

Senza Sordino

Official Publication of the International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians

VOLUME 48 NO. 2

Online Edition

June 2010

The Way Things Are Is Not the Way Things Have to Be

by Bruce Ridge, ICSOM Chairperson

As I write this, I have begun my preparations for the 98th Convention of the American Federation of Musicians, to be held June 21–25 in Las Vegas. I will arrive with the hope that we will create a more unified union, but I will also arrive with trepidation that the atmosphere of internal fighting and negativity will persist.

I believe that the way things are is not the way things have to be.

The way things are:

1. A negative image of the future for the arts in America persists, despite evidence to the contrary that could be used to promote a future of growth.
2. Negotiating committees in orchestras around the country are weary from the constant threats from their managements of bankruptcy and force majeure, situations that are, in many cases, the result of managerial decisions and not just the economic downturn. Musicians are fearful, and managements are emboldened by our compliance.
3. Orchestral musicians turn to our union, a federation of locals, for support, but instead they are often met with political attacks and disregard. Musicians of all styles that would seek to band together are instead often torn apart by the politicization of our Federation and by a structure that seems to value discord over debate.

The way things could be:

1. An atmosphere of unity could be fostered within our union. Personal attacks could end. Dialogue and debate could

be initiated. We could join together with a spirit of “what happens to one of us happens to all of us.” Where disagreements exist, forums could be created for conversation and respectful debate.

2. The unity and communication within ICSOM could be a model for the entire union, promoting renewed strength and hope for Federation members.
3. ICSOM’s positive message of hope for the future of the arts could be promoted by every member of this union. Communities across the country eager for a positive message could be invited to join our community of orchestras and musicians. The union could become a source of inspiration for our members, and the audiences and citizens we serve.

Recently, I have been reading a book by Miriam Pawel about the evolution of the United Farm Workers, titled *The Union of Their Dreams: Power, Hope, and Struggle in Cesar Chavez’s Farm Worker Movement*. I love the title of this book. The brave founders of the UFW were creating the union of their dreams, and they did so by uniting their dreams.

I think maybe that is what has been lost in the American Federation of Musicians. Our dreams are no longer united. In fact, we seem at cross purposes almost everywhere we turn, as frequently the most basic issues are politicized and division is used as a political tool.

But the way things are is not the way things have to be. I believe that we all still share the same dreams. It has just become impossible to hear that shared idealism over the din of divisiveness, the personal attacks, the political maneuvering, and the lack of an inspirational message.

We all believe in a strong union that can serve its members. We all believe in the role that musicians can play in community service. We all believe in the value of our art. We all believe that we must educate the next generation. And, we all believe in the message of hope that our music and our work can provide.

(continued on page 10—see *IT DOESN’T HAVE TO BE THIS WAY*)

In This Issue

The Way Things Are	1
Officer Reports	2
Flooding in Nashville	4
Americans for the Arts Action Fund	7
Orchestra Newslets	8

Chairperson's Report by Bruce Ridge



In May 2007 I wrote an article for *Senza Sordino* about my travels as ICSOM chairman during my first fifteen months in office. At the time I estimated that I had traveled over 40,000 miles to meet with the musicians of ICSOM and the AFM.

Now, three years later, it is impossible for me even to attempt to estimate how far I have traveled to visit with musicians in North America and Europe. ICSOM's message of unity has been heard from Berlin, Germany to Victoria, Canada. And, as I have sought to visit the world's great concert halls, I have also sought to visit our great union halls. I have been honored to meet with local AFM officers, literally from San Juan to Honolulu.

I am, in many ways, the luckiest musician in America. As I travel, I do so with the support of thousands of artists, and with the hopes they all have for their families and their communities. I have been provided the deepest education that any orchestral musician could hope to have, and I am profoundly in the debt of every musician I have met.

I have heard the Phoenix Symphony in rehearsal and concerts, and I have stood with the musicians of the Jacksonville Symphony during their lockout. I have visited the Berlin Philharmonic backstage, and heard the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin in the Philharmonie. I have sat in the "Ring" seats in Boettcher Concert Hall in Denver, listening to the Colorado Symphony rehearse. I have been honored to meet with the musicians of the Baltimore Symphony for over three hours in their concert hall.

In all of these places and many more, I have been inspired by the dedication that the musicians of our orchestras display towards their communities and their colleagues. There can be no doubt that disputes exist among our ranks, but, when push comes to shove, my experience has been that every musician will stand side by side in any time of need.

I have many souvenirs of my travels. My music room is decorated with a lei given me by the musicians of the Honolulu Symphony, and I have every ticket stub from every concert I've attended (going as far back as a 1982 Virginia Symphony concert). I have orange wrist bands protesting the Columbus Symphony lockout, and an arm band calling for support for the Puerto Rico Symphony from the government entity that oversees the arts in that territory of the United States. I have framed notes from orchestra committees, such as the Minnesota Orchestra, that serve to remind me on a daily basis why I am doing this, and why every member of the ICSOM Governing Board works so hard in this mission.

All of these cherished mementos and memories serve me well, as on a daily basis I arise to fight the battle for the arts in this country. The musicians of ICSOM are an extraordinary group, and I suppose that I might have had as great an opportunity to meet

(continued on page 6—see *CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT*)



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SYMPHONY AND OPERA MUSICIANS

A Player Conference of the
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Subscriptions: \$10 per year, payable to *Senza Sordino*, c/o Michael Moore, Treasurer, 953 Rosedale Road NE, Atlanta, GA 30306. Report delivery-related problems to Richard Levine, Editor, 6304 Radio Dr., San Diego, CA 92114.

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President's Report by Brian Rood



The 2010 AFM Convention

At this year's AFM Convention, Recommendation No. 2, a resolution submitted by the International Executive Board (IEB), seeks to *reduce* the number of rank-and-file musician AFM-EPF trustees from three to two. The IEB is proposing to overturn the 2005 AFM Convention's commitment to three rank-and-file musician trustees just five years after ICSOM vigorously and successfully sought to *increase* that number to three.

In this same Recommendation No. 2, the IEB is also proposing to remove the AFM bylaw provision adopted in 2007 that defines rank-and-file musician trustees as individuals who "are neither Federation officers nor hold major elected or appointed union office in an AFM Local (i.e., President, Secretary, Treasurer, Executive Assistant)." In other words, this IEB-sponsored resolution would allow the AFM President to appoint union officers to pension board positions currently reserved for rank-and-file musicians. *Dictionary.com* defines rank-and-file as "members of a group or organization apart from its leaders or officers." The 2007 Convention delegates already clarified the meaning and declared that rank-and-file musicians are union *members* and not union *officers*. Now, just three years later, the IEB seeks to repeal the definition adopted by the 2007 Convention. If approved, Recommendation No. 2 would virtually do away with the idea of rank-and-file pension trustees, allowing the AFM President to appoint an entire slate of union trustees, none of whom would qualify as rank-and-file under the current bylaws.

The AFM-EPF board of trustees is responsible for making decisions for the AFM-EPF. These changes to who might represent working musicians on that board are being proposed just as our pension benefits have been reduced to an all-time low (the infamous \$1 multiplier) and contributions from symphony musicians are high. Many symphonic musicians have the AFM-EPF as their primary pension vehicle. AFM-EPF contributions are also made when working under AFM national electronic media agreements. Together, contributions on behalf of ICSOM and ROPA musicians are now approximately 40 percent of the AFM-EPF's total annual contributions.

As a result of the recession and the stock market declines dating back to October 2008, many multi-employer pension plans suffered investment losses, and some found themselves in the critical (red) zone. The AFM-EPF recently disclosed its rehabilitation plan, effective June 1, 2010. The AFM-EPF's own actuary estimates that it will emerge from critical status by March 31, 2047. 2047? I did a double take when I read that for the first time. I'll be pushing 86 years of age in 2047. I hope I am fortunate enough to live that long, but, at 86, I would expect to be long retired from the Kansas City Symphony. In light of the AFM-EPF's current predicament, however, perhaps I *will* still be working.

However, not all multi-employer pension plans are in the same boat as the AFM-EPF. The Segal Company's May 2010 *Survey of*

Calendar-Year Plans' 2010 Zone Status found: "[T]here has been a significant increase in the number of green zone multi-employer pension plans. For 2010, 54 percent of calendar-year plans are now in the green zone. This represents a significant improvement of 15 percentage points from 2009, when only 39 percent of calendar-year plans were in the green zone." It would be helpful for the AFM-EPF to explain in greater detail what caused it to be in the red zone when 62 percent of the entertainment multi-employer plans referenced in the Segal survey are not.

IEB-sponsored Recommendation No. 24 is also bewildering, particularly coming from elected union leadership. In it, our IEB proposes that the AFM President, Vice President from Canada, and Secretary-Treasurer should each "receive a contingent expense account of \$10,000 per annum, for the spending of which he/she shall not be required to make an accounting" (in addition to salary and travel expenses).

The AFM bylaws already provide for reimbursement of AFM business travel expenses. The newly edited IEB Policy Book, online in the members' area at www.afm.org, provides further clarification from the IEB regarding reimbursements for the International President and Secretary-Treasurer when either resides outside of the New York metropolitan area.

The question begs to be asked: Why would any International Executive Board member need an additional \$10,000 for expenses when Article 3 of the AFM bylaws covers "all hotel and other traveling expenses when traveling on AFM business"? Remember, the IEB's own policy book already provides additional reimbursement procedures.

Many orchestras are in financial distress, and musicians continue to endure painful cuts in wages, benefits, and, now, the AFM-EPF multiplier. Yet, the International Executive Board proposes to overturn resolutions adopted at recent AFM Conventions while raising an additional \$90,000 for three of their own with no reporting requirement to those they are elected to serve and who pay their salaries.

In light of the regressive resolutions proposed and actions taken by the International Executive Board, the ICSOM Governing Board issued a Call to Action on May 14. AFM members across North America are encouraged to directly contact their local officers and delegates who will represent them at the 98th AFM Convention. Let them know how you feel about these IEB proposals and actions. Let them know that you expect greater transparency and not less. Let them know that a union should serve its members first and not its officers. Let them know that you expect to be more involved in decisions regarding the AFM-EPF and not less. Let them know how passionate you are about our great union and your worries about its future. Let them know that actions taken by the officers and delegates at the 2010 AFM Convention should empower the membership and not disenfranchise or be divisive.

(continued on page 6—see *PRESIDENT'S REPORT*)

All Aboard the U.S.S. Schermerhorn

by *Laura Ross, ICSOM Secretary*

Nashville's April was unseasonably warm, with little rain. That changed suddenly when Nashville was deluged on May 1 and 2, causing some of the worst flooding here in recorded history.

Our principal oboe audition was scheduled for three days starting on Friday, April 30, just one day before the flooding began. While the other three auditions we've held since January proceeded without incident, this was one for the record books. With more than 250 applicants, about 100 were sent invitations and 85 confirmed attendance. Of course, the first day went smoothly. After five hours of auditions followed by an evening concert that included Mahler's Fifth, no one anticipated what was to come.

Torrential rains, thunder, and lightning woke most of us in the early hours Saturday. During that second day of auditions, the poor candidates were checking in completely drenched. Still, only one candidate failed to show that day. The auditions were being held in the Schermerhorn Symphony Center's Laura Turner Hall, which has a three-inch separation joint around the entire concert hall to keep out extraneous noises and vibrations (with the exception of fireworks and thunder directly above the building). Because everyone could hear the intense thunder and driving rain while listening to the auditions, we knew the situation must be pretty serious outside. We also knew we were in the safest building in town—since it had been built to recently instituted earthquake standards—and that we could most likely safely survive even a tornado. That relative safety, however, didn't stop the committee members' imaginations from producing some pretty wild speculation about the devastation that might await our departure from the building. Of course, this was after listening to more than 60 oboists play the same five excerpts for two days.

The drama continued to unfold that evening. The Cumberland River cuts Nashville in two as it snakes through the city. Numerous smaller rivers and creeks in backyards and neighborhoods feed into the Cumberland or into one of two lakes built by the Tennessee Valley Authority to control flooding (Old Hickory Lake and Percy Priest Lake). When it really rains here, it's common for the creeks and smaller rivers to overflow their banks and flood the side roads. But this was more than the storm of the century, and there was so much rain that all three highways (I-65, I-40, and I-24) that converge in the center of Nashville were flooded, and sections were closed south and west of the city. Musicians called our personnel managers concerned they might not be able to get to the concert due to blocked roadways. At one point prior to the concert we stood backstage watching news footage of a portable school room floating down I-24, a road some of our musicians might have taken to get to work that evening. Though most musicians were able to get to work that night, not everyone was so lucky. A few were already trapped, and at least two musicians were already dealing with flooding problems. And the rain kept coming.

As we headed to our concerts and the auditions over the weekend, people were forced to confront a concern many musicians often face when there is severe weather: whether we should put our lives in jeopardy trying to get to work, especially when there is a declared

emergency. Over time our musicians have gone to work in torrential rainstorms, flooding, through ice and snow storms, and on the heels of tornadoes that devastated our neighborhoods. Every performer knows that the show must go on, but how dangerous do conditions need to be before travel becomes absurd? On the other hand, were we going to ignore all those hopeful audition candidates who spent countless hours practicing and hundreds of dollars traveling to Nashville for this audition?

And so, trying to get to the hall to complete the auditions, we braved the falling rain and the rising waters and looked for alternate routes that weren't washed out. One committee member got stuck on a highway so flooded that only a few cars at a time were being allowed to wade through, while another musician ended up stalled in water halfway up the car door. (Thankfully she was able to restart the car and coast out of the water.) It wasn't just committee members; our staff members also put themselves in jeopardy.

My colleagues went way beyond the call of duty that day. Operations Manager Tim Lynch left the hall at least three times to help stranded candidates. Some were unable to convince a taxi to pick them up; others, with rising waters surrounding them, had no idea how to reach the hall and needed to be rescued. When the humidity prevented one candidate's oboe keys from working properly, Nashville Symphony members Ellen Menking and Roger Wiesmeyer gladly offered the use of their instruments, and Cynthia Estill loaned out her valuable repair tools so that the candidate could continue.

Accommodations were made to the audition schedule, and breaks were extended as we waited for committee members and delayed candidates. The rain was non-stop, at times pounding on the roof. There were thunderclaps, flickering lights, and rising humidity. A leak developed on the second floor of the building. Then came an announcement that Nashville was under a civil emergency. It became so absurd that we could only laugh. As the day progressed committee members compared the building to the Titanic, renamed the auditorium the U.S.S. Schermerhorn, and hummed "Nearer My God to Thee." We became a bit giddy over the thought that the upcoming week would be our "floating week" (in reference to one committee member's "floating" vacation week).

But my story isn't over! Between two rounds of semifinals, we were informed the building was flooding. The water table had risen so much that water was leaking into the sub-basement—around all the mechanical equipment—and the pumps weren't working fast enough to keep the water from rising. Alarms were going off because of the rising water, and more building staff were called in to deal with it all. Then we heard that Nashville Electric Service was about to cut our power and that we would be switching to the emergency generator. Right after the second semifinalist's audition, the entire building was suddenly plunged into total darkness for about seven seconds until the emergency power kicked in. The audition committee and Music Director Giancarlo Guerrero decided it would be better to continue with finals rather than to reschedule them. So, with light but no air, we continued even as the alarms continued intermittently

(offstage and not in the auditorium, thankfully). Once the committee made its final decision, the remaining candidates were notified that there was a winner. Not five minutes later, the fire alarm went off. It was definitely now time to leave the building. Thankfully, the rain had ended at last.

When I finally got home, TV stations reported that nearly 14 inches of rain had fallen over the two days (the equivalent of 25 percent of Nashville's average annual rainfall) and that the Cumberland River had (hopefully) crested at 49 feet above normal in a day and a half. While the river was only a few feet from washing over the banks and flooding First Avenue, storm drains and the rising water table were flooding Second Avenue and the parking lot in the building across the street from the Schermerhorn's loading dock.

Meanwhile, of the 85 oboists who had confirmed, only five cancelled or were unable to get to Nashville. We survived the storm to end all storms, and we should have a new principal oboe join us in just a few more weeks.

The things we do for our art!

CODA:

As you may know by now, the Cumberland River continued to rise to more than 11 feet above flood stage, engulfing First Avenue. On May 3, the morning after I wrote this article, the water was still rising and came within three inches of reaching the floor of our concert hall before beginning to recede. Additionally, Bridgestone Arena's basement and main floor, the parking structure of the Hilton Downtown Nashville hotel (site of the 2006 ICSOM Conference), the Country Music Hall of Fame, and the construction site for the Music City Convention Center were all flooded and pumping water directly toward the intersection in front of the Schermerhorn Symphony Center stage door entrance (aka Lake Schermerhorn). Our building managers, engineers, and others had remained at the hall overnight trying to stave off the rising waters, but the generator



Photo by Laura Ross

A lake was created outside of the Schermerhorn Symphony Center (seen beyond the trees) during the recent flooding in Nashville.

was only able to run for 14 hours before it ran out of fuel. It was restored again on Monday, but with very limited power and with communications cut off for the time being.

Management began focusing on immediate problems. I arrived at the hall as they were moving the computer servers so we could begin to communicate. That Monday was a beautiful, cloudless day, but below ground level in our sub-basement, more than 25 feet of water covered all the building's mechanical equipment, air handlers, and switchers. In the basement, the kitchen, the storage area housing our two Steinway grand pianos and additional percussion equipment that was not stored upstairs in the percussion room (most belonging to our principal percussionist), the organ console and blowers, and some of our sound equipment were all submerged, and water had entered the coat room and front public bathrooms. Worse still, the storage area for the motorized chair carts, which allow us to quickly convert the hall from traditional seating to a flat floor, buckled more than one and a half feet. It is expected to take months to fix this, meaning that there will be no cabaret seating or events in the hall for some time to come. The silver lining is that the seats were still in the auditorium, so we haven't lost them as well.

Our management has moved quickly, and everyone involved in the design and building of our hall has been incredibly generous in assisting us as we begin our recovery. The generosity and volunteer spirit of our city and state have been truly impressive, but right now the hall resembles something out of E.T.—with generators and giant plastic tubes worming their way around the hall bringing in air to protect the library, the organ pipes, and other vital areas of the hall. The musicians have been understanding and flexible as we become transients once again.

That first Monday morning I talked with some of our staff and watched as they began trying to put the pieces back together, looking for alternate venues for our concerts and deciding how to get back to business. As shocked as we all were, the brainstorming had already begun.

As I was preparing to leave, I mentioned the oboe audition to two of our senior management. Immediately their eyes lit up, their expressions changed and they asked, "Did we find someone?" They were so pleased to hear about the outcome and, for just that moment, we didn't have this terrible burden to face; we had found a great new player for our orchestra. As remarkable as this seemed with all the uncertainty, it reinforced to me that, especially at times like this, our priority must be to continue celebrating what is most important—the orchestra and the music.

Weeks later, the results of this devastation have become even more significant to our city and to our musical community. It is estimated that the damage was in excess of \$2 billion, and it has been suggested that this was the largest loss of musical instruments in history. The Nashville Symphony anticipates it will not be able to return to the Schermerhorn until late November or December because all wiring

(continued on page 7—see NASHVILLE FLOODING)

Chairperson's Report

(continued from page 2)

them all as anyone since the inception of ICSOM. In this time of economic difficulty, I have relied on you all more than you'll ever know for my inspiration. What I wrote in that 2007 *Senza Sordino* article I mentioned earlier is still true: "[O]n all-night flights back to North Carolina, I am never alone. ... I carry the strength of our community of musicians with me everywhere I go."

We all have many battles ahead as we seek to respond to the negative rhetoric that our managements tend to articulate, especially during this recession. Our position has been, and remains, that people will invest in organizations that are inspiring them and serving their communities, and that, in every respect, the incredible people who play in our orchestras give more to their cities than they receive.

Unfortunately, some weak managers continue to take advantage of the recession to reduce their organization to a size that their skill sets are more capable of managing. Musicians who love their orchestras have shown a willingness to make necessary adjustments, but instead of being met with similar commitment from their boards, they are instead met with ridiculous rhetoric that undermines the fund raising ability of their organizations.

While I don't want to expose the name of a particular board or person, I was stunned when I met earlier this year with a board member of one of our nation's greatest orchestras, in one of the world's greatest cities, whose misguided message was committed to the idea that his city could no longer support one of the greatest cultural assets of the world, and that the citizens of his city did not deserve all that they could have—and this was a person charged with inspiring people to give.

What evidence do I have that a negative view of an organization's future is a poor fund raising tool? Well, I'd argue that offering positive news, and demonstrating the value of an orchestra is a productive message.

In May of this year, it was announced that the Kennedy Center had received a \$22.5 million gift. Why would anyone make such an investment? Michael Kaiser, the Kennedy Center president, has been offering a positive message of hope and a positive marketing campaign, trumpeting what can be achieved as opposed to what will fail. I suspect that the \$22.5 million will help him achieve the goals he so clearly and inspirationally articulated at last summer's ICSOM Conference.

More evidence exists for me close to home for a different type of arts institution that is dedicated to growth and service. The North Carolina Museum of Art recently completed a brand new building, as well an outdoor concert hall, committed to displaying great exhibits and offering concerts of all types. An investment in a traveling Rodin exhibit, thought by many to be out of the reach of a North Carolina institution, instead propelled the museum to national prominence under extraordinary leadership. Has such an investment paid off, during a deep recession? Well, on May 26 it was announced

that Wachovia had given the museum a \$2.5 million gift. The museum has promised to use the grant for educational purposes.

As ICSOM has often stated, people and companies will invest in things that will serve the community, and they will not invest in things they are repeatedly told are not sustainable.

I have a mission ahead: to positively articulate the lessons learned from each and every musician I have met in my travels. Those who would suggest that the arts cannot survive are simply wrong. Those who would suggest that their orchestras cannot grow are themselves among the root causes of the problem, and until our field understands how to market a positive image, then I will be on the job, showing up wherever invited, meeting with boards, press, musicians, Congress, and our local officers, until our positive message is heard and repeated.

I never travel alone. I carry the good wishes of you all with me everywhere I go—and I profoundly appreciate the support you offer me. But, I am asking for even more.

Together, there can be no doubt that we will be heard.

President's Report

(continued from page 3)

Sphinx Competition

The mission of the Sphinx Organization is to encourage, develop and recognize classical musical talent in the black and the Latino communities and among all youths. ICSOM's continued support provides scholarship awards to the senior semifinalists of the annual competition. Orchestras are becoming increasingly diverse due, in no small measure, to the extraordinary work of the Sphinx Organization.

The 2010 Sphinx Competition Finals Concert was held at Orchestra Hall in Detroit, Michigan. First place was awarded to Gareth Johnson, a 24-year-old violinist from Wellington, Florida. His performance of the third movement of Saint-Saëns Violin Concerto No. 3 won him the top honors and a cash prize of \$10,000. Second and third place honors went to Paul Laraia and John Sanderson, respectively. Laraia is a 20-year-old violist from Boston, Massachusetts, and Sanderson is a 19-year-old violinist from Bloomington, Indiana.

Additional information regarding the Sphinx Organization may be found at www.sphinxmusic.org.

Nashville Flooding

(continued from page 5)

and air handlers in the sub-basement must be replaced. Due to lack of power, the Symphony offices have been temporarily moved to two locations, and our box office staff is housed 30 minutes south of town, in Murfreesboro. The pianos will be replaced, the organ console rebuilt and, thanks to our many friends in Nashville, our rehearsals and concerts will go on as planned but in a variety of locations. The entire Gaylord Opryland complex, home to the Grand Ole Opry House, the Opry Mills shopping mall, and the Opryland Hotel, was flooded. Submerged were both the Opry House's main-floor audience seating and the stage with its famous "Opry Circle" (cut out from the original Ryman Auditorium stage) that allowed artists to stand in the same place Roy Acuff stood nearly 85 years ago when the Opry began. The Cascades, a section of the nearly 3,000-room Opryland Hotel where the NSO once played in the balconies, also sat under water. (Ironically, the loss of the Opry House for the time being has caused the two largest continuous performing organizations, the Nashville Symphony and the Grand Ole Opry, to vie with each other for performing space.) There is no doubt that one of the worst blows to our musical community was caused by the flooding of Soundcheck Nashville, the main cartage and personal storage area for tens of millions of dollars of instruments, audio and video equipment, sets, costumes, and other stage equipment. It is for good reason that Nashville is known as Music City USA, for it is a city that lives and breathes music of every form—including symphonic, country, gospel, and jazz. While this city has been dealt a terrific blow, Nashville continues to look to the future. Mayor Karl Dean, speaking at the Public Square on the occasion of the NSO's first performance after the flood, said: "Last week I said this city was optimistic. Now I still say this city is optimistic but underlined five times."

The Americans for the Arts Action Fund



Play Your Part

ICSOM continues to partner with the Americans for the Arts Action Fund. The Arts Action Fund seeks to engage citizens in education and advocacy in support of the arts and arts education.

The Arts Action Fund's goal is to enlist and mobilize one million citizen activists by 2013 who will help ensure that arts-friendly public policies are adopted at the federal, state, and local levels, and that public and private resources are maximized. In addition, the Arts Action Fund Political Action Committee (PAC) provides direct support to pro-arts federal House and Senate candidates. The PAC expects to provide support to pro-arts candidates in all 50 states.

Together, we can contribute to the creation of a truly national activist base that ensures our elected leaders will support policies and funding that create opportunities for every American to learn, participate in, enjoy and benefit from the arts. Through this strategic partnership ICSOM is helping to build more powerful advocates for the arts and arts education at the national, state, and local levels.

If you haven't already joined as a free member of the Arts Action Fund, please go to their website and click on the link to join for free. When you join, you will receive breaking news and legislative alerts from the e-advocacy center, quarterly updates through Arts Action eNews, and exclusive access to the members only Arts Action Fund PAC.

The Arts Action Fund website is at www.ArtsActionFund.org.

Don't wait. Join today. Make your voice count.

2010 ICSOM Conference

August 18–21, 2010

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Houston, Texas 77002**

**Delegates will receive Conference packets
during the first week of June**

**All attendees must register with
Secretary Laura Ross by July 16**

Senza Sordino is the official voice of ICSOM and reflects ICSOM policy. However, there are many topics discussed in *Senza Sordino* on which ICSOM has no official policy; the opinions thus expressed in *Senza Sordino* are those of the author(s) and not necessarily of ICSOM, its officers, or members. Articles and letters expressing differing viewpoints are welcomed.

Orchestra Newslets

The **New York City Opera**, after a year of being homeless, is very much alive and thriving back home in the newly renovated David H. Koch Theater (formerly the NY State Theater). The orchestra committee reports that, most importantly for the orchestra, the renovations include a wonderful, enlarged pit, which can be raised to various heights—including stage level—enabling the theater to be used for symphonic concerts.

In addition to the improvements of new seats and additional aisles that are visible to the public, there were many behind the scenes upgrades. Among them were: a new stage lighting system; a new, sound-proofed fire curtain; a new media center and wiring allowing the possibility of HD video and state of the art audio recording; and many others. The acoustics, both in and out of the pit, have also been greatly improved.

The company recently completed its latest season of VOX, the NYCO's American opera lab/workshop. Since it began in 1999, VOX has been an outlet for the future of American opera, giving composers a chance to hear large excerpts of their works—finished or in progress—with full orchestra and singers. Of the more than 100 works that have been performed since its inception, 40 or so have gone on to receive fully staged performances. The readings have been free to the public and have been packed, attracting crowds of opera aficionados, impresarios, and other very interested parties. This year people had to be turned away at the door.



On March 11 the **Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra** embarked on its first tour in twenty years. The five-city tour of Florida included concerts in Fort Lauderdale, Daytona, Vero Beach, Sarasota, and Gainesville with Music Director JoAnn Falletta. Tour repertoire included Rossini's *Semiramide* Overture, Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto (with BPO Concertmaster Michael Ludwig as soloist), Ravel's Piano Concerto in G Major (with Fabio Bidini), and Rachmaninoff's Symphony No. 2.

The tour was made possible by the highly successful fundraising efforts of BPO Executive Director Dan Hart and Music Director JoAnn Falletta. Virtually all of the funding for the tour was raised through personal meetings with potential donors who have roots in Western New York but who now reside in Florida. These efforts were responsible for the tour finishing with a financial surplus.

Many of our Florida audience members were interested in the possibility of acquiring a recording of these concerts. In response, the Buffalo Philharmonic is producing a CD of two of the works from the tour repertoire (the Rossini and the Rachmaninoff), making use of the Live Recording Agreement and utilizing archival recordings made prior to the tour.

In September 2010 the Buffalo Philharmonic will begin a season-long celebration of its 75th anniversary.

The **San Diego Symphony** will celebrate its centennial year starting in July. Both the summer and winter seasons have been enhanced for the occasion with special events and a celebrity cast of soloists. The San Diego Symphony has had successes that include seven straight years of rising subscription attendance and ten straight years of budget surpluses. With the SDS's fiscal year ending in June, the 2009–2010 year was threatening to break its string of balanced budgets, but an end-of-the-year matching gift of \$500,000 by an anonymous donor, dubbed the Fortissimo Challenge Grant, will hopefully give the fundraising effort enough of a boost to keep the succession of balanced budgets intact for the eleventh straight year.



Despite the massive flooding of and damage to the Schermerhorn Symphony Center (see story on p. 4), the **Nashville Symphony** is forging ahead to complete its 2009–2010 season and hopes to be back in its hall by the end of the year. Delegate Brad Mansell reports that the NSO concluded its Classical Series at the Tennessee Performing Arts Center, as scheduled, with a performance of Bartok's *Bluebeard's Castle*—complete with an unveiling of glass sculptures by Dale Chihuly created around the piece. The summer season is moving forward and there are plans to complete all scheduled performances in other venues. A recording project of works by Joseph Schwantner is also planned. Other good news, despite the flooding, was the announcement that NSO has been invited to perform in Carnegie Hall in May 2012 as part of Spring for Music, a festival designed to encourage greater creativity in programming and to spotlight the vitality of orchestral life in American orchestras. NSO musicians send their thanks to all of the ICOSM orchestras for their support and concern, with a special thank you to the Los Angeles Philharmonic for their generous donation at their May 15 performance in Nashville.



Besides concern at **The Florida Orchestra** about a probable season deficit and the continued erosion of government and corporate funding due to the recession, there are also positive developments to report. The Florida Orchestra has begun to reverse a more than decade long decline in subscription sales, and single ticket sales this season for all concerts are exceeding goals by more than 25 percent. There has also been an increase in individual donors and donations. Delegate Warren Powell emphasizes that the musicians hope these are indicators of a better future for TFO.



The **Chicago Symphony's** in-house recording label, CSO Resound, has enjoyed continued success in 2010. The most recent release, conducted by Pierre Boulez, includes Stravinsky's *Pulcinella*, Symphony in Three Movements, and Four Etudes. The 2009 release of Mahler's Symphony No. 2, conducted by Bernard Haitink, was named Gramophone Magazine's February 2010 CD of the month.

In May, the **Los Angeles Philharmonic** went on a two-week state-side tour with its new music director, Gustavo Dudamel. The two programs for the tour included Bernstein's *Age of Anxiety*, with soloist Jean-Yves Thibaudet, Mahler's Symphony No. 1, *City Noir* by John Adams (commissioned and premiered by the L.A. Phil this past fall), and Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 6 ("*Pathétique*"). Due to the flooding in Nashville, the concert there had to be moved from the recently completed Schermerhorn Symphony Center to the Tennessee Performing Arts Center. The musicians and management of L.A. Phil, including Dudamel and Thibaudet, donated \$25,000 to the Nashville Symphony to assist in repairs to their hall and to replace lost instruments. Nashville hosted a reception for L.A. after the concert.



Photo by Lili Yang

Members of the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the Nashville Symphony mix at a reception following the L.A. Phil's May 15 concert in Nashville. (Left to right) From the Los Angeles Philharmonic: Meredith Snow, Barry Gold, Executive Director Deborah Borda, Peter Rofé; from the Nashville Symphony: President & CEO Alan Vanlentine, Laura Ross.



Music students in the Honolulu community presented a benefit recital to support the musicians of the bankrupt **Honolulu Symphony**. Many of these students were winners of the Honolulu Symphony's annual concerto competition and had previously performed with the full orchestra. Student organizers and performers T.J. Tario, Alda Lam, and Annie Kwok, all accomplished pianists from the Ellen Masaki School of Music, initiated this project. They invited friends to join them, solicited donations, made posters, flyers, bumper stickers and concert programs, and contacted local radio and TV stations to publicize this event. The organizers were joined by several pianists from other private studios, 26 violinists from Suzuki Talent Education of Hawaii based at Punahou Music School, and several student cellists (all of whom study with teachers who play in the Honolulu Symphony). At least a dozen Honolulu music studios collaborated for this project. The concert was held at the University of Hawaii's Orvis Auditorium and supervised by Honolulu Symphony members Nancy Masaki and Thomas Yee. During the intermission, homemade cookies, cupcakes, and mochi (a local treat made from rice) were

available for sale. Honolulu Symphony Orchestra Committee's Vice-Chairs Jonathan Parrish and Anna Womack and many Honolulu Symphony musicians were on hand to express the musicians' heartfelt gratitude and appreciation for these students' and their families' support. Thirty-six students volunteered to perform in the concert. The program included solo and chamber music by Bach, Beethoven, Haydn, Chopin, Mendelssohn, Rachmaninoff, Paganini, and Dvorak. All proceeds were donated to the Live Music Awareness funds in support of the Honolulu Symphony musicians.



Donors, staff, board and many others joined the musicians of the **Virginia Symphony Orchestra** and Music Director JoAnn Falletta to celebrate VSO icon Janet Kriner, who had recently announced her retirement. Janet's 45-year career as a VSO cellist spanned half of the orchestra's 90-year history. Mayor Paul D. Fraim (who spoke at the 2009 ICSOM Conference) proclaimed April 3 "Janet Kriner Day" and designated her as a "Community Treasure." Among those present was ICSOM Chairperson Bruce Ridge who, as a youngster, had shared the stage with Janet. As the VSO was saying goodbye to Janet, it was also getting ready to welcome a new executive director, Eric Borenstein, formerly of the Erie Philharmonic.



The **Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra** in May enjoyed a very successful three-week tour of Europe with its new music director, Manfred Honeck. The tour took the orchestra to eight countries, including appearances in Paris, Dresden, Prague, and Budapest, and pairs of concerts in both Luxembourg and Vienna (Mr. Honeck's home). All the concerts were sold out, and return invitations have already been extended to the PSO.



May was "Making Sense of Alzheimer's Month" for the **Utah Symphony**. Collaborating with the Utah chapter of the Alzheimer's Association, the Utah Symphony offered discounted concert tickets, Abravanel Hall tours, and special programs for those with the disease and for their caregivers. As part of the project, musicians also performed at seven assisted-living centers. This is not the first foray into such territory for the Utah Symphony. It has also sponsored special programs for the blind and visually impaired as well as for children with autism and their families.



The most recent release of the **San Francisco Symphony's** Mahler Recording Project, the Symphony No. 8, has won three Grammy awards in the categories of Best Classical Album, Best Choral Performance, and Best Engineered Classical Album. Launched in 2001, the San Francisco Symphony and Music Director Michael Tilson Thomas's series of critically acclaimed Gustav Mahler symphony recordings are issued on the in-house recording label SFS Media. The Mahler cycle will be completed this year and has already received a total of seven Grammy Awards and nine Grammy nominations. SFS Media's Mahler series has sold over 130,000 units worldwide and has earned international critical acclaim.

It Doesn't Have to Be This Way*(continued from page 1)*

But, in this fractured union, we are undermining our dreams. We are not harvesting from common ground but instead are sowing seeds of distrust that limit our ability to be true advocates for the arts in North America and across the world. This union could be a beacon for our dreams, but, instead, it is becoming a roadblock.

In recent years, the musicians of ICSOM have become more unified, even in troubled times. We have answered calls to action to assist our colleagues. A move against one of us is a move against all of us. In the nearly 50 years since ICSOM was created, the organization has

served as an advocate for the arts and our members, and we have sought out opportunities to respectfully debate our differences while also uniting our dreams.

These opportunities can still be found in the AFM. It is not too late—but it is getting there. An inspirational message must arise from this 2010 Convention, or the future of our union could be very dark.

The way things are is not the way things have to be. We can create the union of our dreams.
