

## RICHMOND SYMPHONY • MUSIC DIRECTOR SEARCH COMMITTEE

Held on Tuesday, March 24, 2020 at 12:30 pm by zoom

**Members Present:** John Braymer (VC), Priscilla Burbank, Neal Cary, David Fisk, Sam Huss, Jennifer Lawson, George Mahoney, Ellen Cockerham Riccio, Elisabeth Wollan (Chair), Daisuke Yamamoto

**Members Absent:** Chris Lindbloom

**Also in Attendance:** Jennifer Arnold

The meeting was called to order by Betsy Wollan, who acknowledged the unusual circumstances due to COVID-19. Betsy noted that the original purpose of the meeting was to review Valentina Peleggi. Given the cancellation of all concerts for the next two months, our fifth candidate, Farkhad Khudiyev, would not now be able to come this season. She also noted that our Terms of Commission, approved by the Board in December 2017, state: *“The Committee may recommend to the Board to stop the search process at any time, if the Committee agrees that a winning candidate has been identified.”*

Betsy acknowledged that the reviews and comments about Ms. Peleggi from all consulted - staff, Board, Chorus, audience members and especially our musicians - are extraordinary, quite unlike anything we have seen from our other candidates. Many of the comments urged us to hire her now. 100% of the musicians ranked her as “Excellent.” 100% indicated that she would be an excellent Music Director. Betsy indicated that the remarkable support for Ms. Peleggi made her feel more comfortable having a discussion about ending the search without seeing the final candidate.

Betsy asked the Committee if they would like to have a secret ballot vote (via text, as recommended by Neal Cary) on the question of whether to suspend the search or if they would be comfortable voting openly during the meeting. She noted that our Terms of Commission state that *“Votes taken by the Committee shall be by secret ballot, after full discussion of the matter under consideration, unless the majority of members agree otherwise.”* **The Committee unanimously agreed to vote openly.**

Neal asked whether, if Valentina Peleggi did not accept the job, the Committee would be able to invite Farkhad Khudiyev in June or at another time and extend the search to see all of the candidates. David mentioned that due to Farkhad and his wife expecting a new baby in June and the uncertainty of concerts resuming anytime soon, it is unlikely that he would be able to conduct a concert within the time frame that the Board was expecting. George Mahoney agreed that the Board would strongly prefer that the Search end within this season.

After the Committee discussed various options, it decided to vote on two options on how to proceed.

Option 1: To end the search with only four candidates being considered.

Option 2: To submit to the Board a recommendation for Music Director, with the possibility of inviting Mr. Khudiyev at a later date if our preferred candidate does not take the job.

Lengthy discussion was held about both options; **the Committee voted 8 to 2 in favor of Option 1, ending the search.** After a discussion, it appeared clear that there was full consensus and excitement around Valentina’s candidacy. **The Committee voted unanimously to recommend Valentina Peleggi to the Board as our next Music Director.** There was then some discussion whether to identify an acceptable alternative candidate, a ‘runner-up’, in case Valentina declined the position and/or was unable to come to mutually acceptable terms for her engagement. **The Committee voted unanimously to recommend Ankush Bahl should the Board be unable to come to suitable contractual terms with Ms. Peleggi.** As a postscript, David commented that, if Valentina’s contract has her conducting significantly fewer concerts than the Board had ideally wanted, it might be worth the Board considering the idea, at some point, of adding a Principal Guest Conductor, Music Director Emeritus, or Principal Pops Conductor, to support and complement her, the Associate Conductor and other staff conductors.

Betsy agreed to inform the Committee as soon as the Board has made its decision in its scheduled conference call on Friday at 4pm. She reminded the Committee that **our discussion must remain absolutely confidential until the Board has approved the recommendation and until negotiations with Ms. Peleggi have been concluded successfully.**