



BUILDING A LEGACY OF LEADERSHIP

By Stephen Hunt

Andrea Brussa grew up in a home where music was part of the atmosphere, constantly played by her father, a computer analyst and classical music aficionado. “We didn’t have a radio until I was 12, so I never listened to contemporary music,” she said.

Instead, at home and during her constant ballet training in Montreal and then, after she turned eight, in Los Angeles, Brussa listened to every form of classical, and then not so classical music.

“It’s a form of communication,” she says. “Music is alive — it’s not just notes. It has character and spirit and a neuro-physical effect, as well.”

Ten years ago, Brussa worked with the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra (CPO) to establish the *Brussa Brava! Legacy Programme*, designed to support the Music Director and then to bring in guest conductors to perform with the CPO.

The initial impulse was to honour her father, who was ill at the time, and also to try to find a way to strengthen the foundations of the city’s arts community.

“I decided the CPO was a great platform to help build what I saw as a vision of a greater Calgary,” Brussa says. Her work with the Calgary Opera, the Alberta Ballet, the Banff Centre, the Calgary Zoo and as a founder of Centini’s restaurant all played into her vision of a great city.

“An orchestra is like the loom upon which other arts build — because how can you have a great opera or a great ballet or a great downtown without a great orchestra?”

Over the past decade, the *Brussa Brava! Legacy Programme* has sponsored visits by over 80 important and varied guest conductors — everyone from former CPO Music Director Hans Graf, to New York Pops conductor Steven Reineke, to Emmy Award winning conductor George Daugherty, to the late Marvin Hamlisch, one of only 12 artists to pull off the EGOT: winning an Emmy, Grammy, Oscar and Tony Award.

Brussa won’t name a favourite out of her 80-some guest conductors, but if Hamlisch wasn’t the favourite, he’s surely on the short list. He composed an impromptu piece for her during his performance.

For the remainder of the current season, the *Brussa Brava! Legacy Programme* proudly sponsors Rune Bergmann, Music Director of the CPO. Brussa thinks Bergmann is an ideal fit for the position he stepped into just this year.

“It takes an immensely talented person on a lot of levels to be a great conductor,” she says, “Maestro Bergmann has charm, charisma and such an infectious stage presence he immediately reaches out and touches the audience.

“He also has the musical skills and technical ability to gain the respect, admiration and joyful cooperation of the musicians. It’s a tough job, but Rune is the right man, right now for Calgary and the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra,” she says.

For anyone interested in becoming a CPO patron themselves, Brussa notes “It’s an exhilarating and highly satisfying experience and a great way to support our orchestra and our city by building a legacy.”