

Spring 2010

REGIONAL ORCHESTRA PLAYERS' ASSOCIATION

The Leading Tone

ROPA

Regional
Orchestra
Players'
Association

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

Welcome to our Five New Orchestras

Paul Austin, ROPA Vice President (Grand Rapids Symphony)

During the past six months, ROPA has added five new Full Members, making our membership 83 orchestras strong.

We are delighted that the importance of belonging to a players' conference is recognized from coast to coast. It is a pleasure to welcome the musicians of the New West Symphony, Orchestra Iowa, Pasadena Symphony Orchestra, Portland Symphony Orchestra, and Tucson Symphony Orchestra to ROPA.

In asking their representatives why it was important to join ROPA, here is what they had to say:

NEW WEST SYMPHONY (CALIFORNIA), from Orchestra Committee Secretary/Treasurer Marie Catson:

"New West Symphony members voted overwhelmingly in favor of ROPA membership. We believe that the resources offered, such as the negotiating workshop and annual conference, conductor database, and ability to network with other orchestras similar to ours will be invaluable, especially in this very difficult economic climate."

ORCHESTRA IOWA, from ROPA Delegate Matthew Cameron:

"Orchestra Iowa is extremely proud to be a new member of ROPA. In recent years, Orchestra Iowa has extended its season, established partnerships with the nationally-syndicated 'From the Top' radio program, Iowa Public Television, Iowa Public Radio, and the Cedar Rapids Opera Theater, as well as added performances in communities around Iowa. As Orchestra Iowa increases its presence throughout the region, it is thankful to have ROPA's

resources to call upon for advice and guidance."

PASADENA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, from Orchestra Committee Chair Andrew Malloy:

"The members of the Pasadena Symphony voted to join ROPA with a nearly unanimous vote. After years of feeling very comfortable and secure as members of a well-respected organization, financial difficulties along with changes in management and board relations with the players raised the awareness of many that we wanted to be allied with other players in similar situations. We look forward to having the resources and support ROPA can provide and also hope that we can make useful contributions to ROPA with our own experiences, failures and successes alike."

PORTLAND SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA (MAINE), from ROPA Delegate Richard Kelly:

"The Portland Symphony Orchestra shares a large part of its members with many of the other regional and major orchestras in New England. Even though we currently have open and honest communications with management, it was time for this 80-year-old professional orchestra to get our CBA in line with others in our region. We are indebted to the Boston Local for its help in this process."

TUCSON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, from ROPA Delegate Jessica Campbell:

"The Tucson Symphony Orchestra is thrilled to be a new member of ROPA. We are excited about the opportunities to meet with other orchestras that are similar in size to us as well as sharing ideas to better ourselves. Being a member of ROPA only for a few months has already been an asset to our orchestra."

ROPA Executive Board Mid-Year Meeting

This past February the ROPA Executive Board met in Houston for its midyear meeting. The meeting has proved to be a great opportunity for the board to discuss the issues and trends facing ROPA's 83 member orchestras. A great deal of time was used to focus on and plan the upcoming 2010 ROPA Conference. The agenda included meetings with AFM President Tom Lee and SSD Director Chris Durham.



In the photo (left to right): Laurien Jones, Greg Youmans, Nancy Nelson, Larry Gardner, Gary Lasley, Paul Austin, Thomas F. Lee, Karen Barker, Dennis Danders, Carla Lehmeier-Tatum, Karen Sandene, Chris Durham

Inside this Issue

Welcome to New Orchestras	1
Facing National Agendas	2
A Quarter Century of Progress	3
Orchestra's Extended Family	4
Arizona Opera Steps out of Pit	5
Dallas Opera News	6
Strife Ends for New Hampshire Festival	6
Triumphs of New Hall	8

The Leading Tone

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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.

Facing National Agendas

Carla Lehmeier-Tatum, ROPA President

Over the past two years regional orchestra musicians have been blindsided by orchestra boards declaring a "restructuring" of their organization to their community. The particulars involved are tantamount to a national agenda. This year there have been a number of steamrolling restructuring attempts that indicate how essential it is for ROPA to address future national agendas that provide a perspective from our 83 ROPA orchestras. I invite you to read my observations about the current restructuring trends and the proposed ROPA survey that will assist in establishing a voice to respond to future agendas.

I have been puzzled by the business trends that some of our orchestras involved in restructuring have adopted. These include significant cuts in educational outreach and business plans that leave key positions vacant, a staff that is void of a Development Director and/or an Executive Director and board members stepping forward to "lead" the organization. These managerial decisions conflict with the fundamental functioning requirements of the institution and are decided by the same orchestra boards that have gained a reputation for underperforming in both their fund-raising capacity and institutional oversight. There is no doubt that the choice to leave a Development Director and/or Executive Director position vacant would inevitably threaten both the private and corporate donation revenue sources. Cuts in educational outreach will impact the organization's ability to acquire grants and solicit future donations.

When pondering these circumstances, I asked myself how a board of directors would be led down this diminishing path. This question directed me to a series of papers published about symphonic musicians and the symphony orchestra by Stanford University Professor Robert J. Flanagan. His most debated paper, published in 2008 and commissioned by the Mellon Foundation, "The Economic Environment of American Symphony Orchestras," was used to justify proposed drastic cuts for some of our most controversial negotiations. Professor Flanagan utilized flawed data, then compared the increases in musicians' wages with revenue. He concluded that there was a structural deficit within our industry and placed fault on the increases in musicians' wages for the deficit.

Earlier in 2008 Flanagan published another paper, "Symphony Musicians and Symphony Orchestras." This paper investigates the relationship between the economic difficulties faced by symphony orchestras collectively bargained wage increases and work rules. Flanagan explores nonperformance income and states the following, "If contributed support is viewed as continually responsive to fundraising activities, labor may adopt wage objectives that exceed what they would seek if facing less ambiguous budget constraint..." "...wage demands drive the level of fundraising activity as orchestras seek sufficient nonperformance income to cover wage demands and other cost increases... In this scenario, wage increases absorb increases in nonperformance income, undermining its potential contribution to financial stability. These scenarios each stress the crucial role of nonperformance income in determining wage settlements..."

Reading this paper could give insight into why a "restructuring" orchestra might consent to allowing crucial fund-raising positions to remain vacant, and why donations might be declined. According to Flanagan, we should not allow our wage increases to reflect the increases in the nonperformance income, in particular, private donations. This viewpoint suggests that if the public supports the relevance of what orchestral musician services provide to the community through donations, never-the-less the musicians should not share in the success of increased nonperformance income. This perspective is out of line when it has been evident to me that when individual community members make their donations, they expect that the donation will support the orchestra and the programs they provide to the community. Since the New Mexico Symphony Orchestra returned to work after their four month "postponement" of the season, there has been a constant question brought forth from the community, "How can I be sure that my donation will be allocated towards the musicians?"

Looking at Flanagan's theories could also explain why some of our orchestra boards have adopted brutal take it or leave it nego-

continued on page 7

A Quarter of a Century of Progress: The 1985 ROPA Conference What Has Changed...and What Has Not Changed in the Music Industry

Rachel Cox, ROPA Historian

Nineteen eighty-five was situated in the middle of a decade marked by such salient events as the release of 52 American hostages held in Iran for 444 days; economic prosperity throughout most of the decade; political turmoil in Central America; famine in Ethiopia; the tragic explosion of the space shuttle *Challenger*; the partial meltdown of the Soviet nuclear power plant in Chernobyl; the Iran-Contra affair; the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill off the coast of Alaska; the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe; the student protests for democracy in Beijing's Tiananmen Square; and concluded with the dramatic fall of the Berlin Wall. Ronald Reagan, who served two terms as U.S. President, initiated "Reaganomics," labeled the Soviet Union an "evil empire," deployed U.S. nuclear missiles in Europe, and ordered the invasion of Granada and retaliatory bombing strikes in Libya. Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev and the policies of *perestroika* and *glasnost* transformed the Soviet Union and opened the door to warmer relations with the U.S. that eventually closed the curtain on the Cold War. Popular fashions verged on the eccentric as personal computers, cable television, and VCRs filled American homes. Popular music generated hard rock, heavy metal, and MTV, as well as such notable personalities as Michael Jackson and Madonna. Popular films such as *ET the Extra Terrestrial*, *Chariots of Fire*, *Gandhi*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *Terms of Endearment*, *Amadeus*, *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back* and *The Return of the Jedi*, *Ghostbusters*, *Back to the Future*, *Top Gun*, *Driving Miss Daisy*, and *Fatal Attraction* defined a highly dynamic decade.

ROPA was in its infancy, having been formed a year earlier when representatives of thirteen regional orchestras and seven local unions gathered in Columbus, Ohio. They were joined by individuals from related organizations, most notably Lew Waldeck, the first full-time administrator of the AFM Symphony Department; AFM President Victor Fuentealba; and ICSOM President (now Chairman Emeritus) Fred Zenone. This group discussed their mutual concerns and the commonalities among orchestras in the U.S. From this nucleus ROPA was born.

The second annual ROPA conference was held from September 6-8, 1985 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Fort Worth, Texas. The convention had been organized by Jane Owen, delegate from the Fort Worth Symphony, and hosted by the musicians of the Fort Worth Symphony, the Fort Worth Symphony Association, and Local 72.

A small group of dedicated people carried out the executive duties of the nascent organization. The ROPA Executive Board consisted of President Nathan Kahn of the Nashville Symphony, Vice-President Bruce Schultz of the Tulsa Philharmonic, Secretary Libby Pistolesi from the Charlotte Symphony Orchestra, and Treasurer Leonard Byrne from the Spokane Symphony. Dana Karr had volunteered to serve as editor of the newsletter, which had been distributed in May of that year.

Nathan Kahn delivered the opening remarks. He first provided a brief explanation of ROPA's formation, a vital element in understanding what the organization represented. Since the 1985 conference was the first convention for many delegates, Kahn gave a detailed explanation of the organization's mission and the responsibilities of the musicians in their respective orchestras.

"ROPA is communication, education and research in the form of wage scale charts, bulletins and newsletters, conferences and surveys. There have been too many of us who have been operating in a total vacuum in our orchestras. And it's really amazing to learn of some of the really terrible things that continue to occur in ROPA orchestras because of this. ROPA is not going to wave a magic baton and make things wonderful in your orchestra for you. We are a self-help organization and it's crucial that you and your orchestra understand this. Even if we could do that, we really shouldn't. Only you and your colleagues in your orchestra really understand your orchestra, your management, and your board of directors and community, and all of these things must be carefully considered in determining where your orchestra is going. As leaders in your own orchestra you need good communication, not only with your colleagues in your orchestra, but with your Local, other orchestras and the AFM Symphony Department in order to positively affect your orchestra's future."

Kahn also noted that musicians in regional orchestras face the same issues that occur in all orchestras, in addition to those concerns germane to regional orchestras. He also stated that there are different categories of musicians all trying to earn a living at the same time: full-time musicians, part-time musicians, musicians somewhere in-between full-time and part-time status, and those musicians who are working full-time for part-time compensation. Due to the discrepancies in these categories, orchestra unity on any issue tends to be a difficult subject. Yet, until all of these musicians support each other and support their similar needs in some sort of "orchestra unity," no one will truly gain anything.

Kahn also spoke of the increasing quality of performances by ROPA orchestras and their subsequent amount of touring and syndicated media work, activities which few—if any—regional orchestras had conducted during the previous decade. Such demands on the musicians must be balanced by a higher level of professionalism on the part of the orchestra managements to accommodate the musicians.

One of the most contentious issues facing ROPA at the time was orchestra growth and conversion to full-time status. "We really must temper dreams of having another Cleveland Orchestra in

An Orchestra's Extended Family

Leslie Lashinsky, Long Beach Symphony and Local 353 member since 1981

Wanting to belong is a basic human instinct. Whether it's to a family or a club or a profession, we seek acceptance. We are social creatures in search of sustenance – emotional and economic. We want to be validated, nourished, supported. We are linked to and dependent on others. Even loners, by living apart from, are connected to their fellow human beings.

We orchestral musicians are particularly dependent. As accomplished as we may be individually, we need orchestras in which to play. We study and take lessons and practice alone for years so that we may play well with others and become (and remain) expert team players. Our lives on and off the job require a host of personal and group skills; our successes and failures come from how well we're in tune with ourselves and our colleagues, audiences and employers. Our livelihood depends on at least a few of the following: DNA, talent, hard work, support and encouragement, creativity, energy, joy, love, luck, guilt, compulsion, conniving, schmoozing, who you know, divine or other intervention, good looks, personality, crisp clothing, good karma, mother's milk and money, and riding each wave knowing you'll wipe out now and then.

All kidding aside, we need each other – right here – right now – in Long Beach, California. For me and many of my fellow LBSO musicians, the Long Beach Symphony is a very important part of life, more important than its employment hours and income would warrant. Long Beach Symphony is known to be warm-and-fuzzy as orchestras go, with a spirit of family and fun that has fostered friendly relationships among players (and their Union), staff, conductors, management, board members, volunteers, and audience (including thousands and thousands of school children) for decades. All of these folks want to belong and make up our "Symphony Family." Well, as you know, things get tough in families sometimes. As dysfunctional as our family may seem right now, I truly believe THE LBSO WILL SURVIVE. The positive attitude long associated with our orchestra has suffered during this challenging period, but that too will heal with time IF RESPECT PREVAILS. All factions in our fractured family must work together, acknowledge and appreciate each other's contributions to the LBSO, and keep playing.

For the past several years I have served as the Delegate from the Long Beach Symphony to the Regional Orchestra Players' Association. ROPA is a Player Conference within the AFM, established in 1984 to promote and defend the interests of musicians playing in regional orchestras across the US. Like the other AFM player conferences (ICSOM, OCSOM, TMA, and RMA), ROPA holds an annual Conference (in August) where representatives from regional orchestras share ideas and strategies, and gain knowledge and skills to help their orchestra committees, fellow players, and home Locals better communicate, negotiate and enforce their orchestra contracts (collective bargaining agreements or CBAs). Seminars are pro-

vided, led by AFM Symphonic Services Division staff, legal counsel and guest speakers. ROPA, with over 80 member orchestras, has its own Executive Board that organizes each three or four day conference, hosted in a different city each year by the host Local and orchestra. I've attended conferences in Charleston, West Virginia; Chattanooga, Tennessee; San Francisco; Houston, Texas; and Dayton, Ohio and look forward to Omaha, Nebraska this coming August 2010.

While I could go on for days talking about all I've learned from ROPA, I'll just say that the most valuable and pertinent piece of labor/contract law relevant to our current LBSO condition was (a tablet) handed down to us devotees last August by (I now worship her) AFM Counsel Patricia "Trish" Polach in her power point presentation on Contract Re-openers (Re-Opener Bargaining). She commanded (in her soccer-mom-mouse-that-roared way) that orchestras and their Unions not bow down to management pleadings or protestations to open an existing agreement, decreeing that while an Orchestra's contract is in effect (during the term of the CBA), orchestra management cannot force the Local Union (and musicians) to agree to concessions (changes requested by management). A signed contract is a signed contract (etched in stone?!), and while employees may want to accommodate an ailing employer, they (labor) may enter into diagnostic discussions to treat (and hopefully solve) the problems without relinquishing the provisions in their current agreement. I was so happy to hear how the law encourages the meaningful pursuit of solutions by protecting the contract's provisions during the process; in other words, if you work something out with management that involves changing (conceding) current contract wages and/or conditions, GREAT, but if you DON'T reach agreement, the current wages and conditions will continue to apply, as long as you made clear at the outset that you were not agreeing to reopen the contract, and that these were the 'rules of the road' governing any mid-term discussions you engaged in. In our case, Management violated contract provisions, basically imposing the concessionary terms they demanded and still could achieve if they worked with us rather than against us. Nobody wants the Long Beach Symphony to go out of business. Long Beach Symphony musicians and their Union want to arrive at a settlement that gets the orchestra through its current financial crisis, but restores some semblance of current terms and conditions three years from now. This is REASONABLE, RESPECTFUL and REALISTIC.

Attending ROPA builds one's familiarity with employee/ employer scenarios, tactics and solutions, contract provisions, industry standards and practices and results in increased power, confidence and know-how to handle and guide musicians back home. Local officers often attend to better serve their members. We're particularly lucky to have an extremely responsive, knowledgeable, and committed Local. Local 353 President Tracy Wells has offered every possible resource to LBSO musicians and their committee. The Local brought in a Federal Mediator to offer com-

continued on page 7

The Arizona Opera Orchestra Climbs 'Out of the Pit' for Community Outreach

Katherine Shields, Arizona Opera Orchestra

In 2009 the Arizona Opera Orchestra Musicians Association (AZOOMA), motivated by a desire to support the Arizona Opera and reach out to the community, began producing small ensemble concerts featuring orchestra members. As a pit orchestra which plays for the Opera's five fully-staged productions each season, the Arizona Opera Orchestra is rarely seen by audience members unless they walk to the pit and look in. AZOOMA's hope was that seeing the musicians perform on stage in a more intimate venue would deepen the connection with its audience members.

The first "Out of the Pit: Musicians of the Arizona Opera Orchestra" concert, in January 2009, took place at the Hamilton Library in Chandler. This library offers a weekly evening series for adults and was overjoyed to have a musical presentation offered at no cost. AZOOMA was delighted to have a suitable venue, a built-in audience, and publicity on the library's excellent website.

At this first event, a string quartet played a program of music by opera composers for an audience of fifty adults and school-aged children. The Arizona Opera graciously provided their Education Director, Laura Baldasano Surguine, who ran a drawing for a pair of tickets, gave out season brochures, and fielded questions. The Arizona Opera also provided liability insurance for the musicians performing; this wasn't required by the library but was in other venues investigated. At this informal event, the musicians introduced themselves and their instruments and answered audience questions.

The next "Out of the Pit" concert took place in April 2009 at Orangewood Presbyterian Church, Phoenix on their "Outreach Arts" series. Given in the sanctuary, known for its fine acoustics, "Outreach Arts" events are marketed by the church and well-attended. One hundred audience members attended the concert which included a performance of Stravinsky's "L'Histoire du Soldat" featuring radio personality Michael Dixon as narrator. The Arizona Opera again donated a pair of tickets to be given away and provided brochures.

The April concert resulted in an article in a local magazine and raised \$680 for the American Cancer Society. The church was so impressed with the quality of the musicianship they offered to put an "Out of the Pit" concert on their next season's series.

Results of outreach efforts

Embarking on outreach efforts seemed to create a ripple effect of other opportunities.

Working on a project jointly with the Arizona Opera led to invitations to join in their post-show "Opera Talkback" with the audience. Instrumentalists also began participating in the opera preview series, which was formerly singers and keyboard only.

This event is held the Tuesday evening before every Phoenix opening-night, at the downtown Phoenix Border's Books & Music store.

Another opportunity that presented itself was participation in "Backstage at the Opera," the annual fundraiser for the Arizona Opera produced by the Arizona Opera Chorus. The Chorus was delighted to have instrumentalists collaborate on their program of music offerings. This gala evening of opera favorites and refreshments raised \$4650 in 2009, nearly double the amount raised in 2008.

Besides providing players for their event, AZOOMA assisted the Chorus with their marketing— in particular, internet marketing, which hadn't previously been utilized.

AZOOMA had already joined Alliance for Audience, which runs a comprehensive event-listing website called Showup.com, and encouraged the Chorus to also join as an "Organization." One of Showup.com's member benefits is free on-line event ticketing, which the Chorus needed for their production.

Where this all led

AZOOMA is committed to participating in the "Backstage" concert each year and making the "Out of the Pit" concert an annual event. We are working on a "How to Produce an *Out of the Pit*" handbook for orchestra members.

AZOOMA realized a need for additional marketing venues besides our wonderful website, created by orchestra member Bruce Hembd. We now have a Facebook page, with photo album from each of our events, that has about 300 members. As members of Alliance for Audience, AZOOMA is on the list of major cultural organizations in Arizona. Our "Organization" listing at Showup.com allows us to post contact information and photos. The listing also allows patrons to post event reviews, which remain on-line indefinitely.

The cooperation of the Arizona Opera was vital to our outreach efforts. Not only did they donate tickets and provide personnel, but they advertised our events on their "email blasts" which reach several thousand people. We also shared the names and email addresses put into the basket for ticket drawings. Working with the Arizona Opera on these projects has led to greater public visibility for the musicians, which can only benefit both organizations.

Tips for success

- Begin planning 6-12 months before the concert date. Get confirmation from the venue and all the musicians participating.

continued on page 8

The Dallas Opera Receives Challenge Grant and New General Director

Norm Stone, Member-at-Large and Dallas Opera Orchestra

On February 9, 2010 The Dallas Opera was offered a \$10 million challenge grant from an anonymous donor. The company will have to raise \$10 million on its own before October 31, 2011 to receive this gift. It is to be used to create what the company calls a Cultural Renaissance Endowment Fund. The current endowment has lagged behind most of its peers. Endowment assets held by Houston Grand Opera, Santa Fe, Chicago and San Francisco are eight to thirty-two times as large as The Dallas Opera's endowment of just over \$4 million. There will be attractive naming opportunities for major donors to the fund such as the right to name the Music Director's position and naming concertmaster and other chairs within the orchestra. If the matching funds are raised The Cultural Renaissance Endowment Fund will generate interest and dividends and create financial support for program enhancements and expansions to rank among the very top opera companies in America.

On another front The Dallas Opera has just named Keith Cerny as the new General Director effective May 24, 2010. The company has seen three other directors come and go over the last ten years and certainly is in need of some stability and vision in this

position. Mr. Cerny is currently CEO of Sheet Music Plus, an online sheet music company. Previously he spent three years as Executive Director and CFO of San Francisco Opera. Before that he held executive positions in communications and technology operations with Accenture and McKinsey & Company. He has done consulting work for English National Opera, Opera America, Los Angeles Opera and Houston Grand Opera. He holds degrees in both physics and music from the University of California, an MBA from Harvard Business School, and a doctorate in economic development studies from The Open University in Milton Keynes, England. In other words he's very smart. With a difficult economy still looming, Cerny will face the challenge of raising funds to cover higher costs of performing in the new Winspear Opera House. "The fundraising challenge is always out there with any opera company," Cerny said. "But this company I think is very well positioned to put together the resources it needs. In particular, having access to a purpose-built opera house enables the company to attract top-tier artists, and audience and donor excitement." The challenge grant was surely a help in attracting him to this position.

Strife for New Hampshire Musicians Ends, Long Road to Recovery Remains

New Hampshire Music Festival Orchestra Committee: Ella Marie Gray, Bernard Di Gregorio, Joseph Higgins, Nina Allen Miller, Kristin Van Cleve

Nestled between the Lakes Region and the White Mountains of New Hampshire, Plymouth is a bucolic college town, home to Plymouth State University, the long-time host of the New Hampshire Music Festival.

As reported earlier this year, this community had come together in support of its beloved summer orchestra amidst the strife caused by the Festival's decision makers to move into a drastically new direction for the future which many feared did not include their resident Festival Orchestra.

Immediately following the first rehearsal of the season on July 7, 2009, President/CEO David Graham and Festival Director Henry Fogel delivered shocking news: Musicians wishing to return for the 2010 season would have to undergo a rigorous reapplication process. Veteran performers were being asked to submit an audition portfolio consisting of a CD or DVD of a solo performance of music from three periods of music history as well as optional performances of jazz, improvisation, or alternative styles, and three written essays regarding their approach to music making and mentoring. The rationale behind it was to assure management that musicians would be competent to assume duties related to a "new orchestra model."

Orchestra solidarity was paramount at this critical juncture. At an orchestra meeting, it was decided that musicians would wear purple ribbons during rehearsals and concerts to express their solidarity against Management's actions. Little did the orchestra

know that the audience, who were outraged at the prospect of losing their musicians, would also choose to wear purple ribbons! Concerned citizens gathered to establish a group, S.O.O.N. (Save Our Orchestra Now), whose goal was to save the New Hampshire Music Festival and its musicians.

The battle to save the festival continued throughout the fall and winter, and after countless hours of discussion and lobbying by the Orchestra Committee and executives of SOON, the Board of Trustees voted to abandon the "new model." Along with this decision came the resignations of the President Graham, Festival Director Fogel, the newly appointed Artistic Director, Jonathan Gandelsman, and several board members.

NHMF musicians are pleased with the news they will return in 2010, but are disheartened and slightly wary that the board is not yet willing to recognize the orchestra, represented by its five-person Orchestra Committee as a collective bargaining unit. Most musicians have opted to return, but at this time many questions remain unanswered and further discussions have been put on hold until the summer season takes place.

The Orchestra Committee continues to work to restore peace and harmony to an organization that has seen much strife over the past year. The goal for NHMF musicians is to provide world-class performances of classical orchestra and chamber music and to achieve recognition so that they are never again put in such a precarious position.

Facing National Agendas, continued

tiation tactics. In the paper "Symphony Musicians and Symphony Orchestras" Flanagan states, "Nonprofit organizations do not have owners or shareholders whose interests the board is required to represent and to whom the Board is accountable...Boards are rarely subject to election, and takeovers are not a disciplining factor. These features of symphony orchestra governance are unlikely to provoke the strength of bargaining resistance normally found in the private sector."

Flanagan provides this callous perspective in more than one paper. I ask myself, does bargaining strength justify canceling health insurance and continually disregarding labor law? This year alone the "restructuring" negotiations have left two ROPA orchestras with shortened seasons that in the end resulted in a significant reduction in earned income through lost ticket sales, contracted work from presenters and concert sponsorships. It is my hope that our individual orchestra boards and managements recognize that the costs of the bankruptcy threats and ruthless negotiation tactics that shadowed this year's contentious negotiations have only led to further financial downfalls and irreparable damage within the organization and the community.

One of Flanagan's papers was included in a 2009 Cambridge University publication called "Labor in the Era of Globalization." It brings the perspective that "Since the late 1960s, collective bargaining has transformed the artistic expenses of orchestras from variable to fixed costs by providing wage and employment guarantees, in turn limiting the ability of orchestras to adjust labor costs in the face of financial challenges."

The irony of Flanagan's theories is that most musicians in regional orchestras earn a poverty salary while executive management salaries have surpassed six digits. Over the past two decades the organizational growth within our ROPA orchestras

has shown huge inequities between musicians' salaries and production, administration, marketing and development expenses. Why has the industry not focused on the productivity of orchestra administration, development and marketing? Our boards' balanced budget demands originate from the private sector yet our institution fails to look to the private sector for the basic practice of "dollars in/dollars out" productivity analysis.

So what is next? Both the League of American Orchestras and the Mellon Foundation's Orchestra Forum have devoted a considerable amount of energy focusing on the future of the symphony and the changing role of the symphonic musician. This past January the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor School of Music hosted a summit that explored these questions. ROPA Vice-President Paul Austin was a panelist at the event. The roles explored during the summit included musicians performing in managerial duties as part of their job requirements. It is imperative that we determine for ourselves if this controversial concept is in the best interest for our future and be prepared to discuss this issue at a national level.

Over the next few weeks you should receive a survey that will focus on some of the issues that are being addressed at the national level. This survey will assist the ROPA Board to truly speak on behalf of regional orchestra musicians across the country. While our managements might have benefited through the commissioning of a labor economist, it is time for musicians making the music to create their own vision for the future. Since the recent decision trends of our orchestra boards indicate that they have strayed from the vision and the missions that have built our institutions, it is imperative that we work to preserve our educational outreach and artistic accomplishments first and foremost.

An Orchestra's Extended Family, continued

mittee training. And Local 353 shares the expense (with the AFM) of bringing AFM negotiator Nathan Kahn to Long Beach to deal with LBSO management when necessary. Nathan was instrumental in founding ROPA in 1984. We had a special ROPA 25 year anniversary celebration and award for him in Dayton, Ohio last summer. He's always available in person, phone, or email. Secretary/Treasurer Paul Castillo (a former LBSO OC Chair) has attended many ROPA conferences as a delegate or parliamentarian. And orchestra committee member Gary Lasley is on the current ROPA Executive Board and serves as ROPA's delegate to the AFM Convention (next convention June 2010).

It's all about representation. You have an informed and committed Local. You have a strong Orchestra Committee – some veterans, experienced and savvy in dealing with contracts, management and fellow musicians, and some new bright-eyed

and bushy-tailed rookies, eagerly learning on the job; ALL dedicated to the survival of the Long Beach Symphony AND respect and fair treatment of LBSO musicians. Please believe me when I say that no one person or part of our team: The Union (Local officers and AFM Negotiator) and The Orchestra (Orchestra Committee of five, ROPA Delegate and you LBSO members) is pushing the others inappropriately. Each and every member of the Long Beach Symphony, as well as all Local 353 members, has a vested interest in the LBSO. Support LBSO musicians and Local 353 by communicating with and responding to your elected representatives. We need to be positive and to personify labor as well as artistic solidarity – that ensemble virtuosity we have worked our lives to achieve.

1/20/10 P.S. Hallelujah! We've reached a tentative agreement with Management and are ready to PLAY!

Triumphs and Trials of a New Hall

Norm Stone, Member-at-Large and Dallas Opera Orchestra

The Dallas Opera finally has a new home that is a true Opera Hall. The City of Dallas has been trying to complete the Arts District for 30 years and now the AT & T Center for the Performing Arts is in place. The Winspear Opera House, Wyle Theatre and renovated Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing Arts completes a district which already has in place the Meyerson Symphony Hall, Nasher Sculpture Garden and the Dallas Museum of Art. The Opera Hall itself is a singular landmark, bright red exterior with a louvered canopy that extends around the structure to block the Texas heat. Inside is a classic horseshoe shaped opera hall with tiered seating that accommodates an audience of 2200. The acoustics have been reviewed as excellent. Solo voices, chorus and orchestra carry very well into every part of the hall. It has been called a warm sound with an agreeable ring.

There are, however, a few inconveniences. We opened the season last October with two Galas before the building was really completed...wires, tools and machinery everywhere, parking three blocks away across a busy street during torrential rainstorms, mudslides, acousticians testing with a machine that looked like R2D2, management and conductors losing their minds...a fun time was had by all! To add to all of the confu-

sion downtown, the city chose opening week to begin construction on a park which will be built over Woodall Rogers Expressway (our nearest neighbor) closing many streets and most of the nearby ramps.

After much griping by the Players' Committee, the musicians and chorus park several blocks away—which is great unless you play bass, harp or cello. (It is free, however.) There is some prime patron parking under the theater but the first floor of that is limited to only those who drive a Lexus. (Yep, you read correctly...this is Dallas!). Many patrons park in the neighboring Meyerson underground (\$15.00) and some park above ground at \$10.00. By comparison, if one attends a performance at Bass Hall in neighboring downtown Ft. Worth, there is a parking garage across the street that is free to everyone after 6:00 PM. (Clearly a good model to follow if you want people to come to your Downtown Arts District.) In addition, there are few affordable restaurants, coffee shops, sports bars and other places to attract the general public. That will change as development follows in the wake of the completion of the Arts District. All in all it is a great change for the City of Dallas that has been a long time coming.

The Arizona Opera Orchestra Climbs 'Out of the Pit,' continued

- A venue with an established concert or lecture series has a ready-made audience and marketing. Public libraries, churches/temples are likely to already have a series. Businesses such as stores or shopping centers, usually have layers of management that have to approve special events.
- Decide whether or not musicians participating will be paid for their services or reimbursed for mileage.
- Divide up concert production tasks; have at least two people on each task; and sign up volunteers.
- Keep the entire orchestra informed of event progress by email. A month prior, send the orchestra an "email invitation" they can put on their Facebook page or email out.
- Market to your "target audience." AZOOMA events were designed to attract current or potential opera-goers, so were designed for adults and older children.
- Have an email address that can be included in the event listings. We created azoomaevents@gmail to avoid using anyone's home email address.
- Send out Press Releases, PSAs, and post on-line event listings at least four months ahead to get "Butts in the Seats." The longest lead time needed will be for printed media-magazines and the state tourism calendar. On-line tutorials for writing press releases and PSAs are available. Keep in mind that magazines and newspapers run event listings for free on a "space available" basis, so plan to get bumped from a few.
- Arrange for photography of the concert, getting permission

from the venue and photo releases if necessary.

- Request audience members to post reviews and comments on-line.

Katherine Shields, violist, been a member of AZOOMA since 1999. Her humorous piece "How to be an Opera Orchestra String Player" and her column "Musings of a Musician Mom" are at Scribd.com.

Members of the AZOOMA Outreach Committee are: Jill Marderness, Katherine Shields, co-chairs; Cynthia Baker, Orchestra Committee liason and site liason; Tamara Frieda, Margaret Gilmore, and Matt Ryan-Kelzenburg.

Email azoomaevents@gmail.com to receive a copy electronically.

ROPA ANNUAL CONERENCE AUGUST 3-5

The Doubletree Hotel in Omaha, Nebraska will host this year's ROPA Conference. The Negotiating Workshop begins at 2 PM on August 2. This summer's ROPA Conference will host a number of informative sessions including: "Reading Financials," "Using the new AFM Wage Scale Charts," and "Building Your Players' Association Website," presented by Arizona Opera webmaster Bruce Hembd.

A Quarter of a Century of Progress, continued

town X with the reality of job security and what is the market in town X for a Cleveland Orchestra," Kahn admonished. "Truly great orchestras cannot happen overnight. A community cannot buy a major orchestra on sale at Niemann-Marcus. Conversion to full-time status should not include mass firings of qualified local musicians. You really don't build an orchestra by first destroying it."

Kahn ended his opening remarks with a reminder of what would guarantee ROPA's continuation and success in achieving its mission. "The key to ROPA's success, as in your individual orchestras, is involvement by the membership. If we sit around and complain and expect someone else to do the work, it's probably not going to get done. But if we get involved, we can make a difference. Where ROPA goes from this point will be decided at this conference, and I hope everyone will give some serious thought as to what direction ROPA should take in the future....In short, ROPA is our organization and we will get out of it what we put into it."

Local 72 President Ray Hair then welcomed the delegates with an opening "Welcome to Cow Town" remark. Hair commented on the importance of labor organizations to musicians in the U.S., which gives performers some degree of control over the rules governing their wages, hours, and working conditions. He also extolled the virtues of collective bargaining, which were, in his words:

"good business, because participatory workplace rules are better than those imposed unilaterally by employers;"

"good economics, because it helps prevent recessions by making it possible for musicians to maintain their income;"
and

"good policy, because it gives musicians organized representation in our society."

Hair then presented a brief history of musicians' unions in the U.S. and the circumstances leading to their formation. During the nineteenth century, musicians had to struggle to make a living, performing in orchestras for minstrel shows and in theater pits, as well as for picnics, churches, grange halls, dance halls, and at parades. Working conditions were abominable by today's standards and employment was unreliable.

Musicians' unions started to form in the major U.S. cities by the mid-nineteenth century. Although Baltimore and Chicago boasted musicians' unions as early as 1857, the first organization of recruited musicians whose purposes and objectives were those of a trade union formed in New York City in 1863. Many other cities in the East and Midwest organized musicians' unions during the following decade. (According to Angele David-Guillou's study of the music industry and its influence on performing musicians in Britain, France, and the U.S. from the 1870s to the 1920s, the working conditions under which musicians had to perform actually deteriorated from the 1870s onward, prompting many musicians to con-

sider the benefits of unionization.)

According to Hair, some of the initial musicians' unions did not necessarily form to mitigate the poor working conditions under which musicians labored. A large number of the band and orchestra leaders tended to be saloon keepers, and many of the band members were recruited from the beer-consuming clientele in the establishments. Consequently, such policies were not met without resistance. In Cincinnati, the local musicians' union was organized by a group of younger players in order to free themselves of the control wielded by these leaders and thus force the bandmaster to seek their services when he needed musicians. These same musicians also organized a short-lived cooperative salon so that other musicians would not enter rival establishments.

During the first half of the twentieth century, the AFM fortified the position of the professional musician by unionizing every major symphony in the U.S. This was accomplished by fighting the influx of foreign musicians and by obtaining contracts with every major recording company in the motion picture studios. By 1950, anyone who attempted any business dealings with a professional musician had to contact the AFM. Three decades later, this was no longer the case, largely due to anti-union legislation and court decisions handed down by the U.S. courts.

Hair ended his speech with the hope that musicians of all fields support each other in all of their endeavors. "The position and negotiating strength of all musicians is directly related to the strengths and weaknesses of our entire family, and I urge all of you to exercise care and understanding not only in what we are here for today—to examine the relationships in effect in regional orchestras—but to become more aware of the problems facing other members of our union and our family....let's remember that we are but one part of a family that exists worldwide and let's remember that our family name is music."

This article is part of a series that will focus on the importance of the 1985 ROPA conference.

Sources

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Minutes of the 1985 ROPA conference.

www.ropaweb.org

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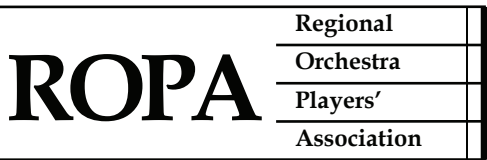
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