

ArtsBuzz

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Orchestra London comes out swinging

By Ron Johnson

Crisis-management has Orchestra London hopeful about the future

Orchestra London let it all hang out March 21 at the Hilton Hotel in London. The Orchestra faces an accumulated deficit of **\$660,000** and a projected deficit of **\$360,000** over the 1999/2000 season. It needed to raise **\$50,000** by **March 22, 2000** just to finish the season, and an additional **\$280,000** by **May 31, 2000**. The target of \$50,000 was raised by the end of the evening. Orchestra London, represented by musicians **Joseph Lanza, Christine Newland, Peter Audet** and guest conductor **Timothy Vernon**, among others, beamed with pride and spoke about the importance of the arts and classical music in London, as well as the commitment the musicians have demonstrated to the orchestra and our community over the past 25 years.

It was announced that the musicians have already donated over \$13,500 from their own pay cheques, an additional \$20,000 in wages deferred and that \$5,000 was raised at a benefit at Jack Chambers School in London.

The evening kicked-off Orchestra London's exciting short- and long-term vision which have provided the orchestra with some much needed positive energy. **John St. Croix, regional vice-president of Merrill Lynch** in London, has committed **\$90,000** to the Orchestra over the next three years, as well as purchasing 250 tickets to each **Jeans 'n Classics Concert**. St. Croix is heading up a new advisory council responsible for assisting the orchestra.

St. Croix said, "Londoners are going to get a little thirsty, a little sweaty, hopefully not bloody, to hold safe an entity that helps define what we are in London."

Immediate plans call for appeals to corporate donors and the community-at-large, starting with asking those attending the evening's reception. In addition, the orchestra will launch a strong and enhanced subscription campaign, appealing to existing and former sponsors, service clubs, unions etc.

Not impressed yet, the long-term vision is where the excitement starts. In addition to financial goals of never allowing accumulated debt over 10 per cent of its operating budget, and building an endowment fund with the goal of total self-sufficiency by 2004/2005, St. Croix aims to shake things up, including repackaging classical programs.

This includes an aggressive three-year plan for outdoor concerts, video screens, couch seating, new concert locations at the Grand Theatre and UWO, a Juno Night featuring five past Juno winners on the same stage, theatrical costumes and more. On March 20, a proposal for restructuring was filed in court by a trustee for the Orchestra.