

Senza Sordino

Official Publication of the International Conference of Symphony & Opera Musicians

VOLUME VI

1968 SUMMER SUPPLEMENT

GREEN LIGHT TO CONDUCTOR RATINGS

ICSOM has decided to go full speed ahead with its project of grading orchestral conductors by means of poll among its member musicians.

The importance and critical need for such evaluations not only to the orchestral performer but to management and in fact all having an interest in the field is hardly open to question.

After some question was raised as to whether the compilation and distribution of the questionnaires might possibly make ICSOM or its members answerable in any suit for libel, counsel was consulted. After thoroughly reviewing the problem, ICSOM lawyers gave a green light. It was their considered judgment that ICSOM might safely proceed with the evaluations provided certain safeguards and procedures were followed. For example, steps should be taken to assure that the statements be neither recklessly nor maliciously made, and evaluations should be made available only to those with a legitimate interest therein. ICSOM will further review with its lawyers the questions and information to be put on the evaluation sheets, as well as the general mechanics of accumulation and distribution of the questionnaires.

Conductor's Comments Cautious

Conductors asked about the subject were cautious. But Erich Leinsdorf of the Boston Symphony said he could see no harm in the poll itself.

"Musicians have always evaluated conductors," he said. "In Europe they do it constantly. The only question to ask is: To what purpose? It doesn't worry me, but it should certainly worry some people who administer orchestras. Such a poll may tell them some things they don't want to know."

William Steinberg, conductor of the Pittsburgh Symphony, also found nothing to be alarmed about. "Why not? Why shouldn't they rate conductors?" he observed. "Conductors are a necessary evil — sometimes more necessary, sometimes more evil — but it is a question of deciding between what I would call the magician versus the genuine kapellmeisters.

"If it would change the situation, if the conductor would learn something from it — make him stick to the beat, for instance — it might be healthy."

(Under the heading of Objective Evaluation, musicians are asked: "Is his beat clear most of the time? Does his beat have clear inner rhythm? Does he show his interpretation with the baton, keeping talk in proper perspective? Does his beat communicate proper character, mood, and intensity of the passage?")

Conducting a "Grazing Ground"

"The conductor is supposed to know everything better than the musicians," said Mr. Steinberg, "but on the fingers of one hand you can count the real conductors. Before the first downbeat, the musicians know."

Player's Opinions Valuable

Some conductors are upset about the possibility of published evaluation, Mr. Steinberg said because "they believe their swindle might be discovered. Conducting an orchestra is a grazing ground for lack of talent."

The relationship between conductor and musician is changing, George Zazofsky, Chairman of ICSOM, said. "In the Boston Symphony's contract it is specified that the players may keep evaluation sheets on conductors and that the management is free to consult them if it so wishes."

Conductors no longer can terrorize orchestra men as they once did, he went on. "The day of Toscanini is long past, you know — cursing musicians, throwing batons, that sort of thing — it doesn't happen anymore."

The official evaluation sheet divides the questions into Emotional Reaction and Objective Evaluation. Under the first heading, musicians answer two questions: "Do you, or would you, like to play under this man as a guest conductor? Do you, or would you, like to play under this man as a permanent conductor?"

"We are mainly interested in evaluating guests, because permanent conductors are chosen from guest lists," Mr. Zazofsky said. "Lately, managements have been showing an interest in players' opinions. And why not? The combined musical opinion of X number of first-class symphony players should be more valuable than the opinion of one or two persons in any given community."

Next Issues of Senza Sordino Will Feature Articles on:

- APMA-ICSOM Strike Fund
- A complete report on the Ray Still case
- About San Antonio and Bob Danielson
- On Arbitration
- Contract negotiations in Honolulu, Baltimore, Boston, others
- Symphonies in Bulgaria — wages and working conditions
- National Endowment of the Arts — help for symphonies
- Why have orchestra dues?
- Letters to the editor, including several from Victor Rie
- FAA Bans Instruments Cases from Airline Cabins
- and more, especially if YOU send material in!

DETROIT TO HOST 1968 ICSOM MEET

Delegates from more than 30 A.F.of.M. Symphony Orchestras are expected to attend the 1968 Annual ICSOM Conference in Detroit, on August 31 through the morning of September 3, 1968. Registration for the delegates will begin at 11 a.m. on the 31st. at the Tuller Hotel in the Italian Room and the first business meeting is scheduled to get underway that day at 2 p.m. The Tuller Hotel is at Park and Adams Streets and can be reached from the airport by limousine using the Statler Hotel stop. Rates for the air-conditioned rooms are \$8.50 single, \$14 double. Reservations may be made by telephone, area code 313, 963-5200. Delegates will be expected to bring with them a completed ICSOM Chart for their orchestra for the 1968-69 chart together with the answers to the additional items which will go on this new chart, which should appear shortly after the end of the conference.

Sipser, ICSOM Lawyer, To Attend

One of the highlights of the conference will be the opportunity to meet and question Mr. I. Philip Sipser of the firm of Sipser, Weinstock & Weinmann, Attorneys at Law. Mr. Sipser, who has been acting as attorney for ICSOM for the past few months, is best known to musicians for the remarkable job he did in helping the New York Philharmonic reach a settlement which provided the pacesetter contract the players won in 1967.

Delegates should plan to turn in their 1968-69 ICSOM Chart information at the time of registration. Additional questions are:

TOURS

- How many services in a tour week?
- Any limit of overtime services?
- How many concerts in a tour week?
- Travel allowed on free day?

GENERAL CONDITIONS

- Back to back children's concerts?
- Maximum rehearsal length?
- Average rehearsal length?
- Five day week? (if yes, are days consecutive?)
- Limit on number of services per day?
- Reseating Procedures?
- Orchestra players participate in auditions, hirings?
- Compulsory Retirement?
- Number of minutes in each intermission?

RUNOUTS SECTION

- How many per regular week?
- In other weeks?
- Mileage payment?
- Portal to portal pay? Numbers of hours allowed?
- How many services on each runout?

PENSION PLAN

- Total funding in \$
- Vested interest at what age, how many years participation?
- Orchestra elected representatives? Equal to management?
- Amount of maximum benefit?
- Early retirement available?
- Amount of Musician's Weekly Contribution?

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CLOSER LINKS WITH AFM AS CONFERENCE STATUS APPROACHES

After many years and untiring efforts, the way has finally been cleared for ICSOM to secure official Conference Status in the AFM. Following a series of discussions between representatives of both groups, the officers of ICSOM have agreed to recommend and urge amendment of its By-Laws to meet certain objections raised by the Federation. Concerned is the section dealing with ICSOM's purpose, which is to be reformulated and clarified, the membership provision, and the provision pertaining to delegates.

As the officers of ICSOM feel that it is unquestionably in ICSOM's interest to effect the amendments and to secure official conference status within the Federation, steps will now be taken to submit the proposed amendments to ICSOM membership in accordance with ICSOM By-Laws.

ICSOM Rights and Responsibilities

The discussion between ICSOM and the Federation also further delineated certain rights and responsibilities of ICSOM as a Conference. Thus it was understood that, subject to discussion with the Federation, ICSOM will be able to do the following: assist in collective bargaining but only on the request of the Federation locals involved; promote or support public legislation; lobby and apply for grants and join organizations outside the Federation.

Delegates to the 1968 Detroit ICSOM Conference will consider the proposed amendments, which will probably then be submitted to the ICSOM orchestras for ratification leading to the implementation of the letter ICSOM received from AFM President Kenin on June 24, 1968 in which he stated "Upon receipt of advice that these amendments have been duly adopted, I shall recommend to the International Executive Board the granting of official conference status to ICSOM."

The proposed amended Sections are as follows:

(1) ARTICLE II. Purpose.

"The purpose of ICSOM shall be to direct continuous cooperative efforts between representatives from symphony orchestras, the members of which are members of the American Federation of Musicians, within the framework and as a Conference of, and in accordance with the By-Laws of the Federation, and thus to promote the welfare of, and make more rewarding the livelihood of the orchestral performer, and enrich the life of our society."

(2) ARTICLE III. Section 2.

The following sentence shall be added:

"ICSOM shall accept into membership all applying symphony, opera and ballet orchestras, and only those orchestras whose players are members of the American Federation of Musicians."

(3) ARTICLE VI. Section 2.

The first sentence shall be changed to read as follows:

"Delegates from orchestras to meetings of ICSOM shall be selected by secret ballot by American Federation of Musician's members in each constituent orchestra."

S.F. OPERA 3-YEAR PACT \$231, \$245, \$260

Capitalizing on the close ties between orchestra and AFM Local 6 Union Officials, members of the San Francisco Opera Orchestra ratified a contract more than a month and a half before the scheduled start of the 11-week Fall season with a first year raise of \$30, up from \$201. Included in the gains were Medical Insurance, seating guarantees, Guaranteed Additional Income of \$34 per week (first year), 5% pension contribution (AFM-EPW), daytime rehearsal rate \$7, Accidental Death and Dismemberment coverage and a minimum 12% overscale for first chair players.

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