**“There is no point in having a great building without having great art inside it.”**

Michael Henson, Star Tribune, February 24, 2008

 **“Balances in 2009 and 2010 would support our state bonding aspirations, while the deficits in2011 and 2012 would demonstrate the need to reset the business model.”**

 Bryan Ebensteiner, Minnesota Orchestral Association VP of finance, board minutes, September 2009

**The Minnesota Orchestra has raised $24 million toward its $40 million Hall renovation. Michael Henson, president and CEO, told the Orchestra’s annual meeting Wednesday that $10 million was raised in September alone. In other financial highlights, the Orchestra balanced its budget for the third consecutive year even as total attendance declined, and ticket revenue rose 4.4 percent… “We must balance artistic initiative with fiscal responsibility,” Henson told the noon luncheon in downtown Minneapolis. “We’re quite pleased with these results in challenging year.”**

Star Tribune, December 9, 2009

**The Minnesota Orchestra has been hitting one home run after another lately. Its budgets are balanced at a time when other orchestras are singing the Deficit Blues and going into hock. In March the orchestra and its music director, Osmo Vänskä, got the kind of “money review” from Alex Ross at the New Yorker that even Donald Trump couldn’t buy, a notice that proclaimed the Finnish music director a “genius” and described the ensemble he leads as “perhaps the greatest orchestra in the world.”**

**Last week’s presentation of designs for a $40 million renovation and expansion of Orchestra Hall, the Minnesota Orchestra’s home at 11th and Nicollet since 1974, was another coup. Aimed at completion in 2013, the renovations will double the hall’s lobby space, which so many people over the years have found cramped. It will also add two exterior terraces and a new multipurpose “City Room” on the lobby’s west side with an honest-to-goodness gas fireplace in the west wall, intended, we presume, to warm the intrepid concertgoer on a frigid January night and enhance his contemplation of the Beethoven symphony he is about to hear.**

**These developments are all related, of course. If the orchestra were running up deficits, it wouldn’t be investing big money in refurbishing its home hall — in fact, nearly all of the money for the project, $38 million, has already been raised. And if conductor and orchestra weren’t getting glowing reviews for their records and for concerts in Europe and New York, contributions might start to wither. Just about everybody, after all, likes to back a winner.**

- MinnPost, April 10, 2010

**The former Bournemouth Symphony head is strategizing his way through the recession – and winning. “There’s no single strategy to beating the downturn,” Michael Henson asserts. “There has to be a whole series of strategies to maintain a focused approach. The priority is continuing the excellence in the artistic work.” With orchestras across the US hard hit by the recession – and management strategies the number-one talking point at the League of American Orchestras’ conference in June – the Minnesota Orchestra stands out as a beacon institution among the bad news…**

 “Aiming High,” Gig Magazine, July 2010.

**Although there has been a slight decline in recent audience numbers, it has not been enough for alarm bells to sound… [Henson said:] “We’ve done a very good job in terms of maintaining audiences and indeed the audiences have really shown that even if we’re in a tough economy, people still want to come out and hear a great orchestra.” … At the time Henson was appointed to the Minnesota Orchestra, he was quoted as saying he believed orchestras were in a golden period. That, he says, is still the case… “At the moment we are getting some great artistic performances from major orchestras in America. The real challenge is looking at the long term future. It’s critical that the art remains central to our mission and critical that we continue to act in a fiscally prudent way. This orchestra’s been in existence for well over a hundred years and our job and duty is to make sure it’s thriving for the next hundred.”**

Classical Music magazine, August 2010