



UNA VOCE

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From the Editor

I recently blew out forty candles on my birthday cake (good thing I'm a trombonist!). Several of my friends and colleagues have reached similar milestones this year; multiples of ten or twenty-five, and it's got me thinking forward to the day when I will no longer be able to blow out either candles or whole notes.

How do we treat our "more experienced" colleagues? In Western society, especially since the Industrial Revolution, people have been more and more defined by their work, and when you can't work at the same capacity as a younger person, you are unfortunately considered a less-valued member of society. How unfair and unfortunate. We have also, in my opinion, become more and more cynical about any kind of authority, even that which is built on experience.

We in the orchestral profession should be a model for the rest of the working world on how we treat our more senior members. Our profession has changed for the better over the last fifty years, and we owe a lot to those who went before us. I hope this issue of *Una Voce* inspires you to think about some of these issues. In the meantime, have a good summer holiday.

Robert Fraser
Editor, *Una Voce*
OCSM Secretary

OUR NEW WEBSITE ADDRESS :

www.ocsm-omosc.org

News of our President Emeritus

Our President Emeritus, Evelyne Robitaille, has been having some health problems this year. In January she had a heart attack, but following angioplasty she was doing well. Her prognosis is good.

During a routine medical check-up in March, she was found to have an aneurysm requiring immediate surgery. Evelyne came through the surgery well, and is expected to recover. The latest news is that she is doing well.

We wish you a complete and speedy recovery, Evelyne.

Eline Brock Sanheim
1st Vice-President

From the President

The theme of this issue of *Una Voce* is "our venerable orchestras" and, by extension, our venerable musicians. We have mentioned at a number of OCSM conferences the importance of each orchestra's having its own written history. I wonder how many of us have actually sat down and compiled such a thing. I would urge each orchestra to select someone (or a committee of willing people) to interview colleagues who have been in the orchestra a long time, especially those who have been orchestra activists and/or those with long (and hopefully accurate) memories. We need to try to capture those memories while it's still possible. Last summer, ICSOM passed a resolution to preserve its own history. This in turn generated a suggestion that an orchestra could record interviews with its activists and use that as an orientation tool for new orchestra members.

We are fortunate in having such a tool already – not specific to a given orchestra, but a valuable resource for all of us. How many of us had the pleasure of working with Lew Waldeck? Lew was the first director of the Symphonic Services division of the AFM. He passed away on January 26, 2004, but his place as a labour leader within our industry has been marked with a plaque at the Michigan Labor Legacy Monument in downtown Detroit (and, yes, I meant to use the American spelling for that "labor" because of where the monument is

located). Most of us in Canada who knew Lew met him because of the “Dog and Pony Show” that he presented to countless orchestras in North America – a course in how to be a good union orchestral musician.

There is a fund in Lew’s memory, described by Nathan Kahn in the June 2005 issue of the *International Musician* (if you don’t still have that issue, you can read it online at afm.org). The first project of the fund is to make Lew’s presentation available to all of us. Fortunately, there is a record of a presentation that he gave in the basement of Local 5 (Detroit) in the late 80’s. The entire session (eight hours) has been captured on 4 DVD’s and five audio CD’s. I purchased a copy for myself for \$30 US, and I consider it a bargain. I think that each of our orchestras AND our Locals should have copies. I hope to show at least part of the presentation at this summer’s OCSM conference and will have information available to your OCSM delegates about how to order copies for their orchestras. Tools like this will help us attain “Powah!” – Lew’s favourite word.

And since we’re on the subject of the conference, please let your OCSM delegates know what topics you would like discussed this summer. The conference belongs to all of us.

Francine Schutzman,
President, OCSM

Reports from Our Orchestras

Prepared by your OCSM delegates and officers

In the musical *Fiddler on the Roof*, the central character, Tevye, is always quoting “The Good Book” – or attributing quotes to it, anyway. One of my favourites is: “Good news will stay; bad news will refuse to leave.” It seems we always hear about things going wrong in our orchestras, so this year we’re sticking to as much good news as we can realistically report and still consider it balanced journalism!

The news looks good for **Symphony Nova Scotia**. Scarcely one month ago things were looking rather bleak— negotiations were beginning and management was looking at cuts to balance its budget. Hard work by the negotiating team (with the help of Mark Tetreault at SSD) succeeded in changing the direction of management, and within 25 days a growth contract was agreed to in principle. Highlights include pay increases (although there is a loss of one week in the contract) for musicians and employer contributions for a collective health insurance plan, a benefit which is new for Halifax musicians. The new contract is yet to be ratified at the time of writing.

Things are going quite well at the **Orchestre Symphonique de Québec**. For the most part concerts are selling quite well, and the public continues to be very supportive of the orchestra. The orchestra just completed recording a Debussy CD, and did

a tribute to “James Bond” multi-media show in February. Dame Shirley Bassey, Nanette Workman, Dawn Tyler Watson, and Steve Barakatt were among the invited performers (Steve Barakatt was also a producer), and Sir Roger Moore and Britt Eckland were among the celebrities in attendance. Everyone was impressed with the quality of the orchestra. The orchestra and musicians are currently in negotiations; changes in management and on the Board are coming soon. It’s not certain how these changes will impact the ongoing negotiations.

Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal is getting back to “normal” following the five-month strike of last year. The musicians are happy to be playing again, although there is still tension with management (to be expected, given the circumstances). Kent Nagano’s visits this year have been well received, both by the musicians and the public. The musicians are looking forward to Nagano’s arrival full-time next season.

Orchestre Metropolitain du Grand Montreal is having a good season. Their Music Director is well-liked by both musicians and public, and this solid relationship is translating into good attendance for most concerts. Financially the orchestra is solid. This is a negotiation year at OMGM, so hopefully the solid finances and good houses will translate into a good settlement.

The **National Arts Centre Orchestra** has been experiencing “interesting times” since Music Director Pinchas Zukerman’s decision right before Christmas to take a sabbatical from the orchestra until June (*N.B. at press time Maestro Zukerman agreed to cut short his time off*). There are some internal tensions which will hopefully be worked out with the aid of facilitators. The orchestra enjoyed a most successful tour to Alberta and Saskatchewan in November and is looking forward to exchanges with the Montreal, Toronto and Quebec symphonies next season. There have been two enormously successful fundraising concerts this season.

The **National Ballet’s** season began with a very successful tour of Western Canada. The new Artistic Director, Karen Kain, taking the company in a different direction as it moves into the new opera house, The Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts. Conductor Ormsby Wilkins is leaving for American Ballet Theater in New York and the new conductor is David Briskin.

Canadian Opera Company – The big news is the new opera house. It’s on schedule with regards to its completion and cost. There are commissioning concerts in April (mainly for adjustments to the acoustics) and Gala concerts in June. We will miss representation from COC during the OCSM conference this summer, but wish them a successful first-ever Ring cycle.

The **Toronto Symphony** is in a period of major change, and is beginning to negotiate a new contract. The mandatory retirement clause is being used for one last time just as the law

is changing to ban this practice. Financial stability has improved and is continuing to do so. Judith "Billie" R. Wilder, a long-time symphony subscriber recently gave the orchestra a \$5 million gift - the largest single donation in the orchestra's 85-year history.

The **Hamilton Philharmonic** has just completed negotiations for a collective agreement; at this writing, ratification has not yet taken place. There were no major issues -- unless you count the orchestra's perennial financial struggles. A fund-raising concert is in the initial planning stages. This is Music Director Michael Reason's last season; a conductor search is currently underway.

Kitchener-Waterloo – A new artistic vision created by the board in collaboration with the musicians shows exciting prospects for the KWS in both size and innovation. Negotiations are commencing this month, and musicians are encouraged by the board's public promises to improve compensation. In the search for a conductor, the players are seeing many new faces on the podium, with varying responses from the orchestra.

Orchestra London Canada is currently in the last year of its contract and is currently negotiating. The orchestra seems to be on a stable financial footing and the administration proposed last year to add positions to the core. While the players support this idea they are also concerned that there hasn't been a significant raise in years.

Windsor – Houses are full and finances are showing a surplus for the WSO. After a defeated ratification vote in December, negotiations were expected to be finished at the end of March. Some concerns for the WSO are how the relationship with the new owner of their hall will work, and how the new Ontario smoking laws will affect the ability to raise funds in bingo halls.

The **Thunder Bay Symphony Orchestra** is currently negotiating. Morale is high despite high turnover in the orchestra. The orchestra's profile has been raised through appearances on the CBC and through their recordings, one of which was nominated for a Juno award this year (**Jeffrey Ryan's "Pangaea"**). The Canadian Music Centre reports that the Thunder Bay Symphony Orchestra's recording "*Variations on a Memory*" was one of the best selling independent CD's of 2005.

The **Winnipeg Symphony** has extended its collective agreement for another two years but are negotiating wages and weeks. They are enjoying their final year of concerts with well-respected maestro Andrey Boreyko. Their new music director, Alexander Mickelthwate, will join them in the fall.

Regina – Sold-out houses and satisfied audiences are signs of a successful season for the RSO. Mark Tetreault made a visit to help the Players' Committee with organizing and struggles against player apathy. Some musicians are feeling the pinch

when repertoire selection results in loss of services for them. Players are optimistic the next round of bargaining will yield gains in player guarantees and salaries.

Saskatoon – The SSO players are looking forward to finishing more than two years of negotiating in the next two months. A substantial bequest will give the SSO an opportunity to train young musicians in an apprentice program. The Players' Association has been looking after its members with a series of "wellness" seminars. Congratulations on the 75th anniversary of the SSO!

The **Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra** introduced their new Music Director, Roberto Minczuk, to the public in February with a very successful inaugural concert. The orchestra was also the recipient of two very generous gifts at the beginning of the season, a donation of \$6.3 million to the CPO Foundation by supporter Dick Matthews, and \$1 million to the operating fund from Jackie Flanagan. The CPO Foundation gift was recently matched by a \$1.5 million grant from the Canadian Arts and Heritage Sustainability Program. This brings the CPO Foundation to over \$15 million, most of which has been raised in the last four years. The musicians' salaries are still not at pre-2002 shutdown levels, however, and negotiations are currently ongoing.

The **Edmonton Symphony Orchestra** is getting to know its new music-director, Bill Eddins; whose approach to concert presentation is very unique. Reports of the orchestra have been favourable in both local and national press. Ticket sales are way over budget for this season and their deficit should be retired by the financial year-end this June. A successful fund-raising concert with Michael W. Smith before Christmas netted a profit of \$130,000. Despite the success of both major Alberta orchestras, the Alberta Foundation for the Arts has yet to come forward with new funding in what is arguably Canada's richest province.

The **Vancouver Symphony** is reporting increased attendance this year; 12% overall, with a 5% increase in subscriptions. An endowment campaign stands at \$6 million of an \$8 million goal, and once again the "Lovers Ball" was a successful fundraiser, this year netting \$400,000. The orchestra is enjoying positive press coverage in the community. There is talk of plans to increase the backstage facilities in the Orpheum Theatre by taking over part of the Capitol 6 cinema next door. Negotiations for a new collective agreement began in April.

The **Victoria Symphony** presented an innovation in composers' concerts: **Reel Music** saw different composers score two pieces of silent film. The compositions were then performed live by the orchestra while the film was projected – the results were then judged by a panel (taking into account the audience reaction). Other highlights include an up-Island tour and the Mozart Festival in May. The orchestra enjoys a good relationship with its conducting staff, especially

principal guest conductor Yannick Nezet-Seguin, and resident conductor Giuseppe (Joey) Pietraroia.

Challenges ahead

Funding – We have known for a long time that the single most crucial need for our organizations is stable funding. It was heartening to hear stories of generous gifts and successful endowment campaigns, but in the meantime, we are still waiting patiently on our new Federal Government. We also hear many of our orchestras tell us their provincial arts councils have not increased funding in many years (in one case, eighteen years with no increase). Although we've had some successes at the bargaining table this year, other managements are still trying to budget on the backs of the musicians. And still, no Canadian orchestra has a fifty-two week season...

Communication among the various parties: boards, orchestra committees, musicians, etc. is always a going concern. Sometimes it's not the message that causes the damaged relationship, it's the way the message was transmitted that causes the most grief. It was also encouraging to see some of our orchestras work hard to improve lines of communication. It is hoped that the "Flying Squads" promised in the *Soundings* report will bring new tools in this area.

Leadership, both artistic and operational, is always on musicians' minds. At OCSM conferences and in delegate reports, we still hear far too many stories about how musicians save the day, either on stage or behind the scenes. While we recognize the value of some musician involvement in all facets of our organizations, we still work best when we have strong leaders on both the podium and in the office. Hopefully as we build on our successes, we will see more and better people attracted to these positions in our orchestras.

is an absolute must-read for every working orchestral musician. In 280 pages she documents the labor history of U.S. orchestras, from the mid-nineteenth century to the end of the twentieth. There is particular emphasis on the founding of ICSOM (the International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians). Ayer also covers the history of segregation in the AFM, women's issues, the battle between the AFM and the recording industry during the Petrillo years, medical issues, and a complete negotiation history of her own orchestra from 1960 to the present. One would think that the negotiation history of someone else's orchestra is not very interesting (most of us have very little interest in our own orchestra's negotiation history) but Ayer really brings to light how the things we take for granted nowadays came about – through years of hard work.

There are many wonderful anecdotes (some uproariously funny) about orchestral life, interesting charts and figures (including the first handwritten attempt at an ICSOM wage chart and the first conductor evaluation form), profiles and photos of major figures in the history of U.S. orchestras, an excellent bibliography, and a complete index.

Ayer briefly touches on orchestral life outside of the U.S. (she herself exchanged jobs with an Australian violinist for a time), but her main focus is on the scene in her own country. She gets the acronym for OCSM wrong in her book (something I hope will be corrected in future printings!) but that does not diminish her accomplishment. Rather, it challenges us in Canada to document our own history with the same level of care that Ayer has taken for her American colleagues. Any takers?

In short: buy this book, read it, and share it with your colleagues.

Book Review

More Than Meets The Ear: How Symphony Musicians Made Labor History, by Julie Ayer. Minneapolis, Syren Book Company, 2005. Available from www.itascabooks.com.

Reviewed by Robert Fraser

Can you imagine waiting in line for your pay, having to tip a manager to get to the front of the line, and having your cheque dropped at your feet? Can you imagine being charged by your union local for organizing an orchestra committee? Can you imagine not being allowed to vote on the ratification of your own orchestra's collective bargaining agreement?

All of these scenarios were reality at one time in the history of U.S. orchestras, and all are described in *More Than Meets The Ear*, by Minnesota Orchestra violinist Julie Ayer. This book

<p>2006 OCSM/OMOSC Annual Conference Aug. 2-6 Fort Garry Hotel, Winnipeg, MB</p>
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