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Kennedy Center Opera House Orchestra  
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Louisville Orchestra  
Metropolitan Opera Orchestra  
Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra  
Minnesota Orchestra  
Nashville Symphony  
National Symphony Orchestra  
New Jersey Symphony Orchestra  
New York City Ballet Orchestra  
New York City Opera Orchestra  
New York Philharmonic  
North Carolina Symphony  
Oregon Symphony Orchestra  
The Philadelphia Orchestra  
Phoenix Symphony  
Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra  
Orquesta Sinfónica de Puerto Rico  
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Utah Symphony  
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians (ICSOM)  
Web site address: [www.icsom.org](http://www.icsom.org)

ICSOM President Paul Austin and former ICSOM Chair Bruce Ridge will be traveling to San Juan next week to support the Musicians of the Puerto Rico Symphony Orchestra (PRSO) as the orchestra faces severe budget cuts.

Founded in 1958 by legendary cellist Pablo Casals, the PRSO is recognized and admired across the globe as a symbol of the cultural life of Puerto Rico. The PRSO musicians have been members of ICSOM since 2003, placing them among the most accomplished musicians in the world. The international respect for the PRSO musicians is immense, and they serve as the cultural ambassadors of Puerto Rico.

"Any reduced funding of the Puerto Rico Symphony Orchestra will have a devastating effect upon the PRSO musicians," said Paul Austin. "Any such cut would lead to a cultural loss for the residents of Puerto Rico, many of whom have turned to the orchestra for solace, inspiration, and healing. ICSOM believes that the PRSO should continue to be funded without reductions so that the orchestra can survive and continue in its historic mission to serve the people of Puerto Rico."

"Even though the PRSO musicians themselves experienced severe hardship as a result of recent natural disasters, the orchestra continued to play for its community, at shelters and fundraisers, for all citizens," said Bruce Ridge. "They emerged as heroes during challenging times."

While in San Juan, Austin and Ridge will meet with musicians, supporters, and government officials to demonstrate the importance of the orchestra and the support it has worldwide.

ICSOM knows that the Puerto Rico Symphony Orchestra truly enhances the culture, education, commerce, spirit, and psychology of the people of Puerto Rico, and that it is vital to the cultural health and well-being of Puerto Rico.

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The International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians (ICSOM) represents nearly 4000 symphonic musicians in the top 52 orchestras in the United States and Puerto Rico. ICSOM's mission is to promote a better and more rewarding livelihood for the skilled orchestral performer and to enrich the cultural life of our society. Please contact ICSOM Chair Meredith Snow at (818) 786-3776, or by writing [meredsnow@gmail.com](mailto:meredsnow@gmail.com).

Paul Austin has been a member of the Grand Rapids Symphony (GRS) horn section for twenty-one years. In 2013, he was instrumental in the drive for the GRS to join ICSOM and is proud to have served as their first ICSOM Delegate. He was elected to ICSOM's Governing Board as a Member-at-Large in 2015 and became ICSOM President in 2017.

Bruce Ridge served as ICSOM Chair from 2006-2016, becoming the organization's longest serving chairperson. He has met with countless orchestras across America, and as an arts advocate he has spoken throughout Canada, Europe and Australia, as well as in testimony before the United State Congress. Ridge is a member of the North Carolina Symphony.

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