

Summer
2011

The Leading Tone

Strategic Planning Work of the ROPA Executive Board

Carla Lehmeier-Tatum, ROPA President

This past March the ROPA Executive Board met in Phoenix and participated in a strategic planning session. The goal of the session was to create a guiding document that would assist the board in defining the organization and its role within the players' conference. During the past decade the ROPA Executive Board has participated in three strategic planning sessions. The ROPA Board wishes to share these guiding principles with the membership to increase the impact of this work to encompass the ROPA Delegates and ROPA orchestra musicians. One of the identified goals established in the meeting was to create a strong component of solution-oriented discussion at the upcoming ROPA Conference. We hope this document will assist the ROPA Delegates in their participation in the upcoming ROPA Conference.

Who is the Regional Orchestra Players' Association (ROPA)?

- Professional orchestra musicians of large and medium sized budgets with AFM contracts;
- Service organizations networking with over 5,000 musicians and 85 orchestras;
- Representatives of Regional Symphony Musicians at International/National forums.

Who does ROPA serve?

- ROPA rank and file musicians;
- Future musicians by protecting today's jobs;
- All orchestras. What affects one affects all;
- The American Federation of Musicians;
- The communities our orchestras serve;
- Elected representatives—Delegates and Orchestra Committees.

Why does ROPA exist?

- To give knowledge and tools to union orchestra musicians and to assist in establishing fair working conditions. To educate the membership about industry standards, labor law, procedures and practices.
- To empower and enable our colleagues to better their lives in their work place.
- To communicate during a time when labor is being dismantled in our country.

Other important principles identified:

- ROPA is a place for our member orchestras to turn for support.
- ROPA establishes a forum for our member orchestras to discuss concerns and to educate orchestras on current trends and solutions.
- ROPA provides assistance for orchestras in crisis with advice and contact information.
- ROPA works to create fair collective bargaining agreements, fair working conditions and fair compensation.

What are the important defining roles the ROPA Executive Board performs in the organization?

- Assist orchestras in need and identify resources for the issue at hand.
- Build relationships to develop industry contacts to provide sound advice.
- Provide professional musicians of ROPA with labor education and strengthen networking.
- Collect regional orchestra data for the industry.
- Strengthen rights and working conditions of our member musicians.
- Educate our membership on what is possible and how other musicians have arrived where they are.
- Work to bring our constituents together: AFM, Players Conferences, Locals, Orchestra Committees, and Musicians.

What are the crucial components ROPA utilizes to accomplish its goals?

- Information sharing with orchestra to orchestra, musician to musician and person to person. The information is shared through website, e-mails, Facebook,

continued on page 2

Inside this Issue

Strategic Planning	1
Welcome to New Members	2
A Quarter Century of Progress	3
Conference News	4
AFM Press Release	4
NLRB Ruling	5
Pension Website	5

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ROPA

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INFORMATION

CENTER

- This newsletter is online at: <http://www.ropaweb.org/>.
- To subscribe to the ROPA Internet Mailing List, visit <http://www.ropaweb.org/forms/elist.php>. The list is open to musicians in ROPA member orchestras, and AFM Local officers for those orchestras.

WELCOME TO THE ROPA FAMILY!

Paul Austin, ROPA Vice President

This year ROPA added three new orchestras to its roster. It is a pleasure to welcome the East Texas Symphony Orchestra, the Eugene Symphony Orchestra, and the Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra as full member orchestras of ROPA.

"The musicians of the East Texas Symphony Orchestra are excited to join ROPA, and the vote was unanimous," reported ROPA Executive Board Member Dwight Anderson, who now also serves as their ROPA Delegate.

Bill Olsen, elected delegate for the Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra, stated "next year, in addition to being the final year of our current contract, the IPO will begin the season with a new Executive Director, and we will be auditioning conductors who wish to become our new Music Director. Having access to ROPA's conductor data bank will be a great asset. Many of our musicians already belong to ROPA through their membership in other orchestras. They know the value of the information and support that ROPA can provide."

We thank Portland Opera Orchestra Delegate (and former ROPA Executive Board

member) Sherill Roberts for her encouragement to the musicians of the Eugene Symphony Orchestra for ROPA membership. In addition, we send a special note of appreciation to their Players' Committee Chair Sharron Smith for the dedicated work during the enrollment process, and we look forward to working with their elected Delegate, Stephen Chong.

Finally, we were glad to see the return of the Shreveport Symphony Orchestra musicians to ROPA's full member status this year. Two years ago, they moved to ROPA's associate member status as a result of their difficult negotiations. Their Orchestra Committee Chair, Peter Haas, expressed "thanks to all of you at ROPA for all the help over the last few years and the patience while we consulted with our members to approve our reinstatement." It is a pleasure to have the Shreveport Symphony back as a full member orchestra of ROPA, and we wish all the best to Peter and his colleagues.

Today, ROPA firmly stands with 85 member orchestras: 77 full members and 8 associate members.

Strategic Planning Work, *continued*

- telephone calls, conferences and newsletters.
- Work to create an atmosphere within each ROPA Orchestra of concern and commitment.
- Create awareness of issues through Delegate communicating to the ROPA Executive Board.

What are the results of the work of ROPA?

- Inclusion in a labor community;
- Better professional lives and contracts than we otherwise had;
- Solidarity and support;
- Greater awareness of management and tactics;

- Knowledge of what works and what doesn't work;
- Education of membership;
- Orchestra profiles: wage and scale charts—orchestra reports

What are the Values of ROPA?

- Unity
- Fairness
- Democracy in work place
- Education
- Shared Sacrifice
- We are one with all labor
- What impacts one—impacts all
- Collective action to find solutions
- Identify problems—Identify Successes

A Quarter of a Century of Progress: The 1985 ROPA Conference

The Relationship Between Local Officers, Orchestra Committees, and Musicians

Rachel Cox, ROPA Historian

The 1985 ROPA Conference was held at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Fort Worth, Texas from September 6-8 (Friday through Sunday).

The conference concluded with question-and-answer sessions and discussion forums that focused on issues regional orchestras continue to address in today's symphonic world: the creation of a core orchestra, the formation of orchestra committee by-laws, long-standing prejudices that conclude musicians from outside the community are better players than local musicians, and the use of taped resumes for auditions. One subject that was discussed in length was the relationship between the local officers, the orchestra committee, and the orchestra players.

AFM President Victor Fuentealba delivered a brief history of the orchestra committee, emphasizing that its existence was a relatively recent phenomenon. Having arisen in the 1950s and 1960s, the purpose of the orchestra committee was to facilitate relations between the union and the orchestra members so that the union was not compelled to go to the orchestra on a regular basis and uncover the wishes of the players. Over time, the orchestra committee evolved in some situations into the liaison between the management and the orchestra players rather than between the players and the union. Whatever role it assumes, however, the committee must be entirely in touch with the players it represents and then communicate those needs to the local officers. It is then the officers' responsibility to absorb that information and use it to the benefit of everyone involved.

It is very important to remember that the local offices are elective. If an officer is unresponsive or if there is implied mistrust between the players and the officers or misconduct on the part of the latter, then the players have the power to vote out the officer in question. And if an officer's actions necessitate this measure, then the musicians must vote out the offending party.

President Fuentealba clarified the legal situation involving the union at the bargaining table and why it is important to have competent and trustworthy local officers. Under federal labor laws, the union is the bargaining agent for the orchestra players. There is no requirement that members of the bargaining unit must be present at the negotiations or that the orchestra players must ratify the contract. "If the local union wanted to, they could legally negotiate a contract without your consent, without your presence, without

your participation and without your vote." This was the practice of many of the locals in the past: When symphony orchestra contracts came up for negotiation, the local officers would designate one or two members of the board to negotiate, enter into, and sign an agreement—all without any input from the musicians. (Since this situation was not in the best interests of the musicians, the AFM instituted a requirement in its by-laws that stipulates orchestra members must ratify a contract before it becomes effective. But this is not a legal requirement.) By the same token, not only do local officers have a right to be present at contract negotiations, they could legally negotiate a contract without any member of the bargaining unit being present. It is thus imperative that the orchestra committee, the orchestra players, and the local officers all have open channels of communication and that the orchestra players have confidence in the officers' ability to represent them at the bargaining table and in all other situations.

President Fuentealba also took time to speak on behalf of local officers. In the majority of the locals at the time, officials were execrably paid for their services. They worked as hard as they did because of their dedication to the union as musicians and on behalf of all musicians. Because their earnings amounted to nothing more than a pittance, the union had difficulty replacing retiring officers with younger musicians. (This particular problem was endemic to the musicians' union because the pay structure in other labor unions was much higher.) A solution was to combine many of the smaller locals with inadequate budgets in order to create larger locals with more attractive compensations that would entice people to run for office.

In summary, local officers play an invaluable role in succoring symphony orchestras in contract negotiations and in labor matters. It is thus essential that unfettered communication exist between orchestra committees and officers and that officers always conduct business in good faith on behalf of the musicians so that a level of trust occurs among all parties involved.

References:
Minutes of the 1985 ROPA Conference.

This article concludes the series that focused on the importance of the 1985 ROPA Conference, which explored issues that were relevant over a quarter of a century ago and how those situations are still important in today's symphony world.

2011 ROPA Conference News!

This year the ROPA annual conference will be held in Portland, Maine, during the first week in August. The ROPA Board will host an open forum with constituencies from the AFM and ROPA. Panel discussions will highlight the relationship of the Local and the Orchestra Committee and the story of the symphony turn around featuring Colorado Springs and New Mexico. AFM attorney Jennifer Garner will lead a session on bankruptcy, and attorney Harvey Mars will present "When Talks Break Down." Other speakers will include AFM President Ray Hair, Federal Mediation and Conciliation Services Director George Cohen and members of the AFM Symphonic Services.

www.ropaweb.org

The ROPA Board offers its sincere appreciation to our conference hosts: Portland Symphony Musicians and Portland Symphony Delegate Richard Kelly. A special thanks **to our hosts from the** Boston Musicians' Association, Local 9-535 of the AFM, and Boston Local President Pat Hollenbeck. Our gracious hosts have arranged special events to ensure that we experience the coastal charm and traditions of Portland, Maine. A cruise to an island with a lobster dinner hosted by Local 9-535 will be one of the highlights of our time in Portland. Richard Kelly will be arranging social outings each evening at unique establishments in the heart of the historic port area of the city. This truly will be a memorable conference for the friends and members of ROPA. See you in Portland!!

AFM Press Release

Honore Stockley

The American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada (AFM) is pleased to announce the appointment of Jay Blumenthal as director of Symphonic Services and as the Federation's Assistant Treasurer.

"Jay's outstanding relationship-building abilities have produced unparalleled excellence in the symphonic employment sector," says AFM President Ray Hair. "He is well known for promoting open, honest discussion on difficult issues, in difficult times, in a manner that encourages respect and problem-solving."

"Jay Blumenthal as assistant treasurer is the right person at exactly the perfect time in AFM history," says AFM Secretary-Treasurer Sam Folio. "His years of experience as chief financial officer of the Federation's largest local will be of enormous assistance during these financially precarious times."

Jay Blumenthal performed as a professional musician for 40 years. He has served on the Orchestra Committee of the New York City Ballet Orchestra and as chair of the New York Pops Orchestra Committee. His involvement with ICSOM began as a delegate for the NYC Ballet Orchestra, and shortly thereafter, he was elected to the ICSOM Governing Board, serving until 2004.

Blumenthal has been a member of the Local 802 Executive Board since 1998. For the past eight years he has served as a full-time officer at Local 802 as financial vice president and supervisor of the Concert Department responsible for

symphony, opera, and ballet contracts. Blumenthal was recently elected vice president of the AFM New York State Conference. He holds a Ph.D. in Music Education from New York University and resides in Manhattan with his wife and two daughters.

"We all know there are many challenges facing the symphonic field today but I truly believe they are not insurmountable," says Blumenthal. "Building relationships, engaging in honest good faith discussions, and thinking creatively accomplishes much more than finger pointing, and wringing, and unilateral actions. Symphonic music is the ultimate expression of humanity. We must navigate through the difficult issues to preserve the music we hold so dear, while maintaining the standard of living of the musicians who perform it."

The current SSD director, Christopher Durham, will continue to serve the AFM as chief field negotiator, an area where he has excelled for many years.

"The Governing Board of ICSOM wishes to thank Chris Durham for his service as director of the Symphonic Services Division," states ICSOM Chair Bruce Ridge. "Chris has earned the appreciation and admiration of every musician in the AFM. We wish him well in his role as an extraordinary negotiator and advocate for musicians. We also welcome Jay Blumenthal to his new position with the SSD, and we are very excited to work with Jay, as we all continue to work together to advocate for musicians and the arts everywhere."

NLRB Upholds Ruling in Electronic Media Case

Paul Austin, ROPA Electronic Media Committee Chair

On June 28, 2011 the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) once again ruled in favor of the AFM's position, that the Musical Arts Association (The Cleveland Orchestra) violated federal labor law by refusing to bargain with the AFM regarding the terms and conditions of employment related to electronic media productions. This reaffirmed that the AFM is the exclusive bargaining agent for electronic media through the AFM media agreements.

This decision should put an end to the questions raised by managers of ROPA orchestras regarding their responsibility to bargain with the Federation over the covered media. Today, dozens of orchestras have decided to move forward

and become signatories to the Integrated Media Agreement (IMA), including the following ROPA orchestras: Ann Arbor Symphony, Dallas Opera, Hartford Symphony Orchestra, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, Michigan Opera Theater, Minnesota Opera, Portland Opera, and Toledo Symphony.

At this summer's ROPA annual conference, the AFM Director of Symphonic Electronic Media, Debbie Newmark, will be giving a presentation that will include information about the variety of media projects that orchestras have explored thanks to the IMA. For further information, inquire with your ROPA Delegate or contact me at HornCallAd@aol.com.

Pension Fund Website is User-Friendly!

Laura Ross, AFM Pension Trustee

At the urging of a number of participants, the American Federation of Musicians and Employers Pension Fund (AFM-EPF) has worked over the past few years to develop and provide a transactional website that not only provides various forms and Plan documents, but also has features individual participants can use.

In 2008, the Fund began providing a password protected area that allowed participants the ability to change their address and to view their most recent contribution statement, which is generally mailed in September of each year. As scanning and archiving has occurred, additional statements have been made available (at this point documents

are available as far back as 2000).

Registration has been streamlined. Previously, the sign-up process included mailing a temporary password. Now, you can sign up in just a few minutes, but to get started you will need your Pension ID number which can be found on your annual statement. Once registered, you can use your email address as your user ID.

In 2010, the Fund began to make available quarterly records for the current contribution year. At this point, if you have registered on the website, you should be able to view all contributions made on your behalf for the first three quarters of 2010, through September 30, 2010. Since some employers do not always pay their contributions in a timely manner, nothing is official until you receive your annual statement for 2010 (which could arrive as early as August as it did last year).

This past February, the Fund announced they have developed a calculator, called the Pension Estimator, which allows you, in just a few minutes to estimate your monthly pension benefit between the ages of 55 to 65. You can either choose either the single or joint & annuitant (you and your spouse or designated beneficiary) benefit and you can even add contributions to estimate anticipated future contributions. Of course this will only provide an estimate of your anticipated monthly benefit but I am sure our members will find this is a helpful tool.

I encourage you to register at www.afm-epf.org and take a look at the information and tools the Fund now provides.

Meeting in New York with the symphonic players' conferences leadership and the newly appointed AFM Symphonic services Director Jay Blumenthal.

Pictured L to R: Francine Schutzman, Carla Lehmeier-Tatum, Bruce Ridge, Jay Blumenthal



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ROPA Member Orchestras

Full Members

Akron Symphony Orchestra
Albany Symphony
Allentown Symphony
Ann Arbor Symphony
Arizona Opera Orchestra
Atlanta Ballet Orchestra
Atlanta Opera Orchestra
Austin Symphony Orchestra
Boulder Philharmonic
California Philharmonic
California Symphony Orchestra
Canton Symphony Orchestra
Charleston Symphony Orchestra
Chattanooga Symphony & Opera Orchestra
Colorado Springs Philharmonic Orchestra
Dallas Opera Orchestra
Dayton Philharmonic
Delaware Symphony Orchestra
Duluth Superior Symphony Orchestra
East Texas Symphony Orchestra
El Paso Symphony

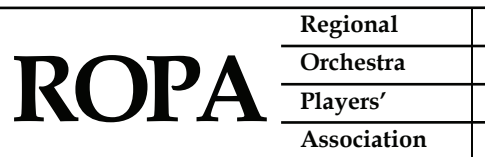
Elgin Symphony Orchestra
Erie Philharmonic Orchestra
Eugene Symphony
Fort Wayne Philharmonic
Fresno Philharmonic Orchestra
Grand Rapids Symphony
Harrisburg Symphony Orchestra
Hartford Symphony Orchestra
Hollywood Bowl Orchestra
Houston Ballet Orchestra
Houston Grand Opera Orchestra
Huntsville Symphony Orchestra
Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra
Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra
Knoxville Symphony Orchestra
Las Vegas Philharmonic
Lexington Philharmonic
Long Beach Symphony Orchestra
Long Island Philharmonic
Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra
Los Angeles Opera Orchestra
Memphis Symphony Orchestra

Michigan Opera Theatre Orchestra
Minnesota Opera Orchestra
Mississippi Symphony Orchestra
Monterey Symphony
Napa Valley Symphony
New Haven Symphony Orchestra
New Mexico Symphony Orchestra
New West Symphony Orchestra
Oakland East Bay Symphony
Omaha Symphony Orchestra
Opera Cleveland
Orchestra Iowa
Pacific Symphony
Palm Beach Opera Orchestra
Pasadena Symphony Orchestra
Pittsburgh Opera Orchestra
Portland Opera Orchestra
Portland Symphony Orchestra
Reading Symphony Orchestra
Rhode Island Philharmonic
Richmond Symphony
Santa Barbara Symphony

Santa Rosa Symphony
Sarasota Orchestra
Shreveport Symphony Orchestra
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Pittsburgh Ballet Orchestra
Tulsa Opera Orchestra



A conference of the American Federation of Musicians, AFL-CIO

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The Leading Tone now accepts advertisements. Here is the information regarding advertising in the official newsletter of ROPA.

RATES/SPECS for black & white advertisements

\$350.00 1/2 page ad (7.5" width x 4.75" height) / \$200.00 1/4 page ad (3.625" width x 4.75" height) / \$100.00 business card (3.625" width x 2" height)

DEADLINE for the final edition of the year is July 1, 2011. *Note that this issue (summer) is electronic only.*

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