



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF
SYMPHONY AND OPERA MUSICIANS

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International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians Announces New Host for DEI Video Series

Van Nuys, CA [June 1, 2023]—The International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians (ICSOM) is pleased to announce that Stephen Laifer will be the host of its monthly video series *Musician Profiles: Celebrating Racial Diversity*.

Launched in June 2022 and originally hosted by ICSOM President Paul Austin, these one-on-one interviews focus upon ICSOM Musicians of Color, their experiences, and how they view the need for racial diversity within our orchestras. The first twelve interviews in this series may be viewed at ICSOM's website:

<https://www.icsom.org/media/profiles.php>

"When I imagined the idea of diversity videos that would feature ICSOM members, I always envisioned an annual change in host," said Paul Austin, ICSOM President. "It has been wonderful to launch the *ICSOM Musician Profiles: Celebrating Racial Diversity* series with tremendous guests but, as in all startups, its success will only be ensured if it can survive beyond the vision of its founder. I am convinced that this series will do so with Stephen Laifer as the host for the 2023-24 season."

Recently recognized with four awards by the International Labor Communications Association for his contributions to the American Federation of Musicians' *International Musician* journal, Laifer has been a horn player with the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra (RPO) since 2012. His first interview as the host of ICSOM's *Musician Profiles: Celebrating Racial Diversity* series is with his colleague Chiao-Wen Cheng, the RPO's Principal Keyboardist. <https://youtu.be/XxxoTsk2y4Y>

"I'm pleased and proud to be hosting this important series of videos for ICSOM over the coming year," said Laifer. "These short interviews provide a crucial platform for the faces of BIPOC colleagues to be seen, and their voices to be heard. I have some big shoes to fill with Paul Austin passing the baton—apologies for the conductor reference—but I'm grateful to ICSOM for allowing me to take part."

"It has been a joy to see the *ICSOM Musician Profiles: Celebrating*

Racial Diversity video series take shape this season," said Kenneth Thompkins, Co-Chair of ICSOM's DEI Committee and Principal Trombone of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. "The series has shown that our back stories are often different, but our shared passion for music unites us all. Bravo to Paul Austin for documenting these important stories."

"What I love about *Celebrating Racial Diversity* is how our Musicians of Color share their whole self," added Alberto Suarez, Co-Chair of ICSOM's DEI Committee and Principal Horn of the Kansas City Symphony. "After a year of hearing these stories I continue to enjoy how unique, fascinating, and honest the guests have been. Bravo to Paul for hosting the inaugural year and thank you for your passion to make sure these voices are heard and celebrated."

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.

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