Norman Schweikert

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Norman Schweikert was born in 1937 in Los Angeles. Both his parents were amateur musicians (mother a pianist and father a violinist). He started on piano at age six, then gravitated to the violin in order to play in orchestras. He studied first with his father, then with Joseph Kessler, whom he credits with giving him a good musical foundation.

Norman played in the Pioneer Orchestra under Joseph Oroop (working his way up to concertmaster) and the California Junior Symphony under Peter Meremblum" . He switched to horn and played with the California Junior Symphony until he got his first job at age 18. He credits his experience playing the standard symphonic literature in the youth orchestra with preparing him for his first audition. He studied with Odolindo Perissi (father of Richard) and Sinclair Lott in Los Angeles and with Joseph Eger on scholarship at Aspen. While studying with Lott and still in high school, he played 8th horn in The Rite of Spring and first F Wagner tuba in Bruckner's 7th Symphony with the Los Angeles Philharmonic under Alfred Wallenstein. He was also a member of The Horn Club of Los Angeles in its first years.

In 1955 Norman auditioned for the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra in Music Director Erich Leinsdorf hotel room in Los Angeles (he was guest-conducting the San Francisco Symphony at that time) and won the fourth horn position. He remained with the orchestra until 1966, playing fourth horn (1955–59), second horn (1959–61 and December 1964-65), and third horn (1961–January 1962 and 1965–66), with three years out for military service with the United States Military Band at West Point (1962–64). He earned a BM degree and Performer's Certificate in 1961 from the Eastman School of Music while playing in the Philharmonic, studying with Morris Secon and Verne Reynolds . Verne wrote his Partita for Norman's senior recital, and the two were close friends until Verne's death in June 2011. Norman played second horn to Reynolds for two years and also enjoyed playing in the Eastman Wind Ensemble with Frederick Fennell (1957–61; first horn, 1958–61), including taking part in more than a dozen recordings. Norman also found time to marry in 1961, and in 1964 he and his wife, Sally, became parents. Norman spent five years (1966–71) as Instructor of Horn at the Interlochen Arts Academy and a member of the Interlochen Arts Quintet (woodwind). During that time, he also played under conductor Thor Johnson with the Moravian Music Festival (1966), the Chicago Little Symphony (tours of 1967 and 1968), and the Peninsula Music Festival (1968–70), including as soloist with the last two. He also served as curator of the Leland B. Greenleaf Collection of Musical Instruments housed at Interlochen (1970–71).

In June 1971 he joined the Chicago Symphony Orchestra as assistant principal horn, taking part in the orchestra's first European tour at the end of the summer. He moved to second horn in 1975, where he remained until retiring in 1997. He continued to play as a substitute or extra until June of 2006. In 1977 Norman, Dale Clevenger, Richard Oldberg, and Tom Howell performed and recorded the Schumann Konzertstück in Chicago, then, while on an orchestra tour in June, gave its first professional performance in Japan with Seiji Ozawa and the New Japan Philharmonic. Norman also taught horn at Northwestern University from 1973 to 1998.

Norman chaired the International Horn Society Society" 's organizing committee in 1970 and was the first Secretary–Treasurer, handling most of its organizing work. He wrote the first several newsletters on a typewriter, folding, stuffing. and stamping them. He continued on the Advisory Council for six years (1970–76), and has contributed many articles to The Horn Call, notably ten articles in the first two years of publication. He was elected an Honorary Member in 1996.

For a number of years (1996, 1999–2004, 2006) Norman performed with the Washington Island Music Festival, and in 2006 compiled the Repertory and Performers, 1992–2006, a forty-six page booklet that is still sold at Festival concerts. He and Sally, who sang soprano with the Chicago Symphony Chorus for thirty years, live on the Island. Their son, Eric, principal timpanist of the Fort Wayne (Indiana) Philharmonic for over twenty years, is currently acting principal timpanist (2011–2012) of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

Now retired, Norman continues research into the lives of U.S. orchestra members, a project that he started while studying at Eastman. His collection of material on this subject is probably the largest private collection anywhere.

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