Unions, Middle Class Under Attack
Todd Jelen
Delegate: Akron Symphony; Secretary-Treasurer, Local 24

If you have seen the news lately, you can understand why many working Americans have a sense of uncertainty about their future. In the past month we have seen an unprecedented attack on unions by representatives elected at the state level who believe that they have received a mandate to curb collective bargaining rights. Lawmakers in Alaska, Hawaii, Indiana, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, and Wisconsin have simultaneously introduced legislation that would seriously reduce the ability of public employees to collectively bargain for their rights in the workplace. Many of these bills would prohibit police and firefighters from bargaining over the equipment they use in the line of duty, and some seek to ban strikes and impose jail sentences on those who do strike. This concerted attack is being done under the guise of financial reform in the face of huge budget deficits despite the fact that any future financial benefit for the states is slim at best. One thing that is certain is the effect this legislation has had on the middle class, as the proponents of “reform” essentially pit neighbor against neighbor in an attempt to undo our tradition of union democracy.

Union membership has steadily declined since the 1950s when the majority of union members were employed in the private sector. Legislation enabling jobs to be sent overseas in the private sector and legislation allowing public sector employees to collectively bargain has turned the ratio on its head. In 2011, most union employees are employed in the public sector. If public sector unions are weakened as a result of this legislation, the earning power of the entire middle class will eventually suffer. The next step may very well be to turn those 16 states into right to work states, whose citizens make an average of $5,500 less per year than their non right to work counterparts. The Governor of Ohio has already started a campaign against private trade unions by including a provision in his budget which would exempt state universities from paying the prevailing wage when negotiating building contracts. Once public sector unions are out of the way, private unions are surely next on the chopping block.

Even though hope seems lost, the battle for collective bargaining rights is far from over. Recall efforts are underway in Wisconsin, and the AFL-CIO in Ohio will challenge the legislation in a referendum that will be decided by Ohio voters. There are many things that we can all do in the meantime to assure that our public sector counterparts retain their rights to union representation. Call or email your state representatives. They are interested in what you have to say, and you may be surprised at how easy it is to talk to your representative directly. Participate in your state democracy by giving testimony, rallying in support of public sector workers, and by voting in recalls and referendums. Contact your local AFL-CIO and its affiliate organizations for more information and for any action taking place in your area. Now is the time to stand in support with our public sector union colleagues! If we fail to act now, there may be no one left to stand with us in the future.
FIM—International Federation of Musicians:  
2nd International Orchestra Conference
Carla Lehmeier-Tatum, ROPA President

In March, the International Federation of Musicians (FIM) hosted their 2nd Annual International Orchestra Conference in Amsterdam. Founded in 1948, FIM is the international organization for musicians’ unions, guilds and professional associations and is now counting 65 members in 57 countries throughout the world. FIM’s main objective is to protect and further the economic, social and artistic interests of musicians represented by its member unions.

Representing the American Federation of Musicians (AFM): AFM President Ray Hair, AFM Symphonic Services Director Chris Durham, OCMA President Francine Schutzman, ICSOM Chair Bruce Ridge and ROPA President Carla Lehmeier-Tatum. Also participating from the U.S. were Alan Valentine (Executive Director of the Nashville Symphony), Paul Stewart (Executive Director of the Dallas Symphony), and Jim Baker (trade union representative of the Council of Global Unions).

The conference format was designed to create dialogue among all participants. Each day had a number of panel discussions that included short speeches from all panel participants. It was a terrific way to understand concerns from all musicians and trade unions. Approximately 40 different countries were represented by over 200 delegates at the conference. The first day explored the funding structures and environments of the different countries in attendance. There was an interesting look at how the European orchestras depend heavily on public funding. With the realization of cuts from government agencies, there were discussions on the possible need for European orchestras to look to the private sector funding model of US Orchestras. There was a reported global trend of downsizing symphony orchestras and salary cuts. Severe budget reductions have resulted from losses in both public and private support in all the international funding. There was discussion on how today’s economic struggles require orchestras to be resourceful. It was stated during a panel discussion that it is the responsibility of the management to be imaginative, creative and innovative in order for the orchestra to be perceived as a vital component of society.

The second day featured topics that included health risks and prevention of injuries. The final session of the day explored welfare, working relations and working conditions. There was a general feeling that progress has been made in the field of risk prevention in professional orchestras. In Bra-

zil, the university music school curriculum now includes courses to address the repetitive physical stress of musicians. Ergonomics, biochemistry, physiotherapy and stretching classes are studies offered to university students. Another issue discussed was that some conditions such as focal dystonia have not been classified as job-related in several countries. Without this distinction, it is extremely difficult to obtain insurance-covered treatments. There was a recognized need to establish a universal listing of job-related conditions experienced by musicians. Some countries require musicians to prove that conditions like hearing loss were caused from exposure to loud sounds at the workplace. A discussion followed on how music directors must consider the health and welfare of the musicians when programming and scheduling. It was suggested that they should consider the musicians as their capital and take that to heart when they rehearse the orchestra.

The final day included a panel discussion on work time. There was dialogue on the benefits of observing the best existing practices for what is considered work time. Work time may be defined as total working hours and distribution of working hours (length of rehearsals and performances and number of services per day or per week). The objective should remain to fulfill the orchestra’s artistic mission while taking due care of the musicians’ health condition and personal balance.

Concerns on the status of the touring orchestra musician in Europe were revealed. The orchestra usually disbands after the tour, however, the name of the organization remains in place. During the tour the musicians are considered a service provider. Depending on the legislation of the country, there may be no obligation to abide by the collective agreements in place or to comply with laws and regulations applicable to the employers in the sector.

Included in this issue are speeches given during the panel discussion on employee situations. My thanks to Seamus Doyle and Hiroshi Sato who gave permission to share these speeches with you.
Protecting our Role as Orchestral Musicians
Paul Austin, ROPA Vice-President

At the January 2010 Orchestra Summit, held at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, I participated in a panel discussion, along with ICSOM President Brian Rood, Detroit Symphony Orchestra Music Director Leonard Slatkin, and several orchestra managers. I was asked to prepare an answer to the following question:

"In addition to performing, what role do musicians play in the execution of the orchestra's mission? What role should they play?"

The following was my prepared response:

When I was in-between graduate degrees at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, I worked for a commuter airline at their corporate headquarters for five years, first in a part-time position in their accounting department, and then in a full-time position in their human resources department. During my second year there, a major airline took us "under their wing," so to speak, and our small commuter airline more than doubled in size overnight in terms of number of employees and cities that we served. Unfortunately, a few months later, the major airline faced a severe financial situation and informed us that our commuter airline must make a 10% reduction in staff immediately.

Our ten-person human resources department was reduced to four persons, a 60% cut. Jobs that were essential in running an airline (that is, the pilots, flight attendants, and mechanics) were not affected by this 10% staff reduction. During my remaining three years at that job, I really did not question why pilots or flight attendants who worked 85 hours a month would not come in to help us with our filing, or why a mechanic would not come in to answer our phones. Actually, I can say in all honesty that it did not even enter my mind as an option, much like I was never asked to clean an aircraft, sort baggage, or serve as a ticket agent during my tenure at this airline.

Whenever I am asked about the role of musician in today's orchestra, I think about my career in the airline industry, especially when I hear comments about how musicians need to lend a hand in the office for the success of their organization. The artistic quality of an orchestra must remain paramount, and anything that takes a musician away from their instrument, hinders their ability to prepare literature, or keeps them from staying in top performance shape will negatively affect the organization. I have auditioned for horn positions in ROPA, ICSOM, and OCSM orchestras, and cannot recall any audition in which I was questioned about my ability to serve the organization in other ways, even in the final round of the audition. Frankly, many musicians simply do not have the skill set to do so. They were hired because they were the best performer for the available job.

Changes in the future will occur, but it should not include the blending of jobs that will take away from the orchestra's artistic quality. Just as ROPA orchestras vary in terms of budget size, demographics, artistic programming, etc., so will the solutions and responses to exactly how orchestras can serve their communities. Our 85 ROPA orchestras stretch from Maine to Washington state. What may work in Omaha and Sarasota will not automatically be a fit in New Haven and Fresno, in the same way that the same advice for negotiations that may be given to all managers of ROPA orchestras will never work. Furthermore, for anyone to think that "one-size-fits-all" in terms of managing our orchestras is absolutely foolish and reckless.

In answer to the question of the evolving role of musicians, I can tell you that the role of the orchestral performer must be protected. Many musicians already go the extra step in their communities, be it as a private teacher or respected member of their town. In a city like Grand Rapids, Michigan (where I live), our musicians are known and recognized in the area for giving recitals, performing in local music festivals, volunteering at animal shelters, being active in civic or religious events, etc. The musicians are vital members of the community and already serve as ambassadors for the orchestra. In many cases, we serve as walking advertisements for the organization. Frequently I am asked at the grocery store or the post office about an upcoming concert, which makes me look twice before leaving the house to run errands!

To be mindful and in touch with the personalized needs of each community will be key to any success. To tag on non-musical duties onto the role of orchestral performer will only take musicians away from what they do best, which will only blur the boundaries and ultimately dilute the artistic product. Think about this: do you really want horn players to give up their daily brass exercises in exchange for office work? And do you really think that a member of the orchestra's office staff, who used to play the horn years ago, would be qualified to play one of the extra horn parts in the Strauss tone poem "Ein Heldenleben"? Is this the best use of either talent? Absolutely not.
Speeches from the FIM Conference
Japan: MUJ Hiroshi Sato

The circumstances surrounding the Japanese orchestras are vastly influenced by the difficulty of drafting funds, because of the deteriorating economy and by the uncertain situation of employment in Japan. At the orchestras with weak economic bases, one can see examples of musicians with limited employment contracts and therefore there occur differences in their treatment compared with the musicians who have a regular unlimited employment contracts. The uncertainty of employment produces the situation that the musicians cannot concentrate on their creativity in the field of music and cannot improve any more the level of their musical performance.

Now there can even be seen examples of musicians who are secured only by contracted employment and cannot even get limited employment. In these orchestras the management denies dealing with employment and take a position of not accepting negotiations with Unions.

The Japanese Unions think that of course the best artistic achievements must be the aim and therefore permanent employment relations must be set up. Permanent employment of musicians and the strong assertion that orchestra musicians, whatever their employment status may be, are workers must be made and also coaching for the musicians themselves must be made to give them the right knowledge and awareness of the employment situation of orchestras. At present negotiations with the unions are advancing, but often the employer’s side is ignorant of matters concerning the management of orchestras and there is the great problem, that the opinion of the Union or knowledgeable musicians is not heard or taken into account.

Concerning the problem of the chorus singer at the New National Theater Tokyo, the point of the controversy is that the management side does not see the member of the chorus as a worker, but as the Supreme Court has recently accepted the appeal we have hope of the possibility to reverse the judgement of the second court, that has denied musicians the status of workers.

The law and the administration in Japan is not directly involved in cultural activities, but mostly the subsidies are granted by extra-governmental organizations and therefore the Unions have to set activities to raise the strength of the voice and existence of the cultural departments within the administration.

It will be also necessary to upraise again the strength of the Labour Unions and the development of a widespread movement is called for.

Speeches from the FIM Conference
Ireland: Seamus Doyle

Ireland has a population of 4 million. There are two full time orchestras which are both part of the National Broadcasting body, RTÉ. The RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra is complemented by the RTÉ Concert Orchestra, a smaller orchestra playing a lot of different repertoire including opera, jazz, classical and popular. I have played with both and currently play with the RTÉ Concert Orchestra. I am on the executive of the Musicians Union of Ireland.

The orchestras are funded not by the taxpayer directly, but by the television licence fee, and RTÉ commercial revenue – mainly advertising on TV and radio. I think this may be a model we have not seen so far at the conference, where there is public TV licence fee funding, but ultimately we are hugely dependent on the television advertising figures, as these are a major source of the overall revenue for the company.

Ireland has had enormous financial challenges over the last two and a half years, and this has hit RTÉ in no small way. After some years of unprecedented boom driven by development and inflated property prices, Ireland became a property ‘bubble.’ A culture prevailed from corporate level down to the general population of ‘invest or be left behind.’ The level of growth was such that we were an inspiration to many other countries. When prices and rents started to dip, those who were making repayments on these properties came under pressure. Our major banks collapsed due to reckless lending.

RTÉ is in financial crisis through an enormous loss in advertising revenue. The licence fee return for RTÉ, normally about half of RTÉ’s income, is reduced.

RTÉ staff including orchestra members accepted pay cuts as an alternative to job losses. The station finds itself having to do more with less.

My own orchestra, the RTÉ Concert Orchestra has seen large [cuts] such as reduction of soloist numbers, less use of extra players, and fewer duties.

With all this difficulty, I feel we have much to be appreciative of in the orchestras. I feel that the security of musicians employment is strong under current legislation. Legislation requires RTÉ to ‘Provide and maintain orchestras.’ I would like to think the Government would not look kindly on the demise of an orchestra – especially as they are not paying for it. For RTÉ to abandon its statutory obligation would weaken their claim to the license fee - funding already coming under attack from RTÉ’s competitors and certain sections of the public.

My hope is that in the orchestras we will re-examine our role in the cultural life of our country. I hope that we will not take for granted the apparent security of contracts and employment. Chasing financial gain in Ireland has proved to be a mistake. As orchestras, rather than focus on balance sheets as a measure of our success, we should prove our worth to the people of Ireland by the quality of our playing and our contribution to society by reaching out to and engaging with the community.

Public service needs to be at the heart of our activities. Educational projects, particularly where they are participative and interactive continued on next page
Speeches from the FIM Conference
United States: Carla Lehmeier-Tatum

On behalf of the Regional Orchestra Players’ Association (ROPA) I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. ROPA is a conference of the American Federation of Musicians’ Union that represents 85 professional regional orchestras throughout the United States. These ensembles include symphonic, opera, ballet and chamber orchestras. The budget sizes of these orchestras range from $500,000 to $45 million. Salaries of the musicians start at approximately $2,000 and a few of the orchestras earn up to $35,000. The majority of this work is performed without a minimum guarantee of employment. Most musicians in regional orchestras have very few benefits. The few orchestras that do offer health insurance usually contribute only partial coverage of the plan. Over the past ten years the insurance costs have far surpassed the wage increases, leaving musicians compensating for the difference.

It has been a very difficult time for regional symphony musicians in the United States. We started to see a pattern of downsizing a few years before the economic downturn. Once the financial crisis hit, there was a never-ending list of requests for contract re-openers as well as an increased number of contentious negotiations.

Regional Orchestras have seen a pattern that reduces the size of the ensemble through either eliminating positions or by declining to fill vacant positions. We have also witnessed a reduction in rehearsals for each concert set and/or the actual number of performances given during each season. Many musicians have realized pay concessions of 10 to over 68 percent, depending on the orchestra.

I believe that the contentious labor disputes experienced in our field are extremely dangerous during this fragile economic time. Last year my own orchestra, the New Mexico Symphony was locked out for three and half months. Since January 2010, this organization fights daily to recover from the confidence lost during the work stoppage. As a result, the musicians have been performing while payrolls have been two months or more behind. The Detroit Symphony has been on strike for 20 weeks; and as there are no signs that this will change anytime soon, I fear what their recovery path will find.

continued on next page

Speeches from the FIM Conference
Ireland: Seamus Doyle, continued

will build the support we may badly need should public attention focus on the orchestras in a way that would cause us to justify our existence.

Connecting with our regional and national Youth Orchestras, music schools at all levels is very important. In these places we will find those who will support us if the pressure comes on the orchestras as the economy struggles and questions where its money is going. By making the connection here we are also investing in a future audience. These are the people who will be our ambassadors.

In the context of this simple yet positive legislative standing of the orchestras, I believe we nonetheless need to work hard to ensure that we as orchestras justify the support of the licence fee payer.

While I do not see any need for fundamental legislative change in Ireland, I feel that a positive measure would be increased involvement of musicians in the running of their own orchestra.

I would like to see musicians at the orchestra decision making table, contributing in a meaningful and structured way to the direction and artistic life of our orchestra.

Orchestra Administrators are reporting to the financial departments, and success is measured in cost savings. We as musicians need to be there to sometimes show the value that can be added by maybe even a little spending where there was no spending before.

The view has been expressed at this conference that musicians are best at playing music. There is truth in this. Nonetheless we as musicians need to believe in the importance of our own perspective, and our ability to express it – nobody else will express it for us. It was very heartening to hear yesterday from managers and orchestra members about the universally positive experiences of musician involvement.

With a new Irish government beginning this week, we have an opportunity to gain political support for our profession. As we re-examine how we run our country and try to rebuild, it is up to us musicians as cultural ambassadors to be part of the changing mindset and show the importance and value of what we do. We need to maximise that value, and demonstrate the importance of the music profession in revitalising the country’s spirit, its morale and our economy.

Finally, if I may tell a little story of one concert I played last year. My orchestra played for the first time ever at an outdoor rock festival. In deciding what to play, we could draw on lots of popular repertoire that we regularly play. However we found the organisers had a request list that included Beethoven, Rossini, and other classical and orchestral works – including ‘Superman.’ We played with a number of popular singers also, with arrangements of their own songs. The young audience went wild for the classical repertoire. This was a new experience for them. We should be proud to be orchestras – and quality music is what the people will respond to when they hear an orchestra.

I conduct in my spare time a childrens’ orchestra of up to about 11 years of age – and I am continually struck at how they recognise quality music – and list pieces of Mozart and Tchaikovsky as their favourites above more ‘custom made’ children’s pieces.
SpeECHES FROM THE FIM CONFEREECE  
UNITED STATES: CARLA LEHMEIER-TATUM, CONTINUED

During my preparations for this panel discussion, I posted an inquiry to the ROPA Delegates about this session’s topic. To my surprise a flurry of responses came in about the change in musicians’ morale and commitment to their organization.

One Delegate wrote,

“As the amount of work decreases and the personnel rotates more and more, there is less and less commitment to the organization. You start to get a ‘take the money and off to the next gig’ attitude. There is dwindling concern for the organization’s health. Managements don’t seem to understand how bad this type of erosion is.”

Another response included this insight, “Producing art has a large psychological and spiritual component: it is not factory work, or even merely craft. Morale and good will play an important role in achieving the desired artistic experience for all—therefore the idea that all we need to do is to get the right personnel to show up at the right time sadly misses the larger picture of what is required for artistic success.”

Another Delegate wrote that musicians are turning out for auditions in large numbers, but when they realize they cannot afford to work under the pay scale they either play a few concerts and leave or don’t accept the position.

All of the comments I received included remarks about the decline in the artistic level as a result of the concessions the musicians have sustained.

Another commonality we have seen amongst ROPA orchestras is an increase in the anti union rhetoric from our boards and management. Last summer one of our Regional Orchestras, the Richard- son Symphony in Texas, was notified by their board of directors that the organization refused to negotiate a union contract. The musicians who did not sign the new non-union contract have all lost this work. This action is in line with the anti union tactics we have seen in the United States. The state of Wisconsin is being watched by all union workers as their Governor attempts to strip the bargaining rights of their public employees.

It is apparent to me that the orchestra musicians in the U.S. who have endured heavy handed negotiations tactics have been sent a message that they are all replaceable. Some of our orchestras who have once strived for excellence have now replaced vision with regressive actions.

Up until a few years ago, regional orchestras were built through vision and the recognized need to develop a strong core orchestra through increased compensation. The benefits presented to our communities and business leaders centered on transforming their city into a vibrant arts center. I am bewildered at the vision that has been disseminated currently by some of our orchestral organizations that offers reduced community outreach, shrinks the artistic product and considers commitment to the musicians as a liability.

There are orchestras in the United States who are flourishing and they should be the example, not the exception. During past financial crises in the U.S., our society has called to the arts to help sustain the dignity and inner health of their citizens. We have not witnessed the same level of commitment to the arts and no one can be surprised when the majority of focus in our news gives question to the future existence of our organizations.

Granted, some orchestras have encountered true challenges; however the words of John F. Kennedy could have been extremely useful as strategies to address these challenges. He stated, “The Chinese use two brush strokes to write the word ‘crisis.’ One brush stroke stands for danger; the other for opportunity. In a crisis, be aware of the danger - but recognize the opportunity.” The orchestras in the U.S. that are doing well have capitalized on their relevance and have created ownership from within their community. These are the stories we should relay as they are the proven solutions to moving our industry forward.

2011 ROPA CONFEREECE NEWS!

The ROPA Executive Board is excited to announce the site of our 27th Annual Conference: Portland, Maine. This summer’s conference will be held in Portland at the Eastland Park Hotel. This historic hotel is conveniently located in the heart of Portland’s acclaimed arts and shopping district. The hotel is surrounded by quaint galleries, outstanding restaurants, upscale shops, and museums, including the Portland Museum of Art. Both the ROPA Executive Board and our conference hosts—the Portland Symphony Orchestra musicians, Portland ROPA Delegate-Richard Kelly, the Boston Musicians’ Association-Local 9-535 of the American Federation of Musicians, and Pat Hollenbeck, the President of Local 9-535—have been working to make this an unforgettable conference experience. This conference will be designed so participants will have an opportunity to experience the European charm of Portland’s Old Port waterfront through special events scheduled at different locations throughout the week.

The Conference Dates are August 2-4, with the AFM Symphonic Services Division’s Negotiations Workshop to be hosted on the afternoon of August 1. The hotel room rate is $129.00 per night and is available to our participants July 29 through August 5. This is a very reasonable rate for Portland, Maine during their high tourist season. The ROPA Executive Board is planning to host meals to defray some of the added costs and the schedule of events will conclude mid-afternoon on August 4 to allow people to arrange to depart that day if needed. We hope that you will join us in Portland for our 27th Annual ROPA Conference.
A Quarter of a Century of Progress: The 1985 ROPA Conference

Words of Wisdom from Lew Waldeck: The Operation of an Orchestra Committee

Rachel Cox, ROPA Historian

Lew Waldeck (December 29, 1935-January 26, 2004) was the first full-time administrator of the AFM Symphony Department, now the Symphonic Services Division or SSD. Before assuming this position, Waldeck was a professional tuba player who had performed with the New York City Opera Orchestra for 25 years. He was the chairperson of the New York City Opera Orchestra Committee when AFM President Victor Fuentesbalda appointed him to direct the Symphony Department in 1982. Waldeck served in this capacity until 1994.

Waldeck originated the so-called “dog and pony shows,” which were seminars designed to instruct musicians about topics relevant to their work in the symphonic world: the power of collective action, the negotiation process, and the relationship between musicians, their management, the Local, the orchestra committee, and each other. Waldeck’s catchword was “POWAH!” (POWER), which signified the end result of musicians working together to achieve a common goal.

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

Waldeck’s dog and pony show for the 1985 ROPA Conference addressed the importance of “orchestra committee administration, which is probably the most important thing that you will ever do. If you don’t do that well, you’re not going to run an orchestra well. It really is at the heart of everything we do.”

The first problem Waldeck pinpointed among many orchestra committees was the lack of continuous knowledge of the CBA and a reluctance to address the constant issues of orchestra management that will lead to the growth of the contract. This is the result of shifting personnel on the committee.

“The fact of the matter is, as I go around the country, I find that people are doing it more or less wrong. There are all kinds of mistakes being made. There are by-laws that say once you’ve been on a committee you can’t be on another committee for X years.

“It’s important that there be some kind of continuity on the committee. I often see in orchestras the kind of structure where every two years, we get whoever is willing to be on the committee and in the third year we get a real Godzilla committee, and they’re supposed to do battle with management. What happens in those other two years? What happens to the upholding of the contract? What happens to the growth of the contract? The contract is not a piece of paper. It is a living document, and there needs to be some kind of dialogue growing up and around it. This is not the circumstance when once every three years we go and do battle with management and then there is all apparent peace for two years. You need to talk to them [the management] in the interim years also. There hardly is anything like in interim years. We all know there’s always something going on. I propose...a committee of five: two people get elected one year and three people the next, so that there is always somebody available who knows what happened in the last year and we don’t spend the first three months of the new committee trying to figure out what went on.”

Another mistake Waldeck identified was the habit of many orchestras to elect the most militant people in the ensemble to the orchestra committee, believing that those people alone would do something beneficial for the players. But the real power does not lie solely in the orchestra committee or even in the union per se. The orchestra itself, as a whole, has the power, and the only power the orchestra committee has is what the orchestra members give to the committee.

Along the same lines, Waldeck stated that if an orchestra is constantly electing “Godzilla committees,” then there is something fundamentally wrong with the relationship between the orchestra and its management. On the other hand, there will be problems if an orchestra committee is comprised solely of conciliatory members. A healthy committee should include members who can accurately represent its constituents.

Any orchestra typically contains a mix of people with differing needs, attitudes, and goals. Waldeck identified two general kinds of responses to the stimuli of being a member of an orchestra: “One is their response to music, art and all that, and the other is their response to management. There are people on committees who are pro-management, who are anti-management, people who need conflict at all possible costs, there are people who need resolution at any cost. You’ve got those people who are just cowed by art. They don’t care much about money or conditions or anything else, and there are other people who are there with the mistaken notion that this is a wonderful way to make a living. They don’t care about the art at all. They’re there to make money. And you’ve got people who run to management, people who are spies.” (One delegate remarked that an orchestra member would tape orchestra meetings and take those recorded proceedings to the management. As a result, briefcases and tote bags were banned from the orchestra meetings.)

And of course, there are differences in the needs of principal and tutti players; core and part-time players; string, wind, brass, and percussion players; and older and younger players. Thus, when an orchestra committee is elected, it is not unusual for all of these different factions to be represented on the committee. The real test is for the committee to find a way to address this diversity and achieve consensus, otherwise it will never unify the orchestra. It is the committee’s job to consider all angles of a situation, discuss the issues, come to a consensus, and make a recommendation to the orchestra members.

Waldeck emphasized that members of an orchestra committee should not spend their terms relaying messages between the musicians and the management. “To a reasonable degree, the committee is and should be empowered to act on its own in the interests of the orchestra. I expect you to know how your orchestra will respond to any given proposal or to any given issue. If you know how they will respond, there is no reason why 85-90% of the time you can’t go and do business.”

continued on page 9
Memphis Symphony Orchestra Conducting Competition
Michael Barar, ROPA Delegate, Memphis Symphony Orchestra

When the Memphis Symphony Orchestra began the search process that led to Mei-Ann Chen's appointment as our music director, one of the explicit goals was to find rising talent for whom we could be a stepping stone. The benefits would be that such a conductor would help to raise the artistic quality of the orchestra and the orchestra would gain recognition as a launching pad for top performers in our field. The former has unquestionably been accomplished during Chen's first season as the Memphis Symphony's music director and we will learn if the latter bears out in due time. What no one anticipated was that Chen would embrace the "stepping stone" concept so thoroughly for other artists.

Late in the planning process for the Memphis Symphony's 2011-12 season a guest conductor withdrew from an October concert date. With such little notice and without an available replacement, what were we to do? Chen decided to make lemonade out of lemons, much the same as the musicians did when we led the way in creating a new concert series when faced with steep cuts to our subscription season two years ago. We announced in February that we would host an international conducting competition, with the winner receiving, in addition to cash awards, an opportunity to conduct the Memphis Symphony Masterworks concerts on October 15 and 16, 2011. The inclusion of a subscription debut in the award package is new to the industry and has attracted world-wide attention. In fact, as of March 25, 221 applicants from 33 countries and 30 states had submitted materials for consideration. According to Chen, "This competition will complement all the innovations at MSO that already have garnered incredible attention nationwide and helps to put the city of Memphis on the international map in the symphonic world."

The Memphis Symphony Orchestra's First International Conducting Competition will be held from May 25-27, and in an effort to draw the best conducting talent available the jury will include Robert Spano, music director of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, and Anthony Fogg, artistic administrator of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Musicians from the Memphis Symphony will review the applications to determine the ten contestants and two alternates to be invited to the competition. In addition to the guest jurists, the panel will include Mei-Ann Chen, Ryan Fleur, president and CEO of the Memphis Symphony, and the musicians of the MSO.
Portland Symphony—Maine
Richard Kelly - ROPA Delegate for Portland Symphony Orchestra

Though the Portland Symphony musicians have not received a wage increase in three years, I am pleased to report that at the end of the 2009-2010 fiscal year, the PSO board of Trustees allocated a portion of excess revenues to staff and contracted musicians in the form of a year-end distribution. The amount of each player’s compensation was based on a percentage of his/her gross wages in the 2009-2010 season. At a meeting between the PSO Players’ Committee, the Board of Trustees, and PSO management, Gordon Gayer, president of the Board of Trustees, announced, “We are pleased to be paying these amounts after two years of shared sacrifice that was made to stabilize the orchestra’s financial situation. We deeply appreciate everyone’s commitment to the success of the PSO.”

Indeed there has been shared sacrifice. The bonus was given because the organization surpassed projected goals with the help of limited musician wage increases, increased donor giving, and increases in ticket sales. This is only the second time in the past 20 seasons that the musicians have received a bonus.

Although the musicians were thrilled to receive this “bump in pay,” especially during the holiday season, we are most appreciative of PSO’s acknowledgement of our “sacrifices.” We made sacrifices because we care deeply about our profession and our orchestra. Since joining the Boston Local two years ago, the PSO Players’ Committee, along with the Union, have worked tirelessly to inform and educate the Board about what it means to work as a professional freelance musician. The Board has listened carefully, asked questions when clarity was needed, and is really starting to grasp what our lives are like. The effective dialogue among all parties in our organization is helping us make gains in creating a healthy, responsible, more stable environment in which to perform.

The Portland Symphony Orchestra looks forward to hosting all of you this summer!

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

It is especially important that the power of the orchestra committee is equally distributed among the five members. If the orchestra perceives a situation in which there is a powerful chairperson and four followers, then suspicions will be aroused that the chairperson has too much power and is possibly manipulating the orchestra members for his/her own interests. All decisions of the orchestra committee must be by consensus and all members must be committed to the decision. The committee members must feel confident and empowered to disagree with the chairperson and not feel any intimidation in doing so.

Waldeck then discussed the nature of the committee chairperson, who may or may not be the right personality for the position. The position of chairperson is not a sinecure; rather, an effective chairperson must possess the requisite leadership qualities of anyone who is in a position of great responsibility: “You’ve got to have a person who is able to offer leadership qualities to the committee, has organizational qualities to make the structure of the committee work, and who can explain a situation in some kind of sensible and understandable manner. It has to be somebody who has conciliatory skills way beyond the standard management/labor line, and it has to be someone who will be able to get many people to do many different things.

“Other than being the observable image of the committee, the committee chair should not have any more or less power than any other member of the committee—only another member of the committee who has certain skills.”

Waldeck also noted an invaluable member of the orchestra committee whom every orchestra should treasure: the individual who keeps all of the committee’s correspondence and paper work as archival material, the person who is “the owner of your history.”

In summation, every member of an orchestra committee has an equally important function that must be exercised in order to produce an effective committee.

References:
- Minutes of the 1985 ROPA Conference.

This article is part of a series that will focus on the importance of the 1985 ROPA Conference, exploring the issues that were relevant over a quarter of a century ago and how those situations are still important in today’s symphonic world.
**ROPA Officers**

**President:** Carla Lehmeier-Tatum  
New Mexico Symphony Orchestra  
lehtat@aol.com

**Vice-President:** Paul Austin  
Grand Rapids Symphony  
horncallad@aol.com

**Secretary:** Larry Gardner  
Fresno Philharmonic Orchestra  
larrybassoon@sbcglobal.net

**Treasurer:** Dennis Danders  
Wichita Symphony Orchestra  
ddanders@prodigy.net

**Members-at-Large**

- Karen Barker  
  Erie Philharmonic Orchestra  
  West Virginia Symphony  
  kbarkerferrell@yahoo.com
- Laurien Jones  
  California Symphony Orchestra  
  laurien_jones@comcast.net
- Tim Judd, Richmond Symphony  
  timjudd1@yahoo.com
- Nancy Nelson, Houston Grand Opera  
  and Houston Ballet Orchestras  
  nancy.nelson4756@sbcglobal.net

- Karen Sandene  
  Omaha Symphony Orchestra  
  ksandene@fps.org
- Dwight Anderson  
  East Texas Symphony Orchestras  
  dwightzellio@yahoo.com
- Greg Youmans  
  Spokane Symphony Orchestra  
  heyou52@hotmail.com

**Delegate-at-Large to the AFM Convention**

- Gary Lasley, Hollywood Bowl Orchestra  
  gary@arcobass.com

**Adjunct Officers**

**Editor:** Amy Morris  
Minnesota Opera Orchestra  
amy.morris7@yahoo.com

**Historian:** Rachel Cox  
Southwest Florida Symphony Orchestra  
RaceRcos@cs.com

**Strike Fund Trustee:** Gaylon Patterson  
Memphis Symphony Orchestra  
gaylonp@bellsouth.net

**Webmaster:** Bruce Hembd  
brucehembd@hotmail.com

**ROPA Member Orchestras**

**Full Members**

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

**Members-at-Large**

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

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

- Sarasota Orchestra
- Shreveport Symphony Orchestra
- South Bend Symphony
- Southwest Florida Symphony Orchestra
- Spokane Symphony Orchestra
- Symphony Silicon Valley
- Toledo Symphony Orchestra
- Tucson Symphony Orchestra
- West Virginia Symphony
- Wichita Symphony Orchestra
- Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra

**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

**Regional Orchestra**

**Players’ Association**

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

The Leading Tone  
6620 Newton Avenue South  
Richfield, MN 55423