

ICSOM PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS 2018 CINCINNATI CONFERENCE

SLIDE 1

Good morning.

Last summer I was humbled and honored to become President of ICSOM. Thank you for trusting and supporting me in this important role for our organization.

This has been a very busy year for ICSOM, and I want to share some highlights of those events with you.

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The devastation of hurricanes last fall severely impacted ICSOM orchestras, starting with our delegates and guests from Texas who attended ICSOM's conference in Buffalo last August who were unable to get flights home due to the storm that became Hurricane Harvey. This was followed weeks later with the damage in Florida caused by Hurricane Irma, delaying the start of concert seasons of our orchestras there. However, in October, we were shocked upon learning about the damage of Hurricane Maria, forcefully striking Puerto Rico and having a horrific impact upon the lives of its residents.

The musicians of the Puerto Rico Symphony are still recovering from the loss and destruction that effected even their basic necessities of life, including fresh water

and shelter. For days after Maria hit, we all held our breath waiting to hear if all of the musicians had survived the hurricane. When ICSOM delegate Jose Martin was finally able to reach us, one week after the storm, we were relieved to hear that NO musician had died.

However, ALL of the musicians were effected by this disaster. Upon hearing about their dangerous living conditions, ICSOM led a campaign to collect funds to be wired to the musicians of the Puerto Rico Symphony, which was equally distributed to them, so that they could purchase items for survival, such as gas to run generators for electricity, and food, for which they stood in line for hours to purchase.

As a result of the generosity of our musicians, about a quarter of a million dollars was collected and wired to Puerto Rico for its symphony musicians, thanks to ICSOM's drive last fall.

It was heartwarming to hear that the Puerto Rico Symphony musicians, who themselves had lost so much, traveled throughout Puerto Rico to give concerts at shelters to uplift the spirits of the residents. By doing what they do best, performing for those who had experienced great loss provided a boost to the morale of both the listeners as well as the musicians.

We are very pleased to have their new ICSOM delegate Enid Collado here in Cincinnati. Welcome, Enid!

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Another important project of ICSOM's involves our social media presence. I am especially proud of ICSOM's Twitter account, which reached its 10,000th tweet last October. Established by former ICSOM Chair Bruce Ridge in 2009, today our Twitter account has over 9000 followers. This is the place to find current news items about orchestras, classical music, and the arts, with an aim to promote unity among musicians everywhere. Follow us, at ICSOM.

In addition, ICSOM has an active Facebook account with daily posts. We also promote ICSOM orchestras on Instagram with a weekly feature, which is a natural fit since we have 52 orchestras. We encourage you to follow ICSOM at those two platforms too.

It is very likely that you may, or that you may have already been, faced with a situation in which a colleague, a manager, a donor, or an audience member refers to how bleak things are in the arts. Your go-to place to find stories to counter this rhetoric is ICSOM's Twitter feed. There you will see hundreds of recent good-news stories, and it may be a very good idea to keep a few current facts in mind, or at least at your fingertips.

In fact, if you have a Twitter account, I would encourage you to retweet the good news stories that you see at IC-SOM's feed. To spread the good news about the arts, truly, is an investment in our future.

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Want some good news? Over the last six months, IC-SOM has witnessed a number of orchestras who have completed their negotiations with positive settlements.

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The Florida Orchestra comes to mind immediately, with a contract reflecting both impressive financial gains and artistic growth.

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So does the Milwaukee Symphony, with added weeks to their season as they plan to move into their renovated location in the year 2020. In fact, Milwaukee's 89 million dollar renovation project of the Warner Grand Theatre, in their downtown's west side, has been noted as not just "the rebirth of a neighborhood" but "the rebirth of the symphony".

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The San Antonio Symphony, after experiencing a ridiculously chaotic season, has completed a contract for next year. That, plus the recent announcement about the appointment of Michael Kaiser as their interim CEO, will

hopefully lead things down the proper path for the San Antonio Symphony.

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The Utah Symphony signed a 4-year, progressive contract on May 25th, at the end of their main season.

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Nashville Symphony completed negotiations with a 4-year contract that includes salary increases plus filling open positions. Their negotiation process was described as respectful, cordial, efficient, and productive.

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The New York City Ballet Orchestra settled a 3 year agreement, also with salary increases, retroactive to September 1st, 2017.

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For the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, they ratified a 3-year extension to their contract six months before expiration, with salary increases plus improvements in work rules they have been striving to attain for some time. What a difference that was for the Atlanta musicians, as their last two negotiations led to lockouts.

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This summer the San Francisco Opera Orchestra successfully settled with a 5-year agreement, with wage increases.

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Just a few weeks ago, the Columbus Symphony Orchestra ratified a new 3 year Master Agreement, the first progressive agreement for Columbus in more than 10 years.

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Finally, the Oregon Symphony finished their negotiations with a 4-year agreement that reflects artistic and financial improvements. This includes the addition of 2 Classical series weeks for the 2019-20 season, increasing the number of Classical subscription weeks from 16 to 18. This will move the orchestra to a 40-week season. The substantial wage increase in this new agreement marks the first time in recent history for them.

This is not to say that we do not have ICSOM orchestras who face challenging negotiations today, and we wish only the best to those colleagues who are striving to achieve the best-possible contract for their organizations at this time. But the positive news of successful bargaining for 10 of ICSOM's 52 orchestras over the past 6 months is notable. Last night we received word that the Hawai'i Symphony has ratified a new contract, bringing our total now to eleven orchestras.

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We hope that the trend of progressive contracts for our orchestras will continue, as the arts are to be recognized as being a vital part of society. In a recent *New York Times* article, Sir Mark Elder, who is the music director of Britain's Halle Orchestra, gives us a marvelous quote: "A country without a rich, supported, appreciated, followed, cultured energy is a very sad country."

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Here's a fact to remember: last April, a third-party study revealed that the Boston Symphony's financial impact upon their state was 261 million dollars, annually. This is a huge 40% increase since the last study of ten years ago. Let me repeat that number. 261. Million. Dollars.

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And here's another one: again, from last April, this time in Chicago, with a study by the Chicago Loop Alliance concluding that arts in Chicago's loop district has a two billion dollar impact. 2. Billion. Dollars.

All of these stories can be found at ICSOM's social media sites, Twitter and Facebook. Help us in spreading the good news!

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A topic that will be discussed at our conference this week is ICSOM's new online Conductor Evaluation Program, which was launched last January. ICSOM delegates submit an online form to request a unique, private, survey link from our Administrator, Barb Corbato, who has access to ICSOM's directory of the email addresses of our 4000 musicians.

Barb and I look forward to speaking more about ICSOM's new online process, and we are happy to answer any questions that you may have. ICSOM is proud to continue our relationship with ROPA and OCSM, allowing access of our conductor files with them. This process was established in 1990 with resolutions passed by our three players' conferences.

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ICSOM has had many discussions this year to address the lack of diversity in our orchestras. Right now we have established a minority caucus within ICSOM membership, those whose lived experience can help us better identify the roadblocks minority musicians face in regards to participation in our orchestras. There have been several articles that address diversity in recent issues of ICSOM's official publication *Senza Sordino*, which you can access online at www.icsom.org. ICSOM is very proud of our newsletter, and our website too. A few weeks ago I had the pleasure of attending ROPA's annual conference, which was held in Portland, Oregon.

While there I met ICSOM's webmaster Martha Warrington who is a member of the Oregon Symphony's viola section. She has some ideas for improving our website, which she designed for us years ago. This will involve the assistance of our delegates, and we will be in touch about this soon.

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It really is thrilling for me to be in Cincinnati, as I lived, studied, and worked here for eleven years in the 80s and 90s. This evening's tour of the newly-renovated, historic Music Hall, home of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, will be a highlight. Our final day of the conference, Saturday, August 25th, will be the 100th birthday of Leonard Bernstein. We have a little surprise to honor this event, plus we do recognize two of ICSOM orchestras who also have reached that impressive 100-year milestone: The Cleveland Orchestra and the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

So, welcome everybody, have a wonderful week, and best wishes to all of our orchestras for a successful season.

Links to support facts:

Boston Symphony economic impact

https://www.masslive.com/entertainment/index.ssf/2018/04/boston_symphony_orchestra_fina.html

Chicago Loop arts impact

<https://www.chicagoreader.com/Bleader/archives/2018/04/11/chicago-loop-alliance-study-arts-in-the-loop-have-a-2-billion-impact>

Sir Mark Elder/Halle Orchestra

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/15/arts/halle-orchestra-manchester.html?rref=collection%2Fspotlightcollection%2Fclassical-music-reviews>