

= Symphony Six =

The Symphony Six were a group of Canadian musicians under contract to the Toronto Symphony Orchestra (TSO) who were denied entry to the United States for a concert tour in November 1951 . Coming at the height of the McCarthy era in the US , the six musicians ? Ruth Budd , Dirk Keetbaas , William Kuinka , Abe Mannheim , John Moskalyk , and Steven Staryk ? were denied visas on the suspicion of being involved in communist activities . The TSO sent other musicians in their place and completed its tour . The six musicians resumed playing with the orchestra upon its return to Canada .

At the end of the 1951 @-@ 1952 season , the TSO refused to renew the contracts of these musicians , stating that they had not fulfilled their contractual agreements . The six musicians appealed this decision to its union , the Toronto Musicians ' Association ; the Mayor of Toronto ; the Canadian Civil Liberties Association ; and many other bodies , without success . They received support from the Federation of Canadian Artists and the Canada Council for the Arts , but not from the Canadian Congress of Labour . The incident garnered extensive media coverage in both Canada and the United States , and sparked a protest against the TSO 's decision . The orchestra 's director , Ernest MacMillan , did not speak about the matter in public , which also prompted criticism , and two members of the TSO board resigned . The six musicians were viewed with suspicion by their colleagues and people avoided them to protect themselves from guilt by association . Budd and Staryk later returned to the TSO , while the four other musicians continued their careers elsewhere .

= = Background = =

The Toronto Symphony Orchestra was founded by Luigi von Kunits in 1922 . From 1931 to 1956 it was conducted by Sir Ernest MacMillan , who achieved renown as " the leading figure in Canadian music " . By the 1940s the orchestra 's popularity had increased , but its financial condition did not allow it to tour or invite many guest conductors and soloists . In 1951 @-@ 52 it received CA \$ 56 @,@ 000 in donations and grants , CA \$ 10 @,@ 000 less than the amount raised by the smaller Vancouver Symphony Orchestra . Some TSO musicians freelanced for the CBC Symphony Orchestra and a few left the TSO to work for the CBC . MacMillan hoped that the TSO could boost its reputation through international engagements .

= = Event = =

The Toronto Symphony Orchestra was invited to perform at the Detroit Masonic Temple auditorium on November 27 , 1951 as part of the Major Symphony Series , which also featured the Boston Symphony Orchestra , the Chicago Symphony Orchestra , the Cleveland Orchestra , and the Philadelphia Orchestra . TSO director MacMillan viewed this first @-@ ever US invitation as a golden opportunity to garner more international invitations for the orchestra . He added vocal soloist Lois Marshall to the orchestra , as well as a piece by an American composer , Herbert Elwell 's work Pastorale , and Edward Elgar 's Enigma Variations , to the repertoire .

At this time in the United States , McCarthyism was at its height , generating fear and suspicion of entertainment industry figures , academics , military figures , and government officials by accusing them of real or suggested links to communist activities . The TSO was required to submit to United States immigration authorities all the names of its musicians and other staff who would be accompanying the tour . The immigration department approved visas for all but seven musicians , suspecting them of communist activities . One of the musicians was later cleared , leaving six musicians who were denied entry .

These six musicians , who became known as the Symphony Six , were :

Ruth Budd , double bassist . Born in Winnipeg , she joined the TSO in 1947 , becoming Canada 's first professional female bassist .

Dirk Keetbaas , Jr . , principal flautist . Born in the Netherlands , Keetbaas was a naturalized

Canadian citizen . He also performed in the CBC Symphony Orchestra and in chamber music groups . He joined the TSO in 1949 .

William Kuinka , double bassist . Born in British Columbia , he had served in the Second World War . He was self @-@ taught in mandolin and guitar as well . The 1951 @-@ 1952 season was his first and last year in the TSO .

Abe Mannheim , bassist . This was his fourth season with the orchestra . Immigration officials had questioned him for 4 hours .

John Moskalyk , violinist . He joined the TSO in 1945 .

Steven Saryk , violinist . Born in Toronto , he studied violin as a child with , among others , John Moskyk , and performed in his first recital on CBC Radio at the age of 14 . He joined the TSO in 1950 when he was still in his teens .

Several of the six musicians had been involved with Canadian @-@ Russian friendship organizations formed in the 1940s for the purposes of artistic collaboration ; however , they denied charges of political involvement . Saryk related that he had played at Ukrainian and other ethnic events , and Budd admitted to being a member of a left @-@ wing youth group . John Moskalyk 's surname was listed in the TSO 's programs as " Moscow " ; he had conducted the Budapest orchestra for two concert performances in August 1949 . Keetbaas could not recall any association with left @-@ wing groups . Harry Freedman , who was on the board of the Toronto Musicians ' Association at the time and whose vote thwarted unanimous decisions against the Symphony Six , stated that he was not aware of any of the six musicians promoting communism . Later , he felt that he should have taken " more direct action " .

MacMillan himself had been involved in the National Council for Canadian @-@ Soviet Friendship in the 1940s , though he had since quit that organization . In 1950 , with an eye to taking the orchestra on international tours , he had written a letter to the American consul in Toronto admitting his former affiliation . He received his visa in November 1951 without any difficulties . After the six musicians were denied entry and before the orchestra had left for the United States , MacMillan solicited help for them from the Canadian ambassador in Washington , but his plea was unsuccessful . In January 1952 he wrote to US immigration officials trying to clear Saryk 's name , lauding him as " an exceptionally talented violinist and valuable member of the orchestra . I have no reason to doubt that he has no Communist affiliations other than that he played from ages twelve to fourteen with a Ukrainian orchestra that is under some suspicion " . His entreaties on behalf of Saryk did not help to exonerate the musician .

The TSO board sent other musicians in place of the six who had been denied visas , and the concert went on as planned . The orchestra 's performance was a success and received positive reviews from both the American and Canadian press . After the TSO returned to Canada , the six musicians resumed their positions .

= = Refusal to renew contracts = =

At the end of the 1951 @-@ 1952 season , with more American concerts planned for the orchestra in Boston , New York , and Philadelphia in the coming season , the TSO did not renew its contracts with all six musicians . Jack Elton , manager of the orchestra , discussed the problem of these six players with the TSO board in a meeting held on April 21 , 1952 . At the meeting , Elton said that " for artistic reasons there could be no substitutes for such an important concert " . The board agreed with Elton 's arguments and contended that the six musicians had not fulfilled their contractual agreement to join the orchestra on international tours , and that being barred from entering the United States would prevent them from joining the orchestra in future US appearances . Ernest MacMillan was not present at the meeting .

The incident and the board 's decision not to renew the musicians ' contracts created controversy when it became public , garnering media attention both nationally and internationally . Members of the press castigated the TSO for not cancelling the US tour in protest over the immigration department 's decision , citing a similar case in which the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam had cancelled its US tour when several of its musicians were denied entry . One

reporter , Langford Dixon of The Globe and Mail , " defended the six so vehemently that it led to his dismissal from the paper " . Many people wrote letters to the TSO and some even cancelled their subscriptions . For its part , the TSO board blamed the newly established Canadian television for the unprecedented decline in subscriptions . A letter to the editor of Toronto Daily Star called the firing " an offence against Canadian independence . "

The TSO board gave orchestra manager Jack Elton the authority to decide what steps should be taken . Elton asked the Toronto Musicians ' Association to intervene . The union upheld the board 's decision . The six musicians appealed but the union turned them down , stating that they had not fulfilled their contractual agreements and so the orchestra had the right not to renew their contracts . Walter Murdoch , president of the Toronto Musicians ' Association , said that it was " a straight contractual matter " and " there is nothing wrong in the orchestra 's not rehiring musicians " .

On May 26 , 1952 twelve members of the TSO board met to review their decision not to renew the contracts . Nine of the members voted in favor of the decision while three voted against it . It was decided that the contracts would not be renewed , but if the United States immigration officials would issue entry permits to the six musicians by September 1 , the TSO would renew the contracts . This decision created a controversy and a split within the TSO board , which eventually led to the resignation of two members , Mrs. Edmund Boyd and Mrs. R. B. Whitehead , although these two remained members of the orchestra 's women 's committee .

The Assembly for the Canadian Arts called a rally in support of the Symphony Six on May 29 . The Toronto Musicians ' Association instructed its members not to attend and sent members to stand outside the entrance " to intimidate members from entering " . Aspersions were cast on the Assembly for the Canadian Arts as being a communist front organization , and the Toronto Evening Telegram called the gathering " a communist meeting " . Several members of the Assembly quit the group in fear " of being labelled communists " . On June 4 the United Church of Canada urged the TSO board to reconsider its decision .

The controversy continued into the orchestra 's 1952 @-@ 1953 season . The six musicians appealed again to the TSO board and the Toronto Musicians ' Association , but made no headway . The musicians also held meetings with the Canadian Civil Liberties Association and the Toronto Board of Control , and pleaded their case to the Mayor of Toronto , Allan A. Lamport , and the American Federation of Musicians , without success . While the Federation of Canadian Artists and the Canada Council for the Arts supported the six musicians , the Canadian Congress of Labour rejected a proposal to back them . In 1952 then @-@ Canadian foreign minister Lester Pearson was quoted as saying that it would not " serve any useful purpose to take the matter up again " . Pearson blamed the Cold War for such incidents , and added that the Canadian government was also denying entries to people wishing to attend communist meetings and was providing US officials with " security information " . A special committee was set up by the TSO board to screen all its members .

MacMillan stayed out of the matter ; he did not attend meetings of the TSO board and maintained a public silence through the spring and summer of 1952 . According to TSO archivist Warren , MacMillan 's correspondence indicates that he supported the board 's decision not to rehire the six musicians .

While the Symphony Six garnered support from many corners , they did not receive widespread support from their peers . While some orchestra members were " genuinely supportive " , according to Budd , many others publicly shunned them for fear of being perceived as communist sympathizers and losing their own jobs .

= = Aftermath = =

Only two of the Symphony Six eventually returned to the Toronto Symphony Orchestra : Ruth Budd and Stephen Staryk . After her contract was not renewed , Budd played with orchestras in Halifax and other Canadian cities . She was rehired by the TSO in 1964 and continued as a double bassist until 1989 , becoming " one of the most beloved members of the orchestra " . Staryk played in the CBC Symphony Orchestra from 1952 to 1956 and then traveled to London , where he was

appointed concertmaster of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra . In 1960 he became concertmaster of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra in Amsterdam and toured the US with them , although he had not been officially cleared by the US immigration department . Staryk was the first Canadian concertmaster of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra from 1963 to 1967 . He returned to the Toronto Symphony Orchestra in 1982 , serving as concertmaster until 1986 .

Keetbaas became the principal flautist for the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra and the CBC Winnipeg Orchestra from 1953 to 1968 . From 1956 to 1966 he directed and performed with the Dirk Keetbaas Players , a wind quintet featuring flute , oboe , clarinet , bassoon , and French horn .

Kuinka performed with the Toronto Renaissance Quintet from 1963 to 1965 . In 1964 he formed the Toronto Mandolin Chamber Ensemble , which existed until 1969 . He also performed with the orchestra of the National Ballet of Canada . He received a research grant from the Canada Council to study European teaching methods and repertoire in 1966 .

Mannheim later performed in the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra and the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra .

Moskalyk joined the Faculty of Music at the University of Toronto and also became a faculty member of The Royal Conservatory of Music .

The TSO board had not renewed the musicians ' contracts hoping that it would receive more concert invitations from the United States . However , it received only eight invitations in the following four years , all from the state of Michigan . The eighth tour had to be cancelled because of a snowstorm .

In a letter written to Dan Cameron , President of the Canadian Federation of Music Teachers , in November 1952 , MacMillan reflected that " the orchestra , far from suffering musically , has in some respects improved . "