Victoria Symphony 2024–26 Strategic Plan

CHRISTIAN KLUXEN MUSIC DIRECTOR

#### VICTORIA SYMPHONY SOCIETY STRATEGIC PLAN 2024-2026

The Victoria Symphony (VS) is one of British Columbia's largest performing arts organizations and one of only two full-time professional orchestras in the province. We provide 36 weeks of guaranteed performance opportunities for 44 outstanding professional musicians who also share their expertise as teachers and mentors at the University of Victoria and the Victoria Conservatory of Music. More than 200,000 people hear the orchestra annually over nearly 60 main season concerts, TV broadcasts, education concerts, and summer festival performances. We are proud to offer a diverse range of programs that appeal to all ages and demographics and our growing Education & Community Outreach programs, which provide formative musical experiences to thousands of school children annually.

This 2024-2026 Strategic Plan is a two-year extension of the previous three-year plan that was developed in the profoundly disruptive context of the global COVID-19 pandemic. Though our strategies will continue to adapt and change as necessary, the VS staff and Board of Directors feel that the guiding principles and goals outlined in the 2020-2024 Plan are still relevant. This updated version will direct our activities until the conclusion of our 2026/27 Season. We are confident that this document will help us build on the successes of the last three years.



### **BUILDING ON OUR SUCCESSES**

The Victoria Symphony is enjoying a resurgence in local interest for our activities that has translated into growing attendance and increasing community engagement, more so than many orchestras in the country. The 2023/24 Season has seen our largest audience in over a decade and donor support for the orchestra continues to be robust and enthusiastic. Under the batons of Music Director Christian Kluxen, Principal Pops Conductor Sean O'Loughlin, and Associate Conductor Giuseppe Pietraroia, the artistic standards of the orchestra have never been higher. There are many reasons to believe that, with continued investment, we will have the capacity to build on our reputation as a world class orchestra. We believe that the remarkable success we are experiencing post-pandemic is directly linked to the shared sense of purpose afforded to us by the strategic planning process and the commitment of all the stakeholders that continue to take calculated risks amidst unprecedented uncertainty.

Artistic excellence and expanding opportunities for increasingly creative and innovative programming should remain top priorities. As our audiences embraced the programs we identified as a risk to the 2023/24 Season, we now recognize these artistic choices as evidence of our organizational integrity.

Looking forward, we are in a stable financial position with no accumulated structural deficit and a Foundation whose assets have now grown from 11 million in 2020 to more than \$16 million in 2024. The creation of the *Future Fund*, an unrestricted portion of the VS Endowment Fund reserved for emergencies and investment in special projects, has reduced the existential risk of possible business interruption scenarios, and allowed us to start imagining new capital projects that will advance our artistic standards, organizational stability, and cohesion.

### CHALLENGES

Despite all the good news, we still have a fundamental issue shared by many other Canadian orchestras: inflation has increased expenses faster than our ability to increase revenues. The stagnation of major operational grants is of particular concern. If we cannot effectively advocate for increased government revenues that keep pace with inflation, we will need to identify new and reliable sources of revenue to make up for what is currently an unsustainable annual draw from our *Future* Fund. Maintaining financial resilience must remain a key part of our strategy even as we acknowledge our artistic successes and community connections.

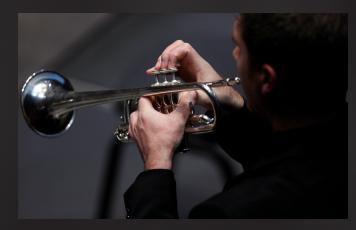


#### **THANKS**

We are thankful for all the stakeholders, ticket buyers, subscribers, donors, board and committee members, funders, artistic partners, musicians, and staff, who together make this organization such an outstanding community asset.

#### LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge and respect the Lək'wəŋən (Songhees and Esquimalt) Peoples and the WSÁNEĆ (Saanich) Peoples, on whose traditional territory Victoria Symphony performs, and whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day. Through our actions and sharing the gift of music, we are committed to being part of the ongoing process of reconciliation.



### MISSION

The Victoria Symphony is a highly versatile Canadian orchestra that inspires, educates, and captivates our community through the transformational power of music.

#### VISION

The vision of this Strategic Plan is to enrich our programming with music that inspires our audience and motivates our musicians. We will cultivate and connect with our community through dynamic performances of new and traditional repertoire, innovative concert formats, stimulating artistic partnerships, and digital strategies.

Victoria Symphony will transform how we engage with our community through education and outreach programs that help us attract a larger and more diverse audience. We will also build on the strong support of our community to maintain the financial strength and inspirational organizational culture necessary to realize our aspirations.

# VICTORIA SYMPHONY SOCIETY STRATEGIC PILLARS

- 1. Artistic development and programming
- 2. Audience growth
- 3. Community engagement
- Organization, culture, and environment 4.
- 5. Financial stability

These five strategic pillars form the foundation for the development of our current goals.

#### **PILLAR 1: ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT** AND PROGRAMMING

A commitment to the highest possible artistic standards and creative programming are at the heart of what we value as an organization. We do not only exist to sell tickets. We need to create art that challenges our musicians and captures our audience's imagination.

- 1.1 Formalize artistic priorities that stimulate orchestra members and captivate our audience.
- 1.2 Nurture diverse professional artistic partnerships, exchanges, and cross disciplinary collaborations that add value to the music.
- 1.3 Enhance the audience's experience through innovative programming and concert formats.

## PILLAR 2: AUDIENCE GROWTH

We must pay close attention to the evolving habits and expectations of contemporary audiences. Finding new ways to reflect, engage with, and captivate a changing population will be key to our ongoing relevance and viability.

- 2.1 Increase the number of people experiencing our performances and engaging in our activities.
- 2.2 Increase the diversity (age, gender, geography, ethnicity, income, education) of people experiencing our performances and engaging in our activities.





#### PILLAR 3: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The most successful symphony orchestras are those that have found ways to create strong connections with their communities. Expanding our role in civic life and awareness will require researching what our community values and finding new ways to engage in dialogue that leads to reciprocal learning.

- 3.1 Expand our education and community relations programs to enhance engagement and increase accessibility.
- 3.2 Nurture a community of engaged donors.

#### PILLAR 4: ORGANIZATION, INCLUSIVE CULTURE, AND ENVIRONMENT

Building common purpose and respect through every layer of VS is essential to achieving our artistic goals. Better management and work culture help create better art.

- 4.1 Create and nurture common purpose and the highest professional standards throughout the organization, especially among musicians and staff.
- 4.2 Equip and support musicians, staff, and volunteers in physical spaces conducive to the creation of art and positive work and community relationships.
- 4.3 Build a Board, staff, and volunteer base whose composition reflects the diversity of the community we serve.
- 4.4 Further develop and implement policies and strategies to realize key goals related to DEIA (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility) and Indigenous reconciliation.

### PILLAR 5: FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Artistic excellence and risk-taking in programming require enough money and financial stability to allow for investments that pay off over time.

- 5.1 Increase the Foundation Assets while ensuring sufficient operational and program funding.
- 5.2 Increase and diversify revenue streams (earned income, donations, and government funding).





SYMPHONY VICTORIA

Christian Kluxen, Music Director

620 View St., Suite 610 Victoria, BC V8W 1J6 victoriasymphony.ca 250.385.9771

