

Symphony Orchestra Musicians' Association (SOMA), Australia Message to Delegates - ICSOM Conference August 2014



Dear ICSOM Conference Delegates:

On behalf of the Symphony Orchestra Musicians' Association in Australia, I would like to extend a warm hello to all our friends and colleagues attending the ICSOM conference in Los Angeles. How we wish we could have joined you this year and immersed ourselves in the conversations, discussions and debates surrounding the art of advocacy - this is a wonderful and timely theme and so important that we continue to work on developing ways in which we can promote the irreplaceable resource that our orchestras provide to our communities. SOMA is comprised

primarily of the permanent players in our six state symphony orchestras, as well as The Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra based in Sydney and Orchestra Victoria which is based in Melbourne. Our numbers are small in comparison to ICSOM - we have around 550 members in eight orchestras - but we have almost 100% membership, something of which we are very proud.

We believe as you do, the orchestra is a source of creative engagement and inspiration for the broader community, and a force that can engender hope and optimism. In today's world, the capacity we have to enable others to transcend life's challenges needs encouragement and support, but it is often difficult to make the argument that encourages adequate funding. We came close to losing Orchestra Victoria last year but following intense negotiations with The Australian Ballet, the orchestra is now a wholly owned subsidiary of the ballet company and we are very optimistic about the future of the partnership. The Australian Ballet has always advocated strongly for the importance of the arts, and of their audiences, friends and community - their success is evidence of this deeply-held philosophy. What is particularly exciting is to sense the potential of the alignment of artistic vision and financial support, something which has evaded Orchestra Victoria in the last few years.

I think I can speak for all of us here that we appreciate enormously the optimism that pervades all words of support for our (collective) orchestras from Bruce Ridge, and it was great for my colleagues Howard Manley, Simon Collins, Cameron Brook and myself to have the opportunity to hear news and reconnect with North America at the recent FIM conference in Oslo. And orchestra-l emails continue to provide us with so much comprehensive information about what is going on throughout the world. I would also like to pass on my personal thanks to Laura Ross who has been so very generous in providing substantial information from her neck of the woods on issues that effect us all. Our associations with you arising from our international commonality of experience and collegiality, is one that we greatly value and look forward to developing over many years into the future.

All the very best for the remaining day of the conference!

Tania Hardy Smith
Orchestra Victoria

President
Symphony Orchestra Musicians' Association
Australia