

Senza Sordino

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74

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ERICH LEINSDORF SPEAKS OUT

Murray Ginsberg, editor of the OCSM (Organization of Canadian Symphony Musicians) Newsletter has graciously given us permission to reprint the following interview which took place on November 13, 1980, in Toronto. Murray Ginsberg and Harry Sargous, Toronto Symphony, oboist, conducted the interview. It was based upon discussions held earlier by the Players' Committee and the Artistic Advisory Committee of the Toronto Symphony with Mr. Leinsdorf.

Lack of space does not permit us to reprint the entire interview, however we hope what follows will be of interest. Murray Ginsberg notes that the transcript has been minimally edited so that the flavor as well as the content of the interview might be communicated to the reader.

*Sargous: Maestro, would you care to respond to the article by Gunther Schuller entitled *The Trouble With Orchestras*.*

*(Ed: The article referred to was printed in the June, 1980 issue of High Fidelity Magazine. It was prefaced by a recounting of the well publicized Tanglewood speech by Mr. Schuller. High Fidelity calls *The Trouble With Orchestras* an "expansion on the subject"). The entire article was reprinted in the OCSM Newsletter.*

Leinsdorf: With pleasure. In fact, I have in front of me printed in the OCSM Newsletter, 1980, two pieces by Gunther Schuller. And it may have been noticed by other people, or it may have escaped notice, that the first piece is a report of the Tanglewood speech of 1979. Then comes another article by Gunther Schuller which goes a long time, and if you read it carefully, it contradicts more or less what Schuller said in Tanglewood. From these many contradictions I must conclude that his statement in reference to the Tanglewood speech — "Since making these remarks I have been overwhelmed with declarations of support" — could not be quite this way because he takes a diametrically opposed view to what he said in Tanglewood.

(Later in the interview with Mr. Sargous, Mr. Leinsdorf says:)

We can now leave Mr. Schuller by saying, "where do you stand? — We don't know because evidently you got a lot of negative comment on what you said in Tanglewood." I heard already, because I sit in the summer in my home on Cape Cod which is in the same state as Tanglewood, and I heard immediately, almost instantly, that the opening speech in Tanglewood caused a great stir in the Boston Symphony itself.

Now, there must be a number of reasons why he spoke this way. I want to say that I have never encountered in my long career what he calls "boredom and alienation," as a matter of fact, before I ever read the Schuller comments, I always kept saying that even behind the most veteran musicians there is still the enthusiastic youngster, and all you have to do is scratch the surface and whatever veneer of blasé that we have all seen before might appear to be there, comes off very easily, you know,

like a superficial scab. And I find this generally true in Europe and I find it true in America. But what I think Schuller has done, and I find this very important to all of us, not only musicians — I think that Gunther Schuller has taken a melancholy view of the human condition (where I may agree with him).

But to single out musicians as an example is patently unfair. Now speaking of "former students who once had that shine in their countenance and who have long since lost that spiritual identification" as he does — this seems to be a very general situation of humanity, that we lose our youthful "world-storming" enthusiasm, and it is replaced by the cares and the wears and the tears of life.

This is sad, this is melancholy, and this may be absolutely true, but all I'm saying is don't put it on musicians, because musicians are part of humanity, and as such, you will have in every group of a hundred people some who have been worn down, and some who have been less worn down. And this is where I think Schuller has grossly erred, that he has confused his own process of aging and disillusionment with the world, (to which he's entitled). In certain ways, all of us, the more we know, the more we are disappointed. But you can not put this on one profession or one group of people within a profession. And therein lies I think, the whole dangerous assumption, particularly at the time when things are changing, and when we see right and left great crises in the musical world that are both musical and economic. But you can not hold the musicians responsible for it.

Sargous: Maestro, a point that you have raised many times before is the concept of the "intendant," or resident musical director, who is a non-conducting director of the orchestra, or musical ensemble, opera company, etc., and we would like to have your views on how this would be effected in North America, and comparing it to what exists now in Europe.

*Leinsdorf: It is in effect — maybe not in name — already operative in a few orchestras. It is obvious that the absentee music director cannot run the day to day musical matters, problems, questions, etc., that come up. This has been proved time and again, and the transition move that I have noticed in orchestras of the United States with which I am familiar, is that they have a person who is variously called *musical administrator*, *musical secretary*. I mean, I'm not getting stuck on the identification tag of the job — but the essence they have persons other than the manager, assistant manager, the librarian, the program annotator — but there is one person that does practically nothing but make programs, keeps contact on musical matters with the musical director, with the guest conductors, with the soloists and who then arranges — it is a very complicated thing in orchestras which have several series, and certainly it comes up that series "B" has not had a pianist for three years, or has not had enough Haydn, or too much Brahms, and you name it. This is the kind*

of thing which today already, and more than that, is being taken care of in many orchestras by people who are *exclusively* concerned. This means they are *not* concerned with money, they are *not* concerned with the board meetings, they are *not* concerned with the box office, they are *not* concerned if the box office says "don't give them too much Stockhausen" that comes in as input from the box office side.

But there is in my opinion no reason why either by name or by function the music director should not be a *non-conducting person*. My own view on this goes right back to 1968 or '69 when I said publicly (and it was printed) — I said, "in my opinion no conductor should be a musical director because no conductor who a good orchestra would want to have as principal conducting person is going to stay long enough or permanently enough to be a music director.

The music director, or the person who does that job, must live with that orchestra, practically speaking, 100% of the time, and even more so, because when the orchestra is in recess or on vacation, that person must be busy with two years hence, because our whole booking system is getting crazier and crazier in the way that we all book with this limitless optimism three or four years ahead. It is mad!

But still, there it is — these are the reality situations, and so I believe. I call it "intendant" because that's what they call it in Europe. In Europe they have no music directors; they have *chief* conductors or *principal* conductors — you can call it anything you want as long as it is clear that the function of the music director can be, and indeed should be, performed by a non-conducting person.

Ed: Regarding orchestra training in our music schools Mr. Leinsdorf had the following to say:

Leinsdorf: I have one great culprit — that's the conservatories. For me, the conservatories are not teaching music so that we are getting prepared people. I must shoot off here a broadside, and I will say that when I talk with musicians who come out of these famous schools, they're either disoriented, which is mainly an approach which people make to the Julliard School in New York — they're disoriented because they do not think that they will have to have careers in orchestras, and therefore there you get sometimes arrogant youngsters who have a wrong view of the profession. But this is totally different from people being *'bored and alienated.'*

If somebody has been told by the great violin teacher that they are going to be the successors to Mr. Heifetz or Mr. Robert Mann as leader of the Julliard Quartette, or that this is going to be their career and then it isn't so, these people have been misled. And this is one thing which I think in Julliard is happening, or has happened to a great extent. And then these people who have studied madly and practiced all the concertos and all the sonatas and all the virtuoso pieces, find themselves sitting in the string choir of an orchestra. This is one thing. The other thing is that there should be a better grounding of musicians in what they are going to do musically speaking. Those are my big exhortations.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING FOR THE ARTS IN TROUBLE?

When the smoke had cleared after the November election, good friends of the arts, Sen. Frank Church, Jacob Javits, Cong. Frank Thompson, who lead the House floor fight during the sixties in support of the original NEA and NEH legislation, John Brademus and others were not going to be around to help in what would shape up as hard times ahead for the arts on Capitol Hill.

This reality was not long in coming when soon after, the press was increasingly spotted with anti-art legislation comments from the "winners" and other voices associated with growing conservatism newly esconced. Typical of the "off with their heads" philosophy was an opinion expressed by Nobel prize winner, economist Milton Friedman, that "there is no justification that I can see for the National Endowment for the Humanities." This view was echoed by David Stockman, now OMB director of the new administration. In regard to the arts, he said, "the National Endowment for the Arts was insignificant and unnecessary."

Very damaging was an Endowment report by the *Heritage Foundation*, a conservative "think tank" based in Washington, which recommended a complete overhaul, restructuring and redefinition of the NEA to "de-politicize" it, and a recently published book by Michael Mooney, *The Ministry of Culture*, which was characterized in the *Arts Reporting Service* "as important to the arts and humanities as a forced belch after eating a Big Mac."

It did not take long for the demolition experts to go to work. The work of the NEA was termed insignificant and a deterrent to corporate contributions, exhibiting thereby a monstrous lack of understanding of the NEA's accomplishments in pump priming millions from the private sector in support of the arts. The NEA's Challenge Grant Program alone awarded \$84 million in grants during its three years of existence while attracting \$500 million in new support for the arts from both private and local sources, according to the *American Council for the Arts*, a well known arts support group.

This arts organization says in a recent bulletin that "already there are signs from key members of Congress that President Reagan's proposed 50% cut in funding for the NEA is too drastic and that an effort will be made to bring the figure down to a more equitable level." It will if Rep. Fred Richmond has anything to do with it.

Rep. Richmond has launched a drive to blunt the edge of the axe. With a claron call for support of the arts among his colleagues, his drive for support at last count stood at 77 members and still growing without any appreciative effort to recruit. Fred Richmond says, about 100 more congressmen owe him favors for favors rendered. It is an interesting application of the "godfather" approach to help the situation. He is only 41 members short of a majority which would assure passage of any arts legislation. We remember his visit with us at an ICSOM conference several years ago. He is a stalwart friend. Right on, Fred!

There are already indications that the 50% cut in the NEA appropriation from 175 million to 88 million for 1982 is an "asking price." If enough support for the arts, not just on Capitol Hill, but by arts organizations and our professional organizations as well, is evidenced in the coming months, the reductions proposed could well be reduced to a minimal level.

Hearings on the President's recommendation began on February 25th by the Subcommittee on Post-Secondary Education (Paul Simon, D. Ill. Chairman.) Another was held in New York on March 2nd. Appropriation hearings (NEA) were to be held April 2 and 3 in the House of Representatives and a corresponding hearing in the U.S. Senate held March 26th.

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ARTIST FEES A CONCERN

Going through my files I came upon a five month old article in the *Arts and Leisure* section of the *New York Times*. The page one article by Harold Schonberg was captioned, "Soaring Fees of Star Musicians are Disrupting the Concert World." He wasn't writing about your first oboist or violist; he was, of course, referring to the staggering prices being demanded by the agents of premier conductors and soloists, which our orchestra managers complain are "throwing budgets in disarray, hurting the business and making a show-biz operation out of serious music."

Pavorotti and Horowitz command a \$40,000 concert fee and except for galas and fund raisers, where \$100 seats can be peddled and scaled down from that point, are virtually untouchable for our concert stages. Serkin and Sutherland command \$25,000 fees; Rostropovich, Bernstein and Solti ask \$15,000; Watts, Menuhin and Caballe, \$10,000. Even artists without proven box office appeal are asking \$4000 to \$6000 per performance, managers complain.

It is generally accepted that symphony orchestras are being hurt most by the inflated prices, according to the article. Subscribers demand top flight soloists and where the subscription season shows few upper echelon artists, ticket sales are affected. The article quotes a New York Philharmonic official as complaining that "Chicago and Philadelphia will be afraid that we'll have artists they don't have, so they jack up the prices. Then we in New York have to meet those jacked up prices. Orchestra managers around the country are talking about it. What the hell can we do about these crazy prices? *Perhaps we can get together and form our own union.*"

It isn't that there isn't enough work around. The proliferation of summer festivals, recording contracts, an ever increasing interest in serious music throughout the country sparked by all phases of the media, and other factors, have arts institutions knocking heavily on the doors of all major artists. If that weren't enough, Europe constantly beckons — no "outrageous" income tax at even better fees because of the depressed state of the U.S. dollar.

I have searched through recent issues of *Symphony News*, an *American Symphony Orchestra League* publication and although I found articles referring to Gunther Schuller's shots heard around the world regarding symphony musicians and the blight that their "union mentality" was imposing on the music world, I could find not one word regarding the aforementioned concern for the stratospheric prices being asked by agents in behalf of their conductor and artist clients. In recognition of the concern expressed in the Schonberg article, it would seem that some space might have been allotted to the subject.

What is especially repelling is that while Schuller scored symphony musicians for their supposed unprofessionalism and preoccupation with maintaining a middleclass living for themselves and their families while practicing "ICSOM-ism," several of the best paid "super-stars" found it appropriate to jump on his band wagon and added a few words of their own unsolicited "wisdom."

In defense of their clients, agents claim that the top artists "sell out halls." While they unquestionably are an influence I would suggest that rather than "selling out halls" they merely enlarge audiences, for appropriately, the foundation that draws most music lovers to the concert hall in the first instance is the rich orchestral repertory and the orchestras that are necessary to bring these great works to life.

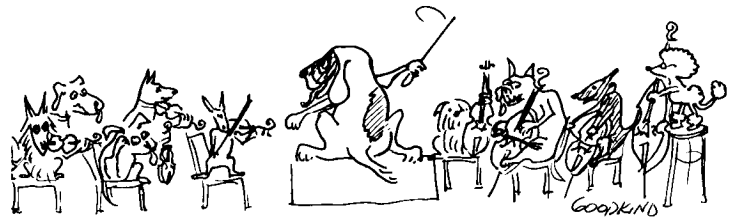
LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

I worried a bit when I realized, too late, that the caption to the lead article of the last issue of SENZA SORDINO didn't look quite right. It read: AT LONG LAST — A K. C. PHILHARMONIC CONTRACT. It didn't look right to Alice Good-kind, a violinist with the San Diego Symphony, either. With no intent to demean our colleagues in Kansas City, she made it "right" with a period after the "A" and the application of a keen sense of humor. We will not bill the *American Kennel Club* for the free publicity.

VOLUME XXIV

FEBRUARY 1981, NO. 3

AT LONG LAST.. A.K.C. PHILHARMONIC CONTRACT



Any resemblance to persons living or half alive is purely accidental . . . A.G.

A. F. of M. STRIKE FUND CHANGES RECOMMENDED

Record-breaking benefits in the amount of \$425,000 from the A.F. of M. Strike Fund have been received by striking and locked-out symphony and opera musicians during the fall and winter of 1980-1981. The extraordinary need which the Strike Fund addressed successfully this season has left the Fund in dire need of additional monies in order to retain its purpose and value to member orchestras in the future.

Trustees of the Strike Fund met in New York in March, 1981 to formulate recommendations to the A.F. of M. International Executive Board in an attempt to create long-term fiscal soundness for the Fund. Those recommendations have been approved by the I.E.B. and will be presented to delegates of the A.F. of M. Convention in June as a change in Article 21, Section 13 of the A.F. of M. By-laws.

The recommended changes in the Strike Fund indenture would increase each member's annual dues from \$55 to \$75 and would levy a one-time emergency assessment of \$25 per member (for the 1981-1982 season only), payable by October 15, 1981. The Trustees anticipate that the emergency assessment will allow the Fund to function effectively until dues at the higher rate can accumulate to build a viable and continuing source of monies to aid orchestra musicians during periods of work-stoppage due to a strike or lock-out.

It should be emphasized that assuming that the A.F. of M. Convention approves the I.E.B. recommendation, it will not go into effect until such time that the member orchestras participating in the Strike Fund *ratify* the recommendation. It would be necessary for a majority of the orchestras participating in the Strike Fund to vote affirmatively for the recommendation for it to become operative.

John Palanchian and Melanie Burrell,
ICSOM Strike Fund Trustees

MUSICIAN'S NIGHTMARE

Recently while on a runout, I was comparing dreams with some of my colleagues and found I was not alone in the occasional nightmares. How many ICSOM members can add a "me too".

Have you ever dreamt . . .

*you were late for the concert
you can't find the wardrobe trunk
you left your instrument at home
your bow—reed—mouthpiece is missing
you missed the bus
you left the music at home
you drove and went to the wrong place, or,
you were offstage when you should have been on.*

Olive Rhodes, Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra

REPUBLIC AIRLINES POLICY ON INSTRUMENT CARRIAGE DISCRIMINATORY?

I have received a letter from a Mr. Ruening who writes that two daughters, Interlochen Arts Academy students, were both refused permission to carry valuable violins on a flight from Traverse City aboard a Republic Airlines plane. Officials of the company asserted that the instruments did in fact measure over the regulation length for under the seat storage. Mr. Ruening, also a violinist, has been given other options by other carriers which are familiar: under the seat, slightly protruding; lengthwise under the seat without any protrusion (occupying more than one assigned area; in luggage storage areas (overhead compartments) and in luggage storage areas in the front or rear of the cabin.

The instruments in question should under no circumstances have been subject to ordinary baggage handling or the extremes of temperature changes encountered in the cargo hold. However, the regulation-bound operatives of the airlines gave the girls no other alternatives. To add to their woes the distraught young musicians discovered that the violins had been mistagged to go to an improper destination and had to retrieve the instruments from baggage in Detroit.

To their dismay they found that their flight from Detroit to Syracuse, their destination, was scheduled on the same plane and with the same crew as their initial flight, but in this instance **THEY HAD NO PROBLEM WHATSOEVER BOARDING AND TRAVELLING WITH THEIR INSTRUMENTS UNDER THE SEATS.**

The difficulty in guaranteeing the safe transport of a violin in a plane's cargo hold is self evident. While one instrument survived the trip to Detroit, another was damaged and awaits estimates for repairs.

A letter from Yvonne Tait, president of the Suzuki Association of the Americas, addresses itself to the experience of the Ruening girls. She notes; "If a parent is allowed to hold an infant in his or her lap during a flight I can not understand why a person can not hold his violin if it does not fit under the seat or in the overhead compartment. The instrument will be as secure in the arms of its owner as a baby will be in the arms of the parent during take-off and landing." She terms the Republic Airline policy inconsistent and unfair.

Mrs. Tait suggests a lobby to call attention to the capricious manner in which airlines deal with the problem. To that extent she solicits the support of all symphony orchestras and has brought the matter to the attention of the A.F. of M. as well as to other musical organizations. She observes that she was booked on a plane on which the seats had been oversold and was offered a refund on her cello ticket if she would allow it to be stored in a closet in which it was perfectly safe. It is interesting that closets are not an alternative when one is required to buy a half price ticket for the instrument in the first place.

Mrs. Tait's niece, Margaret, is a cellist in the San Francisco symphony and brought to the attention of the above contributors SENZA SORDINO as an outlet to air this vexing problem of uneven handed treatment of musicians by the airlines where instrument transport is concerned.

If you have encountered any unpleasant experiences in this regard please write to your SENZA editor. Perhaps ICSOM can be of some help in seeking a policy that makes some sense.

AN OPEN COLLAR CONCERT

A hand-written note appeared on the Detroit Symphony Orchestra bulletin board shortly before the orchestra performed in Harrisburg (of Three Mile Island fame) last spring.

HARRISBURG CONCERT (POPS)

Glow Worm
You Light Up My Life
Smoke Gets In Your Eyes
I Got You Under My Skin
Intermission
Misty
Steam Heat
Hot Time In The Old Town Tonight

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