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Changing lives through music: Professional audition practice and a community focus; an explorative study into the musical development of the Western Australian Charity Orchestra

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CHANGING LIVES THROUGH MUSIC

PROFESSIONAL AUDITION PRACTICE AND A COMMUNITY FOCUS;

AN EXPLORATIVE STUDY INTO THE MUSICAL DEVELOPMENT OF

THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN CHARITY ORCHESTRA

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This dissertation is submitted for the degree of Bachelor of Music Honours

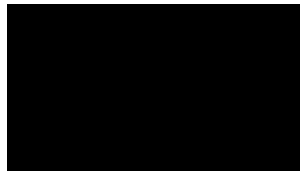
2017

Declaration

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Abstract

In 2008, the Western Australian Charity Orchestra (WACO) was formed with a mission to *change lives through music*. It was hoped that by providing the opportunity for members to play music that was rewarding and challenging within a positive, friendly environment, they would be free to motivate each other to create excellent music. Embedded within a charitable and community focus it was further hoped that the result was an orchestra that would achieve increasing musical capability and community connectedness.

Through the exploration into the practices of selected community orchestras combined with the results of a survey and action research model, I will be attempting to ascertain if the combination of a professional audition process and a charitable mission makes a notable difference to the standard of the music and the experience of musicians.

It is possible that community orchestras may have greater impact on the players, on the audience members and on the wider musical community, if their focus was twofold; to come together through an unbiased audition process to create satisfying musical performances within the guise of raising awareness and supporting charitable organisations.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Matthew Styles, who has been an incredible support throughout this venture. Thank you for your time, patience, wisdom and encouragement, and for helping me believe that completing this project was at all a possibility!

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Thank you to Tari Davis, LeeAnne Biemmi, Anne Phillips, and all those who have helped the Western Australian Charity Orchestra, largely the subject of this paper, become what it is today. We would not be *changing lives through music* without the many hours you have all selflessly given.

Lastly, thank you to Catharine Payze, a mentor, friend and inspiration. Thank you for believing in me and teaching me how to believe in myself. I would not be where I am today without your encouragement and guidance.

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I. Introduction

Community music is music played in communities. It can be recreational, cultural or religious and can embrace any genre... A strong community music program... will encourage participants to strive for excellence in both the processes and products of music making...¹

As a new and overly enthusiastic university music student in 2007, I wasn't exactly sure where I wanted my career to go, but began studying music expecting to find my place in the industry over time. While studying my Bachelor's degree, I made it my mission to be a part of as many ensembles as possible. As such, I worked alongside musicians from diverse backgrounds and with varying degrees of experience and had the privilege of countless opportunities to perform in different university, youth, community, church and professional ensembles on several different instruments.

Musicians that I worked with in these ensembles would often discuss what they loved about the ensembles, and where they felt there were shortfalls in the way the ensembles were structured or operated. Between these discussions and my own observations and experiences, I observed that there was a potential gap in the ensembles available to the Western Australian amateur orchestral community.

Anecdotal evidence suggested that musicians from many backgrounds wanted to be involved in community orchestral ensembles where they could play music that was rewarding and

¹ "Music in Community | Music Australia." Music Australia. Accessed December 05, 2016. <https://musicaustralia.org.au/discover/music-in-community/>.

challenging. These musicians wanted ensembles that maintained a high standard and hoped for a positive, friendly environment where they were still free to motivate each other to create excellent music. Further, there also seemed to exist the opinion that musicians wanted to 'earn' their place in an ensemble free from bias and based on their abilities, and while making great music, wanted to make a difference in the community.

In response to this, I founded the Western Australian Charity Orchestra (WACO). Since its inception in 2008, the orchestra has grown into part of a not-for-profit incorporated organisation comprising several ensembles.

From the beginning, the Western Australian Charity Orchestra aimed to provide musicians with more opportunities to make a difference in the community. Since then, the orchestra has held seven concert seasons and showcased the talents of over 1,000 Western Australian musicians, where the purpose of each concert was to raise funds for charity. In the latest performance in February of 2016, WACO raised over \$19,000 for Guide Dogs WA².

Further, in 2017, WACO is planning on launching its first year-long season with four full-time ensembles. My belief is that over time, there has been created a structure that seeks to answer the perceived gaps and challenges that seemed to have existed in other community ensembles.

Literature suggests that community Western music has been active in Australia for over one and a half centuries, and has made a great contribution to our culture³. In addition to this valuable contribution, I am suggesting that community orchestras could possibly have an even greater impact on their musicians, on the audience members and on the wider musical community, if their focus was twofold; to come together through an unbiased audition process to create satisfying musical performances within the guise of raising awareness and supporting charitable organisations.

² "Our Charities." Our Charities. Accessed December 05, 2016. <http://www.waco.org.au/our-charities>.

³ McPherson, Gary E., and Martin Hardy. "The Development of the Australian Wind Band." *Journal of Band Research*, 1996, 63-84.

In researching several community orchestras and comparing them with WACO, there appears to be two main factors that differentiate WACO from other community ensembles.

1. The audition process.

Entry into the orchestra is based solely on performance within a screened audition process using set orchestral excerpts. This aims to create a fair opportunity for all prospective members and invites healthy competition, and which may allow ensemble members to feel they have earned their place. This seems to have the effect of strengthening the commitment of participating musicians.

2. The musicians perform for the benefit of others.

Not only do the performances entertain their audiences, but it is hoped that musicians and audiences can feel a sense of community by not only raising awareness for, but also contributing to local charities.

Through the exploration into the practices of selected community orchestras combined with the results of a survey, I will be attempting to ascertain if the combination of a professional audition process and a charitable mission makes a notable difference to the standard of the music and the attitude of the players using the following guiding research questions:

1. *Does the use of a professionally-based audition process offer something of more value to the performing amateur music community?*
2. *Does having a charitable focus enhance the personal benefits and experience for the musician and offer something of more value to the music community?*

Throughout this paper there will be two kinds of orchestras discussed. One kind will be referred to as *community orchestras*; this includes any orchestra where the instrumentalists perform without pay for a common interest in making and performing music. The second will be referred to

as *benevolent orchestras*; this includes any community orchestra whose purpose is to perform to raise funds for a nominated charity.

Due to the confines of this paper, this dissertation will focus primarily on the purpose and audition practices of *benevolent* orchestras around Australia, *community* orchestras around Western Australia, and the Western Australian Charity Orchestra. I will be comparing their similarities and differences and exploring how the idea of a charitable focus combined with a screened audition process may have additional benefits for an ensemble.

The next section will begin by providing background information and support for the established benefits of community music, followed by the presentation of the available information regarding the orchestras being reviewed.

II. Literature Review

Community Music

Community music-making itself contributes to the cultural enrichment of a community. Said of a community orchestra in Casper, Wyoming,

The enthusiastic support of the community has been given [to] the project[,] and the orchestra not only provides entertainment for the residents of the community but is a stimulus to high school graduates and adult musicians... to continue their instrumental activities.⁴

The ensembles help school students, graduates and adult musicians to continue a less-formal study of music and to maintain their ensemble participation beyond high school.

How many cases can be cited in communities where adults have lost interest in their music after graduation from high school because of lack of an adult musical organization which would afford them the opportunity for continued playing!⁵

Music Australia says the following about community orchestras:

It provides participants with an experience similar to that of a professional ensemble with scores and parts, led by skilled

⁴ Schwejda, Russell A. "School and Town." *Music Educators Journal*, 1953, 42.

⁵ Banse, Andrew M. "The Case for a College-Community Orchestra," *Music Educators Journal* 48, no. 5 (1962).

conductors, and often has auditions. The music performed is often from the Western canon.⁶

Following a research project led by Music in Communities Network in 2012, it was estimated that there are approximately 130-170 community-based orchestras in Australia⁷. With an average of more than 21 ensembles per state and territory, it could be suggested that these community ensembles add greatly to culture and diversity of Australia.

The survey itself was not able to determine how many orchestras we have in Australia. This is a question ripe for further research, perhaps by canvassing local government cultural officers, for example. Our estimate is that there are between 130-170 community-based orchestras in Australia, but there could be well over 200.⁸

Regardless of the orchestra's purposes and processes, WACO, the *benevolent* orchestras and *community* orchestras studied in this literature review are essentially all community orchestras, and as such benefit the community in their own way.

Given the absence of traditional sources available on the subject – highlighting the need for such a study – researching these ensembles proved to be difficult as the internet provided the only primary source of information. It was further discovered that some orchestras did not have a strong web presence. Eleven years ago, the poet Kenneth Goldsmith stated that “If it doesn't exist on the

⁶ "Types of Community Music | Music Australia." Music Australia. Accessed December 05, 2016. <https://musicaustralia.org.au/discover/music-in-community/types-of-community-music/>.

⁷ Masso, Alex. "Community Orchestras in Australia." Music in Australia. July 2012. Accessed November 22, 2016. http://musicinaustralia.org.au/index.php?title=Community_Orchestras_in_Australia.

⁸ Ibid.

internet, it doesn't exist"⁹. To ensure appropriate information was gathered, in this next section, I have focused my research on ensembles that have a current website. These websites have been used in this literature review to compare aspects of their organisations and have measured differences by a few key indicators: purpose and selection procedure, as well as member demographic.

⁹ Kenneth Goldsmith, "If It Doesn't Exist on the Internet, It Doesn't Exist," in *Elective Affinities Conference* (University of Pennsylvania 2005).

A. Benevolent Orchestras of Australia

Research revealed that eight Australian orchestras currently exist to raise funds for causes, not including the Western Australian Charity Orchestra.

- Adelaide University Medical Orchestra (AUMO)¹⁰
- Australian Doctors Orchestra (ADO)¹¹
- Australian Medical Students' Orchestra (AMSO)¹²
- Monash Medical Orchestra (MMO)¹³
- Queensland Medical Orchestra (QMO)¹⁴
- Tasmanian Medical Orchestra (TMO)¹⁵
- UNSW Medical Music Society Orchestra (UNSW MMSO)¹⁶
- Western Australian Medical Students Orchestra (WAMSO)¹⁷

All the above-named ensembles exist solely to raise funds for charity on a volunteer basis. Some ensembles such as the MMO and WAMSO operate regular rehearsals and perform multiple times per year. In contrast, the orchestras that comprise of volunteers from across the country such as the ADO and AMSO function only for intensive periods that last only a few days and perform once annually.

¹⁰ "Home." Adelaide University Medical Orchestra. Accessed October 03, 2016. <http://aumo.org.au/>.

¹¹ "Australian Doctor's Orchestra." Australian Doctor's Orchestra. Accessed October 03, 2016. <http://www.adonet.net.au/>.

¹² "Home." AUSTRALIAN MEDICAL STUDENTS' ORCHESTRA. Accessed October 03, 2016. <http://www.amso.com.au/>.

¹³ "Monash Medical Orchestra." Monash Medical Orchestra. Accessed October 03, 2016. <http://www.monashmedorchestra.org.au/>.

¹⁴ "Posted in QMO." Ashintosh Foundation. Accessed October 03, 2016. <http://www.qmo.org.au/>.

¹⁵ "Tasmanian Medical Orchestra." Facebook. Accessed October 03, 2016. <https://www.facebook.com/tasmanianmedicalorchestra>.

¹⁶ "UNSW Medical Musical Society." UNSW Medical Musical Society. Accessed October 03, 2016. <http://mmsunsw.weebly.com/>.

¹⁷ "WA Medical Students Orchestra." Facebook. Accessed October 03, 2016. <http://www.facebook.com/WAMedicalStudentsOrchestra/>.

Further, each of these ensembles seems to cater for a specific demographic or industry. The ADO caters solely for professional doctors, the QMO for medical students and professionals, with the remaining six ensembles appearing to be open only to medical students. Some ensembles will consider interested musicians from outside their goal demographic, but not all websites mention whether this is the case.

In an article in the *Music Educators Journal*¹⁸, the story is recounted of a university orchestra that was opened to the general community. The ensemble was founded at State University College, Cortland, New York (a college not offering a music or music education major), and as such finding an adequate number of musicians proved challenging. After struggling for several years to maintain enough players for the orchestra, the management decided to open the ensemble up to faculty staff and the community, resulting in the College-Community Orchestra.

At first there was some apprehension that the college students in the orchestra would resent help from 'outside,' but these fears proved to be groundless. Instead, the students welcomed the additional members. Thus our College-Community Orchestra was born.¹⁹

Following the expansion to involve the public, the orchestra grew considerably larger along with an increased capacity to perform more challenging and interesting repertoire. The students could develop connections with the new members, resulting in a more unified community.

We have found that a college-community orchestra offers many advantages to students, faculty, townspeople, college and community alike. It has provided the student with an opportunity to

¹⁸ Banse, Andrew M. "The Case for a College-Community Orchestra," *Music Educators Journal* 48, no. 5 (1962).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

play in an orchestra considerably larger and more capable than an all-student orchestra, and has enabled him to meet and work with faculty and townspeople on a common level.²⁰

From this example alone it could be suggested that the *benevolent* orchestras may be limited by their preferred or chosen demographic. There may be benefits to having an orchestra that is made up of players from a specific demographic or industry, such as greater unity. However, there may be further benefits to opening it up to the wider community such as greater musical capability and community connectedness.

Using their preferred demographic, of the eight *benevolent* orchestras studied in the review, only three ensembles mention any kind of audition process; AMSO, MMO and UNSWMMS; where the auditions are done in person or via video recording.

The AMSO only holds auditions for concertmaster, principal players for violin II, viola and cello, and for all flute and clarinet players. The audition consists of orchestral excerpts from proposed repertoire, and auditions are submitted via uploading a YouTube video and providing a link.²¹ It is not clear whether these auditions are held every year for existing members.

The MMO holds auditions every year and unless musicians are applying for a leadership position or soloist parts, auditions are generally less than five minutes in duration. The process appears to be very inclusive; “[w]e aim to include all keen musicians and do not intend to turn anyone away.”²²

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ "Registration." AUSTRALIAN MEDICAL STUDENTS' ORCHESTRA. Accessed October 03, 2016. <http://www.amso.com.au/registration/>.

²² "Auditions - Monash Medical Orchestra." Monash Medical Orchestra. Accessed October 03, 2016. <http://www.monashmedorchestra.org.au/join-us/auditions>.

The audition panel for the UNSWMMS consists of the conductor and concertmaster (it is unclear how the concertmaster is selected) and the process includes excerpts and sight reading.²³

None of the three orchestras that do mention auditions, specify a screened audition process.

It is important to note that from the information available, there was no recorded commentary specifically regarding the effect on, or the opinion of orchestral members on being a part of an orchestra with a charitable focus.

²³ "Orchestra." UNSW Medical Musical Society. Accessed October 03, 2016.
<http://mmsunsw.weebly.com/orchestra.html>.

B. Community Orchestras of Western Australia

Five community orchestras with current websites in Perth, Western Australia were identified.

- Churchlands Community Orchestra (CCO)²⁴
- City of Fremantle Symphony Orchestra (FSO)²⁵
- Hills Symphony Orchestra (HSO)²⁶
- Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra (MetSO)²⁷
- Southside Symphony Orchestra (SSSO)²⁸

These ensembles rehearse weekly and perform more than once a year. As with the *benevolent* orchestras, they comprise of mainly non-professional instrumentalists. What sets them apart, however, is their purpose.

The FSO's website states that "[t]he orchestra is a non-profit organisation dedicated to the promotion and enjoyment of music in the cultural life of Perth"²⁹. Other orchestras were established "to promote and encourage interest in orchestral music"³⁰, and "to bring orchestral music to a wider audience"³¹.

²⁴ "Churchlands Community Orchestra." Churchlands Community Orchestra RSS. Accessed October 03, 2016. <https://churchlandscommunityorchestra.org/>.

²⁵ "City of Fremantle Symphony Orchestra Inc." City of Fremantle Symphony Orchestra Inc. Accessed October 03, 2016. <https://fremantlesymphonyorchestra.wordpress.com/>.

²⁶ "Hills Symphony Orchestra." Hills Symphony Orchestra. Accessed October 03, 2016. <http://www.hso.org.au/>.

²⁷ "The Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra." The Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra. Accessed October 03, 2016. <http://metso.asn.au/>.

²⁸ "South Side Symphony Orchestra SSSO." South Side Symphony Orchestra. Accessed October 03, 2016. <http://www.sssso.org.au/>

²⁹ "About FSO." City of Fremantle Symphony Orchestra Inc. 2016. Accessed October 03, 2016. <https://fremantlesymphonyorchestra.wordpress.com/2012/10/11/about-fso/>.

³⁰ "About MetSO." About MetSO. Accessed October 03, 2016. <http://metso.asn.au/about-metso.html>.

³¹ "About the HSO." Hills Symphony Orchestra. Accessed October 03, 2016. <http://www.hso.org.au/about.html>.

Each of these orchestras provides opportunities for amateur musicians to make music and perform for the community, rather than to raise funds for beneficiaries as with the *benevolent* orchestras.

According to all websites, membership to these orchestras is available to all interested candidates, and is not directed at a specific demographic. The FSO specifies that while some instruments can be accommodated immediately, others can only join when vacancies arise, while there is no mention as to whether auditions will be held³². Section leaders from the orchestra are, however, responsible for inviting new members to join. The HSO, while it does not hold auditions, does conduct a six-week trial period³³. Other *community* orchestras specify that there are no auditions for prospective members.

The method of approving new members, or whether existing members must re-audition, is not mentioned on any of the websites.

³² "Join Us." City of Fremantle Symphony Orchestra Inc. 2015. Accessed October 03, 2016. <https://fremantlesymphonyorchestra.wordpress.com/join-us/>.

³³ "Join Us – Hills Symphony Orchestra." Hills Symphony Orchestra. Accessed October 07, 2016. <http://www.hso.org.au/about.html>.

C. Screened Auditions

A blind audition refers to a musical audition in which the person being tested performs from behind a wall or screen. The purpose is to assure that the decision-makers are judging a musician solely on his or her performance, with no consideration of the musician's appearance.³⁴

Blind, or screened auditions, have become the standard practice of professional orchestras since the late 1980's³⁵. The audition panel is not given any information that could identify any of the candidates, the candidate performs behind a screen, and the candidate is not permitted to speak throughout the audition³⁶. The principle behind this practice seems to be based on an attempt to create a fairer opportunity for those from all backgrounds to earn an orchestral position.

Art Davis was a highly-skilled double bass player, with extensive experience in various genres of music. He became a driving force for change in the American symphony orchestra scene.

[Art Davis] insisted on breaking the color line in symphony orchestras... As positions opened in an orchestra, the first-chair players (all of them white) would get management to hire their best students (also white) for those chairs.³⁷

³⁴ "Definition of Blind audition" Topicway. Accessed December 04, 2016. <http://www.topicway.com/dictionary/Blind%20audition>

³⁵ "Give Us Racial Harmony" College of Sciences. Accessed November 30, 2016. http://www.cos.gatech.edu/facultyres/Diversity_Studies/blind%20auditions%202007%20update.pdf

³⁶ "Adelaide Symphony Orchestra Audition Protocol" Adelaide Symphony Orchestra. Accessed December 04, 2016. http://www.aso.com.au/__files/f/5359/audition

³⁷ Hentoff, Nat. *At the Jazz Band Ball*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, California, 2010, 143-147.

Art sued the New York Philharmonic in the 1970's for racial discrimination. He lost the case, but as a result he became the driver to develop the screened audition process. The screened audition process was adopted by most major orchestras in the U.S.A. in the 1970's and 1980's.

It became the practice, when there was an opening for any instrument, to audition the player behind a screen so that those judging his or her abilities—Art also protested gender discrimination—could hear the music but not see the musician.³⁸

Arguably, screens remove bias from the audition process. The panel is not aware of the players' identity, race, gender, sexuality, age, religion, network or social status, and the audition is marked solely on what the panel hears through the screen.

Following the adoption of the screened audition process, the face of American symphonic music began to change.

Whether that face-to-face opens the door to prejudice is hard to say, but the system has clearly benefited some groups... A couple of generations ago, symphony orchestras were all-male, lily-white clubs. Today, women make up 46 percent of orchestra musicians and non-whites 14 percent, according to a survey by the American Symphony Orchestra League.³⁹

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ "Give Us Racial Harmony" College of Sciences. Accessed November 30, 2016.
http://www.cos.gatech.edu/facultyres/Diversity_Studies/blind%20auditions%202007%20update.pdf

One might assume that the symphony orchestras that turned away Art Davis did so in an attempt to find what they felt was the best player. However, after the adoption of the screened audition process, women now make up almost half of orchestral musicians in the U.S.A. today⁴⁰. Arguably, the screened audition process allows for the best players to earn a place, meaning the pre-1970's orchestras may not have had the best players possible.

Most of us believe that we are ethical and unbiased. We imagine we're good decision makers, able to objectively size up a job candidate... and reach a fair and rational conclusion that's in our, and our organization's, best interests. But more than two decades of research confirms that, in reality, most of us fall woefully short of our inflated self-perception.⁴¹

Without screened auditions, it may be not possible to remove bias from the process. Without screened auditions, bias could cloud judgement making it more difficult to determine the most capable musicians for each position. Without screened auditions, the standard of orchestras may be compromised. It is interesting to note that while the purposes of the community orchestras of Western Australia are to make great music, none of these ensembles uses the process of screened auditions.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Banaji, Mahzarin R. *HBR's 10 Must Reads on Making Smart Decisions*. Boston, Massachusetts: Harvard Buss Review Press, 2013, 115.

III. Methodology

To facilitate this study, a reflective journal will be provided detailing the background and growth of WACO. Specifically, two methods of research will be used to scaffold the discussion. The first will be a model of ‘action research’ as cited in *Action Research Principles and Practice* by McNiff & Whitehead (1988) which will be utilised to structure the reflective journal. The action research reflective journal uses the Plan-Act-Observe-Reflect model as indicated in Figure 1.

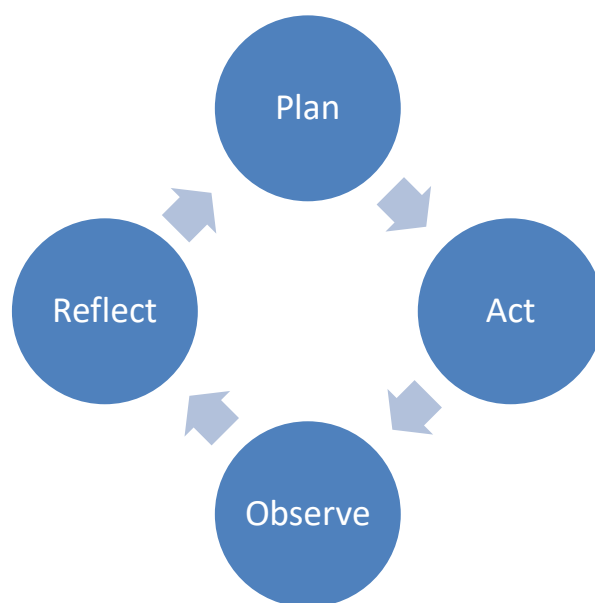


Figure 1. Original simplified action research cycle as cited in McNiff & Whitehead, 1988, p. 22 ⁴²

The second method will be a more quantitative approach where the results of an online survey given to past and current members of WACO will be presented.

The survey was given to current and past members of the Western Australian Charity Orchestra who have responded anonymously. Respondents were invited to answer questions about their experiences with other orchestras, their thoughts on the screened audition process, and the charity aspect of the orchestra.

⁴² McNiff, J., and J. Whitehead. *Action Research: Principles and Practice*. Great Britain: Mackays of Chatham PLC, 1988, 22.

IV. Reflective Journal

The following chapter consists of a reflective journal, detailing the processes involved in developing and running WACO using the ideas of an orchestra with a charitable focus and whose membership is determined through a screened audition process. The journal encompasses reflection on the performances for February 2008 (WACO's first performance season), February 2016 (the most recent and completed year), followed by comments on future plans for February 2017.

The Western Australian Charity Orchestra

In the first few years in operation (2008-2009), WACO began a tradition of annual concerts. The orchestra consisted of mainly high school and undergraduate university students. The production was planned and managed by myself and a handful of close friends and family members. At the time, WACO was run only as an annual event, and it never occurred to me that it had the potential to be something more.

When I was called to serve as a full-time missionary in Auckland, New Zealand, the orchestra was shut down indefinitely as the individuals who had helped me plan the events were not able to drive the project on their own. It was upon returning to Australia in 2012 that past members began asking me to once again start the orchestra, and in response the ensemble recommenced the tradition of annual concerts. And from 2013 onwards, the ensemble began to change.

In the first concert season (2008), WACO featured an orchestra of 78 players. At the time of their audition, 70% of the ensemble was high school students. Comparing this to the results of the 2017 auditions (held in October/November 2016), the orchestra remains the same size. However, in contrast, 70% of the ensemble's members are now high school graduates. This seems to indicate a shift in interest from the music community.

Of the original 78 players in 2008, only three are still playing with the orchestra today. What this change suggests is that the ensemble has evolved over time. Considering this, perhaps it is the

differences between WACO other community and *benevolent* orchestras that may be resulting in interest in the ensemble to increase, and the standard to improve.

Based on the aforementioned research, the differentiating practices and concepts of WACO include the following;

1. Demographic: membership is available to the general public regardless of age or industry,
2. *Changing lives through music*: the musicians play for the benefit of others, both audience members and the wider community; and
3. Audition process: candidates must qualify for membership through an audition process modelled on professional orchestral audition practices (screened audition), eliminating potential bias.

1. Demographic

WACO differentiates itself from other *benevolent* orchestras in Australia by not having a preferred demographic. Each of the eight *benevolent* orchestras, as discussed previously, cater solely to a particular faculty or demographic. While this may have its benefits, it may also limit the ensemble's musical capacity and community outreach.

In the *WACO 2017* recruitment video on YouTube⁴³, ensemble members share their thoughts on playing with WACO. One orchestra member shares how WACO sets itself apart from other orchestras.

We are all different ages, all different backgrounds, coming together
with a passion for music... When I come to WACO it's like coming
home. I love all of it; I love the rehearsals, I love the performances...
wherever we go we have fun.

⁴³ "WACO 2017" YouTube. 2016. Accessed October 01, 2016.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=chdM4jNDTwQ>.

Here the player expresses how the cultural diversity of the orchestra enriches the experience. WACO's 2016 orchestra consisted of players aged 14-57, inclusive of high school students, university music and non-music students, professional musicians, music teachers and amateur musicians. It may be that the common factor between the orchestra's members is a "passion for music", and that this diversity strengthens the ensemble. The different experiences and backgrounds of the players invite a sense of community and 'family'.

2. 'Changing Lives Through Music'

As with the *benevolent* orchestras, WACO's mission is to raise awareness and funding for various charities. Studies have shown that selfless volunteering, like the way WACO musicians give their time to the orchestra, can have positive effects on mental *and* physical health. The Corporation for National and Community Service made the following statement following a study of volunteers in the USA.

Why might we see a connection between volunteer activities and longer and healthier lives? Evidence suggests that volunteering has a positive effect on social psychological factors, such as one's sense of purpose. In turn, positive social psychological factors are correlated with lower risks of poor physical health. Volunteering may enhance a person's social networks to buffer stress...⁴⁴

⁴⁴ "The Health Benefits of Volunteering" Corporation for National and Community Service. Accessed November 30, 2016. https://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/07_0506_hbr.pdf

Through playing in WACO, it is hoped that musicians have an opportunity to use their talents and passions to make a difference in someone else's life beyond the performance. This in turn will hopefully have further benefits for the individual.

3. Audition Process

WACO's membership is not recurring. At the end of each year, all players must re-audition, as is done in all state-based youth orchestras in Australia⁴⁵. In the 2017 Prospectus for Western Australian Youth Orchestras (WAYO) it is explained why the orchestra re-auditions the ensemble each year.

Like all the state-based youth orchestras in Australia, we audition all players each year on a competitive basis. Competitive auditions are the accepted method of equitably assessing an orchestra's members and ensuring that players of similar ability are placed together.

There are new members auditioning for WA Youth Orchestras each year. By hearing all players, new and existing, auditioning for an orchestra, we can be sure that our standards are high, and that placement is fair and appropriate for everyone. This provides balance within each ensemble and maximum benefit for its members.⁴⁶

Holding auditions every year means that current members are required to continue to work to improve to earn their place in the ensemble. It allows for all community members to receive a fair

⁴⁵ *Western Australian Youth Orchestras Prospectus & Application Handbook 2017*. Western Australian Youth Orchestras Inc., 2016. Web. 22 Nov. 2016.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

opportunity, whilst enabling players who have improved their playing to attempt for a higher position in the orchestra.

As previously mentioned, none of the *community* orchestras in WA nor the *benevolent* orchestras in Australia, operate on a screened audition based entry structure. Only three ensembles indicated that they have a ‘non-screened’ audition process (AMSO, MMO and UNSWMMS). Further, it is unclear whether or existing members are required to re-audition each year.

While WACO has adopted a screened audition policy, in fairness, not adopting a re-auditioning policy may have its benefits. Players may feel a sense of belonging in knowing that they will always have a place in an ensemble, allowing a sense of unity to grow by always working together with the same members. However, while this may strengthen an ensemble in some respects, perhaps it is the ensemble’s musical standard that is be propelled forward by consistently re-auditioning current members and creating opportunities for new players. As mentioned in the WAYO prospectus, this practice ensures the standard is always high, and that all players are placed fairly and appropriately⁴⁷.

While the Western Australian Youth Orchestra holds yearly non-screened auditions, the entirety of WACO’s annual audition process always consists of screened auditions. I would suggest that WACO’s increasing standard and changing membership could be, in part, attributed to the institution of the screened audition process.

Using the headings of ‘plan, act, observe, reflect’ as cited by McNiff & Whitehead (1988) in the ‘action research cycle’, the following section will describe the development of the Western Australian Charity Orchestra. This section will include the first year of WACO’s operation (2008), the most recently completed year with final comments about plans for the 2017 season.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

WACO 2008

a) Plan

REPERTOIRE/AUDITIONS

I selected music for the first WACO performance based on my previous experiences, taking into consideration what I thought the audience would enjoy. In my experience, the kind of music I had chosen was music most high school students would not have had the opportunity to perform. While the repertoire was ambitious and challenging (see below), I was thrilled to put this program together, as I felt the ensemble would enjoy the music and was confident they could rise to the challenge.

1. *Espana*, Emmanuel Chabrier (1841-1894)
2. "Mars, the Bringer of War" from *The Planets*, Gustav Holst (1874-1934)
3. "Ballet of the Unhatched Chicks" from *Pictures at an Exhibition*, Modest Mussorgsky (1839-1881) arr. Maurice Ravel (1875-1937).
4. *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, Claude Debussy (1862-1918)
5. "O Fortuna" and "Fortuna Plango Vulnera" from *Carmina Burana*, Carl Orff (1895-1982)
6. "Polovtsian Dances" from *Prince Igor*, Alexander Borodin (1833-1887)
7. *Rhapsody in Blue*, George Gershwin (1898-1937)
8. "Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity" from *The Planets*, Gustav Holst (1874-1934)

I decided this project should have auditions, and that they should be screened. The rationale behind this decision based on the idea that players would better accept their positions as a result of the unbiased audition process, and that younger players would have an opportunity to demonstrate their capabilities. Audition excerpts would be taken solely from the planned repertoire.

Recruitment was through presentations given at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA), the University of Western Australia (UWA), Churchlands Senior High School and Perth Modern School. I targeted these universities and schools because I was aware of

their extensive music programs⁴⁸. Sign-up sheets were distributed at each, and interested individuals could provide their contact details.

At this initial stage of the orchestra's development, I was not confident enough to conduct the ensemble, so I planned to search in the wider music community for a conductor willing to give of their time.

CHARITY

After taking into consideration the charities that I knew personally, I planned to support the Princess Margaret Hospital Foundation (PMHF) for the first performance. I felt that PMHF was well-known, due to the Telethon events and with its centenary of history⁴⁹, and therefore its public appeal would assist in raising the profile of WACO. It was also a cause to which I had a personal connection, having known many friends and family members who had been treated there.

Considering the size of the orchestra and choir I was aiming to utilise, I decided that the only venue in Perth that could support such an endeavour was the Perth Concert Hall.

Upon research, sheet music was expensive; and to minimise costs I planned to engrave the parts myself from orchestral scores using notation software for repertoire available in the 'public domain'. Music still under copyright would be hired.

To fund the project, I planned to ask each participant to donate \$20 to cover sheet music hire, flyer printing costs and the hiring of the concert hall. For rehearsals, I was hoping that Churchlands would allow our orchestra to rehearse in their auditorium. However, for other components of the production process such as promotion, funding the venue, and the potential success of the event, I had no plans. I was moving forward with the project in the hope that I would find solutions to these along the way.

⁴⁸ "About Us." About Us - Churchlands Senior High School. Accessed October 10, 2016. <http://www.churchlands.wa.edu.au/school-of-music/about-us>.

⁴⁹ "Celebrating 107 Years of Care for the Children of Western Australia." Child and Adolescent Health Service. Accessed October 08, 2016. http://www.pmh.health.wa.gov.au/107_years/index.htm.

b) Act

REPERTOIRE/AUDITIONS

Auditions were screened, and excerpts were selected with direct reference to the planned repertoire. Successful members seemed enthusiastic to have something to keep them busy over the summer and to be able to make a difference doing it. Due to the overwhelming response, I was invited to speak at a few other schools and interest in this project grew. Once the audition process was complete, there were more than enough players to cover every part of the orchestra.

A local conductor, Burhan Güner, agreed to direct the orchestra and, as this was a non-paying commitment, he was understandably unable to commit to all rehearsals, and I chose to take on conducting a portion of these – a decision that would ultimately aid in my own conducting training.

CHARITY

PMHF kindly agreed to help promote the event and provide me with marketing advice through the production process.

I contacted the Perth Concert Hall, and made an appointment to discuss booking the venue. It is safe to say that their representative looked rather surprised when my eighteen-year-old-self arrived for the meeting. However, I filled out the contract, booked the venue, and went ahead with the plans for production. A very generous family friend loaned the necessary funds to put a deposit on the event, making the hiring of the venue possible.

Each participant donated the requested \$20 to help cover costs, Churchlands agreed to allow the orchestra access to their auditorium for rehearsals, and a graphic designer in the family designed all the printed materials *gratis*.

c) Observe/Reflect

REPERTOIRE/AUDITIONS

The audition process proved successful, measured by the appointment of a full orchestra of sufficient standard to approach the chosen repertoire. Everyone seemed satisfied with their placements, and I noticed a positive social dynamic throughout the orchestra all season.

Most of WACO's performers were high school students, and for them it appeared an opportunity to play music far more challenging than they'd been exposed to in the school environment. The challenging nature of the repertoire was appealing, and was a component I decided was to remain in future years to support the appeal of the project.

Burhan was a wonderful conductor to work with, being professional, prepared and positive-natured. As I was inexperienced with organising a production of this kind, Burhan gave me excellent advice and support throughout the season, which contributed greatly to my learning.

CHARITY

PMHF were a very supportive organisation, providing a lot of advice on promotion, with several of their employees attending the concert. The appeal to audience members was strong also, and I learned that for this new ensemble, having a charity that would support WACO in return by helping to promote the event was key to the success of the performance.

The Perth Concert Hall proved to be an excellent venue. 800 tickets were sold, and after costs raised \$7,500 for PMHF. It is interesting to note that not only was the orchestra charitable in giving of its time and talent, but also in its willingness to help with the funding of the project.

I was able to bring 150 performers together for a common cause, who performed some incredibly difficult music to a suitable standard. Young musicians had opportunities to play the challenging repertoire, supported and surrounded by university students, and the audience attended a great performance knowing they'd made a difference by attending.

To provide a contrast and a sense of 'time-lapsed development', the latest WACO season will now be presented followed by a summary of the 2017 plans.

WACO 2016

a) Plan

AUDITIONS/REPERTOIRE

Following the WACO 2015 season, I decided to approach things a little differently. In a discussion about the performance with friends and team members, it was suggested that the ensemble play to its strengths more, regarding ensemble experience, ensemble size, and the venue.

In WACO 2015, the choir and orchestra combined performed large-scale works that struggled to work in the Churchlands Concert Hall. WACO was at its largest, featuring the biggest orchestra and choir to date, as well as a brass ensemble. While it sounded incredible from the conductor's podium, audience feedback suggested that the front half of the audience could only hear the orchestra and brass, while the sound at the back of the hall was dominated by the choir. Further, the choir had to sing consistently fortissimo to balance with the instruments. Because of this feedback and after further discussions with colleagues, I decided to make changes for the 2016 season. I planned to use a chamber orchestra to accompany the choir, and to reduce the choir's size to focus on a higher quality of singing.

In WACO 2015, the orchestra performed Stravinsky's *Firebird* suite. While the orchestra did well and appeared to enjoy the rehearsal experience, I found that a lot of the younger players seemed to struggle with the extended techniques and independent parts. I felt that the orchestra needed to opt for a kind of challenge that would be more tonal and traditional and, as a result, potentially more accessible for all orchestral members. I was keen to include some film score music too, but after talking with a double bass player once who confided in me that most film music for them could be 'agonisingly monotonous', I felt it important to choose music that was challenging and interesting for the entire orchestra.

The proposed orchestral and combined repertoire for 2016 was:

1. *Festive Overture*, Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)
2. *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, Claude Debussy (1862-1918)
3. *Left Edge*, Iain Grandage
4. *Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche*, Richard Strauss (1864-1949)
5. *Zadok the Priest*, George Frideric Handel (1685-1659)
6. *The Pirates of Penzance* Medley, Arthur Sullivan (1842-1900)
7. *Bohemian Rhapsody*, Freddie Mercury (1946-1991)

Auditions would again be screened for the orchestra. Excerpts from the planned repertoire and standard orchestra canon were used, and candidates were given three weeks to prepare the material. I assigned each instrument approximately four excerpts that were challenging, as I planned to reduce the string section's size so the ensemble could start to work towards a higher standard overall.

Recruitment would be done through presentations in WAAPA workshops, word-of-mouth by the recruitment team, Facebook posts and a Facebook auditions event, Churchlands SHS senior choir, printed flyers, and by inviting 2015 members to audition again.

CHARITY

For this season, the committee chose to support Guide Dogs WA, an organisation that works directly with the visually impaired to provide guide dogs free of charge⁵⁰. The team felt very strongly about supporting this cause, as it had a local focus and a direct impact on individuals in the community.

Funding would be through a \$30 participation fee from each performer, \$5 higher than previous years.

⁵⁰ "About Us - Guide Dogs WA." Guide Dogs WA. Accessed December 05, 2016. <https://www.guidedogswa.com.au/about-us/>.

Previously all sheet music had been downloaded, copied or printed by myself wherever possible to save costs. However, performers struggled with excessive page turns and smaller font size as a result. For 2016, I planned to purchase and hire sheet music wherever possible, and only print public domain music when necessary. This was going to increase the budget slightly, but the committee planned to manage it amongst the other expenses involved with production.

Promotion for the event would be through flyers, word-of-mouth, Facebook event and posts, and on the WACO website.

b) Act

AUDITIONS/REPERTOIRE

Auditions went ahead as planned, however Churchlands was unavailable on audition day. Auditions were instead held at a local church.

I moved ahead with the 2016 vocal and orchestral repertoire plans. The Shostakovich was hired, the Grandage, Strauss and Debussy were purchased, official permission was acquired to arrange the Mercury and Sullivan, and I edited the Handel myself.

By this stage, my conducting skills had improved, and I was confident enough to lead the orchestra myself.

CHARITY

The committee contacted Guide Dogs WA, and received approval from them to fundraise on their behalf. The organisation worked with a few WACO players to do a special photo-shoot with their representative *Gidgee*, a golden retriever, for the event promotion. Representatives from Guide Dogs WA attended the final performance, bringing another of their 'canine representatives' to the performance who joined them on stage during a short speech.

c) Observe/Reflect

AUDITIONS/REPERTOIRE

By having a three-week preparation time for the candidates, recruitment time was minimised, and upon feedback from the musicians, two weeks would have been plenty sufficient to learn the excerpts. Further, the audition panel gave feedback that there were too many excerpts, with only one or two excerpts being needed to enable an effective judgement of standard.

From a player perspective, comments were also made that in addition to other commitments, the amount of audition material was difficult to learn. In learning from this, 2017 auditions were to have less audition material, less preparation time, thus hopefully being less of a burden on the candidates.

The orchestra and choir thoroughly enjoyed preparing all the material, especially *Bohemian Rhapsody*. The work brought what I think was the greatest applause we've ever had at a WACO concert, and an almost instant standing ovation at all three performances. Many people commented on how they enjoyed hearing instruments like the harp, percussion and electric violin imitate the sounds of the original work.

The balance between the orchestra and choir was the best it had ever been, and I believe choosing to use a chamber orchestra instead of the full complement was a good decision that I will use again in the future. However, some players in the orchestra who were not involved in the choral repertoire did express their disappointment.

In comparing the orchestra's main orchestral work *Till Eulenspiegel* with *Firebird*, I would say that it was a wiser decision. *Till Eulenspiegel*, while still incredibly challenging, had less extended techniques than *Firebird* in the strings and more tutti playing, allowing the younger and less experienced players to learn from their 'desk partner', with the overall sound improving dramatically.

The only two concerns that were shared with me about the orchestral repertoire was that it was very modern classical music and therefore less accessible to the audience, and that more music from music film and the classical era should be used.

In using classical era repertoire, most auxiliary woodwinds (such as cor anglais, bass clarinet and contrabassoon), harp, percussion and low brass miss out on the opportunity to play. It is more important to me that more musicians have the opportunity to play that to feature classical music for the sake of representing the genre.

Moving forward, I feel that combining 'audience-inclusive' repertoire and a chamber-orchestra/choir combination will strengthen future performances.

CHARITY

Guide Dogs WA were an excellent organisation to support, and were very cooperative. Bringing guide dog representatives along to the photoshoot and to the event gave the orchestra a big boost for morale, which seemed also to have helped ticket sales. As much as supporting small charities is my personal hope and goal, sometimes supporting the more established or 'well known' charities (like Guide Dogs WA) does seem to have a positive effect on audience numbers.

Recent feedback was that the WACO members would like to have some ownership over the selection of charity. An effective way to approach this may be to have a public poll where people in the orchestra and public can nominate charities and then vote for which causes mean the most to them.

900 tickets were sold to this year's performance (400 tickets less than 2015), and raised \$19,000 (\$1,000 less than last year). I think the lower tickets sales were a result of having a much smaller orchestra and choir than we'd ever had before. Having a smaller ensemble brought up the standard, but subsequently lowered the number of direct family and friends that were in attendance. Having said that, the amount raised per audience member was much higher, which was a direct result of cutting other costs associated with production, and not offering discount codes.

Whether raising more funds per person or having a bigger audience is better, however, is still open for discussion.

WACO 2017

a) Plan

In my opinion, WACO 2016 was by far WACO's strongest performance. The orchestra performed with confidence and enthusiasm, and the feedback from audience members and performers alike was positive.

During the 2016 season I went through some incredibly difficult personal challenges, that caused me to reflect on which direction I wanted my career to go and whether WACO would be a part of it. I felt WACO was unique, and I wanted to continue to achieve my goal of *changing lives through music*. I concluded it was time for the orchestra to expand.

The plan for WACO 2017 was to expand the existing orchestra and choir summer program into four full-time ensembles and one part-time ensemble. My goal was to incorporate, seek funding and partnership from businesses and other organisations, and produce several concerts throughout the year to raise funds for various charities.

Proposed ensembles for 2017 include:

- Western Australian Charity Orchestra, Summer Season and Full-Time
- Western Australian Wind Symphony, Full-Time
- Western Australian Youth Concert Band, Full-Time
- NHarmonic Chorale, Full-Time
- WACO Choir, Summer Season Only

AUDITIONS/REPERTOIRE

The audition process was to continue to be screened for the orchestra and wind symphony, using excerpts from proposed repertoire and the standard orchestral canon. After feedback from the

previous year, I planned for each instrument to only have two excerpts to prepare, and decided that candidates would only have two weeks to prepare for orchestral auditions.

When planning the repertoire for the 2016-2017 summer season, I tried to keep it inclusive for the entire orchestra while making it varied in style and era. The combined repertoire would still be with a chamber orchestra, but this year the strings were to rotate giving the players an opportunity to be involved in each of the works. The proposed repertoire for 2017 was:

1. *Carnival Overture*, Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)
2. *Symphonic Dances from West Side Story*, Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990)
3. *La Valse*, Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)
4. *Four American Folk Hymns*, Traditional, arr. Mack Wilberg (1955-)
5. *The Hunchback of Notre Dame Suite for Choir and Orchestra*, Alan Menken (1949-)/Stephen Schwartz (1948-) arr. Erich Kunzel (1935-2009)

Because WACO's goals had expanded, I felt that a much larger recruitment drive was needed than had been done previously. The committee planned to produce a promotional video for distribution online, and to re-design the website. A prospectus would be designed that would give prospective members an idea of what WACO was all about, and what the organisation was aiming to achieve with its new ensembles. These, along with flyers, would be distributed to 100 high schools in the Perth metropolitan area. Shirts were to be designed in the four WACO colours (red, orange, green and blue) featuring the logo. Presentations were to be given at UWA, WAAPA and Churchlands, as had been done in previous years.

CHARITY

A suggestion made by players in the previous season was that while they were happy with organisations WACO had supported previously, they would like to contribute to the decision of selecting the supported charity. In answer to this, my plan was to create an online form where the

orchestra and the public could nominate charities, and then vote on which causes meant the most to them. The committee would then review the results, and decide based on the majority vote.

As the organisation was to incorporate, performers would become members of it. As such, the organisation needed to devise a fee structure that was affordable and appropriate. The committee planned to charge \$50 for membership in the organisation, and an additional \$90 amenities fee for participants performing in WACO all year. Promotion of WACO events would utilise the same mechanisms used in 2016, however it was suggested that the committee organise a marketing team of volunteers solely dedicated to marketing for events.

b) Act

AUDITIONS/REPERTOIRE

Recruitment went ahead as planned. The promotional video was produced and distributed online, and a planned Facebook campaign was launched. When searching for a designer for the printed materials and website I came across a company, *Perth Happenings*, who decided to partner with our organisation. *Perth Happenings* re-designed our website and designed the prospectus and flyers for recruitment.

The printed materials were distributed to the planned 100 high schools in the Perth metropolitan area. Presentations were given at UWA concert practice, WAAPA workshops, and Churchlands year 11 and 12 music classes.

Auditions went ahead as planned and candidates were provided with two excerpts per instrument and a two-week preparation time. Five candidates were scheduled every fifteen minutes so that the substantial number of candidates could be processed in one day.

To standardise the audition process, a marking key was developed which was distributed to every candidate. Marks were given based on three areas: technique, rhythm and intonation/tone. Candidates were aware of what the minimum score was for acceptance into the orchestra, allowing the minimum standard to be improved.

CHARITY

The charity nomination and voting polls were held, and many charities received strong support from the public. After reviewing the responses and contacting the charity, WACO will be supporting *beyondblue* in February 2017.

WACO incorporated as the Western Australian Charity Orchestra Inc. on the 27th of July 2016 with a full committee of members, which enabled application for deductible gift receipt status, increasing WACO's opportunities to raise funds.

I approached Churchlands SHS about the 2017 season, and the school agreed to sponsor WACO as our official venue partner for 2017. The orchestra, wind symphony and youth concert band will rehearse there every week, with all performances also being held at the venue.

To aid in the increase in funding needed for the expanded 2017 program, the organisation is currently in the process of looking for sponsors and partners. WACO is hoping to find enough funding to cover basic costs so that all funds raised from concerts may be donated to charity. The committee has moved ahead with previously mentioned proposed membership fee structure.

c) Observe/Reflect

AUDITIONS/REPERTOIRE

This year's recruitment drive brought in the largest amount of applications WACO has ever received – 332 applications. Following auditions, WACO has over 75% of the performers needed for all five ensembles, and the standard is exceptional. In my opinion, this was a success.

Candidates expressed their gratitude at having less audition material. The musicians also appear to be enthusiastic to perform the selected repertoire.

These results seem to provide an indication of successful planning.

CHARITY

WACO is yet to commence rehearsals for the 2017 season, so the funds raised, tickets sold and performance standard are yet to be determined. However, I am very hopeful. The impression that I get from everyone I met on audition day (candidates and the public) is that people are excited about what WACO is going to do in 2017.

V. The Survey

A total of 22 respondents who submitted responses to the survey. The survey was created and distributed via Google Forms⁵¹, totalling 39 questions. The survey was given to current and past members of the Western Australian Charity Orchestra who have responded anonymously. Some of the questions required yes/no answers, some required participants to give a ranking, and others gave respondents the opportunity to share their experiences and thoughts in text. Respondents were invited to answer questions about their experiences with other orchestras, their thoughts on the screened audition process, and the charity aspect of the orchestra.

The following is a summary of the results.

ORCHESTRAL STANDARD AND PERSONAL BENEFITS

86% of respondents feel that the standard of the orchestra has increased over time, with only 3 people indicating that the standard has stayed about the same.

100% of respondents marked that they see personal benefits from playing with WACO. This included;

- developing friendships and a strong camaraderie
- relieving stress and anxiety
- a positive feeling knowing they've made a difference
- opportunities to play challenging repertoire in a safe environment; and,
- inspiration to improve on their instrument, etc.

⁵¹ "Create Forms." Google Forms - Create and Analyze Surveys, for Free. Accessed December 06, 2016. <https://www.google.com/forms/about/>.

AUDITIONS

Only 32% of respondents felt that their WACO experience would have been the same if there had not been a screened audition process. Similarly, only 23% felt that their WACO experience would have been the same if there had been no audition process at all.

77% of respondents felt that WACO has a more positive social dynamic than other orchestras that do not have a screened audition process.

82% of respondents felt that screened auditions had a positive effect on the social dynamic, with 41% feeling strongly that screened auditions affect the orchestra's social dynamic in a positive way.

41% of respondents indicated that they had experienced negative (political, biased, unfair, discriminatory) treatment in other orchestras who did not have a screened audition process. 64% of respondents indicated that politics has affected their experience in other orchestras in general.

64% of respondents believe that screened auditions influence the standard of the orchestra, and 23% were unsure.

Only 9% of respondents would prefer WACO to not have a screened audition process, and the same percentage think there may be negative consequences from the process.

CHARITY

91% of respondents felt that the charitable purpose of WACO affects the social dynamic in a positive way.

73% of respondents indicated that the charity aspect of WACO was important in their decision to join the orchestra.

64% of respondents indicated that they would be more likely to join other orchestras if they adopted a charitable purpose.

Musicians expressed how WACO differs from other orchestras they had worked with.

I found the atmosphere to be quite amicable, there is a palpable sense of energy and enthusiasm from the musicians while maintaining professionalism and dedication; such a balance I find to be a rarity in classical ensembles today.

Players talk of a “friendly, open, supportive atmosphere, which was a welcome change after playing in other orchestras”. Some feel that “[the] respect for each other and our conductor is highly evident, and everyone involved really wants to be there”. Regarding the general feel of the ensemble, one participant said, “I also feel that WACO has a certain vibrancy and energy about it, in both rehearsal and performance (something I have not found so consistently in other orchestras), which makes every second of playing really enjoyable!”

Regarding the screened audition process, one participant said that without it they “wouldn't have had the opportunity to lead a section and develop crucial skills required for a musician, nor would I have had the opportunity to learn from someone more experienced.” According to a string player in WACO there is “considerably less bitterness between players (especially in the violin section) and members are more inclined to respect the leaders of their section as they know the leaders have earned their position through their ability to play, and not any other outside factors”, because of the audition process.

Most survey respondents gave substantial descriptions of what the charity focus of the orchestra means to them. From one player, “the feeling of having helped raise significant amounts of money for charity is indescribable.” Another felt that they were “helping to create a more positive environment for the community. It's a really great feeling.” Some respondents indicated that the

charity aspect even raised the musical standard of the ensemble; “it’s this genuine joy and desire to give back to the community that brings out the best in the orchestral playing and sets WACO apart from other orchestras”.

Overall, respondents appeared to be in favour of the screened audition process, and believe that it has a positive impact on the social dynamic of the orchestra and the standard of the ensemble. The charity aspect also appears to be an incentive for these players to give of their time, drives the players to work harder, and lessens orchestral politics.

VI. Final Thoughts

Through the presentation of the literature review and the results of the survey, it appears that the combination of the audition process along with the charity focus of the Western Australian Charity Orchestra are what make it unique and seemed to have contributed to its increasing standard.

From responses in the survey, most respondents were in support of the screened audition process, and felt that it attributed to a more positive social dynamic and a higher musical standard.

In the survey, 41% of respondents indicated that they had experienced political, biased, unfair or discriminatory experiences with orchestras that did not have an audition process. One respondent shared the following account:

I have experienced in case of both cellists and other sections, weaker musicians appointed to principal roles based solely on longevity of their membership or personal or family ties with the concertmaster or musical director. This has, in my experience, negatively impacted the quality of the music (I still have nightmares about a particular concert with [a community orchestra] where a heavily exposed cello solo came in an entire semitone sharp, and with the most awful vibrato imaginable) and caused relationships between members to deteriorate or quality musicians to leave.”

Other respondents shared; “I’ve seen fights about leadership of sections and have felt annoyed when people were placed in the wrong order in a section”. Rehearsals were tainted by “rumours going around about certain members [in other orchestras] and how they won their seat in the orchestra,” and “I think I have been put leader of orchestras before when I may have not really

deserved it when it was unscreened and the [audition panel] favoured me.” Some respondents even said that “this is very common across unscreened orchestras.”

It would appear as though the benefits of a screened audition process outweigh possible downfalls. By using this process in the Western Australian Charity Orchestra, negative politics have been prevented and the standard increased.

It is unclear why the community orchestras in Western Australia do not use any audition process at all, screened or unscreened. Perhaps this is because the oldest of these was founded in 1961⁵², before the push for screened auditions in the 1970’s as discussed earlier, then perhaps never felt the need for change.

I would suggest that if any orchestra, whether it consist of students, volunteers or professionals, that is aiming to be the best it can be socially and musically, should consider adopting a screened audition process.

All respondents in the survey indicated that the charity focus of the orchestra was highly important to them, and attributed the high standard and supportive social dynamic to the charity component. It appears that the goal of the Western Australia Charity Orchestra, *changing lives through music*, means a great deal to its members.

Having that charity at the back of our minds encourages us to work hard and put on amazing performances.

It means that my contribution to the orchestra is given a lot more purpose and motivation, and makes the overall experience much more enjoyable and uplifting.

⁵² "About FSO." City of Fremantle Symphony Orchestra Inc. 2016. Accessed December 05, 2016. <https://fremantlesymphonyorchestra.wordpress.com/2012/10/11/about-fso/>.

It appears that the use of a professionally-based, screened audition process can offer something of more value to the performing amateur music community. In turn, adopting a charitable focus appears also to enhance the personal benefits and experience for the musician and offers something of more value.

What WACO offers is an orchestra whose members have a greater respect for each other, a higher drive to produce quality music, and who can make a direct impact on the community in which they live, enacting the ethos; *changing lives through music*.

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WACO 2008

The Western Australian Charity Orchestra – *and chorus*



Official Program

7.00pm Monday 4th February 2008

Perth Concert Hall, 5 St. Georges Terrace Perth



PRINCESS MARGARET HOSPITAL
FOUNDATION

Helping Kids through Music



Concert Program

'España'	Emmanuel Chabrier
'Mars, The Bringer of War' from "The Planets"	Gustav Holst
'Ballet of the Unhatched Chicks' from "Pictures at an Exhibition"	Modest Mussorgsky/Maurice Ravel
'Prelude to: The Afternoon of a Faune'	Claude Debussy
'O Fortuna' and 'Fortuna Plango Vulnera' from "Carmina Burana"	Carl Orff
'Habanera' from "Carmen"	Georges Bizet with soloist Deborah Rogers
'God So Loved the World'	John Stainer

Interval

'Symphony No.40 – 1st Mvt'	Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
'Polovetsian Dances' from 'Prince Igor'	Alexander Borodin
'Rhapsody in Blue'	George Gershwin with soloists Hayley McDonald-Burns, Ryan Davies, Aidan Boase, Hye Yung (Sarah) Chung, Hye Sook (Sharon) Chung, and Catherine Ashley
'Jupiter, The Bringer of Jollity' from "The Planets"	Gustav Holst

APPENDIX C: WACO 2008 Concert Programme – Orchestra List



Orchestra

Piccolo

Jordan Slight
Jordan Parry

Flute

Richard Tan
Carmen Fajdiga
Jordan Slight

Oboe

Samuel Parry
Julie Igglesden
Bridget Malcolm
Ashley van der Heever

Cor Anglais

Ashley van der Heever
Giselle Gabriels

Clarinet

Kirsty Page
Michael Honiball
Scott Collinson

Bass Clarinet

Jack Montgomery

Bassoon

Claire Hearn
Kate Pitcher
Gia Bishop
Kathryn Riordan

Contrabassoon

Kathryn Riordan

Saxophone

Cullen Barrow
Faye Saunders
Hannah Muddle

Horn

Simon Kruit
Catherine Lane
Stephanie Davis
Shaun Bartlett
Richard Allen
Ana Bozic

Trumpet

Nicholas Madeley
Brody Linke
Maria O'Neill
Feidhlim Benetts

Trombone

Emma Passmore
Katelyn Dignam

Bass Trombone

Lois Mitchell

Euphonium

Cameron Buma

Tuba

Nishant Anandan

Percussion

Aaron Speed
Cameron Buma
James Howard
Lionel Pierson
Megan Feddema
Michael Gray
Rachiel Howard

Harp

Catherine Ashley
Ariel Lyons

Piano

Ryan Davies
Hayley McDonald-Burns

Organ

Anthony Antemuhl

1st Violin

Sophie Edelman
Melissa D'Cruze
Hannah Brockway
Caitlin Huxtable
Emily Huynh
Jared Yapp
Adrian Sin

2nd Violin

Ben Caddy
Sylvia Sippl
Jacky Nock
Claire Russo
Carly Bullen
Marlene Crone
Michael Crone

Viola

Nikki Man
David Sanders
Cristina Filgueira
Liam Neville
Vanessa Sharplin
Rebecca Watson

Violoncello

Emma Hayes
Jeremy Huynh
Osborn Fong
Josephine Fountain
Karen Ng
Athena Lyons
Ariel Lyons
Alexandra Witt

Double Bass

Alex Harrison
Caitlin Bass
Emily Mostratos
Kier Grimshaw



Are you a young musician looking for opportunities to play music outside of school? Then NCYCB might be for you!

The North Coast Youth Concert Band (NCYCB) is WACO's exciting youth music initiative. NCYCB aims to provide youth with the opportunity to further develop their music and ensemble skills in a positive and challenging environment.

"I joined NCYCB because it's an awesome opportunity to play music and get better at playing my instrument. I love the friendliness of the people, they are a really fun group and I am glad I met them. I also love being able to play a variety of music and have fun along the way. I love everything about NCYCB."
- Gabby (Oboe)

"I love NCYCB because from it I have made many good friends. It's such a fun group to be a part of. I joined the band because I wanted to have more opportunities to play in music groups, and to make more friends outside of school and sport who share similar interests to me. I always look forward to going to NCYCB as everyone there is so friendly and the music choice is great!" - Sarah (Flute)

We are currently looking for new members – please email us at info@waco.org.au to register your interest.

The Western Australian Charity Orchestra
presents

WACO 2016

CHANGING LIVES THROUGH MUSIC

In support of Guide Dogs WA



Western Australian Charity Orchestra and Choir
directed by Samuel Parry

7:00pm, Friday 5th February 2015
2:30pm, Saturday 6th February 2015
7:00pm, Saturday 6th February 2015
Churchlands SHS Concert Hall



APPENDIX E: WACO 2016 Concert Programme – Repertoire

Programme

Choir

Hannah Bardsley	Matthew Grindrod	Cassandra Schickelanz	Festive Overture
Ben Bardsley	Crystal Haig	Rachel Singer	Dmitri Shostakovich
Adam Bardsley	Kyra Harvey	Daniel Smith	
Christopher Barker	Peyton Hawkins	Anthony Spadaccini	Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune
Jocelyn Campbell	Gareth Heame	Cait Strutt	Claude Debussy
Paris Ceglinski	Gabriella Ibrahim	Kirilee Taylor	
Noel Chandramoghan	Mikayla Ibrahim	Belinda Thompson	Left Edge
Mathew Colley	Hannah Johns	Serena Tzen	Iain Grandage
Jack Collinson	Emma Kealey	Bonnie Tysoe	
Scott Collinson	Mathew Leak	Brigit Warland	Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks
David Cosgrove	Avelynn Low	Ingrid Waters	Richard Strauss
Lucy Crazle	Heather Mackay	Chelle Weedon	
Tyrese Cruthers	Sharon Malcolm	Lucas Wong	~ Interval ~
Michael Dang	Felix Malcolm		
Darlene D'Mello	Kirsty Martin		Zadok the Priest
Angus Edwards	Aisling McGonigle	Section Leaders	George Frideric Handel
Suneeth Fernandez	Theodore Murphy-Jelley	Heather Mackay	
Jing Yi Foo	Miriam O'Neill	Gareth Heame	Serenity (O Magnum Mysterium)
Nathan Frazier	Kimberley Phoon		Ola Gjeilo
Kevin Giang	Lionel Pierson	Rehearsal Accompanist	Cello: Jeremy Garside
Chris Greed	Lila Raubenheimer	John Grant	
			Medley from "The Pirates of Penzance"
			W. S. Gilbert & Arthur Sullivan
			Soloists: David Cosgrove, Angus Edwards, Heather Mackay
			Bohemian Rhapsody
			Freddie Mercury, arr. Samuel Parry
			Soloist: Mathew Leak

APPENDIX F: WACO 2016 Programme – Orchestra List

<i>Orchestra</i>				<i>Brass Ensemble</i>			
Flute	Bass Clarinet	Trombone	Concertmaster	2nd Violin	Violoncello		
Tarmon Simpson	Gareth Hearne	Thomas Gilmore	Brittany Williams	Adrian Biemmi	Jeremy Garside		
Shayne Harris		Riley Houlahan		Freya Swarbrick	Laura Tan		
Anne Wheat	Bassoon		1st Violin	Poppy Summers	Krista Low		
Rachel Hicks	Nat Cernicziw		Jasmine Middleton	Sandra Vaughan	James Mailey		
Hannah Chiang	Stephanie Sheridan	Bass Trombone	Thomas Mahoney	Tanya Ramakrishnan			
	Merina Chen	Steven Port	Leyton Hilmer	Hannah James	Double Bass		
	Luis Santos		Shayla Costello	Elisa Sijpola	Ebony Lim		
Piccolo			David Macdonochie	Samantha Ion	Rowan Swarbrick		
Anne Wheat	Contrabassoon	Tuba	Lewis Lee		Thomas Kleinfelder		
	Stephanie Sheridan	Christopher Martin	Yazmin Omran	Viola	Kirsty Malcolm		
Oboe		Percussion	Sarina Li	Scott Trethowen			
Laura Biemmi		Thomas Robertson	Claire Russo	Elyse Williams			
Anne Phillips	Horn	Tom Barrett		Alanna van Mierlo			
Simon Church	Aishah Chadwick-Stumpf	Claire Orman		Andrew Crothers			
Hayley Zhender	Calen Linke	Mitchell Norman		Cristina Filgueira			
	Mark Warrenner			Rachael McMilln			
Cor Anglais	Daniel Smith	Electric Violin		Claire Russo			
Anne Phillips	Jacob Scrivener	Shayla Costello					
Clarinet	Trumpet	Piano	Horn		Trombone		
Jarrad Linke	Ben Noonan	John Grant	Jacob Scrivener	Trumpet	Van Hart		
Ivan Roy	Blake Houlahan		Aaron Stulzbauer	Ingrid Waters	Jeremy Mazurek		
Lorenzo Italiano	Mathew Leak	Harp	Leah Dawson	Zoe McGivern	Genevieve McMilln		
E♭ Clarinet	Zoe McGivern	Elica Bourguet du Coudray	Troy Todd	Belinda Gibbon			
Ivan Roy		Christopher Leak					

APPENDIX G: WACO 2017 Orchestra List

WACO 2017 Summer Orchestra

1st Violin,
Runa Murase, *Concertmaster*
Yasmin Omran, *Associate*
Jasmine Middleton
Megan Partridge
Louise May
Brittany Williams
Serina Li
David Meconochie
Paul Foss
Elisa Siipola
Leyton Hilmer

2nd Violin
Adrian Biemmi, *Principal*
Freya Swarbrick, *Associate*
Poppy Summers
Melissa D'Cruze
Claire Russo
Thomas Mahoney
Samantha Ion
Elise Rosenberg
Kate Molloy
Tanya Ramakrishnan

Viola
Aaron Dungey, *Principal*
Scott Trethowen, *Associate*
Andrew Crothers
Cristina Filgueira
Amadea Foss
Nami Ogishima
Rachel Hicks
Elyse Williams
William Smith
Rachael McMinn

Violoncello
Laura Tan, *Principal*
Jeremy Garside, *Associate*
Maia van Kampen
James Maley
Rachel Williams
Stephanie Vuduris

Double Bass
Sophie Cornforth, *Principal*
Thomas Kleinfelder, *Associate*
Rowan Swarbrick
Kirsty Malcolm

Flute
Megan Barbetti, *Principal*
Lyndon Abbott
Tarmon Simpson

Piccolo
Lyndon Abbott, *Principal*

Oboe
Anne Phillips, *Principal*
Laura Biemmi, *Associate*
Alexandra Allen

Cor Anglais
Laura Biemmi, *Principal*

Clarinet
Ivan Roy, *Principal*
Sienna Karklin

E♭ Clarinet
Andrew Elliott, *Principal*

Bass Clarinet
Lorenzo Italiano, *Principal*

Bassoon
Natalya Czerniaciwi, *Principal*
Stephanie Sheridan
Merina Chen

Contrabassoon
Stephanie Sheridan, *Principal*

Horn
Calen Linke, *Principal*
Isaak Wesson
Aishah Chadwick-Stumpf
Mark Warrenner
Ingrid Waters

Trumpet
Jennifer Bylund, *Principal*
Jack Sirett
Benjamin Lim

Trombone
Elise Jeffrey, *Principal*
Jeremy Mazurek
Ewan Potter

Tuba
Christopher Martin, *Principal*

Timpani & Percussion
Thomas Robertson, *Principal*
Jesse Vivante, *Associate*
Claire Orman
Tom Barrett
Lauren Jolliffe

VACANT

Piano & Celeste
VACANT

Harp
Kira Gunn
Mina Mitric