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## **Orchestra more than money issue**

**By Julie Carl, Free Press columnist**

Centre balcony, Row A, Seat 6. That's where you'll always find Wally Duffield at every Orchestra London concert in Centennial Hall.

Duffield's been front and centre in his devotion to the orchestra since arriving in London in 1957. Two years ago, he was made an honorary member of the maestro circle, a little thank you for buying season tickets for 40 years.

Duffield attends all 42 adult concerts a year. Not only does he take passionate enjoyment in the orchestra, but there's likely not a job he hasn't done as one of the many foot soldiers who fight to keep the symphony going.

He stuffs envelopes, prepares programs, sells raffle tickets -- tasks he calls chore work.

"I don't know what I'd do without the orchestra," he says. "I'd be devastated. I don't know what I'd do to satisfy my musical needs. I just wouldn't survive."

Hopefully, the question of how Duffield, and the city, will do without is a moot point. Officials were pleading their case for more money at a closed-door, city hall meeting yesterday. The committee that heard the pitch was to make a recommendation to council last night.

The orchestra's in trouble and will be in more trouble -- about \$660,000 more -- by season's end. It needs a \$450,000 annual commitment from the city to survive.

It's money the city should cough up willingly, says Duffield. Orchestra London holds its own among the country's top 10 orchestras, he says, while struggling with little municipal support.

The city supports the orchestra to the tune of just 38 cents a resident, while Windsor and Kitchener are whistling pretty at \$1 a resident. Thunder Bay hits a top note of \$1.16 a resident.

European cities subsidize the arts "to the hilt," Duffield says, a subsidy as accepted as those for sports are in North America. (Canadians' revulsion to an NHL subsidy notwithstanding.)

Duffield suspects opposition to supporting the arts stems from the misguided notion they are for a certain elite. That's just not so, he says.

Among the concert series he attends is the Jeans 'n' Classics concerts, which feature rock 'n' roll and sometimes, to Duffield's chagrin, heavy metal. It's not his taste but, he stresses, he didn't decide that until he tried it.

In much the same way, he urges people to sample classical music before deciding it's not for

them. His contemporary music was the big band era, but somehow he ended up loving classical.

A love of music and an appreciation of its importance must be in the mix when judging the city's need for an orchestra, he says.

People who judge by cold, hard dollars and cents alone are missing the point.

"You can't measure the worth of the orchestra by those standards."

Duffield hopes city councillors remember that when voting on support for the orchestra.

If they do, he knows he'll be sitting in Row A, Seat 6 ,for many a concert season to come.