

**Interview with Sandy Nadeau**  
**June 10, 2015**  
**Lemonade Concert and Art Fair Project**  
**St. Cloud State University Archives**  
**Interviewed by Margaret Vos**

**Vos:** I'm Margaret Vos, and today I'm here with Sandy Nadeau. Sandy, you're the former executive director of the St. Cloud Symphony Orchestra, and you served in that role from 2001 to 2014, correct?

**Nadeau:** Correct. That is correct.

**Vos:** Yeah, today, it's Wednesday, it's June 10, and we're on the beautiful campus of St. Cloud State University. We're in the wonderful KVSC radio studios and it's definitely a glorious day in June.

**Nadeau:** It is, it's a beautiful summer day.

**Vos:** So, welcome, Sandy, can I just start out with some basic things? Can you please spell your name--first and last--and give me your official title for the St. Cloud Symphony Orchestra.

**Nadeau:** Okay. First name is Sandy, S-A-N-D-Y and my last name is Nadeau, N-A-D-E-A-U and for thirteen years I served as the executive director of the St. Cloud Symphony Orchestra.

**Vos:** Oh, thanks. So, today, we're here to discuss one of St. Cloud State University's long standing traditions, the Lemonade Concert and Art Fair. We're going into our forty-second year Sandy--

**Nadeau:** That's amazing.

**Vos:**--It's just, it's such a wonderful day in June on this campus. So, the day long, free event, features well over two hundred artists. Most from the region of central Minnesota but we also have artist who put this on their travel itinerary and come to us from across the country. But the day's finale--that final event of the day--is the Twilight Classical Concert at 8:00 PM. So, this year it will be held on Thursday, June 25, and once again on the campus of St. Cloud State University. So, the St. Cloud Symphony Orchestra has actually performed, this will be, for twenty years.

**Nadeau:** Yes.

**Vos:** Since, July 6, 1995, and as you mentioned, you have been involved for the last thirteen. Talk about your role, as executive director with the symphony, and then, working with the Lemonade Concert and Art Fair organizers.

**Nadeau:** Well, I always told the board of directors and the musicians that the Lemonade concert really was the second greatest day of the year. The greatest day of the year, of course, for me was when we performed for fourteen hundred fourth graders through Classics for Kids. The chance to get classical music in front of that many fourth graders in a day was always a goose bump day for me. And then the second goose bump day for me was always the Lemonade concert. It really is the crowning moment of the day and I think a crowning moment for our community. When you look up on that stage and you see, you know, often times sixty musicians performing fabulous music not always in the best of elements (Vos laughs) not always the best of times—before I forget I have to remind everyone there was one time when a duck flew over and one of the musicians shoes got decorated, (Vos laughs) things like that have happened all through the

history of the Lemonade with the orchestra being out on front. But I have to tell you that one of the interesting things for me when I started the job with the St. Cloud Symphony Orchestra was the number of people who came up to me and said, “Oh, we thought that was the Minnesota Orchestra on that stage.” And I said, “No, no, that’s your local orchestra.” And the response throughout thirteen years of my service with the orchestra was, “I didn’t know St. Cloud had a symphony.” So, for us, it was a great day to be on that stage to play for free to our community and to have everybody just know and appreciate how wonderful the orchestra sounded. Because so many people thought, ah, you know, a local symphony can’t be that good. Then we’d get on the stage and everybody would be blown away. So, it was--it always has been a fabulous event for the orchestra.

**Vos:** And you know the beginning of Lemonade, for many years, from 1974 until 1989, featured our own Minnesota Orchestra. So, your quality of that experience for those in attendance and we--our daylong event has over ten thousand people that come. But the bulk of the visitors--the bulk of the community--really comes in for that, free, classical concert that evening.

**Nadeau:** And there are usually fifteen hundred people there and we have--we did two years ago--moved the concert back to 7:30. Because by nine o’clock the instructions are, we want one hour of classical music, by nine o’clock it often got quite dark and it was a little difficult for musicians to see the music and it got to be late for families. You know, I would stand on stage behind the orchestra and watch families start to leave about 8:30 because, it was late for kids. So, I went to the Lemonade committee and said, “Can’t we please move this up to 7:30 so musicians can see the music and so families can enjoy the whole concert?” And they graciously agreed. So, I think that has been a good choice.

**Vos:** Yeah, thank you for that because for—again--for forty years here or thirty-nine years it was at 8:00 PM and that half hour makes a difference. Because as well as the time it takes to set up for the concert, there is also that take down.

**Nadeau:** Yes, yes, and setup is always an adventure. To me, it's always amazing to watch the chairs start to go up on the mall and to see them set up all those hundreds of chairs and then to watch all the chairs go up on the stage for the orchestra. And then to see all the percussion come in. At one time it rained--it was rainy--and the person who does the weather on campus--

**Vos:** Bob Weisman.

**Nadeau:** Bob Weisman.

**Vos:** Yes.

**Nadeau:**--Called and said, "Okay, it's gonna rain for ten minutes, then it's gonna stop, then it will rain for twenty minutes, and then it will stop, and then you will have beautiful evening." So the orchestra was on stage trying to do a sound check and I said, "Okay, here's what's gonna happen." And, so in the meantime we had pulled the percussion off the stage--twice (laughs)--musicians were huddling over their instruments but in the end, he was absolutely spot on and it was a beautiful evening and we got then we got the concert in outside. Now there has been several years--I think three years of my tenure--where we ended up moving the concert indoors because it poured. Especially last year--in 2014--there was rain and thunder and lightning and so many people got drenched. So--

**Vos:** But not the orchestra?

**Nadeau:**--Not the orchestra--

**Vos:** Or their instruments?

**Nadeau:**--Or the instruments. It has been very cold sometimes and musicians have asked to go inside and we've said, "You know, we really owe it to the community to do an outdoor concert so if at all possible, let's try to do it outside"--and we have--so, yeah, the weather's an issue. And then there's the wind, Margaret, the wind, the wind--

**Vos:** Now we cannot control everything, Sandy. (Laughs)

**Nadeau:**--The wind and then we end up we always had five bags of clothes pins (Vos laughs) so that took care of music. One time we had somebody holding the conductor's music--while he conducted--and you know, turning pages from below him. So, you know, it's an adventure, and you just have to go along for the ride and it was a fabulous ride. I mean, I think at the end of the day the orchestra always just went, wow, that was a lot of fun.

**Vos:** Now you refer to going indoors. We have a beautiful auditorium called Ritsche Auditorium, in fact, the symphony performs at the auditorium throughout your year. So, that's our backup site, that's our rain site, or cold weather site.

**Nadeau:** And it's a beautiful, beautiful hall. When I listen to recordings of the orchestra, that's where the sound is the best. It seats over nine hundred people and, you know, for us we just move it in and away we go it's fine. It's our home. We were fine.

**Vos:** But you're right about that the twilight on campus, that we are not limited by the number that can watch--I think we put down about a thousand chairs and then people come with their blankets, and their lawn chairs, and they fill in all the space around our mall area to listen.

**Nadeau:** And it's great, people stand there and they don't have to feel intimidated by regular concert etiquette and protocol. They can simply stand there and enjoy one or two pieces, and walk away or stand there with their friends and have a quiet conversation. I've seen politicians work the crowd (both laugh) it's just, a really great, networking event.

**Vos:** Yeah, and that relaxed environment, so that families--and I think that's part of our history of the day is, it is for all. It is a concert for all. Your music selection for that evening, and so the concert runs about an hour in length?

**Nadeau:** Yes. Yes, that's the request is that we do an hour and I have to tell you, Margaret, that often times, everyone is relaxed except me. (Vos laughs) My job was always to get the opening acts off the stage, get the orchestra on. My commitment to the musicians was to get them on the stage on time and sometimes, you know, I had to be a little cranky with people to get them off and to get us on--but that was my duty to the orchestra and to the community.

**Vos:** I don't think cranky, has ever been put in a sentence with your name, Sandy. But certainly focused.

**Nadeau:** Yes focused--

**Vos:** Focused

**Nadeau:**--And very adamant about caring for the musicians because that's my job. Programming for the Lemonade I have always encouraged the conductors who programmed to program mostly pops music, music that can be enjoyed outside. Playing outside is very difficult--the sound is very difficult to control. So, we try to do things--I just remember the first time we played Star Wars--played the Star Wars march—oh, my gosh, the audience erupted. Stars and Stripes

Forever at the end--the audience erupts. We played Ashokan Farewell one year, and, it was just, people were just, sobbing it was so moving. So, yeah, the music can move you, and it can inspire you, and it can be just so joyful and happy. I've clashed periodically with conductors on what should be performed because I think it should be just a joyous pops concert. In fact, in 2014, our conductor came from Ithaca College and--

**Vos:** In New York.

**Nadeau:**--Yes, and he really didn't have a clue about our community and he said, "Well, what should I program? And I said, "Well, here." And I programmed the concert (laughs) so, I mean it was great and after a while I did admit to people, "Yes, I programmed it." And they went, "Oh, that was really good."—

**Vos:** Mm-hm, it worked. Yes.

**Nadeau:**--And I'm like, "Okay!" A couple of things I am really, really proud of and I will try to be with the utmost of humility present that it was my idea to commission a piece for Ginny Tennant when she had been working with the Lemonade.

**Vos:** Yeah, I was going to ask that.

**Nadeau:** Yes.

**Vos:** If you had those memorable concerts, those memorable moments--now Ginny Tennant has been involved with the art fair part of the day, since the beginning--since 1974, Ginny has been at everyone. So, talk about that one.

**Nadeau:** Well, you know, I've known Ginny since we started doing the Lemonade and she's a friend of mine and Jane Schultzenberg has been on the symphony board and is also a friend of

Ginny's. I've known about Ginny and I know that she played tennis every week with Jane and with the group. So, I said, "You know, Jane, Ginny is gonna be here for thirty years, she really, really needs a piece of music written for her. Do you think the tennis friends would help support that? And Jane went, "Of course they would." And they did!

**Vos:** Most beautiful piece.

**Nadeau:** I went to lunch with all the tennis ladies and we surprised Ginny and told her about the piece of music that I'd had commissioned for her. And it was just--to me it was a beautiful, beautiful moment to see her sitting with her daughters and her family. And just the joy on her face made it all worthwhile. And I think it was a beautiful piece of music called *Ginny's Serenade* by Michael Halstenson. Then a couple years later--my good great friend and mentor—Dr. Kenton Frohrip who worked at St. Cloud State in the music department--

**Vos:** Yeah, for many years.

**Nadeau:**--Many, many years--had a milestone birthday, so I commissioned Michael Halstenson to do a brass fanfare for Kenton, and the brass section of the orchestra helped fund that piece. So, those are two really wonderful moments for me. I think creating a piece of music that, as I introduced it, it's the first time heard anywhere on the planet is--

**Vos:** Amazing to hear.

**Nadeau:**--An amazing, wonderful thing.

**Vos:** Mm-hm. And it's the first time here on our campus with the St. Cloud Symphony.

**Nadeau:** Yes, yes. Exactly so.

**Vos:** Fantastic. You know you talked a little bit about the challenges of that outdoor venue. How about being on the university campus? Is that at all a challenge in itself or is it a, a really kind of lovely place for the orchestra to gather and come together?

**Nadeau:** I think it's absolutely lovely. You know I used to spend the entire day at the art fair. We would have a booth and it was just a great day to see everyone. You know, you got to know the whole community, you got to see people on campus, of course, there was lots of food and beverages, and, you know, what could go wrong with that? I think for the musicians, the hardest part was parking. You know, as usual, there's never been enough parking, but for us but, I think it's lovely. It was an absolutely lovely, there were so many wonderful nights when I would look at the sky over campus and the trees and it was absolutely gorgeous. Just gorgeous.

**Vos:** Clear blue sky, thanks to Bob Weisman's weather report. You know, his work with the meteorology department is such an important part of that day. I think they begin conversations with Bob early in the week, and--as you mentioned--he can be down to almost the minute.

**Nadeau:** Yes.

**Vos:** So, we are always eye to the sky in a way, but we can move very quickly to change plans and move in doors if that is needed.

**Nadeau:** Well, and speaking of university staff, I just remember being huddled in Jessica Ostman's office, you know, talking on walkie talkies and telephones and the same thing with David McCandless. You know, what a great group of people to work with. They are just always here saying, you know, "Do you have what you need? Is the orchestra okay?" I just, I just was so blessed to be with a group of caring university staff who always made us feel welcome.

**Vos:** Well, it is that, town gown, that makes our Lemonade day really very special. You know, it's noted as one of the largest, one day events in the region. As I mentioned over ten thousand in attendance throughout the day. What do you think is the key factors of why it has continued when so many others have failed or ended? And then maybe talk a little bit about that greater St. Cloud community and its impact of hearing the St. Cloud Symphony perform. You mentioned it earlier about people sometimes being almost confused, "Oh, I thought this was the Minnesota Orchestra." No, this is our own, this is our own orchestra.

**Nadeau:** I think the reason the Lemonade has continued and continues to be so successful is because it is so strenuously juried by Ginny. People who appear here, who exhibit here, really have to pass the muster. And I've seen her walk around with a notebook and she visits every booth and writes a note, you know, "This is really great or, you know, they didn't deliver what they said they were gonna do." I remember one year someone came in with crocheted top hand towels and she was kind of horrified. (Laughs) You know, when I've brought people here from out of state or out of town and they've seen the art show they are like, "Wow! Fantastic art." So, that's the first key, I think the second key is the venue. It is so laid out perfectly for this event and having that natural Atwood Mall and the steps that are a natural stage is a brilliant, brilliant design. Whoever did that should be, you know, definitely given a big high-five. I think the fact that the city supports it--the city comes in and does what they do--I think all those elements come together. You know, the fact that the university works with organizations like the St. Cloud Symphony Orchestra--I think we have the longest running collaboration with the university of any organization in the community so--over thirty years--thirty-five years. So, I think all those elements leads to success. And the fact that it changes. You know, the music changes, the exhibitors change--it's not the same every year. There's something new and fresh ever year.

**Vos:** And I think, probably with the symphony as well with the Lemonade committee, they are always evaluating--how did it go? You know, your comment about Ginny walking around and taking notes the day of. We joke about the first wrap-up meeting--our evaluation meeting is actually that night--

**Nadeau:** Yes.

**Vos:**--So, even though the group has been here since four in the morning, it's now eleven o'clock at night and they gather to really kind of take a deep breathe but to capture, what is it that we wanna make sure we hang onto--key components? And then what do we tweak? What do we change? And as you say, parking is always (both laugh) at the top of the list. But over the years I think the shuttle buses bringing people to the community from lower parking lots has been a beautiful addition. But there's a lot of people.

**Nadeau:** Well, and I've always appreciated being a part of the wrap-up. You know, "How do you think it went, Sandy?" You know, "How did it go for the orchestra?" And when I brought forward issues, you know, like we need to start earlier, people listened, and things changed and that's really great--that's wonderful.

**Vos:** So, if you were going to give advice to a community that is kind of looking at what's going on here in St. Cloud and they wanna start their own variation of Lemonade Art Fair and Concert, what would you see as those important aspects for success?

**Nadeau:** Oh, I think, you know, it always comes down to passion. Do you have a passion for your community? Do you have a passion for whatever you are trying to present? Do you have a passion for this event? No one goes into this kind of on the sidelines. You're either all in or all out. And I think having that kind of drive and commitment is critical. And if you don't have the

right people at the table with that kind of passion, then, good luck. You know, I think we've always been fortunate to have those people who are drivers and, leaders, and, who, who want to make the community the very best we can. So that this is great for us to live.

**Vos:** You know, it's such a perfect word isn't it—passion--because it speaks to the heart. It speaks to the soul, because it is this, sometimes, you couldn't really count the number of hours that's invested into that day.

**Nadeau:** Right.

**Vos:** And it goes--the ripple out effect is huge because every artist that comes, preparing their ware, has the passion for that--the time and energy. Each of your musicians prepares for weeks, months, you know, almost probably a year ahead thinking about this—well, we always do Star Spangled Banner at the end. (Both laugh) But that passion really probably ripples all the way across this community and all aspects of the day.

**Nadeau:** Exactly, exactly.

**Vos:** You know, I think as we think ahead, because, you know, when you have forty-two years of this event, you can't help but think about the forty-fifth year or the fiftieth year. If you had to think ahead, what would it be that you would say, "Oh, you know, if I had my way, I would hope that at the forty-fifth Annual Lemonade Concert and Art Fair or the fiftieth, they would do, what?"

**Nadeau:** Oh, my gosh, that's, that's a great question. Well, I think--being a person who adores music--I would figure out a way to tent the mall, tent the stage, and do music all day long. Do some fabulous music. One year we presented the Paramount Jazz Orchestra and they were

fabulous. But it was so hot in the sun that there was no way that people could enjoy them. I think there is some wonderful local folk groups. I think just, you know, celebrating the music of our community would be a really wonderful gift.

**Vos:** Some days, you know--some Lemonades--it did get into that high nineties and, you know, if you could fry an egg on the mall in the mid-afternoon I think that it might have been possible. So, that's some wonderful advice about figuring out a way to somehow, canopy, tent, so that that music venue can continue throughout the day.

**Nadeau:** Yes.

**Vos:** Okay and here's one last one, Sandy, what's the difference between a symphony and a band?

**Nadeau:** Oh, a symphony has string instruments--which are absolutely glorious! And a band does not.

**Vos:** Strings being cellos--

**Nadeau:** Cellos, violins, violas, bass. So, when you have those musicians in your midst, you're in an orchestra.

**Vos:** Hmm. Thank you so much, for taking time out of--as I said--a glorious afternoon in June to talk about--really for us--a wonderful, cooperative event between the university and the community. Thank you, Sandy.

**Nadeau:** Thank you, Margaret.