

Thank you so much. I am pleased to greet you all on today behalf of the members of the Theatre Musicians Association. I'd like to offer a special thank you to president Mike Smith for inviting me to your conference and address you. As I've mentioned to this group before, ROPA has a special place in my heart, as I am currently a member of two ROPA orchestras- The Portland Symphony in Maine and The Rhode Island Philharmonic, where I served as the ROPA delegate for some time.

I'll just take a few minutes of this session today to tell you a little bit about what is happening in the world of theatre, and what TMA has been up to. As I'm sure you are all well and painfully aware, the COVID pandemic had completely and totally decimated the theatre industry. All Broadway and touring productions ceased operations in March of 2020. If I had addressed you even only 4 months ago, my report would not have been nearly as optimistic as it will be today. However, because of the widespread availability of affective covid vaccines, and the subsequent new CDC guidelines regarding social distancing and venue capacity, we are beginning to see the light at the end of the pandemic tunnel. Broadway shows will resume in

September and are currently selling tickets. New York Governor Andrew Cuomo has rightly identified Broadway as a key component of that city's economic recovery. The story from the road is perhaps even more positive, with things starting back up in August. The touring production of Wicked is reopening in Dallas beginning next Tuesday on August 3, with a month-long run at The Music Hall at Fair Park. Hamilton is beginning an extended sit down at The Pantages Theatre in Los Angeles on August 17. So, I think the worst of this is behind us. However, venues cannot simply sell tickets and reopen productions that have been on hiatus for 15 months. Before the stage lights can come back on, negotiations to hammer out safety protocols and special working conditions must first take place in three distinct areas—between the Broadway League and AFM leadership for Pamphlet B productions (Pamphlet B being the agreement that covers traveling musicians on AFM sanctioned tours), between Local 802 leadership along with its theatre committee and the Broadway League for shows on Broadway, and between local theater management and AFM Local officers for regional theatre and non-traveling musician hires. As President Ray Hair reported to you on Monday, it

looks like the first of these – an agreement with the Broadway League and the AFM regarding traveling Pamphlet B productions is close to being settled. I understand Broadway negotiations are ongoing as we speak. I also understand talks in Locals all across the country are taking place with regional theatres. To assist with this third category, last summer, TMA, with the help of Director of Theatre, Touring and Booking Tino Gagliardi, developed a set of safety protocols that should be considered by theater committees and locals throughout the Federation when they bargain with managements regarding the conditions that must be in place before musicians can return to work. A coordinated response to health and safety procedures between the AFM, Actors Equity, and IATSE will ensure consistent guidelines for our workplaces. All regional theatres should establish safety committees to ensure sanitation, ventilation, and, if necessary, social distancing protocol and PPE are in accordance with best practices and legal requirements. And, we insist that under no circumstances should COVID-19 reopening procedures be used to change or diminish the instrumentation of shows by electronic or any other means. For those of you interested in seeing

safety protocol guidelines we came up with, I would point you to the August 2020 issue of International Musician. They can also be found on our website.

TMA is been working on other things non-COVID related. Since I last addressed the ROPA conference last summer, the officers and Board of Directors of TMA crafted a statement declaring our support for those who work towards ending systemic racism in the United States. I am especially proud of this. I'd like to take this opportunity to again publicly thank Lovie Smith-Wright and Brian Butler of our DC-Baltimore chapter for their assistance in developing our diversity statement. In March of 2021, we released a statement in support of our Asian, Asian-American and Pacific Islander sisters and brothers. If you haven't had a chance to read these statements yet, they can be found on both our website and Facebook page. Musical theatre is one of the most American of artforms, and in many ways represents the diversity and inclusiveness promised to us at the nation's founding. That, of course, does not mean we as an organization or theatre as an industry cannot improve. We certainly can. During our 25th annual conference in

August of 2020, Lovie Smith-Wright and Alfonso Pollard facilitated a round table to explore that very issue. We followed this up with an extended discussion on this subject last April during our mid-year mini conference, led again by Lovie and Alfonso. Also, if you examine the photos of pit orchestras from all over the country collected on our website, it is apparent professional musical theatre work remains a male dominated endeavor. There is simply no reason why our orchestras should not reflect the male/female gender ratio of our union. I am currently working on the agenda for our 26th annual conference taking place later this summer, and a discussion regarding gender inequality in the theater will be included in that set of meetings. It is my hope that these frank discussions will not only further define the racial and gender bias issues that must be addressed within our industry, but also inspire the development of concrete steps we can take now to move forward to eradicate them.

You may have seen in the news that theatre producer Cameron Mackintosh is planning to reopen the West End production of Phantom of the Opera with a reduced orchestra, cutting the ensemble down from 27 musicians to 14. This

show has grossed over \$6 billion in its lifetime. That's billion with a b. How much money is enough for Cameron Mackintosh? TMA's statement against this greed was shared and applauded throughout the world. We are pleased to note the Broadway production has promised to reopen with the full 27 player contingent.

An issue we are keeping a very close eye on is the utilization within the industry of the Keycomp virtual orchestra – Perhaps you haven't heard of this technology yet, but you will. Keycomp is a newish system developed by one of Apple's leading audio and music software developers. According to all reports I have heard, it is a remarkable machine, replicating the sound of acoustic instruments with great accuracy. Before the pandemic shut down it was already being utilized in the Disney produced musicals Frozen and Lion King. Of course, TMA is vehemently opposed to any technology that replaces live musicians in theatre pits. Our strategy to fight this contraption, in cooperation with AFM leadership, is still being developed. So, stay tuned.

2020 was to be a negotiating year for the Pamphlet B and Short Engagement Touring

Agreement. The agreement expired on March 15 of last year, and we were scheduled to meet with the Broadway League in May of 2020 to begin discussions for a successor agreement. In late April, we were advised by the League that they would not meet with us to bargain or schedule negotiations. Now that things are beginning to open, they will need to sit down with us to negotiate a successor agreement. My fear is that when we do sit down at the bargaining table, The League will attempt to gut the contract and all the provisions the AFM has fought for over these past decades. You know the old adage – never let a good pandemic go to waste. However, based on my discussions with Tino at our regular meetings, and conversations I’ve had with Ray, I am confident our strong negotiating team won’t allow that to happen. I suspect the status of the Pamphlet B contract and it’s pending negotiations will be made clearer in the next few weeks.

I was extremely proud of TMA’s participation, along with the other players’s conferences – or as I like to call them the “five families” in the pension zoom banking effort, in cooperation with the AFM organizing department, Alfonso Pollard, and Antoinette Follet. It really shows what we can

accomplish when we all work together to achieve something meaningful.

I am also please to report we have a brand new TMA chapter! Philadelphia recently joined our ranks, and I couldn't be happier. Special thanks go out to new chapter president and director Bob Suttman, as well as Local 77 President Ellen Trainer and Vice President Marjorie Goldberg for making this happen – all the more impressive as it happened during a pandemic.

As I mentioned earlier, I am busy preparing for our 26th annual conference. The TMA board of directors have once again decided to hold a virtual conference via Zoom. With the pandemic situation changing almost daily, and some of our potential attendees not being comfortable with flying just yet, we thought it best to do one more conference online. The dates this year will be August 9 and 10. If you are interested in learning more about TMA, please feel free to attend. Just drop me a note at president.tma@afm-tma.org.

Thank you for allowing me to address you today. Please stay safe and healthy, and enjoy the rest of the conference!