

Senza Sordino

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ICSOM Moves Mountains at Aspen 1989 Conference Overview

The 1989 ICSOM conference covered a mountain of agenda in air that was even more rarefied than usual! The delegates were exceptionally dedicated—when it became clear on Saturday that we were running far behind schedule, everyone voluntarily returned, after a brief dinner break, to participate in a workshop on committee administration, and then came earlier than originally scheduled the next morning to continue the negotiations workshop.

The theme of this year's conference was "The Union," and in addition to the customary addresses by the AFM president and head of the symphony department, there was a panel discussion featuring the local presidents from Boston, New York, Orlando, St. Louis, and Honolulu. The presidents discussed what services their locals provide to the orchestras in their jurisdictions, what sort of working relationship they have with the orchestras, and the mechanics of how they work together. A major conclusion that came out of this discussion and the questions from the floor was the need for orchestra players to be involved in their locals so that officers don't act in a vacuum and so that orchestras have some control of the locals.

On Saturday night, the conference met International Representative Dennis Lynch and Field Staff Representative Bill Creelman, who travel within a specific jurisdiction to help resolve local problems. They have educational materials available and can help with organizing efforts, writing a union contract, etc. Both men were involved in trying to resolve the problems in Seattle. Lynch told the conference of his concerns about wages and conditions at summer jazz and classical festivals.

The symphony department has recently expanded the staff. Each symphony department employee is specializing as follows: Nathan Kahn, based in Nashville, responds to phone calls and deals with problems regarding auditions and instruments on airplanes. Chris Durham handles grievances. Wayne King is the computer expert and runs the AFM bulletin board. Lynn Johnson specializes in orchestra budgets, and John Trembath is the newly created Canadian symphony department. Lew Waldeck hopes to be more available having delegated the department's activities.

The relationship of orchestras to the Federation continues to be a major topic at ICSOM conferences. The structure committee established in 1987 to study that topic has made considerable progress. (See "Progress Toward Trade Division," page 4.)

Retired St. Louis Symphony bassist Russell Brodine gave a stirring address on "Unity and Solidarity." He recounted some of the many episodes which led to victories for union musicians. He reminded us that "a union is not insurance, where you keep your dues paid up and call when you're in trouble." He expressed pride

that the AFM president represented us at a solidarity rally for the miners striking the Pittston Coal Company, and urged us to support that strike. Brodine's remarks received an instantaneous and prolonged standing ovation.

A workshop about committee administration featuring Honolulu Symphony delegate Mark Schubert delved into ways of expediting orchestra meetings, achieving unity, and motivating participation.

As part of its mission to examine what, if any, common threads bind the orchestras which have experienced cancellations, bankruptcies, and other crises, ICSOM invited chairman emeritus Frederick Zenone to talk about trends he has seen while serving on teams which advise troubled orchestras. He described patterns which seem to occur frequently as well as problems of role definitions and responsibilities.

Zenone also reported on the status of the amalgamation of medical plans. Study continues on this project.

The ICSOM media committee suggested that ICSOM and the AFM establish a national radio broadcast contract, and also made recommendations concerning videos, limited pressings, and recordings made from radio broadcast tapes.

The conference passed the following resolutions:

- 1) recognizing the Baltimore Symphony musicians for their sacrifices and success during their recent strike;
- 2) authorizing the governing board of ICSOM to take any and all action to aid musicians of the Oklahoma Symphony;
- 3) endorsing the Live-PALRA legislation and urging orchestras to work for its passage;
- 4) expressing solidarity with the Las Vegas musicians in their strike against certain local hotels;
- 5) citing the difficulties in attaining racial balance in orchestras and outlining some components of the problem;
- 6) authorizing the governing board of ICSOM to explore any possible solution to the problem of troubled orchestras;
- 7) clarifying who will represent ICSOM at AFM conventions.

This year's nominating committee consisted of Michael Moore, chairman (Atlanta), Judith Litt (Oregon), and Charles Underwood (Baltimore). The conference elected Richard Decker (Syracuse) as secretary, and James Clute (Minnesota), Carolyn Parks (Kennedy Center), David Angus (Rochester), and Michael Nutt (Los Angeles) as members-at-large.

The Arts Under Siege: What To Do?

Arts Lobbyist Tells ICSOM How and Why She Fights For the Arts, and What She's Up Against

Ann Murphy recalled her early years on Capitol Hill: feeding the fish, answering mail, and typing the legislative start of the National Endowment for the Arts. Now executive director of Artists Alliance, an organization formed in 1979 and based in Washington, D.C., Murphy shared political savvy gained from her twenty-five years in the trenches. She addressed the importance of the arts in our society, the political agenda which threatens them, and how we must fight for their survival.

What the Arts Do For Society

Artists work in what Murphy terms "the only method of communication left to civilization." However, America views the arts not as work, but as entertainment. We must legitimize the arts so they are no longer considered expendable. "The bottom line in music has to do with moving society forward, doing the job that society gave the arts, which is to keep us in touch with our past and analyze our present, so we can create our future," she declared.

What's So Threatening About the Arts?

The arts represent progressive thinking and liberal attitudes, which are directly threatening to the conservative regime currently running the country. Murphy commented, "Congress wants to blame the arts for the moral problems we have in this country. The federal government is not reflecting the opportunity, the vision, the concept, the reality that you represent." Instead, the government is defensive and reflects fear of change, fear of minorities, and fear of losing international control.

How the Government Responds

Murphy outlined the tactics that have been used to undermine the arts in this country since Reagan took office in 1980. The administration tried to cut the NEA by 50 per cent, but lobbying prevented that. Postal subsidies were cut off for non-profit organizations. Tax law changes narrowed the base of private support for tax-deductible contributions to a mere 13% of the country. (This was a compromise from the administration's proposal of *no* deductions for gifts to non-profit organizations.) Another proposal, currently pending, is to tax endowments by 5 per cent. The amount of tax often represents more than an institution receives in federal aid. Arts institutions have been hampered by energy regulations (jeopardizing the condition of musical instruments, art works, etc.). Murphy warned that the administration's agenda is to adopt arts legislation so unacceptable that we would rather not have the Endowment. She cited the Civil Rights Commission, on which the administration appointed a chair that the black community hates, and then accused blacks of not wanting the Commission.

Fight Back!

Putting the arts on the national agenda requires our involvement. Though artists have traditionally left this task to boards and managements, we must take more responsibility. Murphy stressed several avenues for orchestra players to pursue. The first is to be counted in the political process. Telegrams and postcards are weighed or counted, not read, and we must mobilize much more response on issues. Second, we must relate to our communities as workers to help build understanding of what we do, its viability,

and its importance. We have much in common with other members of the non-profit community and must form alliances with them.

Murphy closed, "We as a country are at a crossroads right now, and we're going to go one way or another—we're going to become defensive and build up trade barriers and deal with all the defensive aspects that always lead to self-destruction, we're going to make decisions based on fear and greed; or, we're going to make decisions based on chance, risk, and the willingness of people to have the idea that mountains can be crossed."

What Your ICSOM Dues Buy

Over the 27 years of ICSOM's existence, annual dues have grown from \$43,590 to over \$112,121. The 44 member orchestras now make payments ranging from \$20 to \$38 per person, depending on the orchestra's salary level. The increased budget reflects our continuing expansion of activities.

About one fifth of the budget is spent on communication, not only the hefty bills we rack up to Ma Bell, but also our bulletin system. Timely information is disseminated about negotiations, labor disputes, legislation, and other topics important to orchestra players. Other publications such as *Senza Sordino*, the ICSOM Delegate Manual, and the ICSOM Directory are helpful resources.

A comparable part of the budget includes the expense of lawyers Len Leibowitz and Liza DuBrul, who have expertise in dealing with the singular labor problems of orchestras. In addition to providing ongoing counsel to ICSOM officers and orchestras, Len and Liza present annual ICSOM conference workshops on negotiation, grievance and arbitration, and pensions.

Ongoing ICSOM projects include health care cost containment, medical problems of musicians, racial balance in the orchestras, conductor evaluation, and a trade division within the AFM. The media committee participates in recording negotiations. The summit committee has been extremely effective in achieving AFM bylaw changes that benefit us. Annual meetings of negotiating orchestras are co-sponsored by ICSOM and the AFM. The executive officers meet annually with representatives of the Major Orchestra Managers Conference to discuss topics of mutual interest. Officers attend conventions of the AFM, ROPA, and OCSM. ICSOM works actively to gain immediate and long-range benefits for orchestra players in ways that individual orchestras could not.

Every dollar ICSOM spends ultimately benefits those who provide the funds. \$20 to \$38 a year is a small price to pay to have a national organization working for you!

Florence Nelson, ICSOM Treasurer

Editor's Note: ICSOM orchestras are reminded to pay dues by December 25, 1989.

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Live-PALRA—Why Should We Care?

The most fundamental right workers have under American labor law is collective bargaining through representatives of their choice. Although symphonic and recording artists do enjoy collective bargaining under the law, most other musicians have been stripped of their bargaining powers by some unconscionable decisions of the courts and of the NLRB.

This year Senator Simon and Representatives Clay, Rahall, and Wise have re-introduced the vital bill known as the Live Performing Arts Labor Relations Amendments (Live-PALRA) in their respective branches of Congress.

Needless to say, Live-PALRA is the target of vehement opposition. Preying on the tax-phobia of many club musicians, nefarious exploiters dishonestly claim that the law will make these musicians employees for tax purposes. In reality, Live-PALRA has no effect whatsoever on tax laws, but is strictly a change in labor law, giving

musicians in all segments of our industry the right to bargain collectively.

The issue here is not one of union rights, but of human rights. The bill would not confer special privileges on the AFM. Rather, it would allow musicians to choose or reject any bargaining representative.

Should Live-PALRA be of concern to symphony musicians? After all, they already have collective bargaining rights. This is a fair question, and the answer is a resounding "Yes!" First, there is the altruistic reason of simple justice. We should be concerned when others are wronged, especially when those violated are our brother and sister musicians.

A second reason is our need for mutual support. Strength lies in solidarity, and we become stronger ourselves by joining with all musicians in a single common front, e.g., our united opposition to the recent attack on NEA funding.

As a third consideration, many symphonic musicians perform periodically in situations which do not come under their collective bargaining umbrella. Live-PALRA would offer greater opportunity for better wages and working conditions when we or our colleagues play these non-orchestral gigs.

Finally, symphonic musicians have a very selfish reason for enthusiastically supporting Live-PALRA. The only real solution to the high percentage of union dues paid by symphony and recording musicians is to reorganize the club musicians lost to the AFM by the insidious interpretations of our labor laws.

Live-PALRA is critical to such an organizing effort. The right to collective bargaining will herald the return to union presence in the night-club industry, thus reducing the excessive dependence of the union on its symphonic and recording financial base.

For our own good, as well as for the sake of our colleagues and of justice, we need to work for passage of S. 1216 and H. R. 2025, the current Live-PALRA bills in Congress. If each of us would urge our legislators to vote for these bills, the groundswell we would create would quickly make Live-PALRA the law of the land. In doing so, we would take a giant step toward reducing our proportion of union dues while making America a better place for all musicians.

Richard Q. Totusek
AFM International Executive Officer



QUEEN OF THE ROAD: Kennedy Center ICSOM delegate Nancy Stutsman (also known as "Queen") arrives at Aspen from Washington, D.C. Photo by Mark Schubert, Honolulu Symphony ICSOM delegate.

Progress Toward a Trade Division

Consultant Recommends Evolution, Not Revolution

A motion introduced at the 1987 ICSOM conference in Salt Lake City called for a committee to explore ways of more effective and cost-effective representation for orchestras within the AFM and local unions. In 1988 at the Buffalo conference, this committee reported that a trade division seemed the most viable option to pursue. A structure/trade division committee with representatives of ICSOM, OCSM, ROPA, RMA, and the AFM was formed.

The structure/trade division committee met in December 1988 and identified several immediate goals:

- increased and guaranteed services to musicians by local unions, with Federation relief if such services were not provided;
- increased musician access to and involvement in Federation operations;
- improved services to musicians by AFM departments;
- enhancement of the status of the player conferences.

These goals were achieved at the 1989 AFM convention (see *Senza Sordino* June-August 1989).

Work continued on the long-term goal of achieving a more efficient union structure. At Federation expense, the committee hired Mr. William Roehl, a union consultant and former assistant director of the Organizing and Field Services Department of the AFL-CIO. After meeting with committee members and Federation officers, Mr. Roehl presented the following recommendations:

- Because the purpose and duties of the symphony department and orchestra service program are identical, the symphony

department would be called symphonic services division. The administrator of the symphony department and director of the OSP would be director of the symphonic services division and assistant to the president, and appointed by the president. A symphonic steering committee, made up of the heads of ICSOM, OCSM, and ROPA, would be the advisory committee to the symphonic services division.

- The recording department would become the electronic media services division, with a director (also assistant to the president) appointed by the president. A steering committee of RMA officers and a media representative from the orchestra conferences would oversee the electronic media services division.
- The summit committee would become the player conferences council, and would have regularly scheduled meetings with the IEB. The current structure/trade division committee should continue to explore ways to improve representation within the AFM, including a plan for a trade division.

Mr. Roehl has concluded that there is no existing model of a trade division that would completely serve the needs of the AFM and its conferences. Keeping our local structure is probably advised, although reform is indicated. However, a workable trade division could evolve from the recommendations outlined above.

The structure/trade division committee has urged the AFM to continue to retain Mr. Roehl as a consultant on trade division.

Tom Hall and Carolyn Parks contributed to this report

Arden House Retreat Successful

The Music Assistance Fund sponsored a retreat at Arden House, in New York state, involving black and white orchestra players, orchestra managers, deans and directors of conservatories, and psychologists. Black players were able to network and exchange views on the field and the fellowship program.

MAF administrator Daniel Windham presented highlights of the retreat. Orchestras should represent themselves not as white institutions wanting blacks to attend, but as institutions needing everyone. The audition process ("12-minute shootout") was criticized for eliminating qualified players in looking for the one best player, a goal which was considered subjective and arbitrary at

best. Hiring practices in universities cause black students difficulty in finding mentors. It was felt that black musicians need a network, and that the field in general needs different PR about musicians and what they do.

Windham emphasized to ICSOM the need for dialogue with managers, boards, and music directors. Players often become the scapegoat for lack of change in hiring practices. Affirmative action is not the responsibility of black people, but of an institution which is not where it wants to be. Windham urged orchestras to stop talking about their specialness and exclusivity in order to lessen the distinctions perceived about them by the public.

Oh, Great!! The *Senza Sordino* Cartoon Contest!

- Entries should be black and white, hand-drawn, and not previously published. Artists must be current or retired professional musicians. Topic can be anything orchestra-related.
- Winning entries to be published in *Senza*. PRIZES!
- Judges will be the ICSOM governing board and counsel.
- Artists should submit enlarged entries which can be reduced for printing.
- Cartoons become the property of *Senza Sordino* unless a self-addressed mailing container is enclosed.
- Send entries to *Senza* editor, postmarked by January 15, 1990.