

## **Kate Lidbetter - ADDRESS TO AAPRO**

President Guo, vice presidents, ladies and gentlemen, I am honoured to be here today and am grateful for the opportunity to tell you a little about the education and outreach activities of the Australian orchestras. But first, I should introduce my company, Symphony Services International. Some of you may have heard me speak at the China Symphony Development Foundation conference in Hangzhou earlier this year - back then, we were known as Symphony Australia. Since then, we have expanded our scope to offer a wide range of services and products to orchestras not only in Australia but around the world. Asia is becoming an important market for us.

Like here, the Australian orchestral sector comprises many levels and types of orchestras. The Members of Symphony Services International are the six professional state orchestras based around the country and I am pleased that some of my colleagues from these orchestras are here today. In addition, we have Associates including the Australian Chamber Orchestra, the Canberra and Darwin Symphony Orchestras, opera orchestras and also orchestras from Asia and New Zealand. I am delighted to acknowledge our Associates Philharmonia Taiwan, the National Symphony Orchestra of Taiwan.

Some of the services that we provide to these Members and Associates may also be of interest to you. These include a database of over 3500 program note annotations, available for reprint for a very modest fee or able to be commissioned to your particular needs. We also offer surtitles for orchestral works with a vocal component. Our Music Library has more than 260,000 items including 12,000 sets available for hire and the Goodear Editions publishing arm, which creates high quality editions of works recently out of copyright for sale or hire. The Goodear Acoustic Shield, seen behind me here, is an OHS product with proven track record of significantly reducing decibel levels for orchestral musicians.

Symphony Services International can take the headache out of consultancies by facilitating the entire process from start to finish. Our consultants' database includes experts in the areas of finance, strategic planning, artistic administration and orchestral management.

We are currently working on a suite of training and development programs that will eventually be offered broadly - these are programs that offer specific training for orchestral players and staff. We are in the early stages of putting together one- and two-day courses in leadership training for section leaders, as well as a program on writing about music for marketing managers. There are a variety of other training modules being discussed and we anticipate rolling them out over the next two years.

It is wonderful to see so many of us gathered here to learn from each other, share ideas and debate issues relating to our sector. This is something that the Australian symphony orchestras do together on a regular basis. In addition, Symphony Services International runs annual Summits for various parts of the business. These gatherings are exclusive to our Members and Associates. In 2010 we will shortly hold our Orchestral Librarians Summit at the Sydney Opera House, with a copyright expert as our guest speaker. Next month the Chief Executives and Artistic Administrators will have their respective Summits, with the Director of Education of the Berlin Philharmonic as their guest speaker. Inclusion in these Summits is one of the major benefits of becoming an Associate of Symphony Services International.

The issue of Audience Outreach is an interesting one that can mean different things to different people. For a program planner, the music that is performed is all about outreach – after all, getting the audience into paid seats is vital for an orchestra to survive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Building up the next generation of concert-goers through education concerts is also vital and often costs more money than it generates. Education and community outreach are areas of great importance to all six of Symphony Services International's Members. Each of the symphony orchestras has a thriving program for school-aged students, as well as Artist Development activities for young professionals.

There are a few factors that make audience outreach in Australia a very different prospect than it must be in Asia, Europe or America. First is the incredible distances involved in our country. Australia is a landmass of 7.7 million square kilometers with a population of just 22.5 million people. 8 million (more than a third) of those Australians live outside of capital cities, and we have just six full time professional symphony orchestras. Compare that to a country like Germany, with its landmass of 138,000 square kilometers, its population of 82 million and 130 professional symphony orchestras (not to mention the countless chamber orchestras). The Australian orchestras take very seriously their responsibility to the entire population of their respective states, not just those audience members who live close enough to be subscribers, or who can regularly attend concerts. Bridging the distances so that all Australians can have access to quality orchestral music is something we all put a lot of time and effort into.

The Melbourne Symphony Orchestra has invested heavily in a program based on the El Sistema program of Venezuela. The Pizzicato Effect is in its second year of changing the lives of socially and economically underprivileged children in a suburban public school. The MSO has provided more than 100 half- and quarter-size instruments to every child in Grade 1 and Grade 2. The children have two MSO musicians attend and give music lessons throughout the school year. There is a mid-year concert and a final end-of-year concert which parents attend. The children, parents and school teachers are also given tickets to attend MSO concerts during the year, providing extra opportunities and experience around live musical performance. The program's impact is starting to show in many ways, not least in the school's objective to now become a specialist Performing Arts primary school. A lovely quote comes from a child called Mahamed, who says "Playing my violin makes me feel like a magician because you see people on TV play it and you just feel like them, making beautiful music with a piece of wood." The children benefiting from the program would not otherwise have access to instruments, music lessons or the opportunity to hear a professional orchestra perform.

My colleague Patrick Pickett, CEO of the Queensland Symphony Orchestra, is here today and I'm sure won't mind me telling you about some of the innovative ways the QSO is reaching audiences all around Queensland. Their Education Manager is registered to run online web based programs that will allow teachers and students to meet members of the orchestra. Schools will log onto the internet and be joined by the soloist from a particular concert, or the conductor or members of the orchestra. These web-based conferences provide opportunities for students and teachers to interact with the QSO easily at the press of a button. QSO is also in the process of exploring the option of providing educational orchestral performances "on demand" using the same technology. This means that schools outside the metropolitan area can show their students the concerts at a time that suits their teaching schedule, or use concerts as a teaching tool in conjunction with a specially created education pack.

Besides innovative programs, the orchestras in Australia are doing their best to attract new audiences through contemporary means such as social networking. It is now quite usual for Australian orchestras, and indeed orchestras around the world, to use Facebook and Twitter to promote their activities. Symphony Services International has also got a Facebook page and has just started Tweeting – something I'm not yet quite comfortable with! To attract Generation Y patrons, with their ever changing focus and priorities, we must embrace newer marketing tools.

The Sydney Symphony has a particularly clever marketing plan that includes experimentation with social networking. With a young staff member dedicated to this area, they have gathered over 1600 Facebook friends in a relatively short period of time. They have also built up a following of over 1000 Tweeters since mid-2009. Their Twitter account has fun segments like "We were wondering Wednesday", where they advertise that patrons can "Ask us about music & orchestras. We'll invent answers; some may be true". The orchestra receives some serious questions like "how many strings does a harp have", or "how many rehearsals take place before a concert". These are answered genuinely. On a lighter note, they were asked recently what was the favourite dessert of their Chief Conductor, Vladimir Ashkenazy. This might have been one of the answers to which they invented an amusing response – however Mr Ashkenazy happened to be in the country and was willing to own up to loving home-made ice cream with a topping that includes balsamic vinegar! Yvonne Frindle, the SSO's social networking guru, tweets live from selected pre-concert talks and occasionally during SSO live broadcasts, including sending out pictures of the venue and images from the orchestra while on tour.

The West Australian Symphony Orchestra is based in Perth, WA. Known as the most remote capital city in the world, Perth is separated from the east coast of the country by 4000km and 2-3 hours time difference (about the same difference as between Sydney and Hong Kong). WASO nevertheless attracts audiences from around the country and around the world through its streaming of concerts online. Using Freezone so the concerts don't affect the user's monthly download quota, WASO streams concerts live and on demand from its masters series with introductions from its Executive Manager of Artistic Planning, Marshall McGuire. Also available on demand are webcasts of popular repertoire such as Rhapsody in Blue and Bolero. In this manner, anyone can enjoy a WASO concert, any time.

A very exciting digital project is currently underway in Tasmania. With funding from the federal government, the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra has employed a "Geek in Residence". In case that doesn't translate very well, a Geek is someone with amazing technical skills but who is perhaps not socially very developed. As well as working with the TSO to improve its digital and technological capabilities across all areas of the business, the Geek is developing several exciting projects. First, he is locating and digitising every recording and broadcast made by the TSO since 1946. This is an enormous, time consuming job and will hopefully lead to similar projects by the other five professional orchestras in Australia.

The other activity being undertaken by the Geek is a groundbreaking education project that will enable children in remote parts of Tasmania to not only observe, but to actually participate in concerts with the TSO. The concept is that an education activity gets filmed in the concert hall in Hobart, with the TSO performing, a presenter and a live audience. A second audience is brought together somewhere else in the State and the concert is beamed live to a large screen with no delays or deterioration of quality. The concert is totally interactive – audiences in both places (or even multiple places) can see, hear and participate as if they were in the room. This technology

will soon become possible with the new high-speed broadband cable that is currently being implemented around Australia after much debate and many years of development.

Each of the six orchestras has its own outreach projects and goals, but Symphony Services International is doing its best to tie them all together in a joint, national education project for 2012. One of the services that we hope to offer to orchestras around the world is off-the-shelf educational product – shows that are appropriate to a particular age group and that are easy for the host orchestra to put together and present. International orchestras will be able to hire not only the score and parts, but all associated accessories needed to make a successful performance. Our first endeavour is called *Animals of the Bush Orchestra*, and tells the story of an orchestra that gets stranded by a flooding river in the middle of the Australian bush. The orchestra abandons their bus along with their instruments (perhaps not highly likely, but this is a children's story after all!) At night, the bush animals come out and start to experiment with the instruments, making all sorts of weird and wonderful sounds. Along the way, the audience will learn not only about the bush animals but also about the instruments of the orchestra – a kind of Australian Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra, if you will. The story proceeds with highs and lows, finally reaching a happy ending with the musicians playing the instruments in the traditional way, and the animals contributing their own sounds in a joint concerto performance.

Symphony Services International will commission the music and story, which will exist in various flexible formats such as full orchestra, reduced chamber orchestra, touring options and so on. Although the initial story will feature Australian bush animals, we will suggest ways that different countries can substitute their own native animals if they prefer. We will provide education kits, options for various preparations that the audience can work on prior to the concert, marketing material, the script, score, projections and so on. It will be entirely up to each orchestra how much of this they choose to adopt – the presentation can be simple and inexpensive or complex and technologically impressive. We hope this will be the first of many such projects, and that orchestras around the world will be interested in presenting the story.

In a small and remote country like Australia, it is vital that we work together to maximise opportunities and combine our resources. We are incredibly lucky that our history has bound us closely together – the six symphony orchestras have a collegiate relationship and see themselves as "sister" organisations rather than competitors. Sharing resources makes far more sense than duplicating them. Now that we are able to offer these services more widely I look forward to relationships with many orchestras in the region. If you have any queries about the areas I have outlined here, please let me know so that I can provide you with additional information.

Thank you for your time and attention. I look forward very much to listening to some of you speak over the coming days, and to meeting as many of you as possible. Congratulations on this wonderful event, and thank you for inviting me to participate.