



UNA VOCE

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From the Editor

We need to hear from you!

As musicians, we all know the importance of fundamentals. Even if you’ve been working for forty years, you still have to practice your long tones, scales, and find ways to make Tchaikovsky’s Fourth sound a little better each time you play it (or at least find a way not to get bored of it).

The same is true of OCSM; we need to remind ourselves from time to time why we need OCSM. This includes reminding all of you what OCSM’s “fundamentals” are. Our job on the Executive is a bit like that of music teachers or coaches; we need to find ways of disseminating the same information to you over and over again in different ways. Unlike the stereotypical teacher-student relationship, however, the relationship between the rank-and-file and the Executive must be a two-way street (all good teachers learn from their students, anyway). We need to know what is happening in your orchestras in order to serve you. We also need to know your needs as musicians – what can OCSM do within its mandate to best serve you?

Part of your feedback is in this issue of *Una Voce*. Your delegates have done a great job of reporting on your season’s activities to the Executive, and the results have been summarized here. My column in this issue is a further appeal to you to get involved. Think about what OCSM means to you; maybe you think it’s totally irrelevant, maybe you think it’s essential, maybe you don’t think about it at all.

I’m going to give a quick overview of what OCSM does, and then I’m going to ask you a few questions. I hope you will come up with some answers.

OCSM is, believe it or not, a corporation. Unlike our AFM Locals, which are unincorporated associations of professional musicians, OCSM is set up under the Canada Corporations Act. This means we must abide by certain rules: financial disclosure, etc. It also means we can accept money in ways that unincorporated entities cannot (donations, e.g.). We are also a Player Conference of the AFM. This means we act on your behalf within that organization.

It may be of interest to you what the stated objectives of OCSM are. They are printed in our Articles of Incorporation as follows:

The objects of the Corporation are:

- a) To improve the overall lifestyle of the musicians in Canadian symphonic, ballet and opera orchestras, and to promote and protect their interest.
- b) To encourage and support the growth and development of serious music and other performing arts in Canada.
- c) To encourage a greater appreciation of fine music amongst Canadians.
- d) To preserve, strengthen and expand the concept of a Canadian culture in Canada.
- e) To provide statistics and other information of interest to professional symphonic, ballet and opera orchestra musicians.
- f) To collect and accept fees and donations.
- g) To make representations to the Government, the Provincial Legislatures and the Parliament of Canada concerning the promotion of the aforesaid objects.

My questions to you:

- 1) How well do we accomplish objective e) in the list above? Are two newsletters per year enough? Does our website and e-mail list assist us in achieving this objective? Is there something we can do to make for a better flow of information between delegates, musicians and the Executive?
- 2) Do you think that OCSM should endorse political candidates who can demonstrate support for the arts?
- 3) The objectives in our Articles of Incorporation are silent on the subject of our involvement with the AFM and organized labour. Should OCSM take a more active role in the world labour movement? If you answered yes to question 2) above, do you think that OCSM should also endorse only “labour-friendly” candidates? Do you think OCSM should be involved in labour-wide boycotts, or should the AFM carry that banner? (Note the call for a Wal-Mart boycott in this issue).

One final note – this summer’s conference will be held in Kitchener from August 3-7. Kitchener is within one day’s drive for ten out of twenty OCSM orchestras, so we’d love to see some of you there. If I have learned one thing from attending conferences it’s that we’re not alone in our individual orchestras; all of us face the same challenges.

Do think about these questions. Our e-mail box is always open; you can find us at www.ocsm-omosc.ca, or talk to your delegate.

Robert Fraser
OCSM Secretary/Editor, *Una Voce*

Report of the President: On The Road Again

Since our last issue of Una Voce, I have taken a number of trips on behalf of OCSM, so this report may read a bit like a travelogue. I took part in the Orchestras Canada board meeting in Toronto on January 16th. We heard details of the upcoming Orchestras Canada conference, to be held in London, ON, from June 9th-11th. The theme of the conference is Building Creative Communities: Strategic Partnerships and Collaborations. Musicians are urged to attend the conference. You might want to ask your orchestra committee to sponsor a representative. For more information, check out the Orchestras Canada website: www.oc.ca. Since that January board meeting, we learned that OC Executive Director Dan Donaldson will be leaving that position this spring to become the general manager of the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony. Katherine Carlton, known to many in OCSM through her work with Symphony Nova Scotia and the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony, will be the Interim Executive Director of Orchestras Canada.

Since I was so close to Kitchener in January, I was able to check out the hotel choices for this summer's conference. We'll be meeting and staying at a charming Art Deco hotel in the heart of Kitchener, and I'd like to remind all OCSM members that they are welcome to attend the open sessions of the conference, from August 3rd-7th.

On January 30th, I also met with Barbara Zmich (ROPA President), Jan Gippo (ICSOM Chair) and Laura Brownell (SSD Head) in Chicago in order to discuss a number of issues related to the symphonic community. The following day, the AFM Futures Committee (of which Barbara, Jan and I are members, along with the remaining two members of the Player Conference Council, Vicky Smolik of the TMA and Phil Ayling of the RMA) had its second final meeting (no, that's not a typo). We had had our "final" meeting in October, and the committee had voted to ask the IEB to consider recommending to the 2005 AFM Convention (coming this July in Las Vegas) that the Player Conferences have votes at the convention (right now, we have only voice). I referred to this in the December Una Voce as something that would accomplish our goal of increasing the effectiveness of the various player conferences within the AFM. Several Futures Committee members asked that that vote be reconsidered, so we met again in January. Because of the nature of the opposition to the PC vote, the PCC decided to withdraw our support for the idea, and it was dropped from the committee's final report (which was made to the IEB in a brief third final meeting of the Futures Committee in New Orleans on March 14th). I assure you that this will be a matter of some discussion at this summer's OCSM conference.

In February, I flew to Chicago once again to take part in a one-day media meeting. Please see Florence Nelson's detailed report of this meeting in the March International Musician. The end result was that there was a consensus that the existing AFM media agreements do not meet all of our needs, and a decision was made to meet with the managers to discuss a new agreement. As I write this, there is a musicians' caucus planned for April 4th,

and the first negotiation meeting will be held in Washington on April 17th and 18th.

How I Spent My Spring Vacation: the OCSM executive met in Ottawa on March 11th and 12th. We had an exhausting day and a half discussing the state of our orchestras with Laura Brownell and planning this summer's conference. We also talked about changes to the AFM bylaws proposed by the player conferences for the AFM Convention. I've already sent out the following message on the OCSM delegate list, but it bears repeating: this is the time of year when many AFM Locals are electing delegates to the bi-annual convention, if they have not already done so. I urge all of you to get involved with your Locals, to get on the boards, and to attend the convention as delegates if at all possible. The AFM is not – or at least should not be – a bunch of people in some far-away city deciding things without our input. WE are the AFM, and we must guide our own destiny.

There is another message that I've been asked to repeat: there is no OCSM office with paid staff. Your OCSM officers are your fellow musicians, doing the necessary work in their "spare" time, just as your orchestra committees do. I've been fortunate to be able to attend as many meetings as I have this year because of coincidental days off from my orchestra job, which remains my first priority. I won't be at all of the media negotiation sessions because of work conflicts, and that's just the way it works out sometimes.

And in case anyone is confused by some of my meeting reports and resulting acronyms, you should know that OCSM is a conference within the AFM. As I've said, we have voice but no vote at the AFM Convention. The Symphonic Services Division (SSD) is composed of AFM employees (headed by Laura Brownell) who work for all symphonic players within the AFM – not only in OCSM, ROPA and ICSOM orchestras but in ones which for one reason or another are not qualified to belong to any of the symphonic conferences. There is currently an opening in the AFM Canada office for the full-time position of SSD Director for Canada. OCSM does not employ this person; the AFM does. However, we would love to see someone in that job who has had some connection with OCSM, and we urge all interested musicians to apply.

Francine Schutzman, President, OCSM

BOYCOTT WAL-MART

The OCSM executive recommends a boycott of Wal-Mart stores because of the clear anti-union stance they have taken in Quebec and elsewhere.

The world's biggest retailer, with a \$7 billion profit, has a track record of unfair labour practices worldwide. Protest with your pocketbook by joining the international boycott.

Canadian Orchestras, from "C" to Shining "C"

This has been a busy year for Canadian Orchestras. Here's what's been happening, from West to East.

Victoria Symphony has just ratified a three-year agreement as of press time. There is a deficit in Victoria, so this has impacted the negotiating position of Management. There was a loss of one week in the Season, but a modest overall increase in wages and benefits.

The NACO visit in November was well-received, and their generous contribution to the Symphony Society was most kind and most welcome. Other fund-raising events have been successful at attacking the deficit.

Vancouver Symphony is doing quite well. Bramwell Tovey has signed a new 5-year contract, so will be with the orchestra through the Olympic year of 2010. The financial picture is very promising—the orchestra had a surplus last year, half of which went to pay down the deficit and half of which was paid as a bonus to all employees who took a cut last year. Ticket sales overall are up 22%, the Greater Vancouver Regional District increased their grant by \$8,000, and fundraising is going well. The Provincial government in BC has also increased funding to the BC Arts Council, so there should be some trickle-down. Since contract negotiations will begin soon, let's hope the musicians will see a return on their "investment" (otherwise known as their salary cuts) in the new contract.

Calgary Philharmonic is working hard. The orchestra performs well, but the Main Series attendance is poor. Education and Outreach initiatives have performed to full houses, and overall ticket sales have improved as the season progressed. There were some management resignations and replacements during the season, and they are still looking for a new Music Director to replace Hans Graf.

The closure of the Jubilee Auditorium means no opera or ballet this year, but the full cost to the organization is not yet known.

Edmonton Symphony signed a 3-year agreement in September. The good news is there were no cuts; in fact, there will be a 4% increase in each of years 2 and 3 of the contract. Pension also increased from 8% to 9%. The Jubilee closure in Edmonton, as in Calgary, means no ballet and few opera services. Again, the final cost is yet to be determined.

Edmonton has a new Music Director, Bill Eddins, who is creating excitement in the city, and the new Mayor, Stephen Mandel, has increased the city's orchestra grant substantially.

The orchestra will travel to Ottawa at the end of April for "Alberta Scene."

Regina Symphony has had a good season, with solid attendance and some sell-out crowds. Unfortunately, Regina's Opera Society cancelled their performances this year for lack of fundraising. This has left some holes in the schedule for the symphony to fill. A new contract has been signed, giving the musicians 1% increase in each of the next 3 years. The OCSM Audition Code of Ethics was also adopted.

Saskatoon Symphony is having a good season overall. Attendance is up, averaging 1200 per concert in a hall which seats 2000. There have been some big shows, including Rachmaninoff 2nd Symphony and Shostakovich 5. The Brandenburg Series was a sell-out. Everyone is looking forward to next season, which marks the 75th Anniversary of the Saskatoon Symphony.

Winnipeg Symphony still soldiers on. The halls have varied in attendance, but payroll has been met this year. In 2004 the collective agreement expired, but with the 2 year extension that means negotiations will begin next year for a new contract. Music Director

Andre Boreyko's contract expires in 2006, so changes are coming. Stay tuned...

Thunder Bay has been having a good season. Negotiations are nearly finished for the new contract, which should be ratified soon (the last contract was in 1997!) Jason Caslor is the new resident conductor, and auditions are scheduled to fill several core-musician vacancies. The symphony's CD *Variations on a Memory* was nominated for a Juno Award, sparking renewed interest by the CBC in the symphony. The new General Manager is working out well.

Windsor Symphony has good news and not-so-good news. While the orchestra is selling out most events and has received several prestigious awards (including another Lieutenant Governor's award and a Gemini nomination), the contract negotiations are slow, frustrating, and not very satisfactory to date. This will be one to watch.

Hamilton Philharmonic has begun a conductor search. Several guests are lined up, but the organization seems content to take its time to find the best possible candidate. Contract negotiations will begin soon, and it is hoped that this will go well.

Kitchener-Waterloo. Many things are going well, but there are still some lingering problems caused by the structural problems in the organization which ultimately led to last year's firing of the Principal Conductor. Dan Donaldson, formerly Executive Director of *Orchestras Canada* has just been named General Manager. The conductor search is progressing. The new title for this position is not determined yet.

And it will soon be time to negotiate a new collective agreement...

Orchestra London is having a good year. Relations between musicians, management, and board have been good. Tim Vernon (MD) will be renewing his contract, and overall the relationship between Mr. Vernon and the orchestra is good.

The Trillium Foundation gave a grant this year to help expand the Education and Community Concerts, and this has been quite a successful venture.

Negotiations are due to begin soon and it is hoped that the discussions will be fruitful.

Canadian Opera Company was able to ratify a new three-year contract. It includes the beginning of string rotation language which hopefully one day will result in a proper system of string rotation, independent of the Music Director's approval.

The construction of the new opera house is on schedule, and is expected to open in the Fall of 2006 with the Ring Cycle.

National Ballet completed its second CD in December, which included a score by Michael Torke commissioned by the NB to accompany a new full-length ballet, which will be performed in May.

In April the touring orchestra will join the company in New York for a week of performances.

The collective agreement will expire at the end of the season, so negotiations will soon begin for the new contract.

Toronto Symphony is performing well and to frequently full houses. Lots of exciting and varied music has highlighted the year. Acoustic improvements to Roy Thomson Hall have been well received. School concerts, Young People's concerts, and the Youth orchestra programs are sources of pride for the organization. Relations between musicians, management, and board members are cordial, and morale is high. Plans for an Ontario tour in September are underway, and include several educational activities.

National Arts Centre Orchestra has had a good year. A successful tour of BC in November included 95 educational events and a fundraising concert performed to benefit the Victoria Symphony and Victoria Conservatory of Music.

The annual *FanFair* concert (a musician initiative) raised over \$57,000 for the Ottawa Food Bank and Snowsuit Fund.

Contract negotiations were completed in January, and significant gains were made in the areas of part-time employment and job security.

A tour of Alberta and Saskatchewan is planned for next year.

Orchestre Metropolitain du Grand Montreal has been having a "smooth" season. Subscriptions are up, and the search for new funding sources continues.

A tour in March featuring Carmina Burana went well.

Montreal Symphony is having a difficult year. While concerts are going well, Kent Nagano is not due to arrive for another year yet, so direction, both on and off the podium, is a concern. However his recent visit to Montreal went well, attracting full houses and leaving the public and the musicians in happy anticipation of his arrival full-time.

Contract negotiations have not been going well. Progress may be happening, but very slowly. Musicians have begun using pressure tactics such as wearing red shirts onstage.

Unfortunately, the *Opera de Montreal* has threatened that they may not hire the OSM as planned for a spring 2006 production, citing "Labour troubles."

Orchestre Symphonique de Quebec has been having a good year overall. The houses are generally full, and the Beethoven Festival, featuring all 9 symphonies performed within one week, was very popular, selling out the final evening.

The "Liberal" government under Jean Charest is not nearly as generous as the PQ, and the lack of support makes it more challenging for the orchestra to find new sources of funding.

The collective agreement expires in May, so negotiations will be starting soon.

The 400th Anniversary of the City of Quebec is coming up in 2008, and the Orchestra is already involved in the plans to celebrate this momentous occasion.

And last but not least, **Symphony Nova Scotia** is having a good year overall. A wonderfully successful fundraiser featuring a concert with Renée Fleming, followed by gourmet dinner and live entertainment, sold out, raising a significant amount for the Symphony, helping the organization to pay down its accumulated deficit. A local couple, Mr. and Mrs. Fountain, organized and underwrote the event.

Most concerts are well attended. Bernhard Gueller has extended his contract as Music Director until 2008. He is well liked, and works hard for the organization.

Next year will be the last of the 5-year contract. Since the last four years have seen an improvement in the relationship between musicians, board, and management, it is hoped that this good relationship will translate into a civil and successful negotiation next year.

Prepared by your OCSM delegates, and compiled by Eline Brock Sanheim, 1st V-P.

In Memoriam

Jerry Johnson

It was "with sadness and great thanksgiving" that the family of trombonist Jerry Johnson announced his passing on March 7.

Jerry was one of those rare musicians who could truly play any style of music, from jazz to Broadway shows to studio work to classical. He played with The Airmen of Note, Maynard Ferguson's band, Nimmons'N'Nine, the Boss Brass, the Hannaford Street Silver Band and was also a member of the National Ballet Orchestra and the Stratford Festival Orchestra.

When Jerry was diagnosed with leukemia in 2004, he faced his illness with courage and determination. He and his wife Holly began an e-mail correspondence with his friends called Jerry's Journey. It began as a way to update people on his condition, but it soon blossomed into a series of incredibly touching letters about life, love, patience, acceptance, and spiritual growth. What a privilege it was to share in this journey.

Jerry is survived by his wife, trumpeter Holly Shephard, and three teenage daughters. He also leaves his many friends and colleagues who will always remember his smile, his outrageous sense of humour, his consummate musicianship, and his red shoes. *Submitted by Elizabeth Gowen - COC and National Ballet Orchestras*

Sam Levine

OCSM lost a dear friend and one of its co-founders in January, when Sam Levine died in Toronto. Sam, a retired bass player from the Toronto Symphony and retired president of Local 149 (Toronto), spoke about the birth of OCSM at the Unity Conference in Ottawa in 2002. Sam was the chairman of the symphonic division of the Canadian Conference in the early 1970's. This was called Symphony Symposium. The first problem tackled was that of orchestra auditions, which were not advertised in a timely fashion and which were once even held in the United States for a Canadian orchestra. Thus was the newsletter called Orchestra Openings established, produced initially in the Toronto Local. It was eventually turned over to the Association of Canadian Orchestras (now Orchestras Canada) because the Canada Council was willing to give funding to ACO but not to the AFM. Because of this, Sam was given a seat on the ACO board, which he accepted (at first reluctantly) in order to explain the viewpoint of musicians. In the meantime, Symphony Symposium continued to hold meetings, which were initially not well-attended but which attracted more people toward the middle 1970's. Around 1975, Sam went to the ICSOM meeting in Chicago (Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver were already members) to negotiate those three orchestras out of ICSOM so that they could join the newly-created OCSM.

Sam played the guitar and banjo as well as the string bass. He was a member of the RCAF during the Second World War, before joining the Toronto Symphony. Eddy Bayens, President of the Edmonton Musicians' Association (Local 390, AFM), made the following observations about his long-time friend:

"Sam's union activism stemmed from his intense dislike of hypocrisy and injustice, in whatever form they may present themselves. In spite of his dignified and serious looking persona, he had a great sense of humour, most of it at his own expense. He was an articulate storyteller and had a well-developed appreciation of the absurd, of which our profession, and the people in it, are an unending source. He was never afraid of speaking his mind and he believed that it is possible for one man to be right while a multitude of others with a differing opinion could be wrong."

Sergiu Comissiona

Sergiu Comissiona, the Romanian-born conductor known for the spontaneity and flair that he brought to orchestras around the world, died on March 5th. He was 76.

The New York resident apparently died of a heart attack in an Oklahoma City hotel room, hours before he was to serve as guest conductor for that city's Philharmonic, officials said.

Comissiona held music directorships with some of North America's leading ensembles, including the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, the Houston Symphony and the Vancouver Symphony. He also was music director of the New York City Opera.

Comissiona was principal conductor of the Romanian State Opera in his native country. He was music director of the Haifa, Israel, Symphony from 1960-66; of the Goteborg, Sweden, Symphony from 1966-77, and was chief conductor of the Radio Philharmonic in Hilversum, Holland, starting in 1982.