

The Leading Tone

Pacific Symphony Celebrates New Home

Michelle Temple, PSO Harpist. Reprinted with permission.

It's celebration time for Pacific Symphony! Our orchestra has a gorgeous new home: The Renee & Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall. After years of dreaming, generous donations and planning, then a few more years of watching the building slowly go up piece by piece, finally, an amazing day arrived. On August 11th, in the midst of ongoing construction, the first rehearsal was held in Orange County's new hall. At the appointed hour, Concertmaster Raymond Kobler rose to face the orchestra, lifted his bow, and unexpectedly led us in a joyous version of *Happy Birthday* to the Concert Hall. It was the first of many memorable moments to come.

As the rehearsal continued, and the fantastic sounds and colors of Holst's *The Planets* filled the hall, we began to realize the potential of the acoustics. Cindy Ellis, PSO's piccolo player, sums up the wonder we felt, "The warm ambience of the Renee & Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall invites you to perform...it is visually stunning and acoustically rewarding. We can play the most delicate sounds and still be heard."

The acoustics for the hall were conceived by Russell Johnson, who is at the forefront of adjustable concert hall design. The walls of the hall are lined with double doors and curtains, which can be opened and closed, to varying degrees, by a single computer operator. The hall can be adjusted to accommodate many different ensemble sizes and musical styles. PSO scheduled extra rehearsals and special performances, leading up to the opening Gala on September 15, to give the acousticians and our Music Director Carl St. Clair time to "tune" the hall. From the orchestra's perspective, each adjustment of the hall requires an adjustment to our ears. Every day is an auditory adventure.

While the orchestra was inside tuning the hall, an army of construction workers was swarming the exterior, working night and day to complete the Concert Hall in time for the Gala Opening. Deadlines were met, with only moments to

spare. The choral risers were completed a few hours before the Pacific Chorale's first rehearsal. The concrete in front of the hall was poured about 48 hours before the Gala guests arrived. The orchestra was in awe. "They'll never make it" was heard with regularity, but to the consternation of many, on September 15, the Renee & Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall was ready for its close-up.

Pacific Symphony musicians arrived on the evening of the first Gala to find red carpets, limos, and fabulously dressed people adorning the courtyard in front of our hall. There were almost as many waiters as there were patrons, and the champagne was flowing. Celebrity sightings provided the musicians pre-performance entertainment. Angelica Huston, Esa Pekka Salonen, and one of the doctors from "ER" were a few of the notables decorating the plaza.

It was a lively party, but we still had a concert to perform. As Chris Kollgaard passed through the glittering crowd, clearing a path with his bass, he heard a female patron exclaim, "Oh, is there an orchestra, too?" That was a little deflating, considering the hours of rehearsal we'd spent preparing Mahler's *Symphony No.1*, and a new piece by William Bolcom, which we were performing with tenor Placido Domingo. We knew these weren't our usual symphony patrons when they didn't get the hint to sit down, even while the orchestra was tuning. But when Mr. Domingo was singing you could hear a pin drop, and he received a rock star's ovation. The Mahler commanded the audience's attention as well, and the powerful final movement brought the house down.

Principal Bass, Steve Edelman gave voice to the orchestra's pleasure and gratitude, "This Concert Hall is a great gift to the musicians. I'm really thrilled."

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ROPA

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A Note from the President

Tom Fetherston

I'm very excited about how the 2007 ROPA Conference is taking shape. The hotel has been engaged: Ramada Plaza in downtown San Francisco. The dates of the conference will be Tuesday, July 31st through Friday, August 3rd, with the Negotiating Orchestras Workshop on Monday, July 30th. Following are some examples to give you an idea how the conference plan is coming along. Keep in mind that any of this might change.

- **Keynote** – I have some exciting leads for a keynote speaker on Tuesday, July 31st, to kick us into high gear.
- **Breakouts** – I am planning to expand the idea of the Member-at-Large Breakouts that have been so successful at the last two conferences, and also leave time open for additional breakouts during the regular conference day, on topics to be determined by the participating Delegates.
- **Seminars** – ROPA Counsel Patricia Polach and accounting consultant Ron Bauers are planning to present concurrent seminars in labor law and non-profit accounting. They'll have two separate rooms, and will give two seminars each: a beginner's course, and an in-depth advanced course. These seminars will be scheduled so that the attendees can choose four different course tracks:
 - Beginner's Labor Law and Beginner's Non-profit Accounting
 - Advanced Non-profit Accounting and Advanced Labor Law
 - Labor Law I and Labor Law II; or
 - Non-profit Accounting I and Non-profit Accounting II.
- **Workshops** – I'm working with AFM Negotiator Nathan Kahn on an interactive workshop that we will unveil when we have worked out some more details. We're expecting the workshop to be good fun and instructive for greenhorns as well as seasoned veterans.

Delegates, Local officers, and members of ROPA orchestras are all welcome to attend. If you'll be in the San Francisco bay area between July 31st and August 3rd, please plan on dropping by.

The Ramada Plaza San Francisco

The Ramada Plaza in downtown San Francisco is a fantastic place for the ROPA Conference. The Ramada offers wireless internet in the rooms, a business center, internet café, fitness center, and access to public transportation.

It will be a great place to learn, re-connect with our old colleagues, and meet new colleagues. And perhaps, see some of the amazing sights of San Francisco.

See you there!

INFORMATION CENTER

- This newsletter is online at:
<http://www.ropaweb.org/lt/xxiii/> (* see note)
- To subscribe to the ROPA Internet Mailing List, visit
<http://ropaweb.org/mailman/listinfo>.
The list is open to musicians in ROPA member orchestras, and AFM staff and Local officers.
- The 2007 ROPA Conference will be held in San Francisco, California, July 30th – August 3rd, 2007.

* There may be a delay in getting the newsletters posted onto the web site.



ROPA Executive Board

Meeting: 8/11/06; 8:51 PM – 9:25 PM

Attendees: T Fetherston, K Grimes, L Gardner, D Danders, J Potochnic, S Roberts, N Nelson, N Foofat, L Jones, G Lasley

Proceedings

The board discussed possible dates for a mid-year meeting.

The board discussed communication throughout the season.

President Fetherston reported his intent to study ROPA's processes and services, and possibly craft proposals to improve our methods. He is hoping to focus our emphasis to help make the executive board jobs and the job of ROPA Delegate more manageable, efficient, and effective.

The board discussed MAL communications, and the consensus was that there should be 3 calling periods during the time between conferences.

The board discussed possible improvements to the Conference.

Treasurer Danders proposed changing ROPA's fiscal year to end 6/31. The board agreed without objection.

What to do if......from www.ropaweb.org

If management* asks you what you think of a colleague's playing (exceptions exist if you are a section principal, or if you are on an audition or review committee. In a review committee, it's best to talk about whether the artistic director's actions were based on musical proficiency or were arbitrary and capricious.):

SAY: "It would be inappropriate and unprofessional for me to comment on a colleague's performance or artistic ability." THEN LEAVE.

If you find yourself in conversation with management and it turns to the subject of YOUR playing, and you have reason to believe the conversation might lead to your demotion or dismissal:

SAY: "Since we're now talking about my playing, and what I say might be used against me later, under Weingarten I have the right to have a union representative of my choice** present during this conversation." THEN LEAVE.

* Management can mean Artistic Director, Conductor, Artistic Assistant, Personnel Manager, Contractor, or staff member.
 ** The union representative can be anyone you choose, and should take copious notes.

ROPA Executive Board

Email Minutes

8/12/2006 – 12/10/2006

10/17/06 To reimburse our president's expenses for going to Atlanta to participate in the Atlanta Ballet Orchestra's Picket on October 26.

10/17/06 To approve the names submitted by Jennifer Potochnic to the ROPA Ethics Committee: Jennifer Potochnic, chair, Nancy Nelson, Cynthia Anderson and Ann Gilbert.

10/17/06 To approve the Ethics Committee Mission Statement: The mission of the ROPA Ethics committee is to provide a forum in which moral, legal, and philosophical issues of ethics as they relate to the orchestral industry may be openly discussed and analyzed among the constituent player conferences of the AFM.

The ROPA ethics committee will work to develop guidelines or the promotion of ethical orchestral environments.

The ROPA ethics committee will work to develop and maintain a friendly and cooperative relationship among the constituent groups of the orchestral industry as we promote the discussion of orchestral industry ethics.

12/06/06 To approve up to \$250 to pay for President Fetherston's expenses for the Players Conference Council (PCC) on January 14, 2007.

12/06/06 To approve expenses [Transportation, Food and Hotel if needed] for Gary Lasley to attend the PCC meeting in Chicago on January 14, 2007.

12/10/06 To waive the Atlanta Ballet Orchestra ROPA dues for the 2006-07 Fiscal Year.

"Gee, All I Ever Wanted to Do Was Play My Instrument..."

Nathan Kahn, Negotiator, American Federation of Musicians

Originally published on www.polyphonic.org. Reprinted with permission

There have been countless occasions in the course of some meeting I have had with a negotiating committee, an orchestra committee, or an entire orchestra that some musician(s) have engaged me in private conversation about the terrible situation occurring with their orchestra, and the conversation concluded with the foregoing phrase. I have thought a lot about that phrase and what it means. To me, this phrase is symptomatic of grossly inadequate and unrealistic training at the conservatory level that has for too long been adversely affecting professional musicians and therefore our industry.

So why shouldn't a highly skilled conservatory graduate want to "just play my instrument?" Isn't that all that is expected of a musician in the professional symphonic workplace? No way! It is my view that in today's symphony orchestras successful musicians must not only be skilled performers and ensemble players, but also be trained in, and not limited to, the following areas:

- Knowledge, skill, and experience: how to design and effectively present a wide variety of outreach programs
- Advocates for the arts: include some training in public relations, media, and public speaking
- Communication and leadership skills: how to effectively serve on negotiation committees, orchestra committees, long range planning committees, etc.
- Debating skills: how to most effectively put forth the musicians' positions and debate those who would have differing views
- Knowledge about the musicians' union and the labor movement in general: what and how it can and cannot do
- Knowledge of basic labor law, contract law, federal laws and other legislation: how that might affect the symphonic workplace
- Workplace safety and occupational health: how to avoid performance-related injury
- Political skills: how to successfully lobby on behalf of orchestras, the arts, etc.
- Basics of arts administration and arts management

- Orchestra management: how to start and manage your own orchestra temporarily, if necessary
- Additional skills: how to prepare the musician to adapt and move into some other field (either related to music or not) in the event of the demise of his/her orchestra or a cutback such that the orchestra no longer provided a living

Whether conservatories want to admit it or not, it is much more realistic and necessary for today's symphony musician to have working knowledge of the National Labor Relations Act, Chapters 11 and 7 of the Federal Bankruptcy Code and Equal Employment Opportunity laws, than Jacques Moderne and 14th century music notation, the difference between a polyphonic conductus and an isorhythmic motet, or similar music history trivia that was emphasized in my training.

Yet, in too many music schools across the country, that *is* the emphasis in non-performance related conservatory training. Although interesting, my training on how to analyze a Bartok String Quartet has *never* been of any practical use to me in my thirty five years as a professional performer. Yet, if I had had some training and experience in labor law and negotiating while attending my alma mater, I might not have gotten screwed out of approximately five thousand dollars in salary when I won my first symphonic position.

So why is this additional training necessary? Ask yourself, "Has there *ever* been any period of time in the history of North American symphonic orchestras when there was *not* some sort of strife or financial difficulty or other significant problems for some or many orchestra(s)?" No. Not in my years in this business, nor is such indicated in books and accounts I have read of North American orchestral history.

Despite all of our strongest wishes and actions to the contrary, throughout our history, symphony orchestras, and for that matter all of the arts, have always existed on the edge. It is not likely that will change. As a result, too many musicians have experienced significant wage cuts, strikes, lockouts, shutdowns, layoffs, bankruptcies, and orchestra dissolutions. Were these musicians prepared to deal with these unfortunate actions? In most cases, no.

continued on next page

“Gee, All I Ever Wanted....”

continued

What does a musician, who has spent his/her entire lifetime preparing for and maintaining a high level performance career, do when that career is diminished greatly or, worse, comes to a sudden end through no fault of the musician? They either adapt or they don't survive. What have the conservatories done to prepare their students for this future possibility? In most cases, nothing. So why aren't the conservatories preparing their students for the realities of professional symphonic life?

Of course, all university music faculty don't fit into this category but I can hear certain members muttering right now, to the tune of *“if one wants those kinds of courses they should go to law school or seek other training.”* But if conservatories seek to meet the realistic career needs of their students, then no student should have to take special courses in order to have the necessary skills to survive as a professional symphonic musician.

Notwithstanding, there is a far deeper ramification of conservatory emphasis on irrelevant course work for aspiring professional symphonic musicians. The lack of relevant training and the emphasis on musical fantasy-land training sets up a delusional expectation for symphonic career graduates of what they can expect as professionals. That expectation usually goes something like, *“If I practice hard, take my auditions, get a job, follow my conductor, and get tenure, then everything in my musical life will be OK thereafter.”*

As we have come to learn, that is certainly not the case. Lack of realistic preparation by symphony musicians is breeding ground for an inordinate amount of fear and hysteria in their future careers. We in the AFM Symphonic Services Division have encountered this time and time again. Musicians are human beings, and humans in fear or terror mode often take actions and make decisions that they will later come to regret. In my view the root of this terror and fear lies in the absence of realistic training in the conservatories, and the resulting delusional expectations.

Let us suppose for a moment that there existed an orchestra whose musicians were educated in the kinds of training mentioned previously, particularly in the ability to move to an alternative career if necessary. How would that affect the musicians' ability to withstand unjustified bankruptcy threats, major financial concessions, and in the worse case, dissolution of the orchestra? In my opinion it would make a substantial difference.

In such situations, musicians would be prepared to carry out a public relations campaign in order to help convince audience members, public, and legislators to come to the aid of the symphony. If all of those efforts failed, then musicians would have a “Plan B” to fall back on, perhaps starting their own orchestra as a temporary measure. And if all else fails, they would have a “Plan C,” which would allow the musician to develop a part-time career in music performance, while pursuing other careers/ventures that would sustain the musician and his/her family.

The following is an example of curriculum that would best prepare musicians for the broad demands a symphonic musician will face:

- Primary instrument private instruction, master classes, orchestra repertoire classes
- Symphony orchestra audition-mock auditions
- Instrument pedagogy classes
- School orchestra
- Chamber music
- Music theory and ear training classes
- Recruiting, developing, and maintaining a successful private studio
- Marketing yourself to build a successful free-lance musical career
- Designing and presenting effective outreach programs
- Public speaking and debating
- Public relations and the mass media
- The American labor movement, the American Federation of Musicians, their history, and their impact and function in today's symphony orchestra
- Basic labor law, contract law, and other Federal state and local laws applicable to symphony orchestras.
- The collective bargaining process
- Problem solving in the union workplace
- Contract administration in the symphony orchestra
- Symphonic workplace safety and music medicine issues: maintaining playing health and avoiding overuse problems
- Building political relationships and lobbying
- Fundamentals of arts management
- Resurrecting a symphony orchestra in a community
- **A required minor outside the field of music, and alternative music careers to supplement and replace as needed.**

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What's Happening with ROPA Orchestras?

Portland Opera wishes to acknowledge our sadness at the deaths of violinist Angela Svendsen, 31, and violist Kjersten Oquist, 36, on February 11, 2007. They were killed by a drunk driver going the wrong way on the freeway while they were returning to the Portland area from a Eugene Symphony rehearsal. Kjersten and Angela were both well loved in the music community, and will be sorely missed. They are memorialized at the following web site:

<http://books.dreambook.com/nobleviola/main.html>.

Donations in their memory can be made at www.MADD.org.

**Sherrill Roberts, Member-at-Large
Portland Opera Orchestra**

Michigan Opera Theatre will present *Cyrano*, a world premiere opera by Company Founder and General Director, David DiChiera, and director/librettist Bernard Uzan, Oct. 13-28, 2007 at the Detroit Opera House. This three-act opera, DiChiera's first-ever major opera, is based on Edmond Rostand's celebrated stage drama of 1897, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, a romantic tragedy. *Cyrano* is a joint production with the Opera Company of Philadelphia and Florida Grand Opera.

Mark D. Flint, who has created the 70-piece orchestration, will also conduct all five performances in Detroit featuring an international cast led by highly acclaimed Romanian baritone Marian Pop in the title role and American soprano Leah Partridge as Roxanne.

Following the Detroit engagement, *Cyrano* will be presented by the Opera Company of Philadelphia Feb. 8-17, 2008 at the Academy of Music, and Florida Grand Opera April 26-May 7, 2008 at the Carnival Center for the Performing Arts in Miami, and May 15 and 17, 2008 at the Broward Center for the Performing Arts in Fort Lauderdale. Casting and conducting for both Philadelphia and Florida performances will be slightly different than the Detroit premiere. In all, *Cyrano* will be given eighteen performances nationwide during the 2007/08 season.

**Greg Near, Delegate
Michigan Opera Theatre Orchestra**

Do you have news about your orchestra?
An article to submit? A letter to the editor?
Submit it to Amy Morris at amymorris7@yahoo.com.

The deadline for the next issue of *The Leading Tone* is
May 15, 2007. This issue is online only.

The **Grand Rapids Symphony** was nominated for a Grammy this year in the Best Classical/Crossover category for a recording that we made with 'hip-harpist' Deborah Henson-Conant. Unfortunately, we didn't win -- Bryn Terfel and the London Symphony won with their recording "Simple Gifts." On the bright side, though, the DVD that was produced from our concerts has been picked up for broadcast in some 50 plus PBS markets.

**Erich Peterson, Delegate
Grand Rapids Symphony**

Diane Merrill, President of AFM Local 154 (and ROPA President Emerita), asked us to make the following correction to the **Colorado Springs Philharmonic Orchestra** news in the last issue of *The Leading Tone*. The CSPO management is not in any way connected with this case. The U.S. 10th Circuit Court of Appeals ruling applies to former Colorado Springs Symphony estate. Two appeals were made by the Trustee assigned to the CSSO estate, first to the U.S. District Court and then to the U.S. 10th Circuit, both of which Local #154 won. The trustee is not expected to appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court.

**Diane Merrill, President
Pikes Peak Musicians Association, Local #154**

The **Fort Wayne Philharmonic** announces that the Conductor, Edvard Tchivzhel, has resigned, effective at the end of the 2007-2008 season, after some 15 years tenure. The search committee is being formed to find a suitable replacement. The search committee includes three musicians from the orchestra. Any suggestions for candidates would be appreciated.

**Naida MacDermid, Delegate
Fort Wayne Philharmonic**

In the last issue of *The Leading Tone*, there was an article about the **Memphis Symphony** auditioning three candidates for principal pops conductor: Robert Moody, Matt Catingub and Michael Krajewski. Anyone with information concerning those three candidates was encouraged to contact David Roode, however, the email address was incorrect. The correct email address is davidroode@gmail.com.

**David Roode, Delegate
Memphis Symphony Orchestra**

Progress in Pittsburgh!

Cynthia Anderson, Pittsburgh Ballet Theater Orchestra

Although it certainly isn't time to hang the "Mission Accomplished" banner, I thought you would like to know that Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre is taking little steps in the right direction toward restoring live music.

As you already know, PBT has committed to using the live orchestra for two of their five productions for the 2006-07 season, with the promise of restoration to the full season as their financial situation stabilizes. Of these five productions, four are presented in the Benedum Center, our home theater. The remaining production is a more intimate, chamber-size ballet, presented in a smaller venue. In past seasons, this production did not include the orchestra, because the ballets presented were choreographed to recorded music, like Twyla Tharp's *Sinatra Songs*, or the music of Sting – designed to broaden the ballet's repertoire by using "pop" music and ballet.

Restoration of our orchestra for two large-scale productions for this season had come about because of a groundswell of public support and a matching challenge grant that resulted in funding for the orchestra. In just the past two months, PBT's Board of Directors has raised additional funds to use live musicians for this small chamber ballet production. While it doesn't include the full orchestra (the works to be performed are piano solo, a Mendelssohn piano trio and a jazz combo), this production will use live musicians for the first time in many seasons. It also gives further evidence of PBT's ongoing commitment to restoration of live music, and I view this as a victory!

PBT is preparing to announce next season's schedule, and it also includes a commitment to the orchestra for two large-scale productions. Yes, I would prefer to be back for the full season, but this is a work in progress. At least we're moving in the right direction!

What to do if.....

If you have a concern about a player's artistic abilities or anything else:

Talk to a member of the Players' Committee not to management.

If you think maybe management has done something that isn't allowed by the contract, or is somehow wrong:

Contact the Union Steward, or a Players' Committee member, the local union, or your ROPA delegate.

Welcome new
ROPA Associate Member!
 Eastern Connecticut
 Symphony Orchestra
 Mary Snyder, Delegate

"Gee, All I Ever Wanted...." continued

The preceding curriculum would, in my opinion go a long way in giving today's symphony musicians the necessary tools for survival in a most uncertain world for the arts.

The Eastman School of Music seems to be the leader in innovative course as described herein. Notwithstanding, while there may be other music schools who have started similar programs, most are still more concerned with immersing their students in music history and other musical trivia than in relevant professional preparation.

What will it take to get music schools to change? Awareness, publicity, lobbying, and ultimately economics. The American Federation of Musicians, along with all of its symphonic player conferences (ICSOM, OCSM, & ROPA) should take a leadership role and sit down with the leadership of the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) to discuss this issue. Further, alumni should express to their alma maters what inadequacies they deemed in their own training, and then propose changes in the school's curriculum. And finally, private instrumental teachers should make it known that curriculum will greatly influence decisions as to what music schools their talented students will seek to attend.

It is long overdue that the musical schools of this country carry out the mission they are supposed to fulfill: preparing their graduates for the real world workplace. Through our collective efforts we can make this happen.

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