

# RENÉE LABONTE

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## EXPERIENCE

### **Symphony of the Americas**

**Founding VP / Executive Director** 1987 – May 2020

Administrative management of all activities, performances and staff for annual symphony season and Summerfest chamber orchestra performance tours of US and Latin America.

#### **Communications—Writing**

- Feature Articles – newspapers, magazines, brochures.
- Press releases for concerts, fundraising events and special announcements.
- Program notes and scripts.
- Study guides for outreach and student educational performances.
- Performance Programs – text and artist biographies.
- Grants – State, County and private foundation proposals.

#### **Communications—Public Speaking**

- Pre-concert lectures and informational talks.
- On-stage narrations and introductions of musical selections.
- Presentations for local Chamber, Rotary and community groups.

#### **Educational Outreach**

- Initiate and oversee all youth enrichment activities, from individual mentoring to 10+ full-orchestra educational performances and in-school ensemble presentations.
- Establish programs geared to at-risk students, including a 5-year partnership with the Boys & Girls Clubs in Broward County, Bonnet House Museum & Gardens, and the Symphony for musical discovery.
- Co-Founded and established the Symphony's Children's Everglades Environmental Symphony interactive student project with noted photographer Clyde Butcher and composer David Heckendorn of "Mr. Holland's Opus". Premiered to 5,000 students at Broward Center for the Performing Arts featuring youth orchestra musicians, large screens of Butcher photography, and live animals from Miami Metro Zoo.
- Chosen by the US Embassy in El Salvador to develop and direct a 4-week grant project mentoring the Don Bosco Youth Orchestra in San Salvador. "Friendship in Action" involved 16 Symphony of the Americas musicians in master classes, rehearsals and coaching young musicians about life's goals. Culminating in side-by-side performances of American and Broadway composers with the conjoined group of student and professional musicians throughout the country, youth ensembles in each city were able to perform on the same stage as an Independence Day celebration in partnership with USAID.

## CONTACT

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Deerfield Beach, FL



## PROFILE

Dedicated Senior Executive Director with 35+ years experience leading and growing complex non-profit organizations in the arts.

Drove evolution of Symphony of the Americas from start-up to designation as a Broward County Major Cultural Institution, accruing no debt, maintaining positive retained earnings and building a \$2-million managed endowment.

## EXPERIENCE (continued)

### FACULTY & AFFILIATION

**Adjunct Faculty, Music**  
Broward Community College  
1974–1977

**Grant Panelist**  
Florida Division of  
Cultural Affairs  
1980 – present, as needed

**Member & Adjudicator**  
Florida State Music  
Teachers Association  
1985 – present

**Member**  
Music Teachers National  
Association  
1985 – present

**Member & Adjudicator**  
National Federation of  
Music Teachers  
2000 – present, as needed

**Member**  
National Guild of  
Piano Teachers, a division of  
American College of Musicians  
1971 – present

### PIANO

Producer, musician and soloist  
on over 30 classical music  
compact discs

Acclaimed for recitals and  
orchestral performances with  
national symphonies  
throughout Europe,  
Central & South America,  
Asia and the US

Orchestral Pianist  
Symphony of the Americas  
1987 - 2020

**Studio of Renee LaBonte**  
1971 - present

Private piano instruction  
specializing in early learning,  
skill development, and  
performance coaching

#### Development

- Drive organization's growth from start-up to designation as a Broward County Major Cultural Institution, expanding annual operating budget from initial \$175k to current \$1.4 - \$1.5 million.
- Develop and implement strategies to secure necessary funding through public and private channels, including initiation of legacy and planned giving programs.
- Identify and cultivate funding opportunities with individual sponsors, foundations, corporations, and federal, state and local governments.
- Research, write and submit 35 foundation applications, sponsor proposals and government grants annually, representing over 50% of annual Symphony budget. Administer each request through approval, monitor funded programs to ensure compliance, prepare and distribute final impact reports to funding agency.
- Spearhead fundraising and gala events for audiences of 20-500, with annual revenue budgets in excess of \$350k.
- Lead Ambassador to community, building goodwill for organization by serving on community committees and participating in events.
- Build and maintain strong relationships with potential, current, and past benefactors.

#### Marketing

- Generate PR strategy in accordance with Symphony brand and development best practices.
- Direct creation of all printed program books and brochures.
- Formulate and approve press releases, display ads, social media & banner ads, e-blast flyers, radio ads.
- Supervise maintenance of e-Tapestry database, press and media contact lists, list generation, mail merges.

#### Budgeting

- Draft all budgets together with Board Financial Committee and accounting staff.
- Review monthly updates and cash flow, implementing changes as needed.

#### Volunteer Support

- Develop annual plan of projects and program activities with Symphony of the Americas Society, a support guild of 125 symphony patrons and volunteers.
- Participate with chairpersons for each volunteer fundraising event, from sharing past successful strategies to handling database needs.
- Finance and cash flow manager for the guild's projects.

#### Operations

- Enthusiastic team leader skilled in motivating staff and volunteers.
- Interviewing, hiring and mentoring team members.
- Coordination of all ad hoc and standing Board Committees.
- Contract negotiations and execution.

#### Fundraising Support

- Determine event budgets, and staffing and volunteer requirements, with consideration to theme and goal of each event.
- Coordinate collateral material creation and distribution, and develop sponsorship and underwriting opportunities, alongside individual event committees.

## EXPERIENCE (continued)

### SKILLS

Fundraising Development

Communication

Writing

Marketing

Public Speaking

Production Management

Grant Writing

Education & Administration of  
Education

Event Planning

Volunteer Recruiting &  
Organization

### BOARDS & LEADERSHIP (non-profit)

**Funding Arts Broward**  
Grant Screening Committee

**Broward Cultural Foundation**  
Past President

**Broward Public Library  
Foundation**  
Chair, Night of Literary Feasts

**Winterfest International Boat  
Parade**

**Royal Dames of Cancer  
Research**

**Symphony of the Americas &  
Symphony of the Americas  
Society**

### **Sanctuary Realty**

**Director of Marketing** 1987 - 1994

- Produced all advertising and marketing for firm's general real estate and development divisions, including original developments Boca Grove and The Sanctuary.
- Print, radio, collateral materials and special events.

### **Fort Lauderdale Chamber Orchestra**

(Founded by Maestro James Brooks-Bruzzese, later renamed  
South Florida Symphony Orchestra)

**Executive Director** 1984 - 1986

**Administrator, Grant Writer, Fundraiser** 1976 - 1984

## EDUCATION

**Degree Studies**, Music Performance and Education  
Manhattanville College, NY

**Bachelor of Fine Arts**, Music Performance and Education  
Florida Atlantic University

**Piano Teacher's Certification**  
St. Louis Institute of Music (Fontbonne College)

**Piano Performance Studies**  
William Harms of Curtis Institute of Music  
Gerald Snyder of Cleveland Institute of Music

## AWARDS & RECOGNITION

**World Who's Who of Women**

**South Florida Business Journal** – Up and Comer's Award

**Women in Communications** – Woman of the Year

**Broward Cultural Foundation** – Community Outreach Award

**Order of St. John of Jerusalem Knights Hospitaller** – ordained with Honor

**Florida Grand Opera** – Diva Impresario Award

**Minority Development & Empowerment** – Spirit of Excellence Award,  
Haitian Flag Day