



1st fim

International Orchestra Conference

Berlin, April 7-9th, 2008



More Music! Opening Speech by Fabio Luisi

For a few years we have been witnessing an increasingly explicit transformation of the notion of „culture“, not only in German-speaking areas, but all over Europe. It is becoming obvious that the traditional „educated bourgeoisie“ has found no successor. In a parallel development it appears that the aspiration to establish a „culture for everybody“ is unfeasible, a failure partly due to the chase for rating figures by public broadcasters. Instead of realising their educational mission, they are eyeing for numbers; quality and standards are increasingly being neglected.

Unlike museums, which can mitigate the effects through their reliance on durable collections, music is badly affected by these cultural – or „uncultural“ – social changes. Music as an art form cannot be preserved, it comes alive only in the moment of its performance.

Traditional musical institutions obviously suffer from such a development; indeed, orchestras, the most important of these, are facing not simply a silent crisis, but a fundamental challenge.

It is absurd: the very embodiment of collective artistic activity, the orchestra, an organism which unites highly specialized professionals unite in order to achieve a great accomplishment, to revive a musical piece in its original

form, to realize a synthesis of the creative accomplishment of the individual composer and the musicians' selfless group effort, is in question.

An act, which we can experience only in a symphonic concert, in this single, unique moment, is being questioned. It is absurd to threaten these artistic acts with the downsizing, mergers or closure of orchestras, to sever this „manpower“ – if you allow me to use such an ugly word – , the result of many years of training and sacrifice, from the broader fabric of „workers“ that sustains our society. Even worse, some small minds are asking why we should need orchestras in the first place. Do they not realise that it is these organisms – for they are living, active organisms – which sometimes offer us the final chance to experience something authentic and immediate and, hence, true?

Mere declarations of commitment are not enough – for nobody will publicly argue against cultural institutions, not even against musical institutions – if it is not followed by action. Lip service is the fitting German expression for this. The cultural landscape in Europe and in Germany needs no freelance musicians, but musicians in secure and well-paid positions; not fewer and smaller, but more and larger orchestras; not less, but more music.

Orchestra musicians as educators

Young musicians, Fredrik Österling (Sweden) argued, often face a stressful environment and strict rules, and studies show that there are few ways in which musicians can influence their working conditions. As these are rarely organised around the needs of musicians, many of them state that they value chamber music most highly. Learning and knowledge transfer are much influenced by the different time structures of chamber and symphony orchestras – a vital point that needs to be kept in mind.

Gottfried Heilmeyer (German Orchestra Union (DOV), Germany) addressed the need for early musical education of children. Educators must be brought up to the latest neurobiological findings so they can adequately foster artistic talent. Consequently, the DOV has initiated a number of cooperations with the responsible associations. Early specialised classes are needed for the highly gifted, while young musicians must be trained in a way that enhances their employability (orchestra academies, courses in rehearsal preparation, orchestra internships). At the same time, orchestras must not exploit these opportunities to fill regular positions with trainees. The DOV has formulated a nine

point-programme guiding orchestra internships.

Dan Gottfried (Musician Union, Israel) pointed out the need to find a balance between teaching and performing. Many trained musicians work as teachers or are at least obliged to teach part-time. The standard of the orchestra and its human resources are another factor: some musicians will have undergone teacher training, others not, but may still be excellent educators. Usually, it is only the top performers who attain a permanent position in an orchestra. Others may play with less prestigious ensembles or complement their income through teaching. As there are no hard and fast rules, much depends



on personal preferences. However, in general it could be said that professional musicians will do better concentrating on their career and to leave education and training to dedicated teachers.

Orchestras and social inclusion

Rolando Goldman, National Arts Director of the Culture Secretariat of the Argentine Nation, argued for the utilization of orchestras to foster social cohesion in Argentina, illustrating his point through two case studies: the programme „Children and Youth Orchestras“, and the programme „Music in Factories“. The former includes 50 orchestras, formed by children and young people from disadvantaged families, inviting families to attend performances and support the children in their efforts. The latter takes music into the workplace, such as factories, sometimes accompanied by introductory talks. It invites workers and their families to attend, thus opening up new audiences and bringing national orchestras closer to their mission, to serve all people.

György Lendvai, Managing Director of the Mav Symphony Orchestra, Hungary, talked about the importance of image management for orchestras and the factors that influence an orchestra's reputation: chief conductor, history, repertoire, guest artists, communication, programmes and activities, venues, reviews, and ticket availability. Given today's challenge of attracting and maintaining audiences, he identified educational and outreach programmes as the most impor-

tant elements of this mix. The Mav Symphony Orchestra offers music education to children from a very early age, but also includes socially disadvantaged groups, for example by performing at care homes or in rural areas. Finally, he highlights the role of new media to make ensembles more accessible, and the necessity to create a positive profile for sponsors.

Rui Fernandes from the Musician Union of Portugal summarised the experiences of the ERASMUS Thematic Network for Music „Polifonia“, a pan-European project for professional music training, running from 2004 to 2007, involving 67 organisations from 32 countries. He highlighted the disparate developments across Europe, but also the potential for creating coherent educational and training policies (e.g. regarding curricula, degrees, student mobility). Another element is the role of conservatoires as artistic leaders and partners in dialogue with alumni and the profession in general, especially in the light of quickly changing socio-economic and cultural conditions. Topics such as life-long learning and matters of social cohesion and responsibility need to be addressed in professional music training.

Status of orchestra musicians in today's society

Horace Trubridge introduced the subject: Status of Orchestra Musicians in today's Society, and asked Bruce Ridge, from the American Federation of Musicians and the chairperson of the International Conference of Symphony Orchestras (ICSOM) to speak. Mr. Ridge explained how ICSOM represents the well known, and the little known orchestras in the USA and that by uniting the orchestras ICSOM are able to bring pressure to bear when individual member orchestras are under threat. He also talked about the "4th wall", in other words: the wall between the orchestra and the audience and how orchestras in the US aim to break down that wall and build relationships between orchestras and audiences. Laszlo Gyimesi, the General Secretary of the Hungarian Musicians and Dancers Union, was next to speak and he reminded the conference of the original 1980 Status of the Artist UNESCO recommendation and the subsequent 1997 world congress which produced a final declaration. He explained how the UNESCO recommendation influenced labour legislation in

Hungary and how there was no recognised status for performers, unlike other workers in Hungary such as bodyguards, hunters and lawyers who enjoyed recognised status. Finally, Bongani Tembe, the Chief Executive and Artistic Director of the Kwa Zulu-Natal Philharmonic Orchestra spoke about the South African perspective of orchestras in society and showed a short DVD clip which illustrated the work being done in South Africa to integrate orchestras into the community. Mr. Tembe explained that the orchestra had a comprehensive education and development programme concentrating on three points: exposure, transfer of skills, and offering performance opportunities.



Health and safety at work

Horace Trubridge, BMU, United Kingdom, talked about problems with the implementation of the EU directive on noise protection. He discussed the idea of a „hearing passport“, available from the British Musicians' Union, to give freelance musicians the option to document changes in their sense of hearing.

Ricardo Venazza from the Argentinian Musicians' Union (Sadem) reported on collective labour agreements, which include also negotiations regarding health insurance for permanent employees and their families. Due to far-reaching insecurities, the Argentinian musicians' union has founded its own social security fund („Obra Social de Músicos“) as a primary healthcare provider.

Hans Peter Völkle, SMV, Switzerland, argued that musicians'

everyday work life carries a number of health risks. It is a central aspect of the trade unions' job to counteract such dangers. On a more fundamental level, health promotion must also always include a discussion of the outdated structures of an orchestra and their impact on the state of wellbeing of its members. Yet typically, professional symphony orchestras are still based on 19th century structures. Too often there is no communication beyond rehearsals among colleagues and executives. How, then, can internal conflicts be dealt with? Working in confined spaces, as musicians do, will always give rise to problems, yet there are too few structures to address them. Völkle calls for a number of actions: Young musicians must receive team-building training through their academies, learning how to discuss problems of everyday working life. Orchestras need structures that enable regular communication between musicians and executives. Orchestras must learn to effect internal dialogues, which will require off-the-job training through professionals. Regular MAGs are indispensable. For this, the necessary capacities will have to be established. Orchestras and their unions should aspire to two goals: Improvement of musicians' general well-being. Following on from this, improved working conditions and thus improved artistic performance.



Press Review (Selection)

Kultur Informationszentrum, 28. 3. 08

Berlin: 1st International Orchestra Conference with 180 experts from 39 countries

Berlin (ddp). For the first time, orchestra professionals from all over the world are meeting at a conference, from 7 to 9 April, in Berlin. 180 experts from 39 countries will attend the 1st International Orchestra Conference, according to the Deutsche Orchestervereinigung (DOV, German Orchestra Union) in Berlin. Among the participants are musicians, managers and other representatives of orchestral ensembles. Apart from a review of the current situation of orchestras worldwide, the conference will focus on a discussion of future challenges. The event is hosted by the International Federation of Musicians, the global umbrella organisation of musicians' associations and trade unions.

Frankfurter Rundschau, 1. 4. 08

International Orchestra Conference

Berlin (dpa) – For the first time, an international orchestra conference will be taking place in Berlin. From 7 to 9 April musicians, managers and other representatives of orchestral ensembles from nearly every country worldwide are meeting to share experiences, the Deutsche Orchestervereinigung (DOV, German Orchestra Union) stated. Trade union ver.di expects 180 participants from 40 countries at its federal headquarters.

Apart from a review of the current situation of orchestras worldwide, the conference will focus on a discussion of future challenges and problems. This includes topics such as orchestras' social mission, changing audiences, finances and working conditions. The 1st International Orchestra

Conference is hosted by the International Federation of Musicians (FIM), the global umbrella organisation of musicians' associations and trade unions with more than 100,000 members.

Sächsische Zeitung, 7. 4. 08

Dresden General Music Director sees German orchestras in danger

Berlin – Dresden General Music Director Fabio Luisi sees the German orchestra landscape acutely threatened. „Orchestras are facing not just a silent crisis, but much worse, a general challenge.“ It is „absurd“ to endanger orchestras by downsizing, mergers or closures. „Some simple minds even ask why we need orchestras.“ Music in Germany is severely affected by „uncultural“ social changes, Luisi said on Monday at the beginning of the first international orchestra conference in Berlin.

It is becoming apparent that the aspired „culture for everybody“ will not be feasible as intended. „The chasing of ratings by public broadcasters has strongly contributes to this state. Instead of fulfilling their educational mission, they're eyeing the mass market, quality and standards are increasingly forgotten“, Luisi stated.

This is not the time for „lip service“, as no one will openly argue against cultural institutions; instead it is time for action, the General Music Director demanded. „The cultural landscape, in Europe as well as in Germany, needs no freelance musicians, but well-paid musicians in permanent positions. It doesn't fewer and smaller, but more and larger orchestras. It doesn't need less, but more music.“



Production:

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