Middle-aged Ninja Mutant Newsletter: The Complete Index to Senza Sordino

It is with both trepidation and pride that we introduce the first issue of Senza Sordino. It has been put together against the pressure of both time and limited funds, and no doubt bears the scars of its difficult (one is tempted to say “Cesarean”) birth.

In May, 1962, a Symposium, attended by delegates of 12 symphony orchestras, was held in Chicago. The first item on the agenda was entitled: “Establishment of a Federation-wide Symphony Newsletter.” A committee was appointed, drafted a recommendation, and its report, together with subsequent action, is printed elsewhere in this newsletter. It is on the basis of the mandate of the Chicago Symposium, then, that Senza Sordino goes to press.”

So began the first issue of this publication, which appeared in January 1963 (one could almost write “that is what he said; that is what Bob Coleman said.”) It was nineteen typewritten pages, but what those pages reported presaged many of the issues that continue to provide orchestra activists with plenty to do in their spare time: inter-orchestra conferences, contract negotiations, the dismissal of a musician from the Philadelphia Orchestra allegedly because of his age, a fight to change the relationship between the Chicago Symphony musicians and their local union involving the ouster of the most experienced musician of his craft, while hardly light reading, will serve as a key that will help to unlock that treasure. Perhaps if we can remember our history we will be, as the philosopher George Santayana suggested, less likely to have to repeat its nastier bits.

A word as to the text of the index: articles are listed by titles, followed by occasional explications by the current editor. Given the immense changes in societal mores and values that have occurred since 1963, a few of the titles will no doubt seem quaint and even offensive to some, but in the interests of historical verisimilitude I felt it better to present the actual titles unabowdlerized by my personal notions of what might be unacceptable to current sensibilities.

This issue contains not only an index to the thirty-two volumes of Senza Sordino published to date, but also profiles of its previous editors. Perhaps only someone who has been editor of Senza can fully understand how much time, effort, and intelligence has gone into producing this publication since its birth in 1963, but this writer can assure the thousands of musicians who have benefited from their orchestras would be worse places to work had it not been for the work of these dedicated souls. When the history of the American orchestra is written, these eight musicians will have an honored place in its pages.

Robert Levine
Editor (the ninth)
Senza Sordino

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Robert Coleman was the first editor of Senza Sordino, editing the three issues of Volume 1 (1963). In the span of five months he produced 66 pages of newsletter, an achievement yet to be surpassed by any successor. He was a violist with the Chicago and Dallas orchestras, retiring from the latter in 1992. According to Tom Hall, "Bob Coleman did a great job getting the newsletter underway and publishing the first charts, a big task. The first issues probably contained as much or more information and exchange of ideas than any future issues. To him fell the task of making ICSOM a visible force in the orchestra world, and he met that challenge with courage."
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Reinhardt Elster, who was a member of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, edited Volumes 2 and 3 (1963-65). He provided Senza with a more polished look and some good editorials and articles on the relationship of orchestra musicians to their managements and union.
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Sam Denov, who was a member of the Chicago Symphony percussion section, served as editor for Volume 4 (1965-66). He also served as ICSOM’s first Vice-chair from 1963 to 1966, from 1968 to 1969, and as Chair of ICSOM from 1969-70. Denov was active in the union democracy movement that unseated James C. Petrillo from the presidency of the Chicago local. As Senza editor, he published four news-packed issues in a very attractive newspaper format, with a masthead of truly startling ornateness. Unfortunately the newspaper format did not survive the discovery that it poked over the top of music stands.
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Vance Beach, a cellist with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, was editor from 1970-72 (Volumes 9 - 10). He established a standard of excellence with his writing that has yet to be surpassed, with prose that was both witty and passionate (explaining that tax-sheltered annuities were not simple, he wrote "the government set it up, the government controls it, and the Internal Revenue Service oversees it. How could it be simple?") After resigning the editorship, Beach won election to the position of Secretary-Treasurer of Local 47 in Los Angeles. He died in 1986.

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Henry Shaw, a violinist with the Cincinnati Symphony, edited more issues of Senza than anyone before or since, 61 issues over ten seasons (1972-82). He also served as Regional Vice-chair for Central Orchestras for three seasons. According to his successor, Tom Hall, “our greatest editor was Henry Shaw. Not only did he serve the longest, he was the first to write some truly important editorials, including ‘The Winds of Change’ and ‘Our Decibel Dilemma.’ The first members of an ICSOM Hall of Fame should be George Zazofsky (ICSOM’s first Chair) and Henry Shaw.”
## 1993-94 Wage Chart of ICSOM Orchestras

**Compiled by Stephanie Tretick**

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**Notes:**
- Services for strings and second winds.
- String services.
- Winter subscription, 2nd wind/brass.
- Vacation weeks are floating.
- May be rotating.
- Services for strings, 2nd wind/brass.
- Services for strings, 1st and 2nd winds.
- 1 extra week for strings.
- At least 9 services.
- 1 week.
- 2 floating plus approximately 30 services.
- 4 services personal leave.
- 1 opera every other season for strings.
- Some relief during opera weeks.
- 3 additional unpaid weeks.
**Wage Chart Notes**

- **Atlanta**: Seniority in addition to overscale.
- **Boston**: At least 22 weeks are 5 day weeks.
- **Chicago**: Radio = 8.5% of scale; $5,746 additional assumes 52 broadcasts, may be reduced to 39 or less due to funding cuts.
- **Cincinnati**: Salary figures reflect negotiated 2-week lay-off.
- **Colorado**: Seniority is not paid in addition to overscale.
- **Dallas**: Rule of 85 applies with 30 years of service.
- **Detroit**: Additional relief: 2 services per year per each 5 years seniority, up to 8 services per year. EMG includes radio.
- **Florida Philharmonic**: two-tiered orchestra; 10 players earn less than shown. Salary includes annual travel bonus of $700.
- **Grant Park**: Salary includes special services and health & welfare.
- **Honolulu**: 20-year cap on seniority.
- **Kennedy Center**: Vacation pay = 4% personal scale. Orchestra only in existence for 12 years; maximum possible seniority is only $50/week so far.
- **Los Angeles**: Past retiree pension: $103/106/110 per month times years cap in place when originally retired.
- **Louisville**: Pension is yearly figure. Management will match player contribution up to $450 per year. Relief based on number of services played in previous season.
- **Metropolitan Opera**: Pension = 50% of wage during 1 of last 3 years service. Rehearsal scale for 30 weeks = $36/hour.
- **Milwaukee**: Pension based on years of service; no maximum. Additional relief services are rotated services. Master Agreement guarantees 41 weeks; management is offering 42 weeks this season.
- **NYC Opera**: Plan A Health Benefits Plan, Local 802. Base includes rehearsal pay.
- **New York Philharmonic**: Each musician receives a minimum of $1040/year overscale in addition to figures in chart.
- **North Carolina**: 4 weeks of summer are optional.
- **Philadelphia**: Pension = $1,250/month per year of service to 30 years service maximum 93-94 plus additional $3,000 after 31 years service. String bonus of $20/week.
- **Pittsburgh**: 93-94 terms reflect one-year contract extension.
- **SPCO**: 1994-97 wages will reflect COLA.
- **Syracuse**: Pension is 10% of final yearly wage.

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Deborah Torch, editor from 1986 to 1993 (the second-longest tenure in Senza history), is a violinist with the San Antonio Symphony. She moved Senza into the desktop publishing era, an achievement all the more remarkable given the primitive tools available at the time. She also did something no editor had done before: investigative reporting, including a major piece on the decision of the musicians of the Seattle Symphony to leave the AFM. ICSOM Chair Brad Buckley said of Torch, “I would be hard pressed to say which I admired more, her abilities as an editor or her contributions as an Executive Committee member.” In addition to the news normally covered in Senza, she greatly expanded coverage of the music medicine field, eventually editing a book on the subject (ICSOM’s first book publishing venture).
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(special thanks to Tom Hall for his assistance on this project)
A Call For Help

Please help us find a bone marrow transplant.

Alexandra Hysong is a 3½ year-old girl of Philippine/Caucasian descent who has leukemia. She is in desperate need of a bone marrow transplant, which can give her a second chance for life.

If you (or someone you know) are of Asian/Caucasian (preferably Filipino/Caucasian) descent and want to give Alexandra that chance, please contact the National Bone Marrow Program at 1-(800) MARROW-2. Donors must be between 18 and 55 years of age (male or female). Due to Alexandra’s racial mix, the pool of potential donor matches is extremely small. Many people are needed to be type-matched in order to be able to find a suitable donor.

BRIAN HYSONG

(Brian Hysong, Alexandra’s father, is the bass clarinetist of the New York City Ballet Orchestra.)

Back Issue Policy

Back issues of Senza Sordino are available. ICSOM orchestras may order back issues at no cost, provided that the order is placed by the orchestra’s ICSOM delegate. Back issues will also be provided to AFM Emeritus musicians for no charge. All others may order back issues at a cost of $5.00 for the first issue ordered and $2.00 for subsequent issues ordered at the same time. For many of the older issues there are not sufficient copies available to send out originals; in that case, photocopies will be sent. Please mail, e-mail, or fax requests for back issues to Senza Sordino at the address listed below.

In addition to making back issues available in hard copy form, the editor of Senza Sordino hopes to have the text of all thirty-two volumes online and available for retrieval from the AFM computer bulletin board by the end of 1994.

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