

To our supporters and audience, thank you to all who have called and written to the Bardavon to express your support for the Hudson Valley Philharmonic. We appreciate your outpouring of support more than we can express.

Mr. Silva has answered some of your emails, and we want to address what is being sent widely. You may be interested to see the extent of the financial information shared with us. This excel sheet is the entirety of the information provided. Before our meeting mentioned below of 3/18/22, the Orchestra Committee requested to see financial data. This sheet was provided. Based on the discussions in that meeting, we requested further information, on 3/24/22. We requested to see: tax documents, financial statements, endowment statements, COVID relief grants and loans, and information regarding grants and donations. All of this is relevant and necessary to understanding the health of the Bardavon organization and the HVP within that structure. To date, we have not yet seen any of these documents.

Below is the email from Mr. Silva, shared with permission by a concerned concertgoer who received it. Mr. Silva's email is pasted below, indented. Our responses follow each of his claims.

Thank you very much for writing.

I'm very sorry that a musician's union representative and members of the HVP orchestra committee chose to distribute a flyer at last Saturday's HVP concert with such an alarmist message and no context from which to understand it and then to continue to disperse the same "sky is falling" misinformation on social media. Not helpful to anyone.

We chose to inform you, our supporters and audience, because we believe it is helpful and important for you to know what is happening. Our statements on the leaflet and website are factual and based on communication from Mr. Silva and the Bardavon. What we wrote is confirmed by his own words below. While we don't think the "sky is falling" we do care deeply about our work and the long tradition of the Hudson Valley Philharmonic and want to see it continue.

Some context:

Many professional American symphony orchestras operate with a deficit. There is usually never enough income to cover the enormous expense. The Bardavon has carried annual HVP deficits of \$50-\$70,000 for over 20 years. During that time, subscriptions and ticket sales have declined steadily.

It is true that ticket sales do not cover the expenses of most symphony orchestras. This is the case with most arts organizations. In general, orchestras in the US generate between 20 and 35 percent of their revenues from ticket sales. As an example, museums generate only 6 percent of their budgets from ticket sales, and the rest from donations and grants. You can learn more here: <https://slippedisc.com/2017/01/how-can-orchestras-replace-lost-sales/>. It is imperative for nonprofit arts organizations to obtain additional funding through grants and donations. Maintaining a sound financial plan is a management's responsibility, albeit a challenging one. Most arts organizations employ a full-time Director of Development, in charge of raising funds for short- and long-term projects. The Bardavon does not have a Director of Development at this time.

The 2018-19 HVP season (the last full season before covid) saw the deficit jump to \$100,000.

We would like to see documentation of this.

The current 2021-22 HVP season has a projected deficit of \$160,000. Subscriptions have dropped by 30%, ticket sales by 50%.

The COVID pandemic has affected audiences everywhere. We are glad to see people return to the hall at their own pace and comfort level and have been heartened to see more people attending as the season has progressed. Again, the subscription and ticket sale numbers have not been verified.

In 2023, the HVP will lose another \$100,000 in direct support because a few major funders have changed their priorities. As a result, we project a \$275,000 deficit for the HVP in 2022-23; for the Bardavon to continue to lose that amount of money each year threatens our entire operation and our future.

Again, we have not received verifiable data to back up statements regarding funding.

In January, we asked to sit down with the HVP Orchestra Committee (HVP-OC) to share our concerns. In late March, they agreed to a zoom meeting (including a union rep).

The orchestra members ARE a union. We are all part of the American Federation of Musicians. As such, we include local and sometimes national union representatives in conversations that may affect our contract.

The Bardavon management did not make it clear to the Orchestra Committee that they wanted to discuss financial information until March 2. While we met to discuss other matters between January and March, it was not until an email on March 2 that the subject of financial health was broached. The earliest time to meet agreed upon by the Orchestra Committee and Bardavon Management was March 18.

We shared all the information above in great detail.

The information shared with us is posted above. It in no way provides the information or verification needed to discuss the financial situation in any amount of detail, let alone great detail.

The union response was, in sum or substance, "where are you going to find the money?"

The question we all asked at the 3/18/22 meeting was, "What are you going to do to replace the funding that is being lost?" We thought it was a relevant question, considering that it is the responsibility of management or a Director of Development to obtain funding for the organization. The Bardavon does not currently have a Director of Development.

We said that amount of money is simply not out there and that the decline of audiences and funding has been ongoing and we need to change the structure of how Bardavon presents the HVP to make it financially sustainable.

In the meeting of 3/18/22, Mr. Silva told the committee that the Bardavon could not present the orchestra anymore due to the deficits he has asserted, and that the Board can no longer take responsibility for the orchestra. Then he told the Orchestra Committee that the orchestra should "be reimagined, on your own, as a separate entity" using endowment funds that were taken over by the Bardavon when it acquired the HVP in 1999. We have yet to see any statements or records of this endowment, although they were requested.

We are surprised by Mr. Silva's suggestion that this area - the beautiful Hudson Valley region, a sought-after place to live and visit, with a thriving artistic community - is not able to support a modest symphony orchestra.

We suggested that we pause the 22-23 season and that members of the HVP-OC and other stakeholders (patrons, donors, subscribers, board members) should meet with a consultant to try to figure out what can be done with a greatly reduced budget.

A consultant was mentioned in the 3/18/22 meeting, as a way to move forward, but with the suggestion from Mr. Silva that the orchestra separate from the Bardavon. In the meeting and in a subsequent email of 4/4/22, it was stated that the Bardavon had “decided that the best course of action is to suspend the 22-23 season” and that the Bardavon “will not enter into a collective bargaining agreement.”

At no point in time during the 3/18/22 meeting was it suggested that the Bardavon would continue to present the orchestra, even with a “greatly reduced budget.” However, if that suggestion were made to us, it would be a matter of negotiation, whether including a consultant or not.

Greatly reducing the budget of the Hudson Valley Philharmonic would make it impossible to continue the orchestra as we know it. The budget numbers provided to us show low expenses compared to other orchestras of our size in the region. Particularly, artistic salaries and benefits are extremely low. A not-so-fun-fact, shockingly, is that the Hudson Valley Philharmonic is the second lowest paid professional union orchestra in the entire nation. This information is from data provided by ROPA, the Regional Orchestra Players Association, of which the Hudson Valley Philharmonic is a member. This is why it is imperative to focus on growth, not cuts.

They rejected that suggestion and insisted that we negotiate a multi-year contract based on the current 5 concert symphony season [...]

The Orchestra Committee has not mentioned a length of contract or a number of concerts. We have simply reminded Mr. Silva that we have an existing contract which does not disappear. Any discussion about our future and contract will require formal negotiations.

...] which employs over 300 musicians and is at the root of our financial woes.

The orchestra currently has 59 members. We do not all play each concert, and we have wonderful subs and extras who join us to fill the open chairs. Each concert this season has had around 50 players on stage, but certainly not entirely different players each time.

We are disappointed by this choice of wording: “root of our financial woes,” directed at the orchestra.

Those negotiations will begin the end of May and as we had always planned to do, we will contact every HVP patron, donor and subscriber once that process has concluded and we have a clear path forward.

Mr. Silva’s words from the stage on 4/23/22 were the first we had heard about a negotiation. The email of 4/4/22 had stated they did not wish to enter into negotiations. On 4/26/22 we did receive written communication that they plan to negotiate with us, and we welcomed that news. We have yet to receive financial information relevant to that negotiation, but we look forward to receiving it.

I hope this gives you some clarity and thanks again for your concern.

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