

The Leading Tone

Spokane Opens the Fabulous Fox

Greg Youmans, Delegate-Spokane Symphony

The Spokane Symphony celebrated the grand opening of its new home, a newly restored 1931 art deco 20th Century Fox "Grand" Theater, the week of November 17, 2007.

Slated for the wrecking ball, it was purchased by the Symphony in 2000. Extensive fund-raising efforts finally made possible the beginning of a \$31 million renovation in 2005. Executive director Brenda Nienhouse said that the project was completed on time and under budget.

The hall rings in a new era for the Symphony and is a major step in the renovation of downtown and the development of the Davenport Arts District. Pains-taking care was taken in restoring the 1700-seat concert hall to its original art deco grandeur along with the addition of 21st-century technologies.

The hall is acoustically rated an 8.5 out of ten. Musicians are pleased and excited about the acoustics. Conductor Eckart Preu said, "it will change the way they play," as musicians have a greatly enhanced ability to hear each other across the stage.

The Grand Opening Gala concert on November 17th featured mezzo-soprano Frederica von Stade. November 18th was community showcase day which featured a variety of performances ranging from Celtic, bluegrass and swing to brass band, opera, symphony and the Kalispell Indian tribe—all free to the public along with tours of the theater.

Tony Bennett gave a concert November 19th. The Spokane Jazz Orchestra and a local blues band performed November 20th, and versatile vocalist and honorary theater board trustee Thomas Hampson gave a "Home for the Holidays" recital December 29th.

The opening night began with a Gala dinner at the recently renovated Davenport Hotel, followed by a red carpet promenade to the theater past a display of vintage autos. The glitterati were out, with many patrons decked out in jazz-era finery.

The theater's art-deco design begins with an undersea-world motif in the lobby, graduating to a terra firma mezzanine, to a flora-canopied auditorium which seemed to enhance visually as well as acoustically the performance of Respighi's fully orchestrated *Pines of Rome*, which drew wild applause from the packed house.

"And we can say we were there," was the quote by Goethe that conductor Preu came up with to sum up the truly memorable evening.

Naming rights to the theater went to major donor Miss Myrtle Woldson who dedicated the theater to her father, Martin Woldson. This information was kept confidential until the final days before the Woldson Theater at the Fox was christened.

The Symphony board has endeavored to take advantage of possibilities their new home offers, expanding musicians' services in the 2006-2010 contract.

Ticket sales and fundraising are going well, aided by the buzz about the theater. The organization's challenge will be to sustain this momentum into the future.

Congratulations and thanks continue all around, as the Martin Woldson Theater at the Fox truly harkens a new era for the Spokane Symphony, and the economic and cultural life of the city and the Inland Northwest.

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ROPA

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Email Minutes: ROPA Executive Board

12/11/2006 – 7/26/2007

12/17/06 To approve ROPA Executive Board Minutes from the meeting on 8/11/06 in Charleston West Virginia and Email Minutes Number 1 from 8/12/06 to 12/10/06, as submitted. MSC

1/15/07 To approve ROPA paying for President Fetherston's travel expenses of no more than \$500 to attend a meeting with AFM and Fellows of the New World Symphony on January 22 MSC

2/5/07 To approve the excess expenses incurred by the President in attending the New World Symphony Symposium of \$93.41. MSC

3/1/07 To approve up to \$800, for Dennis Danders expenses to attend the New England Conference of Musicians on March 23rd & 24, 2007. MSC

2/26/07 To approve ROPA Resolution #2 re: Locals and Committees (see attached) MSC

3/7/07 To sign on to letter re: bargaining unit size (see attached below). MSC

3/9/07 To approve President Fetherston's airfare, hotel, reasonable meals, and ground transportation (up to \$750) to attend the 2007 ASOL Conference. MSC

4/3/07 To approve the AFM seeking to negotiate an agreement with a group of symphony managers that would cover both public and commercial syndicated radio.

7/22/07 To approve the following committee members:

Auditing Committee

Thomas Bergeron, South Bend Symphony
Adam DeSorgo, Florida West Coast
Symphony

John Kurokawa, Dayton Philharmonic

Election Committee

Tony Scelba, Long Island Philharmonic
Christina Caterino Berman, Atlanta Ballet
John Kurokawa, Dayton Philharmonic
MSC

Larry Gardner, ROPA Secretary

ROPA Resolution 2

WHEREAS, It is the AFM mission to strive for the best possible working conditions and wages for all musicians; and

WHEREAS, The Locals were established to be the AFM presence in communities around the USA and Canada; and

WHEREAS, In order for the Union to maintain its standing as a credible voice of the people it represents it must take into consideration the unique needs of each group of musicians governed by a CBA; and

WHEREAS, Each body governed by a CBA has the right to elect representatives to speak on their behalf regarding their unique needs to the Union; and

WHEREAS, The Union relies on those elected representatives, i.e., Orchestra Committee, to act as administrator of the CBA in the workplace; and

WHEREAS, Members of the Union have placed their trust in the Union to fairly represent their

continued on next page

INFORMATION CENTER

- This newsletter is online at:
<http://www.ropaweb.org/> (* see note)
- To subscribe to the ROPA Internet Mailing List, sign in at www.ropaweb.org and click on 'Mailing List.'
The list is open to musicians in ROPA member orchestras, and AFM Local officers for those orchestras.
- The 2008 ROPA Conference will be held July 29-August 1 in Houston, Texas. The Negotiating Orchestras Workshop will be July 28th.

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

**The hotel for our ROPA
2008 Conference is the
Houston Doubletree
Downtown.**

www.ropaweb.org

Email Minutes: ROPA Executive Board 12/11/2006 – 7/26/2007

continued

needs to the fullest extent in the bargaining of the CBA

WHEREAS, The spirit and intention of Article 5, Section 39 (2005 AFM Bylaws) is for Local officers and the orchestra committee to work together for the benefit of the musicians they represent; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That Article 5, Section 39 be amended as follows:

All Locals having symphonic orchestras as defined in Article 14, Section 1, shall recognize orchestra committees, elected by the orchestra, to serve as liaison between the orchestra players and the Local. The Local officers and the orchestra committee and/or the orchestra's duly-selected negotiating committee shall work in conjunction with each other, as well as any negotiation consultant(s) who may have been hired for the purpose, in the negotiation of the collective bargaining agreement, with the understanding that the Local is the signatory agent on behalf of the musicians. The Local officers and the orchestra committee shall work in conjunction with each other in the administration of the collective bargaining agreement.

Letter RE: Bargaining Unit Size (DRAFT)

[AFM letterhead]

To: Local officers and Negotiating Committees of orchestras that will be negotiating successor collective bargaining agreements in 2007.

From: AFM, ICSOM, OCSM, and ROPA

RE: Orchestra complement and bargaining for substitute and extra musicians

Date: _ _ _ _ _

We would like to draw your attention to a serious problem in our industry that threatens to undermine our collective bargaining power. It is our hope that you will read this carefully and take the matter to heart if faced with tough choices during the 2007 round of bargaining.

There has been a significant loss of full-time jobs for musicians in the orchestral field. This loss has taken place quietly and by mutual agreement at bargaining tables across North America. At first glance, it would appear that negotiations over the past three years have been highly successful. There have been very few concessionary agreements in terms of guaranteed annual income for full-time musicians. But payrolls are shrinking as musicians are increasingly led to believe that they must trade away orchestra size in order to maintain compensation levels for the full-time core.

The loss of full-time jobs can take several forms. Sometimes the parties literally reduce the number of positions required under

the CBA. In other cases, the parties agree to leave vacancies unfilled, resulting in a reduced complement through attrition. Often the reduction in the number of full-time jobs is accompanied by a reduction in pay for substitute and extra musicians, who are hired in increasing numbers to fill the spots formerly occupied by full-time musicians. In one orchestra, the number of full-time positions has been reduced from 85 to 65 but on any given night there are 85 musicians on stage.

In other words, we are converting good jobs to bad jobs – jobs without pay parity, benefits, or job security. In doing so we are playing into the hands of managers who know that this weakens our union.

In past years, members of the ICSOM leadership have addressed different aspects of this problem. As far back as 1988, Michael Moore, current ICSOM Treasurer, wrote an article for *Senza Sordino* entitled "Justice for Extras" that is still relevant today. In 2006 Bruce Ridge, current ICSOM Chair, addressed the issue from an artistic perspective in his President's Report. These two articles, enclosed with this letter, speak to core values of fairness and artistic integrity.

But there is a third and equally important reason for all of you to think twice before sacrificing orchestra size and/or compensation for extras in exchange for salary and benefits for the full-time core. If we continue to make these trade-offs we add to the growing army of highly skilled musicians who see little benefit from union representation. They join our Locals and pay their dues, yet in most cases have no representation on the negotiating committee and therefore no "say" in setting the terms and conditions that govern their working lives.

The risks in this are huge. So far the several instances of backlash that have taken place have been within the context of internal union politics, as subs and extras organize to form a separate bargaining unit or to form their own committee. There have, however, been incidents of a more serious nature. There has been at least one DFR charge resulting from a pay cut for the extras. We all watched in dismay as the Atlanta Ballet pit filled with non-union musicians during the strike of 1999. In at least one Local, a group of disgruntled musicians has formed a non-union orchestra with a subscription season and film-scoring dates.

We ignore this growing army of underpaid reserve labor at our peril. This issue is about fairness and artistic excellence. But it is also about preserving the power of our union. Please help keep the AFM and its Locals strong by preserving full-time jobs and by providing adequate representation and compensation for our brothers and sisters who are substitute and extra musicians.

We wish all of you a successful negotiating season.

[Signatures]

Planning the ROPA Conference

Dennis Danders, ROPA Treasurer

Many ROPA members and AFM Local Executive Boards have asked about the process of selecting ROPA Conference sites, room fees and the managing of the overall conference logistics. There is much planning involved between the ROPA Executive Board, the ROPA Conference Committee and the ROPA Conference Coordinator.

One of our important goals is to rotate the Conference to various sections of the country each year [last year California, this year Texas and next year Ohio]. We solicit Locals to host a ROPA Conference. The official invitation to host the annual ROPA Conference must come from the member's Orchestra Committee through their ROPA Delegate. The Delegate gives a short presentation to the ROPA Conference which should include a hotel brochure showing the conference facilities and room costs.

The hotel should be union, if possible, and ground transportation from the airport should be convenient and reasonably priced. Adequate parking is needed. The conference facilities must include a main Conference Room that comfortably holds 100 people, five Breakout Rooms, and an Office.

Room rates (both conference and sleeping), as well as catering costs vary greatly from one hotel to another. It is sometimes a challenge to negotiate rates that the Locals can afford to pay in order for their Delegate to attend. Our Conference Coordinator Liz Cochran works very hard in negotiating with the hotel. She is also very diligent in seeing that hotel fulfills the details of the contract.

Most hotels now prohibit conferences from bringing in and serving food and drink purchased outside the hotel. That cute little bottle of Coke or Sprite you see at the breaks can cost \$3 a bottle in some places. This doesn't include the service charge that is also tacked on. The Conference Coordinator along with the ROPA Treasurer scrutinize every possible expense.

The planning of the 2008 ROPA Conference started right after the 2007 Conference. It took many months to negotiate a suitable hotel contract with the Doubletree Hotel Houston - Downtown. We are currently working on the scheduling and guest speakers. If you happen to be in Houston on July 29th through August 1st, please stop in and observe your ROPA Conference.

Sylvia White: Resolution

The ROPA Executive Board passed unanimously a motion to officially and publicly acknowledge the passing of our dear friend Sylvia White, express condolences to her family and make a \$100 donation to Sylvia's favorite charity.

Resolved, that the Executive Board of the Regional Orchestra Players' Association on behalf of the Delegates and musicians of our 75 member orchestras, sends its deepest condolences to the family of Sylvia White. We also wish to acknowledge our gratitude for her many years of selfless devotion and service to her fellow musicians as a ROPA Board member and Delegate from the El Paso Symphony. We all take comfort in the fact that her passionate work with many orchestras will pursue for many years to come. She will be missed.

Minutes

ROPA Executive Board Conference Call

October 26, 2007

1:00 PM EDT – 1:51 PM EDT

Attendees

T. Fetherston, C. Lehmeier, L. Gardner, D. Danders, P. Austin, N. Foofat, L. Jones, T. Judd, N. Nelson, A. Morris, &

Absent

G. Lasley & S. Roberts

Proceedings

Officer Reports

President

- the AFM Media Summit coming up 11/12/07
- Conference Hotel search is close;
- Mid-year hotel

Vice-President

- New members
- Conductor Evaluations Larry & Carla will work on language for limiting number of conductors' evaluations sent out to 12 each time;
- MAL Calls: Orchestras discussed: AZ Opera, Knoxville, Tulsa Opera, Shreveport, Omaha, Cleveland Opera (Opera Cleveland), California Symphony;
- Carla to look into using SKYPE for conference calling;

Secretary/Media Chair

- First mailing coming out around Thanksgiving
- AFM Media Summit and November negotiations

Treasurer— 2007 conf \$700 over budget; the League's Collaborative Data Project has become silent;

Editor— postage increased; found union printer that is better; next deadline 11/15/07;

Motion to waive Associate Member dues for Atlanta Ballet for 2007/08 year; Moved by D. Danders; M/S/C;

Larry Gardner, ROPA Secretary

Email Minutes

ROPA Executive Board

8/12/2007 – 12/31/2007

10/17/07 To approve the ROPA committee appointments as stated below:

Legislative

Gary Lasley, Chair	Dennis Danders
Larry Gardner	Tim Judd

Electronic Media

Larry Gardner, Chairman	Paul Austin
Greg Goodall, LA Opera	Gary Lasley
Carla Lehmeier	

Healthcare

Nadège Foofat, Chairman
Carla Lehmeier

Ethics

Jennifer Potochnic, Chairman	
Cindy Anderson	Ann Gilbert
Laurien Jones	Nancy Nelson

10/26/07 To approve the cost of one hotel night plus appropriate per diem for Larry Gardner to attend the Electronic Media summit on November 12 in Alexandria, VA; M/S/C

10/26/07 To cover half of President Fetherston's expenses to attend the AFM Electronic Media Summit, November 12, 2007, in Alexandria, VA, in the amount of no more than \$250 (including per diem); M/S/C

11/19/07 that the ROPA Board approve expenses to send Pres. Fetherston to the AV negotiations on 11/18-11/19 in New York.; M/S/C

11/23/07 that we agree with the plan to send the Symphonic Players' Conferences heads (or other officer designated by each board), plus the director of SSD Canada as the fourth "rank and file" to the FIM International Meeting April 7-9, 2008; M/S/C

12/4/07 that the ROPA board agrees with the plan to send the three Symphonic Player Conference heads (or other officer designated by each board) as Symphonic Representatives to the FIM International Meeting April 7-9, 2008; and that we suggest to the AFM that a fourth representative can be waived in order to save the AFM some the expense. M/S/C

12/4/07 that ROPA allot Carla Lehmeier up to \$700 for expenses to attend the New World Symphony Fence Agreement negotiations and the New World Symphony Fellows presentation. M/S/C

Grand Rapids Symphony Supports Literacy in its Community

Paul Austin, Member-at-Large

Last year on Grammy Awards Day, the members of the Grand Rapids Symphony were a little busy wondering about their own Grammy nomination. This year, they commemorated the day by organizing an event to promote West Michigan's childhood literacy.

On February 10, 2008, musicians from the Grand Rapids Symphony performed chamber music works with literary themes to raise money for Schools of Hope, the Heart of West Michigan United Way's literacy campaign.

The event, entitled *Sounds of Hope*, featured the orchestra members performing selections based upon literary themes, such as Ravel's *Mother Goose Suite* and a composition featuring the brass section that brings poems by Ogden Nash to life. The musicians also performed the *Winter Concerto* from Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*.

In addition, the musicians solicited and donated silent auction items to help raise money for the United Way's literacy program. The musicians donated personal concerts; Chinese, as well as rhythm bone lessons; personalized crossword puzzles, and an Alhorn appearance. Attendees were able to bid upon such items as a Lake Michigan cottage getaway, an ultra premium wine tasting, a concert tambourine, Pilates lessons, an evening with Opera Grand Rapids that includes dinner and a night's stay at the new J.W. Marriott, and for the chocolate lover, 100 hand-crafted chocolates.

Proceeds from this event helped fund Heart of West Michigan Schools of Hope tutoring and mentoring programs, which help close the literacy gap between urban and suburban students. The musicians hope to make the *Sounds of Hope* concert/auction an annual event.

12/4/07 that we forward Carla's letter to ICSOM President Bruce Ridge immediately. M/S/C

12/4/07 that the ROPA Board drafts a letter to be sent to our delegates and forwarded to all our musicians communicating our position regarding the Mellon Survey

12/21/07 that we send the new version of the Mellon letter (with the ICSOM edits), both a hard copy and electronic version, on Friday, December 21, 2007, to Mellon, with an electronic copy sent to ROPA's Executive Board; M/S/C

Larry Gardner, ROPA Secretary

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ROPA Member Orchestras

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Charleston Symphony Orchestra
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Cleveland Opera Orchestra
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Houston Ballet Orchestra
Houston Grand Opera Orchestra
Huntsville Symphony Orchestra
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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
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Napa Valley Symphony
New Haven Symphony Orchestra
New Mexico Symphony Orchestra
Oakland East Bay Symphony
Omaha Symphony Orchestra
Pacific Symphony
Palm Beach Opera Orchestra
Pasadena Pops Orchestra
Pittsburgh Opera and Ballet Orchestras
Portland Opera Orchestra
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Wichita Symphony Orchestra
Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra

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Hudson Valley Philharmonic
Milwaukee Ballet Orchestra
Richardson Symphony Orchestra
Tulsa Opera Orchestra

ROPA

Regional
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Association

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

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