

# Equipment lost, CSO improvises triumph

By Byron Bell

Newhouse News Service

**S**AN FRANCISCO—A nightmare that "only happens to others, and not to us," in the words of Henry Fogel, executive director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, happened to them here last weekend.

Arriving in San Francisco for a pair of sold-out concerts, conductor Georg Solti, the CSO staff and musicians were informed that their equipment trucks—with more than 60 percent of the instruments, all of the scores and clothing for some 125 people—were missing "somewhere between Needles, Ariz., and San Francisco."

Fogel's colleague, Peter Pastreich of the hosting San Francisco Symphony, rounded up instruments from his musicians and others in the area, and by curtain time for a Saturday matinee in Davies Symphony Hall, everyone had an instrument, although most had someone else's.

While attempting to fill time until the arrival of the trucks, Pastreich and Fogel

put on a witty, warm act explaining the dilemma to the audience, and promising an hour of chamber music by the celebrated virtuosi of the Chicago Symphony, including a surprise American debut as a pianist by Maestro Solti. (Said Fogel: "I feel like the emcee for a late-night variety show.")

With goodwill established on all sides, a marathon of memorable music began, running from about 3:05 until after 6 p.m. Seldom has a crisis demonstrated more dramatically the crucial two-way nature of musical performances: Musicians and the public both play critical roles. On this potentially disastrous Saturday afternoon, Chicago players and Bay Area listeners proved that mutual respect and support could pay off with hefty dividends.

The highlight (and the event that made national news in print, radio and TV) was an elegant performance of the exquisite Andante movement of Mozart's G Minor Piano Quartet, K. 478, in which Solti joined three CSO principals.

The most musically fascinating performance, however, was of a Clarinet Quartet

in E-flat Major, attributed to Mozart. The famous Clarinet Quintet is one of the treasures of the chamber repertory, but this unfamiliar, recently discovered piece proved a total delight, particularly as performed by CSO clarinetist John Yeh and three string associates.

After a near-dozen CSO players had performed winningly, the instruments, scores and formal attire still had not arrived, and it was decided to proceed with the program in drastically altered shape.

The West Coast premiere of John Corigliano's Clarinet Concerto was a feature of the matinee concert, and because the San Francisco Library understandably did not have parts for this contemporary score, as it did for the others, the Mozart 34th Symphony was substituted, with performances of the Wagner Prelude and Liebestod from "Tristan and Isolde" and the Beethoven Fifth Symphony being heard as scheduled.

The only catch was, as Fogel underscored "for those of you who may not be performing professionals," the CSO players would be playing under their superstar maestro as announced, but many of the instruments would not be their own. I frankly thought the results were astoundingly fine, but some critics found things just not quite the same.

Critic Robert Commandy noted that "the upshot was that the orchestra played like the Chicago Symphony, but didn't sound like it." Commandy also offered the most succinct and witty description of the situation: "The Chicago Symphony has been called the Emperor of Orchestras. Saturday afternoon, in San Francisco, the Emperor had no clothes, also no instruments."

Whatever the problems, Solti and his orchestra lived up to their reputations, and the Wagner was glowingly warm and expressive, the Beethoven rich in the dramatic accents of rhythm and color the conductor favors, and the Mozart a perfect marvel.

For soloist Larry Combs and the entire orchestra, the next day's concerto proved a smashing hit in virtuoso performance. Combs, Solti, the orchestra and a beaming composer, John Corigliano, were properly cheered to the rafters for a stunning performance of an eclectic score that manages to make a strong visceral impact at the same time it touches the heart, especially in a lyrical Bartok-Britten-tinged slow movement.

Of course, the CSO covered itself in glory during the passionate Mahler Fifth.

Chicago Sun-Times  
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Georg Solti  
The show must go on

## Truck snarl yields Solti's U.S. debut as pianist

Georg Solti made an unplanned U.S. debut as a concert pianist yesterday in San Francisco after a truck carrying the instruments, music and formal attire of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra failed to arrive at the concert hall because of a snowstorm in Arizona and a flat tire.

Symphony members, using borrowed instruments, played chamber music so as not to delay their concert in San Francisco's Davies Symphony Hall, according to Megan De Pencier, a symphony representative.

Before conducting the Chicago Symphony, Solti, in his 18th season with the orchestra, was an internationally known pianist but had never performed publicly in the United States.

Yesterday, he performed the slow movement of Mozart's G Minor Piano Quartet with three members of the orchestra: co-concertmaster Samuel Magad, principal cellist John Sharp and principal viola Charles Pikler.

About 30 percent of the symphony members, including those who play smaller instruments, were able to use their own, according to Joyce Idema, orchestra spokesman. But the rest had to make do with loaners.

The musicians, who appeared on stage in sport jackets and ties or sweaters and skirts or jeans, were able to borrow from former students or friends in the area, according to Idema. They were left short by only one bassoon needed for music from Richard Wagner's "Tristan und Isolde."

Performances were also scheduled for today.

# CSO 'ambushed' out West, again, but show goes on

By Donald M. Schwartz  
and Robert C. Marsh

The Chicago Symphony Orchestra has been bushwhacked again in the wild, wild West.

Two weeks ago it was a snowstorm in Arizona and a flat tire that held up the orchestra's instrument and wardrobe trucks—and forced an ad lib concert in San Francisco.

Yesterday it was an overturned instrument truck in the middle of the great Texas nowhere. That sent the orchestra manager scurrying with a replacement truck to get the instruments to a concert in Austin last night and gave the musicians a worrisome day of waiting after flying to Austin.

But an orchestra spokesman said there is no thought of the widely traveled musicians giving up their globe-girdling concerts.

"When you don't know what's happened to your instrument, it's very unsettling," said Joyce Idema, orchestra spokeswoman. "But I haven't heard anybody say, 'We shouldn't go touring.'"

Police said the instrument truck overturned about 160 miles west of Austin, near Junction, when the vehicle swerved to the right and the driver, correcting too much, caused the semitrailer to jackknife.

Orchestra manager Henry Fogel flew to the scene in a chartered

plane and sent the instruments on to Austin in the second truck.

Although four double basses were severely damaged and a cello was cracked, the orchestra, which had backup instruments available from the Austin Symphony, made the downbeat at 9:28 p.m.

The concert had been rescheduled yesterday morning from 8 to 9 p.m., but the announced program remained intact—Haydn's Symphony No. 103 and the Mahler Symphony No. 5.

The first mishap on the orchestra's western tour was Jan. 31, when a snowstorm held up the trucks and sent the musicians to the San Francisco stage in sport jackets and jeans and required many to play on borrowed instruments.

It was a decidedly odd concert, with conductor Georg Solti, a concert-caliber pianist, making his U.S. piano debut with the orchestra.

"We've traveled all over the world," Idema observed. "Five times to Europe, twice to the Orient and countless trips in this country. And this is only the third incident."

Yes, the other one was in the West, too—in 1982, when the orchestra's trucks were delayed by a blizzard between Salt Lake City and Tucson, Ariz. The Tucson concert ultimately was canceled.

# Solti returns to the piano and saves day

Chicago Tribune, Feb. 1, 1987

By Terry Wilson

Georg Solti, the 74-year-old musical director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, gave a sold-out audience of 3,000 San Franciscans a true show of his musical flair and flexibility Saturday.

With his musicians' instruments delayed in transit several hundred miles away, Solti stepped out of the role of conductor and into the role of pianist during an afternoon concert at the Davies Symphony Hall in San Francisco's civic center.

Solti, who started his career as a solo pianist but is known in the United States primarily as a conductor, played the Mozart Piano Quartet in G Minor K.478. He was accompanied by co-concert master Samuel Magad, principal violist Charles Pikler and principal cellist John Sharp.

The performance, which lasted about 10 minutes, was Solti's United States debut as a pianist. And the audience was appreciative, to say the least.

"It was wonderful. He got three curtain calls," said David Landis, the public relations director for the Symphony Hall. "The audience just loved it."

Solti made his debut as he and other members of the orchestra, on a West Coast tour, stalled for time hoping that several trucks carrying the instruments, stage attire and music of orchestra members would arrive.

Two of the trucks ran into three problems as they headed to San Francisco from Tulsa, Okla. CSO Executive Director Henry Fogel said one of the drivers had a flat tire and later ran into a snowstorm in Arizona, "which he probably would have missed if he hadn't had the flat tire."

The second truck, ahead of the first, was nearly impounded by California authorities because of problems highway officials had with the manifest the driver carried.

Notified Saturday morning of the problem, Fogel said he called Peter Pastreich, a friend who is the executive director of the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra. He told Pastreich of the problem. Together, they rounded up instruments from members of the San Francisco orchestra and from an instrument dealer in the area.

As the 3 p.m. start time approached, symphony-goers were greeted by Pastreich and Fogel, who explained the problem.

"There was a gasp from the audience," Landis said. The directors announced the new plans, which in-

cluded a few chamber music pieces as the musicians waited for a last-minute truck arrival—and Solti's debut.

The musicians, attired in anything from suitcoats and slacks, sweaters, tennis shoes and casual dresses—instead of tuxedos and stage dresses—took their place on stage and played chamber music.

"It was definitely an unorthodox looking orchestra," Fogel said in a telephone interview.

Solti's debut, which followed a brief rehearsal in a dressing room, received "a rousing round of applause," Landis said.

Explanations were also given for the music, Fogel said. "There's no way you can play with the expertise of a Chicago Symphony Orchestra musician when you're playing an instrument you've never played before in your life," he said.

But he said orchestra members added "a special degree of concentration and adrenaline" and sounded very well.

Instead of playing Composer-in-Residence John Corigliano's Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra, the 110 member orchestra played Wagner's Prelude and Liebestod from Tristan and Isolde, the Mozart Haffner Symphony and Beethoven's Symphony No. 5, Landis said.

"During the concert, the ovations have been louder than almost any others I've heard," Fogel said. "I think the audience was with us all the way."

## Chicago Trib. Feb. 13 Truck carrying CSO instruments topples

A call to borrow instruments was sounded Thursday by musicians with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra after a truck transporting their instruments tipped over on a highway near Junction, Tex. But CSO spokeswoman Joyce Idema said orchestra members were optimistic that their instruments, which they hope will be undamaged, would arrive in Austin in time for their 9 p.m. appearance at the Performing Arts Center of the University of Texas. The Western tour, which draws to a close Sunday in Dallas, also had truck troubles on Jan. 31, when trucks carrying their instruments, sheet music and show attire were delayed by weather and highway authorities.