

Dear Mr. Alexander and Ms. Zell,

As a subscriber and donor to the CSO since I moved to Chicago in 2007, I am very disappointed in the apparent attempt of the CSO and CSOA to hold down wage increases, pension contribution, and benefits (including health care benefits) for the wonderful and talented musicians of the CSO.

I was very pleased (and not at all surprised) to see Maestro Muti's public support for the musicians in their quest for fair wages and benefits. He is right and the Board needs to find a way to meet those needs.

I was disappointed to see that you decided to publish your proposal. That seems a bit too much like trying to negotiate directly with the CSO musicians, going around the union. As a proud union member for the past 40+ years (not AFM, but several other unions), I strongly support the CFM and find attempts like that to be unfair.

I have seen far too many workers (and managers) suffer when a company or organization decides not to fully contribute to pensions over the years. It is hard to catch up once contributions are missed or are not fully made. Surprisingly, those making such decisions are supposedly good managers, but seem to forget the difficulty of waiting until later to make up contributions. The change to a defined contribution plan from a defined benefit plan seems more a sign of poor planning and management/board oversight than it shows "good decision-making".

Talking with members of the Orchestra over the years, I understand the demands of their work, both music wise and physical demands. I've been in the worker health and safety field for decades. Classical musicians experience significant ergonomic and hearing hazards in their long careers. Required postures are not always compatible with the body and thus musicians may be more in need of specialized health care than others without that constant repetitive strain. So good health benefits are critical for the musician and for the continued success of the orchestra.

When I attend the Lyric Opera, I have noticed the increased applause for the Lyric Orchestra at each performance. While the audience always showed its appreciation in the past, since the October strike by the musicians of the Lyric Opera Orchestra, I have noticed the change in the reaction of the audience when the orchestra is acknowledged; I was not sure that they would see the support they have. But I have not heard any anger over the musicians' decision to

strike, certainly from those on the main floor. I think that is likely to be the case from much of the CSO's audience.

I sit in the very front row 25+ Saturdays a year. From that location, I can see the focus the musicians have. I'm sure you agree that the CSO would be nothing without these musicians, but maintaining talent means that the CSO must be willing to do what is necessary to retain musicians. I know that subscriptions do not pay all costs (as the CSO reminds us often). But there are many small contributors like me who care greatly. The CSOA may argue that CSO musicians are highly paid, but they are among the best orchestras in the world, as they have been for many decades. A fight for maintaining a good pension is not just for the benefit of current members, it will help ensure that the CSO continues to draw excellent musicians in the future.

I have not yet renewed my subscription for the coming year and cannot do so until you and AFM Local 10-208 come to an agreement on a contract. Should that not happen, you risk losing not only subscribers, but also contributors.

Thank you and please come to your sense and negotiate a fair contract.

Thank you,
Michael Sprinker

To the Board of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (CSO),

As an international visitor and longtime devotee of the CSO, I write to express my admiration for the musicians of the orchestra and the action they are currently taking. It is both practically short sighted and morally unconscionable to take action that will curtail their legitimate wage rises or affect their pension or health care benefits. There are many alternative strategies you could pursue to fund the orchestra and the livelihoods of your musicians. They may require more thought or effort on your part, but that does not render them worse.

As a board of a not-for-profit association, your duty is ultimately to the employees in your care and the objective of your constitution: the pursuit of artistic excellence. You have an obligation to ensure they have the best conditions possible to enable them to create the most sublime music and share it with the world.

Ultimately levelling the musicians' salaries, and reducing their health care benefits and pensions will not satisfy the aims of the organisation. It will reduce the orchestra's ability to recruit exceptional musicians and sustain them, to attract the best conductors, and to train new generations. It will dampen the community's enthusiasm for the remarkable ensemble and it will cause distaste and distrust for your administration among the music-loving public.

The CSO is successful because it is incomparable. Its sound and fire light the souls of all who hear it. Unlike any other US orchestra its sound is truly unique. It is a striking anomaly, and its musicians have good reason to strike to protect their welfare. It is also the welfare of the orchestra as a whole. Disincentivising the best musicians, the Heisman winners of today and tomorrow, from joining the orchestra will see revenue further plummet, costs fail to stabilise, and the quality of performance decay.

Think strategically, over more than the five year horizon. Invest in the orchestra's foundation: its musicians. It will pay dividends down the line.

Yours,

Simon Hukin

Dear Chair Zell and President Alexander,

I am writing as a supporter of the CSO musicians and a patron of CSO. I stand with the musicians in their reasonable request for continued health care benefits and a continued pension plan. I do not want to see the Chicago orchestra fall behind other major cities that are offering far-better plans, such as Los Angeles and San Francisco. Our musicians deserve the best; they are the reason we, as patrons, enjoy coming to the Orchestra. It is their talent that drives your business. Please treat them with the dignity they deserve.

All best,

Maura T. Levine-Patton

As someone who was hooked on music by hearing the CSO conducted by Fritz Reiner long, long ago, I'm very worried that one of the great treasures of civilization is, at best, being withheld from us temporarily which is bad enough but potentially risking its quality and future. And that is distressing to contemplate.

As someone who is enjoying a wonderful retirement thanks to a very good, well funded, financially sound, defined benefit system, I am sympathetic to your concerns about switching to a so called "defined contribution" arrangement.

I'm hoping to enjoy the concert Thursday but your message seems to indicate that won't happen. Ironic, isn't it, that concert would have been conducted by Osmo Vanska who so recently experienced the tragic mess our neighbors in Minnesota endured. Let us hope that does not portend how things unfold in Chicago, although it feels like there are similarities.

I wish you all a speedy and mutually satisfactory settlement

Evan Richards

Board Member/Past President

Association of Wisconsin Symphony Orchestras

Dear Mr. Alexander and Ms. Rahn,

I write as a longtime subscriber to the CSO to say I fully support the musicians in their quest to keep their full pensions and to be paid as the best orchestra not only in the US but also the world.

You have a wonderful treasure in the musicians who play for the CSO. They need to be compensated as the treasure that they are. With some other CSO that you can hire more cheaply, you may have a beautiful building but a lesser orchestra, which will undoubtedly affect not only your reputation but your finances as well.

The CSO should be the most highly paid musicians in the country, bar none. They are the high bar against which other orchestras measure themselves. We also have the world's best music director in Ricardo Muti, who, we Chicagoans note, fully supports the musicians.

The musicians deserve a fully funded pension plan. As we have found out in Illinois and Chicago to our dismay, pension holidays are a disaster for any organization. And the old reassurance that "we will still contribute to your retirement" falls completely flat with the millions of us across America who have watched as pension plans disappear to be replaced by "We'll contribute a little, but you employees will contribute a lot" plans. Please stop trying to foist this on the CSO musicians.

Please come to your senses, fund the pensions, and pay our extraordinary CSO musicians what they are worth: top dollar in the US orchestra pay scale.

Your patrons are watching, and we support the musicians. Please do the right thing.

Dear Mr. Alexander and Ms. Rahn,

I'm writing in support of the musicians of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. They deserve to continue their pension plan. They deserve to maintain their current health care. And they deserve to be paid for what they are: the best Symphony in the world.

Please sign a contract that gives these musicians their just due.

Sincerely,

Mike Cahill

Subscriber to the CSO.

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Dear Mrs Zell and Mr Alexander,

I have looked at the bar graphs on your website; I noticed they did not include a comparison of pension plans. I am a former union member and my daughter is a labor lawyer. I have never seen a management proposal to change pensions that was not, in effect, an attempt an attempt to gut them. I'm sure yours is no different. I am currently holding tickets for "Bluebeard's Castle". I certainly hope I'll be able to attend -- but if I can't, so be it. If you had freelancers playing for that performance, I would not cross the CSO musicians' picket line. If Rachmaninoff rose from the dead to give a Sunday afternoon recital, I wouldn't cross their picket line. I am with the musicians.

Respectfully,

Sam R. Hamburg, Ph.D.

Ms. Zell and Mr. Alexander,

As a frequent patron of the CSO since college days I am asking that you transform your approach to our musicians. Notice I say OUR musicians, not your musicians. I understand that you are the Administration but when we, the music loving community or we, the Chicago community attend concerts it is the musicians we hear and admire, not the administration. Your rhetoric says one thing but your actions suggest you consider the musicians fungible and they are not. Not in the least. Please approach negotiations with a goal of ending this strike, respect our musicians. Listen to Maestros Muti and Barenboim. Listen to our civic leaders local and national.

Thank you, Jeff Rice

Senior Lecturer in African Studies & Political Science, Northwestern University

Hi,

I've seen a flyer going around Facebook many times, encouraging people to send supportive messages in light of the strike. I figured I'd give it a go.

The Chicago Symphony Orchestra has been the largest musical influence of my life. I'm a Bass Trombone Performance Major in Louisville, KY. I always look forward to see which concerts I can make the trip up to Chicago to see. In the last several months, I've had the wonderful chance to see the CSO 3 times. June 2018, Rhapsody in Blue and Gregory Porter; October 2018, Mahler 3; December 2018, CSO Brass. Every concert, I leave inspired to attain a higher level of musicianship, leave with wonderful musical memories, and a great idea of how high I have to set the bar for myself.

Being a Trombone player, the CSO brass really are, in every sense of the words, Superstars, Legends, you name it. Beyond there, the precision in the Strings are impeccable. The power and blend of the Woodwinds are awe-inspiring, and the stability and foundation of the Percussion defies belief.

Every recording I've ever heard of the CSO is, in my opinion, the gold standard for that piece. Whether it's the Reiner Heldenleben recording from 1954, Mahler 8 from the 70's, Mahler 3 from 2008, or my personal favorite recording of all time, Shostakovich 7, Bernstein from the late 80's. Every recording redefined what it means to be a musician, what it is to make music on that high of a level, what it is to have musical standards, and what it is to be a fan of the CSO.

As I develop more as a Musician, I realize that somewhere like Chicago is exactly where I'd want to be. The CSO has inspired me to take this path, and seeing the livelihood of the Musicians of the CSO being used as really a bargaining chip or pawn is utterly unacceptable and unbelievable. The musical world has always watched Chicago, and will continue to do so, as the CSO sets the standard for the future of music in America, and the world.

I sincerely hope that the terms of the Strike are settled quickly and in the Musicians' favor. Chicago deserves a great Orchestra, a great Orchestra deserves to be compensated rightfully so, and every Musical student in America, really the world over, deserves to have great influences like the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

Dear Mr. Alexander and Ms. Zell:

I am very sad that I have to write once again to urge you to do what is right by your musicians. It sometimes seems that the Association does not realize it needs the musicians to be “successful” in the short and long term.

Why are you punishing the musicians for the Association’ apparent failure to make adequate pension contributions over the years? What has happened to the contribution which the Musicians make by performing two “pension concerts” each year?

Your claim that the IRS is forcing you to greatly increase your contribution to the pension fund next year, while true, is only half the story, but one which you appear to hope will bring patrons and contributors to your side. The IRS requires a minimum amount be paid which increases significantly when contributions are too low to maintain a minimum percentage of funding. Why is the CSO not able maintain that minimum level? Bad investments, failure to pay in what is fiduciarily needed? Are you handling the pension fund as you do your bond debt? Who in their right minds would be paying only minimum payments for that?

This makes me, as a subscriber and a DONOR, wonder about the financial ability of the CSO management and board to run the organization. Perhaps you need a team of neutral, mutually acceptable financial experts to help you get your act together! Every one of us with a credit card knows that paying only the minimum payment means you will be paying that balance off for many, many years (in your case, far more than 20 or 30, or 40 years for the \$145 million).

As for you “last, best, and final offer”, really? Was this written during the 7-10 days you did not meet? I have been walking the picket line with the CSO musicians most evenings (and unfortunately due to illness had to miss Saturday, Sunday and Monday). I don’t know the details of your offer or the details of negotiations as is only proper, not being in the union. However, there seems to be great wonder as to how what appears to be your more costly offer for a switch to a “defined contribution plan” is better for the CSO Association in the long run. From my years as a union member and staff person, and from observing the attitude of most employers in the US, the only way it seems that you could save money in the 10-year period is to cut contributions and benefits in future negotiations or declare bankruptcy.

This is no way to run an organization which you claim to believe is “a wonderful cultural jewel that brings great joy to millions of people in Chicago, across the country and around the

world each year through concerts, recordings and educational activities, and the individuals who make up the CSO as an ensemble are to be greatly admired.” You have a strange way of showing that belief.

Perhaps it is time you turned away from those who advise a tough and divisive stance in negotiations and figure out a way to collaborate with the union to develop a fair and decent plan if the current one is truly not affordable. Perhaps too many of your board members did quite well for themselves with the “Top Hat” pensions while their workers lost their benefits and don’t understand the real fear of pension loss. Maybe your board folks don’t understand that a 35-year musician has most likely been at their craft for 50+ years, beginning as a child. Squeezing more years out of everyone will not necessarily work.

When the musicians come back to work (hopefully with a decent and fair contract), I think the Board members need to consider meeting with audience members and donors (meaning ALL donors, not just the big contributors) and telling us the real state of finances and your plans to deal with you have made to seem a “crushing” debt. And a flashy PowerPoint and the like might satisfy some, but not all. If there are changes you need to make, tell us. If there is more you need from subscribers and donors, tell us. (And by the way, merely asking for more contributions may not do the trick anymore).

I would far rather have been watching and listening inside Symphony Hall, but I have been as proud of the musicians walking the picket line with them for a couple of hours a day as I am when they are performing. I don’t think you fully appreciate to support among the working people of Chicago.

Again, I have not yet renewed my subscription for the coming year and cannot do so until you and AFM Local 10-208 come to an agreement on a contract. Should that not happen, you risk losing not only subscribers, but also contributors.

Thank you and please come to your senses and negotiate a fair contract.

Thank you
Michael Sprinker

Dear Chair Zell and President Alexander,

Having already seen amazing musicians leave Chicago for other orchestras, shortly after having the orchestra built to a very high level during Barenboim's tenure with the Orchestra, I would be bitterly disappointed if the CSO administration failed to support the musicians and reach a settlement. This is the only way that I can see that will allow our musicians to be on a par with Los Angeles and San Francisco, and thus far more likely to stay in our city.

I also strongly believe that we cannot build an increased audience for the CSO without maintaining its musical excellence. I would agree that we certainly need to perform effective outreach to expand the audience base as well. However, I fear that the continuation of over a century of great music lies in your hands via your response to the current strike.

I urge you in the strongest terms to provide the kind of support to the musicians that will allow Chicago to work toward a future that will include music at the highest level.

Respectfully,

Bill Drewett

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Greetings Mrs. Zell and Mr. Alexander,

This note to you both is straight forward & simple. Please find a way to build a forward thinking & beneficial relationship between the management & your loyal & globally talented musicians. They are doing their best & I would hope you'll keep up the positive negotiations!

Respectfully,

Paul Kubina

Dear Ms. Zell and Mr. Alexander:

My family has been in Chicago for over 120 years. Here, institutions and traditions matter. The CSO is a crown jewel of Chicago.

Please take care of the musicians as well as they have taken care of the CSO and Chicago. By doing so you will help them and yourselves: you'll continue to attract the very finest musicians from around the world -- and the future health of the CSO.

This is no time to pinch pennies. You are embarrassing yourselves and your city.

Thank you,

David S. Lipschultz

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Dear Ms. Zell and Mr. Alexander and your Board member colleagues:

I find it unconscionable that you continue to attack the financial well-being of the CSO musicians in the name of the financial well-being of the CSO.?? What is the CSO if not the musicians??? Please, STOP YOUR IDEOLOGICAL WARFARE on the CSO musicians - there is no other reason for the course of action you have chosen, certainly not financial.

A final thought: Ms. Zell and Mr. Alexander, what kind(s) of retirement benefits do you and your fellow board members have??? Do you rely on individual 401(k) type accounts??? I heartily doubt it.

Margaret Schmid

A regular annual subscriber who is dismayed and disgusted with the CSOA's continuing obdurate stance

Dear Dr. Zell and Mr. Alexander:

Last Friday I experienced the appalling spectacle of seeing the CSO musicians picketing outside the Center. The press on both of you is that you understand and respect the musicians' needs and vision of the orchestra and its future; but the presence of a picket line suggests otherwise. Seeing a musician of genius like Robert Chen pounding the pavement calls to mind nothing so much as China's cultural revolution, when the cream of its talent was squandered in farm fields.

Please find a way to end this strike while placing the Orchestra on a sounder footing. Don't squander Chicago's cultural wealth.

William Allmart

Dear Mr. Alexander,

I was very disappointed, and angered, by the CSOA telling the musicians that you were giving them your “last, best and final” offer, essentially saying “it’s this or nothing”. As a fifty year patron of the CSO, who spends over \$2000 a season in tickets, I expect the CSOA to find a negotiated compromise, acceptable to the musicians, to solve this crisis, not to send out arrogant-sounding ultimatums that create total deadlock. That is especially true since the musicians appear to be making reasonable compromise offers. I expect the CSOA to return to the bargaining table without delay, and to make whatever new compromise offers are needed to reach a settlement.

Further, if the CSOA and the musicians cannot find a mutually acceptable solution, then I believe it is the musicians who must prevail. I am unwilling to risk the destruction of the CSO as we know it, i.e. the best orchestra in the nation, and one of the best in the world, because the CSOA rejects the compromises the musicians offer. All of the other top orchestras in the U.S. (Boston, New York, Los Angeles, Cleveland, San Francisco) maintain defined benefit pension plans. Given that, the modified defined benefit pension plan the musicians propose does not sound unreasonable.

Given their stature, the musicians deserve generous pay increases, certainly well above inflation. If the CSOA’s current position prevails, many of our top musicians will likely leave the CSO, soon followed by Maestro Muti. Those remaining will be too demoralized to play their best. Other top notch musicians will not choose to join the CSO, given the better compensation packages, and better relationship between musicians and management, that exist at other top orchestras. The CSOA cannot benefit the CSO if it saves it financially by degrading it musically. Any Board member who advocates such a solution does not belong on an orchestra board.

I understand that making a settlement acceptable to the musicians will put a financial strain on the CSO. However, other top U.S. orchestras, most notably Los Angeles and Boston, appear to be giving their musicians acceptable compensation packages while still remaining financially viable, and even improving their finances. If they can do it, so can the CSOA. The CSOA must make its top priority the quality of the classical music produced at Symphony Center, and the musicians who produce it, and allocate its funds accordingly. It must have an unshakeable commitment to keeping the CSO the finest orchestra in the U.S.. It must cut funds, if necessary, in areas not directly related to music-making. Most importantly, it must use creative

thinking, and high energy, to find new sources of funds, as is apparently being done in other successful orchestras. Any Board member not sharing these priorities, or not up to the task, should be replaced.

I believe that, if the CSOA changes its attitude and policies in these directions, it can give the patrons of the CSO what we desire for the long term, an orchestra that is the finest in the U. S., and among the finest in the world, greatly enriches and inspires people in Chicago and around the world, and is financially viable.

Sincerely,

Terry Stagman, Ph.D.

Dear Chair Zell and President Alexander,

Thank you for your work to provide beautiful music to Chicago and the world.

I hope that you will also consider the transcendent beauty of treating others as you would like to be treated. The practical outcome of doing so is that the world will be a safer more beautiful place for everyone.

The Zell family's enormous fortune and luxurious life style is only possible because of all the rest of us. The privileged wealthy do not gain their riches in a vacuum; i.e. no one becomes rich single handedly.

Sincerely,

Anna Johnson

Dear Mr. Alexander and Ms. Zell,

I received the invitation to attend the CSOA Town Hall scheduled for today. I want you to know that, as a CSO Subscriber and as a lover of classical music, I will not cross the CSO Musicians picket line to enter Orchestra Hall.

Your apology to CSO subscribers for the "inconvenience" of cancelled performances does not sit well with me. Delayed receipt of an online purchase order or a flight cancellation are examples of inconvenience. Depriving CSO subscribers and music lovers from around our city and around the world of culture, beauty, and art constitute far more than an "inconvenience".

The CSO is the best orchestra in the United States and one of the top five in the world. As such, the CSO musicians should be the best compensated and pensioned in the country - regardless of geographic location. The CSO needs to both attract and maintain the best of the best musicians and artistic directors. Nothing less is acceptable when the artistic bar is the highest in the country.

Please give the CSO musicians what they seek - which is reasonable given their artistry, passion, and skills. If you are unable or unwilling to accommodate the CSO musicians, please step aside so that others can get the job done.

I look forward to returning to CSO concerts and hope that the damage caused in recent weeks is reparable or at least minimal.

Sincerely,
Jeffrey Fayerman

Dear Mr. Alexander,

This past Monday evening, I had the pleasure and privilege of attending the Chicago Symphony Orchestra musicians' free concert at Apostolic Church of God. The concert seemed a little more out of my way than I typically travel to attend concerts, but from my experience, some of the best performances I have attended have either been very far away or have taken place during extremely bad weather; for example, I attended the CSO's performance of Prokofiev's Romeo and Juliet conducted by Michael Tilson Thomas in 2016 on the night of a huge snowstorm. I got into a car accident on my way home from the train station, but I still to this day don't have any regrets about having left my house that evening.

Monday night's concert was unlike any CSO performance I have ever attended. In those couple of hours, the musicians' energy and love for their art was so tangible and infectious, I was left speechless. Watching Mr. Chen perform the first violin concerto I ever learned was nothing short of a dream come true, and I truly have no words to describe how moved I was by the energy and musicianship during the finale of Brahms's fourth symphony.

Mr. Alexander, you have an incredible ensemble of musicians serving your organization and the city of Chicago. I urge you to see eye-to-eye with your musicians and come to a resolution so they can return to Orchestra Hall and resume the job that they love so much, as they demonstrated to their audience on Monday night, and continue to do so with every passing concert.

Sincerely,
Sarah Sabet

As a CSO donor, and subscriber to several series for many years (Patron number 730798), I have been deeply disappointed by the cancellation of two months of concerts (so far). When the first concerts were cancelled, I initially focused on the inconvenience of missing out on a number of specific performances that I had looked forward to since ordering my 2018-2019 tickets more than a year ago. As the strike continued through March, my concerns turned more toward the survival and quality of the institution that I treasure so much, in the face of the long-term damage from frustrating the CSO patron community and from inciting members of the orchestra to give up on the CSO for the sake of their livelihoods and careers. When the strike continued into April, I was moved me to develop a deeper understanding of the CSOA's positions, the financial condition of Orchestra, and the financial challenges facing the Association which are at the center of the impasse between the CSOA and the musicians. The cancellation today, of another week of concerts, following the CSOA's "last, best, and final offer" on April 7th, prompted me to share my thoughts with you.

I understand that the CSOA strives to protect the CSO's ability to survive as a financial enterprise by maintaining a sound financial condition, in the near-term and into the future. However, I reject the pretense offered by the CSOA that the only, much less best, solution, is to impose such drastic reductions to the benefits earned by current and future members of the orchestra. The CSOA's recent choice to use the "last, best, and final offer" language was particularly distressing, given the historical frame of such confrontational, dismissive, and unproductive terminology in a labor dispute. It also seemed disingenuous considering the nonprofit status of the CSOA, the size and flexibility of its endowment, and the perhaps more importantly, the options the CSOA must consider and pursue to improve the caliber of its own financial management and planning.

Although our society has persistently turned its back on the needs and rights of labor for decades, the CSOA should not thoughtlessly follow this destructive trend and attempt to squeeze unreasonable concessions out of its 'workforce' among the musicians of the orchestra. Those individuals are not interchangeable laborers to be abused at will by employers, but possess the unique and arguably irreplaceable skills that are the foundation of the orchestra. Even in its financial management role, the CSOA must demonstrate its awareness that the collaborative talent and dedication of the musicians of the orchestra is the essential element of the experience treasured by CSO patrons, and the true foundation of the CSO's future.

Thank you,
Gerry Bakker

Dear Jeff,

Many have written to you about their personal connections to the CSO - members, spouses, children, and general civilians alike. I know because a lot of these letters have been shared with us. I have found it quite touching to hear from the public about how our music has touched their lives. I know personally, because the CSO is the first orchestra I ever heard live, and hearing this great orchestra made me want to become a professional musician. I am proud to be a member of this orchestra. In the past 40 years I am only the second person to occupy my chair, and I think that speaks to the nature of the job, one that has historically been a “destination”.

What has become more and more clear to me over the six weeks of this strike is that there are a few people for whom the symphony does not have a special and heartfelt place: our upper management, and most notably, you. You can say until you're blue in the face that you believe the musicians are top-notch, but as any kindergartener can tell you, “actions speak louder than words”, and your actions have done absolutely nothing to make us believe that you truly respect us. Many of us are feeling the financial hardships of this strike, but what I am hearing quite a lot on the picket line is that we are hurt more by the lack of commitment to us by our own management. You are the one that should be advocating for us, but instead you choose to fight us.

I heard an anecdote about your counterpart at the BSO. A few contracts ago their board wished to take similar action with the musicians' pension. What was his response? No. I will not take this to my musicians. Where is *your* courage? Where is your sense of duty to us and to the institution?

For over a year now you have been well aware about what matters to the musicians. We want a respectful retirement. We want to preserve a benefit that CSO musicians have enjoyed for 50 years, one that is a main attraction to the job. I can only imagine the costs of hiring actuaries, accountants, and lawyers over the course of this negotiation. What if all of those resources had

instead been directed to help figure out a solution that would keep our retirement secure, and keep our wages competitive as they had been in the past?

After all, ticket sales are up, donations are up, and we have a healthy endowment. These are all facts according to numbers from the Association. Yet in good times you ask the musicians to take concessions. Where does this come from? Why not invest in your product? Why not choose a path that would enrich the lives of your dear musicians?

Your negotiation has been one more of fear and intimidation than an attempt at compromise. The musicians voted against your “last, best, and final” offer so come back with something else, something better. We have come to the table many times and been shot down. You have spent more time sitting on your hands hoping we’ll break (we won’t) than actually trying to *negotiate*. Isn’t the goal to get us back to work? To get the music going again? Shouldn’t *that* be your mission? Instead you reiterate your point and walk away. Cancel more music. Who cares, right? You’re not losing any money. You said so yourself to the press.

Maybe you think I’ve got you all wrong. Maybe you feel misunderstood. If so, I strongly urge you to come to the table with something truly excellent for the musicians. Be our advocate. Fight for us as we are fighting for the Orchestra. How do you want to be remembered when this is all over? As the guy responsible for the longest strike in CSO history? Or the person who was able to solve this problem. The one who stood up *for* his musicians. The man other musicians tell stories about when their management is trying to squeeze *them*; “Jeff Alexander, he stood up for his orchestra.” We do not need to be adversaries. Let’s end this so now we can all go back to doing our jobs.

The musicians remain excellent. We work hard to keep our standards high every day. All we ask is for you to do the same.

Emma Gerstein