

Good afternoon everyone – I am delighted to address the attendees of this ROPA conference here in my adopted home of Boston, on behalf of all the members of the Theatre Musicians Association. I'd like to offer a special thanks to President Mike Smith for inviting me to address you today. I'm especially pleased to be here, as I am currently a member of two ROPA orchestras – The Portland Symphony and Rhode Island Philharmonic, and was once a ROPA delegate for the Rhode Island Phil.

As the official AFM conference dedicated to the issues that affect musicians who play in the pits for musical theatre productions in the United States and Canada, we are continually looking for ways to improve working conditions for our musicians, educate the public about the highly skilled tasks we perform, and to find ways to be an advocate for the issues that are important to our members.

We represent the interests of all theatre musicians, be they working on Broadway, traveling on AFM sanctioned national tours, or performing in local theatres. We serve players on blockbuster-hit musicals, as well as those playing small, local union houses. We have much to be proud of, and I'd like to share some of our recent accomplishments with you. We just wrapped up our 24th annual conference just down the hall here. In a well-attended day and a half of addresses, presentations, and discussions, we focused our

attention on the current state of the theatre business in the United States and Canada, and how we can make our organization stronger. We discussed recruitment of new TMA members, and how we can achieve the formation of a chapter in every city that presents professional theatre. At this time, we have 10 city chapters, one for members-at-large, and a chapter serving Broadway musicians.

In recent years, we have been at the table for the Pamphlet B and-Short Engagement Touring Theatrical Musical Agreements negotiations, and the deliberations that took place in 2016 were no exception. These negotiations produced contracts with substantial improvements in economics and working conditions for the musicians who perform under them. This is an example of how we represent the theatre musician at the international level. A successor agreement will soon be negotiated, and we look forward to being at the table for those discussions. During the recent 101st AFM convention, TMA introduced two resolutions for consideration. The first resolution focused on the size of pit orchestras throughout the Federation, and the trend of them shrinking due to advances in technology and the attempts of the producers to increase profit margins. This resolution passed. The second resolution we presented attempted to organize the big acts that travel throughout the United States and Canada who will sometimes hire local musicians. Acts like Gosh Groben, Il Divo, Two Cellos, and the like. Our resolution

was combined with a similar recommendation the IEB presented, and was also passed.

Undeniably, it is the professional theatre musician who adds the unquantifiable “something” that compels the public to leave their homes, which are often filled with seemingly endless entertainment options, and to spend their hard earned money to take in a Broadway, touring, or regional show. I would argue theatre musicians are some of the most talented, versatile, and often unsung artists in our industry. Often called upon to play increasingly difficult scores with next to no rehearsal time under the baton of someone they just met. With the aforementioned continued downsizing of the orchestra pit, while ticket prices continue to rise, today’s theatre player must do more to cover for the musicians cut for budgetary reasons. Also, in many cases the scores are becoming more and more sophisticated. Woodwind players need to be ever more highly skilled on multiple instruments, brass players must play increasingly punishing scores 8 times a week and are expected to not chip a note, keyboard players operating a rig more suited for a NASA mission than the theatre pit... What we do is a highly skilled job, and in many ways unique when compared to the way our other AFM brothers and sisters make their living. Needless to say, I am enormously proud of my fellow theatre musicians.

We are always looking for new members and the formation of new chapters. If your Local has even one venue that produces professional musical productions or hosts AFM sanction tours, and you have members that spend some of their musical lives working in a pit orchestra, I encourage you to look into starting a TMA chapter in your town. Many of the members of our ROPA orchestras also play for touring musicals when they pick up locals. If you play musical theater, even only occasionally, I encourage you to join TMA. It is only through increased membership that our organization will thrive and obtain the resources needed to address the issues that face the theatre musicians of the 21st century.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to share some of my thoughts with you today, and I hope you have a productive, informative conference.