

III. WORKING RELATIONSHIPS - WORKING CONDITIONS

7. Employment situations

Dominique Citroen (The Netherlands)

Citroen Consulting

The subject of my speech started simple but gets more and more complex during the time I am thinking about it.

The subject is: does the orchestral musician has to go around with chicken wings for the audience after a concert? And should he be paid extra for that?

Hans von Bülow wrote about his orchestra round 1850.

Hans Guido von Bülow was one of the inventors of the archetype of the star conductor; he was probably the first to become a star musician interpreting the orchestral music of Wagner, Liszt, Brahms.

He had great classical ideals, was composer, director and pianist.

Von Bülow conducted with an enormous long baton and was not very diplomatic. His best period was in München around 1864.

He was responsible for the growing status and enormous salary of the conductor and good salary of the musicians.

The musicians had to wear dress suit and the stage was invented; the higher the stage the better as that was closer to God. Von Bülow considered himself almost God when he was standing in front of the Orchestra. The public had to look up to him and his musicians.

Von Bülow was perhaps responsible for the status of orchestral musicians till 2011. The difference from then till now is rather small.

How I came to this subject

The director/manager of a famous orchestra in Holland asked the Cultural Foundation where I worked for financial support because he wanted to improve their public relation. The concerts were far from sold out so there should be more audience.

After the concerts, the conductor would meet and greet the public and talk about the works they had heard that evening.

The musicians were asked to join the conductor and serve drinks and chicken wings – bitter balls for the Dutch among us.

The cultural Foundation was asked to support this initiative with € 20.000.

The conductor would do it for free and the € 20.000 was to pay the musicians for their extra work next to their orchestra job.

What is your opinion? Does the musician has to be paid or is this part of your job nowadays!

Why do you choose an orchestral job?

I asked some of my friends why they like the orchestra.

As a musician you want to be looked after and stay a bit anonymous.

It is socially nice and if you are lucky you go on tour.

No responsibility for organization but you rehears, practice, play the concert and then you go home.

Ensemble playing

In an Ensemble you have no conductor in general, you choose the people you want to play with and the music you want to play.



You have a big responsibility to get enough audience/public and money to live from,

You sell cd's in the interval and after the concert, and try to please your public as you are depending on their buying a ticket, CD and they have to come back.

I played harpsichord and we organized sponsor dinners and cooked ourselves to demonstrate that we didn't waste their money; demonstrations for how we rehearsed; stayed after the concert to talk with the public; before we started to play a piece we had little explanation of the piece.

This means that you have to be an entrepreneur. Do you only have to be an entrepreneur when you play as a freelancer or do you nowadays always have to be an entrepreneur, Are you always responsible for the group you play with, not important if it is an ensemble, quartet or orchestra.

Example Netherland's Blazers Ensemble

They have a very interesting way of working.

They give a concert of an hour and after the concert there is an After Concert where people can enjoy their extra music while they have a drink.

This is very much appreciated by the public and this makes that people want to come back as they meet the musicians and they can see that the musicians are happy with their public and appreciate them.

Why is there a difference in behaviour between an orchestral musician and ensemble musician?

My first question:

Do the orchestral musicians nowadays have to change their attitude?

Do they have to be an entrepreneur as the ensemble musician is?

My second question:

Do you have to pay musicians extra to meet and greet!

Or is this a task that is included in your job

Conclusion

It is time for the orchestra's to change their attitude and to ask from the musicians to feel responsible for the future of the orchestra's as if it is their own ensemble. Every musician should be an entrepreneur no matter if you are freelance or in an orchestra.