

ICSOM 2018 address

Two years ago, when you graciously elected me to office—despite having served the previous 12 years on the Governing Board---I had relatively little idea of my role as Chair. The nuts & bolts and housekeeping of it, yes. But direction and purpose were more elusive. After some extensive on the job the training, I would like to speak with you today about some of what I have been doing and thinking in order that you will have a better idea of whom you may be voting into office on Saturday.

There a few uncomfortable topics---let's begin with the most divisive, our Pension Fund. I would like to state unequivocally for the record that I do not believe there has been any malfeasance or incompetence on the part of our trustees.

We are not the only multi-employer pension in crisis. Our trustees followed, more or less, the same actuarial and investment advice that other plans followed. The operating expenses of the Fund are commensurate with the job that needs to be done. If you want to apportion blame, have a look at the deregulation of the banking industry that began with the Reagan Administration. Take a closer look at the former Chair of the Federal Reserve, Alan Greenspan and his Ayn Rand fantasies of a self-correcting capitalist market. Remember the heedless greed and careless gambling on Wall St. that brought our economy to its knees in 2008. It feels gratifying to be able to point a finger and say 'this is your fault'. But the circumstances belie that accusation. The evil was perpetrated much higher up the food chain.

Do we want to cut benefits to our members? Of course not. But neither do we want our younger members to bear the brunt of this crisis at a \$1.00 multiplier for the entirety of their professional lives. Nor do we want the Fund to fail entirely.

We are a Union. We share the success and the burden equally. Whatever solution---potential legislation, restructuring or cuts, they must be fair to all and equally born.

We have a presentation on the Pension this afternoon. I invite you to speak up and ask your questions. The Fund has asked for written questions—which we did last year--- Many of you voiced concern that it stifles dialogue and it does not allow for follow up questions. I agree. Speak up and ask your questions. Please remember that the Fund can't answer some questions because of the lawsuit. We will be courteous and patient with one another and hopefully come away with a better understanding of what is happening with the pension.

On Social Media: last summer you made it clear that you would like guidelines and more latitude for social media for your orchestras. I am sorry to say that we are not able to provide those guidelines yet as the Integrated Media Agreement is still in negotiation. A major sticking point in negotiations is promotional material-- exactly what you are asking for. We will discuss this more when Debbie & Brian present the electronic media report on Thursday.

Next controversial topic:

The League of American Orchestras. The mere mention of the name sends a shudder of loathing through the room.

A handful of us from the Governing Board along with Rochelle Skolnick have attended portions of their conference for the past 2 years.

I applaud the efforts they have made towards Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. The League has championed diversity in their constituent managements, boards and donors, for the past five years. In addition, they have worked to expand our audiences, repertoire, and the field of soloists and conductors to include all ethnicities and genders.

In conjunction with the Sphinx Organization and New World Symphony and with funding from the Mellon Foundation, the League has created the National Alliance for Audition Support. This program will provide both financial support and mentoring assistance to minority candidates auditioning for our orchestras. It was created with input from a number of our ICSOM musicians and the League has solicited opinions from ICSOM, ROPA and the AFM.

This past June at the League Conference, Laura, Kevin and I attended an Implicit Bias Training Seminar. It was an eye-opening couple of hours. I certainly don't think of myself as intolerant or biased but the truth is, we all judge and categorize by different criteria and our actions are informed by those perceptions.

Case in point: I don't think the League is our enemy in every respect. There are areas where we have common interest and can accomplish more working together than separately.

Finally, last summer I told you that some ICSOM musicians from the San Francisco area had participated in the non-union recording of the sound track to Ben Hur, a Paramount Pictures production. Paramount is signatory to the Film & Television agreement so this was a clear violation on their part as well. It turns out that members from all 3 ICSOM orchestras, the Ballet, the Opera and the Symphony,

were guilty of that infraction. The AFM sued Paramount for the pension payments owed to our Fund.

San Francisco is not the only city where this goes on. In Los Angeles, a member of my own orchestra was chastised last season for the same behavior.

Our nonprofit orchestras are already subsidizing the pension payments that some of these production companies have defaulted on. Sony, Warner Bros, Paramount and their subsidiary companies are not hurting for money. How can we expect the AFM negotiate progressive successor agreements when the executives at any of these companies know they can score a film or video game under the table with some of the best players in the country?

Obviously, it is up to our Locals to decide the consequences for their members. But I can't believe that if our musicians truly understood the scope of what is at stake here that they would jeopardize the solidarity and strength of our union for a few hundred dollars. Education is the responsibility of all of us. We need a more global and inclusive understanding of our actions.

I realize I am preaching to the choir. You would not be sitting in this room, volunteering your time and effort if you did not already understand and believe in the political significance of Union labor. You are here because you care about your orchestras and your colleagues.

We are living in a dangerous time for our democracy and there is no room for complacency or ignorance. We must reach out, educate and support our brothers and sisters, of all political persuasions, race and economic standing----not just in Union solidarity, but that's a good place to start.