

# Senza Sordino

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## 1992 Conference: ICSOM Turns Thirty; Collective Action PreVails!

Approximately 100 people were on hand at the 1992 conference in Vail to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the founding of ICSOM and to reflect with pride on ICSOM's accomplishments. The short supply of oxygen at 8,100 feet had no deleterious effects on talking, which continued past the daily six to eight hours of conference sessions and workshops, hours of meetings, and informal gatherings. An outdoor "birthday bash" featuring cake and ice cream lent a celebratory mood to the proceedings.

Some high points of the "bad old days" were recounted by guest speaker Edward Arian (see page 2). Three past chairpersons shared their views on the field. This culminated in a special presentation of engraved plaques and gavels to Irving Segall (Philadelphia), Frederick Zenone (National), and Melanie Burrell (Colorado). A plaque was also presented to attorney Len Leibowitz, marking his twenty-second year of association with ICSOM.

Elected by acclamation for two-year terms were the five incumbent officers: chairperson Brad Buckley (St. Louis), president David Angus (Rochester), secretary Lucinda-Lewis (New Jersey), treasurer Carolyn Parks (Kennedy Center), and *Senza Sordino* editor Deborah Torch (San Antonio).

The media committee reported that the National Public Radio, symphony audio-visual, and phono contracts will expire in January 1993. The committee noted that although American musicians are paid the highest wages, the rate has declined 30% in real dollars since 1970. Since the radio field is in a state of confusion, with orchestras varying widely in rates received for radio broadcast, Brad Buckley appointed a committee to examine the possibility of developing a syndicated symphony radio agreement.

Discussion of the AFM strike fund led to a motion to evaluate means of raising the weekly benefit amount. An important part of this discussion centered around the idea of collective action. What happens to one orchestra concerns and affects other orchestras; keeping the fund strong for those orchestras who need it benefits the entire community of orchestras.

The conference passed the following resolutions:

- establishing criteria to remove an orchestra from the Orchestra Service Program;
- requesting the AFM to fund an internal organizing program for orchestras, with the San Antonio Symphony as a pilot site;
- recommending to the AFM that when musicians belong to more than one local union, per capita dues be paid in one local only;
- protesting the AFM's interference in locals' ability to negotiate minimum staffing in local theaters and the AFM's refusal to let members of affected unions vote on Pamphlet B (the agreement which covers touring musicals);
- recommending guidelines for an AFM policy on syndicated radio broadcast, to be enforced by the AFM;
- supporting Article 27, Section 17, of the AFM bylaws, regarding appropriate conduct by leaders and contractors.

An ICSOM bylaw change clarified that only one musician at a time from an ICSOM orchestra can serve on the governing board. The conference voted to endorse CALM, the Coalition for the Advancement of Live Music.

The delegates worked with great commitment and dedication, covering a full agenda of conference business and exploring many issues of national import to the profession.

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Text by Deborah Torch  
Photos by Ken Ishii

## The Good Humor Man

He did not bring ice cream treats for us, nor did he wear a white uniform as he told us of summers spent driving an ice cream truck through the hot streets of the city. Selling ice cream was not his way of earning money for a college education or for a fancy car. It was the way Edward Arian supported his wife and children for several months each year as assistant principal bass of the Philadelphia Orchestra. He didn't always drive an ice cream truck during those months; sometimes he sold encyclopedias door-to-door.

An activist who worked for the formation of ICSOM and who helped negotiate the first 52-week contract in Philadelphia, Arian performed with the Philadelphia Orchestra for twenty years, beginning in 1947. After eventually earning a Ph.D. in political science, he went on to author *Bach, Beethoven, and Bureaucracy* and *The Unfulfilled Promise: Public Subsidy of the Arts in America*. Currently, he directs an arts administration program at Drexel University in Philadelphia. He has served as chairman of the Pennsylvania State Arts Council, as a panelist of the National Endowment for the Arts, as a consultant to orchestras, and as a board member of many arts organizations.

Arian described the early days of his career in the Philadelphia Orchestra: earning \$110 per week, with no guaranteed number of weeks, in an atmosphere of anti-Semitism, sexism, and racism. "There was an indentured servant system," he reminisced. "Orchestra members borrowed money from the office to get through the summer. When they started the next season, money was taken out of each paycheck until they had repaid the debt; they were then ready to go into debt for the following season."

One poignant memory concerned a European tour. Saturday night, following a very successful concert, the orchestra members had stood in line to be personally greeted by the king of Norway. Sunday, they flew back to Philadelphia. Monday, the same people



*Five fabulous Philadelphians, who enjoyed a reunion at the ICSOM conference, were all members of the Philadelphia Orchestra in 1966-67 (left to right): Abe Torchinsky, Barbara Haffner, Edward Arian, Julia Grayson, Irving Segall.*

were again standing in line—at the unemployment office. "You could be a great artist one day, a bum the next," he recounted.

The personnel manager was the union representative, and was paid double for his efforts. He was very cozy with the local union president. The musicians had no right to negotiate or ratify their contracts—until one night when they took over a meeting, passed a bylaw, and obtained for themselves the right of ratification!

Arian described how recording affected many artistic aspects of the Philadelphia Orchestra. Concert repertoire was chosen according to what could be recorded using the least rehearsal time. In order to save money, the management would require the orchestra to record using fewer musicians than usual. Another money-saving tactic, called "speedup," required the session to be completed within a prearranged time limit, regardless of the quality of the product. This was often very disturbing to the musicians, who would not get a second chance to record any of the material.

The employer's contribution for social security was paid out of the musicians' pension fund. Benefits and perks such as string seating, invitations to social affairs, or sick leave were used to control the musicians. Bitter battles over timekeeping led to the English hornist finally buying a Swiss clock. "It was an environment that turned everyone into gangsters," Arian reflected.

Arian compared his life in the orchestra to his experience in academia. Unlike orchestra musicians, professors have more influence in the running of the institutions and enjoy more autonomy.

Musicians must achieve dignity in the orchestra workplace. "We get no respect and are treated as children, in a manner not worthy of professionals!" Arian declared.

Arian urged musicians to hold their managements accountable and to learn more about development, planning, and fundraising in order to evaluate managements and boards of directors. He remarked, "If orchestras were managed as well as you play your instruments, there'd be a lot fewer problems."

In discussing the crucial role played by the nominating committee in creating a good board, Arian outlined the type of candidate the nominating committee should try to find to serve on the board. One example might be someone who has a business with lots of suppliers, such as a large food service, as all the suppliers can be approached. An estate-planning lawyer might be another good bet. Nominating committee members need to have a clear picture of the orchestra's purpose and programs, and need to have expertise and resources. Another important function of the nominating committee is to monitor current board members and remove "deadwood."

Stressing the importance of planning by the board, Arian emphasized, "Without a plan, the board can't make decisions. People don't give money unless it will be used for an inspiring objective."

Arian raised some of the challenges facing orchestras in a multicultural society. In his view, "The melting pot is dead. We live in a salad bowl—people don't want to give up their identities. White Europeans are not the only model. CEOs, lawyers, and bankers are *least* equipped to deal with the challenges of a multicultural society, whereas musicians have the imagination to meet those challenges."

## AFM Attends ICSOM

The president, vice-president, secretary-treasurer, two members of the International Executive Board (IEB), the entire full-time staff of the Symphonic Services Division (U.S. and Canada), editor of the *International Musician*, and many local officers were in attendance at the ICSOM conference. With many ICSOM delegates now serving on the boards of their locals, ICSOM and the AFM are interfacing more than ever.

Mark Tully Massagli, AFM president, noted there is a more aggressive attitude in the Federation. Improved services to orchestras include hiring Len Leibowitz as in-house counsel and Lynn Johnson as a staff member of the Symphonic Services Division. Federation lobbying has aided in approval of the NEA and in fighting for the Live-PALRA legislation. The IEB voted unanimously to endorse the Clinton-Gore ticket in November.

Secretary-treasurer Steve Sprague discussed how the new immigration laws affect orchestras. The union is consulted on each case when a musician's visa expires. Sprague commented that foreign competition is a serious problem, especially because American musicians are not allowed to work in many other countries. He considers reciprocity to be the best solution. He noted the union's diffi-

cult conflict as it tries to represent its members while meeting federal legal requirements.

Ken Shirk praised the new IEB, noting that the average age is much lower than on the previous IEB. Considerable effort is being directed into organizing, and manuals for locals will be ready by December 1992. The IEB has endorsed Senate Bill 2320, the Universal Health Care bill.

Lew Waldeck spoke about the increasing number of co-op orchestras, noting that the co-op model has a lot of problems, but is sometimes the only way to revive an orchestra or to fill a vacuum so that another organization cannot usurp the orchestra's funding. A company called ICA, in Boston, handles employee ownership programs, and has been engaged by the AFM to provide information about how to run a co-op orchestra. The company will develop a manual explaining what papers to file, how to formulate a business plan, etc., and will also study orchestras that have been run as co-ops.

A second activity is the Symphony Project, which was presented by Waldeck and Kim Fellner. They are developing materials to aid in public relations for orchestras.



*The union officer who came the greatest distance to be with us was Mr. Sin Moriya from the Musicians' Union of Japan. Mr. Moriya, left, is pictured with AFM president Mark Tully Massagli. In 1987, the MUJ donated \$5,000 to musicians of the Oakland and San Diego symphonies.*



## Committee Workshop

In a departure from the format of previous negotiation workshops, ICSOM counsel Len Leibowitz led a workshop on orchestra committee administration. Major topics included contract administration, grievance and arbitration, preparing for a contract negotiation, organizing the orchestra, and interfacing with the local union.

ICSOM secretary Lucinda-Lewis is compiling this information to distribute to ICSOM orchestras.

*Left to right:  
AFM secretary-treasurer Steve Sprague,  
ICSOM counsel Len Leibowitz,  
ICSOM president David Angus.*

## Food for Thought: Frederick Zenone Shares Ideas on Troubled Field

National Symphony cellist Frederick Zenone is uniquely qualified to assess the orchestral field. In addition to many years of service to ICSOM (six as chairperson), Zenone has served on crisis intervention teams for troubled orchestras, has participated in the NEA orchestra panels, and has been on the board of the American Symphony Orchestra League.

Zenone observed that musicians are often so heavily invested in their profession that they deny that their orchestra is in crisis. Such denial prevents the musicians from preparing adequately to meet the crisis.

"The dialogue between management and musicians takes on a different hue in a crisis," Zenone pointed out. When there is no money, the discussion may turn to increased musician involvement in governance and artistic direction. What power and responsibility do we want, and whom of our colleagues do we want to participate? Does the authority of the orchestra committee remain intact or is it being circumvented? Does "power-sharing" pit one musician against another?

Musicians must carefully evaluate these issues and ensure that the best interests of the players and the institution are being served.

## Brad Buckley Issues Call to Action

"What ICSOM has accomplished has gone beyond the wildest imaginings of anyone who attended the first conference thirty years ago," speculated ICSOM chairperson Brad Buckley. The symphonic workplace and quality of life have been dramatically improved through the efforts of many activists working together over the years. What could not be accomplished alone was attained through the group, both nationally and locally.

Equally significant to Buckley was that these goals were accomplished through what he termed "the purest form of trade unionism—by musicians who put down their instruments and embraced activism not for money or for career enhancement, but motivated by a sincere desire to help and to get the job done."

The challenges before orchestra musicians today are different from the ones thirty years ago, yet just as serious. "For the first time, the relevance of our art form to our society is being questioned," Buckley warned. Noting the prevalence of concessions in orchestras, Buckley opined that givebacks alone will not fix the problems. Unless tied to plans for the growth of the institution, concessions accomplish "a slow, lingering, and painful demise that burns out our leaders and demoralizes our orchestras."

Now, more than ever, the principles of collective action that worked well in the past must be used to solve the difficulties facing ICSOM orchestras. "People thirty years ago confronted their problems, and we can, too," reminded Buckley, encouraging the 1992 conference delegates to mobilize for collective action.

## Eighteen Years of Leadership

Following the Presentation of the Gavels, the chairpersons emeriti were invited to speak.

Irving Segall (chairperson, 1974-80) recalled very thorny ICSOM/AFM relations. Years ago, at local union meetings in Philadelphia, the president would say, "Uh-oh, here come the culture boys!" as members of the orchestra entered the room. Once, when the president of the Pittsburgh local was invited to attend an ICSOM conference, two men preceded him in order to search the room! Reflecting on the difficulties orchestras are experiencing today, Segall cautioned against defining orchestras as merely entertainment, because going to a concert is an emotional, moving, and spiritual experience.

Frederick Zenone (chairperson, 1980-86) cited the gradual change from the uneasy relationship that had existed between ICSOM and the AFM. Former AFM president Victor Fuentealba was the first to realize that ICSOM was not going to take over the union. The formation of the symphony department, with Lew Waldeck at the helm, heralded a new era in ICSOM/AFM relations. As chairperson, Zenone greatly expanded ICSOM's association with other organizations, including the League and the Major Orchestra Managers Conference.

Melanie Burrell (chairperson, 1986-88) noted that at the 1980 AFM convention, when work dues were implemented, she attended a meeting of the Law and Finance Committees. When she protested the implementation of work dues, she was told, "We don't have to listen to that woman!" and was quickly ushered out of the room. Being the only woman or the first woman has been a frequent experience over her career of activism. During her tenure as chairperson, ICSOM joined with OCSM, ROPA, and the RMA to form the Player Conference Council. This group has proved to be an effective and broad base from which to accomplish the goals of orchestra and recording musicians. Burrell placed ICSOM in the vanguard of the new field of performing arts medicine and helped design the landmark 1985 ICSOM medical questionnaire.



ICSOM Chairpersons (left to right) Brad Buckley (1988– ), Melanie Burrell (1986–88), Frederick Zenone (1980–86), Irving Segall (1974–80).