

President's Address/2024  
Paul Austin, ICSOM President  
Wednesday, 21 August 2024  
The Benson Hotel/Portland OR

#### SLIDE 1

Good morning. It is wonderful to see all of you here in Portland for ICSOM's 62nd annual conference.

#### SLIDE 2

It is unlikely that anyone here attended ICSOM's 1980 conference, which was the only time when we had held our annual event in Portland. And here we are, 44 years later, continuing to meet with the focus upon improving the lives of professional orchestral musicians.

#### SLIDE 3

A lot has happened since 1980! Today ICSOM is made up of the top 51 orchestras in the United States and Puerto Rico, with a membership of nearly 4000 musicians. ICSOM continues its founding mission: being a positive advocate for our profession. Today I will discuss several of the actions ICSOM took in furtherance of that mission.

#### SLIDE 4

It must be noted that there were no work stoppages of ICSOM orchestras this past year. No strikes. No lockouts. Nearly half of our orchestras were at the negotiation table since last year's ICSOM conference in Milwaukee. And most of our orchestras have settled by now, with progressive contracts, such as what we see here in Portland with the Oregon Symphony.

#### SLIDE 5

Last December, the musicians of the Oregon Symphony ratified a three-year agreement. The overall tone of their negotiation was positive. Front-loading their wage gains, rather than back-loading any wage increases, was a high priority that enabled the Oregon Symphony musicians to achieve a 6% increase in the first year, followed by 3.5% increases in years two and three.

#### SLIDE 6

ICSOM Chairperson Keith Carrick and I had a chance to visit with their committee here in Portland last October, toward the end of their negotiations, and were impressed by their dedication and work. Congratulations to them, and best wishes for their future!

#### SLIDE 7

However, there are a few orchestras that we are keeping a watchful eye on, as they struggle to maintain acceptable conditions for their musicians. In the coming weeks and months, ICSOM may be calling upon all of you for assistance with a few of our member orchestras on the west coast. This could include signing petitions, making donations to our Calls to Action, attending rallies, really most anything to further their stand to achieve the best possible contract at this time. Please be at the ready to help our membership during their challenging times.

#### SLIDE 8

Having attended ICSOM conferences now since 2010, I remember many orchestras that were struggling back then, yet have managed to turn around their situation by now. For me, who comes to mind immediately? The Detroit Symphony Orchestra. The Minnesota Orchestra. Chicago Lyric Opera Orchestra. The Chicago Symphony. The Atlanta Symphony. The Baltimore Symphony. The Houston Symphony. Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. I'll stop there, but I ask you to look at ICSOM's roster and recall moments when we have stood up for everyone on that list, whenever they faced challenges in their orchestras. And we will continue to do so in the years to come.

Because that's what we do, and that's what we are all about.

## SLIDE 9

There are so many cases in which the musicians are the driving force behind their organizations. I must mention the outstanding leadership that Keith Carrick is providing right now to save Abravanel Hall. Aside from being IC-SOM Chairperson, Keith is principal percussionist of the Utah Symphony. Those musicians are unified in saving their musical home, which is just a few years shy of reaching historic landmark status. Their hall is in danger of being destroyed for the construction of a sports and entertainment district, and that news really whipped the Utah Symphony musicians into total activist mode last spring. We are watching. We are impressed. And we hope the best for them.

## SLIDE 10

Another example of fine musicians making a difference would be the work of the Alabama Symphony Orchestra musicians, which Keith and I witnessed during our visit there last January. For the past several years, the Alabama Symphony Orchestra musicians have worked diligently to establish themselves into their community. You know

that the ASO musicians are doing the right thing when a barista at the coffee house I visited heard that I was in town for meetings with the orchestra and exclaimed “We love the musicians.” Keep up the good work!

## SLIDE 11

This year ICSOM’s social media game focused our efforts on Instagram. For our *Orchestra of the Week* series, Rebecca Matayoshi, Delegate of the Hawai’i Symphony, has been creating interesting stories about each of our orchestras, with the help of our delegates who provided photos and facts. These posts build a positive community among our social media followers, and our ICSOM musicians. Rebecca has been devoting hours each week to writing beautiful narratives for our Instagram posts, and we thank her for her dedication.

## SLIDE 12

The initiatives that ICSOM provides continue to have an impact, including our \$10,000 scholarship for a young musician to attend Boston University’s Tanglewood Institute, our check-in calls with ICSOM’s bargaining orchestras (ably led by our Counsel Kevin Case), our monthly *Musician Profiles: Celebrating Racial Diversity* video series (now hosted by Doug Rosenthal of the Pittsburgh Sym-

phony), our online Conductor Evaluation program (facilitated by Jacksonville Symphony Delegate Brian Magnus), our improved website, our highly active Twitter account with the latest stories about our profession, and our official publication *Senza Sordino* (led by our insightful editor Mike Muszynski).

### SLIDE 13

Which reminds me, it was heartwarming to discover that our 2024 BUTI scholarship winner, oboist Fatimá Landa Velaquez, reads *Senza Sordino* online. In fact, that is how she heard about our BUTI scholarship. Originally from Mexico, Fatimá will be entering The Curtis Institute of Music this fall, and we wish her well for her future in classical music.

### SLIDE 14

The danger of naming some people, or some orchestras, in an address like this is that we are omitting others who deserve a shout out for all they are doing. Know that your work is appreciated and valued. We would not be a successful organization without all of you, and we truly thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

### SLIDE 15

It is without a doubt that this ICSOM conference will be like no other. The issues that we will be addressing during our time together in Portland can have an important impact upon the orchestral world. We are asking all of you to listen, observe, ask, and process this critical information. The time is upon us to make that difference.

#### SLIDE 16

This morning ICSOM's Governing Board welcomed new attendees with a breakfast orientation meeting. We are enthusiastic about the next wave of leaders who want to make a difference. All ICSOM delegates are the lifeline to our membership. Know that we entrust upon you to deliver the messages from ICSOM that you will be hearing this week. Please plan to make an in-person report about this conference to your musicians, and to your AFM Local, at the next possible opportunity.

#### SLIDE 17

Thank you for attending the 62nd annual ICSOM conference, for the worthy cause of the betterment of our orchestras, and for going forth as inspiring ambassadors of our profession.