

Symphony Board plays God; fires van der Merwe

EDITOR:

When the Plymouth Symphony Board members decided to fire Johan van der Merwe after the season was completed and said, "We're doing this for the good of the orchestra," it put me in mind of Adolf Hitler when he said, "We're doing this for the good of Germany."

Do they really know what they're doing?

Do those people know what in the world they've done?!

I'll tell you. They've:

1) Fired an excellent conductor without due process;

2) Trampled on the rights and feelings of the orchestra members;

3) Completely disregarded a voiced vote by a majority of the membership of the orchestra;

4) Surrounded themselves with, listened to and allowed themselves to be influenced by self-seeking persons.

The Symphony Board has to learn one great lesson: The Plymouth Symphony is *not* in existence to serve the self-directed, self-seeking aims of the board. On the contrary, the board exists to serve the needs, direction and audience — present and future — of the Plymouth symphony.

This cannot be achieved in the present state of affairs. The board *must* consult the orchestra membership, by way of a representative, in regard to every move they intend to make which would affect the future of the orchestra. This dismissal of the

former representative from attendance at board meetings because "there are board actions about which the orchestra membership need not be aware" speaks most strongly of their determination *not* to communicate their thinking to the membership at large.

What do they think they are — some autonomous anonymity? Some star chamber?

They can't manipulate without consultation. Does the board want change in the PSO? All right; consult, step by step, with the membership. Tell *them* the board's intentions and wait for feedback. Don't put those thoughts in the hands of so-called "players' committee" that is supposed to communicate with the membership and doesn't.

The board doesn't *ask*; they make decisions and pass them on; decisions over which they have no right to have any control — soloists, conductors, literature, yes-or-no childrens' concerts.

They hire an Orchestra General Manager, at a salary many people would love to earn, to write what I think are boring, pedestrian program notes and make artistic decisions for which I'll bet you anything he has barely any qualifications.

I'll go you one bet farther — I'll bet you anything that they have, and have had for some time, someone like Charles Greenwell or Russell Reed in the wings, waiting to take over.

Before Gunther Herbig's appointment, the orchestra membership was given an opportunity to vote their approval. Is the PSO board any better than the DSO board? I don't care how fantastic the new conductor may be, they have no right to bring him/her in without a tryout and approval by the orchestra. As awkward an allusion as it may seem, would you buy a new car without test-driving it?

What makes me really angry is the thought that, long before the April 18 meeting of the program committee, the board probably already knew that van der Merwe was not going to be asked back. Still, they let him attend that meeting and plan what he thought was going to be *his* season. What a contemptible farce!

If they had any collective brains, they'd have kept van der Merwe for at least one more year and not thrown the wet blanket of upheaval over the PSO on its 40th anniversary. Their

actions probably won't destroy the PSO, but I know from 35 years' experience as an orchestra musician that the group will be severely demoralized.

I don't care *how* much money the board brought in this year; that's their job. Stick to it. They should not apply themselves to areas in which they have no expertise.

The next time the board decides to fire a conductor, I hope they will have the courage to do it to his/her face — person to person — not through the anonymity of a letter — and give him/her a chance to say farewell to the orchestra that he/she had sweated blood to mold and train and lead to the greatest heights of achievement in its 40-year history.

The PSO board is a group of mortals; they shouldn't play God.

ROBERT W. JONES,
PLYMOUTH



Down The Road

By Brian Lysaght

In the never-ending speed limit battle between police and motorists, police have the upper hand. Everybody knows that -- or do they?

Even radar detectors don't even the odds.

I spent a couple hours on Memorial Day Monday riding with State Police Trooper Bob Garcia of the Northville Post who was assigned a section of I-275 running through Plymouth Township, Canton and points south.

Memorial Day is traditionally one of the heaviest highway traffic days in Michigan, with thousands of people in the state returning home from holiday travels.

Garcia, the post's community service trooper, normally doesn't draw highway duty. The Northville post doesn't usually have eight cars on the road like they did Monday; they usually have four. Garcia was patrolling as part of Operation CARE, or Combined Accident Reduction Effort, a federally funded program charged with arresting drunk drivers and ticketing speeders.

Garcia said his afternoon shift task was to remain visible and slow traffic on the bustling highway.

But being invisible helps some. Garcia parked his car high along the entrance ramp to I-275 from Ann Arbor Road. There, he waited and watched the highway for speeding cars or trucks. State Police troopers, he explained, are trained to estimate vehicle speeds both in stationary and moving positions. They have to estimate within four miles per hour the speeds of cars in 25 straight tests.

In less than a minute, he picks up a racer and peels off after it. He slips in behind the car, takes a radar reading of

68 miles per hour than throws on the red lights.

The suprised motorist, fuzz buster on the dash, admitted he sped up a bit to pass some cars but had since slowed down. No matter, he got a ticket.

While Garcia's car was radar equipped, he didn't use radar to clock all the cars he stopped. He can do a visual estimate of the car's speed then clock it on his speedometer.

One motorist, who was clocked without radar, quickly pulled his fuzz buster off the dashboard when he saw the red lights flashing in his rear-view mirror.

Garcia says there isn't a shortage of speeders, whether the roadway is I-275 or Main Street in Plymouth.

"There's no need to give out any bad tickets, because if just wait, another guy will come by and you can get him," Garcia said.

And another Garcia policy: It doesn't matter what the wheels look like, a speeder is a speeder.

"Hey if they deserve it, they get it."

He then pulled his car beneath a viaduct along the highway and pointed the radar gun at approaching and unsuspecting vehicles. It didn't take long to spot a station wagon pushing 70 mph.

"You can catch speeders all day at that place," he said.

Garcia issued tickets to six cars in less than two hours without seeming to try too hard.

Along with a ticket, Garcia handed out a pair of pamphlets describing the state's seat belt law which will go into effect July 1.

Pointing to the stack of pamphlets in the car, Garcia says: "Notice I'm an optimist, I've got about 50 of each."

'Reaching Out' outstanding

EDITOR:

Thank you for the wonderful article about the Schoolcraft College Women's Resource Center which appeared in the Women Reaching Out section of the May 8 issue of The Community Crier.

We have received many favorable comments about the article, and we agree that Miriam Zahler did a magnificent job of describing our center and the services we provide. Your photos gave the added touch.

The entire Women Reaching Out section was outstanding. Thank you for allowing us to be a part of it.

VIRGINIA WILHELM, COORDINATOR
WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTER

Graduation caution:

Summer approaches quickly and with it the grand tradition of high school graduation. For the seniors at Salem and Canton, it's a time to don cap and gown, reflect on 13 years of school, and dream of what is to come.

It is also a time to celebrate. Celebrating is painting outrageous slogans on rusted out four wheel bombs, driving around town horns blaring and rubbing elbows with classmates at parties.

But a note of caution must be thrown in amidst the fun: Don't drink and drive. If you drink, let someone sober drive.

With graduation approaching, the rules seemingly have been suspended. But the rules of common sense apply as always.

Celebrate this great accomplishment safely. Don't endanger friends or loved ones by getting behind the wheel of a car when you're not sober enough to drive.

You're smart enough to know that.

THE COMMUNITY CRIER

CYNTHIA FANLOW