

LONDON FREE PRESS Friday March 10, 2000

**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

## **Myth of the bloated budget follows Orchestra London**

I have read in The Free Press the opinions that Orchestra London's budget is bloated and that its salaries are substantially above London's average. These are myths that need to be dispelled.

Orchestra London's operating budget has remained virtually stagnant, at about \$2 million, since the late 1980s. Yet, since then, due to inflation, at least 20 per cent of its resources have effectively disappeared. Fortunately, this has occurred during a period of unusually low inflation, but it clearly cannot continue without perceptible harm to the orchestra's quality.

Orchestra London's budget has come to pale relative to those of ensembles elsewhere in Canada. No orchestra on the continent squeezes a better product or a wider variety of programming out of so few resources. Other Canadian orchestras with which Orchestra London is frequently compared have budgets between 20 per cent and 100 per cent larger than that of Orchestra London.

The dozens of people who work for Orchestra London represent a highly professional (most hold a master's degree) and thoroughly experienced body of people (there are never less than a combined 500 years of professional experience on the stage). Yet, most full-time employees of the orchestra earn about \$21,000 in a season and many musicians can expect to earn no more than \$6,000. Working for Orchestra London is truly as much a labour of love as it is a means to a living.

Far from being a bloated organization with an overpaid workforce, Orchestra London continually walks a difficult tightrope between artistic viability and fiscal restraint. Its survival, now more than ever, depends on the generous and ongoing support from all of London -- government, corporations and individual citizens.

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