

Senza Sordino

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Toward Unity 1998:

Roehl Rapture, Blue Ribbon Blues

In the May 1998 Senza Sordino we began a study of the history of dissent and union democracy in the AFM, culminating with the new crescendo of unrest that had begun with the rise of symphony and recording musicians as a force within the union. The imposition in 1980 of Federation work dues on virtually all working musicians in the AFM (not just on symphony musicians, correcting an error in the last issue of Senza) provoked a new estrangement between working musicians and the AFM leadership, and impelled a search for justice by the musicians so taxed—a search that is chronicled in this issue of Senza.

Dissonance To Consonance: Roehl Report Seeks Resolution

At the 1985 ICSOM Conference and again at a 1986 Symposium in Chicago, then-AFM President Victor Fuentealba acknowledged the unfairness of Federation work dues as then structured, admitting that symphony musicians were paying a disproportionate share of work dues, and recognizing that a concomitant level of service to working musicians needed to be forthcoming from both the locals and the Federation.

In 1987, under pressure from ICSOM, President Fuentealba established a “work dues study committee” to look into possible revisions to the union’s work dues structure. This committee recommended no work dues reforms, and symphony musicians got no relief. It did, however, propose that Federation bylaws be amended to “outline the locals’ responsibility to represent members of all collective bargaining units,” including requiring a local “to provide, at its own expense, competent, professional representation for contract negotiations and the processing of grievances and arbitrations.” But the question of what would happen if the locals failed to comply with this requirement was never answered. Then-ICSOM Chair Melanie Burrell wrote in the April 1987 issue of *Senza Sordino*:

Clearly, the IEB was not willing to guarantee immediate representation if a local would need to borrow money from the Federation for that purpose, nor was the IEB willing to ensure that orchestra musicians would not have to pay **again** [over and above work dues already paid] for the right of representation.

This amendment to the bylaws was adopted by the 1987 AFM Convention and expanded by the 1989 Convention, but the underlying issues of excessive work dues and insufficient union service remained basically unaddressed.

(continued on page 5)

Promise Breakers: The Unraveling of Blue Ribbon

Ah, summer is in the air, and the young activist’s thoughts turn to—restructure? Again? Haven’t we done this before?

Indeed we have, and not so long ago, either. By the late 1980’s it was clear to all that the AFM was heading for the rocks. Not only was the union spending, every year, between 14% and 22% more money than it was bringing in, but the AFM was still reeling from the 1988 decision of the Seattle Symphony musicians to do the unthinkable—decertify the AFM and form their own union. There was widespread discontent within the symphonic and recording communities about the level of work dues they paid and the quality of services they received in exchange, while the union’s reserves were dwindling rapidly. In short, the AFM was virtually bankrupt, and in imminent danger of losing precisely those musicians who could bail it out.

In 1991, then-AFM President J. Martin Emerson, citing the fact that “our Union [was] headed for certain bankruptcy,” put together the Blue Ribbon Committee. This group, headed by then-Vice President from Canada J. Alan Wood, put forward a report which was unanimously adopted by the so-called “Full Deliberative Committee,” consisting of Blue Ribbon plus the Small Locals Committee, a newly-formed Large Locals Committee, and an Advisory and Research Committee consisting of AFM staff. This report consisted of four parts, three of which were presented in bylaw form to the 1991 AFM convention. Most of the bylaws recommendations were passed by the convention and went into effect.

Did it work? Why did the AFM once again find itself out of money last year and with so many of its members in a state of continued discontent?

(continued on page 8)

In This Issue

Roehl Report Seeks Resolution	1
Unraveling of Blue Ribbon	1
New “Evergreen” Era In Kansas City	2
Communist/Capitalist State of the Union	4
Simon	6
ICSOM Financial Statements 1996-97	10
Newslets	12

New “Evergreen” Era In Kansas City

The first years of the Kansas City Symphony might have been very different if our community had not suffered through the wreckage of the Kansas City Philharmonic, which folded at the conclusion of the 1981-82 season. The years of strikes, cancellations, large accumulated deficits, and the plethora of bad press with an anti-union slant, remained indelibly etched in the memories of the community, its leaders, and especially, the musicians.

Immediately following this turmoil, a grateful group of musicians accepted individual contracts to perform in a temporary, interim orchestra organized late in the fall of 1982. The first season of the Kansas City Symphony was made possible by a very generous one-million-dollar gift from R. Crosby Kemper. Subsequent seasons continued through the efforts of a small and dedicated group of board members committed to finishing each season with a balanced budget. Over the years those individuals have contributed large sums of money to cover the annual budgets of the Symphony.

It soon became evident that the Symphony would permanently replace the Philharmonic. The musicians, all members of the AFM and Local 34-627, began to negotiate a collective bargaining agreement. These efforts led to periodic negotiations with the Symphony management and an agreement titled “Personnel Policies.” This document contained fairly standard contract language but lacked union recognition. That issue, although consistently addressed in negotiations, was never completely resolved because the continued financial support of the orchestra remained in serious question and our musicians feared for the orchestra’s future.

Strategic Planning

In 1995 a change in management and board leadership led to a gradual change in communication style within the Symphony. A more active board and more open dialogue and interaction among management, musicians and the board led to a new level of trust and respect within the organization.

During the 1996-97 season the board initiated a strategic long-range planning process. Facilitated by the Wolf Organization, this process brought about the first extensive, frank, and open discussions of all aspects of the Kansas City Symphony—including promotion of artistic excellence and the development of educational, financial, and human resources. Several musicians served on the board’s long-range planning committee and two musicians served on each of five subgroups, together with board members and community leaders. The key to future union recognition discussions came from the “Human Resources” subgroup. A recommendation was adopted to schedule ongoing discussions of the union recognition question through a joint task force of musicians, management and board members. Those subgroup meetings produced a comprehensive Strategic Plan which the board adopted at the end of the 1996-97 season.

The Agreement

As the 1997-98 season began the Musicians’ Committee conducted a survey of the musicians. The results of this survey

mandated the pursuit of a collective bargaining agreement containing union recognition language. The Committee met frequently to prepare for the coming negotiations and requested that management appoint the recommended task force to discuss the union recognition question. The Committee also searched for the most effective legal counsel available and engaged attorney Susan Martin of Martin & Bonnett. The board of Local 34-627 granted our request for financial assistance without delay.

On November 12, 1997, Susan Martin was introduced at an orchestra meeting to formally organize our efforts to obtain union recognition. An overwhelming majority of the orchestra musicians were present at the meeting and they unanimously signed authorization cards appointing Local 34-627 as their sole collective bargaining agent. This confirmed the survey results obtained in September. Later that day Susan Martin and Musicians’ Committee members Dave Everson and Brian Rood met with Executive Director Roland Valliere and one board member to present our request for voluntary union recognition as a requirement for proceeding with negotiations.

Several deadlines we established came and went during December as Susan Martin, the Committee and the Symphony discussed different approaches to the issue. It was during this time that we jointly agreed to follow the recommendation of the Strategic Plan to appoint a task force to address union recognition. Our five Musicians’ Committee members, five board members, and the executive director met for two comprehensive all-day sessions with extensive phone calls, email, and conference calls taking place between meetings. At the conclusion of the task force meetings in late January, the executive board adopted the task force report containing a recommendation to grant voluntary union recognition. The task force also recommended the negotiation of a nine-year agreement with economic provisions negotiated in three-year increments and non-economic issues opened annually as mutually agreed. During these meetings we became aware of how important a nine-year agreement was to the board. A new performing arts center is in the planning stage—a top priority for the Symphony—and both parties wish to insure that the Symphony will perform for many years to come.

As the task force concluded its work, an exhaustive schedule of negotiation meetings began under the guidance of our attorney, Susan Martin, with the full participation of the Musicians’ Committee and Secretary-Treasurer Richard Albrecht of Local 34-627. Negotiations were virtually complete by early March with the pension vehicle determined during meetings in April. These meetings included local pension experts and Linda Scala of the AFM & EP Fund. The musicians ratified the agreement on April 30, 1998, following unanimous approval by the board.

Evergreen Provisions

The term “evergreen” describes our agreement’s ongoing negotiation process with the goal of achieving peaceful and fair contract extension and renewal. Our process, based on benchmarking and a schedule for future negotiations, was developed by the

negotiating teams with the leadership and guidance of legal counsel, based partly on a study of modern labor negotiation trends and practices.

The goal to reach a nine-year agreement which would establish economic terms for the first three years only became possible by benchmarking key economic issues—salary, title pay, and pension contribution—as a means of determining those issues for the later seasons. Statistics will be used from a “peer group” of eight orchestras that will be chosen based on their current annual operating budgets. The group will include four orchestras with annual budgets above and four orchestras with annual budgets below that of the Kansas City Symphony. All eight of the peer group orchestras must be members of both ICSOM & the American Symphony Orchestra League (ASOL). The benchmarks will be the averages of the minimum annual salary, title pay, and pension contribution of these eight orchestras. The board’s stated goal is to exceed the salary and title pay benchmarks. In addition, the board intends to make significant progress in meeting the pension contribution, seniority pay, per diem, and employee health insurance contributions goals in the same manner.

We have established a schedule for future negotiations to help reach timely agreements. Negotiations are scheduled to begin in January of the year prior to the year that the economic provisions expire. This will occur for the first time in the second year of the agreement (1999-2000). There are provisions for employing a fact-finder, mediator, or arbitrator. If by May 1 of a negotiation year there is no agreement, the mediator or fact-finder will be asked to issue a written report on the three benchmarks, and to report whether the Symphony’s offer meets the benchmarks and makes progress toward meeting the other stated economic goals *without resulting in a reduction of annual salary, title pay or pension contribution.*

If the report favors the Symphony, their offer will be adopted. If not, and the Symphony does not increase their offer to meet the established goals, an arbitrator will determine whether the Symphony is financially able to meet the benchmarks. If the Symphony is deemed to be financially able, but does not increase its offer to meet the benchmarks, then the Union may reopen the entire agreement. If the Symphony is deemed to be financially unable, their offer may be adopted. Flexibility is a feature of our agreement. One or two years of a three-year period may be below these benchmarks, provided the remaining year(s) raise the three-year averages to those of the peer group benchmarks.

When an agreement is reached on schedule before a written report is issued, there is an automatic extension of the agreement for three additional years. If agreement is reached later, the extension may occur by mutual agreement. Hence the description “evergreen.”

The process of benchmarking and the agreement renewal schedule balance the board’s commitment to reach competitive economic levels with our shared commitment to fiscal responsibility. The board’s adoption of the Strategic Plan in 1997 established policies that will lead to a gradual increase in annual operating budgets and therefore to a different, higher-budget peer group for each succes-

sive negotiation period. This process will continue to provide a competitive economic package for Kansas City Symphony musicians in future years.

The agreement also provides for three musicians to be voting members of the board (which has a current voting membership of eighteen members) and for four additional musicians to be members of standing board committees, the most important of which is the finance committee. Musicians have been members of the finance committee for the past three seasons. With a commitment to open and complete sharing of the current finances of the Symphony we expect to be fully informed of the Symphony’s financial condition.

The main economic terms established for the first three years of the agreement were arrived at by comparison with other orchestras but not by formal benchmarking. The first goal of the musicians and the board was to eliminate the three-tiered salary structure of the orchestra. This occurs by the end of the third year of the agreement (2000-01). Although very expensive, it underlines the board’s commitment to a first-class, full-time Kansas City Symphony. In addition, any other non-economic provision of the contract, (i.e. non-renewal procedure, audition procedure, etc.) can be reopened at any time by written agreement to address issues of concern.

The members of the negotiating team were Musicians’ Committee members Dave Everson (chair), Shannon Finney, Tim Jepson, Jacky Michell and Brian Rood. We were assisted by Richard Albrecht of AFM Local 34-627 and Susan Martin of Martin & Bonnett. Members of the Musicians’ Committee are deeply grateful to Susan Martin for her exceptional representation, to Richard Albrecht and the Board of Local 34-627 for their financial assistance, and to the musicians of the Kansas City Symphony for their courage, commitment, and support.

The Kansas City Symphony Musicians’ Committee



The new Kansas City contract provides these levels of salary, pension, and title pay for the first three years:

Full-time annual salary:

<i>C category*</i>	\$30,712	\$31,448	\$32,204
<i>B category*</i>	\$27,266	\$29,338	\$31,490
<i>A category*</i>	\$22,294	\$26,267	\$30,427

<i>Pension:</i>	3.5%	4%	5%
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Title pay:

<i>principal</i>	16%	17%	18%
<i>co- & associate principal</i>	8.5%	9.5%	10.5%
<i>assistant principal</i>	6%	7%	8%

** In the last half of the third season all musicians will be paid at the C category level.*

Editorial:

The Communist/Capitalist State of the Union

In the Spring issue of *The Denver Musician*, President of the Denver Musicians' Association Pete Vriesenga laid out two opposing views of union economics which could be interpreted as: 1) the **communist view**—a vision of all union musicians contributing to and drawing from the same well, from each according to his ability, to each according to his need; and 2) the **capitalist view**—

communism – an economic theory or system based on the ownership of all property by the community as a whole.

dollar-in-dollar-out, from each member in dues according to the cost of services purchased, to each member according to what

he pays for. Union “communists” would typically see all forms of union service as entitlements that come by virtue of union membership; union “capitalists” would more likely see union service as a commodity to be bought and sold, not necessarily a membership entitlement.

Unionism is certainly a socialist idea. Solidarity is built on the recognition that identification with and allegiance to the collective can only be expected if each individual feels respected and protected by the collective. Each member of the collective must be represented in some way during negotiations and in the resulting contract, his needs addressed and his opinions considered, if he is to be motivated to contribute to furthering the collective's goals. Keeping the collective strong during strikes and hard times depends on taking care of the weakest and most vulnerable among us. That safety net—the trust among all union members that each will support the other during good times and bad—is the bedrock of unionism.

capitalism – the economic system in which all or most of the means of production and distribution are privately owned and operated for profit, originally under fully competitive conditions.

As communal as unions are, however, there is also another side. Many taxes we pay to government and donations we make to charity go to help those less fortunate, as some say union dues should. But union dues are not quite the same. Unions are not charities, and union dues are not goodwill offerings like those we make to the church or the United Way, with no expectation of personal return. We take a *business* tax deduction, not a *charitable* one, for union dues because we expect to get a service related to our business in exchange for our dues. That's the capitalist part of unionism.

socialism – any of various theories or systems of the ownership and operation of the means of production and distribution by society or the community rather than by private individuals, with all members of society or the community sharing in the work and the products.

Capitalism can also foster a positive and powerful psychology among union members—the pride of ownership. Unions, like other businesses, benefit from their members' having a personal stake in the enterprise. Ownership breeds a greater depth of interest in the union, a greater sense of responsibility toward it, and a greater

involvement in day-to-day union activities. Union dues become more than payment for services rendered; they become investments, meant to strengthen the union as a whole and build a sound organization in which we and our fellow member-investors can place our confidence, and from which we can benefit for years to come.

Few of us would choose to line up all the way toward one side or the other of this economic dichotomy, and fortunately, we don't have to. Elements of communism and capitalism can and usually do coexist within the same economic system, and in the context of different forms of political/governmental structures. Union members, familiar with the art of negotiation, should be able to find accord with some blending of ideas between the two poles, realizing that unionism would fare best by incorporating the best of both systems.

democracy – government in which the people hold the ruling power either directly or through elected representatives; rule by the ruled.

But our differences are not just over communist vs. capitalist views of union economics. They are also about the political system in which our union operates. Although the AFM appears to be a representative democracy, there are two logjams in the union's democratic process that make it more like an oligarchy. The first is between the large and small locals, as a result of the weighted voting scheme at AFM Conventions, giving the members of small locals a disproportionately greater voice and vote at the Convention. The second is between the working members, who tend to be a minority in most locals, and the not-so-working members, who outnumber the working members and control most locals. In paying taxes to government or making donations to charity, the choice to levy the tax or make the donation is made by the taxpayers who pay the tax or the donor whose money is given. Union duespayers in a democratic union ought to have the same personal say in the dues assessments that affect them, but in the AFM they don't.

Working musicians suffer from a policy akin to gerrymandering—the political strategy of drawing voting district boundary lines so as to dilute the voting power of a minority and make it politically ineffective.

oligarchy – a form of government in which the ruling power belongs to a few persons.

Since the AFM geographic locals are the entities upon which AFM voting

representation is based, and since working musicians are a minority in most locals and the local AFM Convention delegates rarely vote their minority interest, the working musicians are effectively without representation in the AFM. Working musicians are more directly represented by the players conferences, but the players conferences do not vote at the Convention. Thus, the imposition of Federation work dues in 1980 on working musicians was a case of taxation without representation because those taxed had no real voice in the levying of the tax.

This kind of disenfranchisement causes, and has caused among symphony and recording musicians, precisely the kind of estrangement and marginalization that most seriously threatens our basic union solidarity. When the AFM oligarchy imposed a tax on part

of the membership in the well-meaning attempt to prop up the other part—to advance the best of the communist side of unionism, you might say—it alienated the silenced minority and made impossible the very internal collective strength it sought.

Union reform allows for the wedding of the communist and capitalist aspects of unionism, acknowledging that an injury to one is an injury to all, and that solidarity depends on meeting the needs of each member, but also asserting that how and by whom those needs are met must be decided in a balanced and democratic way—one musician, one vote. You can't strengthen an organization by weakening the people in it. This applies to orchestras saving money by impoverishing their musicians, and to unions consolidating power in the hands of a few by tying the hands of others.

Definitions from *Webster's New World Dictionary*



(ROEHL REPORT: continued from page 1)

The 1987 ICSOM Conference adopted a resolution calling for the establishment of a "Summit Committee" composed of representatives of ICSOM, OCSM, ROPA, and RMA to discuss areas of common interest among these groups of active musicians, and work in concert to address these interests. Delegates to the 1987 ICSOM Conference also mandated "a committee to explore ways of more effective and cost-effective representation for orchestras within the AFM and local unions." This Structure Committee, composed of ICSOM delegates, reported back to the Conference in 1988. After exploring several options, such as orchestra-only locals and a national symphony-opera-ballet orchestra union, the Structure Committee concluded that the only change which might be practical and beneficial was the creation of a trade division, and in its report to the 1988 ICSOM conference it described how trade divisions work in other unions and recommended exploration of a trade division within the AFM. [See page 12 for an explanation of "trade division."]

Acting on the Structure Committee's findings, delegates to the 1988 Conference called upon ICSOM to establish a committee to prepare a working model of a symphony-opera-ballet orchestra trade division within the AFM, demonstrating governing structure, budget, services, and other features of such a trade division. The Trade Division Committee, composed of representatives of ICSOM, OCSM, ROPA, RMA, and the AFM, was subsequently formed and met in late 1988.

The Trade Division Committee's deliberations were summarized in written recommendations, prepared by Richard Totusek, for presentation to the IEB. The IEB accepted them and in turn incorporated them into proposals submitted to the AFM convention in 1989. Subsequently, AFM bylaws were amended in 1989 to establish player conference representation at the AFM Convention and to mandate increased services to orchestras by their local unions.

During its deliberations, the Trade Division Committee retained William Roehl, a union consultant and former assistant director of the AFL-CIO Organizing and Field Services Department, as an

advisor. Mr. Roehl met with the Trade Division Committee and with AFM officers, considered the documents provided by the committee, and following the 1989 AFM Convention, submitted a written report of his conclusions and recommendations to the IEB. The Roehl Report contained these recommendations:

- that the AFM symphony department be structurally formalized as the Symphonic Services Division (SSD);
- that the AFM Recording Department be similarly formalized as the Electronic Media Services Division (EMSD);
- that a Symphonic Steering Committee, consisting of the principal officers of ICSOM, OCSM, and ROPA, be established to advise the SSD;
- that a similar Electronic Media Steering Committee, comprised of RMA representatives and one symphonic conference representative, be established to advise the EMSD;
- that the Summit Committee be renamed the Player Conference Council (PCC) and be institutionalized in the AFM structure;
- that the PCC meet with the IEB "to exchange information and ideas on appropriate subjects regarding the good and welfare of the AFM;" and
- that "the existing AFM Structure Committee shall continue its research into structural and operational improvements within the AFM, possibly including the submission of a detailed plan for a Trade Division."

The Roehl Report was adopted by the IEB on March 31, 1990. In the June-August 1990 issue of *Senza Sordino*, then-ICSOM Chair Brad Buckley summed up its promise:

The adoption of the Roehl Report by the IEB is a commitment to improve the services that the union provides for musicians in the four player conferences. It legitimizes the informal alliance formed by the conferences (the Player Conference Council) and provides formal access for the Council to the IEB. Further, it places a player conference advisory committee with each of the newly created Federation divisions (Symphonic and Electronic Media). If the IEB and the administrators of the divisions act on the advice and programs recommended by the player conferences, we will see improved services and a Federation that is responsive to our needs.

The essential Roehl recommendations were implemented, the most important being the establishment of formal relationships between the player conferences and their respective AFM divisions, as well as with the IEB. But have we seen "improved services and a Federation that is responsive to our needs?" The changes recommended by the Roehl Report were easily accepted because they didn't cost the AFM any money or force the IEB to relinquish any power. Roehl built bridges and opened new channels of communication, but did not remove the real impediments to the flow of ideas and action. Getting people with personal agendas and political pressures to respond to new information requires more than just improving organizational access.

Marsha Schweitzer
Editor, Senza Sordino

Simon



Once upon a time there lived a man named Simon who played a strange and wonderful musical instrument. The name of this musical instrument was bassoon. The man spent many hours of each day happily scraping little pieces of magic grasses called arundo donax. When he was satisfied that the little piece of arundo donax was vibrating at an acceptable frequency he would place it on the end pipe of the bassoon. By blowing through the magic arundo donax beautiful frequencies of tone would emanate from the interior of the musical instrument. Low tones. High tones. Sad and happy. All who heard the musical instrument called bassoon wondered at the magical sound it could produce.

One day, Simon decided to travel to a bigger town. He wanted to play the bassoon with other musical instruments. He traveled many, many days to this other town. In his travels he saw incredible sights. Things that he had never seen or even heard of before. When he approached the town of his destination he wondered at its size. Never, ever had he seen a town with so many people. The buildings were higher. The roads were wider. The stores were larger. When he stopped to ask directions he learned that the people were almost always in a terrible rush. Eventually, he found himself in front of a building with many columns. Tall windows. Marble staircases. This was the building he had been directed to by the local citizens. The other musical instruments he wished to play with were, he was assured, in this building. Carrying his bassoon he climbed the marble staircase to the splendid front door. When he knocked on this door many moments passed before the door finally swung open. When it did, a middle-aged man with a significant belly stood before him.

"Yeah?? Whaddaya want??" said the middle-aged man with the significant belly.

"I have traveled many long days from my town to play my bassoon with other musical instruments," said Simon.

"Musicians around back," said the middle-aged man with the significant belly as he slammed the door shut.

Simon walked down the marble steps and followed an alleyway that seemed to wind around to the rear of the building. When he had come to the back of the building he

noticed a door at the top of a very small number of stairs. He ascended the stairs and knocked on the rather plain looking door. He had to wait a very long time before he heard footsteps approaching the inside of the door. When finally it opened there stood a middle-aged man with a significant belly.

"Yeah?? Whaddaya want??" said the man.

"Haven't we met somewhere before?" asked Simon.

"I don't fraternize wit musicians!" said the man.

"I am here to play my bassoon with other musical instruments," said Simon.

"Ya got a union card?" said the middle-aged man.

"No sir. I'm afraid I don't know what you mean," said Simon.

"No union card no gig."

But at just this moment the middle-aged man with a significant belly was called from behind by another person. Even though the door was partially closed Simon could hear the agitation in the voices behind the door.

"Wadiamean the bassoon player didn't show up? We're playing Beethoven's Fourth Symphony. Whatthelhell we gonna do now?! Dumbasterd probably drunker'n a skunk somewhere's."

The voices became inaudible to Simon. Even though he couldn't hear voices he sensed that there were still people behind the door talking. After perhaps several more minutes the door opened again. This time a bit wider than it was before. The middle-aged man with the significant belly appeared as before in the doorway.

"Hey kid, ya ever play Beethoven's Fourth before?" asked the man.

"Simon thought for a moment before answering. "Is that the one with the fast bassoon solo in the last movement?" He asked.

"Dat's da one."

"Well, if you don't mind my slurring two and tonguing two, I believe I could play it," said Simon.

Simon was ushered into the building and shortly found himself on stage in the first bassoon chair of a very large group of other musical instruments. This is what he had always dreamed of. This is what he had traveled many

days from his small town to do. And now it was actually going to happen. From the side of the very wide stage there appeared the leader. Simon guessed it was the leader by the large wand he carried. This was the wand Simon had heard magically kept so many different musical instruments playing together. The leader was a middle-aged man with a rather significant belly.

Simon was sure he had seen this man somewhere before.

The rehearsal went beautifully. Simon was thrilled with the sounds coming from all the musical instruments together. And he thought he had done well playing the very difficult bassoon passage in the last movement. Even though he had not articulated every note as Mr. Beethoven had indicated. He had tongued two and slurred two. Perhaps no one had noticed. After all the passage had gone by so fast it was almost impossible to keep track of it.

After the musical instruments had played for exactly one hour and a half, a rest period was announced. All the players wandered off stage to take a rest. But the leader motioned for Simon to come to his private dressing room. When the two of them were seated in the man's dressing room, the man said to Simon,

"Not bad kid, but unless you can tongue all d' notes in the famous bassoon passage in the last movement of Mr. Beethoven's Fourth Symphony, I'm gonna have to let ya go."

Simon was deeply saddened by this situation.

He knew he would not be able to tongue the passage in Mr. Beethoven's Symphony as fast as the middle-aged man with the significant belly wanted. But he wanted to continue playing with all these wondrous musical instruments. What to do. What to do? Even though the middle-aged man with the significant belly seemed to know everything about Mr. Beethoven's music, perhaps a story would enchant him enough to allow Simon to continue playing with the other musical instruments a bit longer. It was worth the try. And so Simon began to explain.

"Sir, I do believe that Mr. Beethoven never intended for the bassoon to articulate every note in the solo of the last movement of his Symphony Number Four and I can explain if you would be so kind. Mr. Beethoven used a quill pen which he constantly dipped into an inkwell to replenish the writing ability of the quill. It was his custom to write from beginning to end first all the notes he wished to be played. Upon completion of all the notes he returned to the beginning to repeat the process for the writing down of all the dynamics he wished. All the time the quill pen was dipping and writing. Finally he once again began at the beginning to write in all the articulations, slurs and separated notes. He was just into the middle of the last movement, just exactly before the bassoon solo we have been discussing when he ran out of ink. Even though he intended to write slurs over the bassoon solo an empty inkwell prevented him from doing so. And so generations of bassoon players have had to suffer the consequences of that empty inkwell."

The leader stared at Simon for several long moments. Since he himself had rarely read a book. Since he himself had ascended to being the leader by virtue of his father's influence in the town. Since he himself really didn't know that much about music. And since he himself had never played a musical instrument very well, he himself didn't want to appear ignorant in the presence of a subordinate. He himself responded as follows,

"Yeah! Yeah! . . . I think I heard o' that situation with Mr. Beethoven. Too bad. Too bad. Poor guy. Ya gotta feel for d'guy. Well it's my foim conviction dat we proceed as Mr. Beethoven wanted, not as he is misintoipeted by those other leaders. I do believe dat slurs are what d'piece calls for. If ya would be so kind . . ."

And so Simon lived happily ever after making music on his bassoon with the other musical instruments. He especially enjoyed playing Mr. Beethoven's Fourth Symphony which he in time learned to articulate correctly. However it was this first encounter with Mr. Beethoven's Fourth Symphony which had taught him a valuable lesson . . . Where there's a quill, there's a way.

Alan Goodman
Bassoon Player, Los Angeles Philharmonic



(BLUE RIBBON: continued from page 1)

While Part I of the Blue Ribbon report recommended raising performance standards for locals, and Part II recommended significant changes in convention procedures and voting reform, Part III (Financial Reform) was the heart of the report. Part III recommended four major changes in funding—a major increase in “per capita” dues (the annual dues that locals pay to the AFM for each member), an increase in recording work dues, an increase and standardization of work dues on traveling engagements done under AFM “pamphlets” (mostly theater work), and an elimination of national work dues on all engagements not done under CBA’s, except for work funded by the Music Performance Trust Funds. (This last recommendation caused Dennis Dreith, president of RMA, to withdraw his name from the recommendations. Dreith believed that eliminating work dues on casual engagements was not only unfair, but would lead to an overdependence on per capita dues—an unwise move given the AFM’s declining membership, in his view.)

The report described the per capita increases as the “center-piece” of the Deliberative Committee’s financial recommendations. And it was the epicenter(piece) of enormous controversy, because the increases were very large indeed. Per capita dues were doubled on life members, and for regular members, the amount went from \$12 to \$40 per year—a 333% increase. The Committee was quite forthright about both the bitterness of this pill for locals and its necessity; they wrote that “while the Committee anticipates the predictable response to these recommendations and the membership losses that might result, it respectfully suggests that similar membership losses would result if the income had been generated through increases in other areas; specifically. . . Work Dues.” The report went on to state that “the committee feels that all basic ‘turn-key’ services provided by the Federation to all its Members should be funded essentially through Per Capita Dues. . . all members must share the responsibility for the necessary funding. The Committee feels very strongly that the Federation cannot survive as the sole representative of professional musicians unless this new philosophical direction is endorsed, merchandised, and accepted.”

In retrospect, it all seems the equivalent of motherhood and apple pie. But it represented a radical change in thinking for the AFM. After all, this was a union that had funded itself during the “big band” years by an enormous work dues on traveling groups; a union that had created an enormous pool of money diverted, in essence, from the pockets of its recording musicians in order to fund part-time work for other members; and a union that had blithely charged hefty national work dues on recording and symphonic work while providing precious little national service in exchange. The idea that the basic operations of the union should be funded by all its members equitably was a dramatic departure from the AFM’s past.

But the Blue Ribbon Committee went further. It recognized not only the principle that basic union functions should be funded by the entire membership, but went on to recognize that work dues on specific segments of the membership should go to fund services specifically for those members. The report stated that, at then-current work dues levels, “the expanded services necessary for [recording musicians] would have to be subsidized by income from

members in other areas of the membership (italics added). Therefore, the Committee recommends that the Federation share of Work Dues on electronic work . . . be increased from 1/2% to 3/4%.” For the first time, the AFM publicly recognized that, just as it was unfair to ask a few members to pay for services to all, it was equally unfair to ask all members to pay for services to a few.

The Committee extended this concept to symphonic and touring musicians as well; “the Committee *strongly* recommends that personnel and services available through the Symphonic Services Division be substantially increased to levels commensurate with the needs enumerated by ICSOM, OCSM, and ROPA, which can be fully funded by the 1/2% Federation Work Dues currently being collected on . . . orchestras.” For touring musicians, the Committee not only recommended that touring work dues be set at 3%, with only 1/2% going to locals, but that the new money “be directed toward both restaffing and additional personnel for the Federation Touring Division.”

This was all pretty hairy stuff, but in the final part of its reports (Part IV – Recommendations), Blue Ribbon took several leaps into the truly radical. The Committee wrote that it

- “strongly recommends that the IEB continue and intensify its investigation of Trade Divisions within the AFM in the Symphonic and Electronic areas;
- “recommends that its consideration of various regional service and administrative concepts be actively continued and expanded by the IEB;
- recommended that, by July 1, 1992, the IEB “engage an International Operations Manager, whose primary function would be management of the Federation’s operations;”
- recommended moving the AFM’s headquarters out of New York; and
- recommended the creation of an “AFM-owned and operated nationwide job referral/talent/booking agency.”

But committees only propose, no matter what color their ribbons. Conventions dispose of what committees propose, and then the executive officers in power use their considerable powers to shape the results of the Convention to their own comfort and beliefs.

So what happened to all of these recommendations?

Most of the Committee’s recommendations in Parts I and II were actually enacted and written into the AFM’s bylaws. The dues increases proposed in Part III were also enacted, albeit with some important changes. The proposal for an “automatic annual increase in . . . Member Per Capita Dues based on the annual Cost of Living” indices ended up on the cutting room floor, while some very adroit maneuvering by some powerful local officers resulted in their locals not having to pay symphonic work dues on some large orchestras in their jurisdictions. But, notwithstanding these losses, virtually all of the action items of the Blue Ribbon report were legislated into existence, much to the surprise of some skeptics who doubted that the political will for change really existed in the AFM.

Three conventions later, though, the AFM faced virtually the same problems that had supposedly been fixed in 1991. It

was almost out of money and projecting major deficits, while the musicians working under CBA's were once again beating the war drums for increased service. What happened?

The answers can be found in Blue Ribbon Part IV and what happened—or didn't happen—to those recommendations.

Blue Ribbon did not promise a specific budget for the operating departments. It did, though, strongly recommend that "personnel and services available through the Symphonic Services Division be substantially increased to levels commensurate with the needs enumerated by ICSOM, OCSM, and ROPA."

A very comprehensive statement of those needs was provided by ICSOM chairperson Brad Buckley in an interview with *Senza Sordino* in February 1991. He said that "actuarial services for pension analysis, public relations help during disputes, accounting services for financial analysis of our institutions, political lobbying, legal assistance, and computer services for contract comparisons are just some of the services we need." Did we get them?

The year following the enactment of Blue Ribbon offered real hope that the needs of symphonic musicians might finally be met by their union. In 1992, the AFM spent almost 40% more on symphonic staff than the previous year. But since then, staff compensation has actually *decreased* by 13%. Even including other expenses and overhead (as well as the Orchestra Services Program), expenditures on SSD rose only 18% since 1992, while total AFM spending increased 73%. The number of full-time SSD staff has also decreased, and now stands at a *lower number than before* Blue Ribbon, while one of SSD's staffers is currently pinch-hitting as the trustee of a local. So much for "substantially increas[ing] personnel and services available through the Symphonic Services Division."

And the needs enumerated by Buckley in 1991 remain largely unmet, even the most basic. The AFM still does not have a complete set of symphonic collective bargaining agreements on file, for example. There is no systematic program to monitor our orchestra institutions' finances. There is no help with pension analysis. There is no help with benefits analysis. There is no help (at least from trained professionals) for PR during negotiations. And there is no more help with legal and legislative needs than there was before Blue Ribbon. Why? Because SSD doesn't have enough staff. Our needs remain largely unmet by the AFM, seven years after the promises of Blue Ribbon, because the SSD has even fewer staff than it did in 1991.

Where did the money go, if not to SSD? The Electronic Media Services Division saw much-needed and substantial increases in its budgets. But Travel/Touring, the other department that was promised significantly increased funding in Blue Ribbon, got the shaft. The Marketing/PR department, formed in 1995 at the Convention's behest, has been eliminated. Organizing (likewise formed in 1995) has also seen its budget diminish, and one of its staffers is running a trustee local as well.

The department that has done the best since Blue Ribbon is the President's Executive Office, which saw its personnel budget increase from \$79,400 in 1991 to \$239,316 in 1996—nearly triple. Symphony musicians are all too familiar with organizations that

spend more and more on the front-office empire and less and less on the folks that actually produce the product—we call them "orchestras." Evidently our union has fallen prey to the same disorder.

What about the other recommendations in Part IV?

- Did the IEB "continue and intensify its investigation of Trade Divisions?" Hardly. In fact, the concept was dropped completely until it surfaced briefly during the botched restructure effort of 1997, only to be met with furious opposition. The attitude of the current administration towards the concept of a trade division for symphonic musicians is openly hostile. And no wonder—locals hate the idea of losing symphonic work dues to a trade division, and local officers elect the executive officers of the AFM.

- Did the IEB "actively continue and expand" Blue Ribbon's "consideration of various regional service and administrative concepts?" Hardly. While this concept, too, surfaced briefly during last year's structure discussions, it also ran into a stone wall. Why? Because locals hate the idea of losing money and power to any kind of regional structure, and local officers elect the executive officers of the AFM.

- Did the IEB "engage an International Operations Manager, whose primary function would be management of the Federation's operations?" Apparently not. This concept didn't even bother to raise its head last year in the restructure discussions. But then it's not surprising that any elected administration of the AFM would be reluctant to hand over authority to a professional manager. There are symphony board chairpersons who have the same reluctance—generally the same ones that run their orchestras into the ground.

- Did the AFM "[move] the AFM's headquarters out of New York?" Moving the offices to almost any other location would save close to \$500,000 just on rent—*every year*. Of course, the officers and staff would have had to move as well, which may account for the fact that this recommendation was also filed in the recycling bin.

- Did the AFM create an "AFM-owned and operated nationwide job referral/talent/booking agency?" Need you ask?

It all forms a pretty sorry record of broken promises and lost opportunities. A nationwide booking and referral service might have helped stem the ongoing membership loss in the casual-engagement sector of our union. A trade division for symphonic musicians might have been able to provide the services that the players conferences have continued to demand. A professional manager running the AFM might have been able to spend more money on direct services to musicians and less on executive office staff. Regionalization had real potential to strengthen the union, at least in some important areas. And moving the AFM office out of New York could have saved the AFM well over \$3 million since 1991.

But without those promises being honored, the AFM's financial condition went from surpluses in 1995 to having almost no cash in 1997. There were, of course, other factors. The AFM's officers wanted a pay raise in 1995, which the Convention gave them—but then also gave themselves an unneeded increase in Convention per diem (both per diems and AFM officers' salaries had been cut as part of the Blue Ribbon recommendations in 1991).

The International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians (ICSOM)

Statement of Revenues and Expenses

For the Fiscal Year June 1, 1996 to May 31, 1997

	GENERAL FUND	EMERGENCY RELIEF FUND	ICSOM MEMORIAL AWARDS	TOTAL OF ALL FUNDS
Revenues				
Dues 95-96	11,772.00			11,772.00
Dues 96-97	109,890.00			109,890.00
Interest Income	2,884.47	7,599.44	421.48	10,905.39
Book Royalties	5,478.28			5,478.28
Refunds & Reimbursements	1,551.05			1,551.05
Contribution Income	240.00			240.00
Transfers from Other Funds	3,500.00		2,570.00	6,070.00
Total Revenues	135,315.80	7,599.44	2,991.48	145,906.72
Expenses				
Legal Expenses	28,600.00			28,600.00
ICSOM Conference Expenses	21,800.02			21,800.02
Senza Sordino	16,960.95			16,960.95
Telephone	10,938.69			10,938.69
Directories	8,024.83			8,024.83
Office Equipment	7,373.02			7,373.02
Honoraria	7,000.00			7,000.00
Travel	6,067.04			6,067.04
Scholarship Awards	4,500.00			4,500.00
Conductor Evaluations	3,341.43			3,341.43
Media Committee	3,316.78			3,316.78
OCSM, ROPA Conferences	2,665.00			2,665.00
Stationary & Supplies	2,290.00			2,290.00
AFM Convention	2,248.88			2,248.88
Postage	2,023.39			2,023.39
Dues Refund	1,860.00			1,860.00
Email	1,831.02			1,831.02
Duplication	1,777.38			1,777.38
Book Expenses	1,661.40			1,661.40
Organizing	1,470.17			1,470.17
Accounting Expenses	1,000.00			1,000.00
Income Replacement	972.37			972.37
Emeritus	859.53			859.53
Subscriptions	458.50			458.50
Bank Charges	170.00			170.00
Good & Welfare	165.06			165.06
Transfers to Other Funds	2,570.00		3,500.00	6,070.00
Total Expenses	141,945.46	0.00	3,500.00	145,445.46
Revenues over (under) Expenses	(6,629.66)	7,599.44	(508.52)	461.26

	GENERAL FUND	EMERGENCY RELIEF FUND	ICSOM MEMORIAL AWARDS	TOTAL OF ALL FUNDS
Changes in Fund Balances				
Fund Balances, beginning of year	98,107.43	174,519.54	12,298.53	284,925.50
Income	135,315.80	7,599.44	2,991.48	145,906.72
Less Expenses	141,945.46	0.00	3,500.00	145,445.46
Fund Balances, end of year	91,477.77	182,118.98	11,790.01	285,386.76

Balance Sheet

For the Fiscal Year June 1, 1996 to May 31, 1997

Assets

Cash - checking	72,862.28			72,862.28
Investments		116,816.05	11,790.01	128,606.06
Prepaid Expenses	4,146.49			4,146.49
Dues Receivable	14,469.00			14,469.00
Loans Receivable		65,302.93		65,302.93
Total Assets	91,477.77	182,118.98	11,790.01	285,386.76

Liabilities & Fund Balances

Total Liabilities	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Fund Balance	91,477.77	182,118.98	11,790.01	285,386.76
Total Liab & Fund Balances	91,477.77	182,118.98	11,790.01	285,386.76

(BLUE RIBBON: continued from page 9)

The 1997 AFM delegates then started to spend money on things that really needed to be done, such as the formation of organizing and marketing departments. Unfortunately, *not one* AFM officer stood up and told the Convention what they all knew—that new spending of that magnitude, unaccompanied by a dues increase, was going to lead to deficits, and sooner rather than later. Such a failure of leadership was understandable—most of the officers were running for re-election, and promising new services is a better way to get elected than promising new taxes. Besides, which of them was going to stand up and tell the Convention that there was enough money to increase officers' salaries, but not enough for the AFM to actually get anything new done?

So the inevitable happened when falling revenues met increasing expenditures and vanishing reserves. The resulting belt-tightening caused the AFM to reduce its expenditures from \$9.7 million in 1996 to \$8.9 million in 1997—a decrease of almost 10%. True to the historic pattern, SSD expenditures took a much bigger hit—a 17% decrease, even though work dues from symphonic musicians continued to rise.

What are the lessons to be learned from the unraveling of Blue Ribbon? Certainly we could learn that a healthy skepticism about promises made but not enacted into cast-iron bylaws is always handy. It's the same lesson we've all learned from our employers—it can be very hard to get management to honor promises that were not written into the contract.

But the deeper lesson to be learned is about the nature of the AFM. Our union, like our orchestras, is an institution with complex internal dynamics, subject to many conflicting pressures, run by very fallible people with their own agendas. While its stated mission is to serve its members, it will generally follow the path of least resistance—which means putting its own needs (and those of the people who run it) before everything else.

In dealing with our managements, we have learned that the price of having promises honored is eternal vigilance—and the occasional job action. It is time that we learned that the price of having our union honor its promises and obligations to its members is the same.

Robert Levine
ICSOM Chair

Newslets

**The ICSOM-OCSM-ROPA-RMA-TMA
UNITY CONFERENCE**

**August 19 – 23, 1998
The Riviera Hotel
Las Vegas, Nevada**

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Unity Conference Keynote Speaker:
Kenneth Paff
*of the
Teamsters for a Democratic Union*

Belated word has come to us that **Ralph Robert Maisel**, St. Louis Symphony Emeritus and ICSOM Secretary and Vice-Chairman in the 1960's and 1970's, passed away on February 22, 1997. Our condolences go to the family of Mr. Maisel, in gratitude for his many years of service to the family of orchestra musicians.

What is a Trade Division?

Some International Unions are organized into divisions of like-employed members. These divisions operate under the umbrella of the International. Thus, everyone is a member of the International Union, but gets services from a specific division of the International. This concept may be the best way to provide services to symphonic orchestra musicians in the diverse membership present in the AFM.

from Senza Sordino, Vol. 28, No. 5/6 June-August 1990

Notice to All Senza Sordino Addressees:

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