

Peter Paulson: In the Beginning...

In the beginning, Harry Pinchin had the idea of doing a community band in Calgary and thought Dennis Orr would be the guy to get it going. I was president of the Bishop Pinkham Band Parents Association where Dennis taught, and my wife Ildi and I had come to know him very well. Dennis proposed the idea in the winter of 1987–88. As we needed both a rehearsal space and a second director, Dennis suggested Rod Pauls at Crescent Heights High School. Also to improve exposure, Dennis suggested Lyle Bennett at St. Johns music as someone who might be interested. After several smaller meetings and discussions, in the spring of 1988, Rod, Dennis, Lyle, Ildi, and I met to discuss the formation of the group.

We decided to do a newspaper insert in the Calgary Herald in some districts in the city to find interested members. We spent \$4000 doing that, and the result on the first night was over 40 interested players arrived at Crescent Heights.

I had known Harry Pinchin for many years, as he was my trumpet teacher when I was a child. As I was writing the articles of association for the CMS (Calgary Music Society), Dennis, Ildi and I went to Edmonton to discuss the ideas with Harry. He had several strong recommendations, but the most pivotal one was to ensure that the music directors had significant influence on the operation of the Society. This advice came from the then 25 years of experience that Harry had enjoyed with the Cosmo band. He discovered that the general structure of the Cosmo Society was not particularly helpful in running the bands, and often found himself struggling with the Societies' board.

As a result of that advice, the CMS articles of association gave significant powers to the music directors. The organization was also registered as a charity under Canada Revenue Act, and to my knowledge, still enjoys that status today. The official status was that of a Registered Society in the Province of Alberta.

Having had cash flow issues in other volunteer organizations, I also opted to ensure that weak boards could not undo years of fundraising with poor decisions. I did so by placing an item in the articles of association that forbade any board to budget a deficit in a fiscal year. This was designed to ensure that

the reserves of the Society would constantly increase from year to year. At the time we were hoping that eventually such a reserve would allow us to buy our own equipment, and maybe allow for us to rent commercial space.

I also recall that the first music directors offered to work for free as we were starting. After a few rehearsals, I suggested to the first board that the directors be paid right from the start to the extent that we could afford. This was done and has hopefully contributed to the success of the organization in drawing the best directors in the city.

I well remember that about 90% of the volunteer work for the Society always seemed to be done by about 10% of the members. We were fortunate that we had so many years of service from some of our original members. We always seemed to lose about 30% of our members each year, and needed to replace that number. Doing the math, it would seem that we must have had around 2000 members go through by now.