

{ MUSIC }

ENCORE BLIMEY

The CPO turns 100 this year. **Eugene Yiga** spoke to its boss, Louis Heyneman, about the thrills & terrors of the orchestra life



WITH degrees in music and journalism, Louis Heyneman, the CEO of the Cape Philharmonic Orchestra, has pursued both interests in a career combining arts writing with musical endeavours.

The orchestra has come a long way since its first concert in 1914, when unreserved seats cost a shilling. I believe it has never been of such a high standard as it is now. We produce amazing musical talent.

Some of the world's most famous soloists have played with the CPO. This is usually before they become megastars.

I grew up in a musical family. I was exposed to classical music from an early age, so I had no choice but to love it.

There are no fun times during concerts for me. We are always panicking that something might go wrong in the next phrase.

Classical musicians are becoming more versatile. We have to be able to play symphony concerts, opera, ballet, as well as different styles like jazz and pop.

Donors are getting tougher and philanthropists are getting scarcer. Not enough public money is available and priorities in Africa are different from the First World.

The CPO has a huge development programme. There are two youth orchestras and several smaller ensembles. We teach in townships and run a mentoring system for young musicians from disadvantaged communities. This will expose whole communities to classical music and the magic of an orchestra.

'If a soloist experiences a memory lapse, I miss a few heartbeats'

It's interesting how you can sometimes predict audience behaviour. The boisterous end of the first movement of the Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto always results in at least one clapper thinking it is the end of the concerto — and then a large part of the audience follows. During our 2011 concert tour in the US, we got a standing ovation after the first movement in Sarasota, Florida. Eventually the audience sat down and the second and third movement followed. Afterwards, a patron commented on the two beautiful "encores".

If a soloist experiences a memory lapse, I miss a few heartbeats. Especially those first moments when you realise something is not totally right. Perhaps a small detail that suddenly sounds unfamiliar and you know it can go in any direction — a complete recovery, more fumbling or a complete stop. The longest-lasting agony was when a young soloist took a wrong turn in a Bach keyboard concerto and repeated a section. The orchestra and conductor were lost. After a minute or two, a double bass player found the place in the score and within seconds the whole orchestra was back in the game.

A city has an orchestra only if the people of that city want one. Fortunately, the people of Cape Town have always supported arts and culture. Today's "older generation" was once young. They listened to the Beatles in the '60s. The metamorphosis to the serious arts is natural in all societies and we should stop worrying about this. And, by the way, we symphony supporters still like the Beatles.

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