

Senza Sordino

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Eight Weeks to Victory Standing Firm in Charlotte

by Bob Rydel, Charlotte Symphony ICSOM Delegate

During the first few hours of the July 2003 ICSOM/AFM brainstorming session in Chicago, it became clear to the three Charlotte Symphony Players' Association negotiating team members that we had heard this story before. The year was 1996, and it was time to negotiate a new CBA. However, we were called to the table earlier than usual, and it was not a good sign. We were told that the accumulated deficit was a sign of "too much product," given diatribes on sustainability, and ultimately shown the bankruptcy papers. We were promised that, if we would be a part of the solution and help the management get its house in order, it would put the company on the road to recovery and a better future. The cost of membership in this plan was a 3-year weekly wage freeze, a reduction of the season from 40 to 36 weeks, and the loss of a \$50,000 equally shared orchestra-wide "bonus" payment provision in the expiring CBA, among other things. Although not termed "structural deficit" then, the discussion this past July of that term's definition recalled with some chill the events we endured in the mid '90s. If the term "structural deficit" had existed in the management lexicon at that time, it surely would have been heard. We watched with envy for the next few years as many orchestras rode the wave of the booming economy and added to their salaries, while we were frozen. In 1999, we negotiated a four-year contract with the help of Lenny Leibowitz, and were able to make some gains that put us on the track to recovering from not only the weekly salary freeze, but also the loss of four weeks from the season. When all was said and done, the average raise over the seven-year period was roughly equal to the increase in the cost of living.

As we were preparing for negotiations this spring, with players' surveys and interviews, the management was informing us of a deficit that was mounting from that season (2003-04). The headline reasons given for the shortfall were: the economy, 9/11, health insurance costs, and unfulfilled corporate contributions. The players had identified cost concerns of our own. For example, large concert projects like the Britten *War Requiem*, Mahler's 3rd, and a concert version of *Der Freischutz*—projects that other

larger orchestras were choosing to postpone—were kept on the schedule despite the risk of significant fiscal exposure. These projects also included 7 or more rehearsals for each, requiring a substantial spending commitment for filling out the orchestra with the extra musicians needed. We also had concerns about several weeks in the season originally dedicated to projects that had since been cancelled, among them a spring gala, and some additional summer concerts. We never completely filled out those weeks, and although we did some concerts, the schedule was light. It seemed that there was probably lost revenue for those weeks.

The negotiating sessions prior to the strike were long and unproductive, as well might be imagined. Management was demanding formidable cuts to the musicians' present salaries, as well as deep cuts to our health insurance coverage, sick leave days and medical disability payments. Specifically, the management demanded a 7.5% salary cut for this season, a 4% cut for next, and an eventual 5.7% "raise" from the base salary of the 2002-03 season levels, which would not take effect until the '05-'06 season. There would be no increase whatsoever in seniority or pension for the duration of the CBA.

As was mentioned earlier in this article, we had fallen behind in salary levels over the past decade, and, with cuts and freezes in effect for many years, our annual base salary grew by only \$147 total, from \$22,101 to \$22,248 during the 1990s. Adjusted for inflation, even during the low-inflation '90s, the musicians' annual salary before the pay cut demanded for this season was only \$1,136 higher than it was in 1987, an average annual increase of just 0.2% over the last 15 years. All these demands were being made at the same time that the management was going ahead with their plans to increase the core orchestra size by adding two violin positions starting in the 2003-04 season. The parallels to our 1996 fiasco were all too real.

Our management also wanted cuts of over 50% in our sick leave, relief, and personal days, in addition to a 33% cut demanded in short-term disability. The injury rate in the orchestra has increased dramatically over the past few years, due to heavy scheduling and the increase in utilized services, including injuries requiring players to take short-term disability. Since the number of actual relief services has remained the same over the last four years, but the number of work weeks has increased, we have a realized decrease in relief as an overall percentage. This has been a clear contributing factor to the jump in our injury rates, and the players could not accept proposals that would put us at further risk of injury and loss of disability pay.

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Chairperson's Report

Jan Gippo



My last few months have been devoted to getting organized with some of the committees that are going to start meeting face to face as a whole body. The Futures Committee of the AFM has set a date for its first meeting: January 23, 2004. This committee was created by Emergency Resolution #8 at the AFM Convention in June. It will look at the internal workings of the AFM, find better solutions to communication issues, and address new initiatives to strengthen our union for the next 100 years.

The Media Committee is going to meet face to face, and discuss the upcoming negotiations for digital distribution and the Sound Recording Labor Agreement. We have been meeting by phone each month, and now will bring to the Federation ideas and positions for further discussion.

We are also working on our upcoming mid-winter meeting of the Governing Board. During the meeting, we will make some final plans for the August conference and entertain ideas for topics. Now is the time for you, the delegates and musicians of ICSOM, to share your ideas with your Member-at-Large or orchestra delegate. If you want to be a force within ICSOM, now is the time for the Governing Board to hear from you. I hope to get 52 new and different ideas for us to discuss.

My vision for ICSOM has always been that of a super-committee of delegates communicating what they are doing in their individual orchestras, with each delegate taking that information and using it as a reference point with which to craft solutions for his/her own orchestra, rather than recreating the wheel every time there is a crisis or problem. For example, one major issue facing most orchestras is audience development. In my recent travels, I went to Detroit to speak with their Negotiating Committee. Before we met, however, they had to play two family concerts. These concerts are performed on Saturday morning, and each concert was sold out. The Detroit Symphony has just opened a new addition to their hall—a large atrium where they serve hot dogs and soda, and where student musicians had string and brass instruments with which the children could try to make a sound. The concerts feature a conductor who is engaging, smart and speaks to the audience in much the same way that a family conversation might take place at home. All in all, it was a great success and extraordinarily entertaining.

How many orchestras have tried Saturday morning youth concerts? Would they work for your orchestra? How does the conductor or music director develop an exciting and engaging program? Why sit around in your isolated committee, talking in speculative terms, when you could simply call the musicians in Detroit and discover how their program has evolved? In this way, we can all benefit from the successes of our colleagues.

How many other initiatives are out there that we could hear about and use or modify to help us better solve our problems? My hope is that Delegate-L will become an "ideas list," used to share orchestral successes and even failures. Perhaps where one orchestra failed, another could modify a concept and make it work.

We are not isolated. We are a part of a 52-orchestra organization with hundreds of great and creative minds. Let's use our combined knowledge to create new solutions to the systemic problems that plague us. I look forward to hearing from all of you.

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President's Report Brian Rood



For most musicians, late December is spent trying to squeeze in some holiday shopping while performing endless Nutcrackers, Messiahs, and other seasonal concerts. For the ICSOM Governing Board, this time of year also includes planning our annual midwinter meeting. Weather permitting, this year's session will be held in Chicago on January 19. Issues and concerns you would like to see addressed may be sent to your Delegate, Member-At-

Large or other ICSOM officer. A report of the meeting will appear in the next issue of *Senza Sordino*.

Amid all the uncertainty regarding political and world events, and despite recent concessionary orchestra negotiations, it may be time for musicians, managements, and boards alike to look ahead more optimistically. Signs of economic recovery are underway across the country: the Dow Jones Industrial Average closed above 10,000 for the first time in eighteen months; the economy grew at its fastest rate in nearly 20 years during the third quarter of 2003; orchestra endowments are beginning to recover from market declines; and ticket sales are returning to pre-9/11 numbers in many cities. A welcome twist on the current negotiation scene is that contract provisions, for some orchestras, are being improved at the table.

Clearly, there are orchestras that have not only "weathered the storm," but actually thrived. Is there an opportunity to learn from these orchestras?

Included in Kennedy Center president Michael Kaiser's remarks at this summer's ICSOM Conference were two important points worth mentioning here:

"By drastically cutting artistic programming and marketing [as a knee-jerk reaction to short-term fiscal problems,] one virtually assures additional reduction in revenue for the future. Donors and audiences are attracted to important programming, to organizations that are vital and flourishing, not to those which are cutting back on visibility programs and retreating behind stale, if cheaper, programming."

Creative and effective marketing really does pay off in terms of increased audiences and earned revenue. A recent example of such success can be found at the Phoenix Symphony. This season, according to Eric Sellen, the orchestra's Director of Marketing and Public Relations, the Phoenix Symphony has experienced "a new historic high in subscription series sales, new record high telemarketing sales for the third year in a row, record-breaking web ticket sales every month all fall long, and seven sold-out concerts to date." (Many thanks go to ICSOM Delegate John Lofton for sharing the news of these successes with us.)

The other point stressed by Michael Kaiser in Vail was this:

"We need to insist that arts managers and boards are trained so that they become strong stewards of our industry. Without

(continued on page 8—see PRESIDENT'S REPORT)

Treasurer's Report Michael Moore



The following is a snapshot of our financial condition, as of December 26:

Account balances:

AGE ERF	\$215,985.20
AGE General	\$19,290.32
AGE Mendolson	\$30,930.73
STB Chairman's	\$3521.90
STB Secretary's	\$3152.38
STB <i>Senza Sordino</i>	\$4778.24
STB General	\$61,181.43
Total:	\$338,840.20

One new \$10,000 ERF loan was provided.

All funds this quarter have been deposited into the SouthTrust General account, with transfers going to the satellite accounts. In January, most will be transferred to the AGE General account. Expenses this quarter totaled \$26,315.81 (vs. \$43,727.79 the previous quarter.)

25 orchestras have paid dues so far, for a total of \$74,145. 26 orchestras still have dues outstanding, totaling \$91,346. (A reminder—our bylaws now impose a penalty if dues are not paid by March 1.) Out of the total dues amount, the ERF now receives \$8,486 and the Mendolson fund (for our Minority Scholarship program) receives \$4,243 (\$2 and \$1 per capita, respectively).

Dues from our newest member orchestra, Puerto Rico, came to \$2,555. There are currently two orchestras who will likely not be in a position to pay dues, and that combined amount is \$4,760. For this fiscal year, dues to the general funds (i.e. all except ERF and Mendolson) will increase \$8,340, plus the aforementioned \$2,555, and minus the \$4,760, for a net anticipated gain of \$6,135. Subtracting an increase in legal expenses of \$1,800 will yield an additional \$4,335 over last year for ICSOM's other program services.

Next year, net dues income will increase another \$1,800 as well as the next four years after that. So, thanks to you as voting members of your orchestras, ICSOM should be on stable ground, with funds available to pursue our joint goals. I especially wish to thank the orchestras who paid this year's dues early, thus eliminating the need for the Governing Board to borrow from the ERF. I wish all ICSOM musicians a happy and prosperous new year.

Senza Sordino is the official voice of ICSOM and reflects ICSOM policy. However, there are many topics discussed in *Senza Sordino* on which ICSOM has no official policy; the opinions thus expressed in *Senza Sordino* are those of the author(s) and not necessarily of ICSOM, its officers or members. Articles and letters expressing differing viewpoints are welcomed.

Secretary's Report

Laura Ross



I hope you all had a fantastic holiday, and that we can all look forward to a better year than the last. 2003 passed at break-neck speed (thankfully), and it's a new year already. As always, I am never far from my trusty laptop, even on my holiday vacation, which is a good

thing, since we have a Governing Board conference call; an Electronic Media conference call; and a meeting (on the last day of my vacation) with the Electronic Media Committee!

On a personal note, I'd like to thank the Houston Symphony for the excellent performance I attended during Thanksgiving weekend. I was quite pleased to catch up with many of my friends in the orchestra, and I'm very proud of the entire ensemble. They are the ultimate professionals, determined to challenge themselves to perform at the highest level, no matter what. I remember the recovery period my orchestra faced following bankruptcy years ago, and I can only wish that the Houston musicians, as well as those in many other orchestras who have been forced to make concessions this past year, recover quickly and successfully.

As for my secretarial duties, I continue to remind delegates in their periodic mailings to contact me when negotiations and ratification are completed. Some delegates and committees have been very good on this score, but some orchestras who settled months ago have never contacted me. I encourage your orchestra to contact me regarding settlement bulletins, because this is the best way for our colleagues to learn the real details of a new agreement, as opposed to reading a newspaper article that may leave out many important aspects of a new agreement. Once a settlement bulletin is approved by the delegate and/or committee, I post the information on Orchestra-L. Robert Levine posts the formatted version on the ICSOM website (www.icsom.org) and hard copies are mailed to delegates in their periodic mailings.

Just prior to Thanksgiving, I tallied the results of the five resolutions that required ratification by ICSOM orchestras. The results (each orchestra having 1 vote) were as follows:

- Resolution (#1) to increase ICSOM dues —39 in favor, 1 abstention
- Resolution (#2) to reinstate the ERF—39 in favor, 1 abstention
- Resolution (#3) to encourage timely payment of dues—37 in favor, 2 against, 1 abstention
- Resolution (#8) to address a housekeeping issue—39 in favor, 1 abstention
- Resolution (#10) to adopt a new procedure of notifying the ICSOM Secretary of bylaw ratification by individual orchestras—38 in favor, 1 against, 1 abstention

New ICSOM Bylaws were mailed to the delegates in November and can be found on the ICSOM website.

I have, happily, handed over the *Senza Sordino* mailing list to *Senza* editor Sam Bergman, who will be making many changes to account for our move from boxed and enveloped mailings to bulk mail. The list was relatively easy to maintain; the only tedious part was printing the labels, which took over an hour each time. I do not envy Sam the task, as delegates will now have five entries as will locals and orchestras. While there are some subscribers, there are also player conference reps and complimentary copies to keep up to date as well. By far, the largest part of the list I had to maintain were the 900+ emeriti — add to that the 4,000+ musicians currently in ICSOM orchestras and you see the massive task Sam is taking up!

I am also pleased to announce that the first draft of the conference minutes is being proofed, and I hope to have them mailed to the delegates by early January when I return to Nashville.

As I mentioned earlier, there will be some ICSOM activity in Chicago in January. The Electronic Media Committee will meet on January 4. The Governing Board will hold their mid-winter meeting two weeks later in Chicago on January 19.

Finally, as announced elsewhere in this issue, the 2004 ICSOM Conference will be held August 18–21 in Salt Lake City, Utah. We thank the Utah Symphony, the Baltimore Symphony and the Puerto Rico Symphony for submitting proposals for consideration. More information will be forthcoming in the spring, but the conference is slated to begin on Wednesday morning, a change from past practice, so delegates will need to arrive on Tuesday evening. Mark your calendars!



President's Report

(continued from page 3)

strong management, no musician will have a secure future. With strong management, every issue we face can be handled and both musicians' health and happiness and institutional strength can flourish."

Every successful orchestra has at least a trick or two up its sleeve that other orchestras may have not tried or even thought of. A founding tenet from ICSOM's early years was that "common problems might have common solutions." With the technological opportunities now available—ICSOM's e-mail discussion lists, relatively inexpensive long distance telephone service, etc.—it should be easier than ever for musicians to communicate with each other and research the best practices throughout our industry.

Finally, I would like to extend my deepest appreciation to our immediate past Governing Board members who stepped down last summer. Former *Senza Sordino* editor Tom Hall and Member-At-Large Mary Plaine were indispensable to the Governing Board last year. Their commitment and leadership are models of exemplary union principles. ICSOM is stronger and more vibrant because of their tireless devotion to our musicians and the orchestra industry.

A Special Night to Remember a Special Guy **Len Leibowitz, ICSOM Counsel**

Editor's Note: Lew Waldeck, former tubist and ICSOM delegate with the New York City Opera Orchestra and Director Emeritus of the AFM's Symphonic Services Division, died on January 26, 2004 at the age of 69.

The little room in the old local New Jersey government building off of Broad Street was packed. A makeshift rostrum had been set up in the middle of the floor, and it was surrounded by wall-to-wall humanity, most of whom wore Hawaiian shirts and baseball caps. Ties were strictly forbidden.

They had come from as far as Honolulu and California as well as from around the corner. When we arrived, the closest we could get was the doorway, but the room was so small it was close enough to see and hear the love. With the notable exception of a former ballet dancer who had known Lew since he played in the ABT orchestra, there were very few tears.

Marsha Schweitzer had come from Honolulu to recall Lew's role in getting the members of the Honolulu Symphony through the worst of the many tough times that orchestra has had (and still has) to endure. Her voice was resonant with adoration. Nathan Kahn adored him too. Everyone did, whether they spoke or not.

Now—famous Waldeckisms were repeated and echoed like hymns. People shouted "POWAH" at any reference to his renowned "dog and pony" show. "If you have to know now, the answer is no," "Hugs and Kisses, everyone" and "Remember the Little Train that Could!" bounced off the rafters. As they did, snippets of memories of Lew kept popping into my head like bubbles in a glass of seltzer.

I remembered the New York City Opera Orchestra Committee in the 1970s (where I first met him). It included Lew,

Florence Nelson, John Palanchian, and as I said recently, "a couple of other guys." As those memories floated by, I turned around and there were the "other guys." What a committee that was! They actually let me believe that I was the chief negotiator. Yeah, right! And, across the table, was our "adversary"—a still beautiful and brilliant Beverly Sills.

I am perplexed that none of the speakers that night mentioned Lew's own "Sundance Kid," John Palanchian. As we adored Lew, Lew idolized John. When Lew furnished (if you can call it that) his office at the AFM, the only adornment on the walls was a photo of the then-late "JP."

Then Florence spoke, and though she didn't refer to the days of the New York City Opera West Coast tours, I couldn't help recalling the stories of her and Lew cooking chili and steaming clams on the California beach, feeding the entire orchestra, most of whom were too drunk to notice. Thinking about chili brought to mind another one of Lew's favorite people, Milton Carter, the late President of AFM Local 677, Honolulu. To every symphony musician in Hawaii Milton was their own local version of Lew Waldeck, and they loved them both.

I also remembered the Buffalo Pilots and the Salt Lake City Stars; the Indianapolis Indians and the Pittsfield Mets, whose "stadium" was located in the parking lot of a diner in downtown Pittsfield, Mass.

Wherever we were around the country Lew dragged us to a minor league baseball game, until we grew to love them as much as he did.

And just as I started to remember the bird hospital in their living room, Mary hugged me. It was quite an evening—you shoulda been there. I wish Lew had been.



Lew Waldeck
1935–2004

Backstage Roundup

Sam Bergman

Items in this column are culled from a variety of media sources, and expanded with the input and assistance of ICSOM delegates from around the country. Readers who wish a more timely and complete picture of the news regarding orchestras may avail themselves of several online resources, beginning with ICSOM's own *Orchestra-L*, an email service which can be joined by sending a request to orchestra-l-subscribe@topica.com. Other available online resources for music news include *ArtsJournal* (www.artsjournal.com), *Andante* (www.andante.com), and *Google News* (a link can be found at www.icsom.org), all of which are updated several times a day. [Disclosure notice: Senza Sordino's editor is also an employee of *ArtsJournal*.] All reports in this column were accurate as this issue went to press.

After several weeks of intense media scrutiny and behind-the-scenes debate, the proposed merger of Carnegie Hall and the **New York Philharmonic** was called off in early October, due to unresolved scheduling conflicts, and the increasing opposition of board members in both organizations. The Philharmonic will remain as the primary tenant at Avery Fisher Hall in Lincoln Center.

The story of the year in the orchestral world was, of course, in Southern California, where the **Los Angeles Philharmonic** debuted its long-awaited new concert hall in October. Designed by world-renowned architect Frank Gehry, Disney Hall was immediately hailed in the press as a musical and architectural triumph. Writing in the online magazine *Slate*, Christopher Hawthorne called it "a building where the members of a democracy can go to feel refined, to be lifted from the everyday," and the *New York Times* pronounced the swooping facade to be "a cornerstone for the creation of a downtown area that already shows signs of reinventing itself." The accolades for the hall's acoustic, and for the sound of the Philharmonic on its opening night, were every bit as glowing as the reviews of its architecture. Writing in the *Los Angeles Times*, Mark Swed described the Phil's new home as "everything and more than we might have hoped for. In this enchanted space, music can take on meaningful new excitement even in an age when many art forms are satisfied with oversaturated stimulation." Charles Michener, of the *New York Observer*, was equally impressed: "People in the concert business tell me that it takes about three years for an orchestra and a new hall to settle down acoustically. What I heard at Disney Hall suggests a marriage that is off to a roaring start."

The **Metropolitan Opera** received a \$3.5 million gift from the Annenberg Foundation in December, dedicated to preserving the Met's world-famous radio series. The future of the Saturday afternoon broadcasts, heard on 365 stations in the U.S. as well as in 40 foreign countries, was cast into doubt last spring, when ChevronTexaco withdrew its sponsorship. The Annenberg gift will cover approximately half the cost of the current season's broadcasts, but will not be annually renewed, meaning that the Met is still seeking permanent sponsorship for the series, which is in its 64th year.

2003 was a roller coaster of a year for the **Detroit Symphony Orchestra**, which debuted its newly renovated Orchestra Place complex in October to rave reviews from the local and national press. The \$60 million, 135,000-square foot Max M. Fisher Music Center was conceived not only as an upgrade to the DSO's concert hall, but as a revitalizing force for the downtown neighborhood that the orchestra calls home. However, the news wasn't all good in Detroit, as the orchestra reported a \$2 million deficit in December, its largest in a decade. It was the third straight year of red ink for the DSO, and the lack of fiscal balance appears to have cost the orchestra's president his job. Emil Kang, who became the youngest president of an American orchestra when he was hired in 2000 at the age of 31, quit suddenly just before Christmas, with board chairman Jim Nicholson refusing to comment on whether he had been forced out. The DSO is also continuing its search for a music director to replace Neeme Järvi, who will be leaving at the end of the 2004-05 season to become the music director of the **New Jersey Symphony Orchestra**. The NJSO announced the appointment in late October.

The musicians of the **Honolulu Symphony Orchestra** reluctantly agreed to a devastating round of cuts in mid-October. Following a reopening of the HSO's 5-year contract (currently in its third year) the base salary was immediately slashed 20%, with a wage freeze the following year, and a re-opener clause available to both sides in the final year. Pension benefits were also cut, and four weeks were shaved off the 34-week season. Musicians were told that the only alternative to the cuts would have been to eliminate six musicians from the orchestra.

The **Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra** announced in December that American-born conductor David Robertson would be its next music director, taking up the reins in September 2005. The SLSO has been without a music director since Hans Vonk was forced to step down last year due to his failing health. Violinist/conductor Itzhak Perlman has been serving as the orchestra's "artistic advisor" and frequent guest conductor in the interim. The SLSO had also made some headlines in October, with the dismissal of the orchestra's well-regarded general manager, Carla Johnson. Orchestra officials said that the position of GM was being eliminated for budgetary reasons, and that Johnson's duties would be split amongst other senior staff.

Also in October, the **Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra** hired 29-year-old Mark C. Hanson as its new president and executive director, replacing Steven Ovitsky, who resigned last spring. Hanson had been executive director at the Knoxville Symphony Orchestra since April 2001, where he was credited with retiring 2/3 of the KSO's accumulated debt, and doubling the size of its endowment. [Disclosure notice: *Senza Sordino*'s editor attended summer camp with Mr. Hanson for several years in the early 1990s.] In November, the MSO reported an \$874,000 deficit for the 2002-03 season, which was \$1.6 million better than initial projections.

(continued on page 7—see BACKSTAGE)

Backstage Roundup

(continued from page 6)

There were also management moves at the **Minnesota Orchestra**, where chief financial officer Ward Gill resigned in November to become president of the San Diego Symphony, and development director Mary Ellen Kuhl resigned after more than a decade with the organization. Neither Gill nor Kuhl will be immediately replaced in Minneapolis, as the orchestra's new president, Tony Woodcock (formerly of the Oregon Symphony), works to contend with a reported \$2.4 million deficit (the orchestra's fifth consecutive year in the red), and slumping ticket sales. Woodcock's arrival led to some scrutiny in the local press, after the orchestra's incoming board chair resigned in a huff during the search process, and a few other board members appeared unhappy that an external candidate had been hired. The musicians of the orchestra were intimately involved in the search process, and were supportive of Woodcock's hiring, as were the majority of board members and staff.

Despite the best efforts of musicians and community volunteers, the **Florida Philharmonic** appears to be finished, reports ICSOM delegate Jay Bertolet. In a December posting to ICSOM's Orchestra-L, Bertolet wrote, "All reorganization attempts appear to have failed and the parts and pieces of the institution are being auctioned off. Largest of these items are the rehearsal hall and music library, which are currently being bid upon, and said auction closes on January 6th. There will be court hearings on January 8th to review the bids and declare winners for these items. There are already bids on both items and, while we could not raise enough money to bid on the library ourselves, it appears that the current high bid for the library is made by a local entity that intends to preserve the library for the use of any possible successor organization. That may end up being a good or bad thing, as the musicians of the FPO will not have any control over the disposition of this local asset. As of right now, it appears that all the possessions of the FPO are slated for liquidation and that disbursement of funds to the creditors will begin within 3 months."

The struggle for solvency continues at the **San Antonio Symphony**, where the 2003–04 season has been officially cancelled (a 26-week season is tentatively planned for 2004–05), and executive director Steven Brosvik resigned in mid-November. The resignation prompted an angry column from *San Antonio Express-News* critic Mike Greenberg, who wrote, "[The] symphony board habitually hires executive directors who are guaranteed to fail because they lack either the experience needed to manage the institution effectively or the personal authority to manage the board itself—or both." For more on the current situation in San Antonio, see Dan Zollars's report on page 8.

Deficits abounded for ICSOM orchestras reporting their financials for the 2002–03 season. The **Philadelphia Orchestra** reported a \$1 million shortfall on the year, and the **Cleveland Orchestra** ran \$2 million in the red, with a projected shortfall of \$4 million for the current season. The **Chicago Symphony Orchestra**, which had reported a \$6 million deficit for the 2001–02 season, officially broke even in '02–'03, but the budget was only balanced due to an additional endowment draw of \$1.3 million, and the CSO anticipates a return to red ink for the current season. The

Houston Symphony Orchestra reported a deficit of \$3.56 million for the '02–'03 season, which was \$1.3 million more than the HSO's board had anticipated. It is thought to be the largest deficit in the orchestra's history, with decreases in ticket sales and donations cited as the main causes, as well as continuing fiscal difficulties stemming from the 2001 flood that badly damaged the orchestra's library at Jones Hall. **San Francisco Opera** ran \$3.8 million in the red, which, although far from breaking even, was 50% better than the previous year's deficit, and far better than the \$9 million shortfall the SFO had originally foreseen. And the **Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra** announced an \$800,000 deficit despite increased ticket sales and subscriptions, the ensemble's first shortfall in a decade.

The **San Francisco Symphony** posted a deficit as well, but it was so miniscule—\$136,000 on an annual budget of more than \$50 million—that it almost shouldn't count as a shortfall. And bucking the trend of red ink completely was the **Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra**, which reported in late October that it expects a balanced budget for the 2003–04 season, as a result of increased donations and improved endowment performance. The PSO had initially projected a deficit of between \$2.5 million and \$4.5 million for the '03–'04 season. The PSO also announced in November that it will shortly become the first American orchestra to perform for the Pope in Vatican City. The performance, which was organized by conductor Gilbert Levine, is scheduled for January 17, 2004, and will feature Mahler's "Resurrection" Symphony.

In December, the **Dallas Symphony Orchestra** announced that music director Andrew Litton would be stepping down when his current contract expires at the end of the 2005–06 season. Word of Litton's impending departure touched off a passionate online debate regarding his tenure with the DSO, sparked by an unusually blunt column by composer/critic Greg Sandow at his blog on *ArtsJournal*. The debate made a few waves around the industry, with musicians, orchestra staffers, and journalists from around the country weighing in, mostly anonymously. Sandow's original column can be found at <http://www.artsjournal.com/sandow/archives20031130.shtml> and the follow-up responses can be read at <http://www.artsjournal.com/sandow/archives20031207.shtml> (scroll down the page a bit to find them.)

Finally, there was good news from Birmingham, where the **Alabama Symphony Orchestra** found out shortly before New Year's that they would soon have an additional three weeks of annual employment. According to ICSOM delegate Jeff Solomon, the ASO's new executive director, Paul Ferrone, announced to the musicians on December 30 that the orchestra's 3-week summer season, which had been cancelled after the 2001–02 season for financial reasons, would be reinstated in June 2004. ASO orchestra manager Terri Johnson tells *Senza* that the summer season will include four weeks of outdoor concerts (one week was already on the ASO schedule), featuring a mix of classical and pops works slated to be performed both in Birmingham, the ASO's home, and at Fort McClellan in Anniston, Alabama, 60 miles to the east.

Toughing it Out in Texas **by Dan Zollars, San Antonio Symphony ICSOM Delegate**

It's been a rough year in San Antonio—one bit of bad news after another. We are in the first year of a four-year agreement, which we ratified in late October. In every respect a horrendous agreement, it begins with a season of zero weeks and ends with three seasons of 26 non-consecutive weeks. We also lost our health insurance benefits this season with less than one day's notice, and received a promise of only partial restoration next season. We've lost ground on other benefits as well, including parking and personal leave. It's the best that could be done under the circumstances, despite many long hours and lots of hard work by the negotiating team (Craig Sorgi, Debbie Torch, Lee Hipp, Jeannine Fancher, Larry Bird, Dan Zollars, and ICSOM counsel Len Leibowitz). The board violated our contract by filing for bankruptcy before the financial emergency procedures were completed, and right now, we are the ones who are paying the price. In the long run, though, it is the institution, and the city of San Antonio, who stand to lose the most.

It is now up to the board to present a viable reorganization plan to the bankruptcy court by the end of January. Despite having been given one extension already, it appears to us that the board's plan is still only in the formative stages. Actually, that's pretty charitable. An independent advisory group was appointed last August to look at the San Antonio Symphony from a new perspective, but since then, they have met only twice, and are not looking at the financial numbers. Two board members are working on some financial plans, but most board members remain

relatively uninvolved. When they finally meet in January to discuss the plan, it will be only the second meeting of the full board since the vote to declare bankruptcy was held in June. That January meeting is likely to be the only involvement with the plan for most board members.

Finally, the Oversight Committee, called for by the Mayor's Task Force last summer, has been postponed indefinitely—in fact, we don't know if it will ever meet. As important as it is to 77 professional musicians that a good and viable plan be presented to the bankruptcy court, it doesn't seem as though there is much going on in that direction. Implementing a plan will likely prove difficult, too, for a predominantly corporate board that has never built any bridges to the private funding community.

On the other hand, there are some positive signs. A group of San Antonio corporations we call the stakeholders have been working to keep the office open during this dark period, and to fund the development of the bankruptcy plan. Concurrent with that effort is the development of a new public relations campaign, using a well-known local consultant. This, and a general acknowledgement that there hasn't been adequate promotion of the symphony over the years, gives us a clue as to some of the changes of direction on which the organization is focusing. The 2004–05 season has been planned as well, though much remains to be done in this regard. Also, the orchestra's executive director, Steven Brosvik, resigned his position effective December 6. [*Editor's Note: Read more on Mr. Brosvik's resignation in this issue's Backstage Roundup.*]

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Learning to Lead

by Tina Ward, St. Louis Symphony

Editor's Note: The following article is a summary of the experiences of the musicians of the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra in a series of leadership seminars undertaken in the past year. An expanded version of the article, including supplemental reading suggestions and complete curricula for each of the seminars, can be found on the ICSOM website, at <http://www.icsom.org>.

During the 2002–03 season, the musicians of the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra had the opportunity to participate in a series of workshops on communication and leadership. The workshops were scheduled as six sets of two–day sessions, held at three–to–four week intervals, with each session consisting of two consecutive four–hour days. The agreement to participate included background reading of a small number of articles pertinent to the topics to be discussed, and brief homework assignments between sessions in addition to attending the seminars.

The training was the direct result of the SLSO musicians' vision. In accepting more authority and responsibility within the organization, the leaders of the SLSO Musicians' Council realized that there was a need to develop better communication and team skills. They believed that a series of seminars could provide the information and practice required to be more effective in all aspects of leadership. Some of the musicians had met John McCann at the Mellon Orchestra Forum meetings, and asked if he would be willing to facilitate a series of workshops. Curricula for the seminars were devised by McCann, in consultation with the members of the Council. Participation in the seminars was open to all musicians willing to make the commitment to attend and fully participate. A total of 17 musicians attended.

The sessions included a great deal of discussion, with the readings and homework as departure points. Exercises were used to allow us to practice new skills, and current situations became working illustrations of problem solving, with the lessons linked to our real lives. In the initial sessions, for instance, the group collectively agreed to ground rules which included a commitment that all participants attend all meetings. By the second month, several people who had not attended the initial meeting wanted to join the group. That created the dilemma of accepting new participants, thus breaking the newly established ground rules, or adhering to the ground rules and losing the benefits added members would bring. This situation became a group problem solving exercise, and an opportunity to experience the topics of that seminar: listening and dialogue.

Throughout the seminars, the group value of respect was always present. McCann maintained a non–threatening environment in which no one was ever embarrassed. The environment created was one of empathy, camaraderie, excitement, learning, and fun.

At the final session, each participant was asked to respond to the following question: "What of value are you taking away from your work in the training?" These were some of the responses:

- "The ability to communicate at a higher level of understanding, and to hear what the other person is saying."

- "That, as a group of musicians, we can take, and have taken, greater responsibility for our awareness of ourselves, our behavior, and that of the entire SLSO."
- "[The knowledge that] there are new ways of getting results."
- "[Methods of] communications and problem solving, despite emotional unrest."
- "A clear idea of a process for change, and a hope that real change is possible."
- "The ability to see and use methods and processes to further efficient and productive work."

A member of the orchestra who had not participated in the seminars had expressed interest in learning more about the work. When I asked what he had observed that piqued his interest, he replied that he had noticed a change in the overall demeanor of the Council. He felt that, as a group, they appeared calmer when approaching conflict and problem solving, and that they were more able to "read" the other side in a conflict, and find an answer acceptable to all.

An excerpt from the notebook prepared by John McCann: "The objective of the curriculum is to improve each participant's ability to communicate in ways that are constructive, and to assume responsibilities of leadership within the orchestra, and the larger institution, that will help the SLSO achieve its long-range vision."

The first seminar dealt with group dynamics, and how to identify who we are, both as individuals, and within a group. As a group, we identified and agreed to our core values of respect, willingness to change, honesty with self and others, authenticity and empathy. Many of us in the training were also involved in the year–long visioning process of the SLSO Forum, and our work with McCann prepared us well for participating in the determination of the core values of the SLSO.

We also looked at the "ladder of inference," which is a theoretical structure illustrating how we come to see our beliefs as truth. The bottom rung of the ladder is observable data: that which we can see. The next rung is selected data, that information which we separate out to create the next higher rung, added meaning. The rung above meaning is the making of assumptions based on the meaning, leading to the next rung of adding beliefs. The top rung of the ladder is taking actions based on the beliefs from the rung below. The beliefs then start to influence the data selected, and the loops becomes reinforcing.

The ladder of inference allowed many of us to understand how we came to our individual assumptions. Using this awareness, one can be more open to questioning one's beliefs and create the possibility for selecting and interpreting information differently.

In the second seminar, entitled "Communicating Through Active Listening and Dialogue," we had the opportunity to experience the value of silence, and to practice asking genuine questions, as well as learning about

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Management requested that a federal mediator become a part of the process on day two of the strike. Although it was very early in the process for such an action, we decided that, because so little progress had been made, this was really the next step. John R. Everman, a commissioner with the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, was invited to join the talks. His presence added a third-party perspective that the board badly needed.

The next five weeks of the strike did not yield much improvement in management's offer. There were variations in the way the total monetary offer would pay out, but no backing away from other demands management had made. There was really no room for the process to move forward, as their demands for regressive working conditions as well as salary concessions prohibited meaningful discussion and progress.

As the strike went on, we mounted a public relations campaign both in the press and in the community. The majority of our press contact work was handled by John Bartlett, our main spokesperson, and by me. Carol Stumpf was the coordinator extraordinaire. She helped to coach us, edit copy, calm us down, make sure we were on time, and she generally made all of it happen. We had several local TV stations, radio, and other print media inquiring constantly about the process. We used the services of William Thompson of Locus Media in Louisville to write news copy, and to coordinate with Lenny Leibowitz on our press management. We also had several strike concerts to help get our message out, and to take donations for our health insurance premiums and legal fund payments. We cannot thank enough the staff of Trinity Presbyterian Church, Queens University of Charlotte, and Davidson College for the use of their facilities. Local 342 negotiated a contract with Opera Carolina for two weeks of work in October—work that would have normally been performed under an agreement between the CSO and Opera Carolina. All of these events helped the players continue playing together, brought music to the community, and helped out financially through donations.

Not surprisingly, the last week of the strike had a roller coaster ride of strategic moves. It was clear at this point that the management was dug in, and there was now talk of the cancellation of the season and, according to management's counsel, other thoughts of "doing something stupid." Lenny had the (rarely used) idea of submitting the whole negotiating issue to binding arbitration. We had submitted counter-proposal after counter-proposal over the course of the 6 weeks, and although management had come up on salary figures once, they continued to use the shell game tactic of moving money around, while actually never agreeing to commit more to the overall total. Lenny's idea was to create a list of orchestra managers with experience in the top 10 ICSOM orchestras, from which the CSO management could pick. The person chosen would then look at each side's proposals, discuss the issues, and render a binding decision. Over a conference call with the entire orchestra, Lenny proposed this idea, and gave his opinion that management would likely not agree to this. We voted in the affirmative on a motion to pursue the arbitration.

At the same time, management was promoting a pops concert with Olivia Newton-John that was scheduled for the end of that week. We were uncertain if the management was going to have Olivia and her band play a

show without an orchestra. We had been in touch with Symphonic Services about this concern, and Janice Galassi, Eric Beers, and AFM President Tom Lee were working hard to contact Newton-John's management to encourage her not to cross a picket line in Charlotte.

The orchestra management and the chair of the Board of Directors felt compelled to make sure that our players were kept in the loop of all the "offers" they made during the strike, so they choose to use an e-mail roster they had for the players. They were concerned that information was not being shared with the players, and often had e-mails prepared within a few hours of the conclusion of a meeting. It was suggested during mediation sessions that management was not motivated to better their offer because they had been told that the musicians were ready to accept what had been on the table for weeks. Although not wanting to be pressured into a vote by management, we decided to have a vote on what was on the table, since there would likely be no movement until we rejected their offer.

It became apparent the day before the scheduled pops concert that Olivia Newton-John and her band were not likely to cross our picket line. We had overwhelmingly rejected the current offer on the table. These developments, along with the plan to submit the negotiations to arbitration, provided enough pressure for a deal to finally fall into place.

As was reported in the ICSOM settlement bulletin, we ended up with a 5-year CBA. The management was only willing to commit to the increases we received with the labor peace that a 5-year agreement can give. We ended up with about a 28% increase in weekly pay over the term, increases in seniority and pension, elimination of 9-service weeks without additional pay, and work hardening language, among other things. We agreed to a health insurance task force to help address the rising cost of health care, and we have been meeting to find a solution. It has progressed much slower than we had hoped or expected, due to some continuing disagreements about overall cost calculations, so we have agreed to extend the process another month. However, we are hopeful that we will come to a plan we can all agree to when we resume talks in January.

Prior to the strike, the management was projecting that we would continue to see a deficit for the next couple of years. The Board of Directors now has committed to dealing with the deficit, and has a plan to retire it as soon as possible. The CSO is now in the quiet phase of an endowment campaign that is long overdue, and will soon announce the campaign publicly.

Some have expressed fears that the CSO will not be able to make good on its promises of the salary increases, especially the larger ones found in the later years of the agreement. We recognize that concern, and hope that the endowment campaign, the deficit reduction plan, and the increased involvement of the corporate community will exceed management's expectations. We hope that the two-year search for a permanent development director for the CSO will yield an energetic and talented person. We hope that the letters to subscribers that our management wrote during the strike will not alienate them from the healing process we must share. We hope that the recently announced plans to increase the size of the orchestra by four more players next season (although we understood

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Charlotte

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from discussions during the strike that the cso could only afford two players) is a sign that the finances are coming into shape and that management won't have a problem meeting their obligations during this agreement. With that news, it seems ironic that, only two months ago, we were fighting to not have cuts in our weekly pay, and we continue to quibble over a few thousand dollars in health care costs, but ultimately we must look forward toward the future of the organization. We hope that future is a bright one.

This article would be incomplete without recognizing the people and organizations that helped the Charlotte Symphony Players' Association. The donations we received from other orchestras and individuals were incredibly generous and essential to our strike effort. With the help of ICSOM Governing Board Member-at-Large Paul Ganson's advice and advocacy, we were able to alert ICSOM to our needs, at a time when the committee was overwhelmed with work. He was even able to visit us in person for meetings and a strike concert! We received donations from the Atlanta local, as well as from the Buffalo Philharmonic, Pittsburgh Symphony, National Symphony, Atlanta Symphony, Chicago Symphony, Minnesota Orchestra, San Francisco Opera, Omaha Symphony, Colorado Springs Philharmonic, Dallas Symphony, New Jersey Symphony, and Baltimore Symphony. Chicago Symphony members Tom Hall, Rachel Goldstein, and Susan Synnestvedt, as well as Symphonic Services Director Janice Galassi, sent personal contributions. We would like to thank Lenny Leibowitz, ICSOM, the ICSOM Governing Board, Paul Ganson, AFM President Tom Lee, Janice Galassi and all the SSD staff, Jane Arant, Charles Rosekrans, Dr. Ernest Pereira, Bill Lawing, William Brown, Paul Nitch, Karen Jacob, Richard Kingston, members of the Charlotte Symphony Youth Orchestra, Zach Morgan, Megan Schlie, WDAV-FM, and many, many other local supporters too numerous to mention, for all the help they provided. Without their contributions and assistance, our struggle would have been much harder, if not impossible.

Bob Rydel has been ICSOM delegate for the Charlotte Symphony since the fall of 2001. He is Co-Chair of the Negotiating team, has served as chair of the Orchestra Committee, and has been on the Executive Board of Local 342 since 1994. He cannot thank enough the other members of the negotiating team — John Bartlett, Co-Chair, Carol Stumpf, Marie Winget, and Ivan Zugelj—for their tireless work and commitment.



Texas

(continued from page 8)

At this moment, we appear to be coming to a crossroads—the moment when the bankruptcy judge accepts or rejects the reorganization plan. If he accepts the plan, it will take several months to implement, and there will be some hurdles to overcome as well. If everything goes as hoped, perhaps the symphony could be a somewhat-less-than-fully-operational, 26-week orchestra by the time the '04-'05 season begins. If the judge rejects the plan, it seems likely the case will be converted to Chapter 7 bankruptcy, and the court will begin the process of liquidation.

(I suppose there is a third possibility—the judge could grant another extension.) For any reorganization plan to work, it will be critical for the board to raise the money to fund it, and to do that in time to start performing next season on a more positive note.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the efforts of several people on behalf of the musicians of the San Antonio Symphony. First, thanks to ICSOM for all the understanding and support, and to all of you who have contributed your good wishes and hard-earned dollars. It was very much needed, and greatly appreciated. Then there are our San Antonio bankruptcy attorneys, Jim Hoffman and Tom McKenzie, who represent us in bankruptcy court. In our situation, local bankruptcy counsel has been very helpful. Also, our thanks to Bill Moriarty (Local 802) and Michael Kaiser (Kennedy Center), who worked with the board and musicians as mediators, and who later offered to help us in any way they could. Finally, what can one say in a sentence or two about Len Leibowitz? He has been working tirelessly with us every step of the way, and we deeply appreciate everything he has done on our behalf.



Leading

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other techniques of listening and dialogue. The third seminar, "Working More Effectively Through Teams," looked at individual behaviors that strengthened team processes, such as encouraging others, asking for feedback, inviting others to speak, and being on time. We also considered processes that block teamwork, such as interrupting discussions, starting side conversations, being argumentative and building a negative attitude. We considered what individual preferences we each brought to a group, and how a group could effectively use each individual's strengths to create a better team. We practiced giving feedback in a supportive and constructive manner.

In our fourth seminar, "Leading Without Authority," we looked at some of the qualities of leadership that can create change and continuous improvement, such as motivating the best impulses, providing vision, and defining goals. We considered that leadership was not really a position within a hierarchy, but rather a set of behaviors. The fifth seminar looked at meeting preparations, beginning with objectives: why are we having the meeting and what do we want to achieve? We also considered a range of different choices in dealing with conflict.

In the final seminar, we reviewed many of the concepts introduced in earlier sessions. Each individual was encouraged to look at what skills s/he had learned, and what areas still needed attention. At the end of the day, we looked at our next steps both individually and collectively.

I ended the sessions excited about the new concepts and skills to which I had been exposed. At the same time, I reminded myself that it takes time and practice to incorporate changes into behaviors and habits. I was encouraged that I had new ways to react to situations that I hope, in time, will enhance every area of my life.

Conference Reminder

The 2004 ICSOM Conference will be held from August 18 to August 21 in Salt Lake City, Utah. Additional information will be made available in future issues of Senza Sordino and via bulletin and Orchestra-L.

The 2004 Conference will be dedicated to the memory of Lew Waldeck, former tubist and ICSOM delegate with the New York City Opera Orchestra and Director Emeritus of the Symphonic Services Division of the AFM.

A Note from the Editor

With this issue, *Senza Sordino* moves to a new mailing system which we hope will streamline our publication process, while also saving ICSOM a significant amount of money in mailing costs. All issues of *Senza* will now be delivered directly to the home addresses of each subscriber and ICSOM orchestra member by bulk mail, replacing the old system, under which ICSOM delegates distributed copies to members at the workplace.

With the switch to bulk mail, it becomes extremely important for ICSOM to receive timely notification of address changes. If you are moving, please inform your ICSOM delegate as soon as possible, so that the new mailing information can be forwarded on. Delegates should send all address changes to the editor at sbergman@mn.rr.com, or by regular mail at the address on the masthead.

We are working hard to make this transition as smooth as possible, but of course, there will likely be a few bumps in the road. If you have any questions, concerns, or problems to report, please contact the editor directly by phone or e-mail. Thank you.

Senza Sordino

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