

Barnaby Kerekes

TORONTO, ON · 416-525-6473 · BARNABY.KEREKES@GMAIL.COM

TORONTO, AUGUST 31, 2026

Dear Ms. McGregor, Ms. Peloso, and the Search Committee,

It is with great enthusiasm that I submit my candidacy for President and Chief Executive Officer of the Vancouver Symphony Society. The VSO is where my musical life began in earnest: I earned my Bachelor of Music at UBC studying with Douglas Sparkes, the VSO's Bass Trombonist, was mentored by Gordon Cherry the VSO's principal Trombonist, and performed with the Orchestra by invitation in 2005. I spent my student years working front-of-house at the Chan Centre, organized my own youth orchestra performances, and have become a passionate educator. My experience covers a tremendous range of what it means to bring performances to life. My time in Vancouver taught me what a great orchestra can mean — and does mean — to the people of its city. The opportunity to serve that institution now, at a moment when it is asking searching questions about the future, is one I approach with great curiosity and excitement.

For the past 23 years I have built and led the ABC Academy of Music in Toronto — growing it from an \$8,000 first year to a quarter-million-dollar operation, from 4 teachers to 20, from under 50 students to 200 across 11 locations, through the 2008 recession and a global pandemic, without interruption and without debt. I know precisely what it takes to run a music school as a growth engine rather than a cost centre: curriculum acquisition and licensing, retention economics (we sustain 70–80% year-over-year), targeted marketing with measured outcomes, and the disciplined transition from credit-based to cash-positive operations. The position identifies the VSO School of Music — nearly 3,000 students strong — as a strategic lever with untapped potential. Building exactly that, from nothing, has been my life's work and your view of its potential is aligned with mine.

I am equally a musician who has sat inside orchestras — as a member of the National Youth Orchestra of Canada, the Vancouver Philharmonic, and the Brampton Symphony, and across contract work with orchestras throughout British Columbia and Ontario. I have held musicians' union membership, worked in the unionized environment of the Chan Centre, and served a term there in temporary management on contract — so a collective agreement is familiar ground to me from both sides of the table. I have lived the musician's side of the stage, and I have spent two decades as an employer of musicians whose trust I have had to build, earn, and keep. Building and maintaining this cohesion between musicians, management, and boards is not an abstraction to me; it is the daily craft of leading people whose work is their identity. I bring a practical, multi-stakeholder understanding and a genuine willingness to work with every side at the table.

In recent years I have also founded and led the development of a software platform that runs music-education businesses end to end — scheduling, enrolment, billing, and client communication. That work has made me fluent in the data-informed, digitally capable leadership the position calls for, and it shapes how I would approach audience development, donor stewardship, and the School's growth: measure honestly, test cheaply, scale what works. In the last 18 months this has also pivoted hard to leveraging the power of emergent AI tools to tremendously accelerate development, streamline business operations, and to enhance and expedite planning across strategy, finances, and a range of other areas. I believe these tools can change how arts organizations plan, market, and operate — and having already led that change in my own organizations, I am deeply enthusiastic about empowering the VSO to lead with it too: letting technology carry the routine work machines do well so more of everyone's time goes to music, audiences, and real relationships that make people connect and stay.

Whatever chapter the committee envisions next, it will be built on trust — trust I am absolutely confident I can earn. I already come to that work wholeheartedly and stay through the hard parts, where I have found my most creative solutions tend to be born. I have never stopped studying my craft, and the question I most want to keep learning about is this one: how can we make orchestral music find its way into the daily lives of regular people — not as a special event, but as something that makes life better every day. That is the most exciting work I can imagine an orchestra doing.

I would be delighted to speak with you and the committee. Thank you for your time and kind consideration.

Barnaby Kerekes



VANCOUVER SYMPHONY SOCIETY · PRESIDENT & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Barnaby Kerekes

A builder of music institutions, coming home.

[Click to view this application online](#)

To the Search Committee.

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Barnaby Kerekes

TRACK RECORD & EXPERIENCE

Every chair at the table.

I have led as a conductor, run a business as its CEO, taught as an educator, played as an orchestral musician, governed as a board member, and built as a founder. Each perspective sharpens the others: the conductor's ear for ensemble, the operator's discipline with money, the teacher's patience, the player's memory of what it feels like on the other side of the podium, the director's duty of care, the founder's fearlessness about the new. When a meaningful opportunity appears, I move toward it — that habit is how every one of these chairs was earned, and it is how I would lead the VSO.

CEO, 23 years

ABC ACADEMY OF MUSIC, TORONTO

Built a private music school from an \$8,000 first year to a quarter-million-dollar operation — 4 teachers to 20, under 50 students to 200, one location to 11 — through the 2008 recession and a global pandemic, without interruption and without debt. 70–80% client retention, 4.9–5.0 ratings, acquisition and integration of Maple Leaf Music Together (2019).

CEO EDUCATOR

Board Member, Performer & Substitute Conductor

TORONTO CONCERT BAND

Serving on the board while playing in and conducting the ensemble — including half of the Fall 2026 concert at Toronto's Glenn Gould Studio. A community institution's full life, seen from every seat in the room.

BOARD MEMBER CONDUCTOR

Orchestral Musician & Theatre Employee

NYO CANADA · VANCOUVER PHILHARMONIC · BRAMPTON SYMPHONY · FREELANCER

Member of the National Youth Orchestra of Canada (1999–2002), invited performer with the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra (2005), and contract work with orchestras across British Columbia and Ontario. Musicians' union member, and unionized staff — later temporary management on contract — at the Chan Centre.

ORCHESTRAL MUSICIAN UNION MEMBER MANAGEMENT: UNION ENVIRONMENT

Assistant Manager, Band & Orchestral

LONG & MCQUADE MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

Canada's largest musical-instrument retailer. Promoted after three years for innovations in events management, merchandising, and sales; top performer in departmental sales; recruited internationally renowned artists for an in-house clinic series.

INDUSTRY MANAGEMENT

Founder — ongoing beta project

MUSIC-EDUCATION SOFTWARE PLATFORM

Founded and lead the ongoing development of a platform, now in beta, that runs music-education businesses end to end — scheduling, enrolment, billing, and client communication. Measure honestly, test cheaply, scale what works.

FOUNDER

What the position asks. What I bring.

The 2026 specification is refreshingly candid about what the VSO needs next. Each of its stated priorities is answered here first with a matching, verifiable piece of my record — and then, in italics, with where I would take that work.

To serve the VSO now — at a moment when it is asking searching questions — sounds engaging and exciting: a true opportunity to shape and impact the future in ways that maintain the legacy and break new ground toward an ever more relevant orchestra in the city's cultural landscape.

Rebuilding trust with musicians, with bargaining ahead

I have sat on both sides of that table: an orchestral musician and musicians' union member, unionized staff and then temporary contract management at the Chan Centre, and for two decades an employer of musicians whose trust had to be built and kept. I would come to bargaining early, transparently, and in person — no surprises is the operating rule.

Year one is a listening year, conducted in person: every section, every department, the union, the School's faculty, all three boards. Trust built in that first year is what every other ambition here is spent from.

Cultural stabilization and conduct beyond question

Twenty-three years leading the same institution, with 70–80% of clients and a core of teachers choosing to stay year after year, is the longest character reference I can offer. Culture is repaired by daily conduct and accountability that does not wait for public pressure.

Integrity as infrastructure: clear policy, visible accountability, and conduct that holds on the ordinary days — until the VSO is the sector's reference point for how an orchestra treats its people.

Financial sustainability and revenue diversification

I grew an \$8,000 first year into a quarter-million-dollar operation through a recession and a pandemic, without debt — diversifying revenue through curriculum licensing, acquisition (Maple Leaf Music Together, 2019), and a disciplined move to cash-positive operations with reserves.

A revenue base broad enough that no single season, sponsor, or grant can destabilise it: earned income from the School, real reserves, and new lines tested small before they are scaled.

The School of Music as an engine for growth

Building and scaling exactly that kind of school is my life's work: enrolment growth, retention economics, credentialed and licensed programs, and making every student household a symphony household. Few candidates in any pool have run this exact business.

The School as the orchestra's second stage — nearly 3,000 students who arrive as learners and stay as audience, players, donors, and the musicians of the next generation.

Donor confidence through the leadership transition

Two decades of relationship-first leadership — families who stayed 10+ years, institutional partners across school boards and civic bodies. I would personally carry the major-donor portfolio through the change and tie giving to futures donors can see.

Donors give to people and to purpose. Every key relationship paired with continuity, and every ask tied to a future they can picture: the School, touring, the next Music Director era.

Equity, diversity, and access through artistic culture

I have spent 23 years running a music school in one of the most diverse cities in the world — families across dozens of languages, faiths, incomes, and abilities, taught in 11 neighbourhoods rather than one address. I am a committed champion of equality and diversity through artistic culture: who gets taught, who gets hired, and whose music is heard are leadership decisions, and I have made them deliberately for two decades.

A VSO whose stage, faculty, staff, and repertoire look and sound like Vancouver — pursued through the School as the widest door, through listening first to Indigenous and equity-deserving artists and communities, and through partnerships built to last rather than announced once.

Data-informed, digitally capable leadership

I founded and lead a software platform that runs music-education businesses end to end, and have spent the last 18 months applying emergent AI tools across operations, planning, and marketing. Measure honestly, test cheaply, scale what works.

Free and community programming as the front door, honest audience data as the hallway that turns a first visit into a subscription — technology carrying the routine work so more of everyone's time goes to music, audiences, and the city.

REFERENCES

People who know my work.

Beginning with three members of the VSO itself — and a letter from the late Bramwell Tovey, the VSO's Music Director for eighteen years, written in support of my work on the podium.

VSO Vancouver Symphony Orchestra

Gordon Cherry

RETIRED PRINCIPAL TROMBONIST, VANCOUVER SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Andrew Poirier

SECOND TROMBONIST, VANCOUVER SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Natasha Boyko

CELLIST, VANCOUVER SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Contact details for VSO referees supplied on request.

Reference letter — Bramwell Tovey, Music Director of the VSO 2000–2018

PDF, INCLUDED WITH THIS APPLICATION

tcb Toronto Concert Band

Ken Hazlett

CO-MUSIC DIRECTOR, TORONTO CONCERT BAND

416-358-5298

kbhazlett {at} gmail.com

Les Dobbin, O.Ont.

CO-MUSIC DIRECTOR, TORONTO CONCERT BAND

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Tony Field

PRESIDENT, TORONTO CONCERT BAND

416-841-2472

president {at} torontoconcertband.com

Artistic & Professional

Elizabeth Raum, S.O.M.

COMPOSER · RETIRED PRINCIPAL OBOIST, REGINA SYMPHONY

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Stacey Taylor

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF ACCOUNTING, UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA

902-293-4959

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uOttawa

THE NEXT STEP

Let's talk about the VSO's next chapter.

Thank you for your time and kind consideration — I would be delighted to speak with the committee, and I am happy to answer any questions in the meantime.

[See this application online](#)

[The résumé on its own](#)

TELEPHONE

416 525 6473

EMAIL

barnaby.kerekes@gmail.com



BONUS: PROGRAMMING COLLABORATION

Ideas I would bring to the table.

Programming is the Music Director's and the artistic team's work, not the CEO's — but a CEO who cannot think in programmes cannot help build them, fund them, or sell them. These eight are offered as collaboration starters: four adapted from programmes I drafted for a music-director search, four new for Vancouver. They lean deliberately on First Nations and Canadian music, and on streams that open the hall to audiences the subscription series will never reach on its own.

01

Dance, Dance, Dance

Dance forms drawn from across the Americas and Eurasia

CANADIAN COMMISSION

■ Commission: *Immigrant Dances* — Elizabeth Raum (proposed)

■ Arturo Márquez — *Danzón No. 2*

■ Alexander Borodin — *Polovtsian Dances* (from *Prince Igor*)

■ Camille Saint-Saëns — *Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso*, Op. 28

- Built for a city of immigrants: each dance on the programme is paired with a Vancouver community that dances it, invited into the lobby before the concert and onto the stage in the pre-show.
- A commission from a senior Canadian composer anchors the evening in living Canadian repertoire rather than souvenir programming.

02

Northern Voices — Elisapie

The Inuk singer-songwriter Elisapie, in two contrasting concerts

INDIGENOUS ARTIST COLLABORATION

DOUBLE FEATURE

TOURING

■ Concert 1 — familiar pop hits reimagined in Inuktitut by Elisapie, the orchestra behind her in new orchestrations, paired with a Canadian orchestral work by an Inuk composer or with an Inuk focus (possible commission)

■ Concert 2 — Elisapie's own catalogue in new orchestral settings, paired with a second Canadian work rooted in Inuk voice and story

■ Scored for a core-orchestra footprint so the pairing can travel across British Columbia

- Programme the reimagined-pop concert as a Sunday matinee so young audiences can attend — or run a micro version built for children, sponsored to be free. The VSO's future audience meets genuine Canadian culture early.
- A school-partnered evening edition: dinner, an orchestral set, and a late set — the concert hall as the best night out in the city, not a formal occasion to be endured.

03

4 + 4 + 4

Three works built around the number four

PROVINCIAL COLLABORATION RECORDING PROJECT

- Robert Schumann — *Konzertstück* for Four Horns and Orchestra, Op. 86
- Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart — Horn Concerto No. 4 in E-flat, K. 495
- Johannes Brahms — Symphony No. 4 in E minor, Op. 98

- The Schumann asks for four virtuoso horns and is almost never programmed. Invite principal horns from orchestras across British Columbia — Victoria, Kamloops, Okanagan — to stand in front of the VSO for it.
- The VSO as the province's convening orchestra rather than only its largest: a recording project, a touring item, and a genuine relationship with the regional field.

04

Canadian Brass in Vancouver

A two-concert collaboration with the Canadian Brass

DOUBLE FEATURE RECORDING PROJECT COMMISSION

- Concert 1 — Canadian Brass: a stand-alone evening (the quintet alone)
- Concert 2 — Solo showcase: the Brass principals as featured soloists with the orchestra
- Repertoire built around brass-and-orchestra showpieces, arranged in conversation with the Brass

- The stand-alone evening opens a commissioning opportunity: a new Canadian work written for each of the five players.
- Both concerts are strong recording candidates, and the education-series tie-in puts world-class brass players in front of School of Music students in the same week.

05

Cultural Festival

An annual festival built around one community at a time

PLACEHOLDER CONCEPT AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

- A festival week each season devoted to the music of one of Vancouver's communities — repertoire, guest artists, food, film, and partner organisations from that community
- Every second year the focus is First Nations: Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh artists and stories first, with the programme shaped with those communities rather than about them
- Inaugural edition: Hungarian music — Bartók, Kodály, Ligeti, Liszt, and living Hungarian-Canadian voices

- The festival makes the orchestra a host rather than a presenter: each edition builds a permanent relationship with a community that may never have seen itself on the Orpheum stage.
- Rotating focus keeps the format renewable and fundable; the First Nations cadence makes the commitment structural rather than occasional.

06

Ashkenaz West

Bringing Toronto's Ashkenaz Festival to Vancouver

PLACEHOLDER CONCEPT **NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP**

- A test collaboration with Ashkenaz — North America's largest festival of Jewish and Yiddish culture — staged as a Vancouver edition with the VSO at its centre
 - One weekend to begin: an orchestral concert, a klezmer late night, and community programming with local partners
 - Designed as the first step of an ongoing partnership, not a one-off import
-
- A proven festival brand lowers the risk of building a new audience from nothing, and gives the VSO a national partner with an existing artist roster.
 - If the test weekend works, the model repeats: bring a strong Canadian festival west, host it with the orchestra, and keep the relationship.

07

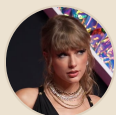
MegaMax Concerts, Recordings & Community Residencies

One or two arena-scale collaborations a year, with the orchestra behind the biggest act we can book — and the artist in the community for the week

PLACEHOLDER CONCEPT **REVENUE PROJECT** **RECORDING PROJECT** **EDUCATION**

- One to two events per season: a stadium-or-arena-scale artist, backed by the VSO, in a concert built and recorded as an event in its own right
- Every booking carries a residency: the visiting artist and their band lead youth workshops in the days around the concert, written into the engagement rather than offered as a favour
- Three equal audiences for that residency — at-risk communities, young people across the Greater Vancouver area, and students of the VSO School of Music — with the artist appearing in each, not only at the School
- Target: at least triple the revenue and the take-home pay of a normal week for the musicians, with residuals from the recording
- Strategic goal: pull major artists and labels back toward working with orchestras — and make the VSO the first orchestra they call

ARTISTS WE WOULD GO AFTER



Taylor Swift



Rihanna



Snoop Dogg



Dr. Dre



Beyoncé



Jay-Z



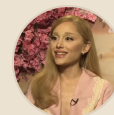
Lady Gaga



Alicia Keys



Ed Sheeran



Ariana Grande



Bruno Mars



Adele



Billie Eilish

A wish list, not a booking. Photographs via Wikimedia Commons (iHeartRadioCA · SIGMA · Diego Serrano · Riceblades · Raph_PH · Photo Courtesy of NYS Senate Media Services · Carlos M. Vazquez II · PhilipRomanoPhoto · Harald Krichel · Barbie Simons · slgckgc · Marc E. · Raph_PH), used under their Creative Commons licences.

- The economics are the point: an event of this scale funds ordinary seasons, pays musicians materially better, and reaches an audience that would never buy a subscription first.
- The residency is what makes the week matter locally: the same artist who fills an arena on Saturday is in a school gym on Thursday, and the young people in that room meet the orchestra alongside them.
- Splitting the workshops evenly across at-risk communities, the wider region, and the School keeps the outreach from collecting where it is easiest to deliver — and gives School students a peer relationship with artists at the top of the industry.
- The recording extends the reach far past the room, and the residual stream keeps paying after the tour buses leave.

08

Recording & Juno Pursuits

Commissioning and recording as a standing priority

PLACEHOLDER CONCEPT CANADIAN MUSIC RECORDING PROJECT

- A deliberate lift in commissioning new Canadian work, with each commission written toward a recording rather than a single performance
 - Double albums pairing standard repertoire with the commissions — the familiar work sells the record, the new work earns the notice
 - Awards and national profile treated as an outcome of the plan, not a hope: Juno and Prix Opus submissions built into the season calendar
-
- A standing recording and commissioning priority strengthens every grant application and special-funding request the VSO makes.
 - It also gives Canadian composers a reason to bring their best work to this orchestra first.
-

Barnaby Kerekes

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PROFILE

CEO and founder with 23 years of continuous leadership in music education and the performing arts. Built the ABC Academy of Music from an \$8K first year to a ~\$250K-per-annum operation across 11 locations; founder of a music-education software platform; orchestral musician trained at UBC and U of T. Track record spans P&L ownership, acquisition and integration, curriculum and program development, team building, and the building and preserving of vital professional and institutional relationships.

SELECTED SKILLS & ACHIEVEMENTS

Strategic & Fiscal Leadership: 23 consecutive profitable years of operation; disciplined transition to cash-positive operations with reserves; challenges treated as opportunities in disguise.

Revenue Growth & Diversification: Grew top-line ~30x; acquired and integrated a complementary business (Maple Leaf Music Together, 2019); licensed and launched curricula that broadened market and margin.

People Development: Employer, mentor, speaker, and trainer to established and emerging musicians for two decades; codified operational and contractual standards that keep professional relationships clear.

Data-Informed & Digital Leadership: Founder of a software platform for music-education operations; marketing and retention decisions driven by measured outcomes.

Institutional Relations: Managed relationships spanning school boards, law enforcement, multi-location private daycares, and publicly funded school and care environments.

CAREER HISTORY

2003–PRESENT

ABC Academy of Music • CEO

ABC Academy is a consistently growing private music school in central Toronto which has operated uninterrupted for 23 years, grossing near \$250K per annum — a substantial increase from its first year of \$8K. The role is responsible for strategy, fiscal management, training, marketing, and sales systems, with strong P&L and Balance Sheet performance throughout, including the 2008 recession and the pandemic. Specifics include:

- Growth from 4 teachers to 20, and from under 50 students to 200, from one location in Toronto to 11 in the region
- Customer retention of 70–80% in both general and pandemic conditions, with 4.9–5.0 online ratings across platforms
- Acquisition and integration of Maple Leaf Music Together business operations and locations in 2019
- Moved from credit-based operation to cash-on-hand operations with a corporate savings and investment reserve
- Acquired, developed, and marketed new curricula to diversify revenue, add margin, and broaden intake age-ranges
- Highly targeted marketing with measured outcomes across print, CPC, web, email, and phone; strong organic search performance
- A historic commitment to orchestral instruments including Oboe, Flute, Bassoon, Percussion, and Harp

2024–PRESENT

Hinna • Founder

Founded and lead the development of a software platform that runs music-education businesses end to end — scheduling, enrolment, billing, and client communication — bringing data-informed operating discipline to the sector I have worked in for two decades.

2026–PRESENT

Toronto Concert Band • Board Member & Substitute Conductor

Serving on the board while performing in and conducting the ensemble, including half of the Fall 2026 concert at the Glenn Gould Studio, Toronto. Conducting workshop with Mark Shapiro, Hamilton, August 2026.

2004–2008

Long & McQuade Musical Instruments • Sales Consultant, then Assistant Manager, Band & Orchestral

Canada's largest musical-instrument retailer. Promoted after three years for innovations in events management, merchandising, and sales; top performer in total departmental sales; recruited internationally renowned artists for an in-house clinic series; mentored and onboarded new team members and co-op students.

2001–2004

Chan Centre for the Performing Arts (UBC) • Front of House Coordinator (interim); Usher Captain

Interim management in a unionized university venue: schedules, trained staff, official reporting, cash handling, and liaison with the University, theatre management, and the RCMP.

BOARD & GOVERNANCE

Board Member, Toronto Concert Band (2026–present) • Creator of the Frank Harmantas Trombone Scholarship at the University of Toronto (2004)

EDUCATION

University of Toronto, Faculty of Music — Advanced Certificate in Performance (2004)

University of British Columbia — Bachelor of Music, Orchestral Instrument Performance (2001)

National Youth Orchestra of Canada — Bass Trombonist, student of Richard Erb (1999–2002)

SPECIALIZED SKILLS

Fluency in written English and French • Fluent in spoken Hungarian • Commissioned and premiered Concerto for Bass Trombone by Elizabeth Raum with the Brampton Symphony (2009)

ORCHESTRAL CURRICULUM VITAE — SELECTED

2026	Conducting half of Toronto Concert Band's Fall 2026 concert, Glenn Gould Studio, Toronto
2026	Conducting workshop with Mark Shapiro, Hamilton
2006–2012	Bass Trombonist with the Brampton Symphony; soloist in a commissioned concerto by Elizabeth Raum (2009)
2005	Invited to perform with the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra
2004–2007	Invited to perform and record with the Thunder Bay Symphony Orchestra; masterclass given at Queen's University
2001–2003	Assistant Conductor, Vancouver Philharmonic Orchestra (position won by audition)
2002	Conducted Franck Symphony in D minor in concert with the Vancouver Philharmonic; co-founder and conductor, Vancouver Orchestral Training Society
1999–2002	Member, National Youth Orchestra of Canada (position won by audition), student of Richard Erb
1997–2002	Member, Vancouver Philharmonic Orchestra; Vancouver Academy of Music Orchestra; West Coast Symphony
1998–2000	Conductor/Instructor, Royal Canadian Air Cadet 767th Squadron Band, Surrey, BC

Full orchestral CV, references, and repertoire available on request.

To Whom It May Concern:

April 10th 2002

I have reviewed a videotape of a performance of Franck's *Symphony in D minor* given by the Vancouver Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by BARNABY KEREKES. Mr. Kerekes assumed the responsibility for this performance at very short notice after the untimely death of the orchestra's music director, Wallace Yeung.

Mr Kerekes acquitted himself admirably with clear, unfussy direction. Unlike many young and inexperienced conductors, Mr. Kerekes emphasized the lyrical aspects of the work and did not make the mistake of doing so at the expense of the more superficially exciting moments.

His beat is clear and lyrical and although his gestures are understandably limited at this stage of his development, he has an obvious understanding of the basic requirements of conducting technique. He possesses a natural ability to convey his ideas through body language to the musicians.

I urge anyone able to support him in his endeavors to pursue training as a conductor, to treat his requests with due seriousness. The road to professional conducting is long and hard and needs to begin with the kind of application and natural ability that Barnaby Kerekes has clearly displayed.

Yours truly



Bramwell Tovey
Music Director