



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.

Musicians without Borders

by Barbara Hankins

Brandon Chui's story of playing in Paris after the terrorists attacks of November 13 reminds me of the healing power of music. Perhaps you too have had similar experiences to Brandon's or know of organizations that foster healing through music. I recently came across Musicians without Borders whose mission is "to use the power of music to bridge divides, connect communities, and heal the wounds of war. Where war has raged, people need everything to return to life: food, water, shelter, clothing, medicine. But more than anything, people need hope. To reconcile, people need empathy. To heal, people need connection and community." In our own ways, in our own communities, we can look for opportunities to use our music to heal and connect.

Two days after the attacks in Paris and Beirut, the mayors of Waterloo Region arranged for a candlelight vigil, which was attended by about 400 people. A hastily gathered choir moved people to tears as we sang:

May truth and freedom come to every nation,
May peace abound where strife has raged so long,
That each may seek to love and build together
A world united, righting every wrong,
A world united in its love for freedom,
Proclaiming peace together in one song.

— Music from *Finlandia*, by Jean Sibelius (1899); words by Lloyd Stone (1934)

Music: A Civilizing Impact

by Brandon Chui

Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony Orchestra

When I was booked by Tafelmusik sometime last season to go to Paris to perform with them as the pitband for Opera Atelier, never in my wildest dreams would I envi-

sion that it would take place a few short days after a terrorist attack. As we all remember, Paris fell victim on the evening of November 13 to multiple attacks that left 130 dead. With our departure date to Paris scheduled for November 16, all of us were left wondering what would happen next. After a flurry of emails over the course of the night of the 13th, it was confirmed that the shows at the Royal Opera House in Versailles would proceed as planned. We were by no means being forced to go, but for me personally there was not a shred of doubt that I had to go, in the words of Opera Atelier's incredible co-founders Marshall Pynkoski and Jeanette Lajeunesse Zingg, to "communicate how important it is to have the civilizing impact of the arts in the face of terror."



Tafelmusik on the stage of the Opéra Royal

The mood when we arrived was palpable. This was my fourth time in Paris but I did not remember seeing quite so many military personnel with machine guns on my previous visits. It was also extraordinarily quiet on the streets. I wondered if it was due to the season, but a good friend, a local Parisian, assured me that this was absolutely because of the attacks. I visited one of the sites of the attacks, where gunmen shot at crowds inside two restaurants across the street from one another – Le Carillon and Le Petit Cambodge. It is one thing to see the images on TV; it's another to see these places in person. All of a sudden it became vividly real. In complete juxtaposition to the profound sadness we felt, while at the same time imagining the mayhem that took place only five nights earlier, was a sense of the ordinary. Yes, the restaurants were closed for business, but there really was no indica-

tion of what had happened. There was a delivery truck just outside of Le Carillon, and there was nothing holding us back from peering inside the windows. The only sign that something was amiss was the small memorial flowers and candles – sitting outside each restaurant.

The emotions really came alive at the concerts. The first of our three shows, on November 20 (exactly a week following the attacks), was dedicated to the victims. Following impassioned, heart-felt, and truly emotional speeches from OA's Marshall Pynkoski and Catherine Pegard, President of the Palace of Versailles, was an absolutely deafening minute of silence. The orchestra's playing of *Le Marseillaise* could barely be heard over the full-throated singing by the public which packed the small Opera Royal. The mental and emotional focus during that performance of Lully's *Armide* was something that I have rarely experienced.

As for the content of *Armide*, the script really couldn't have been more fitting: a Christian knight and a Muslim warrior princess falling in love during the First Crusades: a big "no-no." Again, to quote Marshall, from an article in *The Toronto Star*, "They are out to realize glory, which is obliterated the moment love enters the equation." "Fate." "Destiny." Call it whatever you want, you just can't make this stuff up.

These few short words in *Una Voce* cannot possibly describe the honour it was to represent Canada as cultural ambassadors and to help bring people together through the power of the arts.

OCSM's Newest Member

by Anna Norris

Niagara Symphony Orchestra



This summer, I had the instructive pleasure of observing the OCSM conference as a representative of the Niagara Symphony Orchestra. As a growing regional orchestra, we were excited to receive the invitation to the gathering, and after having been offered

membership in OCSM at the conclusion of the conference, the musicians voted 28 to 5 (from a total core membership of 52) to join.

As brand-new OCSM members and your newest kid sister orchestra, we at the Niagara Symphony are looking forward to the sage advice of other OCSM members in facing the daunting and hormonal adolescence bearing down upon us.

After 16 years – 1999 to 2015 – cradled in the sub-

urban maternal embrace of Brock University and its Sean O'Sullivan Theatre (where we paid nothing in rent), we've moved out and headed downtown.

We opened our 2015–16 season at the new FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre in central St. Catharines. The hall was designed by Toronto-based architects Diamond-Schmitt on a site overlooking a former Welland Canal valley, with naming rights going to the FirstOntario Credit Union, which operates in the Hamilton and Niagara areas. It's so new, in fact, that it was still under construction during our season opener: a marathon evening of all five Beethoven piano concertos played in the same concert by our very first Artist-in-Residence, who is, as you might guess from the slightly unhinged ambition of his inaugural programming, Stewart Goodyear.

It's difficult to overstate how highly anticipated the opening of the FirstOntario Centre was, both by the Niagara Symphony and by the city planners of St. Catharines. In September, *The Globe and Mail* ran a story with the headline "How the arts are redrawing downtown St. Catharines," praising the FirstOntario Centre and two other brand-new buildings – Brock's downtown Marilyn I. Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts and the 5,000-seat Meridian Centre hockey arena – for transforming a seedy and run-down specimen of small-Canadian-city mediocrity into a vibrant and exciting urban core. "You won't recognize St. Catharines ten years from now," the mayor told *The Globe* proudly. "I guarantee it."

For the NSO, there are many benefits besides the very real feeling of having claimed our place in a growing arts economy. We're looking forward to some major improvements in the artistic quality of our product – after a decade-and-a-half in a space built with film and theatre in mind, we're finally able to hear each other on stage! For the first time, the *Toronto Star* sent a reviewer to St. Catharines to hear our second Masterworks concert, with James Ehnes as guest artist, who wrote in his review that "if this latest main series concert represents its current performance level, St. Catharines is getting a lot of bang for its bucks."

So, the Niagara region's little orchestra is growing up – and with growing up comes learning how to have tough conversations with the people you love. Our contract expired in – I kid you not – 2007, and we've been half-heartedly working off the same old agreement ever since. The idea of a strike or lock-out involving a part-time orchestra where many of the players live out of town and would barely notice is patently ridiculous, and when a negotiation resulted in a contract that failed to ratify in 2014, pretty much the only thing that changed was that everyone stopped using the phrase "when we have a new master agreement" quite so often, and replaced it with "once we're in the new hall."

Now that “once we’re in the new hall” is no longer an excuse, we have given our management notice of our desire to open the agreement and are slowly putting together a negotiating team and gathering resources.

One of these resources, we hope, will be the base of knowledge and expertise that is OCSM, its constituent orchestras and members. We are thrilled to be entering this organization at this important point in our history, and look forward to getting to know you and working with all of you!

Hope for a Future Orchestra in London

by Shawn Spicer

#WePlay On

Orchestra London Canada ceased operations in mid-December 2014. That is not news to anyone. It has been a year, and when I look back over that time I am aware of a complicated mix of emotions. First, frustration: many of you are familiar with this feeling, having experienced much the same situation in your own orchestras. What could have been done differently? Why does everything seem to move at a mind-numbingly slow pace as we attempt to get things back on track? Where is that million-dollar donor that values the presence of orchestral music in the community and wants it to thrive with no strings attached?



Fortunately that frustration gives way to a sense of accomplishment and pride when I remember to look back on what has actually happened this past year. We played on in December immediately after the collapse, performing for the Unity Project charity as an orchestra. We kept our presence in the community by sending small ensembles everywhere in the city to play Christmas music. We played in January, in February, in March – and in April, May, June, and July. We paid ourselves and we played for free. As a group of musicians we will

have planned and produced no fewer than 15 orchestra concerts by the end of 2015, the highlight of which was a glorious concert of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony with Bramwell Tovey conducting and Joseph Lanza as soloist. In addition to the playing activity there has been a positive and highly effective social media presence that has given the musicians international awareness.

The most overwhelming feeling, however, is one of gratitude. I feel gratitude for the many generous musicians and volunteers that give their time for the possibility of a future orchestra in London; for the generosity of our colleagues in Canada and the United States who have contributed money and their knowledge and talents. I feel gratitude for OCSM and their unwavering support. I think of Liz Johnston from the OCSM executive who drove all the way to London from Toronto at a busy time of year to be with us for a crucial city council vote. So many people and organizations have shown generosity and care for us here in London.

There is some good news. A non-profit organization has recently been created that will be the new professional orchestra in London. This will allow us to apply for funding from all levels of government. This is all very new so there is not much to report on the progress of this new entity; I hope to be able to fill you in further in the next *Una Voce*.

I am touched by the concern and interest about the future of our musicians in London that I feel from our colleagues as I travel to play with other orchestras and ensembles. My biggest hope is that in time, when I see a friend in another orchestra, the progress of our efforts to establish a new orchestra are far down the list of conversations because we have been successful and that will be old news.

Biking to Work, and Other Musicians’ Stories

by Bob Fraser

OCSM President

In the Spring of 2014, I wrote an article on how to chronicle your orchestra’s history, beginning with the history of its negotiations. Managements, boards, staff, music directors, and union leadership all come and go, but among our colleagues we have musicians with as much as 40 years of experience, and we need to get that collective experience down on paper (or in megabytes) before it is lost. For example, in my own orchestra (the Victoria Symphony) we recently performed Mahler’s Fifth Symphony. For an orchestra as small as ours, this is a rare occurrence; the only other time in our orchestra’s history when this work was performed was 32 years

ago! And yet, there were ten musicians on stage who had participated in both performances. There are few workplaces that can boast that many people with that much collective experience.



In this issue of *Una Voce*, I want to extend this challenge to not only tell the story of your orchestra's past to your own musicians, but to tell your orchestra's full story – past, present, and future – to the public.

You may have noticed in the last few years that a number of musician-run online media initiatives have sprung up in the U.S. These usually come about as a result of a work stoppage (notably in Atlanta and Minnesota). Often when the crisis is over, the activity on these websites and social media sites diminishes, but it is becoming more common for these sites (metorchestramusicians.org) is a good example) to give the musicians a year-round media presence.

I would suggest that every orchestra's community of musicians – as a separate entity – should have regular communication with the public, and not just during times of crisis. Already I can sense two objections to my suggestion – one from musicians and one from managements – that “it's management's job.” That is to say, features about the musicians of the orchestra (biographies, photos, etc.) are part of the “branding” and marketing of the orchestra. And musicians surely have enough to do without adding this to their list.

While both these things are true to an extent, I would respond by saying that even though it's management's job to “sell” the orchestra, what I am talking about is a different thing altogether. I'm talking about “telling the musicians' story” – what we have to do to get that music on to the stage, and all the other things we do for the community, not just involving our musical talent. Although the musicians' stories are part of the orchestra's brand, I would suggest that there is something more genuine, more authentic, when these stories come from the musicians themselves.

And to the musicians who would argue that “it's management's job,” consider this: We put together musicians' negotiating committees whose express purpose is to convince boards and managers why we need changes to our collective agreements: more pay, different scheduling rules, health and safety standards, work-hardening rules. Those committees are, in a manner of speaking, tasked with “telling the musicians' story” to the other side of the bargaining table – explaining the nature of

our jobs to them and why we need these things. And when that fails, we have to explain to the public why we need their support in getting those things. Whether we like it or not, we have to tell the musicians' story some time or another – I say we do it with our own voices, on our own terms, during both good times and bad, and in a way that only real artists and craftspeople can.

We have taken the initiative in Victoria to start our own website, (<http://vsmusicians.ca>), with accompanying Facebook and Twitter accounts. It is run by a committee of four musicians: two of whom are 25-year-plus veterans (including yours truly), and two of whom are newbies (four years). Two have excellent photographer's skills, all of us contribute writing, and one of us possesses the necessary Web skills. We post everything by consensus – we have a more-or-less continuous Messenger thread running on our smartphones. Our management was concerned at first that we would be stepping on their marketing campaigns. We assured them that our reason for putting up this website was not to replace their initiatives but to complement them. So far we have done features on our “Movember Team” – each of our moustache-growers had a personal story to tell here, including the poignant story of losing one of our colleagues to prostate cancer earlier in the year. We also did a feature on “Biking to Work” – we live in one of the few Canadian cities where musicians can bike to work year-round. Every week we have a “featured musician” on the front page, and we try to keep the content to no more than one or two pieces per week – that keeps the “web fatigue” to a minimum. Our friends in the orchestra are encouraged to re-post and share our features among their own social media circles, so the “reach” of our website is growing. At the time of this writing, this is still a very new initiative – I hope that in a future issue of *Una Voce* I can report much more.

During the last two OCSM Conferences, we formed an “Advocacy Committee,” which has been tasked with “getting the musicians' story” out there. We are still near the bottom of the learning curve, but we're taking our cue from the experiences of our colleagues around the world – producing videos, compiling mailing lists, following journalists, and creating partnerships in the media, learning how to mount proper media campaigns. As reported in the last *Una Voce*, Randy Whatley of Cypress Media was a guest at our last conference and he is invited to our next one (he has assisted a large number of U.S. orchestras in public relations).

I would encourage those of you who do not have a musician-run initiative of some sort to start one, or find some way to “tell your story.”

Too Hazy to Predict: TBSO 2015–16

by Merrie Klazek

Thunder Bay Symphony Orchestra



Many of you may be aware, through word of mouth or social media, of the financial issues facing the TBSO right now. Some use the word “crisis,” some use “struggle,” others see this as nothing out of the norm. Since information seems limited, it is very difficult to say, and therefore to write, anything definitive. It does however seem that things are currently more dire than in recent history, so I, with significant input from our Players Committee chair Michelle Zapf-Belanger, will try and shed some light on how we got here. The orchestral community has a strong sense of solidarity among musicians, and I believe this support and friendship is one of the sustaining factors in our profession, which juxtaposes high levels of artistry and qualifications against being underpaid, underappreciated, and overworked. So allow me to start by saying thank you to all who are taking an interest in the current situation in Thunder Bay.

In September 2014, a deficit was projected for the 2014–15 season, resulting in a \$90K reduction of the operating budget. Very few of those expenses were artistic. The cut included a seven per cent cut to office pay cheques, as well as leaving open indefinitely some vacant positions (most notably Finance Manager).

At the end of last season, we were projecting a very small deficit and all seemed well. At the September 2015 finance meeting things continued to seem on track. Sometime in early October, however, it was revealed that the budget was almost \$100K off from what was expected. Almost none of the cuts that had been planned in September 2014 actually transpired, except for the office salary cut. The plan to reduce spending had not been implemented as predicted, and last year’s budget suddenly had a surprise gaping hole. Enter “crisis” mode.

Management came to us in late October to explain that this season would need to see \$225K in donations, and that payroll could only be met until Christmas. The dominant explanation for this situation pointed to cuts in government funding, and as a group we haven’t heard anything since.

Management has made it known to the Players’ Committee that they are expecting to cut \$50K directly from the musicians’ paycheques this year to help manage

the deficit. The Board of Directors passed a new budget agreeing to this cut to our negotiated rate, but they have yet to negotiate anything. Our local maintains that such a cut will not be feasible and that a negotiation would be lengthy and would require concessions from both sides.

Ticket sales and corporate donations are not doing particularly well, although personal donations have been on track and the aggressive fundraising campaigns are showing some results. The bigger questions still loom: Does the organization operate sustainably? How did this happen? Are government cuts really the main problem? Was the announcement to the musicians a tactic? Was it sensationalist talk? There are so many factors that contribute to financial crumbling. Sometimes it points to a breakdown in smooth functioning between various parts of the organization – management, board, musicians, artistic team. This kind of functioning has always been a strong point of the TBSO; there has always been a sense of teamwork among the aforementioned groups. Is that changing? Is the glue coming undone? I sincerely hope not, but when we feel so hazy on what is actually happening, our sense of security shifts. We all know stories of managements shutting down communication when a larger more sinister plan is afoot. That kind of drama is so far from the TBSO that I know, that I really doubt it is a concern. But where is the line between giving the benefit of the doubt and being naïve?

The musicians embarked on a fall fundraising campaign to show our genuine interest in helping get through these uncertain times. The project was a “service auction,” in which patrons could bid on services such as chamber music concerts for the home, lessons, and many non-musical offerings including basket weaving, hiking, or skiing companionship, scotch or wine tasting, gourmet dinners, and much more. This auction, which closed in mid-December, raised over \$11K. This is an example of the teamwork we see here. The Players’ Committee also prepared and presented a variety of non-wage-attacking ways to cut costs, including reducing rehearsal time in the main concert hall, scheduling changes, and various other ideas. Our current contract, which includes small increases each season, goes until August 2017.

Some of the communication deficiencies we are experiencing can be attributed to an understaffed office. There was a fair bit of shifting this fall, in part due to a restructuring of positions. Production manager, education officer, and operations duties have been rolled into one position called Operations Manager. We are fortunate that Simon Ouellette has come to fill this position. He seems to be an excellent fit and is intuiting many aspects of the job.

The climate and morale of the TBSO fluctuates. Musicians, board, and office staff alike are feeling concerned,

and although we hope for financial recovery, there is also a lot of stress and uncertainty. I believe that we are valued here by the community at large and by management and the board. It is difficult to say, however, what concessions may be asked of us in the coming months. Although the TBSO has always found a way to pull through tough times, these tough times seem a bit too hazy to predict.

OCSM Streaming Guidelines and the Shifting Media Landscape

by Matthew Heller
1st Vice President

In the current state of recording, writing media language can feel like building on shifting sand: change is the only constant. Streaming, which few had heard of ten years ago, has quickly become the most popular form of content distribution, with resulting challenges to controlling for quality and copyright.

The history of the OCSM media guidelines reflects those changes, even in their titles:

- The *OCSM Internet Guidelines*, adopted in 2009, addressed audio streaming, downloads, and rebroadcast of certain archival materials.
- The *OCSM Live Streaming Guidelines*, adopted in 2014, addressed audio and audiovisual streaming, with rates based on CBC recording rates. Streaming of archival materials was still offered, but downloads were no longer included.
- The *OCSM Streaming Guidelines*, adopted in 2015, defines streaming to cover both live and on demand broadcasts. Features added language on notice and approval, patch sessions, and use of promotional clips; archival material is no longer included.

The term “guidelines,” which has survived all these shifts, deserves a bit of explanation. All these documents were intended to provide a framework for media projects, including minimum rates and conditions, but were still subject to negotiation and approval by individual orchestras. They have been used and modified for various projects, both by OCSM and non-OCSM orchestras.

This latest set of streaming guidelines is now available for use. To obtain a copy please contact Bernard Leblanc (bleblanc@afm.org) or me, Matthew Heller (vp@ocsm-omosc.org) or go to: (<https://goo.gl/jzY0wl>).

Many orchestras are looking to add streaming footage to their websites, or to develop specific projects that require streaming. We hope these guidelines will facilitate such projects while maintaining reasonable rates and quality control. Our long-term goal is to build an

agreement that will fully address all areas of media work; if these Guidelines find favour with managements and musicians, they may serve as a foundation in that agreement.

The insights, ideas, and energy of OCSM’s Media Committee (by now a very large group of people) have been vital through each iteration of these Guidelines. My thanks go to all of those who have served on Media Committees past, and especially to those who served during this latest, busiest conference in Windsor.

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