

# Reflections of an Ex-Secretary General

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**A**s I look back on my eight years as IAML's Secretary General, I sense a mix of feelings. However, those that rise to the top are affection for all the friends I have made, and gratitude that I was lucky enough to be entrusted with the job. It has kept me constantly in touch with just about everything and everyone in the Association, and has provided me with constant stimulation, variety, knowledge, and not a few little problems!

One of the most interesting and rewarding contacts has been with national branches that are organizing conferences, although it is also a lot of hard work. Each country has its own way of doing things, and one has to sit back a bit and observe from afar, to get a measure of the situation. One then has to strike a balance between letting the members of the organizing committee go ahead on their own, and, if necessary, letting them know that such-and-such a proposal is just not going to work. However, I hasten to add that this last situation rarely occurs.

Putting the program together is a large part of the job and usually at some point or other is a big nightmare, probably made more so by the use of e-mail. When communications were done via "snail mail" and later by fax, programs tended to arrive more or less fully formed, and interactions occurred at a much slower, modulated rate. Now, initial details, subsequent revisions, and last minute requests come constantly bounding in right up until the last minute, and even later! One starts off with

the best of intentions, spacing out the sessions nicely, trying not to have them on similar topics at the same time, and making sure speakers do not get double booked. Initially all is well. Then, once the draft program is sent out, the requests start coming in. One of my speakers is coming on Monday and Tuesday only, so, can you please move that session from Thursday? I'm involved with the Working Group on X, which is at the same time as the session on Y, please could you move one of them? I'm a member of the Z Commission, which has its meeting at the same time as a paper I am presenting, please could you change it? And so on. It becomes an exercise in juggling and diplomacy!

Another challenging and somewhat complex job is writing up the IAML Council minutes. Thankfully the sessions are taped, so there is the recorded version to fall back on, but participants do not always speak into the microphone, and even some who do are scarcely audible! I am always grateful to those who hand me a neatly typed copy of their report—even a not-so-neatly handwritten one is welcome! Council meetings are now more discursive and informal affairs. When I first attended IAML, they were open only to Council members. Now we welcome anyone who wants to attend, and encourage them to participate. We want to dispel any conception that the workings of IAML are in any way secret or subterranean!

It is often said that the true value of attending conferences is not so much in the

presentations one hears, but in the people one meets, and certainly, getting to know music librarians from all over the world is a valuable learning experience. One sees people coming to IAML for the first time, and watches them grow in experience, move on to give papers, get elected to office. My greatest admiration goes to those who come from long distances, such as Australasia and Japan, who have to find large airfares, and who probably foot a lot of the bill themselves. The same is true of members from eastern European countries. They can now travel relatively freely, but funds are still hard to come by, either from personal or other sources. The IAML Outreach Fund attempts to provide as much assistance as possible, but this does not go very far. We Canadians may moan that it's expensive to travel to IAML, but we are rich by comparison with some.

It has been heartening to see the creation of new national branches in Austria, Russia, and Estonia. Countries like Latvia, Lithuania, and Croatia will eventually follow suit, when they feel strong enough. IAML gives free memberships to institutions in countries where there are few IAML members, and where we feel that this will bear fruit. We have had participants come from Armenia, China, Kazakhstan, amongst other places, and hope that they too will perhaps have national branches. On the topic of branches, I am sent the newsletters and other journals that are produced by them, and even when I can't actually read the language in question, I can usually make out enough to see that there is an enormous amount of activity going on.

Music is truly an international language. Put a score in front of anyone who can read western music, whatever their origin or native language, and they will be able to play, sing or read it. This is probably the major reason why an association like IAML works so well. There is a strong sense of community, and we are continuously discovering that we all have the same or at least similar problems, and can work together to help solve them. Being on the IAML Board is an opportunity to take a more active part in the Association, to develop closer friendships, and to participate in the future direction of the Association. It is also an opportunity to look out for rising stars, and to urge them to step forward and get involved.

I have seen IAML grow and change since I first started attending meetings in 1975, and have been able to participate personally and contribute to the growth and changes during my term as Secretary General since 1995. We have established an Outreach Fund, tried to make the program more relevant to today's problems and interests, limited closed sessions to as few as possible, and endeavored to spread the influence of IAML wider in the world to areas where we have few or no members. I have made so many friends in IAML, people I can call upon for advice or information should the need arise. My predecessor in the job talked of the three Fs of IAML: Friends, Fun, and *Fontes*. The first two I have in abundance. *Fontes*, I feel, has moved with the times and become more interesting. (And yes, I do read it!) I plan to stay involved with IAML for a long time to come.