

## AGENDA

### **Richmond Symphony Board of Directors: Special Meeting**

**Friday, March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020 at 4.00 pm**

**By conference call from Dominion Energy Center, 612 E. Grace Street, Richmond, VA 23219**

**Present:** Josh Bennett, Stu Blain, John Braymer, Priscilla Burbank, Lisa Byrd, Mark Cox, Ron Crutcher, David Fisk, Gary Flowers, Jill Bussey Harris, Rebecca Horner, Elizabeth Cabell Jennings, Brennan Keene, Christopher Lindbloom, Ted Linhart, George Mahoney, Patrick Murtaugh, Roger Neathawk, Dale Porfilio, Kamran Raika, Rick Sample, Maura Scott, Brandon Taylor, Marcia Thalheimer, John Walker, Mark Wickersham, Mark Wolfram, Besty Wollan, Bucci Zeugner

**Also Present:** Victoria Cottrell, Frances Sterling

**Regrets:** Phil Bennett, Angel Clarke, Alison Eckis, Earl Ferguson, Steve Girard, Cheryl Goddard, Maria Gogova, Kelly O'Keefe, Debra Pollock, Leon Roday, Richard Smith, Richard Szucs, Ludi Webber

#### **I. Welcome & Opening remarks**

**George Mahoney / David Fisk**

George welcomed and thanked the Board for its tolerance of the difficulty of meeting by conference call. He asked David for an overall update.

David spoke about the status of our fiscal management; he is grateful for the Board, Trustees, and other major donors for their contributions coming in, fast-tracked in some cases, to ensure our cashflow is healthy. For background, normally our payroll every two weeks is \$150K. We have our Rainy Day Fund available, which currently has over \$500K, as well as \$200K left on our Line of Credit, and over \$1M in other funds, in an emergency, in our Foundation that are not endowment. We have sufficient funds to get through the end of the fiscal year without taking extreme action. On the communications piece, we have tried to map out a fairly simple approach of only communicating one 'big thing' every week. The big announcement this week was about the rescheduled concerts for April and May. The big announcement next week or the week after will be about the music director. We have set plans for a major communication plan each week.

The musicians will approve by Wednesday what will encapsulate what they are willing to do to help us. If we are able to proceed with a closing concert on 12th June, the musicians are waiving their fees to save us money. Another idea is an online fundraiser to generate funds for the symphony. The musicians will participate and hopefully community members as well. We see this as being an incredible opportunity for leadership in the musical family community. We will be doing it with Classical Revolution RVA. Musicians are also doing online videos every day of their music at the moment.

#### **II. Special Meeting Agenda:**

George requested questions be sent to his cell phone and he will read and have them answered that way.

##### **(i.) Report of the Music Director Search Committee**

**Betsy Wollan**

Betsy Wollan began with stating that the search for the Music Director started well over two years ago. A field of 200 applicants came down to six finalists. Now, we have seen four candidates that are all very fine conductors. *On behalf of the Search Committee, she is proud to present a unanimous and enthusiastic recommendation to appoint Valentina Peleggi as our next Music Director.* The background refresher: a native of Florence Italy, first Italian woman to enter conducting program at Royal College of Music, Masters of Conducting from Rome, and spent the years 2014-2017 under Marin Alsop as mentor. She is currently a fellow at the English National Opera and guest conducting in Brazil. She is becoming very much sought out around the world. All of her distinguished references got back to Betsy within twenty four hours about how wonderful Valentina Peleggi is. Marin quote "astounded by her, incredibly quick, personally modest...."

A comment about Valentina from one of our musicians: "Maestra Peleggi is the complete package, deeply musical, imaginative, clear and creative with her baton, totally prepared, engaged fully with us, commanding yet collaborative. I sat on the edge of my seat the entire time, not wanting it to end."

If for some reason Ms. Peleggi cannot accept the offer and come to terms with us, the committee recommends that Ankush Bahl be offered the position of Music Director, as a strong alternative candidate.

**George said the motion is that we adopt the recommendations of the committee.** First, David would be authorized to offer the Music Director position to Ms. Peleggi, to discuss the contract with her and her representative, for the approval of the Board via the Executive Committee. Secondly, should we not reach agreement with Ms. Peleggi, David would be directed to offer the Music Director title to Ankush Bahl, with the same instructions of reaching a contract acceptable to the Board. Any comment about this? David said one question folks might have is - if we offer it to her, will she say yes? The answer is absolutely. George put the motion forward for a voice vote. ***The motion passed: all in favor and zero opposed.***

One question came in - If she does says no, will we regroup to hear about Bahl? The answer: yes, we will keep you up to date. Another question- what's the plan to announce, once Valentina accepts? David said that George, Betsy, and he will call Valentina after this meeting. She is waiting for the call. He and her manager have already talked through what the basis of an offer would be to make sure we were on the same page, to enable an offer to be accepted. Following Valentina's acceptance of the offer, David will get into the detailed negotiation of her contract with her manager. An outline of the contract is below:

Paragraph 1: Length of the initial contract. George and David have agreed to propose she would become Music Director Designate immediately and Music Director on July 1st 2020. Her initial term would be for four seasons through 2023/24. There would be opportunities within that time for feedback and performance reviews, and there would be an 18 month trigger for renewal (or expiry) of contract.

Paragraph 2: She would not be able to take any other Music Director Position with another Northern American orchestra without our permission.

Paragraph 3: Enables Valentina to take guest conducting elsewhere and to take titled positions in other parts of the world than North America with the Board's permission.

Paragraph 4: Requests her to establish and maintain a sufficiently visible presence in Richmond to the Board's satisfaction.

Paragraph 5: Talks about minimum commitment of conducting and other activity in Richmond that we are asking. The minimum for 2021/22 is 10 conducting weeks of which 5 would be Masterworks.

Paragraph 6: The duties of the Music Director

Paragraph 7: Compensation (still being negotiated).

Other paragraphs speak about our willingness to provide her with accommodation while she is in Richmond, her ability to be involved in the decisions the Board makes, and how we are working through her manager on her ability to be involved in other things such as media releases. We're hoping to get this contract signed by the end of this weekend. We have been able to have her manager free up a lot more time in 2021 than originally thought. She will conduct the opening week of the season and we will do a 'welcome to Richmond' Big Tent event free of charge. She is not available for the first Masterworks of the season, but will come back to the last week of September to do some auditions. She will stay to conduct the second Masterworks and come back in November and stay to conduct the third Masterworks. She then will be away in December, but will come back to conduct the fourth Masterworks and the January Metros. She will not do the February Masterworks which will likely be given to Erin Freeman, but may be able to do March. She will not be able to conduct the 7th or 8th (Menuhin) Masterworks.

In terms of what happens after that, once we've got the contract signed, we are trying to keep a lid on this a while longer. Our original plan was to announce next Thursday, but because of a tragic circumstance in San Paulo, where two leaders of the music community passed away from COVID-19 who were very close friends of Valentina's, she does not want a celebratory announcement going out whilst that country is mourning these two cultural leaders. We are going to try to hold it until Tuesday of the following week. Our plan will be to tell the rest of the Symphony family the previous evening and then to put it out simultaneously in Italy, Brazil, London, and Richmond on the morning of Tuesday April 7<sup>th</sup>, 8.30a our time.

We need to let Farkhad Khudiyev know the situation without letting him know who was appointed, as well as the other three candidates. Our hope is that he will be able to come and conduct us at some future time. Another thing we are trying to do at the moment is to enable Valentina's first concert to be the 2019/20 Season Closing Concert we talked about at the last meeting. She is available on the 12<sup>th</sup> June. If COVID lifts in the coming weeks and the ban on national travel is relaxed, we could make this happen. Another question - are there any visa issues? David said there is a way for us to get a blanket visa for her first couple of years. We can apply for that now and expedite it which would cover June. Jen Arnold is working on that now. Another question - what are her other leadership positions in Brazil? David said she is maintaining relationships, but has no titled position there.

***It was agreed to keep the appointment confidential, and to respect Valentina's wishes that the announcement wait until 7th April.*** The meeting concluded at 4:45pm.