

# Senza Sordino

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## Travels Without Charley

*by Bruce Ridge, ICSOM Chairperson*

A few late nights ago, with the help of a mileage-calculating website, I added up my travels for ICSOM and other orchestral industry activities over the past fifteen months or so. I was only slightly surprised when I finished the math to see that I had flown over 40,000 miles during that span. I have met with musicians across the country, addressed young people entering the arts management field, visited with our friends in ROPA, OCSM, RMA, and TMA, toured concert halls, and heard rehearsals from San Juan to Honolulu—not to mention the many fine patty-melts I have enjoyed at airport diners.

I feel that I am gaining a unique picture of orchestras in America. I am meeting with musicians and their leadership in our orchestras. I am listening to rehearsals and attending concerts. I am backstage in the musicians' lounges, and visiting them in their homes. I am meeting their board members and their executive directors. My visits in all of these cities are far too brief, but I do get a wide-angle snapshot of these organizations that has served to educate me in a profound way about our musicians' lives and the great potential of our orchestras to serve their communities.

During these past fifteen months, I heard the New York Philharmonic rehearsing in an empty Avery Fisher Hall and returned for a magnificent performance there. I heard the Puerto Rico Symphony in their rehearsal hall, and the San Antonio Symphony onstage at the visually amazing Majestic Theatre. I met with the Virginia Symphony in a giant dressing room at Chrysler Hall (the first place I ever heard a live orchestra), and the Charlotte Symphony onstage at the Blumenthal Center. I had the honor of speaking with the musicians of the Honolulu Symphony at their union hall, the legendary Local 677, when the vast majority of the orchestra spent close to five hours visiting with AFM negotiator Nathan Kahn and me on their day off. I toured the concert halls of the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the

Nashville Symphony. As I write this, I will soon be listening to The Cleveland Orchestra and meeting with the Jacksonville Symphony and the Oregon Symphony.

I am learning enough to fill several volumes. At the risk of putting a viral tune into your head, I've learned primarily that it truly is a small world after all. For while every orchestra I visit faces some unique issue, many of our issues are the same. Far too often our musicians have come to believe the negative rhetoric about the future of the arts in America, and they need to hear a message that compels them to unite and believe in themselves. They need to hear that, through ICSOM and their union, they can be a part of something greater than any individual.

Our orchestras all face some dispute within their own ranks, disputes that can only be addressed through the highest tone of debate and open democracy. But, all too often, they also face a board that is dealing with the very same issues. These problems, with their unavoidable fatigue and discouragement, tend to create a culture of hostility within our industry. This hostility sometimes inhibits our ability to communicate with our boards and our managements. It bears poison fruit in the media that perpetuates a negative future. Worst of all, it contaminates our ability to communicate among our ranks as a supportive bargaining and artistic unit.

There is nothing wrong with dissension, as long as it is expressed in a respectful environment. We are all performers, which means that something inside must convince us that we can command the attention of thousands of people on stage every night. Only strong-willed people who believe in themselves can pull off such a feat. It is only natural that self-assured people will occasionally need to debate their differences. That is the essence of the human and artistic experience. It is healthy, and the churning of emotion is how great art is made.

What I hear everywhere I go are incredible musicians performing at an absolutely astonishing level, no matter the size of the budget of their organization. The musicians I meet are inspired and inspiring people dedicated to serving their communities at the highest cultural level.

We must not let our souls fall victim to the culture of hostility. We have the ability to change all of that. And, most notably, we have the ability to put out a true and positive message about just what it is that our orchestras can do for our communities.

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## Chairperson's Report by Bruce Ridge



### A Call to Action

As the biennial Convention of the American Federation of Musicians approaches (June 18-20 in Las Vegas), the ICSOM Governing Board and, indeed, orchestra musicians all across the country have been awaiting the recommendations and resolutions to be considered there by our local delegates. As always, there are many issues of concern for musicians from ICSOM orchestras, but we are especially concerned about a specific financial package being proposed that we believe has the potential to harm our union and weaken our bargaining units.

Consider these facts:

- Work dues from orchestra musicians covered by collective bargaining agreements accounted for over **55% of all work dues** paid to the Federation between 2001 and 2005. This 55% represents **over \$8.3 million**.
- According to Tom Hall's book, *ICSOM; Forty Years of the International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians*, payments from orchestra musicians represented 37% of the work dues in 1979. In less than three decades, our share of the burden has risen by 50%.
- In 2006, the AFM collected over **\$2 million** from orchestra musicians in the United States and Canada.
- For the years 2002–2006, **the symphonic surplus** (i.e., the amount of symphonic work dues paid to the Federation minus what was expended for symphony-related expenses) **was nearly \$5.5 million**.
- Despite this symphonic surplus and the increased share of work dues paid by orchestra musicians, the Symphonic Services Division (SSD) of the AFM has **only 8 employees**, some of them part-time. Salaries for the employees of the SSD are not competitive with other fields.
- Other divisions of the AFM that have a fraction of the surplus revenue brought in from orchestra musicians have more than three times the number of employees working on their behalf! (We certainly are not suggesting that there are too many employees in these other divisions, but the inequity is obvious.)
- Our contracts are bargained on the local level, not on the Federation level. Almost all of our contract administration occurs locally.

Despite these facts, a proposal from the AFM Revenue Committee to be presented at the Convention would take more money from the AFM membership. We believe that ICSOM musicians are already paying more

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## International Conference of Symphony & Opera Musicians

A Player Conference of the American Federation of Musicians  
of the United States and Canada, AFL-CIO

[www.icsom.org](http://www.icsom.org)

### Orchestras

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Atlanta Symphony Orchestra  
Baltimore Symphony Orchestra  
Boston Symphony Orchestra  
Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra  
Charlotte Symphony Orchestra  
Chicago Lyric Opera Orchestra  
Chicago Symphony Orchestra  
Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra  
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Colorado Symphony Orchestra  
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Detroit Symphony Orchestra  
Florida Orchestra  
Florida Philharmonic Orchestra  
Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra  
Grant Park Symphony Orchestra  
Honolulu Symphony Orchestra  
Houston Symphony Orchestra  
Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra  
Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra  
Kansas City Symphony  
Kennedy Center Opera House Orchestra  
Los Angeles Philharmonic  
Louisville Orchestra  
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Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra  
Minnesota Orchestra  
Nashville Symphony Orchestra  
National Symphony Orchestra  
New Jersey Symphony Orchestra  
New York City Ballet Orchestra  
New York City Opera Orchestra  
New York Philharmonic  
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Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra  
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## President's Report by Brian Rood



As the end of another concert season draws near, many ICSOM orchestras find themselves in the midst of negotiations. A few have already settled, while many others are in negotiations or scheduled to begin.

Before addressing these negotiations, I would like to reference the reasons behind ICSOM's creation. It is important to remember that the right to form orchestra committees, to participate in negotiations, and to ratify proposed settlements is still a fairly recent ICSOM victory. Just a few short decades ago orchestral musicians were seldom permitted to be "at the table," as their wages, benefits, job security, and other working conditions were often negotiated without their involvement or ratification.

ICSOM was created largely to ensure that musicians received and retained the right to meaningfully participate in negotiations. This fundamental right, one that now may easily be taken for granted, was achieved through the collective solidarity and determination of our ICSOM pioneers. Their perseverance demonstrated to orchestra managements and the AFM alike that orchestral musicians were united in their determination to conduct their own affairs. They believed, as we do now, that no one knows symphonic issues like symphonic musicians. Their collective struggle was often at great personal and professional sacrifice. By the end of the 1960's, though, ICSOM was finally recognized as a player conference within the AFM.

The 1979 AFM Convention authorized Federation work dues across the board on symphonic musician minimum scale wages. As a result, symphonic players alone carried 37% of the AFM budget. With the 2007 AFM Convention just a few short weeks away it is particularly interesting to note that this percentage now is much greater. The estimate for 2006 Federation work dues paid by symphonic musicians is actually closer to 55%, with the overwhelming majority coming from ICSOM musicians.

The figures for Federation symphonic work dues are important to consider when evaluating overall services and their value. ICSOM, for example, continues to provide many services on essentially a shoe-string budget. The real value comes from the involvement and commitment of each orchestra with another and to ICSOM. Possibly the most important service ICSOM offers is the annual Conference, this year being held August 15-18. It is imperative that each ICSOM orchestra be represented. Much of what is gained from annual conferences comes from the formal and informal exchanges between delegates and Governing Board members.

Returning to the original focus, another important service ICSOM offers its members is the conference call network for negotiating orchestra committees. Recommended in 2004, these calls have included delegates, chairs, and their committees. Attorneys and

*(continued on page 12—see CONFERENCE CALLS)*

## Secretary's Report by Laura Ross



As my orchestra prepares for negotiations here in Nashville—the first in our new hall—I have begun to reflect upon our own bargaining history and how it has been impacted by ICSOM's relationship with the AFM.

As ICSOM celebrates its 45<sup>th</sup> year, we once again will send a delegation of representatives to the AFM Convention, this year being held June 18–20 in Las Vegas. With the attendance of Chairperson Bruce Ridge, President Brian Rood, and Member at Large Meredith Snow at the Convention, we will witness some of the fruits of our labor. "What is that?" you might ask. It would be our representation at the AFM Convention itself—a voice on the floor of the Convention. In another step forward, the leaders of our Player Conferences (ICSOM, ROPA, OCSM, RMA and TMA) spoke before the entire body of Convention delegates two years ago. When Chairman Emeritus Jan Gippo asked all voting delegates who were orchestra musicians to stand, it was momentous, and it highlighted the activities of our orchestra musicians. Fully 10% of the voting delegates were orchestra musicians!

However, there still appear to be a number of AFM delegates (almost all of whom are local officers) who do not understand the role of ICSOM and the rest of the Player Conferences. ICSOM and others have fought for a number of worthy goals, yet the misunderstanding continues. Some even paint us as the enemy. ICSOM "plowed the road" for all those who came later. Our conference was formed 45 years ago because some of our locals were not representing our members well. Tom Hall's compilation of the first 40 years of ICSOM's history contains details of the trials in the early years, when locals ignored orchestra committees as well as musician concerns and requests. In some cases, locals continued their practice of negotiating "sweetheart deals" that did not address any of the concerns of the employees.

ICSOM said this practice had to stop, that musicians deserved representation at the bargaining table and to negotiate on their own behalf. (After all, who knows better what is going on than the employees themselves?) Musicians also demanded the right to form committees to assure that our contracts will be continually maintained and supported. Later the Player Conferences fought for a voice on the Convention floor so they could bring their concerns to the entire delegate body of the AFM.

Over the past few years, ICSOM Conferences have included discussions about how to work effectively with our locals. We have celebrated orchestras and locals that can work in harmony because they are all stronger for it. Any notion that ICSOM has any desire to run the AFM is ridiculous. Our goal has always been to advocate for the rights and concerns of our members to the AFM and its

*(continued on page 8—see SECRETARY)*

## What's Happening to the Audition System?

by Elaine Douvas, Metropolitan Opera Orchestra

*[Editor's Note: The following article was submitted at the beginning of the year. Unfortunately, space constraints prevented a more timely publication. As a result, some reporting on the state of U.S. oboe auditions is no longer current.]*

It looked like a great year for oboe players, with nine fantastic jobs to try out for: principal in San Diego, Los Angeles Opera, Atlanta, Cincinnati, Rochester, and National; second in Minnesota; English horn in San Francisco and Buffalo; and several smaller ones too! But hope is turning to despair for the 60 or 70 players on the audition circuit, as seven of the nine auditions have already been held, but only three positions have been filled. In some cases a winner was chosen, but the job was not awarded. Instead, orchestras decide to stall—give “trial weeks,” hit the rumor mill, and beat the bushes for possible candidates who didn't go to the audition. In fact, some orchestras now want to preview the field before the audition, or before the opening even occurs. It doesn't seem right.

I play in the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra. We try to run the fairest auditions in the business, defined as follows: The screen stays up until the end. We are not allowed to talk to each other at all, thus barring attempts to influence others or assert one's taste over another's. Anyone may get a hearing, though some first hearings will be by CD. We do not invite a bunch of people to the finals, so as to have a few “in the bag,” as human nature dictates that people will judge the preliminaries more attentively if you have not already “skimmed off the cream.” The decision is made after hearing a 10-minute preliminary and 15-minute semi and final rounds. If you win the audition, you get the job—no questions asked, no trial weeks, no “nobody was good enough.”

How can I prove to you that this works, without naming names? “What if you get a real weirdo?” you might ask. “What if you get someone who can't blend in tone, personality, or ensemble skills?” There are two answers: You would be amazed how much you can tell about a person just from his playing, if you really listen in detail. Moreover, that is the purpose of the two-year probation period. Maybe you think, “They're in the pit; they don't need the same degree of soloism, creativity, or leadership that we do.” Wrong again. The Met plays symphonic and chamber concerts in addition to opera, and we value these qualities as much as any orchestra!

The Met has hired the young, the old, male and female, the small and the large, and (yes) the legally blind. Many of these great players were available to us because they had been passed over by other orchestras for non-musical reasons, or because an orchestra wouldn't hire anyone even though said musician had won an audition. We judge only by what we hear, and the majority vote rules. It usually works out fine—more than fine. Perhaps you know some of the players hired at our blind auditions who have gone on to international fame. I shudder to think how many of our amazing players might not have survived a trial week, the committee of 100,

or the rumor mill. Instant compatibility is not a fair test. You remove the player from the context of the dozens he out-played and put him in the chair for 100 orchestra members to search for flaws; often the result is a failure to appoint anyone. On the other hand, you could put him in the chair for two years and support him; more often than not he will perform better than at the audition.

“Doesn't it bother you to have only one vote out of 12, even when the opening is for your instrument?” No, it doesn't. Often, I did not vote for the winner, but experience has taught me that it will work out well. I trust and respect the system and the taste of the 12 judges, who all play the most closely related instruments. The other woodwinds have as much right to the decision as I do. Music Director James Levine respects the system too. He takes one vote out of 13, if his schedule allows him to come at all. He knows we will get him a fine player, and he is confident of his ability as a conductor to ask for what he wants.

Many of our audition winners were hired fresh out of school. Experience has its points, but when a young player can beat the competition while in his/her early 20s, imagine how far that musician can get by the age of 30! Regardless of age, it can take any newcomer some time to understand the conductor's philosophy and the taste of his new colleagues.

Maybe you are saying, “We should take all the time we want; why should we try to be fair to auditioners?” Because taking that time won't yield a better result than going with what you heard at the audition. Prolonging the process by inviting somebody's friend or protégé will not get you a better player. This will be proven later when your winner gets an even better job! If you don't hire from the audition, you encourage people to boycott auditions and try to slip in by the side door of politics. This is not in the best interest of your orchestra or our profession. It undermines the entire system and damages the morale of the group. Mutual respect is inherent when everyone gets in by the same fair procedure.

A common complaint by those who don't win is that auditions only produce note-getters with no special personality. Well, only if the majority so chooses! Do you know anyone who would choose a note-getter who lacked artistry? I don't. It's your vote, your taste, and your fault if you vote for such. Obviously, both artistry and instrumental mastery are required; there will plenty of overlap from which to choose.

Another argument I have heard is that how you play is only one of many qualifications for the job. “We need people who can give a speech, work the room at a donor dinner, go on the radio, or be an entertainer at a school concert.” To this, I would point out that there are many eloquent musicians who totally lack social skills but provide the greatest possible inspiration to their colleagues and to

*(continued on page 11—see AUDITIONS)*

## Off the Record

by Leonard Leibowitz, (Distinguished) ICSOM Legal Counsel



Recently, a representative of an ICSOM orchestra asked me about “off the record” meetings. My definition of such meetings is that they are collective bargaining sessions which are attended by only one or two members of each team, and they are designed to create an atmosphere in which the parties can freely express their positions and exchange ideas for the ultimate resolution of the outstanding issues, without being bound to any one of those positions or ideas. Each of the attendees may then be free to offer reasons for their position(s) which they ask to remain confidential, or to propose an idea which they must later withdraw, without fear of committing an unfair labor practice, or being accused of a renege.

I then thought that my response to the inquiry might be informative and helpful to others involved in the process. Herewith is my response:

Off-the-record meetings are often the best way to move the negotiations forward more expeditiously, or, sometimes, unfortunately, to discover that the parties are so far apart that a settlement is probably not going to happen without a struggle. Either of these results of the meeting(s) is valuable to both sides in terms of adjusting or creating a strategy for the balance of negotiations.

However, any such meetings require these rules:

1. They are *not secret* meetings. Everyone on each negotiating team must be informed that they have been suggested. Everyone on each negotiating team must participate in the decision to have them occur and help decide who will be the representative(s) of their side. Neither side can dictate to the other who they want to be the representative(s). Everyone should also be informed as to when they will occur.
2. All attendees must be free to express any opinions, tentative proposals, rejections, or tentative acceptance(s) of proposals such that, should any of those tentative positions not pan out for any reason, they would not be accused of renegeing. That is, whatever tentative conclusions, if any, are reached, must be subject to the acceptance of each negotiating team.
3. While the details of some of the discussions may be confidential, the tentative conclusions, i.e., the positions taken by each side on each issue, should be reported to the full committee, and the full committee should retain the right to accept, reject or offer counters to any of those positions.

4. If the meetings prove useful, they can recur, but ultimately the parties should resume full, on-the-record meetings—if only to confirm what has been tentatively agreed. This will hopefully lead to the drafting and signing of a memorandum of agreement (subject, of course, to ratification by the union and the bargaining unit).

### 2007 ICSOM Conference

August 15–18, 2007

Millennium Hotel Minneapolis  
1313 Nicollet Mall  
Minneapolis, MN 55403

*All attendees must register with Secretary Laura Ross*

Hotel reservations should be made by calling the hotel directly at 800-522-8856 or 612-332-6000

Identify yourself as part of the  
“International Conference of  
Symphony and Opera Musicians”  
to receive the group rate

*Hotel reservations must be made by July 15, 2007*

## Orchestra Newslets

*Newslets are compiled with the help of ICSOM delegates and ICSOM Members at Large from sources that include direct submissions, member orchestra websites, and topical news items. The editor encourages input and submissions.*

The **National Symphony Orchestra's** new Principal Guest Conductor, Ivan Fischer, of the Budapest Festival Orchestra, has led two subscription programs so far this season. One of them, an all-Mendelssohn program, was part of the Shakespeare in Washington Festival, a multi-disciplinary event involving most of the city's arts organizations in events highlighting the connection between various art forms and Shakespeare's work. Other recent artistic highlights included a concert performance of *Salome* featuring Deborah Voigt. On another front, delegate Jeff Weisner reports that the music director search committee is continuing its work of seeking a successor to Leonard Slatkin, who will leave at the end of the 2007–2008 season.

The **New York City Ballet Orchestra** is winding down its first winter season with their new music director, Faycal Karoui. Karoui has conducted several outstanding performances, including a recent all-Stravinsky program that contained *Agon*, *Monumentum Pro Gesualdo*, *Movements for Piano and Orchestra*, and *Symphony in Three Movements*. This spring, he will conduct a new choreographic production of Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* to begin the season. Karoui has expressed his determination to bring the City Ballet Orchestra out of the pit and onto the stage for orchestral concerts. The company will travel to Washington, D.C. for a week of performances at Kennedy Center and will return for three weeks to its summer home in Saratoga Springs, New York.

According to delegate Ethan Silverman, City Ballet Orchestra musicians are grappling with the health insurance crisis that has infected many Local 802 musicians, when their union-administered "Plan A" virtually disintegrated without warning at the beginning of this year. The orchestra committee and an appointed sub-committee are busy trying to find alternatives.

**San Francisco Opera Orchestra** delegate Leslie Ludena reports that the San Francisco Opera continues to make positive financial and artistic strides. In October, Mrs Jeannik Littlefield, a longtime subscriber and former board member, made a gift of \$35 million, the largest private donation ever received by the company, with no restrictions placed on the funds. Nicola Luisotti has been chosen to become the new music director, starting in 2009. The appointment has generated much excitement among musicians and patrons alike. Also, there will be a simulcast of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* during the 2007 summer season, the third such live event in the last year. So far the performances have proved to be very popular, with the average outdoor attendance of around 10,000.

The musicians of the **Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra** ratified an extension of their current contract, guaranteeing a \$30 weekly salary increase for the 2007–2008 season and the continuation of the Anthem Blue Cross health insurance policy. Their management

and board have agreed to continue to pay the full cost of single and family premiums through January 31, 2008, when the existing policy expires; a 10% cap on increases will then apply. (The health insurance premium increase this season was around 30%.) As the board and management embark on an aggressive deficit reduction and capital drive, the extension enables the organization to stabilize finances as well as giving both sides the opportunity to examine possible health care alternatives before full negotiations in 2008.

In other news, the Cincinnati Symphony performed a special event concert conducted by Valery Gergiev on February 22, 2007. The program featured Stravinsky's *Petrouchka* and Tchaikovsky's *Fifth Symphony*. The large audience responded enthusiastically to both pieces. Music Director Paavo Järvi invited Gergiev to conduct when, in 2003, the Cincinnati Symphony and Maestro Gergiev's St. Petersburg orchestra were on tour in Japan at the same time.

A recent Nashville Opera performance of *Aida*, featuring the **Nashville Symphony Orchestra**, was threatened by two unrelated elevator incidents in the same evening. The first involved three orchestra musicians who shared a parking garage elevator with opera fans. The crowded elevator, which had exceeded its 20-person capacity, became stuck between floors before its final stop. Keiko Nagayoshi (violin), Radu Rusu (horn), and Dan Vidican (horn) were pulled from the lift 45 minutes later by emergency firefighters wielding axes. They were able to join their colleagues in the pit just ten minutes after the downbeat. They were not docked.

A short time later, a blocked loading dock forced two dromedary camels to make their entrance for the second act's Triumphal March scene through the musicians' entrance. Lacy, the smaller of the two, was easily loaded onto the backstage elevator, but the door was not quite tall enough to accommodate Callie's big hump. After a 15-minute struggle, during which no one was harmed, the elevator doors were finally closed on the reluctant pair, with NSO musicians quietly witnessing the spectacle. Later, emerging from the pit, they were glad to find that the hallway had been cleaned and deodorized.



Photo by Carrie Bailey



There is much activity surrounding the **San Antonio Symphony**. The first post-bankruptcy contract negotiations began in March, and searches are underway for a music director, an artistic advisor, and a resident conductor. The artistic advisor would be an interim position to fulfill music director duties after Larry Rachleff's tenure ends in 2008. The music director search is being conducted by a nine-member committee, composed of three board members, the CEO, one community representative, and four staff musicians.

The orchestra committee of the SASO is concentrating on creating positive PR and network-building. It has beefed up the musicians' online offerings by adding a blog and an e-newsletter to the musician website ([www.sasmusicians.org](http://www.sasmusicians.org)). In keeping with its focus on PR, the orchestra committee took advantage of the AFM's intensive on-site PR training session with Barbara Haig. According to delegate Emily Watkins, as the first orchestra to receive the on-site version of this training seminar, they enthusiastically recommend it.

Concluding a three-year search, the **Dallas Symphony Orchestra** announced that Jaap van Zweden will assume the music director position in the 2008–2009 season. Jaap van Zweden hales from the Netherlands and is the former concertmaster of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra. As music director designate, he will conduct the DSO for three weeks next season. After that, he will conduct 12 weeks in 2008–2009 and 15 weeks in each of the following three seasons. Even though the musicians of the DSO have worked with van Zweden only once (in February 2006), there is much excitement over his appointment. The DSO will record the works for piano and orchestra by George Gershwin with pianist Anne-Marie McDermott and conductor Justin Brown this spring. The recording will be released by Bridge Records.

In October 2005, the **Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra** launched its own e-label, MSO Classics, and became the first American orchestra to distribute recordings previously unavailable for purchase through digital music stores. A check of the MSO's online Symphony Store shows another first: download-only binaural recordings. MSO's binaural recordings are largely the idea of Robert Levine, who is the orchestra's principal violist, president of Local 8, and chairman emeritus of ICSOM. The binaural recording process uses a dummy head with a single microphone embedded in each ear canal. When the binaural recording is played back through headphones, the experience is said to reproduce very closely what would be heard during an actual concert if the listener were situated where the dummy head was during the recording. MSO's first binaural recording, Saint-Saëns' *Symphony No. 3*, is also being offered in a standard stereo version. The next binaural releases planned include Tchaikovsky's *Symphony No. 5* and Grieg's first suite from *Peer Gynt*. MSO's goal is to make 10 to 12 new binaural downloads available each year.

**The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra** recently completed a 10-day tour of Eastern Europe with Artistic Partner Roberto Abbado.

Delegate Lynn Erickson says that they traveled to Budapest, Zagreb, Maribor, Vienna, Warsaw, and Berlin. A live performance was broadcast by Minnesota Public Radio on January 23 from the Musikverein in Vienna. As part of an ongoing collaboration with Twin Cities Public Television, the orchestra was also accompanied by a film crew that is doing a documentary on the tour. The concerts were well-received by audiences and critics alike. Sadly, the SPCO mourns the loss of its dear friend and colleague, violist Alice Preves, who died of cancer on November 15, 2006. Her joyful spirit and wonderful musicianship will be greatly missed.

The **Los Angeles Philharmonic** is on a high brought on by a surprisingly seamless transition of music directors, according to delegate Meredith Snow. Although there was no formal search committee, their management worked quietly and effectively with the orchestra's Artistic Liaison Committee. For several years, that committee has been distributing conductor evaluation questionnaires to each member of the orchestra after every guest conductor's appearance. Those evaluations were taken very seriously by management. The overwhelmingly positive response to Gustavo Dudamel was virtually unanimous among the players.

The surprise dual announcement made to the orchestra regarding Esa-Pekka Salonen's departure and Gustavo Dudamel's arrival was stunning. Management and Salonen jointly informed the orchestra, even before telling the board of directors, and entrusted the orchestra to maintain silence so that there would be no press leaks. At the press conference where the dual announcement was made public, it was quite remarkable to see Salonen literally pass the baton to Dudamel. Officially, Salonen will step down at the conclusion of the 2008–2009 season, at which time he will have been music director for 17 years. Many orchestra members commented on the bittersweet nature of the news. Salonen is highly regarded by the members of the orchestra. Salonen has said that the LA Phil will always be a part of his life and that he will have a continuing relationship with the orchestra.

In February, **Honolulu Symphony** musicians welcomed ICSOM Chairperson Bruce Ridge and AFM SSD negotiator Nathan Kahn. Meetings with the orchestra, orchestra committee, local officers, and management, as well as radio interviews, kept Bruce and Nathan very busy. Delegate Steve Flanter relayed the orchestra's appreciation of the visits, where both Bruce and Nathan gave advice about HSO's upcoming negotiations while attempting to put things into the context of the larger orchestral community.

On March 6, after a search lasting more than two years, the Honolulu Symphony announced the appointment of Andreas Delfs as its new artistic leader. Signed to a three-year contract, Delfs will hold the title of principal conductor for two years, becoming music director in the 2009–2010 season. Delfs, currently music director of the Milwaukee Symphony, expressed his intention to raise the reputation of the HSO both locally and internationally, to learn about the culture and history of Hawaii, and to help establish a bond of trust with local audiences.

## Secretary

*(continued from page 3)*

leadership. That's how we got the AFM Symphony Opera Strike Fund. Those wage charts we receive every year from the AFM were once produced solely by ICSOM. The AFM realized the importance of these charts and took it upon themselves to produce one of the most effective negotiation tools we have available. These are examples of the AFM and ICSOM working together.

Over the years our orchestras have wrought wonders with their contracts, improving the wages, benefits, and working conditions for their colleagues. In almost all cases, this was done with the union's presence and support. I'm astounded when I hear about a negotiation that does not have a local officer presence at the table. Why? Because it is the local's obligation to enforce the contract. If they have no knowledge of the contract, how can they legitimately enforce it, especially if some violation ends up in arbitration? I'm also surprised because part of the reason we pay work dues is so that when we retain negotiators, the local pays the bill. Additionally, while a contract applies mostly to contracted members, orchestras also hire substitute and extra musicians, and locals have the task of trying to protect those musicians as well. Locals have a vested interest in the content and success of any negotiation.

I become frustrated when a musician bashes the union, pointing to an individual or group in which the musician has a personal interest and asserting that the union or a union contract is hindering their success. The union is not one person, nor is it the officers we elect. The union is all of us collectively. Our contracts are the result of painstaking negotiations that include questioning our members for their desires as well as trying to correct problems that have occurred during previous years. I have always felt that collective bargaining agreements often serve to document the abuses orchestras have faced and dealt with during negotiations.

As union members, we are a part of our bargaining units and have every right to voice our concerns, especially during negotiations. Those who have chosen to "opt out" because they live in right-to-work states or assert their Beck rights (and who "freeload" on the backs of those musicians who do pay their fair share) have given up any right to a voice in our process. They do not receive strike fund benefits, they have no voice in overseeing our contracts since they can't participate on committees; and they have neither a say nor ratification rights when a contract is negotiated. They have no voice because they have elected to give up their rights. As an AFM member, though, you do have a voice.

As ICSOM prepares for attendance at this year's AFM Convention, I'd like to make you aware that ICSOM will sponsor two resolutions that will come before the delegates. We hope you will be in full support of these resolutions and discuss them with your local delegates before they head to Las Vegas in June.

The first is a resolution regarding a change to the Orchestra Services Program (OSP). While I have just written about the fine relationships ICSOM hopes to foster between our orchestras and locals, there

have been times (though thankfully few over the years) when the AFM was asked to step in and resolve a dysfunctional relationship. Article 5, Section 38(b) was incorporated into our AFM bylaws after the Seattle Symphony left the AFM in 1988 due to insurmountable problems between the musicians and their local. There was no solution to help Seattle back then. Since that time, the OSP has allowed the AFM to become the overseer of an orchestra's collective bargaining agreement until such a time as the orchestra and local could reasonably work together again. The key problem with the OSP is that it redirects 2% of the local work dues to the AFM to fund contract administration. This loss of work dues can severely harm a local. ICSOM's proposal would add another step that is less punitive. It would allow the AFM to appoint an overseer to act as a local buffer and go-between for a much more reasonable cost. ICSOM does not advocate getting rid of the OSP because there still may be future cases that warrant it. At the same time, we would like to address situations that may not have to go that far. We believe this resolution will address these concerns.

The second resolution goes back to 1997, when the AFM was talking about restructuring. Sadly, all that work led to few changes. One thing that became clear to many back then, however, is that it is a very bad idea to allow a contractor (in other words an employer) to serve as a local officer. Why? Imagine that you've been hired by that particular contractor for a gig and something goes wrong. You would normally contact the local to seek a remedy. Then you realize you are filing your grievance with the very person who employed you. We'd all like to think that our elected officers would be above retaliation, but human nature being what it is, there have been many workers who not only found no satisfaction but were also blackballed from future work. Unfortunately, there are still many locals with contractors serving as local officers, so this is an uphill battle. Over the years personnel managers and theater contractors have been excluded. Until all contractors have been removed, workers have no absolute protection from retaliation in the only place they have to look for assistance.

ICSOM continues to fight for the rights of its members and for the betterment of our entire industry. I hope you'll continue to support our efforts. Both of the resolutions I've mentioned are included in this issue. We urge you to speak to your delegates in support of this legislation.



## Resolutions for the AFM Convention Sponsored by ICSOM

### ICSOM Resolution #1 Regarding OSP Language

WHEREAS, It is AFM policy to provide the best possible representational services to its members; and

WHEREAS, One of the programs used to implement that policy for symphonic members is the Orchestra Service Program (OSP); and

WHEREAS, The current Orchestra Service Program by-law provides only one method of insuring that Symphonic members receive the best possible representational services; and

WHEREAS, It would be beneficial to members, locals and the AFM that there be other suitable programs; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That Article 5, Section 38(b) of the by-laws of the American Federation of Musicians be amended as follows:

#### ARTICLE 5, SECTION 38(b)

In the event that a Local does not or cannot provide the services set forth above in a satisfactory manner, or upon the request of the Local or the members of an orchestra for reasonable cause, the International President (after consultation with the Local and the members involved) shall have the authority to take any of the following actions:

1. Appoint a representative who shall work to resolve any issues that may exist between the Local and the Orchestra members; such representative shall act at the direction of the President, who shall consult with the International Executive Board (IEB) and the appropriate Player Conference on these matters;
2. Implement Article 5, Section 30, of the American Federation of Musicians by-laws;

*SECTION 30. Notwithstanding any other provision of these Bylaws and upon good cause shown, the IEB shall have the authority to assign collective bargaining rights from one Local to another. Such assignment shall be done in accordance with applicable labor law and with a procedure established by the IEB. Such procedure shall include:*

- (1) *Consultation with the current signatory Local;*
- (2) *Approval of the Local to which the collective bargaining responsibilities are being assigned;*
- (3) *Approval of the affected bargaining unit by secret ballot majority vote;*
- (4) *Agreement of the signatory employer if required by law or contract.*

3. Place the orchestra in an Orchestra Service Program (OSP) established and maintained under IEB supervision. The OSP shall provide those services and such other assistance as the IEB may deem necessary in the situation at a cost to the Local of 2% of the scale wages received by the orchestra members under the CBA. If the Local Work Dues payable by the members of an orchestra placed in OSP are less than 2%, the Local Work Dues rate payable by the members working under that orchestra's CBA shall be automatically increased to 2%.

### ICSOM Resolution #2 Regarding Contractors on Union Boards

WHEREAS, There are many Locals in which the Officers also work as Contractors, Personnel Managers, or Booking Agents, creating a clear, inherent conflict of interest that has a chilling effect on a member's ability to receive fair and impartial representation; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That Article 5, Section 43 of the Bylaws be amended, as follows:

No Local Officer shall (1) serve in the position of Personnel Manager or Contractor for an employer/engager of musicians in the Local's jurisdiction[. ~~No Local Officer, except in Canada, shall serve in the position of a contractor of musicians in the musical theater field.~~]; (2) work in any position where s/he receives any remuneration from contracting or booking musical units (other than a regularly organized one of which s/he is a leader or member) in the Local's jurisdiction, except in his/her capacity as a Local officer administering an employment referral or booking program on behalf of the Local.

*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.

## Call to Action

(continued from page 2)

than our fair share, and we would protest any increase in our work dues until a full accounting and review of AFM expenditures is completed and made public. While the AFM has asked for more money, it has never explained where these additional funds will be spent.

The AFM Revenue Committee was mandated by the 2005 AFM Convention as a part of the overall financial package it passed. The current recommendation put forth by that committee would raise work dues across the board; you would be required to pay an additional 0.10% on all your symphonic wages to the Federation. Currently, your local sends 0.55% of your symphonic work dues to the Federation. That figure would become 0.65%, and because the increase is being proposed as a “pass through,” your local’s work dues would automatically be raised accordingly. In addition, the Revenue Committee has proposed a \$5 *per capita* dues increase for each of the next three years (because they are also proposing that the AFM Convention become triennial instead of biennial).

In 2003, the Federation raised symphonic work dues 0.05%, promising in exchange that symphony and opera musicians would receive better services and staff enhancements that never materialized. Now, the AFM says it once again needs more funds, and they are including symphonic musicians in their net. We already pay more than our fair share. We do not pretend to suggest that there will never be a need for a dues increase, but we have a right to ask questions. Why do you need this money from us? What are you doing with the money we already pay? Are the right structures and safeguards in place to ensure that the union serves and is responsive to those who fund it?

We ask you now to help us argue against this increase in work dues, and time is of the essence. If the musicians of your orchestra feel that they are already paying enough dues, communicate that to the leaders of your local and, most importantly, your delegates to the AFM Convention. They, as our representatives, should also be our advocates. ICSOM orchestras pay an astonishingly high percentage of work dues to our individual locals. Check out column 38 on page 10 of the new *AFM Wage Chart of ICSOM Orchestras*. The numbers are daunting: 83%, 79%, 87%, 77%, 90%. Those are just the first five figures, listed alphabetically. There is one ICSOM orchestra that pays virtually all of its local’s work dues and another that pays 97%!

We are the musicians who pay our local officers’ salaries and who keep our locals, and indeed the Federation, financially afloat. Let your local officers know that we do not wish to see our wages cut again by an increase in work dues—certainly not before the Federation can prove to us the need and assure us that it would result in the increased and better services we need. Past promises have not been kept; the necessity for a dues increase has not been effectively demonstrated.

In the coming weeks, there will be postings about this issue on Delegate-L and Orchestra-L. We ask all ICSOM delegates to post these messages backstage and to alert your orchestra committees. A sample letter will be distributed through the mailing lists, and we ask that all orchestra members sign such a letter to protest this proposed increase. Please deliver those letters to your local officers and convention delegates.

We must be our own advocates—in our communities, with our managers, and even within our union. This is the very reason that the founders of ICSOM created this organization.

In my columns and articles for *Senza Sordino* I have tried to offer words of inspiration, to help us believe that individuals have the chance to be a part of something greater than themselves. A year ago I asked, “Is anybody reading this?” Again I ask: Are you reading this? Have we offered any message of hope? Have we suggested the power in every individual to act as part of a group?

If that message has been successfully delivered, we ask you to act now. We all believe in a strong union. To achieve that, we must let our voices be heard. Communicate with your colleagues, your local officers, and your AFM convention delegates.

Fortunately for our cause, our local officers are those AFM officials with whom we work most closely, and they are often highly sympathetic to symphonic player concerns. Let them know how you feel. We must make the effort, and from this effort will grow a strengthened cause for our orchestras to elect delegates from within our ranks. We ask that our locals join with us in a demand for a full and ongoing accounting of the use of our money by the Federation. We will make this union accountable to the very people who keep it afloat as we reach out in solidarity to all of our Federation brothers and sisters.

Visit ICSOM’s newly redesigned website

[www.icsom.org](http://www.icsom.org)

## Travels

*(continued from page 1)*

Here is a fact about the future of classical music: Last year, the genre of music that saw the greatest increase in downloads, an increase of over 22%, was classical music! That's right—the rumors of the death of our chosen art form have been greatly exaggerated.

I write often of my early years as a musician, where I was playing all kinds of music in all kinds of settings, some glorious and some unsavory. I was surrounded by mentors. There were sane and mundane people, crazy and brilliant people, and they all offered me an education into the world of music. I listened and I learned; and I heard all kinds of music imaginable.

But there was something else I first heard back then: the myth of the graying audience. I was told, back in 1979 when I started, that the audience for classical music would soon be dead.

And yet, when I look out at audiences today, I see the same faces I saw then. I see the young and the old, the well dressed and the sartorially challenged. I was thrilled on a recent visit to Avery Fisher Hall to see the youth that dominated the lobby at a New York Philharmonic concert. It made me feel a bit old! I left the concert that evening and wandered the streets of Manhattan, pondering how we might change the concert experience to insure that symphonic music continues to appeal to the older generation.

The playwright Eugene Ionesco wrote, "A work is not a series of answers, it is a series of questions...it is not the answer that enlightens, but the question." Maybe that is what I have learned in my travels. Maybe it isn't the answer that is as important as the question. I'm reminded of that Harry Chapin song, where he sang "It's got to be the going, not the getting there, that's good."

We must remember that this we did with our lives for a reason. I read a great article in a Victoria, Canada, newspaper recently in which there was this quote: "A civilization is not judged by its ability to generate income."

It is our job as artists to remember that. We must rely on our managements to present the other truth, the real truth, that the arts do indeed generate income for everyone in a community. Where our managers are not promoting that message, we must point out the tremendous opportunities presented to them by just how impressive our musicians are, both as artists and as human beings. The good managers will hear our message and thrive. The others will fail. This we assert without hesitation: It is a new day for symphonic music in America. ICSOM is spreading a different message. It is a message of hope. It is a message of the most profound community service.

Over 40,000 miles have I traveled, and over 40 years has ICSOM persevered. But, we've barely begun. Opportunity awaits, and the message must be spread. When I grow weary, I am comforted by the knowledge that there is a generation of friends performing on the same night, at the same moment, as I. There are mentors that went before me, and generations that will follow.

As *The New York Times* reported just last year, this can be classical music's golden age. In a world that is weary with conflict and hostility, we can serve as a beacon, a beacon that has every opportunity to grow brighter with every note we play, and through every life we touch. Some of the orchestras I have visited have generously said that ICSOM's presence has been inspirational. But, to those orchestras, I would say that ICSOM, and I, owe them our thanks. I have been inspired by every musician I've met and every orchestra I've heard. We exist because of our members, and, on all-night flights back to North Carolina, I am never alone. I hear their music, and I carry the strength of our community of musicians with me everywhere I go.

## Auditions

*(continued from page 4)*

the audience. Music is a language unto itself, and pure musical values are something we should fight to uphold in this era driven by glitz, glamour, and surface appeal. There will always be someone to give the speech.

So, I urge you in your role as judges: Don't be so insecure! Listen carefully and trust what you hear! Respect the majority vote, even when you don't agree, and trust that it is rare for anyone to play his or her best at an audition. Don't wait to copy the result from other orchestras. Don't withhold experience that the winner has earned and deserves. Banish the idea that there is one perfect person for the job, a god or goddess who will spring full-grown from the head of Zeus! There are many with the potential to be fine artists and leaders, if they are given the opportunity they earned by winning the audition. Don't drag it out for years, draining time and money from the auditioners and undermining everyone's confidence in a fair deal. Trial weeks put the whole thing into the political arena and increase the number of opinions exponentially.

I have watched the level of musical accomplishment rise dramatically in the past 30 years. There are lots of polished and imaginative players ready to fill the jobs. They shouldn't have to try out three times for the same orchestra. Put the winners in the chairs and let them fulfill their destiny to be music's next stars.

*Elaine Douvas has been principal oboe of the Metropolitan Opera since 1977, oboe instructor at The Juilliard School for 25 years, and chairman of the woodwind department since 1997. She was principal oboe of the Atlanta Symphony (1973–77), and her credits include numerous summer festivals, master classes, solo appearances, and recordings.*

## Conference Calls

(continued from page 3)

local presidents are also invited. We have been very fortunate to have our own ICSOM legal counsel, Lenny Leibowitz, join us. SSD Director Laura Brownell graciously agreed to join, as well, to offer additional expert advice and assistance.

Beginning in late January calls involving several orchestras have been held regularly. Included are Detroit, Kansas City, Minnesota, Nashville, North Carolina, San Antonio, and Saint Paul. Others will be joining as their negotiation schedules warrant. These calls prove very helpful in providing confidential environments to discuss and evaluate management and musician proposals and counter-strategies with colleagues facing similar challenges in their own negotiations. ICSOM Treasurer Michael Moore deserves special mention as he continues to stretch your dues dollars by locating cost efficient rates for electronic services including these conference calls.

One of ICSOM's greatest accomplishments over the past forty-plus years is the ever improving ability to share information quickly and comprehensively. *Senza Sordino*, the newly redesigned ICSOM website, mailing lists Orchestra-L and Delegate-L, member-at-large interactions, the ICSOM Directory, recent on-site visits by Chairman

Ridge, and annual ICSOM Conferences are just a few examples of key services that bring valuable information and support to our orchestras and members.

In closing, I would like to draw your attention to another terrific ICSOM resource: *ICSOM; Forty Years of the International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians*. Part of my normal preparation in writing these columns is to study this comprehensive publication in order to better understand current ICSOM issues by studying our history. Tom Hall, who served ICSOM as editor of *Senza Sordino*, Governing Board Member-at-Large, and delegate (and who recently retired from the Chicago Symphony), authored the book in 2002. Delegates and orchestra committees alike should have copies within reach. New and veteran musicians alike are encouraged to read this terrific publication, easily one of the most accurate and informative references available about ICSOM's history and its importance to our orchestras. Copies of this book have been distributed to all member orchestras at past Conferences. If your orchestra or committee would like more copies please contact me. Additional copies will also be available at this year's ICSOM Conference.