

December 16th, 2021

Dear Supporter,

We are facing a pivotal moment in the history of the San Antonio Symphony. As you are likely aware, emergency funding has seemed to “save” the symphony many times over the past several decades. Yet each time those generous gifts were never enough to keep the cycle from repeating. We have struggled countless times, over these same decades, simply to make payroll, putting every employee, and the organization itself, at very real risk of financial collapse. This pandemic has forced us to face the hard reality that we can no longer afford to live on the edge of collapse – always accepting the short-term rescue rather than the long-term solution. We realize it is up to us, right now, to break the cycle of budgeting beyond our means and to make the difficult yet essential decision to truly save the Symphony for the long term.

The current implemented musician contract is based on an average 20-hour week for 24 weeks out of the year. For core musicians, this includes 90 days of fully paid sick leave, a pension, and healthcare. Previous seasons’ contracts were also for an average of a 20 hour week for a limited number of weeks. As in previous contracts, the current contract maintains a 12 week advance notice of the musicians’ schedule with the Symphony, so each individual musician can plan their schedules well in advance. Granted, this proposal puts forth a smaller core orchestra, but it will be a strong core – and most important, a core we can financially sustain to deliver a beautiful concert experience for our community.

We are also not set on the implemented contract. We must continue negotiating to resolve the current strike and return your concerts to you. In November, we offered to enter into binding arbitration with a mutually agreed upon neutral arbitrator. The arbitrator would settle our contract by focusing on the characteristics of the San Antonio Symphony, employee conditions, and comparative standards at other workplaces in our industry. The Musicians' Union has rejected this proposal as well as rejected our requests to involve a mediator to assist in our negotiations.

We are committed to fulfilling our mission to serve our community through performances of great music. We know the musicians share this same commitment. Our joint mission is not possible, however, without financial viability.

The cyclical funding crisis at the Symphony could be compared to a home built on a flood plain and rebuilt over and over again after each flood. Eventually insurers stop offering coverage. Perhaps a family member offers to rebuild it again once or twice. Soon that money is gone as well because future flooding is predictable. Eventually, the home must be built on solid ground. The pandemic was a flood the likes of which none of us has seen before. Our precarious financial history means we cannot rebuild in the same way as we did in the past - we must now move to solid fiscal ground.

We know when the Symphony successfully establishes a discipline of living within its



means, community confidence will increase. With a stable budget design, we will be able to provide more live music and engagement throughout our community. We will be able to work more regularly with partner performing arts and community organizations. We will once again attract the leadership and institutional donors and underwriters who will be with us for the long-term because they see the Symphony as a worthy investment. With financial stability, the Symphony will grow and provide further value to our community.

We appreciate the care and concern Symphony fans have expressed regarding the Symphony and your musicians. Your voices reinforce our commitment to save this organization. We have incredibly talented musicians who deserve stability they can count on and where this piece of their livelihood is not repeatedly put in peril. It is important, especially now, to be sustainable, by providing a valuable and valued orchestra – one that our audiences, donors, community, and musicians can be proud of today and tomorrow. Will it be painful? It already is. Must we take these steps now, despite the short-term pain? Without doubt. San Antonio has a Symphony worth saving and a generous community who cares. We hope you will join us in doing so by continuing to be generous in your support and attendance once your Symphony retakes the stage.

We envision a future with a Symphony that is fiscally healthy, creatively robust, and has the confidence of its community and its funders. When that confidence returns, we will no longer talk about “saving the symphony.” We’ll be talking about how we can grow and offer more access, education, and enrichment for our city.

Sincerely,

Elected Members of the Symphony Board