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Grand Rapids' Historic Contract

By Member-at-Large Paul Austin

The contract negotiations in Grand Rapids that culminated in a tentative agreement in mid-March and a ratified contract in April were like a thousand-piece jigsaw: the solution, which seemed impossible even after a great deal of struggle, suddenly and miraculously fell into place after incremental and seemingly insignificant progress.



Janice Johnston

This negotiation made history for us. The story of this five-year contract, perhaps the longest in the history of the organization, reached after twelve months of hard bargaining and taking the organization to its 90th anniversary season (2019-20), well, that will be a story to share in Grand Rapids for years to come.

In any negotiation, there are always unexpected twists and turns, and actions that have surprising and unexpected results. For example, back in 2011, the video that the musicians created about the value we bring to our community was viewed by board members and perhaps led to that successful settlement. (Note: See the video at <http://www.grsmusiciansassociation.com/#/about/cjg9>)

Looking back to the events that unfolded this time, the positive outcome of these negotiations in Grand Rapids could be attributed to the many ways in which the musicians used social media. *(continued on page 15)*



Courtesy of the GRSMA

Still from Grand Rapids Symphony Musicians Association video

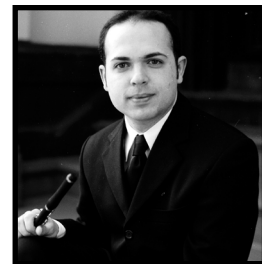
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Oregon Symphony Ratifies New Three-Year Contract With Raises (Well, Sort Of)

By Zach Galatis, Oregon Symphony ICSOM Delegate

Since our new President and CEO Scott Showalter joined us in the fall of 2014, the past two seasons at the Oregon Symphony have been marked by an upswing in fundraising, ticket sales, and general morale. The organization has transformed from one that endured two full seasons (2012-13 and 2013-14) with no official executive leadership and the threat of complete collapse, to one that has seen an incredible amount of potential to grow into something bigger and better—Like Never Before (no really, that's the tag-line for next season). Just last



Bill Olsan-Ecker

month, our annual fundraising Gala brought in over \$850,000, while past galas held prior to Mr. Showalter's arrival brought in significantly less than half that. Our Board of Directors has been reinvigorated; the directors are energized and excited, and have brought their giving up to significantly higher levels. These recent years have also seen a rise in artistic and musical achievements, as well as a significant commitment to community and educational outreach projects. The impact that the Oregon Symphony is making in the city of Portland and state of Oregon is being seen, heard, and appreciated.

And then there were contract negotiations.

After spending over a year at the negotiating table (and over seven months without a contract in “play-and-talk” mode), we have finally come to an agreement, and one that has been ratified. Barely. The vote count, which demonstrated an unprecedented amount of disapproval, was not altogether surprising to me or my other negotiating team colleagues. This contract was a hard sell for various reasons, especially considering recent (not to mention not-so-recent) history.

Historically, the Oregon Symphony musicians have been giving, and giving, and giving. During the 2012-13 and 2013-14 seasons, we gave back 2.5 weeks of pay, amounting to a 3% *(continued on page 14)*

Chairperson's Report

By Bruce Ridge

Hello, I Must Be Going

Recently, I was in a used bookstore in Franklin, North Carolina, a tiny mountain town west of Asheville. On the plywood shelves I found a collection of ten disintegrating copies of *The Etude*, a current events classical music magazine, from 1947. Every page is fascinating, even though the magazines are so moldy they make your eyes water and your lungs ache. There are reports of Stravinsky working on his "new opera" (*The Rake's Progress*) and the American premiere of Mahler's Sixth Symphony by the New York Philharmonic. There is an article on music education by Erich Leinsdorf when he was music director of the Rochester Philharmonic, a notice of an invitation to the "young American conductor" Leonard Bernstein to conduct the Czech Philharmonic, and a brief news report on the acquittal of Berlin Philharmonic music director Wilhelm Furtwängler from accusations of Nazi activities. The editorial attitude of the magazine seems to suggest that the publishers saw it as topically progressive, even though the articles and advertisements contain many social stereotypes from the time. But inescapable in these post-war editions is the palpable sense that musicians represented a great hope for the new and uncertain world.

An opinion piece in the May, 1947, issue states, "The time has long since passed when musicians were expected to stand submissively, as 'souls apart' outside the gates of world progress, and not participate in the tremendous movements of the age... the participation of musically trained minds cannot fail to be of priceless value to the body politic at this startling moment in world history."

Nearly 70 years later, though the circumstances are different, the world again finds itself at a startling moment of unrest, and musicians most certainly will participate in the "tremendous movements" of this age as well.

When I step down from ICSOM this August, I will have served as Chair for ten years, a period longer than any of my predecessors. I will have also served on the Governing Board for twelve years and as an ICSOM delegate since 1993. I think that when anyone looks back on a moment of their life, it is unavoidable to wonder if they've made any difference in the grand scheme of things. I am certainly not immune from such self-questioning. But I do not have any doubts that the musicians of ICSOM have accomplished great things during this time, and I am very grateful that they have been so generous as to allow me to join with them in their efforts.

In this decade the musicians of our orchestras have endured numerous labor disputes, and outlasted a terrible recession. But they have not just endured, they have grown. They have stood against negativity, cultivated new techniques for negotiation and advocacy, and led the way in demonstrating how music is an inherent call for peace and inclusiveness.

The first major speech I gave to an ICSOM Conference was in >>



Michael Zinke



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San Diego in 2005, where as a new Member-at-Large to the Governing Board, I delivered a presentation called A Message of Hope. In those remarks I said, “Symphonic music will survive, and flourish, simply by proving its relevancy to the community.”

In this decade the world has changed, as have I, as have we all. The world has seen violent acts met with violent rhetoric, and battles of equality are waged in statehouses and through social media. But throughout it all, in an ever more present way, musicians have stood for peace, and have taken action with their art to bring compassion to those who are hungry, alone, suffering and discriminated against. Humanity will always persevere in the face of violence, and music will forever be a response to hatred.

In an interview in 1972, Leonard Bernstein said, “The point is, art never stopped a war and never got anybody a job. That was never its function. Art cannot change events. But it can change people. It can affect people so that they are changed... because people are changed by art—enriched, ennobled, encouraged—they then act in a way that may affect the course of events...by the way they vote, the way they behave, the way they think.”

If for a fleeting moment we could set aside the disagreements and maneuvering that infest all politics, from presidential politics to union politics, and reflect upon human relationships and the relationship of music to everything, the world could see that recent events have afforded us an opportunity for contemplation, if only voices of reason could be heard above the din.

In April, Noah Bendix-Balgley, concertmaster of the Berlin Philharmonic, stood on a stage in North Carolina where a controversial new law has imposed discrimination upon the LGBT community, and others. Following his performance of the Beethoven concerto, Bendix-Balgley (a native of Asheville) returned to the stage for an encore, not only carrying his violin but also a microphone. He spoke of his love for his home state and appealed for the realization that this law does not reflect who we are. He then performed the Adagio of Bach’s Sonata No. 1 in G Minor in recognition of “all those who might not feel welcome or safe” due to the discriminatory law.

Wynton Marsalis once said “Sometimes excellence is a form of protest.”

When I was elected ICSOM Chair at the 2006 Conference in Nashville, I knew we would have to overcome adversity. But it was our determined intention to offer our members ideals to work for, instead of merely angrily articulating things to work against. There have been difficult times, and many long nights. But overwhelmingly it has been an honor and a joy to serve as chair of ICSOM for this past decade. I have been inspired by every musician I have met, and I have enjoyed working with leaders in all roles of the field. Together, we have been able to articulate a positive message of hope while demonstrating how music unites all people and creates a more compassionate world.

In the future, I know that the musicians of ICSOM will continue to demonstrate that our concert halls are open to people of all religions and faiths, all races and nationalities, all sexual orientations and gender identities, and to people who respect music across the entire political spectrum.

The musicians of America’s orchestras will continue to explore 21st Century methods to address 21st Century problems,

and new styles of advocacy and activism for our orchestras and music will develop. Technology is a speedboat, but too often our organizations have been giant ocean liners, especially in the utilization of media. We cannot afford to move too slowly. Embracing new tools does not represent a surrender of tradition or solidarity, but rather it represents a crucial step in the preservation of our many institutions. As Mahler wrote, “tradition is not the worship of ashes, but the preservation of fire.”

The musicians of ICSOM have made much progress. Orchestras across North America have supported each other through ICSOM Calls to Action, demonstrating that what happens to one orchestra happens to all of us. There is a bit less of the destructively negative rhetoric about the future of the arts that has, at times, dominated the press. By expressing our own views we have articulated a vision of what is possible to achieve in the future. Music is now a part of federal education policy, the economic impact of the arts for our cities is widely recognized, music therapy is increasingly being accepted as treatment for numerous medical conditions, and soon an opera singer, Marian Anderson, will be honored on United States currency.

I’d like to thank you all for your support and friendship over this past decade. As I have traveled in my role as ICSOM Chair it has been an honor to be welcomed in your concert halls, backstage lounges, and homes. Musicians have accomplished great things by uniting together, but there is much work left to be done. I am confident that the next generation of ICSOM leadership will lead the organization to its greatest heights, and tremendous success awaits the next Chairperson.

As I look to my own future, I do not yet know the next steps on my path, or where the road ahead might lead. But I do know, like Frost, that I have promises to keep, and miles to go before I sleep.

My love to you all,
Bruce



Congratulations, You’re an Employee (Right?)

By Kevin Case, ICSOM Counsel

In April, the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals issued a landmark ruling for professional symphonic musicians. In upholding the NLRB’s determination that the musicians of the Lancaster Symphony are employees—not independent contractors—the Court settled the question once and for all. Symphony musicians are entitled to all the rights and protections that accompany employee status. It is now crystal clear.

Or is it?



Mara Klemm

Fourteen years ago, the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals, a Court on the same “level” as the D.C. Circuit Court (one level below the U.S. Supreme Court), reached precisely the opposite conclusion: symphony musicians are independent contractors—not employees. So . . . which is it?

The answer requires an understanding of two concepts: first, the >

method by which courts determine whether a worker is an employee or an independent contractor; and second, the standard of review that federal appellate courts (like the D.C. Circuit and the Eighth Circuit) utilize when reviewing decisions of lower courts and agencies like the NLRB.

The independent contractor vs. employee question has been very much in the news with the rise of the so-called gig economy. Most notably, Uber drivers have been pushing back, hard, against Uber's position that they are independent contractors. Several class actions have been filed, in various states; one was recently settled, in California, with Uber agreeing to pay \$100 million to the plaintiff drivers. Significantly, Uber did not admit the drivers are employees, and the settlement has yet to be approved by the district court (and has been bitterly criticized by some of the original plaintiffs).

The distinction is hugely significant. Employee status comes with a host of rights: the right to unionize and bargain collectively for terms and conditions of employment; protection under federal and state civil rights statutes that prohibit discrimination on the basis of, among other things, race, gender, age, or (in some states at least) sexual orientation and gender identity; the right to unemployment benefits and workers comp; and more. But if a worker is classified as an independent contractor, the worker is entitled to none of those rights and protections. He or she is essentially deemed to be taking part in an arms-length business transaction, on an equal footing with the "employer". The law views the relationship as one business contracting with another business; the terms of the transaction are governed only by the free market.

Courts have long used a legal test for determining employee status that looks at a number of factors, including the "extent of control" the employer has over how the work is performed, the amount of skill required, whether the worker supplies his or her own tools, the length of time the worker provides services, how management and the worker subjectively view their relationship (particularly as reflected in their agreements), and the method of payment and tax treatment.

The weight courts place on each factor varies considerably. Officially, courts maintain that "no one factor is determinative." Generally, though, the element of "control" is often the most important. That makes sense: whether a worker is directed and supervised in his or her work, and told what to do and how to do it, should be of greater significance than whether, for example, an employer sends out a W-2 or a 1099-MISC at the end of the year. But courts are far from consistent. As with many multi-factor legal tests, it often seems that a court places more weight on a particular factor simply to justify the result the court has already decided it wants to reach.

Which brings us to the two decisions mentioned above. First, the good news: In *Lancaster Symphony Orchestra v. NLRB*—the decision handed down by the D.C. Circuit in April—the musicians of the Lancaster Symphony attempted to organize. (AFM Local 294 filed a petition for certification with the NLRB.) Management challenged the petition on grounds that the musicians were independent contractors, not employees, and thus had no legal right to join a union. Although an NLRB Regional Director initially sided with management, the NLRB ultimately ruled that the musicians were employees and could elect to join the AFM.

When a party reaches the end of the road with the NLRB and is unhappy with the outcome, that party can appeal the NLRB's ruling directly to the federal Circuit Court of Appeals (the appellate court that sits in between district courts and the U.S. Supreme Courts). But appeals from federal-agency rulings are treated differently than appeals from a district court. For agency appeals, the Circuit Court applies a certain level of deference to the agency's determinations—the rationale being that the agency has been charged by Congress with regulating a specific area of law. In contrast, an appeal from a lawsuit ruling, depending on the circumstances, is often viewed *de novo*—that is, the Court of Appeals looks at the judgment as if viewing the evidence for the first time and coming to its own conclusion, independent of and without any deference to the court below.

So in *Lancaster*, the prism through which the Court applied the multi-factor independent contractor/employee test was colored by the deference it was required to show to the NLRB's decision. The Court considered many of the usual factors, but focused (as most courts do) on the element of control. The Court noted that in a symphony orchestra, the employer "regulates virtually all aspects of the musicians' performance." Not only are musicians required to exhibit a certain level of decorum, but—and this is the money quote—the "conductor exercises virtually dictatorial control over the manner in which the musicians play."

Conversely, the Court noted factors suggesting independent contractor status: playing in a symphony orchestra clearly requires a high level of skill; the musicians in the Lancaster Symphony were employed for only a brief period of time; and the musicians' personal service agreements said they were independent contractors and taxes would not be withheld. The Court also examined a factor that courts are increasingly looking to: the extent of a worker's "entrepreneurial opportunities" to work for other companies, sell or assign their role to others, hire their own employees, etc. But the Court concluded that this factor provided only "miniscule support" for the notion that musicians are independent contractors. (After all, it's not as if the principal clarinet can sell his or her spot in the orchestra, or hire someone else to help play the hard parts.)

Adding up the tally, the Court found that while some factors (especially the control factor) weighed in favor of employee status, others weighed in favor of contractor status. But rather than use its own independent judgment to decide which factors tipped the scale, the Court deferred to the NLRB: "Because the circumstances of this case thus present a choice between two fairly conflicting views, we must defer to the [NLRB's] conclusion that the Orchestra's musicians are employees."

That deference is what distinguishes *Lancaster* from the bad-news case: the Eighth Circuit's decision in *Lehrol v. Friends of Minnesota Sinfonia*. There, two musicians who were terminated from the Minnesota Sinfonia (an orchestra of free-lance musicians) brought suit alleging gender and disability discrimination. As in *Lancaster*, the case turned on whether the musicians were "employees"—because independent contractors aren't permitted to bring such lawsuits. Unlike *Lancaster*, however, the Court's standard of review in *Lehrol* was *de novo*, because the district court had granted summary judgment in favor of the employer (i.e., a judgment based solely on the evidence produced in the discovery pro->

cess, without a trial). When a summary judgment ruling is appealed, a reviewing court looks at the case with fresh eyes and no deference to proceedings below, and reaches its own independent conclusion.

But even apart from applying a different standard of review, *Lehrol's* analysis departed from *Lancaster* in several ways. First, the Court construed the element of “control” as referring not to how musicians are controlled in the workplace, but whether they have the ability to decline certain concerts and accept other gigs. Second, the Court put a great deal of emphasis on factors usually afforded little weight—for example, the Court declared it “highly significant” that management did not withhold taxes.

If that sounds like nonsense, well, it is. *Lehrol* is an embarrassingly bad decision. The Court’s interpretation of “control” defies logic and reveals an utter ignorance of how musicians actually work. And it is plain silly to deny civil rights protection on the basis that the employer unilaterally decided not to withhold FICA.

But *Lehrol* has not yet been challenged and overruled, which means that *Lehrol* and *Lancaster* are the only two federal appellate court decisions that have spoken to this issue—with opposite outcomes. For its part, the *Lancaster* Court noted *Lehrol* and the discrepancy with its own conclusion, but explained (unconvincingly, in my view) that there was no conflict because (1) the *Lehrol* case was a civil-rights case, not a labor case; and (2) the standard of review was different.


The result is remarkable: a musician can simultaneously be both an employee and not an employee. In a proceeding before the NLRB on an unfair labor practice charge, the musician is an employee. But if that same musician is alleging racial discrimination in a lawsuit, the musician is an independent contractor. Go figure.

At some point the viability of *Lehrol* will be challenged. The *Lancaster* decision should help with that; despite the different standard of review, the Court’s conclusions regarding the element of control are spot on. (Ask any orchestral musician how much “control” they really have at work—especially vis-à-vis the conductor.) *Lancaster* will be persuasive to other courts that consider the issue.

More importantly, however, the impact of *Lancaster* on the day-to-day lives of musicians is significant. It is now clear under federal labor law that orchestral musicians, even in smaller, “freelance” orchestras, are employees and have the right to unionize. *Lancaster* renders *Lehrol* irrelevant on that point. But does it apply to every orchestra, no matter how small? Quite possibly. Every circumstance is different, and the employee-status factors will vary from case to case; but the element of control is conceptually no different in an orchestra that presents six concerts a year than in one that presents a hundred.

What about subs and extras? Is a musician who subs only occasionally in the course of a season an “employee”? For purposes of federal labor law, the answer has been “yes” even before *Lancaster*. In an earlier decision, *Seattle Opera v. NLRB*, the D.C. Circuit upheld the NLRB’s ruling that alternate choristers in the Seattle Opera chorus were employees. Again, the element of control carried the argument: the choristers were subject to “attendance and decorum requirements,” and required to “follow musical and dramatic direction” on stage.

What *Lancaster* does is reinforce the analysis in *Seattle Opera*—indeed, *Lancaster* explicitly discussed *Seattle Opera* in support of its conclusions with respect to symphony musicians.

I suspect that the reaction of many musicians reading this and other articles about *Lancaster* might be to say, “duh.” Musicians have always known that their autonomy essentially ceases when they set foot on stage. They know how absurd it would be to view musicians as engaged in an arms-length business transaction when rehearsing a Mahler symphony. But now we know that the law—or one important court, at least—sees it the same way. 

Community Service Lauded

By Penny Brill, Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra ICSOM Delegate, Monica Fosnaugh, Detroit Symphony Orchestra ICSOM Delegate, and Greg Mulligan, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra ICSOM Delegate

The League of American Orchestras recently announced the five winners of the inaugural Ford Musician Award for Excellence in Community Service, three of whom are members of ICSOM orchestras.

For the purposes of the award, community service is intended to be meaningful service through music: education and community engagement programs at schools, hospitals, retirement homes, community and social service centers, places of worship, and wherever people gather for civic, cultural, and social engagement. Those served may include low-income or at-risk populations, homebound elderly, immigrants, veterans, prisoners, and students of all ages, as well as members of the general public who may not otherwise have access to or are not traditionally served by orchestras.

The awardees and their orchestras will be presented with their awards—which include a \$2,500 grant to both the musician and his/her orchestra—at the League’s National Conference in Baltimore, June 9-11, 2016. The musicians will also participate in a Conference presentation and separate webinar, providing the orchestral field opportunities to learn from their experience.

Penny Brill, violist and ICSOM Delegate for the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, received the award for her work in the PSO’s Music and Wellness Program, which began in 1999. The program coordinates PSO musicians with music therapists and other healthcare professionals to bring therapeutic, live music to patients in hospitals and other facilities. Penny described the program this way:

“When I walk into a special needs classroom or meet with a group of refugees, or when I meet with a patient or a roomful of grieving parents, my focus is on who they are, what they need most, and how we can share a musical experience together that will give them what they need. Each program that we create together is unique and is shaped by our interaction during each session. I collaborate with special education teachers, music therapists and other specialists to optimize the music experience. Since the music I use ranges from Bartok Rumanian Dances to a simple walking bass, from music that energizes to music for calming or slowing down, I develop a special playbook for each of these events. Much of the information on design >

and implementation of programs for health, education and at-risk populations will be free and publicly available on my soon-to-be launched website Musacor, Musicians as a Community Resource, as a way of encouraging other musicians to create their own programs.”

The Detroit Symphony Orchestra began its Neighborhood Residency Initiative in 2011. Now called the William Davidson Neighborhood Concert Series, the program consists of a classical subscription concert series that is performed in several suburban venues throughout the metro Detroit area. In addition to these orchestra concerts, chamber ensembles regularly perform in smaller venues, such as the Children’s Hospital of Michigan, community and senior living centers, and the Detroit Public Schools. Awardee Shannon Orme, who holds the Barbara Frankel and Ronald Michalak Bass Clarinet Chair, had the following to say about her experiences:

“The Detroit Symphony’s Community Outreach program allows its musicians to reach out to those who may not be able to attend concerts, such as senior residents, hospital patients, or public school students. These small, casual performances are often my most gratifying work, because I can get up close and personal with my audience. I love seeing them smile, stomping their feet, clapping their hands. In these concerts, I witness how music can encourage laughter, allowing patients to forget their unfortunate circumstances. I often see excited young elementary students gaze with curiosity upon seeing a shiny clarinet for the first time. Just last week, I heard a roomful of senior residents heartily belt out “America the Beautiful” as we played along. It’s these types of performances that remind me why I became a musician, and I often come away feeling like I gained more than my audience. We all know that music evokes the full range of emotions, but when you actually see it happening, you know you’re doing something important.”

Baltimore Symphony Orchestra percussionist Brian Precht embodies passion in all of his endeavors, whether it be playing percussion on the stage of Meyerhoff Symphony Hall or composing and performing chamber music for a local series at Second Presbyterian Church. But the work that he is most passionate about these days is the time he devotes to OrchKids, the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra’s outreach program that uses music as a vehicle for social change. Brian has been working with students at a number of schools in some of the most at-risk areas of the city for the last seven years.

When asked what this work means to him, Brian comments, “This isn’t just about teaching music. We’re trying to give these children a view out of the difficult circumstances that encompass their world-view. We’re also trying to instill values that will serve them in all areas for the rest of their lives—concepts like teamwork, concentration, independence and discipline. We help them understand what can be possible when they channel their energies with a sense of focus and purpose for any task. They learn what they can accomplish as individuals and the power of cooperation that a group can achieve. We also teach them a little something about music.”

Besides his BSO and OrchKids responsibilities, Brian is an accomplished composer. He uses his composing and arranging skills for the main performing ensemble he works with in the OrchKids program—“the bucket band.” In addition to five-gallon buckets played with drumsticks, Brian has introduced

other sound sources that originate from home improvement stores rather than from a high-end music shop. “We use HVAC pieces and metal tubing to extend our sound pallet with various ‘found’ instruments.” These instruments help to color the rap and hip-hop inspired “grooves” Brian and his students compose. He will often write arrangements for the “bucket band” along with traditional instruments like a brass ensemble. He uses rhythmic chanting and rhyme schemes to teach and they become a main element in all of the pieces that his “performance bucket band” plays in their many appearances around the Baltimore-Washington corridor. These pieces can be light-hearted, and at other times show some real “swagger”. But Precht always emphasizes to his students the need for music to communicate the emotions we feel. “We try to capture what is going on in our world at any given moment.”



A Collective Tribute to Bruce Ridge

By Laura Ross

At the 54th ICSOM Conference in Washington D.C. this August, Bruce Ridge will step down from his 10-year tenure as ICSOM’s longest-serving chairman. As I reflect upon our relationship and our work together, he has been a treasured friend whose accomplishments have been remarkable; I am the better for this wonderful collaboration.

I was elected ICSOM Secretary in 2002, two years after the Nashville Symphony joined ICSOM. Within four months after that election, the governing board had radically changed—the governing board’s top five officers and two Members-at-Large were new to the board or to their positions. A key issue we were focused on the first few years was to address concerns that many felt ICSOM had lost its way and questioned its relevance.



Robby Klein

In 2004 I was grateful to have the opportunity to get to know Bruce as more than just an eloquent advocate of orchestra-hosted conferences when he agreed to serve as Member-at-Large when Jay Blumenthal was elected as Financial Vice President of Local 802 (NYC). Bruce joined a board that was assisting in the search for a new AFM-Symphonic Services

Division director, considering whether to accept an invitation to join the American Symphony Orchestra League (ASOL) board, and discussing reports issued by a task force sponsored by the Mellon Foundation. In fact, it was following a meeting in Pittsburgh with members of this task force that Bruce experienced what he and others dubbed “Bruce’s fateful cab ride”, when ICSOM President Brian Rood and Member-at-Large Richard Levine (later *Senza Sordino* Editor), convinced Bruce to run for Member-at-Large during the upcoming conference. Thank goodness Bruce did run because we have been the beneficiaries of his leadership ever since!

The following season the governing board dealt with numerous issues, but key amongst them were electronic media issues and negative press articles predicting doom and gloom for the >>

orchestra industry.

To address the direction of ICSOM, a Vision Committee consisting of Bruce, Steve Lester from the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and Henry Peyrebrune from The Cleveland Orchestra (all three Members-at-Large at the time), presented ideas at the 2005 conference that were meant to counter the negativity orchestras encountered at home, and encouraged orchestra musicians to be proactive by reinforcing the importance and contributions of orchestras to communities. Bruce delivered “A Message of Hope” speech that became his mantra in the years that followed. The message was simple: in order to counter the pessimism and negativity within our industry, we must elevate the tone of the debate with a positive message. He also encouraged musicians to work with their boards and communities to build relationships that foster understanding, and demonstrate that orchestras have relevance.

At that conference, Brian Rood stepped down as ICSOM President and Bruce was elected to replace him. During this next season, Bruce’s leadership skills were demonstrated over and over again as he offered to mediate difficult situations, be the bearer of bad news, meet with ICSOM’s newest member orchestra in Puerto Rico, and to participate in the joint ASOL/ICSOM Collaborative Data Project (CDP)—intended to evaluate data from ASOL Orchestra Statistical Reports (OSR) and AFM Wage Charts in order to design a more accurate financial reporting model.

Bruce was elected Chairman at the 2006 conference hosted by the Nashville Symphony and Local 257, as we were preparing to open the Schermerhorn Symphony Center. Building collaborative working partnerships, along with a strong belief that orchestras offer a positive message about its industry, became constant guiding principles during Bruce’s tenure. These past ten years had high and low periods in which creativity, imagination, heartbreak, amazing demonstrations of solidarity, and unimaginable generosity have been exhibited.

Bruce’s accomplishments have been impressive, and I will undoubtedly leave something out, but what is most important to remember is that he, like every other serving ICSOM chairperson, governing board member or delegate, is a full-time member of his orchestra (the North Carolina Symphony). Like many Governing Board members, he has also served on orchestra and negotiating committees. But perhaps uniquely in Bruce’s case, he has traveled almost weekly with his orchestra. I honestly don’t know where he has found the time to do everything!

He was a speaker and panelist at International Federation of Musicians (FIM) conferences, at League conventions and meetings, at the University of Michigan’s Second Orchestra Summit, and he testified before Congress. He has spoken and taught for a number of years at Roosevelt University in Chicago, and met with New World Symphony associates during annual visits with the AFM Symphonic Services Division in Miami. He represented ICSOM at OCSM, ROPA, RMA and TMA conferences, speaking and participating in panel discus-

sions and workshops. He attended rallies and marches to support orchestras in crisis, such as the Labor Day March for the Detroit Symphony in 2010 and the Hartford Symphony Rally in September 2015. Since 2007, and again this summer, he has addressed the convention delegates at the triennial—and previously biennial—AFM conventions. During non-convention years he has earned the respect of, and built working relationships with, Local Conferences Council (LCC) officers and the Players Conferences Council, so that each group now attends the other group’s meeting with the IEB.

Attending meetings has been another of Bruce’s responsibilities. CDP meetings, which continued into the 2007-08 season, were originally intended to test whether ICSOM could work with the League before agreeing to join its board. (We later declined the League’s invitation.) Bruce, Brian Rood, and I attended Mellon Foundation meetings to review the Flanagan Report—input that was mostly disregarded—and led to our condemning the report as misleading when it was published.

Bruce has been a prolific writer during his term. He has written a column for every issue of *Senza Sordino* since taking office, articles for the *International Musician* two to three times each year, and numerous editorials and letters to editors, managers, and board members whenever an orchestra requested his support. And to lend credence to his concerns about transparency, Bruce first sent nearly every article, letter, and speech to the governing board for comment to ensure we were all onboard with his message. He has made himself available for television and radio interviews to speak positively



May, 2016, site visit to Puerto Rico: Local 555 President Miguel Rivera, Bruce Ridge, OSPR ICSOM Delegate Jose Martin, SSD Director Jay Blumenthal, Local Secretary Treasurer Felix Guadalupe

about orchestra successes and the documented recovery of arts contributions and attendance. He also initiated much of ICSOM’s increased digital footprint: soliciting designs that produced the ICSOM logo and 50th anniversary logo; updating and upgrading the ICSOM website to provide information and archival materials to ICSOM members, delegates, emeritus members and the public; established ICSOM’s Facebook page, and the Twitter account that has more than 8,000 followers; and he recently worked with ICSOM Editor Peter de Boor to bring *Senza Sordino* online in a form where individual articles can

be shared on social media. And in 2012, to celebrate ICSOM’s 50th anniversary, Bruce and the governing board engaged a videographer to assemble a history of ICSOM’s formation that included interviews with many of ICSOM’s early founders and officers. (The video and Tom Hall’s “ICSOM: The First Fifty Years” can be found on the ICSOM website.)

Over the past 10 years, Bruce has visited more than three-quarters of ICSOM’s membership, some multiple times. As one of the ICSOM chair’s most important activities, during every visit he met with the orchestra, its orchestra and/or negotiating committees, the local officers and even—if they’re willing and the orchestra agrees—management and board representatives. If the schedule permitted he listened to the orchestra perform or rehearse. During those visits he speaks about the many >>

successful orchestras around the country and offers ideas on orchestra advocacy within that orchestra's community. And then there has been the success of ICSOM Calls to Action that have helped so many orchestras during lockouts and strikes as orchestras stepped up to support one another. Since the very first Call to Action, more than \$1.5 million in contributions have been received from ICSOM, OCSM and ROPA orchestras, individual musicians, RMA and TMA members and Locals.

Bruce Ridge is respected worldwide by orchestra musicians and leadership, union officers, rank-and-file musicians, and more than a handful of managers. Please join me in offering thanks and best wishes in whatever future endeavors he might choose. But first, I think he deserves a long vacation with lots of time to sleep and a nice stack of books to read.

By Brian Rood

From 2006-2015 it was my pleasure to serve alongside Bruce Ridge in what was a remarkable partnership, one that I will always treasure. Our friendship began in 1999 when we met at an ICSOM Conference in Vail, CO. I was somewhat intimidated and intrigued by the imposing yet soft-spoken delegate from North Carolina. During one session Bruce rose to ask if we might consider moving conferences around the country to cities where our orchestras may benefit more from ICSOM's presence. Like others I was impressed with how convincing he was. Equally intriguing was how he made everyone feel at ease by weaving in stories and humor as he tackled what proved to be a fairly controversial topic. Soon afterwards ICSOM began its now long-standing practice of holding conferences in ICSOM orchestra cities around the country. Bruce set those wheels into motion by doing something better than anyone else I know. He builds consensus by inviting differing viewpoints rather than imposing his will on others. During our service together I cannot recall a single time when he chose his way over the rest of the governing board. Due to Bruce's inclusive and collaborative approach governing board members quickly developed friendships that made our work together more productive and rewarding.

The ability to bring people together comes naturally to Bruce because of who he is as a person. We know that he is a charismatic speaker and skilled strategist. It is his unlimited compassion towards others that is unique. Time after time I watched Bruce treat people he knew and those he first encountered in exactly the same way, with genuine interest, kindness and empathy. But it is Bruce's uncompromising integrity under the most difficult circumstances that truly defines him.

Those of us fortunate enough to work with him on the governing board and at annual conferences know that Bruce devoted all of his waking hours to us these past ten years. It is a wonder how he ever found time for his "day job".

ICSOM and the orchestral field will continue to benefit from Bruce's vision and innovations long after he leaves office

in August.

ICSOM site visits are just one example. Bruce has visited about three-fourths of our orchestras, many more than once. Naturally, site visits include meetings with the musicians and committees. Early in his tenure Bruce began to meet with orchestra board chairs, executive directors, community leaders, AFM local officers and the media, too. In meeting with as many constituencies as possible Bruce set into motion what has proven crucial to an orchestra's ability to turn the proverbial corner: rebuilding relationships that allow stakeholders to realize their orchestra's potential and not to succumb to those who insist that orchestras are becoming extinct.

Two of the many important partnerships Bruce initiated include Randy Whatley, who continues to guide orchestras towards successful public relations strategies and Randy Cohen of Americans for the Arts.

Calls to Action became increasingly important under Bruce's leadership due to the unprecedented attacks on our orchestras. Through grass roots efforts over \$1.5 million have been donated from musicians within ICSOM and the AFM to assist orchestras in crisis. Calls to Action also raised awareness of issues before AFM Conventions that directly impacted ICSOM musicians. Musicians responded en masse by meeting with their local officers to ensure that AFM Convention committees heard their collective voices.

Bruce recently visited San Antonio during a critical time for the musicians. A few weeks later major funding support was announced that should erase this year's deficit. The accompanying news article included several quotes from Bruce. They offer excellent examples of his inspired vision and message of hope that resonate as clearly now as when he took office in 2006.

"What's needed now is investment, this moment should be used as an opportunity by the community and its leadership to recommit and to invest. The H-E-B Performance Hall is beautiful, but it is only a building without a living orchestra filling it with music."

"Every note a musician plays is a message for peace, it's a statement of anti-violence. Music brings us together in society and in

the world, which we need now more than ever. The musicians in your orchestra are as remarkable off-stage as they are on-stage because of their commitment and their love of the city."

Bruce, thank you for your extraordinary friendship to musicians everywhere. ICSOM truly is a "united network of friends" due to your leadership and vision.

Note: the Author is ICSOM President Emeritus

By Robert Fraser, OCSM/OMOSC President

The Organization of Canadian Symphony Musicians (OCSM) first met Bruce in 2006, at our Conference in Winnipeg. I was Secretary of OCSM at the time, and I remember taking notes during his address to us. Part way into his speech, I stopped typing and just listened. I knew that, by the end of his address, I would ask him for a transcript of it for our newsletter. And by »



Jana Ross

the end of that day, several OCSM Delegates approached me and asked: “Do you think we could get a transcript of Bruce’s speech?” Since then, Bruce has attended all our Conferences save one, and by the time he steps down as Chair of ICSOM, he will have been to every Canadian province with an OCSM orchestra. And each time he has addressed us, he has done so with great clarity of vision and passion for the art of music.

OCSM is a small gathering; we are usually fewer than 30 people around one big table, so everyone takes part in our Conference in a significant way. Bruce has been a valuable part of that discussion around the table at OCSM for the past ten years.



His passion as an arts advocate will surely be a big part of his legacy on both sides of the Canada/US border, and the “Calls to Action” to assist orchestras in trouble have also become an example of international co-operation. But we will also remember the incredible camaraderie he has with all of us, which certainly will continue.

On a personal note, as OCSM President I often find myself travelling to artificially-lit meeting rooms in not-so-glamorous locations, with the mandate to “fix all the things”. Whenever I feel the dread of such duties upon me, I will often cheer myself up by reminding myself: “At least I get to hang with Bruce.”

Bruce has said several times—and I believe I have an actual sound recording of it somewhere—that OCSM is his favourite Conference (sorry, ICSOM and ROPA!). On behalf of OCSM I would like to return that compliment, and say that Bruce Ridge is one of our favourite (with a “u”) people.

By Carla Lehmeier-Tatum, ROPA President

Bruce Ridge has been a true advocate for symphonic musicians and for the art form. We are ever indebted for his selfless work to provide resources to union symphonic musicians. Bruce has reached out to assist thousands of musicians each year, providing hope and sound solutions to issues at hand. He has been the most accepting and gracious ICSOM leader that ROPA has had the privilege to work with. I am honored to call Bruce Ridge a friend and will truly miss working with an individual of such high integrity and esteem.



By Michael Moore, ICSOM Treasurer

I’ve known Bruce since he was a delegate from his orchestra in 1993. He was a leading proponent of moving the annual conference from Vail to various cities where its presence could hopefully have the most impact on the local orchestra. He was always extremely thoughtful and articulate, even as a first-year delegate. I’m sure it never occurred to either of us at the time that he would become the longest-serving Chair of ICSOM,

through some of its most turbulent recession-driven times. He never shied away from hard work or the potential for conflict when he believed he was in the right. He was a master at walking the line between strong leadership and consensus building. For every important action he took while on the Governing Board, he always sought the approval of the remaining Board members first. We were constantly in the loop. Every trip he took was pre-approved, his expenses were as low as possible, and sometimes he refused reimbursement for legitimate ICSOM expenses. He established the concept of the Call to Action, a device whereby millions of dollars poured into orchestras experiencing work stoppages, including my own. He was very Social Media savvy, and was very open to working with Randy Whatley, a watershed moment that changed the symphonic landscape. Bruce made sure that our Governing Board conference calls and meetings were always highly organized and productive. He was an ICSOM Treasurer’s dream Chairman, and a great friend both to the field and to me personally. I’m hoping he will accept the invitation to remain involved with ICSOM on some level for many years.

By Matt Comerford

Sending my heartfelt thanks and best wishes to Bruce Ridge, the longest serving chair of ICSOM. It’s been an honor and privilege to know and work with Bruce as a leader, a colleague and most importantly a dear friend. Bruce set the gold standard for ICSOM Chair through his selfless dedication and service to orchestra musicians everywhere. His has been the strongest voice extolling the positive message of the benefits the arts and arts organizations bring to their communities.

Note: the Author is a former Member-at-Large

By Beth Lunsford

It’s said that human beings can’t multi-task. But Bruce is the exception to the rule. This past decade, as he led ICSOM to a new level of cohesion and effectiveness, he also served as the North Carolina Symphony’s Orchestra Committee Chair countless times. We are a traveling band, so the middle seats of the second bus served as his second office. Balancing iPad and cell phone, he worked through our local orchestra issues and CBA negotiations, all while writing articles, crafting speeches, planning orchestra site visits, and updating ICSOM’s social media posts. Despite his many duties, he always found time for the personal issues of our musicians. Requests for help were never turned away. Bruce’s dedication to orchestral music and the people who perform it has been unwavering, and for that we will always be grateful.

Note: The Author is the former ICSOM Delegate and current Alternate Delegate from the North Carolina Symphony

By Member-at-Large Paul Austin

During my time on the ROPA Executive Board, I had many opportunities to work directly with Bruce Ridge, ranging from serving on committees to sharing the lectern. The first thing that I learned was to always deliver my speech before his. Bruce has a true gift for public speaking, and anyone following him >>

would pale in comparison.

Last summer, after the GRS joined ICSOM, Bruce visited Grand Rapids. His schedule was packed with many meetings, but I managed to reserve time to drive him to a state park for a hike that ended at the sand dunes of Lake Michigan. The hike took longer because I followed “blue” signs (which I thought in-



dicated the water) instead of the “yellow” signs (which indicated sand dunes). Eventually our path opened to an incredible view, spanning a rare, private area of Lake Michigan. My missteps on our journey were forgotten by both of us, as this moment of calmness and serenity became imprinted in our memories.

Bruce, you are and will always be one tough act to follow. Thanks for showing us a different path, one that can take longer in many ways but, in the end, be even more worthwhile and meaningful.

By Francine Schutzman

Bruce Ridge is my hero. Every time I read something that he has written, or hear him speak, I am struck with the utter rightness of his words. He has been the most effective spokesperson for orchestra musicians throughout North America that one could imagine. We are all lucky to have benefitted from his leadership during his term as Chair of ICSOM. On a personal level, Bruce has taught me, impressed me, inspired me, made me think, amused me, told me some fantastic stories, provided a sympathetic ear when I most needed it, and made me laugh when I needed that even more. I hope that he remains a large part of all of our lives.

Note: the Author is the former President of OCSM/OMOSC

By Mike Okun

A Haiku for my friend Bruce

Courageous, Smart, Kind,
Committed, Honest. In all:
Rare and Wonderful.

Note: The Author is former Interim ICSOM Counsel

By JoAnn Falletta

I first met Bruce Ridge in Norfolk, when he had come down to offer his assistance during a particularly challenging time for the Virginia Symphony. I asked Bruce if he could speak to us during a rehearsal, and I will never forget listening to his words of compassion, support, encouragement, vision, and love for his colleagues. From that evening, Bruce has been a hero to me. In a profession that is often fraught with conflict, he is the vibrant example of finding the best in every aspect of our world. He remains a dreamer and an idealist, determined to bring people together rather than driving them apart. His ten years have been an example of courageous leadership and personal integrity on the highest level. He is an inspiration to all of us, and I am proud to be able to call him my friend.

Note: The Author is the Music Director of the Virginia Symphony Orchestra and the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra

By Cathy Payne

I first met Bruce when we were students at the New England Conservatory, but we barely knew each other in school. After all those years of passing him in the hallway, it was an incredible experience to finally get to know him and to work closely with him on the Governing Board as we both entered the middle phase of our orchestral careers and dealt with epic lockouts and strikes in several ICSOM orchestras. Bruce was somehow able to inspire more people with each crisis, and to work harder and be even more effective as the bad news mounted. I learned so much from Bruce; I try to carry his passion for our art form and his dedication to musicians with me every day.

Note: the Author is a former Member-at-Large



New Jersey Site Visit

By Martin Andersen, NJSO ICSOM Delegate

For an orchestra in real need of a morale adjustment, ICSOM Chairman Bruce Ridge provided treatment in the form of an energetic yet congenially convincing presentation during his recent visit to the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra.

My only regret was that the NJSO management chose not to avail itself of Ridge’s offer to meet with the board or staff—except for a last-minute breakfast meeting with our Interim CEO.


Bruce did sit down several times with the orchestra committee, giving valuable counsel as we begin to take steps to remedy the reality of our perennially under-organized membership.

During a two-part meeting with the NJSO musicians, Bruce delivered an inspirational message, touching on his now-familiar themes: the importance of protecting an orchestra’s brand; that providing an inferior product never leads to success; the large economic impact of the arts nationally and in our community; and a gospel of hope via his catalog of success stories from orchestras all over North America. During the question and answer period he fielded queries ranging from how to establish a separate identity for the players before the public, to addressing the challenges and opportunities of an aging audience. He also reminded us of NJSO’s upcoming centennial in 2021, stressing the imperative that the institution »



The author with Bruce Ridge and
NJSO violist Christine Terhune

must capitalize on this important milestone in the life of New Jersey's largest arts organization. The players' response to his presentation was uniformly positive. One grateful colleague could not hold back tears as she greeted Bruce after the meeting. Another musician, referencing our present search for a new CEO, asked me if Bruce might be interested in the job!

We are grateful to have had a visit from our out-going Chair. It will be remembered. 

Emeritus Musings

In honor of James Levine's appointment as
Conductor Emeritus of the Metropolitan Opera
By Greg Zuber

I joined the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra in 1986. James Levine has been the Music Director for my entire tenure. In fact, he has been Music Director for the entire tenure of every current orchestra member with the exception of Violist Marilyn Stroh, who joined in 1960.

Upon joining the orchestra, one thing that immediately impressed me was the incredible energy and intensity the orchestra brought to our performances with James Levine conducting. Another was the very unique sound the orchestra achieved with Jimmy on the podium. We had taut ensemble precision with a dynamic range that extended from the most delicate chamber music pianissimos to heavy-metal rock concert like volumes viscerally exciting to experience. Mozart was never staid and proper but took on a vital living quality, from tender and expressive to frenetic and muscular. The biggest Wagnerian scenes achieved the most intense sonic expression. Levine insisted that the brass maintain a round burnished sound through the loudest dynamics, the strings play with the thickest velvety sound as well as the fastest arm-cramping tremolos and everyone phrase with a gutsy dug-in tone quality, that the bass never overwhelm the treble, and that the melody always lead in the most singing style. "Make it to

go up!" and "More organic!" were common eclectic directives.

Levine made his Met debut in 1971 with a performance of Puccini's *Tosca*. As a young, modern, new breed of American conductor, Levine for many years eschewed the pretense of the title Maestro, preferring to be called by his first name, Jim or Jimmy. He was appointed Principal Conductor in 1972 and Music Director in 1976. Ten years later he was appointed Artistic Director of the company and held this title until 2004. During his tenure he has led nearly 2,500 performances of 85 different operas.

Over time I became aware of Levine's incredible range. There are many conductors who are comfortable and knowledgeable in a limited range of repertoire. We've worked with bel canto specialists, Verdi or Wagner exponents, and modern music mavens. Even the great Carlos Kleiber, who conducted us transcendently a number of times, had a famously small repertoire including only a handful of operas. Jim conducts Mozart, Donizetti, Verdi, Wagner, Strauss, Mahler, Stravinsky, Berg, and Gershwin with fluency and an understanding that is both historically informed and always vital. He approaches everything with a strong point of view and insightful awareness of the music, the drama, the text, and the context. Jim has often remarked on the importance of playing something like it is the premiere performance or for the person who might be hearing the work for the first time.

Levine initiated an acclaimed concert series for the MET Orchestra and the Met Chamber Ensemble at Carnegie Hall. Under his leadership the company and the MET Orchestra have toured the United States, Europe, and Japan and made numerous CDs, DVDs, live video broadcasts and recordings which preceded the live HD and satellite radio broadcasts of today.

Levine has a voracious musical curiosity, which is often more evident in our MET Orchestra and chamber music performances. While the challenging economics of opera seem to make more adventurous programming daunting, these other settings allow opportunities to explore the most current



The author with Levine

music, including that of John Cage, Olivier Messiaen, Elliot Carter, Milton Babbitt, Pierre Boulez, Tan Dun, Iannis Xenakis, Gunther Schuller, and Charles Wuorinen. The music of these composers, nearly all of whom he has known personally and whose work he has championed, has served a vital mission, a connection to the art of our time, a modernist diet like the adventurous menu in a restaurant offering molecular gastronomy, a way to continue challenging himself and our orchestra.


As a leader, Levine is a master psychologist understanding that, unlike the stereotypical tyrannical maestros, the best performances come from making someone believe they can achieve more than they expect of themselves. He plays the orchestra as his instrument (despite the fact that he was also a world-class pianist who rejected the possibility of pursuing a »

career as a concert soloist). Jim is famous, or possibly infamous, for a rehearsal style that leans toward verbose. With detailed direction that might describe the weight, color, intensity, articulation, envelope, from one note to the next, from one phrase to the next, rehearsal can be laborious. This establishes the parameters of a work, the stylistic characteristics for an entire piece, and of asserting his detailed conception, literally note by note, like any great instrumentalist fastidiously preparing a refined performance. Often, his detailed requests seem as much like he is talking to himself as directing us. While often praising our achievements, it is more common for Jim to offer comments in terms of the ways we can continue improving and raising our level even higher.

Levine is acclaimed for building the orchestra into the high caliber ensemble that it is today. It is less understood that this has largely been through a combination of trust in our collective stewardship, as well as his guidance and all of our hard work. Over the years Jimmy only rarely attended our auditions, which are anonymous and behind a screen in all rounds. He has trusted the committees, made up of orchestra members, to find the most suitable players. On the rare occasions when he has attended the final round of an audition, it has often been to offer a few words of guidance regarding specific qualities we should look for in the applicants, generally, with him abstaining from exercising the single vote allotted the music director. At a recent audition, Jim affirmed our process, advising us to never change this procedure.

When I began at the Met, Jim would come to work in his idea of a uniform: a blue polo shirt, blue slacks, suede shoes, and a big thick bath towel folded lengthwise and draped over his left shoulder. Every rehearsal he wore this same outfit. A colleague once said that if Levine ever showed up without his towel, he would give me \$100. Jim's personal style in casual settings sometimes includes sporting a designer silk scarf. He has a collection of pocket watches and also fine pens. Jim can wax poetic on non-musical subjects. Upon learning my wife grew up in a downtown hotel in Chicago, they had a long discussion on the various pluses and minuses of hotel life, the quality of pillows, room service, etc. (things important to anyone traveling as much as he).

When we toured, it was common to see Jim entering the airport with as many as 11 trunks and suitcases trailing behind his personal assistant Ken Hunt, one containing scores, another books, bringing the necessities and accoutrements of the daily life of an artist along with him. He is known to need no more than four hours of sleep a night and reportedly begins his daily practice and score study early each morning. Still ramped up after performances, it's known that, after leaving the evening's performance, certain restaurants will have a meal prepared and ready to go that he can pick up on the way home.

On the strength of Jimmy's vital energy, keen intelligence, artistic taste, and voracious need to make music, the MET Orchestra and chorus are acclaimed among the world's best. Along for the ride, many of us in the orchestra, chorus, and, I hope, our audience, have been afforded unique and life shaping experiences. I (We) wish to offer our Maestro Jimmy our congratulations on becoming our Emeritus Music Director. 

Note: The Author is Principal Percussionist of the MET Orchestra

Newslets

AFM Convention in Las Vegas

The AFM will hold its 100th convention June 20–23, at the Westgate Las Vegas Resort & Casino. Among more than 250 delegates will be many who are active and emeritus members of ICSOM orchestras; included in roughly 160 AFM Locals sending delegates will be the 42 Locals that have one or more ICSOM orchestras.

The triennial convention will see the election of Federation officers, as well as deliberation of proposed changes to AFM Bylaws and other business.

Note: the proposed Recommendations and Resolutions can be found in the

May issue of the International Musician on pages 21-27. The ICSOM Governing Board encourages you to read the proposed AFM bylaws changes, and to share your opinions with your Local officers and your Local's delegates to the convention in Las Vegas.




Nashville Reopens With Raises

Following four straight days of negotiations in mid-April that resulted in a settlement three months early, simultaneous ratification meetings were held at the Schermerhorn Symphony Center on April 27, 2016. Nashville Symphony musicians met with negotiating committee members, Local 257 President Dave Pomeroy, and attorney Kevin Case to discuss and ratify terms of a wage reopener stipulated in the 4-year agreement negotiated in 2014, while Nashville Symphony Association board members were meeting elsewhere in the building to ratify the agreement.

Wages will increase during the final two years of the contract, with a 4.5% raise in the 2016-17 season and two additional increases totaling 5.3% in the 2017-18 season. The contract also restores one second violin position beginning in the 2017-18 season that was allowed to remain vacant during the previous contract; two positions in the first violin and cello sections will continue to remain vacant during the term of the current agreement.

The orchestra's schedule has increased over the past few seasons; ticket sales have increased and, according to board chair James C. Seabury III, "the institution has made tremendous strides in restoring the Nashville Symphony to fiscal vitality." He recognized the cooperation of the orchestra musicians "who have made enormous sacrifices on behalf of the entire institution."

Nashville Symphony musicians are grateful for the support of the middle-Tennessee community and of the appreciative audiences of all ages that attend every performance. 

Musician on Money

The Treasury Department in April announced the planned redesign of the \$5, \$10, and \$20 bills. The back of the \$5 will be renovated to acknowledge important events that took place at the Lincoln Memorial. In particular, the opera singer Marian Anderson and her famous concert will be featured.

By 1939, Anderson had achieved great success as a singer—Jean Sibelius heard her sing and dedicated “Solitude” to her, and Arturo Toscanini declared, “Yours is a voice such as one hears once in a hundred years.” After she was denied an opportunity to sing at DAR Constitution Hall because of her race, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt helped organize a free open-air concert for Anderson at the steps of the memorial on Easter Sunday, April 9. The concert was attended by 75,000 and heard by millions more on the radio, and some have credited it with helping to launch the modern civil rights movement.

Anderson was also present at the other event to be commemorated on the new bill, the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, during which Martin Luther King, Jr. gave his famous “I Have a Dream” speech.

While culturally important figures, including musicians, have been featured on paper currency in Europe for years, Anderson will be the first musician on United States money, in addition to being one of the first African Americans and one of the first women so honored.

Although Alexander Hamilton had been reported to be facing eviction from the face of the \$10 bill, he will remain; the public support generated by the runaway success of the Broadway musical *Hamilton* was widely reported to be the primary cause of the change of plans.

Chicago Benefit Concert

The musicians of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra are presenting a benefit concert for the Greater Chicago Food Depository on Monday, June 13th, in the Studebaker Theater in Chicago. This is the first time a concert of the full orchestra has been entirely produced and presented by the musicians. “CSO musicians have been committed to community service for many years, and many of the players donate their talents individually to a number of organizations. Presenting this concert as a full orchestra in support of an important cause connects the Musicians of the Chicago Symphony to the Chicagoland community,” said CSO Members Committee Chairman Steve Lester.

CSO Music Director Riccardo Muti will also be donating his services to conduct this concert. He shares the musicians’ commitment to helping those in need, saying “I am very happy to be conducting the first concert of the Chicago Symphony Musicians to benefit the Greater Chicago Food Depository, whose effort to end hunger is so important to our City. As musicians, we strive to provide cultural nourishment and so this joint effort is a reflection of our collective desire to feed the body and soul.”

The Greater Chicago Food Depository began its work in 1979 and has served one of every six Cook county residents. Currently it provides approximately 155,000 meals each day, and the proceeds from this concert will help to extend its reach even further.

A Long-Awaited Return

On April 29, 2016, the Utah Symphony performed in Carnegie Hall for the first time in over 40 years. The performance at Carnegie was the culmination of two years of events celebrating the 75th Anniversary of the Utah Symphony, including the commissioning and recording of three new works, a new recording of Mahler’s First Symphony, and a complete Mahler Symphony cycle.

The Carnegie program included: Haydn Symphony #96, nicknamed “The Miracle”; Percussionist Colin Currie performing the NY premiere of Andrew Norman’s Percussion Concerto “Switch”, which was commissioned for the 75th Anniversary; selections from Prokofiev’s *Romeo and Juliet*; and Bartok’s *Miraculous Mandarin* Suite.

For some musicians the experience was filled with memories of playing in the renowned hall with longtime Music Director Maurice Abravanel; for others it was the first time performing at Carnegie. The performance received substantial media coverage, including two articles and a positive review of the concert in the *New York Times*.

In addition to the performance at Carnegie Hall, a group of musicians, Madeline Atkins, Peter Margulies, Gary Ofenloch, and Louise Vickerman, were invited to ring the opening bell at the New York Stock Exchange with Utah Governor Gary and First Lady Herbert, Acting CEO Pat Richards, Utah Symphony Board Chair David Peterson, and Board members Spence and Lisa Eccles, Scott Anderson, and Kem Gardner. 

Dropping the Mute

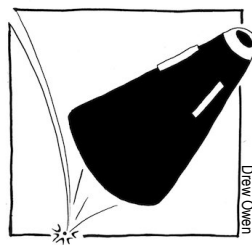
By Peter de Boor, Editor

In turbulent times the quality of leadership assumes a greater significance. This issue is a testament to that.

In the political realm there are many examples of leadership running the gamut from outstanding to execrable. Perhaps the most significant illustration in modern times of the significance of leadership is the ascent into power, in 1933, of very different men in two countries facing very similar economic crises, the United States and Germany. And the very phrase “poor leadership” might well bring to mind the name of one or more present-day candidates for high office.

During recent crises, we have seen many examples of poor leadership of orchestras. I feel fortunate, therefore, to be able to bring you Greg Zuber’s article about James Levine at the Metropolitan Opera, which highlights his incredibly long tenure there—and the new heights of artistic achievement that resulted, bringing renown both to the orchestra and to the company.

The cover article about the Grand Rapids Symphony focuses on a different kind of leadership. The musicians involved in their extended contract negotiations, including author Paul Austin, did more than change the debate across the table. They did so without creating rancor and acrimony. They sparked increased public support for the orchestra, as evidenced by the successful attainment of the >>



orchestra's endowment campaign goals. Based on the starting point of those talks, one could easily have imagined (and as an interested observer, I certainly did) several vastly inferior alternative outcomes.


Chairperson Bruce Ridge has reminded me on occasion, when I've asked for his advice about a prospective article, that *Senza Sordino* functions in part as an historical record for ICSOM. It isn't just a tool for communicating with our colleagues now; it's also a way of communicating with our colleagues in the future. Therefore I feel it is fitting and proper to devote as much space as I do to recognize all that Bruce has accomplished as Chair of this organization.

Taking the helm in the aftermath of the bursting of the dotcom bubble, he navigated the difficult and uncharted waters during and after the great recession. The steady chorus of negative news about orchestras swelled to a full-throated roar. But Bruce had a plan. He would change the tenor of the discussion. Working both quietly behind the scenes and vividly in public discourse, he reframed the conversation, so that self-defeating rhetoric did not become self-fulfilling prophecy. Instead of listening to how some orchestras (and by implication all orchestras) were failing, we would hear about the ways that many other orchestras were succeeding. "Orchestras are dying" became "orchestras are an important part of our communities."

Bruce also greatly enhanced ICSOM by building alliances. As a good unionist, knowing that a great deal of our strength stems from our solidarity, he created the Calls to Action. In the depth of these crises faced by orchestras, the "network of friends" that Bruce likes to refer to answered these calls, with visible financial support that was fundamental to the resolution of many of these crises.

He also sought out new partners, such as Americans for the Arts and Randy Whatley, who have helped to reshape the way that some ICSOM orchestras achieve success both during and after negotiations.

We live in a digital age, and while some decry hours lost to cat videos on Facebook or the decline of personal interaction, the reality is that social media, and the Internet more generally, have fundamentally altered how and what we learn about. Bruce has recognized this and worked hard to ensure that ICSOM keeps pace and stays relevant.

I first became an ICSOM delegate in 2008. From that first time in San Francisco, Bruce's addresses have consistently been a highpoint (often the highpoint) of the conference. I have "grown up" knowing only one ICSOM Chairperson. It is hard to conceive of someone else leading this vital and important organization. But at least it is easy to conceive of what superb leadership of ICSOM looks like. 

Oregon Symphony Ratifies New Three-Year Contract With Raises (Well, Sort Of) *(continued)*

wage cut each year (it is important to note that while recent articles have labeled this as "bonus" pay that was forgone, it was in reality not a bonus, but rather just another element of our contractual season pay that was lost). Prior seasons were riddled with wage freezes, and promised raises were chipped away in the form of contract re-openers. One musician offered a sobering and monumental figure: over the past twelve years, the musicians of the Oregon Symphony have (in the form of give-backs, pay-cuts, pay-freezes, etc.) donated over \$12,000,000 to the organization. This equates to having played two seasons, gratis.

But back to today. This new contract, which runs until the 2017-18 season, offers the musicians yearly COLA: Cost-Of-Living-Adjustments (these are calculated excluding the increases attributed to health care, since management supplies us with healthcare and is absorbing those increases that way). I really like the word "adjustment" because it paints a much more accurate picture than the word "raise", and here's why: while the numbers on the page may be going up, however slightly, these are not raises. This becomes even more strikingly obvious when you realize that these figures are calculated by the "All-Cities" version of inflation, which is sadly dwarfed by locally rising costs in the city of Portland; musicians therefore see these adjustments as wage cuts at the worst, or freezes at the absolute best. This year's increase amounts to 1.45%, while next season we will see an increase of 0.5%. That is \$7 a week (before taxes). I guess I won't have to kick that twice-a-week coffee habit. Yet.

The past few years have seen the orchestra budget grow by



The Oregon Symphony

\$2 million, with 0% of that increase earmarked for increases in musician compensation. Musicians' wages seem to be the only "cost" not viewed as inevitable to increase, and it's been made clear by management that even the COLA increase will be an extreme fundraising burden. This is coupled with the fact that the orchestra is, at 86% of the full complement dictated by the contract, smaller than ever; we have been operating under a side letter allowing for hiring freezes to keep the numbers from 88 down to 76 musicians. We see money allocated for things that seem, at least in times like these, frivolous. One musician succinctly (and hilariously) questioned the decision to spend money on a new Haydn CD recording: "why would you build a >>

The **2016 ICSOM Conference** will be held in **Washington DC, August 24-27, 2016**. All attendees must register for the conference in advance with ICSOM Secretary Laura Ross. Online registration will be available by early June. Anyone interested in attending the conference and wishing to receive a conference packet should contact the ICSOM Secretary. Deadline for conference registration is July 22, 2016.

deck on a house when you can't afford the mortgage?" There is certainly value in recording projects, and we understand how this can benefit the organization. But dollars seem to magically appear for things that can be seen as potential fundraising tools or Grammy submission opportunities, not to mention Music Director-related projects. Evidently it's just not "sexy" to raise the money required to pay musicians a more respectable wage.

In addition to the monetary aspects of the contract, the musicians have been generous in the relaxing of several work and scheduling rules, allowing management the freedom to schedule more revenue-producing engagements. This of course goes hand-in-hand with historical musician give-backs in the sense that making ourselves more available, schedule-wise, limits our ability to go out and make income from other sources, be it teaching or gigging—something that we all depend on. Additionally, we have agreed to give management the option of self-insuring healthcare (although concerns from musicians abound, especially with regard to privacy: "will people in the office know when I need reimbursement for a colonoscopy?!" etc.), which we believe will ultimately be a significant cost-saving measure. (And no, since the paperwork will go through a third party, nobody in the office will know about your colonoscopy.)

Along the lines of certain things being fundraising burdens and other things being able to magically make money appear, you will notice in the ICSOM wage charts that one of the glaringly missing pieces of information from our orchestra's line is the Music Director salary. We all know that the top earners in a non-profit have their salaries listed on the yearly 990 forms. The management here at the OS, however, evidently believes it has found a loophole with which to hide this information. You can easily imagine how something like this would add to the general dismay and non-approval of what is already seen as a lackluster, stagnant contract offer.

In a nutshell, we, the musicians, fear for the future. In a city that gets increasingly expensive to live in (thanks for the exposure, *Portlandia!*), we are concerned for our ability to attract high-caliber musicians and, more importantly, to keep them. Recently, the *Oregonian* published an article stating that in order to live in the city of Portland and not struggle financially, a single person had to be making over \$60,000. This of course is well above the base salary of the Oregon Symphony. Should the quality of life for a member of the premiere musical organization of the entire state be reduced to "just scraping by"? This concern goes unrecognized by management, and sadly there has been no push by anyone in leadership, including our Music Director, to put two and two together and realize that maintaining a world-class orchestral organization requires some sort of competitive edge in the field, financially.

I'd like to see the Oregon Symphony "Like Never Before" as well—but exactly what that looks like remains to be seen. <

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.

Grand Rapids' Historic Contract (continued)

In August 2015, GRS Assistant Principal Bass Michael Hovnanian led the development of the musicians' e-newsletter, which got our stories published and our messages to the public. (Note: see <http://www.grsmusiciansassociation.com/#!/articles/cee5>)

For two months we published musician profiles and important articles related to our negotiations. We also encouraged our supporters to write Letters to the Editor and submit them to local media. But we became aware that none of these letters were being published, either in the print editions or online. As a result, we adjusted our plan: we first contacted those who had already written letters, and with their permission we posted these in our GRSMA e-newsletter and on our website—there were several issues of the newsletter devoted entirely to these letters. Then, going forward, we asked writers to email their letters directly to the GRS Board Chair and Secretary as well, and all granted permission for us to publish their letters ourselves. We eventually stopped asking writers to submit the letters to local media at all, as our own publishing efforts had proved so successful.

The letters showed a level of support of which the GRS Board had been unaware, both on a local and international level. Unfortunately, it seemed that the letters did not have the intended impact; the proposals in the fall of 2015 remained unchanged in terms of financial cutbacks.

We needed to focus upon issues that were most important to our membership, and it was decided to do so through social media. On Thanksgiving of 2015 we launched our Facebook



A post from the GRSMA Facebook campaign

campaign, created by GRS Assistant Principal/Second Oboe Alexander Miller, which addressed management's desire to allow eleven positions to be open in the orchestra. For several weeks, many creative graphics were posted, shared, liked, and commented upon on Facebook at a level that both surprised and inspired the negotiation team. (Note: view a photo gallery of the campaign at <http://www.grsmusiciansassociation.com/#!/graphics-dec-2015/rgpcv>)

When movement regarding the issue of open positions finally occurred at the bargaining table, we decided to launch a second campaign on March 1st that addressed the retirement contribution that had been suspended since 2009. (Note: >

view these graphics at <https://www.facebook.com/grsmusiciansassoc/photos/a.140664678563.115380.129264478563/10153895614288564/?type=3&theater>)

Anyone interacting on Facebook took notice of the comments from our public about the importance of the musicians' retirement account. Everyone involved in the negotiations realized how critical this issue was for a successful contract, and movement in this area occurred soon.

The open positions and the musicians' retirement accounts are just two of the elements of our new agreement. But those were the two issues that we decided to highlight on social media in a methodical and informative way, as they had particular significance for our negotiating committee.

A few weeks after contract ratification, the Grand Rapids Symphony announced that it reached its goal of \$40 million for its endowment campaign. Launched in 2012 as the Legacy of Excellence, with \$20 million from local philanthropists Richard and Helen DeVos, an additional \$20 million has been raised since then. The musicians are pleased by the generosity of our community, and the success of this endowment campaign firmly solidifies our organization for years to come.

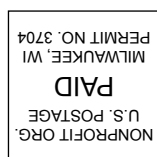
It would be wrong to not name my colleagues who served on the committee. Co-chair Diane McElfish Helle was tireless in her work. While we share an alma mater (University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music) as well as a birthday (May 25th), our work hours vastly differed; as if on a tag team, Diane would work until 4am and then I would pick up where she left off at 5am for our duties as co-chair. The other com-

mittee members, Beth Colpean, Barb Corbato, Jeremy Crossmer, Chris Martin, and Leslie Van Becker, devoted hundreds of hours in preparation, not to mention critical note taking at the table. Outside of our committee work, this team endured huge life events (including major illnesses, marriage, and loss of parents), and we became very close. I challenge anyone to find a more dedicated group of colleagues.

The list of people that we wish to thank seems to be endless, as so many stood beside us in a variety of ways. Randy Whatley, President of Cypress Media, gave us sage advice for our public relations platform. AFM Local 56 leadership Eric Vander Stel and Gary Sironen believed that, rather than using a more traditional approach, it would be more cost effective to hire Randy and have a smart campaign in order to reach a fair contract. Without the guidance of SSD Negotiator Nathan Kahn, this process would not have been a success. To all who wrote letters of support, bought GRSMA T-shirts, put our yard signs in their front lawns, attended our events, and especially to those who interacted with us on social media, we send a sincere and heartfelt thanks.

In the end, who can really say which puzzle piece completed the picture? But it would be an accurate and fair assessment to say that social media played a positive role for the 2015-16 negotiations in Grand Rapids.

(Additional Note: As of this writing, the Grand Rapids Symphony is poised to announce the selection of its new Music Director. This piece of news is yet another reason that the GRS is at a turning point for the organization's future.)



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