



UNA VOCE

March 2006 Vol. 13 No. 2

From the Editor

In an effort to get more specific information to you, we are doing a theme issue this time around. The focus this time is on **workplace mobbing and harassment**. Not exactly the most cheerful of topics, you'll agree, but always timely and necessary. I've often heard people say that their organization would be great if it weren't for the people. Unfortunately, we in the symphony orchestra are in a high-stress job – performing in front of audiences (sometimes critical), our colleagues (sometimes more critical), our conductors (sometimes very critical) and ourselves (sometimes the most critical). It's a recipe for all kinds of stress, and I sometimes think it's a miracle that we don't have more strife in our organizations than we actually do.

Stay tuned for the next *Una Voce* – we'll be printing reports from the delegates of our twenty member-orchestras, and giving you a sneak peek at this summer's conference.

New website – those of you who logged on to OCSM's website may have come across someone trying to sell you something totally unrelated to orchestral music. Our new website is www.ocsm-omosc.org. If you want the story behind this change, you will have to buy Ken MacDonald (Winnipeg Symphony) a beer. Ken is our webmaster, and he worked very hard to bring this change about – thanks, Ken.

See you soon –

**Robert Fraser, Secretary, OCSM
Editor, Una Voce**

OUR NEW WEBSITE ADDRESS :

[WWW.OCSTM-OMOSC.ORG](http://www.ocsm-omosc.org)

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

I take exception to your derogatory comment in the last *Una Voce* about “instructions on the care and feeding of viola sections.” Since I gave up offbeats in my new low-carb diet, I sound much better!

Signed, an anonymous violist.

From the President

CHANGING TIMES - As usual, my report has to do, for the most part, with travels that I've taken on behalf of OCSM. In January, I attended the Orchestras Canada board meeting in Toronto (OCSM has a non-voting, ex-officio seat on the board, as does a representative from the CBC and the AFM). Orchestras Canada has plans in the works for improving the way it serves Canadian orchestras. Look for some announcements to this effect after the June OC Annual General Meeting in Edmonton.

From Mark Steinmetz, the CBC Radio representative, we heard that CBC is planning changes to attract more listeners. The CBC continues to struggle with the same problem many of our orchestras do – a lack of long-term, stable funding. Each year, CBC Radio faces a \$1 million liability due to inflationary pressures and a myriad of other rising costs. Each year, Mark tells us, CBC Radio does its best to avoid cutting program budgets by finding the \$1 million shortfall through technology advances and cuts to non-programming budgets. As each year passes, avoiding programming cuts gets harder and harder. Despite the financial pressures, CBC Radio Music is on target with their plans to record and broadcast concerts by Canadian orchestras this season.

At the OrchestrasCanada (OC) board meeting, I reported that this summer's OCSM conference will be held in Winnipeg from August 2-6. In subsequent discussions with the OCSM board and with Mark Tetrault of SSD Canada, it has become apparent that a central topic of discussion at the conference will be the way older players accomplish the transition to

retirement from our orchestras. It is my hope that we can develop some minimum standards for the treatment of such players that will serve as an industry benchmark – a change for the better.

The change in government has us all hoping that the promised increase in the Canada Council budget will be on target. If pre-election promises can be believed, the Canada Council will get its money. How the larger pie is apportioned is something that Council is working out.

I have attended several negotiation sessions for a new AFM agreement for self-produced recordings. As you may be aware, some of the larger North American orchestras already have agreements in place for such recordings and the proposed new AFM agreement would be a way to have standardized rules and conditions for recording. Representatives from the ICSOM media committee, ROPA, OCSM and the AFM are having on-going meetings with a group of managers to craft the agreement. I think that both sides felt we had made progress at our meeting in Washington in December, and we had hoped to wrap things up at the end of January. As I write this, I have just found out that that meeting has been postponed because of a change in the management team. I hope to report a positive outcome of these negotiations in the next Una Voce.

Also at the OC board meeting, on behalf of OCSM, I thanked the people on the board (a cross-section of managers and board members from large and small Canadian orchestras, plus OC staff) for their work on behalf of Canadian orchestras. I talked about the fact that we musicians get our thanks through applause, and that our managements rarely enjoy the same public acknowledgement. It's no secret that no one goes into arts management for the money or for the glory; it is truly a labour of love. It's also no secret that some people in our orchestra managements are ill-suited to their positions, with the result that some of us feel that those people do more harm than good. I think that everyone who has ever phoned the symphony office at 6:30 PM, hoping to leave a message with a secretary only to find her still at her desk, will agree with the thanks that I expressed. For those who have a problem with it, I can only hope that you get the change in your managements that you deserve.

Francine Schutzman,
President, OCSM

From the 2005 OCSM Conference – Workplace Mobbing

*Editor's note: At the Kitchener OCSM Conference in August 2005 we were treated to an excellent panel discussion on workplace mobbing. Participating in this panel was **Kenneth Westhues**, Professor of Sociology at the University of Waterloo. Prof. Westhues prepared the following document*

*for the delegates, and we gratefully thank him for giving us permission to publish it in this issue of **Una Voce**.*

Name the Process

Workplace mobbing is an impassioned, collective movement by managers and/or co-workers to exclude, punish, and humiliate a targeted worker. A desperate urge to crush and eliminate the target spreads through the work unit, infecting one person after another like a contagious disease. The target comes to be seen as absolutely abhorrent, outside the circle of respectability, deserving only of contempt. A steadily broader range of hostile ploys and communications toward the target comes to be seen as legitimate.

Overall, about five percent of workers are targets of mobbing sometime during their working lives. Most workers see the process from the other side – as instigator, chief eliminator, collaborator, or bystander – or as guardian or rescuer of the target. The same individual may play different roles in different cases. Mobbing is a drama performed on a real-life stage, in which workmates play their varied parts and make their respective exits and entrances.

Mobbing is distinct from penalizing or firing a worker who, on the basis of evidence, does not measure up to the requirements of the job. The latter is a reasoned, routine managerial procedure, normally directed with regret at an underachiever. Mobbing is a furious collective attack made with undisguised glee on an overachiever or someone seen as threatening to all good and decent employees.

Workplace mobbing is like bullying, in that the object is to rob the target of dignity and self-respect. Here, however, it is not a single swaggering bully that the target is up against, but the juggernaut of collective will. The message to the target is that *everybody* wants you out of there. Bullies sometimes play leading roles in mobbing cases, whether as targets or perpetrators.

Understand the stages of the process

No two cases are alike, but mobbing typically proceeds from subtle, informal techniques of humiliation and exclusion to overt and formal measures. Five stages are commonly distinguished:

1. Avoidance and ostracization of the target.
2. Petty harassment: making the target's life difficult.
3. A critical incident that triggers formal sanctions: "something has to be done."
4. Aftermath of the incident: hearings, appeals, mediation.
5. Elimination: the target quits, retires, is fired, goes on disability, dies of stress-induced illness, or commits suicide.

Recognize the signs of ganging up

The first step toward prevention and remedy of workplace mobbing is to recognize the behaviours that constitute it and call the process by its name. Here are signs to look for:

1. By standard criteria of job performance, the target is at least average, probably above average.
2. Rumours and gossip circulate about the target's misdeeds: "Did you hear what she did last week?"
3. The target is not invited to meetings or voted onto committees, is excluded or excludes self.
4. Collective focus on a critical incident that "shows what kind of man he really is."
5. Shared conviction that the target needs some kind of formal punishment, "to be taught a lesson."
6. Unusual timing of the decision to punish, e.g. apart from the annual performance review.
7. Emotion-laden, defamatory rhetoric about the target in oral and written communications.
8. Formal expressions of collective negative sentiment toward the target, e.g. a vote of censure, signatures on a petition, meeting to discuss what to do about the target.
9. High value on secrecy, confidentiality, and collegial solidarity among the mobbers.
10. Loss of diversity of argument, so that it becomes dangerous to "speak up for" or defend the target.
11. The adding up of the target's real or imagined venial sins to make a mortal sin that cries for action.
12. The target is seen as personally abhorrent, with no redeeming qualities; stigmatizing, exclusionary labels are applied.
13. Disregard of established procedures, as mobbers take matters into their own hands.
14. Resistance to independent, outside review of sanctions imposed on the target.
15. Outraged response to any appeals for outside help the target may make.
16. Mobbers' fear of violence from the target, target's fear of violence from mobbers, or both.

Question what is going on

What does the evidence show? Has the target really committed an unpardonable sin? Or might this war of all against one be merely a cruel way of trying to avert a war of all against all?

Educate yourself about humans in mobs

Workplace mobbing springs from elemental impulses common to many mammals. The term *pecking order* comes from what chickens routinely do: gang up on one of their number (often a new arrival), each pecking the target and

keeping it away from food and water. Although individual pecks do little harm, their cumulative effect is to kill the targeted bird.

There is no quick fix for something so instinctive and primordial. Reducing the incidence of workplace mobbing and healing its effects requires not just training but education: independent critical reflection on the human project, insight into the complexity of life, knowledge of right and wrong, self-knowledge above all.

Literature

Classic novels like these shed light on mobbing:

- Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), *The House of Seven Gables* (1851). The hunt for witches, Hawthorne writes, "should teach us, among its other morals, that the influential classes, and those that take upon themselves to be leaders of the people, are fully liable to all the passionate error that has ever characterized the maddest mob."
- Herman Melville, *Billy Budd, Foretopman* (1924)

Films

In many movies, ganging up is a basic theme. Six examples:

- *The Crucible* (Arthur Miller, play; Daniel Day-Lewis; 1996)
- *Dead Poets Society* (Peter Weir, dir; Robin Williams; 1989)
- *Dogville* (Lars von Trier, dir; Nicole Kidman; 2003)
- *The Human Stain* (P. Roth, novel; Anthony Hopkins; 2003)
- *Joan of Arc* (Roberto Rossellini, dir; Ingrid Bergman; 1948)
- *Malena* (Giuseppe Tornatore, dir; Monica Belucci; 2000)

Research Summaries

In the early 1980's, the late Swedish psychologist Heinz Leymann set in motion the international research effort on psychological terror in the workplace. A popular summary in English is Noa Davenport *et al.*, *Mobbing: Emotional Abuse in the American Workplace* (Ames, IA: Civil Society, 1999). See also Gary and Ruth Namie, *The Bully at Work* (Benicia, CA: Doubledoc, 2000), and J. Wyatt and C. Hare, *Work Abuse* (Schenkman, 1997).

On mobbing in colleges and universities, see Kenneth Westhues, *Eliminating Professors* (1998), *Administrative Mobbing at the University of Toronto* (2004), and *Workplace Mobbing in Academe* (2004), all from the Edwin Mellen Press, Lewiston, NY.

Web-sites

Check out Ken Westhue's site at the University of Waterloo: <http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/~kwesthue/mobbing.htm>. Also www.mobbing.ca. Heinz Leymann's site is www.leymann.se/. At this date (February 2006) "Workplace Mobbing" yields 130,000 hits on Google.

Be at once kind and careful

Lying low, keeping your head down, following the crowd, and kowtowing to the boss are poor defenses against being mobbed. Nobody is safe in a workplace of chronic scapegoating, mobbing, and nastiness. This year's mobber may be next year's target.

Practical suggestions researchers commonly offer for personal conduct include the following:

- **Keep your mind on the job.** Mobs form when people lose sight of the organization's purposes, turn their attention inward, get caught up in power struggles and one-upmanship.
- **Plan carefully before blowing the whistle** on managerial misconduct. Managers tend to go after whistleblowers, and elites close ranks. See Brian Martin, *The Whistleblower's Handbook* (Annandale, NSW: Envirobook, 1999).
- **Get a life away from work.** Cultivate social relations in many different groups – family, school, church, community. If managers and workmates turn on a person who lacks alternative sources of social support, the target is easily destroyed.
- **Show kindness to the target.** Instead of joining the mobbers or bystanders, find ways to affirm the target's humanity. The mob may then turn on you, but you may possibly save another's life.
- Nietzsche said it best: "**Distrust all those in whom the impulse to punish is powerful.**"

Promote workplace decency

Keeping a workplace free of scapegoating and terror takes more than good intentions on the part of the managers and workers involved. Some organizational structures and procedures work better than others, for getting work done well and for discouraging people from ganging up. Here are possibilities:

- **Spread power around.** Pluralism, countervailing power, checks and balances, bring out the best in people. Concentration of power in a single hierarchy brings out the worst.
- **Minimize adversarial, zero-sum proceedings.** Quasi-judicial tribunals unleash groupthink and the impulse to scapegoat. Productivity, truth, and justice are better served through open administration and straight talk, with cards on the table.

- **Discourage a culture of grievance and legalism.** Given the choice, wasting hours in occasional arguments is less costly and stressful than wasting years in arbitration or in court.
 - **Avoid neutral mediators.** They usually side with whoever has the upper hand. An effective mediator is openly committed to truth, fairness, give and take, productivity, quality, efficiency.
 - **Provide opportunities for dialogue.** If people have the chance to voice concerns, air differences, listen to one another, and seek common ground, the threat of mobbing is reduced – see Daniel Yankelovich, *The Magic of Dialogue* (New York, 1999.)
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2006 OCSM/OMOSC
Annual Conference
Aug. 2-6
Fort Garry Hotel,
Winnipeg, MB