

# Senza Sordino

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## Collective Ideas

### What Color is Your Collar?

Many of you have had what must be a generic conversation: someone you've just met is enthralled to learn that you play an instrument in a symphony orchestra. The person praises you for your talent, and in the next breath wants to know what you do for a living. In an address to the 1986 ICSOM conference, Mr. Jack Golodner, Director of the Department for Professional Employees (DPE) of the AFL-CIO, offered insights into the meaning of professionalism and our status as unionized professionals.

#### Our Identity Crisis

In this country, the first workers to organize into strong unions were the highly educated and highly skilled, and musicians were among them. However, our identity as union members is fraught with conflict, perhaps because people tend to associate unions with blue-collar occupations. We consider ourselves to be professionals, not laborers; yet we depend on the power of a union to improve our economic status and the quality of our working conditions. A further conflict in our identity exists because we live in a society which cannot resolve how to view people who work in the arts. The public generally experiences the arts as leisure and entertainment, and people sometimes assume that attending a concert is a night out for the musicians as well as for the audience. Golodner stressed the importance of educating the public as to what our work entails. Society is reluctant to acknowledge that people should be paid in money for work that already offers personal rewards. Thus, though people envy artistic talent, they may resent that an artist gets paid for performing. Surely other professions are gratifying to their practitioners; why does society consider an engineer or a university faculty member or a nurse or an airline pilot more legitimate than a musician?

#### Professionals and Independence

The classic professions (law, medicine, teaching, and divinity), involved people who professed to know more than their employers and therefore enjoyed a high degree of autonomy. In becoming employees, many professionals today have lost some of the independence which distinguished professionals in the past. Unions have been instrumental in recovering some of that autonomy by helping workers to gain a say in matters such as salaries and the manner in which work is done. As an example, Golodner described the situation of engineers in the auto industry during the 1960's. When Ralph Nader was attempting to gather data about car safety, he wanted to talk to the engineers involved in designing and manufacturing cars.

### The Honolulu Symphony Strike A Voyage of Discovery

This was the first strike in Honolulu Symphony history, and for most of us, our walk to the picket line was a trek into uncharted territory. We had only the stories of our friends in other orchestras and the mantras of our AFM guru, Lew Waldeck, to prepare us for and guide us through the treacherous waters which lay ahead. During our sixteen weeks on strike, we made some discoveries which we would like to share.

**TIME.** The HSO has always been a very hard-working orchestra. Because of our small string section and the lack of assistant or associate principals in many sections, almost every musician is required to play every service; and because of our low salary, most musicians have needed to supplement their incomes with teaching, chamber music, or other jobs. We had come to believe that working extra hours and constantly rushing from one gig to the next was a normal way of life. Ironically, symphony musicians in Hawaii, surrounded by some of the most famous beaches, golf courses, and parks in the world, hardly ever have time to use them! The ultimate offense is that most of the people we know who work a 40-hour week make two to three times more money than we do!

**CONTROL.** After having taken cuts in two successive negotiations, the HSO musicians became aware that our orchestra was out of control. Our jobs were going nowhere, the artistic integrity of the Honolulu Symphony was in jeopardy, and despite repeated attempts to help the management, things were getting worse. A terrible helplessness and hopelessness settled over the orchestra.

Our strike took the control of our jobs and our lives out of the hands of management and put it into our own. The feeling was glorious. The HSO, like every orchestra, has members who, for various reasons, had previously resisted the idea of a strike, but even these people walked the picket line with a firm, resolute step and an expression of determination reflecting the hope that this strike gave us. WE were in control, and finally we were able to stand together and DO something to reverse the ominous trend.

**RESOURCEFULNESS.** It was amazing to learn that we could manage to live, at least for a little while, without a job. We all discovered a reservoir of resourcefulness within us that provided the basic necessities during the strike. Naturally, the \$100/week from the AFM Strike Fund came in handy, but

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## What Color is Your Collar?

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However, the engineers were too worried about job security to talk directly to Mr. Nader. Instead, they worked anonymously, using their contacts in the United Auto Workers, who enjoyed a measure of protection through the union. Not until the engineers unionized could they voice their concerns about car safety and push for the freedom to work according to the ethics of their profession. In engineering, ethics might translate into designing a product in which the highest priority is safety rather than profit.

### Problems of Working Professionals

The DPE is the largest national organization in which representatives of the various professions meet to discuss common concerns. Twenty-seven different unions participate, representing musicians, actors, teachers, engineers, nurses, social workers, athletes—every major profession. Golodner emphasized that despite the wide range of skills and training which the professions encompass, there are basic issues common to all professions. One issue is the amount of workload. A teacher refers to class size, a social worker to caseload, a musician to service count; each is confronted by the problem of having to deliver increasing amounts of work to the employer.

### Mergers

Golodner explained that due to mergers and other changes in the business world, there are now fewer but larger employers. One result is that members of unrelated professions now share common employers. An organization such as the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (AFTRA) may negotiate its contract with NBC, but the real power behind the scenes is GE. Other affiliated unions in the AFL-CIO and the DPE such as the International Union of Electronic Electrical Technical Salaried and Machine Workers (IUE) have negotiated many contracts with GE, and can therefore offer AFTRA the benefit of that firsthand experience. Because of the enormous size, bureaucracy, and power of employers today, it is imperative for employees to organize around common interests. An example of professionals sharing an employer would be the electrical workers, musicians, stagehands, and actors all taking part in a production under the umbrella of one company. We all are part of the entertainment industry, as are the professional athletes whose games are televised.

### Technology

A third issue described by Golodner concerns technology. Many professionals feel the impact of technology in terms of displacement. We as musicians experience the encroachment of synthesizers; engineers and scientists are vulnerable to the constant and rapid changes in technology which may quickly render a person's training obsolete. Science and technical professionals may periodically need time off from the job to update their training and keep up with changes in their fields. However, the modern workplace puts so little value on an individual that an employer might prefer the cheaper cost of someone just out of school to the loyalty and past contribution of an established employee. In addition to the problem of displacement, technology creates problems of safety, health, and stress. We suffer from the sound levels in a pops concert; an administrative assistant experiences eyestrain from sitting for hours in front of a word processor. Technology raises a host of problems regarding copyright. How can copyright be applied to material being transmitted worldwide by satellite? Golodner pointed out that our obsolete copyright and patent laws offer fewer and fewer incentives to create; our society is mis-handling its artists and scientists.

### DPE and Musicians

The information which the DPE collects about the various professions could be helpful to negotiating orchestras. The AFL-CIO Labor Studies Center is comprehensive and offers training in matters such as contract negotiation and public relations. Members of ICSOM have been involved in some of the training courses. Musicians are encouraged to develop a relationship with their local AFL-CIO office in order to take advantage of the resources there. People can contact the national headquarters of the DPE at 815 16th Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20006.

What can an organization such as the DPE do for us? Probably the most important benefit to us is belonging to a forum in which we exchange information with members of 26 other unions of professionals. The DPE can help resolve a problem that affects several of its member unions. As performers, we depend on non-musicians not only in the technical aspects of our industry, but as members of our audiences. We stand to gain by cementing alliances not just with other musicians, but throughout our society. The DPE can play an effective role in steering the focus and facilitating the dialogue among its member unions.

Reported by Debbie Torch, Editor

## A Voyage of Discovery

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knowing that it would end after fifteen weeks motivated most of us to seek other income. Some of us took jobs as cashiers, waitresses, carpenters, or auto mechanics; others lived frugally from their savings, maybe taking out a loan from our own orchestra loan fund. Most of the musicians augmented their incomes with an occasional free-lance or chamber music job. Such opportunities were greatly increased by a special \$10,000 gift from an anonymous donor who wanted the musicians to continue playing music, get paid for it, and get their message to the community by means of chamber concerts in homes. About 45 such concerts were presented, the original \$10,000 having generated an additional \$6500 in contributions from our audiences.

A hand-to-mouth existence is certainly not what we would have wanted for the rest of our lives, but we learned that strikes CAN be survived, and that the results of a little suffering are worth it.

**BROTHERHOOD.** Someone remarked on the picket line, "I'm getting to know the people in the orchestra better during the strike than I did in all the years of going to work with them every day!" By working together on strike committees, meeting every day on the picket line, having weekly dinners together at the union, we got to know the innermost feelings and aspirations of our fellow musicians. We learned to recognize the talents and unique worth of each person in the orchestra, and to appreciate that people were motivated by the basic human values integral to our strike. The strike brought out in each of us the higher human qualities that are sometimes submerged when we are not so actively engaged in a struggle to preserve them.

Everyone's reasons for striking, or not striking, were different. Some people were more vulnerable to financial or emotional stress than others, and a big factor in our continuing solidarity was the willingness and the ability of

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## 1986-87 Symphony Wage Chart

This chart is based on information supplied by ICSOM delegates. The first column of figures below shows the minimum weekly wage and, where applicable, the minimum weekly wage for players with maximum career service benefits. A plus (+) indicates that such experience increments are paid in addition to any over-scale payments; a minus (-) indicates that this pay is absorbed into any over-scale payments. The second column expresses these wages as annual guarantees. Electronic media guarantees are not calculated in the chart data. For more detailed information, consult ICSOM bulletins and the annual AFM wage chart.

Orchestra	Weeks	Weekly minimum salary + maximum seniority benefit	Annual guaranteed salary + maximum seniority benefit
Alabama	40	\$475	\$19,000
Atlanta	52	660-700*	(-) 34,320 - 36,400
Baltimore	52	[635 - 655 650 - 670	(-) 33,410 - 34,450
Boston	52	930 - 980	(+) 48,360 - 50,960
Buffalo	44	550 - 570	(-) 24,200 - 25,080
Chicago	52	930 - 960	(+) 48,360 - 49,920
Cincinnati	52	[770 - 810* 795 - 835*	(-) 40,690 - 42,770
Cleveland	52	900 - 960	(+) 46,800 - 49,920
Dallas	52	701 - 716	(+) 36,452 - 37,232
Denver	41	607 - 617	(+) 24,887 - 25,297
Detroit	52	910 - 930	(+) 47,320 - 48,360
Florida	39	[420 - 460* 470 - 510*	17,330 - 18,890
Grant Park			
Honolulu <sup>1</sup>	38 (23)	427.15	16,231.70 (9,825)
Houston	52	569.50 - 594.50	(-) 29,614 - 30,914
Indianapolis	50	[595 - 615 615 - 635	(+) 30,250 - 31,250
Los Angeles	52	910 - 960	(-) 47,320 - 49,920
Louisville	39	386.68	15,080.52
Milwaukee	46	[640 - 651 672.50 - 683	(+) 30,187 - 30,687
Minnesota	52	[845 - * 885 - *	(+) 44,980 - 45,280
National	52	[820 - 840 940 - 980	(+) 43,160 - 49,890
New Jersey	24 (168 services)	610 - 630	14,646 - 15,120
New Orleans <sup>2</sup>	38	543	20,634
New York	52	930 - 955	(+) 48,360 - 49,660
North Carolina <sup>3</sup>	39	538 - 558	(+) 20,982 - 21,762
Oakland	Underwent bankruptcy liquidation		
Oklahoma	32	410 - 449	(+) 13,120 - 14,368
Oregon	42	529.83	22,252.80
Philadelphia	52	[910 - 945 950 - 985	(+) 48,360 - 50,180
Phoenix	41	500	20,500
Pittsburgh	52	[875 - 915 915 - 955	(+) 46,540 - 48,620
Rochester	52	581 - *	30,212 - *
St. Louis	52	[810 - 850* 850 - 890*	(+) 43,160 - 45,240
St. Paul <sup>4</sup>	40	see note	34,309.55
San Antonio	39	505 - 540	(+) 19,695 - 21,060
San Diego	Season cancelled		
San Francisco	52	[905 - * 915 - *	47,320 - 48,670
Seattle <sup>5</sup>	45	447.15 - 467.15	(+) 20,242
Syracuse	44	510.55 - *	22,464 - 22,814
Toledo	40	Contract A 327.50 * Contract B 177.50 *	13,100 * 7,100 *
Utah	52	520	27,040
Chicago Lyric	20	890 - 907.80	17,800 - 18,156
Kennedy Center			
Met Opera <sup>6</sup>	45 + 7	875	52,000
NYC Ballet <sup>7</sup>	30 + 3	742 - 785.75	(+) 23,744 - 25,056.51
SF Ballet	16(not guar.)	125.60/serv.	16,341.20
SF Opera <sup>8</sup>	20	920	30,000

Note: opera and ballet orchestra figures do not include rehearsal pay unless noted. Number after + indicates Supplemental Unemployment Benefit (SUB) weeks.

\* For seniority pay in Atlanta (\$1/week/year of service), Cincinnati (\$10/week/10 yrs), Florida (\$1/wk/yr), Pittsburgh (\$2/wk/yr), New York City Opera (1/wk/yr), and St. Louis (\$5/wk/5yrs), there is no cap on number of years of service; dollar figure provided is based on 40 years of service. Rochester has \$30 per year of service to maximum of weekly salary, paid lump sum. Minnesota, San Francisco, and Syracuse also pay lump sums annually. Chicago Lyric figure is 2% of weekly minimum. Seniority in Toledo is based on .50/ser/yr: \$115/yr for A contract; \$75/yr for B contract.

- Honolulu figures in parentheses represent actual weeks and annual earnings following 16-week strike.
- New Orleans is still working under last year's contract.
- North Carolina has 6 optional summer weeks at regular weekly salary.
- St. Paul musicians may opt for payment over 40 or 52 weeks; weekly wages vary.
- Seattle figures exclude Opera and Ballet.
- Metropolitan Opera pay is for 4 weekly performances. Rehearsal pay is included in annual wages.
- NYC Ballet annual wages reflect extra performances at Saratoga.
- SF Opera annual wages include guaranteed minimum 85 hours of day rehearsal pay and guaranteed overtime.

Prepared by Tom Hall, Chicago Symphony ICSOM Delegate

## A Voyage of Discovery

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orchestra members to look out for each other.

UNION. A discussion of brotherhood cannot be complete without mentioning the terrific support we received from our union, other labor unions in Hawaii, and other orchestras all over the country. The Musicians Association of Hawaii, Local 677, was absolutely magnificent in the support and leadership it provided before and during our strike. President Milton Carter and his father-in-law cooked dinner for the orchestra every Wednesday night at the union, and Milton's wry humor kept us smiling during our darkest days. His personal devotion to our cause reinforced our belief that what we were doing was RIGHT, and that our struggle was the business of all professional musicians and all working people, reflecting issues important not only to symphony musicians but to all of organized labor.

For 86 years, the Honolulu Symphony had been taken for granted by almost everyone. Suddenly the strike brought the Symphony to the fore in all our minds, forcing everyone to ask and answer some serious questions—How badly do we want an orchestra? How hard are we willing to work for it? How committed are we to a secure future for the orchestra and its musicians? What is the role of a symphony orchestra in Honolulu and in the world? Are the musicians ready to put themselves on the line in order to get the answers to these questions? In our case, the answer to the last question was an unqualified YES!

Marsha Schweitzer, Editor of *The Bugle*, the Honolulu Symphony Musicians' newsletter.

## Settlement Summaries

**Honolulu:** ratified Nov. 26, 1986. A 38% increase in annual wages over the 4-year term of the contract. Length of season (was 38 weeks) will be 23 weeks this year due to 16-week strike; goes to 38, 39, 41 weeks. Wages (were \$15,459) will be \$9,825 (due to strike); \$16,970; \$18,620; \$21,400. Seniority (new provision) begins in final year; paid in addition to other pay and premiums in increments of \$5/5 year periods. Instrument insurance (new): full coverage for primary instrument(s) used in orchestra. Improvements in working conditions regarding tour days, evening services, 9-service weeks, and 3-hour services. Labor dispute clause under which management can deduct wages for services missed because musician refused to cross picket line; previously, musician could be fired. Major improvements in dismissal review committee procedure, including notification, timing, selection of committee, binding vote of committee, addition of arbitration.

**Dallas:** ratified Dec. 19, 1986. Settlement involved willingness of musicians to accept one-year wage freeze in return for growth in the final two years of the contract. In the midst of negotiations, musicians signed a separate 8 1/2-week agreement with Dallas Opera. Contract is for 4 years; 52-week season. Wages (were \$691 plus \$10 EMG): \$701 (no EMG); \$728 + \$32 EMG; \$755 + \$45 EMG; final year 6 months at \$807 + \$55 EMG; 6 months at \$845 + \$55 EMG. Third and fourth years to show gains in pension, health insurance dependent coverage, parking reimbursement. Improvements in vacation and personal leave. EMG services will now be scheduled as part of a normal 8-service week, with extra work to be paid at time-and-a-half. Liaison committee (board, union, management, music director) to meet at least three times/year. New provision for two musicians to serve on selection committee in the event of a music director search; musicians to be consulted through liaison committee regarding other conductor positions; two musicians to serve on Board of Governors artistic committee.

## As We Go To Press

**San Antonio**—board of directors cancelled the 87-88 season when musicians rejected by a vote of 53 - 2 a proposal which would cut salaries and benefits by 46 per cent for that season.

**Two clarifications = one volunteer.** When Michael Nutt, delegate from the Los Angeles Philharmonic, asked two questions in a row about the ICSOM directory, he was promptly and unanimously declared co-ordinator of the next directory. David Angus, delegate from the Rochester Philharmonic, offered to assist. Data for the directory is now on computer disk, which will make updating much easier in the future. Michael reports that the directory is ready to go to press any day now.

Appearing in future issues of *Senza Sordino*:  
Report on the 1986 Music Medicine Conference, more information on health-related topics.



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New York City Ballet Orchestra  
New York City Opera Orchestra  
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North Carolina Symphony Orchestra  
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