

CONCERN FOR THE ORCHESTRA LOCKOUTS

On January 28, the MNSOTA Board sent the following letter to Governor Dayton, Mayor Rybak, Senator Cohen and Representative Atkins. We wanted to express our concern for the lengthiness of the lockouts of the Minnesota Orchestra and the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra and the negative affect the lockouts are having on string teachers, string students, and string music education. On February 11, the MNSOTA Board sent the same letter to Representative Phyllis Kahn and all the members of the Legacy Committee, prior to a Legacy Committee meeting to discuss the lockouts. In the cover email, we expressed our wish that legislators would facilitate negotiations between the orchestras' musicians and managements. We hope that once resolutions have been reached, the Legacy Fund can continue to provide both operating support and funds for the orchestras' education programs.

Dear Representative Kahn and the Legacy Committee,

This letter comes from Minnesota String and Orchestra Teachers Association. MNSOTA values the cultural shaping that highly skilled professional groups give our state. The lockouts with both "major league" ensembles, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra and Minnesota Orchestra, concern us greatly and present implications for our community. The long-standing nature of the impasse necessitates this letter.

Issues of cultural change raise clashing responses. Amid the conflict one should remember that selling a 2000 plus seated venue every weekend with a new episode presented every 7 days is an amazing feat. String education in Minnesota schools is growing, not declining. Young people are and can be excited about the classics. Yes, unprecedented media competes, but live performance connects performer and audience in a way that is impossible with electronics. Classical music and professional orchestras have a strong future.

Symphony Orchestras devoted to instrumental repertoire were started in the USA (1881 in Boston, one year before Berlin), with the Minneapolis Symphony (now MN) Orchestra performing in 1903. In 1959, our nation's only full-time chamber orchestra, SPCO, began.

Orchestra is not a European based activity; symphony orchestras bridge cultural divides and historical epochs and have become an icon of our region. As a minor example, orchestral background music at the Lindberg Terminal greets visitors and invites them to artistically vibrant cities. Minnesotans value the arts. Music that has stood the test of time performed by world-class ensembles is not cheap, but it demonstrates an enduring, trustworthy quality.

We thank you as public elected officials for your service. Your charge is to work for the common good, protecting endangered state resources. Any interventions that can hear both sides and mediate a fair resolution are desired. Government cannot solve all issues, but appropriate input can communicate the importance of maintaining integrity and a solvent financial base in our arts organizations. The musical treasure that we have in the Twin Cities is worthy of support in whatever way you have power to extend it.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Ericksen and the MNSOTA Board
on behalf of
Minnesota String and Orchestra Teachers Association