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Fund-raising near halfway mark in campaign to rescue orchestra

By BRODIE FENLON, Free Press Reporter

Cash-strapped Orchestra London has raised nearly half of a \$330,000 goal set just three weeks ago as part of its aggressive fund-raising campaign to avoid bankruptcy.

The symphony has already raised more than \$147,000, including \$3,000 donated by members of a packed house at last Friday's Jeans and Classics performance, in a final bid to pull out of the red.

The orchestra's board has adopted a three-year plan to eliminate a decade's worth of accumulated debt, pegged at \$660,000, and a projected deficit of \$360,000 this season.

"The challenge is to keep the momentum going," said John St. Croix, adviser to the orchestra board. "We're doing a lot of leg work, but it's paying off."

Under a proposal for restructuring filed in court last month, the orchestra must either meet a series of bi-weekly fund-raising benchmarks or fold.

About \$15,000 more is needed to meet the next goal of \$60,000, due this Friday. Instalments of \$60,000 are needed April 28 and May 12, and a final \$47,000 is needed by May 26.

"When we first started, (the benchmarks) looked quite daunting, but right now we're making our way through it and we feel good," St. Croix said.

As part of the fund-raiser, the orchestra is raffling a \$5,000 Mercedes Benz mountain bike. Tickets are \$25 each or five for \$100, and only 990 will be sold.

For more information, call the orchestra's sales office at 679-8778.