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Manukau Symphony Orchestra: Reflections on a sustainable model for a community orchestra in Aotearoa New Zealand

ABSTRACT

The Manukau Symphony Orchestra has continued to thrive for 25 years as a community orchestra based in the multiethnic region of South Auckland in New Zealand. Its continued success is partly attributed to its ability to maintain a negotiated 'middle ground' and dialogue within the community and also the way it has valued both musical and human aspects in its daily life. This study, written collaboratively by the researcher and music director and conductor, reports on recent ethnographic case study research conducted with the orchestra, its leaders and its administrators, and seeks to uncover key themes and actions that have enabled the orchestra's ongoing sustainability. The case study found that an active and thriving space for dialogue with the community has continued over the years and this has sustained positive relationships with cultural groups, changing financial and policy strategies, a sense of ownership in the orchestra, a built-in mentoring structure, a community of care and a contemporary philosophy of community music making within a semi-professional orchestral context.

KEYWORDS

community orchestra
middle ground
community music
sustainability
culture
Aotearoa New Zealand

INTRODUCTION

Community music is not a frequently used term in Aotearoa New Zealand but is something that is increasingly becoming of interest to musicians, cultural workers and people with an interest in building community culture. As a smaller country with a recent colonial past, different waves of immigration and a robust indigenous Māori history of settlement, New Zealand offers a different perspective on community participation in music to what may be experienced in parts of the Northern hemisphere. While there is some awareness in New Zealand of the socially conscious community arts movement as experienced in the United Kingdom (Higgins 2012), it is often through the lenses of diversity and culture that community music is understood and practiced in New Zealand.

Situated in South Auckland, a region of Auckland city with a large proportion of diverse ethnic groups of European, Māori, Pacific and Asian origins, The Manukau Symphony Orchestra (MSO) has a somewhat unique position as a music group founded on European musical forms and values. From its humble beginnings in its inaugural performance in the suburban town hall of Papatoetoe, South Auckland, in 1992, the orchestra has now firmly established itself as an orchestra that aims high in terms of its ability to perform difficult orchestral works along with new and innovative compositions often inspired by cultural identity. The process of sustaining the orchestra over this period of time has involved significant challenges for orchestra members, administrators and leaders in the face of funding and policy changes and venue restraints. The fact that the orchestra has survived these difficulties has not only been a matter of policy – it has been reflected in a deeper sustainable and dialogical process embedded in the orchestra's existence that has helped it maintain a healthy spirit and a commitment to both human and musical values.

One of the features of New Zealand is the large number of community orchestras around the country. Most medium-sized cities feature at least one orchestra that presents regular concerts for the local community. Most of these orchestras enjoy a loyal membership and have reasonably good followings. They employ soloists and conductors, inviting younger, not-yet established artists from time to time. Most of these orchestras, however, have a restriction on their repertoires; for example, the rigours of a Brahms symphony would be a challenge, and many late Romantic or twentieth-century pieces for large orchestra would not be able to be featured on these orchestras' play lists. Orchestra membership and budgets do not stretch to additional instruments, such as large brass groups, full sized percussion sections and ancillary instruments such as harps, celeste or orchestral piano. Many community orchestras do not have sufficiently large and competent string sections to cope with the challenging larger romantic sound demanded by larger scale works. Community audiences love these works, with their rousing climaxes of sound or exhilarating rhythms. Therefore, by not featuring these pieces, community orchestras tend to stay within their loyal but modest-sized audiences. From an orchestral point of view, it is an unhappy circle as the inability to increase an audience is also reflected in budget constrictions.

Turning 25 – as the MSO is this year – is a milestone for a community orchestra. Looking back, the MSO's repertoire is very impressive: Mahler's First Symphony, Beethoven's Ninth, Brahms 1 and 2, all the Tchaikovsky Symphonies, most large-scale Romantic piano concertos, the difficult works

by Ravel, de Falla and numerous contemporary New Zealand pieces, many commissioned by the MSO, featuring a full-sized symphony orchestra with up to five percussionists and two harps. In this respect the MSO is a remarkably successful and thriving community orchestra. At the core of the orchestra is a philosophy of respect, family and a very special spirit. Philosophy is just one part of the picture. The MSO's other strength is its support structure – chairperson, music director, orchestra leaders, management committee, volunteers, political backing, funders, etc. All orchestras – whether professional or community – require a robust underlying structure to survive. One of the things that distinguishes the MSO and has enabled its transformation from humble beginnings in a tiny hall in a small suburb into a body that regularly brings classical music to thousands of Aucklanders every year, is its special spirit.

The MSO is in the fortunate position of selling out most of its subscription series. It holds regular concerts in a first-class concert venue, provides a platform for local, non-professional players to learn and play with national and international musicians and performs a repertoire of classic greats and specially commissioned pieces. Despite constant threats of funding cuts, the orchestra has grown to semi-professional status and has carved out a loyal following. Anniversaries this significant warrant a review of the past. It is a fitting time to reflect on the orchestra's highs and lows, what has worked, what went wrong and why. There are elements of the MSO's journey that may be of interest to community orchestras and community musicians elsewhere in the world.

As a music educator and researcher, David Lines began an examination of the sustainable process embedded in the MSO's living culture by undertaking a research study in 2016–17 after receiving a University of Auckland research grant. Teaming up with Uwe Grodd, conductor and music director of the MSO, the authors/researchers decided to collaborate to maximize the impact and ethical validity of the research to ensure that the orchestra and its members, along with the international music research community, would benefit from findings. This collaboration is reflected in the dual authorship of this article. The research gathered information from individual interviews with orchestra leaders (David Lines [interviewer] two interviews with the co-author Uwe Grodd, one interview with the key administrator) and four focus group interviews with a mix of different orchestral players (each group consisted of younger players [<25 years old], older, more experienced players and professional players) in each group. Players could come to the focus group that was most convenient for them and partake in the collaborative discussion that emerged in the group. In addition to the interviews, historical documentation from the orchestra was analysed, and orchestra rehearsals and concerts were observed. This article provides a historical narrative of the orchestra and an overview of the collective themes that emerged from the research and interviews relating to the orchestra's sustainability, its sub-culture and its challenges, restraints and collective actions over the period of time that it has existed. Themes emerged from repeated comparisons of key points elicited from the different interview transcripts in relation to the broader research focus of sustainability in community music groups. These themes suggest a community music model that could be of interest to musicians and community workers operating in spaces where more traditional musical value systems intersect with more human-centred community music goals and aspirations.

THEORETICAL CONTEXT

To begin to understand the process of how a community orchestra is sustained the authors first sought some theoretical tools and concepts from the literature. On the one hand we needed to consider the situation of the orchestra in Aotearoa New Zealand and how community music could be conceptualized in that context. As a small society with a comparatively small population, New Zealand can be seen as having what geographers call 'islandness' (Campbell 2009: 94), a term that emphasizes the vulnerability of less-populated island communities, especially those with recent colonial and postcolonial histories. Through this sense of vulnerability, institutional barriers and differences common in larger societies are not necessarily present and there is a great deal of potential for communication and collaboration within the smaller population between different cultural and civic groups, schools, community music groups of different kinds, city councils, contemporary musicians and so on. Within the islands of Aotearoa New Zealand, the arts have a close connection with community at a very basic level and may be seen as an expression of cultural identity. The Māori performance genre Kapa Haka, for instance, expresses the Māori concept of whakawhanaungatanga or the notion of strengthening the individual through community arts (Rakena 2012). In the Aotearoa New Zealand context, the community arts may be used to redress injustices and imbalances in the community, such as the need to rejuvenate Māori culture and language, or the need to help redress perceived alienation and separation in immigrant communities as is common in South Auckland. Music can be a key part of the expression and experience of islandness, vulnerability and connection in the South Auckland community and musical groups. and events create a more heightened awareness of cultural identity. The MSO, then, is seen as part of the cultural community and has a role to play in the distinctive but sometimes blended cultural life of local citizens.

Both community and professional orchestras can encounter a number of forces from the outside that can disrupt and inhibit sustainable development, and often a careful path is trodden to enable the right kind of process to take place. Preliminary inquiries on the MSO revealed that, right from the beginning of the conception of the orchestra, principles of dialogue and value were embedded in the orchestra's culture – with special attention not only to the important musical values in satisfying musical performances but also attention to human values that cared for and supported the orchestra members themselves. An awareness of the value of both musical and human values within the orchestra culture has meant that a process of constant dialogue and negotiation has taken place.

Educational philosopher Biesta's (2017: 14–15) concept of 'middle ground' is useful here when considering the dialogical space that is needed to be maintained to keep a community orchestra or other community music group sustained and well functioning both musically and humanly. Biesta is interested in articulating the democratic educational or cultural space that he calls 'grown-up-ness', which has to do with 'the alterity and integrity of what and who is other' (2017: 13). He notes that when encountering forces of change, a person or community can make a response and resist or push back. But there is a danger when this kind of push-back becomes so strong that it destroys the potential for future relationships with what is outside. Conversely, a response can be a complete retraction, allowing a new force or idea to takeover completely, and in doing so, destroy the initial organic impulse or desire that

bonded the purpose of the group. The 'middle ground', then, is the space where an ethical and sustainable pathway of resistance and action can be maintained and nurtured, where the integrity of dialogue is kept alive and allowed to be influential. It is a difficult space, and one that is sometimes on the 'border', so to speak, but nevertheless important for ensuring that a healthy and sustainable direction is carefully maintained and fostered through the actions taken by the group. Middle ground thus takes into account the ethical character of the decisions made towards a sustainable future. Sustaining middle ground is a process where decisions are made about the desires of the participants of a community group, what they really want as a community, what they need and how they can go about it together. It also refers to the act of maintaining a healthy and active relationship with forces outside the community that over time can hinder or help the group – this may be a process of either limitation or transformation, something that requires both constant reflection and discernment throughout the community's existence. This notion of middle ground became a key theme in understanding how the MSO has continued to sustain their growth and development as a community orchestra in the face of musical, human, cultural and political dialogue, resistance and interaction.

A dialogue, however, is always a dialogue with some kind of other element – sometimes within and often outside the immediate musical context of the orchestra's focus. In the case of a community orchestra, for instance, it might be the necessity to dialogue with funders, audiences or cultural groups within the orchestra's immediate reach. This is similar to what Rinde and Schei (2017: 27) say, that community music is 'active participation in musical activities that unite musical objectives with paramusical objects'; the intention is to bring together musical focus points with so-called non-musical focus points like those immediately concerned with human interest or finance.

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE ORCHESTRA

When the group calling themselves 'an orchestra' started out it in the community, it did not even closely resemble the normal membership of what is known as a 'classical' orchestra. The standard instrumentation of a modest classical-sized orchestra commonly features two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two trumpets, two horns, a timpani and strings. In addition, the string section would normally have eight first violins, six second violins, four or five violas and cellos and two or three double basses. When MSO started in 1992, a group of interested players held an all-comers weekend workshop in a set-up that was quite different from the norm.

Surprisingly, many string players attended this first workshop and remained part of the group; this was to turn into an incredible strength later on, as it forced the orchestra into large-scale repertoire, something that many other community orchestras could not do. For the workshop, the inaugural administrator spent months rearranging Schubert's Unfinished Symphony so that young children could play easy parts and be part of the symphonic experience from the beginning. There was one horn player who fortunately had two excellent flute and trumpet-playing daughters. Instead of other horns or missing brass parts, band instruments were used with the music especially transposed for them. In addition there were several flutists and clarinetists available. Other more rare instrumentalists, such as bassoon players, came from nearby local groups, such as the Howick School of Music and the Howick-Pakuranga Youth Orchestra in South-East Auckland.

Following the workshop there was a push to form an independent community orchestra with support from the nearby Howick School of Music. Tutors from the school played their instruments in support of the new orchestra, and some brought their students with them; this, too, was unique and was the beginning of a synergy of young and young-at-heart, of professional and community, which much later became a combination of modestly paid and unpaid players within the orchestra. At the beginning there were no paid players; only the conductor and invited guest soloists were paid for their time and work out of concert funds. All organizational and management work was done by volunteers.

After some smaller events, such as open rehearsals for families and friends, the first public concert was staged in 1993. By then, a small but still somewhat unbalanced orchestra was established. Gradually more expert players joined and the orchestra started to balance out. New players who joined were valued for their contributions and the weight and quality that they added to the sound, and they were made to feel special and welcomed. 'A very special spirit' became a catch phrase for the orchestra at this time – something that has continued to this day. This phrase represented the special feeling that members felt in rehearsals, concerts and in gatherings; it captured not only the achievement of making a formal orchestra structure, but from a human angle, the sense of joy, immersion, accomplishment and family that the players and audiences felt in performances and within the culture of the orchestra itself.

One of the most important and ongoing challenges in the early days of the orchestra was establishing a regular funding source plus the related issue of a suitable rehearsal and concert space. Performances began in a local town hall initially, but following negotiations with the local city council, a much larger, purpose-built city facility became available and is now a regular home for the orchestra. While this was a significant milestone for the orchestra, more recently with political changes and the creation of an Auckland 'super-city', the orchestra's regular funding source encountered some resistance and was cut. This remains an ongoing concern and there has had to be considerable readjustment within the orchestra programme to lighten the budget.

The MSO was very soon recognized as a valuable cultural asset to the, then, Manukau City Council; hence the initial name of the orchestra was the Manukau City Symphony Orchestra. It grew in numbers and stature thanks to council support through the chairmanship in the early days of Manukau Councillor Keith Hyland, who believed that every great city should have its own symphony orchestra, and pride was felt by all the Manukau City councillors and its mayor. They revelled in the orchestra's achievements, attended performances, promoted it and supported it financially. During this time of closeness and support with civic leaders in the community the orchestra grew in size and performance standards.

BUILT-IN PEDAGOGY

One feature of the modern classical orchestra is pride and attention to 'excellence' as seen in the capacity of orchestral sections and the orchestra as a whole to perform orchestral works with beauty and precision. However, sometimes in orchestras the hierarchies established between 'better' musicians (often professionals) and those less competent or experienced can result in negative personal attitudes, relationships and job dissatisfaction (Price 2006).

There may be conflicts within an orchestra between philosophical points of view about the music played, based in differing concepts of aesthetic or expressive beauty, cultural meaning or in differing points of meaning between players and audiences about performances.

One of the key features of the MSO has been the way it negotiated past hierarchical notions of perfection in the music and how it sought a more mature view of the significance of its performances in relation to the supportive and living culture of its members, friends and audiences. In terms of sustainability and middle ground, this has been most evident in the way the orchestra has embraced a kind of built-in non-formal pedagogy in its structure – that is, the supportive and constructive real-life mentoring of less experienced orchestra members. For both young and old, the orchestra has become a place where members grow and develop as musicians together in a supportive way. This was viewed as a very natural kind of pedagogical expression, and one that was a strong driver of participant motivation and love for their work with the orchestra. In particular, what stood out was a kind of internal mentoring process at work in the orchestra's sections, where professional and semi-professional players were paired with more amateur and younger inexperienced players. It was as if the more experienced players did not mind working with the less experienced players – in fact they actually got quite a 'kick' out of helping them along and seeing them grow over time. This, to many orchestra members, was a genuine expression of care within the orchestra and was something that was pushed forward and helped the orchestra as a whole remain cohesive and united in vision. This built-in support structure has retained a sense of community through pedagogy and is reflected in the music and the performances in a special way that is gratifying and appealing to audiences. Or to put it differently, a different kind of musical 'excellence' – one infused with an expression of humanity – has sustained the middle ground of pedagogical development and care, which in turn has lifted both the musical and the human value of its performances.

The focus, from the very first all-comers workshop in September 1992, has been firmly on learning, gaining musical and orchestral experience and being together with music. The MSO was, in part, founded to provide a more advanced performance opportunity for young people already participating in local youth orchestras. A particular aim was to give them the means to continue their musical development once they had finished music studies at school. Teachers, trainers and mentors recognized that they would be required to guide the young in their pursuits. To assist this, scholarships were established for younger players based on financial or performance criteria. These financial aids helped maintain the mentoring ethos already in place.

Parallel to this youth recruitment, the MSO welcomed adults wanting to play in a friendly environment, some after several years of non-performance. Newcomers soon settled into the orchestral discipline and realized the benefits and joy of commitment and being part of the team. From the outset it was insisted that professional musicians were needed to guide, assist, coach, teach and support and perform with the orchestra, sitting shoulder to shoulder with other members. This was a departure from the usual youth or community orchestra process where professional coaches come in for a workshop or sectionals to help, but then disappear for the rehearsals and not perform alongside the regular members in concerts. Mentoring opportunities have been valued by both professional musician mentors and less experienced mentees.

The initial goal was that every section was to be led by a professional musician, but a blended effort of both professional and non-professional members held up musical standards overall. The orchestra leader's overall perception of players as musicians and learners together was that there was little distinction between the youth, community players and professionals. The background and age within this mix varied tremendously and was a deliberate approach in order to avoid potentially negative cliché of 'them and us', the ones who 'can' and the ones 'who must learn'. By removing all barriers of age, background, education, experience and skill – at least in terms of attitude and perception – the orchestra started to form a middle ground of like-minded musicians with one common goal: excellent music making together. This love and mutual care still drives the orchestra.

AN ETHIC OF CARE WITHIN THE ORCHESTRA

Community music is often associated with an ethic of care (Lines 2018; Higgins 2012; Noddings 1984), where caring dimensions in music are realized and affirmed as part of the musical action of respect and togetherness. Care, in a sense, is perhaps not so visible in the more competitive or elite professional orchestras, but in many cases may still be there in the background as something that helps bind an orchestra together, depending on the culture of the orchestra, of course. In the MSO, the caring ethic was strongly present; care was not hidden, but freely talked about and enacted by orchestra members. Orchestra members reported that there was a strong 'family bond' that united orchestra members and that they did not just love being in the orchestra for the music (which was certainly important), but there was a sense of care and love for each other. Players and their families were honoured and treated with respect, be they young or old, had a sick loved one or a new baby. There was a real acceptance of difference in the group that people came from different walks of life, and that was considered okay and valued.

The pillar of closeness in this orchestra is the immediate sense of belonging experienced by orchestra members. This is constantly enhanced through a conscious and sincere effort made to make people feel special and valued. Any significant event in players' lives is honoured and affirmed publicly before the break during a rehearsal. Births, deaths, special birthdays, shifting house, somebody being in hospital for long periods – are all commented on in a very respectful manner. If a player moves away they are given a special gift to remember the orchestra and before every concert the person who sold the most tickets also gets a box of chocolates. The chocolates have gone to the same person almost every time, a woman who recently retired in her 80s, a fine professional player and teacher in her own right for many years, who gave her service generously at the end of her career. Many of the older orchestra members get together on weekends to perform chamber music, and the yearly barbeque is always a social highlight. The caring ethos evident in the orchestra was encouraged by the orchestra's leaders right from the beginning, and considerable effort has been expended to keep it in place during times of challenge and personnel change.

MUSICAL AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Finally, a key aspect of the sustainability of the MSO has been the way in which the music chosen and the concerts played have maintained a dialogue with the diverse ethical and cultural groups in the wider community of South Auckland. The orchestra members see themselves as part of a very strong,

extended whānau (Māori term for family), and bonding with the wider community is crucial.

Before its demise, the Manukau City Council (now part of the Auckland super-city) held an outdoor concert every year with the usual mix of pop, rap, jazz and classical music. The MSO would contribute easy listening classics and popular flute and orchestra arrangements at these civic events. The MSO has also supported the wider community through working closely with other local arts groups, such as the South Auckland Choral Society, the Auckland Choral Society, the Music Association of Auckland (Chinese choir), Māori, Samoan and Tongan musicians, and on occasion, Cook Island drummers. Auckland is one of the most ethnically diverse cities in the South Pacific region, and the orchestra leaders believe that it is important that this is acknowledged and that new and creative ways of working together are found. This sense of cultural value is also strongly supported by orchestra members.

When the orchestra shifted into their permanent venue, a special work was commissioned from local composer, Leonie Holmes. Leonie grew up in the area and her husband played in the orchestra for many years, and so she had a very good understanding of the orchestra community. Her captivating work *Journey* depicted life in South Auckland and incorporated many of the local cultures. Five choirs from various church communities joined in the performance, including Samoan, Tongan and Chinese and Pākehā (European) choirs. A beautiful and poignant Māori ceremony opened the concert, followed by the Prime Minister conducting the first few bars of Handel's Hallelujah. A special night to remember, too, for one of the soloists, Tongan Loata Mahe, who performed solo violin for Lalo's violin concerto *Symphonie Espagnole*. Loata had started with the orchestra in the back row of the second violins as a young girl and continued on to study music at the University of Auckland. Everybody was very proud of her, especially her large family. She won one of the first orchestral scholarships to help pay for lessons, a new bow and transport to concerts. That night the famous New Zealand pianist Michael Houston also formed a bond with the orchestra, and he has returned many times since then as a soloist.

A unique collaboration was with Samoan conductor Opeloge Ah Sam for a concert entitled *We Are Pasifika* to celebrate South Auckland's Pacific community. The concert featured many members of Samoan, Tongan, Cook Islands and Fijian Church Community Choirs, the MVE (multicultural) choir, various cultural groups from South Auckland, a popular radio host, and prominent soloists. The newly established Sistema Aotearoa string orchestra contributed, too, with well over 60 young players aged 4–12 years. It was a free concert in the very large stadium, and families from all walks of life and cultures came to listen.

Another significant project was the performance of *The Yellow River Cantata* with the Music Association of Auckland Chinese Choir. On top of the 60-strong Auckland-based choir, a visiting choir of more than 40 singers from a Chinese Opera House was added. The presence of these choirs provided outstanding, first-class soloists, and significant cultural interest in the community. The concert was documented by television stations and several local newspapers, including the Chinese Herald. The first half featured a Chinese pianist playing Tchaikovsky's piano concerto No. 1. Repeat concerts were sell-outs. Many friendships were formed from these concerts and are still warm and strong today, some ten years later.

In 2016, after two years of negotiating with the local iwi (Māori tribe), the orchestra programmed a concert entitled *Kotahitanga-Unity*. It was a rich and rewarding journey through music of New Zealand, and composers from around the Pacific Rim (New Zealand, Japanese, Chinese and Australian) explored themes of earth, community, unity, resilience and identity. The concert was to feature a new work by composer Te Ahukaramu Charles Royal. The work explored the history of the Māori King Movement and the possible lessons for succeeding generations. Unfortunately, funding cuts from the council and other local bodies that year meant that the orchestra was forced to cancel this special event. It was the first time in its 25-year history that it had to cancel an event, but the financial risk to the society was considered too great.

The orchestra gave audiences the option to get a refund on their tickets. Fewer than a handful of people asked for their money back despite several hundred tickets having been sold; all others ticket holders donated their tickets to the orchestra. It was a most heart-warming experience for all. Contracted soloists and the venue chipped in, too, and so there were no bad feelings after what could have been a major embarrassment and disappointment. Happily the orchestra was able to perform this beautiful work the following year as part of their normal subscription series with conductor Tianyi Lu. This beautiful and touching performance featured in a radio programme on Radio New Zealand.

These different cultural programmes reflect not only the orchestra's commitment to honouring and respecting different cultures in the South Auckland community, but the notion that a 'classical' orchestra can and should embrace a broader range of music than the usual and expected western European historical repertoire. Conscious programming of diverse and culturally specific works (including works that honour indigenous music) has held together a middle ground of cultural tolerance and a sustainable respect for musical difference. Maintaining this direction has been a difficult and challenging road for the orchestra, especially given the timing of funding cuts and other pressures impacting on the pragmatics of concert programming. However, a commitment to push through on the orchestra's cultural programming has helped the orchestra maintain a sense of respect and value in the wider community and Auckland city at large.

CONCLUSION

The stories and process of historical development that emerged out of the MSO case study research reflected a constant process of negotiation and dialogue through some very difficult circumstances of vulnerability, financial need and political change. Despite these challenges, the orchestra has continued a sustainable line of development and service that could serve as a potential model for other community music groups as they seek to maintain and negotiate the spaces of middle ground through ongoing dialogue with their own communities, and through their commitment to the human and musical values embedded in community music. In the specific context of the MSO, a key sustainable element has been the built-in mentoring structure in the orchestra that has defused any perceived separation between the more professional players and those who are less experienced. In addition, a caring community spirit has continued to help orchestral members remain personally identified with their 'musical home' – the place and space where they can

safely continued to enjoy a rich and fulfilling musical life together as musicians with different needs and cultural backgrounds. This strong feeling of identity is close to the Māori notion of whakawhanaungatanga alluded to earlier. This strength has aided the orchestra and helped it to sustain middle ground, the dialogical space that has dealt with forces of change impacting on the orchestra over the years. Further to this, the MSO has actively engaged in its cultural community through its different commissioned and special concerts that have honoured different cultural threads in their community. Over the years this has involved local composers, and ethnic groups such as Māori, Pacific island and Chinese communities. These concerts have forged a new middle ground for the classical community orchestra, one that has reached beyond the European roots of the orchestra's inception to a more sustainable paramusical space of relationality and ethical value.

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