

ROPA 2020 Conference
RMA Address to Delegates
Marc Sazer, Chair

Thank you so much for allowing me to offer warmest greetings on behalf of the Recording Musicians Association. ROPA and RMA musicians share lives as freelancers, and we frequently cross over workplaces. Take me, for example; for most of my career, I have played for films, TV shows, awards shows, records and other recordings, but I've also been a tenured member of the Pasadena Symphony for over 20 years, and have played with the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra, Long Beach, Santa Barbara, and multiple other LA area ROPA orchestras. We've always been more alike each other than not. And now, it's clear that we are all powerfully and primarily caught up in the issues of streaming media – we're all recording musicians now.

Streaming is front and center for all of us. How many of our orchestras are streaming our music? How many of us have watched Hamilton from Broadway on Disney+, streamed orchestral performances, or heard chamber music concerts and recitals on Facebook Live?

Even in the middle of this pandemic, RMA is participating with our AFM in major media negotiations; with the record labels for a successor Sound Recording Labor Agreement, and with the TV networks for our Live TV contract, covering late night bands, awards shows, sports and news shows and more. Streaming rights and compensation are fundamental to our future, and that binds us all together.

Another commonality is that we're all facing profound issues of health and safety in the tantalizing prospect of returning to work. RMA participated with Local 47 in Los Angeles in the creation of two working groups charged with developing protocols, one for recording and one for live performance. There is so much unknown, or half known, but still, we have learned a tremendous amount about the science, about navigating state and local political structures, industry employer groups, relationships with adjacent unions and our AFL-CIO state and local groups, always listening to musicians' fears and hopes.

Last week I had a personal glimpse into the future. A week and a half ago. I drove to the Fox lot in LA for my first day back at work since the pandemic, scoring an upcoming 20th Century Fox film. This followed months of meetings, research, preparation – and unemployment insurance. Comporting with government directives and AFM oversight, we were met with a health screening station, a COVID overseer, a nurse, training sessions, rules for behavior – and, finally, a roomful of almost 50 carefully distanced string players! I have to say, it was such a relief and joy to finally sit down and play with a roomful of “us”! There's no telling what tomorrow holds, but I'm confident in our shared future as musicians performing together.

We are all living in the same world, and part of the same moment of history. I congratulate ROPA on the powerful and meaningful Black Lives Matter statement adopted by your Executive Board. We in the recording musicians community have been grappling seriously and passionately with issues of racism and exclusion. We created a statement which can be found at rmala.org, but we've also moved to create a diversity caucus to both educate us, help us find pathways to change, and hold us accountable. We have been engaging in conversations about what we expect of our union – of ourselves as union members – in addressing these issues. We have a long history and are compelled to work for change.

Finally, I know that from my perspective, the weekly videoconferences we've held with our Player Conferences Council, the leadership of ICSOM, ROPA, TMA, OCSM and RMA, have been an uplifting highlight of these difficult months. The exchanges of information and sharing of experiences have been invaluable, and it's been a pleasure to share lots of great conversation with Mike's bass workshop as the perfect Zoom background.

Congratulations on a successful, groundbreaking 37th Annual ROPA conference.