

6-29-1982

Henri Temianka Correspondence; (menuhin)

Henri Temianka

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Recommended Citation

Temianka, Henri, "Henri Temianka Correspondence; (menuhin)" (1982). *Henri Temianka Correspondence*. 1477.
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Keywords

Henri Temianka, Yehudi Menuhin, June 29, 1982, culture, virtuosity in musical performance, violinist, chamber music, camaraderie, Michel Boutinard-Rouelle, California Chamber Symphony Society, money, funds, discontent, music education, Consul General of France



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June 29, 1982

Monsieur Michel BOUTINARD-ROUELLE
President des Concours Internationaux
de la Ville de Paris
17, boulevard Morland
Bureau 7123
75181 PARIS Cedex, 04

Dear Monsieur:

On September 8, 1981, you sent me a contract letter on behalf of the City of Paris, inviting me to serve on the International Yehudi Menuhin Violin Competition in Paris from June 15 through 24, 1982. Under the terms of this agreement, you were to provide me with round trip airfare from Los Angeles to Paris, hotel accommodations in Paris, and a per diem compensation for the duration of the Competition.

In accepting your proposal, I made myself unavailable for other, more lucrative professional engagements elsewhere.

On May 14, one month before the Competition was to start, I received a form letter from Mr. Menuhin stating that the Competition had been "postponed" (sic!) until September 1984, because of "inadequate quality and numbers of candidates". Astounded as I was by this unprecedented cancellation of an international musical competition, I awaited official notification from the city of Paris, in view of its documented legal and moral commitment towards me.

To this day, I regret to say, I have received from no official source a notification of cancellation, an expression of regrets, nor an offer to indemnify me for time and earnings sacrificed.

Even more serious than all the above is the harm inflicted on the serious young candidates, many of whom have made enormous sacrifices in order to participate in the Competition. In the case of a student of mine, I can speak from first hand observation and experience. This young man, Mischa Lefkowitz, is a highly gifted, advanced and dedicated violinist. Despite

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his duties as a member of the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, he spent five and six hours daily preparing for the Paris Competition. He even learned and mastered the "Morceau Imposé" by Mihalovici, a composition so difficult as to be almost unplayable.

Because of the failure of the the administration of the Competition to communicate with competitors or jury members, Mr. Lefkowitz was able to obtain the "Morceau Imposé" only with the greatest difficulty, and at considerable expense. And because the administration failed to acknowledge receipt of the required audition tapes, and did not reply to his letters, he was put to additional expense making transatlantic telephone calls and sending telegrams. Furthermore, in his desire to be as well prepared as possible for the Competition, Mr. Lefkowitz gave several violin recitals in the Los Angeles area at his own expense, in which he programmed the works which he was to play at the Competition.

When Mr. Menuhin's cancellation notice reached me, Mr. Lefkowitz was on concert tour with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra in Japan. At the conclusion of that tour, he was planning to fly directly from Tokyo to Paris for the Competition. Through much effort and expense I was able to reach him in Tokyo to inform him of the cancellation.

The experience to which Mr. Lefkowitz has been subjected is profoundly discouraging and cruel. Many other candidates must have experienced a similar shock. I find it difficult to believe that a major international violin competition in the city of Paris, with so illustrious a jury chairman as Mr. Yehudi Menuhin, would fail to attract a certain number of serious, sufficiently advanced competitors. Even if you found the number of qualified participants disappointing, I feel that the organizers had a moral obligation to proceed with the Competition at such a late date.

The purpose of a violin competition is supposedly to encourage young violinists in the pursuit of excellence. Your precipitate cancellation is bound to have the opposite effect, creating widespread, profound and possibly lasting discouragement. As a lifelong friend of France, and a lifelong champion of its music, I can only register my deep distress.

Yours sincerely,

Henri Temianka
Henri Temianka

xc: Honorable Jean-Claude Moreau, Consul General of France, Los Angeles