

Long term planning of rehearsals / performances: a win / win strategy by Hiroshi Sato (Japan)

About working conditions at rehearsals and performances (including tours).

In Japan the unions are no "closed shop" and therefore there does not exist a standardized agreement between the orchestras and the management side.

Based on the Japanese "Labour Standards Law" the various orchestras have their respective "working regulations". Besides, the union holds negotiations for the correct interpretation and application of the "working regulations" and concludes "collective agreements". On these two rules the labour standards of the orchestras are based, but in case of rehearsals and for instance for subscription concerts almost always around 3 days. Depending on the orchestra there are on rehearsal days also performances with a different program to be played and so increasing the burden for the musicians.

As there are differences in the travel facilities between the countryside and the big cities (conurbation) standard conditions for tours are difficult to decide. In recent years it has been customary that the day of departure or arrival was labelled as travelling day, but now schedules can be seen where the managers have set rehearsals or performances to gain more profit. It problems arise the union negotiates between the employers and the employees and also tries to take care, that though temporary relief is achieved, no long term disadvantages are caused.

Since the economic recession in Japan, since the year 1990, the administration and the economy stagnated and went into decline and the income of the orchestras decreased.

This might be seen as the reason for the management side to start the demand of changes in the working conditions.

There are currently pending cases at the bar, because in some orchestras unfair contract conditions and forceful changes of the form of employment as well as one sided cancellation of contract by the management side for single persons have occurred.

The union promotes strong negotiations between the employers and employees to prevent the pressure of unfair burdens placed on the musicians, as an employed workers, by the management side to become heavier for obtaining an increased profit for the orchestra. We also try to convince the administration and the financial circles, that cultural measures have to be positioned as a long term investment for the society.

As a union we supervise the conclusions of the working conditions and agreements, we publish information and to be able to negotiate effectively between employers and employees we have for more than 20 years compiled exact lists concerning the working conditions for orchestras in Japan. These lists include data about orchestras like budgets, subsidies, salaries and detailed working conditions and highly valued by the society. I have brought along some of these to show you, if you are interested, unfortunately they are all in Japanese.

Thank you.