

# Senza Sordino

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## A REPORT FROM VIENNA

Milan Turkovic

*Milan Turkovic is first bassoonist of the Vienna Symphony Orchestra. Our appreciation is extended to him for the time and effort devoted to producing this report, and to Fritz Manczyk, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, for his translation from the German language.*

I am already somewhat acquainted with orchestra life in the United States, but the material in *Senza Sordino* has enhanced my views and has given me an additional input with which to compare the American and European musical scene. *Senza Sordino* has a vital, refreshing and many-sided influence on the European reader. Witty inserts from editor to reader are typically American and not customary in European publications. I like this relaxed style. Is there some circulation difficulty which restricts the number of musicians who are presently informed? No doubt you will be surprised to know that we do not have our own orchestra magazine in Austria. This is due to the small size of our country, although it has ten great orchestras. The absolute superiority of "*Das Orchester*," a German magazine, makes it difficult for us to compete.

Let me now tell you of the problems and anxieties, as well as the successes with which we concern ourselves from day to day. Through discussion with musicians in your country, I sense envy and admiration for working conditions in our orchestra, as well as the manner in which the European orchestra is subsidized by the State. It is true that here the orchestra has a more solid position in public life and while American orchestras provide cultural satisfaction to their public, they have a greater financial problem. One must not forget that in Europe there is a great regional difference in cultural politics and the degree to which the State supports the orchestra. Thus, the weak financial position of Austria makes music more expensive for the State to support than in rich Switzerland. Also, when a well-to-do Viennese wants to donate a work of art to the State Museum, he must pay tax for the privilege, while in the United States and Switzerland tax deductions make cultural support through gifts more desirable.

Now back to a discussion of our orchestra, the Vienna Symphony Orchestra. We are not typical in many ways, nevertheless, we are an orchestra with a very European destiny. After being disbanded, it was reorganized after World War II, and can be considered a relatively young orchestra which reflects a piece of European history. Though the Vienna Symphony carries a main load of Viennese musical life, it is less popular than the Vienna Philharmonic which is tradition rich. The Philharmonic supplies the manpower for the largest opera orchestra in Vienna and gives relatively few concerts. In foreign countries the Vienna Symphony Orchestra is not as well known as the Philharmonic. This results in the fact that we are mistaken for the Philharmonic a great deal. We are not as well known because we have neglected our recording activity in the past. Our Viennese concert life keeps our orchestra musician nailed to the job and keeps him from circulating in other musical endeavors. Expressing it crudely, we are an orchestra "for hire." This condition is being changed at present, however. Now the orchestra management is planning presentations on its own behalf and together with a more selective engagement policy we hope to raise the prestige of our musicians to a position long overdue.

The orchestra has a budget of \$2,200,000 a year. Income from concerts provides one-third the revenue; the rest is subsidized by

government, one-third State and two-thirds City. We play 160 to 180 concerts a year. As a rule, each concert is broadcast. At least once a year we make a large tour. We have already appeared in the United States three times as well as in Japan, Israel and nearly all other European countries.

We have 129 musicians in our orchestra. Rotation takes place at regular intervals. This results in some free time for everyone. Each group of woodwind players has two principals which allows for a system of rotation. Thus, it is seldom that we perform eight services week in and week out. Our monthly service limit is 31 services for tutti players, 25 services for solo woodwinds and 21 services for the concertmaster. These limits are frequently not observed. If exceeded, the additional services are at extra pay. Our favorable working conditions result in extensive chamber music activity. Thus *The Johann Strauss Ensemble* of the Vienna Symphony Orchestra was founded, as well as the *Concentus Musicus*, *Die Instrumentisten* and the *Kontrapunkte*. Recently we obtained a new pension plan. It provides for 80% of salary at retirement, at 60 years of age and 35 years of service. The above provides maximum compensation. We are provided one year of sick pay and welfare benefits.

Whenever I mention these conditions to American colleagues, they fancy us in paradise and themselves in a veritable hell, therefore let me clear the picture. We too have problems and anxieties that are generally unknown. Up to now, as mentioned before, we were an orchestra "for hire." This condition causes many problems. It devalues the function of the permanent conductor nearly completely, and makes it difficult to work together on a continual basis. Our new manager has established our own concert series. It is difficult to explain to a foreigner what an inroad this is in Vienna musical circles, though in America it is an established pattern. There are, in the near future, large and significant tours and many more guest appearances in large festivals. The focal point of our present summer activity is located in Bregenz in the west of Austria. The festival is in a beautiful location, the water and mountain region. It is held in high summer but unfortunately falls during the school vacation so that in September, those who want to vacation with their families must give it up. Another difficulty is our salary schedule. For years we have been paid by an unrealistic, obsolete and even partly unjust system. No doubt, the section leaders of the string groups receive substantial over scale pay, however, the solo woodwind players receive only about 15% over scale. During negotiation of the planned new system, the regulations of the Berlin Philharmonic and large American orchestras are being used as a model.

This represents the present status of the Vienna Symphony Orchestra. A great difficulty exists in all European orchestras. The situation in regards to replacements seems to be directly opposite to that in the United States. Where for a relatively few positions open in your orchestras there is an ample supply of talent, in Europe there are many string vacancies in large and smaller orchestras, as well as unfilled, exposed wind positions open for years because satisfactory talent cannot be obtained.

One could ideally solve the problem on a drawing board by taking the excess talent in the United States and filling the European vacuum. In a small way it is already happening, nevertheless viewed objectively, such ideas can only be treated as theoretical while traditions and established playing cultures present a barrier to the idea. Will this barrier to musician exchange one day fall and be treated only as a relic of an obsolete prejudice? We hope so.

## NATIONAL SYMPHONY SETTLEMENT

On October 4, 1972 the National Symphony ratified a new three-year contract by a vote of 64-22. The new contract shows gains in wages, fringe benefits, and a voice in artistic decisions.

For these negotiations, the orchestra decided that it wanted to hire and pay for legal counsel of its own choice. The Orchestra Committee was directed to interview several attorneys and to make a recommendation to the orchestra. The recommendation was that ICSOM attorneys Sipser and Leibowitz be retained. The Union negotiating team was Sam Kaufman and J. Martin Emerson—President and Executive Secretary of Local 161-710, the Orchestra Committee, and counsel. As has been the practice, the Union adopted the demands as formulated by the Orchestra Committee from questionnaires. These demands reflected a genuine increase in pride felt by the players as a result of new artistic leadership during the past two years.

If the Board of Directors also felt increased pride, this was well hidden by their bargaining representatives. Association attorney, Milton Denbo, who characterized himself as "speechless" and "flabbergasted" with each item of the demands, said at that first meeting on May 17 that the chances of the Association agreeing to even 1/100 of the proposals was "remote" and that if new proposals were not forthcoming, "The Board of Directors will have to find other ways to spend their time this winter." It was not until the fourth meeting on July 25 that the Association made a full counter offer.

From that time the talks proceeded at a snail's pace until two weeks before the scheduled start of the new season when, with no contract in sight, Denbo advised us to, "get your troops together and we'll see which side is stronger." With that parting shot he left for a cruise of the Greek islands leaving his son to advise management. Ironically, the *Washington Post* quoted an Association spokesman as explaining the slow pace of the talks by insisting that, "The negotiator hired by the musicians, N.Y. attorney Leibowitz, has been repeatedly unavailable for serious talks."

Needless to say, there was no subsequent progress and we came to the day before the new season, the only orchestra in the country where the opening was in jeopardy because of stalemated negotiations.

The night before the scheduled beginning, the players overwhelmingly voted "no" to management's "last" offer, but decided to try to play and talk. The next morning, with TV cameras rolling and the newspapers in full attendance, the orchestra was on stage ready to go when the orchestra manager came to the podium to tell us there would be no season without a contract. We had been locked out! The presence of the media, however, had dramatic effect. Within two hours there was a negotiating session scheduled and within 14 hours of the lockout a new contract was ratified.

There is one area where we feel there must be changes if negotiations are to be different the next time, that is, that all parties should participate in the talks. The NSO Board of Directors seems to feel that the time to withdraw from the scene is when the talks begin. Management feels it is their role to inform the Board only when the action is over. We felt this so acutely that we found it necessary to draft periodic bulletins to members of the Board to inform them of the issues and the way they were being handled. At no time did the Board come into the talks either as participant or observer. We hope that situation will be changed three years hence.

Following is a brief summary of new contract terms:

1. 1972-73	50 weeks	\$270 min.
1973-74	51 weeks	285 min.
1974-75	52 weeks	305 min.

- Pension increase to \$53,444 management contribution and player contributions. Return of all previous contributions. Full pension now 364 month max.
- Full family coverage for hospitalization and major medical to \$50,000.
- Work week—Elimination of 9 service weeks in third year. Additional service credit for New York run-outs.
- Vacation: '72-'73—5 weeks  
'73-'74—6 weeks  
'74-'75—6 weeks, 3 consecutive between Memorial Day and Labor Day.
- Per diem \$26. Cost of living increase in third year.
- Paid disability insurance.
- Paid life insurance to \$20,000.
- Paid travel insurance to \$50,000.
- Five-day weeks 10—10—15.
- Artistic Advisory Committee.  
Orchestra Committee of the National Symphony.

## VANCE BEACH ELECTED TO LOCAL OFFICE

Local 47, Los Angeles has a new Secretary-Treasurer. His name is Vance Beach. The announcement is made with mixed feelings. ICSOM members are pleased, because Vance wanted the position very much, but we regret that he is no longer numbered among us as a symphony musician. His resignation as cellist with the Los Angeles Philharmonic is mandatory with acceptance of his new post.

Vance wishes to thank those musicians who helped elect him and hopes that his success will encourage other symphony musicians to make an attempt to run for office in their respective locals. He says, "if a symphony man can make it in Los Angeles, where we are really 104 out of 16,000, then why not in a city where the orchestra is perhaps 90 out of 1200?" Vance, a past editor of *Senza Sordino*, won't get off the hook easily. Once he "settles in" we'll be badgering him for articles in future issues. My guess is that he'll come through. Good Luck, Vance, and our thanks for your contribution to ICSOM.

## POLLUTION IN THE PIT

At one point during a rehearsal at the Elizabethan Theatre on the 28th of July, the conductor twitched his nostrils and muttered: "Gas!" whereupon everybody was aware of an unpleasant smell, and some possibly wondered if not another theatre was about to go up in flames.

When the orchestra adjourned for the tea-break, the source of the smell turned out to be a truck standing outside, with the engine running and the exhaust pipe aimed directly at the orchestra's quarters. We have been concerned for some time about the status of musicians in Australia but we didn't think it was such a serious matter.

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## CZECH TEAM MEASURES MUSICIAN STRESS

For some years scientists and medical teams in Europe have been assessing and measuring the physical and mental reactions of musicians at work. The more significant experiments were performed by Schmale and Schmidke in 1965—they evaluated the effect of stress upon various German symphony musicians, and by Piperek in 1971. He occupied himself with an examination of 27 Viennese musicians using the encephalogram and electrocardiogram. The findings of these two experiments revealed what every musician has long "suspected." The practice of our professional activities are demanding physically and psychically. The statement, of course, applies to the conductor as well. Reviews of the above studies have appeared from time to time in *Senza Sordino*. We still maintain a curiosity as to the reasons for discomfort while playing on stage. Apparently, the scientist still continues to evaluate, for another set of tests, this time utilizing members of the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra and 6 conductors has come to our attention. These tests by Vaclav Seliger, Josef Glucksmann, and Ladaslava Havlickova again dealt with pulse frequencies and blood pressure at pre-concert, concert and post-concert periods.

It is obvious that the goal of the test is to obtain an expression of the stress to the circulatory system at the performance of various compositions during the course of a given concert. Charting was done with each of 47 musicians carefully ascertaining how many minutes of activity in which each was engaged. Even stage temperature and humidity was used as a factor in analysis.

It would seem that this approach has much more value to the medical profession and psychologist than to the musician; as an example, the correlation of temperament types with certain behavioral patterns at concerts, such as sitting restlessly, excessive head movements, blushing, etc. It is interesting that the study showed that while performing difficult passages, the musician's pulse rate can reach values that are comparable with that of an athlete performing a most demanding physical feat.

The study team was also convinced that it generally does not hold true that performing a "slower" movement will be accompanied by a lower pulse rate. Generally, performing a slower movement stimulates a higher emotional response from the musician as well as greater concentration. This increases the pulse rate. Not only does performing affect the pulse rate, but also do pre-concert situations and other assorted stimuli. This would include the period immediately before going on stage; the mental adjustment necessarily made in order to accept ones exposure before a great number of people; reaction when the conductor turns towards the musician's section; unclear baton signals; long rests; the counting of measures to insure proper entrance. All these non-playing activities produce stress. The study indicates that stress affects performance and that both conductor and musician finds his own way to minimize its affect, some more successfully than others. Some suggestions were offered. Adequate and intelligent rehearsal build a feeling of security. A conductor must develop the ability to recognize a tense orchestra and deal intelligently with the situation. "Establishing Rapport" is the term generally used in this connection.

Prepared by Fritz Manczyk and Henry Shaw

## NOW ALL SHARE THE LOAD

The following was passed by Local #147, Dallas, and is now part of its by-laws:

Strike fund dues, ICSOM dues and all assessments passed by a 2/3 majority of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra shall be mandatory of all Dallas Symphony Orchestra contracted players. Fines shall be levied on late dues according to the DSO Orchestra Committee by-laws, and suspension from Local #147 will occur 30 days after the date the assessment was due. All fines collected will be donated to the Dallas Symphony Orchestra Pension Fund.

## A WATER—WHAT?

A number of contemporary scores employ an instrument called the "Watergong." The Watergong is not a new instrument—it is, rather, an ancient instrument played in a new and innovative manner. A percussionist strikes a gong (it might be Asian, Aztec, Arabian or even J. Arthur Rank) and then immerses a portion of it in a tub of water. Thereupon, in the minds of some composers at least, certain predictable and artistically useful tonal variations occur.

The history of the Watergong is quite brief.\* About thirty years ago John Cage and a confrere or two composed music for a water ballet. Several gongs were employed in the score. Trouble arose when it was discovered that the choreography fell apart whenever the swimmers were completely submerged—they simply could not hear the music. The problem was solved by immersing the gongs slightly in the swimming pool. Water conducts sound waves even better than air. A very simple and practical solution to an immediate problem.

Naturally, everybody noticed that the sound of the gongs changed as they were placed in the water. And naturally (or unnaturally—as you will) the composers became intrigued. Ergo!! The Watergong was born.

Now, the Watergong is not without its detractors, even among percussionists. Just as some fiddlers abhor "col legno" on the basis that they feel no Tourte or Pecatte meant for his bows to be used as drumsticks, so do some percussionists resent placing their treasured gongs in a tub of water.

Some such feelings may have been responsible for the following incident at the Los Angeles Philharmonic: The Watergongist (Watergonger? Watergong Player? Watergongmeister?) nearly flubbed his entrance even though he had dutifully and correctly counted his rest bars. At the instant he was to play, the usually unflappable percussionist suddenly realized his tub of water had been spiked with four goldfish.

Although this story is perfectly true, it is related with a certain sense of foreboding. Could it possibly open a Pandora's Box? What if it should kindle the imagination of some young composer as to just what a watergong sounds like when combined with four goldfish? Or perhaps six goldfish? or two trout?

\* *The writer assumes no responsibility for the accuracy of this report. The genesis of the watergong was related to me by William Kraft, tympanist with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, prolific and renowned composer and, for all I know, a musician capable of hearing a difference between watergong-with-goldfish and watergong-without goldfish. May the Good Lord protect all orchestral musicians and the SPCA watch over the goldfish.*

Vance Beach

## NINE NEW FACES IN DENVER

The members of the Denver Symphony Orchestra welcome the following musicians to its rank for the 1972-1973 season:

Gary Breeding—Principal Horn  
 Bernard Eichen—Concertmaster  
 John Fare—Cello  
 Marvin Feinsmith—Ass't Ist Bassoon and Contra  
 Lynn Hague—Viola  
 Anthony Knight—Double Bass  
 Marcus Lehmann—Violin  
 Nora Shulman—Flute  
 Frederick Vogelgesang—Violin

**FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK**

Norman Black is a violinist with the Philadelphia Orchestra. He is a good one. His artistry has never been questioned by his employer. Norman Black has something in common with Mr. Ormandy and with Mr. Artur Rubenstein. They have all reached their sixty-fifth birthday. For Mr. Ormandy and Mr. Rubenstein it was just another day in their long and illustrious careers, but for Mr. Black it meant the end of a career in the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra. Suddenly a lifetime of experience, of service and devotion are no longer assets to be weighed. Suddenly his capability is of no consequence. His orchestra contract reads that he must leave his position. It does not read that an instrumentalist or vocalist over age 65 may no longer be engaged as a soloist or that a conductor over 65 may no longer mount the podium in Philadelphia. For them there is no argument that youth must be accommodated. The bell tolls alone for the Norman Blacks in Philadelphia and in orchestras across this country and in Canada.

The laws pertaining to employer discrimination on account of age do not apply to employees over the age of 65. So impatient are some managements to rid themselves of older musicians, that they insist upon their retirement in their 64th year (or before the contract year in which the musician reaches his 65th birthday). One can fight the practice of age discrimination as a moral issue with about the same success as a snowball would have in Hades. Norman Black says, "All my life I have opposed discrimination and will, therefore, not permit the association to oust me strictly because of my birthdate but reserve the right, out of respect for my personal dignity, to resign." This he has done, and chooses to battle on legal grounds "on behalf of other musicians who may one day face the same indignity."

That a uniformly applied contract clause to retire ALL musicians at age 65 prevents stigmatizing those musicians not recipient of reprieve, is sheer nonsense. In all fairness there must be protection for the still capable 65-year-old musician who wishes to continue to perform in his present position. There are proper avenues to pursue in order to enforce retirement of those who can not perform up to the standards recognized as necessary by their peers without penalizing the capable. We must take a closer look at the policy of age discrimination. If it is proper to keep in employment, older managers; if it is proper to engage older conductors and soloists: if it is proper to retain older, generous citizens as members of our Boards of Directors, then it is proper to keep 65-year-old musicians on stage and in possession of their dignity.

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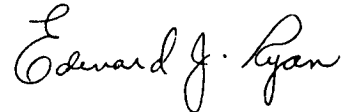
MEMORANDUM

**TO:** All Musicians  
**FROM:** Edward J. Ryan  
**DATE:** September 20, 1972

Attached is a schedule of the New York City Opera orchestra rehearsals, supplied to my office by the Opera Company. Because of numerous complaints received by this office concerning the musicians using rehearsal rooms and other areas when they are not authorized, it has been decided that effective immediately musicians shall not be allowed to practice in this building when they are not authorized by the Opera Company.

Any musician found practicing in the building at a time other than what is listed on the annexed schedule shall be asked to leave.

EJR:wm



**UPDATING AN OLD GAG**

Question: "How do I get to the N.Y. State Theatre?"  
 Answer: "PRACTICE!—but don't try to do it once you get there".

**REQUEST:** Kindly send completed Conductor Evaluation summaries immediately to: Dave Smiley, 512 Browning Court, Mill Valley, California, 94941.

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