

Senza Sordino

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LOS ANGELES USES TAPES FOR AUDITIONS

by Michael J. Nutt

The Los Angeles Philharmonic held auditions last November for six positions: principal timpani, associate principal viola, harp, section violin, section viola, and section bass. A résumé tape was required as part of the audition application.

In addition to a standard résumé form and a list of required repertoire, every applicant was sent a list of works to be recorded on cassette and instructions on how to prepare the tape.

Some applicants known to principals of the sections in question, or who had auditioned before, or who had played in the orchestra as substitutes, were not required to submit a tape. We received 213 tapes: 44 for timpani, 16 for assistant principal viola, 41 for harp, 54 for violin, 28 for viola, and 30 for string bass.

So many persons wanting to audition called within a week of the deadline for submitting applications that the deadline was extended a week. This made it a lot harder to hear all the tapes before live auditions were to begin, and it also gave some people only a few days notice that they could play a live audition.

A staff member numbered tapes as they arrived and removed all identification. At no time did the committee members or personnel manager know who was playing. As soon as enough tapes had arrived, the committee began listening and comparing, using high quality playback equipment. Tapes were played on a machine with an automatic sensing capability that allowed us to fast forward to excerpts of our choice. To keep things running smoothly, an assistant to the committee ran the machine, and the committee compared notes while tapes were being changed.

The audition committee was paid for time spent listening—22.5 hours spread over 10 sessions—just as if it had been listening to live auditions.

Most of the listening took place with all seven committee members present. Tapes were classified “yes,” “no,” and “maybe.”

“No” tapes were checked against written résumés. Applicants playing in major orchestras or having other notable credentials were informed that their tapes were not up to the standard of other tapes but that they could play live auditions if they wished. Only two players took advantage of this option; neither got into the finals. At no time did the committee look at a résumé and then listen to a tape again.

A tape was classified “maybe” even if only one person on the committee found it acceptable. These tapes were later reviewed. If the committee was still ambivalent, it gave applicants the benefit of that uncertainty and invited them to audition.

Timpani and double bass tapes were hardest to evaluate. The committee invited the timpani and bass principals to a listening session for some help. As soon as one got used to listening

only for rhythm, intonation, and technique, evaluation became easier. It was helpful to be able to go back and forth comparing, possible only with tapes.

On the strength of their tapes 5 applicants were invited for live timpani auditions, 4 for assistant principal viola, 7 for harp, 11 for violin, 6 for viola, and 8 for bass.

There were only two acceptable violin tapes, but the committee felt that to pick only two of 54 would leave us open to criticism, so the next best nine players were also invited to audition for the two vacancies. On audition day, we realized we had made a bad mistake: None of those nine should have been there. They wasted their money and we wasted our time. We should have trusted what we heard on the tapes and stuck to our judgment.

Tape quality varied enormously, but even on the poorest tape it was possible to tell if a player had command of the instrument and could play a passage. It may be harder to judge a sonically poor tape, but the impracticality of establishing and enforcing rigid guidelines for recording quality outweighs any advantages that listeners would gain.

The committee found three or four to be an ideal number of excerpts. With more, it takes too long to go through a tape to find a specific passage, even with such special equipment as we had. In fact, the committee ended up comparing just one excerpt played by everyone, listening to more music only on the “maybe” tapes. A single touchy Mozart orchestral passage told more than any well-worked solo.

Some tapes amused us. One violin concerto had an accordion accompaniment. Several applicants announced each excerpt before playing it, and while this might have been useful to us in some cases, it certainly destroyed anonymity.

Tapes were sent back only to those who requested them returned. The rest were to be erased and sold, with proceeds going to the orchestra pension fund.

The consensus of players polled at the live auditions was that the use of tapes was a good idea. All were glad to be able to play a live audition 15 to 20 minutes long. The committee also feels that a longer hearing of a few well-chosen players at live auditions was a fairer and better means of judging. Imagine hearing 41 harpists for 15 or 20 minutes each! We heard nine in five hours of live preliminaries and finals.

Other thoughts and suggestions came from these auditions. As announced, string bass finalists played chamber music with members of the Philharmonic as part of the audition, something that perhaps all finalists should have to do. Also, orchestras might send applicants photocopies of excerpts to be played. Finally, if orchestras could agree on a résumé tape repertoire, everyone would save time and money spent making and listening to new tapes for each audition. Such tapes are used only to establish eligibility for a live audition. Preliminary judgments can be made using a standardized repertoire; individual orchestras can still use their preferred repertoire for live auditions.

NEGOTIATION UPDATE

Musicians of the **New Orleans Philharmonic Symphony** voted 42 to 25 on December 3, 1983, to accept negotiated amendments to their current two-year contract. Players had earlier approved discussions with management to examine ways to reduce an anticipated deficit. Comprehensive financial information was made available to the musicians.

Length of the present season is reduced from 40 to 38 weeks. Three existing vacancies will not be filled this season, reducing the number of players from 82 to 79. Minimum wage remains the same. Earnings lost from the cut in season length will be offset somewhat: Management will purchase two extra services; salaries for unfilled positions will be divided among remaining players; unemployment benefits may be paid for two additional weeks; musicians will be paid for a public TV tape. A manager search committee will include two voting orchestra members and five board members.

San Francisco Ballet Orchestra musicians approved a new three-year contract December 14, 1983, pending acceptable final wording. Wages increase from \$93.41 per performance to \$104.00-\$113.50-\$124.50 and from \$18.32 per hour of rehearsal to \$20.00-\$22.50-\$24.50. A total of 98 performances/dress rehearsals is guaranteed in all three years, up from 88. Guaranteed number of rehearsal hours increases from 80 to 84-90-90. Number of musicians hired for all work increases from 39 to 45 in all three years. New in the agreement are an electronic media guarantee of \$750 a year and a \$25 payment for each archival tape made.

Seattle Symphony musicians have settled their dispute with the Pacific Northwest Ballet, ending a strike begun in October. Agreement had been reached earlier with the managements of the Seattle Symphony and Seattle Opera. Details of the three contracts will be forthcoming.

The 13-week strike is over. **Syracuse Symphony** musicians approved an economic package by a vote of 65-7 on December 14, 1983, following a 26-hour bargaining session. Non-economic items remain to be negotiated by March 1, 1984. Wages increase over 4 years from \$302 per week to \$330.57-\$416.15-\$474.81-\$510.55. 29 weeks remain in this season following the strike; future seasons will be 41, 43, and 44 weeks long. Annual wages thus increase from the former \$12,684 to \$22,464 by 1986-87. Seniority pay will begin in the third year. Life, dental, and instrument insurance benefits are also new in this contract.

Syracuse musicians expressed appreciation for the support received during their ordeal: Local 78 stood by them, ICSOM orchestras set Mailgrams, AFM Strike Fund payments were promptly distributed, and the ICSOM Emergency Relief Fund provided a loan of \$10,000.

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ICSOM TO OFFER SERVICE FOR RETIRED MUSICIANS

Abe Torchinsky, former tuba player with the Philadelphia Orchestra, was a guest at the 1982 ICSOM conference in Baltimore. Abe came with a message for our delegates and our orchestras. "It is wrong," he said, "to assume that because a musician has left an orchestra he no longer has an interest in it or in the profession he has served."

He is unquestionably right, and we musicians still active as symphony orchestra members should be the last to think otherwise. There are many retired colleagues with continuing interest in the profession who have served us valiantly, not only musically but also in the struggle to make our profession one in which we can make a living wage, provide for our families, and enjoy a higher standard of living.

Abe Torchinsky is such a musician. He left the Philadelphia Orchestra a few years ago to assume a faculty position at the University of Michigan but never severed his ties with his former colleagues. He has an abiding interest in keeping informed about orchestra affairs and about ICSOM. Abe has suggested that other retired colleagues who feel the same way might wish to receive complimentary copies of *Senza Sordino* and the ICSOM directory and to be listed in the directory.

Because Abe's plea was enthusiastically received at the conference, an emeritus service is being established. ICSOM delegates are to contact their orchestra's administration to obtain the names and addresses of retired members with at least 25 years of service. Delegates will send these retired members a letter asking them to contact Abe if they are interested in this program. Abe has volunteered to be administrator of this service. We are all grateful to him for his idea and his willingness to help put it into effect.

Retired members interested in the program, including persons who already subscribe to *Senza Sordino*, should write to Abe Torchinsky, 645 Greenville Drive, Ann Arbor, MI 48105.

Henry Shaw

ZENONE GIVES WORKSHOP IN SAN ANTONIO

In advance of upcoming bargaining talks, the negotiating team of the San Antonio Symphony Orchestra invited ICSOM Chairman Frederick Zenone to talk with members of the orchestra. On October 4, 1983, Fred came over from Houston on his day off during National Symphony tour. He presented his two-hour workshop entitled "Organizing Your Orchestra" and answered questions from the floor. After dinner, he spent another two hours with the negotiating and orchestra committees and the local union president. It was a long but rewarding day.

All who attended came away with a renewed sense of purpose and responsibility. Before this season began, the San Antonio Symphony was a divided and factionalized group. Because of Fred's visit, we have set our differences aside to work for everyone's good. We've strengthened our relationships with our local union and with each other. This cooperation will prove vital during negotiations in the months ahead.

Thanks, Fred, for spending your day with us.

Thanks, ICSOM, for making it possible.

*The San Antonio Symphony Orchestra
Negotiating Committee*

1983-1984 SYMPHONY WAGE CHART

Most orchestras that guarantee income for recordings and other media activity pay such income in weekly increments; for comparison, the weekly salary in such orchestras is broken down into two figures. Other orchestras are active in the electronic media field, though no guarantee is provided by contract; this activity is not reflected in the annual guaranteed salaries of those orchestras on this chart.

Orchestra	Weeks	Weekly Minimum Salary + E.M.G.	Annual Guaranteed Salary
Alabama	34	\$330.	\$11,220.
Atlanta	52	525. + 35.	29,120.**
Baltimore	52	550.	28,600.
Boston	52	780.	40,560.
Buffalo	40	460.	18,400.
Chicago	52	780.	40,560.
Cincinnati	52	635. + 30.	34,580.**
Cleveland	52	720.	37,440.
Dallas	52	590. + 10.	31,200.**
Denver	41	557. + 19.	23,616.**
Detroit	52	{630. }680.	34,060.
Florida	32	342.	10,944.
Grant Park		(no data available)	
Honolulu*	38	530. + 20.	13,090.**
Houston	52	{560. }595.} + 25.	30,030.**
Indianapolis	47	{480. }490.	22,800.**
Los Angeles	52	735. + 57.	41,220.**
Louisville	40	292. + 34.	13,040.**
Milwaukee	46	552.50	25,415.
Minnesota	52	{674. }699.} + 25.	36,998.**
National	52	{620. (44 wks.) }680. (8 wks.)	33,780.
New Jersey	125 services (7 serv./wk.)	517.50	9,241.
New Orleans	38	543.	20,634.
New York Phil.	52	760 + 71.84	43,255.**
North Carolina	36	468.	14,976.
Oakland		123 services @ \$60.	7,380.
Oklahoma	32	380. + 20.	12,800.**
Oregon	39	A contract B contract	11,056. 14,727.
Philadelphia	52	770. + {1500 Rec. guar. }1040 FM guar.	42,580.**
Phoenix	39	400.	15,600.
Pittsburgh	52	{675. }700.	35,750.
Rochester*	48	{470. }490.} + 10.	23,520.
St. Louis	52	{565. }595.} + 10.	28,600.**
San Antonio	38	440.	16,720.
San Diego	36	440.	15,840.
San Francisco	52	725. + 35.	39,520.**
Seattle*	44	{435. }455.} + 5.	19,710.**
Syracuse*	29 ¹	330.57	9,586. ²
Toledo	36	A contract 130 serv.	5,500.
	40	B contract 230 serv.	11,000.
Utah	52	{450. }465.	23,790.
Chicago Lyric	17	710.	12,070.
Kennedy Center Opera		{703.73 Opera/Ballet }590. Musicals	no guar.
Met. Opera	48 ¹	734.76 ²	35,268. ³
N.Y.C. Ballet*	25 ¹	625. ²	15,625. ³
N.Y.C. Opera*	23	569.78	13,104.
San Francisco Ballet*		98 perf. @ \$104. 84 hr. reh. @ 20 hr. guar.)	12,622. ¹
San Francisco Opera*..	20	745.	14,900. ¹

LEGEND FOR SYMPHONY WAGE CHART

**Annual Guaranteed Salary includes Electronic Media Guarantee or Recording Guarantee.
 Honolulu*—Figures are for 1982-83 season. Still negotiating current season salary.
 Met. Opera*—¹Plus 4 weeks Supplemental Unemployment Benefits at ½ salary. ²Does not include rehearsal pay above contract allowance.
 N.Y.C. Ballet*—¹Includes 2 wks. S.U.B. ²Does not include rehearsal pay.
 N.Y.C. Opera*—¹Plus 2½ weeks of S.U.B. ²Does not include rehearsal pay above contract allowance.
 Rochester*—Figures are for 1982-83 season. Still negotiating current season salary.
 San Francisco Ballet*—¹Does not include \$750 E.M.G.
 San Francisco Opera*—¹Does not include approximately \$3,000. rehearsal pay.
 Seattle*—Tri-party contract. Symphony pays 77% of salary; Opera Co. pays 13%; Ballet Co. pays 10%.
 Syracuse*—Figures are for season shortened because of 13½ week strike. ¹Full season would have resulted in 42 weeks. ²\$13,884 guaranteed by 42 weeks season.

DETROIT MUSICIANS HELP SELECT NEW MUSIC DIRECTOR

The Detroit Symphony Orchestra recently announced the appointment of Gunther Herbig, eminent East German conductor, as its next music director. The appointment has special significance for symphony players: The musicians had an equal voice with the board of directors in the selection.

The DSO had gone on strike in December, 1982, to protect the contract clause which guaranteed that involvement. (See *Senza Sordino*, April, 1983.) The present contract retains the provision for a conductor search committee, which currently comprises three board members and three musicians.

The committee worked together for three years before naming Mr. Herbig. Lists were compiled, with management and musicians suggesting many candidates. The orchestra had opportunities over the three years to work with these conductors, and musicians were periodically polled by secret ballot for their opinions. To keep this sensitive information confidential, the orchestra agreed not to be told the results of these polls. A majority vote of approval was required for a conductor's name to be placed on the orchestra's final list of candidates. Only conductors on this list could be considered for the position of music director.

ICSOM conductor evaluations from the DSO and other orchestras were invaluable. The DSO manager made every effort to engage as guest conductors those who had received high marks from other orchestras. DSO opinions were also registered using the ICSOM form.

Initially, members of the search committee were apprehensive that one side would insist on someone unacceptable to the other. To allay management's fears, the musicians assured them that their principal aim was to find someone everyone wanted, else the conductor search clause would not be truly effective. The more the committee members worked together and got to know each other, the smoother and more efficient procedures became.

The selection process was a time-consuming but rewarding one. The joint search promoted an atmosphere in which members of the orchestra, board, and management worked together and gained insight into each other's problems.

The musicians look forward to working with Mr. Herbig. All of them have something at stake in his appointment.

*Musicians of the DSO Conductor Search Committee
 Marcy Chanteaux, Derek Francis, Eugene Wade*

This annual mini-chart of orchestra wages has been prepared by Henry Shaw.

A COLLEGE COURSE EXAMINES STAGE FRIGHT

Problems of performance anxiety have been addressed before in *Senza Sordino*, most recently in the July, 1982, issue which contained an article about the use of beta-blocking drugs to help cope with stage fright. Stimulating adrenalin flow is experienced by many performers, giving them an extra boost of excitement and alertness but also bringing many unpleasant physical manifestations detrimental to polished playing. A debilitating attack of nerves often strikes when stakes are high, during an important recital or audition. Whatever the circumstances, any musician's sense of self-worth is vulnerable to the damaging effects of poor performance due to stage fright. Performers have long sought to understand and control this troublesome phenomenon.

Such problems are rarely addressed in the formal training of performers and are rarely studied in music schools, where the deleterious symptoms of performance anxiety may first begin to have their telling effect on many talented musicians. But ways of coping with stage fright, including the use of drugs, are being examined in a class taught at Montclair State College in Montclair, New Jersey, by Dr. Jerome Landsman, professor of music and chairman of the string department, and by Dr. Robert Goodkin, a clinical psychologist and professor of psychology.

What began as an experimental study project led by Dr. Landsman for a small group of music majors rapidly evolved into a course attracting a diverse group of people from every segment of the college community and beyond. In response to the success of the first classes and to the obvious need for such a course, Dr. Landsman and Dr. Goodkin expanded the course into an interdisciplinary offering called "Problems of Performance." The course is relatively new, and the content and format have been modified over three years as more has been learned about performance anxiety and its manifestations.

Performance is broadly defined as a common yet special human interaction. In a sense, everyone is performing for others daily. Although most of the people in the course are musicians, other "performers" also enroll: teachers, athletes, actors, public speakers, secretaries, and salespersons. Class guests have included members of the New York Philharmonic and the New Jersey Symphony, sports educators, Broadway actors, and teachers and psychologists who specialize in problems of performance anxiety.

The class format is open-ended and loosely structured. One meeting each week is devoted to student performances and follow-up discussion, one is devoted to a guest, and a third is given over to discussion of outside reading and performances attended. All class activity centers on defining performance anxiety, its symptoms, its causes, the degree to which it is beneficial or harmful, and the ways to alleviate it or cope with it. There are many approaches to modifying nervous reactions, and the class explores them thoroughly.

The course is a working lab in which each student performs for the audience of classmates, demonstrating his or her particular performance skill. Participants examine, evaluate, and discuss their performances and receive feedback from the audience. Because students share with the class some very personal, intimate, and subjective thoughts and feelings of what happens to them before, during, and after the performance, a high degree of trust must be established, and strong friendships and associations often develop during the course.

An important activity is the creation of a performance profile for each student. Each class member writes down a personal history of performance, noting good and bad experiences. Class

members also maintain personal logs of current performances by themselves and others both in and out of class. These exercises help bring into focus how each student thinks and feels about performing. One learns much about one's inner feelings, attitudes, biases, and ego entanglements by writing down such personal experiences.

Dr. Goodkin conducts a series of class sessions using a technique called systematic desensitization. Subjects close their eyes and imagine preparing for a performance. Initially Dr. Goodkin describes a practice session which is not stressful, one many weeks away from the performance. By stages, subjects are led to imagine the performance date getting closer and closer. When class members begin to feel any anxiety, they raise their hands. Dr. Goodkin changes his narration, describing a less threatening situation prior to performance. Descriptions of more anxiety-producing circumstances are then reintroduced. This process is repeated until class members can imagine themselves in the performance with minimal anxiety. Many class members report being more at ease in actual performance because they have visualized greater relaxation during this exercise.

Progressive relaxation, a technique developed by Dr. Edmund Jacobson, physician and author of *You Must Relax*, is also used as a class exercise. Other factors examined include techniques of concentration and memorization; effective practice habits, including mental practice; and kinesthetic (neuro-muscular) training. Hypnosis, both auto- and operator-induced, is also discussed.

Of special interest are the theories of Dr. Claire Weekes, Australian physician and author of *Hope and Help for your Nerves* and other books on the subject. Dr. Weekes' suggestions to face the sensations of anxiety rather than flee from them, accept them rather than fight them, float effortlessly rather than tense up, and let time pass rather than become impatient, seem helpful to many students.

The use of Valium, alcohol, Inderal, and other drugs to control the symptoms of stage fright is also explored. The instructors report that students are nearly always turned off by the idea of drug therapy, preferring the various psychological approaches proposed. Perhaps, they speculate, this is a reaction to the drug counterculture of recent years.

Stage fright is a real problem in the professional music world, one which performers are often reluctant to admit experiencing and one which is rarely openly examined. In recent years the Manhattan School of Music, Roosevelt University, Northwestern University, Indiana University, and the University of Southern California have added courses in problems of performance. Along with the instrumental proficiency training which music schools must provide, these courses are welcome and significant additions to the college curriculum.

Thanks to Dr. Jerome Landsman for preparing this article. In addition to his position at Montclair State College, Dr. Landsman is principal second violin of the Grant Park Orchestra and author of many articles on string education. His latest book is a string class teaching method, Freedom to Play, co-authored with Kato Havas.

ERRATUM

The December article on the Music Assistance Fund Orchestral Fellowship Program listed Richard Spencer, a Fellow with the New York Philharmonic, as a violinist; he is a violist. Apologies to Richard, to MAFOF Director Daniel Windham, and to offended violists everywhere.