HANSARD 16 NOVEMBER 2010

QUESTION TIME

BERLIN PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA — REGIONAL CENTRE SIMULCAST

Dr M.D. NAHAN to the Minister for Culture and the Arts:

Dr M.D. NAHAN: The state government subsidised the recent visit of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra to perform two shows at the Perth Concert Hall. Can the minister please update the house on the outcomes of the visit and what value the state's investment achieved for the Western Australian community?

Mr J.H.D. DAY replied:
I firstly acknowledge sitting in your gallery, Mr Speaker, Mr Ian Evans, member for Davenport in the South Australian Parliament and shadow Treasurer as a member of the South Australian opposition. It is good to see you, Ian.

The Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra was in Perth from Thursday last week until yesterday. Its visit was the first of two stops on its first Australian tour. The only two cities in Australia the orchestra is visiting are Perth and Sydney. The visit was made possible, to a large extent, through the support provided by the state government through the Perth Theatre Trust and in association with the Perth Concert Hall.

I very much congratulate all those who have been involved in the preparation of this visit, which, essentially, has been over several years but particularly over the past 12 or 18 months. The visit of the Berlin Philharmonic to Perth can only be described as an outstanding success from all perspectives: from the point of view of Western Australians and from the point of view of members of the orchestra, who very much enjoyed their time in Perth. I will come back to that in a moment.

It is notable that we estimate that in the order of 10 000 people had a direct experience of seeing or hearing the orchestra perform, including, of course, the two concerts that took place at the Perth Concert Hall last Saturday and Sunday. Importantly, for the first time the performance was simulcast to eight regional centres around the state, which was made possible through the royalties for regions program, which the Minister for Regional Development spoke about last week.

In addition, the performance was made available through the Westlink satellite system, through various community resource centres, to much smaller towns in Western Australia. People who had access to satellite technology in remote and regional areas were able to watch the performance on Sunday night in their own homes. That is an outstanding achievement in itself.

Mr J.N. Hyde: How many freebie tickets on your side; how many ministers; how many Liberal lobbyists?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Not many. There was some government representation at the concert, as one would expect as hosts of this world-standard orchestra in Perth. Another important outcome has been the opportunities for educational involvement on the part of music students in Perth and Western Australia.

Mr J.N. Hyde: Which Liberal electorates?

The SPEAKER: Member for Perth, I formally call you to order for the first time.

Mr J.N. Hyde: It is another Liberal rort

The SPEAKER: Member for Perth, I formally call you to order for the second time. You could at least give me the courtesy of sitting down before you interject again.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Approximately 300 students had the opportunity of attending the rehearsals. That was an outstanding opportunity to enable them to see the work that goes on behind the scenes and the immense dedication and professionalism of an orchestra such as the Berlin Philharmonic. There were also 100 tickets available to music students for the Saturday afternoon concert. That was an excellent opportunity for them to see this world-standard orchestra at a low cost.

It is also very notable that through the funding that was provided for the regional telecasts and the simulcast, the technology acquired for this simulcast equipment to be used—the decoders, the projection equipment, the satellite receiving equipment and so on—is available for future performances of this nature. I think a whole new world of opportunity has been opened up to the arts around this very large state of Western Australia.

There is also extensive funding of regional visits by performing arts companies around Western Australia. Indeed, additional funding is being made available over the next four years to assist in that process through the cooperative arrangement that we have between my portfolio and the Minister for Regional Development.
The feedback that was received from regional centres about the simulcast was very positive indeed.

If I may just mention a couple of quotes, for example, Helen Scott of Esperance said, according to my notes —

> It was indeed a privilege to experience the Berliner Philharmoniker Concert, via live simulcast from the Perth Concert Hall at the Esperance Civic Centre and to see the chief conductor Sir Simon Rattle do his magic, was truly amazing.
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> The sound system was that as if we were there, in the Concert Hall, which was so obvious when all in the audience clapped after each performance.

After attending a smaller community resource centre in Wellstead, Janie and Chris Gilmour wrote —

> Congratulations upon a wonderful initiative … how privileged we were to have this wonderful music streaming into our Resource Centres providing a fantastic cultural and social benefit for the regions.

Mr J.N. Hyde: This is paternalistic rubbish!

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Paternalistic rubbish? What an absolute insult!

Mr J.N. Hyde: The WASO can go everywhere. You will not fund —

The SPEAKER: Take a seat, minister. Member for Perth, I formally call you to order for the third time today.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I really find it difficult to understand why the member for Perth is so negative about what has been such an outstanding experience for Western Australians, and one putting Western Australia and Perth on the national and international map—more so than has been the case in the past.

If I may conclude with some words of Sir Simon Rattle, the principal conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic, among other things he said, according to my notes —

> We are so impressed with what is going on here. We've always heard that Perth was really a centre for the arts. At a certain time I have to tell you that Perth was the only place that was really definitely on for us—it was Perth who was willing to say yes, we'll take these crazy programmes when this place—I think it's called Sydney?—was beginning to wobble a bit. They have been behind us absolutely from the start. They have treated us like princes. We were so happy to be here, we've left a large part of our heart here. The idea to send this programme out to all the ends of this gigantic state, the size of Europe with a smaller population than Birmingham, that's how I think of it—is a visionary thing. And it's something that is so important for us, it is something that we are trying to do at home, I hope you are very proud of it. We've had a wonderful time. Simply: Bless you. We've lost our hearts, and we look forward to coming back, if indeed we ever go.

Mr D.A. Templeman: It is the most expensive email I have ever heard!

Mr J.H.D. DAY: It was not an email; it was said right here in the Perth Concert Hall last Sunday evening. I would hope that there is bipartisan support for these major cultural events in Western Australia. I think it is a great reflection on all those who have been involved in bringing these outstanding performances to Western Australia, and is a reflection, in partnership to a large extent, of the fantastic contribution that our own home Western Australian performing arts companies provide as well.