



LEADERSHIP AND GENDER IN CANADIAN ORCHESTRAS

A Brief to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

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ORCHESTRAS CANADA/ORCHESTRES CANADA
P.O. Box 2386, Peterborough ON K9J 2Y8
ORCHESTRASCANADA.ORG // ORCHESTRESCANADA.ORG

Prepared by Katherine Carleton, C.M.
Executive Director // Directrice Générale

katherine@oc.ca

705-243-6640



Orchestras Canada/Orchestres Canada (OC) salutes the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage's interest in gender diversity in the arts. On behalf of OC and the 130 orchestra organizations across the country that we represent, I am pleased to submit this brief.

Orchestras Canada/Orchestres Canada is the national membership association for Canadian orchestras. Our member and associate orchestras are located in every Canadian province, and range from community-based, volunteer driven groups, through youth and training orchestras to semi-professional and professional orchestras. We help orchestras achieve together what they cannot accomplish alone, serving Canadian orchestras in both official languages, through research, knowledge-sharing, convening, and advocacy.

In 2017, OC published its IDEA Declaration: a call to all Canadian orchestras to commit to values of and processes that will further Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (available on our website: <http://orchestrascanada.org/resource/idea-declaration/>). This work has been embraced by our members and associates. We are concluding initial research on the current state of Canadian orchestras in this work, and are committed to strengthening both our support to members and our own internal practices.

We'll start with some facts.

OC is a small not-for-profit organization, and like many other small organizations in the broader Canadian not-for-profit and charitable sector, our staff team (3 full-time equivalents) is led by a woman. Our 10-person board of directors is half male, half female. Our board president is male; he succeeded a woman in the role, and he will be succeeded by a woman, too.

Canadian orchestras, like their international counterparts, have a three-headed leadership model. Boards carry out governance leadership and delegate administrative and artistic responsibilities to a CEO and music (or artistic) director, respectively.

According to a recent scan of our membership records, comparative financial data, and orchestras' websites, among the 26 professional Canadian orchestras with annual revenues exceeding \$1 million:

- 16 of 26 have male board chairs;
- 13 of 26 are led by female CEOs;
- 4 of 26 are led by female music directors, including Elisa Citterio of Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra (succeeding Jeanne Lamon), Anne Manson of the Manitoba Chamber

Orchestra, Gemma New of the Hamilton Philharmonic, and Rose Thomson of the Okanagan Symphony.

What we also see from the numbers?

There is no correlation between annual revenues and the gender of board and administrative leaders in professional Canadian orchestras: women lead orchestras of all sizes and are well-represented at the top, middle and bottom end of this group.

Artistic leadership is a different story: the number of women appointed to music director positions in professional orchestras – in Canada and around the world - remains low. (The international situation is relevant, given the small size of the Canadian market, and the number of opportunities in other countries. Indeed, two outstanding female Canadian musicians, Barbara Hannigan and Keri-Lynn Wilson, hold artistic leadership roles at, respectively, the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra and National Slovenian Orchestra).

We believe that the culture is shifting in Canada: we are seeing more female guest conductors hired to rehearse and conduct individual programs with Canadian orchestras, and recently there have been noteworthy appointments of women to artistic leadership roles in smaller-budget Canadian orchestras, including Dina Gilbert in Kamloops, and Mélanie Léonard in Sudbury. They join existing female leaders of smaller budget orchestras such as Claire Guimond, Laura Thomas, Judith Yan, Jessica Kun, Melanie Paul-Tanovich, and Marie-France Mathieu. We also know that much needs to be done to ensure that 50% of the population has a fair chance at artistic leadership roles in the orchestral world.

Across the country, our boards, peers and colleagues recognize this. As I stated in a recent interview with *The Walrus*, “Any enterprise that restricts full participation to 50 percent of the population is an enterprise with a short future, If you’re only going to bring in people who look like you do, you’re losing opportunities to innovate and respond creatively to the giant challenges that orchestras face.”¹

While things are improving, achieving gender parity in artistic leadership won’t happen overnight. Working with the Government of Canada and by bringing sustained attention to the importance and benefit of gender diversity, we believe we will see measurable improvement.

Recommendations

Measurement and accountability are key to progress. To improve our collective understanding of the current situation, OC recommends:

- Support for systematic data collection on current leadership in Canadian arts organizations and institutions; this could be achieved through data collection

¹ <https://thewalrus.ca/why-are-there-so-few-female-conductors/>
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mechanisms at public funders like the Canada Council for the Arts or through Statistics Canada;

- Support for qualitative research on career trajectories of female artistic leaders in the arts, and the barriers they face.

To address specific issues related to the engagement of women in artistic leadership roles:

- Support for the development of training programs for boards and search committees of arts organizations on search processes and strategies for the elimination of unconscious bias.
- Specific support for career development, mentoring, and networking opportunities for female Canadian conductors through the Canada Council for the Arts, to ensure that promising artists can develop their abilities the fullest possible extent.
- Measures to support strengthened collaboration between educational and training institutions and arts organizations, to ensure that prospective female artistic leaders see a path forward from the earliest days of their career development.

At Orchestras Canada/Orchestres Canada, we recognize that we have an obligation to advance this dialogue. We will continue with our Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Accessibility efforts and complementary programming, with a view to achieving better diversity across Canadian orchestras.