



The BSO, plugged in



By [Murray Charters](#)

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Lots of different types of soul music have been part of the music scene since sometime in the 1950s, and a good cross-section of all those styles was on display at “Sister Soul” from the Brantford Symphony Orchestra under conductor Philip Sarabura and their guests, the Jeans ‘n Classics Band from London on Sunday evening at the Sanderson Centre.

“Sister soul” sums up the contribution from a great many famous female singers over the past 50 years, all-important influences on modern culture. Vocalists Katalin Kiss, Andrea Koziol and Lis Soderberg of Jeans ‘n Classics recreated the sounds of many of these soul icons from Diana Ross to Dusty Springfield and lots in-between.

All three ladies are strong and expressive singers, each with her own style. Kiss predominated, starting and ending the sets and the evening. She got better as the concert progressed and provided a couple of wonderful knock-offs of the sound of Gladys Knight among other successes. Soderberg had fewer solos and was fine if not particularly outstanding.

Koziol, however, was the most impressive for her nakedly honest approach to the height and depth of emotion in every song she tackled. She thoroughly justified all references to soul music in this concert; from her very first note it was clear she “got it.”

Soul is a hard thing to define, even if we restrict our search just to the musical uses of that word. Peter Brennan’s concept for Jeans ‘n Classics is brilliant and previous presentations with the BSO provided an entertaining and educational evening. This presentation, however, may have had soul but it lacked focus.

The problem resided first with the patter between songs. BSO audiences are receptive to interesting and planned chats between pieces informing them of connections between artists and songs or other elements of the social history of this music. Sunday night’s patter was generally spontaneous — sometimes charming and sometimes irritating.

The various vocal stylings were another issue. Kiss nailed the style of some past singers while Koziol gave well-known songs her own unique and exhilarating interpretation. Both approaches are good, but the audience would appreciate knowing what to expect before the song begins.

The encore, a powerful performance of Barracuda led by Kiss, was a great way to end, but illustrates yet another, more serious problem: this concert wandered all over the musical map. Barracuda is a signature bit of 1970s hard rock from the band Heart. Where's the soul? Well, it was played with a lot of soul.

That piece was one of the few opportunities in this concert for the BSO to also shine. Although everyone was plugged in, the orchestral colouring came through as an important element in only a few pieces. Credit goes again to Brennan for all of the arrangements.

There weren't a lot of souls in the hall to witness this concert, but the quality of music making pleased them if the wide-ranging and arbitrary choices of repertoire left them wondering what was coming next.

Murray Charters is musician, teacher and writer whose regular column, "Murray's Music," can be found each Saturday in The Expositor.