

the keenness of his thinking. He could recognize subtleties and pitfalls clearly before others and brought to our attention potential ramifications that were not readily apparent to the rest of us.

I clearly recall his early warnings regarding our most recent Special Situations language. At the time, it was hard to comprehend how disastrous Special Situations would turn out to be.

With little support, he remained adamant, and was sadly far ahead of the pack — and dead on target.

This is but one tiny example of his great intelligence and foresight that in this instance bordered on precognition.

Though he is no longer the chair, I certainly hope he will remain a valuable presence at our meetings. He is and will be a tremendous asset.

Recently, Larry fell ill with a serious medical condition. But in spite of it, he continued to work on our behalf even when he was in the hospital.

I feel so privileged to have worked with him. A simple “thank you” is woefully inadequate to express the gratitude we owe him. He has truly led by example.

Marshall Coid

MUSICIANS, WORKERS AND THE UNION

The following letter was originally a response to Allegro's question of the month, which can be found on pages 12-13. We asked the writer if we could run it as a letter to the editor. This letter responds to the basic question, "Are musicians workers or artists?"

To the Editor:

Every artist is a worker above all. I think of myself as an artist first. I work for my art.

I care deeply about the labor movement and the role of the unions. The breaking of the power of unions since the Reagan administration has been a disaster for our democracy, for our society, and for our economy.

I wish that I could say that my art and my work have been supported by a strong musicians' union but that is not the case.

When I lived in Chicago, prominent contractors called me to play gigs for which they had not filed contracts. These contractors were often members of the Lyric Opera Orchestra who had all of the advantages of the contracts that the union had negotiated for them. The Chicago AFM local (10-208) did not discipline them for working below union scale without contracts, driving down wages.

The AFM virtually destroyed the U.S. classical recording industry, setting exorbitant rates, driving work to Europe.

Local 802 has not had the clout to keep orchestras in theatres (a recent performance by the Comedie Française was accompanied by recorded music), while the stagehands' union has managed to keep its members working even in productions where they are not needed.

Since coming to New York City I have learned that the union has prohibited a newly formed period-instruments orchestra from holding auditions, ensuring that its personnel will be chosen not by the conductor on the basis of merit, but by a contractor motivated by entrenched self-interest. Given that I am new to the city this disadvantages me, a dues-paying member.

I continue to be a member of the union on principle, but that principled stand feels sillier every day.

John Mark Rozendaal

SPOTTED: RACISM

To the Editor:

I was very impressed by Gabriel Banar's article about the Afro-French composer Le Chevalier de Saint-Georges.

(The article appeared in Allegro's February 2007 African-American History Month issue, which I read on the Web site of the International Labor Communications Association.)

Banar's book, "The Chevalier de Saint-Georges: Virtuoso of the Sword and the Bow," is one of the principal authorities for the biographical essay on Saint-Georges at my Web site, www.AfriClassical.com.

But none of the dozens of recordings of the music of Saint-Georges prepared me for the June release of a new CD: "Monsieur de Saint-Georges: 4 Concertos pour violon," by Les Archets de Paris (Calliope, 2007).

The cover of that CD depicts Saint-Georges in a bizarre red outfit covered with white polka dots!

The white people in the scene are dressed normally. Contemporary portraits of the composer show him impeccably dressed in the finery of an 18th century aristocrat.

I wrote to Harmonia Mundi USA, the U.S. distributor for Calliope, and respectfully requested a change in the cover art.

I explained that it brought to mind demeaning images of black performers in the minstrel era. Other people wrote to the distributor in a similar vein. Next I launched a blog at AfriClassical.blogspot.com. My first post was called "Black Composer In Polka Dots."

I later received a lengthy reply on behalf of Calliope by Alain Guédé, with no mention of the minstrel issue.

Monsieur Guédé wrote that "the cover is the work of two great artists," and added "We want to give classical music in France a younger image."

Those who perform and listen to classical music must make clear to record labels that racism has no place on classical CD covers. ☐

William J. Zick