

# Senza Sordino

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## Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at San Francisco Symphony

### One musician's perspective

By Barbara Bogatin, San Francisco Symphony

As ICSOM Chairperson Meredith Snow stated in her May *Senza Sordino* report, "Building Inclusion into our New Normal," American symphony orchestra musicians have long been champions of our nation's highest aspirations for supporting peace, equal rights, and efforts against discrimination.

The historical racism in the orchestra world at the formation of our industry in the early 20th Century has been parallel to that in other professional arenas, but we union musicians have done much in the past several decades to attempt to change that. The question is, have we done enough? Can we better reflect and serve all the members of our community? And what is the appropriate path forward in our increasingly diverse world?



San Francisco Symphony

To those who would say that we should only play music and not engage in anything political I suggest that it is impossible to isolate ourselves from the world outside the concert hall, and that view is in direct opposition to our stated mission and values as union members and cultural ambassadors who strive to effect positive change in our communities.

It is in this context that many orchestras have been taking a hard look at the lack of representation of Musicians of Color in our ranks. Nationally our orchestras have only 2.5% Black musicians, which some in our field see as the expected outcome of cultural preferences, lack of access to classical music education programs, or socio-economic reasons beyond our control. However, more orchestras are willing to have a nuanced conversation and delve deeper into possible areas of bias or outright discrimination.

In the San Francisco Symphony we began our journey with Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion work in the fall of 2018, when our CEO sent an invitation to all musicians to join a cross-constituent DEI Workgroup with members of the Board, Staff and Orchestra. SFS had just engaged facilitator Jessica Schmidt, joined the Sphinx National Alliance for Audition Support (NAAS), and launched an Inclusive Programming Initiative. Initially, the goal of the DEI Workgroup, supported by our top Administration and Board President, was to align around common language, vision, and focus, and then to identify more long-term goals.

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## Listen-Respect-Collaborate

By Michael Sutton, Minnesota Orchestra

Listen-Respect-Collaborate. Using these three core values as guides, the Minnesota Orchestra has taken a multifaceted approach to DEI work since 2015. What started as an ad hoc diversity committee of musicians and staff members quickly expanded to include board members and staff conductor Roderick Cox.

But where are my manners? Before I go any further, please let me introduce you to AMELIA. This is the internal acronym we have decided to use instead of BIPOC, because it reflects global heritage rather than skin color. AMELIA stands for African, Middle Eastern, Latin, Indigenous, and Asian. We met AMELIA through our longest running partner in DEI Work, Justin Laing of Hillombo Consulting, LLC. When the ad hoc diversity committee was named an official Minnesota Orchestra board committee in 2019, Justin was hired as a consultant to help create an organization-wide anti-racist leadership plan. Justin's brother Alex, Principal clarinetist in Phoenix Symphony, has also been quite helpful.



Joel Larson

Others we have worked with over the years include Jessica Schmidt of Orchestrate Inclusion, and Alicia Sojourner, who workshopped us on staff culture and integration, truly opening our eyes. We have also brought in Sphinx President Afa Dworkin for an organization-wide conversation discussing her organization, NAAS, and our collaboration with the Sphinx Virtuosi and Sphinx LEAD (postponed due to Covid).

Another interesting project coming soon from our communications department is a brand new DEI tool kit. It is

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# Chairperson's Report

By Meredith Snow

## Negotiating a Post-Pandemic World

As of this writing, almost half of the 24 negotiating ICSOM orchestras have settled. It is never easy to hammer out a settlement and this time around is no exception. Lingering COVID, low interest rates, and high inflation make for a difficult bargaining environment. The resulting settlements are mixed, but so far there are more good outcomes than bad. Even though many orchestras have cash surpluses left over from the American Rescue Plan Act—specifically, the Paycheck Protection Program & Shuttered Venue Operators Grant—managements still fear the current decline in ticket sales and the possibility that our audiences will decide not to return in person.



Diane Alancraig Photography

But it is just that—fear. Our audiences will return. They may be reluctant to attend in person just yet due to continuing COVID variants, but there is no substitute for live performance. I don't believe that we are facing a long-term, hybrid scenario of live/streamed performances. Streaming and recorded product provide added content. They are not a viable alternative for the real thing. But how our recording work is remunerated is nonetheless important. To that end, the ICSOM Media Committee, along with ROPA and the AFM/SSD, have just begun negotiations with the Electronic Managers Association (EMA) for the Integrated Media Agreement (IMA) that expired on June 30, 2022.

After decades of mismanagement and cuts to musicians' pay, the San Antonio Symphony Board has entirely failed in its mission to preserve the San Antonio Symphony. Last month, the Board filed for Chapter 7 bankruptcy—in other words, a total liquidation. The musicians could not accept the Board's myopic vision for the future of the orchestra, which was based on a paltry \$5 million budget and the resulting cuts to pay and complement. Comparable cities by population that support an ICSOM orchestra, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Kansas City, Milwaukee, Nashville, Pittsburgh, and Portland among them, have yearly operating budgets that are more than double what the SAS Board, in its monolithic incompetence, could raise. Closer to home, the Fort Worth Symphony, in a smaller metropolitan area, has an operating budget that is nearly double that of San Antonio. The musicians of the San Antonio Symphony are already crafting their reorganization. ICSOM will be there to help in any way we can.

As you will see, this edition of *Senza Sordino* focuses on our orchestras' efforts surrounding Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). An increased awareness of the racial disparity in our orchestras has reinvigorated ICSOM's efforts to balance that inequity (see President's Report). Over the COVID hiatus, ICSOM—along with ROPA and SSD—took part in creating the National Alliance for Audition support (NAAS) Recommended Audition and Tenure Guidelines ([sphinxmusic.org](http://sphinxmusic.org)), in the



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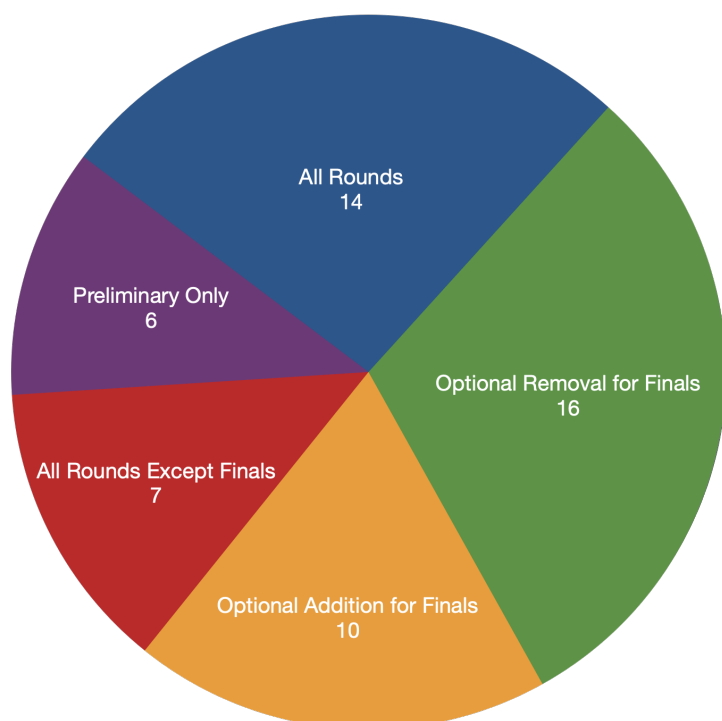
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hope of creating more equitable auditions and rooting out unconscious bias in both our auditions and tenure processes.

In 2018, ICSOM passed a resolution that encouraged orchestras “to adopt an audition process that retains screens throughout every individual round of the audition.” We recently surveyed our member orchestras to get a better understanding of how and when screens are being used:

14 of our orchestras (26%) are fully screened from preliminary rounds through finals. 16 (30%) are screened throughout with the option to remove the screen for finals. 10 orchestras (19%) are screened until the finals with the option to add a screen to the final round. Seven orchestras (13%) are screened until the final round. Only six orchestras (11%) require screens for preliminary rounds only.

## Current Use of Screens in Auditions Rounds in ICSOM Orchestras



Data collected from ICSOM delegates through the Delegate-L mailing list in May 2022 and collated by Peter de Boor.

As we come to understand the importance of keeping screens up in order to avoid the pitfalls of bias, musicians continue to push for screens throughout the audition process in their contract negotiations.

But this is just one aspect of the work needed to achieve greater diversity in our orchestras, and I hope you will appreciate the efforts of our colleagues presented in this month's *Senza Sordino*.

Finally, I am excited that ICSOM's 60th anniversary conference will be hosted by President Austin's home orchestra, the Grand Rapids Symphony and AFM Local 56, in Grand Rapids, MI, August 24–27. Registration is open to all AFM members for live attendance or via Zoom ([ICSOM.org](https://www.icsom.org)). I hope to see you there!

## President's Report

By Paul Austin

### Celebrating DEI Efforts in ICSOM

The gatherings and work of ICSOM's DEI Committee have reached a new level of vibrancy and activity in recent months.

On June 1st, ICSOM launched a new monthly video series called *Musician Profiles: Celebrating Racial Diversity*, which I am proud to host. These one-on-one interviews focus on hearing and lifting the words of ICSOM Musicians of Color, their experiences, and how they view the need for racial diversity within our orchestras.



Terry Johnston

It was an honor to interview Joseph Conyers as the first guest of ICSOM's new video series. I met Joseph when he became Principal bassist of the Grand Rapids Symphony, his first job after graduating from the Curtis Institute of Music. Since then, Joseph joined the bass section of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and is currently Assistant Principal bassist of the Philadelphia Orchestra. Those of us who know Joseph agree that he shines his light brightly in many arenas as performer, teacher, and leader, always with a high level of musicianship, a warm personality, and a winning smile. All of this comes through clearly in our interview.

For the second interview of this series, it was a pleasure to speak with another ICSOM Musician of Color, Judy Dines. She has been a member of the Houston Symphony flute section since 1992. I first met Judy at the ICSOM conference in Washington DC back in 2016 and have enjoyed following her activities ever since, including her service as committee chair for Houston Symphony contract negotiations, her performances and speaking appearances at various conferences and conventions, and even a Houston Symphony video of Judy at her home to showcase her interesting collection of flutes. She closes our interview saying “I think that ICSOM is doing great and important work, and I am happy to encourage it to move forward in the future.” Thank you, Judy!

I hope you will take a few moments to watch these interviews with Joseph and Judy, and that you will view upcoming videos in this monthly series, which are housed at the ICSOM website—which also means they will be archived at the US Library of Congress—and at our YouTube channel, “ICSOM Orchestras.”

The vibrancy and depth of ICSOM's DEI Committee stems from the insight of its members. The group is co-chaired by two first-year Governing Board Members-



Scan the code to visit the interview series at <https://icsom.org/media/profiles.php>



# A Musician-led Reading List

By Margot Schwartz, Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra

The murder of George Floyd in the summer of 2020 made many of the musicians in the Milwaukee Symphony realize that racism was a problem that could no longer be ignored by our orchestra. As a result, a number of orchestra musicians decided to form an EDI committee, which would help us share ideas and resources with the ultimate goal of determining what kind of change we might be able to effect within our institution. Initially, we led an organization-wide discussion of the book *White Fragility* by Robin DiAngelo. After this, we kept the “book club” idea going, meeting six more times between summer of 2020 and fall of 2022.



Jennifer Brindley

Early in our efforts, we invited a longtime friend of mine, yelley Taylor, to work with small groups of musicians in an effort to raise awareness and understanding about racism, which had a crucial effect on our ability to think about and discuss unfamiliar and sometimes difficult issues. yelley shared with us some of their experiences as a Black musician—they play violin and viola. We ended up holding six sessions of two hours each, where we covered many topics, informed not only by history and culture but also by what yelley shared with us about their own lived experience. We really cannot thank yelley enough for being so open and willing to help us on our anti-racism journey. It was a transformative experience for the 20 musicians who participated.

The musician EDI committee no longer meets regularly, but we have been able to use the group to respond to a few issues in a coordinated and productive way, and I should not neglect to mention here that our management has been very receptive to our suggestions.

Last summer, musicians and management created an informative page on the MSO website for prospective auditionees, with information about Milwaukee and what it's like to be a member of the MSO. Additionally, we have been a recipient of the League's Catalyst Grant for the past two years and have had very strong orchestra participation in a set of discussions in the spring of 2021, facilitated by The Impact Seat, the MSO's EDI consultants. These conversations involved many stakeholder groups—including Orchestra, Chorus, Board, Management, Volunteers, and Community Members—and were intended to brainstorm ideas that would eventually inform a longer term strategic plan for the MSO.

Impact Seat has also held organization-wide Learning Sessions which have not been mandatory for the musicians to attend but which have had very strong musician attendance nonetheless.

One challenge ahead is maintaining momentum. We want to work with our management to put more focus on getting BIPOC and LGBTQ members on the stage. I also hope that we as musicians can work on our narrative abilities. I believe it is important to be able to answer the question of why racism is

## MSO Musicians' Recommended Reading

- *The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together*, Heather McGhee
- *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, Michelle Alexander
- *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration*, Isabelle Wilkerson
- *Hood Feminism: Notes from the Women White Feminists Forgot.*, Mikki Kendall
- *Tears We Cannot Stop: A Sermon to White America*, Michael Eric Dyson
- *We Were Eight Years in Power: An American Tragedy*, Ta-Nehisi Coates
- *Beautiful Country: A Memoir*, Qian Julie Wang
- *Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning*, Cathy Park Hong
- *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, Robin DiAngelo
- *The End of Bias: A Beginning: The Science and Practice of Overcoming Unconscious Bias*, Jessica Nordell
- *Invisible Child: Poverty, Survival & Hope in an American City*, Andrea Elliott
- *Shrill: Notes from a Loud Woman*, Lindy West
- *Just Giving: Why Philanthropy is Failing Democracy and How It Can Do Better*, Rob Reich
- *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*, Matthew Desmond
- *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion*, Jonathan Haidt

a major hurdle to us as an institution and why anti-racism and inclusion work should be a priority for us at all times.

There seems to be an assumption that just because we as white people don't see racism or violence in our hall or on our stage, that means it's not there. My own position is that there is no way to escape being part of a system that perpetuates white supremacist values, and we have a lot more work to do in order to be truly welcoming and to be a place where all people can thrive.

Another valuable outcome of this musician-led EDI work is a “Recommended Reading” list (see above). This list is by no means exhaustive, but it addresses some key aspects of anti-racism, social justice, and inclusion work. All of these books have proved very valuable to me personally—helping me to understand context and history, reflect on my participation in white supremacist systems, and finally giving me some tools to address some of the problems that these systems have created. In particular, the book about philanthropy may help musicians understand an important aspect of American orchestras' privileged position. I have found it helpful in general when reading books about anti-racism or other social justice issues to spend some time thinking about not if but how these issues implicate not just me personally but also the institution that I work for, and I am grateful for the musicians and management of the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra for helping to further these ideals.

# Transparent Auditions

## An Ethics Perspective

By Mercedes Smith, Utah Symphony

Many ICSOM orchestras are aspiring to increase diversity throughout titled and section positions. Analyzing a hiring process and its outcomes through an ethical lens can help elucidate what role, if any, the audition procedure itself has in influencing the results of auditions. If orchestras find that full disclosure of their audition process leads to undesired outcomes, they may choose to amend their audition process.

Utilizing an ethics framework to provide appropriate transparency in hiring practices protects committees, management, and audition candidates. *The Ethics of Management*, by LaRue Tone Hosmer, provides an excellent framework to determine if an audition process is transparent enough to meet an organization's ethical standards. Increased transparency also increases the confidence candidates have in the integrity of the audition process, as candidates cannot make a fully informed decision about whether to take an audition if important information is withheld. Our industry often boasts of the merits of blind auditions but rarely delves into other elements of the audition process that can profoundly affect hiring outcomes. From a candidate's perspective, a fully screened audition that results in un-screened trials, or an orchestra that has invited a candidate(s) to an unscreened final round before screened preliminary auditions even take place, may seem to be no fairer than a fully unscreened process. If an orchestra feels their audition process produces the best results for their organization, there should be no hesitancy in disclosing the process to everyone involved.

The following is adapted from Hosmer's principles to apply more specifically to the ethics of hiring of orchestral musicians. The first step in utilizing an ethics framework is to determine, what is the ethical question? This is the question that we will use throughout the following framework and will begin with the words, "Is it right for..." As an example:

Is it right for an orchestra to fully disclose the details of their audition process, along with recent results, before candidates audition? Does greater transparency take power away from those who deserve it the most? Or does greater transparency create fairer procedures and enable candidates to make fully informed decisions?

Hosmer's framework begins with a series of questions, designed to test the ethics of a given process:

### Who benefits from greater transparency?

Candidates, especially those with the least influence and power. Orchestras, as they will be asked to continually review whether their process is truly inclusive and fair. The entire organization, as they will be participating in transparent hiring practices that avoid even the appearance of conflict of interest.



Douglas Carter

### Who is harmed by greater transparency?

Arguably, no one. Committees can still select winners from unscreened rounds, or even handpick them, if the orchestra makes it clear from the beginning that they will be doing so. If orchestras and their audition committees believe in their procedures, they should be proud to disclose how the audition will be run.

### Whose rights are exercised by greater transparency?

Candidates have the right to participate in a fair hiring process, especially one described as 'blind'. Orchestras still have the right to hold unscreened rounds, but they then lose the privilege to refer to their auditions as blind.

### Whose rights are ignored by greater transparency?

Arguably, no one. Orchestras still have the right to conduct auditions as they wish, but they do have to disclose the process accurately and completely. If there is reticence by an orchestra to disclose their process, that could be an indicator that the process does not meet the organization's ethical standards.

### What are the economic costs and benefits of greater transparency?

Candidates would waste less time and money taking auditions in which they can more accurately assess their poor chances of winning. At the same time, candidates will be encouraged to spend their time and money on orchestra auditions with the fairest process.

### What are the legal requirements?

In the case of orchestra auditions, we assume that all ICSOM orchestras satisfy legal requirements. The law represents the agreed-upon minimum moral standards of our full society, and those minimum moral standards must be observed by all to maintain the peace among all and advance the well-being of all.

### What are the ethical duties?

Normative philosophy (the study of ethics) helps us to examine the moral rights and wrongs of any society. As no society—or orchestra—is the same, each will have its own ethical norms.

For a complete analysis of ethical duties, we return to the original question and examine it under each of the eight universal principles of normative philosophy. In the following example, the 'decision' is to give full disclosure regarding the audition process.

1. Is this decision in the enlightened, long-term interest of yourself and of the organization to which you belong, and does it avoid the possibility of future retribution and harm from others?
2. Is this decision open, honest, and truthful, and would you be proud to have this widely and publicly reported?
3. Is this decision kind and compassionate toward others, and does it forward a sense of community, of everyone working jointly toward a common goal?
4. Does this decision violate the law? (The law in this case could be your orchestra's CBA.)
5. Does this decision result in greater net benefits than harms for the full society of which you are a part?
6. Is this decision one that you would be willing to see others, faced with the same situation, be free or even encouraged

## An Open Letter from the Black Orchestral Network

**D**edicated to creating a more inclusive and equitable work environment for musicians of color, the Black Orchestral Network (BON) launched in May by founding members Jennifer Arnold (Oregon Symphony, former), Alexander Liang (Phoenix Symphony), David A. Norville (Sound Garden Wind Quintet), Shea Scruggs (Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, San Francisco Opera Orchestra, all former), Weston Sprott (Metropolitan Opera Orchestra), Joy Payton-Stevens (Seattle Symphony, former), and Titus Underwood (Nashville Symphony).

With the publication of this Open Letter, BON's first campaign focuses on advancing equity in American Orchestras. The letter calls for orchestras to hire Black musicians and for the AFM, and our orchestral conferences ROPA & ICSOM, to stand in solidarity with Black members by honoring the values of fair workplaces and addressing barriers to equitable audition and tenure practices. Bringing awareness to racial injustice and taking action against it are the first steps in supporting opportunities for Black artists.

We support the goals of the Black Orchestral Network and reiterate their call by reprinting the Open Letter here in *Senza Sordino*.

### Dear American Orchestras,

We are a community of Black orchestral artists. We grew up enmeshed in classical music, in our homes and families, through the nation's band and orchestra programs, conservatories and schools of music, and as anchors, creators, and leaders in American orchestras. We love and care about the American orchestral community: from its history and roots, to how it is felt and experienced, to its sustained success and vibrant role in American life.

We are deeply concerned because the American orchestral community is not well.

This letter is a call to action to build a richer and more robust American orchestral community: one where musicians can share all aspects of their artistry and talents, where Black artists can see and center themselves in the history and future of the orchestral community, and can find reflections of themselves and their multiple strengths and complexities. We cannot call ourselves an American orchestral community if we are not inclusive of Black Americans and do not respect and acknowledge Black Americans' contributions to American music and the orchestral community.

As Black musicians within this community, we have too often experienced significant barriers to inclusion, inequities in treatment and process, and indignities and devaluing of our musicianship and talents. The systems, structures, policies, and culture within our community, and the stunning indifference of many of our leaders and colleagues, have perpetuated and exacerbated our experiences of exclusion.

We are concerned about our ability to exist healthily in the American orchestral community, as well as the long-term viability of orchestras in American culture. How orchestras reflect and move forward is critically important to whether we—as Black orchestral artists—can thrive, belong, and contribute in ways so essential in this time.

We, the founding members of the Black Orchestral Network (BON), have initially charted and mapped a collective journey that will allow all of its members to experience equity and a sense of belonging. We are joined in this letter by current and former members of orchestras, who have answered BON's call to join in. We are among those directly and acutely impacted by exclusionary and inequitable systems and policies, and racism which is both casual and cultural.

For decades we have worked in too much isolation, and at too great a cost to dismantle those systems and policies. We are

ending that era now. Together, we are writing the story of an American orchestral community that intends to be a transformational force in how we learn, play, gather, listen, and reveal ourselves to one another.

### Our History and the Current Moment

Inequity, exclusion, and segregation are deeply entrenched in American orchestras. Barriers to Black participation in the American orchestral community were historically sanctioned and systematized through formal policy. It wasn't until the 1960s that the American Federation of Musicians and its local chapters extended full membership to Black musicians.

Significant barriers persist today. Current norms, structures, and processes within the American orchestral community far too often constrain the ability for Black musicians and audiences to fully participate and to feel welcome and included.

There is stunning and persistent underrepresentation of Black musicians in American orchestras. According to League of American Orchestras data, as of 2014, Black musicians made up less than 2% of all orchestral musicians—a figure that has barely budged over the prior decades. Because the great majority of American orchestras are not individually transparent with racial and ethnic data on their artists, we do not know the percentage of Black orchestral artists in our orchestras today. From our vantage point, however, we have seen little meaningful progress. Indeed, the most frequently cited innovation to increasing diversity in recent years, auditioning behind a screen, has rarely been fully blind or equitable. In our experience orchestras can and do go around these protocols designed to ensure fair opportunity, dropping the screen before final selections, or skipping pre-selected candidates straight to the finals.

In the aftermath of the murder of George Floyd and other incidents of police and community violence against Black Americans, organizations in the American orchestral community from The League of American Orchestras to the American Federation of Musicians issued statements in support of racial equity, inclusion, and justice. Two years later though, as it relates to the hiring and tenure of Black orchestral musicians in particular, far too little has been done.

We begin with the moral imperative to create and maintain a diverse, equitable, and inclusive orchestral community. But we can and must go further. Forming deep connections with our audience-communities that acknowledge and celebrate their diversity is essential for orchestras to be sustainable—artistically and financially—for the coming decades.



## Our Call to Action

We can do so much more to meet this moment. In many cases, the solutions are already known or clearly emerging. The challenges within the American orchestral community are big, but so are the opportunities to make American orchestras better and stronger, and to bring new people into the audience.

### To address these challenges

1. *We Call On Orchestras*—through their Boards, management, musicians, and music directors, to:

- *Hire Black Orchestral Musicians*
  - Change the mindset. American orchestras need to do different to be different. Hiring Black orchestral musicians is an opportunity worth working for, not a problem to be solved. Boldly embrace new methods and tools for hiring. Keeping Black people, culture, and artists at arms-length has made—and is making—American orchestras poorer.
  - Remove barriers. Commit to equitable and inclusive tenure and audition guidelines, beginning with those recommended by the Sphinx Organization, with a specific plan to implement them by the conclusion of the 22-23 season.
- *Be accountable*
  - Develop a plan for substantive change regarding opportunities and experiences for Black musicians by the end of the 2022-23 season. This means a written commitment to take specific actions towards specific targets—based on a timeline and dedicated resources—that will increase hiring and the receipt of tenure for Black orchestral musicians. The plan should be tied to and supported by an aesthetic and artistic vision that celebrates Black culture, creating an environment where Black musicians can share their talents in safe, affirming, and welcoming spaces.
  - Collect the data needed for accountable and transparent progress. This means applying best practices for accurately measuring current Black representation in the audition process and orchestras themselves; establishing ongoing measurement practices, including climate surveys and equity audits, to collect the data needed to understand progress against this baseline; and setting goals to increase Black representation and improve the experiences of Black musicians.
- *Support new talent and create opportunities*
  - Strengthen career pathways for emerging Black musicians. Build links between orchestras and educational institutions that ensure the Black musicians who are training now have meaningful opportunities to be hired, and strengthen the future candidate pool through fellowships or other career development opportunities that lead to hiring.

2. *We Call On Funders*—both institutional and individual—to:

- Invest in the long-term viability of organizations already committed to Black orchestral artistry.
- Direct your dollars to orchestras that answer our call to action and publicly commit to act in the above ways.
- Think Big about the possibilities for American orchestras in the context of our changing culture and society. Major

gifts have always been an impetus for change. Support orchestras that are committed to the systemic change needed to make our industry truly inclusive.

3. *We Call On Our Unions*—particularly the American Federation of Musicians and related conferences (ICSOM, ROPA)—to honor the values of fair workplaces and stand in solidarity with Black members:

- Support our call to hire Black orchestral musicians.
- Address barriers to fair and equitable audition and tenure practices. Call on your orchestras to develop strategic plans for meaningful change regarding opportunities and experiences for Black musicians by the end of the 2022-23 season.
- Include Black voices—artistic and/or legal—on bargaining teams.
- Include measures of equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging on ICSOM and ROPA surveys.

### What American Orchestral Community Members Can Do

*Raise Your Voice:* If American orchestras are dear to you too—as an artist, audience member, educator, music lover—co-sign this letter by adding your name to the list in support of Black orchestral musicians who are calling on American orchestras for change.

*Join Us:* As we publish this letter, we know that those signed represent only the fraction of our community we were able to reach, and we have only just begun the work to connect our community of practice. In the coming months, the Black Orchestral Network will be hosting a series of virtual convenings to increase the connection within the community of Black orchestral artists. We invite you—Black artists who study, practice, and perform orchestral music in any setting—to join us, connect with others, and help create a different future for our community of practice and American orchestras.

### Toward Equity and Inclusion in our Community

Black musicians are at the core and the strength of the American orchestral community. The future of American classical music centers on orchestras that embrace a resonant, rooted, open, and just musical community where Black musicians thrive.

We invite you to join us in this journey towards a collective North Star: a community that extends across lines of difference with dignity, care for one another, and a sense of justice; and that honors our sustained and shared love of this music.

America is experiencing a transition and reckoning as it faces technological and cultural disruptions, the lasting mark of a pandemic that has shifted how we gather and engage with one another, and the ongoing desire for spaces where people can feel that they belong. These forces and energies also impact American orchestras.

Now is the time for orchestral artists to come together to build a community where we can experience joy and connection in music making: on stage, backstage, and with growing audiences.

**To our orchestral leaders and colleagues, it's time. Let's go.**

To view the list of signers (or add your name), please visit <https://www.blackorchestralnetwork.org/signers>

San Francisco continued from page 1

We had seven musicians—including a Players Committee representative—volunteer to participate in the monthly meetings, preparatory readings, and small group discussions. From the outset Jessica Schmidt warned that some of us might be frustrated with the slow pace of our work and impatient with the necessary internal explorations before any outward-facing change would be made. I was definitely in this group, coming in with the naïve belief that the San Francisco Symphony is welcoming to everyone and would have more People of Color in our audiences and on stage if only everyone understood this and knew all the great things we have to offer! I soon discovered how clueless I was about how we presented to the world outside our bubble.

We began examining our personal histories: discovering privilege we may not have realized we grew up with, sharing ways we had faced discrimination or micro-aggressions in our own lives, looking at power dynamics throughout our organization. Questions arose as we noticed how our past experience may perpetuate the continuity and concentration of white privilege among our ranks—how are Board members recruited? Do we actively look for People of Color for openings on staff? Is there intentionality in presenting guest artists, composers, and conductors of different ethnicities representing a broader spectrum of our society? Is there potential for bias in our audition process?

With the pandemic shutdown, we moved our meetings to Zoom in sweatpants and used the opportunity to form smaller committees to come up with ideas for community outreach projects, mentoring/education/fellowship programs, learning modules, audition process changes, and to create resources of curated chamber music lists of underrepresented composers (see QR code, opposite). Though lacking the ability to fully implement these worthy goals, our discussions were useful in thinking outside our individual boxes and creating the groundwork for future projects.

When considering DEI in the orchestra context, there is a misconception among some musicians that the initiatives want to prioritize race and gender over artistic excellence, thereby perpetuating another form of racism. But racial awareness is not the same as racial discrimination. Rather, what is meant is an intentional effort to look beyond our usual pool of musicians and consider who else is out there who may

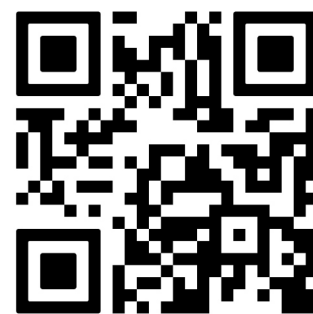
Chamber Music by Black, Latinx, and Woman Composers (scan the QR code below for more)

1. Various chamber music by Jessie Montgomery for String Quartet/Quintet  
<https://www.jessiemontgomery.com/works/chamber-ensemble/>
2. *Leyendas, An Andean Walkabout* for String Quartet by Gabriela Lena Frank  
<https://www.wisemusicclassical.com/work/27965/Leyendas-An-Andean-Walkabout-string-quartet-Gabriela-Lena-Fran>
3. *Wind Quintet* by Valerie Coleman  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U\\_L6Iq1vTCQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U_L6Iq1vTCQ)
4. *Et Nunc* for Alto Flute, Bass Clarinet, and Double Bass by Alvin Singleton  
<https://www.eamdc.com/psny/composers/alvin-singleton/works/et-nunc/>
5. *Masonian Rondo for Brass Quartet* by Quinn Mason  
<https://www.masonianmusic.com/masonian-rondo>
6. *Five Folksongs in Counterpoint for String Quartet* by Florence Price  
<https://www.earsense.org/chamber-music/Florence-Price-Five-Folksongs-in-Counterpoint-for-String-Quartet>

have been overlooked. What compositions deserve a chance to be heard in our concerts that have never been considered before? As one example, Florence Price's dynamic *Symphony in E minor*, premiered by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in 1933, is now finding its rightful place in the American symphonic canon.

Since our DEI Workgroup began its initial discussions, our new Music Director and Artistic Planning team have implemented numerous changes. Esa-Pekka Salonen innovated a new model of eight Collaborative Partners, some from outside the traditional classical world: jazz artist Esperanza Spalding, soprano Julia Bullock, Artificial Intelligence specialist Carol Reilly, Finnish folk violinist Pekka Kuusisto, flutist Claire Chase, and composers Bryce Dessner, Nico Muhly, and Nicholas Brittel. During the lockdown we engineered digital collaborations with musicians from other genres including jazz, hip hop, Indian, Mexican, African, and Chinese music. Our 21-22 season has welcomed debut conductors Karina Canellakis, Nathalie Stutzmann, Ruth Reinhardt, Xian Zhang, Perry So, Akiko Fujimoto, Giancarlo Guerrero, Earl Lee, Daniel Bartholomew-Poyser, and Tyshawn Sorey.

The DEI group began regular "Equity Chats" open to the full orchestra as we considered ways to eliminate possible bias in our auditions. We met with leaders in the Sphinx Organization to discuss their audition guidelines, many of which we



Scan the QR code for Barbara's list of Chamber Music by Black and Latinx Composers



Members of the SF Symphony and the Chinyakare Ensemble perform Kura Uone in CURRENTS: Mavambo eNgoma, Rooted in Music.




already implement such as screening all rounds. While we strive to make our process as fair as possible, there is no easy solution to changing the demographic distribution.

As the work progressed, we soon found that not everyone was in alignment with the underlying premises. This became apparent at an annual July 4th concert where our CEO made a statement to the audience before we played the national anthem recognizing that “America has not always been the land of the free for everyone.”

Some in the orchestra felt that given its political implications in light of the Black Lives Matter movement, we should not have played the anthem at all, while others were outraged at what they saw as the CEO disrespecting our national holiday. This incident revealed a schism in the orchestra about how we should move forward.

In June 2022, the SFS hired a new consulting group, Black Women’s Blueprint, to help us define our next steps. They hosted several “listening sessions” to hear from all constituents. I’m encouraged that the Black Women’s Blueprint team has been able to engage more musicians in open, honest, and respectful communication around these complex topics. There is a definite need for more awareness and shared understanding of the language and goals throughout the orchestra, as we co-create our path forward.

Much like the polarized population at large, we may never see eye-to-eye on many of these issues—but as communicators and collaborative artists we have a responsibility to look with empathy toward different points of view and bring the heart connections that we share through music into our interactions with each other. 

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**Listen-Respect-Collaborate** *continued from page 1*

designed to help colleagues across the organization communicate about our DEI projects, principles, and priorities. Its main focus will be an extensive Q and A document to help us know how to respond to questions from donors, audiences, people on social media, etc.

## Hiring practices

Starting in 2017, our orchestra hiring practices began to evolve. We established the Good Fellowships, an ongoing program of two-year residencies for African American, Latin American, and Native American professional orchestral musicians early in their careers.

By 2018 we began participating in the Sphinx Orchestral Partner Auditions and joined the National Alliance for Audition Support. Last summer, my section—second violin—used SOPA to identify and hire two one-year positions. The upcoming audition to permanently fill those chairs will accept all résumés, as we have made an orchestra-wide decision not to screen out candidates by résumé alone. Following discussions amongst ourselves about the NAAS Guidelines, each audition committee also actively works to recruit AMELIA candidates.

## Internal Education Workshops

Over the last two seasons Justin Laing has curated a quarterly series of anti-racist workshops for us, and given us meaningful reading recommendations—*How to be an Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi has been a great resource to our committee as has *The Theory Behind the Practice: A Brief*

*Introduction to the Adaptive Leadership Framework* by Ronald Heifetz, Alexander Grashow, and Marty Linsky, from Harvard Business Press.

Some other highlights and points of interest from this past season include an AntiRacist Continuum ([https://philanos.org/resources/Documents/Conference%202020/Pre-Read%20PDFs/Continuum\\_AntiRacist.pdf](https://philanos.org/resources/Documents/Conference%202020/Pre-Read%20PDFs/Continuum_AntiRacist.pdf)), which Justin presented in a zoom session. It shows us how we can get from an exclusive organization to a fully inclusive anti-racist multicultural organization.

We also held a study session on the work of Resmaa Menakem, a local clinical therapist who has worked with the Minneapolis police, our public schools, a domestic violence center, and military contractors in Afghanistan. Menakem believes the trauma can be physically passed down through generations and requires a healing process based on the latest neuroscience and somatic healing methods to help us grow beyond our entrenched racialized divide. If you’re interested in more, Resmaa elaborates on this topic on the June 4, 2020 episode of *On Being with Krista Tippett*, titled “Notice the Rage; Notice the Silence.”

In October 2021, we were able to contribute five new recordings to the African Diaspora Music Project library. We spent a week with five pieces by AMELIA composers that had either never been professionally recorded, or ever recorded at all.


## Programming

We are on a journey, and we are taking our audiences with us. Programming has been taken on largely by the Artistic Advisory Committee, with help and input from conductors, the education department, and the artistic planning department. We have had the institutional goal of featuring an AMELIA composer on every single concert for about two years now.

This year, we had our first Lunar New Year’s celebration concert, organized by our Principal bassoonist Fei Xie. It featured a Chinese conductor, a local composer and pipa player, and Asian music from different countries that celebrate the lunar new year. We did a full concert for adults, and our education department put together a Family Matinee based on the same music.

One thing I very much appreciated this season was a performance of Joel Thompson’s powerful work *Seven Last Words of the Unarmed*. We also invited Joel to visit from New Haven in order to give us a presentation on piece and to meet with our Community Advisory Board, made up of local leaders representing grassroots organizations working for social justice.

If you’re interested in learning even more about the Minnesota Orchestra’s DEI and anti-racism work, feel free to visit the [Disrupting Systematic Racism](#) page on our website.

I like to try and come up with analogies, and this is how I think of our DEI work—we have started with an uncut gemstone of honest intention. We are not gem cutters, but we are asking for help, and learning as we go. The main facets we are carving are listening, respect, and collaboration. The next set of facets are programming, anti-racist learning projects, and hiring practices. We hold the gem up to the light, and polish it when we can. And inside that gem, we are looking for as much inclusion as possible. 

**Transparent Auditions** *continued from page 5*

to take, and does this action treat all others with respect and dignity?

7. Does this decision ensure a more equitable distribution of benefits? Does it harm the least among us, those with the least income, wealth, influence, and power?

8. Does this decision interfere with the rights of others to develop and improve their skills and abilities? Because if it were to interfere, this would deny the rights of all of us, not just the least among us, to pursue our own self-interests through our own voluntary exchanges.

Ethical questions are by nature difficult and require significant analysis. After considerable thought, I have come to the following proposals. So that candidates can make fully informed decisions, I believe orchestras should include the following disclosures when sending invites to candidates.

1. **Number of resumes received**, and percentage of resumes invited: were there specific requirements to be invited, such as having already won an audition or currently holding a titled position?

2. **Pre-advancement**: The percentage of candidates invited to start in each round, including the number of ‘direct to trial’ candidates, if any.

3. **Screens**: In what round will the screen come down? Is there anyone who will be invited directly to an unscreened round?

4. **Trials**: Will a trial be required? Does your orchestra select direct-to-trial candidates before the audition is even held?

5. **No-hires**: Does your orchestra prohibit no-hire auditions? If not, what is the percentage of auditions from the last five years that resulted in a no-hire?

6. **Conflicts of Interest**: Does your orchestra have a conflict-of-interest clause that applies to audition committees or elsewhere in the audition process? If not, will spouses or family members of candidates be on the audition committee? Students? Musicians with a vested interest in the outcome, such as the possibility of being appointed themselves? If you do not have a conflict-of-interest clause, the most ethical course of action would be to disclose to all candidates, prior to the audition, whether spouses or family members of candidates will be present on the committee, or all other conflicts of interest.

7. **Gender and Race Statistics**: Of the auditions that did produce a winner, what percentage of winners over the last five years were men? Women? People of Color? Some ICSOM orchestras still have few female principals and even fewer People of Color among their ranks. For more information on this proposal, see *Advancing Inclusion* by Shea Scruggs and Weston Sprott (<https://www.local802afm.org/allegro/articles/advancing-inclusion/>).

It is possible that after making these disclosures, some orchestras may find that their processes deter candidates from auditioning. If your orchestra invites candidates directly to an unscreened final round and discloses that in advance, a consequence could be lower turnout at the audition. This may indeed be the desired result—after all, most musicians do not look forward to listening to full days of auditions, so it may be preferred that turnout is low, especially if an orchestra

already knows that their player of choice will be starting in an unscreened round.

If an orchestra discloses that it guarantees a winner will be selected, will the quality and number of candidates be greater than without that guarantee? Simple disclosure of these facts allows candidates to be fully informed before spending months preparing for an audition, taking time off (often unpaid), and incurring the cost of travel to an audition.

The answers to the questions in the above framework will be different from orchestra to orchestra and from person to person, and there should be no expectation that all orchestras or all people will arrive at the exact same conclusions. Reflection upon what we deem to be fair and ethical gives us the opportunity to look at our processes and examine who benefits and who is harmed by our decisions.

If increasing trustworthiness and integrity is a priority for your orchestra, this framework can be applied to any decision that you or your organization may be considering, from finance and accounting decisions, to marketing and work rules.

**DEI in ICSOM** *continued from page 3*

at-Large: Alberto Suarez (Principal hornist, Kansas City Symphony) and Kenneth Thompkins (Principal trombonist, Detroit Symphony Orchestra). In addition, Yuka Kadota (violinist, Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra) joined the DEI Committee in 2022. ICSOM Chairperson Meredith Snow and I are pleased to continue serving on this committee, as we have since its inception in 2018.

The work of our committee is supported by Jessica Schmidt of Orchestrate Inclusion, who serves as ICSOM’s DEI Consultant (see *Senza Sordino* April 2022 *Chairperson’s Report*, “Building Inclusion into Our New Normal”). Presently, the six of us meet monthly to discuss ways to support ICSOM musicians as they work toward greater inclusion and equity within their own orchestras.

DEI will be highlighted in several ways at ICSOM’s 60th annual conference in Grand Rapids this summer. On the first day of the conference, a presentation called *ICSOM Musicians: Heard and Seen* will be given by Seattle-based violinist and violist, writer, and educator Yelley Taylor. The aim of this presentation is to build shared understanding and response to the experience of racism and discrimination in our orchestras. On Friday evening, conference participants will have the option of taking a guided walking tour along the Grand River to learn more about the history and experience of Grand Rapids’ Black population from 1826 to present, passing touchstones that prompt the telling of the stories of remarkable people, places, events, and issues.

The work of ICSOM’s DEI Committee—and the work of DEI in general—is a practice: always evolving, always challenging in a healthy way, and always important. ICSOM is especially grateful to our colleagues of color who continue to inform and guide ongoing work within our field via the DEI Committee. Feel free to contact me at [AustinLPaul@gmail.com](mailto:AustinLPaul@gmail.com) with any thoughts or ideas that you may have for our group to explore regarding racial diversity, or to express interest in joining the Committee.

## AFM-EPF Pension Report

By Laura Ross, AFM-EPF Trustee

Over the years, ICSOM Delegates' proactive questions about the status of the American Federation of Musicians and Employers' Pension Fund (AFM-EPF or the Fund) led to numerous informational updates and presentations at annual ICSOM Conferences. The Players Conferences successfully led the charge to increase the number of rank-and-file Union Trustees to three working musicians, two of whom were ICSOM Officers when appointed in August 2010 by AFM President Ray Hair.

Since last year's ICSOM Conference, when Union Trustees Brian Rood and Martha Hyde joined me to speak about the Fund, Trustees on the Communications Committee have been focused on finding new ways to educate Participants and make Fund information more accessible. This began by reworking our initial 2021 ICSOM presentation, first by cleaning up the video presentation, and later by breaking it into smaller segments presented by additional Union Trustees.

This project has produced nine videos covering the following topics: *What is the AFM-EPF*, *How is the Plan Governed*, *How Does the Money Flow*, *What Does the Fund Office Do*, *How Does the Pension Estimator Work*, *How Can You Protect Your Loved Ones*, *How Do you Navigate the Application Process*, *What's Happening with ARPA*, and *The Benefits of Diversification*. These videos are available to the public on the Fund's website by clicking on the Participants icon.

In addition, questions and issues raised at the ICSOM Conference, such as the impact of a divorce when applying for a pension, and new ones like the recent beneficiary designation form change that no longer requires a notary and for registered Participants, no longer requires a signature if submitted through the Participants portal. Information about the enhancements to complete a Pre-retirement Death Beneficiary form will be included in *Pension Fund Notes* coming your way shortly.

The Fund's website currently includes *Did You Know* information one-pagers, *Tip Sheets*, and videos that cover topics and information on *The Role of a Trustee*, *What to Do if You Get Divorced*, *You Need to Designate a Beneficiary*, *When to Contact the Fund Office*, *Optional Forms of Payment*, *When Retirement is Down the Road*, *Starting Your Benefit*, *How to Register for the AFM-EPF Website*, and information about the Pension Estimator, which now offers benefit estimates up to age 72. More topics are in the works so if there are particular topics you'd like to know more about, please let us know.

Once you open the AFM-EPF website, click on "Participants" to find these materials. You will find four boxes titled: *How Our Pension Plan Works*, *Life Happens*, *Retirement is Down the Road*, and *Retirement is Around the Corner*. By clicking on each of the downward arrows under each header you will see the information links. And of course, if you are



James T. Green

registered, log in to confirm your beneficiary designee(s) on file at the Fund office, use the pension estimator, view your covered wages and contributions, and more. Trustees believe that the wider availability of these documents and videos will help participants find information they need, when they need it. Visit [www.afm-epf.org](http://www.afm-epf.org) and check it out.

Please speak with any of the Union Trustees in attendance at the Conference in Grand Rapids, MI this summer if you have any questions or suggestions.

## Consistent Style in Senza Sordino

By Mike Muszynski, Editor

One of the hidden difficulties of editing any publication is how to use the same terminology, grammar, and punctuation throughout. If you have a background in writing or journalism, you may be familiar with the idea of a style guide, which describes the decisions an editor should make to remain consistent in publication. For *Senza Sordino*, we start with the *Chicago Manual of Style*, which is one such choice.

However, with a specialized publication such as ours, the starting point is often inadequate, and we need to make a decision based on our specific use case. Take, for example, the titles of individual musicians—there appears to be no accepted standard, as you might read "Second bassoon Mike Muszynski" or "Second bassoonist Mike Muszynski" depending on the publication.

Is either example wrong? Probably not. But I like to refer to myself as a bassoonist rather than a bassoon, and for that reason, I prefer the latter phrase when describing a musician. Of course, when describing a position, the instrument name works just fine (e.g. an "audition for Second Bassoon").

This issue of *Senza Sordino* deals with another large aspect of style: what decisions can we make to ensure that we remain inclusive and respectful of DEI? While the choices we make are important because of this issue's focus on DEI, they should also be applied not only in future issues of *Senza Sordino* but across ICSOM publications as a whole. Jessica Schmidt of Orchestrate Inclusion has been invaluable in helping to choose the best terminology for this issue, and many of her suggestions will form the basis of the DEI decisions in our style guide moving forward.

Speaking of DEI, it feels like every organization has a different acronym. Clearly, ICSOM prefers the use of DEI, but we may defer to another organization's usage of a different acronym—see Margot Schwartz's use of EDI on page 4.

As a final note for this issue, the vast number of web links in this issue almost necessitates reading the issue online. For the print version of this issue, many links have been removed in favor of descriptions of their content. In cases where the descriptions are not enough, the links are either presented verbatim or through QR codes. Whether these QR codes continue will depend on feedback from readers, so please let me know if you would like to see them in future issues.



Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra



# Call for Conference Resolutions

ICSOM Delegates are encouraged to submit resolutions for consideration at the 60th anniversary ICSOM Conference in Grand Rapids, MI on August 24–27, 2022.

Resolutions may be proposed by a musician or musicians of a member orchestra and sponsored by that orchestra's delegate.

Questions and/or submissions should be directed to ICSOM Secretary Laura Ross or ICSOM Counsel Kevin Case by Friday afternoon, August 26, for consideration by conference delegates on Saturday, August 27.

*For examples of previous resolutions, visit [icsom.org/conferences](https://www.icsom.org/conferences)*



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INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF  
SYMPHONY AND OPERA MUSICIANS

