



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 18th 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

Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra	Orchestre symphonique de Québec
Georgian Bay Symphony Orchestra	Organization of Canadian Symphony Musicians
Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra	Prince Edward Island Symphony Orchestra
I Musici de Montréal	Regina Symphony Orchestra
Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony	Saskatoon Symphony Orchestra
Manitoba Chamber Orchestra	Symphony Nova Scotia
Niagara Symphony Orchestra	Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra and Chamber Choir
Okanagan Symphony Orchestra	Thunder Bay Symphony Orchestra
Orchestre symphonique de l'Éstuaire	Toronto Symphony Orchestra
Orchestre symphonique de Longueuil	Windsor Symphony Orchestra
- 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.

