

Senza Sordino

Official Publication of the International Conference of Symphony & Opera Musicians

VOLUME XXVIII, NO. 4

15

COPYRIGHT ©

APRIL 1990

Doors Were Closed, Hearts Were Open National Symphony Tours Soviet Union

by Debbie Torch, Editor

Glasnost and *perestroika* have been the buzzwords in the recent warming of U.S.-Soviet relations. Yet for all the talk of increased freedom and openness, most doors in the Soviet Union turned out to be closed, according to musicians who just returned from the National Symphony Orchestra's recent trip there. Steve Hendrickson, principal trumpet, described the entrance to Moscow's Hotel Rossia, where all American orchestras have stayed: "There was a huge bank of at least ten double doors, but only one side of one door was open; people were bumping into each other and could barely squeeze through."

Violist Bill Foster commented, "I think it's a matter of control. It's not easy to get in and out of buildings, maybe in case the authorities want to stop or slow someone down. Access is very controlled. In the stores, goods are always behind a counter; you can see them, but you can't touch anything. There are no grand entrances that function. If there are two sets of doors, the furthest to the right will be open in the first set, and you'll have to go all the way to the left to get through the second set. But we discovered that even though doors were closed, hearts were open."

Accommodations

The Soviets spared no effort to accommodate the NSO in terms of attention, special tours, and food. Such hospitality went a long way in minimizing discontent with what otherwise would be considered sub-standard accommodations. "The Hotel Rossia was not what we would usually accept," Foster explained. "Although the building was only twenty years old, everything seemed drab and worn; things are not discarded even after they wear out. There were bugs in the bathrooms, and the towels looked like they'd been grabbed off miscellaneous clotheslines. The phones didn't work, which made people feel totally cut off from home."

Having learned from the experiences (and suffering) of the Pittsburgh Symphony, which had great difficulty getting food on a Soviet tour last fall, the NSO elected to have meals for the whole group served at the hotel. The players received a supplemental per diem in rubles to cover expenses other than food, an arrangement which most people found satisfactory.

Concerts

The Soviet Union appeared especially stark in contrast to Japan, where the orchestra had been performing during the previous twelve days. Hendrickson commented, "After the spotlessness and efficiency of Japan, Russia seemed gloomy and kind of a mess. But seeing the Soviet people and how excited they were

at our concerts changed everything."

Without a doubt, the NSO received special treatment because music director Rostropovich's citizenship had been recently restored and the country was welcoming him back with great emotion. Players likened the ambience to traveling with a rock star. Tickets to concerts were strictly controlled by the Communist Party, but were more available for the open rehearsals. When the orchestra arrived at the Moscow Conservatory for the first rehearsal, soldiers had to restrain the mob so the musicians could enter the hall. When Rostropovich walked onto the stage, the crowd burst into a standing ovation. Rehearsal could not start until the cheering died down.

Audiences for the concerts were similarly enthusiastic. The orchestra played five encores the first night in Moscow, ending with "The Stars and Stripes." This was an emotional highlight of the trip for many musicians. Cellist Yvonne Caruthers recalled, "The audience went crazy—they were clapping and stomping—it was better than any Fourth of July concert."

Trumpeter Steve Hendrickson felt the experience was "just incredible. It seemed so symbolic to have the National Symphony representing Washington, D.C., with Rostropovich conducting, in Russia—it was a perfect example of the universal communication that music has."

Having heard much about the sophistication of Soviet audiences, NSO pianist Lambert Orkis, who often accompanies Rostropovich in recitals, was amazed when the audience burst into applause after the scherzo of the "Pathetique" Symphony. "At the end, when there is supposed to be a minute of absolute silence, a woman started screaming, 'SLAVA!!'"

"Backstage facilities were crowded and cramped—some of us were practically in the street changing our clothes! The scene was so exciting, I stayed on stage for entire concerts, even if I didn't play some of the pieces."

Caruthers explained that at the intermission and the end of concerts, members of the audience would rush to the stage with flowers, about twenty bouquets a night. Noticing that the flowers were almost all red carnations, Bill Foster commented, "Apparently that was all that was available in the flower shops. I found it really touching. We got the feeling people had very little, but wanted to do whatever they could to honor the occasion."

The Night Train

The overnight train ride from Moscow to Leningrad was another memorable part of the tour. Late at night, after what seemed an interminable wait at the concert hall, the orchestra boarded buses

and headed for the Moscow train station. The train wasn't ready for boarding, so the musicians remained on the buses for another hour as snow fell on the dimly lit station area. Yvonne Caruthers recalled, "The romantic atmosphere seemed out of a different century. Then we got on the train, which had roomy, clean, modern European rail cars. The train was actually superior to the hotels of Moscow and Leningrad. Each of us had a private compartment with a bed, sink, table, closet, and drinking water. The next morning, the porter served hot tea and everyone sat in the hallway visiting. We could hear late-50's rock music coming from the porter's compartment. He came to where we were sitting and proudly told everyone, 'Turn on your compartment radio—you can listen to it, too!'"

Special Tours

While in the Soviet Union, the orchestra enjoyed a number of special outings. They saw a performance of the Moscow Circus, which has its own beautiful theater. The famous clown Popov came out of retirement to sing a song for Rostropovich, who stood and bowed to a wildly applauding audience.

A tour of the Kremlin lasted six hours and was so exclusive that the Russian guides brought generations of their families along. The guides explained, "We've never seen these places before, and we'll never see them again." Orchestra members described breathtaking displays of gold, silver, and treasures in the Kremlin Palace.

In Leningrad, some members of the orchestra attended the

Kirov Opera. In their honor, the program was changed at the last minute from *Barber of Seville* to *Khovanshchina*. Bass clarinetist Larry Bocaner gave the event raves. "The production was lavish, complete with brass bands on stage and fantastic scenery. Everyone in the audience had an individual velvet armchair. The theater was magnificent."

Pianist Lambert Orkis observed, "Many places such as stores are not clean or well-maintained. But cultural institutions such as the Moscow Circus, the Kremlin Palace, the Hermitage, and the theaters have workmanship and taste of the highest order. It's ironic that works of culture are more valued than consumerism, yet the greatest artists and scientists in the Soviet Union are rewarded with consumer goods."

Shopping

The NSO musicians found that whatever good merchandise is available in stores is not accessible to most people. For the average Soviet citizen, obtaining everyday necessities is a grueling process. Bill Foster explained, "Shopping there is an experience of standing in line. You must go through

three lines to buy one item. The goods are behind a counter, so you can't really examine them. First, you stand in a line to tell the clerk what you want and have a bill of sale written. Then you stand in another line to pay the cashier. Then it's back to the first line to claim your item. The lines aren't well organized either.

"In one store, I saw a hat I wanted to buy. There weren't many people at the counter, so I thought, 'No problem!' I told the clerk what I wanted and got a sales slip for it. She said the line for the



The National Symphony acknowledges a standing ovation following a concert in Bolshoi Hall, Leningrad. Photo by Joan Marcus, Kennedy Center.

cashier was around the corner. When I turned the corner, I saw a line that went on and on, merging with a group of people from another counter. I didn't know how to ask where the line ended! Just then, a young man who had been talking to my son offered to help. He went to the front of the line and spoke to the cashier and the first person in line. They motioned me forward. I presented my sales slip and paid the money, which they counted several times. When I thanked the young man and asked what on earth he had said to the clerk, he said, 'I told them we were in a hurry.'"

Gifts to Soviet Musicians

Knowing that music and supplies are difficult if not impossible to procure, members of the orchestra took items to give away. Larry Bocaner met many conservatory students and noted, "They're desperate for good equipment. A box of clarinet reeds costing \$7 or \$8 in the U.S. would be 20 rubles—several days' pay. (A maid makes 160 rubles per month.) I gave away reeds and other supplies. The big Soviet orchestras provide supplies and even instruments, and everything is owned by the theater."

Steve Hendrickson said, "The trumpet section brought mouthpieces to give away. The country is so closed, trade-wise, people can't get things even if they have money. Their instruments are very old and beat-up. We gave mutes and valve oil to some of the teachers and to brass players in the Leningrad Philharmonic and U.S.S.R. Symphony. They gave us chocolates, bottles of vodka, and handicrafts. Life is very tough—they have food rationing, small apartments—there's no feeling you can advance by hard work or dedication. Everyone seems stuck. I think musicians there are very low-paid; they were dumbfounded at what we make."

Bass player Dick Webster recommended that musicians traveling to the Soviet Union take goods to give away. Players there need music, especially chamber music sets, books, blank and pre-recorded tapes, and tape recorders. Other coveted items include anything with an American flag on it, Western-style clothes, and Reeboks.

Encounters

Webster, bass player Curtis Burris, and cellist Frederick Zenone became friends with a graduate student flutist whom they met in a music store. "Dmitri" (not his real name) needed music, a tape player, and tapes, which the Americans were able to send through a businessman traveling to Russia. (Soviet duty is costly, so goods should be delivered by people who declare them as gifts or for personal use.)

Their friendship was put to a chilling test the last night of the tour when "Dmitri" was roughly dragged away from the theater and taken to police headquarters, where he was interrogated, searched, and fined for being backstage. He was ordered to pay within a matter of hours, and of course, didn't have enough money. Webster and Zenone took up a collection from their NSO colleagues, enabling "Dmitri" to pay his fine. Since returning to Washington, Webster has received a letter in which "Dmitri"

obliquely alluded to the incident, commenting, "There have been no ramifications of our event the last night."

In another personal encounter, Webster and the NSO principal bassist Harold Robinson were invited to the home of the bass professor at the conservatory, a position comparable to being the foremost bass teacher at Eastman or Juilliard. In the professor's modest and sparsely furnished apartment, the guests, who also included the professor's two prize students, were served boiled potatoes, caviar, crackers, and vodka. They talked about music, not politics, and were treated to a brief performance by one of the students, whom Webster described as a wonderful player.

Ending on a Positive Note

Most of the NSO dreaded the trip before arriving in the Soviet Union. They had been briefed by the State Department about everything that could go wrong, and had talked to colleagues in the New York Philharmonic and Pittsburgh Symphony about everything that *did* go wrong during their respective Soviet tours. However, the NSO tour seemed to leave musicians with many positive

feelings for the Soviet people. In addition to the aforementioned generous gifts of music and instrumental supplies to the Soviets, and payment of "Dmitri's" fine, the NSO took up collections for a tip for the tour guides and a fund for needy students at the Leningrad Conservatory. What was supposed to be a bag of everyone's leftover rubles turned out to be graced with American twenty-dollar bills in a collection Yvonne Caruthers estimated at several hundred dollars.

Summing up his reaction to the tour, Steve Hendrickson reflected, "The trip put a face on the Soviet people. I used to think of them as an enemy, but there were certain people I met that I became attached to and really liked. Even though they had sort of

a stiff outer crust, they turned out to be very warm and emotional on the inside. They bond very deeply when they make friends, and right away, I became very close to some of them. The country was humanized for me. Musicians there do the same work we do. Having the same love for music is something special we have in common." ▮



NSO musicians (with beards!) Curtis Burris (front), Dick Webster, and Frederick Zenone, accompanied by Russian bystanders and real (stuffed) bears in a Leningrad Park. Photographer unknown.

Musicians' Hazards

Musicians face a variety of health and safety hazards related either to performance activity or to conditions in performance venues and practice rooms.

The dust in some theaters can be hazardous because it is composed of flotsam from years of performances. Dust may contain scene paint particles, pigments, dyes, textile fibers, sawdust, metal filings, fire-retardant chemicals, mold and mildew, and even asbestos from fire curtains, old wiring, and insulation. A good forensic scientist could probably tell much about the history of a theater from its dust. But the dust also can be the source of a musician's allergy or illness.

Musicians can be adversely affected by chemicals used in venues prior to or during rehearsals or performances. The application of toxic pesticides, spray paints, upholstery and costume cleaning solvents, shoe and hair sprays, curtain fire-retardant chemicals, and welding and soldering fumes from repair work cause health problems. Of special concern are the frequent reports of symptoms attributed to the use of theatrical fog, smoke, and indoor pyrotechnic special-effects chemicals.

Hazards and the Right-to-Know Laws

The increased awareness and understanding of environmental factors which affect health have led to enactment of many laws designed to make all workplaces safer. The Right-to-Know laws are of special interest to symphony and opera musicians. Almost every workplace in the United States and Canada comes under a federal, state, or provincial version of these laws. In general, the laws require employers to:

- institute hazard communication programs (often these programs must include a formally written plan);
- inventory and evaluate all chemical products on site;
- properly label all containers of chemicals (an unlabeled or mislabeled container is now a violation);
- obtain technical information on all potentially hazardous materials in the form of manufacturers' Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs);
- provide workers easy access to inventories, MSDSs, and written programs; and
- train all employees who may be exposed to toxic chemicals.

Although these laws have been in effect in both the U.S. and Canada for several years, there are still many employers in the music field who do not comply. A frequent concern is the cost of allocating staff time for taking inventories, collecting MSDSs, and training employees.

The Right-to-Know laws require that employers budget money for the programs. In the U.S., the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has estimated the cost of compliance for various industries, including the movie industry (Standard Industrial Code 78), amusement and recreational services (SIC 79 includes theater and opera), and educational services (SIC 82).

Today, OSHA gives more citations for Right-to-Know violations than for any other rule infraction. To my knowledge, the first citation of a theater company for violations of Right-to-Know laws

occurred on Broadway in 1986, in which I participated in bringing the company into compliance. This case is especially relevant because a complaint from the Musicians' Union about chemicals used in the theater triggered the action.

How the Law is Applied to Musicians' Hazards

Suppose that you work in a theater where special-effects fogs are rolling into the pit during shows and the smell of costume-cleaning solvents is apparent during rehearsals. You must be provided with technical information about the chemicals in these products and their health effects. You must also be informed about any other hazardous materials to which you may be exposed, i.e., if an odorless chemical such as carbon monoxide were being created by some process.

This chemical information should be in the form of Material Safety Data Sheets from the products' manufacturers. The employer is further required to provide you with formal instruction to enable you to understand the MSDSs and to describe the measures which should be taken to avoid overexposure.

Not only must chemical hazards be covered, but also physical hazards such as ear-damaging sound levels. Information would include the sound levels at which hearing may be damaged, the sound levels associated with your job, and the efficacy of plastic shields or special ear plugs if needed.

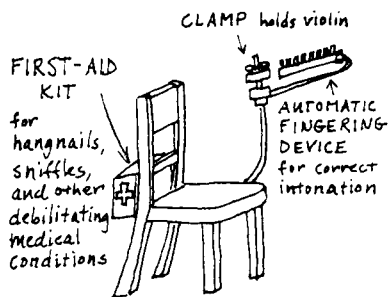
Clearly, the law recognizes that musicians in theaters, opera houses, and other venues who are exposed to the same hazards as workers in other workplaces are entitled to the same protection.

Monona Rossol, M.S., M.F.A., Industrial Hygienist

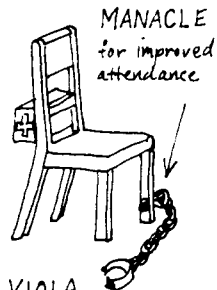
A Source of Help

Arts, Crafts and Theater Safety (ACTS) is a not-for-profit corporation dedicated to providing free or low-cost health and safety services to the visual and performing arts. ACTS will provide information on artists' and musicians' hazards and help employers meet obligations under laws such as Right-to-Know. ACTS collects data on hazards and regulations and answers telephone and written inquiries about them. We also refer clients to doctors and other health professionals and provide speakers and consultants for lectures, training, and health and safety surveys of theaters, studios, and artists' workplaces.

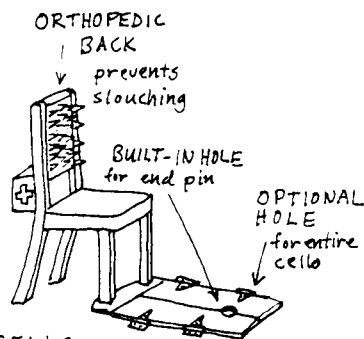
ACTS publishes and distributes literature, including the book *Stage Fright: Health and Safety in the Theater*, and the newsletter ACTS FACTS, designed to help performing and visual artists keep abreast of current regulations and research. Contact Monona Rossol at ACTS, 181 Thompson St. #23, New York, NY 10012. Phone (212)-777-0062.



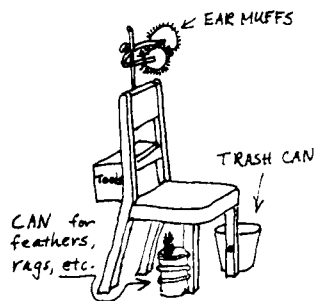
VIOLIN CHAIR



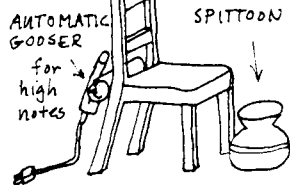
VIOLA CHAIR



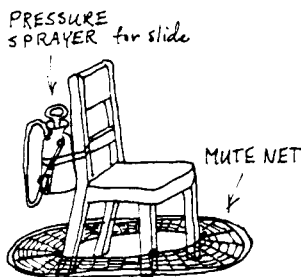
CELLO CHAIR



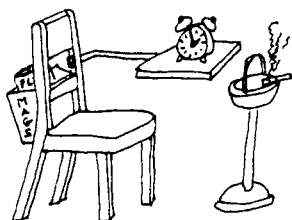
OBOE CHAIR



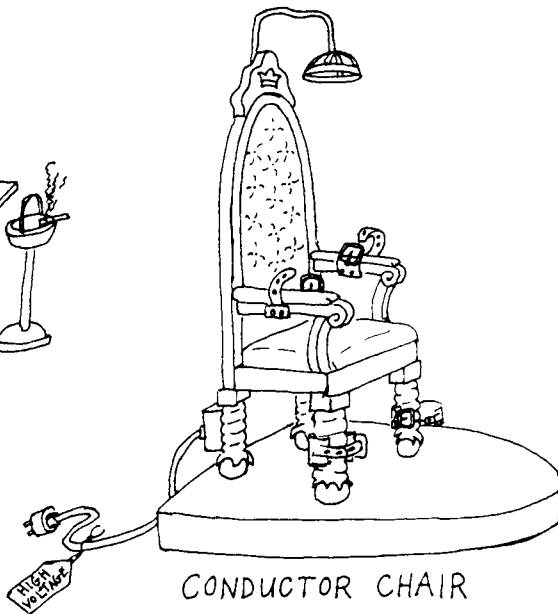
FRENCH HORN CHAIR



TROMBONE CHAIR



PERCUSSION CHAIR



HARP CHAIR

Orchestra Chairs

by

David DeGroot

Another cartoon contest winner! David DeGroot plays percussion with the New Orleans Symphony.

Worth Noting

- The ICSOM Governing Board met on April 2 in New York.
- The first of three negotiating orchestra meetings was held in San Francisco on April 16. Attending were representatives from San Francisco, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, National, San Francisco Opera, San Francisco Ballet, Kennedy Center, Chicago Lyric, Honolulu, Phoenix, Oregon, and San Antonio. Funding for the meetings is shared by ICSOM and the AFM.

- Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Dallas, St. Paul Chamber, Milwaukee, and Rochester will attend the second meeting, May 7, in Chicago.
- Attending the third meeting, May 21, in Orlando, will be Florida Orchestra, Florida Symphony, New Jersey, and Philharmonic Orchestra of Florida (a ROPA orchestra).
- The IEB has adopted the **Bill Roehl Report** (AFM restructuring). See article by Roehl and 1990 ICSOM Conference details in the next *Senza Sordino*.

1989 "Playing Hurt" Conference

The second national "Playing Hurt" conference on the medical problems of musicians was held in Minneapolis, April 14-16, 1989. Major funding came from the Minnesota Orchestra and the University of Minnesota, with assistance from the American String Teacher Magazine and the American String Teachers Association.

Prevention was the primary focus of the conference. Speakers represented a cross-section of medical specialists, pedagogues, performers, and therapists.

The 1986 ICSOM medical survey indicated that 76% of orchestral musicians play in pain at some point during their careers. In order to develop programs to prevent injury, there are increasing numbers of research projects taking place. Of particular interest to ICSOM orchestras is Dr. Alice Brandfonbrener's NEA-funded ongoing study of six orchestras: Chicago Symphony, Chicago Lyric Opera Orchestra, St. Louis Symphony, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, Minnesota Orchestra, and Cincinnati Symphony. Musicians who elect to participate in the study are following a program of exercises for balance, strength, and flexibility, with periodic evaluation by Dr. Brandfonbrener's team.

Kato Havas, world-renown pedagogue, presented the keynote address, "Why is Music Not Always Music? A New Approach to Stage Fright." Shirley Sahrman presented a discussion on "Shoulders, Posture & Alignment: Identification of Faults and Preventative Exercises." In his presentation, "Ergonomics: Adaptive Equipment for Musicians," Dr. Richard Norris explained how he has developed chairs and stools and created supports, slings, instrument key extensions, stands, and cushions for musicians. "Computer Imaging Techniques for Analysis of Posture and Movement in Musicians" was presented by John Jake Kella of the Miller Institute.

Besides overuse and misuse, the other general factors which contribute to injuries are external and sometimes beyond our control. Examples are placement on stage (which may cause hearing problems or craning to see music and/or conductors), stage conditions (uncomfortable temperature, poor chairs, insufficient light and/or space), stress, and schedules.

Experts caution musicians to be careful getting back into shape after time off, especially after injury. Starting with 15 minutes of playing, increase the number of sessions per day before increasing the length of the session.

We must work collectively towards the following goals:

1. work hardening: establishing individualized programs for the player to ease into a full schedule after injury;
2. rotation: balancing repertoire to allow works for reduced orchestra and a system of rotating players off;
3. education: establishing music medicine advisory committees in orchestras with liaison to other orchestra representatives, and educating our managements about music medicine; and
4. health insurance: continuing to press for preferred plans for orchestras.

We need the best care available, especially now that there are music medicine specialists. The utmost confidentiality and mutual trust is in everyone's interest, and injuries must not be used as a manipulative tool by either managements or players.

We have been extremely gratified to be able to participate in the growth of the field of music medicine and to see the atmosphere over the last couple of years change from puzzlement and doubt to excitement, confidence, and hope.

The next conference, "Playing Less Hurt," scheduled for September 14-15, 1990 in Minneapolis, will present a special panel on insurance and worker's compensation. For information, contact Professional Development and Conference Services, Nolte Center, 315 Pillsbury Drive SE, Minneapolis, MN 55455.

Janet Horvath

*Associate Principal Cellist, Minnesota Orchestra
"Playing Hurt" Conference Director*

Errata

Corrections submitted regarding the February Wage Mini-Chart: Although the Chicago Symphony has had a radio agreement for the past 14 years, the orchestra does not have and has never had an EMG. The CSO plays 52 broadcasts annually at \$92.65 each. Pension for the Utah Symphony is 8% of minimum salary to AFM/EPW or 403(b).

ICSOM Governing Board

Chairperson
Bradford D. Buckley
St. Louis Symphony
6607 Waterman
St. Louis, MO 63130
Phone: (314) 863-0633

President
Melanie Burrell
Denver Symphony
415 Garfield Street
Denver, CO 80206
Phone: (303) 331-9263

Secretary
Richard Decker
Syracuse Symphony
418 Seneca Drive
Syracuse, NY 13205
Phone: (315) 469-6854

Treasurer
Florence Nelson
New York City Opera Orchestra
57-87 228 Street
Bayside, NY 11364
Phone: (718) 229-3351

Editor, Senza Sordino
Deborah Torch
San Antonio Symphony
2922 Abercorn
San Antonio, TX 78247
Phone: (512) 496-2605

Member-at-Large
David Angus
Rochester Philharmonic
284 Castlebar Rd.
Rochester, NY 14610
Phone: (716) 271-1730

Member-at-Large
James Clute
Minnesota Orchestra
447 Newton Ave. S.
Minneapolis, MN 55405
Phone: (612) 374-9373

Member-at-Large
Michael Nutt
Los Angeles Philharmonic
1075 W. Kensington Road
Los Angeles, CA 90026
Phone: (213) 977-0222

Member-at-Large
Carolyn Parks
Kennedy Center Orchestra
3730 Brandywine St. NW
Washington, DC 20016
Phone: (202) 966-1874

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

ICSOM Emeritus Program
Abe Torchinsky
654 Greenhills Drive
Ann Arbor, MI 48105
Phone: (313) 662-8114

Subscription: \$6.00 per year
Make check payable to
SENZA SORDINO and send to:
Deborah Torch, Editor
2922 Abercorn Drive
San Antonio, TX 78247

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. Unauthorized reproduction of any part of *Senza Sordino* is strictly forbidden. Copyright © 1990. All rights reserved.