

From the ROPA President: Carla Lehmeier-Tatum

ROPA Board Mid-Year Meeting, and the ROPA Conference

Dear ROPA Orchestras,

I recently returned from a ROPA mid-year Board meeting held in Houston, Texas. We just couldn't stay away from our fellow board member, Nancy Nelson, and her southern hospitality. I would like to thank the ROPA Board for an incredibly productive meeting. During our time together we focused on preparations for the upcoming ROPA Conference, the 25th anniversary celebration of the first gathering of our founding ROPA orchestra



The ROPA Board at the Mid-Year Meeting (from L to R): Paul Austin, Nancy Nelson, Carla Lehmeier-Tatum, Gary Lasley, Karen Barker, Larry Gardner, Sherill Roberts, Dennis Danders, Norman Stone. Not pictured: Laurien Jones, Tim Judd, Amy Morris

representatives. The meeting also concentrated on the current economy and the overriding trend of contract re-openers witnessed within the orchestral industry. We concluded our discussions with the recommendation of increased networking and communication within our ROPA orchestras and between the ROPA Delegates and their assigned Members-at-Large (MAL).

The ROPA Board devoted a large portion of time in Houston listening to MAL orchestra reports. We identified 15 ROPA orchestras whose managements have requested either contract extensions or contract re-openers. The board examined the trends and challenges our orchestra musicians face as they distinguish the motives and causes for these increasing requests. We hosted a call with Symphonic Services Director Chris Durham, and made inquiries about the future plans for financial analyses support and negotiations assignments the AFM will offer to our member orchestras. There have been individuals identified to per-

form financial analyses for some of our orchestras. If your orchestra is in need of an analysis, please work with your local and your SSD negotiator for assistance in identifying an appropriate individual who could provide your financial analysis.

The ROPA board held a brief phone meeting with the President of the Organization of Canadian Symphony Musicians, Francine Schutzman, to ascertain the health of orchestras in Canada. There appeared to be similar cost-cutting measures that US orchestras have experienced, but on a much smaller scale.

The afternoon portion of our meeting included an in-depth conference planning session. One important change we have implemented is a reduction in the length of the conference by one day. It is the hope of the ROPA board that we will avoid weekend conflicting work engagements and obtain full participation from all Delegates with no early departures.

The 2009 ROPA conference will be hosted by Dayton Local 101-473 and the Dayton Philharmonic. A special thanks goes out to Local Secretary Donald Sutton for his superb on-site support and event planning. I am pleased to announce that the plans for our guest speakers have been finalized. The line-up of topics and speakers are both productive and responsive to the current musicians' need to preserve wages and working conditions.

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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.

www.ropaweb.org

From the ROPA President: Carla Lehmeier-Tatum, continued



This year Randy Cohen (pictured left), the Americans for the Arts Vice-President of Policy and Research, will join us as our Keynote speaker. I attended a presentation by Mr. Cohen at the 2008 ICSOM conference and found it to be both inspiring and incredibly informational. Americans for the Arts is the nation's leading nonprofit organization for advancing the arts in America. They have undertaken a study called "*Arts & Economic Prosperity III: The Economic Impact of Nonprofit Arts and Culture Organizations and Their Audience*," which demonstrates that the nonprofit arts and culture industry is an economic driver in communities. This study continues to be among the most frequently cited resources used to demonstrate the impact of the nation's nonprofit arts industry on the local, state, and national economy. It documents the economic impact of the nonprofit arts and culture industry in 156 communities and regions (116 cities and counties, 35 multi-county regions, and five states), and represents all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Back by popular demand!

The second day of the conference will host a presentation of William Thompson. Mr. Thompson is a professor of public relations at the University of Louisville and is the former associate director of the University of Missouri's Conservatory of Music. Mr. Thompson has been consulted by numerous orchestra musician associations during their contract negotiations. He will help us learn how to employ accessible analysis tools that can provide defensible data on our managements' performance amid economic concerns. Using what he terms a "dollars-in/dollars-out" rationale, this knowledge will help deflect your management's knee-jerk reaction, to any fiscal situation, of calling for musician pay cuts. Additionally, the musician's capacity to explain the organization's financial performance to your orchestra's patrons and your fellow community

becomes easier and your messages more persuasive. Just as importantly, that information can transform your message from what may appear to some to be a self-interested desire to maintain wage levels, into a productive stance that helps your community and your orchestra prioritize their energies on initiatives that can deliver constructive bottom-line results. The result: the musicians' voices become more powerful in dictating the decisions that will ultimately insure the institutions' and your own financial foundations.

The third and final day of the conference will feature David Nesmith (pictured right) in a presentation of the key principles of the Alexander Technique. Mr. Nesmith is also a member of the West Virginia Symphony. As a certified teacher of the Alexander Technique, he specializes in injury prevention and performance enhancement for musicians. He has studied the Alexander Technique since 1995 with several master teachers including Barbara Conable. Additionally, he is a certified member of Andover Educators (www.bodymap.org). In this capacity he travels around the country teaching the course *What Every Musician Needs to Know about the Body*. Mr. Nesmith has published several articles on the Alexander Technique and Body Mapping (www.poisedforlife.com). During the presentation the participants will engage in discussion and demonstration of key Alexander Technique principles. We will also explore Constructive Rest, a dynamic procedure for rejuvenating your mind and body, our first and most important instrument for making music.

We will be posting informational links for our presentations at www.ropaweb.org that both Delegates and orchestra members can view prior to the ROPA Conference. Delegates, please take time to register for the conference and hotel. Don't forget to work with your local on approving the conference expenses.



ADDITIONS TO THE ROPA FAMILY (or, get out those cigars)

Paul Austin, ROPA Vice President (Grand Rapids Symphony)

ROPA has grown this year. We are pleased to add four Full Members and one Associate Member this season. As of April 2009, our total enrollment is 78 orchestras (70 Full Members and 8 Associate Members).

The **Atlanta Ballet Orchestra** (GA), formerly an Associate Member of ROPA, has rejoined as a Full Member. Local Secretary-Treasurer Andrew W. Cox reports that "Local 148-462 and the members of the Atlanta Ballet Orchestra are most grateful for the continued support of ROPA during their lockout/firing ... they are glad to be back in the fold."

We welcome two new Full Members: **Duluth Superior Symphony Orchestra** (MN) and the **Reading Symphony Orchestra** (PA). Steve Highland, Delegate for Duluth, states that "over the years we've learned the hard way that going it alone is a tough way to go, and I'm hoping that we can learn some creative new ways to do better from our new ROPA colleagues." Joshua Kovach, Reading Symphony's Delegate, shares that the "members of the Reading Symphony Orchestra voted with an overwhelming majority to join ROPA. We are very excited to have taken this step, and look forward to working with our colleagues."

Moving from Associate to Full Member status is the **Richardson Symphony Orchestra** (TX). "The members of the Richard-

son Symphony are excited to move up to Full Member status and receive voting privileges at ROPA's annual conference," says Delegate Dwight Anderson. "We are also working toward having the East Texas Symphony join ROPA as well and look forward to bringing them on board very soon."

Finally, the **Lincoln Symphony Orchestra** (NE) has joined ROPA as an Associate Member. Their Delegate, Tim Dickmeyer, states that "the musicians of the Lincoln Symphony Orchestra are excited about joining ROPA. We look forward to learning from the other member orchestras and comparing our experiences to those around the country."

Welcome to the ROPA family!



Standing up for ROPA Orchestras. The Shreveport Symphony Musicians show solidarity.

2009 ROPA CONFERENCE INFORMATION

Location:

Dayton Crowne Plaza
33 East 5th Street
Dayton, Ohio

Dates:

August 3, 2009: 2:00 p.m.–10:00 p.m.:
Negotiations Workshop
August 4-6, 2009:
ROPA Conference

Conference Registration:

https://resweb.passkey.com/Resweb.do?mode=welcome_gi_new&groupID=157077

ROPA ORCHESTRAS IN THE NEWS

Congratulations to the musicians of the LA Opera Orchestra for receiving two Grammy awards at the February 2009 ceremony. They were awarded *Best Classical Album* and *Best Opera Recording* for their project "Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny" by Kurt Weill. Recorded at the Los Angeles Opera in February 2007, *Mahagonny* features Maestro James Conlon leading the Los Angeles Opera Orchestra and Chorus; the all-star cast includes Anthony Dean Griffey and Tony Award winners Patti LuPone and Audra McDonald in a production directed by John Doyle, winner of the 2006 Tony Award for Best Direction of a Musical (*Sweeney Todd*). The English translation used on the DVD is by Michael Feingold. The DVD release followed closely upon the production's nationwide United States television broadcast on PBS's Great Performances in December 2007.

T.I.P.S. — IMPORTANT INFORMATION!

Carla Lehmeier-Tatum, ROPA President

The ROPA Board has heard reports of orchestra management scheduling meetings to discuss financial concerns directly with their orchestra without going through the Union or their Orchestra Committee. It is important to remember that Board and Management would be wise to respect the Union's role as the musicians' exclusive bargaining representatives. Although the management has the right to express its views to the musicians, it runs the risk of violating the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) if it does so in a coercive manner. It is important that board and management be well acquainted with the restrictions the NLRA places on them when addressing your orchestra.

Some of these restrictions can best be remembered by the acronym TIPS, which stands for *threats*, *interrogation*, *promises*, and *spying*.

Threats include where management conveys some form of

detriment to an employee. It includes statements by the employer to employees, such as talk of a discharge, layoff, loss of pay, loss of benefits, loss of promotional opportunities, and the like.

Unlawful *interrogation* may be as innocent an event as a supervisor casually asking an employee over a cup of coffee how many people attended a publicly announced union meeting the previous evening.

Promises are the reverse of threats. An employer is prohibited from offering beneficial treatment (such as promotions or higher wages) to an employee in exchange for the employee's forbearance of his legally protected union activities.

Employer *spying* includes supervisors stationing themselves near union meetings and observing and identifying employees attending the meeting, following union supporters to determine where they go after work, or requesting or directing employees to report on the union activities of co-workers.

BEING A ROPA DELEGATE: Why Bother?

Sherrill Roberts, Member-at-Large (Portland Opera)

Your orchestra's ROPA delegate:

- attends the annual conference every summer;
- writes a short report about your orchestra to present to the conference;
- writes a short report about the conference to present to your orchestra;
- compiles data from your orchestra for the national wage chart; and
- participates in the delegate e-list during the year.

So why bother? Why spend time being a ROPA delegate? What's in it for you?

1. Satisfaction:

- gathering information about how other orchestras have dealt with problems;
- helping your colleagues deal with problems that come up;
- learning ways of more effective communication within your orchestra.

2. Stimulation:

- networking with musicians around the country;
- meeting and working with the leaders of the AFM and ROPA;
- being involved with orchestral issues on a national level.

3. Adventure:

- paid travel to an interesting city every year;
- fun with colleagues from around the country.

One of my most satisfying experiences as ROPA delegate happened when my opera orchestra found out just a few days before the first rehearsal that we were going to perform Wagner's *Flying Dutchman* with no intermission. We went to Management to say that playing this particular opera so long without a break would increase the risk of repetitive motion injuries, especially in the strings. We were told that *Dutchman* is usually done without a break, and that there were no injuries in the two orchestras who had previously done this particular production. Without the resource of ROPA, our response would have had to be, "Oh...OK..." Instead, I posted an inquiry on the e-list asking for feedback from orchestras who had done *Dutchman*.

Thanks to all of you who responded, we were able to go back to Management and tell them they were mistaken: more than half of the productions of *Dutchman* have had intermissions, and the orchestras who had done it without a break had a high incidence of injuries. It was too late for our Management to redo the production, but they made significant concessions, allowing musicians to stop and rest during the performance and to leave the pit temporarily without any disciplinary action.

Some time later I learned from the delegate of another orchestra that a similar situation came up for them, and since they had been alerted by our experience they were successful in heading off their company's plan to do the opera without an intermission.

It was a very good feeling to know I played a small part in helping many musicians avoid injury. Personally, that's why I bother.

Conducting Critiques: Path and Process

Paul Austin, ROPA Vice-President (Grand Rapids Symphony)

The last chord and final applause for this evening's concert have just died away, but one task remains on your music stand. As the lights go up and the audience leaves, you take a moment to reflect about this week's guest conductor. With a careful reply to the question "able to achieve successful performances," your ROPA conductor evaluation is now complete. As soon as the form is handed in to your ROPA representative, you are officially off-duty for the rest of the night.

But, have you ever wondered what happens to your evaluation from there, and if your voice will ever make a difference? It is hoped that this article will shed some light on the journey that your conductor evaluation takes after you have submitted it, and how it may help musicians in other orchestras, as well as your own.

The task of administering conductor evaluations is a highly confidential one and perhaps the most important duty that your ROPA Delegate handles on your behalf. There are detailed instructions in our Delegate handbook regarding the legalities of the process in order to protect all involved parties, and so the integrity of ROPA's conductor evaluation data bank is upheld. Please thank your Delegate for the hours spent in completing this project for the musicians of your orchestra.

Once all of the evaluations have been collected by your Delegate, the forms are grouped by instrument family. Next, the Delegate tallies the results and enters the information onto a summary form. Any additional comments written on the forms are included as well, and the summary results are mailed to ROPA's Vice-President for inclusion in our data-base.

It is the job of ROPA's Vice-President to house and maintain the conductor evaluation data-base. This resource includes evaluations of over 250 conductors by ROPA musicians for over twenty years. During my year as Vice-President, this data-base has been transferred to electronic storage. For this huge undertaking, I wish to extend special thanks to my colleagues on ROPA's Executive Board, especially Gary Lasley (Hollywood Bowl Orchestra) and Sherill Roberts (Portland Opera Orchestra), as well as the useful advice I sought and received from Bruce Hembd (Arizona Opera Orchestra), David Howard (Eagle Claims Manager), and Patricia Polach (ROPA's Legal Counsel).

Let's get back to your evaluation of that guest conductor from tonight's concert. Exactly how will your comments be used? Well, very carefully! A prime example would be during a Music Director search. Your management may request the contents of any conductor file from our data-base, which would be sent to your ROPA Delegate. While Delegates may never copy or release the file to anyone, they may verbally report a summary of

the results of the file to the search committee, which can help in determining the suitability of the final Music Director candidates for your orchestra. The Delegate then promptly returns the file to the Vice-President, and confidentiality has been maintained.

We are able to request conductor evaluations from ICSOM and OCSM as well, and these requests are made by management to ROPA's Vice-President. The cooperation in sharing this information between the players' conferences indicates how the voices of all musicians are respected and valued.

Perhaps a useful summary would be to address the top five questions that I have received this year regarding ROPA's conductor evaluation data base.

1. Will anyone ever see what I have written about a conductor on my form?

Yes, but know that the results are tabulated and shared in a way that confidentiality is upheld. Only the ROPA Delegate actually sees the form each musician fills out, and ultimately only the tallies and summary information are shared.

2. Who can see the results of the evaluation?

In order to maintain security and to avoid lawsuits, the results must remain confidential and can only be released to, and viewed by, your ROPA Delegate. The Delegate may report the results to the search committee, but the contents of the evaluation files may never be copied or turned over to anyone.

3. Can the evaluation results be emailed?

No, due to the potential of misuse of e-mail and legal ramifications involved.

4. Should we evaluate our own Music Director for the ROPA data-base?

Yes, and it is recommended to do so every few years.

5. Can the results of our Music Director evaluation be shared with us?

Yes, by using the process of a letter from your management requesting the results. Again, it would only be sent to your ROPA Delegate, who is charged with upholding confidentiality.

So, the next time that you complete a conductor evaluation form, please know that your voice is protected and respected. Finally, thank you for taking the time to complete a conductor evaluation form. It does make a difference.

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ROPA Member Orchestras

Full Members

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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
El Paso Symphony

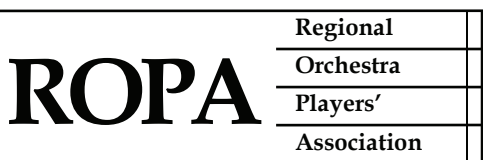
Elgin Symphony Orchestra
Erie Philharmonic Orchestra
Fort Wayne Philharmonic
Fresno Philharmonic Orchestra
Grand Rapids Symphony
Harrisburg Symphony Orchestra
Hartford Symphony Orchestra
Hollywood Bowl Orchestra
Houston Ballet Orchestra
Houston Grand Opera Orchestra
Huntsville Symphony Orchestra
Kalamazoo 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
Oakland East Bay Symphony
Omaha Symphony Orchestra
Opera Cleveland
Pacific Symphony
Palm Beach Opera Orchestra
Pittsburgh Opera Orchestra
Portland Opera Orchestra
Reading Symphony Orchestra
Rhode Island Philharmonic
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Richmond Symphony
Santa Barbara Symphony
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Sarasota Orchestra
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Associate Members

Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra
Flint Symphony Orchestra
Green Bay Symphony Orchestra
Hudson Valley Philharmonic
Lincoln Symphony Orchestra
Milwaukee Ballet Orchestra
Pittsburgh Ballet Orchestra
Tulsa Opera Orchestra



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

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