

# Senza Sordino

*Official Publication of the International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians*

VOLUME 37, NO. 4

Online Edition

August 1999

## MUSICIANS EXCHANGE ROLES Australian Up, Minnesotan Down Under

*by Julie Ayer*

*Violinist and ICSOM Delegate, Minnesota Orchestra*

I returned home on June 10, 1999 from a nine-week exchange with violinist Gary Andrews, Principal Second Violin of the Sydney Symphony in Australia. The idea of trading jobs with someone in another orchestra had been a dream of mine for many years. I have been a member of the Minnesota Orchestra since 1976, and somewhere along the way I began to imagine making my dream a reality. I discussed my idea with our former music director, Edo de Waart, who is now the music director of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. He was very supportive of my proposal, which enabled me to proceed with arranging the endless details, accomplished mostly by email between the managers of the SSO and the MO, the national and local unions, orchestra committees, and Gary. After 1-1/2 years we had finally settled on the dates and logistics of exchanging keys, lockers, cars, clothes (!), etc. As far as I knew, there was no model to work from, so I tried to anticipate every possible problem that could arise. Although Gary and I are both titled string players, we both agreed that we were happy to sit anywhere the section needed us.

The idea of a musician exchange was suggested as early as 1965 by George Zazofsky, former chairman of ICSOM and violinist with the Boston Symphony: "You can't imagine how refreshing and stimulating it would be for a symphony player to have that kind of change. Not a year off, but something new and broadening." It was attempted by the BSO and a Japanese orchestra, but because of the disparity of salaries and living conditions at the time was not considered entirely successful (although the artistic and cultural rewards were great). The Japanese and Australian musicians' unions sponsored a successful exchange program for orchestral musicians in the mid-'80s. Although it may not be the first time between major orchestras, Gary's and my exchange is unprecedented in the Minnesota Orchestra.

Not only is it a rare opportunity to exchange artistic and contractual ideas with colleagues, and to observe different working conditions and a different pool of conductors and soloists, it is also a cultural exchange. Both musicians are representing their orchestra, city, and country, and are goodwill ambassadors in every sense of the word. It is also important to absorb the experience with an open mind and without preconceived notions.

Unlike conductors, most of us do not have an opportunity to participate in another orchestra after we have committed our

professional and personal lives to a particular job and its environment. We can become frustrated in our respective situations, which can lead to anxiety, psychological and even physical stress. An exchange provides a break from one's routine, and although the working conditions are usually similar, there are other differences which impact upon every orchestra. It is a good experience to observe and participate in a different workplace without the responsibility and involvement required of you in your own orchestra, which for me, is a major difference. (I am referring to extra-musical matters such as committees, meetings, etc.)

Although the musical language is the same, the social dynamics of individual personalities and interpersonal relationships create an atmosphere unique to the SSO and to every orchestra. I quickly discovered a wonderful sense of camaraderie and humor that is so vital to our collective survival. It was a real pleasure to meet my colleagues in the SSO, and there was never enough time to talk to all of them. We were eager to share ideas, problems, and stories with each other, and both Gary and I were invited to attend meetings, not to mention numerous parties, restaurants, wine tastings, and into colleagues' homes!

All the Australian orchestras have a relatively short history compared to U.S. orchestras, having been founded in the 1930s by the ABC (Australian Broadcasting Corporation). Over the last few years the SSO and the other ABC network orchestras have undergone by far the most substantial change in the fifty years of their history. Spearheaded by the divestment of the SSO, four of the six orchestras are autonomous corporate entities. It is only in the past 10 years that they have separated from the ABC, and now face the daunting task of creating endowments and beginning to tap into private funds. There is no real tradition of private and corporate donations to the arts in Australia.

As explained to the 1998 ICSOM Conference by Martin Foster, head of SOMA (Symphony and Opera Musicians Association of Australia) and contrabassoonist of the SSO, at one time all

*(continued on page 3)*

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*The International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians (ICSOM)*

**Statement of Revenues & Expenses  
For the Fiscal Year June 1, 1997 to May 31, 1998**

	GENERAL FUND	EMERGENCY RELIEF FUND	ICSOM MEMORIAL AWARDS	TOTAL OF ALL FUNDS
<b>Revenues</b>				
Dues 97-98	110,091.00			110,091.00
Dues 96-97	14,391.00			14,391.00
Book Royalties	4,466.42			4,466.42
Refunds & Reimbursements	1,628.52			1,628.52
Pass through (Louisville)	1,691.85			1,691.85
Interest Income	2,891.24	7,414.36	718.39	11,023.99
Senza Sordino Income	620.00			620.00
CD-Rom Sales	561.46			561.46
Contribution Income	65.00			65.00
Transfers from Other Funds	4,000.00		3,533.00	7,533.00
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>140,406.49</b>	<b>7,414.36</b>	<b>4,251.39</b>	<b>152,072.24</b>
<b>Expenses</b>				
Legal Expenses	30,013.26			30,013.26
ICSOM Conference Expenses	6,983.34			26,983.34
Directories	11,649.30			11,649.30
Investigative Task Force Meetings	11,648.06			11,648.06
Telephone	10,776.80			10,776.80
Senza Sordino	10,573.38			10,573.38
Honoraria	10,000.00			10,000.00
Office Equipment	7,814.78			7,814.78
Book Expenses	7,741.98			7,741.98
Mid-Winter Governing Board Mtg	5,670.71			5,670.71
Travel	4,705.65			4,705.65
AFM Convention	4,307.01			4,307.01
Scholarship Awards	4,000.00			4,000.00
CD-Rom Production and Hardware	2,473.77			2,473.77
Conductor Evaluations	2,357.50			2,357.50
Postage	2,184.85			2,184.85
Pass through (Louisville)	1,691.85			1,691.85
Accounting Expenses	1,050.00			1,050.00
Duplication	1,017.74			1,017.74
Emeritus	938.66			938.66
Income Replacement	883.37			883.37
Stationary & Supplies	839.62			839.62
Email	796.79			796.79
Subscriptions	656.33			656.33
OCSM, ROPA Conferences	644.78			644.78
Bonding Insurance	632.00			632.00
Website	550.38			550.38
Bank Charges	181.00			181.00
Transfers to Other Funds	3,533.00		4,000.00	7,533.00
<b>Total Expenses and Transfers</b>	<b>166,315.91</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>4,000.00</b>	<b>170,315.91</b>
<b>Excess of Revenues over (under) Expenses</b>	<b>(25,909.42)</b>	<b>7,414.36</b>	<b>251.39</b>	<b>(18,243.67)</b>

**Changes in Fund Balances**

<b>Fund Balances, beginning of year</b>	91,477.77	182,118.98	11,790.01	285,386.76
Income	140,406.49	7,414.36	4,251.39	152,072.24
Less Expenses	166,315.91	0.00	4,000.00	170,315.91
<b>Fund Balances, end of year</b>	<b>65,568.35</b>	<b>189,533.34</b>	<b>12,041.40</b>	<b>267,143.09</b>

**Balance Sheet  
For the Fiscal Year June 1, 1997 to May 31, 1998**

**Assets**

Cash - checking	49,300.82			49,300.82
Investments		172,033.34	12,041.40	184,074.74
Prepaid Expenses	7,056.53			7,056.53
Dues Receivable	9,211.00			9,211.00
Loans Receivable		17,500.00		17,500.00
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>65,568.35</b>	<b>189,533.34</b>	<b>12,041.40</b>	<b>267,143.09</b>

**Liabilities & Fund Balances**

Total Liabilities	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Fund Balance	65,568.35	189,533.34	12,041.40	267,143.09
<b>Total Liabilities &amp; Fund Balances</b>	<b>65,568.35</b>	<b>189,533.34</b>	<b>12,041.40</b>	<b>267,143.09</b>

## An ICSOM-Eye View of the AFM Convention *First of Many Reports on the New State of Our Union*



*Six of the nine members of the ICSOM Governing Board were Delegates to the 93rd AFM Convention at the Riviera Hotel in Las Vegas in July. Four of the six attended for the first time, and each has been invited to offer their first-time experiences to Senza readers. First out of the starting gate is ICSOM Secretary and ICSOM Delegate to the AFM Convention Lucinda-Lewis:*

I had always had an image in my mind of what AFM Conventions must be like. This year, the ICSOM Secretary had a chance to witness first hand the process AFM members employ to govern themselves and establish their membership rights and privileges. While I was expecting the symphonic troops to be vastly outnumbered by the non-symphonic crowd, I was pleasantly surprised to see so many orchestra players serving as convention delegates as well as wonderful diplomats to the rest of the union. During my few days of sitting on the sidelines and observing the proceedings, it became clear that our best hope of changing the Union and making it better is for greater numbers of us to become involved in the process.

When I first became an ICSOM delegate in 1983, the symphonic landscape was littered with problems between symphony managements and musicians and between symphony musicians and local unions. The difficult problems we faced within our own institutions generated a high level of internal activism which often made up for the total lack of support and services coming from our locals. The best and brightest from the ranks of symphony orchestras stepped up to the challenge of finding solutions to the myriad of problems. Eventually, union services improved as did symphonic labor agreements. Unfortunately, the intensity of those early battles left many activists burned out.

During his address to the 1994 ICSOM Conference, Chairman Brad Buckley asked what had happened to all the orchestra activists. Their numbers were in steady decline. He was concerned that musicians were becoming less involved in their own orchestras and in the Union, thereby putting greater responsibility repeatedly on the same few people. Brad's observation summed up the biggest problem facing the AFM—lack of rank-and-file involvement. The annual call for grassroots activism from the AFM leadership, especially during last year's Unity Conference, seems like a trite, redundant, meaningless plea. But unless you see how the process for change works, you can't possibly understand how important individual involvement really is. However, as Brad pointed out, most musicians today just want to play their notes, collect their checks, and go home.

Perhaps we have a right to believe that our considerable union dues buys us the right to expect someone else to "take care of business," but in fact, most of us are aware that some union

problems cannot be "taken care of" by union officials and a handful of motivated, well-intentioned members alone. It's going to take greater involvement in the process by all working members. Other unions, like the Teamsters, have succeeded in effecting change when member activists organized the rank-and-file. If change for the better is to occur within the AFM, its members will eventually have to step up and be counted. ✂ ✂

*More reports from ICSOMites at the AFM Convention will appear in future Senzas, including analyses of the official proceedings and legislation that was passed. – Ed.*

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(MUSICIAN EXCHANGE - continued from page 1)

ABC orchestras were covered by a single collective bargaining agreement negotiated by the Musicians Union without musician input. (Sound familiar? This parallels U.S. orchestras' experiences until the formation of ICSOM in 1963). There had been much infighting between local and federal unions, and by the early '70s, committees were providing services to their own orchestras which the union was not able or chose not to provide.

Australian symphony musicians were given little opportunity to replace the union leadership because the union would hold unannounced elections, and relationships continued to deteriorate. The orchestra musicians eventually decided to secede from the Musicians Union of Australia and join with other arts workers in the Media Alliance as SOMA, the musicians division of the Media Alliance. The general feeling is that this has been a positive move, and the complete overhaul of industrial practices has seen an end to the confrontation and divisiveness of the previous two decades.

However, the future of all SOMA orchestras depends on the future of opera and dance, and these companies equally depend on the orchestras. In Australia, it is the responsibility of government to provide sufficient base funding in order to provide a vibrant artistic life for its artists and audiences. Depending on which party is in office, the arts dollar can be quite finite.

From the 1998 ICSOM Conference, Motion #10:

*Resolved: "That the delegates of the 1998 ICSOM Conference express their heartfelt admiration to Martin Foster and their colleagues in the Symphony Orchestra Musicians of Australia for their tenacity and courage in their fight for self-determination and union democracy."*

Gary and I agree that our exchange was a wonderful experience, and I am happy to say that the exchange was a success for all involved. Carl Nashan, my husband and now-retired violinist from the MO, and Gary's wife Dale, an accomplished music educator, accompanied us on our great adventure. We four immersed ourselves in the cultures of the orchestras and the cities in which we found ourselves. We all have met new friends and colleagues, experienced some wonderful music-making, formulated some new ideas, and hope to return someday.

No worries, mate!

✂ ✂

# ICSOM Conference 1999

At The Antlers, Vail, Colorado  
August 25 - 28, 1999

*ICSOM Delegates:* Please contact our official travel agents **Susan Levine** or **Carl King** at Travel Gems for help with conference travel and accommodations. Susan and Carl can be reached in New York from 9:30am to 7:00pm daily at 1-800-569-4495 x115, 212-889-3131 x115, Fax 212-889-8688, or suetravel@aol.com.



The primary function of a true union is not just in organizing the employees it seeks to represent, but in the manner in which those employees are represented for collective bargaining purposes. To do so, it must first purge itself of any semblance of employer domination.

In the AFM, that's a very tough nut to crack because the AFM has yet to determine who the employer is. As long as it maintains the illogical and fictitious notion that the "father of the bride" is the employer, there can be no reform. The "father of the bride" is not the employer of free lance musicians, but the "client" of the employer.

Nearly thirty years ago, while the Chicago Federation of Musicians was in trusteeship under the late Hal C. Davis, actually because we had defeated James C. Petrillo and put him out to pasture, Wayne Barrington and I introduced a resolution at a membership meeting to resolve this employer situation in that AFM Local. Trustee Davis would not, under any condition, permit its consideration at the membership meeting at which it was to be acted upon. Things have not changed all that much to this day in the AFM.

The mere presence of employers at AFM membership meetings is an inhibiting and intimidating factor that the National Labor Relations Board and the courts have long recognized as the unfair labor practice of "employer domination." Until the AFM is purged of these employer members, it cannot collectively bargain for the 80% of its members who are free lancers. Collective bargaining is the ONLY means a union has at its disposal to represent the interests of its employee members. Thus far, the AFM has yet to take its first step. Is it any wonder that AFM officers have never understood the true nature of the relationship of symphony musicians and their employers?

*Sam Denov*  
*Chicago Symphony Orchestra Emeritus*

"Voicings" graphic design and concept by Michael Gorman and Norman Foster  
(bass and clarinet, respectively, of the Honolulu Symphony)

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