

# Senza Sordino

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## Fifty Years and Counting

by Laura Ross, ICSOM Secretary

It is important to pass along our memories about the formation and advancement of our orchestras, for orchestra histories can reveal a great deal. Just take a look at our collective bargaining agreements—between the lines they document many instances of improvements and abuses that explain what might otherwise remain puzzling. I suspect there are a great many stories attached to CBA clauses that would either entertain or horrify a listener.

While I've been "through the wars" with my own orchestra, the Nashville Symphony, it's only been for 24 years of the orchestra's 62-year history. I believe it's important to tell our story to each new member that joins the orchestra, not only so they understand where our contract came from, but also to help them understand what motivates our musicians over time.

I have the greatest admiration for our colleagues who survived the hard times. They faced strikes, shutdowns, pay cuts, and more, and they have been able to share in the vast improvements we achieved over time. When I was growing up, I had no idea what orchestra life was really like. In hindsight, I would have appreciated knowing a little more about what I was setting myself up for (though I very much doubt I would have changed my career plans).

I love a good story, and it occurred to me that some of our colleagues have good ones to tell. When I saw the *International Musician* advertising auditions for Stanley Drucker's position as principal clarinet in the New York Philharmonic, I began to think there are surely others like Stanley who have had interesting careers with their orchestras and who might be willing to share their memories. (I was honored to meet Stanley last year when we both played in a Hurricane Katrina-related concert with the Louisiana Philharmonic.)

I began researching members of ICSOM orchestras who had served their orchestras for at least 50 years. I wasn't disappointed, and the

fruits of my labor appear below. Jerome Wigler from the Philadelphia Orchestra relates the history of his orchestra's struggles, his direct involvement in those efforts, and his early involvement with ICSOM. Frances Darger of the Utah Symphony responded to me directly about her 65 years of experience. Jane Little reveals war stories about touring as a charter member of the Atlanta Symphony. Phil Blum explains how much auditions have changed since he joined the Chicago Symphony. Harriet Risk Woldt, who retires from the Fort Worth Symphony at the end of this season, relates some unusual memories of her years as a musician. Richard Kelley joined his father in the Los Angeles Philharmonic and speaks of his experiences under various music directors over the years. Sadly, just after I requested these stories, I received the news that Detroit Symphony violinist Felix Resnick had died. (I knew of him while growing up in the Detroit suburbs.)

These musicians' many years of service and fortitude are to be praised and acknowledged with great admiration and respect. My thanks go out to the delegates, friends, and musicians who responded and contributed to these fascinating reminiscences.

### Detroit Symphony—Felix Resnick (66 years)

On April 2, 2008, Detroit Symphony violinist Felix Resnick passed away at age 89. He was a member of the Detroit Symphony for 66 years and was an active member of the orchestra until succumbing to cancer. He served for decades as assistant principal second violin, and then as a member of the second violin section. He was born in 1918 in New York City, and raised in Detroit. Felix joined the DSO in 1942, and served under Music Directors Karl Kruger, Paul Paray, Sixten Ehrling, Aldo Ceccato, Antal Dorati, Gunther Herbig and Neeme Jarvi.

While Felix joined the DSO in 1942, he was unable to begin his tenure until the 1943–1944 season due to a one-year shutdown. (There was supposed to be a 21-week 1942–1943 season. However, in July 1942, management insisted they could manage only 14 weeks, and regardless of the many concessions offered by the musicians to retain the 21-week season, management said it would be 14 weeks or nothing. The national music press condemned the shutting down of the orchestra during a time of national crisis when such institutions were so essential.) There was yet another shutdown from 1949 until 1951, when the orchestra was restarted in celebration of the 250th anniversary of the founding of Detroit. The DSO became

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## Chairperson's Report by Bruce Ridge



The North Carolina Symphony recently performed an unusual concert, the brainchild of our music director, Grant Llewellyn. Maestro Llewellyn wanted our audiences to experience some of the musicians' other unique talents, besides the ones they are known for week in and week out. My talented colleagues were given the chance to perform in activities as disparate as flamenco dancing and bluegrass jamming. Our audiences loved every second.

As I enjoyed the concerts from the bass section, I was especially impressed by the bluegrass band that had been assembled. They were fantastic, and over four nights they truly brought down the house.

That band, known humorously as "*Jackie and the Back-stage Boys*" (a nod to one of our orchestra's young stars, Jackie Saed-Wolborsky, and to the members of the stage crew who joined in on mandolin and guitar), was composed of members of the NCS with tenures ranging from over 35 years to less than 8 months. As great as they were musically, I think I enjoyed the diversity in tenures as much as anything. Musicians who had been in the orchestra since before some of the others were born were performing together perfectly and with a camaraderie that demonstrated that this orchestra is truly a family. The embrace of our loyal audiences served to confirm even more the strength of the community that surrounds this orchestra.

In this issue of *Senza Sordino*, ICSOM Secretary Laura Ross has compiled several stories of amazing musicians who have served their orchestras for over fifty years. I encourage you to read through the stories of these remarkable people, and I guarantee you will be inspired. I often consider how rare it is in today's world to find true loyalty. But throughout ICSOM, we have musicians who have dedicated their entire lives to their orchestra, and to serving their community and educating its children.

Every orchestra has a unique sound, a product of the individuals who have developed that sound over time. It is a mix of the young and the more experienced. I find myself reinvigorated by that relationship, both in my own orchestra and as I observe it in others.

Our orchestras and indeed our communities are enriched by our diversity. I have seen how the newer members seek to learn from the history of the orchestra, and how we all can be invigorated by youth.

Every person is in a period of transition every day of their lives. When I joined the North Carolina Symphony, I was the youngest member at the time. I have now lost that distinction—by several decades no less. How can it be true?

Occasionally, we will hear managers talking about "generational shift." That would be fine if they were speaking of the natural process of time, but we know they aren't. There are some managers, including several

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Baltimore Symphony Orchestra  
Boston Symphony Orchestra  
Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra  
Charlotte Symphony Orchestra  
Chicago Lyric Opera Orchestra  
Chicago Symphony Orchestra  
Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra  
The Cleveland Orchestra  
Colorado Symphony Orchestra  
Columbus Symphony Orchestra  
Dallas Symphony Orchestra  
Detroit Symphony Orchestra  
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### Governing Board

#### Bruce Ridge, Chairperson

North Carolina Symphony  
505 West Aycock Street  
Raleigh, NC 27608  
919-833-8720 • Cell 919-971-1160  
[bruceridge@earthlink.net](mailto:bruceridge@earthlink.net)

#### Brian Rood, President

Kansas City Symphony  
9919 Rosewood Lane  
Overland Park, KS 66207  
913-706-4164  
[brianrood@sbcglobal.net](mailto:brianrood@sbcglobal.net)

#### Laura Ross, Secretary

Nashville Symphony  
1609 Tammany Drive  
Nashville, TN 37206  
615-227-2379 • Fax 615-259-9140  
[lar2vln@comcast.net](mailto:lar2vln@comcast.net)

#### Michael Moore, Treasurer

Atlanta Symphony  
953 Rosedale Road NE  
Atlanta, GA 30306  
404-875-TUBA (Voice/Fax)  
[mooretuba@bellsouth.net](mailto:mooretuba@bellsouth.net)

#### Richard Levine, Senza Sordino Editor

San Diego Symphony  
6304 Radio Drive  
San Diego, CA 92114  
619-263-2545 • Fax 619-263-7087  
[senza@richlevine.com](mailto:senza@richlevine.com)

#### Matthew Comerford, Member at Large

Chicago Lyric Opera Orchestra  
2014 North Pinetree Drive  
Arlington Heights, IL 60004  
847-392-4135  
[macomerford@aol.com](mailto:macomerford@aol.com)

#### Paul Gunther, Member at Large

Minnesota Orchestra  
5532 Rowland Road  
Minneapolis, MN 55403  
612-232-8689  
[pbgunther@gmail.com](mailto:pbgunther@gmail.com)

#### Cathy Payne, Member at Large

San Francisco Symphony  
751 23<sup>rd</sup> Avenue  
San Francisco, CA 94121  
415-666-3261  
[paycat@aol.com](mailto:paycat@aol.com)

#### Meredith Snow, Member at Large

Los Angeles Philharmonic  
13610 Emelita Street  
Van Nuys, CA 91401  
818-786-3776  
[meredsnow@gmail.com](mailto:meredsnow@gmail.com)

#### Leonard Leibowitz, ICSOM Counsel

3310 South Ocean Blvd., Apt. 930D  
Highland Beach, FL 33487  
561-455-4455 • 917-863-2897 • Fax 561-276-0320  
[LLlaborlaw@aol.com](mailto:LLlaborlaw@aol.com)



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## President's Report by Brian Rood



### Sphinx Competition

This past February, at Orchestra Hall in Detroit, the 11th annual Sphinx Competition was held. Violinist Danielle Belen Nesmith was awarded first place. Second and third place went to violinists Karla Donehew Perez and Luisa Barroso.

Many thanks to Detroit delegate Brian Ventura, who was in attendance and represented ICSOM and the Governing Board. ICSOM continues to provide support to the Sphinx Organization and its Sphinx Competition through ongoing scholarships for the competition's Senior Division semi-finalists.

### A New Initiative to Diversify Orchestral Repertoire

Sphinx recently launched a new initiative designed to increase the number of works by Black and Latino composers heard nationwide. The Sphinx Commissioning Consortium (SCC) will be administered in partnership with 12 orchestras from across the country, including Baltimore, Chicago Sinfonietta, Cincinnati, Detroit, Grand Rapids, Nashville, New Jersey, New World, Philadelphia, Richmond, Rochester, and Virginia.

Compositions by Black and Latino composers now account for less than one percent of classical music performed. The SCC will commission a new orchestral work from a Black or Latino composer annually. Each member orchestra will perform the commissioned piece during its concert season. The SCC, through its members' joint financial commitments, will have resources exceeding \$70,000 each year to cover commissioning fees and other associated costs.

For further information regarding the Sphinx Organization, visit [www.sphinxmusic.org](http://www.sphinxmusic.org) or write the Sphinx Organization at 400 Renaissance Center, Suite 200; Detroit, MI 48243.

### Negotiating Orchestras

Back by popular demand, our negotiating orchestra caucus will return to this summer's ICSOM Conference in San Francisco's Hotel Kabuki. The caucus will start at 7:30PM on Tuesday evening, August 19, the night before the opening session. All orchestras currently in negotiations are invited, as well as those that recently completed or are about to begin negotiations. This has proven to be an important session in the past. If more time is needed for the caucus, additional time will be available during the Conference.

Over the summer months, the Governing Board will again host conference calls for negotiating orchestras wishing to participate. These calls will take place as needed and will offer delegates, committees, negotiators, and local presidents the opportunity to discuss and share experiences from and strategies for negotiating tables throughout the country. Delegates or committee chairs may contact me to have an orchestra included.

### Flanagan Report Response

Much has been written about Robert Flanagan's recently released report on orchestras, "The Economic Environment of American Symphony Orchestras," commissioned by the Mellon Foundation.

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation should be familiar to orchestra musicians because of its Orchestra Program, a ten-year, \$30 million initiative intended to strengthen a select group of leading American symphony and chamber orchestras. The main component of the Orchestra Program is the Orchestra Forum. Attendees of the Orchestra Forum include executive directors, board chairs, and musicians. The musicians were originally intended to have been selected by the full orchestra either through direct election or appointment. There were times, however, when these appointments were made by executive directors without the approval of and/or consultation with musician leadership. From the beginning of the Orchestra Forum, ICSOM leadership vigorously pursued AFM, ROPA, and ICSOM participation as observers, and this ultimately became a reality late into the Orchestra Program.

An outgrowth of the Orchestra Forum was a subcommittee called the Elephant Task Force (ETF). It was the work of the ETF that eventually led to the Flanagan commission. My perspectives are not only those of an ICSOM Governing Board member but also of a member of the original ETF, which I served on from 2003 to 2004.

Professor Flanagan's report is troubling in several key areas.

One is the process used to choose Flanagan and the circumstances surrounding that choice. Another is the financial data used, which constitutes the very foundation of his research and, therefore, his conclusions. Also of great interest is the lack of attention paid to many types of expenses within orchestras' budgets. Flanagan chose to focus solely on musicians' salaries rather than those of other workforces within our orchestras. One can only ask why. And, finally, what was the rush for this particular report over other worthy projects?

First, let's take a look at the process involved. Flanagan was commissioned by the Mellon Foundation to research orchestral economics in 2006, with support from the League of American Orchestras. (At that time, the League was still named the American Symphony Orchestra League.) The main focus was to study whether the deficits encountered by orchestras at the turn of the century were structural or cyclical.

This very subject was one of the first discussed by the ETF in late 2003. The ETF was composed of Mellon Forum participants and included board presidents, executive directors, musicians, and Mellon officers, along with two consultants. One of the burning questions discussed was the structural/cyclical issue. Musicians on the ETF maintained that the deficits were cyclical—due, in no small part, to the horrific events of 9/11. Another view was that orchestras

*(continued on page 11—see PRESIDENT ON FLANAGAN)*

## Orchestra News and Newslets

The **Orquesta Sinfónica de Puerto Rico** (Puerto Rico Symphony Orchestra) has announced the appointment of Maximiano Valdés as its new music director and principal conductor. His appointment will commence with the 2008–2009 season, coinciding with the orchestra's 50th anniversary. Born in Santiago, Chile, Valdés was the music director of the Buffalo Philharmonic from 1989 to 1998.

ICSOM delegate Jeff Solomon reports that the **Alabama Symphony Orchestra** has successfully concluded its search for a new executive director and will welcome Kurt Long, formerly of the Dayton Philharmonic, to the ASO family. Jeff says that they are excited by this appointment and are optimistic that Long's expertise will help them continue building the momentum established during the tenure of Music Director Justin Brown.

In January, the **North Carolina Symphony** held recording sessions for two CDs to be produced under the BIS label. The first CD features Branford Marsalis and his quartet and includes works by Michael Daugherty, John Williams, Ned Rorem, and Christopher Rouse. The second CD includes piano concertos by Rachmaninoff and Medtner, with Yevgeny Sudbin as soloist. Anticipated release dates for the CDs will be in 2009–2010.

The **Nashville Symphony** announced a new education initiative called "One Note, One Neighborhood" in April. The program will initially target eight schools in East Nashville over a five-year period. In addition to a comprehensive package of education services, including the NSO's traditional outreach concerts, Young People's Concerts, and education ensembles in the schools, the program also incorporates master classes and professional development for music and regular classroom teachers. The model focuses on improving one neighborhood at a time in all levels of the education process. An additional classroom component is a partnership with the W.O. Smith School, named for William Oscar Smith, a bassist and violist with the Nashville Symphony as well as a Tennessee State University professor. The W.O. Smith School was created to make quality music instruction and instruments available to talented, interested, and deserving children from low income families. Students participating in the after-school component will receive music lessons from Nashville Symphony musicians, professional non-symphony musicians, or advanced students two to three times per week, all free of charge. These participants will later train to become music mentors to younger students in the program. "One Note, One Neighborhood" is a part of the Nashville Symphony's education plan "Music Education City," which is based on research showing that schools with comprehensive music and arts education show improved academic performance, a decline in violence and conflicts, higher graduation rates, and greater parental involvement.

**Louisiana Philharmonic** member Annie Cohen reports that despite everything, the LPO is doing just fine. They are back up to a 36 week season, and despite having to ferry around the region to various churches and other venues to do their concerts, they have essentially the same number of subscribers as during pre-Katrina days.

### Honolulu Musicians End Season Without Full Pay

It was an exciting but difficult 2007–2008 season for the musicians of the Honolulu Symphony. Our organization's strengths—particularly artistic and community service—and weaknesses—most glaringly financial instability caused by the lack of a strong board of directors—were all highlighted.

On the positive side, new board leadership, along with Executive Director Tom Gulick, has attempted to move the Symphony in the direction of expanding and improving its service to the public. For the first time in decades, no one blamed musicians' salaries for the financial problems of the organization. Among the board's accomplishments have been the complete restoration of pay after the cuts inflicted on HSO musicians in 2003, the hiring of Andreas Delfs as principal conductor, and the revival of inter-island touring for the first time in over a decade. The belated receipt of \$4 million of previously allocated state funds for our endowment was also welcome news. The HSO is starting to take steps to become an organization that once again serves the whole state of Hawai'i.

Unfortunately, a problem with our venue brought the board of directors' inability to raise sufficient funds to the fore. In 2006, Honolulu officials informed HSO management that Blaisdell Concert Hall, the municipal facility where the orchestra performs, would be unavailable from September till December 2007, in order to make way for a touring production of *The Lion King*. In the summer of 2007, Executive Director Tom Gulick announced the appointment of a special fundraising "Campaign Cabinet" composed of prominent community members who were not already on the board. The cabinet was immediately charged with raising \$1.8 million in new and increased contributed support as a way of addressing both weaknesses on the board and the losses expected from being kicked out of the concert hall for four months. Unfortunately, as the season began, the Campaign Cabinet had not raised the money that they had hoped for, and the future began to look shaky.

The 2007–2008 season opened in late August with a triumphant concert inaugurating Maestro Delfs' tenure with the HSO. A week later the orchestra was booted out of the concert hall. Publicly, the HSO tried to make the best of it, portraying it as a time to perform in different parts of town and as an opportunity to reach new audiences. The reality was less positive. Even as the HSO tried its best to serve the public better, the displacement from the concert hall meant that we reached fewer people and served them less well. The smaller facilities we had to perform in could not accommodate the full orchestra. That meant we could not play anything except chamber orchestra pieces all autumn. In addition, it seemed that many older concertgoers, accustomed to the familiarity of Blaisdell Concert Hall, stayed home rather than venture out into an unfamiliar part of the city. On the other side of the coin, some of the halls were so small that they couldn't accommodate all of the patrons who wanted to be there. This situation meant a loss of HSO earned revenue as well as increased expenses from moving orchestra and equipment all over Honolulu.

In December, during the orchestra's first week back in Blaisdell Concert Hall, our executive director and board chair informed the orchestra that we would not receive the paychecks due that Friday and that they didn't know when we would be paid. They asked us to continue to play the concerts that weekend. We did. After much internal discussion and consultation with ICSOM Counsel Lenny Leibowitz and AFM advisors, we continued to play the entire rest of the season with delayed pay, keeping the Honolulu Symphony's mission of service to the community alive, even as the board was failing to honor its commitment to us.

Throughout this time, HSO musicians were paid sporadically and fell further and further behind in pay. By early March, we had fallen four weeks behind; by the end of April we were nine weeks behind. The burden of not being paid on time was worsened by never being given a firm date about when the next paycheck would arrive. Musicians have had to live with the uncertainty that the next month's rent might not be there.

We have found some ways of getting help. We have used our internal musicians' fund to provide interest-free loans to players who could not pay their bills. More recently, we are grateful for the assistance of the MusiCares Foundation and a generous, unsolicited gift from Local 802 to help us through. ICSOM Chairperson Bruce Ridge and other ICSOM officers have continually monitored the situation and offered to assist us if possible. Other help included a rally organized by the young musicians of the Hawaii Youth Symphony in front of the concert hall, waving banners to remind the public that their music teachers needed to be paid. Still, some musicians were not able to complete the season and were forced to leave the orchestra and travel off-island to look for work elsewhere.

In early May, Tom Gulick announced a \$1.175 million gift from an anonymous donor. It did not come a moment too soon. On May 8, the day that musicians would have fallen 11 weeks behind in pay, we received 7 weeks of much needed back pay. After our season ended on May 18, we received another two-week paycheck on May 22. As of May 31 we are still owed four weeks of pay.

One major difference from previous HSO crises is that musicians' salaries were not blamed for the financial difficulties. The executive director and the board have made it clear that the problem is not that we are paid too much, but rather that community support needs to step up. This is a departure from some past times when cuts were seen as the way to solve budget issues.

As we look forward, it is still a very unsure situation here in Honolulu. As of May 31, we have not yet been told when we will get any of the back pay we are owed. Our collective bargaining agreement is about to expire, and negotiations will have to happen by the time next season begins. Most importantly, the board will need to find the resources necessary to provide financial stability and to grow the organization—a huge task which they have only begun to face.

*Submitted by Honolulu ICSOM Delegate Steven Flanter*

## Fifty Years Plus

*(continued from page 1)*

a 52-week orchestra during the 1972–1975 contract. In 1975 the orchestra was out of work for nine weeks to assure their job security (it was neither a lock out nor a strike), and in 1982 musicians had a successful nine-day strike over whether they would keep their role in the selection of the orchestra's music director.

Felix Resnick was a conductor of many Detroit-area orchestras, including the Pontiac Symphony and the Birmingham-Bloomfield Symphony, each for 30 years, and the Grosse Pointe Symphony for 40 years. Felix also loved teaching and mentoring many students in the area. He remained active with swimming and yoga until his death. Felix will be sorely missed by his colleagues in the Detroit Symphony.

*—Brian Ventura, with assistance from Paul Ganson*

### Utah Symphony—Frances Darger (65 years)

George Brown forwarded my request to Frances Darger, who is completing her 65th year with the Utah Symphony this season. She relates that she was born and raised in Salt Lake to an opera-singing mother who started her on the violin at the age of nine and sent her to the local youth symphony, which was conducted by renowned Tabernacle Choir organist Frank W. Asper. It was at these rehearsals that she fell in love with music.

The Utah Symphony began in 1940, although there were previous incarnations, including a WPA orchestra. Because of World War II, the Utah Symphony needed players, so Frances felt fortunate to start playing with this fledgling group in the summer of 1942. According to Frances's records, the 1942 season consisted of 18 weeks, with the six-service weeks paid at the rate of \$6.25 per service (\$37.50 per week). That first season included five concerts, conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham, Jose Echaniz, Albert Coates, Christos Vronides, and James Sample. The 1946–1947 season, under Music Director Werner Janssen, increased to 20 weeks at \$50 per week; however the 1949–1950 season was reduced to 18 weeks, again at \$37.50 per week, two years after Music Director Maurice Abravanel took over. According to Frances, he built the orchestra "upward and onward magnificently," and in the 1979–1980 season, the Utah Symphony became a 52-week orchestra.

Frances Darger played during the 1942–1943 and 1943–1944 seasons and then spent a year in Los Angeles with her four sisters trying to break into the "swing-singers" world. When that did not materialize, they all returned home, and Frances returned to the Utah Symphony for the 1945–46 season. She has played there ever since and says she has loved the whole adventure. What follows are some remembrances in her own words.

"It has truly been a joy to watch the progress of our Utah Symphony. I actually began playing five years before Maurice Abravanel arrived, and there were a number of conductors during these war years. I particularly remember a wonderful concert with Sir Thomas Beecham. As for music directors, I have 'survived'

*(continued on page 8—see FIFTY YEARS PLUS)*

## Philadelphia Orchestra Project: *Music from the Inside Out* by Don Liuzzi

A ten-year project meant to reach new audiences, educate young listeners, and engage musicians of every age is now coming to final fruition for Philadelphia Orchestra members. The core of the project, *Music from the Inside Out*, a documentary film completed in 2004, has seen many milestones. It was released nationally in arthouse theaters in 2005, seen on PBS nationally in May 2006, and released by New Video as a DVD in 2007.

The project has now reached its final mission by being published as a textbook (by Daniel Anker, Carol Ponder, and Donna Santman, preface by Eric Booth, published by Alfred Publishing Company) with an accompanying “teacher’s guide” DVD. A group of very innovative educators led by Eric Booth conceived of the text for grades 5–12. Moments from the film (and some moments that never made the film) are viewed by the classroom as a send-off for various units of study and discovery. Some of these many lessons include: discovering one’s musical personality, creating an individual musical timeline, explorations of composition, and developing listening strategies by creating musical listening journals and listening discussion groups.

The inception of this entire project dates back to the orchestra’s strike in 1996. The resolution of that strike empowered musicians and board members to create new educational electronic media projects. What was first meant to be a television series became a movie to explore some basic questions: What is music? How is music made? Why does it exist? What are the human stories behind music-making? The resulting film was not at all a Philadelphia Orchestra story, but a music/musician story, going deep into the exploration of motives and aspirations we all share as music makers. The discussions and the interviews of musicians that were filmed touch upon universal stories and themes about how we came to be musicians, how music affects us, and how our music-making relates to every day life. This film is a snapshot view of our musical lineage, without regard to the name of any particular city, person, instrument, or orchestra history.

Award-winning producer/director Daniel Anker and his company, Anker Productions, filmed Philadelphia Orchestra musicians over a period of years on three continents. Over five hundred hours of footage were molded into a ninety-minute film. Our gratitude for the editing prowess and perseverance of Anker and his company is profound. One member of the Philadelphia Orchestra’s artistic committee commented on an early screening, “I am glad there was so much music-making that was allowed to be heard and seen.” The new textbook/teacher’s guide with its accompanying hour-long DVD is their culmination as well. The film’s themes and message—including that music will always be an expression in sound that performers and listeners alike can equally and deeply experience—have an audience far beyond that for the film’s release. The curriculum incorporates many writing activities and extensively utilizes principles of literacy-based learning. It was piloted over a three-year period in New York and Nashville schools. The text and DVD represent a fresh new approach to teaching music.

Philadelphia Orchestra musicians learned some important lessons from this project. Some of these include:

- Get real support and team involvement of your orchestra administration/management. We wasted many months by struggling to get all the constituents of the organization “on board.”
- Try to involve as many of the orchestra members as possible in any project, and share the wealth of the organization. We tried to involve lots of orchestra members but still had to deal with disappointments in the editing process. We had to discover that the greater purpose of the project—the universal message of the film—was more important than who got on camera.
- Trust your colleagues and the experts. Once a film maker was chosen, many moments of trust were tested. At some point we had to let go and realize that the result could not be controlled.

In this project, the positives far, far outweigh the negatives. We created a growing tool for use in schools, conservatories, and music festivals, and that enhances the orchestra’s reputation. There is much new and renewed appreciation among orchestra members of each other’s comments and insights that were in the film. The project fostered cooperation, patience, and understanding among the musicians, even though there was disappointment that not every musician’s voice was heard in interviews.

Many patrons saw the film in the Philadelphia region, either at the theaters or on PBS, which helped the audience get closer to the orchestra and its members. After the strike, our public needed, and we created, a positive and moving view of music-making. A number of our new members even say that seeing the film enhanced their desire to audition here.

The film was recently released with subtitles in Japanese and Chinese, with a potential Korean translation as well. This coincided with a recent tour to Asia. Next year during tours to Europe, a European release in German, Spanish, and French is planned.

A huge thanks is due to all the members of the Philadelphia Orchestra, who allowed a camera to follow them around, backstage and on tour, for four years. Their patience and good will were tested, and the orchestra passed with flying colors.

Please visit the film’s website at either [www.mftio.com](http://www.mftio.com) or [www.musicfromtheinsideout.com](http://www.musicfromtheinsideout.com). The DVD and text can be ordered from that site or from major booksellers and video stores, including Emerging Pictures ([emergingpictures.com](http://emergingpictures.com)), Amazon and NetFlix.

*Don Liuzzi has been Philadelphia Orchestra’s principal timpani for 19 years. He also played for seven years in the percussion section of the Pittsburgh Symphony. As the film’s coordinating producer, Don acted as the link between the musicians and the film maker.*

## From the Dressing Room to the Boardroom

*by Roger Ruggeri*

As a bassist volunteering on the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra board's governance committee last season, I was both surprised and somewhat alarmed to be designated to chair a small subcommittee charged with developing a procedure for annual evaluations of the orchestra's music director and executive director. This situation arose out of our governance committee's desire to be responsive to the 2002 Sarbanes-Oxley Act. That federal legislation protects whistle blowers and requires financial disclosure and accountability in public companies. It also requires boards of public companies to develop oversight mechanisms ensuring high-quality operation. Dependent as orchestras are upon significant donor support, they, too, will do well to ensure demonstrably effective oversight of top leadership.

Our discussions revealed that fair and meaningful evaluation, particularly of a music director, would not be easily achieved. Perhaps the most striking dichotomy to emerge was that very few board members felt qualified to make value judgments regarding a music director, while anyone frequenting an orchestra dressing room recognizes that many colleagues hold finely detailed opinions. On the other hand, musicians were less enthusiastic about evaluating an executive director, while a number of board members were quite comfortable with this more business-like task. Our subcommittee's challenge was to corral this panorama of views into a broadly credible process.

Working with a lawyer/board member, we cobbled together guidelines for an internal evaluation process with an intentionally flexible structure. The process for the music director could be supplemented by information obtained through ICSOM's excellent conductor evaluation program. This is a very young process, and it's expected that it will evolve to achieve its mission. I hope that this sharing of our approach might ultimately benefit any number of ICSOM organizations.

Essentially, the subcommittee's report recommends annual, reliable, objective evaluations of the executive director and the music director. The process should be timed to aid in compensation reviews and the renewal of applicable contracts. Highlights of the report and evaluation process follow.

The evaluation committee, composed of three directors and one musician-elected representative under the direction of the governance committee, should gather and consider information, ultimately making its recommendations to the board chair and the executive committee. Without the musician member, the evaluation committee should also make compensation recommendations.

The evaluation committee is encouraged to gather information as widely as it wants, possibly involving all of the board, all committee chairs, or the executive committee. The report suggests that it might be helpful to maintain the involvement of respective search committees (or members thereof) in the evaluation process.

For both the executive director and the music director, questionnaires would be sent to the heads of the operations, development, marketing, and finance departments, as well as to the orchestra's personnel manager. Additionally, the executive director and the music director would evaluate each other.

The evaluation committee's process should be informed by data from the musicians' artistic liaison committee. That committee will likely gather ICSOM conductor evaluation reports about our music director from our own and other orchestras, taken from ICSOM's database at Wayne State. Information from other arts organizations and constituencies may be gathered as desired by the evaluation committee.

Proposed questions for evaluation of the executive director explore issues including whether the executive director:

- demonstrates a clear grasp of the organization's mission
- accomplished the board's objectives and priorities for the performance period
- supports the current staff and selects qualified new staff
- maintains morale among musicians
- ensures the provision of high quality programs and services
- effectively generates resources for the fulfillment of the organization's mission
- ensures financially informed decision-making
- works effectively with the board and with ancillary organizations
- cultivates positive relationships with public officials, consumers, and relevant community organizations
- responds effectively to challenges
- has a positive image in the local community

Three narrative questions for the executive director would ask about leadership strengths, areas that could benefit from added development, and areas that should receive more emphasis.

ICSOM's longstanding conductor evaluation program, while not designed specifically for the evaluation of an orchestra's music director, can enhance our internal music director evaluation process. Potential questions not covered by the ICSOM form include whether the music director:

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## Fifty Years Plus

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Maurice Abravanel (32 wonderful years), Varujan Kojian, Joseph Silverstein (a fantastic musician), and Keith Lockhart.

“During my many years of playing there have been many memorable experiences but my favorite was to play at the base of the Athens Acropolis in 1966 with the lights ablaze on those timeless rocks. And it is still a joy to play all that beautiful music.”

### Atlanta Symphony—Jane Little (61 or 64 years)

When counting her years with the Atlanta Symphony, it depends on how you look at it! Atlanta Symphony bassist Jane Little is not only a charter member of the Atlanta Symphony, in September 1944 she joined the youth orchestra that, in May 1947, became the Atlanta Symphony. Jane was recently honored by the Georgia State Senate with a resolution commemorating her many contributions to music in Georgia and declaring that “the State of Georgia is honored to have such a gifted and dedicated individual as one of its citizens.”

When the orchestra became a professional orchestra and began hiring professional musicians in 1947, Henry Sopkin came down from Chicago to lead the youth orchestra and became the first of only four music directors of the Atlanta Symphony. (The other three are Robert Shaw, Yoel Levi, and Robert Spano.) The first season, the budget of the ASO, with a six-concert season, was \$5,000. Needless to say, Jane believes that the increased salaries, implementation of benefits, and essential improvements in touring conditions have been the major changes she has witnessed over her fifty-plus years as a member of the orchestra.

Many of Jane’s most memorable experiences are tied to travel and touring. For example, Jane said that Music Director Henry Sopkin always rode the bus with the orchestra for tours. On one occasion he forgot his tails, so Maestro Sopkin called someone to bring them; the entire orchestra waited on the side of the road for their delivery. Maestro Sopkin also liked to reverse the order of the last two movements of Tchaikovsky’s Sixth Symphony in order to maximize the applause. One evening on tour, he decided to do them in the correct order. After the third movement, he bowed and left the stage. He was perplexed that there were no applause. Once someone clued him in backstage, he returned to conduct the last movement.

A defining moment in the early days set the orchestra on its course to change travel conditions. A bus breakdown on a runout caused the orchestra to return to town at 7AM. That morning, as the neighbors were leaving for work, Jane’s boyfriend, Warren, took her to her mother’s house in evening wear, causing quite a little scandal. Warren, by then Jane’s husband, participated in another travel debacle during the orchestra’s 1991 European tour. While in Vienna there was an early suitcase pickup call. Warren packed all of Jane’s clothes except for the plain little blue nightgown she slept in that night. Jane had to fly to the next city and travel all the way to the hotel in her nightgown!

Touring problems also had a hand in the formation of the ASO Players Association back in 1966. While the orchestra was on a South Georgia tour, the inept management got the date wrong for the concert in Norman Park. The stagehand (a violinist in the orchestra) got to the venue early and started knocking down a theatrical set. The theater manager had a fit, pointing out that the contract was for the next night. That very evening at the hotel, the orchestra had a long orchestra meeting in the ballroom. Jane remembers that they were mad as hell and weren’t going to take it anymore. The ASOPA was formed that very night. It was also decided then and there that the season needed to be expanded beyond the 22-week season and that salaries had to increase.

The orchestra did have fun on tour though. During a February tour in the early seventies with Robert Shaw, the orchestra had a concert scheduled at Radford College (now Radford University) in Virginia. Due to snow and ice on the roadways, the concert was cancelled, so the orchestra went back to the hotel. There was a big hill behind the hotel, so everyone got round tabletops from the pool area and sledged down the hill all night long.

Mishaps were not exclusive to touring, however. Arthur Rubinstein performed the Tchaikovsky Piano Concerto at the old Municipal Auditorium, which the orchestra had to share with wrestling matches and the circus. The stage was not level, and at the concert the stagehand forgot to lock the wheels of the piano. It rolled all over the front of the stage and almost into the audience, with Rubinstein chasing it. Once the wheels of the piano were secured, the orchestra began again, but the horns forgot their transpositions the second time.

—with assistance from Michael Moore

### New York Philharmonic—Stanley Drucker (60 years)

When Stanley Drucker, principal clarinet of the New York Philharmonic, retires at the end of the 2008–2009 season, he will have completed an amazing sixty seasons with the orchestra. Some other numbers make one’s head spin: When he joined the orchestra in 1948 at age 19, it was the orchestra’s 4,616th concert since its founding in 1842. Stanley’s last concert will be the orchestra’s 14,868th, which means that Stanley will have played more than ten thousand concerts with the Philharmonic. He has missed almost no services during his career. The numbers are almost impossible to comprehend. To top it off, Stanley is retiring in top form and with the same enthusiasm and love for music he had at age 19.

Movies made from the late forties reveal that Stanley even looks the same as he did in 1948—except for some grey hairs and smile lines around his eyes. Stanley is a genetic wonder, but clearly he has been doing something right for the past 78 years. Hired by Music Director Bruno Walter in 1948, other music directors during his career have included Stokowski, Mitropoulos, Szell, Boulez, Mehta, Mazur, and Maazel. When asked about the most important changes during his sixty seasons, Stanley said: “By far, the most significant

change has been the 52-week season. The Philharmonic was only a part time job at 28 weeks in 1948.” His most memorable experiences with the Philharmonic include his two Grammy nominations for recordings of the Corigliano Clarinet Concerto (1982) and the Copland Clarinet Concerto (1992). His other great memory was being named Musical America’s Instrumentalist of the Year in 1998.

Stanley has appeared as soloist with the NY Philharmonic over one hundred fifty times. He has given performances of the Copland Concerto with only a few minutes’ notice when scheduled soloists have taken ill or failed to show up. With Stanley around, there is never a question of who can get up and dazzle the audience at a moment’s notice. There is no way possible to sum up Stanley’s career, other than to thank him for his inspiration to countless musicians and fans, and to revel in the honor of performing with him during his glorious years in the NY Philharmonic.

—Ken Mirkin

#### **Philadelphia Orchestra—Jerome Wigler (57 years)**

Violinist Jerome Wigler has been with the Philadelphia Orchestra since 1951, and prior to that he was a member of the Minneapolis Symphony, having joined in 1942. He lists the following important changes that symphony orchestras have seen over the past fifty years: tenure; musicians gaining the ability to retain a lawyer; pension; health plan; travel conditions; age discrimination; ICSOM, with all the orchestras working together; season length; compassionate, maternity, and paternity leave; and instrument insurance.

To Jerome, these were the most important changes, but he doesn’t think they happened easily. “There were many obstacles in our path: the Musicians’ Union, management, and members of the orchestras themselves. We as musicians, busy learning to play our instruments, and with our training and schooling, were not aware how conditions were when we decided to become professional working musicians. We are not trained in the political aspects of musical life.”

When he graduated from the Juilliard School of Music, Jerome’s first position was with the Minneapolis Symphony under conductor Dmitri Mitropoulos. His contract was less than a half page long and did not contain provisions for pension, health benefits, or vacation; but it did contain a two-week notice clause in case a musician didn’t meet the conductor’s expectations. Jerome never read that contract until many years later.

Later, Jerome joined the Philadelphia Orchestra. “I didn’t read that contract either” he says. “It was one page, tenure was available, there was very little pension, and there was a health plan to which we contributed a small amount. That contract was negotiated by the local musicians’ union [Local 77] and the board of the Philadelphia Orchestra along with their team of lawyers. Samuel Rosenbaum, a board member, was also the trustee of the Musicians’ Union Trust Fund. He had much to say in regard to any contract with us, since he

controlled the trust fund. As a result, little progress was made for each three-year contract bargained.

“After a few years, I met with other members in the orchestra who felt something had to be done to improve our lives. Little did I know what a stone wall that would be. I had no political skills at all. I played the violin! I joined the orchestra committee and was told by other musicians that I had committed suicide.”

The orchestra committee’s first objective was to hire a lawyer to negotiate their contract, and Jerome remembers that they had to convince a reluctant orchestra. “After all, the Philadelphia Orchestra management had a team of lawyers” he explains. “We had to fight the musicians’ union and the members of the orchestra themselves, who after years of struggle, and fear for their jobs, were reluctant to do anything to disturb the status quo.

“In a crucial moment, we arranged a meeting during the union’s monthly board meeting. We needed 35 members to pass a resolution to hire our own lawyer to negotiate for us. Only fifteen members came. As a result, we rounded up 25 local members who happened to be in the street to help us pass the resolution. And for the first time, around 1955, we had a lawyer.”

Jerome was at the very first meetings of ICSOM in Chicago in 1962. “Most musicians at that time worked a half-year’s season” he recalls. “The only orchestra that negotiated its own contract before ICSOM was the Boston Symphony. The union rep’s negotiator did it here.”

Jerome reports that they had a difficult time with the union and orchestra members but still managed to make progress. He said that while members voted by ballot with the committee, they were quite vocal about their disapproval—most likely because of fear of reprisal from management. He also points out the some of the most vocal were titled players who made more money and negotiated their own contracts; they had more to lose by siding with the committee.

Over the course of years the orchestra has made a great deal of progress, strikes included, and finally in the sixties came up with the idea of a 52-week season, in which they made the greatest progress of all. They also achieved a pension plan, health benefits, vacations, etc., all paid for by management. They have tremendously improved travel conditions. “After all, we do a lot of travel, and our lives have improved a lot as a result” Jerome says. “The management of the orchestra has done much to make things easier for us and try very hard in this regard. Long gone are the days, years ago, when a group of us on tour stayed at the YMCA in Ann Arbor, Michigan and found that the man handing out towels had been the first harpist of the Philadelphia Orchestra under Stokowski—this is how he ended up!

“Now orchestra members are pleased with the Philadelphia Orchestra standards they have come into. Hopefully they can learn

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## Fifty Years Plus

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from the past and keep our orchestra one of the best in the land, and live a happy life here on. It was not easy!"

—Jerome Wigler with assistance from Lisa-Beth Lambert

### Chicago Symphony—Phil Blum (53 years)

Phil Blum, a cellist, is the only current member of the Chicago Symphony with more than fifty years of service. He grew up in Chicago and received most of his musical education there, although he also studied for one and a half years at Eastman. Phil joined the CSO in 1955. He was hired by Fritz Reiner and describes his audition as one of his most memorable experiences with the CSO. "It was in a small room with Reiner and Janos Starker (then principal cellist). There was no preliminary, no screens, and no audition committee. Reiner asked me to play any concerto I wished, and Starker asked for two movements of a Bach suite. Then there was some sight-reading, a little chit-chat, and that was it."

The CSO was founded in 1891, so it had been around for 64 years before Phil was hired. In 1955, the CBA was one page long and was negotiated by the local president and the president of the Orchestral Association. There was no orchestra committee, and the musicians had no say in their salary and working conditions. It would be four years before the members' committee would be formed, and three more before it would be recognized by the union. It would be 10 years before an audition committee would exist, and 15 years before the CSO would have a 52-week season. To Phil, the most important changes in the CSO have been the formation of the members' committee and getting rotation in the strings.

Phil has played under music directors Fritz Reiner, Jean Martinon, Sir Georg Solti, and Daniel Barenboim. During the Reiner years he also played under Igor Stravinsky, Ernst Ansermet, Bruno Walter, Carlo Maria Giulini, Karl Boehm, George Szell, Sir Thomas Beecham, Leopold Stokowski, Eugene Ormandy, Pierre Monteux, Erich Leinsdorf, William Steinberg, Hans Rosbaud, Charles Munch, and Paul Hindemith. Besides his audition, Phil's most memorable experiences were recording the Sibelius Violin Concerto with Jascha Heifetz and his first time playing in Carnegie Hall.

—Rachel Goldstein

### Los Angeles Philharmonic —Richard Kelley (53 years)

In 1955, after a year with the Dallas Symphony, Richard Kelley at the age of 19 was hired to play in the bass section of the Los Angeles Philharmonic by Alfred Wallenstein. His father, Richard F. Kelley, played in that same section from 1931 to 1977. "I grew up in North Hollywood, and back in those days, the Philharmonic was the worst job in town. Anybody who was anybody played in the studio orchestras. The season was eight months long, no paid vacation, no pension or health insurance, no benefits at all. It paid \$105 a week."

Richard reminds us that the LA Phil was founded in 1919. "It had only been around 12 years when my dad joined. I served under

Alfred Wallenstein, Eduard van Beinem, Georg Solti, Zubin Mehta, Carlo Maria Giulini, Andre Previn and Esa-Pekka Salonen. You know, Solti, he didn't last long out here. He quit when Dorothy Chandler (the money behind the orchestra and the *Los Angeles Times*) hired Zubin for the position of assistant conductor without asking Solti first. So fine, we went with Zubin. That didn't turn out so bad, did it?

"I went on my first tour with Wallenstein in 1956—state sponsored, 10 weeks in Asia—Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Thailand, Korea, the Philippines. It wasn't that long after the war. You know, everyone was still in traditional dress. It was amazing. We did an around-the-world tour with Zubin, too. Bombay, Iran, Greece, Turkey—I mean, it was awesome!

"My most memorable musical performances include Tchaikovsky 5 under van Beinem and *Falstaff* with Giulini conducting. When we recorded *Firebird* for Columbia records, Stravinsky conducted. But he was so old, he kept slowing down. See? So Robert Kraft rehearsed the orchestra, and they recorded all that, and that's probably what you're hearing on the record.

"After 53 years with the LA Phil, I still look forward to going to work every day. It's like therapy for me. I love Walt Disney Concert Hall. I think it's the finest concert hall in the world, and I'm excited about working with our new music director, Gustavo Dudamel."

—Meredith Snow

### Fort Worth Symphony—Harriet Risk Woldt (51 years)

Cellist and viola de gambist Harriet Risk Woldt grew up in Muskegon Heights, Michigan. She joined the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra as principal cello in 1957 when the orchestra was reformed after disbanding during WWII. There was no season contract for the FWSO in 1957; musicians were hired as needed. Harriet cannot remember whether the salary was \$3 per hour or \$3 per service. In 1956, Harriet was a member of the Fort Worth Opera Orchestra, and she continued working with the opera once the symphony started up again. She also played with the Fort Worth Ballet Orchestra. Both the opera and the ballet are now part of the FWSO season.

In the seventies, 36 musicians were hired "full time" for 30 weeks to form the Fort Worth Chamber Orchestra, which became the core orchestra of the Fort Worth Symphony. Harriet had to decide between playing in the orchestra or teaching at Texas Christian University. She chose to teach and to continue playing with the Symphony as a part time member. Harriet believes the formation of the full-time core was critical to the growth of the orchestra.

Robert Hall was the conductor of the FWSO when Harriet joined it. Later there were various conductors who filled the position temporarily until John Giordano was appointed music director in the

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## President on Flanagan

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increased their expense budgets too greatly during the economic expansion of the nineties and that revenues simply could not keep up. After a great deal of consternation, the ETF decided to leave this question alone and to focus on looking forward rather than behind.

As many know, the ETF delivered its presentation to the Mellon Orchestra Forum in 2004 and later to members of the ICSOM Governing Board. The presentation included further research and ideas on the four challenges or deficits originally described by Jamie Ireland in his paper, "Caging the Elephant." The ETF presentation contained a future orchestral model that could potentially be both artistically fulfilling and economically viable. Included were perspectives on organizational culture and, my personal favorite, community engagement. While many orchestras have made recent strides towards becoming more engaged with their communities, there is great potential yet untapped. In my opinion, we should be spending more of our collective time and energy on further developing relationships within our communities.

Returning to the Flanagan report, the ETF did discuss inviting an expert to review financial data in order to shed further light on the structural/cyclical question. Knowing that Ron Bauers had worked with many Mellon orchestras, musicians on the ETF naturally suggested that he be engaged. Others thought that Bauers may have appeared to be too "union friendly." Anyone who knows Ron Bauers knows that he is a numbers person. His interest is to help musicians and management alike understand an orchestra's true financial picture, whatever it may be.

After the 2004 presentations, the ETF lay dormant for many months. From 2005 to 2006 meetings were held that involved Mellon and League leadership as well as members of the ETF. Subsequently, Flanagan was commissioned to undertake this study. Apparently, it was thought that Flanagan would stay on track and take an unbiased approach. What is interesting to me, though, is that the decision was made to engage someone who had considerably less experience with orchestral finances than did Ron Bauers, who would have been ideally suited.

Much of the data used by Flanagan for his study was supplied by the League through its Orchestra Statistical Reports (OSRs). This data included attendance figures and financial information, including musicians' salaries and benefits. It should come as no surprise that problems with the OSRs continue to be perceived. In fact, following meetings between League and ICSOM leadership during the 2004 ICSOM Conference, the Collaborative Data Project (CDP) was created to help mitigate these problems.

Let's revisit a few of the issues with the OSRs. The numbers supplied to the League for the Flanagan report were based primarily on management-generated internal reports and not on audited financial returns. It is no secret that musicians have been skeptical of these numbers for decades. To make matters worse, musicians were routinely denied access to this information until just a couple of years ago. There were also problems with categories being

interpreted differently from orchestra to orchestra, and sometimes—due to changes in the chief financial officer and/or executive director positions, different accounting methods, and the impact of FASB regulations—even within the same orchestra from year to year.

In any event, musicians have not had much faith in the OSRs, particularly as the contents were kept from musicians even during negotiations. These points were firmly articulated during the ETF discussions and later with League leadership. It is perplexing that Mellon and the League sanctioned a study based on the OSRs. If this study was so important, then why was it not postponed long enough to allow the development and implementation of the CDP?

AFM, ICSOM, and ROPA representatives attended one meeting last July with representatives of Mellon, the League, the ETF, and Professor Flanagan. The preliminary draft we viewed included research on the dramatic rise of music director salaries, which far exceeded that of musicians. Interestingly, the final Flanagan report focused on salaries of orchestra musicians alone. Much attention was paid to the development of musician salaries in this report and even more in Flanagan's January study, simply titled "Symphony Musicians and Symphony Orchestras." Where is the focus and the research on staff and music director salaries, and why was this not deemed important to a study on orchestral economics?

Why should there be so much concern about this one report? While I have just scratched the surface, there is still a ticking time bomb. Who will be the first management and/or board to use the Flanagan Report against their own musicians during negotiations? Why I am so skeptical? Well, this is exactly what happened four years ago. As you may recall, one board president erroneously credited the work of the original ETF as supportive of the position of his orchestra's board and management that the collective bargaining agreement with their musicians was a "Roadmap to Extinction." Henry Peyrebrune and I requested that Mellon Program Officer Catherine Maciarello set the record straight as to the true nature of the ETF's work. Thankfully, she did. In an open letter to Mellon Orchestra Forum Participants, shared by permission with the delegates at the 2004 ICSOM Conference, Catherine stated:

The (Elephant) Task Force was never intended to conduct independent research or to present conclusions about the general state of the orchestra field. As you know from the presentation, complete data was collected and analyzed for only one orchestra, and much work still needs to be done to refine the model and to determine its applicability to other orchestras. At best, the model offers a tool that individual orchestras within the Forum might use to engage all constituents in a productive dialogue about the future. None of the Task Force materials should be considered definitive, nor should they be used publicly in any way, especially to defend a particular position.

Finally, due to the release of the Flanagan report, there is renewed debate as to the merits of engaging in cross-constituency work

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## Address to the FIM Orchestra Conference in Berlin

by Bruce Ridge, ICSOM Chairperson

*Federation International des Musiciens/International Federation of Musicians (FIM) held its first conference on orchestras April 7–9, 2008, in Berlin, Germany. Founded in 1948, FIM is a federation of 72 unions throughout the world including the AFM. Representatives from the AFM included of President Tom Lee, Secretary-Treasurer Sam Folio, SSD Director Laura Brownell, ICSOM Chairperson Bruce Ridge, ROPA President Tom Fetherston, and OCSM/OMOSC President Francine Schutzman. What follows is the text of an address delivered by Chairperson Ridge to that conference.*

I'd like to begin by telling you just a little about the organization I represent, the International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians, or ICSOM. Our members are 4,000 musicians in the 51 largest orchestras in the United States. If the "international" part of our name seems a misnomer, it is because when we were founded we were indeed international, having orchestras from Canada in our membership. But, in 1975, the Canadian Orchestras formed their own conference, and they are represented here in Berlin by my dear friend, Francine Schutzman.

ICSOM represents some of the most well-known orchestras in the world, such as the Philadelphia Orchestra and the Chicago Symphony. But we also represent smaller orchestras that are some of the finest artistic institutions found anywhere, such as the San Antonio Symphony and the Oregon Symphony. While some of our orchestras are not international names, they are intrinsically linked with their cities, and they serve their communities through the highest level of public service. I am a member of the North Carolina Symphony, an orchestra that performs free concerts for over 100,000 school children every year. In my role as ICSOM chairperson, I have traveled over 60,000 miles to hear our musicians perform, from Puerto Rico to Honolulu. It is indeed a great pleasure to be able to add to my travels this great gathering of musicians in Berlin, and it is an honor to be asked to speak with you today.



Photo by Christoph Polentz

ICSOM Chairperson Bruce Ridge (right) is seen participating in a panel at the recent FIM conference in Berlin. The topic of the panel was the status of orchestra musicians in today's society.

The topic I was asked to address is "What can be done so people don't undervalue or overvalue musicians?" I must say that, unfortunately, in the United States we need not concern ourselves with the issue of musicians being *overvalued*. The orchestras of America face a seemingly endless onslaught of negative prognostications, and for many musicians the struggle to spread a positive message of hope to our communities is as vital as the daily regimen we undertake to maintain our craft.

While there are many orchestras that are thriving, in other places we must be our own advocates. We face governments that seek to balance their budgets by slashing arts funding, despite the fact that every dollar invested in the arts returns seven dollars in revenue. The non-profit culture industry in the United States generates over \$166 billion every year, and provides 5.7 million jobs. Together we work to counteract a negative perception of the future of classical music.

Recently, one of our member orchestras, the Jacksonville Symphony, faced an egregious lockout by their management in a plan to reduce the size of that excellent orchestra into something that their board felt was "more manageable". This absurd position was taken by people who are supposedly stewards of the community in a city that has seen a 35% expansion of the economy in the past five years.

I am delighted to tell you that the lockout was not successful, and that the musicians are now back on stage. This was largely due to an unprecedented show of support by the musicians of North America who responded to a *Call to Action* issued from ICSOM by donating nearly \$100,000 to support the musicians. The support of the unified musicians across the continent made the lockout a national issue, and demonstrated that the positive message of the musicians within their community can overcome a negative message perpetrated by an underperforming management.

No sooner had the issue been resolved in Jacksonville than another crisis appeared, this time for the Columbus Symphony in the state of Ohio. There, the board and management proposed to resolve financial difficulties by eliminating 22 musicians.

The climate that leads to these incidents is one of historic record. For many years, a pervasive sense of doom has lingered over the orchestral industry in America, at times promulgated by the industry itself. When I first joined the Virginia Symphony in 1979, I was told that the audience for classical music would soon be dead. But now, nearly 30 years later, I see the same audiences I saw then. I see the old and the young, the well-dressed and the sartorially challenged. The negative pronouncements ignore the fact that in America we are seeing a rise in attendance, a rise in classical music downloads, and a proliferation of beautiful new concert halls. The artistic level of our orchestras, with budgets both large and small, has never been higher.

The venerable Wall Street Journal recently proclaimed “Contrary to the rumors, symphony orchestras have a bright future.”

But, why do these rumors persist at all? I have a newspaper article that asserts “25 Symphonies Doomed to Die.” Disturbing news, to say the least. Until, that is, you realize that the article was published in 1970, and that all of the orchestras exist to this day. In fact, many have risen to illustrious heights.

One of our success stories is the Nashville Symphony, an orchestra that declared bankruptcy just 20 years ago. Today this orchestra is a model of excellence recognized throughout the world. The orchestra has just opened its new concert hall which is acknowledged by all as one of the finest on any continent. The community rose to save this orchestra. And now, the symphony has revitalized the historic downtown of Nashville, and brought international attention to the city through its award winning recordings.

There are many successes to celebrate. The Fort Worth Symphony is receiving rave reviews for a Carnegie Hall appearance, the Florida Orchestra is announcing gifts totaling over \$3 million, the Buffalo Philharmonic is aggressively building its endowment, the Oregon Symphony has seen a 20% increase in attendance, and the New York Philharmonic is receiving more press coverage than the Oscars. And yet, we still hear the incessant drum beat that professes that the arts are not sustainable in certain cities.

It seems to me that the arts are the only business that seeks to resolve financial difficulties by offering an inferior product to its public. Ballet companies turn to recorded music, and symphony boards propose a drastic reduction in the size of the orchestra. It is clearly a misguided approach.

I think it is less a question of whether musicians are overvalued or undervalued, but rather, how do we work to ensure that they are indeed valued? There are many ways to reach out to our communities and build the sense of family that should surround every orchestra in its city.

“Community” is a buzz word in the orchestra world today. We must strive to make sure that “community” refers not only to an investment in us, but that it also means that we musicians invest in our community. To establish indelibly the positive sense of community that our musicians seek to develop, musicians must learn to break the fourth wall.

In theater, the fourth wall is the imaginary wall between the stage and the audience, the other three walls being formed by the shell of the stage. The term has been adapted from the theater to include books, film, and television.

Musicians in symphony orchestras can adapt the term to serve a new purpose as well. All too often in our concert halls there seems to be a dividing line between the orchestra and the audience. To establish a closer relationship with our audiences, boards, and community leaders, orchestra musicians need to break that fourth wall. This would mean establishing a connection with the audience and

inviting them into the community that surrounds every orchestra. And further, it would mean expanding that community to all constituents of our cities.

At a time of uncertainty in the world, where discord seems more valued than debate, where doctrines of fear and rhetoric of violence replace the inspirational words of hope that have, at moments of past crisis, led the citizens of the world to aspire to something greater than themselves, art (as Bernard Holland wrote)...art is our fragile claim to control over our lives.

Everywhere we look there is evidence of the power of symphonic music. It is seen and heard through historical events. It was experienced internationally when Leonard Bernstein conducted Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony here in this great city at the fallen Berlin Wall. It is heard on one of my favorite vinyl records; an amazing live recording by the Boston Symphony of Mozart’s Requiem at a memorial mass for President Kennedy in January of 1964. I felt it on the lawn at Duke University immediately following the terrorist attacks of September 11, where thousands of people held candles as they listened reverently to their own symphony orchestra, a scene repeated throughout the world by hundreds of orchestras in hundreds of locations. It is felt in the response of our audiences and seen throughout our communities as we help attract businesses, educate our children, and spread the name of our great cities.

We must remember, this we did with our lives for a reason. While it is and has always been so in vogue for orchestral musicians to be cynical, it is not beyond us to continue to indulge in our dreams. The greatest musicians among us are those who are still inspired by the opportunity to inspire. Through uniting together and reaching out to our communities, we can and will ensure that the arts continue to thrive, and we will continue to enrich the lives of our audiences as we improve the livelihood of our colleagues, all while inspiring the next generation of musicians.

Wherever an orchestra is in trouble, let us all respond. Wherever a musician is in need, let us all respond. Wherever a negative image of the arts is produced, let us answer with a positive message of hope. Let our community of musicians serve as an example to those places across the globe that are aching to hear a positive message.

It is a right of the people that they not be deprived of hope. As they hear our music, let them also hear our voices.

While many of the issues that surround orchestras are indeed local issues, there is no doubting the power in collective good will. Let those of us in this room resolve to build an international network of support. Let us establish contacts and friendships that will allow us to shine an international spotlight that will serve as a beacon for the arts in every community across the world. We are the advocates for our art form, we are the advocates for our communities, and we are the advocates for our children. Through our music, we offer a message of hope that the world is longing to hear.

Thank you very much.

## Chairperson

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who have actually said it to my face, who fail to appreciate how our orchestras are strengthened by the diversity of experience on stage. Fortunately, the federal government does appreciate it, as demonstrated through the enactment of the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967.

My friends in my orchestra have served this state through changing times and decades, and long before we had a world-class concert hall in Raleigh. My longer tenured colleagues were pioneers, bringing music to school children throughout the state on old buses and rural back roads. While the accommodations and the highways have improved immeasurably, education remains a critical part of our mission. The trail blazers that arrived before me created an identity for this orchestra, and they brought the AFM to its members, fighting tirelessly for many years to achieve pensions, health care, and many other benefits that are today simply expected.

The same is true for orchestras throughout ICSOM, as you'll read in the life stories in this issue. These brief biographies consistently tell the story of hard-fought battles and victories slowly won amidst an atmosphere of incredible loyalty and ongoing artistic accomplishment.

As I watched my colleagues perform together and observed the sense of ownership our audiences feel, I couldn't help but think of the musicians of the Columbus Symphony (CSO). Indeed, they've not been far from my mind at any moment during these past few months. I was impressed with Barbara Zuck's May 11 review of the CSO in the *Columbus Dispatch* in which she points out that the popularity of the orchestra is rising at the very moment that the board threatens to destroy the community's investment in that orchestral family.

I couldn't help but contrast two recent editorials, one from Raleigh's *News & Observer*, and the other from the *Columbus Dispatch*. Here in North Carolina we are fortunate to have a great newspaper that seeks to serve its state, and they support the musicians at every turn. Throughout this recent crisis in Columbus, the citizens have not been able to rely on the *Columbus Dispatch* to serve their community in the same way.

In response to a new outreach program the NCS has initiated, the editorial staff of the *News & Observer* wrote:

*Ever since its formation in 1932, the N.C. Symphony has belonged to the people. . . . Here is an appropriate gesture of solidarity from this grand group of musicians to the citizens who have long supported the orchestra. . . . OK, OK. We know this isn't a miracle-working tour. Or is it?*

Compare that to the words of the editorial staff of the *Columbus Dispatch*, just a few days later, when speaking of the musicians of the CSO:

*The Columbus Symphony Orchestra is at a crossroads that will determine whether it continues or folds. The outcome is in the*

*hands of the musicians union. . . . The union disingenuously accuses the board of being derelict in its duty to seek out more donations . . . . The musicians should stop focusing on blame and start dealing with the facts.*

Can there be any doubt that the citizens of central Ohio deserve better from their hometown newspaper?

The musicians of the Columbus Symphony bring great credit to their city. Sadly, I must join with the many other voices who have reluctantly noticed that the *Columbus Dispatch* has added nothing but negativity to the debate and has offered its readership not even an illusion of fair and balanced reporting.

For me, I imagine that I am now past the midway point of my career. I remember the beginning, with the Virginia Symphony Orchestra, as if I could still somehow touch it. I remember the scent of backstage—I could name every musician on stage with me that night in February of 1979. We played Brahms' First Symphony in Norfolk's Chrysler Hall. After the show I had a barbeque sandwich and a limeade at Doumars' drive-in and wondered what the future would bring. Little did I know...

To my more tenured colleagues across the nation, I urge you to be invigorated by our newest members, and to help them understand the battles that you have fought. To our newest members, I urge you to be inspired by your colleagues, and to realize that it will seem like a very brief time before you also find yourself standing at your midway point. And to any manager who speaks of any need for a "generational shift" in their orchestra, I urge them to think about music (and life) in a richer way.



Photo by David Tanner

Columbus Symphony musicians at a press conference on May 20. At the press conference, Dan LaMacchia (seated at left) presented independent research backing musician positions in their current struggles. Also in the front are ICSOM Chairperson Bruce Ridge (standing) and Local 103 President Douglas Fisher (seated at right).

## Evaluations

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- provides inspired leadership to the organization
- programs satisfying concerts
- responds to deadlines in a timely fashion
- communicates effectively
- keeps commitments for appearances
- is reasonably accessible
- has a positive effect on others' job performance
- contributes to the advancement of the organization's mission
- has a positive image in the community
- maintains morale among musicians
- ensures the provision of high quality programs and services
- cultivates positive relationships with public officials, consumers, and relevant community organizations

Narrative questions about the music director might ask which areas could benefit from added development and which should receive more emphasis. Naturally, any evaluation committee would tailor the questions and the response parameters to make them most productive.

After the evaluation committee has communicated its report, the board chair and the evaluation committee chair would meet with the executive director and the music director to review mutually held objectives, deliver the overall assessment, share affirmation of strengths and achievements, relate any gaps or concerns, and perhaps suggest avenues of professional development. Compensation decisions would be communicated at the same time; obviously, this component should resonate with the evaluation message. Throughout this entire process, demands of accountability ideally should be leavened with a sense of support and trust.

The institution of such an evaluation process can only happen with a majority buy-in from the board. It's likely that board leadership would have to be ready to actively promote such a process among its more ruggedly traditional members. It's also quite possible that an executive director or a music director might feel blindsided by the institution of such a new program; thus it may be advisable to initiate an evaluation process with an incoming executive director or music director.

The evaluation process outlined above offers an invigorating balance of potential benefits, responsibilities, and risks for all components of large musical organizations. With care, downside

risks can be minimized and benefits maximized as we strive to guide our venerable institutions into the future.

*Emeritus Principal Double Bassist of the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra and Grand Teton Music Festival, Roger Ruggeri remains active as a performer, program annotator, lecturer, and composer. A board member of several Milwaukee musical organizations, he has served as a judge for the Grammy Awards and has been a panelist for the National Endowment for the Arts and the Wisconsin Arts Board. Those desiring further details related to this article may contact Roger directly at roger.ruggeri@att.net.*

## President on Flanagan

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involving musicians. Many musicians feel "burned" by their participation. Others see only potential harm to musicians with no advantage to "being in the tent." As a Governing Board member and the chair of my local orchestra committee, I have to field this question on an almost daily basis. Due to the issues raised here, my ability to lead others back into "the tent" has been seriously compromised by the report and the process that led up to its release.

My address as ICSOM President to the 2003 League conference finished with the following words: "For our relationship to flourish, chances will need to be taken, continued trust will need to be earned, and respect will need to be given. Undoubtedly, there will be bumps along the road. How we deal with those bumps will tell us just how far we've come and how far we have yet to go."

My sincere hope is that this report will prove to be just a "bump along the road." Borrowing from ICSOM Chairperson Bruce Ridge's recent response, "We must stop doing this to ourselves." Are there not more productive ways to use our collective time, energy and resources? I will gladly be among the first to sign up for groups that focus on advocacy to counter the negative rhetoric that pervades our discussions all too often.

*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.

## Fifty Years Plus

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seventies. Harriet credits current Music Director Miguel Harth Bedoya with helping the orchestra blossom artistically.

When speaking of memorable musical experiences, the one that tops the list was not actually related to the FWSO but involves her great love, the viola de gamba. She performed in costume in an onstage *banda* for the Houston Grand Opera. Another noteworthy experience occurred while driving home with the conductor from her very first *Messiah* gig in Michigan when she heard the news about Pearl Harbor on the radio. She still remembers that moment every time she plays Handel's *Messiah*, which has been often during her career!

Harriet related three memorable moments from pops concerts over the years. The first was when her four-year-old son got out of his seat and walked right up to her during a performance in an arena. He told her he needed to go to the bathroom "*right now!*" She put down her cello and took him to the little boys' room. (The incident made the "Out and About" column in the *Fort Worth Star Telegram*.) Harriet also very much enjoyed singing a duet with Garrison Keillor ("Ode to Not Too Bad") and received more phone

calls for that performance than anything else she ever played during her career. She didn't have as much fun, however, the time she fainted onstage during a Marvin Hamlisch performance. It seems she had donated blood earlier in the day and hadn't eaten.

Harriet retires at the end of this season.

—Karen Hall

### 2008 ICSOM Conference

August 20–23, 2008

Hotel Kabuki  
1625 Post Street  
San Francisco, CA 94115

Hotel reservations must be made by July 15, 2008

All attendees must register with Secretary Laura Ross