

Senza Sordino

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Harmonizing Syracuse

By Linda Carmona

The decision to rebrand Symphoria as The Syracuse Orchestra marks a significant milestone in our ensemble's 11-year journey. Symphoria established itself as a cooperative orchestra following the dissolution of the Syracuse Symphony Orchestra in 2011. The determination of the original members who formed the cooperative made possible both the importance of integrating music into the cultural fabric of Syracuse and the fair treatment of its musicians.

When the COVID-19 pandemic began, we (Symphoria) had just appointed a new executive director who collaborated tirelessly with the musicians to continue to provide the Syracuse community with the healing power of music. Once the state/local governments allowed gatherings large enough for us to perform, we played in clusters, augmented by innovative "shields" our crew and staff created out of marine canvas in order to help mitigate any spread of the virus. This allowed us to perform our entire 2021–2022 season virtually and even to extend our reach beyond Syracuse. Orchestra members called every ticket holder personally to thank them for their patronage. The connection to the community that evolved out of the COVID experience became one of the motivating factors to change our name. We now want to acknowledge the Syracuse community directly, and we also want people to know who and where we are!

As a co-op, our orchestra navigates a unique relationship with our administration. Our Musicians' Committee meets weekly and works closely with the administration in every facet of the organization. We have five musicians on the Board of Directors with a representative on every committee. Musicians work in Development, Operations, Library, and Personnel departments. All major decisions made by the administration are shared with the Musicians' Committee, and anything that affects the musician, or targets a gray area in our CBA or Bylaws is discussed and approved through the Musicians' Committee. Having players on both sides of the fence keeps communications open and flowing. This was a goal of our founding members and has provided a great benefit to the organization in practice.

The Syracuse Orchestra's season includes eight Masterworks concerts, five Pops concerts, four Casual



Erin Velasco

concerts with a smaller chamber orchestra, a Sparks series (a themed series with an informal flair), and a children's series.

We also are building a virtual/interactive chamber music program for elementary school children and a healthcare community service program called Healing Harmonies. Our administration in collaboration with the Musicians' Committee is working to expand Healing Harmonies into the workplace as well as offering "Yoga with The Syracuse Orchestra". Each of these represents a bold and innovative step for the orchestra, showcasing its commitment to exploring new avenues of revenue and engagement with the community.

This spring, The Syracuse Orchestra is exploring a residency at Destiny USA mall in an innovative, versatile performance space. Destiny USA is the fifth largest mall in the US and sees upwards of 16 million visitors a year. This promises to be a dynamic and inclusive cultural experience for us and the community. By hosting a variety of concerts celebrating diversity, we expect to demonstrate our commitment to engaging audiences of all backgrounds and interests. The residency will also include chamber music performances, contemplation/meditation hours with live music, and unique opportunities to experience the orchestra in more intimate settings and explore the therapeutic power of music. There will also be a speaker series called "Coffee with The Syracuse Orchestra," providing a platform for engaging discussions and deeper connections between the orchestra and the community it serves.

Rebranding to The Syracuse Orchestra reflects a renewed focus on community engagement and underscores the orchestra's commitment to serving as a vital cultural institution in Syracuse. Through our diverse programming and collaborative initiatives, we, The Syracuse Orchestra, are poised to make a meaningful and lasting impact on the cultural landscape of the region.



More In This Issue

Chairperson's Report	
<i>Beyond the Annual Conference</i>	2
President's Report	
<i>Back Pocket Stories</i>	3
MTT and the SFS	
<i>Our Final Mahler Concerts Together</i>	4
Pushing for a Full Orchestra	
<i>The Hard Work of Filling Positions</i>	5
How Senza Sordino Works	6



**THE
SYRACUSE
ORCHESTRA**

Chairperson's Report Beyond the Annual Conference

by Keith Carrick

On behalf of the Governing Board, I am excited to report about our preparations for the 62nd annual ICSOM Conference, set to take place from August 21–24 in Portland, OR. The agenda boasts diverse presentations, covering crucial topics such as Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; tackling issues like sexual harassment; and exploring strategies for internal organizing. In addition to these sessions, delegates will have ample opportunities to address their own topics through town halls and breakout discussions and immerse themselves in the culture of Portland.

Reflecting on my own experiences as a delegate, I can say that attending ICSOM conferences was always a highlight. Far beyond mere meetings, these gatherings are characterized by high-value content and meaningful interactions. The real power of the conference comes when individuals from different orchestras unite under a common purpose. Whether engaging in discussions on industry challenges, exchanging best practices, or strategizing, there is an unmistakable sense of community and solidarity permeating the room.

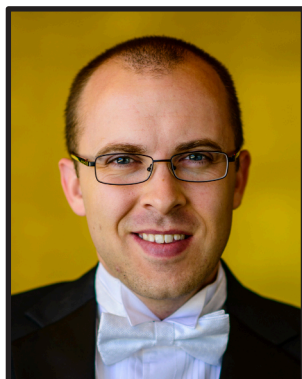
An important aspect of these conferences is the opportunity to gain insights from seasoned delegates. Their wisdom and experiences are invaluable resources for personal and professional growth. Furthermore, visiting the hometown of another ICSOM orchestra offers a unique chance to experience their community and culture, fostering a deeper appreciation for the music we collectively create.

Each conference serves as a treasure trove of knowledge and inspiration. One never knows which discussion or workshop will leave the most profound impact or offer timely insights. Attending these conferences always renewed my enthusiasm and optimism.

However, amidst the excitement, delivering the content of ICSOM conferences to our members remains a persistent challenge. While delegates are tasked with relaying information to their orchestras, the question arises: should certain information be directly distributed to our members, and if so, what's the most effective method?

In response to this challenge, the Governing Board recently organized a zoom presentation titled "From Dialogue to Action: Preparing to Negotiate DEI Goals." Facilitated by Jessica Schmidt of Orchestrate Inclusion and ICSOM Counsel Kevin Case, this session delivered conference-quality insights to our members mid-season.

The primary objective of this presentation was to prompt all musicians to contemplate the necessary steps for successfully negotiating changes in our CBAs to promote greater diversity within our orchestras. The response was encouraging, with



Scott Jarvie



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Conference continues on page 5

President's Report

Back Pocket Stories

by Paul Austin

As ICSOM President, I have had the privilege of meeting and interacting with many musicians. Here are three that come to mind whenever I need a moment to be inspired and encouraged about our future.



Paul Austin

Violinist Clara Schubilske

Before starting her job with the Grand Rapids Symphony last fall, I learned that, impressively, violinist Clara Schubilske had already read and studied our CBA. Growing up in Minneapolis, her mother served on the negotiation committee during the sixteen-month lockout of the Minnesota Orchestra that began in October 2012. One would imagine that this shaped Clara's view of the importance of musician involvement.

Clara's GRS colleagues have made a concerted effort to mentor her during the tenure process, and she already has immersed herself in the community.



Barb Corbato

Rise and Shine! Clara and Orchestra Committee member Jinn Shin perform at a GRSMA community activity for the St Mark's Breakfast Café, early on a recent Saturday morning.

Violist Rebecca Matayoshi

Last spring I interviewed the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra's current ICSOM delegate, violist Rebecca Matayoshi, for our "Musician Profiles: Celebrating Racial Diversity" series (https://www.icsom.org/media/profiles.php?dei_videoID=16). A few months later, we were glad to finally meet in person at the 2023 conference in Milwaukee, and at the end of the week, I was pleased that Rebecca accepted our offer to oversee ICSOM's Instagram page.

As part of that role, Rebecca oversees ICSOM's "Orchestra of the Week" social media initiative, contacting delegates for content and photos. Many of our Instagram and Facebook followers have noted and liked her beautiful writings about our orchestras.



Rebecca Matayoshi

Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra Delegate Rebecca Matayoshi takes a selfie at the 2023 ICSOM Conference in Milwaukee, WI.

Tubist Cameron Hall

Cameron Hall, the first recipient of our Boston University Tanglewood Institute (BUTI) scholarship for high school students, is a musician to watch. And I do mean this literally. Please watch our interview with Cameron from our monthly DEI video series and take note of his comments about how ICSOM's BUTI scholarship will make a difference to the lives of others.

When Cameron speaks about his love for orchestral music, and especially his enthusiasm for Mahler's Sixth Symphony, one cannot help but share in his joy. Now a freshman tuba performance major at the University of Miami Frost School of Music, we are thrilled that Cameron boosted his training with the valuable experience of having worked with the Boston Symphony Orchestra musicians last summer.

Every orchestra membership generates stories like these, and I encourage you to keep a few in your back pocket whenever you or others around you need a boost.



Boston University Tanglewood Institute

Tubist Cameron Hall poses with members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra at Tanglewood.

MTT and the SFS

Our Final Mahler Concerts Together

By Barbara Bogatin

In January 1974, a vibrant, 30-year-old conductor stepped onto the podium at the War Memorial Opera House and conducted the San Francisco Symphony in a knock-out performance of the Ninth Symphony by Gustav Mahler. On January 27, 2024, fifty years seemed to have passed in the blink of an eye as Michael Tilson Thomas again stood before the SFS, and with bittersweet gratitude evident in every well-honed gesture, conducted the same composer's Fifth Symphony in the final subscription concert of his long tenure with "his" orchestra. The aggressive brain cancer that was diagnosed in 2021 was no impediment to the depth of care and love that MTT imbued in each phrase of Mahler's monumental masterpiece.



Although I was hired by Herbert Blomstedt in his final year as Music Director, MTT granted my tenure in the cello section shortly after he arrived in 1995. How lucky I was to be given a front-row seat to the entirety of his wild and crazy ride with us. During the 25 years he was Music Director, MTT forged a partnership with the Orchestra inspired by his eclectic musical creativity, innovative ideas, and a deeply rooted commitment to education for the world community.

Early on, MTT championed the works of under-appreciated American composers, unapologetically introducing an unsuspecting audience (and orchestra!) to mavericks like Lou Harrison, Terry Riley, Carl Ruggles, Henry Brant, Edgar Varèse, and John Cage. Our American Mavericks Festival tour of 2012 was an unparalleled success, as it was hailed by Amanda Keil in *bachtrack.com* "one of the most memorable, intelligently programmed, and brilliantly played concerts of the season." In bringing the eccentric theater piece *Song Books* by John Cage on this tour, MTT gave what was surely the debut performance of an electric blender on the stage of Carnegie Hall.

MTT masterminded a television series for PBS called *Keeping Score*, nine historical musical investigations of masterworks from Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony to Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*, with a two-part episode dedicated to the life and works of Gustav Mahler. In these productions, MTT traveled the world to uncover each composer's origins and influences, shining an entertaining and insightful light on the mysteries of their creative process rarely revealed to those outside the music profession. He took concepts initiated by Leonard Bernstein's legendary Young People's Concerts and combined them with state-of-the-art audio and video technology, to yield new dimensions of musical exploration.

Another of his visionary innovations, our SoundBox multimedia, multi-stage, curated concerts are performed in a renovated rehearsal space converted into a nightclub venue.

An intimate acoustic environment is created with the aid of the Meyer Sound Constellation audio system. Each presentation welcomes new and younger audiences to Davies Symphony Hall and continues to expand the demographic for symphonic music in San Francisco.


But it was the music of Mahler that has always been the connective tissue between MTT and us musicians. His approach is both unique and very personal. The first time I played Mahler's Fifth Symphony with MTT many years ago, he announced at the outset, "This interpretation will be different from what you're used to...think of the music as originating from much further East..." Mahler was raised in a small insular Jewish community in Bohemia, and MTT mined influences of this cultural heritage in the music's emotional shape-shifting from old-world village charm to snarky cynicism to kvetching or anguished longing in a single melody. He harnessed the theatrical lineage from his grandparents, Yiddish theater stars Bessie and Boris Thomashefsky, to bring the music's dramatic gestures and colorful characters to life.

As the MTT-Mahler partnership grew, the SFS embarked upon a recording project that became a compendium of all of Mahler's orchestral works, garnering seven Grammy awards. In 2011, the composer's centennial year, we were invited to perform three of his symphonies at the prestigious Musikverein Concert Hall in Vienna, the only American orchestra so honored. This remarkable recognition of our formidable Mahler interpretations was an acknowledgement of the depth of understanding that had grown between a modern California orchestra and its quintessentially American conductor.



Barbara Bogatin with Michael Tilson Thomas at a concert celebrating the conductor's 70th birthday in 2014.

As our final week together drew to a close in January, I was moved to revisit the *Keeping Score* episode “Origins and Legacy of Gustav Mahler.” In the video, MTT talks about the emotional power of this music and poignantly asks, “Why do we cry when we hear something beautiful? It’s because we fear it’s too beautiful, too beautiful to last. This is an essential quality of Mahler’s music, remembering that sense of beauty and wonder, the wonder that in spite of life’s bitterness and sorrow, we must always hold on to...Mahler teaches us to cherish the wonder of each moment.”

Through his dedication to this music, MTT reminds us of that truth. 

Pushing for a Full Orchestra The Hard Work of Filling Positions

By Greg Mulligan

At the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, we are navigating a long and winding road back to deploying a full stage of full-time musicians!

From the 1970s until 2003, the Baltimore Symphony consisted of 96 onstage musicians and two librarians, all 98 of whom were in the bargaining unit. In 2003 Baltimore Symphony Musicians allowed four vacancies “on a temporary basis” for the first time in a concessionary agreement before eventually agreeing in a July 2008 MOU to fill those four vacancies by the end of the 2010–11 season.

Two months later, the Great Recession began.

Four successive concessionary agreements rapidly ensued, mostly in the form of extensions to the original three-year agreement with pay freezes and then pay cuts included. We musicians were so focused on limiting the damage caused by the reduction of compensation that we didn’t focus enough on the erosion of our complement. Vacancies began to occur, and auditions were scheduled for those deemed important enough to fill. By 2013, the Baltimore Symphony consisted of 80 onstage musicians and two librarians. In September 2013 a new, three-year agreement mandated a minimum of 83 musicians.

But maintaining even that minimum complement became difficult. BSO management was responsible for scheduling auditions, and they showed no sense of urgency. When we pointed out that the agreement said that 83 was the minimum number, we were told that the BSO couldn’t afford more than 83. To management, 83 was the maximum number. And because it isn’t possible to predict the exact timing of retirements and musicians leaving for other jobs, the BSO never maintained the required 83 musicians during this three-year agreement.

In 2016–17 and 2017–18, the BSO and Baltimore Symphony musicians signed successive one-year contracts, this




Brian Precht

time with salary increases but without increases in the number of musicians. After our 2018 summer tour of Edinburgh, London, and Dublin, we returned to Baltimore only to be told that we would need to take a 20% cut in our compensation. We played and talked for most of the 2018–19 season, but in June 2019, our board and management locked us out, claiming an inability to continue to pay our salaries over the summer. After a 14-week lockout, we returned to work in September 2019 with yet another one-year agreement.

Then COVID happened. By the time we returned to the stage to perform for live audiences again in the fall of 2021, the number of musicians in the Baltimore Symphony had dropped to the low 70s.


Thankfully, we ratified a more progressive five-year agreement in August 2020, with plans to gradually increase the complement of the orchestra, reaching 85 tenure track musicians by the 2024–25 season. Implementation hasn’t been easy. Despite the valiant efforts of our personnel office, union stewards, and various audition committees to hire musicians as quickly as possible, the complement still remains lower than the contractually-obligated number of musicians. However, one great improvement achieved in our current agreement is that the Baltimore Symphony is required to hire enough one-year musicians to bring the complement up to the minimum number each season when the organization lacks the required number of tenure-track musicians. One-year musicians also now receive 100% of the salary and benefits that tenure-track musicians receive.

We have scheduled many auditions for the 2023–24 season. With persistence, patience, and a little good fortune, we continue to strive to have a fuller symphony orchestra here in Baltimore. And one thing we have learned the hard way: be careful of what you agree to give up. It’s hard to get it back! 

Conference continued from page 2

approximately 50 members—beyond just delegates—in attendance. The presentation was a fusion of insights into member engagement on DEI matters by Jessica Schmidt and their integration with negotiation processes by Kevin Case. The ensuing Q&A session underscored the significance of such presentations in fostering dialogue toward building a more inclusive orchestral community.

We plan to make this an annual event, delivering presentations directly to all of our members mid-season. Look for future communications from your ICSOM delegate regarding these presentations. If you have specific topics or areas of interest you’d like us to address, don’t hesitate to relay them to your delegate—the Governing Board is eager to consider your suggestions.

Our overarching goal is to equip our members with the knowledge and tools necessary to navigate the complexities of orchestral life. Initiatives like these serve as stepping stones, empowering all our members to become more actively involved and engaged. However, our work is only as effective as its reach. Please consider attending ICSOM events whenever possible, and I look forward to working with all of you soon. 

How Senza Sordino Works

By Mike Muszynski, ICSOM Editor

Just prior to the 2023 ICSOM Conference in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, my predecessor, Peter de Boor, and I made a visit to Colonial Quality Printing (CQP) where we got to tour the facility that does the printing of *Senza Sordino* and the ICSOM Directory. Printing represents the final step for an issue of *Senza Sordino*, and before I discuss what goes on in the shop, I want to describe the process of getting to that point.

Generally, a fellow ICSOM member will enthusiastically suggest a great idea that they want to share in an article (or, often, I will suggest to someone that a recent event could make a good article if it were to be shared from the perspective of an orchestra musician). When the submission comes in, I upload the copy—that is, the actual words written—to Google Docs and make suggestions as to what might need to be changed, letting me discuss back and forth with the author (or authors) in a centralized location.

Once we are satisfied with the article, ICSOM Counsel Kevin Case provides a legal review (and often a gut check, as he has a keen eye about statements that—while they may be technically legal—may require adjustments in wording or



Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra

tone to avoid bias or other implications that could problems in your workplace). At this point, the copy also gets a once-over from Jennifer Roop, a professional copy editor—and a college friend I worked with at *The Daily Northwestern*.

From here, the article copy and any associated images must be inserted into the layout design in Affinity Publisher, our design software. After all of the layout has been created, a PDF of the issue goes to the Governing Board for any last corrections. Once those corrections are made, I send a PDF to CQP for printing, along with a distribution list generated by the online directory.

As I mentioned earlier, ICSOM has been using Colonial Quality Printing in Milwaukee since 2014. Owner John McAdams helped immensely during my first term as editor and continues doing great work for us. When the 2023 conference was scheduled, I wrote to John and asked if we could tour the shop.

One thing was certain as soon as Peter and I walked in the shop—John has a passion for printing. John mentioned a few times when we met that, while they do a large volume of printing, CQP is a small space. Still, the shop is packed with machines that handle a wide variety of printing services for most of the trade unions in Wisconsin, including the IBEW, Operating Engineers, Iron Workers, Plumbers, and many others. Despite this volume of work, John and I find time to fit *Senza Sordino* into the queue once each issue is ready.

Personally, my favorite part of the tour came when we got to inspect the machine that actually prints *Senza Sordino*. Since switching us to a color process in December 2022, each page is printed with each of four colors: cyan, magenta, yellow, and black (also known as “key,” which explains the ink-



The four-color printing press that puts the actual ink on the pages of *Senza Sordino* that you are holding in your hands currently!



One of the parts of the press that transfers ink onto the paper. Note the various cylindrical drums. As paper is fed through the machine, the drums will transfer a specific pattern of ink to the page—in this case, red ink.

color acronym CYMK). The prints are created by generating a “plate” with the specific ink pattern for each color. Ink is rolled onto each page as the paper is pressed against the plate, once for each color. Each sheet contains a print of two corresponding pages (and because our publication is folded, the front page and the back page are printed on the same side of one sheet of paper), which then needs to dry before the opposite side can be printed.

Colors are not combined directly on the page, but instead printed in patterns that fool your eye into thinking that they have combined. Relative strength of the color is determined by how large the tiny colored shapes are, since smaller-sized shapes will allow more white paper to be seen. Your eyes fill in the gaps for you. In fact, if you are reading this in print, you can prove this effect by inspecting the photos with a magnifying glass or a loupe.

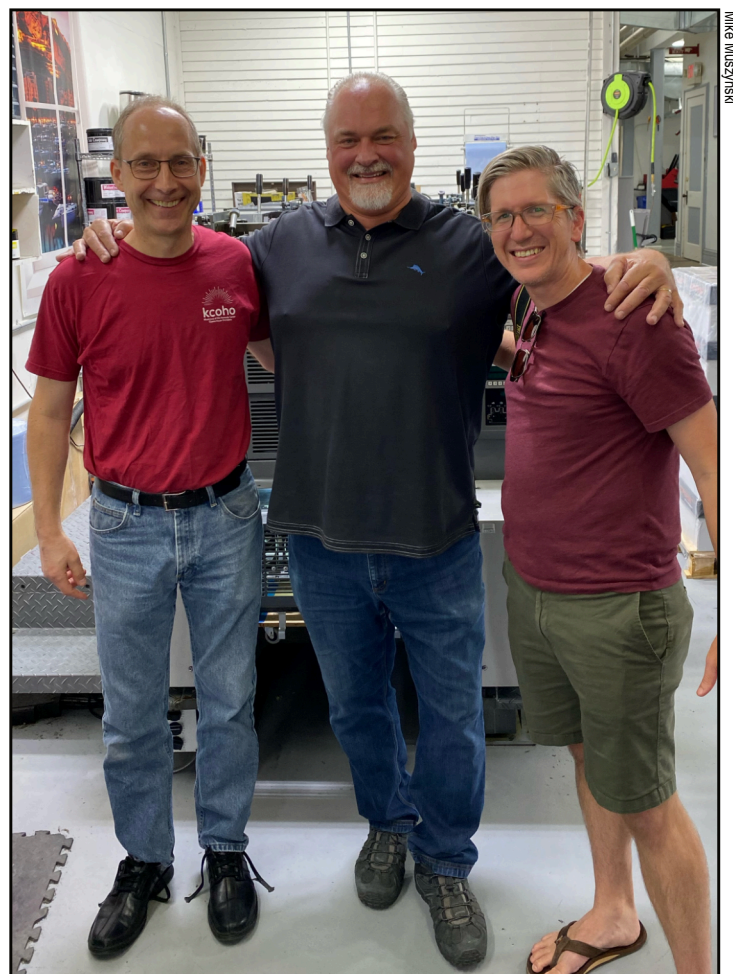


Peter de Boer inspects the pattern of miniscule shapes that fool your eye into thinking you are looking at a photograph of Mike Muszynski. You can see these patterns for yourself by inspecting any photo in this issue with a magnifying glass or a loupe.

After printing, the pages are folded and bound together—a task that is fairly simple for Senza, but complicated for something such as the ICSOM directory. Finally, CQP addresses the individual copies and boxes according to the distribution lists and mails them to ICSOM members and delegates.

In order to completely finish the publication of an issue, there are a couple of final steps, including publishing the issue digitally at icsom.org/senzasordino and sending an email version to those who have opted out of print publication. These final steps take a few days, but they allow for a wider publication of *Senza Sordino* not only on our website and email, but also through digital platforms such as Instagram and Facebook—thanks to Paul Austin and Rebecca Matayoshi.

From the start of each issue to its publication, *Senza Sordino* represents a collaboration between many different people: the authors of each article, the editors and Governing Board who help refine those articles, our counsel, our printer at CQP, the publishers of our website and social media accounts, and the delegates who ensure accurate addresses and distribution information. For me, this collaboration between so many different people makes each issue of *Senza* special, and I look forward to seeing the culmination of that work each time a printed copy arrives at my door.



John McAdams (center) poses for a photo with past ICSOM Editor Peter de Boer (left) and current ICSOM Editor Mike Muszynski at Colonial Quality Printing just prior to the start of the 2023 ICSOM Conference in Milwaukee, WI



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