

# Senza Sordino

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15

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## Commentary

By Brad Buckley, ICSOM Chairperson

As *Senza* goes to press, the AFM Convention campaign rhetoric is reaching a fever pitch. Everyone agrees the AFM is in serious trouble. Yet despite the Blue Ribbon recommendations, there does not appear to be a clear consensus of what to do. At this point, only two things are certain:

1. The rank-and-file musician lacks direct say in the decisions made at this Convention;
2. The central issue of this Convention is how much to increase the Federation per capita dues (presently \$12.00 per year).

I must confess that I am completely mystified when union officers proclaim that requiring musicians to pay a minimum of \$.77 (yes, 77 cents) a week (\$40.00 a year) to the AFM will decimate the membership and wipe out many locals, especially while musicians in the ICSOM orchestras pay an average of \$3.81 a week (\$198.00 a year) to the Federation. The AFM has lost 119,339 members since 1980, when the only dues that were increased were work dues. While not raising the per capita in order to keep members, the AFM has managed to lose 41% of its members.

Symphony musicians keep talking about the services, policies, and programs we and the AFM need. I thought you might be interested in some public statements by those in office or running for office:

AFM President **J. Martin Emerson** in *Variety*, March 1991: The Blue Ribbon Plan is "not being received very happily by a lot of small locals, who feel that it could put them out of busi-

ness." Particularly galling to such locals, he says, "is the increase in per capita dues."

Referring to the Blue Ribbon Plan, AFM Vice-President **Mark Tully Massagli**, candidate for AFM President, in *Variety*, April 1991: "Never has there been one resolution that has taken such a sweeping shot as this one," Massagli says, adding that he believes that a compromise will be reached between the \$28 increase and what he calls "band-aid fixes."

International Executive Officer and candidate for AFM Vice-President **Steve Young**, referring to the Blue Ribbon Plan in the April 1991 *Variety*: That the official proposal would stir up so much controversy "should have been thought out before," adding, "Most members are intelligent enough to see the need for an increase, but you can't completely make up for lost time in a recession year."

Executive Officer **Richard Q. Totusek**, candidate for AFM President, in the April 1991 *Variety*: "A musicians' union cannot compare to an industrial union, where all the members are full-time members," says Totusek. "It's not a reasonable comparison. The part-time musician of this week is the full-time musician of next week and the unemployed musician of the week after that."

There needs to be a thoughtful discussion of the problems of the union at the AFM Convention. The programs and services needed by symphony musicians could easily be funded by the work dues dollars we pay to the AFM. I wonder if anyone has bothered to figure out the real reason why so many people might quit before they will pay 77 cents a week to the AFM.

## ICSOM Conference Agenda

The 1991 ICSOM Conference will take place at The Antlers Lodge in Vail, Colorado, from August 21-25. Planning is under way, and the following are some of the Conference highlights.

A main topic of discussion will be the AFM Convention in June, particularly the Blue Ribbon Committee's recommendations.

Judith Merideth, from the AFL-CIO, will speak about a national health care policy and will explore with us what our role might be in helping to lobby for this legislation.

Dr. Alice Brandfonbrener will report on her NEA-funded study of six ICSOM orchestras which are participating in a program to prevent occupational injury.

Catherine French, Chief Executive Officer of the American Symphony Orchestra League, has been asked to speak about what programs the League has of direct benefit to orchestra players. She will be available to meet with individual delegates.

The negotiations workshop this year will use role-playing, with some delegates taking the orchestra/union side, and others acting as management/board.

Hopefully, the new president of AFM will be at the conference to explain what improvements the AFM will implement.

As always, ongoing ICSOM business will spill into every available moment. At least we will have a beautiful setting in which to accomplish that. —Ed.

## We Sit at the Same Table, But on Opposite Sides



By Debbie Torch, Senza Sordino Editor

*Adapted from an address to the 1990 conference of the American Symphony Orchestra League*

In recent years, many orchestras have begun to address the relationship between the musicians, board, and management. This relationship has been fraught with problems and conflicts, and improving it would mean correcting flaws in our institutions and reforming the system of orchestras in this country. What has caused this poor relationship, and what can be done to fix it?

It's really interesting to watch the new people who come into the orchestra. Typically, they are thrilled to start the job, but often change dramatically in just one season. The reality of daily life in an orchestra is a shocking experience for many musicians. It is a rude awakening after the idealism of our training to discover that many conductors are incompetent, that the musicians have little control over what and how they are required to perform, that the job might not provide a lot of artistic gratification, and that a signed contract can be renegotiated or cancelled.

There is a gap that needs to be bridged in our orchestras, and it is between the musicians and the institution. The typical American orchestra is ruled by a triumvirate of music director, board, and management. Generally, each attends to its own function: the music director is responsible for artistic excellence, the board for governance, and the management for administration. Thus, the music director can be blamed for poor artistic decisions, the board for not raising enough money, and the management for faulty day-to-day operations. But no one is responsible or accountable for the entire institution! We cannot bridge the gap until one of those entities accepts responsibility for the whole organization.

If one were to look at an orchestra in terms of a caste system, the board, management, and music director would be the Brahmins, the office help and volunteers would be the warriors, and the musicians the untouchables. I choose this analogy because in a caste system, status is very closely tied to power, and I think the gap we are talking about concerns power: the power of information, the power of influence on certain aspects of the workplace, and a voice in matters about which one is the expert professional.

Our institutions have a tremendous imbalance of power, with the musicians receiving very little. Consider that it is possible for a manager or trustee with virtually no background in music to influence the artistic aspects of running an orchestra, while the musicians, who have devoted themselves since childhood to the study and performance of music, are not allowed much of a meaningful role, if any, in artistic decisions such as selecting conductors, determining repertoire, and so on. Involving the musicians in artistic planning and decisions does not supplant the role of the music director.

In a few of our orchestras, the musicians have achieved in their contracts the right to substantive artistic influence in matters such as selection of a music director. Usually, that happens at the negotiating table only when the Symphony Association feels it has no money to offer. This seems wrong to me, because

the musicians are a major artistic resource available to the orchestra. Most of them remain in the organization far longer than the average music director or manager.

Thus the musicians have a vested interest in seeing the orchestra thrive, not only because it provides their livelihood, but also because most of them will be staying there.

The musicians of any orchestra offer an array of musical strengths: some will be excellent teachers, some experts at new music, some adept at organizing chamber music concerts, some talented at composing or arranging, some virtuosos at solo performing. Certainly their cumulative knowledge about music far exceeds that of the most well-intentioned board or enlightened management, and for that reason, excluding the musicians from the artistic domain is not in the best interests of the organization.

Our exclusion from the artistic aspects of governance is one example of the power disparity in orchestras. Handling of information is another.

The sharing of information has been a topic for at least the last four years in the liaison committee of ICSOM officers and

*Continued on page 3*

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## Word Gets Around



*Senza Sordino* presently has subscribers on five continents: North and South America, Europe, Asia, and Australia. In our efforts to be truly global, we're still waiting for our first subscribers from Africa and Antarctica! Not only the musicians of the 47 ICSOM orchestras, but also many individuals, libraries, conservatories, universities, members of the press, government arts agencies, legal firms, labor organizations, medical professionals, local unions, and orchestra managements receive *Senza*.

*Continued from page 2*

Major Orchestra Managers Conference representatives. In many orchestras, it is difficult, if not impossible, for the musicians to obtain the Comparative Statistical Report published by the American Symphony Orchestra League. How are we to negotiate and work together if both sides aren't allowed to play from a full deck? To assume that musicians desire such information solely in order to use it against the institution insults our integrity and commitment. The late executive director of the Philadelphia Orchestra, Steve Sell, told the ICSOM conference in 1985 that musicians who request information "do so because they have a fundamental stake in the health of the institution ...and that if indeed there are problems there is no group with a greater interest in addressing and solving those problems than the musicians themselves."

Another problem with information concerns important events going on in our orchestras which too often the musicians learn about from the media. Examples of this in various orchestras have included the announcement of the next season; hiring/firing/resignation of the music director, management, or staff; financial news such as major corporate gifts, and so on. There have even been instances of orchestras learning from t.v. news that dire financial circumstances exist and that the musicians are being asked for pay cuts. This has a devastating impact on the morale and attitude of the musicians. Orchestras have had problems with leakage to the press of confidential material such as the content of off-the-record negotiations. Musicians are not innocent in this area either.

Some managements have instituted informal meetings with the orchestra to improve communication and encourage exchange of ideas. When the management is sincere and honest and meets with the whole orchestra as a group, such efforts can be productive and deserve the participation of the musicians. However, meetings can be misused by either side. Misuse occurs when meetings become a forum for the management to proselytise, when matters that are of concern to the entire orchestra are discussed with only part of the group, or when the management lets the orchestra ventilate with no intention of taking any action. Musicians have abused this forum by trading information for special privileges such as time off, increased pay, or solo opportunities.

In examining the communication problems between musicians, boards, and managements, I suggest we consider what it means to have an adversarial relationship. An adversarial relationship doesn't have to be negative or even unfriendly. When there is an atmosphere of respecting differences and trying to compromise or reach a consensus, the adversaries enhance the institution by the diversity of perspectives they bring to it. An adversarial relationship turns negative when parties act in their own short-term interest rather than in the interests of the group they're representing and/or the long-term good of the institution. Certainly this negative behavior can come from both sides of the table.

Perhaps the ultimate manifestation of our difficulties is the way we resolve conflicts, and that is through grievance procedures and contracts. The contract is to a great extent a chronicle

of the previous disputes and abuses in an orchestra. As far as grievances, there is a long history of many instances around the country of personnel problems that were not handled skillfully or fairly. Taking an issue to arbitration is painful for both sides and often entails a lot of expense that could be avoided if we could solve our problems "in house." I am not saying that we shouldn't have collective bargaining or grievance procedures in orchestras. It would be an ideal world in which neither were necessary.

We represent different constituencies, and each has a place in the organization. Bridging the gap to me does not mean submerging our differences, it means accepting them. It means throwing out the caste system in favor of democracy. It means managements and boards letting go of some of their power. It means treating the musicians as highly trained professional experts, not as factory workers. It means working for the long-term good of the orchestra as a whole, and that, ultimately, would mean better orchestras.

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## Book Reviews

### **The Art of Auditioning**

*by Joseph Glymph*

*11 pps, plus title and contents pages; self-published; \$12.95.*

### **The Audition Process: Anxiety Management and Coping Strategies**

*by Stuart E. Dunkel*

*146 pps, plus contents, bibliography, index, author's bio; Pendragon Press; \$16.95.*

Even though musicians devote untold time and energy to perfecting performance skills, when we get the chance to demonstrate the fruits of our labors and the love of music that must have motivated us for years, we often find the experience overwhelmingly negative. The audition process has not yet been made humane or palatable, much less dispensable; the only solution seems to be to prepare as well as possible. In these days of expensive air travel, any way to cut down on the number of audition trips or to increase the productivity of one's auditioning is welcome.

Both books under review are advertised in the *International Musician* every month. I received both exactly one week after I had sent in my order; good marks for promptness. My first reaction was that the Dunkel book was a better buy: it has many more pages, it is bound like a book (it is Number 3 of the Julliard Performance Guides) rather than with a plastic spine, and the pages are printed on both sides.

*Continued on page 6*



## Fit as a Fiddle

**Taking Care of the Person  
Behind the Musical Instrument  
Dr. Richard Norris**

Physical exercise plays a vital role in keeping performers fit and healthy. While making music is not athletics in the strict sense of the word, it definitely has its physical aspects. The body is an integral part of one's instrument. Muscles which are tight, weak, or deconditioned are hardly ideal vehicles for inspired musical expression and are often a source of physical discomfort which can be distracting at least and disabling at worst.

Many musicians are interested in exercise; however, there is often confusion as to what are the best or proper types to do. This article will attempt to guide the performer towards a comprehensive, balanced program of exercise. Like a balanced diet, an exercise program should have several components: strength, flexibility, and endurance. Ideally, a musician should have a routine which does not entail expensive equipment or memberships and which can be done in an apartment or hotel room without disturbing the neighbors! Let's look at the components in more detail.

### Flexibility

Stretching muscles and tendons increases the blood flow and prepares them for physical activity. The chief component of muscle and connective tissue is collagen. Collagen is contractile, like elastic. If allowed to remain in a shortened position for long periods, it becomes tight, restricting free movement. Like elastic, it stretches most easily when warm and therefore, stretching is best

done after a hot shower or after some mild exercise to gently raise the body temperature. The stretches should be slow and sustained, at least 30 to 60 seconds, or longer for tighter or larger muscles. Stretch only to the point of moderate discomfort, not

to the point of pain, or one risks tearing instead of stretching. All the muscles of the body, not just the hands or fingers, should be stretched. It's a good idea to do at least one good stretching session, preferably early in the day, and then to repeat it, perhaps more briefly, before and after practice. The stretching may also be combined with slow deep-breathing exercises. Yoga classes are readily available and affordable at many "Y's" or community centers. Many excellent books on stretching can be found in the health section of bookstores. The American String Teachers Association just recently published a paperback, *Stretching for Strings*, which has general application for other instruments as well. (Write to ASTA at P.O. Box 669, Bloomington, IN 47402.)

We should also consider the concept of instrument-specific stretches. For example, flutists often rotate the head to the left and tilt it towards the right. Unless one alternates between a left- and right-handed flute, this can cause imbalances over the course of months or years. Flutists need to emphasize the opposite movements in their stretching program. Likewise, the violist's left shoulder is always externally rotated and the bowing arm somewhat internally rotated, so work-

ing on opposite stretches will help avoid imbalances. The harpist's spine is usually rotated to the left because the left hand must reach forward to play the bass strings. Harpists need to work on spine rotation to the right.

### Video Review:

#### "Therapeutic Exercise for Musicians"

When it comes to exercise, many musicians follow the guidelines of Mark Twain, who wrote, "When I feel the urge to exercise, I lie down until it goes away."

Thus Dr. Richard Norris, a specialist in physical medicine and rehabilitation who treats many musicians and dancers, had his work cut out for him when he decided to create an exercise program for musicians. Having pondered for months over advertisements for his exercise video, I finally overcame my inertia and shuffled to the phone to order a copy.

Several days later it arrived and I somewhat grudgingly loaded it into the VCR. What unfolded over the next hour was a most pleasant and uplifting (!) session of warm-ups, stretches, and strengthening routines.

The exercises are derived from Dr. Norris's extensive background in yoga, Tai Chi, and dance, and are most gracefully demonstrated. Even more important, the explanations are clear and helpful, with front and side views shown for each exercise. The exercises can be done anywhere; no special equipment is needed. The program is gentle and low-impact, with suggestions of how to make the exercises more difficult or more aerobic. There are also some interesting coordination challenges. I think it's worth the \$27.50 price of the tape just to see Dr. Norris perform some of the jazz-dance isolation movements in which he rotates his neck or chest in all directions without moving any other part of his body.

Of great value and relevance are the instrument-specific exercises in the last section of the video. These are designed to counteract uncomfortable physical demands of playing an instrument and reflect the injuries Dr. Norris has observed in treating many musicians.

Amazingly, this tape was made in one session, a real testament to the ease with which Dr. Norris explains and performs the exercises. He throws in a lot of information so that without even trying, one learns the names of the major muscle groups and how they relate to playing an instrument. This video is an invaluable service to the field of music medicine, and I recommend it unconditionally.

*Debbie Torch*

### Strength

One needn't be a Stallone or a Schwarzenegger to play the fiddle, but a certain modicum of strength and muscle tone is desirable and can help to prevent fatigue and injury. This is particularly true of the larger instruments and for persons of small stature. Remember that backs and muscles can be strained by carrying the instrument as readily as by playing it! When possible, heavier instruments should be transported in cases with wheels or on folding airline-luggage dollies. Some exercises such as swimming are excellent for both strength and endurance, but are often expensive or difficult to fit into a busy schedule. A good toning program can be accomplished easily and inexpensively by the use of Thera-band™, a broad elastic strip available in different colors, each of a different grade of resistance. It comes in 6-yard rolls for about \$8 from Rolyan (1-800-558-8633) catalog #A521-7 (medium) or A521-8 (heavy). I believe they also have books of exercises, but it is quite easy to make up your own. Cut the roll into one- or two-yard pieces and either hold each end or tie it in a loop.

### Endurance

Physical stamina is probably more critical for some instruments than others, but is certainly an important component of health. One may alternate the various parts of the exercise program, but most experts recommend at least 20 minutes of strenuous exercise three or four times a week. Check with your physician regarding this if you have health problems, are over 40, or have not regularly engaged in strenuous exercise. My favorite is non-impact aerobics which is based largely on dance and martial arts movements and can be done in a small area without making much noise. There is an excellent and inexpensive video called "NIA" by Debbie and Carlos Rosas, available from Vestron, Inc., Stamford, CT, or video stores. Tai Chi is also excellent exercise and when done briskly over 20 or 30 minutes can afford a good workout which is both stimulating and relaxing. Classes like yoga are usually easily found and inexpensive.

I have released a one-hour videotape (VHS only) covering and demonstrating all aspects of a musician's exercise program. The tape, "Therapeutic Exercise for Musicians," was made of my presentation at the recent "Playing Less Hurt" conference on Music Medicine in Minneapolis. [See review on previous page.] It is based on the Physical Education for Musicians course I teach each semester at the New England Conservatory. The exercises are drawn and blended from more than twenty years of study and practice of yoga, Tai Chi, and dance and from my medical background in physical rehabilitation and orthopedics. The tape is available for \$27.50 (personal check or money order) from: Richard Norris, MD, 12 Whitney Av., Cambridge, MA 02139.

*Richard Norris, MD, director of the Boston Arts Medicine Center, practices rehabilitation medicine and teaches at Boston University and at the New England Conservatory.*

### Noteworthy

- Musicians of the Colorado Symphony had agreed to a tiered salary structure with amounts contingent on ticket sales and contributions. At season's end, each musician received a 22% bonus (\$4650 for a minimum scale player), raising base salary from \$21,000 to \$25,650. The CSO has just negotiated a one-year contract and will start next season with a \$400,000 budget surplus.
- The Music Critics Association, Inc. Newsletter reported in the May 1991 issue that Delos Records [which is not signatory to the AFM recording agreement] has not paid several writers who wrote annotations for records which have been released and promoted.
- Another item in that newsletter concerned Russell Stamets, who was fired from the St. Petersburg, FL *Times*. The Newsletter reported that Stametz believes his firing occurred because he was outspoken in his coverage of the Florida Orchestra's problems.
- The *Senza Sordino* cartoon contest has been extended into Volume 30. All entries received this year will automatically be included. The new deadline will be December 31, 1991.
- On the ICSOM Governing Board, officers are elected one year and members-at-large the next. This year, we will elect four people to member-at-large positions.

### Clams

The New York City Ballet Orchestra reports an error in the Mini-chart of Wages in February's *Senza Sordino*. Their entry for average weekly services should have been 6, not 8.

**Book Reviews**

*Continued from page 3*

Yet the Glymph book should not be lightly dismissed. Mr. Glymph is the founder of the Classical Symphony Orchestra, a Chicago-based training orchestra. On the title page, he notes that proceeds from the sale of the book go toward the support of his orchestra; without knowing anything of the man or the orchestra, the charitable aspect allows me to overlook the book's apparent skimpiness. Glymph attempts to cover all aspects of audition preparation, from deciding what openings to apply for, to the selection of solo repertoire, practicing, and mental preparation. The advice is sound, although this book is really aimed toward the young pre-professional: someone whose illusions are still more or less intact. Although more detail could have been included, the tone of this book is gentle, positive, and warm.

Dr. Dunkel's book, however, is addressed to those who have had at least one bad experience, which probably includes all of us! It could just as easily have been subtitled, "Picking up the Pieces," or possibly, "Ego Reconstruction." Dr. Dunkel is an oboist, educator, and composer. His book is a compendium of advice from many sources, including Eloise Ristad's *A Soprano on Her Head*, Barry Green's *The Inner Game of Music*, and Albert Ellis's *A New Guide to Rational Living*. This wide-ranging approach is both the weakness and the strength of the book.

Dr. Dunkel's reading has been eclectic and formidable (many pages in Chapter One have at least one footnote per paragraph); organization of the material, therefore, becomes very important. He divides the book into four sections: Psychological Adaptations to Audition Stresses; On the Realities of the Music Business; Coping Strategies and Techniques; and

Successful Attitudes and Outlooks for Auditioning. The large amount of material is often presented in a scatter-shot approach, requiring careful attention and selectivity on the reader's part.

I think this book is best used as a point of entry into the literature surveyed by the author. Use it to get started, but refer to a cited work in order to get the fuller flavor and background of an approach that interests you. There is a certain amount of repetition, annoying when one reads the book straight through, but perhaps forgivable if one treats it more as a reference work. I wish that some space had been given to integrating relaxation techniques, affirmations, and positive visualization with the task of preparing the musical portion of an audition.

The unfortunate impression arises that this book's main goal is to help one prepare for failure; yet the fact is that usually only one person wins an audition, with the result that all of the other auditionees are, in a sense, failures. Dr. Dunkel redefines success in terms of the attitudes and expectations that one brings to an audition, and how much one is able to enjoy taking an audition.

This book definitely should not be the only one on your audition-preparation bookshelf. Getting the most out of it depends on how much effort you are willing to invest, so don't wait until a week before your audition to get the book if you think it would be useful.

*Melvin Baer  
Dallas Symphony Orchestra*

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