



UNA VOCE

June 2008 Vol. 15 No. 2

From the Editor

Paper or Paperless? The endless debate continues...

Since taking over the job of Una Voce Editor and Secretary of OCSM in 2003, the subject of paperless communication has come up at Executive meetings and at each annual OCSM conference. This subject has also been debated on orchestral, the e-mail list run by ICSOM, our sister conference in the USA. In spite of the fact that the subject was debated on an e-mail list, many spoke in favour of having printed communications. Most people like the idea of having a hard copy; it gives them tangible evidence of the work of OCSM. However, it is becoming apparent that the days of producing four hard-copy newsletters per year are coming to a close. Now that we communicate regularly with both the delegates and the general membership through e-mail, it seems that by the time we get Una Voce to you in hard-copy format, it's what they call "yesterday's news."

At one of our recent Executive conference calls (which, by the way, are costing us nothing since we started using the voice-over-Internet program Skype) we decided that in the future we would continue to print a September issue of Una Voce, which contains a report from the summer conference, and that the rest of the issues would be electronic bulletins. We feel that this is a good compromise; it gives you an important record of our annual general meeting in a hard-copy format, and news throughout the season can reach you with more immediacy. We are, of course, still committed to offering our communication in both official languages.

As always, I appeal to you for your feedback. I have received some positive feedback on the content of Una Voce over the years (thank you), but nobody has voiced strong opinions one way or the other on whether we should continue using paper. My e-mail box is always open ocsmsec@telus.net.

President's Report

We are sending this issue of Una Voce electronically only, since a number of our orchestras have finished their regular seasons. We figure that the best way to reach everyone is to have the OCSM delegate send out the newsletter to everyone on each orchestra's distribution list. If you think that the OCSM newsletter should be sent only electronically, please let your delegate know. I'm sure that this will once again be a topic at this summer's conference.

Speaking of the conference, we will be meeting in Victoria for four days at the beginning of August. The conference is a bit shorter than usual in order to make travel plans easier for those participants who are coming from the east. We will have the privilege this year of hearing the Victoria Symphony's major summer concert, called the Symphony Splash.

I was lucky enough to represent Canada, along with AFM VP from Canada Bill Skolnik, at the first international conference on symphonic union matters at the beginning of April in Berlin. This was put on by the Federation International des Musiciens (FIM), of which the AFM is a member. The meetings were beautifully organized by the Secretary of the German Orchestra Union (yes, they have a separate one), and the presentations were quite interesting, covering a variety of topics from orchestra committees to auditions to contract negotiations. Because of recent events at the CBC, one of my main interests at the conference was to see how many countries have at least one radio

orchestra. As far as I could tell, Canada and the US were the only two countries represented at the conference without at least one radio orchestra. You can read about the conference in the May issue of the International Musician and at polyphonic.org.

As I write this, I am getting ready to depart for Toronto, where I will be taking part in what promises to be a massive rally to save the CBC Orchestra in Vancouver and to protest recent and planned changes at the CBC. I will be giving a short speech (see text below). Please, if you haven't done so already, visit standonguardforcbc.ca and sign the petition.

I represent the Organization of Canadian Symphony Musicians, which is composed of twenty professional orchestras across Canada, including some 1100 musicians. All 1100 of us have been connected to the CBC in one way or another. Those are our orchestras that you hear – or used to hear – on the programs Symphony Hall, Two New Hours, Disc Drive, In Performance, to name but a few. We were the orchestras accompanying the many wonderful artists who appeared in the CBC Young Performers' Competition. Those broadcasts carried our work and our art to listeners from Victoria to St. John's.

We are told that there will still be classical music from 10 AM to 3 PM. Most of us are working then. Our children are in school. They will have virtually no exposure to classical music. With all the cuts in public-school music education in the past several decades, we have little hope that the schools will replace what the CBC is planning to take away. There is a wealth of documentation about the sevenfold return that an investment in the arts brings to a community. Who will be there in the future to make those investments if our children haven't had the daily exposure to classical music that radio can bring? And there are the older listeners who have counted on the CBC their entire lives to act as a unifying voice for the country. One of our OCSM delegates once said that Canada IS the CBC. It's hard to imagine many of those loyal listeners sitting down in front of a computer to try to find a program with the kind of music that is familiar to them.

We are told that the CBC wants to carry out its mandate to represent the music of all Canadians. If there is other music to hear, why not put that on a new channel, or on the Internet? Why destroy decades of tradition, losing all your listeners in the process?

As for the CBC Orchestra, here are some statistics: Norway, with a population of 4.6 million people, has a radio orchestra. Finland also has one, and they have only 5.2 million people. Spain, with a population of 40.4 million, has a radio/TV orchestra and a choir. Great Britain, with a population that is not even twice that of Canada, has five radio orchestras, employing some 400 musicians. The Glasgow BBC Orchestra, for instance, has just moved to a new hall with fixed digital TV cameras. They can broadcast directly to any school in the country. They do videoconferencing. They do educational projects both locally and nationally, and they tour internationally. Germany, with 82.4 million inhabitants, has no fewer than twelve radio orchestras, four big bands and seven radio choruses. And then there's Canada, with 33.3 million people – and no radio orchestra as of this fall. Who will serve as the champion for new Canadian classical music on the airwaves?

All 1100 OCSM members, along with hundreds of thousands of listeners across Canada, want a return to the good old days, to the CBC we knew and loved. For us, it wasn't "broke." Please, CBC, don't fix it.

Mid-Season Reports

The **Victoria Symphony** musicians are presenting 99 performances of 47 unique programmes in 34 working weeks this season, for a total of 250 services. This includes our work for Pacific Opera, plus regular run-outs to Duncan, Nanaimo, Qualicum Beach and Sidney; and although it may not be our record, it is close to the highest number of services ever worked in a single season. Our Board and Management team work just as hard behind the scenes; we ended the 2006-07 season with a modest surplus of \$16,000 and hope to eliminate a small accumulated debt very soon. Tania Miller is

in her fifth season as Music Director, and she continues to bring interesting ideas to the stage, such as our recent collaboration with actor Christopher Gaze and Ibsen scholar Errol Durbach for a performance of Grieg's incidental music to "Peer Gynt." We were also delighted by the positive audience reaction in November to the world premiere of Tobin Stokes' piano concerto, written especially for Stewart Goodyear. Tobin Stokes, along with Anna Höstman, form our composer-in-residence team in their final season with us, and we are currently in a search for their replacements. The orchestra has also responded positively to guest-conducting engagements with Simon Streatfeild and Alain Trudel (who made his third appearance with us in October). We also welcomed our new concertmaster in January, Terence Tam.

Although, like every orchestra, we would like to see fuller houses for our main series concerts and some of our new innovations, attendance seems to be stable and we are told by management that renewals for the 2008-09 season are off to a positive start (the new season was just launched at the beginning of March). We are still working with a core of 34 full-time musicians plus 15-20 almost full-time extras; and we are currently in negotiations for a new collective agreement.

The **Vancouver Symphony Orchestra** is currently enjoying a period of positive growth and success. The orchestra is awaiting the final details of funding for a proposed tour to Korea, Macau, and China in October 2008. This two-week tour will cost approx. \$1.5 million and was initiated by an invitation to appear at the Beijing Festival. The tour has grown to include approximately nine concerts.

Later in the 2008/09 season the VSO will also be touring Ontario and Quebec as the result of an invitation to perform at the National Arts Centre. Concerts will be scheduled in Ottawa, Toronto, Montreal and Quebec City. The VSO musicians are looking forward to the opportunity to reconnect with friends and colleagues in these orchestras. We haven't toured anywhere, including our own province, in a very long time and it is a little surprising to be suddenly slated for two substantial tours in the same season.

The VSO was very fortunate to have won both a Grammy and a Juno award for its most recent recording with violin soloist James Ehnes on CBC records. It's particularly ironic that CBC is dissolving its recording division right on the heels of receiving one of its greatest acknowledgements to date.

The board and management of the VSO are planning to enter the second phase of their ongoing Endowment Fund drive in the near future with the goal of doubling the existing endowment from \$10 million to \$20 million. The VSO has adopted and implemented the 'Tessitura' software program for ticket sales and fundraising applications. In tandem with an increasingly more elaborate website, the VSO will soon be able to manage the majority of its ticket sales in house. Although this software is expensive, our management has high hopes that it will enable them to identify, track and improve customer service as well as vastly improve our database management.

The Beethoven Festival is probably the highlight of our 2007/08 season and it is proving to be a big success with our audiences. All six concerts are scheduled within a nine day period and they are all being broadcast by the CBC. Eric Friesen, host of 'Studio Sparks,' has been with us throughout this festival introducing each programme from the stage. It is bittersweet to realize that these are the last live concerts Eric will be hosting with us before he retires from his long, dignified career in radio. Bramwell Tovey dedicated our Monday night concert performance of the Fifth symphony to Eric. He will be missed!

Vancouver has recently been designated the most expensive city in Canada in which to do business. This presents a challenge for the Vancouver Symphony Society, as the salaries of the musicians and staff are far from what they should be. The size of the orchestra has atrophied and is currently being supplemented with extra musicians. Although increasing the pay of the musicians and the size of the orchestra is clearly acknowledged as a priority in the organization's most recent strategic plan, it will require more fundraising to achieve.

The **Edmonton Symphony** is currently working towards filling five vacancies created by two musicians taking a year's leave of absence and three others who are retiring. A very demanding month of seasonal concerts (17 performances in 22 days) has generated substantial revenue of over \$700,000 in ticket sales at the expense of increased physical toll upon the musicians. The ESO has a small core; hence there is no sharing of concerts or duties. There is concern for what appears to be declining audiences for the more serious concerts. Newer initiatives such as Sunday matinees and mid-week performances have not resulted in higher paid attendance as was hoped. In spite of this, the orchestra is in fair shape financially and expects to break even at the end of the season without having any accumulated deficit. The musicians are disappointed with the reduced amount of CBC remotes and that the CBC seems only interested in popular music. The CBC recently picked up a concert that featured a composition by local composer, Al Gilliland. His jazzy piano concerto was commissioned by the CBC for Music Director Bill Eddins and was well-received. Annemarie Petrov is the newly appointed Managing Director of the ESO and has been working as interim MD since last September.

There's both good news and bad news for the **Calgary Philharmonic**. On the positive side is the recent announcement from the Premier of a 30% funding increase (\$12 million) to the Alberta Foundation for the Arts. The Friends of the CPO have reached their initial target of \$25 million for the endowment, and the administration continues to balance the budget with a healthy surplus in the bank. On the negative side is the persistence of a revolving-door administration. Audience sizes are still a cause for concern, especially for those concerts of a more serious nature, while Alberta's hot economy continues to remind us all that our income does not go as far as it used to. It was announced that Music Director Roberto Minczuk has been offered a contract extension, and resident conductor Pierre Simard will be returning next season. Of particular note, the musicians enjoyed a Very Merry Christmas this year as one of the long standing supporters of the CPO donated funds directly to the musicians.

It has been a difficult year for the **Saskatoon Symphony Orchestra**, as the orchestra is dealing with the repercussions of a lawsuit launched by Music Director Douglas Sanford against the Saskatoon AFM Local, several musicians, and a member of the Saskatchewan Arts Board. To add to this, principal cellist Linda Bardutz was wrongfully dismissed mid-season. She was able to get reinstated to her position, but the effects of her dismissal are still being felt. The SSO OCSM delegate recently informed us that a new Board of Directors for the SSO has been elected, and the musicians are optimistic that things will take a turn for the better as a result. A donation of \$200,000 from Art Postle, outgoing Chairman of the Board, and \$106,000 raised by the Symphony Volunteer's Music and Book Sale will hopefully result in a surplus at the end of this fiscal year. The musicians of the Saskatoon Symphony would like to thank the members of OCSM for all their support throughout this trying year.

The **Regina Symphony** is currently in negotiations, a year before their centennial season (the orchestra has been performing continuously since 1908). Houses have been good; generally in the 80-90% range, with Pops concerts doing extraordinarily well. The orchestra is doing well financially. Artistically, like most of our orchestras, they are occasionally performing large repertoire with too small forces, creating the inevitable stresses (especially on string players). Otherwise, musician-orchestra relationships are running smoothly.

The **Winnipeg Symphony** musicians are currently in negotiation. While sales and attendance have improved significantly this season, we continue to face the complexities of the marketplace. Throughout, the musicians have continued to demonstrate flexibility, pragmatism and a remarkable understanding of the external pressures on the organization. Our successful 'Bach to Schools' program has gained momentum since its inception three years ago and we are beginning to see results of this initiative with the growing number of younger people attending concerts. The orchestra has recently completed its 17th New Music Festival.

In the **Thunder Bay Symphony Orchestra**, the addition of our new Concertmaster, Thomas Cosbey, has led to some fabulous concerts and exciting music making. Ticket Sales are up this season, so far.

Our Board has hired a consultant to write a Strategic Plan for the organization. Musicians, audience and board members were all invited to contribute.

The City of Thunder Bay has made a commitment, in spirit, to supporting the TBSO. This is a major step forward for our organization and may help solve problems associated with the relationship to our hall. We are still waiting to hear exact details.

The organization has pursued a couple of new ventures that were led by our Resident Conductor Jason Caslor. We performed as an orchestra in a Live Cooking Show. The event was a grand success but the ticket sales were not as hoped.

We collaborated with Blues Singer, Rita Chiarelli, to perform a live concert and record a CD. The entire venture was musically very rewarding and the concert was nearly sold out.

Mr. Caslor has also designed an education initiative for Grade Three Classrooms to perform with the Symphony Orchestra in a mass choir. The response has been overwhelming and our student involvement has tripled since last year.

We have tried to start a series on Sunday afternoons, but attendance has been very poor. Although we had a surplus last year, it is currently looking like we will have a small deficit this season. Our current operating deficit is quite substantial. Our sponsorship dollars are down this season. Our major fundraiser, the Annual Fruit and Cheese Sale, is well under way and numbers are looking good.

We have begun a new Music Director Search. The players are a little apprehensive about the search process but excited at the prospect of change.

The **Windsor Symphony** has recently hired a new Executive Director. Jeth Mill was hired just before Christmas and it is too early to tell what impact he will have on the organization. Progress is being made towards the redevelopment of a former federal armouries building into a new concert hall in the downtown. At this point \$85,000 of \$100,000 required for a conversion feasibility study has been raised and it is expected that the City Council will make up the difference. Windsor had one rather ugly non-musical dismissal which went as far as an arbitrator being appointed by the Ontario Labour Board. However, it was settled without arbitration and the individual in question has been reinstated. The WSO has also recently been nominated for a Juno Award for last year's recording of Peter and the Wolf narrated by Colm Feore.

Orchestra London is reporting some successes. New office staff have been welcomed, and there have been well-received education programmes this season. OLC continues to bring in opera productions from Pacific Opera Victoria; this year was Madama Butterfly. So far this has been a fruitful collaboration. Ever-decreasing audiences for Masterworks, however, have led to another change in venue, away from a church outside of London and back to Centennial Hall, with a reduction from two performances to one, and back to the weekend again. A move which will, by the way, further increase the ratio of Jeans n' Classics to Masterworks significantly. Orchestra/conductor/management relations remain cordial and co-operative.

This season the **Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony Orchestra** welcomed violinists Allene Chomyn and Lana Berube, horn player Alana Roney and bassist Ian Whitman.

There are many other new faces around the KWS: September marked the inaugural concert of Music Director Edwin Outwater, and the new General Manager Genevieve Twomey began in January 2008. Many other staff vacancies have also been recently filled.

Unfortunately, the concert hall seat vacancies have not been so readily filled, and ticket sales have been substantially below expectations. In addition, corporate donor giving is also well below targets, and a substantial deficit is forecasted. The problems have been blamed on a reduced marketing team and inexperienced fundraising team. We're hopeful that

the new GM and staff additions will turn the ship around.

It appears that the musicians are a bit more hard-nosed about protecting the contract and our working conditions. Management came to us with four requests to accept conditions outside of our contract; the musicians turned down three of them. The Players' Committee is working hard to address some issues that have been bugging people for a long time: poor lighting, no access to our lockers when there's a show on stage, adequate rehearsals when we're creating a new theatrical kind of show, timely information when we're playing in the community, and accurate booking memos.

Musician involvement with committees (both symphony society and players' association) has been excellent – there are 19 musicians in the orchestra serving in 26 positions. The new GM has requested to meet monthly with the Players' Committee - so we're optimistic that at least our concerns will be heard, even if things don't change as quickly as we'd like.

The **Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra** has filled four positions through auditions this fall: principal second violin, section second violin, and two section viola positions. We are in the middle of negotiations and hope to be done soon. Our first season with Jamie Somerville as Music Director has been going well and the musicians seem to be happy. Our season launch for the 2008-09 was on March 31; they announces a new series and a "new music" festival...so this all seems to be quite positive.

The **Toronto Symphony Orchestra** is enjoying a good year – the sixth since our reformation in 2001. The financials have been excellent: at the AGM in November, it was announced that we finished the 2006-2007 season with a \$500,000 surplus, which went to reduce the deficit. This was the second year of surpluses in a row, bringing the accumulated deficit down to \$8.94 million. An even more positive financial aspect is the reduction in bank indebtedness by over \$1 million to \$2.2 million at June 30, 2007.

The audience numbers have been great, with many sold-out concerts. Management/staff/musician relationships are at an all time high and everyone is working together productively. Negotiations have begun and the process looks to be fairly straightforward with no major difficulties yet. The exciting new 2008-2009 season was launched on February 7, along with the announcement of the extension of Maestro Oundjian's contract for another four years, through 2012.

This season has been mostly an artistic success, with the welcome addition of some fine new players. The *tsoundcheck* program, for 15-29-year-olds, continues to grow. There are now some 28,000 members. Still to come: a two-week New Creation Festival featuring the compositions of Messiaen in April; and a celebratory concert in June honouring concertmaster Jacques Israelievitch, who has decided to move on after 20 successful years with the TSO.

The professional development department is working very hard towards our future. To that end, the TSO has received private funds of \$8,000,000 in the last eight months to December 31, 2007. These funds have been used to increase our budget, reduce the deficit, and build the endowment fund to 23.7 million as of March 31, 2008. The Symphony is alive and well in Toronto.

The **National Ballet of Canada** season started with our biennial Western tour. It went smoothly, except for the unfortunate early bar closings in Vancouver. This year, Air Canada decided that the cellos were too much of a liability and, contrary to their policy, they would not sell seats for the instruments. Their reasoning may have a historical basis arising from one leg of the previous tour when the airline didn't have the proper cargo nets to secure the instruments to the seats. On that occasion our stage manager, Ernie Abugov, to his credit threatened to pull the whole company off the plane unless the airline allowed the cellos on, which they did. So this year the cellos went on the truck which caused some minor problems for players who had gigs booked close to the tour dates.

Back in the Opera House, with one year under our belts, there are still bugs being worked out. The November season, which included West Side Story, the Ballet, featured some of our dancers singing solos on stage, as well as the corps du

ballet stepping up to sing the choruses. It was a huge success. On one night the pit lights started blinking and then went out for most of the Dance Hall – Mambo number. Thanks to Brian Barlow's rock steady drumming and a quick thinking brass player who turned on the service lights at the back of the pit we made it through to the end. The crew blamed it on the house lighting system which they claimed they had never used before. They promised to go back to the NBOC lighting board that they had successfully used until then. Unfortunately, there was a re-run experience in December during the Nutcracker when the lower strings and brass lights all went out. A few shows later it happened again – the whole violin section blacked out. The crew suggested that it was a musician stepping on the extension cord or unplugging it. This is a bone of contention between the musicians and the crew. Other issues are sagging music stands that don't get fixed or replaced for long periods and a serious shortage of sound baffles to protect players' hearing. The baffles are allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. The crew has warned us not to move or touch any equipment, (stands, chairs, baffles.)

On December 22, we simulcast our Nutcracker matinee in hi-definition to 75 Cineplex and independent theatres across the country. Over 10,000 people attended and Cineplex is hoping to expand the number of ballets they present for next year. The Ballet took a huge loss on the production but hopes to economize on scale in future. While I think it's great to be able to present ourselves to so many, and I like the money, I hope this doesn't replace touring.

Judith Yan, our assistant conductor, has been conducting some shows in almost every programme and will be directing some chamber music concerts in March. They will take place in the Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre. This is a free concert venue in the Four Seasons Centre. Management has embraced this as a way to fulfill our Toronto service guarantee which will not be met this year through main stage ballet performances. The concerts have been very well attended so far, and it sure is nice to get out of the pit and play for a real audience.

Since November we have had larger string sections with extras augmenting the violins, violas and cellos. What a difference half a dozen strings make! Ray Tizzard has taken leave as second trumpet and is currently assistant personnel manager, learning the ropes from Jean Verch. He's doing a great job so far. We are about to enter into negotiations with management as our agreement expires this summer.

The **Canadian Opera Company** has forged ahead with the season after the sudden death of General Director Richard Bradshaw in August. There was a special memorial concert in November comprised of Richard's favourite operatic selections. This was a free concert for the public and all those involved donated their services.

The present season, the 2008/09 season and most of the 2009/10 season were already in place before Richard's death. Guest conductors are filling in for the operas which would have been conducted by Bradshaw. A search committee has been formed and is actively searching for new artistic leader.

The orchestra is presently in negotiations and hopefully these will be complete by the time you read this.

The **National Arts Centre Orchestra** is enjoying a season of artistic successes but less-than-full houses. Two exceptions to this have been very successful fundraisers – the fall gala for the Educational Trust, featuring Ben Heppner, Erin Wall and Jann Arden, which netted \$765,000; and the recent Black-and-White Gala, which brought in \$415,000 to be shared by the NAC and Opera Lyra Ottawa. The stage was shared by Russell Braun, Michael Schade and Steven Page of The Barenaked Ladies, who acted as MC and who led the group in a rousing rendition of "If I Had a Million Dollars" (a wish shared by all Canadian orchestras...) as an encore.

NACO had been scheduled to go on its first tour of China this past November, but there were some difficulties with the presenters and not enough money was raised for the tour, so it was postponed to 2009 and is still in the works. We were able to fill the tour weeks with our usual collaboration with Opera Lyra. There was an announcement of a feasibility study for a summer venue on the Niagara Peninsula to be shared by NACO and the Toronto Symphony. The land has already been set aside.

There was a bit of a delay getting an orchestra committee assembled this year, but the members are now in place and preparations for contract negotiations have begun. Auditions have been put on hold until an agreement can be reached with the NAC about the best protocol for reviewing candidates. Hopefully, by the time this issue of Una Voce is in your hands, that will have been accomplished and auditions can proceed for the several existing openings.

The 2007-08 season for the **Montreal Symphony Orchestra** has been an eventful one. Maestro Kent Nagano is full of ideas for programming, touring, recording and events, so the orchestra is certainly kept busy. One recording project featured Beethoven's Egmont overture and other bits and pieces from Egmont and Leonore. The MSO had performed the music the previous January and the compilation was dubbed "The General" and featured narration concerning Romeo Dallaire and Rwanda. The resulting disc will probably also contain Beethoven's 5th Symphony.

As for guest conductors, the highlight was probably the MSO's highly successful benefit concert in December, at which Zubin Mehta conducted Tchaikovsky's 6th and Stravinsky's "Le sacre du printemps." Recently, the orchestra played a concert honouring the Montreal Canadiens, which included Ein Heldenleben (the theme was "the Hero") and a piece by François Dompierre written for the occasion. It was a fun sell-out, with visiting old-timer hockey stars like Guy Lafleur making brief stage appearances and the orchestra doing "the wave" on stage.

Upcoming concerts include an appearance at Carnegie Hall on March 8th. In April, the MSO will be touring Japan for two weeks, staying mainly in the Tokyo area with a brief visit to Osaka and three days in Seoul, S. Korea. It is their first international tour since 1999.

This is the orchestra's second season with Maestro Nagano as music director, and things have settled down into a more familiar mode. Houses are full, and Nagano has proven to be good at working with the public and at raising the orchestra's profile both here and abroad. The Players' Committee is enjoying a better rapport with a newly configured management, having regular meetings with them and with Maestro Nagano. The musicians find this encouraging and are looking forward to seeing how the rest of the season unfolds.

At **Orchestre Métropolitain (OM)**, the season is going well artistically and our halls are mostly full; our subscriptions numbers increase year after year. The media have been giving us plenty of attention, because of Yannick Nézet-Séguin, of course, whose career keeps developing in the most spectacular way, but also because of good reviews for our concerts and recordings. Also, we were lucky enough to do two television shows that drew quite a bit of attention, one of them outside, with the very popular Pierre Lapointe, a singer and songwriter. It was a tremendous success and was made into a CD. We are under the impression that many people who hadn't noticed us before are showing up at our concerts. We notice the difference even in certain traditionally difficult boroughs of Montreal where we have been performing for years: audiences are growing after years of low attendance. Of course when a critic goes as far as to say that Yannick's *Pathétique* is even better than Zubin Mehta's, I guess people figure we may be worth a try...

As far as fundraising goes, our board of directors has decided to redefine the DG position, to focus it on fundraising skills. A hiring process is under way. We will miss our actual DG, André Dupras. Our relations with him have always been excellent and he did a great job during his three years with us, particularly in holding things together throughout the crisis period. Thank you André!

Our board president, Michelle Cormier, announced that our deficit has melted from almost a million to a little over \$100,000, so the board, which has been renewed since the crisis we experienced two years ago, seems to be doing a very good job.

Working with Yannick is as wonderful as ever, more so even, and relations among musicians and with the administration are excellent. The only thing that is missing is more work: after an exciting and very busy Fall season, we will begin 2008 without any OM activity for 7 weeks... not good.

For **L'Orchestre Symphonique de Québec**, the season began in an atmosphere of important budget cuts, in reaction to the critical situation engendered by operating and accumulated deficits. Mme Sophie Galaise, General Manager since the spring of 2007, put in action several measures, notably the elimination of two administrative positions, a request made of all soloists and guest conductors to reduce their fees by half, the modification of several programs in an attempt to limit expenses and the cancellation of several concerts, chiefly the *Dynamique Symphonique* series, representing four weeks of work. Some of these services were used for other activities, and two weeks of work were set aside for the summer season. Mme Galaise insisted that she would do everything to make sure that these measures wouldn't touch the salaries of the musicians.

There were several happier events in the Fall, starting with the renewal of the contract of Music Director Yoav Talmi for a period of three years, from 2008 to 2011. The contribution of our concertmaster Darren Lowe was highlighted in a tribute for the 20th anniversary of his commitment to that position. The post of Director of Artistic Administration was filled at the end of 2007 by Jean Letarte.

Musically speaking, the 2007-2008 season has been notable so far for several events, first of all the *Hommage à Bach* series, under the direction of Maestro Talmi, beginning with the Brandenburg Marathon concert. Another memorable concert marked the 150th birthday of Edward Elgar, also under the direction of Maestro Talmi. Our resident assistant conductor Richard Lee is in the third and last year of his contract. We are now holding auditions to fill this position. The OSQ will be recording a CD in March – a program from the *Hommage à Bach* series, under the direction of Yoav Talmi.

Symphony Nova Scotia – Our music director, Bernhard Gueller has five more years on his contract. We now have a Concertmaster, Robert Uchida. Audiences are pretty good, and the orchestra has a good presence in the community. Of note: a rich patron gave \$65,000 for a Brahms festival. We hope she will be encouraged to continue such donations for another “festival” next season. There is a new manager: Erika Beatty. Her title is not General Manager but CEO. I am not sure how this affects her role in the organization. The director of finance and administration and the director of marketing both left on February 1st, so new office personnel are expected. The Board of Directors and management are working to launch a campaign to raise money for our endowment fund.

This is the last season of our collective agreement and negotiations are under way. There was one 10-service week (of kids' concerts, one hour long – a collaboration with the Dalhousie University theatre department) for which the musicians have exchanged a week's holiday at the end of the season. The concert night for our main series was changed from Tuesday to Thursday or Friday. Audiences are being polled for their preference. One advantage to SNS is that we can do more run-outs by repeating these concerts on Fridays, Saturdays or Sundays. (It seems that smaller centres like to present concerts on the weekend.)
