



UNA VOCE

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The Organization of Canadian Symphony Musicians (OCSM) is the voice of Canadian professional orchestral musicians. OCSM's mission is to uphold and improve the working conditions of professional Canadian orchestral musicians, to promote communication among its members, and to advocate on behalf of the Canadian cultural community.

Editorial

By Barbara Hankins
Editor

Does it matter to music lovers how the orchestra looks? Many will say that people see us before they hear us, and that “visual cohesion” is of paramount importance. Others say that a change of dress code from the stuffy tails and white tie is needed to break down the barrier between the orchestra and audience. Arlene Dahl's article gives a clear overview of the choices musicians and managements are considering. If you have an opinion on this, feel free to chime in on the OCSM list or send me your thoughts for possible use in the next *Una Voce*.



My personal view is that while the dress code should reflect our respect for our art and the tone of the concert, it may matter less than the expression on our faces when we are on stage. If we look engaged and excited about what we are doing, that may affect the

audience's perceptions of the music more than what we are wearing.

Thanks to Matt Heller for a report on the resolution of the “extras and subs voting” issue in Vancouver, to Mark Tetreault for an introduction to useful resources on the AFM website, to Francine Schutzman for a summary of the pension changes, and to our UV production manager Steve Izma for a notice concerning the recently published biography of Georg Tintner.

Vancouver dispute leads to new rights for symphonic extra musicians

By Matt Heller
OCSM President

In recent years, Vancouver Symphony musicians have toured China, opened a new School of Music, and won a Grammy Award. At the negotiating table, vso musicians have fought to keep pace with the city's booming economy and to recover from a 25 per cent salary cut in 2000. The Vancouver Symphony's last agreement finished with the 2011–12 season, so negotiations should have begun last spring. What happened instead was a contentious and complex dispute between the vso Musicians Association (vsOMA), and the Vancouver Musicians Association (VMA), the AFM Local representing all unionized Vancouver musicians, including those in the vso.

The previous contract, completed in 2009, brought modest gains for full-time vso musicians, but extra and substitute musicians continued to fall behind. (For the purposes of this article, references to ‘extras’ include substitutes as well.) By some measures, extras were earning 18 per cent less per hour, even without considering benefits received by full-time musicians. The VMA board, under newly elected President David Brown (also a vso musician and 1st VP of OCSM) and Secretary David Owen, viewed this disparity with great concern. As the signatory to the orchestra's collective agreement, the VMA represents all musicians who work for the vso, extras as well as full-timers. If extras were being chronically underpaid, as many felt they were, the VMA could face Duty of Fair Representation charges before the provincial Labour Relations Board. The VMA had overseen all the negotiations during which the disparity between extra and full-time rates increased and, as is the reality in most orchestras, extra musicians had never been allowed to vote

during ratification of collective agreements.

The vsOMA had already elected a Negotiating Committee, completed a survey of musicians, and felt qualified to negotiate a fair and equitable contract. But during the term of the collective agreement over 200 musicians play as extras with the vso, far exceeding the number of full-time players (66 in 2011–12, though the contract provides for 73). With equal votes in ratification, extras could easily outvote full-time players and radically shift the priorities of the agreement. The vsOMA would not agree to this. The vMA was equally adamant that maintaining the status quo of no votes for extras was not tenable.

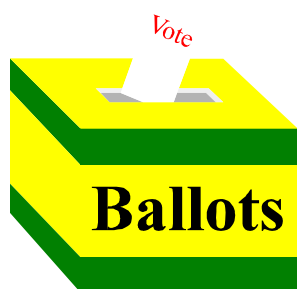
As the dispute progressed, both sides sought outside help from the Symphonic Services Division, OCSM, and the B.C. Labour Relations Board. At the 2012 OCSM Conference in Toronto, we held small meetings with OCSM legal counsel Michael Wright, Symphonic Services staff, vMA President David Brown, and Negotiating Committee Chair Rebecca Whitling, and tried to prepare the ground for a compromise that could prevent legal battles. Though opinions were strongly held, I was impressed by both sides' abilities to discuss their positions respectfully and without rancor.

A compromise was finally reached in November, thanks to an AFM/CFM delegation that included VP Canada Alan Willaert, Symphonic Services Director Jay Blumenthal, SSD Canada Director Mark Tetreault, and Ken Shirk from the AFM West Coast office. The resulting agreement provides for:

- Negotiating Committee membership: the Negotiating Committee will include a musician engaged as an extra, elected by all extra musicians who performed over the past three seasons.
- Pay equity for extra musicians: the Negotiating Committee will make all efforts to achieve pay equity for extra musicians within the term of the next collective agreement.
- Ratification rights for extra musicians: any extra musician who performed at least 33 per cent of the total services under the previous collective agreement is eligible to participate in ratifying the successor collective agreement. This formula means eleven extra musicians will be eligible for this round; future rounds will be capped at no more than eleven.

- The vMA will consult with the vsOMA Orchestra Committee and/or the negotiating committee prior to considering and taking any action on matters that might affect vso members.

One of the priorities of the most recent OCSM conference, held jointly with the Canadian Conference representing Locals, was to promote better communication between Locals and orchestra Players' Committees. Reaching this compromise took a great deal of communication, as well as outside intervention, and its success will depend on more strong communication going forward. Negotiations have now begun, and everyone involved seems hopeful that this will provide a way forward, and perhaps even a precedent for other orchestras to give extra musicians their due rights.



Symphonic Services Resources Can Help Solve Your Problems

by Mark Tetreault
Director, SSD-CFM

New Orchestra Committee members and Local officers often need to know where they can find the information needed to solve their current problems. The answer is www.afm.org, a website that is host to a wide array of information for officers, committee members, and musicians at large.

In order to access this information, you must first register on the site. Registration is easy and free for all AFM members.

Once you have signed up and logged on, click on the red "myAFM" button. This will bring you to your personal AFM home page, where you can save your favourite areas and documents on the site.

Next, click on the blue tab called "Document Library." This will give you a list of folders, one of which is called "Symphonic Services." Opening this folder gives you access to a number of useful resources.

The most important folder is the Resource Centre. This is a relatively new area on the website. It contains OPUS 2012, which has current ICSOM, OCSM and ROPA Collective Agreements, electronic media agreements, Strike Fund information, and other information on collective bargaining, labour law, and the operation of local unions and committees. The Resource Centre also contains 14 years of wage charts. The wage charts are in spreadsheet form, which can be downloaded. Once downloaded they can easily be worked with to determine comparisons with peer orchestras, or trends over

time. Next is the Resource Centre for Arbitration and Court Decisions. When an orchestra committee or Local officer asks “Has this problem happened before under similar conditions? What did others argue and what was the outcome?,” the answers may be found in the indexed collection of arbitration, NLRB, and court decisions issued pursuant to AFM symphonic collective bargaining agreements over the last sixty years. Finally, the Resource Centre hosts an ever-expanding collection of webinars. There is a series of videos about contract enforcement and a series about collective bargaining. These webinars can be used as orientation for new committee members or as refreshers for veterans.

The folder “SSD Handouts” contains documents on a wide range of topics, such as *Bylaws Pertaining to Symphonic Orchestras*, *Cliff Notes for Robert’s Rules*, *Contract Boilerplate Language*, *Goals of a Union Steward*, *Internal Organization*, *Techniques for Better Bargaining*, and many others.

Back up under the “Documents Library” tab is a folder called “Canadian Symphonic Documents” where OCSM orchestra settlements are located, and in the EMSD folder, you will find “Canadian Electronic Media Symphonic Agreements.” This has contract language for archival recording, conductor video auditions, grant tapes, civic projects, and many other agreements. In the Canadian section there is also information on the Musicians’ Pension Fund.

We are always looking for new ideas. If you have any suggestions for topics that are not covered on the website, please let us know. You can reach me at <ssd-mark@yahoo.ca>.

Oh No! Not the Damned Dress Code Again!

By Arlene Dahl (aka Signora Stiletto)

Winnipeg Symphony

There is little that instills more anxiety than being asked to serve on a Dress Code Committee. Mention the topic to most symphony musicians and one is met with (1) anger at the prospect of having to modify their existing wardrobe, or (2) excitement at finally being able to toss the white ties and tails and long black dresses, or (3) a (politely) stifled yawn. To paraphrase Abraham Lincoln, you can never please all of the people all of the time. And yet, from time to time, orchestra managements request committees be struck to review their dress code policies.

An article appeared recently in the *Baltimore Sun* that reported a new partnership between the Balti-

more Symphony Orchestra and the Parsons New School for Design. The purpose: to redefine the image and the functionality of traditional concert attire by using breathable and more flexible fibers to construct garments that allow the freedom of movement and comfort required to meet the physical demands of playing in an orchestra. It is interesting to note that the public responses to the article mirror those of most musicians. Some bemoan the dumbing down of symphony patrons who show up to concerts wearing casual clothing. They believe concerts are special events and not bothering to show up in your Sunday best shows a lack of respect both for the musicians and the music. These respondents indicated that they love to dress up for their night on the town and expect the orchestra musicians to be formally attired as well. Others think it is time to deep-six the 19th-century concert garb and allow the orchestra musicians to dress in a way that might attract new audiences and break down perceived barriers between performer and patron. And then there is this post to the article: “Seriously? With all the real problems faced by these orchestras, this is actually on the radar?”



And yet, modern orchestras are examining their role and image in a contemporary society that places a great deal of value in visual presentation. As orchestras add more multimedia components to their offerings, they are asking their musicians to modernize their image as well. Morning concerts have musicians attired in “business casual” outfits. Pops concerts, which have become more about entertainment than music, showcase the women

of the orchestra in jewel tones. Symphony concerts accompanying a rock band allow musicians to dress in jeans and shirts. In Winnipeg the dress code stipulates “dark hue” for our New Music Festival, giving the musicians autonomy to choose outfits that reflect their own individuality, running the gamut from conservative to wild, from shy to in-your-face, much like the music being performed during that week.

But does dressing an orchestra in cutting-edge trendy clothes actually bring in a younger demographic, and what happens when those clothes become dated a few years from now? If you drastically change the look of the orchestra, will you risk alienating your core audiences who want their musicians to maintain traditional, formal garb? If an orchestral management wants more pizzazz and glitz on stage, where is the

line drawn between glamorous and gaudy? At what point do the clothes worn on stage become distracting to the audience members at the expense of the music they came to hear? And the overriding question posed by the musicians is “Who pays for this?” Very few orchestras have the budget to experiment with their image – musicians certainly don’t. There is probably a good reason why white tie and tails and long black dresses are still considered the uniform of choice for most symphonies – they are as timeless as the repertoire they accompany.

Whether we like it or not, we are in the entertainment business, and at the very least, we are in direct competition with the industry when it comes to convincing people to spend their entertainment dollar. Most orchestras are seeing a decline in single ticket sales, and while subscription sales may be up, patrons are committing to fewer concerts. If a couple decides to take in a symphony concert and spends anywhere from \$30 to \$100 or more for each single ticket, is it not reasonable for them to expect a polished and professional presentation on stage? This is the mandate given to a Dress Code Committee – to look critically at their orchestra from the audience’s point of view and come up with a set of guidelines that puts their organization and its image in the best possible light. Personally, I’m all for keeping the “Class” in “Classical.”

Dress Code Poll

OCSM recently held an online (unscientific) poll to see how many want to see orchestras change the way they dress; readers of Orchestra-L as well as OCSM-list were invited to participate. Here are the results and a few of the comments.

Q: Should orchestras change the way they dress?

Yes: 36 votes (80%)

No: 9 votes (20%)

- As a bass player, who must get up and down from the stool to turn pages, the tails are a constant bother. I would be so happy to be rid of them. Also, the look of the women in the ensemble is so motley as to be distracting to many in the audience: sequins and velvet together, etc. Something more uniform for women would look nicer, I think. The women make the mistake of thinking of this as an individual fashion statement and don’t wish to be forced into something they feel isn’t “right for them.” But it is a uniform for work, not an individual fashion statement.
- For men, business suit and tie should be the standard attire for all concerts. For women, dressy black

dresses or pant suits that are comfortable for their performing requirements.

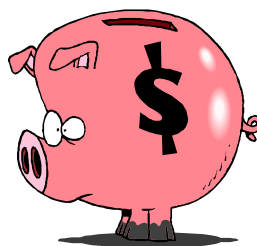
- Comfort is good – slovenliness is bad. Some uniformity so that the focus remains on the music, but not so much that we again fall into the staid stereotype.
- I am in favor of “all black” for men, but it needs to include a jacket. Where do you even start with ladies’ dress? Not all black is appropriate for the stage.
- Not simply for the sake of change, but for the advancement of stylish, attractive functionality. How many times have we each been constricted by the limitations of our archaic uniform? Even ties present an enormous challenge for those of us who must position an instrument between our clavicle and chin.
- Our dress should reflect the times; less formality breeds accessibility.
- As long as it looks classy, is comfortable, suits all body types, is reasonably uniform, and allows for a little bit of individuality.
- Formal dress looks really good and it makes the concert seem like more of a special event.

Pension Changes and a Small Measure of Hope

Francine Schutzman

President, Local 180

I believe that all of you who are vested in the Musicians’ Pension Fund of Canada have received letters telling of you of changes in the Fund. I hope that you read those letters, since your pensions will be affected. The biggest change is that, starting January 1, 2013, 50 per cent of the contributions that are made by employers in your name will go toward funding your benefit, and 50 per cent will go toward supporting the cost of the benefit being accrued from January 1, 2013 onwards. The changes were made in order to comply with recent changes in provincial funding requirements.



I know that there has been a great deal of consternation over the changes. I hope that those of you who were interested were able to join the webinars devoted to explaining the changes. They were on January 28 (English) and January 29 (French). If you

weren’t able to tune in, you may still view the webina-

rs by going to the Fund's website: (www.mpfcanada.ca). There is a Q and A section there that might be helpful to you. And please keep in mind that, although we have experienced an unwelcome change now, the Fund is still an excellent one and represents a superior retirement savings vehicle for you in comparison to what RRSPs can deliver. Since the MPF Canada and RRSPs are two completely different types of retirement savings vehicle, the most meaningful way to compare these two types of plans is to compare the benefits at retirement. This comparison can be found on the Pension Fund website under the link called "MPF Canada Background Information December 2012." It could also be pointed out that for benefits earned after 2012, it will take just over five years before the sum of monthly payments paid to you exceeds the sum of the contributions remitted. More importantly when you retire, the MPF Canada will pay you an income for as long as you live, whereas RRSP income can run dry even if its investments perform well, and much too prematurely if the investments do not perform well and/or you live longer than expected.

If you read the Q and A's on the Fund's website, you may take away a small measure of hope that the current situation with the 50/50 split might be improved with time. Let us all hope so and, please, if you have any questions about the changes, please don't hesitate to contact the Fund directly.

Georg Tintner's Life Explored

By Steve Izma

WLU Press

An extensive biography of Georg Tintner, music director of Symphony Nova Scotia for many years and well known for his work with orchestras across Canada, has been published by Wilfrid Laurier University Press.

Written by Tintner's third wife and widow, Tanya Buchdahl Tintner, it details the conductor's life from his early years as the first Jewish member of the Vienna Boys' Choir, through his composition and choral directing in Vienna prior to World War Two, to his conducting positions in New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, England, and Canada.

But, as the biography shows with considerable depth, his complex career followed anything but a smooth arc. *Out of Time: The Vexed Life of Georg Tintner* narrates his constant struggle to maintain his principles not only as an interpreter of the Classical period and of the late Romantics but as a socialist, vegetarian, and bicycle enthusiast in the midst of, as *Bruckner*

Journal editor Ken Ward stated in a review of the book, "the conservative circles of the musical establishment of the post-war antipodean British Commonwealth." Only late in life, with the release of his recordings of all of the Bruckner symphonies for Naxos, did Tintner receive worldwide attention. Norman Lebrecht, music critic and author of *The Maestro Myth*, explains, "Tintner was one of those all-too-common victims of 20th-century prejudice, an artist who had



to attain a venerable age before anyone was prepared to acknowledge his unarguable gifts."

As Ward wrote in his review: "The description of how these [Bruckner] recordings came about, and the varying circum-

stances under which they were made, provides an essential adjunct to the performances themselves, adding a dimension that increases their power and profundity. And when you add to this the life-history that led up to them, the greatness of this Bruckner conductor that shines through every performance acquires a back-story that helps to account for and magnify its stature. . . . There are many valuable observations on the art of conducting -- and many extraordinary stories of what following that profession can demand. . . . There are trenchant observations of and on anti-semitism . . . on veganism, on friendship, betrayals and mistresses -- and on wives and music."

More details on the book can be found at the publisher's website: (<http://www.wlu.ca/press/Catalog/tintner.shtml>).

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