

Responses to the objectives listed in the summary

Graham Strahle

- 1) Do you see any objectives or recommendations that you think are especially important and that you would like to take further at the Summit?
- 2) Are there important omissions? Will you bring additional proposals to the Summit?
- 3) Turning talk into action: are there any actions in which you or your organisation would like to participate – or even take the lead?

1. OBJECTIVES OR RECOMMENDATIONS

There is no doubt that access for experiencing classical music could generally be increased. I do not believe it is an *image problem* per se that is the limiting factor, but that opportunities for younger people to learn, experience and enjoy classical music are inequitable, i.e. uneven across the school-age population. In many cases, its teaching at school level cannot be provided in a sustained, properly developmental manner by classroom teaching. Instead the job of teaching it often falls to Private Provider teachers, or else it is not taught at all. See *possible actions*.

2. OMISSIONS OR ADDITIONAL PROPOSALS

I believe it is important that the Summit's basic premise, that *classical music is under threat*, needs questioning and debate. I have not seen this so far. Analysing this premise can only strengthen any advocacy the Summit recommends or conclusions it may make.

All observers really can do is comment on their own 'patch', that is, how classical music is faring in their own locales and communities. Yet this is important to do because it is the only way to assemble a full, nation-wide picture.

In Adelaide and South Australia, I do not believe classical music is actually facing threat. As a music critic, I have kept annual diaries of concert activity since 1999, itemising concert activity of SA's orchestras, opera companies, ensemble groups, solo artists and festivals. In that period I have observed a general growth in the number of concert presenters (artists/organisations/festivals) and the number of concerts.

Instances of growth in the last decade:

- Adelaide Art Orchestra was founded 2001. Adelaide Youth Orchestra (AdYO) replaced SAYO, which ceased in 1994.
- The number of professional ensembles has grown: Kegelstatt Ensemble, Zephyr Quartet, Syntony, Adelaide Vocal Project, Adelaide Chamber Players, Duo Trystero and Various People. Several new choirs have appeared, ranging from the community-based to the semi-professional, e.g. Cantamus, Young Adelaide Voices, Kapelle Singers and Lumina. Other new semi-regular professional string quartets have appeared: Skyline Quartet, Amicus String Quartet and Aurora Strings.
- The number of classical music presenter organisations has increased: Ngeringa, The Firm, Coriole Music Festival, International Piano Series, Cathedral Series and Bundaleer Weekend Festival (which has a 'fine music' focus).

Instances of decline in the last decade:

- The Adelaide Chamber Orchestra ceased in 1999.
- The Barossa Music Festival, ceased in 2005; however, there were particular reasons for this

that were specific to the way it operated.

- Stellar Collective operated around 2002, but as an adjunct to ASO activity rather than as an independent entity.

3. POSSIBLE ACTIONS

I think the MCA could pursue a couple of actions in the educational sphere.

Firstly, the MCA could assist schools by providing information to schools and parents on the benefits of children learning a classical music instrument, whatever these benefits might be (and there might be many). This could be in the form of a dedicated website, information kits, videos or the like. Teachers and parents alike could be made more aware of the positive outcomes of learning classical music instruments so that they can make more informed decisions.

Secondly, the MCA could look into how the Private Provider sector is contributing to classical music education at our schools. Overwhelmingly, PP teachers are the silent army doing it all. Dialogue could be opened up with this sector. By investigating it, more may be learned about the full situation of classical music at school level in Australia. A SWOT analysis of the PP music teaching in classical music teaching could reveal a lot more about its present state of health. Programs for building up classical music in schools could be designed and implemented with greater effectiveness.

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