

Senza Sordino

Official Publication of the International Conference of Symphony & Opera Musicians

VOLUME XII



AUGUST 1974 — NO. 6

A LITTLE GAME OF STRINGS AND THINGS

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Several years ago, a thumbnail biography of the 17th century violinmaker, Antonio Stradivarius, came across my desk. Also being a musician (in addition to my other talents as a brilliant but humble chemist)—having once composed a *Tout de Suite* for shoehorn and orchestra—I had the feeling that Antonio had a good thing going since his craft has never been excelled.

Stradivari's progeny, however, apparently found violinmaking a low-profit venture, and diversified into furniture making instead—which we all know has a good profit margin in the fair-trade marts.

Nevertheless, at the ripe age of 35, Stradivarius left the employ of his mentor, Nicolo Amati—the most famous of the Amati family and the grandson of the designer of the modern violin—and set up shop in Cremona to make his own version for the next 35 years or so.

Stradivarius had also learned his trade with the founding member of the Guarnerius violinmaking dynasty, whose son, Giuseppe Guarneri, patterned his instruments after the "Strad."

But, somewhere along the line, after Stradivarius had made several physical improvements, or changes, in the body, neck and scroll of his violins, he did something else.

Historically, I've found it not very clear whether he stumbled onto a new technique or performed a variation on the Amati theme, but in a conversation with my little old violinmaker friend Ernest Schertenlieb—a delightful name for a violinmaker, meaning 'enduring love'—it seems that Stradivarius disposed of his earlier models and embarked on a different procedure for the instruments we know today.

Comparing these vintage violins with more recent, but good, instruments, by holding either the front or back plates up to a strong light, the old are opaque while the latter-day ones are semi-translucent. Once it was determined that the varnish wasn't necessarily responsible for the translucency, it seemed apparent that the contemporary violins didn't have the natural oils or resins removed from the wood, or else they were reintroduced by a later finishing process.

In the pulp and paper industry, there is a treatment to remove ligninous matter by sulfite extraction, which also strips out some of the oils and resins, resulting in a 'black liquor.'

Hidden in the dim recesses of my memory is the tale of an old monk, who, when he was a young novice at a Jesuit monastery in the Italian Alps, saw wood being treated by heating in vats, with the resultant black liquor being poured off. Some of these monks were luthiers, and used this treated wood to manufacture their instruments.



Considering that Stradivarius might have been chemically treating his wood in the late hours of the night while his competition slept, I figured that clay pots and iron kettles could be replaced by polyethylene and 20th century technology in any kind of attempt to reconstruct his techniques, and, knowing that high purity reagent chemicals weren't available in railroad car lots off the alchemical shelves, lo, these 250 years or so, he had to make a more circuitous approach.

Merely boiling woods in water removes some short-chain cellulose and other solubles, but leaves the insoluble oils and resinous matter, and severely warps most woods.

A mild caustic treatment would accomplish the solubilization of the oils and resins without warping the wood in every direction imaginable. So, it seems that by the archaic process of leaching fresh wood ashes, an adequate supply of caustic potash would have been available to Stradivarius.

Trying this technique for my own edification, but being too lazy to accumulate and leach a good supply of hardwood ashes, and using reagent grade chemicals instead, I found that both hot and cold dilute potassium hydroxide solutions used in the wood treatment did indeed form a dark brown, almost blackish, liquor.

After drying, the wood itself exhibited a greater opacity when held up to a strong light, but it was also found that the wood was slightly on the soft and pulpy side, highly unsuitable for violins.

However, as is well known in chromatographic circles, after a caustic treatment cellulose becomes 'activated,' a secondary treatment is required to deactivate and 'set' the active sites to form more rigid cross-linkages. In an imaginative attempt to span the centuries and look over Stradivari's shoulder at what he could have done with available materials, it appears that he may have 'set' his woods with an extensive limewater wash, undoubtedly prepared from locally obtainable calcined limestone. (Actually, x-ray spectroscopy of the ashed mineral residue of an old violin sample has shown the presence of calcium, with traces of iron.)

Experimentally verifying his 'fossilizing' technique in my own make-shift alchemist's laboratory, I asked Herr Schertenlieb for some odd wood scraps to play with. To my consternation he generously heaped on me all sorts of prime Oregon spruce and Italian maple with which he could ill-afford to part.

Thus began a modest, long-term project to prepare woods suitable for the luthier's art. Some two years later, after more false starts and failures than I'd like to admit, reasonable progress was made. And, from the processed woods, came a couple of very good instruments. Not superlative, mind you, as a modern day Strad should be, but good even so.

Hence, with great hindsight and introspection, as the project has since been relegated to the dusty shelves along with other great innovations, it appears that we were on the right track—even if reagent grade materials were substituted for the late 17th century pharamcopocia.

COLOGNE CHAMBER ORCHESTRA VISITS INDY

A visiting chamber orchestra from Cologne, Germany, will spend four weeks in residence this summer at the Indianapolis Art Museum providing concerts for the public and private instruction for interested students. The presence of this orchestra concerns musicians of the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra due to the fact that while foreign symphony musicians are working in Indianapolis, members of the I.S.O. will be unemployed—as our season ends June 14th, and does not commence again until the 7th of September.

The Cologne Orchestra has been contracted to appear in Indianapolis by the Festival Music Society managed by Mr. Cooper. The F.M.S. is a group of young Indianapolis residents who are interested in providing baroque and early classical music to the residents of Indy. Their operation in past years has been on a small scale. In earlier years local players were contracted to play this event, but due to financial problems, the 1972 Festival was cancelled and the 1973 Festival consisted of a non-union student orchestra with guest artists. The F.M.S. is in no way connected to the Indiana State Symphony Society which runs the I.S.O. The details of the F.M.S.'s contract with the Cologne Orch. are as follows: The chamber orchestra will provide 3 concerts a week for four weeks including services of 22 musicians plus their conductor, Helmut Muller-Bruhl. In addition, members of the orchestra will teach 30 hours a week and allow non-commercial recording of all rehearsals and concerts for a total sum of \$20,000. This is less than \$225 per person for a work week which totals well over 40 hours. It is a competitive price against which American musicians can not bargain. The F.M.S. is providing room and board for the musicians with the German Government paying for their transportation. All tapes of the chamber orchestra will become private property of the F.M.S. Mr. Cooper informed us that such tapes will be sent to the National Public Radio, then forwarded to the Voice of America, and finally sent to the National Education T.V. Network for use by these agencies. This publicity is to improve the Cologne Chamber Orchestra's reputation in the hope of a recording contract with Angel Records.

In an attempt to stop this visiting orchestra, the I.S.O. Committee met with our Local #3 secretary, Hal Bailey. Mr. Bailey forwarded all information of the visiting orchestra to the National A.F. of M., which responded by telling us that they might be able to prevent the Cologne Orchestra from entering the country on grounds that the group was taking work away from American musicians. However, they could not guarantee this, as it would be a complicated legal matter; the A.F.M. indicated it would support the decision of the I.S.O. Committee on any action it might take. After much discussion the Committee decided to warn Mr. Cooper that any future attempt to bring in a foreign orchestra while local I.S.O. members were unemployed would be strongly fought, but would allow this incident to pass. Letters from the Local and A.F. of M. were requested and sent. The reasons for this decision are as follows: The I.S.O. members are just recovering from the bad public image of a 9 week strike two years ago. With no guarantee of being able to stop the foreign orchestra, we felt it in the best interest of the I.S.O. not to risk a reoccurrence of bad press. Since the future of the I.S.O. is starting to look good, we did not want to intimidate our supporters in the community by forcefully depriving them of summer chamber music concerts. Also, the main funding for this year's Summer Festival came from the Eli Lilly Foundation. This same foundation has been very prominent in the support of the I.S.O., and we did not want in any way to jeopardize the I.S.O.'s position with this Foundation. Finally, we felt in an approach of mild protest, we could have a chance to meet with Mr. Cooper and propose the use of I.S.O. members in the following summer season.

The Committee later met with Mr. Cooper and such a substitution was discussed; although no promises were made, Mr. Cooper agreed to meet with symphony management in the fall to discuss

such a possibility. Hopefully, some agreement can be negotiated between the two parties; if not, the I.S.O. Committee feels that actions should be taken to prevent such an incident from occurring again in Indy. Only time will tell if our peaceful efforts are successful.

James Beckel
Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra

LYRIC OPERA SIGNS THREE YEAR PACT

The Lyric Opera Orchestra of Chicago ratified a new three-year contract June 5, by a vote of 46 to 8. Details of the pact include a weekly base salary of \$360, \$375, and \$390 for each of the three years (up from the present \$325), based on fewer hours per week (down to 24 in the third year from the present 26). A *pro rata* hourly rate will be paid for any hours in excess of those upon which the salary is based, and time and a half is included for the first time in 1975 and 1976 after 32 and 31 hours in a week respectively. This is a significant improvement since the present guaranteed fifteen weeks (up from fourteen) includes many weeks in excess of 30 hours. The total package, which includes significant improvements in all the fringes, is estimated at 42 percent.

One important aspect of the contract involves the removal of the Personnel Manager from the agreement with the orchestra and the limitation of authority which can be exercised by anyone in the orchestra on behalf of management. Interpreting the contract, exercising musical judgements, or conveying reprimands on behalf of management by a member of the orchestra is now prohibited.

A critical point in the negotiations came when the Opera management "irrevocably" cancelled the season after two members of the Committee, despite a majority vote of the Committee, began circulating a proposal made at a delicate point during the negotiations, among the orchestra and attempted to initiate a petition to oppose the Committee. The resulting clamor raised by a small minority at such a crucial time, undoubtedly was interpreted as a sign of weakness, and the season was saved only after an eleventh-hour settlement in the office of Mayor Richard J. Daley. The issue involved was a clause regarding the termination of a member for significant deterioration, which the dissidents wished to exclude from the contract completely. While the Committee had taken this position for six months, the previous contract had included a termination clause for tenured members, regardless of cause, with a year's notice being the only stipulation. When it became apparent to the Committee that management would not delete this provision without some form of limited deterioration clause, the Committee negotiated a three-year procedure which can be used only in the event of significant deterioration of a member's musical ability, below the musical standards of the orchestra, in order to preserve the musical standards. The procedure involves a review committee selected by the the orchestra, but the Musical Director has final authority in the third year subject to arbitration on the grounds of good faith. A severance pay of a year's wages, plus the weekly salary in the final year, times the number of years of service is applicable to those who terminate as a result of this procedure.

In addition, two members released under the old termination clause last year were reinstated as a result of the orchestral demands and a third member, 86 years of age, was paid a \$13,000 severance settlement in conjunction with a newly negotiated retirement provision.

It is hoped that the sharing of this negotiating experience will impress those in a similar situation with the necessity for the negotiating committee to maintain unity and for the members to subordinate personal ambitions to the will of the majority when issues come to a vote. When political subterfuge was initiated in order to alter the Committee position at such a critical point in negotiations, the management's emboldened attitude further split the orchestra and nearly spelled disaster.

James T. Berkenstock
Lyric Opera Orchestra/Committee Member.

ICSOM DELEGATES TO MEET IN NEW ORLEANS

The 15th Annual ICSOM Conference will be held in New Orleans from Wednesday, September 4th through Saturday, September 7th. An extensive agenda has been proposed. Elections will be held for all top offices. In addition, a Western Vice-Chairman must be elected due to the untimely death of James Weaver. Executive officers only will meet the morning of September 4th with general meetings beginning in the afternoon. The Conference is being held at the Roosevelt Hotel. Those delegates who have not already made reservations are urged to do so immediately. The proposed agenda is:

- I. A—Meeting called to order
B—Roll Call of member orchestras
C—Introductions
D—Minutes of the 1973 meeting
E—Applications for new membership and action thereon
- II. Reports of ICSOM officers
A—Report by Chairman on past year's activities
1. Contract negotiations
2. AFM-Symphony Strike Fund
3. General Organization
B—Acting First Vice-chairman's report
C—Secretary's report
D—Treasurer's report
E—Counsel's report
F—Report on Canadian Symposium and Association of Canadian Orchestras
- III. Committe Reports
A—Committee to study audition procedures
B—Committee to study Health and Welfare benefits
- IV. Unfinished Business
A—Negotiations
1. Completed contract
2. Bargaining in progress
B—ISCOM Chart
C—Recording, radio, TV, video cassettes, cable TV
D—Effectiveness of Artistic Advisory Committees
- V. New Business
A—Nation-wide health and welfare coverage for ISCOM musicians
B—Renewal of Counsel's contract
C—Other new business
- VI. Lecture by Counsel
- VII. Nomination and election of officers
- VIII. Choice and location of 1975 conference
- IX. Good and Welfare

OREGON HOSTS PHILLY MEMBERS

After their June 5, 1974 performance in Portland, Oregon, the Philadelphia Orchestra was welcomed by a party in their honor, given by members of the Oregon Symphony Orchestra.

Home-made food and car-pool transportation, organized by Orchestra Committee Chairman, Bernard Blumberg; and ICSOM Representative Stephanie McDougal, was provided by Oregon Symphony members. Beverages were provided by Oregon Symphony management, David Hyslop, Manager; and AFM Local No. 99, Robert C. Jones, Secretary-Treasurer.

It was pleasurable to meet the members of another orchestra, and engage in shop-talk and informal conversation. The party was enjoyed by all and was a great success.

Bernard Blumberg
Oregon Symphony Committee Chairman

NEXT STEP — THE BIG LEAGUE!

It was a beautiful Sunday in May when the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra Fantastiques, adorned in green and white screen printed T-shirts appeared at Bush Stadium, home of the Indianapolis, Indians. Waiting was their foe for the day, the Indianapolis Symphony's ISOmetrics, a softball team culled out of that orchestra which was playing a concert as a part of Symphony Day at the park. What was to ensue was a seven inning *baseball game?*,



Phil Ruder, Cincinnati concert master "wades" into a pitch.

a preliminary to the Indianapolis Indian-Denver Bear double-header.

The contrast between the participants' athletic prowess and musicianship boggles the mind. It took no more than 25 seconds for watching Indian and Bear players to satisfy themselves that their jobs were not in jeopardy, even after Cinci's bus driver and Indy "500" driver, Johnny Rutherford, were pressed into service during the struggle. The outcome of the Fantastique-ISOmetric game was never in doubt as a ten run second inning vaulted the Cincinnati team to a 12-7 win. The umpiring was provided by a member of the Indians after the Bear manager indelicately offered, "we're not going to provide umpires for a bunch of musicians!" It is our opinion, after watching him manage his team to a loss, that the statement turned out to be his best decision of the day.

Arrangements were made by Ron Arron, shortstop and violist for the winners and Tom Akins, tympanist of the Indianapolis orchestra. Mrs. Louis Nippert, an ardent supporter of both the Cincinnati Symphony and Cincinnati Reds, (no surprise, since the Nipperts are majority stockholders of the "Big Red Machine") provided the transportation for the event. Promotion to the major leagues is not far off as a return engagement is planned for September at Riverfront Stadium, home of the Cincinnati Reds.

"ASAV" IS FORMED

Spurred by the acute shortage of professional violin makers and restorers that threatens the musical life of our society and also by a renewal of interest in the art and craft of violin and bow making in the United States, the American society for the Advancement of Violin Making (the "ASAV") was recently formed at an organizational meeting held in New York. At the meeting, a group composed of amateur and professional string players, violin and bow makers and dealers, decided unanimously to go ahead with the formation of the Society dedicated to the creation and preservation in the United States of instruments of the violin family and their bows.

One of the main objectives is to work towards the development of an American school of violin making that hopefully may include a museum, a research center, a library and data center. In time, the organization plans publication of a newsletter that will keep its subscribers up to date on items of interest in regard to the violin family and their bows. A convention is planned for New York in November.

NEW ORLEANS BENEFITS FROM ICSOM PARTICIPATION

The New Orleans Philharmonic Symphony was founded in 1935 and has been a full-time professional orchestra for over 25 years. It has consistently enjoyed an outstanding musical reputation and has counted among its members many of the country's finest symphony players. Present members of the New Orleans Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra enjoy one of the more extensive of major orchestra contracts.

During the 1960's, New Orleans, like most other orchestras, was beginning to realize the need for a comprehensive contract and the usefulness of a multi-year contract in circumstances where management planned expansion. Until 1966, New Orleans contracts were all one year in length. The existing contract was only seven pages long. In July, 1966, came the Ford Foundation grant of 1.75 million dollars, a three-year contract in which the season was extended to 35 weeks, and a number of problems for all parties to the agreement. Orchestra members realized that they would need more information and expertise than they possessed at that time in order to solve these problems, and so New Orleans joined ICSOM, a move which immediately gave the orchestra a constant and unparalleled source of information, advice and confidence. New Orleans delegates to ICSOM conventions found it most helpful to talk to players from the other orchestras who had been through successful negotiations. Players from other orchestras were very helpful between conventions. The Houston Orchestra committee and its chairman, Bill Black, were particularly helpful.

In 1967, long before expiration of the then existing contract, Crawford Best and Richard Erb, committee members, went to work completely rewriting and reconstructing that agreement so that in 1969, when new negotiations began, a formidable document was presented to management. The result was a new master agreement of which all parties were proud. Features of that agreement, and a consequent agreement were:

1. An extensive ratification of contract clause
2. A players' committee of 7 orchestra members to review firings of tenured players. The decision of this committee is "final and binding on all parties."
3. Reduction of the probationary period from 2½ years to 6 months.

4. Three paid vacation weeks out of 37 total weeks. No vacation previously.
5. New fringe benefits: Health insurance, life insurance, instrument insurance, all non-contributory. Except for the 6% AFM-EPW pension plan introduced in 1964, there had been no previous fringe benefits.
6. A minimum number of players clause. This clause stipulates that if the number of players who are under contract drops below 80, then the salary (at scale) of such unfilled positions shall be divided equally among the remaining players so long as the deficiency exists. (This clause has been in effect since the beginning of the 1969-70 season.)

New Orleans is presently negotiating a new master agreement. At the 1974 ICSOM Conference in New Orleans we hope to report further progress

Crawford Best, New Orleans Symphony
ICSOM Southern Region Vice Chairman

S.F. TO EXPLAIN NON-RENEWAL FRACAS

Symphony musicians are continuing their determined effort to obtain contract controls which will eliminate unfair and arbitrary job non-renewals. In orchestras where such controls have been obtained, few problems have been encountered. In San Francisco recently, an orchestra committee vote to deny renewal to two probationary members of the orchestra erupted into a situation punctuated by unfair and distorted press stories. The difficulties arising in San Francisco over the Union's contractual right to determine renewals thru a decision of its orchestra committee has elicited much interest among orchestra members everywhere.

The San Francisco Orchestra Committee will issue a separate newsletter to all ICSOM orchestras making clear all the facts.

Those orchestra members who so desire, may make contributions to:

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SENZA SORDINO is the official publication of the International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians and is published six times a year on a bi-monthly basis. ICSOM is affiliated as a conference of the American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada, AFL-CIO.

HENRY SHAW, Editor—Mailing address: 1577 Elizabeth Pl., Cincinnati, Ohio 45237

Subscriptions: A.F.M. Members \$2.00 per year
Non-Members, A.F.M. \$5.00 per year

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