

# Senza Sordino

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## ICSOM Shuffles Off to Buffalo

The 1988 annual ICSOM conference will be held at the Ramada Renaissance hotel in Buffalo, New York, from August 17-21, hosted by the Buffalo Philharmonic and Local 92.

As we approach the 1988 conference, the concern of all orchestra musicians in the U.S. and Canada points strongly to the need to examine the multitude of reasons for the demise or temporary demise of a symphony orchestra. While we may take solace and pride in the good contracts that have been achieved and in the good health of many of our orchestras, we must be prepared to take a close look at why, these past few seasons, so many orchestras have floundered. The Governing Board will present proposals regarding a possible professional study of this situation.

An additional focus of the conference will be ICSOM's relations with the AFM and how they may be improved. A special evening session will be devoted to discussing the report of the committee established at the 1987 conference to study ways to more effective and cost-effective representation of ICSOM orchestras within the AFM. Delegates will receive this report prior to the conference to facilitate discussion with their orchestras.

Sam Hirsch, a long-time, very active professional trade unionist, will speak about management-labor relations, specifically concerning attitudes and allegiances of boards of directors. Mr. Hirsch is affiliated with Corporate Campaign, Inc., which has advocated the tactic of applying pressure at the workplaces and other organizations of symphony board members.

Gordon Boles, a consultant who has worked with the Los Angeles Philharmonic musicians in the area of retirement planning, will give ICSOM's first retirement planning seminar.

We have scheduled four workshops this year. Early in the conference, we will have a short session devoted to the role and responsibilities of ICSOM delegates.

Our annual presentation of the principles and techniques of negotiation will be given by ICSOM legal counsel, Leonard Leibowitz and Liza Hirsch DuBrul. This has been a perennial favorite of delegates.

Richard Q. Totusek, a member of the AFM International Executive Board, president of Local #105 (Spokane), and expert parliamentarian, will discuss how to run a union and/or orchestra meeting using *Robert's Rules of Order*.

The fourth workshop, led by ICSOM legal counsel, will present issues of job security and non-renewal. Unfortunately, this enduring topic is always timely.

Other conference business will include election of executive officers of ICSOM. (See article on page 2.) Although the business schedule is extremely full, there will be a hospitality room available for all delegates to meet, socialize, and discuss orchestra concerns. All of us on the ICSOM Governing Board look forward to meeting with you.

*Melanie Burrell*  
ICSOM Chairperson

## Some Thoughts on Representation

As the 1988 ICSOM conference approaches, orchestras might well consider an example of contradictory and inconsistent representation which became apparent during the 1987-1988 season.

At the 1987 ICSOM conference, delegates from the 43 attending orchestras unanimously approved a resolution supporting the use of audition tapes only as adjuncts to written resumes and supporting completely open auditions, with no applicant being refused the opportunity to play a live audition. It was reassuring to know this was a position supported by all ICSOM orchestras.

Yet in a subsequent survey, reported in *Senza Sordino* in February 1988, a majority of the 27 orchestras that accepted tapes said they used them as preliminary auditions, and 16 orchestras reported that they excluded applicants from live auditions on the basis of their taped performances.

Although effort is made to provide orchestras with advance notice of resolutions and motions to be considered at the annual conference, this is not always possible. Because issues are often brought to the floor impromptu in connection with committee reports and other conference activity, delegates must know how their orchestras stand on these issues, must be familiar with their

orchestras' policies and practices, and must be prepared to present their orchestras' viewpoints. Delegates should bring copies of orchestra contracts for reference and should maintain liaison with orchestra leadership during the conference.

ICSOM is a community of orchestras, not an independent information agency or regulatory institution "out there" which promulgates arbitrary policies and imposes them on member orchestras. Any musician asking what ICSOM is going to do about a given problem is really asking what action his or her orchestra, in cooperation with other member orchestras, is going to take to address that problem. Action is undertaken and carried forth by ICSOM officers and committees based on the consensus of member orchestras as expressed by their delegates at annual conferences. Indeed, because the annual conference is the springboard for action to follow, orchestras should select their delegates before the annual conference, not in the fall.

Finally, to encourage representation consistent with orchestra views, and to inform orchestras how their delegates stood, decisions on key issues at this year's conference may be by roll-call vote so that delegate positions will be a matter of record.

*Tom Hall*  
Member-at-Large, ICSOM Governing Board

## Seattle Future Looks Foggy

As our ICSOM colleagues are aware, Seattle Symphony Orchestra musicians are embroiled in a complex dispute with our local and the AFM. To describe all angles of the situation and the emotional energy SSO players have expended would go beyond the scope of this article.

Troubled relations between the Seattle Symphony musicians and Local 76 go as far back as 1980, when the local went against the wishes of its membership and voted for a work dues increase at the 1980 AFM convention. Work dues rose to 4%, with no increase in benefits. Constituting only 6.7% per cent of the local's membership, SSO musicians now provide 79% of the local's work dues income and are dissatisfied with the quality, method, and cost of representation by the local.

Another issue in the breakdown of orchestra-local relations in Seattle is autonomy. There is dispute over whether the orchestra committee and negotiating committee represent the orchestra or the union. In 1984, the SSO presented a resolution to its local proposing that a negotiating committee selected by the orchestra act with the local and legal counsel to negotiate all trade agreements involving Symphony musicians. The musicians were informed by AFM presidential assistant Marv Howard that the resolution was out of order.

By 1985, 80% of the orchestra had signed a deauthorization form. [Deauthorization removes the requirement of union membership as a condition of employment.] An agreement reached between the orchestra committee and local stated that the local would reduce work dues to 2.5% by September 1986, allocate \$7,500 during each negotiation to the negotiating committee for expenses and time, pay up to \$100 per hour in legal fees for negotiations and grievances handled by counsel of the players' choice, and pay the players' ICSOM dues and AFM strike fund assessment. The local would retain representation on the negotiating committee and input on matters which would affect Local 76 or AFM general policy.

In 1987, relations were further strained by two events. First, Local 76 unilaterally altered the above agreement, putting a \$30,000 ceiling on legal fees and requiring the local's approval of legal counsel chosen by the orchestra. Second, the local objected to core members of the AFM serving on the negotiating committee elected by the orchestra. [A core member does not belong to the AFM or a local, but pays the local a service fee which is equivalent to dues.] The SSO core members elected by the orchestra ultimately resigned from the negotiating committee, although there is no labor law which prevents a core member from negotiating a contract.

In January 1988, the orchestra decided to seek an "amicable divorce" from its local. Further conflict between the orchestra and its local developed when the local opted to participate in the new AFM Orchestra Services Program (OSP), against the orchestra's wishes.

Attempts to bridge the widening gap between the orchestra and Local 76 continued through the spring. Officers of the Federation, including Marty Emerson and Lew Waldeck, have met with the local and the orchestra. On April 26th, the orchestra voted 58 to 18 to "seek and obtain by any lawful means the right of the Seattle Symphony Players Organization to fully and autonomously represent the employee members of the bargaining units of the SSO, Seattle Opera and Pacific Northwest Ballet."

At press time, the orchestra had chosen the International Guild of Symphony, Opera, and Ballet Musicians (IGSOBM) to be the authorized representative group. We do not yet know if the AFM intends to surrender bargaining representation rights. The orchestra filed papers on June 2 for a decertification election, which could be delayed until September or October. Meanwhile, no negotiations for a new master agreement have taken place; our current contract expires August 31.

*John DeJarnatt*  
*Seattle Symphony ICSOM Delegate*

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## Letter to the Editor

San Francisco Symphony Orchestra musicians have become increasingly involved in making decisions affecting the orchestra. Through committees addressing artistic matters, sound levels, acoustics, and long-range planning, we are now involved in many aspects of the orchestra. But how influential are we?

Most decisions concerning repertoire, conductors, touring, and recording are made without substantial musician input, and our input is often too late to have much effect. Our committees receive management's explanations, justifications, and apologies for events and actions that are imminent or have already happened. Until we can influence decisions early in the process, we will be limited to expressing our opinions and concerns to management.

Do the musicians want to be more involved in running the orchestra? Our increased involvement entails greater commitment at a time when our work load is already increasing. Does our traditional voluntary system of committee participation include working countless additional hours on duties management is paid to perform? Becoming more involved might be worthwhile if we really had influence. Realistically, however, management and the board have the authority to run the organization, and any controls we have are those we've negotiated into the collective bargaining agreement.

Our time and effort discussing matters outside these contractual controls is wasted until we have some power. And if we do have power to influence management effectively, our local union should pay for administrative assistants (chosen by us) to facilitate our involvement in decisions. However, if our input is ignored, we must simply be tougher at the bargaining table.

*Tom Hemphill*  
*San Francisco Symphony*  
*(The personal opinions expressed in this letter do not necessarily represent the San Francisco Symphony or its Players Committee.)*

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## Elections

Executive officers (chairperson, president, secretary, treasurer, and *Senza Sordino* editor) need to be elected at the 1988 conference. Officers and members-at-large serve two-year terms. A nominating committee has been chosen to recommend a slate of officers for consideration. As is our standard procedure, nominations from the floor are also welcome. The nominating committee members are Donald Muggeride, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Chairman; Lawrence Bocaner, National Symphony; and James Clute, Minnesota Orchestra.

## Orchestra-Union Relations Not All Bad

*When the St. Louis Symphony musicians submitted the information for their settlement bulletin last March, they noted that Local 2-197 was "all and more than an AFM Local should be to its symphony orchestra." This comment piqued the editor's curiosity, resulting in the following interview with Dick Renna, President of Local 2-197.*

**DT: A president from the St. Louis local always goes to the ICSOM conference. Why?**

DR: It is an excellent way to keep current on the happenings of the orchestras and to be a part of the discussions. After I attend the ICSOM conference, I feel I have been privileged to be part of a useful, learning experience. I only wish more presidents of locals could share my enthusiasm. I hear the lame excuse, "It's too expensive." To this I say: Baloney! Damn the expense, it's worth every penny!

**DT: But some local presidents can't justify the expense for serving a minority of the local.**

DR: Well, you can't hide the fact that the work dues from symphony orchestra members help to operate our union. I think it's important to listen to orchestra players' needs and problems and give them proper representation, which I believe involves attending the ICSOM conferences.

**DT: What do you think of the ICSOM conference?**

DR: Fabulous. ICSOM conferences are excellent for working toward the betterment of all symphony orchestras. The delegates learn a lot by talking and listening to one another, and this learning assures a brighter future.

**DT: The orchestra and local in St. Louis seem to get along well. Why?**

DR: Respect for one another. This along with communicating and understanding cannot result in anything but a good relationship. Over the years, members of the orchestra have come to know that either through committees or on an individual basis, they can call the union and get 100% cooperation and support. The union has earned their trust and confidence, and as a result, the players readily call us when a problem arises. A good relationship is easy to come by. I personally would find it very difficult to have a bad relationship with this orchestra.

**DT: Has the St. Louis Symphony been very involved in running the local?**

DR: Yes. Our vice president and one of our board members play in the orchestra. In fact, for as long as I can remember, one of the local's officers has always been a member of the symphony and we've always had symphony players on the board. We like that. Probably in the future it will be the same way.

**DT: How should an orchestra committee and local relate?**

DR: There's only one way: contact, contact, contact! Each side must know what the other is thinking and planning. A committee may come to a conclusion, but perhaps no one stopped to consider whether that conclusion is legal. Remember, Federation bylaws state that a home local is the exclusive bargaining representative of the symphony orchestra and as such, is legally liable for actions of orchestra committees. This is why I say close contact must be kept at all times between committees and the home local. The home local can hardly afford to run the risk of lawsuits.

**DT: What should a union do for its membership?**

DR: Naturally, all it can. I think elected officers should be able and ready to address whatever problems arise. In the years I have been president, I have seen all sorts of problems! Service is a big word with members, and a union must provide as many services as it can afford.

**DT: As president of the St. Louis local, do you earn a living wage?**

DR: Yes.

**DT: Do you think any local president should receive a living wage for performing that service?**

DR: Of course. In the locals which have ICSOM orchestras, I believe the local presidents are adequately compensated. In my case here, the bylaws state that I cannot perform as a player any more. I had this put into the bylaws many years ago. Why should I be in competition with the people who are paying my salary? When jobs are called into the union, there's no way I can take them, because I can't play, period. A lot of people say they're glad I became president because I couldn't play, period, anyway!

**DT: Let's talk about legal advice for orchestras. Should the orchestra select its own counsel? Should the local be bound to pay for that lawyer?**

DR: I think it's important that the orchestra participate in the selection of legal counsel. The players best know their needs and therefore can help select an attorney with the experience to represent them. Symphony negotiations, as we all know, are not quite the same as general labor negotiations. Symphony contracts have gotten so complex that it takes a lot of expertise to negotiate them. Because of this, the orchestra members must be very confident in their legal counsel.

**DT: What legal fees does Local 2-197 pay?**

DR: Well, we pay for all legal counsel. We pay all the fees for negotiations, and also if problems arise on an individual basis within the orchestra and the orchestra wants to consult our attorney. I give them this right, but first they have to ask me. So far, I have never refused.

**DT: Do you think symphony musicians have very much in common with their non-symphony colleagues?**

DR: Yes. I think an orchestra-only local would be a bad move. You know, this is nothing new. I think the reason presidents started going to ICSOM conferences was to assure themselves that the orchestras wouldn't drop out of the Federation. I don't think dropping out of the Federation would be beneficial to orchestras; I know our people don't want to do that.

**DT: What support does a local get from the Federation?**

DR: We get pretty good support from the Federation. Of course, nobody bats 1.000, but overall, I would say the Federation does a lot for us. Sometimes I get annoyed at them because they don't tell me what I want to hear, and also sometimes I call up there about what I consider a major emergency here and the person I want to talk to might not get back to me for a couple of days. I get a little hot under the collar when that happens. But I realize they have to service over 500 locals.

**DT: Do you have any other comments?**

DR: I want to stress what a good rapport we have in St. Louis. If it can happen in St. Louis, why can't it happen other places? We can't solve everybody's financial problems and so on, but we are convinced that a good relationship is easy to come by.

## Settlement Summaries

**Pittsburgh:** ratified a 3-year agreement in April 1988, retroactive to September 1987. Wages (were \$915 + \$10 EMG) go to \$940/960—985/1010—1035/1070, with EMG discontinued. Pension increases from \$18,000 to \$23,000; rule of 85 now allowed for one retiree per year. Current retirees' medical insurance premiums to be paid by Society; orchestra's income from any NPR broadcast activities will be donated by musicians to defray cost of retirees' premiums. Change in payment of orchestra's medical insurance premium specifies employer and musician obligations if premium increases. Improvements made in sick leave; leave of absence; unpaid child-care leave. Life insurance benefit and instrument insurance increased. Scheduling geared toward 5-day work weeks with 2 consecutive days off in return for more flexibility. Instrument loan fund provides tenured players up to \$10,000 interest-free and above \$10,000 at 8%; instrument must be used in all PSO services.

**Louisville:** ratified a 5-year agreement May 9, superseding what would have been the final year of the last 5-year agreement. Length of season (would have been 40 weeks next year) will be 42—43—44—45—45. Wages (would have been \$450.32 + \$40 EMG) will be \$460—471.25—482.74—494.52/507.88—541.30; weekly EMG remains \$40 for all five years. New provision for seniority starts in third year; musicians are eligible after 10 years' service. Pension plan for players with 5 years of service begins in second year; Society will contribute \$250/musician/year, increasing to \$350 in the third year, \$400 in the fourth, and \$450 in the fifth if the musician contributes an equal amount. Increases made in vacation and sick leave. Paid maternity leave (was 4 weeks) increases to 5 and 6 weeks, with unpaid leave to the end of a season. Scheduling changes will allow flexibility and more consecutive days off.

## New Earplug Development

Etymotic Research, Inc., a firm which has developed ear-plugs and other hearing protectors, recently announced the development of a new earplug. The firm claims that the new earplug will "reproduce the shape of the natural frequency response of the open ear, but at a reduced level." The new plug is said to have more uniform response at all frequency levels, unlike other plugs, which block out more high frequency than low frequency and thus muffle sound.

ICSOM does not endorse any specific hearing protection devices, but musicians who want more information can contact Etymotic Research, 61 Martin Lane, Elk Grove Village, IL 60007; telephone 312-228-0006.

## As We Go To Press

**Phoenix Symphony:** Citing a cancellation clause in the contract, the board of directors announced in late May the cancellation of the remaining two years of the current three-year contract. Management wants to renegotiate, and proposes to shorten next season from 39 to 36 weeks.

**Oklahoma Symphony:** The work stoppage has lasted the entire season.

**Nashville Symphony:** The season was canceled earlier this year; the board of directors filed for bankruptcy on June 16.

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