

Senza Sordino

Official Publication of the International Conference of Symphony & Opera Musicians

VOLUME XXVII, NO. 3



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Life Goes On, Even During a Strike

After a 21-week strike, one of the longest by any ICSOM orchestra, Baltimore Symphony musicians ratified a four-year agreement on February 18, 1989. The decision to strike is a serious one because musicians know how profoundly their lives will be affected and how much commitment will be necessary for a strike to succeed. During this strike in Baltimore, musicians experienced parents dying, babies being born, car accidents—the ups and downs of daily life, magnified by the added demands of the strike.

Ed Gorin came to this country about 15 years ago from the Soviet Union. In October 1988, his father died unexpectedly. After a week of mourning, and still in shock, Ed took a job as a messenger in order to earn some money quickly to pay for the expenses of his father's funeral. Then, several weeks later, his mother died, plunging him into a deep depression and exhausting his finances. Ed is a violinist in the Baltimore Symphony and is the players' committee treasurer. How he and his 95 colleagues in the BSO remained strong through a 21-week strike is a story of integrity, resourcefulness, and determination.

Unlike other ICSOM orchestras which have endured long work stoppages, the BSO is not in poor financial health. The orchestra's management has received extensive publicity for the success of a recent endowment campaign during which over \$40 million was raised within two years. Interviews with musicians confirmed that the primary issue in this strike was not money.

Violinist Ray Faraco explained that the issue of job security alone justified being on strike. "What's \$1000 a week when you don't have the job?" he asked. Ray pointed out that he's one person this issue doesn't affect at all, as he's 67 and about to retire.

Citing the national ramifications of the job security issue, committee secretary Bill Kendall pointed out, "We didn't want something disastrous to happen here and then come dumping down on all the other orchestras."

Ed Gorin explained that the existing contract language concerning job security has not been tested by the current music director or management. However, there were two cases during the previous music director and management; one was resolved in favor of the musician, and one in favor of the management, demonstrating that the language can work to either party's advantage.

"Every BSO musician had to see the loss of job security as a personal threat," added violist Delmar Stewart.

Like other BSO musicians, Delmar's commitment to the strike involved more than rhetoric. His first daughter was born during the 16-week lockout in 1981, and daughter #2 arrived during this strike, bringing with her the usual expenses of babyhood. Delmar remarked that being on a long strike can be an emotional roller-coaster, but that he never had any doubts about what the musicians were fighting for. "The BSO is an unusual group, in that people are willing to make personal sacrifices to fight for what they believe."

Of course what musicians most want to do is play music. Several BSO musicians were lucky enough to obtain temporary positions with other orchestras. Two players went on the Detroit Symphony's European tour, and others played with the Boston, Minnesota, Columbus, South Carolina, Delaware, and various community orchestras. The commitment of our colleagues in Baltimore was apparent in the scope of work they had to undertake in order to weather the strike financially. Besides free-lance performing, Delmar drove a bread truck in Washington, D.C., and painted houses. Even free-lancing sometimes presented surprises: when playing in a quartet at someone's wedding, Delmar encountered a BSO colleague who was head waiter for the occasion. Other temporary jobs musicians held included construction, clerking in stores, and secretarial. Trombonist Randy Campora taught school. Laurie Orner, piccolo player, worked in a department store and ran classes for Weight Watchers. In some households, partners assumed more wage-earning responsibilities to compensate for lost income. Trumpeter Ed Hoffman commented that self-esteem in the orchestra rose during the strike as musicians discovered previously untapped survival abilities. Some who thought taking a non-playing job would be the end of the world actually did fine, inspired by the firmness of their convictions and the unity of the orchestra.

Among the hardest hit financially were orchestra couples, losing two incomes. Laurie Orner's husband Jeff Stewart allotted his time to orchestra strike activities such as organizing, finding jobs for musicians, and forming psychological support groups. Jane Marvine, oboist, is married to James Olin, principal trombone. As organizer of weekly chamber music concerts, she was busier than when employed by the orchestra.

Steve Barta, clarinetist, commented on the importance of keeping a positive attitude. Although barely out of the hospital with flu, he described how talking with colleagues about some issues other than the strike helped him stay balanced. His other tactic was to devote extra time and energy to his own playing. Maintaining one's musical identity while on strike presents special challenges.

The musicians in Baltimore had a tight and effective network of support, both moral and financial. A "war chest" of \$49,000 enabled them to hire a publicist, set up a telephone hotline [see box], and offer loans and grants to musicians in need. For the first fifteen weeks of the strike, musicians received weekly payments from the AFM strike fund. Recently, the orchestra committee made a \$100 grant available to every player in the orchestra. Fewer than 30 of the orchestra's 96 players took the money! Virtually every player interviewed mentioned the letters and generous donations other orchestras sent to Baltimore. According to ICSOM delegate Charles Underwood, at press time \$30,000 had been contributed from ICSOM orchestras. Delmar Stewart found the financial and moral support from other orchestras "remarkable and uplifting. It really makes a difference."

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The BSO players used their telephone hotline to maintain communication and unity while keeping up morale in the orchestra. Each night, a new message was recorded, enhanced by appropriate music. Depressing news around Halloween was accompanied by a tape of wolves howling. Many orchestra members calling the hotline howled back. Songs used on the tape included "Big Bad John," "I Can't Get No Satisfaction," and "You Never Give Me Your Money (you only give me your funny papers, and in the middle of negotiations you break down..)" Warnings of an impending attack from management were set to "Mars"

from *The Planets*, with volume going eerily up and down. When he took over the hotline one weekend, Jeff Stewart created a spoof radio show in which the Acme Trap Door Company installed 96 trap doors on the stage of Meyerhoff Hall to go along with management's proposed demotions and dismissal clause.

Both financial and moral support came from the labor unions in Baltimore. For moral support, the players had various activities. During the first seven weeks of the strike, there was regular picketing in front of Meyerhoff Hall. Orchestra meetings occurred frequently. There were weekly chamber music and pops concerts produced by the players.

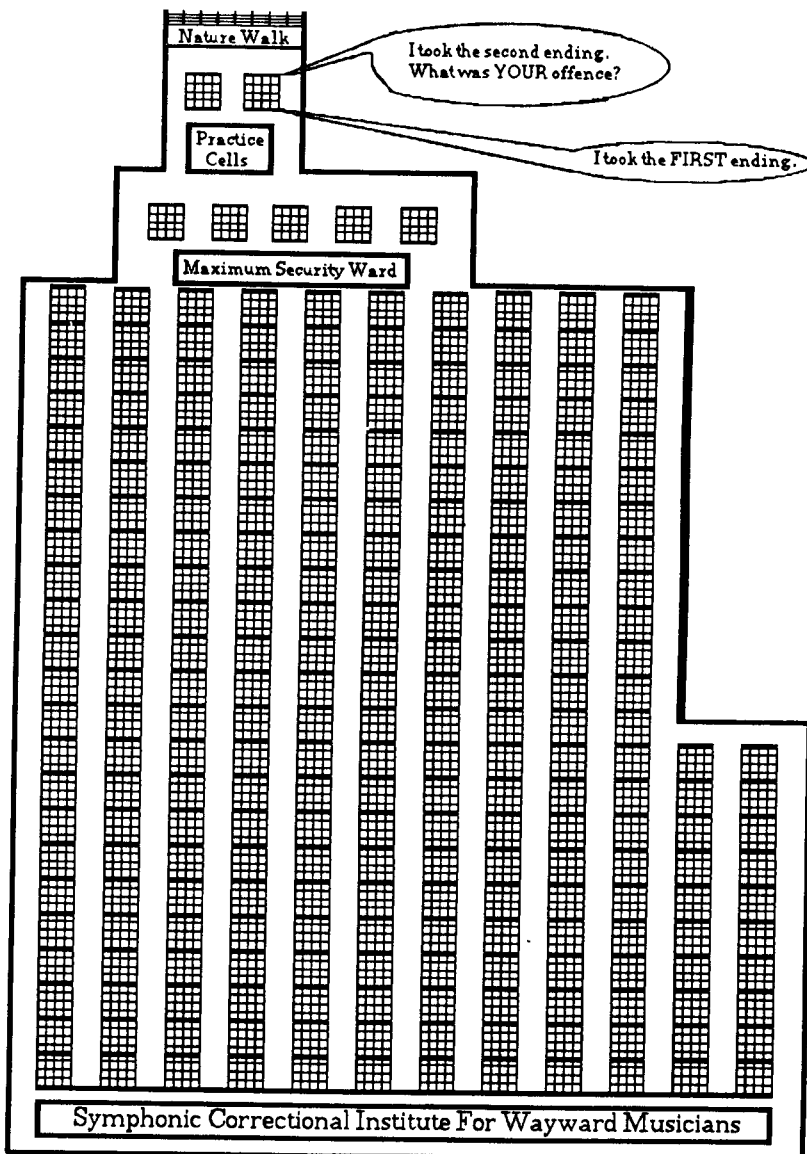
A strong motivation to hold out for a good settlement was the impact on future negotiations in Baltimore. "If we caved in this time, in the future we might as well just tell management, 'Write us a contract and we'll sign,'" warned Bill Kendall.

Although intent on obtaining a good contract, a number of players expressed concern about the long-term future for musicians in Baltimore. Musicians were disturbed by the board's attitude towards the orchestra and the public's general ignorance about what's involved in the work of professional musicians.

There will be many painful after-effects to this strike. A recurrent theme among musicians interviewed for this article was anxiety at returning to work for a management which the players feel has treated them shabbily and with whom they have had such a bitter and protracted dispute. Musicians voiced doubt about their ability to put behind the anger and hostility which the strike generated. Many also conveyed fears of losing dear colleagues to other orchestras.

This strike challenged the BSO musicians financially, morally, and personally. Giving up recital opportunities because of using one's hands for construction work; having a more Spartan lifestyle; foregoing plans that were important to family members—everyone made sacrifices. Orchestra musicians appreciate the cost of those sacrifices as well as the victory enjoyed by our strong colleagues in Baltimore.

Debbie Torch
Senza Sordino Editor



Gene Rehm plays percussion in the Atlanta Symphony.

Gene Rehm

1988-1989 Wage Chart of ICSOM Orchestras

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 (EMGs) and principal overscales are not calculated in the chart data. All amounts are rounded to the nearest dollar. For more detailed information, consult ICSOM bulletins and the AFM wage chart.

Orchestra	Weeks	Weekly minimum salary + maximum seniority benefit	Annual guaranteed salary + maximum seniority benefit
Alabama	40	\$493	\$19,700
Atlanta	52	755 - 795 *	(-) 39,260 - 41,340
Baltimore ¹	52	{795 - 815 (+) {805 - 825	24,905 - 25,945
Boston	52	{1,020 - 1,070 (+) {1,040 - 1,090 (+)	53,560 - 56,160
Buffalo	46	619 - 639 (-)	28,474 - 29,394
Chicago	52	1,040 - 1,075 (+)	54,080 - 55,900
Cincinnati	52	{830 - 870 (+) {870 - 910 (+)	44,200 - 46,280
Cleveland	53	{970 - 1,050 (+) {1,000 - 1,080 (+)	52,205 - 56,445
Dallas	52	800 - 815 (+)	41,600 - 42,380
Denver	41	{639 - 659 (-) {677 - 697 (-)	27,001 - 28,188
Detroit	52	940 - 960 (+)	48,880 - 49,920
Florida Orch.	38	473	17,974
Florida Sym.	39	494 - 534 *	(+) 19,247 - 20,807
Grant Park	10	699	6,987
Honolulu	39	{469 {485	18,620
Houston	52	720 - 745 (+)	37,440 - 38,740
Indianapolis	52	{685 - 705 (+) {710 - 730 (+)	36,270 - 37,310
Los Angeles	52	1,020 - 1,070 (+)	53,040 - 55,640
Louisville	42	460	19,320
Milwaukee	46	770 - 792 (+)	35,420 - 36,420
Minnesota	52	{955 - * (+) {975	50,180 - 50,480
National	52	920 - 1,060 (+)	47,840 - 55,120
New Jersey	22+7	690 - 710 (+)	20,010 - 20,590
New Orleans ¹	12	560	6,716
New York Phil.	52	1,040 - 1,075 (+)	54,080 - 55,900
North Carolina	40	591 - 611 (+)	23,640 - 24,440
Oakland			
Oklahoma			
Oregon	43	574	24,688
Philadelphia	52	{1,020 - 1,080 (+) {1,040 - 1,100 (+)	53,560 - 56,680
Phoenix	36	556	20,016
Pittsburgh	52	{985 - 1,025 (+) {1,010 - 1,050 (+)	51,870 - 53,950
Rochester	48	623 - * (+)	29,616 - *
St. Louis	52	{870 - 910 * (+) {880 - 920 (+) {890 - 930 (+) {900 - 940 (+)	45,740 - 47,820
St. Paul	40	935	37,400
San Antonio	37	{560 - 595 (+) {575 - 610 (+)	20,825 - 22,120
San Diego	37	585	21,645
San Francisco	52	975 - 1,010 (+)	50,700 - 52,520
Seattle	46	438 - 458 (+)	20,148 - 21,068
Syracuse	44	552 - * (+)	24,297 - 24,672
Utah ¹	52	550 - 575 (+)	26,400 - 27,600
Chicago Lyric	21	985 - 1,005 * (+)	20,685 - 21,105
Kennedy Center			
Met Opera	45+7	964	
NYC Ballet	26+3	834 - 890 (+)	23,359 - 24,821
NYC City Opera	26	755 - 795 * (+)	
SF Ballet			19,438
SF Opera	27	1,020	36,000

Note: Opera and ballet orchestra weekly figures do not include rehearsal pay. Metropolitan Opera pay is for 4 weekly performances. Number after + indicates Supplemental Unemployment Benefit (SUB) weeks.

* For seniority pay in Atlanta, Florida Symphony, and St. Louis (\$1/week/year of service), and New York City Opera (\$2/wk/yr), there is no cap on number of years of service; dollar figure provided is based on 40 years of service. Rochester adds a lump sum payment of \$30 per year of service to maximum weekly salary. Minnesota and Syracuse also pay lump sums annually. Chicago Lyric figure is 2% of weekly minimum.

¹ Annual figures for Baltimore Symphony and Utah Symphony reflect strikes of 21 and 4 weeks, respectively, while annual figure for New Orleans reflects partial season cancellation.

Prepared by Tom Hall
Chicago Symphony ICSOM Delegate

Negotiating Orchestras Meet

Every year, ICSOM and the AFM co-sponsor meetings of orchestras which are negotiating their contracts. These meetings provide a forum for negotiators, counsel, and ICSOM and Federation officers to discuss aspects of current negotiations. The first of two meetings scheduled for this year took place on February 20 in New York, with three orchestras attending. Nine orchestras are slated to attend the second meeting in New York on April 10.

Music Medicine Capsules

- An article titled "Medical Problems of Musicians" by Dr. Alan Lockwood was published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, January 26, 1989. Dr. Lockwood is treasurer of the newly formed Performing Arts Medical Association [see Aspen Conference article on page 4]. For information about reprints, write to him at the Department of Neurology, University of Texas Medical School, 6431 Fannin, Houston, TX 77030.
- The second "Playing Hurt" conference on identifying, treating, and preventing musicians' medical problems will take place in Minneapolis April 14-16. Contact Char Greenwald, University of Minnesota Conference Center, (612) 625-1520.

Aspen Music Medicine Conference

The sixth annual symposium on Medical Problems of Musicians and Dancers took place July 1988 in Aspen, co-sponsored by the Aspen Music Festival and the Cleveland Clinic Foundation. This conference is a forum for medical professionals; virtually all the speakers and presenters, and 2/3 of the conference attendees, were doctors, dentists, or research scientists. I attended the conference as ICSOM's representative.

ICSOM orchestras will be interested to learn that our 1986 survey of the medical problems of orchestra musicians was presented at Aspen by Dr. Susan Middlestadt, research methodologist and one of the authors of our study. The ICSOM survey, since reprinted in the journal *Medical Problems of Performing Artists*, was cited repeatedly at the Aspen conference.

Dr. Robert Miller from San Francisco presented work on mechanisms of muscle fatigue and metabolism. Most of his work did not involve musicians as subjects, but the findings appear to be germane to us. A new technology called nuclear magnetic resonance spectroscopy (MRS) provides information about metabolic changes in muscle cells during exercise and fatigue. New methods to measure fatigue use exercise rather than electrical stimulation. Chemical changes, low intensity exercise, and repetitive movement each produce distinct forms of fatigue.

Dr. William Wilke from the Cleveland Clinic explained a diagnosis called fibrositis. This diagnosis seemed somewhat controversial among the doctors, who were inclined to view overuse and other syndromes as the diagnosis in the cases discussed.

Dr. Richard Lederman of the Cleveland Clinic discussed pain, including its etiology and common manifestations. He talked about endorphins and the emotional aspects of pain. Treatments can be medical, physical, behavioral, or surgical. He spoke about overuse syndrome.

Doctors from the Miller Institute in New York discussed correlations between psychological characteristics, movement, workload, and isokinetic measurements as they relate to occupational injury.

Several presenters referred to ergonomics, the design of equipment to match anatomy and natural use of the body. Dr. Richard Norris of Braintree, MA, demonstrated his angled-head flute, flute rest, and flute stand, while dentist James Howard of Seattle showed how modifications of a chinrest alleviated neck pain in a violinist.

Psychological aspects of performers were also considered. Dr. Jeffrey Hutzler of the Cleveland Clinic explained that certain qualities common to creative people are resourcefulness, intelligence, ease in dealing with ambiguity, and skill at solving problems. Fear of becoming too conventional/comfortable sometimes prevents artists from seeking treatment for anxiety, depression, or other symptoms. Dr. Hutzler suggested that psychotherapy would enhance, rather than inhibit, artistic expression.

In order to make optimal use of the extensive data-base in the ICSOM questionnaire, it will be necessary to identify more issues to study. To this end, I attended a meeting convened at Aspen including Susan Middlestadt and Drs. Brandfonbrener, Lederman, and Lockwood. Areas of further study using the questionnaire data were explored. A second, larger meeting will take place this April.

The Performing Arts Medical Association was formed at the 1988 Aspen conference to establish criteria for the practice of this specialty. The group will try to ensure a standard of care, and will work to educate performers and health care providers. Doctors interviewed explained that the group will further credibility of the field and that they hope to work as a lobby to promote research.

Debbie Torch
Senza Sordino Editor

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Editor, Senza Sordino

Deborah Torch
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Counsel

Leibowitz and DuBrul
400 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10017
Phone: (212) 593-3310

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Mail to:
Deborah Torch, Editor
2922 Abercorn
San Antonio, TX 78247

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