

THE WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA

**THE LANGUAGE OF LEADERSHIP**

Report by - HELENTHERESE GOOD - 2015 Churchill Fellow

THE MR AND MRS GERALD FRANK NEW  
CHURCHILL FELLOWSHIP to explore innovative  
ways for a chamber orchestra  
to enrich the broader community

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Dated

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## Introduction

For 41 years John Wooden was a basketball coach. For all but his first year, his teams won. He enjoyed four perfect seasons (a record), 38 tournament wins in a row (a record), 88 consecutive victories (a record), and ten national championships (a record) with seven successively (a record). People all over the world wanted to know his secret. But Wooden insisted there was no mystery- he merely built a team based on simple principles:

- The star of the team is the team.
- Everyone shares information and contributes to the best of their ability.
- Everyone is acknowledged, especially quiet performers.
- He sought players to make the best team, rather than the best players.

As a violinist and mother of five children, I think a lot about efficiency and efficacy- in my home and in my work. So when I read Wooden's book on leadership (Wooden 2005), I began to wonder how these principles might apply in my own life.

Playing in an ensemble that works within the Western art music tradition (also known as 'classical music') is an activity that has remained essentially unchanged for hundreds of years. Musicians today use equipment that would be quite familiar to a time-traveller from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and workplace practices similarly have not developed in any significant way. Trapped in the bubble of being upholders of a tradition, it is not easy for professional groups to remain fresh, relevant and growing alongside conservative public perceptions, audience expectations and a radically changing society.

One step that has been taken in the twentieth century is for some groups to begin working without a conductor. To the layman, this strange figure that doesn't play an instrument seems to wield enormous power and importance, and in fact, this is correct. Traditional hierarchical structure in an orchestra means that the conductor chooses what, when, who, and how music will be played. So for musicians to move away from this model means a substantial change in how they work. Sometimes a conductor is merely replaced with a leader (often the principal violinist) who fulfils the role in exactly the same way, and additionally plays alongside his or her colleagues. But very occasionally, a group will journey on a different path where each member contributes equally to the creative process.

Working without a conductor is harder because musicians must take complete responsibility for rehearsal and performance execution, but it is therefore all the more rewarding because players have complete ownership of the music-making process.

This utopian ideal is far from easy to manage or develop. Humans are complicated creatures and don't behave as expected. Without definitive direction from a conductor or leader, rehearsals can quickly descend into arguments, power struggles, or petty discontent. Even if a fragile peace does prevail, addressing the global problem that faces each ensemble- to prepare as best as possible for performance with the minimum of rehearsal time- is hampered by the fluctuating dynamics of messy interpersonal relationships.

I wondered if there was another way. Could musicians rehearse without strife, in a situation where each member of the group felt confident that they were contributing significantly to the creative process? Could a basketball coach offer insight to classical performers? And if a group was able to manage or even celebrate their differences, how could they work together meaningfully to connect with and enrich their community? One of the most obvious roles of an ensemble is to offer their work to all listeners, and this becomes especially important for those who cannot easily attend performances, because often they are people whose quality of life is greatly enhanced by music.

Practicalities also consumed me. How could an ensemble survive in this day and age of continuous cuts to arts funding, and minimal public interest, in a country where sport remains king of recreational pursuits? I set off to study groups that were not only surviving, but thriving. For months I travelled, observed, wrote, noticed patterns and anomalies... and this report reviews the journey and offers a best practice model, summarising the most interesting and effective ideas I saw working.

# Executive Summary

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## **Project Description:**

For a number of years, I have played for unconducted orchestras with varying degrees of elation. By examining the rehearsal process of thriving musical groups, I seek to encourage creative growth in my own workplaces, and for other Australian ensembles. Sharing performance ideas and experience with fellow musicians and their supporting staff from across the world can help players from our own country to connect with new audiences.

Additionally, I want to develop a strong passionate musical presence amongst disadvantaged and marginalised people in our community. By enabling observation and interaction with institutions excelling in this area, this project will facilitate such outreach, giving many their first opportunity to experience the joy of live music.

## **A BASIC PRINCIPLE: THE MUSIC COMES FIRST**

The single defining focus of every ensemble and organisation studied encompassed this one idea. "It is IMPERATIVE for engagement that the music is the best possible." (Nina Swan) All decisions and practices of the organisation stemmed from prioritising quality music performance as the source and summit of an ensemble's purpose for existence. "The ensemble must be bullet-proof in order to over-ride situations out of their control." (Crispin Woodhead)

## **Normative Rehearsal Practice**

These are the activities which, when part of the usual rehearsal procedures of an ensemble, produced significantly high results:

- Deliberate creation of a respectful atmosphere and cultivation of communication through civil discourse
- Preparation
- Rotating leadership
- Using a trusted listener
- Reflection

## **Innovative Performance**

- Audiences are seeking an experience, not just passive listening. They also want connection with the performers.
- Curators should seek new relationships between genres, repertoire and human experience to tell a story.
- Musicians are a valuable creative resource.

## **Community Engagement**

- Outreach programs need sensitive presentation skills which are DIFFERENT to traditional stagecraft. Once learnt and practiced, these skills also significantly enhance performance expertise on the concert platform.
- Education programs are most successful when every person on stage actively contributes. Humour is an extremely effective communication tool. Children will listen to all types of music without prejudice.
- With appropriate groundwork and time commitment, it is possible to connect deeply with a smaller community by engaging with amateur musicians, schools, social welfare and health providers.
- When internally motivated to prepare and facilitate outreach programs, players report the experience to be greatly rewarding.

The journey I was privileged to make was life-changing, altering the way I think about playing, rehearsing and presenting music to the community. This new knowledge and experience has implications for training and development in many aspects of musical performance; and it is intended to offer this information to as many tertiary institutions and professional ensembles across the nation as possible. Hardcopy and e-versions of this report will be followed up by personal visits to friends and contacts throughout the industry in each city. Additionally, sections of the report will be submitted to international journals of a more technical nature, in order to spread the knowledge more widely. But as it is well beyond the scope of this document to cover fully all that was learnt, I will be launching a fully interactive website to act as an

information bank and idea exchange hub for the global musical community. This online resource will be available to every group who wants to learn of the insights I gained, not just here in Australia but across the world.

# People, Places, Musical Spaces

(This is the chatty travelogue section: skip to [Part One](#) for the findings of this study)

## New York: Orpheus Chamber Orchestra

I knew I was in a foreign land the minute I stepped off the plane and onto the airport shuttle bus where my fellow passengers were introducing themselves. "Hi, I'm Michelle from Salt Lake City. This is Luke, my husband, and Mary, his wife." It took me a moment. While I had been to America before, I had never visited the east coast of the country and this was the first of many eye-opening moments.

I was in New York to learn from one of the oldest unconduted orchestras in the world- the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. Established nearly forty years ago, many of the original founders still play in the group today. Having experienced the vicissitudes of a performing life together, they have developed an operational process that is different to any orchestra in the world. This method is fully supported in written work, both by the players themselves and outsiders who have come to study the phenomena. I had read the book *Leadership Ensemble* (Seifter 2001) that attempted to transplant the Orpheus concept into a corporate model, but it wasn't until I sat and watched a full set of rehearsals that I began to understand how unique and special this orchestra is because of the way each member is allowed- in fact expected- to contribute through some sort of leadership, whether it be musical, verbal, administrative or with artistic vision. This is a totally different approach to traditional hierarchical system of communication and was amazing to see in practice.

Over two weeks I was drawn into this company, being welcomed with open hearts by performers and support staff alike. They shared so much information with me- from their history and philosophy, to helpful software and touring logistics. The founders of Orpheus have had plenty of opportunity to refine their methods over forty years, and are fluent in communicating about it, so after two weeks of witnessing principal, general and dress rehearsals and several concerts, not to mention many discussions, I felt I had a clear understanding of how the orchestra worked and operated.

What are the distinctive qualities and practices of Orpheus?

1. Advanced groundwork: where scores and parts are sent to players 6 weeks before the season and all players prepare the music in expectation of directing the rehearsal at some point
2. A 'core' rehearsal of principal players alone occurs before a general rehearsal, establishing practicalities like bowing and articulation directions, and setting an interpretive base from which to commence work.
3. Respectful language is consciously used. Civility and trust are valued as operating norms. This sounds simple and obvious but actually takes enormous effort to develop habitual pathways. See [Appendix 1](#) for examples of how Orpheus aim to speak in rehearsal.
4. A balance of exploration vs discipline. While all members may offer their opinion and suggestions, there is a sense of each person having the self-discipline to only do this when necessary, and also of each player being responsible for timekeeping.
5. Active listening- the changed perspective of sitting outside the orchestra offers such valuable insight that rehearsal will not commence without a player moving from their seat to listen from the audience's position.
6. Rotating leadership allows each player the opportunity to develop the skills required; simultaneously making them better followers and building group morale.

Unforeseen weather events changed the schedule a little. The biggest snowstorm to hit New York in thirty years occurred a week into my visit, cancelling rehearsals, closing the subway and even bringing on a civilian curfew. But this girl from the tropics was probably way more excited than appropriate for a national emergency. My first experience of snow was definitely a steep learning curve, and a few days later I even got to ice skate outdoors in Central Park, thus fulfilling a childhood dream.

Once I had ventured through the snowdrifts, the opportunity to speak at length with world-class performers who have a wealth of experience was such a privilege. Their wisdom offers many prospects for growth and development even on a personal level for myself; and has changed the way I think about preparing a piece of music for performance. I was also

really pleased to have visited New York first on this long journey, because witnessing the sheer audacity of the Orpheus rehearsal process then put a lens over the way I viewed other places.

Aside from the utter novelty of being in America: pumpkin-flavoured yoghurt, the cold so intense my wet hair froze, dogs wearing leather slippers to protect their paws from the salt (!), I loved being able to understand every nuance of orchestral conversation. It was a testament to the universal language of music that the way musicians work is remarkably similar all across the world. Particularly fascinating was to witness Orpheus learning for the first time a piece I had just performed and was very familiar with: the *Variations on a Theme of Tchaikovsky* by Arensky. It became apparent that some things are just globally difficult (those harmonics in the coda section!), whilst others can be approached in many different ways.

Orpheus was the most assisted orchestra I visited with over 14 full-time support personnel on staff, not including three players who work as artistic directors for fixed terms. It was here I was surprised to hear that most of these workers in the office also had performance degrees as well as their arts administration qualifications. “What made you decide to change direction (after gaining a degree in double bass performance)?” I asked Ryan Schienbein, Director of Operations. “It’s not a change of direction,” he replied. “I’m still in a creative role.” This was a completely different perspective on management to that of Australia, where training focuses on business subjects like accountancy, advertising, economics and finance.

Having an appropriately trained musician in an administrative role has untold benefits through areas as diverse as intuitive understanding of rehearsal planning, clear comprehension of feedback from festivals and venues, and perhaps most impactful for daily operations, the application of music librarianship skills. “What part of your job is made easier by having extensive performance experience?” I asked in each organisation. Everywhere office staff gazed in astonishment. “Everything!”

### Boston: A Far Cry

In Boston I was lucky that the timing of my travel was so serendipitous to avoid the complete airport shutdown caused by the massive snowstorm the previous week. It was a beautiful day and the public transport system was easily navigated to reach my accommodation in the suburb of Jamaica Plain. Here I was able to enjoy the shortest commute of my life, as the orchestra’s rehearsal studio was just paces away from the house I was staying in. Occupying a shopfront with big picture windows on the main street means that A Far Cry has quite a public presence in the area. It was not an unusual event for passers-by to pause and watch or even enter the room and listen quietly for a few minutes. How delightful it was to see a father bring his baby in a few times to listen and watch at close quarters the intricate music of Penderecki!

If Orpheus might be the forefathers of unconducted ensemble playing, then A Far Cry are their teenage children, many of whom were educated and met each other at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, where Donald Palma, founding bass player of Orpheus provided inspiration through the NEC’s unconducted Chamber Orchestra. In the ten years they have been established, A Far Cry have worked with that model of rotating leadership and ventured further into innovative collaborations and programming- even establishing their own recording label. In contrast to the variety of resources commandeered by the administration of Orpheus, until recently A Far Cry have run their operation without support staff, literally selling tickets minutes before playing on stage. While this gives complete control to the players, and forces a co-operative approach, it takes an enormous toll on the time and energy of musicians. Hence the decision to employ an executive director early in 2016 was taken with great hope and some trepidation.

From an outsider’s perspective this group gives off a strong sense of industriousness. From their carefully structured rehearsal plans to their detailed review systems, I was always aware of the huge amount of work required to put together a concert season. Unlike New York where some musicians had the luxury of time to speak at length, these players were always working before and after rehearsals and even during break times to ensure that nothing- musically or logistically- was left to chance. This highlighted to me the importance of having adequate and appropriate administration to ease the pressure on players. Performing at a high level takes an enormous amount of concentration and focus, and there is precious little energy left afterwards. It is testament to a sheer force of will and strength that A Far Cry has enjoyed such success and growth.

The noticeable characteristics of A Far Cry’s work practices came down to a few salient points:

1. The quality of the music comes first. Every step along the journey is towards this goal.
2. Best preparation ensures easier access to the musical essence of the piece.
3. When the group finds a unified approach to the music, it becomes a transformative experience.
4. Communication and rehearsal methods follow carefully regulated and structured procedures for increased efficiency.
5. The practice of self-reflection was deeply embedded into every level of the orchestra's work.

It was also interesting to see how the culture of the city was receptive to the presence of an orchestra striving for the highest quality of performance. One evening, we attended a special function the Museum of Fine Arts for its highest level donors. The museum not only paid A Far Cry to entertain but also offered them the chance to converse and network with potential philanthropists after the music finished. I have no doubt that this invaluable opportunity would have been seized with gusto, as Jesse, one of the violinists, had just that afternoon told me of an especially lovely performance principle: "Always assume that your audience contains someone with the potential to change your life."

My week with A Far Cry gave insight into a group of people who thought and planned together as much as they played. Their extensive rehearsal techniques were on full display and I was intrigued to observe how each member contributed in different ways to the overall production. It was such an impressive company to see and hear!

### London: Live Music Now

"Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. We are approaching our landing point at Heathrow. Local time is 7.30pm and the weather is not awfully pleasant. It's 7 degrees, raining, unfortunately, and rather windy. Terribly sorry about that."

I didn't require the pilot's profuse apologies at all. If one has to spend a birthday on a plane, then I had already had the best present: three seats to myself for the full 7-hour journey across the Atlantic! The rushed trip from Boston to London was made in order to attend the **Musician Training Day** put on by Live Music Now. This wonderful organisation, founded 35 years ago by Yehudi Menuhin and Ian Stoutzker now has a national presence in the UK and a separate branch in Scotland. It provides music programs for people who cannot normally access live performance, and training for the country's finest young musicians to become superb presenters for these diverse audiences.

On this particular Monday, a wide variety of people gathered to gain some practical tips from John Webb, a composer and animateur with a long history of leading workshops for many arts organisations across the UK. Most participants were part of an established group, with varying degrees of experience under the umbrella of LMN. It was a great opportunity for sharing ideas, and John was a masterful storyteller, steering us through a wealth of practical games, songs and activities all designed to encourage participation and interaction. There was a lot of unexpected singing and dancing, (sorry everyone) but we also had some reflective time to absorb theory as well. The training was purposefully generalised, enabling groups to take whatever was appropriate for their genre and future listeners- some might specialise in early childhood programs, while others work regularly with aged care facilities. It was a great introduction for me.

The next day was a fascinating insight into the administration of Live Music Now. Nina Swann, the Director of Music, kindly allowed me to shadow her in the office for a day. She girded my loins with strong tea and piled pages of history, research, funding know-how, specific projects and the daily administration relevant to musicians onto my lap. As the day passed, Nina brilliantly articulated the philosophy of the organisation and pointed me in the direction of so many resources and relevant people. What was particularly interesting was how her own background as a performer informed her work, backing up the maxim that was becoming so familiar on my journey: that the quality of the music was absolutely essential for effectiveness of any organisation.

Nina told an interesting story about a time when Julian Lloyd Webber (a patron and avid supporter of Live Music Now) sat in on some auditions for musicians to join the scheme. The panel listened to a string quartet and discussed them afterwards. "Lovely," enthused Julian, "They'll be great!" But Nina demurred: "Would you present them at Wigmore Hall?" "Oh, heavens, no" he confessed. Nina was firm. "Then they aren't right for us." She is adamant that the same quality of intention must be present at (say) a Special Educational Needs school as on the concert platform, and that effectiveness of engagement is significantly connected to the abilities of the presenting musicians. I left her office weighed down with files and information- much food for thought and inspiration.

Julian West was one of the people Nina recommended I speak to, and I was so grateful when this vibrant man made time in his busy schedule to speak with me at short notice. If anyone could be courteously accused of having a finger in every musical outreach pie, it would be Julian. As Director of Open Learning at the Royal Academy of Music, he shepherds the Academy students and young graduates through a year-round series of creative projects in schools, hospitals, centres for homeless people, care homes and day centres. He has a long-term association with the charity *Magic Me* that promotes intergenerational arts schemes, with *Music for Life* and *Chamber Tots in the Community* at Wigmore Hall, and many, many other organisations doing similar work. And of course Julian does regular training and development for the musicians of Live Music Now. It would be easy to be overwhelmed by the sheer wealth of experience, knowledge and wisdom of this man, but his humble demeanour and cheerful countenance mean that conversation with Julian is a great pleasure. We met at the Wellcome Collection, an exhibition hall that explores medicine, life and art- three things which together nicely form the basis of music outreach.

In one afternoon, I could never possibly get more than a basic overview of Julian's work, but since meeting him I have read quite a lot of his writing, and he so eloquently encapsulates much I was seeking to understand. (See [Appendix 3](#) for his beautiful insights into playing for dementia patients.) We talked mainly about the training- or more correctly- the **empowering** of professional musicians to become creative leaders, and why making connections in the community this way is important. Again, Julian's voice is particularly relevant because he is a performer himself, and has insight into the tension between striving for technical facility and extrovert presentation versus collaborative contextual work where participants have some control over content.

The primary things I learnt from Julian were:

1. Musicians need encouragement and practical experience to gain confidence in creative leadership, and this is possible from early stages of student training.
2. Templates, where a particular set of games or exercises are used in multiple contexts are often less successful. Instead, build programs that grow from the individual strengths and personal intentions of each musician.
3. Quality of connection is important, but the quality of the music will give the experience increased meaning for players.

Again, Julian was a person who had dozens of resources at his fingertips. His interests and connections seemed boundless- and his generosity in pointing me in new directions was enormous. After actively following up some of the reading he suggested, there still seems months of exploration ahead of me. I left his company delighted, and full of hopes and dreams.

After the longest uber ride in history thanks to the marathon London peak-hour traffic, I finally arrived at the Mapledown secondary school for children with severe and complex learning difficulties in time to see the Morph Trio start playing their first set of jazz. It was great to see in action all the theory I'd spent the last few days absorbing. While I remain in awe of what these hypervigilant teachers and carers do each and every day, the presence of musicians seemed to bring an especially joyful atmosphere to the room. I watched as a boy, tightly curled into a chair at the beginning of the session, relaxed enough over 40 minutes to rest his feet on the floor. Another child stood very quiet and still, and extremely close to the keyboard player, smiling and nodding in time to the music. Others leapt around and vocalised loudly with excitement. Almost everyone in the room was affected in a positive way by the music, and it was so moving to see one or two teenagers ask to try the instruments and enthusiastically play.

Spending the day with the musicians meant that in between watching their interactions for three sets of students, I had time to hear about their considerable experiences playing for Live Music Now. They all agreed that the support of staff at each facility was vital- that music visits weren't just a time for the carers to duck out the back for a quick break. "LMN organises that part for us really well," said Sam the double bass player. It was easy to see how the preparatory and follow-up work done in briefing and debriefing staff allowed musicians to play while those who know the children best could enable their participation. In contrast to other school visits I'd seen, the sessions at Mapledown were mostly music (quite loud), with very little talking; just the occasional introduction and invitation to "show us your best dancing". This allowed people to get used to the sounds- to stand up, or sit down, even roll around! There was a small activity where Sam invited children to control the volume by raising or lowering their hands. By the end, staff were spinning wheelchairs, kids were jumping and singing along, everyone smiling and laughing.

There is clear evidence-based research on the benefits of music in an extensive range of challenging settings, including children in special schools, and older people in care homes. Live Music Now is truly a visionary organisation in its wide-ranging activities: securing funding and financial backing, training and supporting musicians to provide a service of the highest calibre, and then organising thousands of workshops and interactive presentations each year. It was just wonderful to see what is possible when talent and expertise and goodwill are all harnessed together for the public benefit.

## London, Bath, Newcastle: Orchestra for the Age of Enlightenment

The week I spent with the Orchestra for the Age of Enlightenment was truly all-encompassing! It began with attending the illuminating preconcert talk and subsequent performance of Beethoven's Symphony No. 2 with the group conducted by Sir Roger Norrington at the Royal Festival Hall. The concert was SO enjoyable. My first impression was of an incredible softness to the sound, quite different in style to the American orchestras I had recently heard. But the most charming thing of all was the big-hearted spirit shown by the conductor Sir Norrington. He injected lots of humour into the evening, playing his (swivel office) chair for laughs, graciously accepting applause between movements instead of frowning at ignorance of traditional etiquette, and even interacting with the audience during the final work, drawing their attention to virtuosic flourishes and milking the crowd for applause. Together with his informative, off the cuff introduction to a lesser-known composer, listeners were made to feel welcome and included, and we couldn't help but be influenced by his infectious love of the music.

I was still on a high from this exhilarating event when CEO Crispin Woodhead met me the next morning for a wide-ranging discussion about musical leadership, administration and artistic philosophy. The generosity Crispin showed in sharing his far-reaching knowledge and experience was overwhelming, and I left his office hours later with my mind spinning over new ideas. On my way out I was even able to have a brief chat with Andrew McKensington, director of Trusts and Foundations who gave me a primer in fundraising partnerships.

The next day I was fortunate to have some time with Colin Kitchings, founding violist for OAE and now fulltime music librarian. This vital job is a lynchpin in the efficient running of any group, and I was keen to see how a busy orchestra managed the role. Colin describes himself as "an obsessive historian", and he regaled me with stories- and practical information- about the challenges faced and conquered in his work.

Then finally I was able to observe the ensemble rehearse! London orchestras are infamous for employing minimal rehearsal time, and it was sobering to see a program put together in just two days from first practice to performance. The expectation that players will have the full technique necessary (OAE is a baroque orchestra playing on original instruments and bows) and will have already learnt the music is unspoken and enormous, so of course there are implications for the music librarian! There was a strong sense of urgency to get through the material, and the Musical Director (at the harpsichord) was definitely under pressure to be responsible about time-keeping. Rehearsals are therefore much more centred on playing through repertoire, rather than discussing it, and although there are (infrequent) pauses to adjust phrasing or balance, most knowledge about performance practice is assumed already in place. This is not to infer in any sense that the preparation I saw was slap-dash or less than thorough; on the contrary, even for the most informal performance the musicians were still taking time over the tiniest of details regarding tempo, tuning and spirit. Again, it was apparent that the quality of the music was paramount

An orchestra with a national profile like OAE is expected to appear outside the capital city and so the following morning we travelled to Bath on the train. This journey was made such a pleasure by the company of Kati Debretzeni, leader and member of the Player's Artistic Committee. She spoke with real enthusiasm about the curatorial and research aspects of her work, and also the challenges involved in recreating a characteristic sound for the group when working with a large pool of rotating musicians with minimal rehearsal time. As a direct result, she had called this afternoon for the violins to practice initially without the rest of the group, in order to blend the sound a little more easily and tidy up some loose edges.

After the concert at the Bath Assembly Rooms, the following morning saw another long train journey, this time to Newcastle. The beautiful scenery kept me entranced, and I enjoyed chatting to the revolving occupants of the seat beside

me. All were interested in some aspect of the Churchill Trust's work, and I was pleased to tell them that, as UK citizens, they too would be eligible to apply for a Fellowship in their own country! On arrival in Newcastle, it was wonderful to hear the local accents changing, and to try the culinary delights of the northern city. John Holmes, Director of Marketing for the OAE, assured me that a stout pie and mushy peas would go down a treat in the bitterly cold evening, and he was absolutely correct. He also generously shared much of his learning and understanding about publicity in the arts sector while later instructing me on the finer features of local cider- a most informative host.

And so my final evening with the Orchestra for the Age of Enlightenment was spent observing the rehearsal and presentation of their Night Shift program. This late-night, informal concert has become a staple in their calendar, bringing finest quality baroque performance to pub patrons. The shows are full of chatting, humour and interaction with listeners; where each musician is expected to play AND speak- about their instruments or the music, or to answer questions from the audience. They do this really well, drawing parallels between lyrics hundreds of years old to feelings experienced in modern life. The crowd is encouraged to come and go, to visit the bar regularly, to take photographs, and engage with social media. This, along with the charming hospitality of Sir Norrington just days earlier, shows a commitment from the OAE to connecting with their audiences in a really literal sense- and it was completely convincing. I'd definitely go back!

### Glasgow: Scottish Chamber Orchestra

This value of this part of my trip was completely unexpected. Having finished with the OAE in the deepest north of Newcastle on Friday night, and needing to be back in London on Monday, I decided to spend the weekend in Glasgow, visiting an old friend. One of the wondrous things about a life in music is the opportunity for travel, and the friendships that form as a result of working with people who share a similar love of the craft. Nearly 20 years ago, I had participated in a program under the auspices of the Australian Youth Orchestra. A small group (Camerata Australia) had met some counterparts from the northern hemisphere (Camerata Scotland) to rehearse and perform together, touring both Australia and the UK. It was a tremendously exciting adventure, resulting (for myself at least) in many long-lasting friendships, and it was one of these that I sought to renew on my weekend in Scotland.

Much to my surprise, the visit took a totally different turn. Not long into our conversation, my friend Nicola Boag began telling me about a special project she had worked on as a freelance violist for the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. For two years she had been involved in a series of workshops for dementia patients at the Royal Edinburgh Hospital and Ferryfield House, organised through the SCO's Connect/ReConnect program, under the leadership of Dr Jane Bentley. (Interestingly, Dr Bentley is a UK Churchill Fellow and I was to meet her in person a month later in Dundee.) Nicola had found the program profoundly moving and was able to speak at length about her work and the impact of training on her involvement during the second year. Thanks to her careful explanation, I was able to understand exactly how the playing style changes from concert platform to clinical setting, and how musicians learnt to respond to cues from participants.

It was fascinating to hear how she had overcome initial reservations to become an enthusiastic proponent of outreach work. In Australia, it's not common for students focussing on a performance career to have much experience in this type of activity within their formal training. Many say things like "I'm not good enough," or "I can't improvise/play from memory". Without opportunity to experience the empowering force of music in clinical settings, the fear of the unknown can remain with musicians into their adult professional lives and many avoid projects like this as "too hard".

If you say the words "memorise" and "improvise" to classical musicians, especially orchestral veterans, many turn and run for the hills. The primary focus of our training is to enable us to reproduce precisely what is on the page at any time, nothing more, nothing less. And so our work becomes rooted to the score; anything different to that can be quite confronting. Yet the music stand is a huge barrier between the player and the participant for outreach programs, both physically and mentally. When instrumentalists are looking at sheet music, they are not looking at participants for signals. And learning to read these signs and responding to them musically is an important part of an effective interaction. How exactly is this done? A musical reaction is simply varying repetitions of small sections of the music with different speed, volume or sound colours, depending on what seems appropriate to the energy levels of the room. Nicola noticed that despite her inexperience and the strong emotions she was feeling, it soon became intuitive for her to read the 'temperature' of the room and adjust her playing accordingly.

From Nicola I learnt the difference between playing AT someone, playing FOR someone, and playing WITH someone. These are vital differences within the clinical settings of community outreach, and an exploration of diverse ways of playing can greatly assist orchestral musicians develop musical responsivity and nuance.

### Other London Learning:

One of the things that was heavily stressed in the Trust orientation materials was to say 'yes' to every opportunity on the journey. And it was exactly that sentiment that brought about one of the more memorable meetings of my whole trip. As I basked in the sheer sensory pleasure of the Beethoven concert presented by the Orchestra for the Age of Enlightenment, the man in the seat beside me noticed my enjoyment and struck up a conversation. He was very interested to hear about the Churchill Fellowship and I admired his extensive knowledge of the arts. When he invited me to continue this discussion over lunch another day I did not hesitate, thus laying down the foundation for a new and delightful friendship. Mr Felix Appelbe introduced me to the term "Enabler", and I marvelled at what must be such a rewarding profession, connecting and assisting others to achieve their dreams.

Our conversation covered innumerable topics including French composers and their music, humanity's need for a connection with nature, spirituality, and then especially communication; in short, it was utterly enchanting. From Felix, I understood that musicians MUST foster and develop the ability to effectively communicate about their work. Philanthropists (and audiences) in this day and age need more than a mumbled "Thanks" from an artiste with no social skills. As musicians, our voices are the most effective in sharing messages of (among other things) historical context, anecdotal amusement and insights into practical performance issues. The public is not just interested in what we do, but what we think, and they don't necessarily want a substitute like program notes or a preconcert speaker to act as an intercessory in that conversation. The most striking engagement comes from performers who can play like angels, AND convey their passion articulately before or afterwards over a cup of tea; listeners will happily pay for this and benefactors will appreciate it as a return on their investment.

Felix told me the story of the day a young man with a guitar came to see him. His father was a distant friend and had asked Felix to consider sponsoring him. "What do you want to do?" he asked. The young man said that he wanted to play 300 gigs a year to maximise exposure with the aim of getting a recording contract. "Ok," said Felix, "Let's hear what you can do." The young man duly demonstrated his talents and was quite impressive. He was sent off with instructions to work hard and shoot for the stars. The pair met frequently and a year later the young man came back with a contract. But the solicitor in Felix took one look and tore it up. "Keep trying, I think you can do better than this," he encouraged. The young man continued on his gruelling gig schedule and in return gave his sponsor some guitar lessons. By the end of the second year a record company had come to the party and in this way, Felix Appelbe became the second person in the world to learn the chords of *Thinking Out Loud*. His young man with the guitar had indeed reached for those stars and grabbed them, selling out Wembley Stadium five nights in a row... because his name was Ed Sheeran. The support of this 'Enabler' meant the talent of a musician could reach many, but it wasn't just a one-way relationship. Pragmatic backing (like marriage) is made so much easier for both parties if the relationship is nurtured with commitments of time and communication.

Another surprise meeting of my Churchill trip occurred simply because of geographic serendipity. A great advantage when creating an arts hub in a city is the cross-pollination of ideas and connections that can occur when people are working in close proximity. It wasn't until I went to the offices of Live Music Now in the basement of Kings Place in London, (incidentally this building is also the home of the Orchestra for the Age of Enlightenment) that I saw the sign for Music in Detention. Intrigued, I immediately contacted them and was so lucky that Katie Bruce, one of the program co-ordinators could meet with me.

Despite the lack of notice, Katie gave me an extremely thorough briefing of the work of her organisation, which offers programs for eleven immigration detention centres throughout the UK. She talked about how their participatory model was not just between musicians and detainees, but also included small groups from local communities located near each centre. Despite only meeting through the medium of music, the young/elderly/homeless or visually impaired shared their experiences of marginalisation with the detainees via the musicians who acted as go-betweens. The local people subsequently found that they could enter the immigration debate on a human level, with some significant changes of attitude recorded.

Katie also outlined the whole process involved in setting up such a program and had lots of practical advice based on her experiences. She followed up my visit with emails full of more information and even stories from the group of people whose voice has very little opportunity to be heard. The recordings of these Music in Detention sessions offer a tangible positive memento for detainees to keep, and for some, it is the single part of their current situation that causes them pride. Many of the tracks are available for public access on the MID website [here](#) and make for powerful listening. While each country is different, there are significant parallels to the immigration situation here in Australia, and programs such as this could offer small rays of hope in an otherwise dark place. I remain very grateful to Katie for her improvised and enthusiastic tutorial!

### Edinburgh: Live Music Now

This visit to Edinburgh was literally a flying one- with breakfast and supper provided by British Airways. (Returning home I was certainly glad to see an end to those elderly croissants.) The day was punctuated by superb music from Cherrygrove, a traditional Scottish group, and conversations with brilliant educators and international representatives of Live Music Now. But surely the highlight was meeting the indefatigable Carol Main, Director of Live Music Now, Scotland. This lady may be short of stature but her deeds and energy and ideas tower over many of us. As she ushered me into the LMN office (her dining room) and opened a box of extravagant Christmas biscuits over a huge pot of tea, I felt so welcomed into her world. But these gentle beginnings hid the bombardment of information I was to receive over the next few hours.

Carol spoke passionately about some very special and successful projects LMN Scotland had commissioned, and then about the training pathway she had instigated to shore up the future of her organisation with experienced musicians. She was full of practical advice and stories about the history of the charity as she served morning tea to myself and two Live Music Now musicians visiting from Europe; all the while answering the telephone, replying to urgent emails and locating resources, contacts and documents to share with me. Then we all squeezed into her car to be driven at breakneck speed across the city to a preschool. It was like being in the presence of a benign cyclone.

We were off to mingle with toddlers and professors at the launch of a CD which was the collaboration between the musicians of Live Music Now Scotland, the little children of Leith and the Scottish Book Trust. This latter organisation blooms under the care of its visionary director, Marc Lambert, and is responsible for **every child born in Scotland** receiving a bag of books, activities and traditional music at the age of 18 months, 3 years, and 5 years. (More information about this wonderful project [here](#)). The [Traditional Tunes for Tiny People](#) project saw the musicians going into special schools and early years centres across Scotland, and leading a series of participatory workshops with the children and their carers. The highlights were recorded and the resulting CD was now being launched and added to the book bags. It was a fantastic example of musicians working within their local communities, using their skills to enrich a very wide group of people.

Carol's time as Director of Live Music Now Scotland has seen her oversee a number of ground-breaking projects doing this very thing, where musicians gathered information about a community to create new music for repertoire. This imbues great meaning into subsequent performances, both for players and listeners alike; and illustrates beautifully her philosophy that ***musicians should invest in relationships***.

From Carol I also learnt the value of appropriate documentation of projects, and this backed up Nina Swann's dogged insistence on the engagement of professional photographers at LMN events. It is absolutely true that a picture tells a thousand words, and for programs like these, serious evaluation reports and proposals need beautifully produced publicity materials like videos and photographic stills to stir even the most reluctant funding bodies.

I left Edinburgh in awe of the work being done by Carol and her team at Live Music Now Scotland. After more than thirty years of work, they have enriched their country enormously, and it was a wonder to behold.

### Oslo: Norwegian Chamber Orchestra

As my plane flew over the pine forests of Norway, I truly felt I had travelled to the other side of the planet. So much snow and ice! Oslo: the place where people stood at tramstops with skis and wore leg warmers in a non-ironic sense. Oslo, that strange mix of medieval and brutalist architecture where the townsfolk took a Sunday afternoon walk ON the harbour. Oslo, where the station of arts in the nation's consciousness was also a foreign experience.

Imagine if the Commonwealth Bank of Australia decided that it wanted the arts to be stronger presence in its image and brand perception. Imagine then that the bank moved out of its Sydney or Melbourne headquarters (a heritage-listed edifice

in the centre of the CBD) and spent one hundred million dollars refitting the building into a concert hall, recital spaces with state-of-the-art technology for sound and lighting, rehearsal rooms filled with natural light, a glamorous restaurant, office space for the administrative staff of every arts company in town, and then filled it with art and sculpture, making it a place of great beauty and creative energy. And then imagine the bank gifting this cultural centre to the people of Australia, handing it over in a week of joyful music and dance productions and (of course) great media presence.

To have that sort of support for the arts in Australia would be a dream come true. Incredibly in Oslo, it was no fantasy. I arrived in the middle of that week and my jaw never really left the ground. On my first day, the Norwegian Chamber Orchestra was in the middle of the move into their new offices- boxes of music and office equipment everywhere, hundreds of tradesmen still drilling, hammering, wiring, and oh, installing a kitchen downstairs; an incredible hive of activity as the first concert was in 48 hours and the official opening was just five days away. It was complete chaos, and yet everyone was so excited and happy! The musicians were entering the new rehearsal rooms for the first time and were trying out the acoustics, management were on their hands and knees, plugging printers into hallway sockets.... and, predictably, the lift was not working for the arrival of the many grand pianos that would inhabit the halls.

Understandably, I was happy to sit in the corner and observe everything. People would stop in their busy-ness and chat, and I was honoured that Pelle Larsen, the Managing Director, took the time to explain about the orchestra's origins and structure, and to introduce me to the other staff and musicians. I had come to Norway because this unconduted group has a long history of excellence- I owned many of their recordings, and the arresting videos of their more recent work under the direction of violinist Terje Tønnesen were gaining a lot of attention on the internet. I was keen to hear about Terje's philosophy on performance and was lucky enough that he generously shared many hours of his time to do so. It was especially interesting to hear of his work with Bud Beyer, whose thoughts on the performance of music are truly radical.

Musically, too, it was an unusual week for the orchestra. Stephen Isserlis, one of the finest cellists in the world, was visiting and would direct the group in rehearsal and concert. Turning the pages of his music while he played remains one of the geeky highlights of my trip! While perhaps this type of work was not quite the style I wanted to focus upon, to sit (literally) at the feet of a musician of the highest calibre was an opportunity to learn from an old-school master, and I lapped it up.

However, it was a striking contrast watching this type of rehearsal after being immersed in the work of self-directed groups. There was a slight sense of passivity and reactivity- of the orchestra not entirely owning the musical gesture or character. (This is a bit like the difference between riding on a horse, or pulling one tethered behind.) Of course, the superb musicians ensured that their reaction time was infinitesimal, even in the earliest rehearsals, but it was still faintly noticeable. Their minds are only engaged in "copy precisely" mode, as opposed to having a communal, internal direction. Leaders must therefore work harder to ensure that their vision of the work is physically and audibly evident. It can be a paralysing situation, especially in slow, painstaking rehearsals, where interpretation might seem to be dragged out note by note, phrase by phrase. Over a period of preparation in this style, the collective spark of musical imagination is replaced with a flicker of fear; fear of being a tiny bit wrong, or late, or just not quite perfect. And for some audience members, that fear is palpable. It infects the listener and detracts from the pure energy and enjoyment of the music. In an ideal world, the charisma of the leader inspires with joyful discipline, rather than galvanising players through apprehension.

An absence of musical ownership in a group also affects preparation process. Unusually, in this particular week, no-one had taken responsibility for getting the Director's markings and transferring them into the instrumental parts (the NCO does not employ a separate music librarian per say). The Norwegian musicians were actually playing from a different edition to Maestro Isserlis, and this took up quite a lot of rehearsal time to match bowing and articulation in the intricate works of Haydn and Mozart. Of course, the players were completely professional in their attitude, and quickly altered their music to have the correct markings, but I wondered how this might be an issue if rehearsal budgets were tighter....

And speaking of generous support, a lunchtime conversation with the administrative staff of NCO was very telling: During the course of our meal, I asked if the orchestra was ever involved in any community outreach, like playing for care homes or hospitals? The staff looked at me blankly. "No, not really. We just do concerts and festivals." "Yes. Of course," I hurriedly assured them, trying to avoid any perceived offence. "I just ask because some of the other places I am visiting do a bit of this type of work." They stared. "Why would we play in hospitals? They already have their own musicians. There is music in

hospitals here every day.” Then it was my turn to stare. The benefits of a Nordic social democracy dangled, tantalisingly beyond my reach.

Adequate funding does more than keep arts present in society. There was a great sense from all people in the company of being involved in useful work for the good of society, with no apologies needed. Each person happily did all that was required for their job without resentment or stress because they were being paid and resourced appropriately, and there was a generosity of spirit which created a tangible atmosphere of goodwill. This security then enables the orchestra to explore music in new ways, and their creative philosophy is intriguing. The Norwegian Chamber Orchestra is actively seeking to be unlike all other musical groups, to present things differently, and to point out new possibilities. They see their task as one of keeping the traditions of classical music alive, yet to approach it “on the diagonal”. But this does not mean chasing novelty at the expense of musicianship; on the contrary, they seek to delve deeper into pieces, working on them for long stretches of time to become intimately familiar with every nuance. It is with great curiosity and interest that I look forward to seeing and hearing their future performances.

### [Glasgow, Inverness, Dundee: Scottish Ensemble](#)

It is the utter softness of Scotland that is so beguiling; the low sky, the muted colours of spectacular wilderness, the burr of accent that makes an Antipodean heart flip. I was thrilled to finish my Churchill journey in this place that was full of passion and warmth, where the welcoming correspondence with the Scottish Ensemble had made me so excited about accompanying the group on one of their City Residencies. This innovative model of touring and connecting with a wider community had captured my attention some time ago. In Australia because of the tyranny of geography, it’s particularly important to get our artists and performers out of the capital cities and into rural communities who are chronically under-resourced. One common way of doing this is to prepare one or two programs and fly/bus (often over very long distances), playing in a different town each night over a period of week or two. It’s expensive and exhausting- and puts a lot of pressure on the rural audiences to be there on the night or miss out, with possibly no alternative options for months.

Over the last few years, the Scottish Ensemble have followed a different path. They found that it was easier to create a sense of community in smaller towns by staying in one place for 4 or 5 days, experimenting with different playing formats out of the context of the concert hall. There might be chamber music in someone’s ~~chamber~~ lounge room, or Shostakovich in the shopping mall, the Holberg Suite in a hostel, or sea shanties on the seafront. For coming seasons, they plan to work closely with resident authorities, targeting a different focus group each day; including youth and education programs, social care, and collaborating with local arts organisations. In some places this deeper connection with ordinary lives of people has resulted in a 100% increase in audience numbers for more standard concerts! It was remarkable to see the rich and varied activities the group was involved in, coming in contact with a huge number of people in different venues across Inverness and Dundee through ‘pop-up’ performances, coaching sessions and free community appearances.

This group was the smallest I visited, and perhaps the most tightly-knit. Just twelve musicians along with four support staff form the company, and there was a palpable sense of pastoral care towards the musicians, and deep trust of management. It was particularly lovely to witness the nurturing and inclusive leadership of Jonathon Morton, who aside from being a brilliant violinist, exhibited so many of the effective communication and interaction skills that I had been thinking about. For example, a magnificent exchange took place in a workshop for an orchestra of teenagers: After asking a question, and being given a blatantly incorrect answer, Jonathon gallantly replied: “That’s a surprising answer to me,” and went on to demonstrate a more appropriate response. There was no occasion for embarrassment or belittlement at all, and this manner continues at a professional level. In such a small group as the SE, individual strengths become powerful tools for the orchestra to employ in specific situations- school workshops, or hospital bedsides, for example; and Jonathon quietly celebrates each player as they contribute to the best of their ability.

Another joyful event was meeting Dr Jane Bentley in person. After reading so much of her writing and hearing all about her work in Glasgow, it was fantastic to get the information straight from the horse’s mouth (so to speak) as she briefed the SE musicians prior to visiting the paediatric wards. In a marvellous co-incidence Dr Bentley was just about to depart on her own Churchill Fellowship so we exchanged a few travel tips and addresses to keep in contact.

The warm bonds of the Scottish Ensemble belie their completely serious approach to the preparation of the music and it was heartening to witness their careful crafting of each piece on the program. The incredible improvisational skills of the piano soloist for the season, Gabriela Montero, provided jaw-dropping moments of entertainment, and it was also very

interesting to hear about their cross-art projects involving architecture, dance, visual artists and newly commissioned works. This orchestra is on an obvious upward trajectory and I can't wait to see what they do next!

# Part One: Rehearsals- Communication, Normative Practice and Specific Tools

Traditional hierarchy, whether it is used in orchestras, corporate offices or the military, is used to influence people to comply, not to think, and this causes people to feel marginalised. The often-cited study *Life and Work in Symphony Orchestras* (Allmendinger, Hackman and Leyman 1996) places the job satisfaction of orchestral musicians below government economists and federal prison guards. On the surface this seems extraordinary- after all, aren't these same people following life-long dreams to be involved in the production of art? But deeper examination provides more insight:

Jobs in orchestras are rare. A city can only sustain a limited number of groups working, and each of those ensembles only employ a set number of musicians; because unlike other industries, orchestral frameworks just cannot expand to employ more people, no matter how successful. The music determines how many people are required. So when a job is advertised, there can be dozens- in some places even hundreds- of applicants for one position. Competition is intense and orchestras can afford to be choosy. To get a job, players must demonstrate effortless technique, superb musical decision-making, and that they can work reliably under enormous pressure: all skills that take years of concentrated study to develop. In essence, on the day of the audition a musician has to be the finest in the profession: as quick and knowledgeable as any CEO. But then the minute this person begins on their first day, any decision about the way they work is immediately taken from their hands and put into the conductor's. For all intents and purposes, the extremely competent musician becomes almost like data entry worker. So then after years of being unable to express independent musical thought in their work, it is understandable that some players become frustrated and cynical.

But even with the best of intentions (see: marriage!), communication can break down and working relationships can become dysfunctional. "People need to be taught to work together-it's a human myth that we all just get along", says Nicola, a musician from Scotland.

And so, for this reason it was particularly wonderful that the first orchestra I visited was the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra in New York, a group that has thought a lot about the way they speak to each other in rehearsal.

## Normative Rehearsal Practice

### Communication and Interaction Skills

The intentional creation of a culture where communication and respect are established norms is something that will assist any workplace to grow and develop to its highest potential. Orpheus players deliberately cultivate a way of speaking- literally a series of phrases- that assist the rehearsal process to be as smooth and efficient as possible. (See [Appendix 1](#)) The key word here is "deliberately". Effective communication techniques do not always come naturally, but with investment of time and energy give enormous benefits in employee satisfaction and production.

Further to this, after studying engagement principles in a number of fields, a superb framework on which to base communication has emerged from those who work with the frailest and most sensitive members of our community. Professor Tom Kitwood was a pioneer in the field of dementia care, and based his philosophy on a 'person-centred' approach; quite simply: treat others the way you yourself would like to be treated. This is far from a new idea, but when his principles are applied to rehearsal room behaviour, it is revelatory. (Kitwood 1997) The principles are as follows:

1. **HOLDING:** Aim to create a safe psychological space so that people understand that even if they make a mistake, whether musical or other, they will still be welcome to contribute. Even better: there are no right or wrong answers, just alternatives that may be more appropriate in different circumstances. Actions and words (courtesy of the Orpheus players) that strengthen this atmosphere include:

- Recognition: acknowledging and affirming individuals without prejudice. Looking someone straight in the eye when first meeting them each day, giving positive contact through conversation or just a smile.
- Validation: acknowledging another's emotions and feelings **and responding to them**.
- Empathy: going beyond one's own frame of reference to try to understand a situation from other's point of view. What's it like to be at the back of the section all the time? How does it feel to have everyone relying on you for an entry?

- Giving: offering one's own work openly and honestly with highest integrity. Allowing vulnerability: "Is it ok if I play it this way?" "Just listen to me for a moment and tell me if I'm too fast"
- Receiving: accept contributions of others with humility. "I take it back! I was wrong!" "Are we late here?" "That's a surprising answer"
- Abstention: not leaping in to solve a problem. (After a long discussion) "Concertmaster, what do you think?" "I agree with you, that's why I didn't chime in".

2. **CREATION**: Giving encouragement for all (including self) to unite life skills to make something new (perform a piece for the first time) or solve a problem (like getting the ensemble perfectly together). Ronnie Bausch says: "We give each other permission to criticize but that is within the context of ALL of us trying to get the best result, not about winning or losing."

- Flexibility: the ability to alter course if needed, from the smallest of technical details to the largest activities. "Let's try it both ways" (this was said 43 times in one 3-hour rehearsal)
- Negotiation/Consultation: allowing choice, waiting for answers, not assuming. Explaining wishes, negotiating outcomes. "How do you guys feel about that?" (another day) "Can you guys lead from the back? When I lead from up here I end up ahead of everyone."
- Collaboration: working together to achieve a definite aim. "Let's take all these suggestions on board and start from the top, but not get bogged down with details." "That's in the right direction...you know what? I think we can listen to it one more time."
- Facilitating: discernment and observational skills are needed by any leader to help each person help others. Not forcing, but responding to and finding a place for each person's contribution. "I think that's a good point, let's try it." "I love your comment." "That's a really good question." "You both sang it exactly the same way, but you used different words to describe it."
- Play: the nicest way to achieve a goal, creating/allowing spontaneity and fun to get things done, not personally fighting for something. The use of humour is an excellent way to break tension. (While tuning) "Sorry to take time" "Not at all. It's always informative." (later between friends) "Sorry- I didn't mean to isolate you." "That's ok, I'll remember- it's not the first time." (totally deadpan- the orchestra cracks up). "Those notes on the third beat sounds a little rushed." "Well, we're excited about them". "I know! I'm excited too!" (much laughter)
- Relaxation: allowing respite; quiet time together with no agenda. This is where the advantage of socialising together in a small way, like sharing a meal away from the pressures of the season can greatly assist in building morale.
- Celebration: it additionally boosts group spirits to share moments of satisfaction or joy on a personal or broader life

### **The Too-Hard Basket?**

The use of playful humour to break tension is an important and vital part of a human approach to rehearsal, but this is totally different to 'blue', or 'adult' humour. There is no place for double entendre, openly suggestive comments or coarse language in the rehearsal room. It is indicative of an immature personality, is unprofessional and adds absolutely nothing to the work process.

Further to this, players no matter how brilliant need appropriate mentoring in rehearsal etiquette. Patterns of disruptive or inappropriate behaviour need to be modified through strong leadership early on in order for rehearsal equilibrium and efficiency to be maintained. This is most effective when done by an experienced director (not necessarily the section principal): quietly, away from the group and in private; not apologetically, but clearly and unequivocally. This is as much for the musician's benefit as the orchestra's- otherwise the player will get a reputation for being difficult to work with.

Another very difficult concern that ensembles face is maintaining standards of professional competency. It is vital that there are clear thresholds, and set processes in place for what happens when those lines are crossed. Frank conversations need to occur between players and **trained management** (not section leaders) before a crisis occurs. "Here is the problem, here is what we can do to help you, please engage with this." It is a frightening issue, but ignoring it is a mistake and will only lead to increased emotional, monetary and legal stress over time

level; specifically, not just musical triumphs, but also rejoicing in individual attainments.

While communication and interaction skills have a profound effect on the rehearsal room, there are other ways that the making and crafting of music was made paramount to all of the ensemble's activities.

#### Preparation:

"You **can't** play uncondacted without prior preparation" (Ryun Schienbein, Director of Operations, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra). Rehearsals are expensive and should be for valuable exploration- not for learning a work. It was very clear that players in the most successful ensembles were totally familiar with the entire score from the very first moment they gathered together. So how does this come about?

1. Music availability: personal practice copies were made available to players a minimum of four weeks before the first rehearsal (most common timeframe was 6 weeks). Players report that it is extremely helpful when principals send thorough bowings and other pertinent notes (for example, *sul* or divisi markings). For contemporary / complex music important cues should be in parts before the first rehearsal.
2. Score availability: the expectation of constant use suggests one per stand, provided by the orchestra. Why is it important to work with full scores? "In an uncondacted orchestra, it is the player's job to know what everyone else is doing at any given time, so that you have this expanded consciousness of the music. Everybody has to have that. The degree of success of the performance is directly dependent on how well everybody sees the big picture."
3. Stylistic research: every work, regardless of period, requires historically informed practice (HIP), with the emphasis on being informed. Consider each work contemporary and investigate with the forensic detail that would be applied with the composer present. For example, when preparing Arensky's *Variations on a theme of Tchaikovsky*, one player had researched not only the original song, but also the original poem in order to ascertain sentiment nuance. Research about the context of the work informs decisions on articulation, colour and tempo. When only one person in the group has done this study, a lot of rehearsal time is spent on getting the message across to others, leaving less time for playing together and even less opportunity for artistic exploration.
4. Personal commitment: All players assume responsibility for bringing entire work together- not just their own part. No-one 'turns off' if the section being rehearsed is not about them. This way, there might be vision about many different aspects: dynamic levels, or articulation, or ensemble, or the overall 'spirit', rather than just one aspect dominating the discussion. It does put pressure on those playing to take in a lot of instructions... but invariably the rehearsal moves on a lot quicker than having to regain the attention of the full group.
5. Principal rehearsals before general rehearsals exponentially increase efficiency and quality of work. Frank Morelli says: "In the early days, strings would (rightfully and needfully) talk about bowing for 20-25 minutes. We woodwind players would do a crossword and then get into trouble for not paying attention. These forward rehearsals with principals save an incredible amount of time. We couldn't do without them now." Ronnie Bausch adds: "These core groups formulate one interpretation of a piece. It's not necessarily *the* interpretation. Sometimes it's just a starting point." (Seifter 2001, 92)

#### Time Management

The tyranny of time is a global problem facing every professional ensemble, and effective time management in rehearsal is a fundamental way towards improvement of the finished product- the music. Annie Rabbart from A Far Cry clarifies: "As for structuring tutti rehearsal, I think it helps for the (Director) or principals to develop an outline. (Regarding) both how much time on tricky passagework and how to build things up in the bigger picture, I notice we do best when the tutti is engaged, when we don't get stuck on a place or detail but rather look for evolution."

Having a clock that is clearly visible to all encourages every player to be responsible about time. Orpheus musicians constantly referred to theirs in order to make most use of every minute. Phrases heard when observing rehearsal included: "We only have 30 more minutes, so if you need to check more notes the score is here; but we still need to do the last movement."

"There are 11 minutes left, let's go back and do some slow work on the tarantella (a fast movement)."

"These are questions for the whole group to consider, but we are meeting now to rehearse difficult string parts, so let's come back to this another time."

"We'll do a full run-through at the end, so that gives us 2 hours to work on each of the four movements."

“We only have 20 minutes to finish this section AND do the finale. We **have** to keep moving.”

“We are starting the run-through in 12 minutes.”

“We have two minutes left - actually, it’s closer to one minute.”

“Consider your Arensky colleagues!” (referring to players for the next piece who need their allotted rehearsal time, so don’t bleed into it!)

“Sorry, we are out of time.” The player directing this piece stands up and the music dissolves almost as soon as it commences.

It was also interesting to note the respect for rehearsal time shown by the Orpheus players. Nearly half the orchestra were present at the venue half an hour beforehand- warming up, checking scores with the composer, setting music out, string principals doing mini-rehearsals. Tuning started at 1:54pm and actual rehearsal on the dot of 2pm.

Having a clear structure for the rehearsal, and agreed goals for the use of that time is helpful. The clock visible to all means that one person cannot derail proceedings with their own agenda. Then all members will find it easier to show the same degree of self- discipline to work efficiently.

### Rotating Leadership

As discussed earlier, it is often to seek autonomy in their work that players come together without the conductor in a chamber music setting. And yet, if one player then takes on that leadership role in the same way a conductor would work, the risk of general disengagement or dissatisfaction remains possible. Even the most talented and charismatic director still must rely on external forces of motivation (the carrot and the stick) in order for their personal vision of the music to be upheld. Admittedly, the power of ego makes this possible, but it is hard, uphill work.

In one place I watched closely as one of the greatest instrumental soloists in the world painstakingly directed a rehearsal, sometimes feeding the orchestra three or four pieces of information about a single note. This took a huge amount of energy and time, with lots of talking and not much playing. The professionalism of the players ensured that the time it took for them to apply these instructions was minimal, but this type of music-making is passive and reactive, and (to be honest) scary. No-one owns the gesture or musical character, and the pressure not to step out of line (as opposed to create music) is immense. The players were polite and precise in their obedience, but the energy in the room told a different story.

So what? Why does it matter if some people are feeling underappreciated or underutilised? Because it profoundly affects the process of creation and the end product. “When educated, creative, talented, motivated and experienced employees are consistently locked out of meaningful leadership roles- whether goal setting, prioritising, or performance evaluation- the entire organisation suffers.” (Seiffter 2001, 88) Think about all those years of study each musician brings to any ensemble: only using their performance skills (as opposed to rehearsal, curation and communication skills, not to mention areas of special expertise like contemporary techniques or baroque performance) is tantamount to ignoring a wealth of corporate wisdom. And if every effort should be made to ensure the quality of music produced is as high as possible, then surely rotating leadership should be considered.

In Boston, musicians in A Far Cry (an orchestra heavily influenced by Orpheus) appoint a “spoke” for each piece- someone who acts as the centre of information about historical, cultural, musical context of the music, and whose research informs even the planning of rehearsal time allocated. This person might be the double bass player, or the lead violist and their artistic vision provides a starting point for the group’s work. They often also act as a time-keeper in rehearsals of the piece, ensuring the ensemble stays focussed and efficient.

In workplaces like this where each person feels valued, they are thus enabled to give and share information freely, giving enormous benefits for any organisation. “An individual without information cannot take responsibility; an individual who is given information cannot help but take responsibility”. (46) An immediate benefit of having players take turns in leadership positions is that they develop better following skills. Engagement in rehearsal preparation is greater, and a greater spread of power minimises small resentments and improves morale. The orchestra is greatly strengthened by having many players who can step in to any role and this diminishes professional risk for the company. Having a rotational position policy thus also influences any recruitment process.

## Changed Perspective: Using and Trusting an Outside Listener

In New York, I wasn't surprised to see players leave their seats and walk out to the front to listen to the rehearsal; after all, it is a common technique to clarify volume levels and other balance issues. But what was startling was the realisation that Orpheus consider this outside listener so important that they insist on using one for 100% of rehearsal time. Each player is expected to act as the listener at some stage of the rehearsal- even the leader- and their opinion is regularly sought. When this person also has reference to a score they become particularly valuable for quick problem solving, as an outside listener hears what players can't and gives an immediate response. In the picture here, Ronnie sits out and reads the score while the group plays and he then will later tell them of his impressions. This type of feedback is so highly valued that when it came to the important concert in Carnegie Hall, the ensemble was happy for several players to go out and listen, even though the programme had been performed at least three times that week.

An outside listener saves the orchestra money that might be spent on recording equipment and speakers. Their time is not wasted in otherwise practising something that is not effective.

## Reflection: Experience is a great teacher

From Socrates uttering "the unexamined life is not worth living" to Confucius' dictum to "study the past if you would define the future", humans have realised the value of reflection for thousands of years. And yet how many ensembles embrace a philosophy of regular consideration of work practices? As corporate administrative methods creep into the arts, we are becoming familiar with formal evaluations and reviews, but there can be some merit in having the practice of reflection encultured, so that it becomes a first response to any situation musicians encounter.

It can start on a most intimate and personal level, Annie Rabbat says. "When I'm leading I love to study the score and **journal** about my observations. I notice more and make more connections and then find my practice and interpretation solidify faster and more enjoyably." On a daily and weekly level, the musicians from A Far Cry constantly re-assess their rehearsal schedule to ensure that work is proceeding in a timely and appropriate manner. Jesse Irons described how this was especially important in the middle of a season when a commissioned work arrived and was far too long and difficult to incorporate and perform professionally in the program. Advertising concert repertoire as "subject to change" gave the ensemble leeway to move the premiere to another occasion.

The orchestra goes "on retreat" together twice a year to review and check issues that are needing attention. Everything from interpersonal relations to office space leasing, structuring of rehearsals and grant applications are up for discussion, in a carefully organised three days designed to give a 'big picture' understanding to each member. With historically no administrative staff (their first manager was appointed in January 2016 after ten years of operation), it has been critically important for A Far Cry to be fully aware of the state of their affairs and to administer checks and balances as needed. But an ensemble with support staff can also benefit from regular reflection.

Setting up and nurturing a regular framework of feedback loops helps to efficiently identify and safely dialogue about what is working and what is not. This increases effective work processes and saves the company money when it can course correct easily. But it is not enough to constantly reflect and review things. Our attitudes as musicians and administrators also need to be open to adjustments. Re-evaluation becomes purposeful when change is not seen as a threat, and having this as a central ethos is helpful for progress and (ironically) stability. "But we've always done it like this!" is surely the most stultifying phrase in any environment. In our fragile clinging to existence, classical music ensembles would do well to view growth as a result of re-assessment and subsequent alteration of work practices.

## Specific Rehearsal Techniques

After weeks of observing rehearsals in a variety of different groups and countries, the following list represents a compilation of the most common and effective ways of practicing.

### **Use Every day:**

- The language of mutual respect and civil discourse.

- Positive demonstrations- be careful about what is remembered in discussion. “Play it like this\_\_\_”, as opposed to “Don’t do \_\_\_”.
- Discipline balanced with exploration: All players must be responsible for time keeping, and for the preparation of the entire work; along with the self-discipline to know when to speak up and when to keep quiet. Exploration should occur with respect and full intent.
- Always be considering the SPIRIT or character of the music and listen. This is quicker and easier than examining intricate details of articulation, tempo and dynamics. Karen Tuttle was a legendary viola teacher at Peabody, Curtis and Julliard, and influenced many of the Orpheus founders with her use of descriptive words to inform performance. Her document which hung on the walls of countless studios appears as [Appendix 2](#).
- Balance detailed work with running through longer sections. The latter gives a sense of flow. A full run to start the working process may not be as helpful as one (or a large part of one) a day or two before the show.

### **Use Most Days:**

- Posture makes a difference. The torso is the centre of human energy. If it is facing out and upwards, the sound will be directed there.
- Eyes up. The best chamber ensembles look at each other, not the music. Consider if the use of pencils in rehearsal increases looking at the score rather than colleagues. Try going without their use to encourage internalising directions.
- Reduce complexity by regularly alternating rehearsal tempo between 60%, 80% and 100% of performance speed, but also be careful not to perfect (or get too familiar with) an ‘in-between’ tempo.
- Run transitions frequently, get used to switching gears together.
- Encourage cross listening by asking outer desks to play together, or playing across the circle, or playing into the centre of the group.
- Section leader demonstrations: an aural picture tells a thousand words. Annie Rabbat says: “I think the principals demonstrating with conviction -- and as they truly intend to play -- is hugely valuable. Sometimes people sing or play in an exaggerated way to get an idea across, maybe changing the timing or not paying attention to the tone... But when we hear what the performance intention is, and we can then emulate it, perhaps even more can be gained than the original intention.

### **Use Occasionally:**

- Singing together complex rhythmic work, tempo changes or transitions.
- Use spatial changes- face outwards in small groups to encourage deeper listening. Alter position within the ensemble, or move around the rehearsal room to notice the difference in sound another perspective offers.
- Play Bach Chorales to develop a collective sound, trying colours, building depth, experimenting with bow speeds.
- Development of group sound by experimenting. Martha Caplin says: “Listen, and always ask ‘Is this good?’- yet don’t be afraid to get ‘dirty’. Perfect, crystalline sounds have no emotion. An audience identifies with a range of sounds from the grittiest to the sublime- the wider the better. *Play without fear.*”

## Part Two: Innovative Performance

Wanting to make the most of my time in New York, I bought tickets to hear some of the most renowned orchestras in the world, who just happened to be playing concerts in town that week. On successive evenings I saw the Philadelphia Orchestra, the New York Philharmonic and the Orchestra National de France and this is what happened: I excitedly took my seat (expensive, up close to the front) and read through the program, learning about the pieces I was about to hear. About ten minutes before the show was to begin, the musicians wandered on stage, gentlemen formally dressed in white tie and tails, ladies in black gown with luxurious fabrics. Some chatted to their colleagues, some tuned their instruments, others practised small fragments of the upcoming symphony. A few glanced briefly at the architecture of the hall, but none looked at the audience. The concertmaster arrived and the orchestra tuned, the conductor entered and the orchestra stood, looking passively out into the darkness- not smiling, not frowning, just vacantly gazing to an indistinct spot somewhere high above my head.

Then they were seated and began to play. Wow! The richness of the string section melted my heart, fearless horns pinned my ears to the side of my head, violas played glorious tunes; the powerful sound of these groups could be felt through the soles of my feet and the chest; it was wonderful. When the music ended I burst into applause and so too did my fellow listeners. There were cheers and whistles, people drummed their feet on the floor and shouted “Bravo!”. And each night the orchestra stood, turned out to the hall and stared out into the noisy darkness. One or two players smiled briefly, the conductor and soloist bowed, and then they all left the stage. And I was aghast.

How is it possible that conventions of performance could have developed to the extent that as the paying customer I was **completely ignored** by the players? There was no sense whatsoever that my presence was significant to the occasion, or had been considered. Despite being deeply schooled in the traditions of this style, I left with a profound sense of disconnection, even anger. There was no relationship acknowledged between musician and audience; no personal line of communication established, even the most basic one of eye contact. And therefore the experience became self-limiting and irrelevant to my (human) interests. I did not wonder that scores of people today spurn classical music in the concert hall.

In some ways, the art of performing music has remained untouched for centuries, and in others it is making rapid evolutionary changes. In the past, programming was a simple narrative. Overture, concerto, interval, symphony. And this type of concert certainly still exists, and has a place in the world. (It might be worth noting Crispin Woodhead’s warning to orchestras: “Don’t be afraid to make unpopular program choices to avoid becoming an expensive jukebox for the board or patrons.”) But this familiar set list and the associated ritual behaviour is only expected territory for an aging audience, and the people we need to replace them require a different approach. Younger generations expect to see the relevance of anything that wishes to gain their attention (and patronage); the sense of disconnection I experienced in the traditional halls of New York is intolerable for many. Classical music performance needs innovation in order to grow and develop; so how can we go about this? Ensembles who wish to journey on a new path may consider the following ideas: Be a story-teller, enrich the depth of audience experiences, and use your musicians as a fabulously creative resource library.

Be a story-teller: Create pertinent and authentic connections

- Between genres
- Between repertoire
- Between the listener and the music

One of the easiest ways humans connect with each other is through stories, and this is a particularly useful principle within the medium of music. What about this composer’s life or work can speak to contemporary existence? How does this music connect with other pieces or art forms? ***How can we tell the stories of humankind and our world?***

One lovely example of musicians using their skills to create new work that has an immediate interest and relevancy is the project commissioned in 2014 by Live Music Now: “Composing with Care”. Musicians interviewed ordinary folk in the community about certain aspects of their lives like living near the coal mines ([Songs from Above and Below](#)) and a local rubber factory that provided boots for the soldiers in the first world war ([If It Wasn't For Their Wellies](#)). This material was passed to composer John McLeod who worked it into a song cycle, which was then given a series of performances, beginning with the very people whose memories prompted the work. Imagine how exciting it would have been for them to hear this!

In order to make curatorial connections that are meaningful, we musicians not only have to communicate with the world, but also research broadly. Long gone are the days in Australia when a liberal education embraced the major classics of literature, poetry, philosophy, art, language and history. In my own personal journey, I barely scraped the surface of nearly two thousand years of Western culture before entering the practice room as a young teen and emerging into professional life a few years later, scrambling to learn millions of notes in the infancy of an orchestral career. And yet, the tales we call classic were central to the lives of many artists who have lived before us. Poets, painters, authors, sculptors, composers all referenced the same mythological sets, whether they be biblical, Greek or Roman; so even if a relationship between works is not initially obvious, a connection may still exist. It is up to us to discover (but not invent) it. And we don't even have to limit ourselves to Western humanities - increasingly, global cultural traditions are also available for exploration.

Once links have been established, Terje Tønnesen, Artistic Director of the Norwegian Chamber Orchestra, suggests they can be used as pivotal tools to approach the music in a new way. If this seems a hard concept to grasp, think about the way that the theatrical world has been able to reinvent their strongest works by staging them in different contexts: *Hamlet* set in Nazi Germany or millennial Australian speaks as powerfully as when placed in England of the middle ages. Similarly, links with other elements can introduce a new way of thinking about music, while remaining true to our 'text', and not reverting to gimmicks or pop medleys to sell seats.

Examples of creative concepts are beginning to emerge. One that unites baroque art to baroque music is the [House of Dreams](#) project, created by Alison Mackay and performed by the Canadian Tafelmusik ensemble. Listeners are taken on an imaginary journey through five houses across Europe that held a wealth of paintings; with connections drawn to musical repertoire, written word and visual images. Similarly, the work [Reflections on Gallipoli](#) curated by Richard Tognetti and the Australian Chamber Orchestra offers patrons the opportunity to hear stories matched with music from both fighting sides of a hideous episode of war. Both are immersive experiences that stimulate the senses on many levels. Terje Tønnesen advocates that this is exactly what audiences today want; to be part of a singular event, rather than have layers of edifying material applied over a period of time.

### [Enrich the depth of audience experience](#)

Classical music is important enough for us to devote our lives to performing it. Theoretically, we know that we need to attract new audiences. But do the conventions that surround the presentation of it, especially in perceived quality, impede us from thinking creatively about how to bring it to different groups of people? Historical research gives clear evidence that traditional practices are often far from original intention or context. What is preventing us from experimenting with:

- Formality: How does it change the atmosphere when musicians change the formality of their dress? What happens when audience can eat and drink, or move around during the performance?
- Perspective: Why must the audience always sit at the front? Can they sit behind? Above?
- Spatial distance: The physical space between players and listeners can be an enormous barrier. How can this be overcome? Can listeners be somehow within the group?
- Movement: This may require the removal of music stands. Playing from memory is an enormous undertaking for an orchestra but provides a completely different experience for the audience and players alike. Innovative examples can be found across the globe. In the US, University of Maryland students did an extraordinary [Appalachian Spring](#), while this version of the [Holberg Suite](#) by Grieg is particularly beloved by the Norwegian Chamber Orchestra.
- Eye contact: "Classical music is the only form of music performance where you don't look at the audience," says Terje Tønnesen. But consider the power of this rendition of [Verklärte Nacht](#) where the NCO stand and face the listeners openly.
- Location: There are many people for whom the concert hall is an intimidating place. It is also expensive to hire and may not be suitable for smaller ensembles. Actually anywhere it is safe for people to gather could be considered a potential venue, subject to acoustical assessment. We are only limited by our imagination.
- Time: 8pm after dinner works well for those who work in offices. But elderly people might prefer early afternoons, and a young demographic may prefer late nights. Does it have to be two lengthy halves with an interval? Or could it be different: three shorter sets interspersed with another genre? A single entity with no break?

- Light and darkness are theatrical elements often neglected in music performances but used widely in other art forms like dance and drama. Here the Norwegian Chamber Orchestra uses them to stunning effect in the [Metamorphosen](#) for 23 Strings by Richard Strauss.

A brilliant example of an orchestra re-framing performance conventions is the OAE's [Nightshift](#) program. The finest baroque repertoire is played late at night in unusual venues (pubs, warehouses) with food and drink served, offering a warm and hospitable atmosphere for visitors with little or no previous experience of live classical music. Technology and movement is welcome, and there is no compromise on the quality of the work presented, nor are the programming choices patronising. Musicians speak openly about their instruments and work, and answer questions from the audience. And in the ten years the concept has been touring around the UK, the response has been overwhelmingly positive. Evaluative research has shown that "the Night Shift succeeds in reversing all negative preconceptions of live classical music concerts: in the course of an hour or so attenders moved from expectations that the experience will be expensive, formal, long, middle aged, proper, strict and stuffy to an understanding that it can be accessible, comfortable, inclusive, informal, laid back, relaxing, spontaneous and 'studenty'. (It) takes first time attenders on quite a journey. ... They are now more aware of classical music and more willing to engage with live concerts. They all have a very strong commitment to attending future Night Shifts. Some even say they will now consider a transition to the OAE's main season." (Millman 2010) So this type of program is a valuable audience development tool in its own right!

Thinking back to the one-way communication of symphony orchestras in New York, are there other ways that concerts can be changed to enable interaction between performers and listeners? Using the principles outlined by Eric Booth (2009, 187-211) and David Wallace (Wallace 2007) ensembles can shape active audience engagement and participation through designed experiences that hinge on the music about to be presented (tango lessons before a program of South American dances), around a specific element of the music (talking about orchestral colour and asking the audience to experiment with the instrumentation of a played example), or through thoughtful speaking about context or personal connection.

### [Utilise the best creative resource: musicians](#)

So where are all these brilliant curating ideas going to come from? There is no need to hire special consultants, creative directors or artistic development officers. Instead, the richest seam of imaginative vision already lies within each ensemble in the musicians themselves. "Players are full of ideas and you'd be an idiot to ignore them," says Crispin Woodhead. It makes sense that the people who spend all day thinking about music, with a lifetime of discernment and experience behind them will have explored widely. Like a librarian who displays books for readers to try, we can offer the public so many aural treasures that exist beyond the traditional repertoire catalogue.

Using players for artistic curation and program design has many advantages. The increased responsibility deepens player engagement and the research required brings intellectual stimulation and professional development, an area which is notoriously difficult to promote for veteran musicians. Orchestral players generally do not respond to being taken away to build forts with their colleagues as a method of team building. But working together in different artistic ways builds morale in a significant manner. Artistic development is a challenging, yet meaningful activity and is intensely rewarding and exciting for players and management alike. The process becomes transformative on an individual and group level.

It was also interesting to note that larger orchestras which regularly use players for artistic planning (Orpheus, OAE) recognise the work is very time-consuming and full of effort, and so remunerate musicians in a modest way for their involvement. Commonly, a committee is formed by management (generally giving financial regulation) in conjunction with a number of elected players who serve for a few years. In contrast, A Far Cry, the self-managed ensemble in Boston has made the rotation of artistic planning a cornerstone of the group. This brings a richness and variety in their programming that is really distinctive. No single person's bias or personal interest impedes a full exploration of a repertoire that ranges from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In summary, innovative performance comes when players work together to make connections between people, repertoire, genres and ideas to tell stories that are meaningful to listening communities. People are interested and curious about music and if we leave our safe spaces and conventions to offer the music broadly, it may allow them to venture into the world we already know and love.

## Part Three: Reaching out to Other Audiences

### Sowing Riches: Working with Children and Amateurs

Within the broad field of mainstream education in the last decade, Australia has followed closely the lead of the United Kingdom, focussing on a national curriculum, an outcome-based framework, and standardised testing, especially within kindergarten and primary years (Cumming 2004). Unfortunately, implementation of an arts syllabus has increasingly become subject to the skills and experience of individual teachers, and is sometimes ignored or dropped altogether as establishing basic literacy and numeracy skills is prioritised (Gardener 2016). And this is despite extensive research showing that music education increases cognitive capacity for children! (Collins 2015) In this landscape, arts companies are increasingly being asked to fill the gaps, especially in music, so much consideration should be given to education programs as a vital part of our artistic work.

Gradually, the role of music in society is changing to one where the majority of people witness it and few participate; and this seems such a sad erosion of something that is often a source of great joy and comfort in life. So aside from preparing audiences of the future by **performing for children**, we should strive to encourage their participation in engaging and stimulating workshops. And these workshops can be practical ones that focus on **extending student's skills** on their instruments with existing music, or inventive ones where young people are involved in **creating new work**.

### Performing in Schools

"I nearly wept with joy when I saw Webern on the program". (Jonathon Morton) Children rarely have preconceived ideas about repertoire, and will listen to anything without judgement. Use this opportunity to introduce a wide variety of styles and genres with pieces that clearly illustrate soundscapes, colour, rhythm; contemporary music often fulfils all these requirements. And when preparing the script, it is wise to remember the advice of NY Philharmonic musician and host of the Very Young Peoples Concerts, Rebecca Young: "Whatever you do, don't be educational- instead be funny and children

Julian West (2014) and Eric Booth (2009, 27-37) are amateurs (also known as teaching artists) with extensive experience in presenting music in schools, and they offer these wonderful guidelines to consider when planning an effective faculty performance:

#### **You and your instrument**

- What do you love about your instrument?
- What keeps you playing?

#### **Introducing a piece of repertoire**

*Offer engagement before information: Draw the listener in, rather than putting information out.*

Finding an entry point....

- Connect with the piece yourself. What interests and excites you about this piece right now?
- Pick something tangible that can be seen or heard.
- Make personal relevance a high priority. Identify something that **connects** the art to the listener's world.
- Must be appropriate for the context. Teenagers respond much better to minimalism than nursery rhymes!

#### **What is Participation?**

- Active: the audience are physically doing something, e.g. clapping, singing or have a role to play in the piece.
- Imagination: the audience are able to use their imagination while listening, and can relate to something in their own experience.
- Conversation: there is an exchange between the audience and the musicians - either formally or informally, where high quality questions (no single correct answer) encourage thought rather than test knowledge.

#### **Other things to consider**

- Creative use of the space: make use of the space available in an imaginative but purposeful way.
- Control: the audience is given an element of choice over the performance.
- Separate observation from interpretation. "What did you hear that made you feel happy/scared?"
- 80% of what we teach is who we are. Participant's deepest learning comes from seeing how we speak, listen, think, respond, discover, handle trouble, joke, improvise and so on.

will remember EVERYTHING.”

Use the minimum number of words to engage, connect, show and challenge. Use vocabulary that students and non-musician adults understand, but remember, too, that dumbing-down is counter-intuitive. Audiences can sense when ensembles present music they are not excited about. Instead, seek to help them understand a piece that might otherwise be threatening by highlighting features that draw them in. (Booth, 135-40) Musicians also noted that it was important that school audiences see true performances; not just sight-reading of old chestnuts, but repertoire that is properly rehearsed. In some situations, ensembles choose story programs and there are many traditional offerings from Prokofiev to Poulenc. But if something new is sought, greatest effectiveness comes from using professional composers, authors, and narrators. Retro-fitting a story line to an existing piece of music is more difficult to pull off than one might expect.

### [Practical Workshops](#)

Hands-on events that extend the playing skills of students are increasingly popular as schools or youth music organisations recognise the value of having professional performers pass on their skills. These opportunities can either be as tutors for existing groups or as facilitators bringing individual learners together. In one session observed as part of the Scottish Ensemble’s Dundee residency, players sat in on a rehearsal of a beginner strings orchestra made up of [primary school-aged children](#). The kids loved it when the professionals were introduced and played short pieces, as individuals or in pairs. We cannot underestimate the power of demonstration when beginners may have rarely seen their instruments played live, let alone well!

Participation in this latter type of workshop needs full engagement from professional performers, even though the regular conductor may be directing proceedings. Be realistic about the timing of comments, for example when suggesting new bowings to beginners when it is their last rehearsal before a concert. Will they have the ability to adjust? Additionally, talking about more advanced concepts (like tremolo) is best supported when the kids can try out the technique a few times, not as an aside when rehearsing something else altogether. Try to be as physically close to the children as possible, even sitting among the group; and playing alongside them would give them a huge boost of confidence and support.

One thought: what about offering a repertoire advice service? The children in one orchestra were playing a dire compendium/medley, consisting of about 40 ‘greatest classical hits’- with no more than about 4 or 8 bars of the famous tunes. While this might please Grandma, it certainly does them no service in developing a sense of form or harmonic development, nor offer the sense of achievement that comes the first time one can play a whole work. The music director who makes this selection, while heroic in commitment and intention, may have less performance experience than a professional musician, whose knowledge of the canon could offer a selection of viable satisfying repertoire alternatives.

In a session for [older kids](#), there is much more scope for experimenting with sound production, correcting intonation, and building ensemble skills. To improve tuning, focus first with a drone, then use professionals playing strongly to provide an anchor for tentative notes. It’s sometimes hard for us to remember that some students **will have never heard their part played correctly**, and so cannot even imagine what to aim for. Recommend an app like Cleartune- young people will appreciate the use of their native language!

Encourage comparison of sound and ease of execution in different parts of the bow; and also small exercises in self-direction, for example, sniffing to feel the beat on a rest, and counting and listening. Adolescents respond well to the concept of taking responsibility for themselves, and in this context that might be getting a passage together without relying on the conductor. Success is usually immediately audible!

When correcting technique, the use of language is just as important as the content. Take these generous examples from Jonathon Morten: “Some of you are playing vvnv on the semiquavers which is admirable- I have so much admiration for you! - but it is one hundred times harder than playing nvnv. Try it this way and you will be making an unbelievable sound.” Or this: “It’s possible that some people in the celli are reading bass clef. Just check that you are in tenor clef- it’s not low here.” Each of these statements precisely shows what needs to be changed, and how; without making a self-conscious teenager lose face or confidence. Admittedly, this might seem a very obvious point, but there are countless stories of musical enjoyment and participation being destroyed by thoughtless or even cruel direction.

By creating a welcoming atmosphere, we can encourage students to make the most of a session with professional performers by asking questions and accessing practical tips learnt through our regular performance experience.

Another type of practical workshop is one that is *fully facilitated* by professional players.

The following activities were presented in a session for very beginners by amateur May Haliburton and were enjoyed with relish:

- Demonstrations- very appropriate here. Ask the children what they noticed and that made them feel.
- Warm up bodies and minds with copying clapping patterns with both rhythms and dynamics.
- Instil a sense of pulse with a simple activity as follows: March on the spot and stamp your foot on the 1<sup>st</sup> of each four-beat bar, then on every 2<sup>nd</sup> bar, and finally every fourth bar. "Hold the pulse in your head silently".
- Next add instruments. Copy rhythms on the D string, add combinations with A string. Then form a C major chord with cello and viola playing C strings and violins playing G or E strings.
- Now is a good time to experiment with sound colours: chocolate, windy, icy (good contact with string/ tasto/ ponticello)
- A simple tune like Frère Jacques enables everyone to play real music together.
- A wonderful game to encourage watching, listening and reading body language: All children crouch in a circle and must take it in turns to stand and say a number in a consecutive count from 1 to 20 (or however many participants there are). They are told that "You have to be brave and patient at the same time" because if two people move together they have to go back to the beginning. Its great fun, and everyone asks to play it again- so they do it with variants.
- They go back to playing the simple tune and talk about eye contact and how the leader of the group needs to show everyone when to start, so everyone has to watch! "Now you are all working as a giant team!"
- Again, lots of positive language and encouragement makes this a beautifully gentle and enjoyable atmosphere.

### Creative Engagement for New Works

For projects with a more generous funding allowance and time commitment, a different style of workshop is possible. This is where musicians work together with participants- children or teenagers, elderly or even dementia patients- to create a new work. There are many examples of this, particularly on Julian West's informative webpage "[Sample Projects](#)", and I came across two particularly interesting schemes run by the orchestras that I visited. OAE's major education work, the [Watercycle Project](#) toured through 9 cities in England, reaching more than ten thousand children. It combined core repertoire with a specially written song (complete with body percussion and actions) and original concertos for each location composed in consultation and performed with young musicians of the area. OAE musicians also played extensively within the community in each location, bringing a tremendous fun to a huge number of people. Meanwhile in the US, the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, directed by Ronnie Bauch organised a multi-disciplinary project at Interlochen College, across faculties of design, visual art, drama, dance, and music performance. They visited the school to work with students over a year-long residency, working on Schoenberg's [Verklärte Nacht](#), the storyline of which has particularly resonance with teenagers. Both students and professionals reported the experience as powerfully rewarding.

Julian West is particularly articulate about the additional skills musicians need to facilitate creative engagement, and provides the following information:

"A creative leader knows

- how to create a safe and inclusive environment in workshops;
- the importance of providing lots of different access points, so that everyone feels able to contribute
- to consider measuring quality in relation to the context – what does truly constitute success and quality in each situation?
- how to work flexibly and able to respond to the participants and the context
- how to provide structure and a sense of appropriate pacing, purpose and direction, while allowing everyone to continue to contribute, be heard, and make their mark.
- to think about delegation, and recognising and extending the skills and abilities of individual participants.
- providing closure – of moments, sessions, and whole projects, with opportunities for reflection and evaluation."

(West, Chamber Challenge: valuing and reframing the skills of professional musicians in a creative context 2015)

Readers who have come through this entire document will recognise the sentiments as having strong parallels to the desirable rehearsal room behaviour described in [Part One](#), and will note that these skills are different to general rehearsal, ensemble and performance expertise.

### [Engaging with Amateur Musicians](#)

Participatory programs for amateur musicians are enormously valuable for income generation and long-term audience development of professional ensembles. People who play instruments as hobbies are usually tremendously enthusiastic about it and often willingly pay for the opportunity to play alongside or be coached by professional players. Sometimes they have played at quite a high level until child-rearing or career commitments have taken them away from performance, and it is very exciting to return to a beloved activity. Once they have had a positive experience in a participatory program, they often become regular supporters of the ensemble, occasionally taking on a semi-ambassadorial role, and actively promoting the ensemble through word-of-mouth.

One participant at the Scottish Ensemble's "Scratch Workshop" (available to all-comers: a single day of rehearsals culminating in a public performance) had this to say about her involvement: "There's hardly any classical music where I live in the Western Hebrides. There's 3 other people in my village so we bash through quartets a bit, but rarely get to hear anything live. It's taken me ten hours to get here door to door but it'll be amazing to play with these people."

Things to consider when working with amateur musicians:

- Some participants will be able to absorb educational commentary about articulation and technical issues (bowstrokes, fingering, vibrato subtleties), but many will only be concentrating on notes and rhythm. It's helpful to pace the rehearsals very, very slowly and break up the music into really small sections.
- Participants might be quite nervous. One teenage girl I saw was shaking visibly, but after an hour or so of reassurance by a professional stand partner she seemed more comfortable. There is no need for expert musicians to be patronising, showing off their prowess; they can be most helpful by quickly identifying crucial signposts in the music and gently mentioning/ demonstrating tips and tricks to solve problems.
- Try to let participants experience early success and allow for long periods of slow repetition without showing any sign of impatience, not moving on until the participant signals that they are ready. If it is taking up too much rehearsal time, one can offer a little extra mini-tutorial in a break; but it's also important to emphasise that perfection is not desired or expected.
- It is particularly lovely when professionals socialise with amateurs at the breaks, not just superficially but in genuine offers of friendship. The public LOVES and responds enormously to revelation of humanity behind the superhero/ musical goddess image. So therefore any opportunity to converse and develop friendly relationships with potential audience should be viewed as important as work on the stage. It's not enough to be playing professionally; we need to be 'switched-on', and 'on duty' at any point during an event like a participatory workshop.

In conclusion, education projects are most successful when they have stated goals and clear desired outcomes. Musicians benefit from training in teamwork, leadership and facilitation skills and then are able to design, implement and evaluate engaging programs. And being part of that creative process is an important factor in the overall satisfaction of musicians involved in educational outreach work.

### [Giving Purpose: The Value of Community Outreach](#)

At a north London secondary school for pupils with severe and complex learning disabilities, a jazz trio plays three sets during the day. To the untrained eye, it might seem chaotic, with some students shouting, running and lunging, but the musicians are unruffled and the atmosphere is decidedly joyful. Sam is playing bass here and tomorrow will fly to Europe where he is in demand in many groups as one of the best young musicians in the jazz field. "I've been doing this (playing for SEN schools) for six years now, and I'll never stop. You can literally see the effect your music is having on people. It's so much better than playing for corporate gigs where the crowd just ignores you." Over in the corner, a hoist lifts a teenager out of a wheelchair so he can hang weightless for a few minutes. A carer swings the hoist in time with the beat and the teenager's smile is incredibly infectious. A girl bounces on her toes, endlessly grinning. "Thank you Music! Thank you Music!" she calls.

As an artist it is a great privilege to play for receptive and appreciative audiences, and community outreach work really is the ultimate opportunity to make music which will be completely enjoyed and not critiqued at all. For younger musicians, this can be in stark contrast to many of the performing opportunities available during tertiary education which are most often competitions, examinations, or auditions. For some, the constant fear of judgement can be paralysing, making it difficult to draw any enjoyment from the act of performing. So then to come to a situation where listeners are affected so positively by one's music-making is absolutely liberating, renewing our love of music, and reminding us why we commenced this lifetime journey in the first place. The same goes for those (gig) musicians whose regular clients pay little or no attention to their work at all. It is most disheartening for our efforts and expertise to be ignored, which is why playing for such happy listeners is so rewarding.

When Nicola, a viola player with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, first visited the Ferryfield House for dementia patients in Glasgow, she was nervous and inexperienced. One of the participants was an elderly gentleman who sat in a catatonic state, unmoved by conversation or activity for some months. But when she began playing the Skye Boat Song, a traditional folk tune, the man sat up and began watching her intently. His mouth began to move a little- almost as if remembering the words to the song. Each week for two months, Nicola went back and played Skye Boat, and each week the man was there, more and more alert, and beginning to communicate through the music. Incredibly, by the seventh week, he was fully singing each verse. Nicola said: "This was the most powerful change to witness, and was the reason I signed up for the program straight away the following year."

In a similar way, Zoe, an alumni flutist for Live Music Now, recalled many times when her music in care homes calmed an agitated patient, stimulated memories, and even momentarily overcame the loss of speech. She noted that she could sense a participant was listening, despite showing no outward reaction, and thus was compelled to play to the best of her ability, resulting in a "magic atmosphere" in the small intimate space.

The power of music to positively change atmosphere, emotions and even behaviour in care settings is undoubted, but perhaps the greatest wonder is that it enables **connection** where disability, illness, imprisonment or age has impeded it. As humans, we need and crave friendship with each other, and understand that the worst psychological pain is caused by a sense of isolation. As musicians, we are uniquely gifted to enable connection through our work, and this happens in an esoteric way in the concert hall. How wonderful then to experience communication in a much more powerful fashion as is offered by community outreach! If ever one was searching for a sense of purpose within a musical life, then surely it is this: to facilitate and support life-giving bonds amongst all people, especially those who are isolated physically, mentally or emotionally.

One particularly vivid example of this ethos in action is found through **Music in Detention**.

Here, a participatory model has many benefits. It encourages dialogue through a shared experience, it provides a way for otherwise unheard voices to express feelings in a safe environment, it offers occupation and reduces stress in a sterile place, and it improves relationships between staff and inmates. These are all potent changes effected by the music. When they witness these transformations, musicians see themselves as real messengers of hope.

Experienced program co-ordinators for music in detention projects have much practical advice to offer, particularly for those beginning to put a program in place:

- Meet the Head of Regime to establish guidelines and negotiate terms of visiting.
- Recruit: ideally seek musicians who have experience with marginalised settings or closed settings.
- Define an ethics framework to determine what can and cannot be done.
- Understand that flexibility with time is VITAL. Language barriers and security always take longer than expected.
- Start a concurrent volunteer assistant scheme to provide support in the workshops.
- Artists should have clear communication streams for regular evaluation and debriefing.
- Interviews post-event with staff feed a lot into a program's design, as often staff/detainee relationships change after visits.
- A CD soundtrack of activities offers detainees a tangible positive record of their participation, and can become a great source of pride.
- Also helpful is an annual discussion forum for all musicians to share stories, tips, concerns, preview and debrief.

- Being clear in aims ensures that it is easier to stay on track. For MID (UK) it was to support detainee's wellbeing through participatory workshops, enabling them to discuss difficult concepts in a safe environment, and to connect with local communities.

Given the international nature of many immigration centres, focussing on world music or cultural festivals is often a good place to start, and then this can be paired with some different style or genre. Musicians take in their own instruments and others (particularly percussion) for detainees to try. After demonstrations, they workshop simple ideas for detainees to express themselves; for example, set up a repetitive chorus progression which can be overlaid with rapping. Offering an opportunity to share stories, set them into verse and then perform musically is a very powerful bonding experience.

### Reaping Excellence: Unexpected Benefits

"It makes me a better performer on the concert platform". A new skillset heightens musical communication, increases confidence, improves connection with audiences and offers transferrable expertise.

From a professional musician's point of view, we work very hard to ensure- and thus have a great confidence- that our work is of highest quality; and to be asked to do something different (and completely alien) to our experience and training is sometimes confronting. But contemporary research and practice from the health sector bring a new understanding of engagement principles for music in clinical settings, and we ignore this at our peril. One ensemble committed to playing regularly at their local hospital, but were asked not to return because they 'were not particularly helpful'.

But professional musicians have found that taking the time to learn about, and then using these skills brings significant benefits- not just in personal satisfaction, but specifically in improvements in their own performance craft. By moving away from playing with sheet music and towards a sensitive and interactive approach to music in these settings, players report that their communication skills and awareness on the concert stage are noticeably enhanced.

Current research, particularly by Dr Jane Bentley, delineates music in hospitals (or similar clinical settings) by purpose, and shows that traditional concerts- "**just music**"- are one way of presenting our art. Other forms of playing are as a response to personal communication- "**music for**"- or as an active connection: "**music with**"; and sometimes one form is more desirable than another. So it is important for musicians to become confident in assessing a situation and to be able to modify their actions appropriately.

As professional performers we are all very experienced with the first form, and know that music positively shapes any environment. This is especially lovely in a hospital setting, where music in a foyer area can offer a 'normalising' and gentle buffer against what can be a frightening and strange place. There is also a sense of ministering to the carers- medical staff and patient's supporters alike- who work under pressure or visit in this place every day. A little bit of gentle humour (spinning a cello) doesn't go astray, and classical music with a variety of emotional content is good. Clown doctors who are always 'up' are exhausting!

Then musicians might choose to move a little closer to patients; for example, into a corridor outside a ward, or into a day room. Here the situation calls for a bit more interaction. Listeners might be offered a chance to select music; this is attractive as being in hospital usually gives little opportunity for choice. Bringing along a Musical Menu allows an ensemble to play with integrity and remain in control, avoiding the juke-box feel that sometimes manifests when requests are taken. Again a variety of genres, eras, and age-appropriate songs is important. Good arrangements are vital!

Some things to take into consideration for this type of playing are:

- Volume. As concert performers we have spent a large part of our training developing projection and sound quality. But the technique in sending a phrase to the back corner of Carnegie Hall can be really overwhelming in a subdued clinical setting, especially as illness can bring sensory fragility. The use of mutes (even practice mutes!) is entirely practical, perhaps necessary.
- Talking normally is helpful in establishing trust and reducing formality. People tend to be interested in personal elements of a musician's story: explanations of instruments for younger listeners, aspects of our job, even why we like a particular piece.
- In these situations, it is good to have repertoire that you can play around with: stretch out or change depending on the cues (usually unspoken) given by listeners. Someone with obviously low energy may prefer really quiet or gentle

music, whereas more boisterous children might enjoy upbeat tunes; and our innate musicianship allows us to offer both within the same piece! So it is helpful to have music where musicians feel comfortable looking away from the score in order to regularly assess and respond to the energy in the room.

Finally, musicians might choose to make music with the patients, and this is where utmost sensitivity and flexibility is required.

- Begin by playing gently or tentatively outside a doorway waiting for implicit permission to enter. (A child patient might need to see that their parents are relaxed about a musical visitor before responding).
- Here music becomes less about performing the whole work, and more about being a vessel for participation and interaction, so playing without a score is important to allow freedom to move and communicate. But no-one is suggesting memorisation of a symphony! Even just a simple harmonic progression or folk tune (rounds like Frère Jacques work well) would be perfectly adequate. As you begin to play, invite listeners to join in with you. Offer simple instruments like shakers or miniature bells for participation. One person in the group may have to demonstrate their use.
- Then use a cute little mnemonic “DRIVES”:
  - D** Dialogue musically back and forth with each other and the listeners. Physically face them, look at them and smile!
  - R** Repetition gets people on board.
  - I** Imitation, mimic and copy. Change your playing to imitate the movements of the listener.
  - V** Vary the game to keep interest. A start and stop game not only gets a patient involved, but into the driver’s seat.
  - E** Engage with your eyes.
  - S** Synchronicity: playing together is a bonding experience. Create links through non-verbal communication.
- Musical repertoire doesn’t always have to be at the centre of what we offer: - instruments can be used in unconventional ways to create soundscapes.
- Constantly re-evaluate the ‘temperature’ (energy level) of the room. Move forward if participants lean towards you, back off if they lean away; and change the way you play accordingly, especially with tempo, dynamics, emotional intensity or pauses.
- Sometimes patients, carers, staff and even players can have quite strong emotional responses to musical interactions. This is normal, and good to acknowledge that music is powerful and can cause mixed feelings. Take time if you need it, but the music doesn’t have to stop.
- Musicians have noticed that even after a short time they begin to intuitively gauge energy levels. It helps to know that within every session there will be a natural peak and then people will begin to tire or withdraw.
- Also be aware that there is an art to managing the end of these sessions. Signposting (“This will be our last song”) or even making an exit while playing is a gentle way to finish without breaking the atmosphere.

Specific training in this type of playing shows us that music is an activity, not just a passive washing over of sound. And with that knowledge, amazing opportunities for communication and connection are possible, where they might not have been previously. This can be a beautiful and moving experience to be a part of. Julian West says that a shared understanding of experience changes the way people communicate; they bond through courage, honesty, laughter and pain, and it’s a very humbling thing to facilitate or even witness. His reflective writing on working in a Dementia Unit ([Appendix 3](#)) is an eloquent exploration of our hopes and fears as musicians working in outreach situations.

Some players might initially express concern about being overwhelmed by emotion. But Nicola, a violist, says that training helped her be more in control, ironically, by letting her be free to open her heart. “I had to acknowledge and deal with the feelings I was having, and by doing so it helped my playing.” On a more down to earth note, playing in clinical settings cultivates fine concentration skills. Try creating a magical moment while the tea trolley is getting wheeled around, during a staff change-over meeting, or while a patient might be shouting! Learning to work around these distractions and to block them out translates into highly developed focus on returning to the concert platform. Additionally, some listeners in an outreach setting may not have chosen to be present when the music arrives, so we need to work really hard to capture and

retain their attention. Our expressivity needs to be super-charged, and the more we play in that manner, the more that will reflect in our traditional work. Coupled with the intuitive sensitivity and flexibility needed for excellent engagement, a musician with regular experience in clinical outreach playing will find that their concert performance skills are greatly enhanced.

When playing in **Dementia** settings, all of the information above is relevant and there are just one or two extra things to keep in mind. Firstly, a preparatory visit with staff and families can be really helpful in flagging any pieces of music that have played significant roles in participant's lives because a song or hymn or tune that was once meaningful can sometimes trigger a breakthrough when it is heard again. In this case a melodic or rhythmic fragment of the special song can form the basis of interactive work. Asking the staff what to look for with respect to individual patients can also assist in sensitive interaction. Repetition becomes even more important, and when tempos are slowed right down, the music becomes very soothing and calming. "There's not a lot of speaking. It's more like hushing a baby," says Nicola. Dementia patients sometimes respond readily to big gestures (like volume changes) but don't always show engagement. But the deeper we look, the more some tiny signs of appreciation and enjoyment will appear. All we have to do is stay aware, flexible and accommodating.

## RECOMMENDATIONS: Vision Builds a Future in the Business of Music

1. As effective communication techniques directly impact on the morale of any group, ensemble training at tertiary level should include development of appropriate interaction skills. Being a great performer does not automatically give understanding in interpersonal relations, but conscious and deliberate cultivation of constructive and positive communication will have a strong impact on any ensemble. It will enable each player to contribute to the best of their ability and thus the group will become greater than the sum of its parts.
2. Musicians who receive training in teamwork, leadership and facilitation skills will become valuable designers, implementers and evaluators of the varied creative work of an ensemble, including curation, education or outreach. It is recommended that this type of training commence at tertiary level. This is especially important with respect to speaking skills. See [Appendix 4](#) for Eric Booth's serious words of advice for musicians.
3. Ensembles should offer education/participation programs for people of all ages: children, teenagers and adult beginner/ amateurs (like a "Cobweb orchestra" or "Silver Linings" workshops) as an avenue of long-term audience development. Early familiarity with music develops a lifetime of listening and connection with live performance.
4. Ensembles should prioritise outreach playing to build a positive community presence. With appropriate training this work strengthens the group's communication skills, creates strong bonds within the company, and confirms their purposeful role in social cohesion.
5. CPD should be offered for administration staff to overcome geographical isolation barriers; but musicians retain a sense of engagement and stimulation through creative and artistic development for the ensemble.
6. Consider collaboration with other art forms to develop programs of interest and relevant stories for the audience. Strive to give audiences a strong sense of connection to the music and musicians through their listening experience.
7. When planning recruitment:
  - Of **Musicians**: hire for rotation. A strong musical opinion is desirable but the ability to let go of an idea gracefully when it does not have group support is even more valuable. Furthermore, the best ensemble players are not necessarily big soloists. Seek instead those players who are most adaptable, then any changes of personnel will have minimal effect on the overall group sound.
  - Of **Administration** staff: Upskill performers with appropriate degrees for instinctive and efficient management. This should be a recognised and supported career pathway from undergraduate level.
8. Audience development: As a core audience is generally unresponsive to marketing, all branding should be directed at developing new audiences. Any social media engagement should be quickly creative. Word of mouth is the only way to fill a house and discount tickets, including last minute deals which do increase sales. Attending the OAE

concert at Festival Hall, I saw large groups of young adults in the audience. When I asked them what brought them to the hall that night, 2 out of 3 said that they had come with someone, or on the recommendation of a friend.

9. Business Plan: The expertise required for development of funding and performance are totally different, and should not be confused. However very occasionally a charismatic player with highly developed social skills can complement and enrich “enabling” relationships with individual benefactors. While a box office will generally lose money, financial stability comes from

- Government funding and grants
- Corporate Partnerships
- Trusts and Foundations
- Community Partnerships

The element of risk is important, and yet needs to be managed very carefully. Too little, and the organisation remains stuck with a 19th century product that is profoundly disconnected from 21<sup>st</sup> century consumers. Too much, and it's easy to lose sight of the fundamental principle- *the music comes first*. But by exploring the fruitful work practices of other ensembles, musicians can greatly increase the efficiency and efficacy of their rehearsals. If they plan to be the company that views change as opportunities for growth, their ensemble will enjoy considerable achievement and success.

## Appendix 1: The Language of Constructive Criticism

Adapted from “Orpheus: The Evolution” by Eric Bartlett

**Mutual respect** and **civil discourse** are the cornerstones of good relationships everywhere, in marriages, in business, between sovereign nations and especially in rehearsals where there is no conductor. Whenever either of these principles breaks down, conflict results.

**Mutual respect:** Each musician has strengths in different areas. Some are less outspoken and more thoughtful. Some may be more concerned about instrumental colour, some with musical character, some with articulation or tempo or energy or intonation. Whatever it is, it is an interest and a strength that will add to the whole. It is important to be respectful of all colleagues and really listen to what they are trying to say. It is the individual responsibility of each person to treat every other member as an important colleague so that they are free to do and be their best, and so that they will feel compelled to do the same for others.

This is a different idea from traditional orchestral roles: that each musician really can learn from one other. To even get to the point of playing professionally, every person in the room has had to spend countless hours learning, practicing and studying. There is a tremendous corporate wisdom available if historical hierarchy is set aside.

### Civil Discourse:

How comments and suggestions are made is at least as important as what is said. One should always try to start with a compliment, saying what was liked about what was just heard. This gentles the path for future conversation. Then a request for something more or slightly different can follow, using words like:

Would you be willing to consider...

How would you feel about trying...

When discussing things that are not together or not perfectly matched, it works well to be impartial:

“From where I’m sitting, it sounds like either the horns are ahead or the violins are behind.”

“It sounds to me like the second violins are playing a little longer, or the violas a little shorter.”

This conveys valuable information about the nature of the discrepancy without taking sides about who is “wrong” or “right.”

It’s also helpful to talk about a personal perspective, without pointing fingers. There is an enormous difference between “I feel that this tempo is a little too slow,” and “Your tempo is a little too slow.”

One describes a reaction to hearing a tempo, while the other is an accusation.

Perhaps even better might be, “I wonder what it would be like if this tempo was little bit faster.”

Often it is helpful to include oneself or one's section in the comment. For instance, imagine that the violas and cellos have a line together, with different notes but the same rhythms and articulations, and you, as a violist, feel that the cellos are playing the notes too long.

By saying, "I think we're a little too heavy on these quavers, let's try playing them a little shorter." the phrasing this way appears to be criticizing yourself as well as not pointing fingers at others. Meanwhile attention has been drawn to the point in question. Often it is just the act of drawing attention to the detail that will result in a solution being found.

## ➤ Appendix 2: Karen Tuttle's Lists of Musical Colour and Spirit

(Dane 2002)

### Love

Majestic  
Cry  
Plead  
Lost  
Longing  
Flirt  
Amiable  
Nostalgic  
Languor  
Tender  
Tease  
Abandon  
Quiet  
Passion  
Sentimental  
Forthright  
Noble  
Suppliant  
Warmth  
Frolic  
Melancholy  
Gracious  
Rejoice  
Yearning

### Joy

Buoyant  
Twinkle  
Sprightly  
Frank  
Rollick  
Capricious  
Naïve  
Peaceful  
Tickle  
Boisterous  
Inner Joy  
Luminous  
Whimsy  
Exaltation  
Ecstatic  
Mischievous  
Vigorous  
Comical  
Sassy  
Caricature  
Frolic  
Effusive  
Buffoonery  
Mimic  
Elegant  
Wondrous  
Glorious  
Fluttering  
Skittish

### Anger

Grim  
Tortured  
Anguish  
Torment  
Morose  
Stormy  
Frenzied  
Complaining  
Agitated  
Kvetch  
Rage  
Snarling  
Madness  
Frustration  
Grouch  
Furious  
Sarcastic  
Grim  
Nettled  
Irritated  
Violent  
Fierce  
Restless  
Crotchety  
Crank  
Hate  
Peevish  
Impatient  
Irascible  
Provoking

### Fear

Terror  
Awe  
Reverence  
Torment  
Urgency  
Anxious  
Ominous  
Shocking  
Agitated  
Mysterious  
Ghostly  
Evil  
Pain  
Begging  
Timid  
Apprehension  
Suspense  
Grinding  
Uneasiness  
Depressed  
Panic  
Cold  
Startled  
Ophelia  
Insane  
Eerie

### Sorrow

Lost  
Bleak  
Pensive  
Stale  
Tragic  
Torment  
Sad  
Longing  
Stark  
Cry  
Pleading  
Despairing  
Doldrums  
Prayerful  
Wailing  
Shriek  
Heartbeat  
Stagnant  
Yearning  
Agony  
Melancholy  
Tortured  
Death bell/toll  
Passion  
Noble

## Appendix 3: Julian West Blog “A Good Day”

December 8, 2014

For those of you that don't know me personally, this blog is about a session working with Music for Life. We work with people living with often quite advanced dementia in residential care settings. We work in teams of three musicians, alongside a team of care staff at the setting. All of the music we make is improvised by the team of musicians, alongside the residents and the staff.

Today was such an unexpected and special session.

Last week, as the care home residents arrived, we were all struck by the atmosphere – very flat, with many of the residents seemingly very much within their own worlds, not making connections with anyone. And R, who had been the only resident to play an instrument, looking terrible. He was, in fact, the only person who was connecting and communicating – but was communicating complete and utter despair and desolation. How could we make music in this atmosphere? What could we possibly do for people? Every note played felt trivial and futile to me, almost offensive and disrespectful. Our music seemed to go into itself, unwilling to strike out in a new direction. We also became trapped in the atmosphere.

But as we talked, it became clear that positive things had happened. But they were tiny. B had sought connection with M, there was some playfulness at the end of a piece that included staff. And we received feedback that we had made some lovely pieces of music. L had made lots of eye contact with P and M.

This week, for whatever reason, T (who had slept all through last weeks' session) arrived with smiles, and took an immediate interest in the harp. N sat beside me and said “That's an oboe isn't it? I used to sing in a church choir. We did the St Matthew Passion every year, and I was always very impressed by the chap playing the oboe”. Things felt so completely different – there was hope, and energy, and something to respond to. We began our session, and following the welcome song, N, encouraged by one of the staff, stood and took a drum, playing it purposefully, leading the music, and connecting very strongly with the musicians. He continued to play instruments throughout the session, and showed his sense of humour. This was the man that has declined to even take an instrument for the preceding 5 sessions.

And so we felt that session had been a “success”. It had been one of those “feel good” sessions. (And boy, did we need it.) What I am puzzling over is how much we did to affect the sessions, and how much is simply down to chance and how everyone is feeling as they arrive. Could we say that all of the work we have been doing in our preceding sessions had brought us to this point today? The one thing I do know is that the musician team had been able to properly have time to play together and connect with each other, and practise really listening and responding to each other. Also having time to practise just playing without judgement attached.

I've been doing quite a bit of free improvisation this autumn, where the emphasis has been very much on focussing on how you feel, what the impulse to play is, not judging it, and staying true to that impulse. It has been surprising that at the end of a long tiring day, when I have often felt tempted not to turn up for the session, playing has been the very thing that has put me back together and connected me with more of a sense of self. The time flies.

I've spent a good few years wondering whether it really is the music that makes the difference, or whether the music is almost irrelevant, and it is the quality of our connection with the residents that truly makes the difference. While I think it has to be a combination of both, I am feeling at the moment that the music, the quality of it, my mastery of my instrument, and my ability to listen and respond to the other musicians and the residents is definitely at the core of this work for me. I wonder how much of this is to do with my own identity being tied up so much with my playing? If I feel that I have made good music and connected with others musically, then I become more “available” to residents and staff? If I feel that I have played well and taken musical risks myself, then my own self-esteem is reflected back onto the group?

The big question that I keep coming back to is, who is actually changing? Me, or the people living with dementia? Were they there all along, just waiting for me to “have a good day”?

## Appendix 4: An Exhortation from Eric Booth

In his book “The Music Teaching Artist’s Bible”, Eric Booth shows little patience for those performing musicians who believe that it is enough just to play the notes on the page:

“I hear many musicians agree with such ideas [about guiding audiences to a greater understanding of music] in principle, and then immediately exempt themselves. They say they are not good at speaking; they hate teaching; kids give them the creeps; they don’t want to learn new skills because it is hard enough just to make the music well and scramble to make ends meet. They respect musicians who are good talkers and are willing to let them carry the responsibility in their ensembles. I watch them sit, benignly smiling, through the audience interactive stuff, waiting to get to playing the music, which is all they really care about. Two comments to such musicians: (1) With that attitude, you and your ensemble are going down- smaller and smaller audiences, less income, less excitement- and taking the rest of us with you. (2) There is a role for every musician in the teaching artist’s world, even if you are not a good talker and get hives around eight-year-olds. We all need to join this work of supporting audience’s capacity to succeed in the crucial act upon which the future of classical music depends- making personally relevant connections inside the music. This is not the responsibility of a designated charming few; it belongs to all of us. There is a role for everyone, a way every musician can contribute without being embarrassed, or being forced to do things that are not personal strengths.....you will find many ways to contribute well, happily, comfortably, creatively, importantly.” (2009, 7)

He goes on to specifically address speaking skills as something every person can learn- just as technical ability on an instrument is not a mystery, just a result of commitment and time. His top tips are:

- Speak slowly
  - Speak all the way through your thoughts- don’t finish the phrase too softly.
  - Address the “um”
  - Pause
  - Rehearse, don’t memorise
  - Enjoy the moment
- (2009, 139)

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