

**Montana Association of Symphony Orchestras
Music Directors Conference Call**

Tuesday, January 22, 2008, 9:00 AM (MST)

Minutes

Participating: Darko Butorac, Anne Harrigan, Gordon Johnson, Matthew Savery, Allan R. Scott, Elizabeth Stoyanovich, John Zoltek; John C. Barsness, MASO staff.

Gordon started the meeting at 9:05 AM with introductions and welcome to all. He asked Matthew to begin with some good news. That news is MASO last week decided to budget and spend up to \$3,000 per year for purchase of new music. Matthew proposed the following:

- Each of the Music Directors to please send Matthew a wish list of new music.
- Reserve \$300 each year to replace badly worn or missing parts of existing sets that are listed but do not exist.
- Pay \$100 to Great Falls' Librarian to house and maintain the new scores with MASO's previously purchased music.

There was agreement to share with each other, via e-mail, ideas for music purchase prior to sending lists to Matthew.

2009 MASO Young Artist Competition

Allan said an email of 2009's edited guidelines will be sent soon. The competition is scheduled for January 17, a Saturday, at MSU Reynolds Recital Hall in Bozeman.

Changes to the application form and guidelines include:

- Applicants will be required to submit 3 photocopies of the piano accompaniment with their package so the judges can follow along.
- Language was changed from "winners may be invited..." to "winners will be invited to one performance with a MASO orchestra."
- The application will be downloadable (in PDF) from MASO's Web site.

Anne asked who selects the judges. The response is the competition coordinator selects them and 2009's coordinator is Allan. The budget has room for 1 out-of-state and 2 in-state judges and will be making that decision in the next 3-6 months. The judges last year were very good; however, he will try to avoid school district personnel, due to perceived conflict of interest, and perception is everything. He will let other Music Directors know what he is thinking and is open to suggestions regarding judges. Montana is a small state and it is hard to avoid conflicts. This year's applications will be blind so initial screeners will not know whose entry they will hear. Matthew, Gordon, Elizabeth, and John Z. volunteered to serve as screeners; there will be one per division.

Marketing for YAC is through advertisements in this spring and fall *Cadenza* magazine, individual members' and MASO's Web sites, and personal calls from Music Directors to local teachers. The challenge is to make musicians aware of the competition. From the

Music Directors conference call minutes—page 2

MASO meeting, all executive directors will make lists of local private teachers available to the MASO office for a direct mailing. Darko suggested purchasing the American String Association's list of Montana string teachers.

Presentation of 2009 winners: Glacier, April 18, 2009; Bozeman, February, 2010; Great Falls, March, 2009; Billings, October or November, 2009; Helena, December, 2009.

2008 – 2009 Calendars

Gordon recommended everyone send their 2008-2009 rehearsal/concert schedules (email, snail mail or fax) to the MASO office for distribution, and then we can pass them on to our personnel directors. There is some turmoil in setting schedules for next year: Bozeman performs in a high school auditorium and cannot set the schedule until the school district makes its space use decisions in mid-February. For Missoula, the late Thanksgiving holiday made the University's calendar messy. Helena schedules the Civic Center 3 years in advance and is set; Billings is in good shape, also. Gordon asked John B. to send everyone's schedule out to the member orchestras.

Orchestra Reports

Anne: Things are going well. Billings is about to hold its free family concerts in 10 schools. In February Montreal's Quartango will perform a Valentine's Day concert of Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*. She is collaborating with Matthew on a performance using the 2 choruses. She recommends advertising on www.musicalchairs.com for auditions, especially for finding new string players, as it directly links to your Web site.

Darko: Missoula just had its biggest sell-out in history with a pops concert. He recommends using *Peter Versus the Wolf* as it is a new take on an old classic. And, they have 3 concerts coming up yet this year.

Matthew: It is an intensive time of year; Bozeman is about to have its annual Chamber concert, following with a week of family shows. He is scheduling a contemporary percussion concerto and is placing sandbags around his house for the repercussions. MASO was subjected to a fine DVD which is a 40-minute documentary of a recently commissioned work. Bozeman's Choral Director also resigned because he is moving out of town; the job description is on their Web site www.bozemansymphony.org and he asked anyone who could suggest someone to apply to give him a call.

John Z.: is happy to be in his new office after an 11-year wait; the new space will help with public perception and office efficiency. There will be 3 performances this week of *West Side Story* in collaboration with Alpine Theatre, a professional troupe based in Whitefish. In August there will be the first annual Festival of Amadeus, 5 nights with 3 chamber groups and 2 of orchestra with visiting artists. He was congratulated on his upcoming 25th anniversary with the orchestra.

Elizabeth: two of the perks of MASO are sharing the music libraries and sharing experiences with each other. Butte held its first “performance in the flats” this past summer which showcased each of the armed forces and was ended by a thunderstorm. They will hold their family concert in March featuring dueling strings to include a cellist runner-up from YAC plus her daughter. She encourages podium exchanges, too.

Allan: Helena featured its concert master in a Sibelius performance; there will be 2 candle light performances at the Cathedral. They are also using Peter Versus the Wolf which is more educational than the original and more of a CSI approach with courtroom drama. That will be 1 performance for all of Helena’s 4th and 5th graders. The gala is in March, although next season it will move to become the September opener. They are also eliminating the May concert, because of schedule difficulties, and ending the season in April with *Elixir of Love*. The summer “Symphony Under the Stars” performance is booming, drawing 15,000 to 18,000 attendees, so much so they had to hire a project manager, and it has replaced MASO’s The Montana Summer Symphony after it went defunct. This summer’s theme is “Out of This World” which is a pops/planets multimedia piece with astronaut Buzz Aldrin. He is extremely expensive at \$35,000 and not signed yet. Matthew said astronaut Loren Acton (who ran unsuccessfully for Montana Legislature last year) lives in Bozeman; is available for free, and has his own NASO film footage available.

Gordon: The Great Falls Symphony is halfway through its season with performances by Natasha Perinski, a commission piece by Richard Pearson Thomas of *Ghost of Alder Gulch*, and the October concert used works by composer Jim Stevenson—who is great to work with. Coming up next season is a tap dance performance with Carlos Jones and that has generated more community questions and interest than their other performance with James Galway. For that one, the Galways will perform *Magic Flutes* which is a medley written specifically for them.

Free Forum

Gordon applauded Anne’s desire to get more string players in the state. She comes from Michigan is an area that has two universities yet is still short of players. Her ad for auditions on musicalchairs.com brought string players from Chicago for a \$50 fee plus travel. The same source brought 27 auditions for third trumpet. Since universities are producing unemployed players, it makes sense to try to get them to Montana. Could MASO in some way help attract players from out-of-state; perhaps orchestras could package players and help them set up private teaching? Everyone agreed there is a definite need for string players. It was also suggested we could look to South America for players who are literally starving, although visas are difficult to obtain. John Z. reminded everyone of Montana’s vast distances and that setting up musicians would have to be done more regionally; it is impractical for Billings to use someone from Kalispell and vice-versa.

There was further discussion on sharing information about musician pay scales. Matthew related the outcome of the MASO meeting and that only ranges of pay could be collected, per Henry Fogel of ASOL, without getting into trouble with an anti-trust violation. What is yet to be determined is precisely which ranges qualify. On the other hand, it was suggested everyone post their pay scale on their Web sites as public information and avoid the problem altogether. Nobody is interested in collusion, but in whether or not what they pay is fair to the musicians and in line with regional scales.

Darko asked if there were any interest in expanding Young Artist Competition to bring in talented players from out-of-state and make it a national/international event. It was agreed it is an exciting question and worthy of further discussion. Gordon said it would definitely change the purpose and complexion of the competition which was set up to give Montana musicians an opportunity that was otherwise not available to them. Further time is needed to digest and think about the idea. Darko was directed to write a description and send it to the music directors. (In light of MASO's upcoming strategic planning process, it would be appropriate for the Music Directors to think about introducing new ideas for consideration.—JB)

Meeting adjourned at 10:05 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

John C. Barsness, Executive Director