

## **RICHMOND SYMPHONY • AUDIENCE BUILDING COMMITTEE**

Notes of the meeting held Wednesday, April 15, 2020 at 4pm via Zoom

**Members Present:** Phil Bennett, David Fisk, Catherine Ireland, George Mahoney, Patrick Murtaugh (Chair), Roger Neathawk, Dale Porfilio, Helen Winn  
**Apologies:** Richard Smith (VC), Mark Wolfram  
**In attendance:** Kristen Allegood, Walter Bitner, Kira Hiller, Frances Sterling

**Welcome:** Patrick welcomed everyone and introduced Frances Sterling, the new Director of Advancement and Patron Communications.

**Summary of recent actions/communications:** The appointment of Valentina Peleggi as the new Music Director was announced last Tuesday. The announcement received a lot of attention from the media and we had a large spike in social media interactions. We also announced changes to our Masterworks season and the extension of the renewal deadline. This means the launch of the Compose Your Own Subscription has been pushed to mid-May. This week we launched a new, temporary treatment of our logo that is more spaced out and uses the tag line “We Play Where You Stay”. We will be hosting a virtual, live Music Marathon on Saturday, April 25. This is not only a fundraising event, but will also be a first test of hosting an online event. We continue to share the videos of RSO musicians performing.

**Preparing for Summer/Post-Covid:** For June concerts, we have self-imposed a May 1 deadline to decide if we can move forward with our June concerts or not. If not, there is still a chance of moving Star Wars to the fall. If we are able to move forward with the Summer Series concerts, the attendance numbers can give a strong indication of what to expect from audiences in the fall. We are looking into the possibility of private broadcasting the summer series as a test in case we have to utilize that technology for our fall concerts. Frances suggested, no matter the situation, we should explore live broadcasting as part of our future model. Berlin Philharmonic currently has a digital stage and broadcasts all their concerts, but do not turn a profit. But NT Live has a strong, financially successful broadcasting program. It was suggested that we look at ways to preserve the social aspects of concert attendance with these streamed concerts.

**Patrons Post-Covid:** The committee discussed ways we can make patrons feel safe enough to return to the concert hall. Ideas included: provide face masks as patrons enter; check temperatures as patrons enter; sell fewer tickets and allow patrons to self-space (general admission); place rules that require spaced out seating; provide a small, safe space for at risk patrons to watch concert; ensure access to private streaming with ticket purchase (in case patron is ill); more outdoor concerts; shorter programs; make sure the doors to the auditorium are open concurrent with the opening of the theatre so that patrons can go straight to their seats; receive the endorsement of our arrangements of a medical professional. It was pointed out that key to any action is the communication to the patrons of the steps we are taking. Also key is to keep up connections with patrons now during the interim.

The Symphony is looking at options for making musicians feel safe as well, which could mean programming changes to pieces using smaller orchestras that would allow them to spread out more.

**Next meeting in June with Public Relevance Committee (date tbc)**