

# Senza Sordino

Official Publication of the International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians

VOLUME 39, NO. 2

Online Edition

March 2001

## "TWO LEADERS BEAR WATCHING"

### Why ICSOM?

The INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF SYMPHONY AND OPERA MUSICIANS (ICSOM) met for the first time under that name on September 6, 7 and 8, 1962, in Cleveland, Ohio. The first order of business at this second conference (the first had been held in Chicago a few months earlier) was the adoption of the new name and statement of purposes: "The International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians is an association of professionals whose concerns and efforts are dedicated to the promotion of a better and more rewarding livelihood for the skilled performer and to the enrichment of the cultural life of our society. It is a further objective to direct continuous, cooperative efforts within the framework of the American Federation of Musicians of the U.S. and Canada."

At this conference, George Zazofsky of the Boston Symphony was elected Chairman, and Sam Denov of the Chicago Symphony was elected Vice-Chairman. Walter Trojan, a conservative writer of labor relations who had a syndicated column in the *Chicago Tribune*, wrote that the two leaders had Russian-sounding names, and "although I have looked up their records at the FBI, and they have no communist records: nevertheless, they bear watching." The focus of the syndicated article in the *Chicago Tribune* was that this new organization (ICSOM) was attempting to "take over" America's symphony orchestras and had a newsletter by the "foreign"-sounding name of "Senza Sordino." [from an impending history of ICSOM by Julie Ayer, Minnesota Orchestra violinist]

### excerpts from ICSOM – An Investment To Protect by Henry Shaw

(*Senza Sordino*, Vol. XV, No. 4, April 1977)

While culling through assorted ICSOM memorabilia recently, I slowly developed the mood necessary for putting the organization archives in order. I was immediately sidetracked upon picking up Volume 1, issue No. 1 of *Senza Sordino* and became engrossed in re-reading it. It was dated January, 1963. The issue represented the carrying out of a mandate by the representatives of twelve major orchestras who met in Chicago in May, 1962 to discuss orchestra issues of common interest and concern. The first item on their agenda was the establishment of a Federation-wide orchestra newsletter. The priority is noteworthy, not so much because it was the first action in a long succession which would be taken in the ensuing fifteen years, but rather because it emphasizes the desire for communication that existed among those present. It was the hunger for information that was the catalyst which came to bind orchestra players into a new common bond and which has held them together for these many years. It was from this springboard that many began to profit from a new interrelationship and to realize that a common bond can be helpful in solving common problems.

Since it is a volunteer organization supported entirely by a voluntary dues structure, ICSOM has been a pay as you go, hand to mouth operation since its inception. While it may seem on the surface a flaw, it is most certainly one of its strengths. What has been accomplished has been done on a shoe string budget; the dedication of inspired officers over the years and, most of all, by the continuous individual support of its membership. What has resulted is an inexorable movement towards a more rewarding livelihood. For its part, ICSOM stands with pride as a model of democratic unionism in action.

(SHAW – continued on page 6)

### excerpts from What Is ICSOM? by Tom Hall

(*Senza Sordino*, Vol. XXI, No. 1, November 1982)

To persons long affiliated with the International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians, and to the delegates who regularly attend its annual meetings, the purposes and values of the organization may be clear and self-evident. For those new to the ranks of symphony, opera, and ballet orchestras, for those who have never gotten actively involved, for those outside the profession, and for those who, especially at dues-paying time, question the worth of ICSOM, periodic review and explanation may be in order.

ICSOM was formally established in 1962, the culmination of meetings in Chicago and Cleveland of delegates from U.S. and Canadian orchestras, musicians who shared serious concerns. At that time, most musicians in major symphony orchestras were employed little more than six months annually at a yearly salary that was barely a living wage, about \$4,000. Among 49 professional groups listed in the 1960 census, musicians ranked 40th in annual income. Only one orchestra (Boston) participated directly

(HALL – continued on page 6)

### In This Issue

Why ICSOM? . . . . .	1
Some Plain Talk About Symphony Orchestras . .	2
Launching ICSOM Into The New Millennium . . .	4
Voicings . . . . .	7
Comparative Salaries – 1952 - 2000 . . . . .	8
Evolution of Committee Chair: The Interview .	10
Freefall Twelve Minutes . . . . .	11
Richmond Symphony Buy-out . . . . .	13
Newslets . . . . .	16

**EDITOR'S PREFACE** – *In the 1980s and early 1990s, a downsizing trend emerged among orchestra managements and boards. Many orchestras, including those in Buffalo, Charlotte, Honolulu, Oakland, Oklahoma City, Phoenix, Rochester, Sacramento, and San Diego, were hit. Some speculated that the double-digit inflation of the 1970s and the recession that followed during the Reagan era had crippled orchestras, which were then collapsing under the weight of debt and needed to trim their budgets. (The most expensive orchestras in the cities hardest hit by economic downturns were not collapsing, however.)*

*Others surmised that the breaking point of board resistance to steady growth in musician costs, with the associated increases*

*in budget size and pressures on revenue production, had been reached. The tide that ICSOM had so successfully generated two or three decades earlier had to be stemmed. In the orchestras infected by this downsizing bug, containing or reversing budget growth took precedence over respectful labor relations, carrying out the orchestra's mission of public service, and in some cases, even the very existence of the orchestra.*

*Lew Waldeck was the Director of the SSD during most of this troubled time. "Some Plain Talk About Symphony Orchestras" was written during that period to help musicians understand that they were not, as some were lead to believe, responsible for their orchestras' financial troubles.*

## Some Plain Talk About Symphony Orchestras

*By Lew Waldeck*

*ICSOM Emeritus, New York City Opera — Retired Director, AFM Symphonic Services Division*

Thirty years ago symphony musicians began to think about the causes for their unrest. They thought hard. They thought for a long time. They thought together. They thought separately. They thought, "We are not like any other union. Not like the air controllers or the pilots. We are not only the workers. We are the means of production. We are the delivery system. We own the tools of production. We are the product. We cannot be easily replaced. If we organize well we can solve our problems." They did organize and by understanding their position were able to make great gains.

Symphony boards and managements said these gains were impossible. They said a 52-week season was impossible. They said full medical coverage was impossible. They said adequate pensions were impossible. Today, members of many orchestras have all these things and more. They have job security. They have limits on their working conditions. They have five-day weeks with guaranteed days off and much more than that. They have grievance procedures and input into the selection of the music director and binding review of tenured dismissals. They have things other unions do not even think possible. These gains have been made not only in a few elite orchestras but in many orchestras.

Past organization made all of these things possible. Present organization assures their continuation and even more growth.

Today they have these things, yet there is still unrest. How can that be? Perhaps it is because musicians had to force symphony boards and managements to pay them living wages. Perhaps it is because they had to force symphony boards and managements to afford them livable working conditions. Perhaps it is because tenure review and artistic control by the musicians is in conflict with "management rights." This suggests another way to look at things. How has the symphony board and management talked to symphony musicians?

Thirty years ago when they organized themselves musicians brought their problems to the boards and managements. Whatever the problem was, they said, "It is impossible." "Nevertheless ..." said the musicians, and because of their organization they gained some ground. Next, the managements said, "But first we must build

the hall. . . . But first we must build the endowment. . . . They are raising money for the museum and you must wait your turn ... Trust us." Some players trusted them. Others said, "Nevertheless ..." and because of their organization gained some ground. Then the boards said, "We have a deficit. Give us some time to get our house in order," and some musicians trusted them. Some musicians trusted them all the way from major to regional status. Because of their organization some orchestras held their ground. Some made gains. Then for the first time a management said, "We have spent several years getting our house in order. We are now running in the black. Now we must ask the musicians to take cuts to preserve this." "But then, when will it be our turn?" asked even the most trusting musicians. Perhaps the relationship bears the seeds of unrest. *Demystifying the symphony musician might help.*

The symphony musician is a professional, as a doctor is a professional, as a lawyer is a professional, as a banker is a professional. Often a symphony musician has a degree of commitment unheard of in any other profession. This commitment must be made earlier in life than in almost any other profession. Eight or nine is not an unusual age. That is when most musicians start. Do bankers? Do lawyers? Do doctors? At fifteen, in high school, musicians are already performing for those who have perhaps barely decided to enter law, or medicine, or business. Musicians are already sharpening physical and mental skills comparable to those of Olympic athletes. Upon graduation musicians enter the music program at a university or conservatory. The intensity of concentration is extreme, the expense comparable to educations in law, medicine, or business. At the bachelor's level, when other professionals are barely beginning their specific, detailed education, musicians are already able to perform lengthy works of the utmost complexity at what would be Olympic levels of 9.5 or better. After graduate school the best of these musicians find jobs in symphony orchestras. In the best orchestras the expected performance level is like an Olympic 9.8 or better, often even in rehearsal.

What is the symphony musician's reward for this dedication, study and professionalism? At the end of a concert played at peak levels, dressed in servant's livery, musicians are required not to

stand on the highest pedestal to receive the gold but to stand before the audience and bow their submission. Is this how we reward athletes? Is this how we reward doctors? Lawyers? Bankers? The mystification of the act of art as being something beyond the ordinary, a gift of the gods, a reward for suffering in a garret, as opposed to the professional honing of a talent, allows society to ask symphony musicians even in the largest orchestras, "But what do you do for a living?"

The seamless perfection of everyday performance by the musicians allows one board and management to mystify itself to such a degree that it is not astonished by its own acts. It has taken a legal position holding that the musicians must not call themselves members of the orchestra because the public is becoming confused as to who the orchestra really is. Another tries to cancel a season. They do not understand. They do not have that power. Only the musicians have that power; musicians have the music. The musicians chose to have a season. There was a season. Another board gleefully considers a symphony ball without the need to trouble themselves with musicians. Do they not understand they are a support group? Necessary? Yes. Hard-working? Yes. Volunteer? Yes. The orchestra? No. Could these same pillars of society envision a hospital without doctors, a court without lawyers, or a bank without bankers? *Perhaps demystification of the institution of the symphony orchestra will help.*

Why do we have symphony orchestras? To enrich our lives, to preserve culture, to educate our children. Yes, all these reasons, and we must never lose sight of these primary reasons. Are there any others?

The New York Port Authority has studied that. It found that every dollar spent on the arts in New York generated four dollars in revenues. Other cities have sponsored similar studies and revealed even larger numbers. That is a compelling reason.

Cities are competing with each other. They all want the corporate headquarters. They all want the manufacturing. They all want the tourists. The all want the retirees. In order to attract these groups all cities wishing to compete must offer the standard cultural events.

Reading the booster article in any in-flight journal will make this very clear. Surprisingly small cities are shown to have symphony orchestras, ballet companies, opera companies, and museums large enough to house important traveling exhibitions. The message is often "all the culture of a big city with a small town atmosphere." Realty and business boosterism is surely another reason. How can we measure the dollar value? Not directly, but consider the time, effort, and financial inducements lavished by city governments on sports attractions. A City will build a stadium with public bond issues. A city will make tax easements. A city will bid seriously against many other cities to obtain a sports franchise. In most cases the city receives no direct profits from this franchise. The hopeful owners expect large TV fees and some money from the gate. The city receives intangible values, we are told by our elected officials, measurable in increased property values, more business and more employment. There seems to be a certain similarity of rhetoric here.

There are also reasons related to individual social status and corporate image raising. Organizations like Business for the Arts

spend many working hours preparing and distributing expensive print material demonstrating these values to individual business leaders and corporations.

All of these are valid reasons. It is important to understand that their result is the sponsorship of our important cultural institutions. We need only be reminded that there is no such thing as a free lunch. No case can be made for the subsidy of symphony orchestras as work projects for indigent symphony musicians.

*This leads us quite neatly to the demystifying question, Who should subsidize symphony orchestras?* There is no argument about the need for subsidy. All agree that the professional symphony orchestra cannot pay for itself. Most orchestras consider themselves fortunate to earn fifty to sixty percent of their expenses. The rest must be subsidized. But by whom? Given the above reasons for the life of the orchestra it is reasonable to expect governmental, business, and individual subsidy to make up the difference, just as they subsidize other "special interests" like farming, national parks, and tobacco, to name just a few. To a large degree it does.

There is another large area of subsidy that does not seem so reasonable, the subsidy from the symphony musician. Today [1986] the highest-paying orchestras offer a base salary of about \$50,000, which for many professionals is barely an entry-level wage. *That is a subsidy.* Today many professional orchestras do not approach this level. While still occupying full attention from the musician, many orchestras offer annual wages substantially below \$20,000. *That is a subsidy.* Unlike any other workforce in the country, the musicians, at their own expense, supply the tools to the employer. These tools often cost more than a full year of wages. *That is a subsidy.* In some cases the employer is not even willing to insure the tools. That responsibility falls upon the musician. *That is a subsidy.* In most cases the musician is responsible for the care, maintenance, and upkeep of the tools. *That is a subsidy.* It is hard to imagine a symphony orchestra operating without these subsidies.

A further subsidy is sometimes required of the musicians. When there is a real or perceived financial crisis musicians are often asked to accept substantial reductions in annual salary. In these situations they are often told that the continued existence of the institution is their responsibility. In light of what we now understand about the reasons for a symphony orchestra and the musician's place in the professional world, can this be a reasonable claim?

The mystification surrounding the purpose of the symphony orchestra and the mystification surrounding the professional musician leaves the musician vulnerable to this sort of charge. It is no wonder that the instinctive perception of inequities not understood on a conscious level produces in professional musicians an unresolvable angst.

It is the responsibility of society on an individual, governmental and corporate level to finally recognize its responsibility. Society, not the professional musician, must pay the bills for an institution it needs.



*Lew Waldeck can be reached at Lew@lwaldeck.com. His website is lwaldeck.com.*

Years that end with “0”s seem to be natural times for retrospection and introspection. During 2000 ICSOM looked backwards and inwards, both at the Louisville conference (which featured much discussion of what ICSOM’s past might say about its future) and in the pages of *Senza*.

ICSOM has not only survived for almost four decades, but has actually achieved much of what its founders hoped it would. Certainly the world of professional symphonic musicians is profoundly changed since 1962, as is the relationship of those musicians to both their employers and their union. That is not entirely due to ICSOM’s efforts, of course—but ICSOM, more than any other institution, is emblematic of the principles that lie at the heart of those profound changes.

But just what has ICSOM done? And how? Oddly enough, there is very little record of discussions about ICSOM’s mission from the early years. Rather, there was action on specific issues and projects, most notably the publication of a newsletter, “the point of view of [which] is to be that of orchestra musicians, as distinguished from orchestra managements and musicians’ unions.”

This ability to move ahead on specific projects and issues without spending much energy on discussing philosophy has been a hallmark of ICSOM throughout its existence. It has meant that ICSOM’s methods have evolved naturally, meeting changing needs in pragmatic ways. But, even though the current form of ICSOM is a product of evolution rather than creation, it is still possible to define what ICSOM does by some broad categorizations—most of which were present from the beginning.

From its inception, ICSOM has provided information to the musicians of its member orchestras. *Senza Sordino* has always been the most visible source of that information. But there have been many others. The first **ICSOM Wage Chart** appeared in the second issue of *Senza*, starting a tradition that has continued ever since (and which has been emulated by the AFM, which now publishes extensive wage charts for orchestras in all the symphonic player conferences). The **Conductor Evaluation Program** began in 1967. Breathtaking in its audacity, its attempt to rate and exchange information on our institutions’ artistic leadership was one of the first efforts in the arts—or indeed any other field—to have the supervisees grade the supervisors. It has been used by virtually every major professional orchestra looking for new artistic leadership.

The **ICSOM Bulletin** system began operation in 1964. It was intended to provide information about negotiations and other issues of immediate concern in a more timely way than could *Senza*. The first **ICSOM Directory** was published in 1972. ICSOM moved quickly to use the Internet in the mid-1990s with its own Internet mailing list, **Orchestra-L**, and one of the first **websites** in the orchestra industry. And ICSOM adopted desktop **CD publishing** as soon as it became economically feasible, producing the first portable source of contract information in the business.

From its inception in 1962, ICSOM advocated for the interests of symphonic musicians. ICSOM did so by calling for the establishment of an **AFM symphony department** and fighting for

## Launching ICSOM Into The New Millennium

by Robert Levine, ICSOM Chair

the right of symphonic musicians to ratify their collective bargaining agreements, to form committees, and to be free of harassment by their

locals. From the first issue of *Senza*, ICSOM also called to public account managements and conductors who misbehaved.

Thirty-six years later, ICSOM helped lead the only major rank-and-file reform effort that the AFM has seen in its 100-year history—the **Investigative Task Force**. The changes the ITF proposed are a measure of how far symphonic musicians have come within the AFM; the ITF proposals would have been regarded as maniacally unrealistic by even the most radical of the delegates to the 1962 symposia that led to the formation of ICSOM. (No doubt some delegates to the 1999 AFM Convention would have agreed.) And ICSOM is still calling to public account managements and conductors who abuse the positions of trust they hold.

One role that was not envisioned for ICSOM in 1962—at least not publicly—was that of representing musicians, either in bargaining with employers or within the AFM. But both have become part of ICSOM’s core mission. By 1965 ICSOM representatives were participating in AFM media negotiations, and in the early 1970s the **ICSOM Media Committee** was formed. Since that modest beginning, the ICSOM Media Committee has become an equal partner with the AFM in all media negotiations concerning symphonic musicians, as well as the administration of those agreements.

A formal representation role for ICSOM within the AFM had to wait until 1988, when the first formal meeting of the player conferences with the International Executive Board took place. The role of ICSOM in AFM governance was expanded in 1991 to include representation on a new **Symphonic Services Steering Committee**, as well as regular meetings of the leadership of the player conferences, the **Player Conferences Council**, with the IEB. While the results of these structures may not have been all that was hoped by those who proposed them, nonetheless they represent something highly unusual in the American trade movement: groups composed of working rank-and-file members, not full-time union officers, playing a role in the national governance of their union.

Implicit in the discussions that took place in 1962 was the notion that ICSOM would eventually provide guidance to its members on their relations with their employers and their unions, although it seems that the delegates originally hoped that the proposed AFM symphony department would help with the former. From the beginning there was much picking of the ICSOM chair’s brains by leaders within ICSOM orchestras. But the AFM’s tepid response to the demand for a department to help symphony musicians led ICSOM, in 1968, to form its own “symphony department” by hiring I. Philip Sipser as ICSOM’s first **legal counsel**. ICSOM has retained counsel ever since, to advise individuals, orchestra committees, and the ICSOM Governing Board and to help train current and future activists.

From the first meetings in 1962, ICSOM has tried to create networks of activists within its orchestras. The second issue of *Senza* listed the members of every ICSOM orchestra committee in the explicit “hope that this will help all orchestras in communicating with each other.” The passage of time proved that hope was

not enough, however, so a system of regional representatives was put into place in 1969. This structure, with some cosmetic changes, has been in place ever since, and today is embodied in the positions of the ICSOM Governing Board **Members-at-Large**.

The annual **ICSOM Conference** also plays a role in the creation of networks. Activists, when held hostage in a hotel for four days, naturally begin to conspire. And of such conspiracies are enduring relationships built. ICSOM delegates quickly learn who can be helpful to them—and to whom they can be helpful, in turn.

### *Looking Ahead*

Providing information, advocacy, representation, guidance, and networks have been the core functions of ICSOM. It is hard to see what could be added to, or subtracted from, that list of categories that would enable ICSOM to serve orchestra musicians more successfully. But what goes into the categories has evolved without stop, and must continue to do so.

The creation of the Conductor Evaluation Program is a good example. We needed better information (and sharing of information) on those who conduct us than anyone could provide to us; so we went and did it ourselves. We still need that information. But, as our institutions evolve and our relationship to our institutions changes as well, we need more. It used to be that orchestra musicians were quite mobile. (In fact, a prominent conductor was quoted in the first issue of *Senza* as saying that orchestra musicians “were like birds” and didn’t want long-term employment.) That has changed radically. Now a musician hired by a full-time orchestra is probably more likely to stay married to that orchestra than married to their spouse. It is a recognized, although lamentable, fact that very few orchestra musicians change jobs after the age of 35 or so.

So we need more information. We need information about the people who manage our orchestras. We need information about the financial health of our orchestras. And we need guidance in using that information. Of course, we continue to need the information that we have received from ICSOM in the past—but knowing what Orchestra Y thought about your music director and what Orchestra Z just got in pension benefits is just not enough anymore. Your music director is not the only person in your orchestra making decisions that will affect your future, and Orchestra Z’s settlement may no longer help you make your case to the public.

Advocacy is another box that might require a new set of contents. We have advocated successfully within the AFM for rights and responsibilities. But, at the end of the day, it’s not the union that provides us with paychecks. Would ICSOM be doing a service to its members by advocating for orchestras when we can? Do we need to work with others in the field (such as the American Symphony Orchestra League) on keeping the industry as a whole afloat? Who are our allies-to-be for the next forty years—and on what issues are those alliances to be based? A change in tax law (such as the repeal of the estate tax, a current hot proposal) could have an impact on our orchestras—and our incomes—as much as any agreement, or policy, or action by either our union or our employers. We need to look very hard at our assumptions about ourselves and our relationships; not everything that worked for us in 1962 is going to work for us in 2042.

How should ICSOM represent musicians in the future within their union? The AFM has changed since 1962; not only is it much smaller, but a much larger proportion of its politically active membership are musicians who make much, or all, of their income from performance. More and more union officers are such musicians. ICSOM has always had a more direct relationship with the national AFM than it has with the locals. But perhaps our future power within the AFM is closer to home. Certainly the number of orchestra musicians who have become local officers just in the past year augurs for a rather different 2001 AFM Convention, even as compared to 1999, when there were more of us in attendance as voting delegates than ever before.

And how should ICSOM represent its members in negotiations with employers, especially regarding electronic media? It is clear that the Internet offers opportunities to orchestras that no other form of media has; any orchestra (or indeed any group of musicians) can be its own producer and its own distribution channel for recorded performances. In the past, the amount of media work, and media exposure, orchestras got was not responsive to the rates the union charged. The big orchestras recorded because the record companies wanted them in their catalogs, and damn the expense. The major record companies didn’t want the smaller orchestras at all, regardless of cost. So ICSOM’s job was simply to help the AFM intelligently negotiate national rates that worked for those orchestras that the record companies wanted.

The situation now is much more complex. No orchestra is barred from the Internet by a recording company. But a poorly-conceived national media agreement could bar lots of orchestras from the Internet. The responsibility borne by the union’s negotiators in this much more complicated situation is enormous, and solutions that are fair to musicians of small and large orchestras alike are hard to achieve.

What about networking? It is ironic to me, after having watched ICSOM from the inside, that where ICSOM is least successful is in addressing inter-orchestra networking, the original need ICSOM was designed to meet. The whole point of the original symposia out of which ICSOM arose was that “common problems might have common solutions.” Yet it seems that there still is too little communication among activists in different orchestras about both problems and solutions. The annual conference is still the major place for such discussions—but four days of crowded agendas don’t allow for that much discussion. Even if ICSOM had the budget for more meetings, would anyone have the time?

Perhaps technology will come to our rescue. The cost of telephone conferences is dropping rapidly. With increasing access to broadband, even Internet videoconferencing is becoming real. Should ICSOM insist that all its delegates and committee chairs get themselves to a videocam? Should ICSOM get the AFM to pay for it? If we did have the tools, would we have the time and interest to use them?

ICSOM plays a role in the orchestra field that is unique. If we are to continue to play it well, we must make introspection an everyday activity; not something that we do once every millennium. We have reason to be proud of what ICSOM has achieved. But there is so much more yet to do.



(SHAW – continued from page 1)

Although not an organizational trait, it becomes necessary upon occasion to “blow one’s own horn,” for the influx of new players into our orchestras is constant. To tell what has transpired since 1962 should become a part of new member orientation. Also, for many, ICSOM may have come to mean little more than six issues of *Senza Sordino* and a request for a dues payment once a year. It is a problem we face, since more personal contact is primarily the privilege of our delegates and orchestra committees. However, it must be emphasized that ICSOM represents an investment and it must be protected. Perhaps an occasional reminder of difficulties that had to be dealt with is in order, along with the admonition that history can surely repeat itself where complacency becomes the order of the day.

The symphony scene is perpetually in crisis. Orchestra associations in many instances are financially strained. The role of government in perpetuating the symphony orchestra as a fully functioning institution in our communities will become increasingly crucial. There is developing a new group of orchestras whose members are clearly voicing their discontent with the condition of part time employment in their orchestras. Orchestra opportunities for exposure, as electronic media becomes increasingly important in bringing the performing arts into the living room, will open up new areas for discussion.

The ICSOM conference table must remain a significant site for discussion of these subjects along with others.



(HALL – continued from page 1)

in the negotiation of its own contract, and no orchestras had the right to approve the contracts negotiated for them by union representatives who, often being ill-informed about symphony orchestra matters, concluded agreements which incorporated token salary increases and minimal improvements in working conditions.

ICSOM actively addressed these problems. Vowing dedication to “the promotion of a better and more rewarding livelihood for the skilled [orchestral] performer and to the enrichment of the cultural life of our society,” ICSOM held annual meetings at which delegates worked to achieve certain prime objectives: the right of orchestras to form committees, elect their own officers, and conduct their own affairs; the right to representation and legal counsel of choice at the bargaining table, and the right of general orchestra membership to ratify contracts; establishment of a strike fund to assist players during a work stoppage; fifty-two week employment; significant increases in wages and pension benefits; exchange of information on the qualification of conductors; and government aid to the arts. Delegates discussed matters which are still of

concern: electronic reproduction of music; tour conditions; auditions, probation, tenure, and dismissals; occupational health problems; adequate life and health insurance coverage; discrimination on the basis of sex, race, and age; and more.

Largely through the efforts of ICSOM, many goals were reached. Salaries, job security, and working conditions improved considerably. By 1965, most orchestras had gained bargaining representation and contract ratification rights. Many orchestras could retain legal counsel. By 1971, six orchestras had year-round seasons; today [1982], fifteen do, and the median length is over 40 weeks. An ICSOM Emergency Relief Fund was established in 1965. An AFM Symphony Strike Fund was established in 1970 and to date has disbursed over \$1.5 million to 23 different orchestras which were on strike or locked out.

For ICSOM today, there are new issues, new problems, new goals: securing financial subsidy for the arts, especially in difficult economic times; improving quality of educational concerts; diversifying services to the community and developing new audiences; expanding repertory and developing chamber music and solo roles for the orchestral performer; alleviating adversarial attitudes between management and musicians and achieving greater player participation in affairs of the orchestra, especially in the selection of music directors and managers; promoting the role of symphony orchestras and the arts in general in modern society. Solving problems and reaching goals will most effectively be accomplished, as in the past, through cooperative effort, with ICSOM providing means for exchanging ideas and ways to implement them.

ICSOM is a family of orchestras, a family increasingly diverse in size, financial stability, managerial adeptness, artistic accomplishment, and professional stature. What some orchestras attained years ago, other orchestras are still striving to achieve. The largest and smallest orchestras may be very different in many ways, yet they meet and work together in an organization whose existence is predicated on principles of solidarity, team effort, and mutual support.

The dynamics and values of ICSOM often parallel those within the symphony orchestra itself; no member is unimportant, and none can stand alone. No member orchestra can afford to isolate itself and remain aloof from united support, certain of survival as others succumb. No orchestra has achieved improvements over two decades solely on its own enterprise, knowledge, and unity. The same collaboration which won the gains of the past must help defend and retain those gains today.

ICSOM is a volunteer organization supported entirely by a voluntary dues structure. The quality of services it offers varies in direct proportion to the involvement of its membership. It will falter in direct proportion to apathy and complacency; it will flourish in direct proportion to enthusiasm and dedicated participation.



Four Senza Sordino editors spanning nearly 30 years of Senza history were in attendance at the 2000 ICSOM Conference: Henry Shaw (1972-82), Tom Hall (1982-86), Marsha Schweitzer (1996-present), and Robert Levine (1993-96)





I began playing trumpet with the Los Angeles Philharmonic in 1962, the year ICSOM got its start. My, how things have changed. I remember how the AFM treated ICSOM and our members before we became a conference. Without ICSOM, where would the symphony orchestras be today? Many young people haven't the slightest clue how conditions were in the "good ol' days."

*Irving Bush*

*LA Philharmonic trumpeter and personnel manager, retired  
Local 47 (Los Angeles) board member*



When I think about the early days of ICSOM, the only thing that sticks in my mind is how fed up we were with the union, at least Local 77 (Philadelphia), and all of us thought that ICSOM was going to be a breakaway from the union.

The biggest thing I'm proud of is the starting of the Emeritus program. I remember going to a conference when Fred Zenone was the chair and making my push for the program and how many people had reservations about it being too much trouble or costing too much. Over the years I was delighted to see so many of those same people who were opposed become members of the Emeritus. It's proven to be a very popular thing for us old-timers.

*Abe Torchinsky*

*Philadelphia Orchestra tubist, retired  
ICSOM Emeritus Program Director*



I was playing in the Rochester Philharmonic while at the Eastman School of Music. This was my very first professional orchestra job and of course I wanted to make a good impression. Erich Leinsdorf was working with the strings on a particularly thorny passage. He stopped and turned to the violins indicating a very specific bowing he desired. We repeated the passage—I was on the sixth stand, first violins—but I goofed on the revised bowing. Leinsdorf stopped the orchestra, and I ducked behind the stand and started to "put in bowings." Suddenly I heard this stentorian voice booming out about "the sixth-stand player is not getting it right." My stand partner nudged me saying, "Jerry, he's talking to you!" With the great (and very intimidating) Erich Leinsdorf talking to a scared-stiff 20-year-old in his first season—I was petrified! I did manage to look up and he was staring directly at me! Thus my indoctrination into the orchestra world.

*Jerome Landsman*

*Grant Park Symphony violinist, retired*



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

This is to inform you that my beloved husband, Charles Weiser, retired member of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, passed away after battling cancer on August 7, 2000. He was a longtime member of his musicians' union and ICSOM, a fighter for musicians' rights and a lover of classical music. A viola chair was named after him in his university orchestra because of the great respect in which he was held, and when the St. Louis Symphony visited the Southern Illinois University-Carbondale auditorium to perform, they dedicated their performance to Charles.

*Nancy Weiser*



Many years ago we were rehearsing with the then-called Portland Symphony on the stage of the Civic Auditorium. There was a very large loading dock door that had no weather stripping of any kind. There was at least an inch of space that allowed the wind (it was the dead of winter and the temperature was below freezing outside) to swirl onto the stage.

The conductor was a tall, gaunt, imposing figure, and he stopped the orchestra and said, "Mr. Trumpet Player, you are out of tune!" The trumpet player sheepishly answered, "Maestro, the cold wind is howling through the stage and as soon as my horn warms up, it will be on to pitch." The Maestro then snorted, "Well, you should have been here half an hour early to warm up your horn . . . and if the weather warrants it . . . TWO HOURS EARLY!"

The point being: ICSOM, the AFM, and musicians the world over have demanded better working conditions and respect from employers.

*Herman Jobelmann*

*Oregon Symphony bassist and personnel manager, retired  
former President, Local 99, Portland*



You have requested submission of material relevant to the history of ICSOM. I apologize for my tardy response. I am an old coot of 82 years, and I am now in the procrastination stage of my life, enjoying each day of my existence, and neglecting some important matters until my conscience (plus New Year's resolutions) says MOVE!

Serge Koussevitzky invited me to join the BSO in 1940. I was 21. Circa 1950 my close friend and colleague in the Boston Symphony, George Zazofsky, and I had lunch in New York with Harold Gomberg, then principal oboe of New York Philharmonic; another member of NY Philharmonic whose name I can't recall; Mason Jones, then principal horn of the Philadelphia Orchestra; and another member of that great orchestra. The six of us discussed the need for communication among major orchestra members especially, and all professional players generally. I was chairman of the BSO orchestra committee at the time and Associate Principal Bass, and Principal in the Boston Pops. George was of course one of the leading violinists in the orchestra.

At the New York lunch we talked informally about the lack of national coordination of basics like rehearsal time, recording rates,

*(continued on page 15)*

## Comparative Growth in Orchestral Salaries

CPI (base 1967=100):		79.5				125.3			
ORCHESTRA	1952	1952	1962	1962	Real Sal Growth	1972	1972	Real Sal Growth	Minimum
	Minimum Annual Salary	Salary Adj to 2000 \$	Minimum Annual Salary	Salary Adj to 2000 \$	prev 10 years % change (adj for inflation)	Minimum Annual Salary	Salary Adj to 2000 \$	prev 10 years % change (adj for inflation)	Annual Salary
Alabama									
Atlanta	1,210	7,806				9,553	39,104		2
Baltimore	1,400	9,032	3,185	18,031	100%	9,660	39,542	119%	2
Boston	4,830	31,161	8,880	50,271	61%	16,640	68,114	35%	3
Buffalo	1,882	12,142	3,388	19,180	58%	9,975	40,831	113%	1
Charlotte						3,875	15,862		1
Chicago Lyric						4,340	17,765		1
Chicago	4,505	29,064	7,500	42,459	46%	16,640	68,114	60%	3
Cincinnati	2,660	17,161	4,185	23,692	38%	11,960	48,957	107%	3
Cleveland	3,270	21,097	6,120	34,646	64%	14,820	60,664	75%	3
Colorado (Denver)	1,660	10,710				8,600	35,203		2
Columbus									
Dallas	1,600	10,323	4,500	25,475	147%	11,700	47,892	88%	2
Detroit	3,040	19,613	4,940	27,966	43%	12,855	52,620	88%	3
Florida Orch									
Florida Phil									
Florida Sym	720	4,645							1
Grant Park	704	4,542							
Honolulu						5,280	21,613		1
Houston	2,560	16,516	3,998	22,633	37%	11,180	45,764	102%	2
Indianapolis	1,400	9,032	2,250	12,738	41%	7,980	32,665	156%	2
Jacksonville									
Kansas City	1,560	10,064	3,474	19,667	95%	5,300	21,695	10%	1
Kennedy Center									
Los Angeles	3,050	19,677	5,011	28,368	44%	14,790	60,541	113%	3
Louisville									1
Met Opera						17,595	72,023		3
Milwaukee						9,020	36,922		2
Minnesota (Minneapolis)	2,600	16,774	4,350	24,626	47%	12,192	49,906	103%	3
Nashville									
National (Washington)	2,080	13,419	4,480	25,362	89%	13,500	55,261	118%	2
New Jersey									
New Orleans	1,300	8,387	2,830	16,021	91%	7,828	32,043	100%	2
NYC Ballet									1
NYC Opera									
New York Phil	4,200	27,097	8,720	49,365	82%	17,160	70,242	42%	4
North Carolina	1,054	6,800				4,495	18,400		1
Oakland									
Oklahoma City	1,331	8,587							1
Oregon (Portland)	1,100	7,097	976	5,525	-22%	2,200	9,005	63%	1
Philadelphia	4,995	32,226	7,770	43,987	36%	17,180	70,324	60%	3
Phoenix									1
Pittsburgh	2,500	16,129	5,230	29,608	84%	13,500	55,261	87%	3
Rochester	2,640	17,032	4,125	23,352	37%	9,225	37,761	62%	2
St. Louis	2,214	14,284	4,380	24,796	74%	10,965	44,884	81%	2
St. Paul Chamber									
San Antonio	1,470	9,484				5,760	23,578		1
San Diego									1
SF Ballet									
SF Opera									
San Francisco	2,200	14,193	4,010	22,701	60%	13,720	56,161	147%	3
Seattle						6,800	27,835		1
Syracuse						3,960	16,210		1
Toledo									1
Utah	\$892	5,755							2
Virginia									
AVERAGES	2,221	14,328	4,741	26,840	87%	10,311	42,205	57%	2

### NOTES:

- 1) Inflation adjustments are based on the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (U.S. city average, all items, not seasonally adjusted). Different regions may have different inflation rates. Thus, the figures in this chart are approximations only, for general comparative purposes, and should not be relied upon to assess the progress of a particular orchestra.
- 2) Sources: Annual ICSOM Wage Charts as published in Senza Sordino, and AFM Symphony Wage Charts (ICSOM and ROPA), supplemented with data provided by individual orchestras.





In Vol. 1, No. 2 (March 1963) of *Senza Sordino* there appeared a narrative article describing a purported orchestra committee chairman of that era. It is reprinted here, followed by a modern-day story about twelve minutes in the life of a modern-day committee chair. Both stories have a very large tongue in a very big cheek, but they do show how much has changed in our perception of the role of the committee chairperson—and to whom he/she answers.

## AN INTERVIEW

*In the first issue of SENZA SORDINO we promised our readers that there would be a profile of a Committee Chairman in the second issue. Due to several factors, chief of which is our own sloth, we were unable to fulfill this promise, but we have done the next best thing: we hereby print an interview with a prominent committee chairman. We hope you will accept this temporary substitute, and find it instructive and even heart-warming.*

I journeyed, one cold day last week, to the busy metropolis of Capitol City. I had an appointment to meet the Chairman of the Capitol City Symphony Orchestra Committee. As is well-known to all musicians, the Capitol City Symphony is famous for its long record of labor peace—in the past twenty years there has not been a single dispute over wages or working conditions. It was because of this enviable record that I made the long trip, in hopes of discovering, from the Committee Chairman, the secret of this marvelous achievement.

As the readers of this journal are no doubt aware, the Chairman of the Capitol City Orchestra Committee is Mr. Wolfgang Klopff. He has held his post as Chairman without interruption for twenty years.

I found him in the lobby of the hotel where I had a reservation and was immediately struck by his charm and force of personality. He is an enormous gentleman with a soft, flabby handshake and a disconcerting habit of never looking one in the eye. He greeted me jovially and gently propelled me into the hotel bar. He slid oleagiously into a booth and I took up my position opposite him. After ordering drinks for both of us, he made some inconsequential remarks about the weather and creeping socialism, and we got down to business.

Mr. Klopff was only too glad to discuss the affairs of the orchestra, and took a pardonable pride in his own part in the establishment of the labor-management Nirvana that exists. I asked him about his role in this remarkable state of affairs and he was direct and to the point.

"Twenty-three years ago," he began, after taking a thirsty swig of his Rob-Roy, "this orchestra was wracked by an especially nasty labor dispute. The men, who were being paid \$50 a week, were asking for a three dollar raise and fringe benefits and . . ."

"What were the fringe benefits?" I inquired, and he replied, mangling a toothpick, "Oh, they were demanding toilet facilities, or some such damn-fool thing. At any rate, things got kind of nasty,

## Evolution of the Committee Chair 1963 - 1999

and the Orchestra Committee was obviously the root of the trouble. In my capacity as President of the Board of the Orchestral Society, I . . ."

"I beg your pardon," I interjected, almost slopping my martini, "did you say Pres . . ."

"Of course!! My family has been the orchestra's heaviest contributor for decades. It was only natural, therefore, that upon graduation from high school I should automatically assume the duties of my father, and *his* father before him."

I nodded; the logic of this was unassailable.

"Be that as it may, the orchestra members won. We compromised, of course, and gave them a *two* dollar raise and a chamber pot, but it was a serious blow to the Society and damaged its image almost beyond repair.

"It was clear to me that there was only one way to solve this problem so that it would not recur. I, therefore, used my not inconsiderable influence to get myself appointed as a member of the orchestra. I had studied the accordion as a child, and when I pointed out to the conductor of the orchestra that it did not *have* an accordion player, and reminded him that his contract was coming up for renewal shortly, he realized immediately that what the orchestra needed was an accordionist. I was hired on the spot.

"I will not go into the complicated story of how, within a period of a mere two years, I became Chairman of the Committee, nor how, by the simple expedient of donating \$200,000 to the union treasury, I became President of the Local—suffice it to say that these events transpired.

"It was now a relatively easy matter to rewrite the bylaws of the Orchestra Committee so that such anachronisms as majority rule, ratification, etc. were expunged. The Chairman *became* the Committee under the new setup, and the new era of peace was entered upon."

Mr. Klopff settled back in his cushions. His flesh, inside his Italian silk suit, seemed to spread until it filled the entire seat. He beckoned the waiter, who responded with such subservient alacrity that I remarked to my host that he was obviously well-known here to command such service.

He looked surprised at my comment, then laughed genially. "I quite forgot, you two don't know each other. This fellow is Tomkins, our first horn player. He works here to make ends meet; poor devil has financial problems, I don't know *how* he manages!"

"But as first horn player, he must draw a fine salary," I protested. Mr. Klopff gave me a look of stern rebuke.

"ALL my players get scale !! We don't encourage any over-scale nonsense here! Right, Tomkins?" He swung to the waiter, who almost dropped a glass in his fright.

"Y-yes, sir," he stammered, and then quickly recovering, resumed his fawning posture.

"What is scale?" I asked, more impressed than ever with the acumen of the man opposite me.

"Why, \$52 a week, of course. I am quite proud of the fact that we have not had a single cut in the minimum in the twenty years I have been in charge! I fancy that the men are rather grateful to me for that. Right, Tomkins?"

This time the frightened first horn player *did* drop a glass. It splintered on the carpet, and its contents spilled over my cuff.

"Damned Idiot !!!" my host exploded. Tomkins dropped to his knees and hastily mopped the injured cuff. The plump man now turned to me and remarked on the abominable waiters that were available these days. I had to agree. Mr. Klopff's contempt was contagious, and I looked down with loathing at the trembling fool at my feet.

"But how is it that your musicians stay here when they can get more money elsewhere?"

"Quite simple really. In my capacity of Orchestra Manager ..."

"You mean you are also Orchestra Manager?" I exclaimed in awe.

"Yes, indeed," he replied, and then almost with modesty, "and, I might add, also *Personnel* Manager. As I was saying, we Orchestra Managers, as you no doubt know, all belong to an Orchestra Managers Association. In the Association we have, of course, a "blacklist" —that is, a list of known troublemakers in various orchestras. I have, quite simply put the entire personnel of the Capitol City Orchestra on the blacklist! No other orchestra in the country will hire them."

I was struck speechless by this stroke of genius, and could only murmur, "Incredible."

"You see," he continued expansively, "it has been my entire goal to create a tight ship here. A tight ship is a happy ship. Right, Tomkins?"

Tomkins, who was just rising from his menial task, recoiled as if struck, and whimpering his "yessir" again, retreated in confusion.

"You must remember," my host said in a more confiding tone, "that the thing that is paramount in an orchestra is *image*. The *image* of the orchestra in the eyes of the public, in the eyes of the ticket-holders, in the eyes of the rest of the union members, etc. The *image* of the Capitol City Orchestra used to be no better than that of any of the other orchestras in the country who are constantly wrangling in public with their managements and their unions. I like to think that I saw the importance of image even before it was discovered by Madison Avenue. The public image of our orchestra *now* is of a *tight ship*!!"

There was no longer any doubt in my mind that I was face to face with one of the great men of our age. It was astonishing that one man, with nothing but his own vision, and thirty million dollars, could have created this paradise!

I was about to grasp his hand and falteringly express my admiration, when he suddenly broke off our discussion.

"I'm afraid I must go now," he said abruptly. He took a five-

dollar bill from his pocket and threw it to the table. It obviously included a generous tip for the obsequious Tomkins. Comprehension suddenly dawned.

"Now I understand!" I cried, "You are like a — a *father* to this orchestra!"

Mr. Klopff beamed. "Exactly," he said. "You've put your finger on it exactly."

He rose from his seat—a difficult feat, considering his enormous bulk—and shook my hand.

"I'm glad you came to see me. I hope you will write me up in your newsletter. What's it called? Ah yes, *Mit Dämpfer*, that's it.

"Well, I really *must* run; I'm conducting an all-Wagner program tonight." He waved cheerily and waddled into the night.

I took four dollars from my pocket, placed them on the table, and put the five-dollar bill in my wallet. I do not believe in coddling waiters.

Robert Coleman  
Chicago Symphony, retired  
Senza Sordino Editor 1962-63

---

## FREEFALL TWELVE MINUTES

The call came at 5:30 p.m.

I was sitting, slouching really, on a tall stool next to the kitchen counter. The garbage cans were in from the street. The dogs were fed. Outside, they strained against their chain leashes making enough racket to wake the dead. A pet rabbit, my daughter's, chewed nonchalantly on a blade of grass barely six inches from the dogs' bared incisors.

My wife fussed over dinner as I lifted a glass of Scotch to the memory of the day's endless rehearsal ...

... just another day in Paradise.

"Hello. Alan?" The voice asking for confirmation was vaguely familiar.

Not many solicitors ask for me by name. "Man Of The House" maybe, or "Occupant," possibly, but never "Alan." So, I had reason to suspect that this might be a personal call ... my first of the day. I looked longingly at the Scotch waiting for me at the bottom of the glass.

"Yes," I announced to whomever it was at the other end of the line, "...it is I, Alan." The voice, undaunted, surged ahead. It had assurance. It had purpose. It knew me by name. A dubious combination, I thought ... bad news for sure.

(continued on next page)

"Alan, this is ... Zola (named changed to protect the innocent)." I listened, watching my wife struggle to get dinner on the table.

"Zola! Zola!" I answered in my best stage whisper, "I told you never to call me at this number ... especially while my wife is struggling to get dinner on the table."

My wife barely turned from her chores to give me the "eyes-rolled-up-in-your-head" look. You know the "eyes-rolled-up-in-your-head" look. It tells you dinner is on the table, and you had better get off the phone and rescue the rabbit before you even think of tilting the Scotch out of the glass.

The phone voice paused, but only for an imperceptible instant. When you have grown as demented as I have from playing in symphony orchestras for as many years as I have, you get used to the "imperceptible pause." It comes with the territory of dementia. After a while you crave the imperceptible pause ... life becomes meaningless without it.

"Alan," the voice of Zola persisted, "I called to tell you that you have been elected to the orchestra committee ... Congratulations ... or maybe, condolences are in order."

Zola gave me the gory details of an election in which I joined four of my colleagues on the orchestra committee. My campaign, based upon a promise to embezzle, cheat, defraud, sell out, lie, steal, misrepresent, had successfully persuaded my colleagues in the Los Angeles Philharmonic of my superior qualifications to represent them.

Another "eyes-rolled-up-into-head" look from the direction of the dining room table convinced me that the phone conversation was over. I thanked Zola for the bad news, and said my good-byes. No sooner had I made myself comfortable at the dining room table, full glass of Scotch in hand, than the phone rang again.

"Hello," I said in my best "make-it-good-and-make-it-fast" voice.

"Alan?" the voice queried at the other end of the connection.

Twice in one night with the first name, I thought with concern for my vanishing anonymity.

"Yes ... none other, in the flesh," I responded.

"This is Moses [name changed to protect the gullible]." The angry voice of another colleague from the orchestra floated into my eardrum, "I called to complain about the absolutely lousy job you are doing on the committee ... GOOD-BYE!"

The phone went dead.

"What was that about?" my wife asked as I sat at the dinner table for the second time that night.

"I think I just broke the committee record for incompetence," I said, glancing at my watch.

It said 5:42 PM.

*Alan Goodman  
Los Angeles Philharmonic bassoonist  
not ever Senza Editor (so far)*



*Here is the platform upon which Mr. Goodman ran for election to the orchestra committee:*

#### CANDIDATE STATEMENT

I wish to announce that I, Alan Goodman, am running from the orchestra committee.

Many of you who were here when I last served on an orchestra committee are dead. You who are dead know who you are. I would appreciate your not encouraging those still living to vote for me with your lurid reminiscences of graft, corruption, money laundering, underhanded double-dealing, and plain old lying under oath.

I have come to this sad pass in my life only because the graft I received during my last go-round as a committee member has run out. This, ladies and gentleman should be a lesson to each and every one of you ... inflation eats up everything including tax-free graft. In defeat, perhaps you might still allow me to fondle the orchestra general fund just for old time's sake.

When not elected I promise to not gum up the works with logic, common sense, decency, and courtesy. I will not ... if not elected ... abrogate the contract when expedient. And if called upon to accommodate reasonable demands by management, I will hold out on principle ... until an offer of personal gain satisfies my unquenchable need for money, fast cars, and slow women.

If not elected, I will be found on Castaic Lake plumb-ing the depths for the wily large mouth bass. At my age ... much more realistic than slow women.

So, those of you that have one, I urge you to vote your conscience. The rest of you, those without conscience ... like me ... are invited to my defeat party at the local pub, where every man is for himself, and the beer is on you.

I wish to thank my supporters, those foolish enough to think I have changed my self-serving ways over the years. I promise, when defeated, to belittle those crazy enough to be elected to a thankless job. My only regret is that all that opportunity for personal gain and graft will go (wasted) to someone else. Such are the vagaries of a life poorly spent.

Finally, many thanks to The Committee to Reinstitute Dishonesty, which has advocated my candidacy with rapacious eagerness. Without their loyal support, I would in all likelihood have to begin thinking about robbing piggybanks.

Thank you, humbug, and kiss my reed.

*Alas, Mr. Goodman was elected, anyway.*

## RICHMOND SYMPHONY BUY-OUT

*by Marta Schworm Weldon*

*Executive Board Member, Local #123 — Clarinetist, Richmond Symphony  
martasweldon@world.oberlin.edu*

The Richmond Symphony leadership team has made an unprecedented buy-out offer to 44% of the orchestra's musicians. Thirty-two out of 72 musicians are eligible for a one-time-only offer to quit, based on a formula of age plus years of service. An anonymous donor has given up to \$1.5 million as a "reward" to fund the early retirement plan. This is the largest single gift ever given to the Richmond Symphony. It comes just five months into the first full season of new Music Director, Mark Russell Smith.

The \$1.5 million is not enough money to cover every eligible musician and is forcing a first-come, first-served scenario.

The retirement of these veteran musicians will greatly diminish the institutional memory of the RSO. A meager number of Board members and musicians will remain who have been engaged with the RSO since 1985. The ensuing chaos in orchestra personnel will take several seasons to resolve as auditions are held for each of the vacated positions.

### BUY-OUT PLAN

Management states at the outset that musicians' "decisions to retire and participate in the Plan are purely voluntary [emphasis in the document]."

Eligibility is offered to both core and per-service musicians who have 25 or more years of service or whose combined years of service plus age equals 70 or more as of June 30, 2001.

For core musicians, the buy-out equals \$75,000 plus two percent (2%) of the 2000-01 base salary times years of service. For per service musicians the formula is \$25,000 plus two percent of the 2000-01 contractual service guarantee times the contractual per-service rate.

Payment for core musicians will be in three parts: two lump sum payments in the first two calendar years equaling about two thirds (2/3) of the benefit, and the final one third (1/3) spread out over three-year period. Per-service buy-outs are paid in one lump sum.

Musicians have from March 15, 2001, through March 15, 2002, to decide to take the offer. The decision to retire is irrevocable. Secondly, each musician in order to receive buy-out money must sign an "Agreement and Release" form. This releases the RSO from the Title VII Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Fair Labor Standards Act, the Family and Medical Leave Act, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, the National Labor Relations Act, and the Employee Retirement Income Security Act, among other things. Each musician also signs away the right to ever again be a contracted musician with the RSO.

Core musicians must serve a "consultancy" period with the RSO in the third year of buy-out payments. A joint committee agreed upon by the union and RSO will determine consulting services. Management anticipates that this will include quarterly

meetings by person or by phone for up to ten occasions per year.

Finally, all participating musicians will be placed on top of the RSO substitute players lists, if they so desire and subject to the Master Agreement.

### CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

On December 20, 2000, Michele Walter, Executive Director, met with Michael Lisicky, President of Local #123, and Laura Roelofs, Chair of the Orchestra Committee. She informed the players that an anonymous donor had come forward with a "grant" to offer seasoned veterans of the RSO a "retirement" package. Ms. Walter wanted "advice" as to how to handle the musicians. This was to be a "good thing" for the orchestra.

Mr. Lisicky and Ms. Roelofs felt compelled to make the bombshell announcement to RSO musicians and began seeking legal counsel from the SSD.

Reaction from Robert Levine, Chairperson of ICSOM, was swift. In a letter dated December 23 to Michele Walter, Mr. Levine wrote that the buy-out would be "a very bad idea, and one that will be harmful to the Richmond Symphony's short-term and long-term health." He wrote that this was a very inadequate, inefficient and shortsighted way to handle job performance. Regarding the RSO musicians' appeal to institute a program for funding continuing education for the players instead of the buy-out, Mr. Levine said, "Such a program could garner national attention for the Richmond Symphony—and such attention, unlike what you are now receiving, would be overwhelmingly positive."

On December 22, each RSO musician received a letter announcing, "We are very pleased ... to be able to make a significant financial offer to assist musicians who have dedicated many years of their lives to music making with the Symphony and who wish to make a change at this stage in their careers." Also included was a "Personnel Data Confirmation" form requiring each musician to confirm date of birth and hire date.

The RSO Negotiating Committee asked for a January 6 meeting with Mark Russell Smith, Music Director, Michele Walter, Executive Director, and Marcia Thalhimer, Board President. The musicians demanded to know the exact terms of the buy-out.

The players asked if management had considered reapportioning the money for priority items discussed in the negotiations of August, 2000. These included the addition of core positions, expanded musical repertoire, or expanding the length of the season. Management said no, they were given a clear agenda by the donor. The players asked if management was aware of the enormity of the decision each eligible player would have to face, that it could mean the end of playing careers in Richmond. Management countered with a statement that this is the decision players have to make each and every season with the Richmond Symphony; in reality musicians only have the current contractual year to count on.

*(continued on next page)*

(RICHMOND BUYOUT – continued from page 13)

Mark Russell Smith stated that the buy-out offer and a musician's performance were separate issues, this was "not an artistic issue."

Perhaps the most critical questions from the musicians were in regards to an ongoing Strategic Planning process initiated by a June, 1999, grant of \$200,000 from the Mellon Foundation. Management revealed the buy-out had been in planning stages for 18 months, all during the Strategic Planning discussions and during the Music Director search of the 1998-1999 season.

Musicians gave over 500 hours of volunteer time serving on joint committees with board and staff members. Forty-one initiatives for a new Strategic Plan had been developed. As a result of the enormous cooperative effort put forth the RSO was awarded an additional three-year \$700,000 grant in June, 2000 by the Mellon Foundation.

A basic premise of the "new collaboration" was that it would be "transparent and different." Musicians asked why the buy-out plan was not presented at any time during the Strategic Planning discussions or even during the recent contract negotiations. Michele Walter reportedly replied, "I have no answer for that."

The sense of betrayal and violation of the fundamental tenet of openness of the Strategic Planning process was palpable. Since that time musicians have formally suspended participation citing that "avenues of communication are now damaged, and perhaps beyond repair." Under the current circumstances, discussions were deemed "a waste of valuable time."

The RSO Negotiating Committee made a formal request to bargain over the buy-out issue. Though the musicians were informed that the buy-out plan could legally be instituted without any direct input from them, management agreed to negotiate.

On January 19 the Negotiating Committee called an informational meeting for all union musicians. Following rancorous debate the Negotiating Committee stated repeatedly they would bargain in everyone's best interests and not do anything to anger the donor, possibly losing the money.

On January 26 negotiations began with Florence Nelson, Director of the Symphonic Services Division of the AFM. The Negotiating Committee managed to secure several improvements. The window to accept the buy-out was extended by one year to March 15, 2002, from the original six weeks. Secondly, the formula for eligibility would be shortened to 70 giving six more musicians the opportunity to participate. Thirdly, the musicians fought to have retired musicians eligible for the substitute player lists. Management's first offer would have no musician ever playing with the RSO again, though they still claimed this was "not an artistic issue."

The musicians put forward an alternate retirement plan benefitting every current and future RSO musician. Management refused to look at this offer. Also denied were requests to speak directly to the donor and to see the original letter outlining the donor's intentions.

On January 27 the Negotiating Committee announced the terms

of the buy-out to union musicians of the RSO. Florence Nelson outlined protective steps to take if a musician chose the buy-out plan.

The next day a front page article entitled "\$1.5 million gift a buyout offer" appeared in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*. Clarke Bustard wrote of Mark Russell Smith's speaking in general terms "of the need to reinvigorate orchestras by replacing aging veterans with younger, more energetic musicians."

On February 1, a memo was sent from Michele Walter to the entire Board of the RSO. Incredibly, the musicians learned that the responsible body of the RSO did not know that one third of the artistic product was potentially being altered.

A second newspaper article by Clarke Bustard pointed out that while Mark Russell Smith says he does not intend to purge players, he is evaluating them this season with rotating string sections. He wrote, "Whatever each player decides to do, many predict that this gift will buy a markedly different orchestra, in both membership and character, and a very different musical scene in Richmond."

## IMPACT

As of this writing, enough eligible musicians have opted to retire that almost all of the money is committed. About 30% of the full orchestra including 20% of the core musicians will leave by the end of next season.

The emotional impact of this entire event upon most of the musicians has been staggering. For longtime veterans anger, grief, and sadness prevail. Many of these individuals feel this is finally the last straw. Some believe they can no longer effect any positive change. Others talk of the incredible commitment they have made to the institution over the years, sacrificing family obligations and financial gain. One musician said, "This organization has become an energy vampire. It is time to put the focus back on myself and my family."

The betrayal of the Mellon process and refusal of management to consider the musician's retirement plan has also been a serious factor for many in considering retirement. "When I realized this decision was not even made by the entire RSO Board it did not speak well of individual concern for the players or the institution. It certainly was not indicative of the spirit of the Strategic Planning discussions which took place all of last season." Most believe they were never given a truthful explanation as to why the buyout is even occurring. "I thought about the organization I was highly loyal to and realized it probably doesn't exist anymore, except in the memories of the musicians."

Making the decision has been extremely difficult for some. "I was forced to choose between what I may need for retirement in the future and what I love doing, playing music in a symphony orchestra."

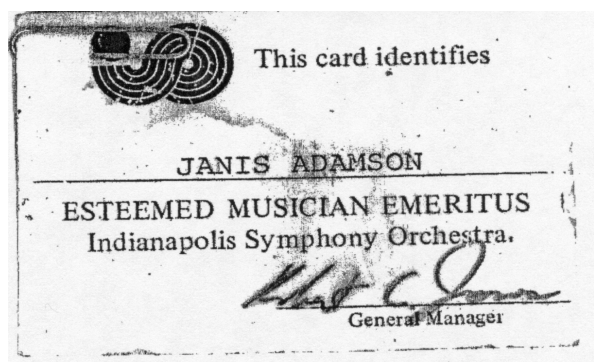
Younger and newer RSO musicians have very mixed feelings. Some express shock and grief for the colleagues they are losing and the divisiveness this has caused. Having to sit on numerous audition committees and adjusting to so many new faces seems "freaky" and overwhelming. There is anger that the musicians' alternative retirement proposal was not accepted: "It would have



Many thanks to **Janis Adamson**, Indianapolis Symphony cellist, retired, who sent Senza Sordino a huge collection of historic photographs and notes starting with his grandparents in Latvia to his present retirement in Minnesota:

Please don't be alarmed to receive this "Book!" The invitation to ICSOM Emeritus members to submit to *Senza* put me in the mood to start all over ... Those bygone years! Full with traditions and treasures in musician's life! ... Proud! I'm very fortunate to be already 80, but with very clear head and thinking! Going through this "package" I'm sure you will find interesting "stuff." All original ... no fiction or lies ... practically my life story! From once-free country of Latvia ... I played cello with the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra from 1956 to 1985. Those 29 years are full with exciting events and stories! All close to my heart! Never a dull moment! ...

Among the many items in Janis' collection was a copy of his Indianapolis Symphony "Esteemed Musician Emeritus" card:



been a much healthier gesture." There is serious concern for the future. Many question where enough musicians will be found to replace all the retiring part-time string players.

Others believe the donor may have had altruistic motives, but trust is now a real problem. "The morale has been destroyed; management has so little respect for us."

A few musicians left behind think this was a good idea and that older players' attitudes have obstructed growth. Even so, one player observes, "I believe this plan was designed for the spirit of the players, not the playing. The musicians who are leaving are more unhappy and disgruntled with management. I'm not opposed to the principle of asking people to leave who can't play, but rather than deal with problems, management chose a cowardly way to get a new work force."

Ultimately, no one can know how this unprecedented move in orchestral history will turn out. No matter what, this certainly is a "very sad way to do business."



(VOICINGS – continued from page 7)

travel per diem allowances, pensions, relationship with AFM, vacations, annual salaries, all negotiations, etc. Since our 3-hour luncheon was 50 years ago, I remember only the general aspects of the discussion. Managers, Board members, Guilds had their own organizations, why not the players? That was the gist of that very first meeting.

Willis Page  
Boston Symphony bassist, retired



What a change I have gone through since I started playing professionally in 1924. I auditioned for the National Symphony in the 1932-33 season that was under the Director Hans Kindler. My salary for that season was \$1,000, and I played for the first inauguration of Franklin D. Roosevelt on March 3, 1933. Soloist was Lawrence Tibbett.

As a solo bassoonist of the Cleveland Orchestra in 1937 my salary was \$125 a week. How times have changed. I have been retired since 1972 and am glad to see the progress that the orchestras are receiving due to ICSOM.

Frank Ruggieri  
New York Philharmonic bassoonist, retired

[Along with his letter, Frank enclosed a copy of his contract with the Cleveland Orchestra dated April 12, 1937. There was no mention of any pension or health insurance, but there was this provision: "... when services are rendered in Cleveland, Ohio, not more than nine services shall be exacted of the MUSICIAN in any one week, and when such services are rendered outside of Cleveland, not more than eleven services shall be exacted of the MUSICIAN in any one week." - Ed.]



After joining Local 802 in 1939, I auditioned in New York City for the Indianapolis Symphony, no curtain for anonymity, no committee—only the conductor—and I was accepted. It was an 18-week season, one week off at Christmas (no pay), no benefits of any kind. There was a one-page contract, all issues slanted toward management, no orchestra committee or shop steward; the conductor (who wrote the one-page contract) had five minutes of free overtime every rehearsal. That was fully a half hour per week free. Also no restriction on late-night rehearsals, no job security (he frequently fired musicians during rehearsals) and schedule changes at his will. All that for \$55 per week. Travel conditions were impossible!

When I retired at age 67 after 50 seasons (Indianapolis, Portland, North Carolina, Central City Opera, and 25 years in Denver), the contract was a thick, well-written document that addressed the musicians' needs and rights, our working conditions and benefits. This is a result of hard work by courageous members, our union, ICSOM, and orchestra committees. I am grateful to them all—my three-generation family of musicians has come a long way! Thank you all for your hard work.

Mildred Stubblefield  
Colorado (Denver) Symphony, retired

## Newslets

**FREE SPEECH AT THE MET**—Citing First Amendment protections, a federal appeals court on February 2 overturned a lower court ruling that barred the Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees Union from criticizing the Metropolitan Opera as part of its effort to unionize food service workers at the Metropolitan Opera House. For two years H.E.R.E. Local 100 has been in a battle with the Met's food contractor, Restaurant Associates, which refuses to recognize the union. The workers want the Met to help them convince Restaurant Associates to unionize. [from *Work in Progress*, AFL-CIO, 2/5/01, and the *New York Times*, 2/26/01]

**WORK HARDENING**—An article by Janet Horvath, Minnesota Orchestra cellist, entitled "Work Hardening: How To Safely Return To Work After Injury," appeared in the *International Musician*, February 2001.

**ICSOM, INCORPORATED**—ICSOM's new corporation, approved by the delegates at last summer's ICSOM Conference, was registered in the State of New York on December 8, 2000. ICSOM began operating as a corporate entity on January 1, 2001. A determination letter in recognition of ICSOM's 501(c)(5) tax-exempt status was issued by the Internal Revenue Service on March 8, 2001.

**IN MEMORIAM**—Word has just come to us that Carolyn Parks, hornist of the Kennedy Center Opera House Orchestra for nearly 30 seasons and former ICSOM Treasurer, passed away on March 5, 2001. More about Carolyn will appear in the next *Senza Sordino*.



## 2001 ICSOM Conference

San Diego California

August 22 - 26, 2001

Handlery Hotel & Resort  
950 Hotel Circle North  
San Diego CA 92108  
(619) 298-0511 (800) 676-6567  
fax: (619) 298-9793  
www.handlery.com

*ICSOM delegates and other attendees:* Please make reservations by phone directly with the hotel (8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Monday-Friday). Susan Levine is available, as always, to assist with travel arrangements:

**Susan Levine & Carl King**  
**CTS (Cassis Travel Services)**  
200 West 57th Street, Suite 608  
New York, NY 10019  
Tel: (212) 333-3633 x515  
(800) 726-2757 x515  
Fax: 212-247-3702  
email: suetravel@aol.com

*Senza Sordino* is the official voice of ICSOM and reflects ICSOM policy. However, there are many topics discussed in *Senza Sordino* on which ICSOM has no official policy; the opinions thus expressed in *Senza Sordino* are those of the author(s) and not necessarily of ICSOM, its officers or members. Articles and letters expressing differing viewpoints are welcomed.

## International Conference of Symphony & Opera Musicians (ICSOM)

Affiliated with the American Federation of Musicians - AFL-CIO

### ICSOM Governing Board

#### Chairperson

Robert Levine  
Milwaukee Symphony  
7680 North Longview Drive  
Glendale WI 53209-1862  
(414) 352-3246 / FAX (877) 482-2502  
rtl@icsom.org

#### President

David R. Angus  
Rochester Philharmonic  
284 Castlebar Road  
Rochester NY 14610  
(716) 244-2514 (Voice/FAX)  
david.angus@icsom.org

#### Secretary

Lucinda-Lewis  
New Jersey Symphony  
4 West 31st Street #921  
New York NY 10001  
(212) 594-1636 (Voice/FAX)  
lucinda-lewis@icsom.org

#### Treasurer

Stephanie Tretick  
Pittsburgh Symphony  
3979 Boulevard Drive  
Pittsburgh PA 15217-2619  
(412) 422-7275 (Voice/FAX)  
stephanie.tretick@icsom.org

#### Editor, Senza Sordino

Marsha Schweitzer  
Honolulu Symphony  
905 Spencer Street #404  
Honolulu HI 96822  
(808) 531-6617 (Voice/FAX)  
marsha.schweitzer@icsom.org

#### MEMBERS AT LARGE

Jay Blumenthal  
New York City Ballet  
484 W 43rd Street #24M  
New York NY 10036  
212-695-5895  
blujay@erols.com

Michael Moore  
Atlanta Symphony  
953 Rosedale Road NE  
Atlanta GA 30306  
(404) 875-TUBA (Voice/FAX)  
michael.moore@icsom.org

Mary Plaine  
Baltimore Symphony  
630 Deepdene Road  
Baltimore MD 21210  
(410) 433-6063  
mary.plaine@icsom.org

Charles Schlueter  
Boston Symphony  
60 Otis Street  
Newtonville MA 02460-1823  
(617) 964-4019 / FAX 630-8077  
charles.schueter@icsom.org

#### ICSOM Counsel

Leonard Leibowitz  
322 West 48th Street  
New York NY 10036  
(212) 765-4300 / FAX 765-2775

#### ICSOM Emeritus Program

Abe Torchinsky  
777 W. Germantown Pike #1028  
Plymouth Meeting PA 19462  
Phone: (610) 277-3981  
AbeT825844@aol.com

Orchestra-L and WebMaestro: Robert Levine

**Subscriptions:** \$10 per year, payable to *Senza Sordino*  
c/o Marsha Schweitzer, 905 Spencer Street #404, Honolulu HI 96822

### ICSOM Orchestras

Alabama Symphony Orchestra  
Atlanta Symphony Orchestra  
Baltimore Symphony Orchestra  
Boston Symphony Orchestra  
Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra  
Charlotte Symphony Orchestra  
Chicago Lyric Opera Orchestra  
Chicago Symphony Orchestra  
Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra  
Cleveland Orchestra  
Columbus Symphony Orchestra  
Colorado Symphony Orchestra  
Dallas Symphony Orchestra  
Detroit Symphony Orchestra  
Florida Orchestra  
Florida Philharmonic Orchestra  
Grant Park Symphony Orchestra  
Honolulu Symphony Orchestra  
Houston Symphony Orchestra  
Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra  
Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra  
Kansas City Symphony  
Kennedy Center Opera House Orchestra  
Los Angeles Philharmonic  
Louisville Orchestra  
Metropolitan Opera Orchestra  
Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra  
Minnesota Orchestra  
Nashville Symphony Orchestra  
National Symphony Orchestra  
New Jersey Symphony Orchestra  
New York City Ballet Orchestra  
New York City Opera Orchestra  
New York Philharmonic  
North Carolina Symphony  
Oregon Symphony Orchestra  
Philadelphia Orchestra  
Phoenix Symphony Orchestra  
Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra  
Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra  
Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra  
Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra  
San Antonio Symphony  
San Diego Symphony Orchestra  
San Francisco Ballet Orchestra  
San Francisco Opera Orchestra  
San Francisco Symphony Orchestra  
Syracuse Symphony Orchestra  
Utah Symphony Orchestra  
Virginia Symphony



www.icsom.org

*Senza Sordino* is the official publication of the International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians and is published four to six times a year. ICSOM is a conference of the American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada, AFL-CIO. Unauthorized reproduction of any part of *Senza Sordino* is strictly forbidden. Copyright © 2001. All rights reserved. ISSN 1074-7850