

# Senza Sordino

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## Blogging in Fertile Ground

By William Short

We can all agree: classical music is at a crossroads. Much of the rhetoric swirling about our period of change is negative. (According to blogger Andy Doe, we are now nearing the end of the eighth consecutive century of panicked cries of “Classical music is dying!”) Little of the discussion, however, has focused on an exciting new possibility—the use of the internet to increase our reach and amplify our collective voice.



Rita Chiscolla

My visionary colleague, percussionist Rob Knopper, embarked on a mission some 18 months ago to improve the MET Orchestra’s web presence. Using Squarespace, he designed a comprehensive, professional website with a minimal budget. Dedicated to giving our orchestra the representation that we lack on the Metropolitan Opera’s website, he recognized that, if we wanted to make our website a destination, rather than just an occasional resource, it had to have interesting, continuously updated content.

This is where a few more of us came in, including violinist Sarah Vonsattel, timpanist Jason Haaheim, librarian Jennifer Johnson, and myself. We were, and remain, eager to use this opportunity to reach a virtually limitless population of current and potential fans. By simply posting a link to our latest article, video, or infographic, we can reach tens of thousands of people—without spending a penny on advertising. Moreover, we organically target a more engaged audience than traditional media outlets, such as newspapers and television. People who like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter, and their friends, and their friends’ friends, want to hear what we have to say. “Old media” outlets, whose subscribers and viewers don’t necessarily have a vested interest in classical music, can make no such guarantee. In a very real sense, we are using personal connections to reach those who are most interested in us.

This kind of viral reach is unlike anything that has been presented to the musical community before. And it is as indispensable as it is unprecedented. For the first time, we can show, in as much detail as we please, what the daily experience of being a musician is like. We can empirically demonstrate

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## “Lobbying” in North Carolina

by Rachel Niketopoulos

In 2009, I learned about an intermission feature at New Jersey Symphony Orchestra concerts called “Ask a Musician” that was started and run by musicians. Sarah Seiver (cello) and Mark Timmerman (bassoon) created “Ask a Musician” as a fun way to make connections with audience members. When Mark told me about it, I knew that’s exactly what we needed to do in North Carolina. As orchestra musicians, we all have the experience of looking out into the audience and seeing many of the same Friday- and Saturday-night faces looking back, not knowing them, and with virtually no prospect of ever meeting them. “Ask a Musician” has turned out to be a great way to get to know our audience members and for them to connect with us.

We have very good access to our lobby at Meymandi Concert Hall in Raleigh, so it is very easy for musicians to get to and from the lobby quickly during our 20-minute intermissions. I talked to my colleagues about what Sarah and Mark were doing in New Jersey, and with their involvement, I proposed the idea to a couple of our managers, who eventually agreed to let musicians make

announcements from the stage before concerts. We invited the audience to meet us in the lobby at intermission, making it clear that absolutely any question was welcome, that they

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Michael Zinke

A recent “Ask a Musician” with the author (horn) and Jonathan Randazzo (trombone)

## Chairperson's Report

by Bruce Ridge

### Music Education and Hope

A recent article posted on the Daily Beast website reported on how "Music Shields a Child's Psyche in a Time of War". The article describes a moment when Palestinian music students reach a road block assembled by Israeli soldiers, and in the midst of the tensions inherent in the conflict of the region, a student and a soldier each learn that the other can play the violin and they play for each other at the armed checkpoint.



Michael Zilke

Parts of the Daily Beast article probably could be viewed as controversial by some, as the conflicts in that part of the world have existed for centuries and we all have our deeply held views on world issues. But what is not controversial is that music has the power to unite even the most disparate of ideologies and soothe the deepest of conflicts, if only for a passing moment in the midst of profoundly ingrained conflict.

The posting also quoted from the collection of essays *Music, Music Therapy and Trauma: International Perspectives*,

saying "Music, by raising the threshold for anxiety, can reduce the likelihood of resurgence of traumatic memories." Another quote was cited, saying that creativity can serve as a "fundamental part of healing...it is the refusal of victimhood and helplessness. Creating something new is an act of defiance in the face of destruction."

At a time when we are reminded of world conflicts through an unceasing din of 24-hour cable news channels, I am forever inspired and heartened by the fact that music continues to have the ability to unite people, and continues to be a force for change and strength for the people of all nations.

This month, to commemorate the centennial of an historical atrocity, one that has become known as the Armenian Genocide, 123 orchestral musicians from 43 nations gathered in the Armenian capital of Yerevan to perform a concert called *Renaissance*. Musicians of other genres also performed to remind the world of this event that must not be forgotten by future generations.

And in Baltimore, less than 48 hours after civil unrest spread through the city, the Baltimore Symphony performed a unifying outdoor free concert as a demonstration of peace in their city. Music Director Marin Alsop wrote: "With so much need alongside so much possibility, I hope we can use any opportunities we get to set an example and inspire others to join us in trying to change the world."

Music is a powerful tool for positive change in the world, and music education empowers creativity in all fields. The musicians of our orchestras must articulate this message tirelessly.

But music education is discouragingly underfunded in our own country. Robert Fitzpatrick, former dean at the Curtis Institute of Music, recently wrote that the past 50 years "have led to a decline in the quality of education in general, and an abandoning of the arts and arts education in particular."

Still, there are some signs of hope. I enjoyed a recent account of remarks made by Adam Savage of *Mythbusters* fame, who



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said “If you want the kids’ test scores up, bring back band and bring back shop and get kids actually learning stuff instead of teaching them how to take a test.” Our friends at Americans for the Arts recently posted an article titled “Arts Education Poised for Comeback in Nation’s Largest School Districts.” As more states adopt Common Core, they are implementing a program that mentions the arts approximately 75 times in its education standards. And, earlier this month, music was recognized as a core subject in draft federal education policy for the first time in history as part of the Every Child Achieves Act of 2015, which is designed to make adjustments to the policies of No Child Left Behind.

In New Orleans, a music education program called *Trumpets Not Guns* is providing musical instruments to students in communities that are at risk for falling prey to violence. A report from the Brady Campaign to End Gun Violence indicates that last year, handguns killed 10,728 people in America, as opposed to 58 in Israel, and 8 in Great Britain. Disproportionally at risk is the African American community. *The New York Times* recently wrote that “More than one out of every six black men who today should be between 25 and 54 years old have disappeared from daily life due to early deaths or incarceration.”

Through innovative programs like *Trumpets Not Guns*, music education can inspire young people to reach for a higher ideal than the violence that too often surrounds them, proving that creativity is a positive act of defiance in the face of negativity. It is no exaggeration to say that music education saves lives.

If only I were naïve enough to believe it is that simple though. I have no delusions that we can eradicate violence from the world, and when I rise each morning I am aware that new accounts of human suffering will greet me should I turn on the television or read the paper. But I do believe that every concert we perform is an act of defiance in the face of destruction. Every note we play advocates peace. Every lesson we teach advocates knowledge. Every piece of music we learn and share advocates understanding.

We are the music makers and we are the dreamers of dreams. The musicians of our orchestras must lead this effort to change education, and change the world, just as musicians always have.

The life of a performing classical musician is difficult. It requires discipline, and an almost unnatural combination of confidence and self-criticism. It is easy for us to have moments of futility and apathy. After all, only fools never doubt. But the lives we have chosen to lead stand for unity and understanding in a fragile world. We must constantly renew our dedication, and we must constantly renew our hope.

As long as a single violin has the ability to unite Israelis and Palestinians, if only for a fleeting moment at a roadside blockade, I will remain hopeful for the world. 

The 2015 ICSOM Conference will be held in

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

August 26-29, 2015

at the Philadelphia Sonesta Hotel

All attendees must register in advance for the Conference with ICSOM Secretary Laura Ross.

## Cancer Blows

by Ryan Anthony

On March 4, 2015, members of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra participated in a unique and historic benefit concert. The event was called “Cancer Blows” and showcased many of the greatest trumpet players of our time, together making a statement in support of cancer research. The performance sold out, filling the 1,800-seat Meyerson Symphony Center, with an additional 6,000 viewers watching the live stream. In addition, a DVD, CD, and televised special are being made to help the concert and the cause live on.



Two years ago, I was diagnosed with multiple myeloma, a terminal bone marrow cancer. I immediately began therapy and received a stem cell transplant in spring 2013, while the orchestra toured Europe under the direction of Music Director Jaap van Zweden. During treatment, I received supportive calls from trumpet players throughout the country, and I would tell them, “We’ll all play a concert when I’m healthy again and we’ll call it ‘Cancer Blows’.” When my cancer went into remission, my wife Niki, a devoted team of volunteers, and I worked hard to make that light-hearted comment a reality.



The author with some of the Cancer Blows guest artists (left to right): Lee Loughnane, Jeff Tyzik, Vince DiMartino, Doc Severinsen, Jens Lindemann, Anthony DiLorenzo, Wycliffe Gordon, Phil Smith, Arturo Sandoval

With all the people who wanted to participate, it worked out best to spread the event over three days. It would have been a crime to have so many world-class trumpet players together in one city and not give students and professional musicians a chance to experience it. This made the event a community-oriented project that would touch all ages. This is also what cancer does—it doesn’t discriminate against its victims. The events included master classes, a panel discussion, and a separate brass ensemble concert featuring 12 principal players from major symphonies, including the Chicago Symphony, The Cleveland Orchestra, the Philadelphia Orchestra, and the New York Philharmonic, as well as brass players from the DSO.

Altogether, 26 trumpet players from coast to coast took part, with the main concert including soloists Doc Severinsen, Arturo Sandoval, Allen Vizzutti, Marvin Stamm, Wycliffe Gordon (trombone), Ronald Romm, Jens Lindemann, Phil Smith, Joe Burgstaller, and others under the batons of Jeff Tyzik (DSO's Principal Pops Conductor) and Robert Moody. This concert included a wide range of music, from traditional classical repertoire (including movements from Respighi's *Pines of Rome*, Torelli's *Sinfonia in C*, and the "Intermezzo" from Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana*) to orchestral pops (including Vizzutti's "High Class Brass", Stevens's "New Carnival of Venice" and DiLorenzo's "Trumpets on Parade"). The second half included the University of North Texas One O'Clock Lab Band, adding a jazz element to the evening. To see these musicians all willing to donate their time was incredible. It was a gift of hope not just for me but for all patients and caregivers.

Cancer Blows raised funds through The Ryan Anthony Foundation, a 501(c)(3) organization, with 100% of the proceeds going to cancer research. There has already been interest in holding concerts in other cities, both in the United States and abroad. Music is the perfect way to wage the fight against cancer—the healing power in music can go beyond any words.

My bi-weekly chemo infusions are keeping my cancer in remission, but this Cancer Blows project was better for my body than any pills and infusions. It healed my heart, mind, and soul, and provided the hope and strength needed to win this fight. The members of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra were a major component in this and I couldn't be prouder to sit on stage with this group of colleagues as they showed their unity and demonstrated the strong role they play in the city of Dallas. My thanks go to them, and to DSO President/CEO Jonathan Martin, who suggested the use of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra and allowed the DSO musicians who took part to perform under the DSO name for this historic event. 

## Baltimore Symphony Musicians Play for Peace

By Michael Lisicky

After resident Freddie Gray died while in the custody of Baltimore Police, protestors took to the streets of downtown Baltimore seeking justice. Following a week of peaceful protests, the demonstrations turned violent on April 25, as protestors attacked a number of downtown businesses and disrupted an Orioles game at Camden Yards. Several arrests were made and about a dozen police officers were injured. Two days later, riots broke out in northwest Baltimore and at various locations throughout the city, and several businesses were burned and looted. For the first time since the 1968 riots that followed

Martin Luther King's assassination, the Governor of Maryland declared a state of emergency in the city, and National Guard troops, along with hundreds of additional state and local police officers, manned city streets. The Penn-North area was a major locus of unrest, with years of tension between the police and the predominantly working-class African-American community erupting into sparring between police in riot gear and residents. For six days, a curfew was in effect between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m. The curfew tarnished the city's image and devastated businesses. All of the week's BSO services were



Music Director Marin Alsop conducts the BSO

cancelled—the curfew had prevented evening concerts, and area school districts cancelled all trips into Baltimore, forcing the cancellation of the daytime educational performances that happened to be most of the week's concerts.

The Joseph Meyerhoff Symphony Hall, home to the Baltimore Symphony, is located roughly one mile from the hard-hit Penn-North district. The day after the riots, a few musicians sought permission from BSO management to casually read some music outside of the hall, offering solace to each other and any possible listeners. Every musician in the orchestra was personally contacted and invited. This was not meant to be a performance but an unrehearsed "gathering" of musicians. Repertoire was flexible. Once a baroque-sized group signed on, the instrumentation grew from there. The BSO public relations department notified media outlets, the librarians filled folders with potential works, and the operations staff provided chairs, stands, security, and other necessities.

Within five hours, a *New York Times* article—"Baltimore Symphony to Play Free Outdoor Concert Wednesday"—appeared. Nobody knew what to expect, as the BSO Facebook page quickly received over 14,000 likes. At noon on Wednesday April 28, less than 48 hours after the onset of civil unrest, the musicians of the BSO presented a light, impromptu "gathering" outside of the Meyerhoff. Over 1,000 people from all backgrounds attended, along with dozens of media outlets from around the world. The concert was not about the BSO, it was about the community, which was trying to comprehend

the state of the city. Music included selections from Handel's *Music for the Royal Fireworks* and Bach's Orchestral Suite No. 3, with Music Director Marin Alsop conducting the finale of Beethoven Symphony No. 2 to complete the program. The national anthem was performed twice, along with the rarely-heard city anthem from 1914, "Baltimore, Our Baltimore". The concert received massive worldwide coverage and gave a sense of peace to the troubled city, even for just a half hour.

An educational concert was performed the following day to a (mostly) empty hall. However, the concert was streamed live into classrooms under the terms of the recently approved Integrated Media Agreement. It was a trial run and a good test for future projects. There is a lot more work left to do in Baltimore, and the country. After a week of demonstrations that culminated in indictments against six police officers, the city is back to "normal". The efforts of the Baltimore Symphony musicians did not go unnoticed. It was a very special and personal moment in the orchestra's, and the city's, history. It demonstrated the power and the purpose that a symphony orchestra can provide during times of struggle and soul-searching.

*Note: the author is the Chairperson of the BSO Players' Committee and the organizer of the musician-led event.* 

## 5th Grade Concerts

By Julie Edwards, USO ICSOM Delegate

Every spring the Utah Symphony invites 20,000 fifth graders to Abravanel Hall for a very special concert, an annual ritual that is more than fifty years old. The students dress up for the occasion, they whoop when the lights go down, they cheer when the conductor enters, and applaud enthusiastically when they are moved by the music.



David T. Hedden

The Utah Symphony has a long history of reaching out to students in their home communities and schools. Several times a year we pack up the buses and travel all over the state to schools in faraway places and small towns that don't have easy access to a symphony orchestra. In the early 1970s, Maestro Maurice Abravanel lobbied the Utah state legislature to fund concerts for students all throughout the state, and to this day the orchestra takes the mandate of being the symphony for the entire state of Utah very seriously. Currently we perform 43 in-school concerts per year, reaching about 35,000 students.

School concerts can be wonderful experiences, but often they take place in auditoriums where shortly after the performance ends the students will be eating lunch, or playing dodgeball in gym class, or later attending a pep rally. The 5th Grade concerts are different: the students have the experience of coming to downtown Salt Lake City and attending a full symphonic performance in a legendary concert hall.

They get the chance to experience the beauty and grandeur of Abravanel Hall, from the giant staircase with gold leaf on the walls, to the Chihuly glass sculpture in the lobby, to the

crystal chandeliers inside the hall. As they enter the hall, they hear the orchestra warming up. Projected behind the orchestra are photos of individual musicians with descriptions of how they picked their instrument, or where they grew up, or their favorite hobby.

In advance of the concert, teachers are sent materials about the concert, and the students receive a classroom visit from volunteer docents. The programs are often tied to the fifth grade curriculum, making connections between music and other subjects such as arts, language, math, or social studies. Sometimes this preparation is interactive, with students creating artwork based on the repertoire.

Because the performances are held in the hall, there is more opportunity to program larger scale works, and a chance to use other media. For instance this year the symphony used the student artwork from local grade schools to help tell the story of *Till Eulenspiegel*. During the performance the drawings were projected behind the orchestra, illustrating the story while the orchestra performed.

Utah Symphony violinist Becky Johnson is in the unique position of having been both a volunteer docent and a past student attendee of a 5th Grade concert with Abravanel conducting. She recalls the thrill and excitement of taking the city bus to the Tabernacle (the home of the Utah Symphony before Abravanel Hall was built) and seeing him conduct in front of a capacity crowd of 5,000. She has also taught students who were inspired to learn to play the violin because they attended a 5th Grade concert at Abravanel Hall.

I'm often reminded how much impact these concerts have when I am in the grocery store and someone recognizes me.



Courtesy of the Utah Symphony Orchestra

"Oh! I've seen you at the symphony! I remember going to the symphony to see Maurice Abravanel conduct the Utah Symphony at Abravanel Hall when I was in grade school!" The excitement of seeing the full orchestra perform in the hall stays with people into adulthood, and the spontaneous response from a total stranger wanting to share with me their experience shows me that the performance had a lasting impact. 

*Senza Sordino* is the official voice of ICSOM and reflects ICSOM policy. However, there are many topics discussed in *Senza Sordino* on which ICSOM has no official policy; the opinions thus expressed in *Senza Sordino* are those of the author(s) and not necessarily of ICSOM, its officers, or members. Articles and letters expressing differing viewpoints are welcomed.

## Understanding And Negotiating For Disability Insurance

by Susan Martin, ICSOM Counsel

Group long-term disability (LTD) insurance is an important benefit that can dramatically affect quality of life for orchestra musicians and their families in the event of a disability. Recently, some orchestra musicians have inquired about the content of their orchestra's long-term disability policies. Negotiating for a good disability policy is essential. The collective bargaining agreement should include the important terms of the policy agreed to and/or include a reference to the specific policy by insurance carrier name, policy number and date. The Orchestra Committee should follow up and review the actual policy to ensure that it complies with the terms negotiated and that summary plan descriptions of the policies are distributed to all orchestra members. The cost of disability insurance policies can vary widely, as can the quality of the insurance carrier in paying benefits to disabled employees. Committees negotiating over limited dollars should determine if any changes in coverage should be explored either from a cost-benefit perspective or with an eye to improving coverage.

Negotiating committee members, along with their representatives, should be familiar with some of the key provisions of group long-term disability insurance policies and the impact of a disability on the musician and the orchestra. Below are some of the most important issues to consider.

### I. How Long Will LTD Benefits Continue?

Determining how long benefits will be paid in the event of a disability is one of the most important questions to consider. The answer depends in large part on the definition of disability, whether the definition changes after benefits are paid for a period of time and whether certain types of disabilities have express limitations. The benefits under most policies generally continue to age 65 or social security retirement age. If a musician becomes disabled close to or after age 65, many policies provide that benefits will still be paid for a set period, often five years. But determining the length of coverage in large part depends on the nature of the disability.

### A. Own Occupation vs. Any Occupation

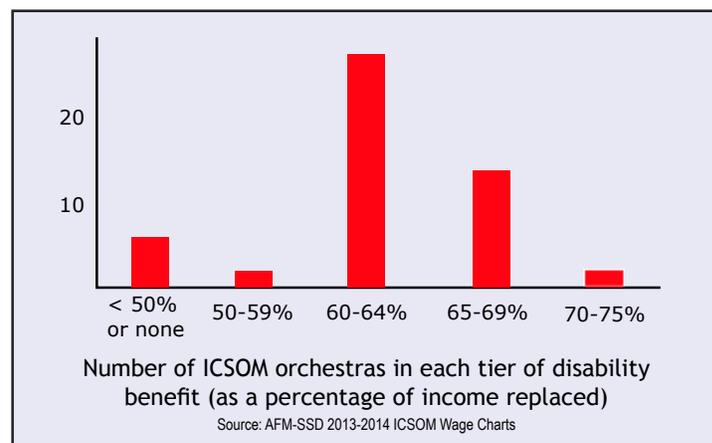
This is a very important feature of any long-term disability policy. It determines whether you are disabled under the definition of disability contained in the policy. Policies will usually define disability as the inability to perform "the material and substantial duties" of your regular occupation, but this definition will often hold only for a limited period of time (frequently as short as two years). After that time, policies will often define disability based on whether you are unable to perform any occupation in the labor market for which you are reasonably qualified by education, training or experience. So in negotiating for a disability policy it is critically important to try to get the "own occupation" definition to last as long as possible. In some orchestras, musicians have bargained for the ability to "buy-up" an extension of the "own occupation" period by self-paid premiums.

### B. Limits For Certain Disabilities

It has become increasingly common for policies to limit benefits—often to two years—for disabilities arising from mental health and nervous condition issues such as stress, anxiety or depression, and to limit benefits even further—sometimes as short as one year—for disabilities arising from alcohol or drug abuse. Not all policies have these exclusions and it makes sense to periodically review your policy, and perhaps seek a different carrier if efforts to eliminate these exclusions are unsuccessful.

### 2. How Long Can Disabled Musicians Keep Their Jobs?

This can be a thorny subject, with the Orchestra and the Orchestra Committee weighing fairness to the disabled musician against other considerations. Depending on the player, the section, and the circumstances, keeping the seat open for the disabled musician and using substitutes may be perfectly fine, even for multiple years. In other circumstances, having someone out for an extended time could pose a hardship if a



prolonged absence adds unreasonable burdens to the remaining section players or seriously affects artistic quality.

A number of orchestras have tried to address this question in the collective bargaining agreement. Some provide a process by which after a period of time (often a number of years) a musician can be asked to provide a medical prognosis regarding the likelihood of returning by a certain date, with the right to terminate if the musician can't make it back within that time. The problem with these provisions (and I have helped draft some of them) is that any blanket date of return may violate disability discrimination laws. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act, if an employee has requested an accommodation, an employee is entitled to return to the same job unless the employer demonstrates that holding the job open would impose an undue hardship. And providing a fixed date of return may not be reasonable, if, for example, the employee can only provide an approximate date, or if an employee knows they won't be able to return by the fixed date but expects to return within a reasonable additional period of time. The key in all of this is engaging in an interactive process with the disabled musician. While the collective bargaining agreement can provide some parameters, under the ADA one size does not fit all.

Accordingly, any contracts that provide a fixed date of return without a process to evaluate the circumstances and engage interactively with the disabled musician should be revised.

### 3. Other LTD Policy Considerations

#### A. Cost Of Living Adjustments

If a 40-year old musician suffers a permanent disability, receiving a benefit that is two thirds of today's salary may be little comfort by age 60. Long-term disability policies can provide that benefits be adjusted either with reference to an outside index or based on raises negotiated for the group covered by the policy. In bargaining for disability insurance, negotiators should determine whether the benefits are indexed to protect against inflation.

#### B. Employer-Paid, Self-Paid, Or Both?

Employer-provided group disability insurance typically replaces between 60-70% of the musician's pre-disability income, subject to a maximum monthly benefit under the policy. (The maximum monthly benefit covered under the policy should be included in the collective-bargaining agreement and reviewed and adjusted as wages increase.) The question arises whether employer-paid disability insurance is better than employee-paid disability insurance. If the employer pays the full cost of the premium, all of the benefits are taxable, whereas if the employee pays all or part of the premiums with after tax dollars, the benefits attributable to employee-paid premiums are not taxed. Depending upon the individual circumstances of an orchestra, the ability to pay, and the cost of the insurance, this might be something an orchestra would want to consider. In the event the orchestra decides to switch from employer- to employee-paid disability insurance premiums, the IRS will phase in the non-taxable portion of the benefit for disabilities occurring within a few years after the switch.

#### C. Policy Exclusions & Limitations

Unlike health insurance under the Affordable Care Act, disability policies most often contain exclusions for pre-existing conditions—i.e. conditions in effect before you were covered by the policy. While many policies contain this type of exclusion, many policies will allow the exclusion to disappear after a period of service. Musicians negotiating or renewing policies should ask about this.

#### D. Benefit Offsets

Many policies reduce benefits by the amount of income received from other sources, including outside earnings from other employment, any employer-provided retirement benefits, workers compensation benefits and social security disability benefits. It makes little sense for musicians to apply for retirement benefits that are less than their disability benefits if the entire amount will be offset under the disability policy. Some policies require the employee to apply for social security benefits and then take an offset for the entire amount of any retroactive social security award or any payments made to your spouse or children on account of your disability. Of particular concern to musicians is whether the carrier can offset earnings from teaching. If the disabled musician had pre-disability in-

come from teaching, they should contest any attempt to offset like earnings after benefits begin.

#### E. The Waiting Period

The waiting period determines how long a musician must be absent from work before long-term disability insurance kicks in. Generally, waiting periods can be anywhere from 30 to 180 days—the shorter the waiting period, the more expensive the policy. It may be less expensive to negotiate for increased sick leave and allow sick leave to accrue from year-to-year than to pay for a disability insurance policy with a shorter waiting period. The key issue surrounding the waiting period is to make sure that musicians who are disabled are not left without paid sick leave before long-term disability benefits begin. If your orchestra has a waiting period of less than 180 days it pays to review whether improving sick leave and extending the waiting period might be beneficial.

#### Not Just Wages

Contract negotiations rightly focus on big-ticket items, and long-term disability insurance is seldom one of them. But coping with a disability can be hard enough without the added stress of serious financial loss. A good LTD policy can be critical in assuring a reasonable quality of life for disabled musicians and their families and may not be unduly costly. Taking the time to review and understand an existing LTD policy, and negotiating for needed improvements, makes good sense. 

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## Orchestra Newslets

### NYCO Honors Rudel

NYCO Renaissance and the Rudel Family presented a musical tribute to Maestro Julius Rudel on March 9th at Rose Hall. Rudel passed away last June, and he made explicit that he did not want any memorial service. His last public appearance had been at NY City Center at the NYCO 70th Anniversary concert, presented by Local 802 in February 2014.

Rudel had spent much of his career with the New York City Opera, beginning as a rehearsal pianist and eventually running the company. It was only fitting for the orchestra and some of his favorite singers to take to the stage to honor his life. The list of singers who appeared was long and included Frederica von Stade, Plácido Domingo, Mark Delevan, Christine Goerke, and Kristin Sampson, to name but a few.

The evening was more than just an artistic success; for everyone involved, the remembrance of Maestro Rudel through living music was an emotional experience. A short film that had been produced about his life reminded everyone of the profound impact he had on musicians, singers, the cultural life of New York City, and the development of American opera.

The concert and gala dinner that followed celebrated two lives. One was the opera legend and the other, a renaissance of the legendary opera company. NYCO Renaissance raised over \$800,000 that evening to help fund a new season that is anticipated for 2015-2016.

The bankruptcy proceeding continues, as of this writing. NYCO ICSOM delegate Gail Krvand said, "We remain hopeful that we will soon be back in the orchestra pit."

## Dallas Receives the Sun and Moon

The Dallas Symphony Orchestra (DSO) has received a \$5 million gift from the Nancy A. Nasher and David J. Haemisegger family. “The artistic quality and organizational strength of the DSO has been transformational here in Dallas,” said Nancy A. Nasher. “We are delighted to invest in the Dallas Symphony’s future, providing opportunities for all to enjoy the beauty and inspiration of music.” The gift will be recognized through the naming of the DSO’s SOLUNA Festival. The festival will now be titled The Nancy A. Nasher and David J. Haemisegger Family SOLUNA International Music & Arts Festival. The inaugural festival begins on May 4, 2015, and continues through May 24, 2015. Anchored by DSO performances led by Music Director Jaap van Zweden, the Festival will showcase internationally acclaimed guest soloists, visual artists and performing artists alongside leading Dallas-based companies and ensembles. A new annual, three-week multidisciplinary event, SOLUNA will stage performances and exhibitions across such venues as the Meyerson Symphony Center, Dallas City Performance Hall, AT&T Performing Arts Center, Nasher Sculpture Center and Dallas Museum of Art, as well as other prominent galleries and performance spaces in the Dallas Arts District.

## Saint Paul’s New Hall

On Thursday March 5, 2015, the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra performed the first concert in its new home—the Concert Hall at the Ordway Center for the Performing Arts in downtown Saint Paul—to high acclaim, both for the fine performance of the orchestra as well as the acoustics of the new hall. Tim Carl of HGA Architects and acoustician Paul Scarbrough have designed a 1,100-seat hall that is acoustically ideal for the SPCO.

The hall also is designed to be visually stunning, with white



walls sculpted with abstract shapes. The ceiling is made of wooden dowels, set in waves that sweep down towards the stage. All of the work was done with acoustics in mind. The shaped walls diffuse sound and prevent echoes, while the dowels allow the sound through into the space above, adding warmth and resonance.

“This is like being given a Stradivarius,” SPCO President

Bruce Coppock said. “And of course the orchestra will learn to play it the way one explores an instrument. The orchestra’s musicians couldn’t be happier about the hall’s intimate sound.”

“You can play as soft as you want and you can hear it at the top of the second tier,” musician Kyu-Young Kim said. “I have been all throughout the hall and it’s really exciting.”

Music critics have called the new space “an acoustic wonderland”, “resonant and rich”, and “inviting and acoustically ideal” for the Chamber Orchestra. The \$42 million Concert Hall also provides a more intimate setting for the audience, as no seat is more than 90 feet away from the stage. A total of \$83 million was raised for this project—\$42 million for the hall, \$32 million to an endowment fund, and \$9 million to a maintenance/transition fund. Of that, \$20 million was raised from a state bonding bill, and \$3 million from the City of Saint Paul.

## New York Looks to the Future and the Past

Lincoln Center has announced that Hollywood mogul David Geffen has pledged \$100 million for the naming rights to Avery Fisher Hall, making the estimated \$500 million renovation in 2019 more of a reality. Avery Fisher Hall will officially be named David Geffen Hall at the New York Philharmonic’s opening gala on September 24, 2015. Geffen’s gift gives him the naming rights in perpetuity, as did Avery Fisher’s \$10.5 million gift in 1973. Fisher’s children have negotiated a \$15 million payment in exchange for releasing their family’s naming rights. Geffen grew up in Brooklyn, NY and has expressed an interest in spending more time in the city, as well as being more involved in New York’s cultural life.

The Philharmonic also announced that it has received a \$300,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), its first such grant in 30 years. The funds will aid in the creation of the New York Philharmonic Leon Levy Digital Archives, with a planned completion in 2018. The materials to be digitized—dating back to 1842—include correspondence, operation files, financial ledgers, minutes from business and artistic meetings, marked scores, printed programs, and press clippings. The materials will be made available to scholars and the general public, and offer unprecedented access to nearly 130 years of cultural, political, and social history.

## Cincinnati Conductors Continue

The Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra recently announced that it has extended the contract of its relatively new music director, Louis Langrée, for an additional three years, through the 2019-2020 season. Under his leadership, which began in September 2013, the orchestra has undertaken a wealth of new initiatives, including its partnership with MusicNOW (Cincinnati’s new music festival), the popular community engagement program One City, One Symphony, and the LumenoCity concert and image mapping event.

“Louis has captivated Cincinnati through electrifying concerts and bold initiatives while at the same time reinforcing a welcoming and vibrant culture around the Orchestra,” said CSO President Trey Devey. “Being determined for greatness

is one of the CSO's core values and Louis embodies this with his remarkable leadership and unparalleled artistry. Extending his current contract three additional years advances our vision to engage audiences and community in extraordinary ways in the seasons ahead." In order to expand awareness of the orchestra in the community, Maestro Langrée and his family have moved from France to Cincinnati, where his two children are attending local high schools. He and his wife, Aimee, have become popular figures at events throughout the area.

The Cincinnati Pops Orchestra also re-engaged its Conductor, John Morris Russell, although he will soon be dividing his time between Cincinnati and Buffalo (see below). Russell, in his third season as the Conductor of the Cincinnati Pops Orchestra, shared the podium with Langrée during the inaugural LumenoCity concert, and previously served as the CSO's Associate Conductor.

### Buffalo's New Conductors

John Morris Russell will become the Principal Pops Conductor of the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra beginning in 2016-17 (after a season as Principal Pops Conductor Designate). "John Morris Russell has the charisma and energy to be a first-rate face of the BPO Pops series," said Louis Ciminelli, BPO board chair. "We are confident that he will bring the best of pops programming to Buffalo and add extra vitality to an already outstanding series. He will create a dynamic leadership team with JoAnn Falletta."

Russell will join the recently hired Associate Conductor, Stefan Sanders, who played in the orchestra's trombone section from 1999 to 2006, and subsequently served for a year as an apprentice conductor at the BPO.

### Reaching New Audiences in Baltimore

The Baltimore Symphony Orchestra announced that it will receive a grant of \$400,000 from the Wallace Foundation, part of the foundation's Building Audiences for Sustainability initiative. The BSO, one of 26 performing arts organizations to receive a grant from the foundation under this initiative, will use the grant to fund its classical/rock series Pulse. "This will support the first year of what, hopefully, will be a multi-year program," BSO president and CEO Paul Meecham said

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in an interview (quoted in the *Baltimore Sun*). "The series is geared to 25- to 39-year-olds. Baltimore has a large proportion of millennials, and this is the demographic we need to be engaging with."

Other ICSOM orchestras to receive grants under the initiative include the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the New York Philharmonic, and Lyric Opera of Chicago.

### North Carolina Musicians Respond

Members of the North Carolina Symphony gathered at a popular restaurant/bar in downtown Raleigh on April 29 to play chamber music in an effort to raise money for the Nepal earthquake relief efforts. The devastating earthquake struck Nepal on April 25, and as of this writing more than 7,500 people have lost their lives as a result of the tragedy. The event in Raleigh was organized by NCSO violinist Maria Evola Meyer, and donations to assist the recovery efforts in Nepal will be made through [globalgiving.org](http://globalgiving.org).

### Boston Announces New Recording Project

On April 3rd the Boston Symphony Orchestra announced that it has entered into a new partnership with Deutsche Grammophon (DG) that will consist of a series of live recordings under the direction of Music Director Andris Nelsons. The project, entitled "Shostakovich under Stalin's shadow", will focus on works composed during the period of Shostakovich's difficult relationship with Stalin and the Soviet regime—a period that started with his fall from favor in the mid-1930s, continued through the composition and highly acclaimed premiere of his Fifth Symphony (the BSO gave the first Boston performances in January of 1939 under the orchestra's Assistant conductor Richard Burgin), and concluded with the premiere of the composer's Tenth Symphony, purportedly written as a response to Stalin's death in 1953. In addition to Symphonies 5 through 10, the project will also include performances and recordings of the incidental music from *King Lear* and *Hamlet*, as well as the "Passacaglia" from *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, the opera that first brought official disgrace to Shostakovich. The recording of these works will take place at Symphony Hall during performances scheduled in the BSO's 2014-15, 2015-16, and 2016-17 seasons. The first of the five albums in the series—to be released by DG in three installments between summer 2015 and summer 2017—will feature the "Passacaglia" and the Tenth Symphony, which were captured during recent performances, on April 2, 3, and 4. Everyone at the BSO is thrilled that this recording project has materialized, especially in an environment that has seen such a precipitous decline in recording company-sponsored projects. 

Tom Hall's *History of ICSOM*, published in 2002 as *ICSOM: The First Forty Years of the International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians*, has been updated. It now includes ten more years and is available as a free download in the Reference/History section of the ICSOM website ([www.icsom.org](http://www.icsom.org))

## Lobbying in North Carolina *(continued)*

didn't have to stick strictly to music-related questions. As the program evolved, "Ask a Musician" was listed in our program, and a sign was posted near the front door with photos of the



NCSO Musicians David Marschall (viola)  
and John Ilika (trombone)

two musicians who would be in the lobby that evening. Now we have a pre-recorded announcement before our concerts, reminding audience members to meet us in the lobby.

I thought that we needed a sign to direct people to us, so I went to Trader Joe's, where employees walk around carrying "Ask Me" signs. I met the artist in charge of making the signs and gave her my orchestra comp tickets in exchange for an "Ask Me" sign of our own on a tall pole. She did a beautiful job—our sign is red and gold with a silver treble clef and the words "Ask Me", and it is freestanding so that we can hold our instruments and stand next to it. If you look out over the lobby from a distance, you can see the sign sticking out above everyone's head, and beneath it, musicians holding their instruments, surrounded by audience folks of all ages. I have passed along what we have learned here in North Carolina to Aimee Toomes (violin) in the San Antonio Symphony, where they have a thriving "Ask a Musician" program with many musician volunteers.

Recruiting my NCSO colleagues is not difficult, and more than 90% of the orchestra has volunteered at least once. We do it because we want to, because the audience loves it, and it's a relaxing way for the extroverts among us to spend intermission. We don't try to sell subscriptions, we are simply interested in making personal connections with our musical community. In the beginning, we tried to stick to one question per person, but we have become more flexible over the years. Sometimes, there are many questions from one person, while the next person just wants to chat about the music.

We are grateful for the help of our stage crew, who call it the "Wildly-Successful Ask a Musician Program". They always run the recorded announcement, position the sign in the lobby during the first half so it is ready to go at intermission, and put it away afterwards.

The feedback we have received is that this program is very popular with the audience. But it has provided important benefits to the musicians as well. One of my favorite memories is of a violinist who had just come backstage from "Ask a Musician" at intermission, shortly after we started the program. With a

huge smile on his face, he said, "Wow, they are really listening! They notice everything we do! They love us!"

*Note: Readers interested in more information about creating a similar program may contact the author via the North Carolina Symphony Musicians Facebook page.*

*More information about the "Ask a Musician" program in the New Jersey Symphony can be found at [njmonthly.com/articles/jersey-living/got-a-question-for-an-njso-musician-ask/](http://njmonthly.com/articles/jersey-living/got-a-question-for-an-njso-musician-ask/).*

## Blogging in Fertile Ground *(continued)*

that ours is not a 20-hour workweek, that we are relatable people, and that classical music, an authentic experience in an increasingly inauthentic world, is more relevant than ever.

Our features have included an infographic about reed-making; a series, inspired by the wildly successful Facebook page "Humans of New York," entitled "Humans of the Met"; and the remarkable story of a man whose harrowing experience in a blizzard atop Mount Rainier led him on a pilgrimage to a Met performance of *Così Fan Tutte*.

These examples embody the goals of our website content:

- Humanize musicians.
- Help the public understand the daily experience of our jobs.
- Interact with fans in ways the traditional concert experience largely prevents.

Content has been mostly created in-house, with a tremendous amount of work coming from, among others, violist Mary Hammann and her husband, documentarian Richard Kaplan; cellists James Kreger and Kari Docter; percussionist Greg Zuber; violist Katherine Anderson; trumpet player David Krauss; violinist Yoon Kwon; associate musicians, retirees, and many more. An orchestra is a treasure trove of great stories and storytellers.

When a musician has an idea, it is tentatively scheduled in one of our weekly slots. (We try to keep a "buffer" of several backup posts, since life can intervene, preventing projects from being completed on time.) Before it is formatted for the website, it goes through one of several editors for finishing touches. These editors are also responsible for posting that content to the website and advertising it on our Facebook page and Twitter feed. Posting takes no more than five minutes and complements our social media presence, ably led by oboist Susan Spector and violinist Miran Kim.

Much of our most successful content has been that which delves deepest beneath the surface: the nature of being a music librarian, the experience of an audition, or the thoughts that are going through one's mind in a performance. This is what people want to learn about, because it is so often foreign to their own experience.

When negotiations turn sour, the internet is the most powerful tool we have ever been presented in the battle for public opinion. In a stable work environment, it is yet another way to connect people to classical music. The most exciting part? This is just the beginning. The MET Orchestra Musicians' web presence (and that of enterprising musicians and orchestras around the country) is only the first step in revolutionizing how musicians relate to the larger public.

## Sam Denov Remembered

Sam Denov, a member of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's percussion section from 1954 until 1985, passed away on Wednesday, March 4, 2015, in Des Plaines, Illinois. He was 91.

Born in Chicago in 1923, Sam Denov attended Lane Technical High School and, following service in the U.S. Navy during World War II, he spent a year in the Civic Orchestra of Chicago before joining the San Antonio Symphony in 1947. Three years later he joined the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra where he remained for two seasons before returning to Chicago to operate his own high-fidelity equipment business. In 1954, he was invited by music director Fritz Reiner to join the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's percussion section. Denov also later attended Roosevelt University, earning a bachelor's degree in labor studies.

A tireless activist for musicians' rights, Denov was a major force in the founding of ICSOM, serving at various times as chairman, vice-chairman, and editor of the ICSOM newsletter *Senza Sordino*. Following his retirement from the Orchestra in 1985, he became a labor relations consultant, representing clients before the National Labor Relations Board. At the ICSOM annual conference in 2009, the delegates passed a resolution by unanimous consent honoring Denov for "his many contributions as an early leader in the orchestra field" and expressing "ICSOM's respect and admiration as an ICSOM founder." At the 2012 conference, he addressed the group's fiftieth anniversary along with several of his CSO colleagues.



Courtesy of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's Rosenthal Archives

Widely known among percussionists, Denov authored three books: *The Art of Playing Cymbals: A Complete Guide and Text for the Artistic Percussionist* (1966), *Symphonic Paradox: The Misadventures of a Wayward Musician* (2002), and *Boom and Crash Musician: A Percussive Memoir* (2012). He also contributed numerous articles to professional journals.

In his retirement, Denov was an active member of the CSO Alumni Association, serving as its first president from 1993 until 1996, as a board member, and as secretary-editor.

Note: This obituary first appeared on the website of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's Rosenthal Archives, and can be found at <https://csoarchives.wordpress.com/2015/03/09/remembering-sam-denov/>. Reprinted with permission.

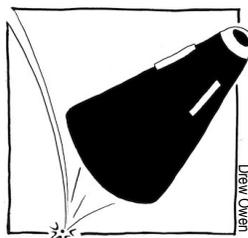
## Dropping the Mute

by Peter de Boor, Editor

Recently I have been reading *Bowling Alone*, by the political scientist Robert D. Putnam. It is about a disturbing diminution, during the latter part of the previous century, in many forms of social capital. By this, he means the connections among individuals and the resulting social networks, including their norms of reciprocity and trust-

worthiness.

Putnam amasses a host of data to support his contention. Starting about two thirds of the way through the 20th century, people began participating less in a range of activities that typically serve to connect us to others. Fewer people worked on political campaigns or attended political events, and fewer people voted. People joined clubs less often, and didn't serve as officers as much. And, of course, many fewer belonged to unions. He even has data to suggest that people entertained their friends and neighbors less often, and gathered together for family meals at lower rates.



The book was published in 2000, before the advent of the smartphone, and I am very curious how the trends have altered in the intervening 15 years, although I have my surmises. Having seen the videos and cartoons about the many ways that smartphones come between us in the course of daily human interaction, I have to believe that the patterns Putnam identified have only gotten stronger.

Some critics have argued that the advent of social media has not reduced social capital but transformed it. Indeed, in this column (as recently as the previous issue) I advocated the use of social media tools to reach our audiences and the general public. But as anyone who has read the comments section of almost any article can attest, some aspects of this transformation are not welcome—we may be reaching a greater network of people in our online interaction, but we are collectively saying things there that we never would utter in person.

As Chairperson Bruce Ridge notes in his report this issue, our profession requires discipline and hard work. It can be very easy to focus on the rigors of the job, to the exclusion of our other responsibilities. And I say responsibility, because I think we owe more to our orchestras than merely our best performances. It takes more than great individual musical performances from its members for an orchestra to thrive.

Although I am gratified by the contributions of our new Social Media Committee, I have also observed a few indications of a decline in the willingness of my colleagues to participate in the orchestra without their instruments. A few years ago, my orchestra had to hold a special election for the Orchestra Committee, because at the normal election there were not enough candidates to fill all the offices. And we recently had occasion to empanel our peer review committee for the first time. After completing their service, several of the committee members gave me the impression they would not serve in that capacity again, a decision I hope they will reconsider. Participation in the running of an orchestra—as an organic entity, not as a financial one—is critical to its success. When we serve on committees, when we attend orchestra meetings and Local membership meetings, when we participate in the discussion, the union and the orchestra can both grow stronger.

But I think there is a larger point here. While our concerts are not participatory *per se* (with rare exceptions), the very act of going to an orchestra concert (or any live music concert) is akin to the types of participation that have been in decline. Technology has made it extremely easy to be entertained from the comfort of one's home, and so the decision to physically

travel to the concert hall and attend a concert has become more like membership in a club. After a day at work, how often do people make the choice to sit at home and watch the playoff game (pick your sport) or *House of Cards* (pick your movie/series), rather than go to the effort of driving downtown to hear the orchestra (what's that Higdon piece they're playing?).

There are perhaps those who feel that they don't need to go to a concert for music. They can hear the Berlin Philharmonic in its Digital Concert Hall, or just have Pandora or Spotify on whichever device is near at hand. We know that there is something fundamentally different about experiencing a concert in the hall, and that there is an interaction that takes place between audience and performers that doesn't exist in a video; but many in the public don't know about the difference or have forgotten.

I remember a time years ago when my wife and I flew to California to visit her parents. It was a long flight, our kids were very young, and we were exhausted when we arrived. Her parents said, "We got you a special treat. We'll babysit so you can go to a concert tonight." While it is true that I dreaded sitting through a performance of Händel's *Messiah*, it is equally true that it was wonderful and I am richer for it. And just this week I had tickets to a (masterful) performance by the Miró Quartet and mezzo-soprano Sasha Cooke, but I failed to persuade either of my violin-playing children to attend—their internal barriers to participation were too high.

We cannot magically transform the world into one in which everyone buys concert subscriptions, cities spend as much on

concert halls as on sports stadiums, and all children learn to play musical instruments. But we can act to exemplify our values. Our art form requires participation, and we can lead by example, whether that means attending neighborhood association meetings or serving on the orchestra's social media committee. We can attend rallies to support causes we believe in, or write (polite) letters to the editor (including this one). We can establish "Ask a Musician" programs in our orchestras and then volunteer to interact with the audience. We can play concerts to raise money for earthquake victims or cancer research. We can participate. 



On a recent visit to Chicago, Chairperson Bruce Ridge met with the musicians of the Chicago Lyric Opera Orchestra before their performance of *Carousel*, including those pictured here (l to r): Peter Labella, Marguerite Lynn Williams, William Cernota, ICSOM GB MAL Matthew Comerford, Melissa Trier Kirk, Lewis Kirk, and Collins Trier



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