

Melbourne Symphony Orchestra Players' Association  
Tuesday, 8<sup>th</sup> September 2020

The Hon Paul Fletcher MP  
Minister For Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts

Dear Minister,

The musicians of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra write to you at this time of crisis for our industry with a plea for your intervention. Many arts companies are fighting for survival through this period, but it is imperative that creative artists are given the support needed to weather this crisis so they may continue contributing to society as an intrinsic part of our culture.

We understand the \$35m Arts Sustainability Fund will deliver some of the much-needed support, but the rescue package has been slow to materialise and funds may not be received until it is too late. Some companies are now at tipping point, and at risk of losing the creative talent upon which they rely.

The Opera Australia Orchestra is currently in this position, likely to permanently lose a quarter of their musicians, reducing their size to an unworkable number. It can be likened to a football club losing so many players they can no longer field a full team. Redundancies are a disastrous last resort, and all effort needs to be directed to retaining artists.

Orchestras build their collective skills over decades and generations. This is what makes these institutions so great – that wealth of knowledge, skill and experience being passed from one musician to the next, growing and developing all the time. It is vital to maintain the integrity and continuity of personnel, and the working relationships that have formed amongst colleagues over the very long term. Once lost, it is a very long road to rebuild.

All great cities have great orchestras – they are a part of the fabric of a cultured civilisation. And we cannot have one of the world's most iconic opera houses without a thriving Opera Australia Orchestra driving the performances within.

We ask you to urgently intervene so that there is not only funding to grow out of this crisis, but immediate emergency funding available to sustain companies in such desperate need right now. Retaining artistic talent is essential if we are to restart and grow.



Michael Pisani

On behalf of the Players' Executive and Musicians of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra