

# Senza Sordino

April, 1964 Vol. II—No. 2

## A Deeper Look At Symphony Problems

About 2 1/2 years ago, following a period of symphony and opera crises, N.Y. Times critic Harold C. Schonberg wrote an article, a part of which we quote on this page. He found there were other, deeper troubles than salary disputes affecting the musicians. Today, the National Symphony strike provides a springboard for us to probe even deeper.

The struggle for human dignity—known as civil rights—is the great democratic movement of our day. Many symphony men are also engaged in a “civil rights” struggle—a struggle for dignity.

In certain areas of human relations some musical culture organizations often act like the last repository of 18th century (or earlier) attitudes—and the musician's dignity suffers. Symphony men realize their low salaries have subsidized these organizations, and they can no longer accept being treated like hired hands, workmen en masse, or welfare employees.

A man uses his work to define for himself

## EDITORIAL

who he is and what he will do with his life. The arts are perhaps the last area in today's society where a man can define himself. It is perverse to wield “artistic authority” as a weapon to beat down a musician trying to gain some economic dignity.

Where union protection is poor (see San Antonio Imbroglio), management does not have to camouflage reprisals by invoking “artistic” reasons. Where protection against reprisals for union activity is covered by contract, management often conjures up a magic forest called “artistic authority” in which to hide the facts. Arbitrators and the public may be fooled by this, but the artistically experienced and knowledgeable musicians are not. They can see the woods for the trees.

This wasteful strife must end! A new system of relationships must be found between the musicians and their conductors and managements. The musicians are ready to co-operate.

## SYMPHONY PROBLEMS

[Philharmonic musicians]... feel that they have not been accorded their place in society; that they are merely hired hands who anonymously make music and get none of the credit: privates and pfc's in the army of culture. They want to make sergeant, and they see no reason why some of them should not go to O.C.S.

And they have a point. They are a highly distinguished group of musicians, one in which all America can take pride. To become expert violinists, clarinetists, horn players, they have had to put in years of study—more years than it takes to become a dentist, physician or lawyer. A good violinist starts studying around the age of 7 (and even earlier for an important solo career) and continues for twelve years or so, working at his instrument five hours a day or more, generally more. Before he can get into a great orchestra, he has to have impeccable training plus an apprenticeship.

Yet, in spite of all this discipline, and devotion to music, many American musicians feel they are constantly being neglected and passed over. They think that even at home they are objects of curiosity to their own boards. In medieval times the musician was classed as a servant and ate with the menials. Some of that attitude remains.

To give one example—slight, perhaps, but one that rankled—the Philharmonic management several weeks ago invited members of the press and concert managers to see the state of progress of the new symphony hall in Lincoln Center.

“Why weren't we invited?” a Philharmonic musician wanted to know. “What's the matter with us? Are we diseased? After all, we're the men who are going to make music there. Aren't we entitled to look, too?”

The musicians take things like this as an insult—not deliberate, perhaps, but indicative of management's disregard of

them, if not actual scorn for them. Most of them do not care to express this feeling, but anybody who knows the orchestra knows that it is there. More than anything else, it is what bothers the men. They are ready to fight for their place in society, and salary disputes are only part of it. They want to be an active, not a passive, part of Philharmonic thinking, Philharmonic policy.

Here's hoping, then, that in the future management, and union too, realize they are dealing not with a group of workmen en masse but with individual, talented, high-strung specimens—with artists, in short.

## SPECIAL REPORTS

- National Symphony  
Strike . . . . . Page 1
- San Antonio  
Imbroglio . . . . . Page 3

## SENZA SORDINO

An Inter-Orchestra Newsletter  
Sponsored by the International  
Conference of Symphony and  
Opera Musicians

Editor ..... Reinhardt Elster  
Met Opera Orchestra

### IC SOM OFFICERS

President ..... George Zazofsky  
Boston Symphony Orch.  
Vice-President ..... Sam Denov  
Chicago Symphony Orch.  
Secretary ..... Harold Laudenslager  
Detroit Symphony Orch.  
Treasurer ..... Gino Rafaelli  
Cleveland Symphony Orch.

### KANSAS CITY

The Kansas City Star reported that the symphony "MUSICIANS ASK PROBE OF TOUR".

Local 34 sent a letter to six officers of the Philharmonic association questioning decisions made on the recent West Coast trip on which several persons were injured in a bus mishap. The union is requesting a "full, impartial and public investigation of the circumstances of the recent tour, and of the decisions promulgated before and after the accident." It was believed that the January tour was mismanaged and that the Philharmonic management had taken insufficient precautions to safeguard the musician's welfare.

The Star reported that the musician's objections to the way in which the tour was managed falls into two major categories:

1. There is a feeling it was a mistake to send the orchestra through the Northwest states during the winter in busses. The orchestra members expressed particular dissatisfaction with the decision to resume the tour the day after the accident and over difficult highways in bad weather. (Later, sleeper cars were engaged for several days).

2. The orchestra men objected to the scheduling of travel on days off. Their contract grants them no less than one day off in nine on tour and limits travel on days off to 7 hours.

The players charge that the management scheduled jumps on the days off that were too long. They have demanded, through the union, compensation for the excess travel time.

### DALLAS

"Dallas' orchestra is now enjoying what its management calls its best year financially and artistically."  
*New York Times, 3/1/64*

The following letter was received from a Dallas correspondent:

"Somehow we seem very remote here from all the activity in the other orchestras across the country. Each orchestra has individual problems to solve, and in spite of the tremendous wealth of Dallas, ours is that of rais-

ing financial support for the symphony.

We, today, just concluded negotiations and union ratification of a new three year contract.

1. Over the next 3 years we will lengthen our season to 31 weeks.
2. Scale raised to 120.00 a week.
3. Per Diem—14.00 a day.
4. Further guarantees of job security.

These may not seem like much but they are advancements for us considering our past history."

### CLEVELAND

At the management suggestion, representatives of 4 aspects of Cleveland Orchestra life have agreed to meet on a fairly regular basis to outline and discuss mutual problems. Representatives from management, union officers, trustees, and orchestra have already met, and further meetings are projected. Its function may be to establish lines of communication.

### NEWS ITEMS

The Philadelphia Orchestra will take up permanent summer residence in Saratoga Springs, N.Y. beginning in 1966. Mr. Eugene Ormandy will assume the duties of musical director of the Saratoga Festival. A 5,200 seat amphitheater will be constructed which will house a fully equipped stage and an orchestra pit for operatic and ballet performances.

Donald Johano, 36 year old conductor and music director of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra has been signed to a new three-year contract.

The N.Y. Times reports the Houston Symphony Orchestra budget at \$700,000. In October, 1965 the Symphony will inaugurate the Jesse H. Jones Hall for the Performing Arts in Houston, future home of symphony, opera, ballet and related arts.

A fact-finding committee settled a dispute recently on a health and welfare plan for the Chicago Symphony musicians. The Symphony Association will reimburse the musicians \$15,000 to \$20,000 for payments they have made to date. The Association agreed to pay 75% of hospitalization benefits and the full cost of a \$5,000 life insurance policy for all the symphony members.

### COMMENDATION

Senza Sordino commends Local 161 of Washington, D.C., and its President, Sam Jack Kaufman, for the strong support given to the men of the National Symphony Orchestra in their strike.

We see that a local acting with conviction can enlist AFM support. Perhaps all together we can try to remake "this sorry world entire."

## NATIONAL SYMPHONY ON STRIKE

On Monday, March 23, the National Symphony Orchestra men began a strike—the 2nd strike this season—against the Symphony Association. The present strike is on the moral issue of job security and the basic right to engage in legitimate union activity.

According to the N.Y. Times "the question of the conductor's authority has remained a point of bitter contention." The musicians are proposing a committee arrangement to share the conductor's present absolute power over matters of hiring, firing, and seating—an arrangement which will not cost the management a cent. The musicians want to prevent the possibility (so familiar to symphony musicians) of management misusing "artistic authority" as a smoke screen to cover reprisals for union activity. They want to see safeguards established so that matters of "artistic integrity" may properly remain within the area of musical performance.

This season began with a 15-day strike in a struggle to obtain a better contract. The present firings and demotions evidently involve some men who were active in the contract battle last fall. When Local 161 weighed the evidence it decided these actions could only be viewed as reprisal because of union activity.

On March 31, the N.Y. Times reported that the directors of the symphony had planned a meeting to arrange for cancellation of the remaining 7 weeks of the season, but agreed instead to consider mediation. It is to their credit that they did not immediately yield to the temptation of exercising full economic force to reassert hegemony in democratic matters which are debatable.

The N.S.O. Committee reports "In the past 15 years over 200 musicians have come and gone from the N.S.O. Only 16 are members who were here 15 years ago. Within the past 5 years nearly half of the personnel is new." "This significant turnover in personnel does not contribute to the musical well-being of the orchestra and is directly related to the prevailing atmosphere of uncertainty, fear, and suspicion, so detrimental to musical expression."

The orchestra musicians are deeply concerned about the stability and artistic integrity of the orchestra. They have helped to subsidize the organization by the low wages musicians are forced to accept in our society, and they feel they have a vested interest in the orchestra and its quality. They also feel that the potentialities for cooperative effort among the musicians, conductor and management can be utilized, and that their demands are in the best interests of the artistic integrity of the N.S.O.

Contributions to the Strike Fund can be sent to:

Symphony Musicians Strike Fund  
c/o Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO  
1311 L Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C.

## SAN ANTONIO IMBROGLIO

A little over a year ago 4 members of the San Antonio Symphony were told that their contracts would not be renewed. The 4 musicians represented a total of 63 years of service—63 years of subsidizing this cultural organization "by the low wages which our musicians are forced to accept in our society." (Hecksher)

One of the four musicians was the orchestra committee spokesman. He was an assistant principal player, and is a quiet, responsible citizen with 4 children and an established home in the community. The principal player who sat next to him said in his behalf: "It seemed to me that Bob had been treated very unfairly, especially in consideration of his 16 years with the S.A. Symphony. He had been elected a member of the committee, and in this capacity had spoken with honesty and conviction whenever problems arose, mostly to improve the working conditions of the orchestra. I think in the long run San Antonio would have had a better symphony, with good morale and a wider choice of well qualified musicians [had Bob remained]."

The 4 musicians were not told the reason for non-renewal of their contracts. However, a local newspaper columnist reported that "each of them exercises a 'disruptive influence'". The columnist said he got his information from the conductor (according to an affidavit by a witness.)

Although the conductor is a member of the union and a fraternal brother of the maligned musicians, the local refused to accept a registered letter containing charges against the conductor. The local says this is merely a personal matter between the musicians and the newspaper.

### Files Charges Against Local

After months of getting nowhere, Bob Danielson filed charges in the Federation against the local. He charged the local with abdicating its obligation to properly defend him. His case contains many facts well supported by letters and affidavits. For instance, there is an affidavit from an attorney which denies the local's claim that he had represented Mr. Danielson and had had "numerous conferences" with the local's attorney. Another grossly misleading union statement said that the 4 musicians were given verbal notice on tour "to enable said members to audition with other symphony orchestras while on the tour." How this was to be done was, of course, not mentioned. The notices were given in Denver a few hours before the S.A. orchestra left by plane for Roswell, New Mexico. Following the concert in Roswell the orchestra flew back to San Antonio arriving about 2:30 A.M. the next morning.

The local's sur-rebuttal (final statement), submitted to the AFM by the local's attorney, contained misspellings of legal words, confused defendant with plaintiff, and was apparently unsigned. The so-called sur-rebuttal did not attempt to refute any statements in Mr. Danielson's rebuttal. It was just a superficial general denial of the charges.

## Federation Dismisses Charges

The Federation's consideration of this case exceeded the 4 month period stated in Federal law as adequate time within a union to exhaust "reasonable hearing procedures." Furthermore, this delay deprived Mr. Danielson of another rightful recourse as provided by law, because it carried the case beyond the 6-month time limit in which to file NLRB charges. The Federation dismissed Mr. Danielson's charges on December 16, 1963, but did not notify him until 31 days had passed. The AFM by-laws state that a final appeal to the convention must be filed within 30 days after a decision. The 30 days had passed when Mr. Danielson received notice of the Federation decision. On this "error", and other factors, he asked for reconsideration and stated: "The statute of limitations for an appeal to a convention had run out 1 day before Mr. Stanley Ballard had mailed notification of this decision to [me]." Mr. Danielson has been notified that this appeal has been denied.

*Through this case one can better understand the statement of local 802's Executive Board that "A union trial is quite different from a trial in a court of law."*

### "Gentlemanly Battles"

The San Antonio local's reply to Mr. Danielson's original charges rested mainly on a long letter which the local secretary had received from the orchestra manager (since resigned). The letter praised the local highly and the first paragraph contained this sentence: "I can well remember some of the gentlemanly battles we have had over contract negotiations, *the many improvements you have won for the men over the years*, and your continued insistence that the Society live up to the letter of our agreement." (Emphasis ours) Let's look at "the many improvements won for the men over the years"—by gentlemanly jousting:

1. *No unemployment insurance*
2. *No pension plan*
3. *No medical or hospital plan*
4. *Low scale, with consequent low salaries and inadequate pay raises.*
5. *Short season*
6. *Night rehearsals (like an amateur orchestra)*
7. *No security of employment (even after years with the orchestra)*

A veteran principal player stated the above reasons for leaving the orchestra after last season. Other

reasons given by another prominent departee could be added to the list. There was once a job protective clause in the contract, but this clause disappeared sometime after the 1949 season.

### Many Left The Orchestra Last Year

These many (management type) improvements may have had a lot to do with the exodus of at least a third of the musicians after last season, despite the manager's professed efforts "to maintain a fine morale which we have in the orchestra." The lack of a professional attitude toward the musicians may have been another reason. The manager's letter said "we have already established a paternal attitude toward the players."

Musicians in this kind of situation must either abandon hope, resign, or take some form of action. The lack of proper union support for committeemen in the performance of their legitimate duties will be noted by many managements. (This can make the task of a local like 161 in Washington much more difficult in its efforts to protect its members against unfair treatment and reprisals.)

Symphonic musicians know that there are only a few major cities where they could suffer Mr. Danielson's fate and not have to move to another city to earn a living. Mr. Danielson, however, is a determined man, and has managed to survive and maintain his home and family, despite the fact that he has been denied many jobs not under the symphony management. The situation would tax anyone's belief in coincidence. He has not been called for jobs that he regularly played for the past 5 to 15 years. Some of these jobs are in charge of individuals apparently beholden to the symphony and/or the conductor. There are supposed to be Federal laws which protect a man's right to earn a living.

### Hope Springs Eternal...

In conclusion we quote another San Antonio musician: "There is much left to fight for in San Antonio. Benefits such as unemployment or some sort of summer season, a longer winter season, higher minimum and more job security. For these goals we need a strong and cooperative union which is not strictly pro-management, a co-operative management, and, above all, a strong orchestra committee to provide the checks and balances of a democratic way of life in the orchestra. The committee must have a guarantee of job security before any real strides can be taken."

Caveat Musici

---

## LATE BULLETIN

The National Symphony Management, backed by its culture-loving Board of Directors, has cancelled the rest of this NSO season. This hoary tactic increases the aridity of the Washington cultural desert.

Expressions of both moral and financial support for the musicians have come from many other orchestras—Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Metropolitan Opera, New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia and St. Louis, to name a few.

