

Senza Sordino

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A Minnesota Orchestra Update by Sam Bergman, Minnesota Orchestra

The musicians of the Minnesota Orchestra have now been locked out by the Minnesota Orchestral Association (MOA) for more than six months, and there appears to be no end in sight. Concerts have been canceled through April 27, and despite the recent resumption of some limited talks surrounding our request for an independent financial analysis of the MOA's past practices and future plans, there is no evidence that our management has any intention of working towards a fair and equitable agreement, or of presenting a concert season of any length while a new \$52 million lobby for Orchestra Hall is under construction.

The obstacles that the MOA has quite deliberately placed in the way of a new collective bargaining agreement are so numerous that it is hard to conceive of a way that we might chart a path forward. We are miles apart on salary and benefits, but even if we magically came to agreement on those issues tomorrow, we could still be months away from a settlement because of MOA's insistence on nearly 300 changes to our working conditions. And even if those nearly 300 changes somehow ceased to be a matter of dispute, we would *still* not be anywhere close to returning to work, since the MOA has canceled the individual contracts of every member of the orchestra and is seeking to entirely eliminate individually negotiated overscale and relief time. It is clear, and has been clear since before the lockout began, that the current corporate leadership team at MOA intends to gut the Minnesota Orchestra as an institution, and that no one on the management side of the table cares how long it takes to accomplish that goal, or what damage is wrought in the meantime.

The good news (and there is some!) is that the musicians of the orchestra have found ourselves the beneficiaries of boundless good will and support since this nightmare season began. Public sentiment in Minneapolis and Saint Paul has been overwhelmingly on our side, with letters of support pouring into our web site (minnesotaorchestramusicians.org) and waves of protest directed at the MOA.

Three of our former music directors—Stanislaw Skrowaczewski, Neville Marriner, and Edo deWaart—penned a joint letter in the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* warning that the MOA's plans would lead to disaster, and Stan and Edo went so far as to volunteer their time and talent to lead us in three self-produced concerts, all of which sold out and turned a profit.

Our current music director, Osmo Vänskä, made history on February 1 by appearing with his orchestra in the middle of the lockout. The concert he conducted (which more than sold out a 2,500-seat venue despite bone-chilling cold and an unexpected snowstorm) was proposed by Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak and longtime Minnesota Orchestra benefactor Judy Dayton as a celebration of our recent Grammy nomination. According to Rybak and Dayton, this was intended to be a truly neutral event, free from acrimony and offered as a chance for all sides to come together and celebrate music for one night. In the weeks leading up to the performance, we invited the MOA management team to appear with us at the concert to announce an end to the lockout and a truly fresh start in negotiations. Two days before the concert, our proposal was flatly rejected, the MOA decided unilaterally to end a weeks-long media blackout with a disingenuous press release, and MOA staff and board members were ordered not to attend the concert. Despite their absence, the concert was a roaring success, with one local critic writing that,

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Photo by Melissa Kleinbart

The San Francisco Symphony shows its support for Minnesota Orchestra musicians, wearing their "Support Minnesota Orchestra Musicians" T-shirts. With fist raised is Minnesota violinist Michael Adams. To his right are Maestro Charles Dutoit and Member at Large Cathy Payne. Seated in the front (between cellos) is violist Matt Young, who is in his first season with the San Francisco Symphony, a recent transplant from the Minnesota Orchestra.

Chairperson's Report by Bruce Ridge



The Myth of the Graying Audience

On New Year's morning, I rolled over as my clock radio turned on to NPR's *Morning Edition*, as it does every morning far earlier than I ever expect. This day I was surprised to hear my own voice during a feature on the state of orchestras in America from a phone interview I had done some weeks earlier. The reporter introduced me as a bassist "with the South Carolina Symphony," a fact I found even more surprising than hearing my own voice. I felt fairly certain, even in my relative slumber, that I had never been a member of the South Carolina Symphony.

But when it comes to covering orchestral music in America, what's a fact among reporters? While this error was relatively mild in the grand scheme of things, there is so much unfair and unbalanced reporting going on that one wonders if reporters are simply copying each other's articles without even applying the integrity of a Google search to their fact-checking.

A recent article in *USA Today* had the Web headline: "Performing arts face strikes, layoffs, bankruptcy;" and the print edition subheadline read: "Strikes, money woes leave symphonies, operas out of tune." To my knowledge, there was not an orchestra anywhere in the world on strike the day that article was published, but people in hotel lobbies and airport bathrooms (or wherever it is that people read *USA Today*) had any negative perception of symphonic music reinforced by a misleading headline. I guarantee that most people saw only the headline and didn't bother to read the article. I doubt I would have read it if I hadn't been quoted.

Mark Twain said, "There are laws to protect the freedom of the press's speech, but none that are worth anything to protect the people from the press."

It isn't fair of me to blame the press entirely, though. There is no doubt that such inaccurate, negative reporting undermines the success of our organizations, and strengthens the resolve of managements and boards that seek to diminish the presence of our orchestras in their communities. But some of this artless reporting is a result of the industry's self-inflicted wounds. Still, reporters and editors should be more responsible with fact-checking and in offering their readers a less prejudiced, more balanced perspective.

On February 4, *Mother Jones* published perhaps the worse article I've seen. The writer was encouraged by other interviewees to reach out to ICSOM, but she did not. If she had, we might have spared her the indignity of publishing an article so fraught with factual errors that it is certain to be a stain on her journalistic career.

The subheadline of the *Mother Jones* article read: "With lockouts, deficits, and dwindling audiences, classical ensembles fight for survival."

(continued on page 4—see *CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT*)



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Secretary's Report

by Laura Ross



Most of the time I sit down to write and the ideas just flow. This time the spirit is willing but the inspiration hasn't been forthcoming. Call it writer's block, the weather, or a really busy schedule. Or maybe it's like approaching John Adams' *Harmonielehre* for the first time. As a string player you

face page after page of never ending notes and patterns, but the notes are periodically interrupted by a note change or a rest. God forbid you should misstep, because then you are in utter confusion. You can't count on the person next to you because they're playing a different line, and behind you your section members are playing an entirely different part.

Or maybe it's all the above! It's certainly a time of great confusion, and there doesn't appear to be much clarity on the horizon. Take our misbehaving Congress, for example. Members of each party brag about sticking to their guns, even when it's apparent that such a failure to lead—to do the right thing for all the people, not just special interest groups or major campaign donors—puts the entire country in jeopardy. And, of course, we have two boards of directors in Minnesota—public trustees of the Minnesota Orchestra and the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra—fighting over the title of worst caretakers ever as they refuse to back off untenable positions and to negotiate in good faith for the benefit of their orchestras and communities.

Both Congress and these two boards exhibit the worst kind of unproductive behavior. Every day I continue to hope that other boards and managers in this country will come to the realization that this type of futile, horrible conduct is incredibly counterproductive and is causing great harm to their institutions. Only when musicians, managers, boards, and communities work together in an honest dialogue can problematic situations find resolution. More than anything else, being honest and showing true respect for others' opinions goes a very long way.

When life seems difficult and frustrating, I suspect that we all look for the positive things in our lives—things that make us glad we do what we love, such as attending, or, even better, participating in a truly inspiring performance. Or we look for inspiration from the actions of others, such as the recent support for Minnesota Orchestra musicians by members of the San Francisco Symphony. Member at Large Cathy Payne, a passionate advocate for ICSOM's orchestras, on her own purchased a large number of Minnesota Orchestra musician T-shirts. Not letting things rest there, she then convinced her colleagues to show their support by buying (at purposely inflated prices) and wearing those T-shirts, sending a substantial contribution to support musicians who have been locked out since October.

Or there is the inspiring individual recently featured by the Nashville Symphony as narrator of Schoenberg's *Survivor from Warsaw*. He seemed an odd choice to narrate this particular work until we understood that, as a child of five during World War II, he and his entire family survived one of the most humiliating

experiences imaginable—being forcibly removed from their Los Angeles home and relegated to an Arkansas internment camp. Today he is an internationally acclaimed actor. Unlike many guest artists who head straight to their dressing rooms after a performance, he deliberately came backstage to mingle with orchestra and chorus during intermission. He was soft spoken and genuinely engaged each person who asked him to sign something or pose for a picture. But he is no shrinking violet and has used his experiences to help change attitudes about prejudice in our society. This passionate advocate for change is George Takei, someone I've admired since I first saw him as Mr. Sulu on *Star Trek* when I was a child. He impressed me greatly and made me want to work that much harder to be a strong advocate for the important work of orchestras in our communities.

My colleagues on the ICSOM Governing Board also inspire me. Our recent midwinter meeting in Chicago offered me another chance to catch up with my friends, to hear about Chairperson Ridge's visits with member orchestras, to catch up on what other orchestras are doing, and to begin our 2013 ICSOM Conference planning.

One of the issues we discussed concerned our newly redesigned ICSOM website. Anyone visiting the site at www.icsom.org recently has undoubtedly seen the wonderful photos of many of our orchestras, as well as the Conference photo and *Senza Sordino* archives. (Those orchestras not yet represented through pictures on the website are encouraged to submit photos so we can be even more inclusive.) Until recently, ICSOM settlement bulletins were available to everyone on the website. However, concerns were raised that all of the details in those bulletins should not necessarily be so readily-available to any Tom, Dick or Robert (Flanagan). In mid-January, access to settlement bulletins was limited to ICSOM members.

Last September, ICSOM webmaster Charles Noble began contacting delegates and orchestra committee chairs to set up password access for the ICSOM website. The new website has a great deal of material on it, but some of it is sensitive and therefore protected. Information such as governing board minutes, rosters, and certain conference materials are now available only to delegates and committee chairs, but the entire archive of Conference minutes dating back to 1962 is available to all ICSOM members, as are the aforementioned settlement bulletins (both current and archived).

We are in the process of editing video from last summer's historic Conference in Chicago and plan to post many of the speeches online. We are also in the process of updating Tom Hall's comprehensive history of ICSOM, *ICSOM: Forty Years of the International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians*, which was published 10 years ago to celebrate ICSOM's 40th anniversary. Rather than publishing another book, we plan to offer all this information on the website and to update the material going forward. We will also be adding materials from the George Zazofsky ICSOM Archives, a number of which were on display last summer at the Conference.

We hope you will visit the ICSOM website and sign up to access this information. Perhaps you will find something to inspire you.

Chairperson's Report

(continued from page 2)

Let's do a little bit of fact-checking on that headline by looking at "dwindling audiences" in 2012, the year that NPR questioned if American orchestras had "hit the wall":

- Utah Symphony: 23% rise in ticket sales
- The Cleveland Orchestra: on track to set season ticket sales records
- Cincinnati Symphony: two years of increased attendance
- St. Louis Symphony: highest ticket sales for December in a decade
- Buffalo Philharmonic: highest number of subscriptions in its history
- Oregon Symphony: increase in ticket sales of 19%
- San Diego Symphony: ticket sales reach an all-time high
- Kansas City Symphony: ticket sales revenue increased 46.8%

So, why isn't the press writing about the resurgence of attendance for orchestras? (Could it be because the League of American Orchestras is telling newspapers, "There's no question the audience for orchestras has gone down"?)



Photo by Claudia Botterweg

ICSOM Chairperson Bruce Ridge presents the Professional Musicians of Arizona Lifetime Achievement Award to the Phoenix Symphony's Chuck Berginc at a ceremony at Local 586 in Phoenix, December 4. The musicians of the Phoenix Symphony recently ratified a one-year agreement that calls for a 5% raise, along with raises for substitute musicians.

What frustrates me so profoundly is that even when I give reporters positive information, complete with links to support my assertions, most still don't print these facts. So ingrained is the negative outlook, so often from within the field itself, that reporters can only continue to print the same old negative clichés. If the facts don't support the clichés, the facts are discarded.

When I speak about the positive statistics for orchestras, some bloggers and commentators mischaracterize my words by claiming that I am saying that everything is fine and that there is no need to examine the future. Of course, that is not what I am saying at all. I am an advocate for change, though at times it feels like no one is listening. We must reach out to new audiences and new donors. We must learn from the industries that have mastered marketing in the digital age, and we must develop better platforms for social media. Part of the recent success in Cleveland has come from reaching out to new audiences through social media, and as a result of a concerted effort, they have increased their Facebook followers by 16,000 in just 9 months, accompanied by a surge in student attendees at Severance Hall.

A Pew Charitable Trusts survey recently reported that "[t]he internet [*sic*] and social media are integral to the arts in America," and the Americans for the Arts *ARTSblog* concluded that "the new and innovative solutions social media offers to the arts is unparalleled."

Our field must change. We must develop new marketing strategies, and we must stop recklessly causing self-inflicted wounds that undermine all we should seek to achieve. Remember that most negative commentators are selling a product, and the product is usually themselves. Not all, but many of them are self-promoters—selling courses, books, or consultancies. The negativity they articulate leaks into the press, where uninformed reporters simply take what they are given; and often they just report the loudest voices. But this negativity is cultivating panic, and when those who promote panic are also profiting from it, their message is usually false.

This leads us to the myth of the graying audience—perhaps the single most repeated and unchallenged tenant of the doctrine of failure that undermines success for orchestras. Those who promote this idea look back to audience studies from 1940 that demonstrated the median age of audiences for orchestras was around thirty at that time. They cite statistics from Baumol through recent NEA studies that show, due to aging audiences, we are surely doomed.

But I maintain that if the graying audience is a fact at all, it is being misinterpreted.

In 1940, the average life expectancy in America was 62 years. In 2013, it is 79 years. Never in history has a civilization seen such a rapid increase in life expectancy as in the past century. As a result, the audience for absolutely everything is aging. If you allow me to ignore the increase in life expectancy the way proponents of the myth of the graying audience do, I could make an argument that the audience for *Dora the Explorer* is aging.

A Long-Awaited Site Visit by George Brown, Utah Symphony

Even as the management of the Atlanta Symphony prepared to lock out its musicians, it stated that “[t]here is a myth that our audience is old and dwindling.” By their own estimation, attendance in Atlanta has been growing at 3% per year, and the average age has dropped from 57 to 52.

While I am constantly encouraged by the many young attendees I see in concert halls across America, I also accept that people tend to turn towards attending orchestral concerts as they age, having achieved a measure of success in life that allows them more freedom and leisure time. If that is the case, the fact that we have an opportunity to reach out to that segment of our audiences for an additional 15 years of life expectancy is not a problem—it is an opportunity.

We all must change. We must abandon the new model of failed rhetoric, pathetic media relationships, Boulwaristic lockouts, ineffective marketing, negative pronouncements from self-serving commentators, and the promulgation of the myth of the graying audience.

Observers of recent events can reasonably conclude that the field’s manner of training and hiring managers is inherently flawed. That is the new model we must find. How do we train and encourage visionary and charismatic managers, and how do we find them outside of traditional industry searches that have clearly grown ineffective?

It is true that orchestral music has faced a crisis, just as nearly every field has in the economic downturn. But the story to be told is how resilient orchestras have proven to be. The story that reporters should be writing is not that some orchestras have suffered, but rather that so many are reaching new heights. Sometimes, I marvel that any orchestra has remained in business, withstanding the crisis that exists in arts management. Ultimately, as I play for thousands of school children each season, or feel the reaction of an audience to Sibelius or Beethoven, or see the outpouring of love for the locked-out musicians in the Twin Cities, I know orchestras survive because of an increasing relevancy to a society that seeks meaning and comfort in a world that too often slumps under the weight of its burdens.

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.

For several years now I’ve been bugging Bruce Ridge to make a swing through Salt Lake and pay the Utah Symphony musicians a visit. We’re all well aware here that most of Bruce’s fieldwork has taken him to orchestras in various states of major distress. And, although the Utah Symphony has endured some very trying and difficult times over the past decade, we have not been taken to (or over) the brink by our management or board—as have so many orchestras whose situations have so acutely demanded Bruce’s attention. (Although, in retrospect, we actually got pretty close back in 2005.)

So I’d work angles like: “Hey Bruce, ya know, Salt Lake is a Delta Airlines hub. So, on your next trip out West, why not choose a connecting flight through here and simply stay a day or two? Maybe you could even time it to hear a rehearsal or a show.” I could tell he wanted to, but for quite a while it just didn’t work out—that is until last December when, at last, he was able to put together a trip that could work with his understandably harried schedule.

In fact, he scheduled several days here, so my partner in crime (read “ICSOM alternate delegate”) Larry Zalkind and I decided to milk this opportunity for everything we figured we could wring out of it. In the process, I temporarily became Bruce’s local press agent—booking him for interviews with the arts desks of Salt Lake’s two major newspapers, our biggest network TV affiliate, the classical music FM station, and a popular regional performing arts blog. Those of you who follow the ICSOM Group page on Facebook may recall the links to those printed or recorded interviews that soon followed.

There was a method to our madness here. Not only did we wish to tout Bruce’s visit in the press, this was also a marvelous opportunity for the Utah Symphony musicians to take charge of some of our own “branding” throughout the community and to put the orchestra and its players into dinner-table conversations around the state, even with folks who might not attend the Symphony. It’s important to find ways to remind people in one’s region *just how* important their symphony orchestra *is* to their region; and giving Bruce high visibility here talking about the Utah Symphony was a superb way to do this for us! Not at all surprisingly, Mr. Ridge came through in a huge way, hitting it out of the park in each interview. In addition, Bruce managed to work in: addressing the players after a rehearsal; attending our Ravel/Debussy concert that weekend; dinner beforehand with our CEO (my, but Bruce is a charmer—but *that’s* not news); and, after all that, attending an after-concert party the musicians threw for him.

We realize that the current issues facing our players don’t have quite the intensity or immediacy of those that many of our colleagues nationwide are currently being made to endure. Even so, many musicians here told me after his visit how they found Bruce’s words and energy to be uplifting, inspiring, and healing.

We eagerly await the next time Bruce can manage to swing through this Delta hub.

Gino Vivaldo Raffaelli
1925–2013

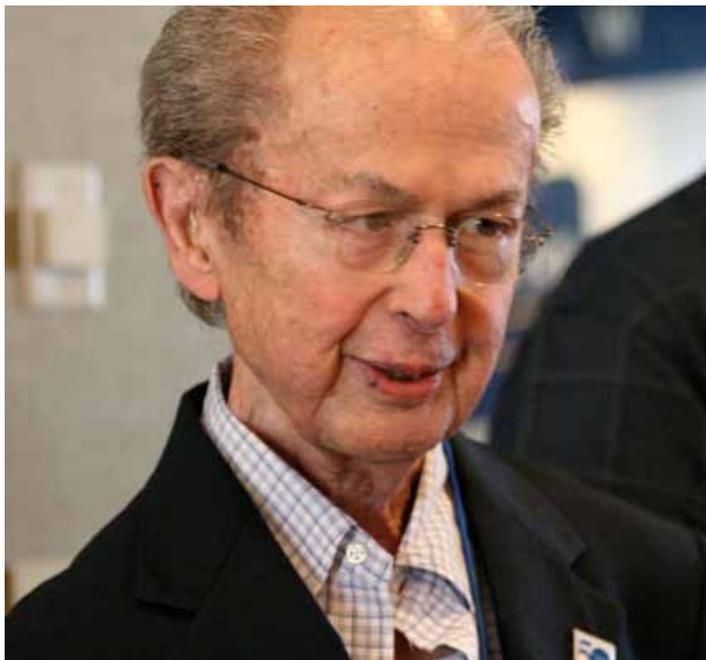


Photo by Eric Arbiter

Gino Raffaelli, a founding member of ICSOM, passed away on January 10. He was a violinist with the Cleveland Orchestra from 1957 to 2001 and served as ICSOM's first treasurer. He is survived by his daughter, Giovanna M. Shore, and two grandchildren.

Gino was widely admired by his friends and colleagues as both a musician and an activist. In 1984, with fellow Cleveland violinist Diane Mather, he co-founded Performers and Artists for Nuclear Disarmament (PAND).

Those in attendance at last summer's ICSOM Conference had the privilege to hear him speak about ICSOM's fundamental concepts and first meetings. He concluded with the following remarks:

I would like to relate one of my most endearing memories as a member of The Cleveland Orchestra. The year was 1963, and the venerable Pierre Monteaux was guest conductor. Mr. Monteaux was in his eighties at the time. At the end of the last rehearsal he turned to the orchestra and said: "Ladies and Gentlemen, you are truly a great orchestra, and it has been a pleasure to work with you this week. Many of you may know that this year is the 50th anniversary of the first performance of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*, and many of you may know that I conducted the premiere performance of this great work in Paris in 1963. And, I would love to conduct the 100th anniversary performance of this piece with your great orchestra, but unfortunately, by then most of you will be dead." And so I would like to paraphrase the words of the good maestro. I won't be around for the 100th anniversary of ICSOM, and so I extend to you my best wishes for good health and good fortune, so that all of you will be around for the 100th anniversary of ICSOM.

William Bennett
1956–2013



Photo by Terrence McCarthy

On February 28, the San Francisco Symphony lost one of its most beloved musicians. William Bennett, our principal oboe, died five days after collapsing at the front of the stage while performing the Strauss Oboe Concerto. He had been performing beautifully, when the sudden traumatic event shocked both the orchestra and the audience. The orchestra dedicated three performances of the Bruckner Seventh Symphony to his memory, with Michael Tilson Thomas leading a moment of silence before each.

Bill joined the San Francisco Symphony in 1979 as associate principal oboe, a year before Davies Hall opened, and won the principal oboe chair in 1987. The American composer John Harbison wrote his Oboe Concerto for Bill, and Herbert Blomstedt conducted its premiere, with subsequent performances on tour. Bill was also on the faculty of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.

To those who knew him, Bill was a man of many talents—supremely capable musician, creator of oil paintings, deft cartoonist, quirky arranger of music, and someone who had a keen eye for seeing the depth and humor in the world around him. To say that we in San Francisco will miss him is an incredible understatement. He is survived by his wife, Peggy, sons Daniel and Michael, mother, Fran, and sisters Jean and Nancy.

—Robert N. Ward, Principal Horn, San Francisco Symphony

Grammy Awards

At the recent 55th Annual Grammy Awards there were a number of ICSOM orchestra recordings that won or were nominated for awards. Congratulations to these ICSOM orchestras, listed here along with the award categories in which they were recognized.

Producer of the Year, Classical

- Blanton Alspaugh (winner), *credits include*:
 - Davis: *Río De Sangre* (Joseph Rescigno, Vale Rideout, Ava Pine, John Duykers, Kerry Walsh, Guido LeBron, The Florentine Opera Company & **Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra**)
 - Music For A Time Of War (Carlos Kalmar & **Oregon Symphony**)
- Tim Handley (nominated), *credits include*:
 - Gershwin: Piano Concerto In F; Rhapsody No. 2; *I Got Rhythm* Variations (Orion Weiss, JoAnn Falletta & **Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra**)
 - Hailstork: *An American Port Of Call* (JoAnn Falletta, Virginia Symphony Chorus & **Virginia Symphony Orchestra**)
 - Mahler: Symphony No. 1 (Marin Alsop & **Baltimore Symphony Orchestra**)
- Marina Ledín, Victor Ledín (nominated), *credits include*:
 - Delibes: *Sylvia*; *Coppélia* (Martin West & **San Francisco Ballet Orchestra**)

Best Engineered Album, Classical

- Music For A Time Of War - Jesse Lewis & John Newton, Engineers; Jesse Brayman, Mastering Engineer (Carlos Kalmar & **Oregon Symphony**) (nominated)

Best Orchestral Performance

- Adams: *Harmonielehre* & *Short Ride In A Fast Machine* (Michael Tilson Thomas & **San Francisco Symphony**) (winner)
- Music For A Time Of War (Carlos Kalmar & **Oregon Symphony**) (nominated)
- Sibelius: Symphonies Nos. 2 & 5 (Osmo Vänskä & **Minnesota Orchestra**) (nominated)

Best Opera Recording

- Wagner: *Der Ring Des Nibelungen* - James Levine & Fabio Luisi, Conductors; Hans-peter König, Jay Hunter Morris, Bryn Terfel & Deborah Voigt; Jay David Saks, Producer (**The Metropolitan Opera Orchestra**; The Metropolitan Opera Chorus) (winner)

Classical Vocal Solo

- Homecoming: Kansas City Symphony Presents Joyce Didonato - Joyce Didonato (Michael Stern & **Kansas City Symphony**) (nominated)

Contemporary Classical Composition

- Steven Stucky: August 4, 1964, Gene Scheer, Librettist (Jaap Van Zweden, **Dallas Symphony Chorus & Orchestra**) (nominated)

Minnesota Update

(continued from page 1)

“In Vänskä’s turbocharged account—the most rousing I’ve ever heard—[Sibelius’s *Finlandia*] became a political act, dispelling any lingering questions as to the conductor’s impartiality.”

While our situation could not be more dire, and there appears little light at the end of the tunnel as yet, we remain absolutely steadfast in our determination to preserve our orchestra’s 110-year legacy. We are organized, we are united, we are well-supported, and we are prepared to remain locked out for *one day longer* than the MOA continues to insist that it can build for the future only by demolishing the present.

We owe a profound debt of gratitude to our lawyer, Bruce Simon, and also to AFM Local 30-73 President Brad Eggen and his fellow officers. The Minnesota AFL-CIO and its Working Partnerships program have also been instrumental in keeping us all safe and warm through the long Minnesota winter. In addition, we have been staggered by the outpouring of financial support we have received from orchestras all across North America in response to ICSOM’s *Call to Action* on our behalf. These funds are being monitored carefully, and used responsibly and sparingly.

Finally, we thank every individual musician we have heard from during this immensely sad season. The anti-union, anti-music current that is sweeping through our industry is strong, but it cannot begin to match the collective strength of the community of musicians. Your words of support and encouragement mean the world to us, and we know that you’re counting on us to remain strong. We will not let you down.

Sam Bergman is a violist with the Minnesota Orchestra and serves on its members’ committee. He is a former editor of Senza Sordino.



The artwork for both lawn signs and T-shirts being distributed by Minnesota Orchestra Musicians.

Orchestra Newslets

Delegate Rachel Goldstein reports that the **Chicago Symphony** started a 19-day tour of Asia in late January. It included the CSO's first appearances in Taipei, Tianjin, and Seoul, as well as performances in Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Beijing. CSO members also participated in educational activities such as children's concerts and master classes. Music Director Riccardo Muti was forced by illness to withdraw from the tour. Osmo Vanska and Lorin Maazel stepped in to conduct the concerts, with a few changes to the planned repertoire. Maestro Muti is recovering from surgery and will return to Chicago in April.



Photo by Todd Rosenberg

CSO Musician Michael Hovnanian signs autographs following the Citizen Musician performance at the Xuhui Library in Shanghai. The free performance was open to a number of different groups, including visually impaired adults.



The October settlement that ended the five-week lockout of **Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra** musicians included both a bridge agreement, taking the ISO through February, and a five-year contract that would start after the successful completion of that bridge agreement. In order for that five-year contract to take effect, \$5 million had to be raised between November 2012 and February 2013 from new sources—people who had never given to the ISO before, those who had not donated in two years, or existing donors who doubled their donation and made a five year pledge. On February 3, the ISO announced that it had more than met its goal, raising \$5.4 million in new money and an additional \$3.1 million from existing donors. The ISO board and management worked extraordinarily hard to accomplish this. Additionally, the musicians contributed to the fundraising effort in an unprecedented fashion by providing personal contact lists to the development department, selling a self-produced CD, sending personal letters to friends, family, and community members, and appealing to the audience association that was created during the five-week lockout.

According to delegate Louise Alexander, the musicians are excited to welcome ISO's newly appointed CEO, Gary Ginstling, to their orchestra. Ginstling leaves a nearly five-year stint at the Cleveland Orchestra, where he served as general manager, and is slated to begin his new position on March 18.

The musicians of the **Jacksonville Symphony** have been “playing and talking” under management-imposed, union-contested terms and conditions (but no contract) since the opening of the 2012 season. An unfair labor practice charge over this imposition resulted in the NLRB issuing a complaint against the employer and setting a trial date for late March. The timing of the complaint was fortuitous, as it motivated the Jacksonville Symphony Association (JSA) to increase the amount of its imposed health insurance coverage. JSA has since offered a settlement proposal which would lengthen the season but offers a sliding bonus that is tied to increases in operating revenue in subsequent seasons. After the JSA hired former Chicago Symphony executive director and former president of the American Symphony Orchestra League (now League of American Orchestras) Henry Fogel as consultant, Mr. Fogel urged management to seek a trial postponement in the interest of increasing the likelihood of a settlement, as litigation would bring a chilling effect to that process. The trial is now postponed until the week of June 3. On March 3, the musicians responded to the settlement offer with their eighth proposal.

Meanwhile, the JSA board decided to institute a change in management, to take effect on March 18, tapping David Pierson, who served as executive director of the Jacksonville Symphony from 1988 to 1996, to replace Executive Director Stacy Ridenour. His new title will be CEO/President of the JSA.



The **Houston Symphony** has appointed Colombian-born, Vienna-trained conductor Andrés Orozco-Estrada as its next music director. Orozco-Estrada will serve as music director designate during Houston's 2013–2014 centennial season and then begin a five-year contract the following season. He is currently the music director of the Tonkünstler-Orchester Niederösterreich (Vienna's Tonkünstler Orchestra) and the Basque National Orchestra, and next year he will succeed Paavo Järvi as music director of the Radio Symphony Orchestra of Frankfurt. Orozco-Estrada has worked extensively with European orchestras, including Vienna Philharmonic, Munich Philharmonic, Leipzig Gewandhaus, Mahler Chamber Orchestra, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Santa Cecilia Orchestra Rome, Radio Symphony Orchestras of Frankfurt (hr) and Hamburg (NDR), and Orchestre National de France. His concert in Houston last October marked his U.S. professional orchestral debut and was so well received by the musicians that a visit for a private rehearsal with different repertoire was quickly arranged.

Brinton Smith, principal cellist and member of the search committee, says that the appointment concludes a three-year search that considered over 50 conductors and was notable for the deference paid by the board and the administration to the orchestral musicians' preferences, as expressed in their evaluations. He adds that the musicians of the Houston Symphony wish to thank their ICSOM colleagues in other orchestras who aided the search by providing valuable feedback and insight regarding their guest conductors.

Last September, the **Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra** board of directors took the dramatic and unprecedented step of naming a musician, principal trumpet and Players Council chairman Mark Niehaus, to the position of executive director. In November the musicians and management agreed on modifications to the current contract that will delay raises due this year and spread them over a two-year contract extension. Since then, MSO committee chair Scott Kreger says that management has begun a campaign intended to raise both endowment and bridge funding, using cost containment and predictability as centerpieces of that campaign. One major effort that is meeting with some success is an attempt to accelerate the annual giving cycle to help end the long-standing practice of year-end emergency fundraising. Ultimately, the longer-term challenge is to eliminate the annual emergency by improving possibilities for earned income and raising the endowment to better match the orchestra's budget. Other new initiatives have included a corporate holiday tour, which took the orchestra to a number of Milwaukee businesses for holiday concerts, and the acceleration of the cycle of planning and announcing seasons. The musicians of the orchestra are pleased that the Milwaukee Symphony Board and management are taking a positive approach to problems that many of us face.



The Cleveland Orchestra announced better than expected ticket sales, setting records in November and December 2012. Several factors contributed to the trend, including a wider variety of programming, a new student ticket advantage program, and an increased presence in social media.

According to delegate Jesse McCormick, the orchestra's 2012 Holiday Festival ticket sales were 16% higher than its previous record set in 2007. Programming this year included Classical, Celebrity, and Traditional Holiday concerts, as well as a Charlie Chaplin film with orchestral accompaniment, premier performances of *The Nutcracker* with Joffrey Ballet, and a collaboration with Pink Martini.

The Cleveland Orchestra welcomed a much larger student audience in recent months. Students filled an average of 200 seats per concert. The orchestra rolled out new offerings for students, like the "Student Frequent FanCard" and the "Under 18's Free" ticket program. The orchestra also increased its social media presence by over 300% in the past six months, including a dramatic increase of followers on Facebook and Twitter.



Following the bankruptcy and dissolution of the **Syracuse Symphony Orchestra**, SSO musicians organized **Symphony Syracuse** and, during the next 18 months, performed nearly 50 concerts under its auspices.

Though never intended to function long term, Symphony Syracuse did keep the orchestra in the public eye and focus attention on the situation. The desire for a long-term solution was shared by people from many parts of the community, so even while Symphony Syracuse was operating, leaders from higher education and other community members joined the musicians in trying to keep professional orchestral music in Syracuse permanently.

After extensive discussions, it was decided that a cooperative model would be adopted for the initial operations of a new orchestra to be run by Musical Associates of Central New York, a not-for-profit organization made up of nearly 50 musicians who were members of the Syracuse Symphony Orchestra. After securing funding commitments from the county and a foundation that had supported the Syracuse Symphony Orchestra, plans were announced to perform concerts through the fall.

The name of the new orchestra, **Symphoria**, was announced December 14 at the sold-out grand opening event. The organization also announced a subscription season for the winter and spring of 2013. Concerts have been very well attended, and Symphoria is repairing damaged relationships in the community.

Jon Garland recounts that ICSOM Chairperson Bruce Ridge was able to visit in December, just before Symphoria's grand opening. Bruce was on hand to share Syracuse musicians' experiences in anticipation of the event, and the musicians were likewise interested to hear Bruce relate the experiences of colleagues in other orchestras across the country. Jon adds that the support of ICSOM colleagues has been very meaningful to everyone and that they are very appreciative of all of the help, support, and advice they have received.



Photo by Tom Kornacker

On December 2, 2012, the locked out musicians of the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra presented a sold-out benefit concert with former music director Pinchas Zukerman to an enthusiastic crowd. Pictured are Pinchas Zukerman and SPCO delegate Leslie Shank.

Judging Symphonies as Tax-Exempt Organizations

by Lucinda Lewis, *New Jersey Symphony*

When symphony managements and boards cut the artistic guts out of their institutions by slashing performances and downsizing the musicians, the nonprofit mission of the orchestra has all but been relinquished. One has to ask, then, why are the public standards and expectations directed at other U.S. nonprofits and charities not being applied equally to nonprofit symphony orchestras? For whatever reason, American symphonic nonprofits have been given a pass.

What should a nonprofit organization prioritize when it is financially challenged? Would it be appropriate for a humanitarian charity to economize by downsizing the number of its on-the-ground linguists, medical personnel, and truck drivers? Would it matter if the charity cut costs by offering impoverished people cheaper food of lesser nutritional value or providing them lower quality medical supplies? Would any of these cost-cutting measures be tolerated by the public without the charity's first having announced significant cuts to its administrative overhead?

Certainly, where other community nonprofits are concerned, the public expectation is that the mission of the organization should be sacrosanct and maintained at all costs. If genuinely non-for-profit principles were fueling the business behavior of American symphonic organizations, cuts to the administrative side of the budget would routinely be the first economies instituted. This would ensure that a community continued to receive the maximum number of program services an orchestra could deliver under financial constraints.

Unfortunately, the business philosophy many financially troubled orchestra boards and managements are pursuing these days ignores the nonprofit purpose and attaches greater importance to a full-time, well-compensated management overseeing a small, part-time ensemble. They reason this will make their organizations "financially sustainable." When shrinking the product and downsizing the number of artists who carry out the nonprofit mission of an orchestra are the first fiscal initiatives undertaken by its leadership, the idealism and altruism that are supposed to be the driving impetus behind our purpose have been supplanted by a for-profit business doctrine: Downsize the workers, make the product smaller and cheaper, and expect the public to pay the same price for it.

American orchestras have historically been in financial trouble. The article "Symphony Finance," published in the March 1935 issue of *Fortune Magazine*, chronicled the incessant economic woes of the New York Philharmonic Symphony Society. By 1934, the Philharmonic's budgetary dilemma was so great that the management finally turned to the public to ask for donations. In contrast to what we see throughout the industry today, back then, every organizational expense of the Philharmonic was cut, including the salaries of musicians and administrators. However, for practical business reasons, the Philharmonic's management made every effort to avoid cutting performances.

In the 1930s, one of the largest single sources of revenue for an orchestra was from ticket sales. It was, therefore, difficult to justify

cutting anything which generated income. Today, performance revenue is still a substantial part of every orchestra's budget; so why would it ever be deemed economically prudent for a financially challenged organization to do more than make modest cuts in the number of performances? Symphony managements complain they can't sell concerts these days. This is not a new problem. Even in 1935, *Fortune Magazine* cited low audience attendance as having been one of the Philharmonic's most challenging, longstanding problems and offered a cogent explanation: programming—the same reason at work today.

The *Fortune* article made three points. First, no part of the Philharmonic's structure was exempt from cuts. Second, the purpose and quality of the orchestra and its musical product had to be protected from any erosion which might result from the drastic budgetary pruning instituted to stabilize the organization financially. Third, even after every level of the Philharmonic's operation had been cut dramatically, the Philharmonic still could not balance its budget.

As compared to the considerable commitment of boards and managements to protect the artistic product of orchestras in the 1930s, a for-profit doctrine has begun to emerge in the modern symphonic industry. Today, the nonprofit mission of symphonic organizations and the quality of the product become secondary when cuts are made exclusively in the artistic side to deal with a financial crisis. While this might be the preference of a growing number of boards and managements, it does not change the fact that American orchestras are nonprofits and have an obligation to provide their communities with more than a cursory product for the multi-millions of tax-exempt dollars they spend each year.

In 1994, the CEO of Save the Children, James Bausch, was driven from office over what journalist Michael Maren described as an "ostentatious waste of sponsorship funds." Maren's observations are still applicable to today's institutions.

The two little slices [of Save the Children's financial pie chart] are always fundraising and management. The big slice, always more than 80 percent, is "Program Services."...The pie chart is misleading in two ways: First, it tracks the proportion of all expenditures that go to program [services], not the proportion of all donations. The distinction is probably lost to potential sponsors, who might naturally assume that the pie chart is a representation of how their donations are being spent. The second misleading thing is...[that the pie chart does not] explain exactly what "program services are." [*sic*] The reason Save the Children...emphasizes the program services statistic is, presumably, that it is seen as a rough approximation for "money that actually helps people," as opposed to funds spent on overhead and fundraising expenses...In fiscal 1994, [program service] included nearly \$4.5 million for travel, \$3.5 million for supplies, \$15.5 million for salaries, and \$2.2 million for rents. Save's non-public financial statements show that film,

holiday cards for sponsors, the gift shop, and craft catalog were also charged to program expenses. The total of the sponsors' dollars that actually went in grants to field programs was [\$]45.1 million, less than 50 percent.

One assumes that if an organization as highly respected as Save the Children could camouflage which expenses it classified as "program services," symphony orchestras have been doing the same thing. While this technically may not be illegal, it is dishonest. It was dishonest for Save the Children to create the illusion of their funding helping more poor children than was actually the case. It is dishonest for a symphony management to represent to the public that 75%–80% of organizational funding goes to music, while loosely classifying many administrative expenses as "program services" in their annual audits and tax returns.¹

In 2010, Stanford University lecturer Laura Arrillaga-Andreessen wrote an exposé about the "excessive" compensation of the CEOs of the five largest children's charities, none of which was more than \$500,000 a year. She observed, "If a charity CEO earns \$400,000, and the sponsorship is \$20/month, the first 1,666 donations go directly into the CEO's pocket before the children get anything." The annual budgets of these charities are in the hundreds of millions of dollars and far exceed the annual budget of any American orchestra. So why is there no public concern expressed when, from a percent-of-budget perspective, the compensation of a symphony's CEO is far higher?

No one is arguing that symphony orchestras don't need administrators or that administrators should not be compensated; nor is it to say there are never times during which musicians legitimately have to accept cuts in compensation to help their orchestras survive. It is to point out, however, that there has been a lack of public scrutiny of orchestra boards and managements which address their financial difficulties by cutting the product and the purpose of the organization while leaving the administrative structure and costs intact. It's not about equality of sacrifice but how the mission of a nonprofit orchestra should be the preeminent survivor during a period of economic instability.

The League of American Orchestras has a history of obfuscating the reasons for the financial problems of symphony orchestras. From the *Wolf Report* and *Americanizing the American Orchestra* to the present, the League has endeavored to pin the economic woes of the industry on union contracts, musician compensation, shrinking audiences, ethnic and cultural tastes, the national economy, and other forces of nature. There has never been a legitimate discussion about the enormous financial burdens created for many orchestras by oversized, highly compensated, uncreative managements and underperforming boards. One could even argue that the symphonic industry has never been able to shed itself of its enduring economic

problems because those in our organizations responsible for developing creative solutions have largely been exempt from the commitment of financial sacrifice.

For-profit solutions cannot work in a not-for-profit environment, but who in the public is paying attention? Musicians have to begin changing the conversation and countering the spread of the for-profit thinking which has insinuated itself more and more into the business practices of American orchestras. Our traditional public talking points during difficult negotiations have always centered on the musicians' sacrifices and how cuts in the artistic side impact artistic quality. Communities that have lost many teachers, firefighters, and police to budget cuts will have little sympathy left over for our problems. So we have to build a new case that puts the nonprofit responsibility of our orchestras under a microscope.

Orchestras do not exist for their name only. Nonprofit arts organizations have as their basic premise the goal of making the arts accessible to the public, but their benefit to a community is not limited to the uplifting experience they provide. When a symphony cuts its season, not only does the public receive fewer program and educational services, it economically impacts all of the local businesses which depend upon concert goers to patronize their shops, restaurants, parking lots, boutiques, and the like. This creates the ripple effect of fewer tax dollars flowing into a community's treasury.

Beyond the lacking nonprofit sensibility in today's symphonic industry, there lurks the other more troubling, long-term consequence of the downsizing of American orchestras. With symphonies cutting seasons and musicians, Broadway shows using smaller orchestras, and virtual orchestras and electronic instruments replacing live musicians far and wide—if a living cannot be made playing music, what is the incentive for young players to consider music as a profession? How long will it be before we see an irreversible impact on our industry? Even if a few full-time organizations are able to survive, it won't be enough to prevent what will surely be a dramatic decline in qualified artistic talent.

Symphony managements might be able to convince their otherwise preoccupied communities that an orchestra's fiscal challenges justify cutting performances and artistic personnel, but they will find it a much more difficult task to explain why protecting the orchestra's nonprofit purpose should not be the principal goal that obligates cutting other expenses within the organization first. If we are to ensure the continuation of the viability of symphonic music as an art form in the United States, musicians have to become outspoken advocates for the nonprofit mission of our industry.

Lucinda Lewis has been the New Jersey Symphony's principal horn since 1977 and served as the ICSOM secretary from 1990 to 2002. She runs the website embouchures.com and is the author of the books Broken Embouchures and Embouchure Rehabilitation.

1. An interesting place to verify such statistics is Charity Navigator's website, www.charitynavigator.org, where other useful information pertinent to evaluating nonprofits can also be found.

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