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Henri Temianka Correspondence; (merrill)

Henri Temianka

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Please reply to:
2915 Patricia Avenue
Los Angeles, California
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October 24, 1972

Dr. Lindsey Merrill
Chairman, Music Department
Kent State University
Kent, Ohio 44240

Dear Lindsey:

Your very kind letter of August 22 did not come to my attention until I returned from Europe two weeks ago. I warmly appreciate your kind comments on my contribution to this past summer's program at the Blossom Festival School. I feel privileged to have been able to participate in a project of great intrinsic value. The fact that the school has now completed its fifth consecutive year is the finest possible tribute to your creative and organizational talents.

In response to your request, I gladly offer some constructive comments for whatever they may be worth. As I am sure you realize, my effectiveness with the string orchestra and one or two of the chamber music groups was limited by the imperfect cooperation of a few students who influenced some of the others. I find no precedent for this kind of experience and have tried to analyze it with all of the objectivity I can muster. Because of the fact that, during this very same summer, I was involved in a number of similar projects, where the standards were also very high, I think I am in a position to make some valid comparisons. The enclosed reprint from the Jerusalem Post should be of interest.

I believe it is important to weed out those students who, taking advantage of your generosity, are motivated by the advantages of free travel, room and board, rather than a genuine desire to learn. There is also some evidence that certain students are afflicted by a peculiar brand of eastern seaboard provincialism. They are prejudiced against an import from the wild West, particularly when they are not too familiar with his work. Here, paradoxically, is where unfamiliarity breeds contempt. What I am really saying is that some of these young people are spoiled and not yet

October 24, 1972

ready to cope with the realities of life. When they come face to face with these realities, as they inevitably must, they are in for a rude shock.

What can be done about all this? I think, for one thing, it should be spelled out carefully in advance, and repeatedly during the summer session, what is expected of them. They must be made to realize that the privileges received impose certain obligations. I believe, that so long as you have confidence in a member of the faculty, you could give him important moral support by imposing sterner disciplinary measures against uncooperative students. I also think that it might help if you could introduce a new faculty member to the students, giving them an adequate briefing on his career and qualifications. It would do much to overcome both their distrust and their ignorance.

Many students complained about excessively heavy schedules and exhaustion. While some of these complaints are to be taken with a grain of salt, it would be an improvement to allow for a ten-minute break between coachings, enabling students to get from one class to another at a more relaxed pace. Incidentally, I have qualms about referring to teachers as "coaches", as this tends to further erode their already precarious prestige.

Well, my dear Lindsey, you cannot complain at my lack of candor. A number of my Blossom School colleagues repeatedly made similar comments in the privacy of our martinis.

Emmy and I greatly enjoyed getting to know you and Martha, and send you warmest regards. You have our very best wishes for the continued success of your magnificent project.

Yours always,

Henri Temianka

HT/cp
Enc.