

## ICSOM CHAIRMAN'S REPORT - 2011

The 2010-11 season has been one of the most challenging years during my service as a member of the ICSOM Governing Board, and perhaps one of the most challenging years ever for our members. The musicians of the Detroit Symphony faced a six-month strike and three of our member orchestras, the Syracuse Symphony, the Louisville Orchestra, and the Philadelphia Orchestra have faced bankruptcy filings while the Honolulu Symphony sought to emerge as a new entity from its Chapter 7 bankruptcy. While these events are partly the product of the world-wide economic downturn, they are also the result of problems within our field that need to be addressed. Unfortunately for musicians and the communities that depend on a thriving arts community, the problems of advocacy and marketing are not being addressed. There can be no authentic conversation about change in our field that excludes executive compensation and artist management fees, yet that is the one area that seems off-limits for discussion. ICSOM will continue to push for positive advocacy, and will work to shine a light on these aspects of our field that need and deserve attention.

In the national political environment, we have seen a renewal of attacks on unions and the American worker everywhere. While American families suffer with reduced pay, the average salary of CEOs in our country has risen 24% since the onset of the recession. In the late 1970s, the wealthiest 1% of Americans took in 9% of the income. Today, that same 1% controls 23% of the income. This disparity and inequality of sacrifice is reflective of the atmosphere that gave rise to unionism in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and we are seeing this inequity growing again. As a result, workers have risen up in town squares across America to protest and demand a greater sense of equality.

The orchestral field is becoming a microcosm of the greater sociopolitical environment. As the workers (musicians) earn less, salaries for executives continue to rise in disproportionate ways. This sends a terrible message not only to musicians but to our communities.

And while the wealth in our country has become more centralized, our field remains unable to promote itself in a way that inspires those with access to wealth to support us. No successful person will donate to a field where industry leaders proclaim the notion that what we do is not sustainable. We must become more astute at marketing our orchestras and the value of what we do.

The field at large must follow the positive message that ICSOM has articulated, and any discussion of change must include a commitment from those that seek to elevate their profile by tearing down our field that this negativity must end. Our industry is attacking itself from within. After all, even in this year of challenges, many well-managed orchestras that engage in positive advocacy have made great strides towards recovery and growth.

The ICSOM Governing Board has worked tirelessly this year to promote the vision of the musicians of ICSOM, and this report summarizes a few of the activities I have been involved with since our 2010 conference in Houston.

### **I. TRAVELS AND ORCHESTRA SITE VISITS:**

- a. Detroit: On September 5 and 6, I traveled to Detroit to march in the Labor Day parade along with the musicians of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra and representatives of Local 5. I was joined by AFM President Ray Hair, ICSOM President Brian Rood, ICSOM Secretary Laura Ross, ROPA President Carla Lehmeier, and OCSM Board member Greg Sheldon. While there, Brian Rood and I gave speeches on the stage at the end of the parade route along with Ray Hair. All of our speeches from the Detroit Labor Day parade can be found on YouTube. On the stage we were joined by such luminaries as Rev. Jesse Jackson and Congressman John Conyers, Jr.
- b. Chicago, October 11-12: I was honored to be able to travel to Chicago to participate in a retirement dinner honoring legendary musicians' attorney Mike Greenfield, and present Mr. Greenfield with the resolution passed by the delegates to the 2010 conference which celebrated his career. While in Chicago, I was able to hear a dress rehearsal of *Carmen* at the Chicago Lyric Opera, and meet with the members of the Lyric Orchestra in their lounge at the Opera House. I was also able to attend a rehearsal for Mahler Symphony

No. 7 with the Chicago Symphony, and I addressed the members of the CSO on stage at Orchestra Hall just prior to the rehearsal.

- c. On November 8, I traveled to Washington, DC to meet with George Cohen at the office of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Services (FMCS). Mr. Cohen is well-known to orchestral musicians, having served as general counsel for the American Federation of Musicians while a partner at the DC law firm Bredhoff and Kaiser. Mr. Cohen was appointed director of the FMCS by President Obama. I was joined at that meeting by AFM President Hair, ROPA President Lehmeier, and current SSD Director Chris Durham as well as mediators who serve on the staff of the FMCS. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss ways that Mr. Cohen, and the FMCS, might be able to facilitate conversations between the elected leadership of orchestral musicians and the organizations that represent the management of orchestras, namely the League of American Orchestras (formerly ASOL). It was decided at this meeting that an effort would be made to have a mediated meeting between the two groups.
- d. Louisville: Following the announcement that the management and board of the Louisville Orchestra would seek chapter 11 bankruptcy protections I traveled to Louisville on December 11-14 to meet with the orchestra, hear their performance with the Kentucky Ballet and to mediate issues that exist between the musicians and their Local leadership. We also strategized about the PR effort the musicians would need to launch, and we taped a video viewable on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ompyp2Achy8>
- e. FMCS/League meeting: Following up on the November 8 meeting with George Cohen, I traveled to Chicago for a day-long meeting with the League, mediated by Mr. Cohen. The AFM was represented by Ray Hair, Chris Durham, Carla Lehmeier, and me. The League was represented by Robert Levine, Jesse Rosen, and Chicago Symphony CEO Deborah Rutter. At this meeting I urged the League to issue a statement that calls for an elevation of the tone of dialogue within our field, as I had done in the December issue of *Senza Sordino*. I have not heard such a statement from the League as yet, and it is difficult to describe this meeting as fruitful. It was however, cordial, and certainly talking is better than not talking.
- f. Second International Orchestra Conference: The International Federation of Musicians (FIM) held the second International Orchestra Conference in Amsterdam, March 7-9. I was invited to speak once again, following up on the invitation to the first such conference in 2008. The AFM delegation to Amsterdam included Ray Hair, Carla Lehmeier, Francine Schutzman, and Chris Durham. It was an honor to represent North American musicians at such a prestigious event, where musicians from over 40 nations gathered to discuss the issues they confront. Many of the issues are the same, no matter what country musicians are from. Issues of funding, advocacy, and negativity must be overcome everywhere. The text of my address can be viewed at [http://www.fimioc.org/documents/amsterdam\\_2011/speeches/ioc\\_ridge.pdf](http://www.fimioc.org/documents/amsterdam_2011/speeches/ioc_ridge.pdf). While in Amsterdam, I was able to hear performances by both the Netherlands Opera and the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestras.
- g. ICSOM's mid-winter meeting: Immediately following my return from Amsterdam, I traveled to Los Angeles for the annual mid-winter meeting of your ICSOM Governing Board (GB). It is always a joy to meet with the members of the GB. This meeting also provided an opportunity to visit with the Los Angeles Philharmonic on stage at Disney Hall and to hear a rehearsal under the direction of Maestro Dudamel. I was able to address the orchestra briefly before the rehearsal to thank them for the support they have shown their colleagues across the country. After the rehearsal, members of the GB met for lunch with LA Phil CEO Deborah Borda and LA Phil committee chair Peter Rofé. We were also able to visit with members of the LA Opera orchestra during our time in LA, as well as making an impromptu trip to visit with the officers of AFM Local 47 and IEB member Vince Trombetta.
- h. Syracuse: With the news that the Board and interim management of the Syracuse Symphony planned to file for Chapter 7 bankruptcy, I traveled to Syracuse on April 10-12. There I met with local union officials, the orchestra committee, the interim manager and board chair, as well as community leaders including the Mayor. I was also able to hear members of the orchestra in two different performances in their community.
- i. AFM LCC/PCC- In years in which there is no full AFM Convention, the AFM bylaws call for an annual meeting of the LCC/PCC. The LCC is the Locals' Conference Council, and of course the PCC is the

Players' Conference Council, composed of the heads of ICSOM, ROPA, OCSM, TMA, and RMA. This year we met in Las Vegas on June 4 and 5. The first day was spent with the PCC sharing issues and ideas, as well as brief meetings with the LCC. The second day the heads of each Players' Conference gave a detailed report to the IEB on the issues their members are facing. My report this year focused on the obvious difficulties and drastic hardships being confronted by members of ICSOM orchestras, as well as the nation-wide assault on workers' rights.

- j. June 26- New York City- On June 26 I traveled to New York along with Francine Schutzman and Carla Lehmeier to meet with Jay Blumenthal in advance of his assuming the duties as director of the Symphonic Services Division on August 1. The trip also afforded me an opportunity to meet with Gail Kruvand, chair of the New York City Opera Musicians, so that I could learn more about the difficulties they are facing.
- k. ROPA and OCSM: As of this writing (July 10) I am planning to attend the annual ROPA Conference in Portland, Maine August 2-4, and also the annual OCSM Conference, this year to be held in Vancouver, August 10-14.

## **II. FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR ORCHESTRAS:**

This year, ICSOM issued three Calls to Action (CTA) to support our members in need. While ICSOM musicians have always been eager to offer financial support whenever and where ever needed, the Governing Board initiated a new program of CTAs starting in the summer of 2007. Two of these CTAs have called for unified action in advance of AFM conventions, and the others have called for financial support. This year the musicians of ICSOM also joined with ROPA to raise money for one of their member orchestras, the New Mexico Symphony.

For the striking musicians of Detroit, ICSOM's CTA was answered with approx. \$304,000 in gifts. We were assisted by our friends in OCSM, ROPA, TMA, RMA, and throughout the AFM. Other CTAs led to \$69,200 for Syracuse, and \$47,600 for the Louisville Orchestra. The need for financial assistance for Syracuse and Louisville remains as of this writing.

Also, ICSOM musicians contributed \$32,800 to the musicians of the New Mexico Symphony.

Since late 2007, ICSOM has raised over \$765,000 to support our members in need. For a volunteer organization with no staff that depends on its own members for such contributions, this is a stunning amount. The Governing Board thanks each and every member of ICSOM, and every musician who has participated, for their inspiring generosity.

## **III. MEDIA PRESENCE FOR ICSOM:**

One of the goals when I took office in 2006 was to work to elevate the profile of ICSOM's positive message of advocacy through use of the free media. This year the leadership of ICSOM has been quoted in *The New York Times*, *The Detroit News*, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, *Syracuse Post-Standard*, *Houston Chronicle*, as well as on Michigan Radio, WQXR in New York, and on the Fox News channel. In addition, letters to the editor have been published in the *Louisville Courier-Journal* and the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, and full-length guest editorials have appears in the *Syracuse Post-Standard* and the *Albuquerque Journal*.

In addition, a chair report from the June issue of *Senza Sordino* titled *Ending the Doctrine of Failure*, which served as a commentary on the League of American Orchestra's annual conference, was covered on several websites and re-posted on Facebook (in some form or another) over 200 times. The Governing Board received messages from as far away as Australia thanking us for producing the article.

## **IV. SYMPHONIC SERVICES DIVISION:**

This summer, Chris Durham announced that he would be stepping down as director of the Symphonic Services Division. The Governing Board of ICSOM wants to take this opportunity to thank Chris Durham for his service as director of the SSD. Chris is a tremendous union leader, and his record as a negotiator is extraordinary. He deserves the appreciation and admiration of every musician in the union, and we wish him well in his future efforts as an advocate for musicians and live music everywhere. We are certain that

many great successes await him in his role a chief negotiator for the SSD, and we wish him much happiness, and we pledge our ongoing support.

We also welcome Jay Blumenthal as the new director of the SSD. Jay is one of the most respected union leaders in our field, having served in virtually every possible position. He has been a long-time member of an ICSOM orchestra, a member of the ICSOM Governing Board, and an officer of Local 802 in New York. We look forward to our work with Jay, and we are certain that we can build even greater unity between ICSOM and the SSD.

#### **V. GOVERNING BOARD APPOINTMENTS:**

The ICSOM Governing Board made several appointments this year.

- a. Following a thorough search that sought to be as inclusive as possible, the ICSOM GB appointed Susan Martin as General Counsel to ICSOM on October 21, 2010. We also appointed our interim counsel, Michael Okun, as Special Counsel to the Governing Board.
- b. The GB appointed a new webmaster on May 26. Charles Noble, of the Oregon Symphony, has agreed to take over the important webmaster duties. Bruce Christensen, our previous webmaster from the Nashville Symphony, decided to step down following five years of excellent work that saw a complete redesign of [www.icsom.org](http://www.icsom.org). We are extremely grateful to Bruce for his tremendous contribution to a website that has led to musicians from across the world reaching out to us for guidance, and we welcome Charles to continue in our effort to enhance ICSOM's on-line presence.

#### **VI. AMERICAN FEDERATION OF MUSICIANS AND EMPLOYERS' PENSION FUND:**

The ICSOM Governing Board was delighted when newly elected AFM President Ray Hair appointed two members of the GB to serve on the AFM-EPF board of trustees. ICSOM President Brian Rood and ICSOM Secretary Laura Ross now serve their colleagues as trustees. The musicians of ICSOM are grateful to President Hair for these appointments, and even more grateful to Brian and Laura for their willingness to take on this crucial and difficult task on behalf of their colleagues.

#### **VII. PLAYERS CONFERENCE COUNSEL (PCC):**

It is always a pleasure to work with the leaders of the other AFM Players' Conference on the PCC. We have built a close relationship over the past few years based on shared interests and a deep friendship. I especially want to mention Francine Schutzman, the president of the Organization of Canadian Symphony Musicians (OCSM). Francine has announced that she will not be seeking re-election at the OCSM Conference in August. Francine has been a source of inspiration to me throughout my tenure with the ICSOM Board. She has served for eight years, which is a daunting amount of time to hold the stressful position as leader of a symphonic players' conference. I have constantly been impressed by her bravery and her willingness to always put herself on the line for her colleagues. Perhaps more than anyone I have ever known, she has an innate willingness to call attention to the facts whenever she feels that an emperor has no clothes. I will miss her on the PCC, but the work she has done has brought ICSOM and OCSM closer, and we look forward to working with her successor. And I personally look forward to our continuing friendship, away from the pressures of our respective positions. Thank you Francine, for everything.

#### **VIII. FRED ZENONE:**

ICSOM has had many great leaders over the years. This year, we lost one of ICSOM's most respected historic leaders when Fred Zenone passed away on October 22. Fred was the fifth Chairman in ICSOM's history, and this summer's conference will be dedicated to his memory. His National Symphony colleague, Bill Foster, has agreed to deliver a remembrance that will pay tribute to Fred's many accomplishments which will have a lasting positive effect on our field.

#### **IX. 2010-2011 GOVERNING BOARD:**

The members of your Governing Board are the most dedicated people I could ever hope to know. In this year of difficulties, their tireless work has been even more impressive to me, and I have depended on each

and every one of them for support more than I could possibly say. It is an honor to serve with them, and even more of an honor to have them as friends. We continue to work together in a unique way, with an atmosphere that welcomes healthy debate and encourages innovative dialogue. I learn from them every day, and I thank them for their support and their patience with me as we all seek to serve our colleagues, our communities, our art form, and musicians everywhere.

As we approach our conference in Detroit, August 17-20, there can be no doubt that we all face many challenges. But I am certain that there are solutions to be found to the difficulties orchestral musicians face, and that musicians will lead the way. The greatest innovations for our field have always come first from musicians, and the key to a successful future will once again come from the inspiration and brilliance that is to be found within every orchestra.

Thank you for the honor of allowing me to serve as Chair of the historic institution.

Respectfully submitted,

Bruce Ridge

*July 2011*