



CSO financial future brighter

By Dottie Ashley
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The president of the Charleston Symphony Orchestra, **Leo Fishman**, is optimistic about the future of the organization that has had quite a bumpy season with finances and personnel.

CSO problems included ending its fiscal year last June with a \$179,000 operating deficit, having its executive director resign and facing negative cash-flow projections.

But it appears things are looking up.

"I am confident the CSO will end the fiscal year, ending June 30, in the black," says Fishman. "Also, I don't think we will have to invade our line of credit, as we had a very upbeat meeting this past week." The board president adds that salaries of CSO musicians will be negotiated soon.

In August, CSO Executive Director **Sandy Ferencz** resigned, and in September, the word went out that the symphony might have to cut its season short, or even cease to exist.

"We were very concerned because we were looking down the road at a very negative cash flow," says Fishman.

"But once our dilemma was made public, it was amazing how many people stepped up to bat without our even having to ask them."

In October, the CSO hired **Laura Deaton**, a nonprofit consultant from Summerville, known for her history of excellent "turn-around" results, to be acting chief operating officer until a new director could be hired.

"Laura has been much more than just a substitute or stop-gap person," says Fishman. "She has been a terrific asset to us. When we were in really tough straits, Laura made order out of our business operation; made us focus on our goals and made us get our work done on time."

Fishman says the orchestra is in much better financial shape as it ends its season, largely because of the efforts of the Symphony Orchestra League, a fundraising committee that runs such efforts as the yearly Designer Show House and other projects.

In March, the CSO board hired the Catherine French Group as a recruiting agent to find a new executive director of the organization.

Headquartered in Washington, D.C., the group specializes in conducting national searches

for executives for performing arts organizations.

Fishman said the CSO expects to have one or more finalists for the position identified by June.

While its regular season is over, the CSO will play a vital part in the upcoming Spoleto Festival USA by accompanying the ballet "Swan Lake" and opening the 2007 Piccolo Spoleto Festival with a Sundown Concert at the U.S. Customhouse.

'Fifty Years of Friendship'

The Eva Carter Gallery is displaying "Fifty Years of Friendship," an exhibit of the artwork of **Eva Carter** and **John Steele**, abstract artists who have worked together and been friends for almost 50 years.

When Carter opened her gallery nearly 30 years ago, she was one of the first full-time abstract artists in the city, a tough row to hoe in a place where realistic and figurative art reigned.

Her large works in oil have been described as "paintings drenched in color and brimming with movement and emotion."

Although she doesn't paint the literal landscape, she says her inspiration is charged by the idyllic setting of her Wadmalaw Island studio where she finds a balance of energy and grace.

Carter's abstract expressionist paintings have been included in numerous exhibitions at galleries, universities, colleges and museums throughout the Southeast.

Her solo exhibitions have been seen through the United States, with one shown at the Gibbes Museum in 1993.

When Carter first entered art professor John Steele's classroom in 1959 at East Tennessee State University, she quickly realized he was no ordinary teacher.

It was through their love of abstract expressionism and a mutual respect for each other's art that the two have remained friends for nearly half a century.

A Birmingham native, Steele taught art for 38 years at East Tennessee State, where he was assistant chairman of the department of art and design. He lives in Johnson City.

The exhibit will be on display at the gallery, 132 East Bay St., through June 30.

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