



UNA VOCE

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OCSM (the Organization of Canadian Symphony Musicians) 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: Concrete Solutions

by Barbara Hankins

We all know how easy it is to find fault. Perhaps it's because for so many years we have given ourselves the critical ear every time we practice. Criticism is necessary for improvement. We didn't pay lesson fees to our teachers for them just to tell us how wonderful we sounded – we wanted information on how to get better. In Matt's panel discussion on improving personal relationships in our orchestras, our friendly psychologists suggest that, if we establish positive relationships first, then criticisms will be more favourably received.

In this issue you can read about other solutions to issues in our workplace: Karen Hall suggests being as enthusiastic about our product as her geologist friend is about concrete, Brad Powell recounts his experiences as a Management Intern, and Julie Shier explains the possibilities and challenges of a new hall.

I welcome your criticisms and suggestions for our OCSM newsletters!



When Stand Partnerships Falter: A Panel Discussion

Moderated and transcribed by Matt Heller
OCSM President

[For the full text of this panel discussion, please visit: http://ocsm-omosc.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=99&Itemid=1]

I recently talked with Dr. Chris Wuerscher, a psychologist and former Calgary Philharmonic board member and current member of the CPO Chorus who offers his services free to CPO musicians; Dr. Ron Dougan, an industrial/organizational psychologist and former Edmonton Symphony bassist; and Michael Hope, second bassoonist and CPO OCSM delegate. The topic was work relationships: why they sometimes can go awry and how to address those conflicts. I started off the conversation by observing that so many of the problems in life start with relationships; and while we're all trained to deal with performance situations, we're not always so well trained to deal with people.

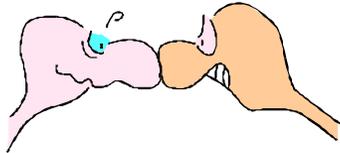
Michael: The insight I can offer is that musicians deal in the currency of high emotion: passion and anger, happiness and all the front-burner emotions. We are the channels and vessels for that, so it doesn't surprise me that we are in a heightened state of emotionality when we come to work.

Matt: Having been in the CPO for 30 years, have you developed a tolerance for other peoples' emotions? Or a recognition of your own emotions when they reach that boiling point?

Michael: I always come back to the teamwork part of the job, and recognize that it's my job to adapt to other people, to be part of a collective. And when I can activate that little switch inside me, then it makes it a lot easier and it allows me to get along with people.

Matt: Dr. Wuerscher, any perspective to add on this high-emotion workplace, and the challenges of dealing with colleagues in a heightened emotional state?

Chris: I guess I want to step back a little bit from that question. To begin with, I think some people just don't have a natural affinity for each other, whether in an orchestra or in other social situations. And you don't always get to choose whom you would want as your stand partner. To be placed into situations where you



don't have a lot of control is, in itself, frustrating. What is really important to learn are the things over which you *can* have control

so that you don't feel put-upon by the other person.

Another factor which relates to the control issue is mobility. Not all musicians are able or prepared to switch from one orchestra to another if they wish to enter into a different social environment. And then you have differing perspectives that you bring to how you play your music. On the one hand, one can regard being an orchestral musician as merely a job: it pays the bills, and there isn't any more emotional engagement than that. And on the other hand, it may be the most important thing and life-defining element of a person's makeup, and that maybe is true more of the younger musicians whereas with the older musicians –

Matt: Present company excepted!

Chris: So having differing levels of passion for the job can affect how one plays and how one attends. If you are next to someone who is very different in those regards, that can also contribute to the sense of aggravation, the sense of not being on the same page. And that doesn't even begin to address the different learning and playing styles that people have come with before they join the orchestra.

Matt: It's beginning to sound more and more like an arranged marriage of people with completely diverging interests, goals, even lifestyle choices! Ron, anything you would add about the underlying sources of conflict?

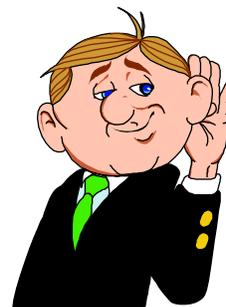
Ron: I'm reminded, without naming names, there was a very well-known string quartet from Europe and they hadn't spoken to each other for 30 years. But they're still performing, and performing very well! One of my questions, perhaps to Michael, is: Does the fact that there is no personal empathy between two musicians affect the quality of the music?

Michael: I would think if you're musically aligned and if you have the same philosophy about how to execute your craft, then it doesn't matter. It's like if you get a couple of hockey players, they might hate each other, one guy might have slept with the other guy's wife, but if they both want to win, then they'll figure out a way to make it work. It would be the same in an orchestra, or string quartet – if the goal is to produce consistent, uniform music with good ensemble, good intonation, and a uniform interpretation then it wouldn't be an issue. Then again, I've noticed as certain people have learned to get along, intonation and ensemble have improved, because we've had low points with the teamwork aspect of what we're doing.

Ron: When you stop to think about it, the symphony orchestra is an amazing phenomenon. You get 65, 70, 100 individuals together, and they produce something that could not be produced any other way. And something of really high quality, and whatever their differences, people pay big bucks to hear the outcome. So let's start with the positive, too. You may not have heard it, but after Mario Bernardi left the orchestra and Hans Graf was the music director, Bernardi was interviewed on CBC, and the interviewer asked, "What's the CPO like?" And he said, "They're good. They don't realize how good they are." Good for you Mario, because I feel the same. It's a good orchestra, and if there are individual feuds and misunderstandings, the product is still excellent.

Matt: Chris, you brought up the fact that many young musicians are very passionate about what they do. They may have never played with other people from a more senior demographic who don't have the same level of passion, who may even have different sorts of lives?

Chris: I think this goes back to what are the expectations of how one is to get along together. If you have the expectation that you really want to understand and know what another human being is like, there's a way of listening to another person that makes it possible to develop an appreciation for who that person is. But that kind of listening requires setting aside judgements and setting aside one's own ideas about what is right and proper, and just trying to hear how it is for this other human being.



Ron: One of the key requirements for all humans to

get along is what we psychologists call empathy. Not sympathy, which means “I feel the same way you do.” Empathy means, “I understand how you feel.” Big difference! In tests of communication, specialists say that only 7 per cent of communication is verbal. 38 per cent is tone of voice. For example, if I said (pounding table), “I am not angry!” what would the communication be? Would you believe my words, or would you believe my nonverbal behaviour? And 55 per cent of communication is nonverbal. If you believe in evolution, before our ancestors developed vocal cords that they could communicate with, they communicated bodily. Often we dislike a person immediately and we don’t know why, and probably it has something to do with body language.

Matt: I think so. I would argue those percentages are even more skewed in the orchestra, because nonverbal cues are everything we do! But I’m wondering about



situations where we’re not great fans of what our colleagues are doing – there’s something that we’d like them to think about differently, let’s

say, and nonverbal cues are not conveying that message. What are respectful ways that we can communicate with our colleagues, or should constructive criticism be off the table?

Chris: I would approach it not as a technique, but a process that needs to occur – there needs to be a *relationship* between you and the other person such that there would be an openness or a welcoming of whatever feedback came your way. And that requires an investment in creating a relationship. That may seem like an extra burden or responsibility, but at the end of the day, people who have those kinds of relationships as foundations are better able to say things, communicate things with the other person, and will be better received than where the relationship doesn’t exist.

Matt: Michael, you played in a section with someone with a very different way of expressing himself, and you meshed so well. How were you able to be so successful?

Michael: You know, I always told myself how fortunate I was that *he* put up with *me*, too, and I always took that as a gift. And I wanted to return that gift. That was my motivating factor.

Matt: While you seem so different on a surface level, I’m sure there were some affinities and similarities that weren’t immediately apparent.

Michael: Very true, and we would often find common ground. I think what really helps is to look for the things you have in common, especially the same things you like to laugh about, and then talk about that stuff a lot!

Matt: We haven’t mentioned humour, but that can be such a defuser of conflict, such a binder of relationships, and humour is a constant presence in an orchestra rehearsal. Though of course, being intensely critical is also part of this job: we’re all self-critical and honestly, we don’t restrain criticism to ourselves – we might turn it on the conductor, the music being presented, even our colleagues. What choices or tendencies should we be looking out for, with those sorts of critical responses?

Chris: I would suggest that to begin with, it is important that you realize that you’re having a critical reaction to someone or something before going into automatic mode and just saying something that one might later on regret. We all have automatic behaviors that often do not reflect what is best in ourselves. So if I’m aggravated or aggrieved by something, how do I want to deal with that? And what might be a good way in *this* situation with *this* person? If one can give some thought to that, then one is less likely to step in it.

Michael: And also making the other person aware – something I would say is, “I’m doing something to make you behave that way, how can I fix this? Do you need me to be playing softer here, or is it shorter that you want? Because I can tell that you’re not happy.” By saying that, you’re letting that person know that there’s a consequence to sighing under his breath, or giving you a dirty look. This is not invisible behavior. And offering a constructive response to it.

Ron: I like Michael’s approach here. I think one has to get into a kind of space where one can use that approach. As you were saying Chris, sometimes it’s automatic and it’s not connected to our rationality at all, and there are good reasons for that because if you’re really emotional, it means then that you’re not thinking rationally. Emotions developed evolutionarily before rational thought, so the emotions come first. But by counting to 10 like grandmother said, you allow time for the emotions to drain a little bit and then you can say, ‘Alright, here’s how I’m going to approach this person.’ Instead of coming in with guns blazing!

Matt: I think that’s a great place to tie in this conversation, because we started out talking about the currency of high emotion, and what is music except emotion wedded to precision?

Chris: One suggestion is that each person can make a choice about how they want to be, how they want to experience life and all the events that are connected with it. And one can experience that with an openness and with an embrace, and if one brings good will into one's situations, that's usually felt by other people and tends to engender good will in others, in spite of the mistakes that one might make and the social gaffes that one might be guilty of. Whereas if one starts from a place of fear, judgement, and anticipation of bad things happening, the world will likely cooperate and reinforce the need to be fearful, judgemental, and living in dread of the future. So I think deciding how one wants to live is really crucial.

Michael: I like what you said – I wish positivity were infectious!

Ron: You must remember that we're communicating all the time, even though we're not talking. And as I said earlier, 55 per cent of our communication is non-verbal, so we may not be saying anything in words, but we're communicating.

Matt: And when an amazing concert happens, it's largely the result of nonverbal communication in the rehearsal.

Ron: That's true, so you have 55 per cent nonverbal communication, 38 per cent tone of voice, 7 per cent words, and then you have communication through music, which is probably the highest form of communication, in my humble estimate.

Michael: And because music is an art form that's been around forever, and it's so durable – I think musicians can all agree that we want the same thing. And if everyone bases their actions on solution-based thinking, then we're a step ahead.

Reaching the Classical Music Audience

by Karen Hall

ICSOM delegate and Cellist, Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra

An article posted to Orchestra-L, interviewing Baltimore Symphony principal trumpet Andrew Balio, prompted an interesting discussion on how to build concert audiences, focusing primarily on youth concerts and repertoire. I wrote the following post, which has now been slightly edited, in response.

* * *

While the replies on this thread revolving around compelling repertoire show much thought and care for our youth and many good points have been made, I think we've lost the intent of the original article which suggested creative ways to enhance the concert-going experience as well as focus on building audiences beyond just trying to attract younger people. In my opinion finding just the right repertoire is the very last step in our mission to bring symphonic music to our North American culture.

Years ago I was at the swimming pool at the Best Western in Alpine, Texas, which is a long way from most everything. A chatty woman introduced me to her husband who was a geologist specializing in concrete. He investigated structural failures like the Hyatt Regency balcony collapse. I spent the most fascinating hour listening to this man tell me detailed information about concrete. He *loved* concrete and left me looking at the sidewalk with awe and wonder. I still find concrete fascinating.

If he could do this for concrete we need to do the same for classical music for the sake of our audiences, young and old.

Our first challenge is to make a good first impression. Mr. Balio's points about parking garages and theatre lobbies are spot on. Mr. Balio suggested that, instead of starting the evening by parking in a garage that looks like a WWII bomb shelter, Valet parking should be much more accessible. This concept of customer service is something we need to reinforce with our managements. Patrons (and children!) need to be greeted from their original ticket purchase through being seated in the hall by friendly human beings who make their experience easy and special *and* who show great enthusiasm for the concert in which they are about to participate.



Once our audience is seated and sees us we again need to consider our first impression. Spend a few moments thinking about the fact that a lasting first impression is made in only three to seven seconds! We don't have time to get to our lyrical solo in the third movement to make a case for classical music. We need to look and act like professional musicians whenever we're on stage.

Let's think about those precious moments when we do have the opportunity to interact with youth. An ele-

mentary school teacher pointed out to me that children mirror what they see from adults. They act like we act and they look where we look. She suggested that if a musician is speaking or playing we look at them with interest and the children will do the same. We are trained to ignore our colleagues when we're on stage to avoid all whirling around when someone makes a mistake, so this is a difficult skill to learn.

Therefore I would like to respectfully suggest that we re-evaluate how we present ourselves onstage for what I've heard colleagues describe as "s**t concerts." If a couple thousand kids are bussed in and see bored musicians in rumpled "casual" dress they will not be compelled to follow in our footsteps or follow us to another concert.

Here is where repertoire matters – it keeps US motivated to play our best. Way back when, in our Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra history, someone decided that kids *love* Minuets from the classical period. *ugh!* We could barely stay awake enough to figure out the repeats! A wildly contemporary selection would have kept us on our toes and given the kids a new aural experience they couldn't get anywhere else. We may grumble about difficult or unusual repertoire but let's face it – we have spent our lives preparing for those challenges, they are exciting, and that excitement is what projects to our audience.

I am a strong believer that orchestras should appear in tails and long black (yes ladies, skirts if you can) whenever possible. It is undeniably our "brand." Only the most important occasions call for tails – from the White House to the white wedding – and we *are* important; we are special, we are not "everyman" and we should look the part.

My last suggestion is that when the audience is applauding we acknowledge and appreciate them for spending their valuable time with us, and not turn to our neighbours and start in on the complaints about the concert with that familiar air of disdain that is visible to the far rows of the balcony.

A point was made about bringing in audiences: "If we do it by becoming something we are not, we are not doing ourselves or anyone else any favours." Let's collectively be the best classical symphonic musicians possible and our audiences will join us in our enthusiasm.



My Year on the Dark Side

by Bradley Powell

Saskatoon Symphony Orchestra

I'm the 2011–2012 Orchestra Management Intern at the Juilliard School, and I'm grateful to the sso for supporting my pursuit of this opportunity. Of the various hats I've worn so far in my career, I'm fairly certain that this one has promoted the most *efficient* period of personal and professional growth. Since my internship is new to the Professional Internship Program at Juilliard, I'd like to shed light on it for the OCSM community, especially since my experience as an OCSM delegate last year was a large part of what kindled my interest in arts administration.

The Basics

Professional Internship Program is year-long, non-degree, and full-time (at least forty hours per week). A living stipend of \$315 per week is offered. There are twenty-eight (soon to be twenty-nine) interns in technical theatre (costume design, electrics, wigs and makeup, stage management, props, scenic art) and administration (drama, vocal arts, orchestra management, special projects, and branding, and a new internship assisting the Juilliard residency in Aiken, South Carolina). International applicants are welcome.

In orchestra management, I've taken part in the following: posting assignment and schedule information, managing email correspondence about conflicts and concerns from Juilliard Orchestra students, taking attendance at Juilliard Orchestra and Lab Orchestra rehearsals, managing seating auditions, managing the weekly department meeting, production duties during concerts, occasion-



al artist assistant duties, engaging substitute and extra musicians, securing rental instruments, operating the internal instrument loans to students (for auxiliary wind and brass instruments), managing conductor surveys, supervising work-study musicians and managing their timesheets (Lab Orchestra).

The Fun Stuff

I work with major artists on a daily basis at Lincoln Center. I have so many great stories to tell that I don't know where to start. This February I worked as an assistant for the Carnegie Hall / Weill Institute's Wind and Brass Masterclasses with musicians from the

Berlin Philharmonic. After seeing the Berlin Philharmonic perform at Carnegie Hall for the *second night in a row* for FREE, I was talking with James Ross, Associate Director of Juilliard's conducting program, and I found out that he was Principal Horn in the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra for the recording of Richard Strauss' *Four Last Songs* with Jessye Norman and Kurt Masur. It's a recording I've listened to countless times since high school, and it definitely cultivated my interest in pursuing a career in music. I should add that I've also worked with Maestro Masur and Ms. Norman this year!

With that said, it's been hard to make the adjustment to (what feels like) being a non-creative member of the arts community. It's hard to feel like I matter as much as what's happening on stage, and to rationalize the long hours and the tension that are very similar to what I experience as an artist. I'm lucky that the arts administrators I work with are so talented and driven, and this intensely motivational environment inspires me even on my worst days!

The Nice Folks at the Orchestra Canada Strategy Meeting

by Leslie Dawn Knowles
Toronto Symphony Orchestra

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Editor's note: In February, members of the Orchestras Canada board of directors met in Toronto to kick off the development of a new strategic plan for OC. Leslie Dawn Knowles represented OCSM as a non-voting board member.

During the day-and-a-half-long meeting the board re-affirmed its belief that Canadian orchestras have an intelligent and brave group of directors working on their behalf. While the plan itself will not be complete for a number of months, the OC staff suggests that the following themes will almost surely be explored in it:

- Smart positioning of Canadian orchestras: with government bodies, the Canadian public, businesses, and philanthropic funders
- Collective action: enhancing and expanding partnerships and collaborations
- Network building: providing the tools and venues to Canadian orchestras to learn together, build common cause, and better support one another.

* * *

At the Orchestras Canada meeting, I discovered that the orchestra managers there seem to be very nice folks who appreciate and respect musicians, and I believe they genuinely want to do right by us and the music. This attitude is a huge change to me, having been through the adversarial climate and fighting of the past forty or so years. Of course it is still their job to do the most with the least money but at least that is tempered with a better point of view.

The big focus of the meetings was Orchestras Canada defining what its role is which seems primarily to be advocacy. There was some discussion of forming partnerships and alliances with other advocacy organizations but also concern over maintaining identity and control in such situations.

There is ongoing discussion about succession planning which they will address internally.

In general I was surprised that there isn't more networking amongst them than there appears to be. The larger orchestras do have access to the comparative reports but I think they could all benefit from talking more than they seem to, especially when it comes to operational issues.

The facilitators had a great approach to discussion: instead of starting with what is wrong, talk about what is good and build on that. At first I was not convinced this was the way to go and was worried that problems wouldn't be addressed, but I came to appreciate that it created a positive environment which was great. We might consider using some of their techniques.

They were happy to have OCSM represented, and it was an intense but great weekend.

A Capital Move for the Windsor Symphony

by Julie Shier
Windsor Symphony Orchestra

The Windsor Symphony is about to embark on a new chapter in the orchestra's history. Beginning September 1st, 2012, we are to become property managers, thanks to a multi-faceted deal with the City of Windsor.

In a nutshell, the Windsor Symphony Orchestra has been looking for a new performance space and the City has been looking for tenants of a mostly vacant hall they've been saddled with, so the arrangement would seem to be a perfect fit. However, the Capitol Theatre has a much smaller stage – too small for a

full-sized symphony orchestra, not to mention the choirs and other community groups we so often collaborate with. As well, there is a seating capacity of only 600, compared with the 1,000-plus seats in the Cleary, where we currently perform our Masterworks and Pops shows. And there are some major structural issues (such as water damage from a leaking roof) that need to be addressed before the Capitol becomes a functional space again. The City of Windsor has agreed to spend 1.8 million dollars to address these issues, as well as to provide a sound shell to enhance the acoustics of the space, plus a freight elevator, so that we can store large instruments in the basement.



The City of Windsor will remain the owners of the building and will pay all utilities as well as any maintenance costs. The Windsor Symphony will convert the retail space into administrative offices for the orchestra, and will be able to rent out the main theatre and two smaller theatres to other arts groups in the community to benefit the wso budget.

The City will forgive the \$250,000 outstanding loan to the orchestra, but will also phase out the \$300,000 annual operating grant over the next three years.

If managed properly, this is an incredible opportunity for the orchestra to become a financially viable organization without continually running to the City of Windsor to bail us out. But there are so many unanswered questions at this point: Will the orchestra have to scale down the number of musicians in order to fit on the smaller stage? Will the renovations finish in time for the start of the 2012–13 season? And will there be enough money in the renovation budget for the acoustical enhancements the space so badly needs? How will the orchestra manage the budget without the annual grant from the city? How will the Windsor Symphony administrative staff be able to manage an entire building as well as running the orchestra? How will our audience members feel about the move to a new hall? A new hall and a music director search all at the same time: these are exciting times!

A Highly Personal and Subjective Memoir

by Francine Schutzman

National Arts Centre Orchestra

OCSM, ICSOM, and ROPA are the flag holders for the CFM/AFM and are our most visible presence. They are vital to keeping our profile in the public eye. I wish OCSM great success.

— Bill Skolnik

Bill Skolnik, who was elected to the position of Vice-President for Canada of the AFM in 2007 and then re-elected in 2010, recently announced his resignation, effective March 9, 2012. Bill is moving to the position of CEO of the Ontario division of the Directors' Guild of Canada.

Bill's tenure as VPC overlapped my own as OCSM President (I held that post from 2003 until 2011). Frankly, I wasn't sure how things were going to work out when Bill was elected. I didn't know him that well, but it was no secret that we were on opposite sides of the fence on certain issues, and that Bill could usually make his point more forcefully than I did mine. I must point out, however, that we always treated each other with mutual, albeit occasionally wary, respect.

I won't rehash the details of the main issue about which we disagreed, or the reasons that compelled each of us to stick to our guns. Suffice it to say that we didn't see eye-to-eye for several years. During that entire time, we were able to work together in other areas. Finally, a situation developed in one of the Canadian Locals that demonstrated to Bill that there was indeed a good reason for OCSM to want a change to a certain AFM bylaw. He let us know that he would no longer oppose our resolution to change the bylaw at the next AFM convention. Finally, after four tries, we were successful in achieving our goal. Now, I could say that Bill was a good loser, but the truth is that I feel that we all won. It takes a big man to have both an open mind and a willingness to change that mind.

I said above that we were able to work together, but it was more than that. Bill was always careful to include OCSM in discussions and decisions. He was most respectful of our endeavors. When he went to the OCSM, ICSOM and ROPA annual conferences, he was an eager participant in the proceedings, and his attentiveness let us know of his very great interest in our organizations. He became a true friend of OCSM, and we will miss him.

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