

Senza Sordino

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AFM Politics (as usual)

by Bruce Ridge, ICSOM Chairperson

Most political attacks, especially those of a personal nature, are really just distractions. They are designed to keep people from examining the real issues that could affect their lives. This is true of national politics, and it is certainly true of politics within the American Federation of Musicians. Recently, ICSOM has been the subject of a number of attacks—and a lot of misinformation. While disheartening, these attacks will not distract us from our work or our message of unity, even while others respond to that message with parody and distortions. These are serious times for orchestras and our union, and we are raising serious questions. Unfortunately, all too often these concerns are answered by posturing.

At a time when orchestral musicians across the nation have faced serious cutbacks, ICSOM has rallied behind a message of unity in supporting our colleagues, as we believe our union is supposed to do. Our recent *Call to Action* to assist the musicians of the Honolulu Symphony has brought in over \$110,000, an astonishing figure considering the hardships we all are facing. This means that, in approximately 26 months, we have raised over \$340,000 for ICSOM musicians in need. That is the true message of ICSOM in 2010: United we stand. Wherever one is in need, we all respond; and what happens to one of us happens to all of us. If only this message could be embraced by the entire AFM.

ICSOM's message is one of unity and peace, and it is a message that asks: Can't debate be reasonably held in an open forum, beyond anonymous attacks on blogs? Can't differences of opinions be addressed in a spirit of civility and openness? Must those who voluntarily seek to serve also endure the politics of personal destruction?

Within the AFM, this negativity is really nothing new. *Reader's Digest* published an article way back in 1956 about AFM politics, called "The Union That Fights Its Workers." It seems that there is

a renewal of this approach in debating the important issues before us. But it doesn't have to be this way. With the troubles facing this union, especially within the AFM pension fund, what is needed is inspiration, not desperation.

Orchestral musicians surely can't help but notice that the acronym "ICSOM" seems to be making fewer and fewer appearances in the *International Musician*. In the February issue, the AFM president's report takes great credit for how the Symphonic Services Division (SSD) is creating innovative programs for the field. And, that is fine. We are pleased that the department is finally taking on some of the initiatives that ICSOM has been promoting for several years. Most notably, the revamped wage chart project—a project brought to the leadership of the SSD by members of the Minnesota Orchestra and the ICSOM Governing Board that languished for years while incomplete and inaccurate wage charts were produced during our greatest time of crisis and need—is now finally moving forward. If the AFM president feels the need to take credit for ICSOM-initiated projects, we understand. It is just politics. If the AFM needs to address the fundraising activities for Honolulu by omitting any reference to ICSOM in the February *International Musician*, even though it was an ICSOM effort, we understand. Again, it is just politics. But, marginalizing orchestral musicians who keep this union afloat through substantial work dues will not serve the cause of unity, and political posturing does not enhance the lives of the union's members.

Recently, a parody of the December 2009 issue of *Senza Sordino* was distributed widely. The source was the Small Locals Committee, led by a gentleman named John Leite. I have to say, I find it strange to be serving as chairman of an organization that is attacked by a committee of small locals, especially since I have been a member of small locals throughout my entire ICSOM career. I joined Local 125 in 1979, and Local 500 in 1987, both of which have approximately two hundred members (and fewer when I joined them).

The Small Locals Committee, or Mr. Leite, had some disagreement with an article written by ICSOM Member at Large Paul Gunther, who is widely recognized as one of the most respected leaders within ICSOM. Paul's article was titled "I Went to the State Fair—for ICSOM" and was a populist message that sought to inspire questions. It did not advocate for any bylaw change or for any electoral position. The Small Locals Committee took issue with Paul's message.

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Chairperson's Report by Bruce Ridge



Performing arts centers can transform cities, enhancing the lives of citizens and the business environment. During a recent visit to New York City, I visited the new David Rubenstein Atrium at Lincoln Center, one of over 500 Privately Owned Public Spaces (POPS) in New York City created under a program that offers incentives for buildings to provide publicly accessible spaces in the community.

I received a tour of the Atrium, and also the beautifully renovated Koch Theater, from the New York City Opera's ICSOM delegate Gail Kruvand and former delegate Nancy McAlhany. Later in the week I was also able to visit with the orchestra committee of the New York City Ballet and delegate Ethan Silverman and to greet some of the musicians in the renovated orchestra pit just prior to a Sunday matinee ballet performance.

There is a lot of renovation going on around Lincoln Center these days, and the Rubenstein Atrium truly impressed me. The Atrium is an example of how the arts community can enhance the living environment within any city.

The Rubenstein Atrium serves as the box office for all of the theaters at Lincoln Center and for all 12 of the resident arts organizations. The Atrium is named in honor of Lincoln Center Vice Chairman David Rubenstein and features (in addition to the box office) a fully staffed information desk, restrooms, free Wi-Fi, and a café with food from celebrity chef Tom Colicchio (of *Top Chef* fame). The beautifully designed area has two vertical gardens, a fountain, a wall designed for video presentations, and public art by Dutch textile artisan Claudy Jongstra.

I passed through this space a few times when it was known as the Harmony Atrium, but it was never fully utilized. Today, it is filled with people learning about the events at Lincoln Center, meeting with the artists, purchasing tickets, or awaiting same day discounts at the Donald and Barbara Zucker box office. The Atrium is open to

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Photo by Mark Bussell

The David Rubenstein Atrium at Lincoln Center.



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SYMPHONY AND OPERA MUSICIANS

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Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra
Minnesota Orchestra
Nashville Symphony Orchestra
National Symphony Orchestra
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President's Report by Brian Rood



The University of Michigan hosted the *American Orchestras Summit* in Ann Arbor January 26–28. The summit sought to examine how orchestras impact cultural life in America and how orchestras and academia might partner more effectively in the future.

Participants and attendees were mainly from southeastern Michigan. U-M professors, students, and University Musical Society staff represented the largest constituency. National presenters included Henry Fogel (currently at Roosevelt University), Susan Feder (Melton Foundation), Drew McManus (Adaptistration), Larry Tamburri (Pittsburgh Symphony CEO), Leonard Slatkin (Detroit Symphony music director), and Joseph Horowitz (writer and co-creator of the summit). It was a pleasure finally to meet Sphinx Organization president and founder Aaron Dworkin, who thanked ICSOM for ongoing support of the annual Sphinx Competition.

In the late fall, ICSOM Chairperson Bruce Ridge wrote to summit organizers about the lack of representation and input from working orchestral musicians. We were assured that this was unintentional, and ICSOM and ROPA officers were subsequently invited. Vice-President Paul Austin represented ROPA, and Secretary Laura Ross and I were pleased to represent ICSOM. The trip was particularly meaningful for Laura and me as we are both U-M alumni. We were able to visit with ROPA President Emerita Barbara Zmich and ROPA Vice-President Emerita Kathleen Grimes. Also in attendance were SSD Director Christopher Durham, SSD Benefits Analyst Joseph Goldman (also a DSO musician), Detroit Local 5 President Gordon Stump, Greg Near (ROPA delegate of the Michigan Opera Theater Orchestra), and recently retired DSO musician Paul Ganson. Paul, a former ICSOM Governing Board member at large, long-time DSO committee member, and current DSO historian, was largely responsible for saving Detroit's Orchestra Hall from the wrecking ball in the 1970s. Paul engaged the audience with his wit and charm during the panel entitled "Sustainable Partnerships: What Works."

Over the two days of the summit, nine different panels/presentations were offered. The schedule was full but well paced. Each topic lasted about an hour, and ample opportunities for coffee-break discussions were available. One of the unique characteristics of the summit was the attendance of university students, particularly during Pierre Boulez's Q&A session. That session followed an electrifying performance by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra the previous evening. Laura and I visited briefly with CSO delegate Rachel Goldstein and CSO Members Committee Chair Steve Lester (also a past ICSOM Governing Board member at large).

Paul Austin and I participated on the panel entitled "The American Orchestra in 2010: National, Regional and Local Perspectives." Laura passionately shared her experiences in Nashville on the "Re-Conceptualizing the Symphony" panel.

The first panel was entitled "A Brave New World: Three Case Studies." In two of the case studies, the executive directors from the

Louisville Orchestra and Memphis Symphony discussed examples of services that are not typical rehearsals, performances, or recording sessions. In Memphis musicians must participate in "approved partnership activities" in order to preserve full salary. These activities include teaching in city schools and taking on traditional staff/office roles, such as planning, development, marketing, and presenting. Musicians who choose not to participate forfeit about 20% in annual salary. The extra services in Louisville are optional and not tied to minimum annual salary. They are similar to community connection and partnership additional services already found in several ICSOM orchestras.

During the summit a couple of people expressed the notion that orchestral services should be redefined to allow for "service exchange." They felt the definition of a service should be changed to allow "Memphis-style" activities. One reason given was that orchestras might be presenting more concerts than their communities can accommodate.

Musicians contended that available performances do not outstrip demand. While ticket sales understandably declined or remained flat after September 11, classical series ticket income for American orchestras increased 18% between 2004-2005 and 2005-2006. Equally noteworthy was that paid attendance at all concerts given by American orchestras, including chamber, youth, education, family, pops, summer, and youth concerts was also up 18%. Overall fundraising and fiscal performance likewise improved.

Musicians also contended that the current orchestra economic model still works when organizations fire on all cylinders. The Los Angeles Philharmonic and the San Francisco Symphony continue to thrive despite the recent recession. Ticket sales have improved in communities across the country, including in Saint Louis and Kansas City, to name just a couple. When creative programming is coupled with dynamic marketing, and when boards and managements are aligned and engaged with the musicians and conductors, orchestras thrive. When one or more of these key components is missing, an organization flounders and rarely achieves artistic success or financial stability.

An interesting presentation during the summit focused on utilizing orchestras to celebrate their contributions within their communities. Perhaps one reason orchestras achieve just single-digit overall market penetration is that there is relatively little information about how orchestras began and their early community relationships. Hopefully, the U-M summit will prove to be a springboard for new research and provide increased collaboration between academic institutions and orchestras.

A curious aspect of the summit was that Laura, Paul Austin, and I were often referred to as *the union people* instead of just orchestral musicians. It became clear to us that there is a lack of knowledge about our lives as professional orchestral musicians, that we are unionized, and that we are integrally involved in negotiations and

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Robert Coleman, the First Editor of *Senza Sordino* by Laura Ross, ICSOM Secretary

“It is with both trepidation and pride that we introduce the first issue of SENZA SORDINO. It has been put together against the pressure of both time and limited funds, and no doubt bears the scars of its difficult (one is tempted to say ‘Caesarean’) birth.” And so began the January 1963, Volume 1, Number 1 issue of *Senza Sordino*. The editor of this publication, and the additional two issues from March and May of 1963, was Robert Coleman, a violist with the Chicago Symphony.

I spoke with Robert Coleman at his home on Cape Cod about his experience putting together those first issues of *Senza Sordino* and learned a great deal about this lovely man. As we talked he wondered at the fact that nearly 50 years had passed. Robert graduated from Julliard in 1949, spent a year with the Pittsburgh Symphony, and joined the Chicago Symphony two years out of college, in 1951.

As I prepared for my conversation with Robert, I reviewed his newsletters. They contain a great deal of insight into the early days of ICSOM. Those were days when musicians battled not only their managers but also their locals and the Federation. Back then, nearly all contact between orchestras or orchestra committees had been bilateral, with no real means of addressing common problems with common solutions.

One of the most interesting articles in the first issue describes a series of four inter-orchestra conferences that were the first of their kind. (They were also called *symposiums*—perhaps because “Symphony Orchestra Symposium” would be shortened to “SOS.”) They were held between July 1960 and October 1962 and eventually developed into what is now the annual ICSOM Conference. AFM President Kenin called the first one together in New York City. Although musicians anticipated addressing real issues, such as contract ratification, dismissal procedures, and pension, the theme of this symposium instead became local autonomy. The only motion that was allowed was one to convene a conference annually. Even that was undercut when the 64th AFM Convention declared that future conferences would be held at the discretion of the AFM Executive Board.

In early 1962, President Kenin called for another symposium to be held in June. Several orchestra committees decided to meet in May in preparation for that meeting. When President Kenin cancelled the June symposium, that did not deter the musicians from their plans, and so the first three-day conference was convened in Chicago on May 12, 1962, with delegates from 12 of 26 invited orchestras in attendance, but without union participation. It was at that May 1962 meeting that some meaningful resolutions were first adopted, calling for: publication of a newsletter (i.e., *Senza Sordino*), establishment of a symphony department, the right to organize and elect orchestra committees, and the right to ratify agreements.

When the Federation rescheduled the cancelled symposium for October 1962, musicians planned to meet before that as well, this time in Cleveland, September 6–8. The September conference was called the International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians (*ICSOM*) and, like the previous one, was held without

union participation. When the Federation did hold the October symposium, it met in New York City and, like the first New York symposium, accomplished little. Interestingly, the AFM arbitrarily limited attendance to orchestras that had budgets exceeding \$300,000—and thus excluded the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, which had been in a bitter dispute with Local 802, from attending.

The first item on the agenda of the Chicago symposium of May 1962 was a report from the Symphony Newsletter Draft Committee that recommended establishing a Federation-wide news medium specifically for symphony orchestras. When the name recommended by the committee (The American Symphony Orchestra Newsletter), did not go over well with the Canadian orchestras, musicians voted to establish the newsletter but to postpone naming it. Robert credits Joane Bennett, the assistant editor for the first and second issues, with coming up with the name *Senza Sordino*. As we spoke, Robert said he felt guilty that it took four to five months to get the first issue to press and that he had not been able to live up to the original goal of an issue each month. I, on the other hand, am impressed with the quality and content that was published that first year. Robert and his colleagues Joane Bennett and Janet Lorin (assistant editor for the third issue) are all to be commended for the valuable service they performed in producing those first issues. Their contribution is even more remarkable when you consider that once publication responsibility passed to the next editor, there were only two issues per season (although the newsletter was being published more professionally). It was not until Sam Denov, also from the Chicago Symphony, took over as editor that it expanded to more than four issues per year again.

Finances were a real problem that first year. The second issue included an apology that read: “This issue of SENZA SORDINO is approximately one month late; the reasons are mostly financial, and its tardiness is unavoidable; but the editor wishes to apologize, nonetheless. One orchestra has recommended five issues per year instead of ten, and there is considerable merit to the idea. However, this is a matter for ICSOM to decide at its next meeting. In the meantime, the present editor will struggle to produce issues as rapidly as funds allow.” In his editorial, Robert wrote about ambiguities in the newsletter’s mandate: “For instance in order to open a bank account in SENZA’s name, the editor has been required to declare himself to be the legal owner, a state of affairs that is undesirable in the extreme.”

The original intention was that the editorship would be passed to a different orchestra each year, and Chicago just happened to be the first. Robert told me that the early days of ICSOM were somewhat fuzzy to him because he was never actually a delegate to ICSOM. That led to a discussion about what was occurring in the Chicago Symphony at the time of ICSOM’s formation. He told me that the season was not very long when he joined the orchestra and that it had little if any summer season. Scheduling and hiring for a summer season was virtually at the discretion of the personnel manager. Robert said that most people were afraid of the personnel manager because of the power he wielded. Robert felt that one of the greatest

things about forming an orchestra committee was that it defused the power of the personnel managers. Until that time, personnel managers held almost total control over hiring and firing, though they did need the consent of management.

Robert said that when the committee was established, it was not universally supported by the members of the orchestra; they were fractious and there was a great deal of infighting. Yet, this was a time when the Chicago Symphony was considered to be the best in the world—even as the musicians were divided and hostile. As far as Robert remembers, over time all the “arch conservatives” eventually came around.

The orchestra had been battling Local 10 President James Caesar (“Little Caesar”) Petrillo. (I suspect that the “Caesarean” birth Robert referred to in the first issue of *Senza Sordino*, quoted above, may also have been a nod to Petrillo.) I asked Robert if he had any idea why Petrillo was so unwilling to support CSO musicians. He suspected that, aside from his complaints that the orchestra made a lot of noise at union meetings, Petrillo believed the union was for jazz musicians. He didn’t really understand classical symphony musicians. While Petrillo would defend jazz musicians who were under attack, that wasn’t the case with symphony musicians. Robert also thought it was possible that Petrillo didn’t want to antagonize the CSO board, many of whom were very powerful in the city of Chicago. (In discussion with a current CSO member, the latter reason was probably closer to the mark. At the time, CSO musicians earned less than the many successful Chicago freelance musicians, and CSO board members were very powerful and important.)

Add to this that the CSO was in a lot of trouble. Active members of the orchestra were being fired. Though there was no tenure at the time, these acts of bad faith by management brought tenure into focus as a key issue for the orchestra. Robert was among four or five musicians fired by management for labor activity. When it foolishly admitted the reason, management was forced to hire the musicians back because (surprise!) firing for that reason was illegal. One year later, management tried again, this time citing musical reasons. A writer for one of Chicago’s newspapers approached Music Director Fritz Reiner and asked about his reasons for the terminations. Reiner knew nothing about any of it. In fact, he revealed to the newspaper that there were some musicians he’d like to get rid of, but they weren’t these musicians. Management had to rehire the musicians once more and never tried that again.

All the controversy and lack of unity, plus personal attacks by management and a union that refused to support musicians—that was the environment of the first editor of *Senza Sordino*. Robert has mixed feelings about those first issues. As he reviewed them recently, he wished the quality of some of the writing was better, but he knew they were done in a hurry to get the issues out. There were about half a dozen people who helped put it all together, but Robert wrote most of the content. He saw some angry writing that lacked finesse and thought the periodical kept an angry tone until it was published more professionally. Still, he also felt that some

later issues lost that initial spirit, where warfare among and between musicians, their union, and their managements were the setting for some very scary and precarious times. Robert later realized that the issues were losing their roughness, but he also believed they deserved to be better produced.

Roughness aside, there are many positive things about those first issues. They contain the first lists of orchestra committee members, the first wage charts (with periodic updates), letters from readers who share orchestra news (both positive and negative), and reports that some locals were more progressive and supportive than others (and even pointed out some as role models). And there was humor. In the first issue, the “prospects” for the next issue included such topics as: some tear-provoking insights into the life of the assistant principal, a profile of a committee chairman, and a recipe for a potent holiday punch made from valve oil, rosin, and flute polish. The third issue announces that the price of individual subscriptions had been set at \$5.00 per year and warned: “The individual subscriber is advised that the number of issues per year is undetermined, and that the price is exorbitant; he therefore is not only a subscriber, but a financial supporter. It is just one more desperate device to make SENZA SORDINO solvent.”

Technology has come a long way and allows us to communicate much more rapidly. And yet, we are all professional musicians first and foremost. I cannot imagine fulfilling the requirement to publish an issue every month, or even every two months! What Robert and his colleagues accomplished in establishing *Senza Sordino* is nothing less than astounding, especially under such difficult conditions. While those old issues may bring back tough memories, they are priceless in their accomplishment.

Robert is now 85. In 1964, after 14 years with the orchestra and not long after he relinquished responsibility for *Senza Sordino*, he left the Chicago Symphony to become a professor, a teacher, and a member of the University of Connecticut’s string quartet for the next 14 years. He returned to orchestral playing as assistant principal viola in the Dallas Symphony for 10 more years before he finally retired. His wife, he said, was always supportive during those years in Chicago, but she wished the fighting would end. Robert would never want to go through that time again. He said he was much braver in those days than he is now. For me, I’m very glad he was so brave because his work provided a wonderful starting point from which to build. As ICSOM Secretary, I am always reminding delegates about the importance of communication. That is what ICSOM was, and is, all about.

I urge you all to go to the download section of the ICSOM website and view the first issues of *Senza Sordino*. You will marvel at how heroically those before us faced such seemingly insurmountable problems. I hope that you will admire Robert Coleman, as I do, for producing those newsletters while enduring distractions like divisiveness and personal attacks. I know I speak for all of ICSOM when I say thank you, Robert, for your incredible contribution to our history.

Chairperson's Report

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the public 365 days a year until 10:00 p.m., with the box office open until shortly before concert time. More information is available at the Lincoln Center website.

At a time when the relevancy of the arts continues to be under attack, I can think of many downtown areas that could benefit from such a convenient and inviting space near their Performing Arts Centers. When you visit such a creative area and see the innovative use of space within a city, it is tremendously inspiring.

While there is much consternation in the field over the release of the recent National Endowment for the Arts report that showed a drop in attendance for all art forms in America, the timing of the study makes me doubt the results. As Alex Ross said in the February 8, 2010, issue of *The New Yorker*: "Despite the dire trends, the classical audience remains reasonably healthy. Although a smaller portion of the population is heading out to concerts, those who do go are going more often: orchestras reported a slight rise in attendance between 2003 and 2007." I believe that innovative thinking, such as what led to the Rubenstein Atrium, will make it easier for our audiences to find us, and for new audiences to seek us out.

We must remember that the economic argument for the arts is central to our theme, accompanying the education and artistic message that our orchestras provide. In my home state of North Carolina, a recent study proclaimed that the Creative industry in the State contributes \$41 billion to the state's economy, and yet every time there is an appropriation for the arts, we have to read letters to the editor proclaiming it frivolous. By that same account, the wine industry in North Carolina, which is celebrated and encouraged, has an \$813 million dollar impact. Of course, the wine industry is generally for-profit, and many of the agencies of the creative industry are non-profits. But, those creative industries account for 300,000 jobs, and the wine industry accounts for 5,700.

Please, don't get me wrong. The wine industry in our state is crucial to our economy, and we are proud to rank tenth in the nation in wine production. It should be supported and celebrated through every

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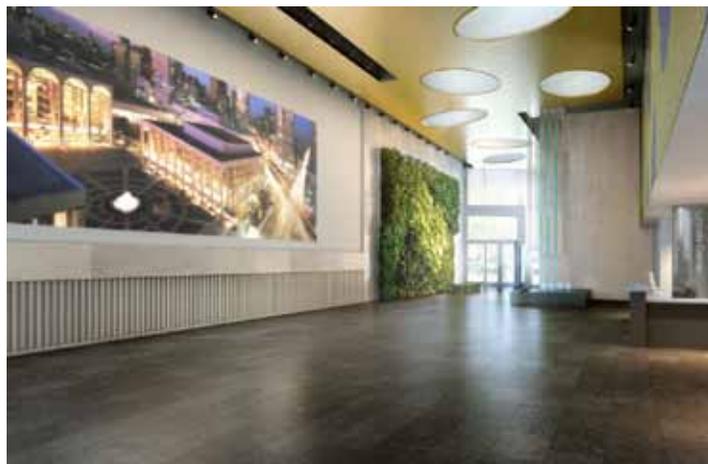


Photo by dbox

A view of the David Rubenstein Atrium at Lincoln Center.

Colorado Site Visit

by John Kinzie, Colorado Symphony

The chairman of ICSOM, Bruce Ridge, recently visited the Colorado Symphony Orchestra for three days, March 9–11. On Tuesday, Bruce met with all the musician representatives of the orchestra during a luncheon at our union hall. Pete Vriesenga, the president of Local 20-623, provided lunch for Bruce and the 20 or so musicians present. There were musician representatives from the artistic, budget/finance, orchestra, and negotiating committees. Bruce gave an impassioned presentation about the current state of orchestras around our country and led a spirited discussion about the current situation of the Colorado Symphony. Following this meeting, the negotiating committee met with Bruce to discuss strategies and challenges facing the orchestra's upcoming negotiations.

The following day, after a morning rehearsal, there was a full orchestra meeting with lunch again provided by our local union. With about 55 musicians in attendance, Bruce presented a very positive view on the future of orchestras in this country and challenged our orchestra to remain focused and strong during our upcoming negotiations. Many musicians asked questions, and there was an engaging discussion. After the orchestra meeting Bruce had a very positive and informative meeting with the chairman of the board, along with the president/CEO, the CFO, and the vice presidents of the artistic, development, and marketing departments. During this meeting, Bruce also expressed his displeasure at the use of bankruptcy threats during the last negotiation and talked about the harm that this kind of tactic causes an orchestra family.

On Thursday, Bruce again met with the orchestra during our lunch break between rehearsals. Once again there was a large turnout of musicians. During these three days Bruce helped the Colorado Symphony musicians become more unified, understand the importance of our orchestra in our community, and become better prepared to negotiate a new contract. We collectively thank Bruce for his commitment, his time, and his energy that he gives not only to the Colorado Symphony, but to our industry and orchestras across the country.

John Kinzie is the chairman of Colorado Symphony's orchestra and negotiating committees.

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.

AFM Politics

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But rather than reach out to ICSOM with a request to respond appropriately, the Small Locals Committee chose to issue a parody of *Senza Sordino*, titled *Senza Voce*, numbered Volume 1, No. 1, and labeled “The Official Voice of the Small Locals Committee.” The title of the article was “I Went to the Library—for SLC” (a personal reference, of course, to the fact that Paul is the librarian of the Minnesota Orchestra).

I won’t take issue with all the points contained in the parody issue. Instead, we will regard this as an example of imitation being the sincerest form of flattery and recognize that when a publication has been as successful and historic as *Senza Sordino*, there will be parodies. We regret though, that the use of this method only served to deny the small locals of our union, which are supposedly represented by the Small Locals Committee, an opportunity for a true and fair representation of their opinions.

We further regret, and indeed resent, that this parody was posted on the AFM’s website, a website that is maintained with your dues money. It is certainly unfortunate that a website that should be used to promote unity was instead used to attack a group of loyal AFM members who have repeatedly been proponents of unity.

And then, there is the “Committee for a More Responsible Local 47.” I think that some of you might receive its weekly e-mails, as it somehow seems to have managed to harvest our delegate list without our permission or consultation. In fact, it is kind enough to send me two copies every week, neither of which I read—at least not until recently.

I almost hesitate to even mention “The Committee,” as it refers to itself. It engages in muckraking of the lowest order, and it does not like to be confused with facts. Please don’t get me wrong, The Committee is welcome to its viewpoint on AFM politics, and I would respect their expressing that viewpoint if they did it in a respectable manner. Instead, it acts anonymously, allows anonymous comments which are frequently of a personal nature, and its representing of certain “facts” is either direct distortion—or the result of a lack of understanding.

The difficulties between the symphonic players’ conferences and the AFM president in the selection of the new director of the SSD were misrepresented in one Committee posting. This mystified us, as we have published a detailed account of that, which was widely distributed through *Senza Sordino*, the ICSOM website, and both of our e-lists, as well as on Twitter and Facebook. It is true that we received a request to clarify our position, but we chose not to respond to an unsigned e-mail. The Committee refuses to identify itself. We can’t debate or communicate with an unknown person. Also, the questions posed to us were impossible to answer, as their representation of events was so undeniably false and distorted by artless political spin.

But, don’t get me wrong. I really understand all of this. It is just politics. But, how does it serve to advance debate? How does it

serve to address crucial problems within the AFM pension? How does it promote our orchestras to their communities? How does it spread a positive message of hope for the future of music and the arts in America? How does pitting musician against musician serve the cause of our union?

I understand that in issuing these criticisms I might become a target of similar personal attacks. I don’t mind. I am willing to stand up for the message of unity and civility that ICSOM represents, and I understand that standing up always increases your chance of being hit by lightning. I choose to stand anyway. Enough is enough.

Some organizations foster debate by uniting, and some stifle debate by dividing. Sadly, it is usually the latter. It is our understanding that the International Executive Board recently repealed a series of “Five Points” that were enacted in 2005. The Five Points promoted communication and unity within the union and gave the heads of the Players Conferences an opportunity to address the delegates to the AFM Convention. Unfortunately, that opportunity seems to have been unceremoniously eroded.

It doesn’t have to be this way. It shouldn’t be this way. But, how can we change the pervasive atmosphere of disunity and personal attacks that dominate the politics of the AFM?

I can only ask: Have you done enough? Have the ICSOM delegates reported to their colleagues about the events from last summer’s conference? Have you spoken with your Local officers? Have you volunteered in your community to reflect a positive view of the future of the arts? Have you joined *Americans for the Arts*? Have you read these articles in *Senza Sordino* and encouraged your colleagues to do the same? Have you distributed the remarks of the ICSOM chairman before the International Executive Board in Las Vegas from July of 2009?

It is time to stand up, even if we do risk being hit by lightning. We have seen what we can accomplish together, but there is not much time. I have heard it said that we like to buy books because we believe we are buying the time to read them. But we can’t buy any more time. Your pension is at stake. Your union is at stake. Your livelihood is at stake.

It is indeed time to stand, and if we stand together we will be heard. I call now for an end to the personal attacks within our union. I call for debate, not discord. I call for a unity that is strong enough to welcome such debate, and for candidates courageous enough to participate.

This will not happen without you.

Chairperson Ridge’s address to the IEB regarding the delayed and unnecessarily divisive process through which the director of the SSD was appointed is available on the ICSOM website at www.icsom.org/vegas_address.html as well as in the September 2009 issue of Senza Sordino.

San Antonio Musicians' Caroling Project

by *Allyson Dawkins, San Antonio Symphony*

The musicians of the San Antonio Symphony have developed a special program that both gives and gets back in spiritual rewards. During the month of December 2009 we celebrated our 21st season of presenting the gift of holiday music to the city of San Antonio through the *Caroling Project*. The project began in 1989 with principal string players visiting two hospitals. It has grown to include as many as 40 volunteer musicians playing at 25 institutions. In 2009, groups of musicians visited Santa Rosa Children's Hospital, Southwest Mental Health Center, the Bexar County Jail, Bexar County Juvenile Detention Center, Cyndi Krier Correctional Institution, HealthSouth Rehabilitation Center of San Antonio, and Methodist Children's Hospital.

My favorite event each year is the trip to Bexar County Jail, a correctional facility that houses up to 4,000 inmates. We usually take a string quartet to the jail because of the portability of the group and the wealth of seasonal repertoire. We wander through the maze of cells with our instruments, music, stands, and, of course, an armed escort. The inmates are visibly surprised at our act of kindness and they respond respectfully and gratefully. We feel privileged to share a moment of humanity with a part of our society that needs positive interaction.

Over the years we have given priority to children's hospitals, as young patients cannot always rationally understand their pain and suffering. The children love to hear *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*, *Frosty the Snowman*, and *Jingle Bells*. We take along a collection of small percussion instruments such as sleigh bells, tambourines, and triangles for the children to play. We also always manage to squeeze into Intensive Care units where we play favorites like *What Child Is This* and *The Little Drummer Boy*. The monitors of very sick children show an improvement in their vital signs as they listen to our soothing music.

Each year the *Caroling Project* culminates with a chamber orchestra performance at the Juvenile Detention Center. At



San Antonio Symphony musicians, colleagues, and family at Christus Santa Rosa Children's Hospital on December 22, 2008.

this particular concert many of the symphony musicians invite their students (or their children who play instruments!) to join us. We set up in a cold and depressing gymnasium which is quickly transformed into a concert hall brightened by our colorful clothing. This year we were very fortunate to have four trombones in our chamber orchestra. They played several arrangements alone and garnered enthusiastic response from the teenaged inmates.

One of the most surprising and gratifying aspects of the *Caroling Project* is the mentoring opportunity. Students relish the chance to go out into our community with their teachers and classical musician idols, stand beside them, and share their talents. I am always humbled by the attentive and serious expressions on the faces of students as they strive to keep up with the "pros" in even the most difficult arrangements of Christmas music.

So, the music is put to rest in my file cabinet, the percussion instruments are quiet in the closet, the memories and the photos bring smiles. I am waiting for the inevitable and pivotal day in November 2010 when one of my colleagues will ask me, "Hey, are we doing the caroling thing this year?"

Allyson Dawkins is the principal viola of the San Antonio Symphony Orchestra.

Update

The new 2010 edition of Janet Horvath's book, *Playing (less) Hurt: An Injury Prevention Guide for Musicians*, excerpted in the April 2009 issue of *Senza Sordino*, is now published by Hal Leonard Corporation and is available directly from the publisher (www.halleonard.com) and from bookstores including Amazon.

Chairperson's Report

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means possible, but the creative and artistic industries should also be recognized for what they truly provide. Instead, some critics react with the same old rhetoric, usually because the facts are so difficult to hear through the din of despair and hand-wringing that serves to undermine support for the arts.

Spaces like the Rubenstein Atrium demonstrate clearly what an investment in the arts can do for a community. Next time you are in New York City, I encourage you all to visit the Atrium, and take the message it represents back to your home cities as well as your local governments, businesses, and arts leaders.

Orchestra Newslets

The **San Antonio Symphony** announced that Sebastian Lang-Lessing will become their eighth music director, bringing a three-year search to an end. According to San Antonio delegate Stephanie Tepy Westney, Lang-Lessing's four-year contract will start later this year with an October 2 concert featuring Mahler's Symphony No. 1. In all, he will direct 10 programs during the 2010–2011 subscription season, including a four-concert Tchaikovsky festival. Lang-Lessing will also conduct a special non-subscription concert on January 12 with pianist Lang Lang performing Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2.

Lang-Lessing previously conducted the San Antonio Symphony in May and November 2009. He was born in Germany and spent time in high school as an exchange student in Indiana. Besides his native German, he speaks English, French, Italian, and Spanish. Lang-Lessing began his career as resident conductor of the Deutsche Oper Berlin and has been active on both the symphony and the opera fronts. His U.S. appearances include performances with San Francisco Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Washington National Opera, Opera Colorado, and Los Angeles Opera. Since 2004, Lang-Lessing has also served as chief conductor and artistic director of the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra.

In January, the orchestra committee for the **North Carolina Symphony** organized a Thank-a-Thon. Over three days, orchestra members phoned nearly 1,300 donors across the state to thank them for their support of the symphony. Donors were grateful for the calls and expressed their thanks for the ways in which the orchestra has enriched their lives. Both donors and musicians enjoyed the opportunity to get to know each other and shared experiences about past symphony concerts. An additional Thank-a-Thon is planned for this spring.



Photo by Pete Vriesenga

ICSOM Chairperson Bruce Ridge meets with Colorado musicians. (See story on p. 6.) Clockwise, from bottom left: Keith Howard, Matt Switzer, Wyn Hart, Steve Dombrowski, John Kinzie, Char Campbell, Paul Naslund, Susan Bowles, Gary Goble, Erik Peterson, David Waldman, Lloyd Bowen, Tom Blomster, Philip Stevens, Bruce Ridge.

From the Honolulu Symphony Musicians

On behalf of all the Honolulu Symphony Musicians, we would like to express our gratitude to all the ICSOM orchestras and individual musicians who have stepped forward with donations and good wishes for us. The overwhelming response to the Call to Action has been breathtaking and deeply meaningful: as of February 25, 2010, we have received a total of \$104,977 from 39 ICSOM orchestras. While we knew that ICSOM would come through for us, we could not have expected this level of support, especially during difficult economic times. We also would like to thank the trustees of the AFM Strike Fund for their commitment to provide much-needed benefits in this time of great need.

Some orchestras have asked what we have been doing with the donations. We've initially used a portion of the money to make an initial "stipend" payment to all full- and part-time contracted musicians in order to help with expenses such as health care costs, which we now have to pay ourselves. While the full core has been employed during opera season, we have been able to hold onto the rest for now, with a view towards keeping it as an emergency reserve for as long as possible while the bankruptcy process grinds on.

These have not been easy times for us, but the knowledge that we have the support of our colleagues across the nation has both warmed our hearts and helped give us the will to keep fighting to keep a professional symphony orchestra in Hawaii. We have been particularly moved that the musicians of ICSOM orchestras have reached out to us at a time that has been so uncertain for our industry. So many musicians have been there for us even while they themselves faced crisis at home.

We also want to thank Bruce Ridge and Brian Rood and the rest of the governing board of ICSOM for their unwavering commitment to us. We are glad to have such good friends only a phone call or email away. We also plan to continue to rely on the good advice of all the musicians of ICSOM, especially those who have already been through a bankruptcy. We are not the first to have to deal with this, and the experience of those who have come before us has been and will continue to be an immense help.

Stephen Dinion, Chair, Honolulu Symphony Musicians
Steve Flanter, Honolulu Symphony ICSOM Delegate

President's Report

(continued from page 3)

contract administration. While we proudly wear our AFM, ICSOM, and ROPA hats, we are first and foremost professional musicians. The three of us took every available opportunity to share our orchestral and union experiences with students and other attendees.

We repeatedly addressed the 20-hour-workweek nonsense recently perpetuated by managers in attempts to bolster their bargaining positions. It may be difficult for some to understand just how many hours musicians spend perfecting their craft outside of rehearsals and performances. Apart from the time spent directly preparing for those services, musicians also engage in ancillary activities including commuting, bus trips, reed making, instrument upkeep and setup, as well as time spent between services and other unpaid time. Musicians willingly take on huge time commitments by serving on audition, tenure-review, orchestra, and negotiating committees. Increasing numbers of musicians serve on boards, board committees, and other activities in service of their orchestras and communities. We cannot spread the word often enough about our lives as orchestral musicians!

In response to ICSOM Chairperson Bruce Ridge's March 2008 *Senza Sordino* article, "First, Do No Harm," U-M professor and summit

co-organizer Mark Clague and his graduate class have embarked on a survey of successful ideas, projects, and community relationship building strategies that are working well for today's American orchestra. Mark's students of Musicology 650 (History of the American Orchestra) seek contacts with North American orchestras of all sizes who have success stories to share.

It would be great if musicians from every ICSOM orchestra flooded the email inboxes at U-M with success stories. Simply email Mark and his students sounds.of.success@umich.edu with the name of your orchestra and a brief description of your ensemble's success; also include the name and email address or phone number of at least one contact person. Let us work together to counter the negative rhetoric with positive, inspiring orchestra stories.

I would like to extend our appreciation to the University of Michigan, Dean Christopher Kendall, Professor Mark Clague, UMS President Kenneth Fisher, and the many faculty members and students for their warm hospitality and collegiality during the summit. Videos of the panel presentations may be found in their entirety at www.sitemaker.umich.edu/orchestrasummit using the Video Archive link.
