

I. ORCHESTRA FINANCING

3. Visionary orchestra management

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I always have this wild fantasy. Someday music education is so prevailing and so successful that eventually everyone can read as proficiently as musicians do, and music echoes in the mind just as written on the paper. So music, like literature or fine arts, becomes the art of reading and seeing instead of listening. And that means we, musicians, are all going to lose our jobs. I am sure John Smith is not going to let this happen. Guaranteed.

That means symphony orchestras, so far the only means of interpreting orchestral music, still retain their raison d'être but have to adjust themselves within the context of the ever changing world, and that sometimes hurts. I speak of 56 orchestra members of the China Symphony Development Foundation that I chair. Nearly all of them had gone through several reforming and restructuring plans.

Most of our orchestras were affiliated to an opera house. You may call it Staatskapelle but that's far from it. Gradually they gain independence from their umbrella bodies both in financing and in management. To most of them independence means unchartered area, unspecific audience, unknown market, unreliable source of funds and undermining subsidiary, and a happy face. So within the 56 orchestras, less than 6 have embraced season and only 2 have presented subscription season.

For the rest, they either perform on a quarterly based plan or with no specific plan at all. This has created a lot of headaches in fund-raising, programming, commissioning, casting and every aspect in orchestra management.

So the visionary orchestra management for China symphony orchestras, or in my case, the future of them that we are willing to see and the way we have been doing, are surely different from yours. Orchestra's season shall not be interrupted by short noticed governmental obligations so that they are entitled with a season planned years ahead.

Funding from private and cooperate sector should be encouraged, maintained and favoured by our law and policy makers in terms of tax deduction while more rich people are emerging. My foundation has set up a conductor's fellowship. It's an initiative to help both monetarily and morally modestly-funded prefectural orchestras to invite well-known conductors for training and preparation so that they can expand in repertoire and gain in artistic value.

We also present in each year a China Symphony Summit and bring international delegates often from the arts administration field, to cultivate our orchestras managers and let our managers to talk and share with others. This year the summit is held from March 23rd to 25th in Jinan in Shandong Province, to which you are all invited to come, and actually some have already confirmed their participation.

Apart from that, the foundation publishes an annual White Paper of Orchestras in China. It's a comprehensive study of our orchestra and symphonic music landscape with first and most updated data collected on a regular basis, including key information ranging from funding, budget to performances, repertoire and venues. This white paper is the only guideline of its kind for our policy and law makers, and also a benchmark for the creative industry. So far it's only available in Chinese I am afraid.

The foundation is also closely involved in the Spring of Symphony, an initiative by the National Centre for the Performing Arts to bring virtually all the symphony orchestras in China to perform in Beijing in 2008. CSDF also co-commissions new works by renowned Chinese composers with our orchestras. Since 2004 when I chaired the foundation, it serves as the platform for exchanges in culture, experience and knowledge.



IOC SPEECHES

It advocates on behalf of our orchestras and acts relentlessly in their favour. The foundation is the collective wisdom, the repository, the reservoir, ready to help and ready to act. And in a country with double digits GDP growth, there's nothing we can't do because there's no much yet to do.

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