

THE WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA

Report by – Anna Cerneaz --2006 Churchill Fellow

To gain and develop marketing, administration and promotional skills to assist the presentation and awareness of Australian classical music – USA

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Anna Cerneaz, August 2007

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This country cannot afford to be materially rich and spiritually poor. To further the appreciation of culture among all the people, to increase respect for the creative individual, to widen participation by all the processes and fulfilment of art – this is one of the fascinating challenges of these days.

John F. Kennedy. Plaque on the wall of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington, DC

1. Introduction and Acknowledgments

Introduction

The hot topic in many Australian classical music organisations is the concern with developing the audience and the constant concern that the world is changing around us. “Developing” means two things – both increasing the numbers and increasing the understanding and appreciation of the art.

People avoid classical music concerts as they don’t understand it nor realise that it’s fine to experience the music in whatever way they want to. Finding ways to connect people to these concerts, making them feel welcome and somewhat informed is at the heart of building audiences.

The media (including traditional and emerging medias), e-marketing, institutional marketing, building an active audience, creating information pathways and sharing information are all important factors in the small to medium sector to extend the conversations of the creators to the wider community. These tools and skills provide information and appreciation that enables an understanding, helping the process of engaging new audience members and servicing existing audience members to the music.

With the changing world around us and the changing ways people are gathering and digesting their information, classical music organisations can use these new technologies and skills to help connect to new audiences and better involve their existing audiences. A growing set of on-line tools, friendly and personal approaches, plus lively and informed criticism can help understanding of what the music is about and create a buzz about what’s great to go to. In the small sector, taking advantage of immediate relationships and letting others access connections and information works to get people knowing what the music is about, become excited about it and ultimately supportive of it.

American organisations are at the forefront building audiences and generating support for the arts – from small to large arts bodies. The Churchill Fellowship allowed me to continue my investigations by visiting organisations and individuals who have had excellent success in reaching and engaging people to the arts and I am thrilled to have learnt so many practical solutions from them.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust for the valuable experiences I gained from my overseas tour, not only for the financial assistance, but also for the advantages in making contacts that have happened from being a Churchill Fellow.

I would like to acknowledge the large number of inspiring arts professionals with whom I connected with during my overseas visit. Many are mentioned in the main body of the report. Without exception, I was met with an overwhelming generosity to share experiences, ideas and information.

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2. Executive Summary

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Project Objective

To investigate marketing, administration and promotional operations of classical music in the United States in order to assist in the presentation and awareness of Australian classical music. My particular interest is in the small to medium performing arts organisations. My itinerary included San Francisco, Vancouver, Chicago, Washington, DC, Rochester, New York, Boston.

Project Highlights

In Washington, DC, the chance to attend the National Symphony Orchestra tribute concert to Mstislav Rostropovich, who died the day I arrived in the city; most interviews at The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, particularly with Michael Kaiser, President; Ann Stock, Vice President Institutional Affairs; David Kitto, Vice President, Marketing and Sales and the private tour!; and the interview with Neale Perl, President of the Washington Performing Arts Society.

In New York, attending the Metropolitan Opera production of Puccini's *Il Trittico*, conducted by James Levine; and interviews with publicist Rachelle Schlosser and blogger, writer and journalist, Greg Sandow.

In Vancouver, interviews with David Pay, artistic director of Music on Main and Gloria Wong, General Manager of the Vancouver Recital Society; and experiencing the wonderful musical creativity of the city at a number new music performances.

In Chicago, interviews with Brian Dickie and Colleen Flanigan of the Chicago Opera Theatre and a chance to observe the operations of the company and listen to rehearsals; experiencing the vibrant new music scene in performances throughout the city.

Without doubt, the Fellowship allowed me the wonderful opportunity to meet with many experienced and established arts professionals from the United States who are enthusiastically involved in helping spread the importance of classical music in shaping a better society.

Findings

'Audience development' is a term greatly used by performing arts organisations across Australia, particularly with government funding agencies and larger arts institutions. By development we mean two things – building audiences (or increasing box office) and increasing awareness of the artform. But how can small to medium ensembles and organisations with very small infrastructures and resources create communications lines that connect people to their music and ultimately to the artform? How can they get others excited enough to talk about them, to buy a ticket?

Small classical music enterprises cannot afford to learn and implement in-depth strategic marketing and promotional campaigns nor learn about audience development procedures and its challenges, as they are busy co-ordinating every facet of their organisation's operation including, in some cases, writing the music themselves. In these environments, the responsibility to build audiences lies with the artists themselves or one or two people holding the entire infrastructure together. These people need practical solutions that are sustainable and long-lasting.

One of the best form of building audiences and awareness is co-opting. However, personal recommendations are something that cannot be controlled or managed. There are many areas in which small to medium Australian classical music marketers and administrators can learn from their colleagues in the US. These include creating effective information pathways, information sharing pathways, active audience involvement, an openness to more diverse organisational structures, efficient teamwork, effective use of online marketing techniques and a certain positive determination.

Notably, there were things that Australian groups do well that could be considered in America. For example, the sense of community encouraged by organisations such as the Australian Music Centre, Pinchgut Opera and the New Music Network.

3. Programme

San Francisco 4 – 13 April

- Interviewed Marcia Lazer, Director of Marketing, San Francisco Opera; interviewed Associate Marketing Directors, Jennifer Owen and Kara Larson
- Interviewed Bruce Pachtman, Pocket Opera
- Attended San Francisco Symphony, Michael Tilson Thomas conducting Stravinsky & Tchaikovsky
- Attended San Francisco Ballet which included a premiere of *Concordia* by Matthew Hindson

Vancouver 13 – 18 April

- Interviewed Keith Hamel, Director of Professor of Composition and Director of Computer Music at the University of British Columbia
- Interviewed Doug Tuck Director of Marketing at the Vancouver Opera
- Interviewed David Pay, Artistic Director of Music on Main; attended Music on Main's "Cage & Aperghis" in Cellar Jazz Club
- Interviewed Gloria Wong, General Manager of the Vancouver Recital Society
- Attended CBC Radio Orchestra concert at the Chan Centre

Chicago 19-27 April

- Interviews at the Chicago Opera Theatre with Brian Dickie General Manager and Colleen Flanigan, Director of Marketing and Public Relations; observed a rehearsal of Bartok's *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* and Schoenberg's *Erwartung*
- Attended Yo Yo Ma's Silk Road Ensemble at the Chicago Symphony Center, performing works by Yanov-Yanovsky, Osvaldo Golijov
- Attended a concert by CUBE Contemporary Music Ensemble of mainly US/Illinois composers

Washington, DC 27 April – 5 May

- Attended the opera *Otello* by Rossini performed by the Washington Concert Opera conducted by Antony Walker
- Attended National Symphony Orchestra: Composer Portrait: Antonin Dvorák and tribute concert to Mstislav Rostropovich, conducted by Vladimir Ashkenazy
- At The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts interviewed Michael Kaiser, President Kennedy Center; Ann Stock, Vice President Institutional Affairs; Darrell Ayers, Vice President Education; Alicia Adams, Vice President International Programming; Garth Ross, Director Performing Arts for Everyone (PAFE); interviewed David Kitto Vice President, Marketing and Sales; interviewed Ramien Pierre – Manager of KC Institute for Arts Management Administrator, Education Department; Private Tour of Kennedy Center
- Interviewed Jennifer Leed, Community Relations Manager, National Symphony Orchestra
- Interviewed Neale Perl, President of the Washington Performing Arts Society
- Interviewed Ed Zakreski Chief Development Officer, Shakespeare Theatre Company; attended *Titus Andronicus* production; interviewed Barry Colfelt, PR& Marketing Director

Rochester 5 – 10 May

- Attended Pegasus Early Music concert "La Primavera", and interviewed Deborah Fox, lutenist and founder of Pegasus Music
- Interviewed Nan Hildebrandt, Executive Director of the Geva Theatre

New York 10 May to 21 May

- Attended Metropolitan Opera production of Puccini's *Il Trittico*, conducted by James Levine.
- Attended Barge Music concert including new works by New York composer
- Interviewed Rachelle Schlosser of Rachelle Schlosser Public Relations
- Interviewed Greg Sandow, NY blogger, writer and journalist
- Attended the Boston Early Music Festival performance at the Morgan Library and Museum

Boston 21 May – 5 June

- Interviewed Anthony Fogg, Artistic Administrator of the Boston Symphony Orchestra
- Attended new music concerts at Harvard University Music Department, conducted by Elliott Gyger
- Interviewed Jean Moncrieff, Harvard Music Department Concert Coordinator and administrator of the Fromm Foundation
- Interviewed Scott Metcalfe, Director of Blue Heron Renaissance Choir

4. Main Body

San Francisco

San Franciscans are strong supporters of the arts, in its multitudes of disciplines. Like Sydney, San Francisco has a catchment area of around 6 million people with a large arts-engaged gay community. Technologies play an increasingly important role in reaching new audiences and developing existing relationships.

The use of e-marketing plays an important role in the small organisations. Chanticleer is a male vocal ensemble of 12 singers that performs diverse repertoire, reaching audiences worldwide through live concerts, electronic media and education. Based in San Francisco, the group tours across the United States and Europe and performs repertoire from early music to contemporary (including commissions) to gospel, pops and jazz. The company prides itself on excellence, and its marketing strategies include a strong online presence that provides access to a range of people. These include videos, podcasts of interviews and performances, downloadable information such as programs on the website – which all help to enhance the audience experience and engage them sufficiently to purchase a ticket. Chanticleer's many recordings are available for purchase on-line (with suggested CDs for newcomers) and its record deals with Warner Classics ensure distribution to most music shops worldwide. In addition to their extensive Bay Area educational and performance activities, the ensemble conducts master classes, workshops, produces the annual Chanticleer Youth Choral Festivals, the "Singing-in-the-Schools" program and a student composer competition.

Pocket Opera is a small operation (five staff) that presents professional performances of operatic works in intimate, "intelligible"¹ productions at affordable prices. The focus is on "the translations" rather than the music, with the founder, Donald Pippin, having translated over 80 mainstream operas into English, building a library for other organisations to use. With very few resources, the one-person marketing/PR organisation has focused energies into their online presence and a simple brochure campaign.

The San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, an ensemble of highly skilled musicians, focuses on music written in the last ten years, with a special emphasis on Californian composers. It has a strong following with average attendances of more than 320 per concert, and claims the series is one of the best attended of its kind in the United States². It presents concerts in the San Francisco Bay Area with the main series at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, an inspiring centre for contemporary practice in all genres including film, visual, theatre and new media. It's a real hub for 'young and connected' people to be and be seen. Each concert is preceded by an informative discussion with the evening's composers and guest artists. The ensemble attracts and engages audiences through its efforts to inform people about new music – through performance, touring, recordings, collaborations (such as with Chanticleer) and innovative education programs. These include musical presentations for students at colleges and high schools, family concerts, and adult classes about new music. Its Contemporary Insights series offers audiences a chance to preview selected performances and to meet and engage with the musicians.

I attended the opening night of San Francisco Symphony, a program of Stravinsky and Tchaikovsky conducted by the charismatic and much-loved Michael Tilson Thomas. At the start of the concert, the orchestra had cleverly arranged for an award presentation on stage for the Mahler recording the Symphony had recently won (2006 Grammy Award Winner for Best Classical Album and Best Orchestral performance). Tilson Thomas was so charming and gracious in his acceptance speech that it was he and the orchestra who were standing to clap and thank the audience. The San Franciscans were busting with pride in their seats.

The San Francisco Opera presents about ten operas a year, but there are numerous subscription packages that are marketed to different audiences. For example, the Rainbow Series is a 5-opera series that provides the gay and lesbian community with "an opportunity to see world-class operas and meet new opera-loving friends at the same time"³. In its second year in operation, it grew in subscribers by 150%. Associate Marketing Director, Kara Larson believes that to market to the gay community there are two things that work: co-opting and providing free alcohol. "You must go out of your way to not just say that you are accepted but that you are welcome." This was achieved by providing social activities, receptions and events surrounding each performance, giving the audience the opportunity to experience opera not only as an artform but also as a social and community celebration. The theatre was painted in rainbow colours and complimentary champagne receptions were held at the interval.

Larson is responsible for subscription marketing in its many facets and describes herself as a "professional eavesdropper". She believes that the importance of knowing your audiences and continually canvassing them reaps benefits for audience

¹ www.pocketopera.org

² www.sfcmp.org

³ www.sfopera.com

numbers. A total approach is needed, including a large telemarketing campaign, research (information gained from telemarketers, survey to subscribers, eavesdropping at events, asking current subscribers), advertising, direct marketing, e-marketing and public relations.

Marcia Lazer, Director of Marketing says that to keep audiences interested during the downtime (June – August), events, such as live free simulcasts in Bay Area universities including Stamford and Berkeley, are held. In September this year, the San Francisco Opera has partnered with the San Francisco Giants (the city's largest sporting club) to "bring opera to the ballpark" with a live, free simulcast of Saint-Saëns's *Samson and Delilah*. Through technology, the performance will be transmitted in high definition, live from the Opera House stage to AT&T Park's 3200-square-foot scoreboard. Baseball fans and opera fans will experience this free event with seating both on the field and in the stands.

Associate Marketing Director Jennifer Owen is responsible for single ticket sales and her job, amongst others, is to make access easy for newcomers. Such tips include ensuring all marketing material directs readers/listeners into the specific website page; providing a newcomers' guide on their website (promoting it with a direct website address in all brochures and marketing campaigns); use of a star symbol to recommend opera to first-timers; offer \$10 standing room tickets for performance on sale on the day. The "Get in the know before you go" information promotes Opera Talks (free pre-opera lectures); E-Opera (behind the scenes info from breaking news about the artists and production to special on-line ticket offers) and the Opera website, which offers advance program notes, production photos, music clips, complete casting etc. This year, the Opera has just finalised a new agreement with the city's leading classical radio station, Classical 102.1 KDFC, to broadcast regular San Francisco Opera performances on the radio – providing audiences in the Bay Area, across the United States, and internationally to hear their performances.

Box office and an excellent, manageable database are integral to the operations of any classical music organisation. You only get one chance to make a first impression, let alone build a sustainable and growing relationship. This requires detailed knowledge of what was said, when and to whom. Having box office staff part of the organisation is vital to ensure that this information is collected; and also, that the passion and excitement of the performance are communicated to the potential audience member. The organisations I met in San Francisco all had their box office and telemarketing departments integral to their operations, although some larger organisations subcontract the phone centre to an outside vendor but operate it onsite.

Vancouver

Vancouver is a real nexus of musical creativity. Its diverse population has created clever strategies to involve and stimulate different audiences, which is of particular interest for Australia's diverse cultural landscape.

With audiences as diverse as the Canadian experience, programming plays an important role. The CBC Radio Orchestra's "The Great Canadian Songbook" concert at the well-appointed Chan Centre, consisted of well-known Canadian songs (by Gordon Lightfoot, Buffy Sainte-Maire & Joni Mitchell), arranged for orchestra by some of Canada's most interesting composers including Glynn Buhr (co-founder of Winnipeg new music Festival), Giorgio Magnanensi (Artistic Director of Vancouver New Music) and others. The CBC Radio Orchestra is the last remaining radio orchestra in North America, with nearly all their programs broadcast on national radio. Consequently, their audience is made up of radio listeners, rural and urban, throughout the country. The programs are diverse, from commissions and new works to established classics that showcase Canadian performers and conductors – engaging and stimulating their diverse patrons.

Music on Main, conceived by Artistic Director David Pay, is a concert series that presents contemporary classical performances in a jazz club every Tuesday evening. Attending the "Cage & Aperghis" performance of prepared piano and voice was so refreshing in its ability to create a listening environment of "challenging" new music as casual as it was stimulating. The series is so welcoming for any newcomer to new music, as it combines concertgoing, top-class musicians, shorter concerts, and a bar before, during and after every performance. The series has been described by the British Columbia newspaper, *Georgia Straight*, as "the highly popular series that's as musically adventurous as it is socially gregarious."⁴ Pay's enthusiasm and passion is infectious. He personally engaged with each member of the audience at this particular event and encourages people to 'spread the word', join the e-list and complete the survey.

Vancouver Recital Society is a small, dynamic and flexible organisation that presents recital series at three venues across Vancouver on little resources. Their focus is on the performers and the music, with a strong "next generation" theme. Internationally acclaimed artists, both emerging and established are presented, and the organisation prides itself on a reputation for innovation and excellence in programming. General Manager Gloria Wong describes how the organisation has built a following of dedicated patrons who trust they will be hearing the stars of tomorrow – the "future" of classical music. Nearing its 30-year anniversary, the Society has presented recital debuts of some of today's well-known classical performers long before they became household names, including Cecilia Bartoli, Maxim Vengerov, Anne Sofie von

⁴ www.straight.com/article-86482/april-19-26-2007

Otter, Yo-Yo Ma, András Schiff, Joshua Bell, Steven Isserlis and Bryn Terfel. They also champion Canadian musicians and present famous artists in special one-off concerts such as Kiri te Kanawa this year. Basically, though, their audiences expect that they will be uncovering the “superstars” of the future. They have had success with growing audiences by marketing the concept across all promotional avenues and also letting the audiences build their own program and with “bring a friend” schemes. “Bring a friend” campaign actively engages the audience by encouraging them to bring a friend or family member along to the concert; sometimes the presenting organisation will offer discount or free tickets to assist.

Vancouver’s music critics seem unsympathetic to classical music presented by small to medium groups, with very few reviews, articles or coverage in the mainstream media, despite obvious audiences numbers. Both Pay and Wong complain of the limited reviews, articles and listings their concerts have achieved in the past years. These presenters and musicians have no alternative but to focus their attention on e-marketing, actively engaging their audiences such as “bring a friend” schemes, and by cross-promoting to like-minded individuals and organisations. For example, a new opera by Vancouver composer John Oliver being broadcast live on the internet by “Western Front New Music” from its performance in Montreal (5 May 2007) was being promoted online and at performances such as Music on Main.

Vancouver Opera produces about five mainstream operas a year. Doug Tuck, Director of Audience Development and Community Programmes, outlines their current strategies on building capacity, with a focus on large telemarketing and advertising campaigns. However, he would like to do more on-line marketing, and one recent approach to capture new younger audiences was through “singing posters” aimed at the “iPod generation”. The company has teamed up with a local company that creates arts and culture content for mobile devices such as cell phones to develop nine 30-second episodes that outline the plot of Puccini’s *Tosca* (which was opening the week following my visit). Ads were posted on buses, transit shelters, and other locations across the city urging passers-by to take out their mobile phones, dial a seven-digit number, and enter a four-digit code to hear the narrated episodes. The Opera is trying to engage new, younger patrons, given that their existing audience is getting older and given that the iPod generation is overwhelmed with an enormous array of entertainment options such as YouTube videos. Tuck said that if the campaign is successful it would be downloadable on i-phone when they were available in 2008.

Another interesting approach to engage a specific audience is targeted at the Japanese community in Vancouver. For the last three years, the Opera have engaged the services of a local illustrator, Roy Husada, to create a manga-style comic based on *Tosca* with the idea of drawing the Japanese community. Husada has created opera manga strips that have been published in the Japanese-language Vancouver Shinpo weekly paper and have also been printed in English and have been made available on-line.

Chicago

Chicago seems the most similar to Sydney, in terms of geographical spread and population, as well as the situation facing small to medium presenters of new and early music and chamber opera. Chicago has a central performing arts precinct, with a successful symphony orchestra and opera company, a small chamber opera company and a network for new music organisations. Unlike Chicago’s famously well-developed jazz and live theatre scene, the classical music scene needs to work hard to attract audiences, particularly in the small-medium sector. By forming networks, and by coordinating and collaborating with individuals and other arts groups, classical music groups manage to market and promote their music to audiences.

The Chicago Opera Theatre (COT), is not typical of the opera companies in America, where the mainstay is for large companies to perform mainstream repertoire in 3500 seat houses. They see their role as a balancing act to the larger opera companies, especially Chicago’s Lyric Opera (the large opera company in the same city). Their most successful ticket sales since 2004, when they started performing at their new home at Harris Theatre, have been *Death in Venice* and *Nixon in China* – two not well-known, nor often performed operas⁵. One advantage of playing in a comparatively small theatre (1,400 seats) is the enormous flexibility it gives to the choice of repertoire. COT only has to sell 6,000 seats for each production, which works out at less than two performances in the larger houses, which make up the majority of theatres in the US. Brian Dickie, General Manager says, “Smallness is beautiful and is the only thing that enables such companies as COT, Glimmerglass, Opera Theatre of St Louis etc., to undertake the work that we do. We are a niche – and very happy, thank you! The prospect of selling 36,000 seats to some of the most wonderful pieces in the repertoire...., is daunting indeed. But that is what Peter Gelb may be trying to figure out at the Met.”

Similar to Sydney’s Pinchgut Opera, COT challenges the traditional concept of opera, and brings a new experience of opera by creating and presenting operas that are heard far less often than they deserve to be. They aim to develop and bring in new audiences, even those that don’t consider themselves to be opera lovers. They achieve this by putting the music first, combined with reasonable ticket prices, creative productions and innovating programming. All of this is set in intimate venues where the audience is engaged with the music. Basically, they use creativity in place of big budgets.

⁵ briandickie.typepad.com/my_weblog/2006/10/

They use creativity in their savvy set-designs, staging and use of spaces, and in marketing and publicity.

Much of the small-medium musical activity in America cities has strong connections around university and colleges, whether presented by ensembles, involving university staff or students or, particularly in the case of chamber music, just taking advantage of the small, affordable venues.

New Music Chicago, formed in 2005, is an association of 17 different new music ensembles and organisations. According to their president, Stephen Burns, who is also director of the Fulcrum Point New Music Ensemble, the organisation was formed to “coordinate schedules, build audiences, and to promote new music”. Its ensembles work with one another to coordinate performances, thereby building a community of working artists within the city. They publish a calendar and coordinate schedules to avoid conflicts. Many of these ensembles, (Fulcrum Point New Music Ensemble, the Accessible Contemporary Ensemble, CUBE, the MAVerick Ensemble, and the International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE),) participate in free concerts in the Chicago Cultural Center throughout the year to promote their concerts and the artform

The Chicago Cultural Centre is America’s first free municipal cultural centre and is considered one of the most comprehensive arts showcases in the United States.⁶ Located right across the street from the new Millennium Park (which houses the Harris Theatre and Jay Pritzker Pavilion), the Center attracts people from all over. Each year, the Center features more than 1,000 programs and exhibitions covering a wide range of the performing, visual and literary arts. Programming is aimed at increasing public awareness of the arts and features classical, jazz, world, folk, pop, and vocal music concerts, new and classic plays and readings, modern dance performances, art discussions, film screenings, lectures, cultural celebrations, and participatory events for all ages. Regularly scheduled programs include weekday “LunchBreak” concerts and gallery talks, and weekly “Sunday Salon Series” afternoon concerts, among others.

On my first visit there I was able to attend and plan for the concerts held there and elsewhere in the city. I was there for classical music, but was enticed to attend a blues concert, a literary event and two exhibitions. With its multi-use spaces, (including two concert halls, two theaters, a cabaret performing space, a dance studio and a visitor information centre), not only does it entice the visitor to try something they would not normally go to, but it seems to provide fertile ground for new ideas for arts presenters and collaborations across artforms – even if these genres may compete for audiences.

I attended a performance by CUBE, Chicago’s most established new music ensemble⁷, as part of the “Sunday Salon Series”. The program of mainly US/Illinois composers, including works by Patricia Moorehead, founder and director of CUBE, and was attended by a diverse audience of old and young alike (including strollers), new music aficionados, the newly initiated, and a few curious passers-by. On entering the hall, I was able to pick up flyers on the New Music Chicago’s programs and talk to performers in a very relaxed setting.

The New Music Network is an organisation of 15 new music ensembles in Australia, which the Australian Music Centre assisted in establishing more than 10 years ago. The idea behind the Network is that each member group enjoys the benefit of other members, by providing access to other people and information. By working collaboratively and collectively, the individual ensembles are able to reach more people and share skills, marketing activities and technologies – and, of course, there are also the creative advantages. My role as manager of the network is to co-ordinate this. It was especially worthwhile to discover how the NMN could be enhanced by implementing various aspects of the Chicago model.

The Network model for new music should serve as model for other cities. By combining resources, these groups are able to reach out to a broad audience and show off the diversity of new music in Chicago in a unified format, from the academic to the accessible. The new music community in Chicago seems willing to work together to further the broader cause of new music in America.

More collaborations of a meaningful kind between various genres help gain awareness and increase audiences especially in small to medium sector. I attended the “East Meets West” performance at the Art Institute – a festival collaboration between the Silk Road Ensemble, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra’s “Musicnow Ensemble” (featuring players from the orchestra) and the Institute of the Arts, with all organisations jointly marketing the festival activities. By combining chamber music with more world music, the each of the organisations was able to reach different audiences. The Chicago Symphony Orchestra supports chamber music and new music (especially since its principal guest conductor is the new music great Pierre Boulez), with a history of commissioning new works, and of creating programs that help composers and musicians for chamber music.

⁶ egov.cityofchicago.org:80

⁷ www.newmusicbox.org/article.nmbx?id=4692

Washington DC

As the nation's capital, Washington, DC, is a unique cultural centre due to its multicultural population, transient and core political community, large-scale businesses and institutions – all wanting to be seen at important cultural events and to be seen *giving* to cultural events. However, with a population of just over half a million people, and many competing cultural events presented in the city, classical music must work hard to achieve high audience levels and awareness. I met with many large performing organisations, particularly with the various departments at the John F Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, one of the nation's largest. What was of particular interest in building audiences in these larger institutions is that the same challenges are faced as in the small-medium sector, with many creative approaches used to build awareness and grow audience numbers.

Discussing American orchestras with the National Symphony Orchestra's Jennifer Leed, Community Relations Manager, highlighted the need for strong communication and information pathways within and without these large organisations. Building audiences for classical music depends on getting your art talked about in a range of communities and providing the infrastructure to manage that. The database is central to marketing and vital to managing relationships and communications with patrons. The National Symphony Orchestra's busy performing schedule also includes pops concerts, touring, broadcasts and one of the country's most extensive educational programs. In addition, the orchestra has a large commissioning program (with over 50 new works), nurtures young American conductors and musicians. Collectively, these activities involve sophisticated yet manageable information-sharing systems.

Mstislav Rostropovich, the former music director of the National Symphony Orchestra, a world-class cellist and the dominating icon on the musical landscape of Washington for two decades, died the day I arrived in DC. Rostropovich led the National Symphony for 17 years with many performances regularly selling out. I attended the National Symphony Orchestra performance of a composer portrait, Anton Dvorák that the Orchestra had reformed into a tribute concert to Rostropovich. It was a truly memorable evening and certainly felt the place to be in town that evening.

President of the Kennedy Center, Michael Kaiser leads by example. Having worked in several organisations leading up to his current position (including the American Ballet Theatre and London's Royal Opera House), his accomplishments have earned him the nickname of the "turnaround king". "It all starts with the quality of the art," he says. "That's your mission. If you're really aggressive about quality, people get excited about what you're doing. My mantra is: Great art, well marketed."

The vision for the Kennedy Center as an international art destination was established before Kaiser arrived (2001); he just focused on better marketing. From his platform as President, he does a lot of advising and nurturing to arts managers in Washington and around the world, under the auspices of the centre's extensive arts management programs. He had recently returned from Cairo (April 07) when I met with him, to lead the first Arab Arts Symposium, and has been to China a few times to teach arts management to students.

He cautions against spending advertising money in places where only existing audiences will see it and recommends making sure that the most influential people in communities know about all the positive things the company is doing. He advises that institutional marketing is especially important for small to medium organisations with few resources. Rather than promoting each concert, he suggests building trust and bringing the audience into the "family" – find out what audiences think of you, do your research. "Engage them in the family. End of sermon."

Creating an image for the Kennedy Center and all its activities is really simple, says David Kiddo, Vice President of Marketing and Sales. "Ask what your goals are and who your audiences are. Look at the timing of your messages and just do it." He believes that marketing equals relationships, and should always be thought that way at every level of operating, in every day-to-day activity across the arts organisation.

Australia and the US face many of the same concerns in the arts – boards, how to get younger audiences, how to fundraise, how to get more well-known. In the US, the boards of directors are affluent, well-connected patrons who are essential to the work of music groups in bringing in not only funds, but also audiences and credibility. Michael Kaiser expects board members to be major contributors – or make way for someone else – and stick to supervision, rather than interfering in the daily operations. "If I have a board member who sucks, I want them off the board in one month, not three years. I want my good board members forever." Kaiser, himself, can't put this in to practice at the Kennedy Center, because he can't alter its board, appointed by each occupant of the White House (additional, ex-officio members come from Congress).⁸ This pragmatic approach to facing governance challenges also extends to business planning. On

⁸ Article published in the Baltimore Sun titled "Makeover artist" by Tim Smith (April 29, 2007)

strategic business plans Michael says, “If everyone is happy with it, you’ve got a plan that does nothing.”

Garth Ross, Director of Performing Arts for Everyone, says that operating any strategic plan within an organisation calls for constant appraising from both within the organisation and the environment in which it sits. The environment is constantly changing through technology, politics, society etc and any marketing campaign needs to adapt – there is no use replicating great ideas; adaptation is the key.

The Kennedy Center presents international festivals to create excitement on a national and international scale, promotes them through splashy press announcements for each event, followed up by full-page ads, not just in the local press, but also in *The New York Times*. When I was visiting, the Shakespeare in Washington Festival was underway and in 2008 there will be a celebration of Japanese culture and technology, and a festival of Arab culture proposed for 2009.

The “Performing Arts for Everyone” incentive was designed to expand and increase access to the performing arts for local Washington residents and visitors to the capital. The project is designed to introduce the Kennedy Center and its programs to a far wider audience by providing a free public performance every day of the year. These performances are staged free on the Millennium Stage in the Grand Foyer at 6pm every day and broadcast live on the web (and all archived on the website). Featured on the Millennium Stage are a range of artforms, including performing artists and groups from all over the US, and an Artist-in-Residence program, with artists performing several evenings in a month that both organisations benefit from with cross-audience promotions. Other Performing Arts for Everyone incentives include “TicketPlace”, a new facility in the heart of downtown DC offering discounted tickets for local residents and out-of-town visitors; “Pay-What-You-Can Tickets”, for selected performances. In its three years of operations, the Millennium Stage concept has been able to encourage cross institutional dialogue and share expertise and contacts; bring in new audiences to the Kennedy Center by connecting with the audiences of other arts groups; use technologies to further enhance its reach and draw people from a range of communities to their activities.

The importance of creating a strong front-person is an excellent way to promote the arts organisation, create recognition and credibility. Neale Perl, President of Washington Performing Arts Society is just that man. Neale is a charismatic personality and the identity of the organisation. The Society presents more than 60 performances on 10 subscription series, covering – to name a few – classical music, jazz, gospel and contemporary dance, and presents in about six venues throughout the Washington, DC, area. Due to its huge diverse program of different genres in various venues, there needs to be a connection to the Society and that is what Perl provides. He tells me, “I am at the front of every performance.” Creating a strong identity brand (Perl) and incorporating institutional marketing strategies, Perl believes that many of the audiences are able to take that journey of discovery with the organisation and come along and experience something that they would not normally try, “It’s about creating entry points for people.” It’s an exhausting job but Perl thrives on it.

Rochester

Of special relevance to small classical music groups is the idea of getting everyone connected to the organisation, including audiences, staff, musicians and composers, to feel responsible for its future and its success. From asking for money to encouraging someone to attend, the use of humour, plus a personal and relevant approach helps. And it’s important to always show gratitude, and acknowledge any contribution.

Pegasus’s Artistic Director and lutenist Deborah Fox says, “Advice that was given to me was ‘If everyone contributes, then we have something’.” People can contribute in different, and not obvious, ways. For the audience that might mean bringing a friend along to the performance who would not normally buy a ticket; for the musicians, it could be giving their time to meet and talk about what they do to anyone they can; for staff, it may be to provide easy access points for others to be involved, to talk about what they do.

Pegasus is a small early music ensemble that was formed by Fox in 2005. Their concerts encompass medieval, renaissance, baroque and classical music, both vocal and instrumental, sacred and secular. To the musicians who perform in this series, early music is a living artform, with its dynamic tradition of improvisation and innovation; its spirit of intense collaborations; its incredible ability to communicate sophisticated human instincts and emotions; and its chamber-style direct intimacy⁹. They share these ideals with their audiences through intimate pre-concert talks, by making the musicians available, asking their audience to help be part of the organisation from ticketing, and by providing interval refreshments.

Geva Theatre Centre in Rochester is the most well-attended regional theatre in New York State. It has a strong commitment to education and developing new works, including commissioning. The strong community focus to attract local audiences and a commitment to educational and outreach programs provide a deeper experience for the current audience; access and affordable theatre to the Rochester community, including thousands of students; and the

⁹ pegasusearlymusic.org

development new works to nurture the audience and artists of the next generation. Basically it offers “multiple opportunities for audiences to get in on the act”, explains Nan Hildebrandt, Executive Director. That is, it provides many entry points for people to engage with the theatre from young people (grades K-8 and their families) to locally emerging and nationally established artists. Free events and workshops are held for writers in the Rochester community, for example; Afro-American evenings are held every week to teach aspects of the theatre, with every department involved, including costumes, directing and scriptwriting. This has translated sometimes to audience but more importantly, says Hildebrandt, the community speak highly of “Geva” and its activities.

New York

Building audiences for classical music depends on getting it talked about, particularly for the small to medium sector. That is, getting conversations activated and maintained in a range of communities by people who have the ability to influence their peers – enough to get them to try something they would not normally do.

“Word of mouth” is a key factor that influences audiences, that is, co-opting is the most powerful form of building audiences. With more and more media outlets covering less classical music, the job is to find the ones that still write, review and *influence*, and then connect with them personally with exclusive story ideas relevant to their reader/listeners. That is, find the “influencers”, those journalists, active networkers, active audiences members, bloggers, and online community participants and newsletter corresponders to name a few. For example, apart from sending a targeted release to an influential blogger, to efficiently influence word of mouth, find the sources that influence the blogger. Websites and media are key sources. And influencers use more of all media, particularly the Internet, and they embrace emerging media.

A well-established and highly accomplished New York publicist, Rachele Schlosser, believes that marketing and public relations makes sense to be combined in the classical music business, and being direct and personal gains results. Direct marketing helps inform the potential audience member and develops an ongoing relationship with the arts group in a meaningful way. Through its various avenues (direct mail, online, phone, face-to face), it builds up an active involvement with the audience member who then feels informed and excited about the next concert. Similarly, direct media communications brings fruitful outcomes when approached with an understanding of the needs of that media contact. Rachele also stresses the importance of a strong dramatic visual image; “It can make all the difference to whether your concert is noticed by 10 or 10,000”.

Greg Sandow¹⁰ explains that in the large arts companies, traditional audiences are getting older and they are not being replenished, so they have to do something. Culture is changing, and where people under 40 gather and digest their information is quite different from even a few years ago – word of mouth plays an ever-increasing role. “The future is in these different kinds of people.” He explains that to bring people in, you must have a total strategy that includes all sorts of things, and so it’s talked about more. “It all adds up – videos, movie screens, seats for \$20, news/media outlets, celebrated openings. They all have an impact and make them feel that it’s what’s cool to go to.”

Sandow points out several places that influence audiences, one at the moment is New York magazine’s The Totally Matrix, a column about high pop culture and what is “happening” at the moment. The Metropolitan Opera was keen to move away from its “stuffy conservative” image and clever marketing approaches – including Opera at the Movies (live broadcasts of its operas into movie cinemas across the US), massive posters on the Metropolitan Opera House, online campaigns, such as one suggested by the student advisory committee that used the social networking tool Facebook to drive excitement in younger audiences, offering low-discount tickets etc – all added up to making the Met the place to be and be seen – and listed in The Totally Matrix.

Creating an active relationship with audiences is vital to the success of any arts organisation. Until the mid 90s, most classical musicians had only occasional contact with their audiences. Now, many audiences (especially younger ones) are not just hearing about classical music concerts from ad campaigns, radio airplay or newspapers/magazines anymore, but through new technologies – such as viral word-of-mouth, when a friend forwards a website address, swaps an MP3, e-mails a link to a blog or via video on YouTube.

An article published in the New York Times¹¹ during my visit, highlights the active relationships that musicians have with their audiences. The article describes how, in Sept 2005, Jonathan Coulton quit his job as a computer programmer and became a full-time singer and songwriter. His goal was to write and record a song each week, posting each one to his blog. Today, more than 3,000 people, on average, visit his site every day, and he makes a living by selling CDs and

¹⁰ The future of Classical Music www.gregsandow.com

¹¹ The New York Times May 13, 200 “Sex, Drugs and Updating Your Blog” By Clive Thompson <http://www.nytimes.com/>

digital downloads of his work on iTunes and on his own site. Today, audiences do not want merely to listen or buy music; they want to be more involved. And that means they want to interact, comment and participate. Coulton’s audience has grown to such a point that they are the ones doing the marketing and promoting of his music. More than 50 fans have created music videos using his music and posted them on YouTube. “People always think that when you’re a musician you’re sitting around strumming your guitar, and that’s your job,” he said. “But this” — he clicked his keyboard theatrically — “this is my job.”

Sandow sees the problem with many large classical organisations such as orchestras is that they see their “mission” not their “market” as important. The beauty about smallness is that they can be flexible in their programming, reach their audiences in a more personal and engaging way, including influencers, and create a buzz around their activities. The larger classical music institutions such as orchestra and opera companies are expensive to run, they take a lot of money to maintain, and that’s money that has to be continually renewed. Thus, these institutions cannot afford to alienate people who might give them money, and so become quite conservative.

Boston

The music scene in Boston could best be best described as saturated. Boston’s compact city centre and relatively small population, of around 550,000 with a catchment area of over a million, is home to a huge number of arts organisations ranking it with the highest number of cultural arts organisations per capita in America¹².

The city is home to one of the country’s most celebrated orchestras, the Boston Symphony Orchestra and one of the most comprehensive art museums in the world, The Museum of Fine Arts. Both organisations dominate the arts scene in Boston. In addition, the city has two major universities, Harvard and MIT, with large and well-respected music departments, as well the Berklee College of Music, New England Conservatory and Longy School of Music.

On any night of the week, performance can be heard throughout the city with a number of festivals being presented throughout the year. I saw new music concerts presented by Harvard University’s Music Department conducted by Elliott Gyger to farewell two faculty composers, a Fromm Music Foundation concert and a BSO chamber music performance. The audiences were a mix of students, staff, financial supporters of the group and general concertgoers.

With such a large student population, looking towards future full-paying attendees, Anthony Fogg, Artistic Administrator of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, explains that it makes sense that every effort is made to reach them. The “BSO College Card” costs \$25 and gives students the opportunity to attend up to 16 BSO performances at no additional cost. There is a minimum of 100 tickets per concert which are available on the morning of each performance. The company also encourages students to “Register Your College Card”, enabling BSO to inform students of new performance listings and other interesting information about the music. Other youth incentives include the “Young Musicians Card” which costs \$15 to high school students giving them the opportunity to attend up to 12 BSO performances; specially created youth and family concerts; the “Metropolitan Youth Concerts” which brings thousands of students from the Boston Public school system into Symphony Hall; student concerto competitions; and various education programs.

Technologies play an important role in reaching the student audience and in also developing relationships throughout the country and internationally. BSO has a strong online presence including downloadable audio episodes of the season’s performances, sound bites of their recordings (with most BSO recordings available on iTunes and CD Baby) and podcasts of interviews.

¹² The Boston Fountain www.tbf.org/

Conclusions & Recommendations

These are exciting times for arts marketers and administrators in the small to medium sector. Never before has there been the breadth of tools, knowledge and skills to promote classical music with very limited resources.

Of particular benefit to the arts is e-marketing for its speed, cost-effectiveness, interactivity and flexibility. In the United States and Canada, many arts organisations are embracing and developing the skills needed for current and future discoveries that these technologies will play in their organisations, from equipping staff with IT marketing skills, investing in systems and arming themselves with information. The use of video and digital media to promote a certain concert or the organisation as a whole, is an exciting development in classical music. Giveaway “Season preview” CDs that have been so popular since the early 2000s are becoming less so, due to the number of groups producing them and thereby lowering the novelty value. Instead, possibilities arise through advances in technologies, including YouTube, MySpace, podcast; the ability to send music clips to audience members direct via email; and the use of the internet as a social networking phenomenon. As David Kitto at the Kennedy Center, says, “The web is our friend.”

Building audiences for classical music depends on getting the music talked about. That is, getting conversations activated and maintained in a range of communities – from friends/family/the people already connected to the organisation to a larger and broader community. It’s about getting classical music talked about by the people who have the ability to influence the person next to them – enough to get them to try something they would not normally do. In these situations, information pathways and information sharing is vital to bring people in. That is, creating relationships with other like-minded individuals and groups in the first instance. These people normally have a common goal and are also struggling to get their work known by a larger community. They are also connected to others who should be informed and interested in the first group’s activities, and so on – providing various links in the chain that these small organisations can mutually take advantage of. Naturally, these conversations lead to a broader community, and with a stronger voice for the artform.

“Word of mouth” is a key factor that influences audiences. Co-opting is the most powerful form of building audiences. Apart from looking after current audience extremely well (as they are the ones talking about the music groups to their networks), marketers and administrators must work hard to find the people in society that influence others. That is, find the “influencers” and engage with them directly and supply appropriate information to them and to where they source their information (such as websites and all media).

Arts journalists are often so over-extended with multiple assignments, areas they need to cover and deadlines that there are few opportunities to concentrate on various artistic disciplines, let alone classical music. Getting the message to the media should come from various sources – in a very digestible way. In the small to medium sector, there is often no publicist and it’s best not coming from him or her to many of today’s media outlets. It is recommended that anyone in the organisation and that *everyone* in the organisation connect and supply information to the media in a direct and personal way. There are many tools to get the message across, including a growing set of online tools, friendly and personal releases, the phone, and exploiting the conversations already happening in the organisation’s immediate network.

Friendly, well-informed and integrated box office staff, and an excellent, manageable database are integral to the operations of any successful classical music organisation. You only get one chance to make a first impression, let alone build a sustainable and growing relationship. This requires detailed knowledge of what was said, when and to whom. Nearly all the organisations I met had their box office and telemarketing departments integral to their operations. It is recommended that box office staff be part of the organisation, not externally operated, so as to ensure that information is collected and well documented; and also, that the passion and excitement of the performance are communicated directly to the potential audience member.

America and Canada’s diverse population has created clever strategies to involve and stimulate different audiences, which is of particular interest for Australia’s diverse cultural landscape. Programming plays an important role, and it is recommended that inclusion of new works through commissioning and showcasing the country’s performers, composers and artists in the program are incorporated.

Marketing and public relations activities make sense to be interwoven in small classical music enterprises and being direct and personal, gains results. Direct marketing helps inform the potential audience member and develops an ongoing relationship with the arts group in a meaningful way. Through its various avenues (direct mail, online, phone, face-to-face), it builds up an active involvement that the audience member then feels informed and excited about the next concert. Similarly, direct media communication brings fruitful outcomes when approached with an understanding of the needs of that media contact.

Creating an active relationship with audiences is vital to the success of any arts organisation. Informing them of the organisation’s activities and how fabulous the concert will be is not enough. Suggesting ways to participate in the organisation is important. That could be putting up a visiting musician, writing content for the website or newsletters,

creating YouTube videos, being a member of an audience/student advisory committee, emailing flyers and newsletters to their networks and participating in “bring a friend to the concert” schemes. This helps the audiences feel responsible for the future and the success of the organisation.

Nearly all concert programs in the United States were free of charge and I can’t remember purchasing a program in my travels. This not only informs every audience member attending about the evening’s music but also is a way of welcoming them and a gesture of equality. The New Music Network and many other new music ensembles throughout Australia implement this rule. The Sydney Symphony this year for their 75th anniversary made their program free as a birthday present to their audiences – a practice that would be wonderful to continue, however due to the commercial relationship this maybe unable to be achieve, yet.

Institutional marketing and creating a strong identity brand for the organisation is of particular benefit for small to medium classical music organisations. People feel more comfortable to take “that journey of discovery with the organisation” and come along and experience something that they would not normally try. The most effective way is by using the human side – a frontperson so people can relate – or a particular theme of the group to promote the music, create recognition and credibility.

An overwhelming finding was the willingness to share information and create information pathways with like-minded arts organisations to increase awareness of the artform and increase audiences. The sense of community encouraged by organisations such as New Music Chicago, Chicago Opera Theatre, NewMusicBox and, in Australia, organisations such as Australian Music Centre, Pinchgut Opera and the New Music Network, can serve as model for other cities both here and in America. By working collaboratively and collectively, the individual ensembles are able to reach more people and share skills, marketing activities and technologies, and also provide fertile ground for creativity. It was especially worthwhile to learn further enhancements that the New Music Network could implement from the Chicago model, such as the performance scheduling and greater use of on-line marketing campaigns. Many music communities in America seems willing to work together to further the broader cause of classical music in America.