

## Dear Patron of the Vienna Philharmonic,

Are you aware that the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra still discriminates against women musicians? In 1997, our protests led the orchestra to begin admitting women for the first time in its 150 year history, but in the six years since, the orchestra has hired 21 men and only 3 women. Women thus represent only 2 percent of the orchestra.

On behalf of the **International Alliance for Women in Music**, we request that you join us in urging the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra to end its discrimination against women as members. Our organization is a coalition of 800 professional musicians, including composers, conductors, performers, musicologists, educators, and librarians in 31 countries. We believe that excluding candidates based on factors other than musical ability is outrageous.

It is our belief that such open contempt for women's rights and talent prevents the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra from being accepted as a true ambassador of Austrian culture. We are committed to publicizing this information internationally until this discriminatory policy no longer exists.

Some facts to consider:

- In a recent interview, Peter Schmidl, Business Manager of the Vienna Philharmonic, acknowledged that one third of the orchestra is still opposed to the admission of women. Since the competition for positions in top orchestras is fierce, and the votes are often very close, it is virtually impossible for women to win auditions with one third of the men *a priori* against them.
- The Vienna Philharmonic's discrimination is illustrated by comparison. In the last six years the very similar Zurich State Opera Orchestra has filled 20 of 30 free positions with women (66%), while the Vienna Philharmonic filled only 3 of 24 with women (12.5%).
- Women consistently comprise more than half of the graduates in Austria's music schools, but in the last six years they have obtained only 3 of the orchestra's 24 new positions.
- At the current rate of employment, it will take women 24 more years to represent even 10 percent of the orchestra.
- Last year the Vienna Philharmonic brought three women substitutes along for its US tour in an attempt to disguise its lack of women.
- Incredibly, the Vienna Philharmonic also has a tradition of excluding people of color, since the orchestra feels such individuals would weaken the ensemble's image of Austrian authenticity. Note that the orchestra's members are all Caucasian even though there are many Asians students in Austria's music schools.

For complete information and documentation of the orchestra's employment policies, see the full press release of the International Alliance for Women in Music at: <http://www.osborne-conant.org/iawminfo.htm>

**A collection of statements that illustrate the gender and racial ideologies of the Vienna Philharmonic.**

A Vienna Philharmonic musician in a recent interview with the Austrian magazine *profil* (February 24, 2003):

“Three women are already too many. By the time we have twenty percent, the orchestra will be ruined. We have made a big mistake, and will bitterly regret it.”

In his memoirs, Otto Strasser, a former Chairman of the Philharmonic, describes the problems blind auditions caused :

“Even a grotesque situation that played itself out after my retirement, was not able to change the situation. An applicant qualified himself as the best, and as the screen was raised, there stood a Japanese before the stunned jury. He was, however, not engaged, because his face did not fit with the 'Pizzicato-Polka' of the New Year's Concert.”

Dieter Flury, the orchestra's solo-flutist, in an interview with the West German State Radio (1996):

"The soul does not let itself be separated from the cultural roots that we have here in central Europe. And it also doesn't allow itself to be separated from gender. So if one thinks that the world should function by quota regulations, then it is naturally irritating that we are a group of white skinned male musicians, that perform exclusively the music of white skinned male composers. It is a racist and sexist irritation. I believe one must put it that way. If one establishes superficial egalitarianism, one will lose something very significant. Therefore, I am convinced that it is worthwhile to accept this racist and sexist irritation, because something produced by a superficial understanding of human rights would not have the same standards."

A statement from an Asian woman musician as documented by Dr. Elena Ostleitner, director of the Institute for Music Sociology at the University of Vienna (1995):

"I auditioned for an orchestra, and I led in the point tabulations as long as I played behind a screen. Due to my name it was not apparent that I am an Asian. But when the screen was removed [for the final round], I was rejected without comment. Friends in the orchestra confirmed my assumption. They do not take foreigners, and if they do, then only those in which foreign appearance is not visible."

Prof. Roland Girtler, of the University of Vienna, in interview with the West German State Radio (1996):

"What I have noticed that is interesting, is that the Vienna Philharmonic would also never take a Japanese or such. If they took one, this also would somehow by appearances put in question the noble character of Viennese culture. But this is not racist!"

Wolfgang Schuster, Press Secretary of the Vienna Philharmonic (1997):

"Many musicians, even if they won't admit it, secretly believe there's a difference in the sound produced by a man and a woman. I know three conductors who say this. [...] I know a lot of men that sound like women. But not with us, mind you. [...] This is something that we label our personal style. And it is, if you want to characterize it, masculine."