

THE ORCHESTRA

The issues raised in numerous letters and petitions received by the Committee about the place and the role of the Orchestra and the public concern with decisions and involvement of the Board and management in matters other than the Orchestra were creating a climate of mistrust and tension. It is against this background that the Standing Committee passed a motion in December 1989 to study the role of the Centre, to establish a Sub-Committee on the National Arts Centre in May 1990, and to hold hearings in early June 1990.

The National Arts Centre Orchestra is the only resident company left at the Centre. It alone enables the Centre to fulfill the following object of its legislation: "In furtherance of its objects...the Corporation may...encourage and assist in the development of performing arts companies resident at the Centre". The Orchestra plays an important educational role in the National Capital Region through its student matinee concerts, high school music series, musicians in the schools, pre-school music academy, open rehearsals and pre-concert talks, cushion concerts, Carleton University concert lecture series, University of Ottawa "World of Music" series, music instruction given to private pupils, to students at the University of Ottawa, Carleton University and the Hull Conservatory and coaching or conducting in the National Capital String Academy. Many of the Orchestra's musicians are members of seven other musical ensembles performing in the community. The Orchestra reaches outside the region by touring regularly and by its recordings. Of course, this long list of achievements is in addition to its regular concerts. As the only resident company, the Orchestra accomplishes a highly visible and respected role in the community.

During the 1989 contract renewal negotiations between the Centre and the musicians, it became known that options for the establishment of the Orchestra as an independent institution of the Centre were being considered, in keeping with the recommendation made by the Nielsen Task Force. It also became known that a reduction in the number of players and in the number of weeks of work were being considered. A strike by the members of the Orchestra lasted from October 1989 until the settlement of December 1989. At the time, the Board of Trustees issued a statement reaffirming the place and the role of the Orchestra in the programming of the Centre.

According to the testimony given by Mr. Hamilton Southam, the first Director General of the Centre, Mr. Alain Gourd, Deputy Minister of the Department of Communications, concerned for the welfare of the Orchestra, asked Mr. Southam in April 1989 "to explore the possibility of creating a private group to finance and manage the Orchestra."⁽¹⁵⁾ The group formed by Mr. Southam for this purpose included the Hon. Mitchell Sharp and the Hon. Gordon Robertson. Their efforts stopped in June 1989 after finding out that the government could only find part of the federal funding needed to sustain the Orchestra and