

Noted composer believes trombone deserves solos

NEW YORK (AP) — Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Ellen Taaffe Zwilich was commissioned to create a new music piece for the Chicago Symphony because two trombone players wanted her to write music for them.

Sir Georg Solti will conduct "Concerto for Trombone and Orchestra" when the Symphony premieres it this month.

"The orchestra has a very fine first trombonist, Jay Friedman, and now has a wonderful bass trombone player, Charles Vernon," said Zwilich, the only woman ever to be awarded a Pulitzer for music.

"They both asked for me. I love the instrument and I think it's a wonderful solo instrument — with a very small repertoire.

"To me it's an instrument that should have the stature of the violin or piano as a soloist. So I was thrilled. It's nice to feel you're making a contribution."

When it came to composing, Zwilich said, "What I decided to do was write very different pieces. The one for tenor trombone is very interactive with the orchestra.

"The other, that I'm working on, is for bass trombone and strings and very little percussion. It is less interactive and more brilliantly virtuosic." That piece will be premiered next season.

Zwilich, 49, won the Pulitzer Prize for music in 1983 for her "First Symphony."

She played violin for seven years in the American Symphony and played trumpet in school. She has had experience with each family of instruments, but she didn't play trombone.

"I think one of the wonderful things that's available to a composer today is the good advice of musicians you respect," Zwilich said.

"Both Jay and Charlie have had very strong impact on the pieces I was writing for them. I've sat down with them, with and without instruments. We talk on the telephone. Someone who spends his or her life playing an instrument always has insights the outsider can never have.

"I also sat down with Solti. We talked about other people's music for trombone and orchestra and he told me what he thought the problems were."

The New York Philharmonic premiered Zwilich's "Symbolon" last June in the Soviet Union. It is the first American composition to be premiered there. This season, the Philharmonic will perform that work and the composer's "Concerto Grosso 1985" at Lincoln Center.

Based on a theme of Handel, it was commissioned by the Washington Friends of Handel.

Zwilich went on the Philharmonic tour. She relates that one Soviet man said he was surprised to hear a powerful piece composed by a woman. "The translator sort of giggled," she said. "She, as well as I, thought it was quaint." However, Zwilich said, Americans also "are sometimes surprised that women composers would have what might be considered a powerful statement to make."

As the trombone concerto was composed for a particular player and orchestra, "Symbolon" was tailored for its debut.

"Two things were uppermost in my mind," she said. "One was that I wanted it to be a piece that would ex-

loit the New York Philharmonic's virtuosity. I wrote a bass solo because the principal contrabass player is from Leningrad.

"The fact it was going to receive its premiere in the Soviet Union was very touching to me. I knew the piece would reflect the powerful and sometimes conflicting emotions that I have about the current world political situation.

"It's a piece of music. People can listen many different ways. It's not a piece where I think it's necessary to know the background. The title is an old Greek term which refers to two parties breaking something in two and each keeping half.

The implication is that it's a token of friendship and good will. There is a sense of needing the other to complete things."

Two recordings of Zwilich music will be released soon. The New York Philharmonic recorded "Symbolon," "Concerto Grosso 1985" and "Concerto for Trumpet and Five Players," conducted by Zubin Mehta, and "Double Quartet for Strings," conducted by the composer, for New World Records. The Louisville Symphony recorded her "Second Symphony" for Louisville Heritage Records.

Zwilich was born in Miami, has bachelors and masters degrees in composition from Florida State University and was the first woman to receive a doctorate in composition from the Juilliard School.

Zwilich met her husband, violinist Joseph Zwilich, in a restaurant after she had performed with the American Symphony and he had played in the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra.

Tractors, tractors everywhere but not one can plow the fields

HOPKINSVILLE, Ky. (AP) — Most everyone in Christian County knows that Charles Oatts farms a lot of land.

What many don't know is that he has more than 500 tractors, combines and implements stored in a building behind his house, and not one of them is big enough to do a decent day's work.

That's because they're toys. Every one is an imitation of farm machinery made during the past 40 years by companies such as John Deere, Case, International Harvester, Oliver, Massey-Ferguson, Kubota, Ford, New Holland, Allis Chalmers, Hesston and New Idea.

Oatts, 47, sells the farm toys to collectors. Some drive hundreds of miles to this out-of-the-way farm in western Kentucky. Others call from far reaches looking for toys they haven't been able to track down elsewhere.

"I strive to have the toys people want and the toys they can't find anywhere else," he says. "If somebody calls here looking for something, I like to be able to say I've got it."

Oatts began collecting farm toys seriously in 1980 and opened his business three years ago.

"People would come to our house to visit and they would say,

"I wish I had one of those,"" says Oatts. "I decided if there were that many people who wanted them, then I might as well sell the toys myself."

Oatts estimates that only a quarter of the toys he sells are for children.

Oatts' toys for sale range in price from a few dollars to \$135 for a Case-International tractor that was made for a 1987 dealer's show in Denver. The most valuable toy tractor Oatts owns, a John Deere 430 made during the late '50s and valued at about \$650, is not for sale.

Harmon claims sexiness just a job

LOS ANGELES (AP) — "Oh, he's a television actor" is a common Hollywood put-down that Michael J. Fox, Tom Selleck, Bruce Willis and Ted Danson have managed to overcome. Now Mark Harmon faces the same sneer.

The former Dr. Bobby Caldwell of "St. Elsewhere" has broken through with two major films: "The Presidio," co-starring with Sean Connery; and "Stealing Home," with Jodie Foster.

"The Presidio," a big-budget production that bombed at the box office, featured Harmon as a San Francisco police officer investigating a murder on an army base. In the more modest "Stealing Home," he is a minor league ballplayer on the

skids, returning to his boyhood roots.

Last summer, Harmon made his big-screen starring debut in the raucous comedy "Summer School," directed by Carl Reiner. He called it a turning point.

"Before 'Summer School,' nobody was knocking on my door."

"It was Carl Reiner who actually took that by the horn and said, 'This is the guy I want to play the role.'"

Harmon first achieved prominence as star quarterback for the University of California at Los Angeles football team in 1972 and 1973.

"I don't think it hurts to be competitive in this business," he said. "It's best to work hard at what you do and try not to let the effort show.

Underneath it all I'm pretty nice, and that comes from being an athlete."

Harmon made his acting debut in an episode of "Ozzie's Girls" and played 22 other TV roles before breaking into features with the 1984 "Comes a Horseman." His greatest exposure came as the AIDS-dying doctor in "St. Elsewhere" and Coors beer commercials.

The 37-year-old actor is unswayed by such comments or his selection. People magazine as "the sexiest alive." Of his profession he said:

"This is what I do. It's a job, and I respect it as that. It's also about what I do. I have a family, and I used to be a carpenter.

"If this all disappears tomorrow, I know I can still build houses."



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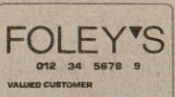
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