



# Friendly Notes

## Newsletter for Friends of Guelph Symphony

FRIEND

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Editor: Geoff Howe

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### Simon says...

Topical comment by the  
Artistic Director



You may be interested to know what goes on in a conductor's head during a performance. I cannot of course speak for all conductors, but here are my observations. It helps to be mildly schizophrenic (not that I'm implying that conductors are crazy). Like stage actors, conductors must be aware of two things simultaneously – the performance itself, and also the mechanics of it. Actors must think not just about the emotions and reactions of their character, but also the mechanics of stage positioning, what their next cue is, their next move, whether they should be in a stage light and so on. In the same way, conductors must be truly involved with the music, to convey the musical sense of it, and at the same time be very aware of the details of what is happening and about to happen. These may be such mundane things as a page turn with a surprise event just after the turn, or a tempo change, or a spot where a player might need a specific cue. And all the time the conductor is listening to what is being played and managing the balance, tempo and phrasing. Not to mention being ready to recover instantly from any errors that might crop up (surely not!). Sometimes I find myself with an involuntary smile on my face when hearing a beautifully played phrase or melody – but one cannot allow such pleasure to detract from one's focus and concentration. One needs to be totally in the music, so that the passage of time is unnoticed. Sometimes the end of a piece arrives and one thinks – "it's over already?" – not realizing that fifteen or twenty minutes may have elapsed! As a colleague conductor once told me, "it's a funny place to stand." 🎵

### Getting to Know the GSO Musicians

David Knight – Timpani



A founding member of the GSO, David B. Knight, timpanist, studied voice with Covent Garden Opera singer Vera Gilbert and drumming with Bruce Mulholland in New Zealand. He was appointed drumming Instructor in the Music Department of Macalester College, Minnesota, and then became the timpanist in symphony, chamber, opera, and ballet orchestras in Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Chicago. Some of his memorable performances include Beethoven's Symphony No. 9; Brahms's "A German Requiem" under Noel Edison's direction with the Elora Singers and Beethoven's "Emperor Concerto" with the GSO with Anton Kuerti as soloist. Knight has been a university professor, Dean of Social Sciences at the University of Guelph, and a visiting professor and consultant in several countries. He has been an editor with the Encyclopaedia Britannica, President of the International Commission on the World Political Map and has written a number of books including his *Landscapes in Music: Space, Place, and Time in the World's Great Music* (Rowman & Littlefield). He writes the GSO's concert program notes.

**How old were you when you first started playing?** *Snare drum when 9; timpani when 17.*

**Why did you choose this instrument?** *After a Messiah performance I told my Dad that one day I'd play the timpani. Seven years later this happened.*

**Do you play any other instruments?** *Various percussion, and my CD player!*

**What do you like most about playing in an orchestra?** *The challenge, thrill, and immense joy of music making with the ensemble.*

**Do you play any other kind of music?** *I've played in pipe bands and opera and ballet orchestras; concert bands.*

/Continued overleaf:

**Winner of the Dinner -on-the Train Ticket draw  
is  
Dr. Irene Matthews, a FOGS member.**

## About the Orchestra:

Oboe and English Horn

No. 12 in a series

by David Knight

Derived from the shawm, the baroque oboe (*hautbois* — *haut*, high or loud; *bois*, wood or woodwind) was popular in the French court in the mid-17th century. Due to its refined sound it was accepted into the orchestra. Until that role was assumed by the clarinet, the oboe also was the principal melody instrument in early military bands. The word oboe was adopted into English ca. 1770 from the Italian word for the French instrument, *oboè*. In the Classical period the instrument's conical bore was narrowed and keys were added. Further changes occurred over the years, notably by 19th Century Parisian craftsmen, including the Triebert family and, later, François Lorée, whose company to this day is the dominant maker of professional model oboes. Most instruments are today made from *grenadilla* (African Blackwood). The modern conservatoire oboe, pitched in concert C, is comprised of 45 pieces of keys that are generally made of nickel, silver or, sometimes, gold-plated. With careful manipulation of embouchure and air pressure, a player can express a surprising range of timbre and dynamics. The oboe's best known sibling is the English Horn (*cor anglais*). Pitched at a fifth lower than the oboe, it has a distinct, rich voice. Each is a double reed instrument, about which more in the next column. 🎵



David Knight

## 2010 CONCERTO COMPETITION FOR WIND AND BRASS

The GSO is pleased to announce its ninth Annual Concerto Competition, for which the upper age limit is 27. Deadline for entries is 5 pm March 19th 2010. In 2002, the GSO initiated the competition to offer talented young musicians the opportunity to perform with a quality orchestra in front of a live audience. Each year a different instrument category is offered – piano, strings and wind. This year the category is for wind and brass players. 🎵

## CONDUCTOR CHANGE For 2010/2011

Simon Irving, founder and Artistic Director of the Guelph Symphony Orchestra, will be redefining his role after the 2009-2010 Season to assume a greater focus on the management of the orchestra. This change will see him becoming Conductor Emeritus and General Manager of the Orchestra in the 2010-2011 season. Since the Orchestra's formation in 2001, Mr. Irving has filled the demanding dual roles of both Artistic Director and General Manager of the GSO. Under his leadership, the orchestra has enjoyed a remarkable growth expanding from a modest beginning to a 55-player professional-level symphony. Over the past 8 years the orchestra has given 53 concerts, recorded a broadcast-quality CD, brought internationally renowned soloists to the River Run stage, and built a loyal audience ” 🎵



### Valentines and The GSO

Still time to get your tickets for the  
GSO's exciting Valentines day  
Concert and Excursion.

Sunday, February 14th 2010

Combined Concert and Dinner on the Train

\$99 per person.

Tickets at The River Run Centre

### SPREAD THE WORD !!

**FOGS** was formed to assist the orchestra in as many ways as possible. Help with promotional functions, addressing envelopes, selling CD's and so on. One other very important help that **FOGS** members can give is to promote the organisation and encourage your friends to join.

For more information about the GSO, its people, its concerts etc. visit the website [www.guelphorchestra.ca](http://www.guelphorchestra.ca)

David Knight interview -Continued from Page 1.

**What is your favourite music?** *Anything by Bach, Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Berlioz, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Bruckner, Brahms, Smetana, Tchaikovsky, Dvorák, Mahler, Saint-Saëns, Sibelius,*

*Richard Strauss, Vaughan Williams, Shostakovich, Copland, Hovhaness, Takemitsu, Evans, Rautavaara, Glass, and Zwilich!*

**Do you have any hobbies?** *Reading; writing; bird watching at our cottage.*