

# Senza Sordino

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## New York Philharmonic Goes to Pyongyang

by Kenneth Mirkin

**O**n February 7, 2008, the New York Philharmonic embarked on a three-week tour of Asia, playing 13 concerts in Taipei, Kaohsiung, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Beijing, Pyongyang, and Seoul. It was an emotional roller coaster that few of us were prepared for.

When the Philharmonic first received an invitation from the North Korean government (otherwise known as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, or DPRK) in August 2007, our management had to consider whether it might be a prank. The matter was discussed with the State Department and the Korea Society, a non-partisan group that promotes dialogue between the two Koreas, and it was determined that the invitation was indeed serious. Management responded that we would consider such a trip only with the full support of the State Department and that we could not yet make any commitments.

Somehow, the invitation leaked into the press while the orchestra was on vacation in August, and many of us read about it in the *New York Times*. Most of us considered it to be one of many bizarre rumors that gets into the papers and didn't think too much about it. When we returned from our vacation in September, Philharmonic Executive Director Zarin Mehta met with the tour committee and informed us that he was indeed considering a concert in North Korea's capital, Pyongyang, and that he had been in contact with Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill about the potential trip. Ambassador Hill was an old friend of the Philharmonic from our previous trips to South Korea, when he had served as U.S. Ambassador to South Korea. He was now serving as the head of the U.S. delegation to the six-party talks on the North Korean nuclear issue. Ambassador Hill felt that progress was being made with North Korea and that the time was right to have some type of cultural exchange to help warm up relations.

Zarin decided to make an exploratory trip to Pyongyang in October. He was accompanied by tour committee member Fiona Simon, Director of Public Relations Eric Latzky, Operations Coordinator Brendan Timins, and TravTours President Guido Frakers. After they returned from their trip with a positive outlook on the potential concert, it was time to discuss it with the orchestra, which was still in the dark due to the sensitivity of the issue.

The announcement was met with a combination of shock, horror, dread, and amusement. How could we even consider a trip to a country with one of the worst human rights records in the world? What about the safety of our many South Korean colleagues? Wouldn't Kim Jong-il use this concert as propaganda to help boost his own deadly and corrupt regime? The Philharmonic played in the Soviet Union in 1959, and the Philadelphia Orchestra made a groundbreaking trip to China in 1973; but U.S. presidents had previously visited those countries, and dialogues had already begun. Somehow, this felt very different and much more distasteful. The questions went on and on, and Zarin seemed to be caught off guard by the orchestra's concerns. Christopher Hill agreed to speak with the orchestra, and the larger issues were put on hold until Ambassador Hill could meet with us a couple of weeks later. Frankly, many orchestra members were suspicious of Hill because of the political nature of his position, but he immediately won the orchestra over with his candor and common sense.

There were still doubts in many of our minds about the concert, but the decision was made to tag on an extra two days to our scheduled China tour in February. We had only three months to put all the details together. The orchestra made it clear that, as a condition of our performance in Pyongyang, we would have to be able to meet with local students and musicians, and the concert would have to be broadcast on television and radio within North Korea. Only 1,500 of the party elite would be able to fit into the East Pyongyang Grand Theater. Though we had no control over who would be invited to the concert, we did insist on opening up the dress rehearsal to students, musicians and teachers. We were also able to set up master classes at the music school and joint chamber music sessions with North Korean musicians.

The final issue to be settled was the flight from Beijing to Pyongyang. The North Korean airline, Koryo, was considered too unsafe for the orchestra, so we had to find a respectable charter. In January, Zarin made a final trip to China, Pyongyang, and Seoul. He was able to

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## Chairperson's Report by Bruce Ridge



In the immortal words of Roseanne Roseannadanna, "It's always something."

No sooner had I returned from a whirlwind three-day visit to Jacksonville—a trip that saw a settlement of the egregious lockout of the musicians of the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra—than we heard disturbing news from the Midwest. The board and management of the Columbus Symphony had secretly devised an insidious "plan" to decimate that great orchestra and turn back the progress of a 56-year investment the citizens of central Ohio had made in their orchestra.

But first, the good news.

On December 4, ICSOM issued a *Call to Action* to our members to help save the Jacksonville Symphony (JSO), and, once again, you responded. In a five-week period that encompassed the holiday season, the musicians of North America sent nearly \$100,000 to assist the JSO Players' Association in their battle. Ninety-four percent of ICSOM orchestras participated in this campaign, and support was also sent by our friends in OCSM, RMA, ROPA, and TMA.

This latest *Call to Action* again demonstrated the power of collective action and sent a message far and wide that wherever an orchestra is in need, the members of ICSOM will rise to their aid. The donations and letters of support poured in from across the United States and Canada, making an irrefutable statement to the management and board in Jacksonville that this was indeed a national issue.

But the real heroes are the musicians of the JSO and the citizens of Jacksonville. Time and time again the audience turned out for benefit concerts as they evinced a belief in their orchestra. The musicians stood with their leadership through many difficult moments, and they can now look ahead to what should be a very bright future.

Everywhere I went in Jacksonville I met citizens who professed their pride in their orchestra, as well as their desire to see that orchestra grow so it can serve all of Northeast Florida in new and innovative ways. There was tremendous support for the musicians, and winning the public relations effort was key to the settlement. The citizens were tired of the negative portrayal of the future of the arts in their city, and they were hungry for the positive message from the musicians and ICSOM.

Crucial to this effort was the support of our ICSOM orchestras. Had our member orchestras not answered the *Call to Action*, there was a very real possibility that the JSO might have met its demise as the orchestra we have come to know. Instead, the JSO is returning to the stage of their beautiful concert hall and is working toward a better future as it builds on its historic past.

In my address to the delegates of the 2007 ICSOM Conference in Minneapolis, I said: "We should be ever vigilant in seeking  
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## Secretary's Report

by Laura Ross



In December I attended the Recording Musicians Association (RMA) conference that was held in Nashville. (How convenient for me!) This conference is very intimate, with guests sometimes outnumbering the delegates!

During the RMA conference, Maureen Kilkelly, Executive Director of the American Federation of Musicians and Employers Pension Fund (AFM-EPF, or the Fund), gave a very informative presentation. It was interesting to hear about the percentage of contributions received versus the amount of wages reported. Much of the recording income and contributions derived from recording work (TV, motion picture, jingles, and audio recording) are broken down by work type, and contributions average between 2 percent and 5 percent of total Fund contributions for each contract type.

Fifty percent of the the wages reported to the Fund are from symphonic sources, and they are responsible for 39 percent of the total Fund contributions. Surprisingly, 20 percent of the Fund's contributions come from casual engagements. I can only assume this large number is due, in part, to the recent introduction of the LS-1 form. This form, available to any member of the AFM, allows musicians, bands, pick-up orchestras, and others to receive pension contributions for concerts, weddings, shows, parties, etc. This has been especially successful in locals where pension may not be included in their "Miscellaneous Scale Wage" charts.

Maureen also spoke about the past few years' changes to the AFM-EPF's multiplier as well as some of the reasons for those reductions. One point of interest related to the trustees' application to the IRS for an amortization extension. One IRS requirement included a prohibition on benefit improvements for 30 years. Because the IRS requirements were unacceptable, in the end the trustees chose to lower the multiplier a second time (on April 1, 2007). This was done to ensure that the Fund would not have a funding deficiency through 2042 (based, of course, on all the actuarial assumptions). By the trustees' refusing to accept a freeze on benefits for such a long period of time, we might see a multiplier or other benefit increase sometime in the future, hopefully long before 30 years passes us by.

Many were not aware of a requirement to name a primary beneficiary (on a form available from the AFM-EPF office) and to keep that information current at all times. That includes participants who have not yet begun receiving pension benefits as well as participants who started receiving pension benefits before normal retirement age (usually age 65) and who then continued to earn additional pension benefits before achieving age 65 (what the Fund calls a *re-retirement* benefit). The pre-retirement death benefit was changed effective in January 1, 2004, and that change was significant. Now, the spouse or other designated beneficiary of a vested participant

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## Member at Large Report

by Paul Gunther

### ICSOM and Education

Education was the topic for a breakout session at last summer's ICSOM Conference. The ICSOM Governing Board heard a clear mandate to address this topic further. In an effort to address the need for our colleagues to remain informed about education and how it impacts our institutions, *Senza Sordino* will continue to produce articles exploring various aspects of education in music and the arts, both in general and as it pertains to the lives of performing musicians.

Further, the Governing Board is exploring the possibility of forming an education committee. Such a committee would research and report on relevant education-related topics. The committee's aim would be to pinpoint issues, to create recommendations, and to present an action plan to the Governing Board. While we know there are others, here are some potential topics of interest that impact arts education: arts funding, student orchestras (both public and private), the Sphinx Organization, public school arts enrollment, the NEA, grant opportunities, government lobbying, medical and sociological research, successful programs at home and abroad, the business of arts and education.

The Governing Board considers arts education in general, and music education in particular, to be crucial not only to our own futures as performing musicians but, perhaps even more importantly, to our future generations' quality of life. While there is a wealth of information about arts education itself as well as a body of research that supports its importance, that information is not particularly well organized or easy to obtain.

Our entire ICSOM membership stands at a cultural crossroads, ironically struggling for dollars and concertgoers in a nation that is both wealthy and culturally knowledgeable. We are committed to doing what is in our power to further the cause of music education for artists and audience alike. We hope and believe that this can lead to successful orchestras in thriving communities, and to a richer nation.

If you would be interested in participating in this effort, or if you know someone in your orchestra who would be interested, please contact your ICSOM delegate or any ICSOM Governing Board member.

*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.

## Orchestra Newslets

*Newslets are compiled with the help of ICSOM's delegates and members at large from sources that include direct submissions, member orchestra websites, and topical news items. The editor encourages input and submissions.*

In January, months before contract negotiations were to begin, the management and the board of the **Columbus Symphony Orchestra** publicly issued a 50-page strategic plan proclaiming that the orchestra's financial problems would be best solved by firing 22 musicians at the end of the summer, thus reducing the number of full-time core musicians from 53 to 31. They also announced their intent to exact a 30 percent wage reduction from the remaining 31 musicians by cutting the current 46-week season by 12 weeks. Their plan was developed in secret over several months. Musicians learned of the plan by reading about it in the newspaper. The musicians and the local union have stated publicly that they will not accept any firings, even if that means the end of the orchestra and the loss of all jobs.

Doug Fisher, Local 103 president and CSO bassoonist, said that CSO musicians voted to make a live recording of standard Tchaikovsky repertoire to memorialize the achievements of their orchestra, now at its artistic peak after decades of development. Music Director Junichi Hirokami, who publicly condemned the board/management plan despite possible career consequences, will conduct. The recording is being personally underwritten by the former board chair, Gene D'Angelo, father of actress Beverly D'Angelo and grandfather of her twins with actor Al Pacino.

Following a series of payroll problems that started in October 2007, musicians of the **Honolulu Symphony Orchestra** were told on December 13 that paychecks scheduled for the next day would not be issued, that the symphony was insolvent, and that there would be no further payroll paid until some time in January at the earliest.

Since that time, HSO Musicians have been playing with pay delayed by as much as five weeks. The HSO musicians' emergency fund has extended loans to players who have needed assistance in getting through this challenging time. The hardship has been too much for some, though. They've had to travel off-island in order to find work. Paychecks have been issued sporadically, and HSO management has not been able to give a firm timetable on any future pay.

According to Honolulu's orchestra committee chair, Paul Barrett, HSO musicians are encouraged by significant community support, including \$450,000 in public donations in response to media coverage of the crisis and a well-attended rally in support of the musicians organized by students of the Hawaii Youth Symphony. The Honolulu orchestra committee continues to consult with ICSOM Counsel Lenny Leibowitz and the officers of Local 677 as it carefully monitors the situation.

The **Detroit Symphony** is looking forward to Leonard Slatkin's April return to Detroit for his first concert series since being named music director. Even before Slatkin's tenure as music director begins in September, he has already begun meeting with orchestra and staff members and helping plan future seasons.

The DSO is grateful to Honda Motor Company for its generous \$1 million grant for education programs. The grant, to be paid out over five years, will fund ensemble experience and private beginning string instruction in underserved local communities. Delegate Brian Ventura says that the grant will enhance the Detroit Symphony's already strong support for music education, which currently includes a total of 10 civic orchestras, wind, jazz, and chamber ensembles.

The **Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra** has been engaged in an endowment campaign with a \$30 million goal since fall 2005. Then, BPO's endowment stood between \$6 million and \$7 million, which placed the BPO 35th among U.S. orchestras in endowment size.

Buffalo's ICSOM delegate, Robert Prokes, notes that the campaign was in a "quiet" phase until the season opening gala concert in September 2007, when it was announced that \$13 million in cash and pledges had already been secured. The campaign currently stands at \$18 million in cash and pledges, of which \$8.4 million was raised from board and former board members.

The endowment campaign recently received a \$6 million challenge from a private foundation. If a total of \$24 million is raised by the end of the year, the foundation will add \$6 million to complete the endowment drive. The chair of the endowment campaign is the current chair of the Buffalo Philharmonic Board of Trustees, Dr. Angelo Fatta.

The **Chicago Symphony's** new in-house recording label, CSO Resound, has just released its third CD, *Traditions and Transformations: Sounds of Silk Road Chicago*, according to Delegate Rachel Goldstein. In December, CSO Resound released its first download-only recording, Shostakovich's Symphony No. 5, which was an immediate success on iTunes.

The CSO launched three new concert series two years ago: a rush hour series, a Friday night film music series, and a lecture/multimedia series called *Beyond the Score*. While the rush hour concerts have not been particularly popular, the other two series have been quite successful, and *Beyond the Score* has received critical acclaim. Its website, [www.beyondthescore.org](http://www.beyondthescore.org), provides free video downloads of the lecture/demonstration portion of the concert (produced under the Symphony, Opera, and Ballet Audio-Visual Agreement).

Ticket sales for the **Oregon Symphony** this season have already surpassed \$5 million. According to Oregon's delegate, Dolores D'Aigle, that's almost half a million dollars better than they were doing at the same time last year. The success marks a change in direction for ticket sales in Portland, which were in decline for the last five years. This season has also seen an increase in average paid attendance at Oregon Symphony's home, the Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall. It is up a whopping 20.5 percent over last season.

**The Florida Orchestra** ratified a three-year contract in December. The agreement's concessionary tone reflected a seven-year erosion in subscriptions and chronic long- and short-term debt that hobbled the institutional cash flow.

TFO Player's Committee Chair Harold Van Schaik explained that the agreement was contingent upon a multiyear bridge fund as well as board and management accountability benchmarks, all of which have been met or exceeded thus far. The \$6.5 million bridge fund goal is nearly two-thirds complete, and the 2008–2009 season subscription renewal campaign was launched in mid-February—four weeks earlier than usual and ten weeks earlier than last year. For the first time in many years, TFO also successfully navigated through the tight-cash-flow months of December through March without tapping into lines of credit or endowment loans.

The board and the administration are continuing a “retooling” to improve quality and efficiency in areas of institutional advocacy, marketing, and fundraising. Although TFO still has a long way to go on its road to recovery, if these past few months are an indication of what is to come, they seem to be headed in the right direction.

The Recording Academy announced three Grammy Awards for the **Nashville Symphony** and its music advisor, Leonard Slatkin, for *Made in America*, a CD of works by American composer Joan Tower. The orchestra won in the categories of Best Classical Album and Best Orchestral Performance, with the third award going to Tower for Best Classical Contemporary Composition (*Made in America*).

In a long list of firsts, this was the first Grammy win for the orchestra as well as its first project with Music Advisor Leonard Slatkin for the Naxos American Classics series. The CD, which includes Tower's *Tambor* and *Concerto for Orchestra*, was the first recording made by the orchestra in the new Schermerhorn Symphony Center. The title piece, *Made in America*, was the first composition resulting from a project known as “Ford Made in America.” The 65 participating orchestras, smaller-budget orchestras from all 50 states, jointly commission and individually perform the project's works. The project is spearheaded by the League of American Orchestras and

Meet the Composer, with major support from the Ford Motor Company Fund and the National Endowment for the Arts. Joseph Schwantner has been selected to write the next commissioned work for the project.

In addition to four previous Grammy nominations, the Nashville Symphony also received a Regional Emmy award in the Special Event/Live category at the 2008 Midsouth Regional Emmy Awards for *One Symphony Place*, a live broadcast of the Schermerhorn Symphony Center opening. Other nominees for this year's Grammy Awards included **Atlanta Symphony, Boston Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, and Minnesota Orchestra**. Nashville's delegate, Brad Mansell, says that it was truly an honor for his orchestra to be nominated along with those orchestras.

The **San Francisco Symphony's** *Adventures in Music* (AIM) program is celebrating its 20th year of providing music education to students in the San Francisco Unified School District. Believed to be the longest-running program of its kind among U.S. orchestras, AIM reached more than 22,000 children during the 2006–2007 season. Cathy Payne, San Francisco Symphony delegate and ICOSM member at large, reports that each year the SFS Education Department creates a curriculum for the San Francisco Unified School District that links music to fields such as language arts, science, geography, or history. Teachers receive books, CDs, simple instruments, and other materials to support the program. Students also attend in-school performances that reflect the diverse musical traditions of the Bay Area, including classical, jazz, and world music. A major component of the AIM program is an annual concert by the San Francisco Symphony in Davies Symphony Hall that incorporates the concepts students studied in their classrooms.

In May, the **Atlanta Symphony Orchestra** will open the 12,000-seat Verizon Wireless Amphitheatre at Encore Park in Alpharetta, Georgia. In so doing, it will become the only orchestra in the U.S. simultaneously operating two amphitheaters. The orchestra also operates the Chastain Park Amphitheater, home of the Atlanta Symphony's Classic Chastain summer series. According to Atlanta's long-time delegate, ICOSM Treasurer Michael Moore, the ASO's annual budget will top \$50,000,000 as a result of the new operation.

The ASO also announced a new \$1 million, three-year grant awarded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to support three ASO programs: recordings, the Atlanta School of Composers, and Theatre of a Concert. This represents the first Mellon Foundation grant to the ASO in more than thirty years, as well as the largest grant from a national foundation outside Atlanta earned by the ASO in its history.

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## Summary of Report Released by Robert F. Flanagan by Laura Ross, ICSOM Secretary

Delegates attending the 2004 ICSOM Conference in Salt Lake City will remember a discussion forum headed by ICSOM Counsel Leonard Leibowitz and then-Member at Large Richard Levine. The topic was *structural deficits*, a buzzword that had been appearing at bargaining tables around the country. That discussion, which centered on whether orchestra financial problems were cyclical or structural, was quite similar to the dialogue begun in late spring of 2003 by the Elephant Task Force (ETF), a subcommittee of Mellon Forum participants (funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation).

Following a year of discussions, the entire ICSOM Governing Board was invited to attend a presentation of the findings of the ETF, much of which concluded that each orchestra's financial situation is unique and that each orchestra has a unique place in its own community. The ETF also identified four areas for individual orchestral self-assessment: community relationships (how the orchestra meaningfully connects with the community to create true public value), internal culture (how orchestra constituents can work together in mutually supportive and cooperative ways), artistic activities (how the orchestra uses resources in service to the community, to orchestra constituents, and to the art form), and financial structure (how an orchestra secures its revenues and handles its expenditures to achieve balance and fiscal viability). At that point, the ETF had devised a financial structure model for orchestra self-evaluation.

Once this information was presented, the ETF appeared to have completed its task. Many months later, however, Mellon reconvened ETF members—though by this time some members, including ICSOM President Brian Rood, no longer participated in the ETF or other Mellon activities. Their task, as funded by Mellon, was to identify an economics scholar who could assess the “cyclical versus structural” question. As a result of their discussions, Professor Robert J. Flanagan of Stanford University's Graduate School of Business was commissioned in March 2006 to conduct an analysis of the economic health of orchestras, with the objective of assessing the cyclical and structural influences thereon.

Needless to say, there are no earth shattering conclusions in “The Economic Environment of American Symphony Orchestras,” released by Flanagan in March 2008. (Mellon chose not to publish the report and requested that its release be delayed, but that request was disregarded.) The report itself goes into great detail about the so-called *performance income gap*, which is the shortfall between performance revenue and performance expenses that orchestras sustain. Flanagan notes that when orchestral salaries and expenses rise, the performance income gap increases. (Surprise!) In addressing the many issues that lead to this gap, his report gives an overview of trends in concert attendance, artistic costs (i.e., musician costs), and public and private support and endowments. Some of the newer charts show changes in distribution of expenses, but, again, there are no big surprises. The financial and operational data on U.S. orchestras used by Flanagan,

which were supplied by the League of American Orchestras, were controversial. For more than three years, representatives from the League, ICSOM, ROPA, and the AFM have been meeting for the Collaborative Data Project, trying to reconcile the different financial reporting methods used when data is submitted to the League. So far, there has been no resolution in this project. Flanagan's conclusions are culled from data provided on 63 sample orchestras, but only 32 had the full 17 years of data covered by the report (from 1987 to 2003). Those 32 orchestras are: Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Dallas, Detroit, Fort Wayne, Fort Worth, Grand Rapids, Indianapolis, Jacksonville, Kansas City, Knoxville, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, Minnesota, National, New Jersey, New York, Omaha, Oregon, Pacific, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Pittsburg, Richmond, Saint Paul, San Francisco, Seattle, and Utah. Other sample orchestras had gaps in reported data occurring at different times. Those orchestras reported between 4 and 16 years of data.

In July 2007, ICSOM Chair Bruce Ridge, President Brian Rood, and I attended a two-day meeting to critique an earlier draft of the report titled “American Symphony Orchestra Finances at the Turn of the Century.” I can report that certain changes were made, including the removal of some graphs and exhibits, as well as language changes and the arrangement of the document. However, our key concerns, that there are so many unmentioned and unexplained idiosyncrasies in our industry that fair comparisons cannot be made without misinterpretation and misrepresentation (as has occurred in the past), as well as concerns that publication of the document could do damage to our industry, fell on deaf ears.

I also found that certain references in the report have been changed. For instance, comparison groups, which were previously classified as “professional white collar,” “blue collar,” and “service industry workers,” are now identified as “unionized workers in the United States,” “nonunion workers,” and “other professional service workers.” There are also references to the fact that musician wages, benefits, and terms and conditions (including orchestra size) are negotiated through collective bargaining and that the resulting agreements cause an impediment to adjustment or change during economic and financial downturns. (At this point I ask myself how many times musicians and unions have reopened their contracts when all parties are convinced it is the appropriate thing to do. Unions are not as intractable as Flanagan would have others believe.)

One of Flanagan's key mistakes in this report (aside from appearing to go well beyond the scope of his original mandate to assess the cyclical and structural influences) is his attempt to compare the orchestra industry to the manufacturing industry, especially when productivity cannot realistically be a comparable factor. As orchestral musicians know, *we are the product*. If you cut weeks from a season or reduce the size of an orchestra, it is comparable to selling a car without doors or seat belts. Who would buy that?

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## First, Do No Harm

by Bruce Ridge, ICSOM Chairperson

In recent days, there has been a great deal of discussion regarding the release of a report by economist Robert J. Flanagan, commissioned by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, titled “The Economic Environment of American Symphony Orchestras.” On behalf of the ICSOM Governing Board, I thought I would share some brief observations about the report and the work of Mellon as well as the oft-referred to “Elephant Task Force.”

It seems that every few years or so a new report is commissioned and released about the symphony orchestra industry in America that suggests that orchestras are not sustainable, and they generally place the blame, at least partly if not occasionally entirely, on musician salaries. It is difficult to determine just when the industry became so committed to proving to its public that failure is inevitable, but the self-destructive pattern of behavior has been around for decades. A United Press International article from 1970 famously depicts the findings of the death sentence report of that era, titled “25 Symphonies Doomed to Die.”

But still, no matter how deeply our industry is committed to publicizing its impending death, some orchestras somehow manage to survive. In fact, in many places, they are thriving. This is due to the leadership of creative managers and active boards who are able to effectively demonstrate the relevance of the arts in their communities. It is a relatively simple formula: people will invest in things that serve the citizenry, and they won't invest in things that they are repeatedly told are unsustainable.

Three officers of ICSOM attended one meeting to discuss the Flanagan report, in July of 2007. At that meeting, we vociferously expressed our concerns with what we saw were faulty conclusions based on faulty data. But even more than the findings of the report, we were concerned that the release of the report would lead to yet another onslaught of press that would trumpet the end of the orchestra in America similar to what followed the publication of the 1990s' version of this phenomenon, the Wolf Report.

All of these doomsday reports are filled with *USA Today*-like charts and graphs that serve to support the assertions of the text. However, the text is generally written in such a way that only the most ardent masochist would actually be able to plod through it all. The graphs, with their plummeting lines of revenues paired with their rising lines of musicians salaries, are welcome release from the numbing prose. I suspect that for many readers, their eyes are drawn to the illustrations as they beg for mercy.

Since the release of this report, some of our fears have been realized: There certainly has been a lot of coverage, both on-line and in some print media. But, to our relief, the report has been, frankly, ridiculed more often than not. Perhaps the most telling review came from Mr. Andrew Druckenbrod of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, who wrote, “Duh!”

Inherent in Mr. Druckenbrod's “Duh!” is the fact there is some truth in Professor Flanagan's report. Mr. Druckenbrod goes on to say “Other conclusions are so obvious they are laughable.”

We don't dispute that there is a need to analyze our field, but we believe that we are researching the wrong things. The Elephant Task Force acquired that sobriquet because it determined that there is a proverbial elephant in the room no one is discussing—that pachyderm being the economic situation of the symphony orchestra in America. We would suggest that the real elephant is still being ignored, even as it wrestles with the 800-pound gorilla and crushes the coffee table.

We must learn to effectively market our orchestras, promoting them as vital, and branding them as indispensable. In a world where other businesses that offer far less to the common good have mastered the art of promotion and the utilization of free media, orchestras remain, by and large, dramatically behind the times.

Where is the report that analyzes the great success stories? Why are we not studying the places where creative managers and musicians have led their orchestras to new heights of community service and artistic excellence? What other business uses the stories of its failures to build a model for the future?

We have seen it all before. We are seeing it again now.

Bankruptcy used as a fund raising tool. Ridiculous.

An orchestra with half the musicians will be the panacea for a lack of endowment. Absurd.

Put that on a glossy brochure: “The Columbus Symphony: To Cure You We Must Kill You.”

A fair criticism of what I have written here would be that I have not disputed the Flanagan report point by point. Frankly, I just don't have the time. There are musicians working to support their families that need our assistance, and there are underserved communities that need our ideas. I am very grateful to those who have taken on the task of pointing out specific concerns with the Professor's findings, and those observations are easily found online. In this brief essay, I have merely attempted to muse on the phenomenon of our industry's penchant for reports that promote such negative aspects of the field.

We have no doubt that the Mellon Foundation cares deeply about the preservation of our great art form, and about the community service we provide. We know that all involved are fine human beings, all trying to do what they think is right. But, we encourage them to re-evaluate the process they are undertaking. Musicians are frequently invited into the room for these discussions, and those

(continued on page 13—see *THOUGHTS ON FLANAGAN*)

## Pyongyang

(continued from page 1)

secure an Asiana Airlines 747 for the approximately 280 orchestra members, guests, and press for the trip. The back half of the plane would be used to transport our cargo. In exchange for the use of the plane, we added another concert at the end of the tour, this one in Seoul, for the benefit of Asiana Airlines.

With less than one month left before our departure for Taiwan, the North Korea trip was finally official, and the staff worked nearly around the clock making preparations. Amazingly, the North Korean government gave in to every request from the orchestra to accommodate our needs. They wanted this concert to happen and seemingly would do anything to make it work. Food would be flown in from China and Japan; temperature-controlled trucks would be allowed in from South Korea to transport our instruments from the airport to the hall; extra heating oil would be brought in to make sure that the gigantic and normally empty Yanggakdo Hotel would be heated; and generators would supply backup electricity in the event of one of their frequent power failures. Special equipment would even be brought in to service our aircraft, as no 747 had never landed in Pyongyang before.

We boarded our chartered flight from Beijing to Pyongyang on February 26, after spending five nights in Shanghai and two in Beijing. The full impact of what we were facing didn't really hit us until our 747 landed at the Pyongyang airport, and we caught a glimpse of the giant red letters spelling "Pyongyang" on top of the terminal—next to the huge portrait of the Great Leader, Kim Il-sung, who is still president of the DPRK despite having died in 1994.

Under a light snowfall, the tarmac was filled with local and international press, and our plane also carried a large international press contingent to cover our arrival. As we walked down the ramp onto the tarmac, our cameras were aimed at the press on the ground and at the Pyongyang terminal with the huge smiling portrait of the Great Leader. Camera shutters blazed away, recording our musical D-Day invasion as the throngs merged. Orchestra members posed for a few group photos in front of the terminal, and then we were ushered onto buses to take us to the Yanggakdo Hotel.

The mood was more subdued on the dreary 45-minute ride to the hotel. We were introduced to some of our "minders," who rarely left our sides except when we were alone in our hotel rooms or performing on stage. The minders told us that their purpose was to make our trip as enjoyable as possible, but we knew that their real purpose was to make sure that we would not have unsupervised contact with the locals or do anything objectionable. To make sure that the minders were doing their jobs, there were also minders for the minders—usually stone-faced non-English speakers.

All of the rooms in the hotel were stiflingly hot, with the heat blasting on high and the windows sealed shut. The North Koreans wanted to impress us with how well they could heat a building, but we had a horrible feeling it was at the expense of ordinary citizens who rarely had enough heat. I turned off the heat and cracked open the window. We had just enough time to drop off our bags before being shuttled to a performance of the Pyongyang Performing Arts Troupe, which was followed by a huge 19-course dinner banquet at the People's



Photo by David Finlayson

The New York Philharmonic, just after arriving at the Pyongyang airport. The picture was taken by second trombonist David Finlayson.

Palace of Culture. Everything was so over the top that guilt and shame made it hard to appreciate the kind gesture and honor they extended. While there was enough food for a group ten times our size, millions of North Koreans faced starvation. We settled into our assigned tables, where my family met the four grim-looking minders who were assigned to us. (My wife and her parents came on the tour, along with many other guests.) It had all the markings of a long, agonizing evening until Ryu, one of the English-speaking minders, picked up his glass of Insamsul, a fiery liquor made with ginseng, and said, “Mud in your eye!” We burst out laughing, and after we all had a few glasses of Insamsul, even the robotic minders’ minders were smiling and having a good time.

Politics was not to be discussed, but we talked about families. We admired the pins of the Great Leader (which all citizens over age 17 were required to wear over their hearts) and learned that there were at least 12 styles of them. My wife, Lyn, was asked what she did for a living, and she replied, “psychotherapist.” The minders got excited because they thought she said “Secret Service”—but judging by the blank stares while she explained the role of a psychotherapist, she should have stuck with “Secret Service.” Ryu had worked with Madeleine Albright when she brought a delegation in 2000, but the other three minders had never really had a chance to sit down and chat with Americans before. One of the English-speaking minders, Gyong, was getting quite chummy with my father-in-law. Near the end of the long dinner, and after a lot of good laughs, one of the hardcore minders told us (through Ryu) that even though the day before we were all sworn enemies, today we are brothers and sisters. It was the first time during the trip that I was deeply moved. At the end of the evening, we gave each other slightly inebriated hugs and said goodnight. I wasn’t sure I understood what had just transpired, but I think we all surprised ourselves at how much we enjoyed each other’s company. We went back up to our rooms where the windows had again been sealed shut and the heat was blasting on high.

The next morning, after an outrageous and over-the-top breakfast buffet, we had a rehearsal in full dress for the cameras at the East Pyongyang Grand Theater. Driving through town to the hall, we passed many highly stylized posters of happy North Korean workers, soldiers, children, and, of course, the Great Leader and his son Kim Jong-il (the current head of the DPRK, known as the Dear Leader). We were told that most of the anti-U.S. posters had been taken down for our trip, but near the hall there was one large poster of a giant fist crushing an American soldier. The rehearsal was supposed to be open only to students and musicians, but it seemed to be used as another concert for the slightly less elite who couldn’t secure one of the 1,500 seats for the evening concert. After the rehearsal we met

with some students and gave them gifts of strings and rosin that were generously provided by the D’Addario Company as well as woodwind and brass equipment donated by orchestra members. We also presented the students with a huge stack of orchestral scores donated by Countess Yoko Nagae Ceschina, a devoted Philharmonic patron who provided most of the funding for the trip.

Between the rehearsal and concert, some orchestra members gave master classes at the conservatory, and there was a chamber music performance with local musicians. The level of playing was very high, but little personal interaction was allowed. For the rest of the orchestra, a tour was offered of the unbelievably boring Korean Central History Museum, but it was the only opportunity to get out of the hotel and see glimpses of the town outside the bus window. (The Yanggakdo Hotel is on a conveniently isolated island, and we were told that it was highly inadvisable to walk off the island. Some managed anyway, but one of our colleagues was turned back by two machine gun-toting guards.) At the museum, our guide suggested that we all bow to a statue of the Great Leader in the entry hall, but she had to settle for a solo bow.

It was finally time for our 6PM concert. Before our trip, the orchestra had a long discussion concerning our displeasure at the thought of standing for Kim Jong-il, should he decide to attend. We decided that the best way to handle it would be to make a group entrance and remain standing to play the North Korean and U.S. anthems. That way, the Dear Leader would be forced to stand for us. First we played the North Korean anthem and then the “Star Spangled Banner.” Flags of both countries were on the stage, and the audience stood throughout. The Dear Leader did us all the favor of staying home, presumably to watch it on television. The Philharmonic has played the “Star Spangled Banner” in China,

East Germany, and the Soviet Union, but this time my hair really stood on end. I could not believe we were actually playing our national anthem in North Korea. Afterwards, audience members sat down as politely as they had stood, and a very passionate North Korean hostess in traditional dress introduced the official program. The concert was performed without intermission and consisted of Wagner’s Prelude to Act III of *Lohengrin*, Dvorak’s *New World* Symphony, and Gershwin’s *An American in Paris*, with encores of Bizet’s *Farandole*, Bernstein’s *Candide* Overture (performed without conductor, as we always have since Bernstein’s death), and “Arirang,” a traditional folksong much beloved in both Korea. The televised show was broadcast live in both North and South Korea and shown worldwide on a tape delay. It was also available live on the Internet for those who were awake and curious.

(continued on page 10—see PYONGYANG)



Author Ken Mirkin and wife, Lyn, pose in front of poster at East Pyongyang Grand Theater announcing historic concert.

## Pyongyang

(continued from page 9)

The orchestra played beautifully. At least in the beginning, though, there was nothing really remarkable about the concert (other than the fact that it was happening at all). The audience applauded politely but sat emotionless through the Dvorak and the Gershwin. There were few smiles and no toe tapping. They seemed to liven up for the encores and appreciated our conductorless *Candide*. But something magical happened when we played “Arirang.” I noticed that, for the first time, the audience was really reacting, and I noticed a few people wiping tears from their eyes. I was moved by seeing this and enjoyed the repetitive beauty of the folksong. The applause was thunderous after “Arirang,” and the standing ovation lasted five minutes or so. Lorin Maazel eventually took Concertmaster Glenn Dicterow’s hand and led him off stage, and we all began to follow.

The audience was just not ready to let us go. The applause kept growing louder and louder until we had no choice but to turn around and come back on stage. Then something really remarkable happened: this audience of 1,500 of the DPRK’s most elite Communist Party members lost control, and they were really enjoying it. They waved and shouted at us with tears in their eyes, and we looked at each other on stage, stunned, and waved back. Most of us were getting teary-eyed, too. We just stood there and waved back and forth for a few minutes. I couldn’t help thinking about how, not too far away, North Korean and U.S. soldiers were pointing guns at each other across the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), while here we were crying and waving to each other across a concert stage. And then I really lost it.

Back to the Yanggakdo Hotel for an over-the-top celebratory dinner banquet. Tonight it had been reduced to only 16 courses. We were all really drained from this incredible day, and dinner ended slightly early so we could get back up to our rooms, unseal the windows, turn off the heat and get some sleep.

There was another over-the-top breakfast buffet before our afternoon departure for Seoul. We had some time to hit the hotel’s souvenir shop with its large selection of English-language books, most of which were purportedly written by the Great and Dear Leaders. By far the most popular title was *The U.S. Imperialists Started the Korean War*. It felt strange to purchase this from the kindly matronly cashier. After that, I visited the hotel’s small grocery store. The young woman at the register clapped her hands and said, “Viola!” I was astonished—even our music director doesn’t know who I am. Much of the press went with Maestro Maazel as he led a rehearsal of the State Symphony Orchestra of the DPRK. They played the Prelude to *Die Meistersinger* and the *Romeo and Juliet* Fantasy-Overture. He was astonished at their high level of playing, especially knowing that Western music is considered “morally corrupt” in the DPRK.

The majority of the orchestra checked out of their rooms and were taken to the Mangyongdae Schoolchildren’s Palace for the final event of our North Korean adventure: a performance of some of North Korea’s most talented young musicians, dancers, and singers, aged 7–14. They could not have been more astonishing. The

precision and artistry were beyond belief. As moving and incredible as the performances were, we had to wonder what kind of lives they lived, and what would become of the talented kids who don’t make the cut to attend the programs at this school. An eight-year-old flutist, Kim Jon Ri, blew us all away with her virtuosity on a traditional wooden flute. A chorus of tiny girls sang an adorable rendition of “Clementine” and “Jingle Bells,” with a gangbusters finale of “We Are Faithful Only to General Kim Jong-il” (which included gymnastics). That last one went over especially well with the large contingent of minders and children who were in the audience, and we clapped a bit uncomfortably. As we left the theater for our bus ride to the airport, the children in the audience were very hesitant to make eye contact with us as we said goodbye.

When we arrived at the tarmac of the Pyongyang airport, it seemed less imposing than it had two days earlier. It was a sunny day, and we were now used to all of the press around us. My family and I spent our final moments saying goodbye to our favorite minders, who were clearly upset to see us go. There were no exchanges of e-mail addresses, because North Koreans are not allowed Internet access. I gave Gyong a big hug, and he had tears in his eyes. I told him he was a good friend and I hoped to see him again soon, maybe even in New York. He gave a good laugh at that, knowing it was impossible. The plane was about to leave, so we gave Ryu hurried hugs and exchanged hopes of reconnecting soon. A final goodbye wave before walking onto our Asiana 747, and our whirlwind trip to North Korea was over.

Once in the air for the short flight to Seoul (made slightly longer by the need to fly over the ocean to avoid the Korean DMZ), we were able to catch up on the news that was being streamed on the televisions. We knew that our concert was a big media event, but were amazed to see that it was the lead story everywhere. When we arrived in Seoul, we tore through all of the newspapers to catch up on the news we missed by being in the center of it. Much of the media coverage before our trip was negative, suggesting that we were being used by Kim Jong-il. Right before our trip, the *New York Post* headline, “New York Foolharmonic,” was only made worse by Maestro Maazel’s unfortunate remarks that the U.S. was in no position to criticize North Korea because of our own human rights abuses. Now with the North Korea concert behind us, even many of the most skeptical members of the orchestra felt that the trip had gone very well, and it was entertaining to read the reactions of pundits in Washington and the press. The White House and State Department had distanced themselves from the event, and no active high-level U.S. government official attended the concert. Perhaps it was out of a desire to maintain a hard-line stance against North Korea, or perhaps the reason was revealed in the State Department response to Condoleezza Rice’s invitation to the concert: “We regret to inform you that Secretary Rice will not be able to attend your concert in Pyongyang, China.” She was in Seoul the day before the concert for the inauguration of the new South Korean president, Lee Myung-bak.

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## On Houston's Recent Settlement by Eric Arbiter

I have certainly seen my share of stressful and contentious contract negotiations in my 35-year career with the Houston Symphony. My last stint on the negotiating committee was in 2003, the negotiations that resulted in the first strike called by the musicians of the Houston Symphony. During those negotiations, our negotiation committee held out until March against pressure from musicians to strike earlier in the season. I could write a lengthy article on this subject alone, but a much more positive and productive story is that I feel much was learned from that strike by the management, the board, and the musicians.

Many of the chronic cycles that have repeated themselves every three years for as long as I can remember were finally addressed during the recently concluded negotiations. It was certainly painful for the musicians to have had our salaries frozen and our healthcare benefits reduced, as well as to have seen the deficit reduction financed in large part by leaving positions within the orchestra unfilled and using furlough weeks. On their part, the board pledged to demand more from board members and to recruit new members who wanted to leave behind past practices. The management, under the then new CEO, Matthew VanBesien, gathered a group of talented people on staff not only to seek new ways to solve our problems, but also to address the common problems all American orchestras face in the twenty-first century. Maybe it's because Houston was the first orchestra to hit the wall in 2003, but I think we finally began to see that the rules of the industry were changing and we needed to adapt.

The results, though hard for the musicians to bear (since we had taken similar sacrifices in previous contracts), have brought us three years of balanced budgets and helped us in our fundraising efforts. Our audiences have increased and progress is being made in raising the level of our endowment.

As to our recent settlement, salaries have started once again to increase modestly, the furloughs are being phased out (ending next year), the vacancies are being gradually filled, our healthcare premium has returned to earlier rates (the premiums had doubled a year ago), and a ten-year dispute regarding the status of our now-frozen defined benefit pension plan was resolved in the musicians' favor. (The Houston Symphony is currently in the AFM-EPF pension plan.) Through the tireless work of our negotiating committee, our attorney, Mel Schwarzwald, as well as our board and management, the process was completed well in advance of the contract deadline (pending the pension issue resolution).

From my long perspective, these seem to be positive signs. All sides are starting to see that if our organization is to prosper, each branch is needed and must function together with the others, as pulling in the same direction is always most effective. To harm one part of the organization inevitably harms the whole.

*Eric Arbiter is Houston Symphony's ICSOM delegate as well as its associate principal bassoonist.*

## Secretary on AFM-EPF

*(continued from page 3)*

who dies before beginning to collect a pension benefit may receive the pre-retirement death benefit only as a monthly annuity; a lump sum payment is no longer available. Because the pre-retirement benefit is paid as a monthly annuity for the life of the beneficiary, naming an estate or trust as the beneficiary is prohibited. For purposes of the pre-retirement survivor annuity, a participant may designate up to three primary beneficiaries and an equal number of alternate beneficiaries (unless there are more than three children). Until recently, participants were only allowed to designate one beneficiary, so you may want to check with the AFM-EPF office or your local to update your beneficiary information once the new forms become available.

Additionally, it was pointed out that same-sex marriages are not recognized by the federal government. Because of that, a participant should not assume that a same-sex spouse would receive an annuity should the participant die before designating that partner as the beneficiary.

These were just a few of the facts that Maureen covered in her fascinating presentation. The pension discussion at last summer's ICSOM Conference was well received, and the Governing Board is considering continuing our education with more pension-related topics at the next ICSOM Conference. I'd like to thank Maureen Kilkelly for her assistance with this article.

### Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra

The musicians of the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra would like to express our sincere appreciation and gratitude to everyone who supported us during our lockout. The support of our colleagues touched, inspired and sustained us during our ordeal. We were surprised and overwhelmed by your generous support and kind words. Also, ICSOM Chair Bruce Ridge and SSD Director Laura Brownell visited Jacksonville at a crucial time, and that really meant a lot to us.

We were able to come to an agreement when a group of community leaders stepped up to try to bridge the gap between what our management was willing to offer and what we were able to accept. The Friends of the Jacksonville Symphony are now working hard to raise money to add weeks to our season. Already they have raised enough to add one week this season. The concerted response of both the orchestral community and the Jacksonville public serves as a great source of encouragement and hope for the future.

*Susan Pardue, Orchestra Committee Chair*

## Summary

(continued from page 6)

There is one important point we noticed buried in the report's Executive Summary. Holding the influence of general economic conditions on symphony orchestras constant, it says that "there was a modest trend improvement in the overall surplus/deficit position of orchestras in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century." (Yes, *improvement*.) Also, there is interesting information contained in a statement from the Stanford Graduate School of Business that accompanies Flanagan's release of his report. It first mentions that most orchestras ran deficits with endowment money excluded. The statement then has this to say about the 17 orchestras in the report that normally remained in the black even with that important resource excluded: "Flanagan said the study's scope did not try to identify similarities among the 17 symphonies that usually did have surpluses. Overall, he said, he noticed how widely all orchestras studied varied in terms of expenses, sources of income, and even how they invested their endowments." Now, that's food for thought.

Missing from this document, over serious objection by ICSOM, ROPA, and the AFM last July, are: comparisons of administrative salaries; the rapid and significant increases in music director salaries, which, in terms of percentage, are well in excess of those of musicians (this reference was removed from the draft viewed last July); recognition of the massive amounts of free education and community performances provided by our institutions; and the recovery that seems to have occurred since the devastating effects of the bursting tech bubble and of the 9/11 attack (the report's data ends only two years later).

I suppose the only consolation we can take from our two days spent in Chicago last July is in the Acknowledgement section of Flanagan's report: "... while I have benefited immensely from the comments of these parties, I have not always accepted their suggestions." No kidding!

## Pyongyang

(continued from page 10)

The question remains whether the concert was a "success." If success is measured in immediate de-nuclearization or regime change (theirs, not ours), the concert is unlikely to be hailed as successful. But those of us who were in Pyongyang know that, at least for a brief moment, we pried open even the hardest of hearts and touched a group of people in a way that no politician or soldier can dream of. In the process, many of us returned forever changed, reminded that music and the arts, along with the freedom to express them, are perhaps the greatest gifts we possess.

*Kenneth Mirkin joined the New York Philharmonic as a violist in 1982. He has served on that orchestra's negotiating, orchestra, tour, and pension committees for as long as he can remember. He currently serves as the Philharmonic's ICSOM delegate.*

## Newslets

(continued from page 5)

The **Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra** played its debut performance in Carnegie Hall on January 26. Over 500 Texans traveled to the Big Apple for the experience. ICSOM Delegate Karen Hall reports that orchestra members ran into friends, neighbors and patrons at every turn in Manhattan!

The nearly full concert received critical acclaim, including from *New York Times* critic Anthony Tommasini, who said that "[t]he Tchaikovsky was first rate." Mr. and Mrs. Sid Bass hosted a formal dinner at their New York City home for the event and expressed their pride in the symphony by donating a second million dollars this season. Another formal dinner was hosted by Mr. and Mrs. Bass after the concert for the orchestra members and patrons.

On January 27, the Symphony returned to the Carnegie Hall stage for a sold-out performance of *Peter and the Wolf*, narrated by John Lithgow in English and Spanish. The Carnegie Hall trip was a welcome change for the Fort Worth musicians, who usually find themselves playing educational programs to small towns in Texas when they go on tour.



Fort Worth violinists, left to right, Kristen Van Cleve, Amy Faires, Swang Lin, and Sergey Tsoy pose in front poster at Carnegie Hall announcing the orchestra's debut performance there.

## Chairperson

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opportunities to implement our network of activism. Whenever an orchestra is in need, let us all respond. Wherever a musician is in need, let us all respond.”

In ICSOM’s *Call to Action* for Jacksonville, we included these words: “...unfortunately, there can be no doubt that we will issue similar *Calls to Action* to assist other orchestras in the months and years ahead.” I assure you, we did not intend this statement to be so immediately prophetic.

It was on January 17, less than 48 hours after my return from Florida, that we learned of a “plan” from the board of the Columbus Symphony Orchestra (CSO) to cut their budget by \$3 million, to implement a pay cut of 30 percent for the musicians, and to fire 22 of the 53 full-time musicians. While there are many unprintable words I could use to describe this “plan,” for the purposes of this article, I think I will go with *ghastly* and *absurd*.

Again we find ourselves disputing false and negative claims. Again we find ourselves asserting this inherent truth: offering an inferior product to consumers can never be the basis of a viable business model for an orchestra. In fact, far from solving any problems, this ludicrous “plan” would most certainly sentence this cherished cultural institution to extinction. The unified musicians of the CSO, the citizens of Columbus, and every musician in ICSOM will simply not allow this to happen. We will all rise once again to shine the national spotlight on the failed policies of a board and management that would appear to have been derelict in their duties as community stewards.

We ask the board that devised this scheme to explain themselves. Why, at this time of promise for the arts in America, are they spending time and money producing a glossy document in a futile effort to convince the citizens of Columbus that their city is not world-class, instead of exploring new avenues of support for the growth of the institution they are charged with maintaining?

In a time when the Fort Worth Symphony is receiving rave reviews for its Carnegie Hall appearance, the Florida Orchestra is announcing gifts totaling over \$3 million to their stabilization plan, the Nashville Symphony is winning three Grammy awards, the Buffalo Philharmonic is aggressively building its endowment, the North Carolina Symphony is recording the works of Pulitzer Prize winning composer Christopher Rouse, the Oregon Symphony is announcing a 20% increase in attendance, and the New York Philharmonic is receiving more press coverage than the Oscars, why does the management of the CSO profess that the arts in Columbus are not sustainable? To even contemplate making such a claim one would have to ignore the fact that the non-profit culture industry in Greater Columbus results in over \$330 million in economic activity every year.

In the coming months, we all must direct our attention to Columbus. It is our hope and belief that this situation will be resolved and

that a positive message will be heard, as it ultimately was in Jacksonville. I am convinced that the citizens of Columbus will demand that the board and management that devoted more time to this plot than to nurturing their institution must explain themselves.

I have no doubt that the Columbus Symphony will endure. And I have no doubt that if another *Call to Action* is needed, the members of ICSOM will once again rise to the aid of their brothers and sisters.

The ICSOM *Call to Action* issued for Jacksonville went on to say: “...if we effectively respond to every call, we will demonstrate the power in collective action. We can and will make a powerful statement to our managements and boards as we work to spread the positive community message of the musicians of ICSOM.”

There are truly more positives than negatives to report about symphonic music in America, and I wish I could spend this column exclusively recounting the many successes. But, as we rally to the cause in Columbus, we must also turn our attention westward, where the musicians of the Honolulu Symphony are engaged in a struggle of their own. You might have read reports that headlined, “Honolulu Symphony Bounces Back.” But those reports are premature. The musicians there are facing serious difficulties. You can read about them in the Newslets in this issue of *Senza Sordino*. It is a different type of battle, one not so much with their management, but rather with the perceptions of a community weary of ongoing financial difficulties. There, as in many places, we must convince the citizenry of the orchestra’s relevance.

All too often, and in far too many places, we must be our own advocates for our communities. In places where the bastions against progress stand silent when confronted with fallacies, and where the purveyors of negativity are blind to the opportunity that investment affords them, we must ensure that they hear our voices as well as our music. Our audiences are eager to hear the positive message that we offer, and they are ready to reject the rhetoric of those who would suggest that their cities cannot achieve all that they deserve. Let us never rest in this cause, and let us remember that with every victory a new challenge awaits.

## Thoughts on Flanagan

(continued from page 7)

gestures are certainly appreciated. But every time we enter, we emerge with the knowledge that we have participated in a process that leads, seemingly inevitably, to a public reporting that we feel harms the field, or in other circumstances labels the salaries through which we feed our children “A Road Map to Extinction.”

The Mellon Foundation, the Elephant Task Force, and the Flanagan Report all call for change in our industry. We agree. We must change. We must stop doing this to ourselves.

## Nominating Committee Seeks Input

In accordance with ICSOM bylaws, there will be elections at the 2008 ICSOM Conference for the positions of ICSOM Chairperson, Treasurer, *Senza Sordino* Editor, and two Members at Large. Also in accordance with ICSOM bylaws, the Governing Board has appointed a Nominating Committee that may, at its discretion, nominate candidates for those positions. Nominations may also be made from the floor at the Conference.

The Nominating Committee will consider all worthy candidates, including those incumbents intending to seek re-election. The duties of all ICSOM officers are spelled out in the ICSOM bylaws. The ICSOM bylaws are available online at [icsom.org](http://icsom.org), and a copy is included in the ICSOM delegate manual. Among the criteria applied by the Nominating Committee are candidates' personal abilities, experience and activity in ICSOM, compatibility with ICSOM policies and personnel, and willingness to serve. Balance of orchestra size and diversity on the Governing Board are also considerations.

As part of its procedure, the Nominating Committee is soliciting comments and opinions, favorable or otherwise, regarding the incumbent officers and the dispatch of their duties. Delegates and members of ICSOM orchestras may contact any member of the

committee. The committee also welcomes suggestions of other possible candidates for these positions.

All input to the nominating committee will be held in the strictest confidence. Committee members may be contacted by telephone or e-mail. The deadline for input is June 10.

Members of the nominating committee are:

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