



THIS WEEK'S PROGRAM

February 27, 2024

2023-2024 Board Members

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Foundation Joe Morris

Programs Andy Dinkin



David Fisk, President and CEO, Charlotte Symphony

by **Susie Masotti**

Jim Mannix introduced Tuesday's Speaker – David Fisk. David Fisk joined the Charlotte Symphony in August of 2020 after many years with the Richmond Symphony. Born in Great Britain, he studied piano, cello, and organ before transitioning to the administrative side of the business of music. He had the honor of serving as General Manager of the Orchestra of St. Johns and was a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. His 18-year tenure in Richmond saw growth in their endowment by more than 200%. He is married to Anne, and they have a son and daughter. With his free time, David enjoys scuba diving, motorcycle riding, and horseback riding.

David thanked everyone for welcoming him today and took the time to provide a little background on how he came to Charlotte. His first interview for his position was in mid-March of 2020, as we all know the world shut down just a few days later and his next interview was not until June of 2020. After joining the staff in August of 2020, as a group the Symphony found ways to bring live music back and keep all 65 musicians on staff. There were barriers such as learning that wind instruments could spread the disease so new and innovative ways of providing music. David is thankful for the many local, state, federal, and private grants that kept the symphony staff and musicians intact.

David's time in Belfast, Ireland (where he served as Chief Executive of the Ulster Orchestra) was the period when tensions were calming, and he was able to witness firsthand the ability of music to bring opposing forces together in a unique manner. They arranged for Luciano Pavarotti to

provide an outdoor concert that truly showed that through music, those who oppose each other can stand side by side and appreciate the same thing.

David and his team at Charlotte Symphony are always keeping their eyes on the transformative power of music by providing different programs throughout our area. Their strategic areas of focus primarily center on learning as central to their mission. He believes that education about music should be available to everyone. The Educational programs available through the CSO are many and vastly different. CSO provides after-school program learning in CMS schools and through community programming. CSO musicians are regularly at the children's hospital, and it is provided not only for the children in the hospital but also for their parents and the hospital staff.

The CSO Youth Orchestra's programs have been in place for more than 15 years. David is looking forward to the upcoming Music and the Holocaust – this program includes pieces written by composers who wrote music while they were in concentration camps. Musicians use this program to keep the memory of the Holocaust alive for a new generation that have limited knowledge of this awful part of our history.

Kwame Ryan will serve for the next 4 years as the music director of the Charlotte Symphony Orchestra – his hiring has made history as the first Black Music Director of the CSO. His appointment to this position was unanimous by a committee comprised of CSO staff, musicians, and board of directors. He is literally bringing a “world” of knowledge to his new position.

New programs and concerts coming in 2024 include the 100th anniversary of Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue, Baughan Williams' A Sea Symphony, and Kwame Ryan conducting Tchaikovsky and Brahms. There is also a new way for the Orchestra to get out into the community – the CSO Road Show, a new mobile stage for the Charlotte Symphony. This will be a traveling concert series that will bring pop-up music experiences into neighborhoods and the music played will be tailored to each neighborhood they visit. The 40-foot trailer takes the CSO musicians to the streets, parks, and plazas for free walk-up concerts. The traveling concert series fits in with the CSO's guiding principles to remove barriers to help the public engage with arts and culture. The mobile roadshow will also be utilized by the Charlotte Opera. A local artist competition was held for the wrapping of the artwork and a Mexican American created the backdrop of the Road Show stage. There will be 5 concerts this spring and 6 in the fall and local artists from the communities they play in may be included.

The “Immersive Experience” phenomenon is sweeping the country and CSO is proud to have received a grant for experimentation and building new audiences. This award was followed by a CSO \$5 million endowment for Digital Innovation just months later to enhance the experience. The electronic dance music programs are designed as late-night performances and fuse live music with electronic music and should appeal to a young audience. When David was working in Belfast, he had the honor of participating in an immersive experience. He witnessed an elderly gentleman who had Alzheimer's who was so visibly moved by the experience that he

spoke for the first time in many years. He convinced some of the musicians to return with him to his apartment and there showed him his Oscar for music composition for “The Red Shoes.” This shows the healing power of music.

The CSO’s popular Movie Series will return with Star Wars: The Force Awakens and Jaws this year. In a more non-traditional move, the CSO is introducing the On Tap Series – musicians will be performing at Triple C Beverage as well as Town Brewing Company with more to come.

David took questions from the audience including what we would expect from the new Electronic Dance Music program. He is very excited about this program as there is a large audience interested in EDM – the CSO will be held on May 9 and 10th at the Black Box Theater and will also feature local artists' work projected on the walls.

A member asked how musicians feel about the “extra” programs that are being added. David replied that the CSO pushes the boundaries of orchestral music and musicians are included on every committee making decisions about programming, programs, and events. They are always involved and excited. One guest expressed concern about attending large public events with unfortunate shootings in venues across the country. David replied that the CSO does everything they can to protect not only their musicians and staff, but the audience in attendance and reminded us that all of us should be vigilant about safety all the time.

David was asked about how we can find non-traditional orchestral music and he answered that Candlelit is putting out great programming and is an easy version of what the CSO is trying to do – all these experiences encourage current and future fans of orchestral music to participate.

David was asked why he made the switch from being a musician to being an administrator and his honest reply was that he did not have the skill to become a soloist, so he transitioned to administration. Because his wife is a musician, his work in administration provides stability for his family and allows all his family members to pursue their own dreams.

A recording of the meeting can be found here: <https://vimeo.com/917543851>
The program introduction begins at approximately 21 minutes and 5 seconds.