January 31 through February 4th marked the 21st annual Sphinx Competition for black and Latino string players, and the sixth year of SphinxConnect, a conference known as “a national convening focused on diversity and inclusion in the arts.” For the competition, participants divided into Junior and Senior Divisions to compete in multiple rounds over a five-day period. During the final rounds of both divisions, the competitors were accompanied by the Sphinx Symphony Orchestra (SSO). The Senior Division finals took place at Orchestra Hall in Detroit before a distinguished panel of judges: Pamela Frank, Juan Miguel Hernandez, Jaime Laredo, Rachel Barton Pine, Sharon Robinson, Dmitry Sitkovetsky and Peter Wiley. The awards were significant: the Senior Division 1st Prize winner, Rubén Rengel, violin, won $50,000, solo appearances with major orchestras and a custom-made gold bow by Berg Bows International. The Junior Division 1st Prize winner, Levi Powe, cello, won $10,000, solo appearances with major orchestras and a nationally broadcast radio appearance on National Public Radio’s From the Top.

The SSO has deeply influenced my personal development as a musician. Most SSO musicians will be very open about the first time they experienced being in an orchestra that is only black and Latino. It’s emotionally moving to not feel so alone, and to realize there are many others like you with myriad shared experiences as a musician of color. One of the Sphinx mantras is “Transforming Lives through the Power of Diversity in the Arts.” Some examples of the impact of that statement within the SSO, Sphinx Competition and Sphinx Connect are:

- The orchestral experience is monumental for every black/Latino musician who participates. It is impossible to be the same. It’s a form of validation in a world of classical music that historically has made others feel they do not belong.
- Through the competition, solo string artists are empowered, motivated and inspired to continue their growth. Winners receive excellent funding, and are given opportunities to perform with major orchestras that want to be involved in the momentum of this initiative.
- Adult and youth audience members feel they have a place within the community of classical music. They don’t have to be an exception to the rule.
- For those attending the conference, it’s most often an eye-opener to the inequities within our musical world, and a motivation to be a change agent.

Sphinx Orchestral Partners Auditions (SOPA) were held for the second consecutive year. Participants (continued on page 3)

In This Issue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sphinx 2018: From the Perspective of a Sphinx Symphony Musician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Why You Should Care About Mark Janus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2018 ROPA Conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Remembrances of Paula Wright</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Minutes, ROPA Executive Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>ROPA Officers and Member Orchestras</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Why You Should Care About Mark Janus
by Naomi Bensdorf Frisch, Interim ROPA Vice President

Soon, the Supreme Court will render a decision in Janus v. AFSCME, which will be a landmark decision in United States labor law. If Mr. Janus wins, it will have a significant impact on unions nationwide.

In the United States, when a workplace is organized and a union represents the workers, that union is obligated to represent all employees in the bargaining unit, whether they are members of the union or not. In “right-to-work” states, employees who choose not to belong to the union are not obligated to pay anything, and they receive the benefits of collective bargaining without contributing to the union’s efforts. This is often referred to as “free-riding.” In the other states, commonly called “free bargaining” states, employees of unionized workplaces are not obligated to join the union, but they are obligated to pay “fair-share” fees, or their fair share of the cost of collective bargaining. These fees include the cost of negotiating, processing grievances, and otherwise administering the contract, but not lobbying or other political efforts of the union. Such fair share fees help the union maintain the resources it needs to stay strong at the bargaining table.

Mark Janus is a public employee in Illinois, a free bargaining state. He is not a member of AFSCME, the union that represents the employees in his workplace. His lawsuit challenges the validity of fair share fees in the public sector; he argues that because his employer is the government, any bargaining the union does with the employer is inherently political, and his paying dues for such political speech violates his first amendment rights. (If you’re confused about why spending money equates to free speech, just google “citizens united”). If Mr. Janus wins, it will make collecting fair share fees in public sector unions unconstitutional. This would likely lead to an increase in the number of “free-riders” in the public sector, creating a large reduction in the amount of fees a union can collect. It could have widespread damaging effects on the ability of public sector unions to function.

We have all seen the effects of right-to-work in the private sector: lower wages, workplace inequality and fewer jobs. If Mr. Janus wins, as many expect he will with Justice Neil Gorsuch now on the bench, unions in the public sector will effectively become right-to-work regardless of whether the state in which they operate is a right-to-work state. In 2017, public sector union density was 34.4 percent while public sector was only 6.5 percent. As a result, public sector unions represent the vast majority of union workers in the United States today. Such a blow to public sector unions will likely reduce the power of all unions at home and in Washington.

All is not lost, however. Many unions across the country are launching campaigns to combat the effect of the Janus case. Some are doing what they can to boost membership proactively. Others are investigating ways in which they can provide more attractive services to members than non-members, hoping to entice non-members to join. Here in Illinois, one union has filed at least one lawsuit against a municipal government, claiming that union members’ tax dollars are being spent in violation of their First Amendment rights. The purpose of such a lawsuit is to hopefully sway the Supreme Court to decide against Mr. Janus by showing it the unintended widespread consequences of making “non-political” governmental spending unconstitutional.

While the Supreme Court deliberates on the Janus case, how can you help the cause? Talk to your colleagues and friends about the value of the union! We are stronger together: the more members we have, the stronger our voices. Union membership is about more than just wages; it gives employees a voice in the workplace. A strong union is a proven shield against the war on the middle class. Regardless of the outcome in the Janus case, I look forward to sharing ideas with all of you about how we can strengthen our own bargaining units at the ROPA conference in Portland this summer.
played a blind orchestral audition round for a panel of musicians from various orchestras in Detroit Symphony Hall. Afterward a “talk back” session between the auditionees and the panel provided an opportunity to ask questions and discuss the experience. The auditionees received a recording of the audition and comments from the panel. The ultimate goal of this initiative is job placement for musicians of color in American orchestras.

Presentation/panel highlights from the Sphinx Connect Conference experience:

- **Opening Plenary**, which included a performance by Juan-Miguel Hernandez and Rachel Barton Pine.
- **Welcome Address** from Afa S. Dworkin, President and Artistic Director of Sphinx.
- **Throwing the Dice that Fuel Inclusion: A Wager on Diversity, Inclusion, Creativity, and Entrepreneurship in the Arts**, presented by Aaron Dworkin, Sphinx Organization Founder.
- **Intermission: Music, Movement and Mindfulness**
- **Masterclasses** presented by Pamela Frank, Juan-Miguel Hernandez, Peter Wiley, Dmitry Sitkovetsky, Rachel Barton Pine, Sharon Robinson and Jaime Laredo.
- **You are the Powers That Be: A Practical Guide to Excellent Governance**.
- **Getting to Yes**, featuring conductors who are working toward diversity and inclusion in their programming.
- **The Orchestra as an Inclusive Institution**, a panel discussion led by Rochelle Skolnick, who represented the Union beautifully.

The League of American Orchestras has been involved in this conversation for a very long time. Also, Union involvement is a significant sign of progress. Other union representatives in attendance were Susan Barna Ayoub, Secretary/Treasurer of Detroit Local 5; Rachel Skolnick, AFM Symphonic Services Director; Paul Austin, President of ICSOM; Alfonso Pollard, AFM Legislative-Political Director, Director of Diversity; and Meredith Snow, Chairperson of ICSOM. Meredith wrote a terrific article on the Sphinx Conference in the March publication of Senza Sordino. If you haven’t already read it, please do!

I returned from the Sphinx experience feeling very hopeful about the future of diversity and inclusion in classical music. I am also hopeful about the relationships forming that will help strengthen the future of the arts. We are moving forward!
The 34th Regional Orchestra Players’ Association Conference is just a few months away! The conference will be held July 31st through August 2nd in the beautiful Pacific Northwest city of Portland, Oregon. We will be meeting at the University Place Hotel and Conference Center, located on the downtown campus of Portland State University.

Our hosts will be the musicians of the Portland Opera Orchestra and AFM Local 99. Our Portland Opera Orchestra host delegate is Casey Bozell and President of Local 99 is AFM International Vice President Bruce Fife.

There will be a Negotiating Orchestras Workshop presented by AFM Symphonic Services Division on Monday, July 30. Delegates and negotiating committee members of ROPA orchestras who will be negotiating new CBAs in the next year are invited and encouraged to attend this informative workshop.

The conference will officially begin on Tuesday morning, July 31st. That afternoon will feature lunch and breakout sessions with delegate groups and Members at Large from the ROPA Executive Board. On Wednesday and Thursday there will be presentations by several invited speakers, resolutions, nominations for election to open positions on the Executive Board and presentations for hosting upcoming ROPA Conferences. We are still in the planning stages for social events.

Room rates for University Place are at three levels: $109 for economy, $129 for standard and $139 for comfort. A limited number of double rooms will be available at the same cost. Conference room rates are good for three days pre- and post-conference. There is light rail transportation from the airport to a station right in front of the hotel, and parking is available on campus and at the hotel.

Registration packets, which will include more details, will be mailed to delegates and Locals in mid-May. At that time registration for rooms will open. Please be aware that the hotel is completely booked during the time of the conference. If you miss the deadline, you will not be able to get a room at University Place, and the cost of hotel rooms for that time in Portland is currently $250 and up. The deadline for registering for rooms is July 9th.

The AFM Bylaws provide that the Local covers the cost of its orchestra delegate.

The ROPA Board looks forward to seeing you in Portland this summer!

The 2018 ROPA Conference, Tuesday, July 31st—Thursday, Aug. 2nd
by Mike Smith, ROPA President

photo courtesy of Travel Portland
My dear friend Paula Wright passed away on April 5th after dealing with several years of health issues. She was 87. Paula was a cellist in the Austin Symphony and the ROPA Representative for the Austin Symphony for many years. She also taught at the Texas School for the Blind for more than 25 years — one of her students appeared on 60 Minutes.

I met Paula at my first ROPA conference in 1988 in Nashville. She was being forced to give up her hotel room, so I offered her the second bed in my room. We “bonded” and had remained close friends ever since. Those who knew Paula will remember what a beautiful, elegant woman she was. Even though she was 20+ years older than most of us ROPA folk, she fit right in. She wore very stylish clothes and stunning Navajo silver and turquoise jewelry, and had a larger than life personality. “This ain’t my first rodeo,” she was fond of saying — frequently!

Paula hosted the ROPA conference in Austin in the early 1990s, and did so with her usual elegance and irreverence. After dinner one night, she took a crew of us “bar-hopping” on famed Seventh Street, and she was the only person amongst the group to get carded — she was in her late 60s at the time! The social highlight of the conference was a dinner held on the grounds of the Governor’s mansion. (Ann Richards was governor at the time. Paula always reminded me of her.) As we all filed in, these lovely Texan docents (society women) asked us where we were from. As we stated, “Hartford, Connecticut” and “Grand Rapids, Michigan” and “Los Angeles, California,” one of them said, “I thought this was a conference of regional TEXAS orchestras!” Paula had sweet-talked her way into having the dinner hosted (and paid for) without quite making it clear what ROPA actually was.

Barbara Nielsen and I hosted the conference in New Haven in the early 1990s, and I had the ROPA Executive Committee come to my house for dinner the day before the conference started. I had bought a new grill just for the occasion, and as I was grilling chicken and running around being hostess, the whole damn thing caught on fire. Everyone freaked out except Paula, who calmly put the fire out, put on an apron, and finished cooking our dinner in the oven.

After Paula and I both ceased attending ROPA conferences, we saw each other every year on Long Island, for many years, as Paula’s sister-in-law’s family had a cottage near Stony Brook. My husband Algis and I, and our mutual friends Fran and Steve Cobb, would take the ferry over to spend a weekend with Paula, her brother Peyton and his wife Suzanne. Such wonderful memories of our times exploring Long Island. And I’m so pleased that Algis and I were able to visit with Paula and Don in Austin in October, 2016, as Don died that Thanksgiving weekend.

Paula represented so many things: love of life, passion for beauty, irreverence to authority and commitment to causes she believed in. She loved her cello and the Austin Symphony, and she was a connoisseur of fine art. Her husband Don was the viola professor at UT Austin, Principal Violist of the Austin Symphony, and an avid antiques collector. Their house, and later their retirement apartment, was filled to the brim with beautiful objects and beautiful sounds.

Andy Brandt, former ROPA President, remembers Paula: “Paula lived life to the fullest with all its ups and downs. She was a fierce champion for Austin musicians and nationally, and was a unique Texas lady through and through. She was unforgettable, and she’ll definitely live in our memories.”

Janice Galassi, former Head of SSD, also remembers Paula: “She certainly did light up any room in which she took residence. She was truly one of a kind.”

Michael Lisicky, former ROPA Rep from Richmond, described Paula thusly: “Nobody was classier, wittier, stronger, an advocate, a fighter, and a damn great lady!”

I will always be so grateful that the hotel back in 1988 was forcing people to move out of their rooms, as this act enabled me to get to know Paula, and thus ensued an incredible 30-year friendship for me with a truly amazing woman.

Rest in peace, my dear Paula.
Minutes
ROPAP Executive Board
Mid-Year Meeting, Chicago IL
March 4, 2018 at 4:30 pm CST to
March 5, 2018 at 5:08 pm CST

Attendees: Mike Smith, Dave Shelton, Karen Sandene (3/5 only), Donna Loomis, Taylor Brown, Lisa Davis, Marika Fischer Hoyt, Sean Diller, Katie Shields, Maya Stone, Amanda Swain, Steve Wade, Naomi Bensdorf Frisch

Proceedings: March 4, 2018
MAL Reports
The ROPA Board heard summaries from Members-at-Large winter contacts with their delegates. Reporting on March 4 were T. Brown, M. Stone, S. Wade, M. F. Hoyt, L. Davis, S. Diller. Orchestras with special concerns were discussed.

Proceedings: March 5, 2018
MAL Reports: Amanda Swain, Katie Shields
Amanda and Katie reported on their orchestras, and those orchestras with grievances were discussed. Topics for conference were generated during this discussion.

Conference Call with Rochelle Skolnick
- Roles of Local/OC/Steward/ROPAP Delegates: Rochelle described the SSD Orchestra Committee and Local Leader Skills Training webinar. It was suggested that a workshop at the conference on this topic would be beneficial. A mock New Member Orientation presentation for conference was also discussed.

- Diversity Activities: Rochelle shared preliminary discussions on encouraging diversity in the symphonic institutions with Jesse Rosen at the League of American Orchestras, and with ICSOM officers. A Mellon Grant was awarded to the Sphinx Organization, New World Symphony and others over four years to create support programs for musicians of color, some topics being audition support, board diversity, and institutional readiness. Maya thanked Rochelle for the AFM’s representation at the Sphinx Conference.

- New World Presentation: The focus of the visit by the AFM, ICSOM, ROPA and the Miami Local has changed to entirely educational. SSD led interactive activities which helped fellows learn how to function in an AFM workplace. Topics included handling interpersonal problems, artistic discipline, leave requests, and media topics.

- Request for The Leading Tone Article: A request was made by Karen for Rochelle to submit an article for the upcoming issue of The Leading Tone.

- Current State of Orchestras: Rochelle observed that things have been fairly calm. The media negotiations are at the forefront right now.

Vice President Appointment
Dave Shelton has a new position with the AFM as a Local Rep and offered his resignation as Vice President.

A motion was made to appoint Naomi Bensdorf Frisch to the Vice President position until the elections at the 2018 Conference. Moved: Diller, seconded, Hoyt. m/s/c. Elections to fill out the remaining year of the term will occur at that time.
Social Media Policies
The Board discussed fine-tuning policies for various social media platforms.

Legal Representation
The Board discussed the pros and cons of hiring legal representation on a retainer vs. on an hourly basis. A possible candidate for consideration addressed the group via speakerphone.

Treasurer's Report
A motion was made to approve the Treasurer’s amended annual reports from 2014-15, 2015-16 and 2016-17. Moved: Wade, seconded: Diller. m/s/c. The board examined expense lines in financial reports to identify areas for possible savings.

The Leading Tone
The board discussed the pros and cons of hard copies versus digital-only issues, possibly utilizing a delivery system such as Mail Chimp.

On-Line Conductor Evaluations
The board discussed following the progress of ICSOM’s online conductor evaluation pilot program to see if something similar would be feasible for ROPA as well.

Associate Member Status Request:
A motion was made to approve the change in status for the El Paso Symphony from Full Member to Associate. Moved: Loomis, seconded: Wade. m/s/c

Membership Dues Discussion
The board compared the annual expenses and membership dues rates since the last time ROPA dues were raised in the by-laws, which was for the 2005-06 fiscal year.

A motion was made to recommend to the delegates at the 2018 Conference an increase in membership dues to $700 for full member orchestras and $220 for associate member orchestras, beginning in the 2018-19 fiscal year. Moved: Wade, seconded: Shields. m/s/c

Sphinx Conference and Competition Report
Maya Stone told the board of her experience representing ROPA at the Sphinx competition. She described the mission and activities of the organization.

2018 Conference Planning
The board discussed ideas for speakers for the 2018 conference. Scheduling suggestions were also brought up. Offices up for election were identified, and suggestions were made for how to inform delegates of the duties of each office.

Adjourned at 5:08 pm CST.

Please note: members of ROPA orchestras cannot serve as delegates, alternate delegates or executive board members if they hold managerial positions in their orchestras.
The Leading Tone
901 C Street
Lincoln, NE 68502

ROP A
Regional
Orchestra
Players’
Association

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

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ROP A Member Orchestras

Full Members
Akron Symphony Orchestra
Albany Symphony
Allentown Symphony
Annapolis Symphony
Ann Arbor Symphony
Arizona Opera Orchestra
Atlanta Ballet Orchestra
Atlanta Opera Orchestra
Austin Symphony Orchestra
Binghamton Philharmonic
Boston Ballet Orchestra
Boulder Philharmonic
California Symphony Orchestra
Canton Symphony Orchestra
Chattanooga Symphony & Opera Orchestras
Colorado Springs Philharmonic Orchestra
Dallas Opera Orchestra
Dayton Philharmonic
Delaware Symphony Orchestra
Duluth Superior Symphony Orchestra
East Texas Symphony Orchestra
Elgin Symphony Orchestra

Erie Philharmonic Orchestra
Eugene Symphony
Fort Wayne Philharmonic
Fresno Philharmonic Orchestra
Harriscburg Symphony Orchestra
Hartford Symphony Orchestra
Houston Ballet Orchestra
Houston Grand Opera Orchestra
Huntsville Symphony Orchestra
Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra
Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra
Knxville Symphony Orchestra
Las Vegas Philharmonic
Lexington Philharmonic
Long Beach Symphony Orchestra
Los Angeles Opera Orchestra
Madison Symphony Orchestra
Marin Symphony
Memphis Symphony Orchestra
Michigan Opera Theatre Orchestra
Minnesota Opera Orchestra
Mississippi Symphony Orchestra

Monterey Symphony
New Haven Symphony Orchestra
New Mexico Philharmonic
New West Symphony Orchestra
Oakland Symphony
Omaha Symphony Orchestra
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
Sacramento Philharmonic and Opera
Santa Barbara Symphony
Santa Rosa Symphony
Sarasota Orchestra
South Bend Symphony
Southwest Florida Symphony Orchestra
Southwest Michigan Symphony Orchestra

Associate Members
California Philharmonic
Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra
El Paso Symphony
Flint Symphony Orchestra
Glimmerglass Opera Orchestra
Hudson Valley Philharmonic
Lincoln Symphony Orchestra
Milwaukee Ballet Orchestra
Opera San Jose
Pittsburgh Ballet Orchestra
Tri-Cities Opera Orchestra
Tulsa Opera Orchestra

Spokane Symphony Orchestra
Symphony Silicon Valley
Tacoma Symphony Orchestra
Toledo Symphony Orchestra
Tucson Symphony Orchestra
West Virginia Symphony
Wichita Symphony Orchestra
Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra