

# Re-sounding the Orchestra:

Relationships between Canadian orchestras,  
Indigenous peoples, and people of colour

A research paper by  
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# Executive Summary

This is the final report on a year-long research initiative, commissioned by Orchestras Canada, on the orchestral sector's engagement with Indigenous artists and artists of colour, their practices, audiences and communities. The report is comprised of three chapters:

- Chapter 1, *Placing relationships at the heart*, by Soraya Peerbaye, presents perspectives gathered through interviews with administrators, artistic directors and conductors of orchestras across Canada, and roundtable discussions with Indigenous musicians and musicians of colour;
- Chapter 2, *Defining the terms underlying the IDEA(s)*, by Parmela Attariwala, presents a historical and critical overview of issues related to equity and diversity, including systemic inequity and coloniality in Canadian orchestras; and finally,
- Chapter 3, *Re-visioning Western classical musical training for the 21<sup>st</sup> century*, also by Attariwala, provides further perspectives about education, training, professional development and collective agreements, and the future of Canadian orchestras.

The report concludes with a series of recommendations, forwarded as actions, conversations and questions that may catalyze the development of new strategies.

This research is based on close to twenty interviews with orchestral administrators and artistic directors, representatives of funding bodies, musicians' associations, and the Canadian Music Centre, and discussions with an almost equal number of Indigenous musicians and musicians of colour (hereafter referred to as "artists"), who work with orchestras as soloists, composers, creators, collaborators and conductors. The process followed Orchestras Canada's initiative, the IDEA (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility) Declaration, which was released in 2017 and has begun to be adopted by orchestras across the country<sup>1</sup>. While Soraya Peerbaye's knowledge is of an arts and equity consultant working across disciplines, including performing arts and literature, Parmela Attariwala foregrounds her expertise in ethnomusicology and her lived experience as an orchestral musician and music educator. We hope that both perspectives widen and deepen the findings presented here.

## Findings

This report examines Canadian orchestras' engagement with Indigenous artists and artists of colour, their practices, and communities: both through a consideration of the current experiences of orchestral leaders, Indigenous artists and artists of colour; and the historical, critical and speculative context of orchestras' development. Throughout, we advocate for the need to re-examine the characteristics of orchestral culture, so that orchestras can adapt to new approaches in creation, collaboration and the development of new repertoire. Further, we argue that Canadian orchestras must implicate themselves within wider conversations about the experiences of Indigenous people, people of colour, and other equity-seeking communities, to cultivate equal and reciprocal relationships that meaningfully support current artistic inquiries. This, we believe, is how orchestras can become relevant, socio-culturally and musically, to new and diverse generations of artists and audiences in Canada.

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<sup>1</sup> The IDEA Declaration was also adopted by the Organization of Canadian Symphony Musicians at the August, 2017 Annual General Meeting.



In Chapter 1, *Placing relationships at the heart*, Soraya Peerbaye attends to the interviews and roundtables we conducted in the field. She notes how the narratives of orchestral leaders, Indigenous artists and artists of colour reveal, time and time again, the colonial characteristics of orchestras that inhibit and even harm relationships - even in the midst of vital initiatives. Orchestras are hierarchical and rigidly structured in terms of creation and production processes and protocols of decision-making, and need to develop flexibility for new and more complex approaches. Orchestras also operate within a homogenous internationalist model that does not correspond to Canadian realities: our cultural diversity, and its great variances depending on urban, rural and remote geography; as well as current re-considerations of our colonial legacy. Meaningful diversity requires a heightened awareness of local ecologies, needs, desires and curiosities.

Rather than proposing best practices or toolkits, this chapter asks what shifts might be required in orchestral culture to realize the artistic visions of Indigenous artists and artists of colour. While some of the models presented here are imaginary, they reflect current and active and artistic inquiries taking place within Indigenous practices and practices of people of colour, and visions for the future of both Western classical and non-Western, contemporary orchestral music in Canada.

Peerbaye acknowledges that some orchestras do not have the history and depth of relationships with communities to make this shift, and may lose operating funding or miss critical strategic funding opportunities. Notwithstanding, she argues that the concern of Orchestras Canada should be to support a sectoral transition.

In Chapter 2, *Defining the terms underlying the IDEA(s)*, Parmela Attariwala grounds the relevant concepts of this research in the music profession and orchestral practice in Canada, to explain why aspects of orchestral music-making are in dissonance with contemporary Canadian social values. Attariwala addresses the two most significant terms that underpin the current situation facing Canadian orchestras: systemic inequity and coloniality, and the wide spectrum of ensuing problematics, from hierarchical structures which reinforce sexism and racism, to exoticism and cultural appropriation, to “universality” and internationalism. Most notably, Attariwala points to the way that Canadian orchestras are caught between conflicting international and local priorities, which inhibit the development of a truly Canadian orchestra. Attariwala asks: “Who belongs in the orchestra, and whose music belongs in the orchestra? What is the relationship between orchestras and other musical cultures? Can those relationships exist equitably and according to current definitions of cultural ownership and sovereignty?”

In Chapter 3, *Re-visioning Western classical musical training for the 21<sup>st</sup> century*, Attariwala addresses the changes needed in music education and training, as well as in professional associations, to generate socio-cultural and musical change in Canadian orchestras. Attariwala considers the way that current Western classical musical education separates the roles of the composer (the creative musician) and the performer (the performing musician), and insists on re-production as the most virtuosic skill of the latter; ultimately leaving orchestral musicians without the ability to engage in collaborations with musicians working in other musical systems. More than an “openness” to collaboration, Attariwala argues that musicians need learned skills and sensibilities to engage in process-based approaches. By extension, the sector needs new approaches to the education and training of musicians; and collective agreements that support their engagement in these processes. Additionally, Attariwala points to the particular characteristic of musicians who are leading collaborations between different musical traditions: bi-musicality. Bi-musical artists - including the composers, creators, collaborators and conductors who participated in our roundtables - are translators and guides in these new processes.

Attariwala also asks the sector to address systemic inequities in music education: the prerequisite of an already high level of training in Western classical music for admission to music education and performance programs, for





instance; or the lack of access to instruments and lessons due to economic or geographic disparities. Likewise, Attariwala implores the sector to address the subtle but felt racism in orchestral culture, including the lack of knowledge of foreign-born conductors in relation to Canada’s colonial history and the country’s ever-evolving vision of cultural diversity.

While administrators described a sense of helplessness in cultivating diversity in their orchestras, pointing to the untouchability of the screened audition or “the pipeline” of training and education, Attariwala argues that orchestral administrators and artistic directors have agency in defining the vision of what the art form could be in Canada.

Through interrelated observations, Attariwala and Peerbaye explain why “access” and “inclusion” are insufficient as a context for conversation or a strategy for action for the sector. Engagement with Indigenous artists, practices and communities, and those of people of colour, requires engagement with issues of racial equity, Indigenous sovereignty, and the dismantlement of Eurocentricity, to create non-hierarchical environments where the artistic inquiries of Indigenous artists and artists of colour can take place. There must be an active and shared curiosity about the orchestra, not as an institution, but as a medium, that can respond to a wider spectrum of musical inquiries.



# Chapter I: Placing Relationships at the Heart

## I.1 Context

This inquiry is being made at a time when orchestras are facing increasing pressure to diversify their artistic content and their audiences, or face the loss of public funding and the perception of their social, cultural and even musical relevance. The orchestra is a resource-intensive model, that is now being viewed in the context of broadening support for new, smaller and often more adaptable models of artistic production. In the wake of the extraordinary growth of artistic and cultural practice since the establishment of the Canada Council for the Arts, and a re-evaluation of legacy organizations, orchestras find themselves at a critical point.

Orchestras' engagement with issues of equity and diversity began in the 2000s, less because of a change of values from within, than from pressure from without: anti-racism advocacy by Indigenous artists and artists of colour, a recognition of immigration and demographic shifts in Canada; and changes in arts council policies, from redefining the "professional artist" to diversifying representation on peer assessment committees. Over time, sustained attention from equity-seeking communities have pointed out the limitations of strategies aimed at "access", "inclusion" and "diversity", and developed new discourses on equity, decolonization, and sovereignty.

When we asked administrators and artistic directors what was motivating their concern for diversity, many spoke about recent events: the release of Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) report; the Syrian refugee crisis; Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's cabinet appointments and his now iconic declaration on striving for gender balance, "Because it's 2015"; the peculiar timing of the sesquicentennial, only a year after the TRC report and its questioning of Canada's moral foundation; even the socio-political implications of the election of Donald Trump, or Brexit. As researchers, however, we acknowledge not only events, but discourses taking place in Indigenous, people of colour, feminist, queer/trans, and Deaf/disability communities. Artists, advocates, and activists from these communities have advanced in the sector and now have greater access to positions of authority, and platforms for creation, production, and curation. Digital and social media platforms have become sites of vigorous discussions and brainstorming, questioning, re-considering, and amplifying critiques of colonial and capitalist cultural structures.

In the past three years, legacy institutions have also been prominent recipients of funds through two federal programs: Canada 150, a sesquicentennial program offered through the Department of Canadian Heritage, and New Chapter, a Canada Council for the Arts program offered in the transitional year to the New Funding Model. While deeply problematic (for reasons that will be addressed later), both of these programs have allowed orchestras to engage in new ways with Indigenous artists and artists of colour, through large-scale projects that generated intense scrutiny. Institutions - including funding bodies themselves - are being called to account.

While this report addresses orchestras' relationship to Indigenous artists, artists of colour, their practices and communities, these are only two of many larger conversations about the exclusivity of orchestral artistic practice - most significantly with regard to class, but also with regard to women, queer/trans, and Deaf/disability communities. Ultimately, this is a conversation about power. It is no longer centered on statistical demographic representation - which may vary widely in different parts of Canada - but a larger question about Canadian identity (or identities) and potential. We are at a particular moment in the evolution of the nation-state known as "Canada" during which an increasing number of socially concerned groups are questioning our colonial past, and demanding an equity-oriented reorganization of Canadian structures, including cultural institutions. In the words of one artist, orchestras are facing the same critique as Canada, as a nation-state and an idea.



The precarity of orchestras is not due to one of these causes but their confluence. Some orchestras are unprepared at this pivotal moment and may lose operating funding or miss critical funding opportunities that would enable them to make this transition. Rather than developing strategies for the survival of individual orchestras - a project which can exhaust equity-seeking communities in processes of continued consultation, without their interest at the centre - we maintained a focus on spaces where creative, critical and collaborative engagement can take place immediately, when energy and imagination are available.

*“This is not a new conversation. That people are listening, that they are listening in a different way, is new.”*

There is, among Indigenous artists and artists of colour, true optimism, but also questions, and caution: is this a catalytic, transformational moment? Or is it fleeting, and will it be forgotten? It is, many felt, a particularly Canadian moment. Equity-seeking communities are offering visions that are equally vital to artistic and cultural inquiry as to societal well-being. This discourse is resulting in a profound influx of knowledge production, which offers opportunities for introspection, learning, and re-generation, for orchestras across Canada.

## 1.2 Intentions

In the course of our inquiry, we held one-on-one interviews with administrators, artistic directors and conductors representing a cross-spectrum of the orchestral sector in Canada: from fully professional chamber and symphony orchestras with international profiles, to regional and municipal orchestras comprised of professionals and amateurs; full-time salaried to part-time contracted orchestras; community orchestras to youth orchestras. Although we endeavored to include representatives from all national regions, not all provinces are represented and we were unable to represent the North. Women in positions of administrative and artistic leadership were represented in the process.

While our initial intent was to address a spectrum of equity-seeking groups, including women, queer/trans, and Deaf/disability communities, we ultimately concentrated our attention to address Indigenous people and people of colour. This was both a response to administrators’ narratives of artistic and audience development initiatives, and the communities they were primarily engaging, as well as the need to address the complexity of issues of racism and colonialism. We recognize, however, the importance of other equity-seeking communities, and the specificity of issues that may arise in their practices, and encourage this as an area of future research.

We reached beyond orchestral leadership to include the perspective of Indigenous artists and artists of colour that was essential to this process. We know of no Indigenous orchestral leaders in the sector, but did reach out to people of colour in new positions of artistic and administrative leadership. Roundtable discussions were centered on Indigenous artists who act as soloists, composers, collaborators and ethnomusicologists in the field; and artists of colour who are orchestral musicians, composers and conductors. The different themes that emerged at each roundtable may be more a result of differences in representation of artistic practice, rather than identity. We regret that we were unable to connect with Indigenous artists who are orchestral musicians and who could speak to the experience of being in the orchestra. Likewise, we did not invite artists of colour who are guest soloists and collaborators (rather than composers or conductors) in orchestral projects related to both Western classical and non-Western/non-classical musical practices; this was an omission that should be addressed in future research.





We have not pointed to the gender of the participants in our research and how that may complicate their positions and perspectives; nonetheless, we are mindful that this matters and should be addressed in future research. We emphasize that issues of colonialism, racism, sexism, heterosexism and ableism, are interconnected structures of power and should always be considered as such. Future initiatives to further engage with Indigenous artists and artists of colour should pay special attention to the participation of women, queer/trans and Deaf/disabled artists within those communities; and further initiatives to engage women artists should pay special attention to Indigenous women, women of colour, queer/trans women, and women in Deaf/disability communities.

Rather than proposing best practices or toolkits, this inquiry considers how orchestral culture might shift to realize the artistic visions of Indigenous artists and artists of colour, and asks: what conditions are necessary to realize this goal? The responses to this question will certainly have parallels in other equity-seeking communities, but again, inquiries into further specificities should be pursued. While some of the models here are imaginary, they offer future visions for new orchestral practices and expressions of current, active and vital inquiries taking place within diverse communities of identity and practice, in both classical and contemporary music in Canada.

## **A note on language**

In the many conversations that we have been honoured to be a part of, Indigenous artists have rigorously questioned the language of public funding agencies, art institutions, and policy makers in engaging with Indigenous artists and artists of colour. One artist gave us pause with their questioning of the colonial implications of the word “research.” Parmela and I considered this challenge and possible alternatives. At one point the word “inquiry” seemed to offer more potential; but as the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women became mired in colonized bureaucracy, it ultimately seemed no better. We continue to consider and be receptive to other possibilities.

Another word which seems even more fraught is “pipeline,” to describe the connection between the education and training sector professional orchestral sector. Especially in light of the conflicts between Canada as a nation-state and Indigenous people over energy policies, we are mindful of the profound irony of this word. Metaphors of extraction - “mining,” “sourcing” - with all their colonial and capitalist resonances, have become part of the discourse of Indigenous artists and artists of color as they describe their relationships with settler institutions. We encourage the orchestral sector to re-consider this term, to allow new metaphors that may create better relationships between Indigenous artists, artists of colour and settler institutions.



## 1.3 What did we hear? Administrators, Artistic Directors and Conductors

We began our research with a series of one-on-one interviews with administrators, artistic directors and conductors of orchestras across Canada; our guiding questions can be found in Appendix A. We asked respondents to describe their orchestra's engagement with access, inclusion, equity and diversity; recent and current initiatives, including those funded by Canada 150 and New Chapter; what was motivating these initiatives; what successes, failures and learnings were emerging; and how they could envision diversity in the orchestra.

The breadth of initiatives described was wide: from traditional Indigenous dance prior to the main concert, to blues soloists accompanied by the orchestra; feasts and concerts free of charge for refugees, to tours to remote Northern communities, to a festival of Indigenous music; commissions of compositions and orchestral arrangements, to community-based collaborations about the history of residential schools; a conductor-in-residence position held by a classical music artist and Syrian immigrant, to a residency program for emerging Indigenous composers and composers of colour.

To describe these initiatives would be a task in and of itself. It may be more important to note the great variations in the conversations that unfolded about their limitations and ambitions: tones of curiosity, delight, excitement, awe, vulnerability, anxiety, fear, skepticism, defensiveness, frustration, anger. Administrators and artistic directors expressed both a sense of potential, and insecurity, for the future of Canadian orchestras.

### 1.3.1 The orchestra in community

*"We're in danger of living in a gated community, where we are programming for ourselves rather than the people who live around us."*

*"I do see this whole question as one of relevance to community, to the creative expression of a community. If you're perceived as irrelevant, you aren't relevant. The orchestra in its own community can be a leader of cultural expression and human contact. There needs to be so much more than performance to what an orchestra does."*

Administrators and artistic directors describe a moment of reckoning as they engage in major initiatives towards diversity, while trying to bridge significant gaps of knowledge within their organizations and across the sector. There is an increasing urgency to respond to declining or changing audiences, public funding bodies' evaluations, and the implicit threat of cuts to operating support. Orchestral leaders hear the criticism from arts councils, or more precisely, from peers at the evaluation table, that artistic merit, in and of itself, isn't sufficient to justify funding; that merit is being considered in relation to relevance to current artistic practices and audiences, and the orchestra's role in community. They are also adjusting to expectations of new audiences: younger, more diverse, often more socially concerned; and with access to an unprecedented array of art, entertainment and technology for live and virtual musical experience.

Yet we also hear that administrators and artistic directors are motivated by a desire for orchestras to connect: to new and different musical practices; to audiences and communities that define the demographics of where they are; and to broader cultural and socio-political conversations that are defining an emerging generation. Diversity, one administrator said, is both an issue of "the health of orchestral and audience development." It is also an ethical commitment to an ideal.



### 1.3.2 Relationships over initiatives

*“Relationships are what matter: not initiatives, not timeline, not achievement.”*

This shift was most clear in orchestral leaders’ stress on relationships with Indigenous artists and communities, and artists and communities of colour. In our conversations, administrators and artistic directors were acutely aware of criticisms of “checkboxing” and one-time or short-term initiatives by legacy institutions, and reiterated a desire to cultivate “relationships, not initiatives.” There is a growing number of orchestras producing long-term initiatives, through commissions, inter-cultural and inter-disciplinary collaborations; and engaging with artists-in-residence, advisors, and elders.

Certainly, these initiatives create intense encounters, within the existing structure of the orchestra, or new contexts being tried and tested for the first time. But even in new contexts, elements of the structure often (but not always) remain intact. The conductor, whether the artistic director or a foreign-born guest, often still remains a key negotiator in the exchange between composers, collaborators and orchestral musicians. Composition remains the solitary practice of the composer, separate from the orchestra. Administrators describe a culture that is unused to R&D and collaboration, and despite long-term planning and stages of development, the orchestral creative process is still concentrated in short rehearsal periods. Meanwhile, community collaborations create large-scale encounters amidst people and in places to which orchestras are still very new. Everything, it seems, is at stake: artistic success, the response of conservative audiences, box office returns, and the approval of funding bodies, donors and sponsors, and boards of directors.

Despite this, orchestral leaders attest to their own and musicians’ genuine sense of joy through initiatives with Indigenous artists, artists of colour, and forms beyond Western classical music: of being inspired by different creative processes and experiences of performance; of learning about different modes of musical listening and response; of amazement at the virtuosity of musicians trained in other traditions. Likewise, they describe being deeply moved by new interactions in community: spontaneous acts of welcome and exchange, encounters with young people and elders, and exposure to others’ lived experience. Barbara Smith, Executive Director of the National Youth Orchestra, described young orchestral musicians’ response to their participation in The Unsilent Project, and in particular the transcultural exchanges and collaborative workshops led by Michael Greyeyes and Signal Theatre. While some young people were uncomfortable (“I came for music; why am I becoming an activist?”), Smith said: “Others called them out, and said, ‘If you live in this country, if you’re part of a national orchestra, this is what you signed on for.’ They asked questions, were engaged, interested, curious, had suggestions.”

Nonetheless, orchestral leaders also describe the anxiety and discomfort among Western classically-trained conductors and musicians when they encounter the cultural and musical practices of the other.

### 1.3.3 Orchestral culture

One of the most common challenges administrators and artistic directors described, for example, was how to accompany a soloist accustomed to improvisation, or to being followed rather than following a conductor. They could sense the artist’s frustration with rehearsal periods that constrained musical experimentation, or with the inability to communicate directly with the musicians. Most often, they described the issue of time as the result of collective agreements, a schedule and cost-driven restriction, and the issue of communication as one of protocol. Many orchestral leaders felt that creative challenges in processes with Indigenous artists, artists of colour, and



non-Western classical musical practices, could be addressed by a better understanding of orchestral protocol. Others, however, could see how protocol inhibited - and often harmed - the relationships that were being sought.

This was especially tangible in relationships with Indigenous artists and communities, in the current period of Truth and Reconciliation. One administrator described a community partnership which became strained over discussions about whether the elder or the guest conductor should lead the young performers; whether the performance should take place in a community space, or in a concert hall. The conductor's proposal came from an intention to cultivate professionalism or excellence; but from the elder's perspective, this disrupted relationships to young people, community spaces, and meaningful cultural transmission. What resulted was, in the administrator's words, "a marvelous, bizarre magnifier of settler mindset: 'this is what's best, we've done it before; it will be better this way.'"

These are tensions between distinct cultures of making, sharing and performing music - informed as much by artistic practice as identity - that administrators and artistic directors are not always able to ease. Orchestral leaders are recognizing that there must be a deeper shift for collaborations to work: "It's not enough to invite the artist; it's more important that artists come together as equals."

### 1.3.4 Time in the orchestra

Time was a recurring concern in our conversations, as orchestral leaders describe their engagement with increasingly complex, cross-cultural commissions and collaboration. One administrator spoke of the need to better communicate "the way time works in the orchestra." In response, some administrators were building time into the production schedule to transmit this information, to varying degrees of success. But time must also be deepened by clarity of intention.

One administrator drew from parallels in the field of opera, where more inter-cultural and inter-disciplinary collaborations have taken place:

*"When it works, it works because we have brought the right artists together, giving them time to create a connection, to develop a way of working together. Each of them is in a world that is not his or her usual world. Our role is to be available to them, to be there when they have insecurities, to support them through the process. It takes time. Do not abandon them. The process is very demanding. We are developing some expertise, or at least the sensitivity...if we take the time to do it right."*

Time, in other words, is a challenge as new creative processes emerge. Whereas traditional orchestral music is created by a single composer, who works with the orchestra only in rehearsals immediately prior to performance, contemporary orchestral works that are introducing non-Western, non-classical materials have been conceptualized as collaborative. As the administrator quoted above notes, works of multiple authorship require time for the negotiation of cultural and creative differences and finding shared resolutions. Even single authorship works by Indigenous artists and artists of colour working in non-Western classical or hybridized practices require time, in a field where there has been no formal training or professional development for cross-cultural encounters. Likewise, administrators and artistic directors need experience presenting that material to diverse audiences and communities who may bring different experiences, expectations and responses. One administrator said, "We had to live in the performance for a while until it became what we wanted it to be." Transmission in performance is a learning ground in and of itself that cannot be re-created in rehearsal. In the deepest way, the concern for time is a concern for the gestation and life of an experience.



### 1.3.5 “Marketing” and relationships

Orchestral leaders attest to audiences responding with deep appreciation and curiosity to projects that reach beyond Western classical music and engage with Indigenous artists and artists of colour, their practices, and communities. There are powerful emotional reactions, especially to Truth and Reconciliation projects. But there are still audience members who do not want to break with the European repertoire (“Don’t mess with my Beethoven”) and who are uncomfortable in their position being challenged by new narratives (“My ancestors have lived here for five generations - I don’t like being called a guest”). There were a few administrators who were uncompromising in challenging audiences: “If I offend people, at least I made them feel something.” If this was a minority stance, we were nonetheless struck by administrators’ willingness to take risks in their relationship with audiences; to invite them to trust orchestras to challenge them.

At the same time, administrators plainly stated the difficulty and often failure of marketing, and the undeniable risk of poor attendance and box office revenue. Almost uniformly, they describe papering houses as a strategy to bring new audiences to the orchestra, but note that these audiences rarely return. It is the ironic other half of “one-time initiatives” by legacy institutions: one-time audiences who attend to visit something novel, that once experienced, satisfies a superficial interest. Audiences do not emerge with a sense of possibility that returning might offer a new, changed, or deepened relationship. One administrator described inviting a Chinese artist who had played to sold-out houses the previous year when presented by a Chinese cultural centre; at the orchestra, the artist played to under-capacity houses with almost no members of the Chinese community. Administrators are painfully aware that the issue is not the absence of an audience, but of networks, and of inadequate knowledge among predominantly white staff to reach audiences from non-white communities.

*“There has to be a way of convincing [communities] that the orchestra belongs to them, just as much as their school or the local ice rink.”*

*“We are so damned white.”*

### 1.3.6 Elders, cultural advisors, and advisory board: relationships and reciprocity

Administrators and artistic directors describe being changed, having “[their] eyes opened,” by long-term relationships with Indigenous artists and artists of colour. Several conversations highlighted the importance sometimes placed on a single, one-on-one relationship between an administrator and an Indigenous artist or an artist of colour. Often these are moving expressions of collegiality and genuine friendship; in listening, though, we were reminded of the pressure that can be placed on an Indigenous artist or artist of colour - or any person from an equity-seeking community - to be likeable to be able to make change. Reliance on one person also means that an individual shoulders the responsibility to educate and advocate for a community; and that the institution may turn less to others to contextualize its learnings in a wider discourse.

Only a minimal number of orchestras describe working consistently with Indigenous elders and advisory boards. Those that work with advisory boards emphasize the importance of not only deepening, but broadening their knowledge across a multiplicity of differing perspectives within a community. One administrator described the advisory, not only as a resource for the orchestra, but also as a resource for advisors, who could then access the orchestra’s profile in the region and fundraising capacity to support their own community’s causes; this introduced an important element of reciprocity that was not addressed in other interviews.





No one described working with advisory boards centred on other equity-seeking groups, or groups that would otherwise represent the demographics of their region, artists or audiences the orchestra would want to be connected to.

### **1.3.7 Boards of directors: determining the value of relationships**

Administrators and artistic directors often described struggling to articulate the vitality of these projects to boards of directors who value “measurables” in the face of decreasing audiences and box office revenue, and increasing organizational deficits. In the end, as staff they feel they can only defend a project by describing how it may potentially reach wealthy donors and sponsors, or unlock strategic grant opportunities. In the midst of this, it is notable that almost none of the orchestral leaders we spoke to identified diversification of the board of directors as an active strategy. In some cases, administrators were unsure how to invite Indigenous people and people of colour onto the board; the expectation that members of the board be active drivers of fundraising was a barrier, and there was a concern that it may not be “fair” to depend on some members for knowledge, and on other members for fundraising and networking. Creating liaisons between Indigenous advisors and advisory boards, and boards of directors, were touched on in only a few interviews.

### **1.3.8 Relationships as a product of culture and time**

In our conversations with administrators and artistic directors, we sensed varying degrees of recognition that the ripples of relationship need to be traced across the orchestra’s system and structures: from administration to artistic creation and production; audience development and community engagement; governance etc. But our conversations suggested tensions and at times separations within the organization; between administrative and artistic, or artistic and marketing and publicity personnel; or between staff and governance; all of which create a fragmentation of intention and learning.

*“Sometimes the risk is in what we present on stage; sometimes it is in the relationship with the audience. The team has to agree with the goals of the new project, and the risk that the team is able to take. Sometimes we have to say, this is very important to do, to innovate, to connect... We might not sell 6,000 tickets, but we will compensate elsewhere. Otherwise, the artistic team will feel the project was successful, and the marketing team will feel it’s a failure. You need to look in the same direction and say together, let’s take the risk. The risk has to be shared.”*

There is also an emerging sense that allowing that ripple to travel through the organization may in fact change the orchestral culture:

*“We need to work in a different way; we have to develop our capacity to work with new artists, new approaches, new elements... The administration has to change. When we work with people from other communities, the way we approach the project - even a contract - may be different. For many reasons, some communities will not be comfortable with a contract; sometimes a person may hear that as, ‘You have no confidence in our relationship?’ We need to develop a reciprocal trust. It takes time to communicate, to engage in cultural mediation.”*

*“We shouldn’t perpetuate colonialism. If we want to bring people into our performance space, it means changing what we perform; the ways we make; how we engage with those communities.”*



### 1.3.9 Sustaining relationships

Despite expressions of deep curiosity, care and questioning, the orchestral leaders' uncertainty about how to proceed is palpable. The majority of administrators described further initiatives engaging Indigenous artists and artists of colour as dependent on more funding, even as they acknowledged that it may not be available; that large strategic grants like Canada 150 and New Chapter will likely not be reiterated; and that increases to operating funding across the sector are unlikely. While none of the administrators and artistic directors we spoke to used the word we most expected to hear - "survival" - there is, even in their affirmation of commitment, a profound anxiety. "Is it sustainable?"

Part of the anxiety is a sense of obligation to address diversity of all kinds, to reach all communities in their region, even when this may not be of clear benefit to the communities implicated. One administrator, for instance, noted that a coordinator of services for Syrian refugees advised him that there had been so many invitations from artistic and cultural institutions that people were no longer inclined to respond. The commodification and competitiveness of outreach aside, administrators were pointing to a real challenge in a vast country with extraordinarily different demographic compositions and environments. We did not sense this concern as arising from an evasion of responsibility, but as a real question about how to make their work meaningful. This presents a challenge to a homogenous "international" model on which Canadian orchestras are built, and a question about how alternate models may allow more responsiveness to artistic practice, communities and audiences in their region.

### 1.3.10 Relationships as shared inquiry

*"When a composer collaborates through a different kind of music, when different kinds of composers come together, they're hearing different things - reflecting different things."*

*"Are we only going to bring other cultures and instruments [to the orchestra] if they can do what we do from an orchestral perspective? That's going to have to change, if we want to engage different traditions of music-making. It needs more rehearsal time; and the willingness of musicians. Does our skill set need to change, so that we can improvise? Absolutely. Who's going to be the musician of the 2050 performing ensemble?"*

We asked all orchestral leaders to describe their long-term vision for orchestras in Canada, with the question: What could the orchestra of the future look like? And most key: what could it *sound* like? What may have been most surprising in our research was the recognition that, in many ways, the artistic potential of diversity had not yet been sounded.

Many administrators and artistic directors, for instance, were interested in considering that the orchestra of the future might be more "visually diverse", including musicians of different racial and cultural backgrounds, musicians with disabilities etc. Most saw this as an issue of "the pipeline," or the education and training sector. From their position in the professional sector, they felt paralyzed in addressing the demographics of their orchestra with the current commitment to holding auditions behind a screen. Likewise, many were interested in considering that the orchestra might include non-European instruments; that it may require different skills and sensibilities, particularly with regard to improvisation, and an "openness" to collaboration. But there were no active initiatives within the orchestra to include these instruments or cultivate these capacities; responses to these questions seemed to be in an abstract realm, ideal and very distant.



In almost all our interviews, administrators and artistic directors both described a wish for the orchestra and the Western classical music repertoire to live up to its claim of “universality”; few questioned the notion of universality in and of itself. There were, in fact, critical points of tension emerging from this issue. Some questioned whether a shift in training and professional development towards new skills and sensibilities in intercultural practice or collaborations may undermine virtuosic technique and expression in Western classical music. We would argue that this is an unproven binary, that would likely be contested by musicians trained in dual or even multiple traditions - what Parmela Attariwala describes as the bi-musical artist in chapter 3. At the same time, some expressed a deep mistrust of critiques of universality; an anxiety that such critiques negated the value of Western classical music altogether and threatened its continuity. The possibility that challenging universality might open new avenues for orchestral music was not always apparent to administrators.

We note that, while all orchestral leaders we spoke to described an *ethical* commitment to diversity, few spoke of what was driving their *artistic* inquiry. This may have been a fault of the phrasing of our questions, which leaned more towards “initiatives” in an organizational sense, and referenced systems and structures of the orchestra, rather than artistic inquiry. But it is worth considering what might arise if this were to be the subject of discussion with orchestral leaders. More than anything, these are the questions that will influence the sector’s understanding of the orchestra’s future potential.

*“Our motives are faulty. If we’re doing this because we ‘should,’ we’re not approaching them [Indigenous artists and artists of colour] as musicians.”*

## **1.4 If relationships were at the heart: Perspectives from Indigenous artists and artists of colour**

*“I’ve always brought my cultural self with me; I didn’t hide, although it was recommended [in the beginning] that I don’t tell people I’m Indigenous, because [otherwise] I might not have as many opportunities. And I disagreed. I had enough of a core of who I am and why that was important... Since then, I’ve been trying to regain that ego, that voice, that belief that my musical ideas are right and good and worth pushing - and as I’m getting older I’m finding that conductors and other collaborators are actually looking to me and asking me what I want to do, and they mean it. It’s not just, ‘Well, we’ll do what you want to do, but this is how it’s gonna happen’ - which did happen for a long time; I felt like I was just an eternal student. But now, I do feel like I am being asked, and it has to do with the shift of how organizations bring in Indigenous voice. And it has taken me a little while to believe it.”*

*“[The] way I thought about it, while I was in school, was that I was bringing our music into the classical sphere; taking our melodies and arranging them for a classical audience. Now I don’t see it that way. Now I see it more as taking two genres and ways of making music, and placing them - I believe for the first time - on equal footing; valuing them equally, and letting my artistic practice come at the centre point of that. And not trying to put our content into the world of classical music, because I don’t necessarily feel it belongs there; that putting a couple of melodies on the existing framework is going to change it. And I do feel that the Western classical music paradigm needs drastic change.”*

We held two roundtables as well as one-on-one conversations to hear perspectives of Indigenous artists and artists of colour on questions of race, Indigeneity and the potential of orchestras in a culturally diverse society. Artists of colour included orchestral rank-and-file musicians, as well as two composers and/or conductors who



have recently attained positions of administrative and artistic authority in the orchestral sector. The Indigenous artists' roundtable included soloists, composers and creative collaborators who have been involved in orchestral practices, in some cases since the early 1990's, through seasonal programming. These different histories and positionalities brought forth very different but nonetheless inter-related observations.

### 1.4.1 Race and racism in the orchestra

The experience of artists of colour in the orchestra is an important indicator of the state of the Canadian orchestra as a site for diversity. Artists of colour have had greater access to the orchestra, in part because there has been greater consciousness about their inclusion; and in part because systemic inequities of race may be mitigated by the interrelation of class privilege and bi-culturalism. As Parmela Attariwala details in chapter 2, diasporic communities have different relationships to Western classical music depending on histories of colonialism, nationalism and migration. Together with the fact that "classical" music is also recognized in some non-Western traditions, this creates different frictions, but also fluencies, between artists of colour and orchestral practice.

While musicians of colour were not responding to specific initiatives towards diversity in orchestras, each of them spoke of the duality of being in a racialized body in predominantly white organizations. They pointed, for instance, to the benign racism of cultural stereotyping (assumptions that a Black artist is "naturally" skilled at improvisation, for example), or the micro-aggression of a conductor who would not directly speak to a principal musician of colour, but only his or her white stand partner. In other situations, musicians described the discomfort at times of touring to predominantly white regions, and their visibility (and vulnerability) as people of colour as they walked back to their hotel, or sight-seeing in town.

Yet they also described asking themselves whether racism was a factor in situations where they were passed over for employment or advancement:

*"You don't want to jump to the conclusion that it might be racism. I didn't want to think that that could happen to me. But I'll probably never really know."*

*"It's hard to pinpoint racism in the orchestral world. There's a lot of discrimination based on whether the person likes you or not. Like, I may believe I'm a better player than someone else, but they got hired and I didn't. It might be racist, but I've seen so many other situations where even white people are being discriminated against for nothing."*

Racism, many of them said, "might not even be a conscious thing: it's just something ingrained." And yet the difficulty of "pinpointing racism" does not mean that it is a subjective reality. In the context of musicians' experience of orchestral culture, what we note is the fraught act of naming racism in organizations where there is already a rigid hierarchy of power, gender and class, not to mention notions of excellence. To address racism, orchestras must not focus only on becoming more "inclusive" of artists of colour; they must also create safe workplaces, opportunities for professional development, and transparent policies for advancement and pay equity.

Orchestral musicians described their own experience of difference, of moving into the orchestral world feeling, "What am I doing here? I look like nobody [else]; who do I look up to?" Mentorship, they felt, was "absolutely necessary, to reach lost kids, kids who go halfway and then say, 'I don't get this anymore - I'm out.'" Mentorship was what they believed would enable a connection with parents, and legitimization of the art form as a profession for their children.



We do note that artists of colour expressed optimism that, while Black, Latin American, South Asian, and Arab orchestral musicians are very few and far between, this situation can change. And while again, we reiterate that our roundtable included only one composer, and cannot be representative of the experiences of other creators, collaborators and soloists - there was a sense of confidence that Canada presented a unique opportunity for composers and other creators. Composer Dinuk Wijeratne, for instance, compared his experience in Canada to other experiences in the United Kingdom and in New York City, “I feel comfortable in this country in terms of being accepted for the kind of music I make, because my music is the product of my very diverse background.”

## 1.4.2 Gestures of inclusion

The Indigenous musicians we spoke to, on the other hand, were all responding to initiatives designed to include Indigenous artists, practices and communities; they were the interpreters invited as guest artists alongside the orchestra, composers commissioned and invited to collaborate in musical, interdisciplinary and community-based projects. They observe significant shifts in orchestras’ relationships with Indigenous artists, practices, and communities, even in the past three to five years. One artist described the collaborations they had been recently involved in as “some of the most important and satisfying musical experiences I’ve ever had,” while another described the past 15 years of establishing relationships with orchestras as “an exercise in incredible frustration.” Collectively, they point to persisting issues that have their roots in what they describe as the coloniality of the orchestra, and that remain unaddressed by good intentions; that reveal, not situations to be corrected, but deeper systemic and structural blocks that require a cultural shift.

The very recent history of the Canada 150 and New Chapter programs show how unsteady legacy institutions’ gestures towards Indigenous artists can be. Both programs were designed around an unprecedented scope and scale of financial promise, and emphasized cultural diversity, community engagement, and organizational partnership in eligibility and evaluation criteria. With very tight timelines, the programs led to reflexive and often irresponsible approaches by historically Eurocentric organizations across the arts sector, placing extraordinary pressure on equity-seeking groups and especially Indigenous organizations. In an article entitled “An Awkward Call to Arms”, Cole Alvis, then-executive director of the Indigenous Performing Arts Alliance, wrote: “IPAA receives one request a day from potential Allies looking to collaborate with an Indigenous organization or artist on a Truth and [re]Conciliation project. Regrettably, we are unable to adequately (and patiently) respond to every request...”<sup>2</sup>

## 1.4.3 Putting a feather in it: checkboxing, cultural appropriation, de-contextualization

*“[The conductor said], ‘I really like your compositional voice,’ and I was like wow, this is great, I would love to have the support of this orchestra. And then I realized that, oh, this was about getting that grant. The most telling experience was after the final performance; there was a talk-back, and that was exciting, people were engaged. But the conductor meandered out of the room and seemed...disinterested. And disinterested throughout the process - [an attitude of] ‘We got the grant, we’re good; you can do whatever you want and we’ll play it.’”*

The widespread problematic conditions created through Canada 150 and New Chapter, the programs highlighted how easily the sector falls back on “checkboxing,” programming Indigenous material without real consultation

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<sup>2</sup> Cole Alvis, “An Awkward call to arms”, SpiderWebShowPerformance, (Oct 24, 2016), <https://spiderwebshow.ca/an-awkward-call-to-arms>.





with Indigenous communities, or commitments to employing Indigenous artists or creating supportive contexts for their practice. All the artists we spoke to observed, both as practitioners in the field, and peers in the grant evaluation process, instances of checkboxing; what one artist described as “putting an elder on it, putting a feather in it.”

Likewise, artists described the many variations of cultural appropriation in the Canadian repertoire; and commented on the prevalence of appropriation in Western classical music as a feature of Eurocentricity. The most discussed example was undoubtedly the Canadian Opera Company’s 2017 production of *Louis Riel*, and the appropriation by composer Harry Somers of a Nisga’a mourning song; a powerful critique and subsequent consultation with the Nisga’a community was led by ethnomusicologist Dylan Robinson. But artists also pointed to other forms of appropriation. One artist noted that not all Indigenous musicians are “song-carriers,” and that only song-carriers have permission to sing and transmit songs through teaching or adaptation. Even approaches that orchestras may describe as “collaborative” may be considered forms of appropriation: engaging a white composer, for instance, to create the music for material (story, poem, play or libretto) by an Indigenous artist.

Another point of frustration was the contextualization of Indigenous music within orchestral programming: artists observed the ways that they are often programmed, not in the main season, but in family or popular program, on secondary, smaller stages. This may even be with recognition of the best intention of administrators and artistic directors to move out of legacy venues and present the orchestra in community-based spaces that are known and meaningful to Indigenous audiences and communities. But this may or may not be what is necessary to the artistic experience; if not, the result is a de-contextualization, an imaginative, sonic and spatial dislocation of the musical work.

#### 1.4.4 Whose protocol?

*“I remember a scenario when the musicians were trying to get an extended technique I had devised for the string section. I was told that I had to communicate to the conductor, and then he would turn around and tell the orchestra. But he was miscommunicating what I had told him to relay to them. I became so frustrated because they were doing it wrong. I just felt that we were wasting time, and time is money in the orchestral world. I asked, softly, ‘Can I just say it myself to the orchestra? I can demonstrate it, and then they’ll know what it is; it’ll save time.’ I picked up the violin. He smiled and nodded, and I just did it, and they got it, and it was fine. Why do we have this outmoded chain of command in communications in orchestral rehearsals? It makes me think of the House of Commons: hearing people talking over top of one another and interrupting one another. And no one listening.”*

Even more complex issues arise in the creative collaborations that have been developing in the orchestral sector - and here the concerns of composers and conductors of colour rejoin those of Indigenous artists to once again identify coloniality. Like administrators, artists noted the many tensions in the creative process leading up to production in protocols of communication and time. In particular, they pointed to the mentality of “time is money” that is underscored by collective agreements, that reinforce notions of what is considered productive, creative, “saved” or “wasted” time. Both Indigenous artists and artists of colour described instances where an orchestra spent an hour on a well-known piece from the classical European repertoire, but only a fraction of time on a new composition - leading not only to inaccurate reproduction of melody, but also an inability to consider the context of its musical traditions, techniques of transmission in creative process, and sensibility in performance.

Most profound is the issue of the orchestral hierarchy of communication and decision-making. Indigenous artists noted the protocol of deference to the conductor, despite the artist’s presence as guest, creator and key



collaborator with specialized knowledge. Composers, creators and conductors at both roundtables commented on the unusual non-responsiveness of European classical music, in stark contrast to communal forms of music-making, as well as improvisatory practices, in non-European musical cultures. In fact, the role of the conductor in the creative process and performance, is a symbol that composer and cellist Cris Derksen challenges directly in her work *Orchestral Powwow*. The work is performed without a conductor; instead the classically-trained orchestral musicians follow the beat of the powwow drum - Derksen's metaphor for what Canada's relationship with Indigenous people as a whole should be.

Here it is important to circle back to administrators', artistic directors' and conductors' observations on the same issues. Most of them saw these problems of communication and time as ones that could be addressed by a better understanding of "the way things work" in an orchestra: the role of the conductor, the terms of collective agreements, the financial realities of an orchestra's or project's budget. In other words, the way they often described resolving the problem was not by mediation, but by reasserting the conventions of orchestral culture. Yet these micro-transactions reinforced colonial assumptions about the soloist's, composer's or collaborator's place in the orchestral hierarchy. Most viscerally, the lack of time spent on new compositions limits the orchestra as a medium for the creative artist, and leads to the loss of integrity of both the composition and performance. When compared to the time spent on European repertoire, it expresses whose music is valued - and whose is not.

Conductor Daniel Bartholomew-Poyser, in separate conversations, returned to one situation which illustrated the problem:

*"I think that systemically nothing is changing in terms of how we do things. What we're doing is including more people of colour and Indigenous people in the music, but the way in which it is done, it's the 19<sup>th</sup> century. We say, 'We're going to do your piece, I've arranged it for the orchestra, and the rehearsal is on the 21<sup>st</sup> at 1 o'clock, and we're doing this-this-this-and-this, and then we have a break, and you show up and then we're done.' And [the artist] arrived and he was like, 'OK, why don't we do this, and can we try this, and let's just hear that again, how that feels...' And the dancers arrived - they were there, nobody was late, but they weren't orchestra-early... And there was no give. No give. How do we do this? Our ways of creating are so different. I'm stymied and disappointed. I'd really love to work with [the artist] again, but I don't blame him for not wanting to be made into a live artifact.*

*The issue of Indigenous peoples, and their music, performance and participation in orchestral life, is very problematic. The clash of cultures that occurred upon European contact happens every single time an orchestra works with Indigenous groups. Not analogous - it's exactly the same. When we work with Indigenous artists, we say, here's what we're playing, here's the schedule, here's the contract. And reconciliation is out the window."*

The friction between orchestral protocols and the protocols in non-European cultures is more than an issue of sensitivity: it is a real, tangible issue in music-making and the transmission of musical knowledge. These situations represent a loss of deep listening, of reciprocal artistic curiosity, learning and transformation. What may be most notable about this example is that it is an interaction that includes a person of colour within the orchestral leadership, and an Indigenous artist as a key collaborator. Racial identities notwithstanding, both artists were caught in dynamics of orchestral culture which they do not control.



## 1.4.5 Partnership and creative authority

*“There was... a great interest [from the orchestra] in opening up a space for Indigenous voices to take the lead. It was a beautiful thing from the outside, but in the end, seeing [I could see] how the constraints of orchestra suffocated that process. And at a certain point, a lot of the participants were thinking, what are we doing? It was a beautiful experience in many ways; it did allow space for Indigenous voice, but it was very complicated.”*

Throughout the conversation, Indigenous artists noted that “partnership,” “consultation” and “collaboration” require acknowledgement of power and privilege differentials, and meaningful actions towards reciprocity, at every point of the process. Without that, artists find themselves in situations where they have been invited to join the artistic team after the project has been structured by the orchestra; when attempts to change the conditions fail, they nonetheless feel an obligation to continue and make the best of uncomfortable conditions. Ironically, this can happen even in “collaborative” contexts where there are multiple Indigenous artists in the room; a collective silence develops as they try to “get through it.” It is potentially most toxic in situations where a young or emerging artist is isolated in an orchestral project. One artist described being approached in their early career by a symphony conductor for a commission. “It was like speed dating,” said the artist, “and he was sweeping me off my feet. And that’s when it went wrong. As a young composer, you say, I’ll do it, I’ll do it, I’ll do it - without even knowing how to write properly for the orchestra.” Such examples raise questions about how inclusion in fact compromises a young artist’s progression, leaving them stranded without professional development and adequate creative and collaborative support. At best, the absence of safe spaces means that essential viewpoints on artistic creation are submerged; at worst, they create situations where artists can be exploited.

The questions at stake here are not ones of inclusion, but of creative equality and leadership. Dylan Robinson describes it in this way:

*“There are many, many instances where orchestras and musical ensembles have brought in [Indigenous] people for an Indigenous stamp; where the process that is called collaboration, has actually been a process of - and I use this word in a negative way - “inclusion,” [in a sense] that has nothing to do with setting the terms. [It is] not a process where [Indigenous people] define it, where [orchestras] give over time and resources [to Indigenous artists]. The instances I’ve witnessed - not as much recently, but in the past 15, 20 years - are about inclusion where... you can even be at the front of the stage, you can be the soloist, but you have little agency. [The orchestra says,] ‘We’re going to cue you; we won’t ask about how you think things should take place.’”*

Whether through the administrator, the conductor, or the composer, the protocols of the orchestra maintain a strict creative hierarchy, with authority and authorship in the hands of white artists - despite the intention of collaboration. The issue of continually working under white authority is an issue that is described as pervasive and perhaps the most powerful expression of orchestra’s historic roots: “a colonialist control of voice.” It communicates “a lack of imagination; a lack of trust that we as Indigenous people have a process that may be different, but that works.” In defining true partnership, Indigenous artists point to emergent relationships where orchestras are ceding leadership and the reimagination of the orchestra to Indigenous artists.



## 1.4.6 Consultation as relationship or reaction?

Consultation is a deeply intertwined issue here, as a gesture of inclusion that seeks approval from Indigenous communities for white institutions and leadership. Artists note that it often comes as an after-thought - in the case of the COC production of *Louis Riel*, in the face of public backlash. As a result, there are limitations as to how consultation can affect a creative process that is already underway, or an imminent production. Indigenous representatives may need to come from a great distance; there is a lack of education of non-Indigenous participants, that must then be addressed to create common understanding and intentions. There is an expectation that the consultation process can take place on its own terms, and often not a consideration of the protocols of a specific community: who needs to be consulted, when, where and how resolution can be enacted. Robinson, in describing consultation processes such as the one that followed the COC production of *Louis Riel*, said:

*“A lot of ignorance needs to be dealt with around these contexts; a lot of learning needs to take place. It can take quite a long time sometimes, because we’re still, in many situations, at the very beginning of these conversations. It takes the time it takes, right? And that for me is a really important thing. [Artistic leaders often want to know], tell us what needs to be done, how do we solve this? [There is a desire for] this very quick [process], [an attitude of] ‘we need to get this taken care of right away’, that works against long-term processes. It takes the time it takes.”*

## 1.4.7 Culture as material

*“I am being Indigenous right now: everything I do is Indigenous. It doesn’t matter what I sing; I am singing it from an Indigenous perspective. Everything counts - it doesn’t have to be a creation story, a trauma story.”*

*“When I get a commission, it’s immediately assumed that I will write about something Indigenous. Once I was speaking to a conductor, and I said, jokingly, I have this great idea - I actually want to write about the fall of Berlin in 1945...I could see him panic, [mentally] unchecking all the boxes...But why can’t I? I can do anything.”*

One of the critical points that Indigenous artists raised was the way they are most frequently commissioned to develop narratives that foreground their identity, mythologies and traumatic histories, as Canada as a nation-state comes to terms with the violence of its colonial past. Discussions with Indigenous artists raises questions about what orchestral administrators and artistic directors believe constitutes an Indigenous work. A narrow interest in Indigenous “material” (e.g., creation stories, stories of trauma) depends on Indigenous artists to foreground dominant culture’s commitment to address histories that it has suppressed; but this may or may not be a priority for the artist. Identity and culture are not simply material; they are also ways of informing and influencing modes of expression and creation. In situations where orchestras commission white composers (to create the composition or the aesthetic “container”), and engaging Indigenous story-makers and interpreters (the “material”), the white institution maintains musical control, while bringing in racialized narratives and bodies to give a sense of collaboration that hasn’t fully been actualized.

It would have been valuable to discuss the issue of “culture as material” with, for instance, Black artists, who in other sectors have made similar observations about the ways they are commissioned to foreground the Atlantic slave trade, and especially Canada’s claim to innocence through narratives of the Underground Railroad. Indeed, artists of colour have often observed that cultural production in theatre, literature, and film and television often capitalizes on narratives of colonialism, conflict and displacement, and racism; in the same way that Deaf artists and artists with disabilities observe capitalization on individualized narratives of disability. Likewise, it would be



valuable to discuss issues of checkboxing, cultural appropriation and decontextualization with a broader cross-section of artists of colour, and Deaf artists and artists with disabilities. Certainly artists across all equity-seeking communities have in recent years spoken to issues of insincere partnerships, and the recent controversy regarding Robert Lepage and Ex Machina's production of *SLÁV* at the Montréal International Jazz Festival vividly demonstrates that there are still vast chasms in understanding.

### **1.4.8 Changing the institution from within**

In this light, it was salient to hear the experiences of Indigenous composers, and especially the composers and conductors of colour, who occupy positions in the orchestral structure as directors, associates, and artists in residence. They described access to discussions and decision-making processes at the level of the programming, administration and governance, and in some instances their role as a liaison between orchestral musicians and higher level discussions. They noted, too, how the presence of Indigenous artists and artists of colour can change the organizational culture; in one instance, Daniel Bartholomew-Poyser described how a collaborator on an inter-disciplinary project (a dancer and woman of colour) questioned his programming of a work, the title of which included the word "savage." Her stance brought a collective recognition of the work's racism and colonialism - and of the risk she took in voicing her perspective.

The presence of these artists within institutions creates new and sustained means of engagement between orchestras and perspectives of Indigenous artists and artists of colour, and is absolutely essential. Still, it leads us to note that while orchestras are producing works by, involving, about and for Indigenous people and people of colour, there are only two people of colour in positions of creative/administrative authority employed by orchestras in Canada. At the time of writing, there are no Indigenous people, no women of colour, and no Indigenous women in such positions.

### **1.4.9 True partnerships**

Significant words and phrases in our conversations with Indigenous artists and artists of colour about their most positive experiences included:

Communication; listening; openness; asking questions; asking, 'how can we do this better?' Changing, learning, adapting; understanding cultural appropriation; an invitation to lead; lifting restrictions; asking permission; giving credit; acknowledgement; engagement throughout the process; normalizing the presence of Indigenous artists in creative and performance spaces.

What defines true partnership and collaboration? Marion Newman described the experience of performing a composition based on Cree and Métis poet Marilyn Dumont's writings:

*"[The response from] the instrumentalists was amazing. They came to me and said, that was not something I expected to be playing in a symphony, that addresses things so directly, for an audience like this. I was like, oh my god, the orchestra is talking to me?! And they meant it, and they shared some of themselves. That was really special and it made me feel, this is the right way to go. What is happening here is creating relationships, and is letting people look each other in the eye and say hello."*





Later, she elaborated further:

*“I have great faith in and find comfort and inspiration in working with talented and collaborative conductors and composers, be they female or male, white or otherwise. These are the ones who tend to be far more musical and confident... They have all asked for my opinions, trusted my musical training and instinct and listened to and implemented what I have to offer... I believe that there is plenty of room within [the classical] framework to include Indigenous practice and voice, with my balance of classical expertise and traditional experience. It is very difficult to make these two worlds blend if there is resistance on either side, but when the collaboration is right, the possibilities are exciting and endless.”*

Indeed, as researchers, we were struck by the fact that encounters with racism, and hard, even painful, experiences in Western classical music, in no way dimmed artists’ commitment to embodying and envisioning the practice, in all its possibilities. The questions that Robinson asks, for instance, do not close the practice, but deepen and expand it:

*“That kind of openness to recognizing that you need to listen differently, or just listen as a director or someone in charge of an orchestra is very rare, and absolutely essential. And saying maybe I don’t know. The question is, how do people become open to listening differently, and setting their knowledge aside? It’s hard when you’ve spent your entire career in this and being told you know, to have those foundations challenged. This thing the country is based on is the foundation of orchestral structures, that are also being challenged. Listening, giving space; in orchestras and the nation-state, these are the same, hard things. How can that happen in an organizational way?”*

## **I.5 Curating the future of orchestras**

*“I was teaching this morning at a high school as a substitute teacher for the choir director. And that school - you walk down the hall, and you are in Jordan, and then you’re in Palestine, then in Jerusalem, then Scotland then Norway... I’m talking about the languages you hear, and every manner of dress... It’s like partly a lesson in diversity and a lesson in fashion. It’s incredible. The next generation is going to be completely different. Every morning they hear a land acknowledgement: before O Canada, it’s ‘We are on the land of the Anishinaabe and the Haudenauonee...’ They know the greetings. So they come to a concert with a social consciousness that is different.”*  
(Daniel Bartholomew-Poyser)

It may be valuable at this juncture to remind the reader of our approach as researchers. We resisted presenting this paper as “success stories”, “best practices” or “toolkits,” in part because we believe that such documents prioritize efficiency over meaningful conversation. But it was also because we heard multiple, complex and sometimes contradictory narratives about the initiatives towards diversity that are taking place in the orchestral sector. And yet, in the midst of these narratives, there is the very beginning of a gradual, but tangible, alignment of intention and inquiry. The gap that needs to be bridged may be described as the difference between a model of “access” and “inclusion” and one of equity - and sovereignty.



## 1.5.1 Moving from inclusion to equity and sovereignty

It bears noting that there are significantly different histories in orchestras' engagement within what has commonly been described as "cultural diversity." Engagement with artists and communities of colour began in the 2000's, when institutions began responding to anti-racism advocacy with the politics of inclusion. However, artists of colour (and other equity-seeking groups) argue that, while inclusion may increase the representation of a group within a system, it does not alter the fundamental dynamics of that system, or their level of control within it.

The engagement of orchestras with Indigenous artists and communities has been cultivated in very different conditions. In provinces such as Manitoba and Saskatchewan, where Indigenous people represent 17% and 16% of the population respectively, Indigenous programming has been part of longer-term efforts to engage with regional demographics, as a strategy of inclusion. But across most of the country, engagement with Indigenous artists and communities is a nascent endeavour and has taken place alongside movements of Indigenous political, economic and cultural sovereignty.

The politics of 'diversity' are not static; varied equity-seeking groups influence and inform one another. Across Indigenous communities, communities of colour, feminist, queer/trans and Deaf/disability communities, there are movements of cultural reclamation, restoration and resurgence. The deepening interrelationship of social justice movements means that ideas of cultural acknowledgement, and how this affects cultural production, are influencing artistic sectors in profound ways. "Inclusion" is insufficient to unsettle colonial systems and structures; Eurocentricity remains the power that determines who or what is included, when, where, how and why. The vital question at the heart is if whiteness itself can be de-centered; if dominance can yield to interdependence; and if the sector can develop environments where other artistic and cultural modes of expression can be valued on their own terms.

We would argue that many of the initiatives described by administrators and artistic directors were primarily (though by no means exclusively) about access, inclusion and diversity; in other words, they included Indigenous artists and artists of colour, but did not necessarily change or cede the values, practices and protocols of the orchestra. When they did, however, potential became visible. The shift that is required of orchestras is, in fact, to un-settle their own systems and structures: not only organizationally, but artistically and creatively.

## 1.5.2 The orchestra as medium

*"I think it's vital [to engage in these questions]. Because we all fell in love with orchestral music at one point; it's what made me want to become a musician. I didn't think, this is the music of a dead European white male. Throughout my life I found a way to reconcile my being Asian with Western orchestral culture. I want the genre to keep expanding so that it can reach people. It has such a breadth of expression; it should reflect the breadth of our cultures. Otherwise we will keep playing a core repertoire that doesn't represent vibrant communities." (Dinuk Wijeratne)*

Recent and current encounters between orchestras, Indigenous artists and artists of colour are more than their successes or failures: they are windows onto current practices by Indigenous artists and artists of colour; and sites of exchange and expansion of artistic inquiry. Indigenous artists and artists of colour described falling in love with Western classical music as an art form that expressed the beauty of an historic repertoire from a specific cultural tradition; but they are also imagining its future in relation to a multiplicity of traditions and current practices. Their practices are a means to question, critique and challenge orchestral hierarchies and aesthetics; and to consider the potential beyond the orchestra as it is presently conceived. In the same way that artistic



inquiry has shaped the composition and repertoire of the orchestra at different points of its evolution in Western tradition, current and diverse inquiries need to be given space to shape orchestral composition and repertoire.

Indigenous artists and artists of colour pointed to the ways that considering the values, practices and protocols inherent in orchestral *culture* could open new possibilities for the orchestra as a medium:

*“How do we think about those structures not being just normative - ‘Oh, this is the way we always do things: we always perform in the concert hall, we always clap when the concert master enters...’ How do we think beyond those structures, and think about ways in which our structures, as Indigenous peoples across the country, actually become embedded in classical music performance? What I’m most interested in is...the ways that structural frameworks of classical music - performance, administration, programming, relationship-building - do not simply become about bringing in Indigenous content into a space that itself is not changed. Because that’s just an ongoing form of tokenism: [orchestras have] brought in more Indigenous performance, more Indigenous people, but there is no opportunity, no thought around how this space is changed and challenged by bringing in this material. I think [Indigeneity] is still treated as material, a thing, rather than a relationship. If relationship-building were at the heart of everything we did, we would have a whole different set of conversations.” (Dylan Robinson)*

Artists point to the many decisions that could be made differently: where the performance takes place; how the audience and artists are configured in relation to each other; what instruments constitute the orchestra, even whether the orchestra should learn the music aurally. In this imagining, the repertoire is only one element of Indigeneity. Cellist and composer Cris Derksen brings this into focus through her current practice:

*“In all my artist’s statements, it’s like, ‘braiding the traditional and the contemporary,’ over and over. But I’ve also recently been thinking about [it]...more as a sphere, like we’re in a bubble, in which we can then shift our lens about how we look at classical music, always within the sphere of traditional and contemporary, so we can shift it in multiple directions. [In recent works] I’m making work in which I’m not actually performing. Again, shifting the lens - it’s all these non-Indigenous folks, playing music composed by an Indigenous human, and [asking], what does that mean, and what comes out of it? And that’s really interesting.*

Likewise, Robinson, building on another artist’s earlier affirmation, stated: “Everything we do is Indigenous - even if it’s performing a Beethoven symphony. It would be an interesting proposition for an orchestra to consider - how to approach a non-Indigenous repertoire from an Indigenous perspective?”

Composer and conductor Dinuk Wijeratne followed a similar vein of thinking:

*“Part of the challenge is the history of how orchestras have evolved. When you look at the orchestra, it’s tricky to separate the medium from the content. It is a great instrument; so versatile, made up of so many diverse components. It is a great metaphor for a diverse society. But it is born of Western culture, and now we can’t separate the medium from the content: we still see it as a medium for Western music, for a core repertoire by European white men. It needs to keep evolving, through new music, so that the context is not behind what the medium can do.”*

These visions demand more than inclusion; they require conversations about equality, agency, creative and cultural authority. And yet, they are within reach. How can administrators and artistic directors of Canadian orchestras engage with these artistic inquiries? Is this potentially a shared inquiry that could consciously inform and influence future collaborations?



Daniel Bartholomew-Poyser, for instance, noted how difficult it could be to initiate new processes of creation and collaboration in rehearsal; he, like almost all individuals we spoke to, emphasized the need for changes to be made to education and training:

*“For a conductor to stand up and say - can you imagine this? - ‘For the next twenty minutes, we’re just going to experiment with the piece, try a few things and see how it goes...’ You’ve lost most of the musicians. You’re not going to do that on your first - like, forget it! Eye rolls, mumbling, grumbling, ‘What is he talking about...’ And to be vulnerable and honest, I don’t want that. It’s hard enough to make the music and represent it, but to try and change the structure from the podium - it’s not that easy. It has to start in our universities.”*

We would argue, however, that the change must take place simultaneously within education and training institutions, and orchestras; that collaborations may provide artistic directors, conductors, composers, creators and orchestral musicians with a landing from which to look back at what education and training could provide, and look forward at what could be possible in the orchestra.

### **1.5.3 Diversity, inter/national identities, and local ecologies**

*“[As Indigenous artists], we need to talk about the importance of localization. And that’s why I don’t think a toolkit will make sense. We’re from different cultures; we may as well be from opposite ends of the world, our culture and language and songs are so different. It doesn’t make sense to say, this is the model for how we’re going to make decolonial orchestras. It has to come from the people that are living in that place, the language, the culture comes from that land. The whole epistemology, how knowledge is created comes from the place.”*

*“These issues are very specific to each community. This is a national discussion, but at a community level, it is very different, these are very different reciprocities. This needs to be a community-based discussion. What do we [as orchestral leaders] do in our community, how do we reach out, how do we adapt, what is happening around us? These are hyper-local issues.”*

As orchestras consider creating more residency opportunities for artists of diverse backgrounds, it may also be worth considering that the orchestra - as institutions with significant human, financial and physical infrastructures - is also “in residence.” In relation to one administrator’s observation that the orchestra was “in danger of living in a gated community”: what is the orchestra to its community? To Canada? To Turtle Island? Are these the same thing?

The question of how orchestras can be truly Canadian is not solely a demographic one, but one of expression and of potential. Part of the issue, that a number of administrators and artistic directors voiced along with artists, is that orchestras are often designed around a homogenous international model. “Internationalism” in and of itself (if one considers “cosmopolitan” cities as ones that share a Western socio-economic infrastructure and multicultural identity) requires a certain erasure of Indigeneity. But both Indigenous artists and artists of colour note the challenges that are posed when non-Canadian conductors must address very specific Canadian content and contexts. One Indigenous artist, speaking broadly of conductors, said:

*“In some cases they didn’t know we’re still alive. How can they know? It’s a lot to ask a foreigner to take on; it’s unwise. We’re not going to get to Truth and Reconciliation like this. This is a Canadian issue. We need Indigenous conductors, administrators.”*



Artists of colour likewise often describe European conductors who are engaged by Canadian orchestras but “don’t really care about localized issues.” Administrators, artistic directors and artists all wondered aloud what possibilities would materialize if orchestras could respond to the specific ecologies of their communities, and the musical practices in those environments, rather than conform to the international model.

If instead of asking how orchestras can “include” Indigenous artists and artists of colour, their practices and communities, we ask instead what changes are required in orchestral culture to realize the artistic visions of Indigenous artists and artists of colour, then shared concerns come into sharper focus. In part, this question releases administrators, artistic directors, and artists from the homogeneity of the international model, and allows us to see what might be uniquely Canadian to the orchestra; how the orchestra can reflect a specific national and even “hyper-local” approach.

### **1.5.4 On the issue of sustainability**

One statement we heard from administrators, in varying tones of intensity, was the need for resources for these kinds of projects, beyond special or one-time funding programs. We do not hold the answer to that, but we do want to pose a question for the sector in return. What if there are more resources - but not to the orchestral sector? The institutionalization of European art forms was made possible by the suppression of Indigenous art forms, beginning with the banning of the potlatch, and the marginalization of art forms of communities of colour. The underdevelopment of the infrastructure for these art forms is as much a factor in the underrepresentation of young artists from these communities in orchestras, as the strategies of engagement of orchestras or conservatories. Curating the future of relationships with Indigenous artists and artists of colour depends as much on building arts infrastructure in racialized communities, as within the orchestral sector. This, too, has implications for the role of Orchestras Canada.

The New Funding Model - though its potential has not yet been realized - is a way of envisioning redistribution. But redistribution is not only a funding body’s concern; it is a sectoral concern. If partnership still centres resources in Eurocentric institutions that then allocate a portion of their resources to time-limited projects in non-white communities, it is still colonial. Partnership should be a means of sharing resources and sharing the long-term impact (learning, generation of new ideas, new practices). The Creating, Knowing and Sharing program, for First Nations, Inuit and Métis artists, arts organizations and communities, was established to affirm Indigenous cultural sovereignty. Indigenous artists now hold greater autonomy over their practice, defining the terms of a new creation, determining their own partnerships for residencies, commissions and collaborations.

This harkens back to Katherine Carleton’s question to Orchestras Canada National Conference participants in June 2017 in Montreal: if orchestras advocate for and receive more funding for the sector, to the continued under-resourcing of other musical communities, is that success? If the NFM could enable artists from a wide spectrum of equity-seeking communities to thrive, is that a loss or a gain for the orchestral sector? Another way of saying that is, if relationships are at the heart, then Orchestras Canada must consider and care for the health of whom orchestras are in relation with. Interdependence involves a recognition that the health of orchestras depends on the health of the diverse artistic communities around it; and that the health of those artistic communities depends on the health of their ethnocultural communities.

This is why in conversations with Indigenous artists, clean water continually comes up as an issue. One of the most poignant images described to us, by administrators and artists, by Indigenous artists and artists of colour, was of orchestras performing historic repertoire on reserves, in fine dress, in communities where there was no clean water. This is a deep experience of dissonance. Is it possible to advocate for “access” to classical music for





Indigenous people on reserves, including access to instruments or to early childhood music education, without also advocating for access to clean water? What are the ethical implications of orchestras' reliance on Indigenous communities for their relevance and survival? What are the implications of an orchestra touring European repertoire to Indigenous reserves without clean water, or where fresh produce costs ten times as much as in urban centres? What are the implications of engaging in "partnership" without nation-to-nation dialogue? These questions express the vast difference between entering this discussion through a politics of cultural diversity, and cultural resurgence.

### 1.5.5 Land bridges to future orchestras

*"It's about giving up power. It is about asking; how can we relate to each other on human level? It is difficult and painful at times. How can we gently work through the scar tissue? How can we be kind to each other? It is about asking "how do you feel about this?" in the most intimate way."*

*"Some of the conversations were difficult. We were so afraid of offending. We were so very careful. We had to ask, "please help me; how should I address you? What is the proper way?" Simple things like that. We didn't know; we had to learn."*

*"We haven't been listening for so long."*

Thinking of next steps becomes less daunting if the orchestral sector can consider the process of creating - and re-creating - relationships, as the core of both ethical and artistic inquiry. It also enables the sector to think of the process of valuable in and of itself, without anxiety about what process will yield in terms of product in one, or three, or ten years. In that sense, then, the success or failure of current initiatives is less relevant; what is more valuable is to think of what is currently taking place not as initiatives but as cultural interventions, collaborative, productive, and generative of new visions, that allow orchestras to recreate their own system. The question now is not only about an ethical commitment to diversity, but also about making space for active, creative, curious, responsive, and generous relationships. Is there an artistic and cultural curiosity? Is there a willingness for orchestral culture to be moved, changed by these encounters? What is currently taking place are not initiatives, but collective visioning, maybe vaster than originally thought, with artists, audiences and communities in imagining the future of the field on orchestras' behalf; and what evolutionary paths may take the orchestra there.

## 1.6 What is required?

I close this chapter with Indigenous artists' responses to the question, what is required, to create and present the work that matters to them, within the orchestral field? Again, we recognize that these kinds of questions must be posed to a spectrum of composers, creators and collaborators of colour. Nonetheless, these responses influenced the way that Parmela Attariwala and I continued our discussions after the interviews and roundtables had been conducted, and shaped the recommendations that come at the conclusion of this report. "What is required?"

*"Space. The giving of space, the reorientation of space. Jobs: hiring us - that can't be said enough. If we aren't involved at every turn of telling our stories, then they aren't our stories. Support in doing that, whether financial or logistic - anything that word can mean; we need to be supported in doing this work. And listening; we need to be listened to. We've been saying these things for a very long time. For us, this is not a new conversation. The way that people are*



*listening is new. To encourage people who haven't been listening to find ways to do that is important. And the final thing is access."*

*"Space, in a physical sense - space to work, space to practice. But also space as in time. The length of time [spent] on a piece is part of the fabric of how orchestras rehearse. How does one occupy a space for a period of time significant enough that so that story and voice and experience can have those ripple effects? [Can] the composer come into that space, a week or more out, or at a couple of points in the rehearsal process? Is there a space where the orchestra breaks and [the musicians are] in the green room - casual, low-pressure spaces that aren't just rehearsal space, that isn't on a stage, where there a place for exchange? And access, access on so many levels: access to classical music, to music; access to lessons; access to instruments, especially for young people. Access within a university setting. Access in spaces where we perform. Access to...those kinds of places which are generally where many people - and not just Indigenous people - don't feel safe to go into.*

*...How do we normalize a space like the [orchestra], which is like a fortress, where many people don't feel safe? How can young Indigenous people see they could have a place, a voice [in this space]? Could there be projects where they can initiate creations with members of the orchestra, which is a frightening space - but could we make it less so?" (Ian Cusson)*

*"If the classical music world is interested in developing a canon that is created by Indigenous people, they need to invest in us. Residencies and [other forms of] professional development are lacking."*

*"I think it's important that [our needs and wants] don't become a kind of mandate. It's equally problematic when an organization comes in and says, we know these are your needs and wants. It's more important to come in with a question: what are your needs and wants? So as not to presume. You don't know: it's contingent on the composer you're working with, the community you're working with. It's complex. Who knows what the priorities are until you start to asking and listening?" (Dylan Robinson)*

*"[Our] advisory council has been inviting the orchestra's Board and staff to various events. I was there when we were invited to a pow-wow; it was the first time a lot of people had been to that event. We've also been invited to a sun dance ceremony; it's something I've never experienced because I'm from a different culture. It's important, instead of [the advisory] being in a boardroom; it's in community and in life. It's about, oh I hear there's this play on, by the Indigenous community; should we all go together? It's about engaging with the community, not only bringing them to you. I get asked all the time, how do I meet the Indigenous community? Show up, introduce yourself. Don't ask them to do anything, just say, I enjoyed your show, or I have questions about something. Observe and listen. You'll find your way through that kind of engagement." (Marion Newman)*

*"[We need to talk about] how intensely class is related to music education, and to the symphony orchestra in general. It is a very clear class bracket that is invited [into orchestral music], that it's for, that can play it. This is something we need to talk about. Because we don't have access in Indigenous communities to that kind of education."*

*"[We need to ask,] who is in the room? Who is asking these same questions? Can we start with small collaborations? Can we start by making those kinds of connections, concert by concert; [saying,] I don't have something, but I know someone who does; [asking,] why don't you think about this? In a very intimate fashion, piecing things together, keep talking." (Daniel Bartholomew-Poyser)*



# Chapter 2: Defining the terms underlying the IDEA(s)

## 2.1 Overview: Equity, Art and Eurocentricity

At the heart of a critical discussion of inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility in Canadian orchestras, are contemporary concerns for democratic equality in Canadian society. The active pursuit of equality has become a primary Canadian value; a symbol by which other nations recognize Canada. Yet, while the right to equality—irrespective of any type of difference (physical, ethnocultural, spiritual or intellectual)—is written into Canadian law and touted internationally, residues of the inequalities and injustices rooted in our colonial history persist. The degree of inequity differs across professions, geography, and local histories.

The following section endeavours to provide an overview of terminology that is fundamental to this research document. More often than not, issues related to equity in the arts are articulated by artists (and academics) whose specialties utilize language as part of their art-making (theatre, film, literature) or whose disciplines require a knowledge of critical and social theory (visual artists). As a result, the specificities of music-making are often left out of—or misunderstood in relation to—the broader discussions.<sup>3</sup>

Our goal is, therefore, to clarify the ideas behind the terms in a historical and cultural context in order to help explain why aspects of orchestral music-making are in dissonance with contemporary Canadian social values. The reader will also find positive examples we heard about of what orchestral culture can offer (such as new immigrants finding community), which are theorized within larger concepts (internationalism).

### 2.1.1 Art, aesthetics and representation

Naming and identifying inequity in artistic practices is particularly troublesome, for artistic creations and performances are often the means by which ethnocultural groups signal and maintain their differences from one another. Moreover, certain expressive cultural practices, such as music and dance, are often used in public forums to represent distinctive ethnicities, as has historically been the case in Canada.

Woven into modes of art that originated in Europe are aesthetic suppositions and behaviours that are often assumed to be universally understood. Examples of these include assuming a universal recognition of tonality as diatonic, and chordal harmony as representing emotional affect. But we now know that such beliefs are specific to European-based understandings of aesthetics and philosophies. While many such aesthetic beliefs have spread by means European colonial expansion and proselytization, they are nevertheless of European origin and are thus described as Eurocentric.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> In Part 3 of this document, I discuss how the professional music education systems for Western art music in Canada offer little, if any, teaching on the social and contextual understanding of music-making in contemporary society.

<sup>4</sup> For a thorough discussion of Western art music and Eurocentricity see: Timothy D. Taylor, “Introduction” in “Beyond Exoticism: Western music and the world”, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).



## 2.1.2 Clash of values: individualism and Eurocentric structures

Beyond art, and our particular concern with Western art music, the financial, governance and legal structures of many former European colonies are also Eurocentric, as is—most critically—the concept of individualism and the rights of the individual in liberal democratic societies. Yet, the philosophies of individualism and liberal democracy arose in tandem with the spread of European colonialism and the belief (supported in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century by Darwin) in the evolutionary superiority of European males. Any notions of equality of the individual were only ever intended to apply to this narrow segment of humanity.

We are thus caught in a contradiction of values. If we put aside biases against gender, ethnoculture/race or Dis/ability and consider the intrinsic values theorized by liberal democratic philosophy—whereby each individual should be treated with equal respect, dignity and access (or opportunity)—we find these values of equality are in conflict with the systems of patriarchy and colonialism from which they emanated. Thus, twenty-first century aspirations towards creating a more equitable society are caught in this contradiction of values. Nevertheless, in following the logic of liberal democratic philosophy, democratic countries (and international bodies like the United Nations) have used legislative means to peel away, and attempt to make amends for, the layers of colonial injustices and oppressions.

## 2.1.3 Witnessing Indigenous cultural resurgence in Canada

Understanding coloniality is especially critical to any discussion of the territory's Indigenous peoples. At the turn of the twenty-first century, we are in the midst of a period of cultural decolonization of the Indigenous people on the geo-politically “Canadian” side of Turtle Island. As we co-exist on the same land, we are currently witnesses of, and responsible to, the decolonizing process: to the relearning, reclaiming and resurgence of Indigenous culture. The act(s) of reclaiming culture engenders pride in it at the same time as it actively resists structures that are imbued with coloniality, which (as demonstrated below) includes the orchestra.

Most importantly, as settlers, we are ethically bound to respect this moment and be open to the shift in values it is creating.

The two most significant terms that underpin the current situation facing Canadian orchestras are systemic inequity and coloniality; all subsequent problematics (universality, internationalism, elitism, genderism, racism, exoticism and appropriation) are derived from these two concepts. The often unacknowledged and unrecognized barriers to an individual or group's opportunity to participate are often ascribed to structural (or systemic) inequity.

## 2.2 Structural Inequity/Inequality

Structural (systemic) inequality is a system of biases embedded in the structure of our organizations that results in unequal opportunities and rewards for certain segments of society. Structural inequality can be gauged by looking for recurring patterns, particularly absences in positions of power or prominence, or over-representations in poverty or criminality.

Structural (systemic) inequality is a system of biases embedded in the structure of our organizations that results in unequal opportunities and rewards for certain segments of society.



Much of the theorizations about structural inequity, particularly in Canada and other countries with significant multicultural populations, have been concerned with racism and thus refer to “structural racism”. The overarching term “structural inequity” encompasses issues of racism, genderism, ableism, ageism, and other inequities such as geo-political centrism.

Unlike overtly naming (or implying) that an individual in an organization is prejudiced towards a certain social group (i.e. racist or homophobic), charges of structural inequality acknowledge that biases have multi-tendoned historical-colonial roots, roots that are revealed as problematic when viewed under a contemporary social lens. As a result, an individual working within the constraints of a structurally biased system may be pre-conditioned to accept inequities within their organization. Our current challenge is to recognize the elements of structural inequity in our organizations and either remove or adapt them.

## 2.3 Coloniality

Some of the most critical terms in a Canadian understanding of structural inequity relate to colonialism. Geopolitically, Canada underwent initial processes of legislative decolonization from British rule through the 20<sup>th</sup> century: in 1931 with the Statute of Westminster (which established legislative independence from Britain), and then in 1982 with the patriation of the constitution (which removed both: the need for formal approval from Britain to amend to the Canadian constitution; and the right of Britain to amend the Canadian constitution). Meanwhile, the Francophone population of Québec (Québec having not signed the 1982 Constitution Act) consider themselves still subjugated by Anglophone Canada. This sometimes results in very different presentations and understandings of colour-based racism than in other parts of the country.

### 2.3.1 Cultural Genocide

Colonization of Indigenous peoples and their culture has been ongoing since first contact. Colonization is both the aggressive assumption of physical territorial power coupled with a subconscious “colonization” of the belief systems of those who have been physically colonized. Successive Canadian governments, unable to physically rid the colonized Canadian territory of its original peoples, used a number of methods to wage cultural genocide against them; aiming to “kill the Indian in the Indian”. Similar ignominies were carried out in other European colonies, undertaken in the colonialistic certitude of European superiority over all aspects of human behaviour—including sacred and expressive culture.

### 2.3.2 Postcolonial behaviours and Canada

In framing a future for orchestras in Canada, particularly with regards to ethnocultural diversity—and also because we tend to rely upon foreign research—it is critical that we understand the historical and political distinctions between the Canadian, British, French and American situations with regards to artistic and expressive culture. England and France—as former colonial centres—express and presume modes of cultural behaviour that are traditional to them and can therefore remain societally unquestioned. In the United States, American exclusionary policies prevented generations of African Americans from accessing Western, Eurocentric modes of expressive culture, including training in Western art music. By contrast, many immigrants who came to Canada after the lifting of race-based immigration restrictions in the 1970s came from decolonizing countries and brought postcolonial understandings of self and culture, which included rejecting some elements of





European expressive culture (music/dance/literature/theatre/spirituality)—what we call “art”. In many cases, postcolonial immigrants’ decisions not to participate in Western modes of artistic culture were made consciously and contributed to an understanding of ethnocultural expression that ultimately influenced specific details of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act of 1988, including its subtitle “an Act for the Preservation and Enhancement of Multiculturalism in Canada”.

An additional stigma that can affect those from decolonized ethnocultural backgrounds who participate in (and defend) elite aspects of colonial culture, is that of being labelled “neo-colonial” by others from the same ethnographic region. The charge implies a lack of pride in one’s own traditions and may be accompanied by a lack of in-group support, if not cultural ostracization.

Whereas the terms “colonialism”, “colonization” and “decolonization” relate to specific geopolitical actions and moments in time, coloniality refers to the residue of belief systems and “patterns” of power that have persisted beyond the end of a colonial era. A critical feature of the social justice movement involves examining our institutions for tangible and intangible (symbolic) coloniality that contribute to structural inequity and behaviours we now recognize as inequitable (or unjust) within the framework of liberal democracy, the ideal of which is equality of opportunity.<sup>5</sup>

Coloniality refers to the “patterns” of colonialist power that persist beyond the end of a colonial era.

Many elements of coloniality are simultaneously inequitable and interconnected:

- Eurocentricity (and attendant implications of aesthetic, technical, and philosophical superiority)
- hierarchy and hierarchical structures
- classism,
- gender bias (including sexism and homophobia)
- racism,
- proselytization,
- exoticism, primitivism and cultural appropriation

Adjusting bias at one point often shifts biases to other points. For example, adjusting for racism by bringing only men of colour into a workforce does not alleviate gender bias and patriarchal tendencies.

We must, therefore, examine aspects of coloniality embedded within the structure and behaviours of the Western classical orchestra. By first identifying these, we can then analyze why orchestras are problematic: as collaborators for mixed genre works; as recipients of public funding in a time of rapidly shifting socio-political values; as vessels for creating Canadian works; as places of employment for people without a relationship to Western classical music or coming from postcolonial heritages; as creative avenues for socio-economically challenged people.

Although ethnocultural minority artists (originally those from European communities of non-English and non-French backgrounds, and only later from visible minority groups) pressured public funders to allow access to funding for non-classical arts forms in the mid-1980s, it has only been with growing public awareness of Indigenous cultural suppression that settler Canadians of all ethnic backgrounds are beginning to comprehend the ramifications of colonialism and appreciate the persistent patterns of coloniality.

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<sup>5</sup> For a thorough discussion of coloniality and Western art music see: Tamara Levitz, “Decolonizing the Society for American Music”, <http://www.american-music.org/publications/bulletin/2017/VolXLIII3-Fall2017.php>



## 2.4 Internationalism/Localism

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century Canadian context, the Western classical orchestra is caught between conflicting international and local priorities. Because the orchestra has protocols, performance behaviours and foundational repertoire that can be found around the world, the orchestra is expected to maintain internationally-recognizable ideals and ultimately, to compete for elite status in a global field. At the same time, Canadian funders and the public are demanding that orchestras find ways to respond to, and aesthetically represent, local (both national and hyper-local) socio-political values. The latter, though, is not possible without adjusting and reconfiguring international protocols to suit the local environment.

Western art music became internationalized through a combination of colonial expansion, missionary conversion, and diasporic European migration. Thus, by learning how to read and perform Western musical code, one can feasibly play a Western classical work anywhere and with anyone equally versant in the language. In this way, it is not a “bounded” cultural expression (as others are) that is limited (or guarded) by ethnoculture, gender or class. *Idealistically*, it might therefore be seen as an egalitarian art form. The legacy of its egalitarianism, though, is tied to both colonial expansion and the Western definitions and values associated with technological progress, capitalism and cultural superiority.

### 2.4.1 Universalism

We must also consider the language used to describe Western classical music. While musicians practicing in any and all genres of music love the form they practice, few traditions advertise themselves as *the* greatest or as universal. The practice of making “musical” sounds *is* universal to humans across cultures. But the language and set of beliefs that characterizes Western classical music specifically as “great” and “universal” emerges from empire, from colonialism and capitalism.

There is, however, a peculiar commingling of the notions of universalism, greatness, symphonies and Beethoven that has become mythologized and contributes to the perception of Western classical music as an apex of human cultural achievement. Its roots lie in two 19<sup>th</sup> century Romantic ideas: that of “universal brotherhood” (again, gender-specific), which Beethoven endeavoured to express in his Ninth Symphony; and in the idea of the “artistic genius” whose creations emerged from a place beyond the confines of time and location. As a result, the notion of the (musical) genius, timelessness and the symphony have become conflated with the idea of universality: ideas which were disseminated by means of the music’s historical coincidence with colonialism.

## 2.5 Western art music in Canada

### 2.5.1 Elitism and Value

Historically, Western art music had value to Canadian settlers of European origin, both for the nostalgic connectivity it provided to Europe and religious traditions, and to its association with socio-economic status. The status we give to Beethoven, for example, is based as much on his being the first successful musical capitalist as it is based on his compositional skill. Beethoven’s success as a “freelancer” gave him the capacity to follow his own compositional direction, rather than have it be dictated by an employer. The congruence of multiple factors—a burgeoning middle class, concert halls built for a paying public rather than exclusive to nobility, printing and



copyright that allowed for re-creation and dissemination along global colonial pathways, as well as the rise of philosophies extolling individualism—all contributed to the extra-musical valuation of Beethoven. This ultimately meant that Beethoven—as historic figure and as musical composition(s)—came to embody Western social and economic values in expressive aesthetic form.

From the 18<sup>th</sup> to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the orchestra in Canada (as in the United States and other white settler colonies) was associated with class and elitism; and it was supported by those who could afford to maintain a connection to Europe. The intention of the Massey-Levesque Commission—and ultimately, the activities funded by the Canada Council in its first thirty years of existence—was to demonstrate that the Canadian nation had the means to create and project symbols of artistic culture that would equal those of other globally important countries in the mid-twentieth century, countries which were (with the exception of the United States) all European.

While non-elitist European cultural practices were tolerated, the colonialist government endeavoured to quash Indigenous social and expressive culture. Early immigrants of colour—African-Canadians, Africans fleeing slavery, indentured railway labourers of Chinese, Japanese and Punjabi origin, and Lebanese refugees—were culturally ignored. The other non-European and non-elitist art forms that were excluded from the original public arts councils developed their own paths of maintenance, recognition and performance. With no external recognition of their value, and with access to only spartan resources, the trajectories of other forms of cultural expression did not allow their practitioners the luxury of aiming for levels of excellence or professionalism that come from full-time dedication to one's art. The legal implications of official multiculturalism forced the arts councils to reconceptualise their priorities towards the inclusion of all types of expressive culture that are practiced by—and that represent—the multi-dimensionality of Canadian identities.

## **2.6 Western classical music and embedded coloniality: Hierarchy, Gender, Ownership**

### **2.6.1 Hierarchy**

The most immediate representation of colonial structure is the hierarchy of the orchestra which parallels that of a factory or an army. The composer unilaterally develops a plan; the conductor is in charge of executing the plan, the concertmaster and principal players can ask to have their roles clarified, and the other players fill in the ranks. Each musician's role is highly specified; and while the system is efficient for those who have trained in it, successful collaboration is highly problematic for outsiders from creative (improvisatory-based) or non-hierarchical musical systems.

When collaborations do occur, they generally require the interlocution of a composer or an arranger, who then receives the accolades and/or the copyright royalties. Critically, because a majority of musical systems have elements of improvisation and/or are not notated, deferring to a conductor or composer immediately limits the true breadth of a guest artist's expressive form, contributing to recurring statements about the superficiality of “checkbox” performances.



## 2.6.2 Hierarchy and Inappropriate Behaviour

Whether at the helm of an auditioned orchestra, or a vanity project, conductors can wield significant power over not only soloists, but rank and file musicians. The uni-directional chain of command (and communication) in an orchestra can put young, unseasoned musicians in a vulnerable position, particularly in non-auditioned and pick-up orchestras. Although unauditioned orchestras may be beyond the purview of a professional organization, it is important to note that many now-established Canadian orchestras began as vehicles for a conductor wanting to practice their skills.

Moreover, the orchestral world has not remained untarnished by revelations from the #MeToo movement. Conductors and concertmasters with major international profiles have fallen from grace, including Charles Dutoit, former music director of the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal (OSM), who arguably helped develop the OSM into one of the top tier North American orchestras. A small number of less public charges of sexual misconduct have been filed in the past against prominent music educators in Canada, many of whom have (or had) principal positions in Canadian orchestras. We have yet to see how deeply the orchestral sector will be affected by the #MeToo movement, and how far along the chain of hierarchy it will reach. Can we find a way that Orchestras Canada, the Canadian Federation of Musicians and the Organization of Canadian Symphonic Musicians work in concert with initiatives across the arts sector to address issues of sexual harassment in the arts?

## 2.6.3 Gender

### 2.6.3.1 Women Onstage: composers, conductors, concertmasters

Until fifty years ago, most orchestras were all white, and almost all men. The advent of the blind audition in the 1970s—introduced to rectify cronyism between conductors and orchestral musicians—had the added effect of shifting the gender dominance of men in rank and file orchestral positions. Yet, the most powerful onstage positions in the traditional symphony orchestra continue to be dominated by men: composers, conductors, concertmasters. So long as Main Series programs are focused on music from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (arguably, most music before the late 20<sup>th</sup> century), the “composers” performed will be also overwhelmingly male.

Nevertheless, as reviews, Twitter exchanges, and editorials about the Toronto Symphony Orchestra’s 2016 New Creations Festival indicated, it is no longer be acceptable for contemporary music to be dominated by male performers and composers. In the TSO’s case, patrons—both male and female—made their displeasure known by boycotting the normally well-attended festival. In a March, 2016 editorial, Michael Vincent noted that this type of oversight is no longer acceptable because women account for “nearly 50 percent of composition students across our universities”, and “because it’s 2016.”<sup>6</sup>

Okanagan Symphony Music Director Rosemary Thomson says she tries to be mindful about programming female composers and soloists equally, and that she deliberately commissions female composers. As one of a small handful (seven of fifty) of artistic directors of Canadian orchestras who is female, Thomson says, “It’s still a challenge for female conductors”, suggesting that conducting is one of the last bastions of patriarchal thinking in the classical music world. Echoing sentiments similar to that from a 2016 Walrus magazine exposé by Danielle Groen on the dearth of female conductors, Thomson says:

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<sup>6</sup> Michael Vincent, “Why There are No Women in the TSO New Creations Festival” (Mar 8, 2016). <https://www.ludwig-van.com/toronto/2016/03/08/editorial-tso-composers-we-need-to-talk>



*If they see a female conductor who's bad, they think it's because she's female, and not because she's just bad. They don't say this about men.*

Both Thomson and Groen highlight that female conductors face non-musical biases in the hiring process that rank and file musicians do not: they cannot demonstrate their ability from behind a screen and thus must contend with all of the explicit and implicit corollary sexism.<sup>7</sup> Groen cites female conductors contending with “sexist orchestra management”, including examples of management over-ruling orchestral players’ choice(s) to hire a female conductor. Her informants say they hear the same sexist arguments about female conductors that men used to make about keeping women out of rank and file positions—that women on a podium will be “distracting”. Yet, in citing university enrollment statistics, which indicate that 25% of conducting doctoral students in the United States are women, Groen intimates that it may be inevitable that orchestras begin accepting women as equals on the podium. Thomson, nevertheless, suggests that young female conductors need targeted advocacy and mentorship if they’re going to overcome the persistent stereotypes they face in taking ownership of the orchestral podium.

Few people cited the minimal number of women in concertmaster positions in Canada, nevertheless, a perusal of orchestra personnel across the country indicates that few women occupy these chairs, particularly in the country’s major orchestras. Violist and classical music broadcaster Kathleen Kajioka says we should not ignore this paucity. While auditions for the second-most important orchestral position after the music director begin with a screen, the more important decision in hiring will be made by the music director as it is subjectively linked to the dynamic between the conductor and the concertmaster. If we question whether we’re comfortable with women conducting orchestras, we must also ask the same question of concertmasters. Is, for example, a male conductor comfortable having the second in command be female, or would he find it problematic or “distracting”?

Meanwhile, Kajioka points out that in baroque ensembles the situation is reversed, such that the majority of baroque ensembles in North America and Europe are led by women. Yet, as is authentic to baroque period performance, the concertmaster is also the conductor.

### **2.6.3.2 Women in Management**

One interviewee noted that, while many women are administrators of Canadian orchestras, they are in a minority when compared to other similarly-sized organizations. This implies two very different things: that administratively, orchestras might be more gender-progressive; but in the still male-dominated corporate world, orchestras may be at a disadvantage in advocating for music in the public sphere and in soliciting corporate funding. Barry Hessenius describes this as a “feminization of a field ... accompanied by it being patronizingly regarded ... inferior to the private sector and not the equal in terms of value as male-dominated enterprises.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Danielle Groen, “Why Are There So Few Female Conductors”, in *Walrus Magazine* (Dec 19, 2016). <https://thewalrus.ca/why-are-there-so-few-female-conductors>

<sup>8</sup> Barry Hessenius, “The Feminization of the Field” in *Barry’s Blog* (July 1, 2018). <https://blog.westaf.org/2018/07/the-feminization-of-field-gender.html>





### 2.6.3.3 Gender Diversity

We did not explicitly ask about gender identity, but amongst rank and file musicians, the Western classical orchestra is home and workplace to many who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender queer or two-spirited (LGBTQ2S). Moreover, the National Youth Orchestra's Barbara Smith noted that

*NYO has always been a 'safe' place for marginalized people. We've always had a large group of LGBTQ ... and we get kids from very fundamentalist, home-schooled backgrounds. It becomes a very welcoming community. They're free to be who they are.*

Transgendered pianist, Sara Davis Buechner, nevertheless suggests that the same is not necessarily true for solo artists.

*The classical music business likes to pretend that it is gender—and color—blind regarding the concert stage, and that the high-minded pursuit of Mozartian Truth is all that is professionally considered in the evaluation of performing musicians. My own experience tells me otherwise.<sup>9</sup>*

While commenting, in a 2014 interview, that Canadian orchestras and institutions have been more welcoming, the word “conservative” is used to describe the American concert scene. Additionally, Buechner notes that “long-time friends deserted me, particularly conductors.”<sup>10</sup>

## 2.7 Cultural Appropriation: Primitivism, Exoticism and Orientalism in Western classical composition

### 2.7.1 Who owns a sound?

Historically, Western classical composers have freely borrowed musical material from folk and non-European musics. In some cases, folk musics were the bases for nationalistic compositions; in others, borrowings were used as aural representations of an imagined primitive or exoticized “other”. In the colonial mindset, music could be “taken” and used because the people to whom it belonged had not recorded it in any recognizable fashion that might indicate ownership or copyright. Over time, many representations have become aural metaphors for an imagined other: Stravinsky's use of rhythm to represent the “primitive” in *Le Sacre du Printemps*; Mozart's use of augmented seconds in *Rondo alla Turca*, and his introduction of the Turkish cymbal into the orchestra; Debussy's *Golliwog's Cakewalk*; Rameau's *Les Sauvages*; a myriad of orchestrations of gamelan music throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century; and Dvořák's *Humoresque*, which the composer took from a collection of “slave songs” originally transcribed by an African American student - possibly aware that the student would never be given the opportunity to publish the songs.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Sara Davis Buechner, “A Transgender Note”, <http://saradavisbuechner.com/transgender-issues>

<sup>10</sup> The Canadian Press, “Transgender pianists shunned in U.S. gets encore in Edmonton”, (June 8, 2014) <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/transgender-pianist-shunned-in-u-s-gets-encore-in-edmonton-1.2668923>

<sup>11</sup> Neil Sorrell, “Issues of pastiche and illusions of authenticity in gamelan-inspired composition” in *Indonesia and the Malay World*, vol. 35, no. 101 (Mar, 2007).



The Canadian work that brought the debate on musical appropriation into sharp relief was the Canadian Opera Company's sesquicentennial staging of Moore and Somers' *Louis Riel*, and the recently revealed inappropriate use of a Nisga'a funeral song as a lullaby in it. At the time it was originally composed, Somers' borrowing would not have been seen as unethical, or even controversial. But much has changed in the intervening half century, and the dismissal of ethical responsibility by the COC's current artistic directorship has sounded alarm bells through many parts of the Canadian classical music infrastructure, particularly amongst administrators and musicologists in post-secondary music faculties. (It is unknown whether this awareness will trickle through to performance departments which, charged only with training the orchestral infantry, have generally remained socio-critically illiterate.)

Cultural appropriation is the act of taking or using elements of a culture that is not one's own without demonstrating an understanding or respect for the culture.

Intimately tied to colonialism, capitalism and cultural superiority, appropriation displaces the value and significance of the appropriated item from its culture of origin.

The 2003 UNESCO Convention on the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage is the foremost of legal article that endeavours to prevent appropriative resourcing of material, including sound material, from other cultures. With this article and a cognizance of what musical trespasses are, how do we go forward in a socially just manner? How do we reconcile the history of appropriations and exoticism that clutter—and in some cases define—many musical compositions in the canon?

In 2005, Jeremy Strachan (then assistant librarian at the Canadian Music Centre) compiled a list of works housed in the CMC library that incorporates or has been inspired by “aboriginal sources”. With whom can we collaborate to update this list? Can we develop a protocol of ethics regarding orchestras' performance of such pieces?<sup>12</sup>

## 2.8 Cultural and Aesthetic Values: Harmony and Discord

### 2.8.1 Harmony / Aesthetic discord

We use the word “harmony” to refer to different notes/people/ideas existing in a pleasing simultaneity—in “accord”. Yet, as previously mentioned, in some cultures the emotional metaphors of Western harmony and tuning—even conceiving of music as separate from dance or theatre—are foreign and nonsensical. This is particularly true of cultures that have either been untouched by colonialism or that maintained and continued to prioritise their own expressive culture through periods of European colonisation.

While we can describe the orchestra as international or cosmopolitan, the value it carries in the substance of its sound world is not universal. Rigid beliefs in the primacy of Western tonality allows Western art music to maintain its own cultural barriers.

South Asian and Arabic traditions prioritise complex monodic melody and equally complex (monodic) rhythm, but have nothing equivalent to harmony.

Differences between major and minor bear no signification to “happy” or “sad”.

<sup>12</sup> Jeremy Strachan, “Music Inspired by Aboriginal Sources at the Canadian Music Centre”. (Toronto: Canadian Music Centre, 2005). [http://old.musiccentre.ca/media/downloads/en/CMC\\_Rep\\_Guide\\_Aboriginal.pdf](http://old.musiccentre.ca/media/downloads/en/CMC_Rep_Guide_Aboriginal.pdf)



## 2.8.2 Cultural Elitism and East Asia

The gradual inclusion of women and non-white people has had to do with more than the screened audition, or even access and inclusion. For people of colour, it also has to do with the relationships between diasporic people and their complex socio-political histories with Western nations. In the 1970's, and in lockstep with their strengthening economies East Asians began to play in Western orchestras—first the Japanese, then the Koreans, and more recently, (the) Chinese. Now their presence in orchestral culture is normal.

Many musicians we spoke to talked about being aware of distinct differences in the way certain ethnocultural groups valued Western classical music. “For East Asians [classical music] is extremely valuable”. “They make up most of my studio.” What makes the path of East Asians towards Western classical music distinct to that of other non-European ethnocultural groups is that Japan, Korea and China (with small territorial exceptions) were not part of European colonial empires and their valuation of Western music was not accompanied by the weight of colonialism.

In *Musicians from a Different Shore: Asians and Asian Americans in Classical Music*, Mari Yoshihara describes three processes by which Asians adopted Western music into their cultures, all intimately tied to desires to modernize. The trajectories of each country's adoption were similar, but the timelines were different, and in each case, the pattern began with the Japanese, was followed by the Koreans, and then by the Chinese. The Japanese first consciously adopted Western music came in the mid-1800s after concluding that it would be good for both “maintaining discipline and raising morale in the military”.<sup>13</sup> Secondly, missionaries introduced the Japanese to Western music in their schools in the early 1900s, which the Japanese government then implemented throughout the education system. During the Second World War, the Japanese reversed this strategy and banned all Western culture. Later, as the Japanese adopted democracy in the 1950s, the middle-class saw Western art as a way to acquire globally-recognizable cultural capital. As each of the three countries endeavoured to become major players in the global, capitalist economy, they saw Western classical music as the most elite form of Western cultural expression and embraced it in order to be not only technologically, but culturally competitive on the global stage.

For many East Asian families, learning Western classical music is an expected element of childhood, particularly learning the elite instruments which offer the prospect of concertizing opportunities: piano, violin, cello, voice, and more recently, percussion.

Ironically, the Suzuki method of teaching music geographically reversed the flow of musical knowledge when it was introduced to North America in the 1960s. Moreover, the method touted the concept of each child having equal musical potential, an idea that negates Western beliefs in musical exceptionalism and also motivates many orchestras' music education outreach programs.

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<sup>13</sup> Mari Yoshihara, “Musicians from a Different Shore: Asians and Asian Americans in Classical Music”, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2007), 15.



### 2.8.3 Internationalism: Inclusion through Shared Musical Literacy

Eileen Keown, Executive Director of the Mississauga Symphony Orchestra, a professionally-led community orchestra, offered two examples of community-building and inclusion through a commonly shared literacy in Western art music.

*“A social services placement officer brought a young Chinese lady to us. She spoke no English, but wanted to play the violin. She wasn’t poor but she also had no family here. ... She’s a good solid first violin player. She found a community of people through the orchestra that has given her an anchor in Canada.*

*We have a number of Eastern Europeans in the orchestra, including Ukrainian and Russian expats. ...It was difficult for a while when Putin invaded the Ukraine. But they didn’t fight. They played together.”*

Keown argues that community orchestras have unique, but under-recognized value as community-builders, particularly as a means for diasporic new immigrants to experience Canadian diversity through a mode of expression that is familiar.

### 2.8.4 On the Stage or in the Audience: Challenged Values

Because children of East Asian-origin families make up a significant proportion of classical music teaching studios, we often assume that these ethnocultural groups should be ready audiences. However, administrators and teachers note that this assumption does not hold true, particularly for new immigrants from China. One administrator noted that one such group communicated with each other about cultural events via language-specific online sites that were difficult to access by an outsider. A number of both administrators and teachers noted that both parents and students—while willing to pay for music lessons—are not culturally habituated to pay to attend concerts.

Another administrator noted having difficulty “cracking” marketing mechanisms in the South Asian community, even though her orchestra is in a municipality with a significant South Asian population.

#### Challenges

Whose music belongs in the orchestra? What is the relationship between orchestras and other musical cultures? Can those relationships exist equitably and according to current definitions of cultural ownership and sovereignty?

How and where do we consider these questions? Are they questions to be managed? to be solved? or to be negotiated?

We can no longer afford to ignore the socio-cultural controversies regarding the orchestra’s role in Canadian culture.



# Chapter 3: Re-visioning Western Classical Music Training for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

## Introduction and Hypothesis

While the education systems by which Western classical musicians are trained—the conservatories and music faculties—are not part of Orchestras Canada’s purview, issues related to training arose on multiple occasions during our interviews. More importantly, it will not be possible to generate socially responsible change in Canadian orchestras without figuring our music education systems into the equation. Music faculties and conservatories hold a key to change. Currently, though, Canadian music education institutions: perpetuate the inherent coloniality of orchestras; inhibit relationship-building; resist change(ing) due, in large part, to an uncontested belief in the primacy of the orchestra as a mode of international expression rather than as a medium through which to express the local.

We therefore offer an analysis of the training methods in order to contextualize how the system:

- perpetuates elitism in some instruments, and thereby restricts opportunity (i.e. maintains inherent systemic barriers);
- could better provide orchestral musicians with the skills to navigate the types of musical dialogues Canadian orchestras want to engage in;
- could better support: young racialized musicians; and female composers and conductors
- could offer more creative and socially responsible ways to engage students in music-making; and
- could nurture, rather than stifle, creative impulses of performing musicians.

The training of orchestral musicians arose with respect to two distinct situations. Firstly, while many administrators acknowledged their musicians’ fascination with collaborations involving non-Western classical musics (as detailed in Part 1), they also noted an inhibition—and in some cases a refusal—to engage in modes of music-making that differ significantly from the Western classical tradition and that challenge traditional, hierarchical protocols. A number of our informants ascribed this behaviour to a shortcoming of the training system.

The second issue concerned the “pipeline” - as in, “they are not in (or making it through) the pipeline”. “They” referred to “diverse” musicians, a diversity that was non-specifically defined, but referred in every instance to racialized musicians (as opposed to musicians with disabilities). This lack, or absence, of diversity in orchestra personnel was invariably coupled and defended by references to the use of screened auditions as a filter to ensure the excellence of orchestral musicians. The implication suggests that either a) they are not there or b) if they are, they are not good enough.

In order to properly contextualize administrators’ concerns regarding the training of orchestral personnel, we begin by first asking:

- Who is on the stage?
- Whose music is being played?
- Who is the guest artist?





And compare this to the absences:

- Who is not on the stage - as rank and file musician; as guest artist; as composer?
- What skills do we wish our performers had - as rank and file musicians; as collaborators?
- What kinds of compositions are we not hearing or performing? Who are the potential creators of those compositions? Are they a part of our system, and if yes, then what supports are missing that do not allow them full participation?

While concerns about education may have been indicated by administrators, signposts to its re-visioning came from performers.

### 3.1 Professional training divisions

Firstly, it is important to distinguish between the three types of musicians who go through the Western classical training system: the performing musician, the creative musician, and those who analyze music (musicologists, theorists and ethnomusicologists). Our prime concern, in this analysis, is the first two.

I distinguish between these two types of musicians purposely, because our conservatories and music faculties also do so in the classical music divisions. They produce either: the composer, who is given tools to create; or the performer, who learns to execute what is on the page and - like a science - prioritizes reproducing accuracy of the hard details. Meanwhile, software programmers have suggested that Western music notation is one of the most complex forms of code. In performers, we train the synapses that coordinate the vertical layers of that code on a page to strings of trained impulses in the body. It is a kind of training that bears many similarities to elite athletic training; and that we describe as “virtuosity”.<sup>14</sup> But with orchestral instrumentalists, especially, we train “out” creative impulses.

All of the Indigenous artists on our panel talked about having both creative impulses and performative impulses as children, and being enchanted by the creative possibilities music offered them:

*“I loved it ... as a way to express bigger thoughts than a child can ...”*

This inspired them to pursue formal undergraduate music studies. Yet, all but one related being disillusioned by the narrowness of the path they were forced to follow, and the inability to combine multiple layers of musical being: composing (creating), performing (re-creating), drawing upon ethnocultural identity (possibly ethno/musicology).

*“I’d composed as a child; it wasn’t until university that the separation occurred”*

*“I took a performance degree because I knew I needed to “play good” on a string instrument, but [as soon as I was finished], I left to create my own music”*

*“I’m grateful for the teachers that nurtured me along the way and who didn’t make me feel like I had to fit into any role ... until university”*

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<sup>14</sup> Two respondents suggested that, beyond calls to reconsider the importance of the orchestra, it would be a greater deprivation to lose the virtuosity that orchestral playing demands.



*“Music was a good experience for me, until university ... [where I encountered] blatant racism; professors telling me about Indigenous music. I didn’t stick it out. I struggled with where to go after that.”*

This blinkered training is a relatively recent evolution in pedagogy that gained prominence in the early to mid-20th century when there was high demand for orchestral musicians.<sup>15</sup> Before then, most instrumentalists had sufficient tools to compose or improvise. The training *out* of creativity has nurtured a hyper-efficient re-creative musician, and the virtuosity with which orchestral musicians do this is the marker of excellence. Few other types of music are as specifically *re*-productive as Western classical music has become.<sup>16</sup>

As a consequence, our musicians suffer from printed-page paralysis. It is unsurprising, then, that orchestral musicians lack the musical skills to navigate and engage in collaborations with musicians working in other musical systems. One informant also suggested that string players in particular, who must begin training at a young age, may also lack the social skills.

*“They come out to rehearse and perform, but otherwise spend all of their time practicing. They don’t have the social skills for cross-genre negotiation and collaboration. They have tunnel vision, and that’s what the orchestra requires of them.”*

## 3.2 Collaborations and process

When administrators suggested that orchestral musicians should learn about collaborative work as part of their training, none could articulate the techniques they thought were necessary other than an “openness” to collaboration, and an ability to engage in it. The implication is that the openness to engagement is part of the *process* of collaboration.

Non-traditional collaborations—the kind of collaborations Indigenous artists are asking for (and that would also benefit other cross-genre collaborations)—require a ceding of control from the composer and the conductor. This requires us to be cognizant of the coloniality of orchestral hierarchy and be prepared to revise or reinvent it.

Thus, rather than have a composer determine how best to negotiate stylistic differences and orchestrations, egalitarian collaborations require a process-based approach that allows a work to grow and mutate over multiple iterations before it is ready for performance. Like the process-based work that occurs in other disciplines such as dance, theatre, and opera, non-traditional collaborations allow for on-going editing of the work. It allows space for input from the performers themselves; where as much (or more) time is spent discussing, strategizing and listening as is spent playing.

For an orchestral musician, this process is distinct to the traditional final-product recipe whereby a musician spends many solitary hours in a room learning their part (unpaid time that is compensated for in collective

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<sup>15</sup> Rebekah Wolkstein traces the evolution to this training in North American schools in her 2013 DMA thesis, “Teaching Versatility to Post-Secondary Violin Students”, [https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/36068/1/Wolkstein\\_Rebekah\\_201306\\_DMA\\_thesis\(1\).pdf](https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/36068/1/Wolkstein_Rebekah_201306_DMA_thesis(1).pdf)

<sup>16</sup> Folk musics often have this tendency. Criticising its inauthenticity in the “authentic” performance of baroque music, harpsichordist Bruce Haynes describes it as a “cover band mentality” in “The End of Early Music” (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 203



agreements or hourly rehearsal/performance rates), then 5-6 hours of rehearsal, followed by one or two performances. Nevertheless, the process-based type of conductor-less, negotiated rehearsal occurs to a certain degree in chamber music, so it is not a completely foreign concept to Western classical training. What *is* different is being part of the generative side of music-making, which requires a flexibility and receptiveness to new ideas - musical or otherwise. In many ways, it is an openness to play.

Because orchestral musicians are used to being involved only in the final stages of artistic production, they can perceive process-based work as unprofessional, collaborators as “unprepared”, and time spent sitting around working out creative details or logistics as time wasted. We might hypothesize, therefore, that if we bring orchestral musicians closer to the relationship-building stages of creative work and engage them in the art making process, a few things might happen. They might appreciate different modes of creating and curating, they might learn to negotiate differences in musical traditions; they might learn about the priorities and protocols of other musical systems. It would also mitigate against the often scant time given to new (Canadian) works on a program that contribute to their often being poorly played and devoid of the commitment given to canonical works.

In teaching about collaborative process and negotiation, universities rather than conservatories (at least in Canada) are at an advantage in having resources to guide students in navigating difference. Learning to collaborate ethically would itself require careful guidance from a combination of composers, jazz musicians, elders, ethnomusicologists, specialists from the outside tradition, specialists from other disciplines (art history, anthropology, Indigenous studies, religious studies, theatre studies, etc.), specialists outside the academy.

Knowing that many musicians playing in our orchestras - the teachers who might otherwise influence the direction of training - are rarely versed in social or cultural theory, can orchestra administration be more involved in the direction of orchestral training in Canada? Can Orchestras Canada help to convene a working group dedicated to addressing the shortcomings in music education (particularly the socio-cultural illiteracy that many other artistic disciplines have addressed)?

### **3.2.1 Collaborations and “The Union!”**

Many administrators suggested that the union and collective agreements were partly to blame for problems with collaborations. If rank and file musicians become part of the process of creation, become invested in it, they might find alternate ways to put together a collective agreement that, like in other disciplines, replaces (the unpaid) time spent practicing for the time spent engaging in collaborative process. Both current (and former) union representatives with whom we spoke agreed that this is possible. Hesitations to make such adjustments, they suggested, had to do with individual locals not wanting to make provisions that would affect the bargaining positions of other locals. Is it possible, therefore, to convene a working group of orchestra administrators, OCSM members and CFM delegates to negotiate provisions tailored to creating new Canadian works while ensuring that such provisions cannot be abused by the big for-profit producers?



### 3.3 Vertical Training - the next generation

Because many orchestral training protocols are learned before students enter undergraduate programs, process-based creation in music needs to be encouraged vertically from the very beginning of music education through professional training programs. This is a systemic issue in that the prerequisites for students accepted into Music Education and Performance divisions (ie. the people who will end up teaching young people about music and instilling them with protocols and rules) is an already high level of training in Western classical music.

Reconfiguring the rigidity of our teaching systems may be easier for the younger generation. Again, as one of our informants who teaches in the secondary school system noted, “the next generation will be completely different.”<sup>17</sup>

### 3.4 The Bi-musical Musician

There is a third type of musician whose voices our musical institutions have not yet learned to nurture in Canada: the musician who wants to be a literate performer, a creator, and a socio-culturally/politically engaged individual.

As noted, most of the Indigenous musicians on our panel mentioned a disillusionment with the university training system. Those musicians also happen to be hybrid artists: both performers and creators, for whom learning and knowing about their heritage and expressing it musically are intrinsically linked—whether that expression is recognizable sonically, or simply by their presence. Their musical works and fully embodied selves fuse the strands we have separated in our institutionalized system: the composer, the performer, the (ethno)musicologist. They are also cognizant of two systems—their own specific Indigenous cultures, and the Western (including classical music) culture. Bi-musical Indigenous musicians have become the bridges, the translators, the “it” people to whom we are currently turning to help us integrate different performative and social presences.

Bi-musicality is the ability to participate (perform) fluently in two distinct musical traditions. Like bilingualism or biculturalism, a bi-musical musician is completely fluent

Bi-musicality is the ability to participate fluently in two distinct musical traditions.

not only in the musical system of each tradition, but in understanding and respecting the cultural nuances of each. Examples of bi-musical cultural understanding might include: knowing how to show respect to a teacher or elder—whether it means bowing to them, avoiding eye contact, shaking hands, washing their feet; or approaching a performance space in a certain way—whether with folded hands in approaching a sacred space, or open-chested in acknowledging an audience.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> See extended quote in section 1.5

<sup>18</sup> The term bi-musicality was coined by ethnomusicologist Mantle Hood who believed that in order to acquire skills in a second musical tradition, one must fully engage with all aspects of the music’s tradition of origin. The aim of this approach to musical learning—now a trademark of ethnomusicological practice—is a nuanced understanding and awareness of non-musical externalities (behaviours) which ideally will lead to both respectful relationships with the carriers of the tradition as well as insight on relationships between specific details of the music itself and its culture of origin.



Increasingly, the musicians we turn to for help in creating successful collaborations between different musical traditions are those with a degree of bi-musicality. Their understanding of differences in protocols allow such musicians to “translate” between traditions. This ability is true of most of the Indigenous musicians with whom we spoke.<sup>19</sup>

### 3.4.1 Bi-musicality and Collaboration

Moreover, we might hypothesize that the more smoothly a collaboration flows, the more fluent the artist is in translating between musical cultures. What is unknown, and is worthy of further study, is how a bi-musical artist negotiates the limits to which they are willing to push the protocol of one or the other musical tradition. What sacrifices do they need to make when working within the strictures of the orchestral tradition?

In the Western classical music world, we traditionally leave negotiations between musical traditions to the composer. Yet, composers may or may not have the extra-musical understandings that lend themselves to respectful negotiation between musical traditions. How many composers working collaboratively are given the necessary time to learn not only the intricacies of another musical language, but also to learn intercultural respect?

In the past, composers freely used and “borrowed” cultural sounds from non-Western traditions as aural material that inspired their own output. Today, we know that such sounds, in their original state, are part of the “intangible wealth” of cultures and that using them without extra-cultural understanding of nuance is appropriation, and is a colonizing behaviour.

### 3.4.2 Racialized expectations?

It is also worth bearing in mind that we often expect both Indigenous and racialized *creators* working within the Western classical tradition to represent their difference, something that presumes a depth of cultural engagement with that difference. Yet, we do not expect the same engagement with difference for orchestral musicians. Instead, we question only why racialized musicians are rarely found in Canadian orchestras. Similarly, as one Indigenous musician noted, we also need to ask whether we should expect the Indigenous composer’s music to “sound” different? Is that expectation part of the colonial tendency to exoticize and primitivize?

### 3.4.3 Bi-musical training

If the collaborations we are pursuing with Indigenous artists are any indication of a future for collaborative projects and performances, we must consider that—outside of percussion departments—there are no professional training institutions in Canada that allow bi-musical learning between Western art music and a second musical form.<sup>20</sup> This is particularly significant for orchestral string players. Wind, brass and percussion players, who generally begin playing their instruments in secondary school, often have access to jazz and Latin musical

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<sup>19</sup> Semantically and ethically, we must bear in mind the historical connection with Indigenous “translators” as traitors to their nations. Moreover, we should not expect any willingness to translate.

<sup>20</sup> While I was on faculty in the jazz division at the University of Toronto, I received regular requests from young musicians who wanted to engage in studies that combined high level performance with creation/composition and ethnomusicology. Unfortunately, this type of inter-divisional training does not exist in Canada. To my knowledge, it is offered at a few specialized institutions in the United States and Europe, and as inter-institutional options in Britain.





vocabularies, whereas string players tend to be firmly grounded in a classical music vocabulary and its protocols from primary school.

One Indigenous musician, finding inadequate mechanisms to develop their skills in bridging between performance and creation, asked whether there might be a way to develop a mentorship program that could support Indigenous creators wanting to develop their craft.

### 3.5 Rank and File: Cost, Class and Colour

As mentioned, the phrase “they’re not in the pipeline” occurred multiple times from administrators wanting to explain why members of their orchestras were predominantly of European heritage, with some mentioning they had East Asian members, and one, an Iranian. Without doing internal surveys it is difficult to accurately assess the ethnocultural background of orchestral musicians.

Nevertheless, in reaching out to Indigenous colleagues for names, we found it almost impossible to find Indigenous musicians amongst orchestral personnel. One violinist approached me directly and offered that, while identifying predominantly as Québécoise, she also had some Métis ancestry. Additionally, she wanted to communicate to me that she had become involved in music thirty years ago only because the conservatory program she attended in Québec was completely subsidized. Without that subsidy, she would not have been able to afford lessons.

Indigenous artists on our panel similarly mentioned the prohibitively high cost of music lessons—and for string players—the cost of instruments.

*“It’s very clear the class that’s invited [to the symphony] and that it’s for; because we don’t have that kind of money.”*

Another Indigenous artist talked about geographic impediments: about the difficulty of children accessing music lessons (let alone instruments) on remote reserves.<sup>21</sup>

Coinciding with our research, Canadian violist and New School lecturer Tanya Kalmanovitch, who is currently undertaking research on social class in Western classical professional training institutions, solicited comments on the topic on a Facebook page in June, 2018. Kalmanovitch, who was a fully subsidized student of Calgary’s Mount Royal Academy in the 1980s later found herself as an undergraduate at Juilliard, overwhelmed by the wealth of many fellow students. Other respondents to the Facebook page recounted opportunities that financial privilege allowed the classmates: expensive string instruments; attendance at prestigious summer festivals; class-based favouritism from teachers, aware that a student’s connection to money could be beneficial to the institution. At the same time, another former Juilliard graduate—a brass player—countered that the classism that existed for string players, was not the same for brass players. In contrast, brass players generally began playing in high school and did not need to own their own instruments until much later in their studies.

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<sup>21</sup> Two orchestras noted having music education programs on reserves, one in Alberta and one in Manitoba. Is there a way that reserves interested in bringing music lessons to their children’s daily lives can communicate this desire to orchestras?



### 3.5.1 Subsidized lessons and outreach

Many orchestras talked about offering subsidized music lessons and outreach in their communities, but then finding that while students were present, parents were not involved in their children’s musical progress—being unconcerned with progress, practicing, and especially with performance.

Does the absence of involvement reflect a lack of interest, a lack of resources to allow for presence, or different cultural attitudes towards childrearing?

While we often find diverse and multi-hued children in our subsidized programs and community music schools, few of these teaching institutions have the infrastructure to nurture and infuse a student with the requisite skills to embark on a career as an orchestral player. More often than not, the teachers in subsidized programs are not the same as those who teach in conservatories. The low wage offered to teachers in community schools means that students rarely have long-term and sustained access to the *best* teachers: the kinds of teachers, mentors and programs (orchestra, chamber music, theory, piano) that can adequately prepare students for competitions and undergraduate degree programs. Additionally, because those students who have promise often do not have family support (either emotionally or financially), they need extra *sustained* investment and support from the outside.

#### 3.5.1.1 Need for extra sustained support

Musicians of colour also indicated a desire for extra support due to the vulnerability of their small numbers in the sector.

While Canadian multiculturalism has tended to fuel a disinclination towards engagement with Eurocentric modes of cultural expression amongst post-colonial groups (noted in Part 2), there are exceptions—categories into which most of our panelists fell. Some musicians’ families are disengaged from their ethnic heritage and have purposely left it. Some are adopted or come from blended families. Some exoticize Western music in the same way that we exoticize the foreign. Some experience it as part of a Christian upbringing.

One musician of colour expressed the juxtaposition of two oppositional attitudes in his family. His mother was from an upper-class Anglican Sri Lankan family that was very colonial, and completely supported his decision to become a musician. Meanwhile his father’s lower-class Tamil family, who are more interested in Carnatic music, do not understand his career choice.

*“It’s hard to make them see this as legit ... [I’m] alienated within [my] own culture.”*

While it is one thing to rank “artists” low on the capitalistic rung of accomplishment, it is something different to not have one’s work valued when it is perceived as culturally incorrect; like cheering for the wrong team.

Another musician talked about perceptions of Western classical music’s “value” and expressed the distinction of its value for musicians of East Asian heritage, a distinction echoed by all other participants:

*“[For West Indians] Western music isn’t on our radar. It’s not something to think to do; it’s not a possibility; whereas it’s not an issue for East Asians for whom it’s valuable.”*



### 3.5.2 Mentorship

Every musician on the panel of African, Caribbean and South Asian artists articulated the importance of strong mentorship and a wish for role models. They were aware of their uniqueness, and mentioned the alienation of being the only person of colour on a stage.

*“Who am I, what am I doing here? Who do I look up to?”*

*“There are so few of us that we know each other. We can count each other.”*

One musician related being approached by a mother and daughter after a concert. The mother expressed how rare it was that the daughter should see someone who looked like her on a stage.

Four of the musicians of African ancestry talked about the importance of being involved in some of the American initiatives for black and Latinx musicians; of knowing they belonged to a community where they didn't stick out. If Canadian orchestras truly want more people of colour amongst the rank and file, how do we ensure they are supported and mentored?

### 3.5.3 Racism

Orchestral musicians of colour also talked about the racism they encountered in university and in their professional careers. In most cases, the racism they experienced came from the top: from a music director or other important member of the orchestral community.

*“You don't want to jump to the conclusion that this might be racism, but when it keeps happening, and when other people suggest it is ...”*

*“I was the principal player, but the Board Director shook my stand partner's hand and not mine ...”*

*“The conductor wouldn't look me in the eye or listen to anything I said. And I was the section leader. If anything, he addressed my stand partner.”*

*“The conductor in university refused year after year to let a black [Ethiopian] clarinetist play in the orchestra. Now [that clarinetist] is principal in Cleveland.”*

One musician, who plays with some of Southern Ontario's largest orchestras acknowledged that:

*“Our conductor says all sorts of racist things, but he's German. You can get away with saying stuff like that in Germany, but not here.”*

Though not naming it “racism”, Marion Newman sent us a note (following the panel) that casts a further shadow on the continued prominence given to European conductors in Canada:

*One of the major difficulties in finding these educated and sympathetic conductors to collaborate with is that many of them come from Europe, due to the (in my opinion) silly trend of operatic and orchestral boards hiring European conductors rather than drawing from the pool of incredible talent we already have here in Canada. Our Canadian conductors at least are, for the most part, aware of the struggles Indigenous people have had and still have here. Most European conductors have little to no idea of what the politics are, or the importance of taking on the work of bringing Indigenous voice to the stage and audiences, using music as the medium. In fact, many of them don't even realize*



*Indigenous people still exist. And unless they undertake to educate themselves, there is little hope that they will have the depth of knowledge needed to collaborate successfully.*

If we want to ensure a future for our art form that engages across the spectrum of our socio-economic and ethnocultural diversity, we must find a way to provide access to the best quality teaching, instruments and emotional support; recognizing that many of our “target” students may not have support from their families.

Administrators we spoke to described a sense of powerlessness in relation to bringing diversity into the orchestra: bringing more women into positions of artistic authority; integrating Deaf/disability artists; populating the orchestra with a greater ethnocultural cross-section of musicians. They relegated their powerlessness to two things: the blind audition and the education system. But this distances them from the solution.

How do we ensure that our foreign-born music directors:

- a) do not bring their ethnocultural prejudices or stereotypes into our rehearsal halls and performances spaces
- b) understand the ethics of engaging with Indigenous artists

How do we ensure protection for our colleagues, who may be vulnerable to gender or racial stereotyping, intolerance or belittling?

Orchestra administrators and artistic advisors have agency. They/you are the labour market and must contribute to the vision of what the art form could be. Place yourselves in the conversation. Help define and design the prerequisites for educating Canadian musicians.

### **3.6 Postlude: An illustration of process and collaboration**

While undertaking this research, I often wondered how the collaboration would work. Towards the end, I realized that it served as an apt metaphor for the musical collaborations we have written about.

As collaborators, Soraya and I share similarities and differences. We are both successful artists in our individual disciplines, and we have both been involved in cultural criticism. We also have a long-standing respect for each other as artists and cultural critics.

Where we differ is in the behaviours that characterize our disciplines, and the use of different research strategies. True to my training as a Western classical musician, my aim (particularly while writing) has been to refine my work as much as possible before having it be subject to criticism or scrutiny. Soraya, meanwhile, has been sharing her work in process, and has been open to critique and discussion before determining form. Of course, I couldn't help but acknowledge the irony between my writing about collaborative process and the behaviour instilled in me by my training.

Soraya and I also had to negotiate writing style. How do we create cohesion between one writer disciplined in passive tense writing, and another drilled in active tense? I represent the former. And I am too aware of the similarity between the rigours of learning the violin and of academic research, and the paucity of grammatical license allowed in either. Being the 2<sup>nd</sup> violinist on this gig, I followed Soraya's lead. I continue to find myself in awe of Soraya's literary dexterity, fluidity at synthesizing ideas, and openness to critique in process. My



contribution to this research is the stronger for it. Like all first-time collaborations, it has taken much more time than either of us could have anticipated.

Nevertheless, as a musician and musical anthropologist heavily invested in the education and performative structures of Western art music, I must drop the cloak of passivity. The circularity of passive voice avoids assigning responsibility, and suggests instead that things *ought* to maybe be considered. Writing in active tense demands that I indicate responsibility. Thus;

We must be accountable for our action or inaction regarding the questioning and altering of orchestral institutions in Canada *if* we sincerely desire equity, and if we want to create Canadian works with integrity.





## Recommendations

*“[An elder] in her nineties said to me, ‘There isn’t a Cree or Anishinaabe word for reconciliation. Why is it called the Truth and Reconciliation Commission? No one asked us.’ Together we talk a lot about finding truths. Relationships can be very true.”*

As equity consultants, Parmela Attariwala and I have wrestled with the question of how we can make recommendations to the orchestral sector, without diminishing the extraordinary complexity of the perspectives of Indigenous artists and artists of colour. Both of us, in different ways, use inquiry as a methodology in and of itself; believing that the right questions are potentially more generative than any answer. Two essays have been keystones in this consideration. One is “Making Room for the Unnamable”, by Maria Cherry Galette Rangel. Rangel, a queer brown arts practitioner, was the Equity Auditor for the Rockefeller Foundation’s Multi-Arts Production program, and the essay provides her reflections on the grants review process. She writes:

*[A] key premise around which the panel process was centered was the concept of futurity. When we consider the future of the field what do we imagine? What do we want it to look like? Futurity is an exercise in possibility. We, today, right now, have a role in shaping the evolution of our sector. The decisions that we make ultimately inform the future of the field as a whole. Given that framework, who does the sector need us to be in this moment? How does the sector need us to show up in the panel room right now? This sense of futurity aided in making room for projects, artists, and cultural interventions that were emergent in process and form, and that challenged the dominant Eurocentric models of performance art.<sup>22</sup>*

Closer to home, “Inside a Year-Long Experiment in Indigenous Institutional Critique”<sup>23</sup> is an interview between John Hampton and two members of the Wood Land School, an initiative of the SBG Gallery. In 2017, the gallery renounced its identity and operated as a travelling project under the curation of Omaskêko Cree artist Duane Linklater and Alutiiq artist Tanya Lukin Linklater. During the interview, Tanya Lukin Linklater states:

*I think sometimes people don’t have clear and concise definitions of what they mean by decolonization, or Indigenization, or any of those terms that are being used quite a bit right now. There has to be more thinking through of what these words and actions mean, because they will present themselves in different ways in different locations. They will not always happen in the same way, and we can’t just take one model and apply it across the world.*

*And I guess that is part of what we are thinking through within this experiment. Not that we are using the language of decolonization or Indigenization—to be clear, we are not—instead, we are trying to find language, and find a way through this. What does it mean for us to come into this space and effect a kind of change? I don’t know. But we wanted to allow ourselves space to think through the exhibition, to let it unfold, for us to have conversations to inform the work, because that’s how we want to work.*

Both Rangel and Linklater, in different ways, suggest moving away from certainty and knowing: and moving towards “unknowing.” Likewise, our recommendations are intended to create time and space for conversation as the work in and of itself. In proposing, in some instances, structures for these conversations, we do not intend to establish advisories that make it efficient for colonial institutions to consult Indigenous artists and communities,

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<sup>22</sup> Maria Cherry Galette Rangel, “Making Room for the Unnamable”, (June 8, 2017).  
<https://mapfundblog.org/2017/06/08/making-room-for-the-unnamable/>

<sup>23</sup> John Hampton, “Inside a Year-Long Experiment in Indigenous Institutional Critique”, (May 2, 2017).  
<https://canadianart.ca/features/Indigenous-institutional-critique-case-study-wood-land-school/>



and artists and communities of colour. Instead, they are meant to create circles of conversation that are generative, and regenerative.

The engagement of Canadian orchestras with issues of equity and diversity comes at a time of profound, moving and ever-changing discourse within Indigenous communities and communities of colour. In light of this, our recommendations are framed as proposals for actions, conversations and questions; none of which are complete or conclusive in and of themselves, but create sites of learning in real time.

## Actions

- 1. Reposition the IDEA Declaration** as a document that can evolve and be responsive to the discussions and actions above, and identify “access” and “inclusion” as strategies towards broader goals of equity, diversity, and recognition of Indigenous sovereignty.
- 2. Create a shared, living document to support exchange of information on new repertoire, commissioning and collaborations developed by Indigenous artists, artists of colour, and artists of other equity-seeking communities, and identifying the potential of co-production.**  
*This could be done in partnership with the Canadian Music Centre.*
- 3. A. Work in collaboration with the Canadian Music Centre to support the continued identification of cultural appropriation in the compositions housed at the CMC;**  
**B. Update the list originally compiled by Jeremy Strachan in 2005 (“Music Inspired by Aboriginal Sources at the Canadian Music Centre”).<sup>24</sup>**  
*This should especially address of appropriation of Indigenous culture, but can be extended to compositions that incorporate other racialized exoticizations and appropriations. Ensure that orchestras are aware of this list and establish a protocol of ethics regarding the programming of any such works.*
- 4. Collaborate with the Canadian Music Centre to develop the Ontario region’s “Adopt-a-composer” initiative nationally as a mentorship program for Indigenous and under-represented composers who want to compose/create works for orchestra, building on the initiatives current goal of supporting composers in remote regions.**  
*The opportunity exists for Orchestras Canada to help shape the new Adopt-a-Composer program into a mentorship program that supports the goals of both organizations.*
- 5. Support current initiatives across the arts sector to address sexual harassment and assault in the arts.**  
*This should be done with a continuous attention to the way that violence towards women is inter-related with violence towards Indigenous people, people of colour, Deaf persons and persons with disabilities, and 2SLGBTQ people. Policies to address sexual harassment and assault should also address racism, homophobia and transphobia, and ableism.*

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<sup>24</sup> Jeremy Strachan, “Music Inspired by Aboriginal Sources at the Canadian Music Centre”. (Toronto: Canadian Music Centre, 2005). [http://old.musiccentre.ca/media/downloads/en/CMC\\_Rep\\_Guide\\_Aboriginal.pdf](http://old.musiccentre.ca/media/downloads/en/CMC_Rep_Guide_Aboriginal.pdf)



## Conversations

The following actions can assist Orchestras Canada, its membership and a broad learning across the orchestral and classical music sector:

**6. Initiate a discussion with Indigenous artists on the desirability and potential of bringing together Indigenous artists engaged in orchestral and other forms of Western classical music.**

*The intention in this initiative should be, first and foremost, to create a space for Indigenous artists to share their experiences in the orchestral classical music sector. It may be considered, not so much an “advisory” in the service of Orchestras Canada, but an incubator that creates the conditions, time and space for reflection. The group should be self-directed and should determine if, when and how orchestral administrators and artistic directors can be included in the conversation.*

**7. Initiate a discussion with Indigenous artists, artists of colour, artists who identify as Deaf/disabled, and 2SLGBTQ artists, on the potential of bringing together individuals concerned with equity and diversity in orchestral and classical music.**

*This incubator should include artistic directors, conductors, musicians, composers, creators, collaborators and educators in orchestral music, and could address broad issues of equity in orchestral culture, including training and professional development, mentorship, residencies, incubators etc. to begin to define new models of knowledge transmission.*

**8. Create a working group to address the diversification of orchestral boards of directors.**

*This group should include administrators, artistic directors, elders and community consultants to re-examine roles and responsibilities of directors; and how to cultivate reciprocity with Indigenous communities, communities of colour, and other equity-seeking communities.*



## Questions

- How can initiatives cultivate relationship across difference? How can collaboration serve as a meeting ground not only for orchestras and collaborating artists, but also education and training institutions, so that the new capacities, skills and sensibilities required in orchestras are being developed throughout the sector?
- How can initiatives towards equity and diversity enact values of reciprocity? How can they provide opportunities, not only for the orchestral sector but for Indigenous artists, artists of colour, their communities and practices?
- How can initiatives support, not only the development of new repertoire, but artistic inquiries in and of themselves, through R&D, commissions, residencies and other creative and collaborative incubators, and other means of support? How can these initiatives curate a shared future?
- How can mentorship create new opportunities for knowledge transmission, without reinforcing colonial models of power? How can the sector support reciprocal exchange and learning between artists trained in Western classical music, and artists trained in other traditions? How can the sector create more opportunities for Indigenous artists and artists of colour to mentor emerging Indigenous artists and artists of colour? How can the sector create opportunities for Indigenous artists and artists of colour to mentor artists of all racial backgrounds in new models of artistic leadership?
- How can mentorship, residencies and creative collaborations allow for new relationships and exchanges with community-based practices, or with young and emerging artists? How can they sustain traditional knowledge and practices?
- How can the sector normalize of the presence of Indigenous artists and artists of colour within institutional spaces?



## Final notes

To answer these questions, artistic and administrative leaders must consider what it is, in the orchestra as a medium, that has value to everyone in the room and what is its potential. We recognize that these are long-term questions that may not address the concerns of orchestras facing more immediate challenges in artistic programming and audience development. Some orchestras may lose operating funding or miss strategic funding opportunities as a result. Attention should be directed to sites where orchestral practices are being reimagined - which may or may not be within orchestras. The concern of Orchestras Canada should be to support a sectoral transition; during that transition, it is important that Orchestras Canada, as an arts service organization, considers itself in the service of Indigenous artists and artists of colour, their communities and practices, regardless of whether or not they are actually represented in the organization's membership.

In making the recommendations above, we are mindful of Indigenous artists' caution - not to turn needs and wants into a mandate - but to continuously open relationships with essential questions and exchanges. Likewise, we are cognizant that this process should be expanded to include conversations with artists from Deaf/disability and 2SLGBTQ communities, and women-identified and non-gender conforming artists from across the spectrum. In light of this, our recommendations here are not so much oriented towards action, but towards conversation and the deepening and widening circles of relationship; towards conversation as a tangible resource in the development of new knowledge and practice.





# Appendix A: Interview questions for orchestral representatives

1. **How significant is inclusivity/diversity/equity/accessibility as a concern for your orchestra?** Who is concerned (artistic leadership, Board of Directors, artists, audience, broader community, funding bodies, donors and sponsors)?
2. **How are you addressing inclusivity/diversity/equity/accessibility in your orchestra?** Who is involved in this initiative? Who did you ask for guidance from? What resources have you made use of? When do you expect to see change?
3. **What is the response?** Who is responding (artistic leadership, Board of Directors, artists, audience, broader community, funding bodies, donors and sponsors)?
4. **What would be a measure of “achievement” or “success” from your point of view?**
5. **What is working?**
6. **What are you learning? What is challenging?** What do you wish you had known? What do you want to learn/know/understand better? Who else do you need guidance from? Who else do you want to involve?
7. **How would you describe your community?** How would you describe the value of this initiative to your community?
8. **How would you describe the music ecology of which your orchestra is a part?** How would you describe the value of this initiative to that ecology?
9. **Do you imagine your orchestra still existing 5 years from now? 10? 50?**
10. **What do you imagine the future of orchestras will look like? What will it sound like? How do we curate the future of orchestras?**
11. **What are you committed to doing in the service of equity and diversity?** What risks are you prepared to take? What risks are you not prepared to take?
12. **What are you curious about?** What aspects of this conversation are you most interested in? Least interested in?



## Appendix B: Participants

### Administrators and Artistic Directors

Daniel Bartholomew-Poyser, Artist in Residence and Community Ambassador, Symphony Nova Scotia  
Tanya Derksen, Executive Director, Regina Symphony  
Simon Gamache, Executive Director, I Musici de Montréal  
Margot Holmes, Executive Director, Vancouver Island Symphony  
Eileen Keown, Executive Director, Mississauga Symphony Orchestra  
Olga Mychajluk, Artistic Administrator, Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony Orchestra  
Marianne Perron, Director, Music Programming, Orchestre symphonique de Montréal  
Barbara Smith, Executive Director, National Youth Orchestra of Canada  
Neil Spaulding, Personnel Manager, Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra  
Marc Stevens, General Manager, National Arts Centre Orchestra  
Meiko Taylor, Orchestra Operations and Personnel Manager, National Arts Centre Orchestra  
Rosemary Thomson, Music Director, Okanagan Symphony Orchestra  
Mark Turner, Executive Director, Saskatoon Symphony  
Kelly Tweeddale, Executive Director, Vancouver Symphony Orchestra  
Vicki Young, Managing Director, Manitoba Chamber Orchestra  
Glenn Hodgins, President and CEO, Canadian Music Centre  
Michael Murray, Executive Director, Toronto Musicians' Association

### Facebook Member Pages

Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony  
Organization of Canadian Symphony Musicians (Executive)

**Many thanks to the musicians, including soloists, orchestral musicians, composers, collaborators and other creators, as well as ethnomusicologists who contributed to this research. They include (but are not limited to):**

Andrew Balfour, Ars Nova  
Ian Cusson, Carrefour Composer-in-Residence, National Arts Centre  
Cris Derksen, cellist and composer  
Kathleen Kajioka, violist and broadcaster, Classical FM 96.3  
Marion Newman, mezzo-soprano  
Dylan Robinson, Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Arts, Queen's University  
Dinuk Wijeratne, former Conductor-in-Residence, Symphony Nova Scotia, and Music Director, Nova Scotia Youth Orchestra

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# Appendix C: Responses from Orchestras Canada

By commissioning Soraya Peerbaye and Dr. Parmela Attariwala to undertake research and prepare a report on Canadian orchestras' relationships with Indigenous people and people of colour, Orchestras Canada has taken an important first step in re-envisioning our work as an arts service organization.

It's only a first step, because we know that Canadian orchestras serve diverse populations, and each geographic community inevitably contains its own diversities, whether related to socio-economic factors, ethnicity, age, ability, gender identity and/or expression, language, or geography. Because of limited time and funding, we opted to focus this research project on challenges and opportunities related to engagement between orchestras and Indigenous people, and people of colour. We acknowledge that we have much more to do.

Orchestras Canada is proud to have started this journey, grateful for the learnings so far, and excited to continue.

*Re-sounding the Orchestra* challenges some core assumptions about Orchestras Canada's responsibilities, commitments, and constituencies, and asks us to fundamentally re-consider our reach and our impact. It poses similar challenges to Canadian orchestras.

In this addendum to *Re-sounding the Orchestra*, we'll articulate some core beliefs that motivate Orchestras Canada's work, acknowledge some of the people who have inspired and done the work that has brought us to this point, outline the steps in our journey, and offer responses to the report's recommendations, as well.

We undertake to renew then share our current strategic and operating plans to make space and time for the commitments we make in this response document. Our commitment is to transparency and accountability. We will learn by doing, and our plans will continue to develop. We invite readers to join us as the work evolves.

## Preamble

We believe that Canadian orchestras are at a crossroads. From their first performances in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, Canadian orchestras have existed to promote and sustain the Western European (and Western European-inspired) concert music canon. They have done this work exceptionally well. Orchestras have evolved ways of working that have ensured their success as artistic and community institutions.

As *Re-sounding the Orchestra* highlights, though:

- Canadian orchestras live and work in communities experiencing unprecedented demographic, economic, artistic, and political change. For orchestras to thrive, they need to participate in and respond to these changes;
- Canadian orchestras represent the confluence of remarkable artistic and community resources. If they are to fully achieve their potential as flexible, capable, creative instruments of evolving musical expression, they must re-consider their ways of working.

We believe in the collective ability of Canada's orchestras (musicians, artistic leaders, board members, direct service volunteers, staff, and audiences) to respond to these new challenges.

We also believe that Orchestras Canada has a role to play in helping orchestra organizations, and the performing artists and creators they work with, to deepen their understanding of their evolving community context.



Furthermore, we believe that Orchestras Canada itself must continue to evolve, modelling inclusive behaviours, engaging more voices in conversations about the future of orchestras in communities of the future, strengthening its research and curation role, and building alliances between people with overlapping interests.

*Re-sounding the Orchestra* presents many challenges to ingrained ways of working, but we believe we're collectively capable of working our way through these challenges. Transformation is not only possible: we believe that it's imperative.

## The people

We'd like to thank and acknowledge those who have helped Orchestras Canada take this work forward. They include:

- The Canada Council for the Arts, through the Leadership for Change program
- Orchestras Canada's individual donors
- Members of OC's Equity Task Force, 2016-2017:  
Olga Mychajluk, Natalie Paproski-Rubianes, Meiko Taylor, Vicki Young, Katherine Carleton
- Members of OC's Equity Committee, 2018-19:  
Daniel Bartholomew-Poyser, chair; Tanya Derksen, Simon Gamache, Cheryl McCallum, Olga Mychajluk, Mark Turner, Dinuk Wijeratne, Vicki Young, Katherine Carleton, Nick Walshe
- The orchestras and organizations that have adopted the IDEA Manifesto in its fall 2017 iteration
 

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra</li> <li>Georgian Bay Symphony Orchestra</li> <li>Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra</li> <li>I Musici de Montréal</li> <li>Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony</li> <li>Manitoba Chamber Orchestra</li> <li>Niagara Symphony Orchestra</li> <li>Okanagan Symphony Orchestra</li> <li>Orchestre symphonique de l'Éstuaire</li> <li>Orchestre symphonique de Longueuil</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Orchestre symphonique de Québec</li> <li>Organization of Canadian Symphony Musicians</li> <li>Prince Edward Island Symphony Orchestra</li> <li>Regina Symphony Orchestra</li> <li>Saskatoon Symphony Orchestra</li> <li>Symphony Nova Scotia</li> <li>Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra and Chamber Choir</li> <li>Thunder Bay Symphony Orchestra</li> <li>Toronto Symphony Orchestra</li> <li>Windsor Symphony Orchestra</li> </ul>
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- The artists and arts workers who have generously informed our thinking through their participation in past OC national conferences and workshops:  
Ella Cooper, Michele Decottignies, Christine Friday, Christos Hatzis, Jeff Herd, Lee Maracle, Ian David Moss, Tania Saba, Luc Simard, Sara Roque, Clayton Windatt, Steve Wood.
- We'd like to pay special tribute to the authors of *Re-sounding the Orchestra*, Soraya Peerbaye and Parmela Attariwala, and the people they consulted over a number of months. Because of their belief in the importance of this work, Ms Peerbaye and Dr. Attariwala brought far more to this project than we could ever compensate them for. We are so grateful.



## Re-sounding the Orchestra: timeline

1. In May 2016, at the close of the national conference in Kitchener, OC made a commitment to deepening our efforts to understand and inform orchestras' current and future work in inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility.
2. In the months that followed, a task force of volunteers was convened to work with OC staff to frame OC's "IDEA Declaration" – a customizable statement of commitment by Canadian orchestras to broadening and deepening their work in these areas.
3. The Declaration was finalized in the late summer of 2017 and circulated in fall 2017. It is posted on the OC website: <https://oc.ca/en/resource/inclusion-diversity-equity-and-accessibility-idea-declaration>
4. In September 2016, OC applied for funding to the Canada Council's Leadership for Change program for funding for research that would help us better understand Canadian orchestras' work in these areas.
5. In December 2016, we learned that the project had been funded.
6. In Spring 2017, researchers Soraya Peerbaye and Dr. Parmela Attariwala began to formalize their work plan. A new and important aspect of their research was the convening of two roundtable discussions with Indigenous artists and artists of colour.
7. In May 2018, Ms Peerbaye and Dr. Attariwala presented preliminary findings from their research and held round tables with participants from the orchestral community at OC's conference in Calgary.
8. In September 2018, the final report was submitted by the researchers, and it was received by the OC board at its October board meeting.
9. The report was translated from English into French in October 2018.
10. Between November 2018 and April 2019, OC staff and members of the Equity committee undertook further discussions with members and stakeholders about the report's content and recommendations. Many organizations and individuals are implicated in the report's recommendations, and before OC could comprehensively respond, we wanted to consult with key partners – including (but not limited to) representatives from our member orchestras and such organizations as the Canadian Music Centre, the Canadian Federation of Musicians, the Organization of Canadian Symphony Musicians, and the Indigenous Performing Arts Alliance.
11. In the fall of 2018, the National Conference Committee concurred that national conference programming in 2019 should be shaped by the insights in *Re-sounding the Orchestra*.
12. The OC board reviewed and approved the Equity Committee's proposed responses and action plan in May 2019.
13. The report, responses, and plan will be presented to our members at OC's national conference in Ottawa on June 12, 2019.





## What's next

### Aligning *Re-sounding the Orchestra* with OC's mission statement and strategic plan

Orchestras Canada's mission statement, adopted in 2017, commits OC to helping "orchestras achieve together what they cannot accomplish alone, serving Canadian orchestras in both official languages, through research, knowledge-sharing, convening, and advocacy." In 2019, inspired afresh by *Re-sounding the Orchestra*, we continue to believe that research, knowledge-sharing, convening, and advocacy are appropriate areas of work for OC. We acknowledge that our circle of concern must expand to include artists and organizations whose creative expression and ways of working are new to orchestras. Our interest is not to colonize their talents and insights, but to learn together, and to be in good relations with them.

Accordingly, we commit to reflecting a diversity of interests in our research, knowledge-sharing, convening, and advocacy efforts, and to use our resources (time, money, influence) to engage more people in our work.

As part of a new strategic plan, we will develop and publish qualitative and quantitative goals for this work, and report annually on our progress.

### Responding to Recommendations in *Re-sounding the Orchestra*

Soraya Peerbaye and Parmela Attariwala included a numbered list of recommendations in *Re-sounding the Orchestra*. For the convenience of the reader, they are re-stated below, along with OC's responses. As well, we extracted some implied recommendations from the report (identified by letter), and have included our responses to them, as well.

**Recommendation #1:** Reposition the IDEA Declaration as a document that can evolve and be responsive to the discussions and actions above, and identify "access" and "inclusion" as strategies towards broader goals of equity, diversity, and recognition of Indigenous sovereignty.

*Response: OC agrees to undertake this regularly, and to consult with and communicate changes and updates to all member orchestras.*

**Recommendation #2:** Create a shared, living document to support exchange of information on new repertoire, commissioning and collaborations developed by Indigenous artists, artists of colour, and artists of other equity-seeking communities, and identifying the potential of co-production. This could be done in partnership with the Canadian Music Centre.

*Response: We agree in principle with this recommendation, but experience tells us that "a shared, living document" may not be the most effective means of achieving the desired goal. Instead, we commit to hosting opportunities for information exchange at OC-organized regional meetings and national conferences, and documenting the discussions. Furthermore, we will encourage orchestra stakeholders to participate in existing cultural events in their regions, as well as provincial, national and international presenting network "contact" events, so they can better engage with Indigenous artists, artists of colour, and artists of other equity-seeking communities, and share their learnings with peers.*

**Recommendation #3:** Work in collaboration with the Canadian Music Centre to support the continued identification of cultural appropriation in the compositions housed at the CMC. Update the list originally compiled by Jeremy Strachan in 2005 ("Music Inspired by Aboriginal Sources at the Canadian Music Centre"). This should especially address of appropriation of Indigenous culture, but can be extended to compositions that incorporate other racialized exoticizations and appropriations.

*Response: We are supportive in principle of this work, and commit to sharing it with OC members when it is complete.*



**Recommendation #3a:** Ensure that orchestras are aware of this list and establish a protocol of ethics regarding the programming of any such works.

*Response: OC will not wait for the work identified in Recommendation 3 to proceed. Instead, OC will convene a multi-stakeholder task force to discuss, potentially develop, and communicate a protocol of ethics relating to programming. This work will be inspired by the Statement on Indigenous Musical Sovereignty (<http://www.ipaa.ca/news/regions/national/indigenous-musical-sovereignty>), among other sources.*

**Recommendation #4:** Collaborate with the Canadian Music Centre to develop the Ontario region’s “Adopt-a-composer” initiative nationally as a mentorship program for Indigenous and under-represented composers who want to compose/create works for orchestra, building on the initiatives current goal of supporting composers in remote regions. The opportunity exists for Orchestras Canada to help shape the new Adopt-a-Composer program into a mentorship program that supports the goals of both organizations.

*Response: We propose to start by convening a round table of composers and orchestra stakeholders to talk about the current state of composer development initiatives (including residencies), to help us identify a range of viable options. We think this work can be approached most effectively as a collaboration between partner organizations (including the Canadian Music Centre, Canadian League of Composers, and the Association of Canadian Women Composers), funders, orchestras, and individual composers, with due attention to composers’ developmental needs, and organizational mandates.*

**Recommendation #5:** Support current initiatives across the arts sector to address sexual harassment and assault in the arts. This should be done with a continuous attention to the way that violence towards women is inter-related with violence towards Indigenous people, people of colour, Deaf persons and persons with disabilities, and 2SLGBTQ people. Policies to address sexual harassment and assault should also address racism, homophobia and transphobia, and ableism.

*Response: We will continue and strengthen our efforts in this area, on our own, and in collaboration with members, groups like the Canadian Federation of Musicians, participants from equity seeking communities, and experts, and through participation in the Cultural Human Resources Council’s Respectful Workplaces Initiative.*

**Recommendation #6:** Initiate a discussion with Indigenous artists on the desirability and potential of bringing together Indigenous artists engaged in orchestral and other forms of Western classical music. The intention in this initiative should be, first and foremost, to create a space for Indigenous artists to share their experiences in the orchestral classical music sector. It may be considered, not so much an “advisory” in the service of Orchestras Canada, but an incubator that creates the conditions, time and space for reflection. The group should be self-directed and should determine if, when and how orchestral administrators and artistic directors can be included in conversation.

*Response: We have started a discussion with some of the people involved in the round table of Indigenous artists convened as part of Re-sounding the Orchestra as to what they’d find most useful, and we are committed to supporting the continuation of their dialogue, and ensuring that the discussions include emerging and established artists.*

**Recommendation #7:** Initiate a discussion with Indigenous artists, artists of colour, artists who identify as Deaf/disabled, and 2SLGBTQ artists, on the potential of bringing together individuals concerned with equity and diversity in orchestral and classical music. This incubator should include artistic directors, conductors, musicians, composers, creators, collaborators and educators in orchestral music, and could address broad issues of equity in orchestral culture, including training and professional development, mentorship, residencies, incubators etc. to begin to define new models of knowledge transmission.

*Response: We believe that this important convening work should take place under the aegis of OC’s Equity Committee. This group can be expanded and resourced to undertake an enlarged mandate.*

**Recommendation #8:** Create a working group to address the diversification of orchestral boards of directors. This group should include administrators, artistic directors, elders and community consultants to re-examine



roles and responsibilities of directors; and how to cultivate reciprocity with Indigenous communities, communities of colour, and other equity-seeking communities.

*Response: In OC's role as convenor, we will start by hosting a discussion in the sector, duly informed by results of recent Canada Council for the Arts research on diversity in Canadian arts institutions. We will also explore the potential for collaboration on further research and training with other arts service organizations and networks such as the Canadian Arts Summit.*

**In addition to the eight formal recommendations in *Re-sounding the Orchestra*, the report included some implicit recommendations. We've identified them, and comment briefly on the major implications for action.**

**Recommendation A:** OC acknowledges the need for continued research with “other equity-seeking communities, and the specificity of issues that may arise in their practices.” (page 8)

*Response: For reasons of time and money, Re-sounding the Orchestra focuses on Canadian orchestras' relationships with Indigenous people and people of colour only. We know that every orchestra will encounter many forms of diversity in the communities it serves, and we commit to continued research and knowledge-sharing to help orchestras contextualize their work.*

**Recommendation B:** The report authors ask, “Can orchestra administration be more involved in the direction of orchestral training in Canada? Can Orchestras Canada help to convene a working group dedicated to addressing the shortcomings in music education (particularly the socio-cultural illiteracy that many other artistic disciplines have addressed)?” (page 48)

*Response: In its role as a convenor, OC commits to facilitate exchange between orchestra leaders and leaders of training institutions and youth and training orchestras to discuss orchestral training in Canada.*

**Recommendation C:** The report authors ask if it is possible “to convene a working group of orchestra administrators, OCSM members and CFM delegates to negotiate provisions tailored to creating new Canadian works while ensuring that such provisions cannot be abused by the big for-profit producers?” (page 49)

*Response: In its research, convening and knowledge-sharing roles, OC undertakes to discuss (with CFM and OCSM) the desirability of undertaking research on existing contract models for new work development, in music and other performing arts disciplines. OC does not have a mandate to negotiate, but acknowledges that such research could be helpful to all parties in future negotiations.*

**Recommendation D:** The report authors observe that “Without doing internal surveys it is difficult to accurately assess the ethno-cultural background of orchestral musicians.” (page 51)

*Response: In its research and knowledge-sharing role, OC commits to exploring the feasibility and funding of an orchestra census with such partners as Canada Council, OCSM and CFM, to collect data on orchestral musicians (including but not limited to ethno-cultural backgrounds) in Canada.*

**Recommendation E:** The report authors ask, “How do we ensure that our foreign-born music directors: a) do not bring their ethnocultural prejudices or stereotypes into our rehearsal halls and performances spaces b) understand the ethics of engaging with Indigenous artists” (page 54)

*Response: Absent supporting data, OC can neither agree nor disagree with the perspectives implied in these questions; however, we believe that a thoughtful and thorough music director search process (whether national or international), robust orientation practices, and ongoing discussions between music directors and orchestra boards and administration are vitally important. In its knowledge-sharing and convening roles, OC commits to curating resources and fostering discussions to help orchestras manage these processes well.*





ORCHESTRAS  
ORCHESTRES | CANADA

## An Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility Declaration for Canadian Orchestras

May 2017

### COMMITMENTS

The [*insert name of orchestra*] is committed to inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility. Because we care about the vitality of our art form, we seek to better understand, reflect, engage, and celebrate our diverse community.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We acknowledge that Canadian orchestras benefit from supportive public policy and community investment, and we acknowledge our responsibility to Western classical music traditions, to music of other cultures, and to the development of music inspired by the diversity of the people of Canada.



## DEFINITIONS

**Inclusion:** The commitment to ensure active engagement of all people, and the removal or mitigation of barriers to that engagement.

**Diversity:** The representation of all people, including but not limited to: Indigenous peoples, people of varied gender identities, gender expressions and sexual orientation, ethno-culturally diverse groups, people with (dis)abilities (including physical, mental health, sensory, learning and/or chronic health disabilities), diverse language communities, people of various ages, people of varied socio-economic status, and people living in urban, suburban, rural, and remote communities.

**Equity:** Access to opportunities for all individuals.

**Accessibility:** The ability for all individuals to access, connect to, be aware of, and benefit from a system or organization.

## GENERAL PRACTICES

We are **supportive partners**, developing mutually beneficial artistic and community collaborations with individuals and groups with diverse perspectives.

We engage in **ongoing internal training and education** to strengthen our work in inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility.

We are **familiar with funders' requirements and legislation** governing inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility, and seek to meet or exceed these standards.

We acknowledge that **our approaches to this work will evolve over time.**

## LEADERSHIP

Leaders champion the commitment to inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility.

## ARTISTIC PROGRAMMING

Our artistic programming reflects our commitment to inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility.

## TALENT DEVELOPMENT

We acknowledge and articulate our role in developing future generations of orchestral musicians, conductors, and composers, and we help address inequalities of access to training and development opportunities, on our own or with partners.

## RECRUITMENT

We consider tactical, strategic, and systemic factors as we recruit, retain, develop, and promote diverse artists, orchestra and administrative personnel, board members, and volunteers.

## AUDIENCES

We gather and use comprehensive, current information about demographics and trends in the communities we serve.

Recognizing that everyone has the right to participate freely in the cultural life of the community, we identify and work to mitigate factors that impede access to involvement in classical and/or orchestral music.

We work with our venues to create genuinely welcoming and safe spaces for all patrons.





# Appendix E: Statement on Indigenous Musical Sovereignty

February 22, 2019

Maintaining ownership and control of our stories and artistic projects is of vital importance for Indigenous creators. The stories we need to tell at this time often significantly vary from the existing canon of “Indigenous inspired” works.

Simply, a work is Indigenous when it is created by an Indigenous artist, regardless of theme or topic. A story is Indigenous whether it comes from ancestral knowledge, lived experience or imagination. We as Indigenous creators are best positioned to tell our stories that discuss hard truths faced by our communities, while ensuring appropriate steps are taken to provide emotional support and aftercare. We seek an end to those musical works by outsiders that shock audiences and re-traumatize our most painful experiences.

To non-Indigenous composers who seek to tell “Indigenous-inspired” works: be honest with yourself and ask why you feel compelled to tell this story and whether you are the right person to do so.

As Indigenous creators, we value our non-Indigenous collaborators and creative partners. We invite partnership across all levels (librettists, orchestrators, performers, producers, curators, artistic directors, etc.) and insist that when telling stories that are specific to Indigenous experiences that we as Indigenous creators are granted authority and full oversight on how our Indigenous communities are portrayed. Recognize that we as Indigenous creators are accountable to our communities in cross-cultural projects and that this represents additional responsibility and emotional labour in our creativeness.

As Indigenous artists, we seek to represent our peoples truthfully and in our full complexities. We too ask ourselves if we are the right peoples to tell these stories - and recognize that we as Indigenous creators do not always have the positionality to tell every Indigenous story. We seek to hold ourselves to the highest ethical standards of Indigenous community engagement, and request that our collaborators in the Canadian music community work to the same level of accountability.

Cris Derksen	Melody McKiver	Ian Cusson	Beverley McKiver
Jeremy Dutcher	Sonny-Ray Day Rider	Michelle Lafferty	Corey Payette
Jessica McMann	Andrew Balfour		

