

Classical Music Summit – Focus Group

Wednesday 26 May 2010

AMEB Building, Hobart, TAS

Attendees:

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| Prof. Kevin Purcell (Chair) | Head, Conservatorium of Music, UTAS |
| Edwin Paling | Former Concertmaster, Royal Scottish National Orchestra |
| Andrew Bainbridge | The Hutchins School |
| Aaron Powell | St Michaels Collegiate School |
| Dr. Heather Monkhouse | Dir. Classical Music, UTAS |
| Myer Fredman | Freelance Conductor |
| Frank Bansel | Senior Lecturer Music Education Programs, UTAS |
| Nicholas Heyward | General Manager, Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra |
| Jeremy Williams | Head of Strings, UTAS |
| Gabi Robin | Executive Officer, Tasmanian Youth Orchestra |
| Maria Lurighi | Board member, Tasmanian Youth Orchestra |
| Paul Dean | Art. Dir., Australian National Academy of Music (Apology) |
| Dr. Maria Grenfell | Co-ordinator of Composition, UTAS (Apology) |

Question One

Edwin Paling:

In the UK every orchestra, except the BBC ones, all do an enormous amount of education and community work. This work is funded from separately from the orchestras' main activities. What it does, briefly, is that a concert: usually something with a piece of music with a narrative will form a project. Members of the orchestra will go around in two's to designated schools; maybe visit four or five times and get the children to invent a piece of music. This can be anything from primary-age children to A-Level.

If they play instruments, they can bring them along. If they don't play an instrument, then they either play tuned or un-tuned percussion instruments.

Over a period of weeks, something forms. The concept is these various groups from different schools play a short concert for Mums and Dads before the main concert – before the professional concert begins – and it's proved to be, over the last fifteen to twenty years in the UK, a brilliant way of getting young people interested in music. It is unimportant that they necessarily take up an instrument, but it does develop their interest in music and there is a significant rise in young people attending concerts. Without this kind of work in the UK no orchestra could survive. Unfortunately Nicholas Heyward – TSO isn't here (*ed. Mr. Heyward had not yet arrived at the meeting*) but it is my belief that the TSO are not engaged as much as they may be in this kind of work and their audience base is one of middle-class people and there are not many young people there. There needs to much more energy, in my opinion, from all orchestras to follow this kind of model.

The kind of projects that run in the UK go over several weeks. This may take six weeks or so of weekly visits. Before all these projects begin there is a forum for all of these teachers to come along and meet the orchestral musicians. I think these days there is very little room for the boring school's concert; they are not a vehicle that to inspire anybody, at least in my opinion. What the UK orchestras are so heavily involved in can widen a child's interest.

The orchestra I used to be with did projects on music by James McMillan, so they are really contemporary music projects; and to my astonishment, kids that normally do not have access to classical music are really fired up by these very unusual orchestral noises. I think as part of any curriculum, in any music academy these days, the students should be trained to speak in a coherent and enthusiastic manner about their instrument and it is something that I think is sadly lacking.

I think it is most important, because in the years to come with orchestral jobs diminishing, it is going to be important that the student has a really rich portfolio of skills that they can take out. it's not going to be sufficient to be able to play an instrument really well; they are going to have to be able to communicate about it, whether it be to people that know a lot about music or

whether they walk into a primary school and talk to small children. This is going to be so important and it's something that should be addressed in Tertiary Education and part of the syllabus.

Jeremy Williams:

As a member of Granger Quartet, and before that a member of the Australian String Quartet, we did four national tours a year - based in Adelaide.

We did a lot of going into schools, both private and public sector, giving short concerts, talking about the pieces and getting the children to say what they thought about the pieces; maybe a story for the young kids and then asked them "what do you think about that? what does it make you think of?"

Sometimes it takes a bit of coaxing, but probably ninety-five percent success wherever we went. We always came away feeling there was a response. Not making it too long, making the music very varied and you can be quite challenging sometimes with them, as long as it is short and you've explained. I think that a lot of that sort of thing would be very useful in schools and I know it's done a lot in Europe: in places like Germany, where I've previously travelled a lot. There is a real awareness of musical culture right from when they start school really. I think a lot of kids start going to concerts from a much younger age than they may do in the UK, or Australia, where audiences are a lot older, because I think they are exposed a lot more to that sort of thing and there's probably not a enough of that going on in Australia.

Aaron Powell:

I think Edwin and Jeremy have almost answered question number three for us as well. Linking what Jeremy was saying about listening in schools, I think it's a real key concept and area that school teachers need to be looking at: what are the kids listening to? Even as early as primary school, in terms of quality of music and all sorts of activities, can be linked to listening to good quality classical music and not just the latest offering from the latest children's group around, or whatever they think the children might like to listen to. I've done numerous interesting activities with children, including graphic notation with pieces, movement and getting the children to draw what they think the music represents and you can play all sorts of pieces and they readily accept it. I think that's an area that educators can build on.

Frank Bansel:

I'd support both of those sets of comments and also reminders that a number of years ago theatre companies as well as music ensembles etc. often employed education officers. These were often subsidised too by the Department of Education. Currently in Tasmania, the Department of Education has a Musica Viva Project Officer who develops support materials for teachers and runs workshops for teachers prior to the visit of the Musica Viva musicians and then has follow-up activities. Interestingly enough, the kids come very prepared for a concert and teachers feel supported with teaching and learning activities they can engage kids in prior to the visit and then have something to go on with once the visit is over. I think education officers attached to ensembles and orchestras are absolutely crucial for developing a network of teachers; for raising listening activities etc. that Aaron was alerting to, and can also do follow-up so that programs can be tailored to meet the needs of teachers and kids as a result of the real experience – not just packing up and going away and hopefully coming back in a few years time – that there is some continuity of contact.

Nicholas Heyward:

I agree with most of what you say. Though, we find that most of the young musicians that we engage as permanent members of the orchestra usually are pretty articulate these days and most of them can speak enthusiastically about their instrument. In other programs that we run for composers for conductors and so on, we always include a number of sessions to try and encourage them to be able to speak with young people in audiences and so on. In particular, for conductors, I think it is important to do that. I want to go back to what you said about boring school concerts – we do plenty of them and some are boring and some aren't. We do run them as much as possible with preparation kits for teachers and so on that we've already talked about, although we don't always do seminars; we sometimes do for teachers to try and prepare them. The difficulty has been with primary school kids is being able to develop materials that actually fit into primary school curriculum these days. There is no specific music curriculum. The fact is that no longer are our orchestras accepting the Queensland funding model for these positions. Although we have a full-time education officer, this position is not funded and the Australia Council has made it very clear that if we get financial problems the first thing we should cut is Education. They are very clear about that!

Comment about Musica Viva: I might be wrong, and I'm happy to be corrected: I see a very distinct trend in Musica Viva away from classical music; not so much in Tasmania, but certainly on the mainland where the bulk of the ensembles are not 'classical' now. They are much more likely to be world music, ethnic music, folk music: all of which engage the kids really well and they are often ensembles with higher values, but we are talking about classical music here and so I think that's something we need to watch and it's a very clear trend away from classical music in those touring ensembles.

Andrew Bainbridge:

I find that with programs like Musica Viva, one of the problems with that is affordability. Going to a Musica Viva program more than once a year is impossible to afford unless you spend the budget on taking a small number of children to see that type of program. TSO programs are much more affordable. There are some other offerings affordable but taking that as one consideration, budgets in schools aren't unlimited. The other thing that schools need to consider is that time is of the essence. You don't have an unlimited capacity for groups to come in or groups to go out, because it almost invariably is going to involve other areas of the curriculum. Music classes aren't all blocked together at a convenient time that matches up with these organisations.

So whatever has to be done has to be planned in advance and has to be taken into consideration. Stepping back to funds: it might only cost five or six dollars a head for each child to be involved but it also costs another, however much on top of that, for buses to transport them. So it's just part of the thing.

Another point that was raised was the idea of groups coming into schools over a period of time and I think that could be a really good idea. If curriculum coordinators can be brought onboard so it is part of what is being taught; so it becomes an integral part of the program, rather than an integral part of the program rather than being an add-on. The fact that the TSO not only has an education officer but also has a consultation group with school teachers that meets two or three times a year with the education program. Over the last two or three years the education program has been developed with input from these school teachers, and has been fantastic. A lot of the ideas that have been brought up in those meetings have developed into some of what's going on in their education program. I imagine it is a funding thing from both sides. Not only does it cost the orchestra to put those things on, but it also costs the schools to go to them. The last point: Aaron's point of what kids are listening to. I think it is a combination to me of what goes on in curriculum and what goes on before: training the teachers. I think there are a lot of music teachers that are training in tertiary institutions that are barely getting by on four chords and that sort of thing, and I think what is being taught as being important for our music education needs to be looked at as well.

Question Three

Nicholas Heyward:

We're an orchestra so fundamentally we believe that we're not in the business of not teaching kids to play instruments and we're not in the business of running string quartets for example, because people are always asking for very small ensembles. Essentially, an orchestra is a big thing. There is not a school in the State that can take the TSO - as far as I know - so they need to come to us if they want an orchestral experience. I guess you have to think very carefully about that. So, the two things that would be most important for us is a National Curriculum that is clear, because at the moment our planning cycles are totally out with schools. Schools make up their mind very late in the day about everything. We are plan eighteen months in advance and we're like a big battle ship: it is very hard to turn it around. The second thing is: I suspect that a lot of future contact is going to have to not be live. We are going to have to integrate a lot of things online as well. If you have a really good plan, that involves clear repertoire and a contact with some of which is online, and some of which is live, you can build a good connection. Otherwise, it is very difficult. We're a fantastic resource, but we are not very flexible resource, unfortunately.

Maria Lurighi:

I feel with the advancement of technology in classical music has only in a minuscule way stepped up.

Through ABC Radio, or the BBC, or any of the other radio stations around the world: from the leading economies, to countries like South America where they have education programs which have been initiated in very marginal communities, are using radio as a mechanism. There is much to be learnt from that and I've written down two words: 'inspiration teaching' and that online media is going to be a fantastic way to connect communities. I'm not trying to make a lot of work for your orchestral players, but through podcasts – a child in Oatlands (TAS) can sit and listen to an orchestral concert for free. They would also be able to email the Concert Master and ask about a work, or ask the educational officer. They might be able to have a conversation with these people in very remote areas - and we have that mechanism, in some ways, like School of the Air. If we took that principal – the media and IT that is now being put into schools and into the Conservatorium and into orchestra's: surely there is an easy way and delightful way to connect up very quickly a lot of important and significant teaching and cultural underpinning for young artists and underpinning for those senior musical artists and teachers as well.

Nicholas Heyward:

There is a lot of low-quality sound and vision related to digital distribution at the moment. I suspect that the broadband network that is being rolled out will deliver a really high-quality sound and vision – in an interactive way. Kids need to be able to ask questions and get a response. In theory, as they can and occasionally do in the concert hall, I think that will make a very big difference, particularly for orchestras. You can't take them into a school. You can take a guitarist, or a string quartet or something more easily.

Frank Bansel:

I think the interactivity issue is absolutely crucial. Most of the literature tells us that teaching and learning is an interactive and is a relational activity. Kids are far more interested in who you are, how you come to be who you are, and what your story is before they can be impressed with what you do. The opportunity to create relationships with people; know them well over time and actually feel like you are a participant in the process is important. I don't like conversations that talk about delivery models; it is the relational interactivity stuff that Nicholas is talking about that actually makes the difference.

Local musical ensembles and orchestra's really need to be thoughtful about how we cultivate relationships with young listeners and young audiences, so that it is interactive and is personalised; so that kids in Oatlands (TAS) don't believe you have to come from a London Conservatorium; that we actually have them living and breathing and working in our own communities.

Kevin Purcell:

I agree on all those issues. There is a danger in over reliance on technology in any area, because it provides the potential for disaggregation: in this case for a child actually being able to see firsthand, pick up and hold a musical instrument. The 'touch' issue gives them the tactile ability to be able to make a connection between the vibration and the way the instrument operates. I would be worried if we purely did everything in an online, virtual environment as passive receptors. We would be reinforcing a lack of participation evident in a lot of young people, epitomised by the an inability to make a physical connection with a musical instrument, including recognising the sound that it makes.

Nicholas Heyward:

I completely agree. I was speaking specifically about orchestras. I think you have to build a whole program of real, live, experiences. Otherwise the interactive digital experience is never going to make any sense at all. Sports people engage with kids, but they don't actually move the MCG to kids when it comes to the big match. The kids are all at home, glued to the TV watching it. They do take the footballs; they kick them around; they meet the stars – they do it in

a very organised way and we can learn a bit from them. It 's perhaps not education, but their marketing and big business, I suppose? We want to do the same thing and we want to engage kids in a way that hooks them for life - that has them playing - has them listening - and has them writing music.

Jeremy Williams:

That's exactly what we were doing, like the sport stars with the Quartet. Get them to play, get them to make sounds. This is also what Frank and I are working on at the moment: working on sending some of our students into schools to do this. Some of our chamber groups, and even our string orchestra can go into schools. It is very cost effective and beneficial for both students and the youngsters experiencing the performance.

Question Five

Gabi Robin:

I think we could look at the way CSIRO have their Double Helix Club and have an educational office in each State. I have been thinking of a classical music version, so that the recent graduates from University can contribute to introduce orchestra music concepts and ideas. There could be a small magazine that had lots of ideas on classical music: exercises, things like that. Another model: the book club model – in State libraries, where a book is chosen and groups are formed voluntarily could also work around specific music.

Could do this with pieces of music: something to listen to where the library has packs available; where a music club, or book club, has access to materials and listens to it and gets together and talks about it and have some sort of guide or questions.

Nicholas Heyward:

Education in classical music making at community level, which I didn't take to be about kids, I took it as being about performing. More like community ensembles, community orchestras and community choirs, as an education thing. It's not about people playing in every front room is it? One of the things I would suggest: there is no national body at all now, Orchestras Australia has died and there is really nothing. There is not a community orchestra network. I don't know what else there is in respect to community music making. There is nobody to lobby for it. The choirs: they're always swapping their scores with each other. I guess the orchestras do to a certain extent don't they? They don't seem to be very together, is what I'm saying and that would really make a difference. Probably comes down to money again though.

Maria Lurighi:

Book clubs are built around adults. It's about education and access to understanding music and the processes of it. It is a good idea to have community orchestra network.

Jeremy Williams:

They just sort of mug along on their own don't they...the community orchestras?

Frank Bansel:

One of the concerns expressed about literacy in the schools – there are young people coming to into schools never having seen a book; that in the home there is no such thing as a storybook, or the parents do not read. Now you could extend that to classical repertoire. Part of a community engagement is getting music into homes, whether it be recorded or some form of local concerts. But just exposing people to repertoire and building some notion that it's a really good idea for kids hearing stuff isn't enough. Whether it just be in the background, or whether it be for a dinner party, just exposing them to classical repertoire is not productive. Part of that community education program is, is not just about players and people in youth orchestras. It's actually about pointing out the value and engaging kids at a very young age, and we have plenty of data on that from existing research to emerging new research. Contemporary music does pretty damn well.

Maria Lurighi:

What if you took that mechanism you were just talking about and applied it to the Salvation Army? The Salvationists literally provide music for the community. By playing they are saying 'we need this in our lives'. The Salvation Army actually uses that mechanism - and they have some of the best brass players in Australia performing with them. It's something we have lost in a way. Everyday people can contribute.

Nicholas Heyward:

Almost every TV program is almost some kind of Talent Quest; maybe we're too precious, I don't know? Those dancing programs, has it done a lot with participation in dance classes? How many kids these days want to cook? If that's the sort of thing Frank is talking about, then we have to engage, we have to be more commercial. Maybe the distinction we draw between classical music and all the rest of it, is one that puts them off?...that we're only for the experts?

Myer Fredman:

Styles change; not just because musicians change, but because societies change. We have gone from church music, to classical, to romantic, theatre music and to contemporary in the real sense of the word. I believe the signs are there that society is such no longer requires classical music in the same way: societies have always wanted something different over a period of time and society now has something different - for want of a better word - Pop. It's a great shame that classical music in our society is becoming redundant, but I do believe that is the case.

Kevin Purcell:

In discussing education at the community level, I think it is very important that we are able to define the constituencies of the communities that we actually mean. We tend to concentrate our discussion towards the youth sector, but there is clearly an aspirational adult group that are consigned to being passive receptors, but who are also very highly skilled orchestral players. Many of these people, in my view, are disaggregated from participating or adding value into classical music making at the community level because there is simply no avenue for them to perform at a level consistent with their expertise. I do make a distinction here between amateur community orchestra groups and musicians who are very highly skilled who often do not participate in these largely amateur-filled groups. At the UTAS conservatorium here, we have an initiative running - the Tasmania Discovery orchestra – which is an attempt to evaluate this notional idea. An early indication seems to be that there is real interest and that there are very significant communities of orchestrally very competent musicians who want to participate – and at high levels of engagement. Perhaps we need to revitalise and redefine our definition of what classical music is: as an umbrella statement as to what it actually means in Australia. I believe this warrants significant research and investigation.

Myer Fredman:

I don't think we should just let it go. I think there is a different style required by the general public.

Question Seven**Nicholas Heyward:**

We have to understand: what are the audiences?...and embrace and do a bit of crossing over and maybe redefining it. Is the Southern Gospel Choir (TAS) classical music?...no, but they use classical music skills?

Maria Lurighi:

Yes. It uses classical music skills.

Nicholas Heyward:

A lot of that kind of stuff, to say: are these legitimate audiences? People move around and people who sing in that kind of choir sing in other kinds of choirs as well and reapply their skills – some do, some don't.

Myer Fredman:

It all boils down to the inspiration quality of the people who are out there, out front. The classical example is Bernstein: those are the people that are required to raise the situation, who can inspire, whether they're young people or older people.

Question Nine

Nicholas Heyward:

TSO has grown its audience quite significantly in recent years, but its audience is not growing very fast for straightforward classical concerts. It's growing fastest in our showcase series – concerts down at Wrest Point...last week...a Beatles cover band, that kind of thing. That's where it's grown, mainly because we never used to do that kind of thing. Also our school concerts, wherein we actually asked the teachers what they wanted, rather than telling them what we wanted. Then the family style concerts bleeding chunks – you get bits here and then there, and they're introduced to someone like Christopher Lawrence - who does crack bad jokes - but does know what he's talking about. Those kinds of concerts: that's where our audiences are growing. The other programming thing that makes audiences grow, is when you bring someone really famous. The really charismatic performer. If you want to look at what grows audiences - that does it.

Kevin Purcell:

What strategies are there for growing audiences that on the backbone of the orchestral canon?

Andrew Bainbridge:

Concerts to a lot of people are impenetrable. They perceive classical music and large symphonies as something as they can't get into. I think that boils down to two things: one, they don't have the literacy to be able to deal with it; they don't have their skills developed and two, that the vast majority of people's involvement in music these days is on the very lightest level that you can get. That whole idea of musical discipline that is required: to be able to get into the music, is one side of things, but the other side of it is the idea of making that music less impenetrable. For instance, kids at our school performing in two symphonies in the past six months - The AISOI Project: they weren't performing instrumentally, they were in the choirs, but these kids spent weeks and weeks preparing this music in a way that you would never ever

expect school kids to do. But the vast majority of kids didn't have the foggiest idea how to get into it. Part of the problem with audience building is, that unless it's a really big spectacular, people might not go along and give it a try.

Frank Bansel:

Unless it's packaged more for the Twenty-First Century. The issue to me is: access. The time spent within an auditorium and then the time spent going home. I often think the broader package that provides transport for people; that provides food and drink for people and that makes music an integral part of a social experience, is a really rich way to experience music. It probably means much shorter concerts, built around times where working people are able to access them, eat, engage...so it becomes a far more social arts experience than a passive listening, sitting, receptive experience only. I think concert packages become very attractive to a different population of people. It might not be the traditional orchestra population?

Nicholas Heyward:

Our existing audiences don't like that. They don't like any change. I think you're right – you need to create events. Festivals do a lot of concerts. If you look at something like WOMAD – the World Music Festival, that goes for three days; it's about food, wine, short concerts and moving from one to the other and so on with a very high-level of musical expertise on display, just in a slightly different genre I suppose. Classical musical in different cultures, not just our western culture, but that's a debate we probably don't need to have.

You're right, people love special events and a lot of people will engage if the music is packaged around a whole lot of other things, whether it's at the cinema, or whether it's live theatre of other kinds. Andrew is right, there is no better way of engaging people by actually getting them inside.

Edwin Paling:

The orchestra I used to work with introduced some four, or five years ago, a series of concerts that they call: Naked Classics. They started these concerts at six o'clock, about four or five a year. They were really fortunate in the staff. They had an absolutely fantastic amateur - an engaging, charismatic young man that could really talk about music so that anybody would enjoy it. These Naked Classic concerts were a forty-five minute talk about the piece with few illustrations and little bit of general background; nothing heavy or too analytical, a short interval, followed by a performance of whatever it was. These Naked Classic concerts surprised me how many people turned up at six o'clock to come and then this had a knock on effect when we played the concert, the real concert – full concert, it had a knock on effect on audience numbers for that as well. You've got to have the right person. The guy they had was absolutely brilliant. He was in great demand; does an awful lot with the LSO – another orchestra I used to be with. He is in great demand, because he is so brilliant at his job. It was a project worth doing and

they've got all sorts of different initiatives. I think their audiences are increasing as a result of this.

Nicholas Heyward:

Edwin, did you charge for these concerts?

Edwin Paling:

Yes, but very little.

Nicholas Heyward:

We did those and we found that when we charged for a one hour concert people wouldn't come.

Edwin Paling:

It would be about an hour symphony, plus forty-five minutes talking about it.

Nicholas Heyward:

Ours are an hour in total, but we do the same thing. Graham Abbott does them live and does them on the radio and he's an excellent presenter, but there is a lot of resistance to price. I think that's part of the key, we haven't mentioned the dollars before. They can be a real impediment.

Edwin Paling:

I think I'm right in saying, they had a scheme: if you were under twenty-five you could go to any Royal Scottish National Orchestra concert for five pounds. Nothing really, when you think about it.

Question Thirteen

Aaron Powell:

I have an issue with the claim that classical music is the music of our time. To go back to Myer's argument that it actually isn't the music of our society. In the same way that you wouldn't look at classical works of art from different periods, and you wouldn't look at all artists currently trying to re-create those types of work: they're moving forward. They might use those works for inspiration, or look at the techniques of those works, but they are still very much creating new identities and new artistic identities for themselves.

Nicholas Heyward:

But this is about audiences, not about creating the art isn't it?

Aaron Powell:

Yes. I just have an issue with the way the question is written I think? Is this really more about audiences who are used to listening to contemporary music to come across and start listen to classical music?

Gabi Robin:

Just on the that topic that you've just raised in the previous question about having a specific classical music radio station for youth – I would suggest instead of setting up that, a good way would be to put a classical music segment on Triple J. So have some really interesting youth performers who are able to present why they love classical music and all the best pieces. Talking about it. You could definitely find the people to do and if you had a regular two-hour time slot; something like John Saffron, one of those presenters idea on that, you'd tapping into young audiences and giving them the opportunity to hear classical music with fresh ears.

Aaron Powell:

The concerts that the TSO hold with the Beatles, The Whitlams and the Idea of North: surely are providing a starting point to close that gap aren't you? By bringing people that might not listen to an orchestra and classical music along and you're sort of providing those stepping stones to perhaps come into it.

Nicholas Heyward:

I don't believe we're providing stepping stones. I'd love to think we were, but all the market research shows that they are discreet audiences. There will be one percent of the audience who will come along to the Beatles and eventually start listening to hard core contemporary orchestral music, but no, they don't. On the whole they are discreet audiences, but there's nothing wrong with that.

Aaron Powell:

No not at all. The question I'm asking is, is that part of the process of bridging the gap?

Nicholas Heyward:

Well, no. *My Fair Lady* was not considered a classical work, but once it's been performed by the Opera Australia you have to go – well maybe it is. It's continually evolving and where you draw the line is a bit hard to say. We're not dealing with something that's fixed, and I suspect as we roll on, Myer is partly right. But, we will gather other things up with it and the definition will broaden. So if you wanted to answer this question about music of our time I think we'd go: that classical music is A music of our time, but there's zillion of other musics.

Andrew Bainbridge:

I think that one of the bad premises in this question is the idea of needing to have classical music light, where the only way that people are going to want to appreciate heritage repertoire is having some easy in-road. Maybe that's a good thing but I'm not convinced that it is. Do they need to start looking at different cartoons of the Mona Lisa before they see the real thing? Do we need to put on rap performances of the Scottish play before people will want to go and watch the real thing? These are great works of Art and something needs to be done to promote them for what they are rather than what they aren't. On the other hand, the idea of exposure isn't, I don't think, anything like as good as what it needs to be. Kids sitting outside the back of McDonalds in Camberwell were being exposed to classical music played through the PA to frighten them away, because they were putting graffiti on the walls. So they started playing Vivaldi and Corelli so that the Bogans and their skateboards would move off.

Kevin Purcell:

Is there a responsibility for composers to help bridge the gap between the heritage repertoire and bringing a contemporary classical repertoire to the fore that has an audience connection?...maybe I could put the question to Edwin: over a long number of years in service to the orchestra that you played for, did you see a major change in the types of repertoire programming over the years and what was the reason for it?

Edwin Paling:

The orchestra I used to work for, when I joined it in 1973, had as Principal Conductor was Sir Alexander Gibson and he was an amazing supporter of anything Scottish – artistic, he founded Scottish opera. He was a great supporter of lots of Scottish composers. Half a dozen times a year we would play special commissioned works. They formed an integral part of our work. As the years went on travel became easier. Thirty-five years ago we had a monopoly of concerts, in Glasgow. As a consequence, when he retired, everything become just dumbed down for fear of losing money.

There is something to be said building challenging programs. It's not quite gone full-circle where it was thirty-five years ago, but most British orchestras do offer more stimulating repertoire. There is not so much criticism that everything is dumbed down.

Nicholas Heyward:

Other kinds of repertoire have changed. TSO's first concert included the Hamilton-Harty arrangement of the Water Music. A little while later you wouldn't have dreamed of doing it, you would have done something more proper. Shortly after that you wouldn't have dreamed of doing it at all. Now, you can dream of playing it again, knowing you're not playing original instruments but tweaking things a bit. That sort of fashion has come and gone. When I was going to concerts as a kid, things were more formal, much more stuffy. I think concert going has changed in many, many ways. People take drinks in now. Lots of things have changed. It's not only about dumbing down.

Myer Fredman:

There have been attempts over the last hundred years or not quite as long to bridge the gap with symphony orchestra's playing Jazz type works and it's always failed miserably because it's a totally different style of performance playing and so forth. I don't think you can, but you can have the two running parallel.

Nicholas Heyward:

Agreement from Mr Heyward.

Myer Fredman:

But try and fuse the elements, the styles together – it doesn't work.

Nicholas Heyward:

No, you run the risk of alienating both the jazz audience and the classical music audience.

Andrew Bainbridge:

Other groups than orchestras can perhaps manage this a little bit better. For instance, there has been a move in recitals for a long time to try and include heavy repertoire alongside light repertoire and I think that can be more successful. Being able to put together a program with a bit of this or a bit of that, chunks of Purcell or things like that and it seems to go down a whole lot better. Whether that's doing anything to build audiences I don't know.

Nicholas Heyward:

But that's how people listen to their music now; probably most people will listen to music on things like *Classic FM*. If people are listening on their iPods, got some random shuffle thing going, God knows what's going to follow what. Many of us don't mind that.

Myer Fredman:

It does still come back to the thing of the inspiration and vitality of whoever is communicating to the audience in front of the orchestra. We forget that thirty years ago Mahler was a rude word; doesn't know how to write music, now he's the most popular composer there is. So it's all a matter of whoever is in charge, inspiring and setting people alight regardless.

Question Sixteen

Maria Lurighi:

It is important not to lose sight of that. Therefore, the discussion goes back to underpinning a high-level of music commitment in our educational system. Classical music underpins all music.

Andrew Bainbridge:

TSO schools concert performed *Peter and the Wolf* a few weeks ago and the students were encouraged to write letters to the Education Officer and one of them came from a little boy from Rokeby Primary School (TAS) in Grade Six. He thought that when he got to the concert that it would be boring, but he discovered that when he got to the concert that it wasn't boring. He was asked what the best thing about the concert was, and he said, "The violin: I think it's really cool."

Maria Lurighi:

Will he remember that, or will he forget about it? And that comes back to education.

Frank Bansel:

Access and equity – two great words there it seems to me. I was thrilled that a kid from Rokeby was able to be there. I don't know if a kid from Oatlands (TAS) might have been, again, it's just about whether you can get transport there.

Nicholas Heyward:

Oatlands are still coming because they have one teacher who is keen. When he gets posted to King Island. I guess we won't see Oatlands again. It gets back to this inspirational person again in a certain way.

Frank Bansel:

Myer has set a whole new train of thought. This notion of charismatic and instrumental musicians; really it seems to me, is what it's about with connecting with people. Whether they be players in an orchestra, community members, or a wider population. The repertoire itself sometimes it seems to me is a little irrelevant. I want to see Myer Fredman conduct this ensemble doing this... you understand what I mean? I believe we should look for ways of celebrating the presence of our fantastic inspirational musicians than we currently do. It seems to me some of our really inspirational and charismatic musicians and artists should be celebrated with far more passion and longevity than Governments, or advertising agencies seem to want to commit. I think that'll do more for the place of any repertoire in the community than anything else.

Myer Fredman:

The difference from what you were saying is that classical music costs far more. To have a symphony orchestra is an enormous expense and somebody has got to 'pay the piper'. That means, whereas it was aristocrats and patrons previously, now it's Government. Government's have to feel that they have some return for their money and classical music doesn't give them that return.

Maria Lurighi:

I don't think that's true. I think that the underpinning of society and the stimulation intellectually and culturally is very much underpinned by what has gone before it. It is a well known fact these vibrant communities, of which Tasmania is one, have the highest ticket buying audience in Australia per capita.

Myer Fredman:

Yes, but an orchestra still can't survive just on tickets alone.

Maria Lurighi:

No, but it's always been funded; that's how the mechanism was set up, you can't take that mechanism away.

Kevin Purcell:

This may not be well known, but one musical genres that appears to survive in its own right in Australia, but actually doesn't, is musical theatre. One quarter of all attendances at live music events in this country, courtesy of October 2009 statistics from LPA, are actually to musical theatre productions. As amazing as this statistic is, this form of theatre doesn't survive on its own right because commercial producers receive very significant tax concessions, particularly from the NSW and Victorian State Governments, to allow them to bring those productions in at under real cost. Otherwise it would be very difficulty to turn a margin even with a one hundred percent capacity on some of these productions given audience size. I think our classical music producers do an amazing job considering the lack of commensurate support.

So, if, without financial incentives, it is not potentially profitable for even musical theatre, then classical music must be, comparatively, significantly compromised. Predicated on the reality that Governments will actually fund commercial music enterprise as a driver, for amongst other things, Destination Tourism, perhaps we need to reposition classical music delivery differently in the market?

A questions about 'El Systema'

Frank Bansel:

The National curriculum in music is currently under development. It enshrines music in the primary curriculum to Grade Eight. My concern, at looking at the initial draft is that it's very much bargain basement, very much the bottom line that a generalist primary teacher can manage. It's not as low as what kindergarten children should sing, but it's not a lot better. I actually believe that it meets the desire of the Federal Government to have systemic music curriculum Australia-wide, but I don't think it really does anything to promote, or engage in children in rich and diverse music programs. I would never have thought that I would be on the side that said: I think it's well worth considering something a bit more powerful and focussed. I want it to be accessible to all. I think there are marginalised populations that could be far more richly and deeply engaged in music that aren't. I have no issue with the idea of looking at a style of music in education that gives every opportunity to every child that wants to play in Australia.

Jeremy Williams:

The Venezuelan thing, when they started, dealt with issues with children from broken homes and terrible conditions. Somehow, by bringing the expertise in, they actually ignited something in the culture and it just took off. At the moment, I don't feel that is in the Australian psyche.

Frank Bansel:

All of the data on that is really profound, Jeremy. The capacity for playing in really good ensembles, the capacity that music has to change kids lives and have all sorts of pay-offs in other areas, in terms of socialisation, academic development etc. is there. We know it. It's a very powerful argument.

Heather Monkhouse:

If we know it, why is this National curriculum apparently so poor? Why, if we have this opportunity to create something, why are we in danger of making it so poor?

Frank Bansel:

I would say because, politically, the Arts were on the agenda. Only through pressure from the Arts community, it seems to me, but as a second thought they didn't want to go beyond developing literacy, numeracy, science and history and they have very political reasons for doing that. It was through pressure that at the second stage the Arts were out along with a couple of areas. Interestingly enough, they'd already made their big commitments about time and resources for the first four. Are we surprised! So I think that the second stage, subject to it being developed, is being developed with a very different agenda.

Heather Monkhouse:

I still think that regardless of how we got on the table, and how much resource they feel we need, I still think it is an opportunity to say 'well, this is what it needs' and let them turn it down if they so decide.

Frank Bansel:

Through the Australian Curriculum Assessment Research Authority, (ACARA), people will be able to respond. The extent to which that response will shape future developments is unknown.

Final Question by Kevin Purcell:

“Would anyone like to contribute a single compelling thought as to the need for classical music in Australia and its importance and how we might better engage with that idea?”

Heather Monkhouse:

I keep looking at this attitude in Section D, of the last little sentence that says: ‘Education is optional,’ and sadly in Australia I think that is true. I feel that if we don’t get the education right, classical music won’t survive, because the Government won’t support it – why would they? I don’t think we should be thinking that music education is optional. I think it is about engagement, it is about letting people hear it. I think if they then go on and play well that’s fantastic. As part of education, if you don’t provide those opportunities that are challenging and that do provide an opportunity for students, you eventually do dumb it down. The other thing is a lot of our music product is a final product and for students a lot of the joy factor is the process of watching it. Some of my best experiences at school were actually going along to the final rehearsal; which was a two-dollar thing, but the final rehearsals were terrific! Watching the rehearsal process and why things were stopping and why they weren’t – that was exciting. The final product is nice, but the fact that music was living and happening and changing in that moment...I think we tend to look at the final product all the time. The more we can get people into doing stuff, that’s where we’re not capitalising.

Frank Bansel:

I think a lot of the gap has to do with the metaphors we used to describe classical music that are so implicit in our language. We’ve used the phrase: ‘dumbing down’ a few times, which gives us a vertical hierarchy of classical music somehow at the top and anything beneath that we dumb down to. Or, we open the doors a bit and let some other repertoire come in. There are very deep metaphors that we use to describe the place of classical music and its value etc. that actually, I think, is quite pejorative of anything that is not classical music. I think the questions that we have been given to consider are riddled with those sorts of metaphors.

Attendees agree.

Frank Bansel:

...Bridging gaps of all sorts of things. How can we exist if we're not captionised? I think we've got to really re-think the way we talk about...if it is our music it should be somehow enshrined in our language, not in the language of exclusivity which I believe is in these questions.

Andrew Bainbridge:

I think that one of the things we need to look at is the millions of songs that have been written. If we think in fifty years time: how many of them are going to be around? All of them will probably still exist in libraries and recordings, but who is going to be listening to any of them? A lot of the music that is popular these days is going to disappear very quickly. The music from the Sixties that is left, is largely by people who might be regarded as on the way to genius if you like. The very best music that has been left behind on the whole has been written with a high-level music literacy behind it. You think about the chord structures in the Beatles songs – that's what makes it worthwhile; it's not because they were popular at the time., it is because they're good music in and of themselves. The difference between that music and classical music is that classical music to a large extent has been written by people on one level, if there is such a thing as one level of genius. This is art of the highest possible calibre and it is going to continue to exist and people are still going to want it. There are some things that are going to survive, included in that are going to be a certain amount of contemporary classical music. There will be things that stick around and that last just as much as Mozart symphony.

Jeremy Williams:

There is good music and bad music. If Mozart actually survived until today, that's contemporary music. If the Beatles is played today and my kids have been through all that – they'll keep doing it, because it's good music and it doesn't sound dated.

Meeting ended.