

## **ICSOM MEMBER-AT-LARGE REPORTS – 2011**

**Matthew Comerford: Alabama, Chicago Lyric Opera, Grant Park Music Festival, Kennedy Center, Metropolitan Opera, Cincinnati, Jacksonville, NYC Ballet, NYC Opera, SF Ballet, SF Opera, San Antonio**

Since our last conference in Houston, the governing board has been in almost constant activity dealing with the myriad of issues facing our orchestras. Many of the issues we attend to deal with the renewed negative attacks on orchestra musicians by the very managers that are hired to run our music performance organizations. These attacks mirror and seem to be in collusion with the attacks on Union workers in virtually every industry going on all across our country. The ICSOM Governing Board, with the incredible leadership of Chair Bruce Ridge, has been meeting these attacks head on with Calls to Action, publishing articles and editorials, interviews, conference calls with orchestra committee representatives, and meeting with managers and musicians whenever possible to promote ICSOM's view that the best way to keep our arts organizations progressing and staying healthy is by presenting the most positive message of what our arts groups do for the communities we live and work in. Promoting this positive message is the best way to gain the respect and support of our donors and patrons. This effort is one of the most important actions ICSOM is in the forefront, in our work together.

This year, your Governing Board has also worked on concerns and issues that keep our conference healthy and strong. The GB spent a tremendous amount of time in the search and selection of our new legal counsel and Susan Martin has been fantastic in fulfilling that position. We have a very strong legal team in Susan and Special Counsel to the Governing Board, Mike Okun. Our annual Mid-Winter Governing Board meeting was held on March 13 and 14 and dealt with all of the current issues along with detailed planning for our 2011 Conference in Detroit.

I have been keeping up my contact and activities with the ICSOM Media Committee, in helping to promote the AFM's new Integrated Media Agreement. We have had many more orchestras become signatory to this agreement during the past year. I have also taken part in duties on the ICSOM Audit Committee along with Meredith Snow and Cathy Payne. Due to the excellent work and diligence in managing our funds constantly shown by Treasurer Michael Moore, the Audit Committee's job was one of the easiest tasks to complete.

I have been keeping in touch, through emails and phone conversations when needed, with the orchestras I represent as Member-at-Large, bringing any specific issues to the Governing Board and generally keeping current with how their various groups are progressing. Some of my specific activities follow. Last Fall, I closely tracked and kept the GB informed of the possible contract reopener that the San Antonio management was attempting. Emily Freudigman, the San Antonio delegate, contacted me with this concern and we both worked with Chair Bruce Ridge and the GB to keep a close watch and supply any help needed to Emily and her colleagues. I worked with the San Francisco Opera negotiating committee and, in the process, enlisted the help of my own Chicago Lyric Opera Orchestra Committee Chair, William Cernota, in answering questions and communicating information to the SF Opera committee while in the midst of their negotiations. Our two orchestras are very close in size and budget and our respective managements try to use each of our contracts against the other when in negotiations. Bruce and I had a conference call with New York City Ballet Orchestra Chair Sara Cutler and ICSOM Delegate Ethan Silverman to help them with issues regarding their current negotiation. And, recently, I have been in contact with Thalia Moore at the San Francisco Ballet Orchestra, providing clarity on items in our Chicago Lyric Opera contract as they face comparisons of specific questions on wages in our two contracts made by their management during negotiations. Communication helps all of us to stay strong, unified and well informed, able to counter any negative comparisons our managements present to us in negotiations.

I have also been working with our Chicago Federation of Musicians Local 10-208 President Gary Matts, Chicago Symphony and Grant Park Orchestras in planning our 2012 Conference in Chicago. Secretary Laura Ross, President Brian Rood and I have been researching and visiting hotels in vetting a final selection for the site of our 2012 Chicago Conference.

I know we all bring our support and solidarity to the Detroit Symphony Musicians for all of their hardship faced this year and that they continue to face in the days ahead. We bring this same solidarity, support and concern to our other members fighting for their livelihoods in Philadelphia, Syracuse, Louisville, and Honolulu. Together we will persevere and bring our collective groups to a better future.

I cannot tell you strongly enough how much admiration and respect I hold for my Governing Board colleagues. I continue to be amazed by all of my fellow Governing Board members and their total dedication and the hard work they do for all of the members of ICSOM. I am proud to serve and be a part of this Governing Board.

Lastly, I would like to express my thanks, respect and admiration to all of you, the Delegates. Your hard work on behalf of your colleagues exhibits the greatest spirit of Unionism, bringing true unity and strength to ICSOM.

Best wishes to you all and have a great conference here in Detroit.

**Paul Gunther: Atlanta, Charlotte, Dallas, Florida Orchestra, Fort Worth, Houston, Louisville, Minnesota, Nashville, National, New Jersey, North Carolina, Virginia**

How has this past year differed from others?

“The more things change...”

“Never a dull moment.”

“Just when you think things could never be more challenging...”

“In every trial there is opportunity.”

ICSOM Governing Board service breathes life into all these aphorisms, and more besides.

Unfortunately, this past year has been another in which we in this profession have continued to be clobbered by those who would kill the proverbial goose and thereby sacrifice the golden egg of symphonic music. There is no need to reiterate the specific tribulations all of us continue to observe or suffer in recent years. We know all too well what is happening.

And yet, fortunately – and it is very fortunate, in my view – there are many of us who are not content merely with understanding the attempt that is being made on our professions, on our livelihoods and on our families. More and more ICSOM musicians and our supporters are willing to act in concert (as it were) to hold the line and staunch the bleeding. We stand firm; we write and call our local and national officials; we hire colleagues from other orchestras, and support them in countless ways.

We even donate personal and collective funds to those in need: Indeed, I am pleased that in less than four years ICSOM musicians and friends have donated nearly \$800,000 through our Calls to Action. A remarkable feat, demonstrating extraordinary generosity.

Within our profession, other noteworthy events affecting ICSOM in the past year include major regime change at the AFM; a new ICSOM Counsel; and – at a more personal level due to my direct involvement with them – two ongoing projects that touch everyone in ICSOM: Orchestra-L, ICSOM’s web discussion list; and this year’s newly updated Directory, perhaps ICSOM’s most visible tool. These are reminders of the unity of ICSOM, that we individual musicians working in the finest orchestras identify ourselves as part of something stupendous, and that we are all in it together.

We in ICSOM must continue to steel ourselves to defend all we hold dear: our families, our livelihoods, and the communities who benefit from our active presence and from the artistry we provide at the very highest level.

Serving on the Governing Board at such a demanding time in our history is both a privilege and an opportunity.

**Cathy Payne: Boston, Buffalo, Chicago, Cleveland, Columbus, Detroit, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Pittsburgh, Puerto Rico, Rochester, San Francisco, Syracuse**

The 2010-11 season, my fourth as a member of the Governing Board, was one of the most difficult seasons symphonic musicians have ever faced. News went from bad to worse this year as we all watched our colleagues in Detroit endure one of the longest and most epic strikes in our history. As the months passed without a settlement, with the DSO management and board refusing to move away from the heinous proposals that forced DSO musicians into the work stoppage, we began to hear rumblings about bankruptcy in Louisville, Syracuse, and Philadelphia. Could it possibly be that three ICSOM orchestras would be declaring bankruptcy within months of each other, including one of the most lauded orchestras in the world, the Philadelphia Orchestra?

I would have said no—it won't happen, but I was wrong. In December the Louisville board voted to declare bankruptcy and within months Syracuse and Philly followed suit. Suddenly symphonic musicians were forced to face a seemingly new negotiating style where managements and boards find it easier and more desirable to destroy or cripple the orchestras of which they are supposed to be stewards, rather than taking the steps necessary to ensure that their orchestras thrive in their communities. It's a brave new world where managers and boards spend millions of dollars on bankruptcy proceedings, or create complex videos for YouTube explaining why bankruptcy is the only option, rather than putting their resources into more intelligent, strategic, and aggressive fundraising and marketing campaigns.

How does one fundraise for an institution that is in bankruptcy court? How does one hope to create a sense of the vital importance of an orchestra to its community when the highly trained musicians are considered expendable and trashed in the press? How do musicians not lose hope for the future when a manager who has been so destructive has her contract extended in a gesture of confidence from the board? How do union members stay positive after a year of unrelenting attacks on public employee unions?

I am staggered and disheartened by the stupidity of it all, yet despite the terrible news since our last conference, there are still reasons to be positive, still reasons for hope.

The theme of this year's conference is "Now More than Ever." Now more than ever, we must speak with one voice and reject the destructive tactics and negative rhetoric employed in our communities by our managements and boards. Now more than ever, we must come together with a unity made stronger by the viciousness of the attacks against us. Now more than ever, we must put ourselves in the place of our colleagues who have lost their livelihoods and lost their orchestras and reach out to them, doing all that we can to support them. Now more than ever, we must do all that we can to make our orchestras an integral part of our communities.

The Detroit Symphony musicians displayed extraordinary courage and solidarity by staying out for six months and fighting off many onerous proposals that had little to do with economics. These proposals, if implemented, would have had a chilling effect on all ICSOM orchestras' CBAs. ICSOM musicians owe our DSO colleagues a great deal, and we look forward to hearing directly from DSO musicians at our conference.

The musicians of ICSOM did all they could to support colleagues across the country who were in need of assistance. The DSO Call to Action raised an unprecedented \$300,000, and CTAs for Syracuse, New Mexico, and Louisville have also produced strong results, with many orchestras who have been hit hard by the economic downturn making generous donations.

The Hawaii Symphony, comprised of musicians of the former Honolulu Symphony, is scheduled to play their first concerts next fall. The musicians in Louisville began a Keeping Louisville Symphonic campaign, continuing to present concerts on their own and advocate for their orchestra and the importance of symphonic music while bankruptcy proceedings continue. Syracuse musicians are also performing in their community as Symphony Syracuse.

We have a new AFM President, Ray Hair, who has had an open and responsive dialogue with the Governing Board this year. He has already done a great deal to heal some of the wounds that were plaguing the Federation and has made all of us more unified as a result. We are happy to welcome a new director of SSD,

Jay Blumenthal, a man who is a great friend of ICSOM and extremely thoughtful and capable. I am confident that Jay will be a dedicated and effective advocate for symphonic musicians everywhere. How wonderful to interact with the AFM when they are working with you, not against you!

We have an excellent new General Counsel in Susan Martin. It was inspiring to sit down with her and begin working together for the first time at our Midwinter Meeting. She brings tremendous expertise and perspective to our discussions, and we welcome her to ICSOM and look forward to our continuing collaboration.

Perhaps most significantly, the Chairman of ICSOM, Bruce Ridge is somehow able to work even harder as the bad news has mounted. There is not a person in the world who cares more about symphonic musicians than Bruce, and no one who works with greater dedication and passion for us and for our field. The leadership of ICSOM continues to be extraordinary, with officers Brian, Laura and Michael working with intelligence, skill, and tireless dedication. Richard has produced fantastic issues of *Senza Sordino* this season, and my MAL colleagues Meredith, Matt, and Paul are strong advocates for musicians and tremendous people. This Governing Board is the most outstanding group of leaders and activists that I have ever worked with, and it is a privilege to serve with them.

It is an honor to serve all of you and do what I can to help our orchestras and our art form flourish. I look forward to seeing you in Detroit.

**Meredith Snow: Baltimore, Colorado, Honolulu, Indianapolis, Kansas City, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, New York Philharmonic, Oregon, Saint Louis, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, San Diego, Utah**

This year was horrifically challenging for many of our orchestras. The anti-union sentiment that swept the country, in addition to the already devastated non-profit economic environment, has created a perfect storm. While some managements have maliciously used these circumstances to gut their orchestras, others have simply been catastrophically inept.

Labor relations in our industry have been tested to a degree that has not been seen since the inception of ICSOM. And it keeps on coming.

The Governing Board has done its best to lend moral, financial and legal support where it can, advocating tirelessly for our membership. The future of our orchestras hangs in the balance. We must continue the fight for fair labor practices, knowledgeable and committed managements and boards, and raise awareness in the general public of the significance of orchestral music within our culture.