THE WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA

FINAL REPORT - FABIAN RUSSELL - 2011 CHURCHILL FELLOW

To research leading advanced orchestral training programmes - USA

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Fabian Russell

14 July 2012
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INTRODUCTION

In May 2012 I travelled to the United States to research leading advanced orchestral training programmes, to assist with the development of current Australian programmes and to expand my experience as an orchestral conductor and educator. I attended dozens of concerts and rehearsals of professional and student ensembles and met with over fifty conductors, composers, orchestral musicians and administrators to gain a more thorough understanding of the mission, vision and function of America’s world renowned music institutions. My study was not confined to traditional orchestral repertoire but fine music in its many and varied forms including opera, chamber music, jazz and contemporary music.

I gratefully acknowledge the following institutions for their assistance during the course of my Churchill Fellowship:

- San Francisco Symphony
- San Francisco Youth Symphony
- San Francisco Opera
- New World Symphony Miami – America’s Orchestra Academy
- Chicago Symphony Orchestra
- North Western University
- New York Philharmonic Orchestra
- The Juilliard School
- Curtis Institute of Music
- Symphony in C

And finally I thank the Sir Winston Churchill Memorial Trust for awarding me a 2011 Churchill Fellowship. The insight I have gained into American orchestral training programmes has given me valuable information which will assist with future planning in my work as a conductor and educator of pre-professional Australian orchestral musicians. I truly appreciate the opportunity that has been granted to me at this stage of my professional life and salute the Churchill Trust Board, Staff and Committees for all the assistance I have received since being granted this Churchill Fellowship.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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OCCUPATION: Professional Musician – Conductor, Artistic Director, Teacher  

POSITIONS:

- Monash University Academy of Performing Arts, Monash Academy Orchestra – Artistic Director and Principal Conductor  
- The Orchestra Project – Artistic Director  
- Tasmanian Discovery Orchestra – Music Director designate  

PROJECT OBJECTIVE:

To research leading advanced orchestral training programs – USA  

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS:

- San Francisco Youth Symphony – meetings with full briefing by artistic team and attendance at rehearsals and performances  
- San Francisco Opera – production of John Adams Nixon in China – meetings, interviews, rehearsals and performances  
- San Francisco Symphony – rehearsals and performances  
- New World Centre, Miami Beach, Florida – tour and full briefing of America’s Orchestra Academy  
- Juilliard School – meeting with Artistic Director of Vocal Arts Head of Voice and Metropolitan Opera Lindemann Young Artists Development Program  
- Chicago Symphony Orchestra – attended rehearsals and performances, meetings with orchestra members and Civic Orchestra Music Director  
- New York Philharmonic – meeting with Director of Education and attendance at concerts  
- Curtis Institute of Music – meeting with Gary Graffman, President of Curtis for 25 years Attendance at rehearsals and concerts of the Philadelphia Orchestra  
- Symphony in C – meeting and full briefing with Artistic Director  
- Meetings with over 30 composers, conductors, musicians and administrators  
- Attendance at 25 concerts
PROJECT RECOMMENDATIONS AND ASPIRATIONS

- Establishment of an Australian orchestra academy similar to New World Symphony Miami
- Introduction of a Master’s Degree in Orchestral Performance at an Australian university
- Inclusion of mandatory music studies in primary and secondary school curriculums of all Australian States and Territories
- Build closer relationships between Australian professional orchestras and their respective state youth orchestras
- Substantial increase in Australia Council for the Arts funding for project grants relating to music education
- Fast track the building of infrastructure to support Internet2 technology at Australian music education institutions in order to ‘connect’ with leading international educators via distance learning
- Investigate ways in which the Federal Government can assist and further promote philanthropic organisations so arts companies can move away from heavy reliance on public funding
- Greater engagement with Asia in cultural exchange – particularly Singapore, Malaysia, Korea and China
- Forge closer ties between Australian and leading US music institutions
- Establishment of a full time Australian contemporary music ensemble
- Creation of a ‘real’ promotion and support network for Australian composers, soloists and conductors

IMPLEMENTATION AND DISSEMINATION

- Report on my experiences to the various organisations that I am involved with including Monash University, Australian Youth Orchestra, Tasmanian Conservatorium of Music and Australian National Academy of Music
- Continue to explore ways to build a national training orchestra utilising the information attained vis a vis American models
- Lobby Federal, State and Territory Education Ministers to bring mandatory music studies into the school curriculum
- Share my experiences with the considerable number of musicians I work with throughout Australia each year
- Promote innovative orchestral training models to Australia’s professional orchestras.
PROGRAMME

In 1988 Australia celebrated a significant event in our history – the Bicentenary of permanent European settlement. As is historical practice between nations, cultural gifts are often exchanged in tribute of such milestones – the United States of America presented Australia with a tour by the world renowned Chicago Symphony Orchestra under Maestro Georg Solti, and the USA received a tour by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra with Dame Joan Sutherland as soloist, performing in venues including Carnegie Hall and the United Nations General Assembly. It could not have been better timing for any aspiring young professional musician, including myself – a nineteen year old contract musician with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. These two events so early in my career began a deep fascination with the American orchestral tradition. My admiration for their orchestras together with a hunger for knowledge to develop my technique and artistry brought me back to the USA on numerous occasions over the last twenty five years.

My career as a musician took a different turn about ten years ago when I became increasingly attracted to the training and development of musicians on the threshold of a professional career. By the age of 38 I had already accumulated a twenty year career as an orchestral musician. I felt that it was time for a new direction and I took the decision to retire from orchestral playing to fully dedicate myself to conducting and orchestral training. In only a few years I’ve had the privilege to work with thousands of young musicians all over Australia. I’m thoroughly dedicated to these musicians and understand the responsibility I have to them and also future generations to continue my own study. In this respect I looked closely at what makes the great America training programs the success stories that they are, with a view to implementing new knowledge gained by such exposure.

Orchestral training is fundamentally about education. However, while my Fellowship began as a study of pre-professional musician training I began to imagine how we in Australia can improve music education in the broader sense – from grass-roots music education at primary school right through to university level, polishing emerging artists on the threshold of a career, and let’s not forget about educating the all important audience as well – a substantial undertaking! Surely with better educated musicians, audiences – and for that matter, decision makers and administrators – we may have a greater chance not only to ensure the sustainability of the art form of Fine Music, but to see it flourish like never before.
SAN FRANCISCO

San Francisco Youth Symphony

The San Francisco Symphony Youth Symphony was founded in 1981 and is widely considered to be one of America’s finest youth orchestras. It also has the reputation of being one of the best in the world given the regular invitations it receives to perform in the major concert halls of Europe and the USA. Hundreds of young musicians around the Bay area audition every year for a position in the orchestra and the age range of candidates is from 12 -21. The San Francisco Symphony administers SFYS and all its rehearsals and major performances are at Davies Symphony Hall – the home of the San Francisco Symphony.

Members of the San Francisco Symphony tutor the musicians regularly. The Principal Conductor is Donato Cabrera who also holds the position of Associate Conductor of the San Francisco Symphony. The musicians enjoy regular visits by some of the big names in the music world including San Francisco Chief Conductor Michael Tilson Thomas, Yo-Yo Ma, Sir Simon Rattle, John Adams, Emanuel Ax, Wynton Marsalis and Midori.

At the invitation of Music Director Donato Cabrera I attended sectional and full rehearsals of the SFYS during preparations for their 8th European Tour where it was to perform in venues including Berlin Philharmonie, Vienna Kongresshaus and Munich Philharmonie. It is clearly a fine youth orchestra and in particular the strings were excellent. The orchestra also has a close relationship with the San Francisco Conservatory and the high level of teaching is obvious just from looking at the stage and seeing how well ‘set-up’ the strings are, and of course hearing the results. Three of the most recent SFYS Concertmasters have been prize winners in the Sir Yehudi Menuhin Competition in recent years – all under twenty years of age. It was impressive to see such young people playing at such a high level, with great discipline and unabashed enthusiasm.

There are no fees for the musicians of the SFYS. Entry is based on merit alone. SFYS has a strong presence in the community through its vibrant outreach programmes. Its affiliation with San Francisco Symphony is clearly one of the major keys to its success. The San Francisco Symphony realised long ago about the importance of education and the success of their Youth Symphony is proof that its substantial investment is paying major dividends.

Fellowship activities included:

- Attendance at Full String rehearsal of Prokofiev Symphony No 5 directed by the exceptionally skilled Diane Nicholeris – 1st Violinist with the San Francisco Symphony
- Attendance at Full Orchestra rehearsals of Prokofiev Symphony No 5 and Gustav Mahler Symphony No 1 directed by Principal Conductor Donato Calebra
- Attendance at Full Orchestra rehearsal of John Adams Shaker Loops directed by the composer himself What an amazing experience it was for
these young musicians to work with one of the world’s greatest living composers on one of his works. What he had to say to the musicians was worth his weight in gold, particularly concerning rhythm.

- Meeting with composer John Adams
- Meeting with Alasdair Neale – Music Director of the San Francisco Youth Symphony from 1989-2001 and Resident Conductor of the San Francisco Conservatory Orchestra
- Farewell Concert of San Francisco Youth Symphony prior to European Tour – Greig Piano Concerto and Mahler Symphony No 1
- Tour of Davies Hall, rehearsal venues and San Francisco Conservatory
- Attendance at San Francisco Symphony annual Education fundraising concert. Under the name of The Black and White Ball this event has raised millions of dollars towards the Symphony’s Education program that provides over 75,000 children in the Bay area access to high quality music education programs. Celebrities including Paul Simon and Cindy Lauper donate their services to an event that has grown to be one of the city’s most significant events on the social calender
- Attendance at San Francisco Symphony concert – Cirque Musica – a summer event of popular orchestral music
- Attendance San Francisco Symphony rehearsals for performance at Stern Grove Festival conducted by Music director Michael Tilson Thomas – Copland Billy the Kid Suite and Beethoven Symphony No 9

San Francisco Opera

The San Francisco Opera is the largest opera company on the West Coast and America’s 2nd largest behind the Metropolitan Opera of New York. The superb beaux arts War Memorial Opera House sees more than half a million visitors pass through its doors each year. Under the stewardship of General Director David Gockley and Music Director Nicola Luisotti the SF Opera presents over 75 performances throughout the season.

My visit to San Francisco coincided with the rehearsal period of John Adams Nixon in China – a superb production by Vancouver Opera of Adams’ 1987 seminal masterpiece, hailed as one of the finest American opera scores of the last hundred years. Guest Conductor Lawrence Renes, who has appeared on numerous visits with Australian orchestras, and Director Michael Cavanagh from Vancouver Opera led an all star cast of singers. The professionalism and spirit of the artists and production team impressed me immediately. It also came as no surprise that the Chorus were magnificent. This was a team of people as good as it gets and I felt so privileged to witness the rehearsal process up close. I also attended the Dress Rehearsal and two performances – an inspiring experience.
Activities included:

- Meeting with Lawrence Renes – Conductor for *Nixon in China* – to discuss the orchestra score and Vancouver Opera Production in detail
- Attendance at Full Cast rehearsal at the invitation of Lawrence Renes
- Meeting with Joseph Marcheso – Resident Conductor of San Francisco Opera and Assistant Conductor/Cover for *Nixon in China*
- Introductions to cast including Simon O’Neil, Brian Mulligan, Maria Kanyova, Patrick Carfizzi and Chen-Ye Yuan
- Introductions and discussions with Production Team, Director Michael Cavanagh and SF Opera Music Director Nicola Luisotti
- Meeting with Conductor, Educator and Prompter Jonathan Khuner – Resident Prompter at San Francisco Opera and regular guest at The Metropolitan Opera New York
- Attendance at Dress Rehearsal and Opening Night
- Meeting with Composer John Adams and initial discussion on *Nixon in China*
- Attendance at Dress Rehearsal for a new production of Mozart *The Magic Flute*
- Visit to San Francisco Public Library to peruse reference material pertaining to San Francisco Symphony, Youth Symphony and Opera

**MIAMI**

New World Symphony – America’s Orchestra Academy

The New World Centre is home to the New World Symphony – a bold and ambitious enterprise of artistic excellence founded by Artistic Director Michael Tilson Thomas in 1987. Its mission is to prepare graduates of leading music schools for leadership roles in orchestras and ensembles around the world. It is to be seen to be believed!

Rather than try and paraphrase the vision of NWS, I will quote it here in full as it appears in its promotional material:

‘The New World Symphony is dedicated to the artistic, personal and professional development of outstanding instrumentalists. The NWS fellowship program provides top graduates of music programs the opportunity to enhance their musical education with the finest professional training. A laboratory for musical education and expression, the New World Symphony, through a wide range of performance and instructional activities, seeks to develop in participants the full complement of skills and qualifications required of twenty-first century first class musicians. Under the artistic direction of Michael Tilson Thomas, the program offers in-depth exposure to traditional and modern repertoire, with the active involvement of leading guest conductors, soloists and coaches. The relationships with these artists are extended through NWS’ pioneering experimentation with distance learning via Internet2’.
The New World Symphony has assisted establishing the careers of more than 700 musicians in its twenty-five year history. Ensembles including Boston Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, National Symphony in Washington, San Francisco Symphony as well as ensembles in the major centres of Australia, Asia, Europe and South America have benefitted from the NWS training programme. In addition, many New World Symphony musicians have chosen career paths in chamber music, music education and arts management as a result of their time in Miami.

The New World Centre is a building designed by Frank Gehry, a state of the art concert hall and multi-purpose venue that is unlike any other orchestral venue in the world and home to one of the world’s most innovative orchestral training programs. During my visit to Miami I was given a personal tour of the facility by Ms Beth Boleyn, following an approach I had made to Maestro Michael Tilson Thomas through his representatives at Columbia Artists Management. (I might add that the date and time of my appointment to visit NWS was confirmed within three hours of me writing to Maestro Tilson Thomas.)

Why is New World Symphony such a success story?

- Visionary artistic Leadership – NWS is the brainchild of the Conductor and Artistic Director
- Its success is attributed to the extraordinary financial generosity of those that give part of their wealth back to the community. The new building attracted philanthropic support of over $250M USD One anonymous benefactor contributed $100M USD alone
- NWS is recognised as an educational institution but participants do need receive accreditation towards any postgraduate, graduate or doctoral qualifications
- NWS participants are not admitted unless they have previously acquired Higher Education qualifications at a recognised tertiary programme. This is probably the major reason why NWS is a finishing school for those on the cusp of a professional career
- NWS clearly ‘fills the gap’ between the university/youth orchestra and the profession
- Its artistic and professional goals are clearly set out but there exists a flexibility so as to maximise its artistic objectives
- NWS provides participants with the closest experience to a professional orchestras rehearsal and performance schedule along with valuable vocational guidance to its members
- Only thirty of the ninety position are auditioned annually thereby ensuring artistic continuity as a result of two-thirds of the orchestra positions that roll-over to the next season
- NWS musicians receive a weekly stipend and are housed in NWS housing
- regular programming of new works by established and emerging composers
- Musicians regularly gain access to the world’s finest conductors, soloists and orchestral musicians
- As good as an administration team that you could find anywhere in the world
- An abundance of imagination, drive and inspiration
Activities included:

- Full tour and briefing of New World Centre by Beth Boleyn – Assistant to the President and Board of Directors
- Meeting with Robert H Smith Jnr – Artistic Administrator and Director of Community Engagement
- Meeting with Howard Herring – CEO including a comprehensive briefing of NWS plans with Internet2 and the possibilities of educating millions through their on-line learning capabilities
- Meeting with Martha Levine – Librarian and Assistant to Michael Tilson Thomas
- Meeting with Donna Parkes – Australian musician and NYS Alumnus about her two years as a member of New World Symphony
- Meeting with Doug Rosenthal – NYS Alumnus

No account by me in these few pages can comprehensively describe this groundbreaking initiative and the achievements of this unique programme. This is an orchestra programme for the 21st Century that should be studied by decision makers in Australia as an ideal model for training orchestral musicians. Please visit the following links for a more thorough account of this revolutionary initiative

http://wwwnwsedu/
http://wwwyoutube.com/watch?v=q2GDfcDk_K4

Arts Global

Arts Global is the brain child of Australian ex-pat Heather de Haes, founder and President of Arts Global. It is an organisation that aims to support emerging talent in Europe, Asia and North America. It is the sister company to Swiss Global that was founded in 2005 in Europe and has its sights set on supporting artists in North America, in particular Australian talent. It has a link to the Australian Music Foundation – the London based enterprise that has been providing scholarships to Australian student musicians for decades.

At the invitation of Heather de Haes I was invited to attend the North American Launch of Arts Global in my capacity as a Churchill Fellow. The launch consisted of a contemporary dance performance followed by a dinner hosted by Heather de Haes. I met a number of Arts Global delegates and US contacts to discuss ways we can foster the talent of our finest young artists who are on the threshold of a professional career.
The Civic Orchestra of Chicago was formed in 1919 by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra for the purpose of training college graduate musicians. It is the only programme of its kind affiliated with a major American orchestra. Civic Orchestra maintains close ties to DePaul, North Western and other first rate universities. Under the stewardship of Principal Conductor Cliff Colnot, the Civic Orchestra programme features in-depth study of orchestral repertoire, sectionals and chamber music with musicians from the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, alongside performing critically acclaimed performances at Orchestra Hall with world-renowned guest conductors including CSO Music Director Riccardo Muti.

The Civic Orchestra of Chicago is a signature program of the Institute for Learning, Access and Training at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. With the ultimate goal of ‘transforming lives through active participation in music, the Institute for Learning, Access and Training seeks to create and sustain connections to music for individuals and communities by sharing the vast resources of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Activities of the Institute reach over 200,000 children and adults annually’.

Since 1997, selected groups of Civic Orchestra musicians have participated in another CSO initiative called MusiCorps, a music education and advocacy program that gives musicians opportunities to teach, mentor, and perform at community venues throughout the city.

My activities included:

- Attendance at Chicago Symphony Orchestra concert in works by Prokofiev, Shostakovich and Beethoven
- Attendance at Chicago Symphony Orchestra Adult Education Presentation of Beethoven Symphony No5
- Meeting with Chicago Symphony Orchestra Trombonist and Australian expat Michael Mulcahy and his wife Hornist Gabriel Webster
- Meeting with Professor Rex Martin North Western University
- Meetings with students at North Western University
- Meeting with Chicago Civic Orchestra Music Director Cliff Colnot where I received a full briefing of the Chicago Civic Orchestra programme
- Attendance at Summer Orchestra Concert at Millennium Park
- Attendance at lectures on Pop Art and Contemporary Music at the Chicago Institute of Art as part of the Roy Lichtenstein Retrospective
NEW YORK

The Juilliard School is one of the world’s foremost tertiary institutions in the fields of Music, Dance and Drama. Its alumni have collected hundreds of Grammy Awards, Pulitzer Prizes and National Medal for the Arts. It is steeped in tradition and attracts the very best students from around the world into its Undergraduate, Graduate and Doctoral programmes.

The Music Faculty maintains very close relationships with New York’s major performing arts bodies including The Metropolitan Opera and New York Philharmonic Orchestra. The relationship is now even closer since Alan Gilbert, Music Director of the New York Philharmonic, has accepted the position of Director of Conducting of Conducting and Orchestral Studies at The Juilliard School. Gilbert is a Juilliard Graduate himself.

The New York Philharmonic Orchestra is one of America’s oldest and most famous ensembles. Many of the greatest composers, conductors, soloists and orchestral musicians have performed with this extraordinary orchestra and I was privileged to hear the orchestra in two very different programmes.

My activities included:

- Interview with Brian Zeger – Artistic Director of Juilliard’s Marcus Institute for Vocal Arts; Executive Director of the Lindemann Young Artists Development Program I received a briefing of The Juilliard School of Music and The Met Young Artists Development Program A valuable source of information from a very astute performer and educator
- Visit to the Lila Wallace Library at Juilliard which contains one of the most important collection of music reference materials in the world including first edition orchestra scores, recordings, photographs and donated items
- Attendance at New York Philharmonic Orchestra concert at Avery Fisher Hall Lincoln Center for a performance of Mozart ‘Great’ C Minor Mass and Piano Concerto No 22 performed by Emmanuel Ax and directed by Alan Gilbert
- Attendance at New York Philharmonic Orchestra concert at the Park Avenue Armoury entitled Philharmonic 360 – Spatial Music from Mozart’s Don Giovanni to Stockhausen’s Gruppen. This extraordinary program centred on the spatial qualities of a performance where members of the orchestra surround the audience with Conductor Allan Gilbert on the podium right in the middle of the hall – himself surrounded by the audience The major work of the evening was Gruppen by Karlheinz Stockhausen—a work that requires three orchestras and three conductors Also on the programme was Pierre Boulez's Rituel in Memoria Bruno Maderna, the Finale of Act I from Mozart’s opera Don Giovanni, Charles Ives’ The Unanswered Question and a Giovanni Gabrieli Canzona for Brass. This concert was one of the highlights was possible the best and most innovative program I attended during my Fellowship
- Meeting with Theodore Wiprud – New York Philharmonic Director of Education Received comprehensive briefing of New York Philharmonic Education program and highlights of its 2012/2013 season. He also introduced me to the Sphinx organisation in Detroit, Michigan that is
doing some remarkable work with music education for underprivileged children and minorities

- Meeting with Victoria Bond – distinguished American composer, conductor and educator about her sixty year career in New York City. She shared the scores of works that she has written specifically for young people’s concerts and conveyed a genuine passion for teaching A remarkable woman and a fabulous communicator!
- Attendance at a Jazz Masterclass and performance directed by New York Jazz identity Kenny Werner at New York University (NYU). He also performed alongside ex-pat Australian musicians now residing in New York in a concert at NYU
- Meeting with Heather de Haes – Founder and President of Arts Global We discussed ways in which we could assist with the promotion and support of talented Australian emerging artists. We also discussed the future of the Australian Music Foundation and how we can do more to foster the development of Australian emerging artists
- Meeting with Australian composer Tamil Rogeon and an introduction to alternative music styles for young people, recent briefing about his work in recent months, in particular his May project with the Australian Youth Orchestra. We discussed ways in which we could collaborate in the future
- Meeting with Kate Baker – pre-eminent American Singer and teacher at The City College of New York and The New School University of Jazz and Contemporary Music. We discussed programming and also the opportunities and challenges that come with orchestral and jazz fusion
- Attendance performance at Jazz at the Lincoln Centre featuring Dion Parson and the 21st Century Band
- Attendance at various exhibitions and lectures on Art and Music at the New York Museum of Modern Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Guggenheim and Frick Collection

PHILADELPHIA

The Curtis Institute of Music ‘educates and trains exceptionally gifted young musicians for careers as performing artists on the highest professional level. It provides full-tuition scholarships to all of its students, ensuring that admissions are based solely on artistic promise. Curtis provides complete and diversified musical training, plus liberal arts courses’. Only 4% of applicants are successful in gaining a place at Curtis. The Curtis Orchestra is recognised as one of the world’s best university orchestras regularly visited by the world’s finest conductors. Undergraduates must play in the orchestra as well as pursue solo and chamber music. All three disciplines are promoted equally unlike other schools.

In 2006 Curtis President and American piano doyen Mr Gary Graffman visited the Australian National Academy of Music for a week long residency that included masterclasses, private lessons and concerts. He performed the Prokofiev Piano Concerto No 4 in a joint concert with musicians from ANAM and
The Orchestra Project conducted by myself. His presence was a significant event in ANAM’s history.

Mr Graffman and I stayed in contact over the last few years and I interviewed him as part of this Churchill Fellowship. The interview lasted several hours where I was given a thorough briefing of the Curtis programme and mission, together with anecdotes about Mr Graffman’s magnificent career. I felt privileged to meet with him again and hear his marvellous stories that he conveyed to me with staggering attention to detail and immaculate style. He is 84 years of age and possesses boundless energy. Although he is now retired as President of Curtis he remains on the teaching Faculty and maintains a vigorous performance schedule. He has had tremendous success as a teacher with his most famous student in recent years being China’s leading piano megastar – Lang Lang. In 1996 he released his memoirs titled *I Really Must be Practising*.

**The Philadelphia Orchestra**

I attended a rehearsal and concerts by The Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Charles Dutoit. This was another major highlight of my Fellowship in a programme of Scriabin, Debussy, Rachmaninov – A performance by one of my favourite orchestras directed by one of my favourite conductors playing three of my favourite pieces. Not much else to say really.

**SYMPHONY IN C**

Symphony in C is based in Haddonfield New Jersey and functions as a professional training orchestra that offers a Professional Development Internship Programme to develop the careers of young orchestral musicians. This program works in cooperation with universities, colleges and conservatories across the Mid-Atlantic region providing students pursuing a music degree the opportunity to gain valuable professional performance experience while receiving fees to assist with their education expenses. The Symphony’s 80 musicians, who are auditioned annually, are the beneficiaries of a programme that have seen substantial artistic improvements in recent years as a result of the organisation’s strategy of focusing on recruiting pre-professional musicians for the purpose of orchestral training and community outreach.

Conductor Rossen Milanov, himself a Graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music and Associate Conductor of The Philadelphia Orchestra, is the driving force, public face and Artistic Director of The Symphony’s programmes. His extensive experience as an orchestral trainer and educator has been critical to the growth of Symphony in C. Symphony in C was formerly a community orchestra but its growth in recent years and success as an orchestral training academy has seen it become one of America’s premier programmes for pre-professional orchestral musicians.

Alumni of the program hold positions with major orchestras worldwide including The Philadelphia Orchestra, The Cleveland Orchestra, the New York
Philharmonic, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Seattle Symphony, the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic and the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

Meeting with Rossen Milanov, Artistic Director – full briefing of Symphony in C, Artistic Vision and programme.

Key points include:

- Open to musicians aspiring to work with a professional orchestra who are currently studying towards a degree or have recently completed studies
- Musicians are paid a stipend for rehearsals and performances
- Close association with Rutgers University, Camden New Jersey
- The organisation hosts an annual young composer’s competition
- The organisation hosts an annual Symphony Summer Camp for high school band and orchestral musicians
- Long term vision is to be a major American orchestral training programme

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

The Project Recommendations and Aspirations on Page 5 of this Report may assist with developing music training programmes in Australia. I believe that some of the recommendations are urgent and others will take time. Above all, it is my view that young Australian musicians should have access to a professional training orchestra like many advanced countries throughout the world enjoy.

In 2002 while I was still a permanent member of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra I approached MSO management with an idea to form a training orchestra under the auspices of MSO. The idea had support from former MSO Chief Conductor Markus Stenz, members of MSO management and a number of my MSO colleagues. We worked hard to build Melbourne’s first professional training orchestra to ‘bridge the gap’ between youth orchestras and the profession. Over the next ten years my team and I organised dozens of large scale projects for Australia’s pre-eminent young musicians under the name of The Orchestra Project. We received no government funding and relied on goodwill initially from the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and the Australian National Academy of Music. Hundreds of musicians that have played in our projects would still testify that The Orchestra Project was, like the Australian Youth Orchestra, one of their most memorable experiences whilst still a student musician. Many of these musicians now occupy full time and casual positions with Australian and international ensembles.

If we look at world’s best practice models to assist with building a domestic orchestra academy then I believe that the New World Symphony Miami model is a blueprint we could replicate in Australia to provide the very best opportunities to Australian students, and something that may be attractive to international musicians given our positioning in the Asia Pacific region.

We need to address the inadequacies in primary and secondary school music learning in Australia. We are way behind the Americas, Asia, Europe and Scandinavia in this area. If compulsory music studies were part of the Australian
school curriculum, alongside the priorities of numeracy, literacy and sport we may see a marked improvement in the scholastic levels of young Australians. Music incorporates numeracy, literacy, sound, expression, thinking, analysis, comprehension, beauty, emotions and a host of other elements that contribute positively to society and a clever society at that. Asia understands this and as was pointed out to me during my visit to New York, there are millions of Chinese children that currently play an instrument. Millions! It was quipped to me, that if you see a child in Beijing walking home from school that doesn't have a violin or clarinet case in their hand, it probably means that they are a pianist. Australian Education MPs need to be convinced of this fact as a matter of urgency and include music studies in the National Curriculum.

And lastly it has been my long held view that Australian professional orchestras funded by the Australia Council for the Arts, Major Organisations Board (MOB) should direct a portion of their education budgets to youth orchestra training. My experience visiting the San Francisco Symphony confirmed to me, that its relationship with the San Francisco Youth Symphony is something that should be considered by every Australian State and Territory professional orchestra.

When the Australia Council for the Arts was originally set up, Nugget Coombs stated that its purpose was to maintain: “that the best is encouraged and those who produce it are given the greatest opportunity to achieve the highest quality of which they are capable”. Australian musicians who aspire to achieve the highest quality of which they are capable should be given access to world’s best practice models. We have the talent, we have the Australian Youth Orchestra, and we have so many great Australian success stories in music throughout our history. There has never been a more important time for us to be increasingly innovative and astute to ensure that orchestras are not only sustainable but given every opportunity to flourish. (The same observation is perhaps even more pertinent for some of Australia’s troubled conservatoria.) The Symphony Orchestra is after all the most supreme acoustic instrument that requires a very large team of men and women to operate and manage it, and capable of delivering the most beautiful array of sound colour possibilities that any human has yet conceived.

To ensure its sustainability I would also love to see a campaign funded by the Federal Government to promote philanthropy like never before. The public purse is simply not enough. American arts organisations are the recipients of billions of dollars in philanthropy each year and therein lay the key to their success and continued growth. Government money is a smaller part of the pie in the USA whereas in Australia it is by far the largest. Some of Australia’s music institutions are not sustainable under current funding models and at a time when our nation has never been wealthier, a marked increase in philanthropy is the key to funding our current and future programmes so we can, at the very least, keep up with international best practice. Without doubt we have the talent but we also need leadership, innovation and the financial resources to promote and develop our best and brightest.
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