

# Senza Sordino

*Official Publication of the International Conference of Symphony & Opera Musicians*

VOLUME XXIII, NO. 5



JUNE, 1985

## SAN ANTONIO STRIKE ENDS

If a strike can be an unfortunate rite of passage in an orchestra's development, then the San Antonio Symphony has finally come of age. San Antonio was the only major orchestra in the country which had never had a strike, and there is no question that the struggles and experiences of our colleagues in other orchestras benefited us. With the help of ICSOM leadership, the AFM Symphony Department, and our attorney, John Schulman, we were able to use many strategies which had already been proven effective.

From the very beginning of our negotiations we knew that orchestra unity would be crucial to a successful outcome. Fred Zenone spoke to us about organizing our orchestra, and we all began to realize the importance of putting aside our private agendas and working for the good of the group. Good communication within our organization seemed to be imperative in building a truly collective unit. We periodically held combined meetings of our different committees so that we all continued to work toward similar goals. To keep orchestra members informed during the summer break, we sent out newsletters. The negotiating committee members were always willing to answer individual orchestra member's questions, and as a result the orchestra gave us its trust when we needed it.

During the strike, communication between orchestra members became crucial in maintaining morale. Our phone committee worked overtime, passing on the latest news. We held potluck suppers, which became group therapy sessions as we expressed our feelings and supported each other. Even picketing gave us opportunities to talk with each other, and we began to feel like members of a large family.

Our fund-raising activities before and during the work stoppage were also important in keeping us together. Music was our best money-maker, and we found that our concerts with both large and small ensembles helped us retain our identities as musicians. We held many concerts, including our Lone Star State Solidarity Concert, in which players from around Texas rallied to the cause and traveled here at their own expense to join us in an exciting concert. At the potluck dinner between the rehearsal and the concert, musicians from Austin, Corpus Christi, Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio mingled and made friends and set the groundwork for mutual support in the future. The San Antonio Symphony musicians were also honored to have nine members of the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra join us in one of our other concerts.

Fund-raising also brought us into contact with other members of the San Antonio community. We met with our local AFL-CIO council early in the strike, and their help was invaluable. Labor unions throughout the city sent financial donations, and their members wore our buttons, came to our concerts, and walked our picket lines. Joan Suarez, president of the council, was a major force in helping us to contact and involve city government in our efforts to reach a settlement. She had the political knowledge and relationships we needed, and she coached us daily in our lobbying activities.

The AFL-CIO also put us in touch with the United Way, who trained four of our members as strike counselors. The counselors were briefed on such economic options as food banks, extending credit, postponing payment of utility bills, and others. An important goal of the strike counselors was to use every resource possible to help people weather the strike economically and to strengthen the orchestra's bargaining position by trying to keep our ICSOM emergency fund as strong as possible. (The orchestra did not join the AFM strike fund in time to receive benefits this year. However, the International Executive Board of the AFM did make available loans of up to \$2500 per musician should the need arise.) The counselors drafted a set of guidelines which were distributed to the orchestra after having been approved at an orchestra meeting. Anyone who needed to borrow money had to meet the requirements set forth in the guidelines.

We learned many lessons during the work stoppage. Most important, we have recognized the necessity of seeing ourselves as a part of the many communities to which we belong. Our relationships with other orchestras, labor unions, and to our city were all crucial to the settlement of our strike. Finally, in assessing our strike, it is important not to forget the national climate in which it occurred, for we are in an era in which managements are demanding that labor give back past gains. Although painful compromises had to be made from both sides of the table, we are proud of the progress we have made.

*Ellen McGlone  
San Antonio Symphony  
ICSOM Delegate*

## PRELIMINARY SOUND LEVEL SURVEY REPORT

*by Karla Holland-Moritz  
San Diego Symphony Orchestra*

After tabulating over 900 responses to the partially completed ICSOM sound level survey begun in January, it is clear that we have an alarming problem in our orchestras, one of major significance to many symphony, opera, and ballet musicians. Every one of twenty-three orchestras thus far surveyed reports excessive sound levels on stage to be a problem. More than three-fourths of the respondents report personally experiencing problems with excessive sound levels on stage, and in several orchestras a total of more than half the contracted players report experiencing such problems.

Over half the respondents report fear of sustaining a hearing loss as a result of excessive sound levels on stage. More than three-fourths state that their performance is adversely affected by this problem. The same number report a morale problem as a result. More than half report nervousness, tension, anger, disgust, and irritability resulting from excessive sound levels on stage. Half the respondents state that their concentration is disturbed and that the quality of their playing is harmed. Nearly half

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**SOUND LEVEL SURVEY** (Continued from Page 1)

report experiencing physical pain as a result of excessive sound levels on stage. The same number report feeling that they have no control over the situation and feel helpless, frustrated, and trapped. A third express loss of job satisfaction, antagonism among players, and decreased enthusiasm for the job. Nearly a third report fatigue and ringing in the ears. According to a third of the respondents, complaints are ignored, with both management and conductor seeming to be unaware or unconcerned. Brass, timpani, and percussion vie for first place as the source of excessive sound levels, with electronically amplified instruments next, followed by flute and piccolo.

One theme found in musicians' replies to the questionnaire was the hope of benefiting from solutions used by other orchestras. Though orchestras have tried various solutions, it has become clear from the results of the survey that none of the orchestras thus far tabulated has a complete solution to this problem. Some solutions tried include:

- *Earplugs.* Though this is the most widely practiced attempted solution, its main accompanying side effect is heartily disliked by musicians; hearing protection is achieved at the expense of being able to hear while playing. As one player noted, "I am deaf on stage, but I can hear the rest of the time."

Management is contractually required to provide earplugs to players in Oakland. Other orchestras in which management provides earplugs include Los Angeles, Denver, Oregon, San Francisco, Rochester, and Milwaukee.

- *Plexiglass shields for pops concerts.* Most often this was reported to be used around trap sets. Orchestras using this method include Syracuse, Boston, Milwaukee, Los Angeles, Denver, Oakland, Oklahoma, and Phoenix.

- *Plexiglass shields during subscription concerts.* These are located in various areas of the orchestra. Orchestras using this method include St. Louis, Denver, Houston, Oregon, Minnesota, Metropolitan Opera, Los Angeles, and Rochester. Pittsburgh uses acoustical paneling around percussion in the pit, in addition to a partial wall with carpeting between strings and percussion.

- *Separation.* Orchestras attempting to create greater distance between the sources of sound and other musicians include Rochester, Milwaukee, Oakland, Denver, New Jersey, and Los Angeles.

- *Risers.* Risers are used as an attempted solution in Los Angeles, Denver, and St. Louis. Dallas will use semi-permanent risers in their new hall in 1987. Oregon reports exploring the use of risers and ceiling panels in their new hall.

- *Individual baffles.* Buffalo, Minnesota, and Oregon report the use of baffles placed on the back of individual players' chairs.

Many musicians expressed gratitude to ICSOM for addressing this long-standing problem in orchestras. Musicians are clearly looking to their national organization for assistance. ICSOM will continue to give attention to this area and to work with management to find viable solutions to this problem.

Thanks to all the musicians participating in this survey, and special thanks to the St. Louis Symphony for participating in the pilot survey. A more complete report on the results of this survey, along with a progress update on ICSOM efforts to seek solutions, will be presented in August at the ICSOM conference.

**ERRATUM:** No, that third paragraph in Dr. Henry Scott's article in the April issue is not a hodge-podge of psychoanalytic jargon, it is a printing error (a duplicate line of print) which completely escaped our proof-reader. Dr. Scott's point, made clear by omitting the second line, is that one can reach subconscious forces underlying stage fright through psychoanalytic methods. Apologies to Dr. Scott and to our readers.

**ORCHESTRAS SEEK SOLUTIONS TO DECIBEL DILEMMA**

*To supplement the preliminary report in this issue on the ICSOM survey of sound level problems in member orchestras, we print information gleaned from some of the orchestras and musicians that have sought solutions other than the only partially satisfactory ear plugs.*

The National Symphony Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, St. Louis Symphony, Cincinnati Symphony, Minnesota Orchestra, Denver Symphony, and Los Angeles Philharmonic have used plexiglass screens in recent years to deflect sound and protect musicians' ears.

ICSOM delegate Paul Murphy reports that the Minnesota Orchestra has been using large plexiglass screens for three years with some positive effect. The orchestra is now experimenting with small plexiglass baffles that clamp on to the backs of chairs and extend behind, but do not come around, players' heads.

The story in Saint Louis is related by delegate Gary Smith:

The excessive sound levels on the stage of Powell Hall were brought to the attention of the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra management seven years ago by a survey and paper prepared by bass clarinetist James Meyer. To remedy the problem, extra music stands, with tops tilted straight up, were placed behind musicians who sat directly in front of percussion, timpani, trombones and trumpets.

Meyer continued to investigate the use of plastic screens of various sizes and thicknesses to replace the music stands. As a result of his study, the SLSO bought four large plastic shields and mounted them on wood floor stands for stability. Units are placed behind the last stand of second violins and next to the bass clarinet and fourth horn to buffer percussion sounds. Screens are also placed next to the last stand of violas and next to the English horn and contrabassoon to shield these musicians from the timpani. Music stands are still used to give the horn section some relief from the loud sounds of the trombones and trumpets who sit behind them, but the music stands are not as successful as the plastic shields.

The shields and extra music stands are taken on tour, but they are difficult to place when performances are on small stages. The music director does not want the timpani and percussion section to seem enclosed by the shields.

For SLSO summer pops concerts at Queenie Park, carpeting covers the floor and the brass are placed on risers. Trap drums and electronic bass are enclosed by plastic shields. Because electronic amplification is used at these concerts, the brass underplay their parts and an engineer adjusts balances at the console, an arrangement which brings smiles to the faces of the string players.

A letter from Bernard Fleshler, violist with the Buffalo Philharmonic for 25 years, notes his own solution to the noise problem. Mr. Fleshler holds a Patent Pending on an acoustical baffle that fits on the back of the musician's chair. An elongated plastic plate, covered on both sides with sound absorbent material, curves behind the musician's head, shielding his ears and reducing the decibel level from the instruments in back of him by as much as 65%. The pad is covered in black velour, making it practically invisible to the concert audience. Height and angle are adjustable. A new model can be mounted on different chairs, making it usable for tours and run-outs.

According to Mr. Fleshler, musicians of the Buffalo Philharmonic have been using the pads for about two years and indicate that they are less tired after rehearsals and concerts.

Persons interested in more information can write to Mr. Fleshler at 67 Covington Road, Buffalo, NY 14216.

## ICSOM CONFERENCE IN FOCUS

*The annual ICSOM conference will take place in San Francisco August 14-18, a Wednesday-to-Sunday schedule that increases delegates' access to discounted airline fares. Sessions will be held at the Golden Gateway Holiday Inn. Hosts for the conference are the San Francisco symphony, opera, and ballet orchestras and the Oakland Symphony.*

*ICSOM chairman Frederick Zenone tells what to expect in San Francisco.*

The 1985 ICSOM conference will focus on the dynamics of representation and the workings of musicians' representative organizations. We will examine how musicians individually and collectively are represented by orchestra committees, by local unions and the national federation, and by ICSOM. We will consider what these organizations can and can't, should and shouldn't do. We will be especially concerned with the quality of representation, and we will explore how constituents and representatives can most effectively interact.

A whole generation of activists has passed since orchestra musicians began to assert their collective will, and new leaders and new committees have come forward. Some have become or remained part of the national collective effort while others, and the orchestras they represent, have left or remained apart from this effort. Some have established or continued wonderful practices, some have continued not-so-wonderful practices, and some have been unnecessarily reinventing the wheel. We must take a back-to-basics look at collective activism in this new generation.

Special emphasis will be placed on orchestra committee practices, resources, and quality of representation. Problems of maintaining continuity, developing consensus, functioning effectively, and representing the orchestra to the management and to the union will be examined. Donald Koss, chairman of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra Members Committee, and Ralph Curry, chairman of the Cleveland Orchestra committee, will make a joint presentation on the role of the committee chairperson.

Apart from this major focus, we will examine two other topics of great importance to musicians.

A panel discussion by four physicians who have been directly involved in the study, diagnosis, and treatment of musicians' medical problems in this country and in Australia will be moderated by Stuart A. Schneck, M.D., Professor of Neurology and Neuropathology at the University of Colorado School of Medicine. Other participants will be Hunter J. H. Fry, M.S., Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons, Fellow the Royal Australian College of Surgeons, Plastic Surgeon and Treasurer of the Performings Arts Medicine Society of Australia; Richard Lederman, M.D., Ph.D., Staff Neurologist, The Cleveland Clinic; and Jonathan Newmark, M.D., Clinical Fellow in Neurology, Harvard Medical School, Massachusetts General Hospital. It is important that our orchestras, through their delegates, become aware of the varied work and points of view of these four major medical clinics with which our panelists are affiliated and which are designed to deal specifically with the problems of musicians. To our knowledge this presentation will be the first of its kind for musicians.

Last year's pension workshop showed that some orchestras have serious problems with their pension plans. Accordingly, ICSOM legal counsel Phil Sipser and Len Liebowitz will be available to meet with small groups and with individual delegates to discuss specific problems about individual orchestras' pension plans, their benefits, funding, and investment return.

These consultations will be available and useful only to delegates who have some basic knowledge of pensions. Delegates with specific questions should bring copies of their pension plans and latest actuarial evaluations.

We are fortunate indeed to have as our setting for this year's conference the wonderful city of San Francisco. Planned activities and evening sessions will be kept to a minimum so that delegates may have more free time than at past conferences.

**It is with sadness that we note the passing of Margaret Lucchesi, ICSOM delegate from the San Francisco Opera Orchestra. According to published reports, Peggy died February 24 following a swimming meet in Palo Alto just after posting her fastest time in the 100-yard freestyle. Last year she ranked in the top 10 nationally in three distances for women 55 to 59 years old. Peggy, a percussionist with the San Francisco Symphony until switching to the Opera full-time, was obviously a woman of accomplishment. She will especially be missed at the 1985 conference, for which she was to be one of the co-hosts.**

## SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON SOUND LEVELS MEETS IN CHICAGO

On February 5, 1985, five members of the ICSOM-Major Managers Liaison Committee met with three consultants in Chicago to discuss sound level problems. Topics included the effects of noise on hearing; the combined effects of drugs and noise, measurement of hearing loss; measurement of sound levels; acoustic barriers and earplugs; and data-gathering techniques.

The consultants, all specialists in aspects of physiological, psychological and physical acoustics, were Dr. Constantine Trahiotis from the University of Illinois, Dr. William Rabinowitz from MIT, and Dr. Richard Stern from Carnegie-Mellon University.

Participants included Fred Zenone, Melanie Burrell, and Penny Anderson for ICSOM, and Henry Fogel and Ernest Fleischmann for the Major Orchestra Managers Conference.

## NEW ICSOM DIRECTORY IS PUBLISHED

The 1984-85 *ICSOM Directory* has been published and mailed. All member orchestras should have received copies. Orchestras are reminded that the *ICSOM Directory* is not made available to the public at large and that no copies are to be distributed to persons other than ICSOM orchestra members.

Special thanks to Cincinnati Symphony delegate and former *Senza Sordino* editor Henry Shaw, whose hard work in preparing the directory again this year is greatly appreciated.

Richard Decker, Syracuse Symphony Orchestra ICSOM delegate, reports that the SSO has been able to rent equipment to measure sound levels in the orchestra this season. Orchestras wishing access to dosimeters and other sound level meters may contact Mr. Robert N. Andres, Vice-President of Oshex Associates, Inc., 4 Commane Road, Baldwinsville, NY 13027. Mr. Andres ships to any place in the U.S. and rents by the day or week. He has been most helpful to the orchestra in Syracuse.

## SETTLEMENT SUMMARIES

Settlements are reported in greater detail in the ICSOM bulletins which are sent immediately to member orchestras; basic summaries and interesting new provisions are noted in Senza Sordino. Orchestras are encouraged to file bulletins as a basic source of information.

**San Antonio Symphony Orchestra** musicians ratified a new 4-year agreement March 20, ending a strike which began January 5 and lasted 11 weeks. Length of season changes from the former 38 weeks plus 2 weeks for the San Antonio Festival to 40 consecutive weeks plus 3 possible additional weeks in the final year. Wages (were \$440) increased to \$458-\$480-\$505-\$545, all plus \$15 EMG. Pension increases from \$10 to \$11-\$12-\$13-\$15 per month per year of service. Sick leave, long-term disability, severance pay, and fully employer-paid medical and instrument insurance provisions were gained for the first time.

New provisions were also achieved for a dismissals review committee of 15 musicians elected by the orchestra and for changes in the grievance and arbitration procedure incorporating an appeals committee of 5 musicians elected by the orchestra. A new provision calls for screens to be used at preliminary and final auditions; screens may be removed in finals only if all committee members and music director agree.

Scheduling and working condition concessions included allowing split-orchestra services, an increase from 3 to 12 9-service weeks (to be offset by 7-service weeks), and a decrease in overtime increment (from 30 to 15 minutes). Management has agreed to provide 15 5-day weeks.

A board-management-musician committee has been established. Three tenured musicians elected by the orchestra will have a voice but no vote at board meetings.

Thanks were extended for the support of ICSOM orchestras, the AFM Symphony Department, and local public and union officials. Financial aid was offered through the ICSOM Emergency Relief Fund and by the AFM, which made special \$2,500 no-interest loans available to individual musicians.

## ICSOM LEGAL COUNSEL REVIEW SETTLEMENTS

This year's round of negotiations had a distinctive "good news—bad news" flavor.

The good news included the excellent Pittsburgh settlement and the progressive settlements in Philadelphia, National, Los Angeles, San Francisco and San Francisco Opera. Most of these agreements contained increases in seniority pay, which many musicians believe is a very equitable wage structure. In many of our orchestras it is unseemly, to say the least, to pay the entry or scale wages to senior members who have devoted many years to the organization. Seniority pay plans, which have become widely accepted ever since the first such program was negotiated over a decade ago, also offer incentive for younger members to remain in the orchestra.

The bad news comes from New Orleans, Houston, Baltimore, and Louisville.

In the first three we saw musicians forced by financial crises to accept mid-term reductions in salary without any solid commitment for the future by management. Long-range planning with musician involvement might help prevent repetition. Such forced reductions serve to highlight the fact that a collective bargaining agreement is just a piece of paper unless it is supported by proper managerial and fund-raising skills.

Hopefully, long-range planning and cooperation is the rationale behind the new 5-year contract in Louisville. Although there is nothing inherently wrong with a contract term longer than 3 years, having future wage increases dependent upon fund-raising make a long-term contract a precarious venture. If both sides learn the lesson of cooperation and joint planning, this settlement may turn out to be worthwhile. But if cooperation is one-sided and limited to the tri-annual fang-bearing of negotiations, then it is nothing more than appeasement. Long-range must apply to cooperation as well as to planning.

*I. Philip Sipser  
Leonard Leibowitz*

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SENZA SORDINO is the official publication of the International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians and is published six times a year on a bi-monthly basis. ICSOM is affiliated as a conference of the American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada, AFL-CIO.

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Subscriptions: A.F.M. Members \$4.00 per year  
Non-Members A.F.M. \$7.00 per year  
Overseas rate \$9.00 per year