

Why We Propose an Expansion of Strike Fund Benefits *ICSOM Governing Board*

From its very founding in 1962, one of ICSOM's stated goals was to establish a strike fund that could help our musicians withstand the financial pressure of a work stoppage. It wasn't until 1970, more than a year after ICSOM had been granted conference status within the American Federation of Musicians, that the AFM Symphony-Opera Strike Fund was begun with a \$250,000 loan, essentially a line of credit, from the Federation.

Today, 63 orchestras participate in the Strike Fund—48 orchestras from ICSOM, 10 from the Organization of Canadian Symphonic Musicians (OCSM), and five from the Regional Orchestra Players Association (ROPA). To be eligible to participate in the Fund, an orchestra must have a collective bargaining agreement that provides for a minimum weekly scale of \$300 and a season of at least 15 weeks. Over the past 50 years, the Strike Fund has disbursed almost \$12 million to 56 different orchestras involved in a strike or lockout.

The Fund is administered by six Trustees, three appointed by the AFM International Executive Board (IEB) and three who are active players in participating orchestras. Two of those positions are selected by ICSOM, while the third position alternates yearly between a trustee selected by ROPA and another selected by OCSM. The alternating Trustees participate in all Strike Fund deliberations. Those currently serving are AFM Secretary-Treasurer Jay Blumenthal, Director of Symphonic Services Rochelle Skolnick, IEB Member Edgardo Malaga, ICSOM President Paul Austin, ICSOM Treasurer Peter de Boor, and ROPA Secretary Karen Sandene. The OCSM Trustee position currently stands empty, due to Rob McCosh's recent retirement.

During the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown beginning in March 2020, our ICSOM orchestras went to extraordinary lengths to stay active and connected to their audiences. Thanks in large measure to the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and the Integrated Media Agreement (IMA) side letter, which tied a guaranteed amount of annual compensation to a commensurate percentage of free media, most of our orchestras were able to maintain some level of activity and salary.

But not all. As we well remember, several ICSOM employers furloughed their musicians, declaring force majeure or

RESOLUTION NO. 1 Expansion of Symphony-Opera Strike Fund Benefits (*Excerpted*)

SECTION 4(e). Strike benefits also shall be payable from the Fund in the following circumstances:

(1) a lockout, or

(2) upon application by the Local Executive Board to the Trustees and approval of a majority thereof, in the event an employer declares force majeure, asserts impossibility of performance, repudiates the local collective bargaining agreement in its entirety, furloughs musicians, or takes similar action that has the effect of depriving the musicians of all wages guaranteed under their local agreement.

invoking the doctrine of impossibility. No concerts, no pay. Entire seasons were canceled, leaving our musicians stranded—deprived of all wages and, in one case, without health benefits.

Many of our musicians asked if the AFM Strike Fund could be utilized to assist these orchestras. Some level of payment from the Strike Fund would have gone a long way in supporting our members through this crisis—including by increasing their bargaining leverage. But the Strike Fund Trustees were unable to even consider awarding benefits because the AFM bylaws, as currently written, prohibit the consideration of any reason other than a strike or lockout. Even though the Trustees have the flexibility to extend or increase/decrease benefits, they are prohibited from considering other circumstances—such as force majeure—even though those circumstances may be virtually indistinguishable from the effects of a strike or lockout.

Because the ability to award Strike Fund benefits under such circumstances would help our musicians stand up to

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President's Report Group Efforts Go Further

By Paul Austin

It has been said that one acting alone could get the job done quickly, but that they may go further and have a greater impact by including others in the process. With that ensemble spirit in mind, here are a few examples of how ICSOM and the AFM have been working together recently for the betterment of our membership.

As an example, the delegates of our orchestras have repeatedly requested a mechanism that lets them create and share media projects to help promote themselves to their communities. ICSOM and the AFM have engaged in conversation about how to craft an agreement that allows such activity for several years, and I am pleased to say that those talks have led to the creation of the AFM Local Player Association Promo Agreement—see the web version of this article at icsom.org/senzasordino to read the full text. Approved by the AFM's International Executive Board last summer, this new agreement allows musicians to create their own media products while empowering the Union to protect the rights of those musicians.

For many years, the AFM, ICSOM, and ROPA have made annual visits to the New World Symphony (NWS) in Miami to give a panel presentation to the Fellows there about AFM membership. Coordinated by the NWS, this visit provides a chance for us to speak to the next generation of symphony musicians about the importance of being good orchestral citizens. This was my second year attending this event as the ICSOM representative, this time with Debbie Newmark and Rochelle Skolnick of the AFM, ROPA President Steve Wade, as well as Chas Reskin (President) and Jeff Apana (Secretary/Treasurer) from the South Florida Musicians Association (AFM Local 655).



Paul Austin



The 2023 panel for the NWS presentation (left to right): Steve Wade (ROPA President), Deborah Newmark (Director of Symphonic Media), Rochelle Skolnick (SSD Director), Paul Austin (ICSOM President), Chas Reskin (AFM Local 655 President), and Jeff Apana (AFM Local 655 Secretary/Treasurer).



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF
SYMPHONY AND OPERA MUSICIANS

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United States and Canada, AFL-CIO

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Orchestras

Alabama Symphony Orchestra
Atlanta Symphony Orchestra
Baltimore Symphony Orchestra
Boston Symphony Orchestra
Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra
Charlotte Symphony Orchestra
Chicago Lyric Opera Orchestra
Chicago Symphony Orchestra
Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra
The Cleveland Orchestra
Colorado Symphony Orchestra
Columbus Symphony Orchestra
Dallas Symphony Orchestra
Detroit Symphony Orchestra
The Florida Orchestra
Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra
Grand Rapids Symphony
Grant Park Orchestra
Hawaii Symphony Orchestra
Houston Symphony
Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra
Jacksonville Symphony
Kansas City Symphony
Kennedy Center Opera House Orchestra
Los Angeles Philharmonic
Louisville Orchestra
Metropolitan Opera Orchestra
Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra
Minnesota Orchestra
Nashville Symphony
National Symphony Orchestra
New Jersey Symphony Orchestra
New York City Ballet Orchestra
New York City Opera Orchestra
New York Philharmonic
North Carolina Symphony
Oregon Symphony
Orquesta Sinfónica de Puerto Rico
Pacific Symphony
The Philadelphia Orchestra
Phoenix Symphony
Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra
Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra
St. Louis Symphony
The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra
San Diego Symphony Orchestra
San Francisco Ballet Orchestra
San Francisco Opera Orchestra
San Francisco Symphony
Symphoria
Utah Symphony
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After we introduced ourselves, we asked each Fellow to introduce themselves to us and describe their past experiences with the AFM. Quite a few Fellows had joined a Local while playing as a substitute member of an ICSOM orchestra, and the majority held a positive image of the AFM. However, the chief concern that Fellows expressed to our panel involved recent audition procedures. While some examples that the Fellows gave to us actually were allowable, as the language in that orchestra's CBA had been followed, our panel recognized their level of frustration and definitely heard their voices. We also took the opportunity to make the Fellows aware of the AFM Audition Hotline (330-322-2265) where they can anonymously report future instances that seemed unfair to them.

This year the NWS event included a tour of their facility, a demonstration of their state-of-the-art media control room, and tickets to attend a concert. It was very meaningful for me to see and hear the Fellows, whom I had met just that afternoon, in a performance that evening (which ended with music by Michael Tilson Thomas, who was in attendance and spoke to the audience afterward). Our NWS hosts were very gracious with their time, and ICSOM looks forward to future opportunities to join the AFM and ROPA in speaking with NWS Fellows to assist in training the next wave of our membership.

Since the trip to NWS took me to the area, I tagged on visits to ICSOM's two orchestras in Florida so that I could meet with musician committees and their Local officers. For both the Jacksonville Symphony and The Florida Orchestra (TFO), I attended their concerts, met with musicians and committee members, and spent time with their Local officials.

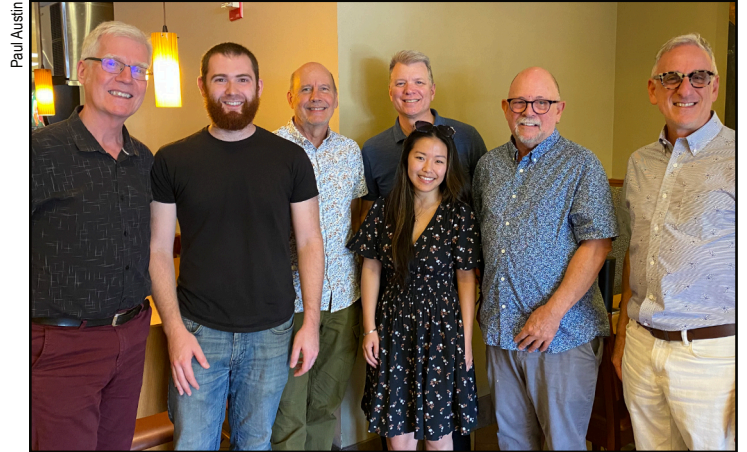
Prior to the NWS event, my time in Jacksonville included a visit to Local 444 Union offices in the building that the Local has owned since the 1960s. With a residential construction project happening across the street, there is no doubt that their property value will increase. Nearly all of their Local's Executive Board members are Jacksonville Symphony musicians.



Brian Magnus, ICSOM Delegate, Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra

ICSOM's April 2023 meeting with Jacksonville AFM Local 444 Executive Board. Seated (left to right): Brad Buckley (former ICSOM Chairperson), Susan Pardue, and Stephanie Magnus; Standing (left to right): Paul Austin, Patty Evans, Jason Lindsay, Andy Bruck, and Kevin Casseday.

After my time in Miami, I flew to Tampa and traveled to St Petersburg to meet with the Orchestra Committee of TFO and their AFM Local Secretary/Treasurer Richard Sparrow (AFM, Florida Gulf Coast, Local 427-721). TFO musicians have always had the unique situation of performing in different venues equally for their orchestral season, which presents challenges that other ICSOM orchestras do not face.



Paul Austin

ICSOM's April 2023 meeting with The Florida Orchestra's orchestra committee and AFM Local 427-721 Secretary/Treasurer. (Left to right) Paul Austin, TJ Graf, Richard Sparrow, John Shaw, Natalie Hoe, Warren Powell, and Fred Gratta.

My time in the Florida gulf coast included finally meeting TFO violinist Mary Corbett, who graced the cover of the AFM's *International Musician* in December 2022. Having interviewed her for ICSOM's DEI monthly video series *Musician Profiles: Celebrating Racial Diversity* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AcAWrenoprE&t=7s>), it was wonderful to speak with Mary in person so that we could discuss pertinent topics of the day. In addition, I also had the opportunity to speak with other TFO musicians, especially Warren Powell (who led the charge for TFO musicians to join ICSOM in 1987 and has been their first and only ICSOM delegate, serving now for 36 years!).

Upon hearing a pops concert by the Jacksonville Symphony in Jacoby Symphony Hall—an amazing acoustical space with an impressive pipe organ—and a performance on the chamber music series by The Florida Orchestra in Clearwater—in a beautiful Gothic-revival church built in 1925—it became very apparent that these ICSOM musicians are dedicated to performing live symphonic music to Florida audiences and will go to great lengths to do so. Both concerts were nearly sold out, with just a few open seats in the house. After the concert in Jacksonville, an usher politely asked when I would be returning for another concert. And the next day I received a thank-you email that went to all new ticket buyers and included a video message from Jacksonville Symphony's Music Director Courtney Lewis, which was a very nice touch.

In creating a new media agreement for our musicians' associations, speaking with the next generation of orchestral players, and observing the support of AFM Locals in our two ICSOM orchestras in Florida, it is clear that we continue to strengthen connections between ICSOM and the AFM. We look forward to attending the national AFM Convention in Las Vegas in June 2023.



The State of ICSOM

Compiled by Mike Muszynski, Editor

A lot has happened since the last AFM Convention, and we have asked the delegates of each of our member orchestras to give a sense of what their orchestras have faced in the last few years as well as the challenges they face going forward. Responses were collected during the months of April and May. Charter members of ICSOM are denoted with an asterisk ().*

Alabama Symphony Orchestra

Founded: 1997

Joined ICSOM: 1998 (the predecessor Birmingham Symphony was a member of ICSOM from 1975–1995)

AFM Local: 256-733

Delegate: Brad Whitfeld

The Alabama Symphony Orchestra has resumed almost all pre-pandemic activities as of April 2023. In addition to bringing back live audiences at full capacity in our performance spaces, we have also seen the creation of two new concert series: the “ASO @ Avon,” featuring soloists from within the orchestra at the historic Avon theater nestled amongst a bustling restaurant scene, as well as “Tunes on Tap,” which presents the orchestra in free concerts in breweries across town for a more casual and approachable setting.

Our greatest challenge as we move forward will be charting a path of sustainable growth for the organization. Historic wage cuts, lost weeks of work, and inflation have put the musicians in an unsustainable financial position, yet we have remained as committed as ever to serving our community. It is our sincere hope that productive and progressive negotiations will take place next season.



The Alabama Symphony Orchestra, presenting “Tunes on Tap” at a local brewery

Atlanta Symphony Orchestra

Founded: 1945

Joined ICSOM: 1971

AFM Local: 148-462

Delegate: Lachlan McBane

The Atlanta Symphony Orchestra is finishing its first season with new Music Director Nathalie Stutzmann, currently the only female Music Director of a major American orches-

tra. Reviews have been generally excellent, audiences have averaged around 90% of capacity, and the orchestra is headed for a 9th straight year of budget surplus. In the fall the musicians will enter the second year of a three-year contract that will bring our base salary to \$100,000 for the first time. A major challenge for the orchestra in the short term will be completing the current \$55 million drive to supplement the ASO’s endowment.

*Baltimore Symphony Orchestra

Founded: 1916

Joined ICSOM: 1962

AFM Local: 40-543

Delegate: Jacob Shack

The highlight for the Baltimore Symphony in the past two years has been the announcement of our new music director, Jonathon Heyward. We are excited for the growth as an ensemble we will experience under his leadership and cannot wait for where we can go together. However, like many orchestras, we have experienced challenges in retaining audiences since the pandemic has subsided. Our main challenge over the next two years will be capitalizing on the announcement of our new music director and using this momentum to spur ticket sales as well as new and continuing contributed revenue.

*Boston Symphony Orchestra

Founded: 1881

Joined ICSOM: 1962

AFM Local: 9-535

Delegate: Carl Anderson

The BSO, along with Music Director Andris Nelsons, recently completed a recording cycle of all 15 Shostakovich symphonies which won three Grammy Awards for Best Orchestral Performance. This summer the BSO musicians look forward to helping to mentor the first recipient of ICSOM’s scholarship for underrepresented high school musicians as part of the Boston University Tanglewood Institute (BUTI).

*Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra

Founded: 1934

Joined ICSOM: 1963

AFM Local: 92

Delegate: Dan Sweeley

The BPO has returned from the pandemic with exceptional financial support from the community and solid ticket sales for many performances. We negotiated a very fair two-year contract. Our main concern moving forward is continued ticket sales growth in all series, especially Classics.

Charlotte Symphony Orchestra

Founded: 1932

Joined ICSOM: 1999

AFM Local: 342

Delegate: Bob Rydel

The Charlotte Symphony and Local 342 negotiated a CBA in 2022 that represented many positive changes and mod-

ernizations, including adding to the season length and to the size of the orchestra. The organization has implemented a robust strategic plan, and we are experiencing positive results in fundraising and overall enthusiasm as supporters are motivated by our comprehensive goals.

We are seeing evidence that audiences are returning post-COVID, as ticket sales are strong in many areas. COVID grants and tax breaks have given us a positive cash flow position, and we have received additional grant money to partner in developing immersive programming with the goal of establishing new audiences.

We are hoping that ticket sales and overall fundraising maintain the positive trend. As we don't own our hall, we also hope to continue to get favorable dates in the venues we use, as the orchestra competes with shows that were delayed by COVID and are now rescheduling.

Chicago Lyric Opera Orchestra

Founded: 1954
Joined ICSOM: 1969
AFM Local: 10-208
Delegate: Amy Hess

Since April 2022, the Chicago Lyric Opera Orchestra has independently partnered with a local school hosting Ukrainian refugee students, raising over \$67,000 through two benefits and visiting the students for an in-school concert. Over the term of our recently-settled progressive five-year contract, we look forward to building back our ranks by filling the many vacancies left open from retirements and the pause on auditions during the pandemic.



Top: Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot addresses the audience before a benefit concert for Ukrainian refugees at St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral on April 9, 2023

Bottom: Chicago Lyric Opera Orchestra musicians perform for Ukrainian refugees at St. Nicholas Cathedral School on October 28, 2022

***Chicago Symphony Orchestra**

Founded: 1891
Joined ICSOM: 1962
AFM Local: 10-208
Delegate: Miles Maner

The Chicago Symphony Orchestra Association and its musicians have successfully risen from the ashes of the pandemic as a team. Management was able to take care of the musicians thanks to its ability to secure relief funding from the government and run successful campaigns to keep donations on track. Musicians remained on board to create content throughout the shutdown to stay connected to subscribers while maintaining a safe working environment. Concerts are now back to a pre-pandemic model and we already have many successful and well attended concerts in the books.

Our current CBA expires in September 2023—negotiations begin this summer. The musicians are optimistic that a spirit of collaboration will result in a successful and simple process. Maestro Riccardo Muti's tenure comes to an end this June and the complex search for the Chicago Symphony's next Music Director continues.

***Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra**

Founded: 1895
Joined ICSOM: 1962
AFM Local: 1
Delegate: Jennifer Monroe

Reflecting on the past two years, we take great pride in our return to the stage following the COVID shutdown in 2020, successfully keeping all musicians playing and compensated. Although our audiences haven't fully returned to pre-pandemic levels, we have made significant strides toward that objective.

We are thrilled that auditions in the 21-22 season were incredibly fruitful, resulting in the addition of nine exceptional musicians to our orchestra this year.

Our primary challenge for the next two seasons is to continue our progress toward a restored complement. Given our MD's reduced availability in his final season, as well as the possibility that the position remains vacant in 24-25, replacing retirees with new hires will be a formidable task in the coming years.

***The Cleveland Orchestra**

Founded: 1918
Joined ICSOM: 1962
AFM Local: 4
Delegate: Katherine Bormann

The Cleveland Orchestra has received an historic \$50 million gift from the Jack, Joseph, and Morton Mandel Foundation which will provide funds for an opera and humanities festival, invest in the endowment, and support the orchestra's digital initiatives, including the launch of our streaming platform, Adella, and the installation of a sophisticated camera system.

Peter Kobun

Susan Thomas

We have also received a \$10 million gift from the Milton and Tamar Maltz Family Foundation that will benefit the Blossom Music Center. We have seen a return to full salary, live concerts, and touring both domestically and internationally.

However, audience attendance remains mixed—at times we have had robust crowds, including a sell-out concert at Carnegie Hall and on our Florida tour, and then alternately, we see weeks with far fewer patrons. There is currently an unusually large number of musician vacancies, and we continue to have issues with touring: transportation, COVID restrictions, and high inflation.

Colorado Symphony Orchestra

Founded: 1989

Joined ICSOM: 1968 (joined as the Denver Symphony, then reformed as the CSO after bankruptcy proceedings in 1989)

AFM Local: 20-623

Delegate: Jason Shafer

The Colorado Symphony has had huge success in ensuring a major endowment gift from an anonymous donor. This incredible gift provides a substantial financial boost to the orchestra, as the total gifts from the endowment drive raised the total to \$88 million, up from approximately \$10 million total previously. In addition to this financial stability, a series of successful one-year CBAs have ensured consistent raises for the orchestra, each being around 9-10% of base wages each year. Artistically, we are glad to continue to work with Peter Oundjian as our Principal Conductor. Finally, the orchestra is happy to announce the recent hiring of Mark Cantrell as our next CEO, who joins us from The Florida Orchestra. His hiring was the result of a Search Committee that had equal numbers of musicians and board members, and his appointment was unanimous.

The main challenge awaiting us is to secure more consistent annual giving/contributions. Our proportion of contributed income vs. ticket sales has always been extremely weighted towards ticket sales. Our hope is that our new CEO can help solve this problem that has plagued us for many years.

Columbus Symphony Orchestra

Founded: 1951

Joined ICSOM: 1990

AFM Local: 103

Delegate: Betsy Sturdevant

The Columbus Symphony is currently in the first year of our new contract which adds weeks to the orchestra's season. We have successfully navigated the COVID and post-COVID environment without suspension of operations or pay cuts, and the orchestra has greatly expanded community outreach through educational and community-based performances of the orchestra and chamber groups. We expect some difficulty moving forward due to dwindling audiences and challenges in funding our added weeks and newly hired musicians.

Dallas Symphony Orchestra

Founded: 1900

Joined ICSOM: 1968

AFM Local: 72-147

Delegate: Emily Levin

After two seasons of pandemic impact, 2022-2023 has felt "almost" normal for the Dallas Symphony. We celebrated a return to full capacity audiences, large-scale programming, and went on our first tour in almost a decade to the East Coast in March. We are looking forward to another season with music director Fabio Luisi, the beginning of our Ring cycle programming, and the inaugural year of our Diversity Fellowship in 2024.

The DSO gained managerial control of the Meyerson Symphony Center in late 2019—a positive development with rather unfortunate timing! We are still recouping the lost revenue from canceled rentals and concerts during the past few years as we deal with long-overdue critical maintenance. We are also working to build back our audience numbers, which are not yet at pre-pandemic levels.

*Detroit Symphony Orchestra

Founded: 1887

Joined ICSOM: 1962

AFM Local: 5

Delegate: Monica Fosnaugh

In the past two years, the Detroit Symphony Orchestra has received many donated instruments from across Metro Detroit for our Detroit Harmony initiative, which provides instruments to any Detroit student who wants to learn how to play, and has seen success from our African American Orchestra Fellowship program, with Cole Randolph winning a position in our cello section. Unfortunately, audiences have been slow to return, and rebuilding those numbers, in addition to renegotiating a new contract, will be our main challenges the next few seasons.



Ben Piper, founder of Heartbeat Detroit, a Detroit Harmony partner, drums with young attendees at an event in Chandler Park in July 2022.

The Florida Orchestra**Founded:** 1968**Joined ICSOM:** 1987**AFM Local:** 427-721**Delegate:** Warren Powell

Our biggest success in the past two years has been the negotiation of a progressive three-year CBA with 24% increases over the term of the agreement. But we still have a few challenges, including increased difficulty accessing our main venues for rehearsals and concerts, staff shortages, board governance, and a tendency for the organization to fall short of its fundraising goals.

Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra**Founded:** 1957**Joined ICSOM:** 2001**AFM Local:** 72-147**Delegate:** Debbie Brooks

The FWSO's 22–23 season saw the debut of Robert Spano in his inaugural season as our music director, as well as the appointment of Kevin Edusei as our new principal guest conductor. The FWSO is leading the way in creating unique concert experiences through a concept called “Theater of a Concert.” By partnering with other arts organizations and using different multimedia elements, audiences have been able to experience Stravinsky's *Firebird*, Haydn's *Creation*, and the music of Wagner in a multi-sensory way—all to critical acclaim.

A new chamber music series also started, providing the opportunity to feature FWSO musicians in a much more intimate setting—even giving Robert Spano the chance to lead from the piano instead of the podium! One full-time position was added this year, and we celebrate the return to regular programming post-COVID. We appreciate our management, board, and audiences for their continued support of our work and look forward to many great concerts next season.

Grand Rapids Symphony**Founded:** 1930**Joined ICSOM:** 2013**AFM Local:** 56**Delegate:** Barb Corbató

At the beginning of the 21–22 season, the Grand Rapids Symphony returned to pre-pandemic wages, and has since had an increase beginning in January 2023, in addition to negotiating a one-year extension to the current agreement with a 3% wage increase. Expiring on August 31, 2024, the extension was negotiated in advance of the departure of our CEO this past December, so that a new President/CEO could get settled in the organization before embarking on negotiating a new agreement. The arrival of a new President/CEO will be an exciting time. Maintaining and increasing audiences post-pandemic is one of the challenges faced by the organization, but we look forward to seeing success in this area.

Grant Park Orchestra**Founded:** 1944**Joined ICSOM:** 1977**AFM Local:** 10-208**Delegate:** Amy Hess

After a dark summer of 2020 and a modified 2021, the Grant Park Orchestra is back to its full 10-week season in the heart of Downtown Chicago. Our programming continues to feature new commissions and little-known works alongside orchestral staples, attracting thousands to free outdoor concerts.

We look forward to welcoming a new Music Director in 2025, who in addition to their artistic leadership will need to partner with management and board to continually reaffirm the orchestra's claim on our prime location in Chicago's Millennium Park.

Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra**Founded:** 2011**Joined ICSOM:** 1967 (as Honolulu Symphony)**AFM Local:** 677**Delegate:** Rebecca Matayoshi

In July of 2022, the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra ratified a new agreement which runs through the 25–26 season. This ratification comes with a guaranteed increase in weeks from 18 to 21, as well as an increased salary and EMG—formerly part of our base salary, but now in addition to guaranteed wages. This past January, HSO announced new Music Director Designate Dane Lam will begin a five-year contract in July of 2023.

Our usual performance space, Neal Blaisdell Concert Hall, is owned and run by the City of Honolulu and will undergo major renovations beginning in the fall of 2023. We will not have access to it for the foreseeable future. The majority of our next season will take place at the Hawai'i Theater, but the space is not ideal for an orchestra, acoustically or spatially.

Houston Symphony**Founded:** 1930**Joined ICSOM:** 1965**AFM Local:** 65-699**Delegate:** Brian Del Signore

Successes of the past two years include the return of audiences for live performances and the successful implementation of live streamed Saturday night subscription concerts, both Classical and Pops. There are continuing hall renovations in the summer which require us to be away from the hall, but acoustics are being improved noticeably. Education and Community Engagement initiatives continue to expand with a Community Embedded Musicians program now including teaching residencies at area public schools and fellowships at Rice University and the University of Houston.

One of our challenges going forward is getting subscription sales/season ticket holders back to pre-pandemic levels. The return of our audience has come mostly through single ticket sales. The orchestra balanced its budget in 2022 but as of May 2023, we are running a slight deficit and project a small deficit for 2024. A return to touring is also a challenge

with the way it is funded here in Houston, but a strategic planning committee involving musicians continues to tackle the issue.

*Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra

Founded: 1930

Joined ICSOM: 1962

AFM Local: 3

Delegate: Melissa Deal

The past few years in Indianapolis have been some of the most tumultuous in the history of the organization, from the pandemic furlough—including the unthinkable loss of health insurance—to our return to the stage after taking a nearly 25% pay cut. Like other organizations, we have seen our audience slowly return, especially for our Classical series, which has been encouraging.

Unfortunately, we have been without a music director since 2020. In the meantime, we have maintained some semblance of artistic continuity through our relationship with Jun Märkl, who has served as artistic advisor since the 20–21 season. In this capacity, he conducts three weeks a season and serves in the music director role for auditions—under Märkl’s leadership, we have successfully hired 10 new tenure-track musicians since May 2022.

We continue to put pressure on our management to make the music director search a top priority, as it has become an urgent issue for the musicians that we are hoping to solve for the 24–25 season.



Musicians of the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra performing an outdoor concert for supporters at Northminster Presbyterian Church in July 2020, shortly after the loss of healthcare coverage

Jacksonville Symphony

Founded: 1949

Joined ICSOM: 1997

AFM Local: 444

Delegate: Brian Magnus

There has been good recovery for the Jacksonville Symphony since 2020, and the Orchestra is poised to do great things in the coming years, both financially and artistically. The Jacksonville Symphony’s 75th anniversary is next year, with special events in the works to celebrate. The current

CBA concludes at the end of the 23–24 season; negotiations for the next contract are underway, with hopes for an early agreement. Leadership in the coming years should be stable, as Music Director Courtney Lewis—who started in 2015—has renewed his contract through the 26–27 season, and Executive Director Steven Libman, remains under contract until 2028.

Kansas City Symphony

Founded: 1982

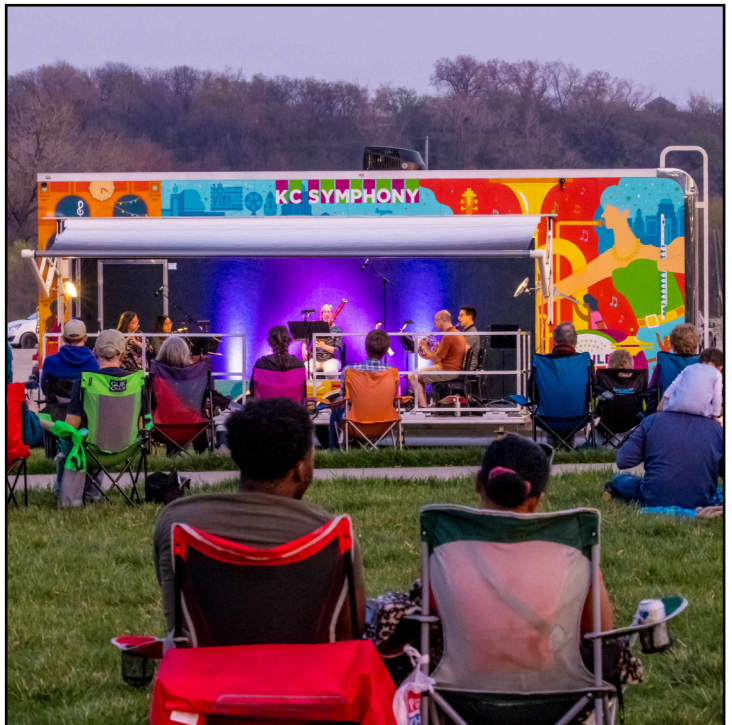
Joined ICSOM: 1998 (the predecessor Kansas City Philharmonic was a member of ICSOM from 1966–1983)

AFM Local: 34-627

Delegate: TK DeWitt

We have had runaway success with our Mobile Music Box—a mobile stage that is towed by a pickup, with lighting and even minor climate control—which began as a way to perform safely during the pandemic. This transformed our reach within the community, allowing us to have dozens of outdoor concerts at schools, parks, and other community locations. Even after the pandemic, these concerts have remained quite popular, and there are still around 20–30 during the warmer months of the spring and fall.

However, there have been plenty of growing pains that will continue into the next few years as we make the transition between our outgoing and incoming music directors. Between 2019 and 2024, we will have experienced a changeover in every major leadership position within the organization, including CEO, COO, most of our operations staff, music director, associate conductor, concertmaster, as well as the chair of our board. Preserving our culture of trust and transparency throughout this change is a priority for all, but there will be an ongoing learning curve.



Patrons take in a performance based out of the Kansas City Symphony’s Mobile Music Box in April 2021.

Kennedy Center Opera House Orchestra**Founded:** 1978**Joined ICSOM:** 1978**AFM Local:** 161-710**Delegate:** Douglas Rosenthal

In September 2021, we ratified an agreement that included KeyComp as a listed given example in our virtual orchestra machine technologies prohibition. While there will likely be brief and narrow compromises for one touring musical theater producer over the coming months, the Kennedy Center administration has expressed to us steadfast opposition to such technology.

Our biggest challenge at the moment is the displacement of opera and ballet due to an increase of touring musical theater presentations in the Opera House. Because of this, Washington National Opera and touring ballet productions have been significantly reduced. We are very concerned that this is not the Kennedy Center's strategy to come back from pandemic cancellations, but rather, that it is their prioritization of commercial art forms that already flourish elsewhere in the Washington, DC Metro Area.

Los Angeles Philharmonic*Founded:** 1919**Joined ICSOM:** 1962**AFM Local:** 47**Delegate:** John Lofton

The LA Phil's Resident Fellows program has had a successful tenure here. We've placed all of our violin Fellows in professional orchestras including the Seattle Symphony and Montreal Symphony Orchestra. We are expanding our program to include a French horn Fellow. We face a challenge moving forward due to the departures of Music Director Gustavo Dudamel and CEO Chad Smith. We're happy for their new positions and for the music world of New York and Boston, respectively, but also look forward to our next music director and CEO appointments.

Louisville Orchestra**Founded:** 1937**Joined ICSOM:** 1980**AFM Local:** 11-637**Delegate:** Jonathan Mueller

The successes that the Louisville Orchestra has achieved in the past few years have been the release of our first Deutsche Grammophon recording featuring Yuja Wang, the advent of our Creators Corps program that features three resident composers per year that live in Louisville, and the securing of state funding for a multi-week tour of Kentucky.

Our main upcoming challenge—besides a CBA negotiation in 2024—is ensuring that all organizational stakeholders participate in and are in agreement on a shared vision for the future of our great symphony orchestra. We all need to, with the help of an industry professional, craft a clear path forward that ensures that the Louisville Orchestra will continue to grow and innovate as we approach our 100th anniversary in 2037.

Metropolitan Opera Orchestra*Founded:** 1880**Joined ICSOM:** 1962**AFM Local:** 802**Delegate:** Jessica Phillips

On the positive side, there were a series of extra payments to the Orchestra which offset contractual concessions that were negotiated in 2021 in order to bring the company back after the pandemic furlough. These were achieved by the negotiation of a sizable special payment for a concert before the opera season began, the negotiation of a settlement for some of the unpaid furlough wages, and the creation of a Carnegie Hall chamber music series that secured an annual payment of one extra week of base pay for every musician regardless of participation, with an additional fee for those who elect to participate.

Although our Orchestra was successful in increasing our pension benefit in 2018, our Orchestra's biggest challenge in the coming years will be trying to overcome years of wage concessions since 2011 and catastrophic financial losses during the COVID furlough. Starting in 2021, new hires have to wait until their sixth full season in order to be eligible for a large annual special payment. The effect of this is roughly a 6% loss in starting salary. Further, in 2018 the orchestra started to contribute pre-tax premium sharing for our health care for the first time and in 2021, new hires are now only eligible for a high-deductible health care plan. Finally, management has taken advantage of our "Mid-Season Break" negotiated in the 2018 to cut roughly 25% of our rehearsal hours, which are compensated on top of our base pay.

The total cumulative result of these concessions means that the base salary of a Met musician will be lower in actual dollars in the final year of our current contract (2024-25) than it was in the 2013-14 season. Solidarity will be of the highest importance in our next negotiation in order to achieve a contract with financial gains in the midst of the Met's financial challenges.

Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra**Founded:** 1959**Joined ICSOM:** 1970**AFM Local:** 8**Delegate:** Helen Reich

Our greatest success of the last two years is settling our current collective bargaining agreement four-and-a-half months early. Our biggest challenge for the next two years will be the task of raising \$75 million to increase our endowment.

Minnesota Orchestra*Founded:** 1903**Joined ICSOM:** 1962**AFM Local:** 30-73**Delegate:** Michael Sutton

The Minnesota Orchestra is being seen and heard—our audiences have come back to 86%, and our live stream TV performances are averaging 20,000 views. Our DEI work is full steam ahead, including a commissioned work to com-

memorate the murder of George Floyd called *brea(d)th*. And we are also welcoming an exciting new Music Director next fall, Thomas Sondergard.

That said, the orchestra still runs at a significant deficit. We are diligently fundraising—receiving NEA and State grants—and trying to tap into new donors and revenue streams.

Nashville Symphony

Founded: 1946

Joined ICSOM: 2000 (the orchestra was also an ICSOM member from 1975–1977)

AFM Local: 257

Delegate: Bradley Mansell

The Nashville Symphony returned to work after an 18 month furlough in September of 2021. Highlights since that return include two major premiers of important works, *Her Story* by Julia Wolfe and *The Jonah People* by Hannibal Lokumbe. We also continued with recording projects that were shelved during the furlough. Our biggest challenges are ticket sales, filling several positions lost as a result of the furlough, and drastic pay cuts that have yet to be restored.



Hannibal Lokumbe, composer of “The Jonah People”, takes a bow after his performance with the Nashville Symphony Orchestra in April 2023

*National Symphony Orchestra

Founded: 1931

Joined ICSOM: 1963

AFM Local: 161-710

Delegate: Alex Jacobsen

The NSO had planned a very exciting 19–20 season. We had recently hired a popular music director, had multiple international tours in the pipeline, were invited to both Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall, and were planning to record all the Beethoven symphonies. Obviously all of that had to be put on hold. However, over the last two years, we managed to perform in Carnegie Hall again, finish recording our Beethoven cycle, and begin planning a European tour for February 2024.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion remain a big topic in the orchestra, and our new musician-organized DEI committee

has been meeting to take stock of what we can do as musicians in the fight against racism, both internally and externally. It is a massive, daunting challenge that may not be solved quickly, but we musicians did not get this far by giving up when things got difficult.

New Jersey Symphony Orchestra

Founded: 1922

Joined ICSOM: 1973

AFM Local: 16-248

Delegate: Derek Fenstermacher

New Jersey Symphony concludes our monumental 100th anniversary season, featuring world class soloists, world premieres, and celebrating the beautiful diversity of our musical family. In addition, this season marked an important achievement for our musicians—in September 2022 our musicians joined together in one voice and sent a powerful message to our management that our salary and benefits must remain intact to survive the next century. Subsequently, we negotiated a five-year progressive contract with modest salary gains and an increase in our season to 29 weeks, with benefits fully intact.

New York City Ballet Orchestra

Founded: 1948

Joined ICSOM: 1968

AFM Local: 802

Delegate: Ethan Silverman

In January the New York City Ballet presented a new full-length work, “Copland Dance Episodes,” an all-Copland ballet including *Rodeo*, *Appalachian Spring*, and *Billy the Kid*, performed without pause and choreographed by Justin Peck. Also, we are pleased to report that our loyal audience has returned and attendance has been and continues to be excellent.

Our contract will expire on August 31 of this year. Bargaining its successor will surely be a challenge.

*New York Philharmonic

Founded: 1842

Joined ICSOM: 1962

AFM Local: 802

Delegate: Dasol Jeong

Over the past few years, the New York Philharmonic has enjoyed quite a few successes, such as the opening of the newly renovated David Geffen Hall—on time and on budget—the restoration of our full, pre-pandemic salary, and the appointment of new Music Director Gustavo Dudamel, who will become the 27th conductor to preside over the Philharmonic with a five-year term beginning in the 2026–27 season. We have also returned to international touring with a trip to the Usedom Music Festival in the summer of 2022 and will travel this summer to Taiwan and Hong Kong.

Going forward, there will be challenges as we enter a period of unknown contract negotiation, as well as with the difficulty of maintaining artistic momentum in the years between the departure of Jaap van Sweden and the start of the Dudamel era.

North Carolina Symphony**Founded:** 1932**Joined ICSOM:** 1972**AFM Local:** 500**Delegate:** Kurt Tseng

Some of our biggest successes these past two years at the North Carolina Symphony include a steady recovery from the effects of the pandemic and maintaining growth with the endowment. We recently have made new connections with audiences in the western part of North Carolina through education and evening concerts, but also have branched out closer to home with our first concert entirely in Spanish for the Spanish-speaking communities. We also concluded our music director search and will be welcoming Carlos Prieto officially this coming 2023-24 season, and we have been continuing to work to increase the diversity in our programming and guest artists.

With the expected rapid growth of the Research Triangle Area (aka Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill), we believe our challenge for the next few years is to find ways to continue to serve and stay relevant to an increasingly diverse community. Education outreach will always be a big part of our mission, but as more and more people move to the area, it will be important to maintain and even expand upon our visibility to gain more support from the community.

Oregon Symphony**Founded:** 1896**Joined ICSOM:** 1971**AFM Local:** 99**Delegate:** Zach Galatis

The Oregon Symphony installed a new acoustic system in our hall which has improved the listening experience for the audience, and additionally helps us hear better on stage. Also, our fundraising gala this spring brought in a record \$2 million.

However, even though our ticket sales are above average industry-wide, we still face challenges regarding bringing audiences back to pre-COVID numbers—partly due to perceived safety of the downtown Portland area. We also face a constant challenge due to the steeply rising costs of renting our hall.

Orquesta Sinfónica de Puerto Rico**Founded:** 1958**Joined ICSOM:** 2003**AFM Local:** 555**Delegate:** Miguel Rivera

In 2022, after many advocacy efforts supported by ICSOM, the Puerto Rican Governor reached an agreement with the Fiscal Oversight and Management Board for Puerto Rico (FOMB) for a \$20 million contribution—over a 10-year period—to fund the PRSO Musicians' Pension Fund, protecting its solvency in the long-term. Another important success was convincing the Puerto Rico Legislature and FOMB to reconsider drastic budget cuts to the orchestra, making the 22–23 fiscal year the first without cuts since 2017.

Going forward, we still expect the need to continually advocate for a healthy budget that allows the Orchestra to fulfill its mission. Also, the PRSO has not had a full roster of 80 musicians since 2018, as the budget restrictions imposed by the FOMB make it difficult to fill the eight current vacancies.

Pacific Symphony**Founded:** 1978**Joined ICSOM:** 2021**AFM Local:** 7**Delegate:** Rob Schumitzky

We are very fortunate to have been able to keep our musicians compensated these past two years. In the latter half of the 20–21 season, we recorded performances to video and gradually resumed live concerts in the summer of 2021. For the 21–22 and 22–23 seasons, we resumed a schedule of performances of Classical, Pops, Ballet, and other concert sets similar to the pace and variety of previous years before the COVID pandemic.

Our season ticket renewal rate is down, which is of concern to our Board. However, single ticket sales are dramatically up which is unusual for us. The 23–24 season will begin the final year of a four-year agreement, and we anticipate difficult contract negotiations but are hopeful to make significant gains that will increase the stature of our orchestra. We will also be navigating the challenge of identifying and choosing a new music director.

The Philadelphia Orchestra*Founded:** 1900**Joined ICSOM:** 1962**AFM Local:** 77**Delegate:** Nicole Jordan

For The Philadelphia Orchestra, the successes of the past two years include the presentation of a digital concert series during the height of COVID, the restoration of full salaries in the 21–22 season, resuming summer residencies and international touring, and our first Grammy win in the “Best Orchestral Performance” category for our recording of Florence Price’s Symphonies Nos. 1 & 3.

Our challenges ahead include an increase in performances of Film and Pops music, efforts to equalize compensation for substitute musicians, bringing our compensation into line with our peer orchestras, filling the contractually obligated complement, and ensuring that personal contracts of our new members are not used to violate provisions in the CBA.

Phoenix Symphony**Founded:** 1947**Joined ICSOM:** 1974**AFM Local:** 586**Delegate:** Melita Hunsinger

After being furloughed for the entirety of the 20–21 season, the orchestra returned for the past two years at reduced weeks and pay. The previously consistent 38-week season has shrunk to 30 and 33 weeks over the past two years. Still, it should be considered a success that the organization

survived closing its doors and continues now to perform for our community—albeit in a more limited capacity. Part of that resurrection was due to unusual, large and generous gifts by the federal government, the State of Arizona, and the Piper Foundation, a regular supporter of Arizona nonprofits. Other successes include attracting a number of very fine musicians on one-year contracts to replace a large volume of musicians due to the furlough, contract uncertainty, wage and work week reduction, and retirements.

We face a major challenge in regaining Classics audience and subscribers in general, as well as keeping up the fundraising necessary for the orchestra that we were once and want to be again. We anticipate an ongoing struggle to have our salaries keep pace with the cost of living in Phoenix and the difficulty in appealing to our community and audience when the options for entertainment are very numerous.

*Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra

Founded: 1895

Joined ICSOM: 1962

AFM Local: 60-471

Delegate: Bronwyn Banerdt

The PSO has seen very encouraging numbers with audiences returning to concerts following the pandemic. We have launched several promising new initiatives with the aim of reaching new audiences, including a new concert format for select Saturday nights featuring a less formal atmosphere and onstage discussion, as well as multimedia elements. One of the challenges we have already been dealing with is a massive turnover in staff during the past pandemic years. We also need to continue rebuilding our subscription base and—since we have had multiple contract extensions due to the pandemic—will soon face our first full contract negotiation since our strike in 2016.



The PSO presenting Shostakovich Symphony No. 10 in a Disrupt series program entitled “Persist.”

*Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra

Founded: 1922

Joined ICSOM: 1962

AFM Local: 66

Delegate: Nikki Labonte

Due to proactive musicians and staff, the RPO has been able to successfully navigate the COVID-19 pandemic both financially and musically. While attendance has not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels and fundraising is becoming complicated by the current financial market, the RPO is looking ahead to the future. We have just launched our centennial celebration which features both a capital campaign that has been consistently hitting its goals and targets as well as a massive repertoire of major works and soloists!

*St. Louis Symphony

Founded: 1880

Joined ICSOM: 1962

AFM Local: 2-197

Delegate: Hank Skolnick

In the Summer of 2022 we concluded negotiations on a new four-year CBA that included modest increases and a return to stable trends post-COVID.

The Orchestra had a successful, four-country European tour March 23–31, 2023, conducted by our Music Director Stéphane Denève with pianist and recording artist Víkingur Ólafsson as piano soloist. The five performances took place at Vienna Konzerthaus in Vienna, Austria; the Centre for Fine Arts in Brussels, Belgium; the Muzikgebouw Eindhoven in Eindhoven, Netherlands; The Royal Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Netherlands; and the Auditorio Nacional de Música in Madrid, Spain.

In May 2023, ground was broken on an expansion and renovation of our St. Louis home, Powell Hall. The auditorium will get a new stage floor and audience seating, reducing the seating capacity and increasing leg room for concertgoers. There will be new construction to the backstage areas with the addition of a large rehearsal space, new offices, dressing rooms, percussion and piano storage and a new library space, plus new expanded foyers and a new audience entrance facing the theater district south of Powell Hall. The orchestra will perform primarily at Stifel Auditorium in downtown St. Louis and at the Touhill Performing Arts Center on the University of Missouri campus for the 23–24 and 24–25 seasons during the construction.

Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra

Founded: 1959

Joined ICSOM: 1984

AFM Local: 30-73

Delegate: Lynn Erickson

Our free online concert library has allowed us to significantly expand our ability to share the SPCO and the music we perform with our community. Consequently, our digital audience has grown substantially over the past two years and so has the number of programs available online for free to our community. We continue to advance the musician-led model

with Creative Leads. As a Creative Lead, musicians are able to curate a program and oversee it from development through performance. It's been a great way for our musicians to develop a closer connection with our audience while programming music that they are passionate about.

Our greatest challenge emerging from the pandemic in the next two years will be rebuilding our audience and annual fundraising to pre-pandemic levels.

San Diego Symphony Orchestra

Founded: 1910

Joined ICSOM: 1974

AFM Local: 325

Delegate: PJ Cinque

In the past two years we opened our new outdoor venue, the Shell, and have had many successful performances there. In June 2022 we negotiated a two-year contract with significant increases in wages and EMG. We will also be opening our newly renovated hall, Copley Symphony Hall, in November 2023. The orchestra will be going on a short tour to Carnegie Hall in October 2023 as well.

Looking ahead, We have another contract negotiation coming up before the current CBA expires in June 2024. Because of the rising tide of inflation and the extremely high cost of living in Southern California, we are still in need of significant financial gains. In addition, with two new venues we will be faced with the challenge of staying visible and making sure audiences consistently come out to concerts after the buzz around the grand opening dies down.



The Rady Shell at Jacobs Park, a new outdoor venue for the San Diego Symphony Orchestra, completed in August 2021

San Francisco Ballet Orchestra

Founded: 1975

Joined ICSOM: 1977

AFM Local: 6

Delegate: Joe Brown

The SF Ballet orchestra stayed unified through the pandemic, negotiating a COVID contract that successfully restored our 2021-22 season to full pay retroactively. We also just ratified a three-year contract that begins to address the extreme cost of living and inflation in the Bay Area. We have successfully hired a number of key positions in the orchestra and just celebrated the Ballet's 90th anniversary season with a critically acclaimed new works festival.

Most of our management is new to the Ballet within the last couple years, with a new Artistic Director, Executive Director, and General Manager, to name a few. Our Board leadership is also changing next season. While this will be an exciting time, it brings with it new challenges and uncertainty.

San Francisco Opera Orchestra

Founded: 1980

Joined ICSOM: 1983

AFM Local: 6

Delegate: Leslie Ludena

The SF Opera Orchestra has spent the last two years celebrating the arrival of our new Music Director, Eun Sun Kim. Our first season together included a star studded Verdi concert on the opera house stage in 2022 which was critically acclaimed. The current season marks the 100th anniversary of the Company and will feature a Centennial Gala this summer.

In the next two years, the biggest challenge facing the SF Opera Orchestra is the first contract negotiation since the pandemic. Our three-year COVID contract was a bitter pill, and our goal is to return to our pre-pandemic salary levels, however hard we have to fight to get there.

***San Francisco Symphony**

Founded: 1911

Joined ICSOM: 1963

AFM Local: 6

Delegate: Barbara Bogatin

The 21–22 season marked our first full, live season with our new Music Director, Esa-Pekka Salonen following 15 dark months of lockdown. In March 2023 we embarked on our first tour since the pandemic, performing in Paris, Luxembourg, and Hamburg, with a new touring model of residencies which included regular orchestra concerts in addition to our SoundBox multimedia performances. We continue to increase diversity with our programming, guest artist and guest conductor rosters.

We are still playing under the terms of an expired COVID side letter—which expired in November 2022—and our Management wants to reset our wage scales at pre-COVID rates. We have many openings in the orchestra and can only hold so many auditions each year. Therefore, we are facing some years of playing with many unfilled positions, as Management is unwilling to hire one-year subs.

Symphoria

Founded: 2012

Joined ICSOM: 1970 (as Syracuse Symphony Orchestra)

AFM Local: 78

Delegate: Patricia Sharpe

The Symphoria Board, which includes several musicians—all of whom are on Board committees—has made raising musicians' salaries its top priority. Our current contract, in effect from 2022 through 2024 contains a 25% raise the first year and 16% the second, meaning that our base salary will

Gary Payne

rise from \$17,500 to \$25,375. Symphoria also received three unanticipated bequests, and the Board has developed special secure funds as insurance if future problems occur.

Now Symphoria has to be able to fund these increases and continue making progress. We are still working to get audiences back after the pandemic but also to engage patrons from the Syracuse Symphony days who have not embraced Symphoria after the bankruptcy in 2011. We want to continue our co-op structure while being able to add capacity in the management section, including such areas as marketing, development, and outreach, in order to help the organization grow. We also need to attract aspiring musicians by making them aware of our growth and progress over our first 10 years.

Utah Symphony

Founded: 1940

Joined ICSOM: 1979

AFM Local: 104

Delegate: Veronica Kulig

During the month of February, an educational program featuring Black composers from the past and present called *Encore: A Celebration of Black Symphonic Music* was presented for fifth grade students in Abravanel Hall. Music from such composers as Adolphus Hailstorm, Jessie Montgomery, Carlos Simon, and Florence Price filled out the fifty-minute program.

This season and last, the orchestra has filled many vacant positions, including two new section violins, 2nd associate concertmaster, principal oboe, principal tuba, and principal horn.

We are currently searching for a new music director, as Thierry Fischer completed his tenure in May 2023. Despite having been in a MD search for a few years we have yet to find a replacement.

Virginia Symphony Orchestra

Founded: 1920

Joined ICSOM: 2000

AFM Local: 125

Delegate: Everett Burns

In the last two years, the Virginia Symphony has welcomed Eric Jacobsen as our new music director, as well as Norfolk native Thomas Wilkins as our first principal guest conductor. Under their leadership, we've had successful collaborations—including recording projects and world premieres—with artists like Yo-Yo Ma, Gil Shaham, Chris Thile, and Branford Marsalis.

Ticket sales and marketing continue to be our biggest challenges. Our audience size can be inconsistent from week to week, and our ticket sales are still not reaching pre-pandemic levels, with the exception of a few very specific programs. Our marketing strategies are not always getting the word out successfully about what the VSO is doing, and we need to keep working at reaching new and different audiences.

Thank you to our delegates writing these updates, as their publication in Senza Sordino creates a vital record of our union's history.

Strike Fund *continued from page 1*

employers seeking to exploit catastrophic events like the pandemic, ICSOM and the four other Player Conferences (ROPA, OCSM, TMA, and RMA), along with 22 Locals, have submitted a bylaw amendment to the 102nd AFM Convention that would give the Trustees greater scope in their authority to award benefits. The full text appeared in the May issue of the *International Musician*, but is excerpted above.

This bylaw revision would give the Trustees the ability to consider awarding benefits in a situation like the imposition of force majeure—but it would not be a requirement to do so. It would simply allow them the freedom to consider the request and surrounding circumstances. The Trustees have a duty to maintain the fiscal health of the Fund, which would obviously be a part of the discussion when deciding whether or not to award benefits in any given situation.

Unfortunately, the AFM IEB has, without consultation with the Strike Fund Trustees or the player conferences, submitted their own recommendation to increase the yearly Strike Fund dues by 50%. ICSOM does not feel that an increase in dues is necessary at this time, and does not believe that a dues increase is an appropriate response to ICSOM's proposed bylaw amendment.

The current balance of the fund represents about 14 years worth of contributions. Looking back over the past 20 years, and particularly at the five most costly years in that period in terms of benefits paid out compared to contributions received, the Fund could endure 10 straight years as bad as those five without risking the fiscal health of the Fund. Furthermore, there is already a provision in the bylaws governing the Fund to automatically increase the dues should the balance fall below a certain threshold (currently \$1 million).

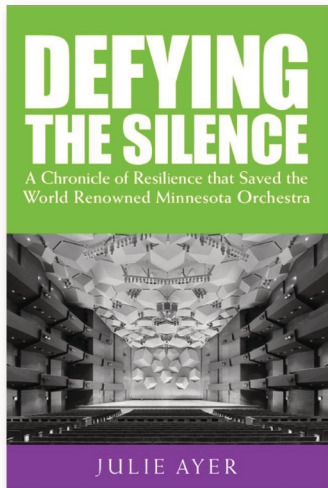
The IEB's proposed 50% increase to the Strike Fund dues would impose a significant financial burden on our members as well as the sizable number of Locals that pay those dues for us. There is also no need to grow the already sizable cushion in the Fund. Our proposed bylaw amendment would give the Trustees greater leeway in the awarding of benefits, but their ability and responsibility to act as prudent financial stewards of the Fund would remain the same.

The ICSOM Governing Board hopes that the Delegates to the 102nd AFM Convention will pass our proposed bylaw amendment as written—without any dues increase.

In the previous issue of *Senza Sordino*, retired Minnesota Orchestra Librarian Paul Gunther reviewed *Defying the Silence*, a new book by Julie Ayer:

“Julie tells a story of betrayal and recovery, of shock and tenacity. It is indeed a warning, one that tells the reader how the tides can turn against a beloved institution; and then can be turned back again through sheer grit and the firm belief that there are things worth fighting for that can make not just lives, but entire communities better for the struggle.”

Defying the Silence is now available! More information can be found on the page at the right or at juliaayer.com.



About *Defying the Silence*

In this extraordinary example of how to unionize in the arts, this labor history book reveals how some of the world's finest musicians went from sitting in the Minnesota Orchestra to standing in the picket line . . . and how their city rallied around them.

Praise

"A story of incredible musician solidarity as well as community resistance and collaboration."

—Jonathan Eisenberg, *Minnesota Orchestral Association board member*

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IN THE MEDIA

Julie Ayer has been featured in numerous media outlets and publications, most notably:

Boston Globe, International Musician, Star Tribune, Polyphonic.org, Senza Sordino, Strad Magazine

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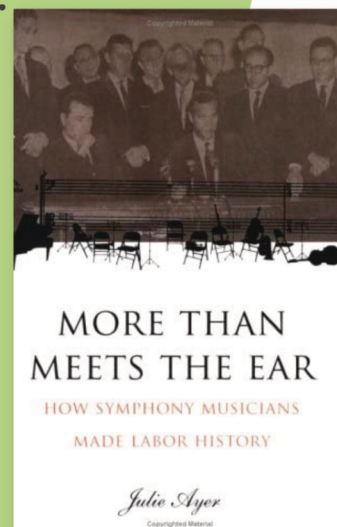
About *More Than Meets the Ear*

Written from the perspective of a professional orchestra musician, *More Than Meets the Ear* is the story of a grassroots movement that transformed labor relations and the professional lives of U.S. and Canadian symphony musicians.

Praise

"Ayer provides an unprecedented overview of the profound effect the musician's labor movement has had on the profession."

—*International Musician*



Available on
**Amazon.com &
 JulieAyer.com**

ABOUT JULIE AYER

Julie Ayer is a professional violinist, arts advocate, historian, and author. A passionate lifelong musician, she spent her thirty-six-year professional career in the Minnesota Orchestra, including their ground-breaking tour to Cuba in 2015. Julie was also a member of the Houston Symphony, Santa Fe Opera Orchestra, and Sydney Symphony Orchestra. Throughout her career, Ayer was involved in many orchestra committees, including labor negotiations. She has presented workshops and spoken to a variety of groups, including labor lawyers, music students, and colleagues. Julie has a master's degree in music and is a graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop. Learn more at www.julieayer.com.



61st Annual ICSOM Conference

August 23–26, 2023

Milwaukee, WI

Details to follow at <https://icsom.org/conferences/>

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF
SYMPHONY AND OPERA MUSICIANS



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