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Fund-raising drive keeps Orchestra London alive for now

THE ARTS REPORT - CBC Radio

LONDON, Ont. - Orchestra London has met a fund-raising goal to keep its doors open.

In an emergency call for cash, the orchestra raised \$60,000 in just three days. But the prospect of bankruptcy still looms large before the orchestra.

It must now come up with another \$330,000 before May 31st if it is to stay solvent.

On Tuesday, the orchestra's board proposed a number of strategies aimed at increasing the fortunes of the organization. The proposals include adding theatrical elements to its concerts, using large video screens to replay the action on stage, and offering poetry readings to accompany the music. But none of them are guaranteed to work.

John St. Croix is with Orchestra London. He says he can't predict the success of these changes, but what he does know is that the current strategies aren't working.

"The way that the performances are being viewed right now isn't necessarily working and we need to try new things. Some of the answers that have been coming back among board members -- among colleagues even -- is that we want something that is a little more exciting, a little more of visual stimulation. These are things that I think we have to at least explore and try," says St. Croix.

He says he's aware of the resistance to change by symphony purists, but he insists it's not about changing the notes -- it's about changing the presentation.

He says in the age of MTV and shortened attention spans it's imperative to maintain artistic integrity but to also create fun for audiences.