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Player Conferences and Working Musicians Move Forward at AFM Convention

by Marsha Schweitzer, Senza Sordino Editor

The agenda of the working musicians of the AFM was advanced significantly at the 2001 AFM Convention, held June 24-27, 2001, in Las Vegas. ICSOM submitted two resolutions, both of which fared rather well. With one of those resolutions another step was taken toward eliminating contractors (employers) on local union boards. The resolution added contractors in musical theater to the existing language barring personnel managers from local boards (except in Canada). Eloquent and poignant testimony from Maura Giannini (Local 802, New York City), Robert Levine (ICSOM and Local 8, Milwaukee), Fred Sautter (Local 99, Portland), Jack Wheaton (Local 325, San Diego), and Denise Westby (Local 99, Portland) made a compelling case for the chilling effect that employers on boards creates. The measure passed in a standing vote of 154 to 113. At least three factors contributed to the success of this action:

- the increased number of Player-Conference-related delegates and other working musicians representing locals across the Federation;

- the increased number of delegates allotted to the largest locals as a result of the 1999 Convention's action to raise the maximum number of delegates a local may send to the Convention (relative to size of local membership); and

- a gradually increasing understanding among all the delegates of the separate functions of labor and management and of the inherent conflict of interest that exists when employers are on both sides of the bargaining table.

ICSOM also submitted a resolution to insure that no local board member who is also a member of a bargaining unit in that local's jurisdiction would be barred from discussing and voting on an issue that involved said bargaining unit. A revised resolution to that effect was passed.

ICSOM also signed on to a resolution submitted by OCSM to add a rank-and-file pension trustee to the AFM's Canadian pension fund. Due to legal complications this resolution was withdrawn.

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Richter Scale Registers AFM Election Tremor

by Robert Levine, ICSOM Chair

Las Vegas, while infamous for many things, is not known for its earthquakes. But an electoral temblor rumbled through the AFM's Convention in Las Vegas on June 26, 2001. When the dust settled, only two of the six incumbent AFM officers who faced electoral opposition survived the upheaval. Most notable of the victims was President Steve Young, who lost the presidency to incumbent Secretary-Treasurer Tom Lee by 12 votes out of 922 votes cast. To put that razor-thin margin into perspective, a switch of 7 votes—a total held by a Local of as few as 651 members—would have tipped the election towards Young. Lee became only the second challenger in AFM history to unseat an incumbent president running for reelection.

The only incumbents left standing from the five incumbent members of the Executive Committee—all of whom ran for reelection—were Ken Shirk of Portland and Ed Ward of Chicago. Tammy Kirk, Tim Shea and Tom Bailey lost reelection bids to newcomers Hal Espinosa (president of Local 47, Los Angeles), Mark Jones (president of Local 92, Buffalo, and former OSP steward for the Buffalo Philharmonic), and Bob McGrew (president of Local 65-699, Houston). Incumbents AFM Vice-President Harold Bradley and Vice-president from Canada David Jandrisch were reelected

without opposition. Also elected were the AFM's representatives to the AFL-CIO Convention: Patricia Majors (Beaver Falls PA), David Winters (San Jose CA), and Dick Renna (St. Louis MO).

Perhaps the most remarkable electoral result was the shattering of the AFM's glass ceiling for national executive office by a piccolo-wielding former officer of ICSOM and Local 802—the redoubtable Florence Nelson. Nelson, currently the AFM's Director of Symphonic Services, won a landslide victory against former IEB member Sam Folio of Reno NV, winning more votes than any other candidate for a contested position. Her achievement in winning one of the AFM's top executive offices was confirmation (if any more was needed) that rank-and-file symphonic musicians and

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(AFM ELECTION – continued from page 1)

women are now an integral part of the AFM’s political landscape.

The favorite topic of conversation around the bars, slot machines, and hallways of the Riviera Hotel the morning after was just *why* the delegates—traditionally a conservative lot given to rewarding incumbency with more incumbency—turned against so many longtime officers. In the case of the presidential election, perhaps the best explanation was the simplest one: friends come and go, but enemies accumulate. Young had alienated some important constituencies, including many members of the Recording Musicians Association. The lack of effective action regarding nonunion film scoring in Seattle was a long-standing complaint in the recording musicians’ community. A more recent issue for them was his appointment of a new trustee to the board of the AFM-EP Fund without prior consultation with them or the other Player Conferences, as they believe they had been promised by Young. While others (including the ICSOM Governing Board) protested the lack of consultation with affected constituencies as well, the issue enraged and energized many in Los Angeles, to Young’s detriment.

In the case of the other upsets, simple explanations were harder to find. One wag said that while it was good that the IEB was held accountable, it would have been better if it had been clear just what they had been held accountable *for*. But there was a clear sense of dissatisfaction with the performance of the AFM’s elected leadership amongst the delegates. A flood of stories about personal enmities between officers heightened that dissatisfaction. But an underlying sense that the elected leadership was, as a group, not capable of setting and articulating a clear direction for the AFM was likely the major tension in the AFM’s crust that finally released itself in the electoral earthquake.

In such a politicized atmosphere, legislative achievements got less attention than they perhaps deserved. But there was significant movement forward for the progressive wing of the AFM, first formalized in the Investigative Task Force initiative of 1997-99. The ITF’s push for a greater formal role for the Player Conferences in the AFM’s governance received a boost from the IEB’s recommendation, and the Convention’s acceptance, of a bylaw change allowing nonvoting Player Conference delegates to the Convention to be appointed to serve on Convention committees. While that may seem a small step (and indeed is a much more modest step than the ITF’s 1999 proposal for a Conference Representatives Board), the value of such representation is very real. Legislation and elections are the main business of an AFM Convention, and most of the give-and-take about legislation happens in committees. Because most ICSOM officers and some ICSOM orchestra musicians were already voting delegates, President Young had the opportunity, and took it, to appoint a significant number of delegates associated with ICSOM and ICSOM orchestras to this Convention’s committees, where their impact was significant. This new legislation will greatly expand the pool of Player Conference-friendly delegates available for appointment by future AFM presidents to these all-important committees.

Another ITF initiative made a little headway as well at this convention. ICSOM put forward a modified version of the ITF’s



AFM President Steve Young swears in the Federation’s newly elected officers.

proposal barring local officers from serving as contractors. While the proposal was not recommended to the Convention by the Law Committee, they did put forward a substitute resolution that would add contracting for musical theater to the list of prohibited activities for local officers. Even this small step towards ending employer domination of some locals met with fierce opposition, and was only passed after a division of the house (standing vote) produced a clear majority of delegates in favor of the proposal. AFM General Counsel George Cohen took the floor during the debate for an extended riff on the increasing interest the NLRB has displayed in the question of contractors on local boards, which ended by warning the delegates that, regardless of their decision on the substitute resolution, the larger issue was not going away.

At the 2000 ICSOM Conference, the Governing Board was directed to put forward legislation that would prohibit locals from barring members of the Local’s board who were also members of local bargaining units (such as orchestras) from voting on matters of concern to that bargaining unit. The Governing Board put forward such a resolution to the Convention, which resolution, with minor modifications for clarity, passed with no discussion and virtually no opposition.

Other highlights of the three days included the passage of an emergency resolution put forward by ICSOM, OCSM, ROPA and Bill Moriarity of Local 802 that would make former SSD Director Lew Waldeck an “Assistant to the President Emeritus.” The high point of the Convention for this delegate was, however, Marsha Schweitzer’s elegy to former Local 677 President Milton Carter—a tribute that left at least one cynical and case-hardened orchestra musician rather damp-eyed.

One danger of conventions for a democratic organization is that occasionally such meetings produce real change. The 2001 AFM Convention certainly did so. And while (in the words of an astute historian), “it is hard to make predictions—especially about the future,” the leadership of ICSOM looks forward to working with the AFM’s new leadership to advance the cause of working musicians in all fields.



(WORKING MUSICIANS MOVE FORWARD – continued from page 1)

Resolution

Whereas, Lew Waldeck served with great distinction as Assistant to the President/Director of the Symphonic Services Division, and

Whereas, he has spent much of his life and career, both as a rank-and-file musician and as a member of the AFM staff, fighting to gain symphonic musicians decent working conditions, fair compensation, respect from their employers, and most important, **power**, and

Whereas, his passion, commitment, enthusiasm, and humor have been an inspiration to an entire generation of union activists within American and Canadian orchestras; therefore, be it

Resolved, that Lew Waldeck be awarded the title of Assistant to the President Emeritus, with all the rights and privileges to which that position would entitle him.

Submitted by: ICSOM
ROPA
OCSM/OMOSC
Bill Moriarity, Local 802

Adopted by the 94th AFM International Convention
June 27, 2001



***Musicians have power in two places—
on stage and at the bargaining table.***

– Lew Waldeck

While the passage of the contractors-on-boards resolution was a major success, the appearance of the per capita dues increase recommendation on the docket just before the election of officers caused perhaps the biggest bungle of the Convention. Hal Espinosa, president of Local 47, Los Angeles—and a candidate for election to the International Executive Board—gave an impassioned speech proposing that we look for revenues in other places, like new use payments, before raising per capita dues. The absence of any argument from the proponents of the recommendation (the IEB, who were also running for office) or anyone representing their position insured that the one revenue-producing piece of legislation presented to the Convention would be defeated.

The Convention passed a few resolutions that will increase the expenses of the Federation, but none that will raise its revenues, at least initially. Across the Federation, musicians are facing an increasingly hostile business climate due to, among other things, the encroachment of technology in theater work, runaway film scoring problems, and piracy on the Internet. As a result, in the near-term the Federation can anticipate continuing erosion in income from per capita dues and work dues. Fearing the cumulative effect of these factors, in its final report to the Convention the Finance Committee said, “The Committee would like to express its deepest concerns that a potential financial crisis is looming if future conventions fail to confront the need for increases in Federation revenues at or above a level equal to inflation.”

Other legislation of interest to ICSOM: Player Conference delegates will now be able to be appointed to Convention committees, giving direct PC input into committee deliberations. This resolution came out of the AFM Governance Task Force, a group composed of Player Conference and AFM leadership which was created by the IEB at the 1999 AFM Convention as a condition for the withdrawal of the ITF-proposed “Conference Representative Board.” While this gain is very important in principle, it will have little real effect on ICSOM’s voice at future conventions if, as at this year’s convention, ICSOM Board members and other ICSOM musicians continue to heavily populate the ranks of the locally-elected delegates. The one remaining privilege accorded to local delegates that is still denied to PC delegates at the AFM Convention is the right to vote.

At the Unity Conference in 1998 AFM President Steve Young encouraged us to run for AFM Convention delegate from our locals. We did so in significant numbers, and then, once we were elected, he appointed several of us to posts on influential Convention committees. ICSOM musicians sat on the Law and Finance Committees at the 1999 AFM Convention, and ICSOM musicians, including almost all ICSOM Governing Board members, served on each of the major committees at the 2001 Convention. This involvement of Player-Conference-associated musicians in the upper levels of AFM deliberation and decision-making had much to do with the relative success of Player Conference initiatives at the 1999 and 2001 AFM Conventions.

Dear Colleagues,

As you probably already know, the Houston Symphony recently suffered catastrophic losses during massive area-wide flooding. Our new executive director, Ann Kennedy, wrote the following description in a letter to donors and subscribers:



“Our administrative offices, which housed forty staff members beneath Jones Hall, were submerged to the ceiling. Our entire music library, which contained scores marked by our great conductors and date back nearly ninety years, was also completely submerged. In addition, several valuable instruments, including two string basses and two pianos that were in Jones Hall, were destroyed. Our rehearsal room, storage spaces and archives were obliterated. Phones, Internet and email access, computers, office equipment, furnishings and paper records are gone. We do not know yet what the financial impact of this catastrophe will be. We do know it will be enormous.”

Jones Hall suffered structural damage as well as damage to its power plant. An all out effort is underway to make the hall usable by September 1. Damage estimates were recently raised to eight million dollars from an initial estimate of \$3 million.

Many of you have generously contacted us to ask how you can help. In response, we are initiating a Flood Recovery Fund. Proceeds from this fund will go towards recovery efforts, with an emphasis on rebuilding the music library. If your orchestra or any of its members would like to make a contribution, they can be sent to:

Musicians of the Houston Symphony
P.O. Box 1406
Houston, TX 77251

The Houston Symphony Orchestra Committee will combine all monies contributed and present it to our administration as a gift from ICSOM and concerned musicians throughout the country, crediting participating orchestras and individuals if so desired.

We thank you for your kind wishes and thoughts.

Chris Deviney
 Houston Symphony Orchestra Committee

The Houston Symphony musicians would like to acknowledge some especially generous gifts so far from the following sources: Erich Graf, Utah Symphony flutist and president of Local 104, Salt Lake City; Scott Mozlin, Cincinnati Symphony violinist; Milwaukee Symphony Musicians Players' Council; Atlanta Federation of Musicians, Local 148-462; Chicago Symphony Orchestra Members' Committee; and the New Jersey Symphony Players' Association. – Ed.



“Voicings” graphic design and concept by Michael Gorman and Norman Foster (bass and clarinet, respectively, of the Honolulu Symphony)

As a veteran of five consecutive and difficult contract negotiations in Baltimore, I would like to commend Leonard Leibowitz for his straight talk about Interest Based Bargaining. Of course we would all like for contract negotiations to be as amicable as possible, but IBB is useless at best and damaging at worst. Of course I

hear, “But our orchestra just did IBB and we got a great settlement. And it was really cool, too !”

If the Musicians of a given orchestra feel that they have achieved a favorable settlement as a consequence of IBB, then I believe that settlement would, obviously, have been at least equally as favorable, and possibly more so, if it had been a consequence, instead, of “traditional” bargaining. And if an orchestra finds that an unfavorable settlement has resulted from “traditional” bargaining, then I believe that settlement would, obviously, have been equally as unfavorable, and possibly more so, if it had resulted, instead, from “Interest Based Bargaining.” The conclusion of this is, logically, that IBB is never advisable.

“Traditional” collective bargaining is not a bad thing. It is merely recognition of the normal, natural, understandable, and unavoidably confrontational nature of a process in which the two sides are, by definition, in conflict. Traditional collective bargaining is simply an acknowledgment, rather than a denial, of reality. This is neither positive nor negative ... it’s just realistic.

Be it “traditional,” “IBB,” “non-confrontational,” or any other characterization ... to try to establish, at the outset of negotiations, the “style” in which those negotiations are to be carried out ... is the epitome of the tail wagging the dog.

I have always understood that the objective of any given negotiation is to achieve the best *possible* settlement—not to improving working relationships. (Improving relationships is for the liaison committees, town meetings, and touchy-feely sessions.) If my understanding is correct, then the Musicians must not allow managements or mediators to cause us to lose sight of our goal—an optimal contract.

The Musicians must stay focused on the *goal* ... then, with that in mind, simply understand and accept the fact that the negotiations will be whatever the negotiations *need to be*.

Charles Underwood
 Baltimore Symphony



When I interviewed Mr. Sipser he was very happy to share anything he could, and was pleased that I was writing this history and documenting the labor history which led to the formation of ICSOM. He loved working with and advocating for musicians, and he spoke very highly of the musicians he had worked with over the years, especially the founders of ICSOM, Ralph Mendelson and George Zazofsky.

I asked him how he got involved with musicians, and he replied it was after he was asked to mediate for the New York Philharmonic in 1967. Before he became ICSOM counsel he had represented blue-collar workers in the iron and brewery industries.

He got a call from George Zazofsky asking him if he would serve for a trial period of six months as lawyer for ICSOM. He agreed, and at the end of the six months was hired as first legal counsel for ICSOM. Leonard Leibowitz joined him in 1970.

The last time we spoke was when he called me to ask me if I had seen the *New York Times* article of Feb 6, 2001 entitled "Musicians Are Gaining a Bigger Voice In Orchestras," and could I find more information about the Richmond Arts Bill introduced 25 years ago. He also asked to see a copy of my manuscript, which I never managed to get to him before he died. At least he knew it was a work-in-progress.

Here are a couple of excerpts from my two-hour interview with him in February, 2000:

IN REGARDS TO THE BATTLES WITH THE UNION IN THE 1960's: "The internal union situation was very rough, and unlike any other labor/union relationship that I know of. The symphony field is the only field in which the lawyer does not represent the entire union, only some of its members. This situation is completely unique in labor history, and that's a critically important difference. The symphony members did not have the strength of the union behind them. Here was a group of rank-and-file who organized themselves, kept the movement alive, retained counsel, fought a three-front battle against the AFM, locals, and management ... and lived to tell about it!"

THE CONTRIBUTORY PENSION ENDS: His work with the Minnesota Orchestra in 1970 revised the whole concept of pensions for all the orchestras of ICSOM. As he recalled in my interview, "The pensions were terribly designed. We revised the concept of the management of the pension funds."

The Minnesota Orchestra hired Philip Sipser in its 1970 negotiations, which became a historic benchmark in the industry for pension distribution. The final agreement included a completely restructured pension plan by eliminating the employee contributions, which up until that time had been as high as 3%. At the annual ICSOM conference in September 1970, Sipser spoke on "Pensions and Fringe Benefits," explaining how some pension funds are administered resulting in less than maximum benefits to pensioners. He showed how an ultraconservative actuarial assumption and funding methods could be modernized, resulting in substantially increased pensions without any increased cost to the management and without employee contributions. He further discussed the possibility of a refund of all employee contributions and still retaining the same benefit formula.

During negotiations and a one-week lockout in 1970, the union lawyer of the Minneapolis Local 73 said to Sipser in reference to the pension proposal: "If you're successful, I'll give you the local!" (As if it was his to give away!!!) Carl Holub, negotiating committee chair, recalled the memorable experience: "Mr. Sipser called me in the middle of the night: 'It's in the pension!!!! We can solve it—it's in the pension!' he screamed over the phone." In a climactic moment during negotiations, Sipser peered over his half-glasses at the other side of the table and declared, "You're a thief of the worst kind, robbing from the old," and he went on to propose that any pension expert would agree with this proposal to eliminate employee contributions.

Management brought in a lawyer who was later appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court, Justice Harry Blackmun. As a pension expert, Blackmun agreed that this proposal would not adversely affect the pension, said Sipser. The Minnesota Orchestra contributory pension plan was terminated in 1970, becoming the first NON-contributory pension plan in the industry, funded entirely by the Association. Other orchestras followed in subsequent negotiations.

AFFILIATION OF ICSOM WITH THE AFM, AND THE STRIKE FUND, were two major accomplishments which he negotiated with the AFM as ICSOM counsel and believed were critical to the survival of ICSOM. "The union called it the 'Sipser agreement' because they did not want to acknowledge ICSOM's existence until the very last minute. The idea of ICSOM becoming a division of the AFM came from my representation of the brewery division of the Teamsters. We had negotiated an affiliation agreement with the Teamsters and I did the same thing here."

Achieving the 52-week season was also of foremost importance, and was successfully negotiated by many orchestras in the 1970's. "The growth of ICSOM has helped the individual player to the degree that the younger players will never understand. It was an incredible effort made in those days."

Julie Ayer

*Minnesota Orchestra ICSOM Delegate
canayer@earthlink.net*

(from an interview with I. Philip Sipser in his New York City office, February 2000, to be published in Julie's upcoming book on the labor history of American orchestra musicians, *More Than Meets the Ear*)



I would like to correct an error in the 2000-2001 wage chart concerning relief services for the Utah Symphony. Our CBA states that "each musician will be scheduled a minimum of 16 services of relief time per season, eight of which may be considered to be 'on-call.' "

Lynn M. Rosen

*Utah Symphony ICSOM Delegate
rosenlynnrosen@cs.com*

Marion Albiston Retires



Missing at this year's ICSOM Conference will be Marion Albiston, the Utah Symphony's ICSOM Delegate for many years. Marion retired from his second trombone position with the Utah Symphony in December 2000 after 42 years of service. Marion's career started in Army bands during the Korean War, followed by a year of touring the Midwest with dance bands. His sidelines after joining the Utah Symphony included managing a music store and driving the Symphony's truck on tours. And—at night he played for the Utah Symphony, but by day he traded his tails and trombone for coveralls and a lantern to work as a switchman for the Union Pacific Railroad! His plans for retirement? "Lots of projects and hopefully some traveling," he says.

Lynn Rosen, violinist, will be the new Utah Symphony ICSOM Delegate at this year's conference in San Diego.

Work Hardening

How to safely return to work after injury

by Janet Horvath

Cellist, Minnesota Orchestra, and Director, "Playing (less) Hurt"TM Conference and Lecture Series

Any injury is devastating to a musician. Recovery is oftentimes a slow and methodical process requiring time off and painstaking rehabilitation. Overcoming the fear of reinjury once one is finally on the mend can be a challenge. Work hardening is a program that attempts to prevent the possibility of reinjury and relapse.

Work hardening is a term that was developed in industry to describe using the workplace as part of one's therapy by implementing a graduated return. For musicians, as well, gradual return can make the difference between successful re-entry or chronic injury. Playing back in the orchestra is much more strenuous than playing at home. At home one is much more in control of all the factors relating to our playing. The following factors have contributed to the rise of injuries amongst musicians, especially in the orchestral setting.

1. Our schedules are much more demanding than they were a few decades ago. Today, the norm is a 52-week season with 3-4 orchestral performances each week. Sometimes orchestral musicians might do several different programs within a week.

2. Repertoire is much more demanding.

Twenty-five to thirty years ago works which seemed unplayable or extremely demanding such as *The Rite of Spring* are now standard repertory and required learning.

3. Higher standards.

Just as in athletics where the 10-second 100-yard dash seemed humanly impossible and now it's commonly achievable, in music younger artists are performing more and more difficult works with greater perfection and often greater intensity.

There is more and more competition for positions in orchestras today. Two hundred candidates for one position is not uncommon. Taking 10-15 different auditions in different cities is also not uncommon before actually landing a job.

Composers and performers have extended the technical capabilities of wind and keyboard instruments which have undergone numerous changes in shape and structure over the last several decades. This has also contributed to increased musical and technical demands on instrumentalists.

Programming week after week of large demanding symphonic works is also a relatively new phenomenon, *Ein Heldenleben* of Strauss one week, followed by Mahler *Symphony No. 7* the next, followed by *Gurrelieder* of Schoenberg, allows for no recovery time for musicians who must go "all out" to perform these works.

4. Lack of control.

Playing in an orchestra is like being a passenger in a car. When you're in the driver's seat you know when you're going to stop suddenly or take a "hard right." You are able to anticipate

the motion by bracing yourself and you are ready for it physically. It's the *passenger* who goes through the windshield!

In an orchestra, the *conductor* is in the driver's seat. We musicians never know when the conductor will suddenly stop or start, lurch forward in tempo, freeze endlessly at the end of a movement, or jump onto the podium and start the downbeat before you've even sat down. In an orchestra, due to this lack of control, one is unable to anticipate motions and maintain fluidity. Our motions become more jerky, sudden and uncontrolled. If a conductor has an inconsistent or thoughtless rehearsal style, our problems can be magnified. How often do we hear a conductor say "Take it easy on this—save it for the concert!?" In an orchestra many taxing techniques are written into the repertoire with little or no respite. Pages of tremolo, col legno, or long softly held notes are not as common in solo or chamber music repertoire.

5. Preparedness.

The days of six rehearsals and two concerts are in the past as well. Today, orchestras see the music as a group for the first time on Monday morning. By Wednesday we are performing it, often only after four rehearsals. Performing music which we are relatively unfamiliar with adds to our physical strain. Since we don't know what's coming, our motions are again more jerky and more unplanned. When there is inadequate rehearsal time we have the feeling that we are "walking on eggshells"—translation: we are more tense.

6. Conditions.

We rarely have control of our stage placement. We may need to crane our necks or contort our bodies in some way to see the music and the conductor. We might not have adequate room to bow. We may be seated immediately in front of the brass section, percussion section, or the piccolo, and we are cringing from the decibel level. The concert location may have inadequate light and heat. Outdoor concerts produce peculiar problems as well. It may be 63 degrees or 103 degrees in July, and we may be attacked by swarms of insects! We may be subject to the worst possible chair to perform on. All of these may contribute to our physical or emotional discomfort which can give rise to injury.

7. Performance anxiety.

Due to recordings perhaps, there are unrealistic expectations placed on musicians today. A cello soloist is expected to be heard booming above the orchestra, a solo in the horn or trumpet is expected to be "clam"-free and always perfect. We are so very public in our work. Other artists can throw away their mistakes or rework aspects they are dissatisfied with. Performance anxiety can put us physically ill at ease and make us more tense. We may breathe more shallowly, which may put us at risk for injury.

Conductors can definitely contribute to our anxiety level. What profession can you name that the boss supervises everything you do at all times? He/she hears the wind, percussion and brass players *all the time*. There is little opportunity to “hide,” “coast,” or doze off in a symphony orchestra, whether or not you had a sleepless night due to a sick child, a financial setback, a disagreement with your spouse, or a bout of the flu.

8. Touring and recording.

Although these are not daily stressors, when they do occur, they can “put us in the red” for risk. On tour we have even less control over our schedules and our physical comfort. Our routines are totally altered. We may have trouble sleeping, we can never eat at appropriate times, or eat what we are accustomed to eating. We may be lonely. We have difficulty maintaining our regular exercise schedules and are subject to cramped, uncomfortable travel conditions such as long bus rides and airplane rides on a daily basis. Touring tends to be extremely tiring. Invariably, when we can’t “catch up” on rest, illness spreads rampantly through the group. Chairs may be of the low, folding, uncomfortable, rickety kind. All these additional stressors combined with the pressure of important concerts, puts us at risk for injury.

Recording has its own demands. We are much more on edge, trying to do even more than our best. Microphones are so sensitive that we tend to be afraid to move, to breathe, to sneeze or cough, let alone miss a note! Talk about tense! All of these factors make the professional symphony musician more at risk for injury. It is for these reasons that a work hardening program is critical for us.

When you first return to the orchestra after injury, you need everyone on your team: your therapist and doctor, the orchestra management and conductor, the medical insurance company, and your colleagues! We don’t want a relapse at this time. Work hardening in the orchestral setting has been a sticky one to iron out. Most orchestral contracts indicate that musicians must be “full time.” Most insurance companies feel that they’ll pay while someone is sick and if they’re back playing they’re “well,” right?

Here in Minnesota and in several other orchestras an innovative plan for gradual return for an injured musician has been implemented. The insurance company is notified that the on-the-job appearance of the musician is part of his/her therapy. The insurance company continues all disability payments. The orchestra continues to hire a substitute who plays the full schedule and is paid by the orchestra. The injured musician returns initially playing whatever s/he can, which may only be a few minutes. The musician does not sit in his/her customary seat but sits at the back of the section to facilitate his/her exiting when s/he needs to. Soon s/he is able to graduate to one piece on the program, then one-half of a program. Only after a number of weeks’ time does s/he graduate to a full program. It is advisable to choose the timing of the re-entry so that the player begins with a “light” program rather than an intense and/or extended program. Works by Mahler, Strauss or Bruchner should be avoided.

The following is the language that is used as policy here at the Minnesota Orchestra:

* * * * *

Work Hardening Program

Definition

The work hardening program allows a musician to regain strength needed for full-time employment. For example: A broken bone is healed, the cast is removed and the physician says that the musician no longer needs to protect the injury, but the muscles need to be strengthened. The physician recommends a work hardening program of a specific length of time. The musician remains under the physician’s care.

Basic Elements

The musician remains on sick leave or disability until released to come back full-strength, full-time by his/her physician.

The Association reserves the right to have a musician examined according to section 12.1 of the Master Agreement.

The musician is not considered part of the required complement.

The musician sits at the rear of the section, allowing him/her to come and go as his/her condition warrants.

The musician decides which services and which pieces to perform, keeping the personnel managers informed of his/her intentions.

Customizing Elements

Differences in the program have to do with the length of time a musician is required by his/her physician to remain on work hardening or other physician related requirements.

History

This program was first introduced by Mark Volpe and Ron Balazs, working together with the Members Committee in 1988.

* * * * *

This method has worked successfully time and time again. No one wants to see the musician re-injured. Lobby your orchestra committee and management to implement a work hardening program.

Now that you are successfully back, pay attention to the signals your body sends you. Constantly search for ways to make your playing easier and tension free. Warm up, cool down, stretch, take breaks. Continue to monitor all of your activities, both playing and not, and your stress level. Keep analyzing. Everything you have learned during this difficult process will put you in good stead for a long, fruitful and pain-free career.

♪ ♪

This article is an excerpt from Janet Horvath’s upcoming book, “Playing (less) Hurt”™—An Injury Prevention Handbook for Musicians. Janet can be reached at jhorvathcello@hotmail.com.

Coming soon . . .

The 2001 ICSOM Conference

San Diego, August 22-26

Hot topics of discussion are likely to be ...

The Mellon Foundation Orchestra Program

Orchestra Shop Stewards

Election of ICSOM Governing Board Members-at-Large

ICSOM's Influence at the AFM Convention

The New Audio/Visual Agreement with a look to the
Upcoming Phono Negotiations

... and the usual networking, arguing, schmoozing,
gripping, gossiping, and revelling at the Mixer, in the
Hospitality Suite, and at other undisclosed locations.

Newslets

Fiddle and Fight, Russell Brodine's autobiographical account of life in the St. Louis Symphony, is now available at your bookstore or from International Publishers, 239 W 23rd Street, New York NY 10011, www.intpubnyc.com.



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Stephanie Tretick
Pittsburgh Symphony
3979 Boulevard Drive
Pittsburgh PA 15217-2619
(412) 422-7275 (Voice/FAX)
stephanie.tretick@icsom.org

Editor, Senza Sordino
Marsha Schweitzer
Honolulu Symphony
905 Spencer Street #404
Honolulu HI 96822
(808) 531-6617 (Voice/FAX)
marsha.schweitzer@icsom.org

MEMBERS AT LARGE

Jay Blumenthal
New York City Ballet
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blujay@erols.com

Michael Moore
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(404) 875-TUBA (Voice/FAX)
michael.moore@icsom.org

Mary Plaine
Baltimore Symphony
630 Deepdene Road
Baltimore MD 21210
(410) 433-6063
mary.plaine@icsom.org

Charles Schlueter
Boston Symphony
60 Otis Street
Newtonville MA 02460-1823
(617) 964-4019 / FAX 630-8077
charles.schlueter@icsom.org

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ICSOM Counsel
Leonard Leibowitz
322 West 48th Street
New York NY 10036
(212) 765-4300 / FAX 765-2775

ICSOM Emeritus Program
Abe Torchinsky
777 W. Germantown Pike #1028
Plymouth Meeting PA 19462
Phone: (610) 277-3981
AbeT825844@aol.com

Orchestra-L and WebMaestro: Robert Levine

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c/o Marsha Schweitzer, 905 Spencer Street #404, Honolulu HI 96822