

**Minutes**  
**2021 ROPA Conference**  
**Virtual Conference**

Monday, July 26 – Thursday, July 29, 2021

**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  
Ballet West  
Binghamton Philharmonic  
Boise Philharmonic  
Boston Ballet Orchestra  
Boulder Philharmonic  
California Symphony  
Canton Symphony Orchestra  
Cape Symphony  
Chattanooga Symphony & Opera Orchestra  
Chicago Sinfonietta  
Colorado Springs Philharmonic Orchestra  
Dallas Opera Orchestra  
Dayton Philharmonic  
Delaware Symphony  
Duluth Superior Symphony Orchestra  
East Texas Symphony Orchestra  
Elgin Symphony Orchestra  
Erie Philharmonic Orchestra  
Eugene Symphony  
Fort Wayne Philharmonic  
Fresno Philharmonic Orchestra  
Harrisburg Symphony Orchestra  
Hartford Symphony Orchestra  
Houston Ballet Orchestra  
Houston Grand Opera Orchestra  
Huntsville Symphony Orchestra  
Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra  
Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra  
Knoxville Symphony Orchestra  
Las Vegas 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  
Pacific Symphony  
New West Symphony  
Oakland Symphony  
Omaha Symphony Orchestra  
Opera Philadelphia  
Oregon Ballet Theatre  
Palm Beach Opera Orchestra  
Pittsburgh Opera Orchestra  
Portland Opera Orchestra  
Portland Symphony Orchestra  
Reading Symphony Orchestra  
Rhode Island Philharmonic  
Richmond Symphony  
Sacramento Symphony and Opera Orchestra  
Santa Barbara Symphony  
Santa Rosa Symphony  
Sarasota Orchestra  
South Bend Symphony  
Southwest Florida Symphony  
Southwest Michigan Symphony Orchestra  
Spokane Symphony Orchestra  
Symphony Silicon Valley  
Symphony Tacoma  
Toledo Symphony Orchestra  
Tucson Symphony Orchestra  
Vermont Symphony  
West Virginia Symphony  
Wichita Symphony Orchestra  
Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra

**Associate Members**

Eastern Connecticut Symphony  
Flint Symphony Orchestra  
Glimmerglass Festival Orchestra  
Hudson Valley Philharmonic  
Lincoln Symphony Orchestra  
Milwaukee Ballet Orchestra  
Opera San Jose  
Pittsburgh Ballet Orchestra  
Tri-Cities Opera Orchestra

**Member Orchestras Not Represented**

El Paso Symphony  
Lansing Symphony  
Lexington Philharmonic  
Orchestra Iowa  
Pasadena Symphony  
Tulsa Opera Orchestra

## Monday July 26, 2021

### **Proceedings**

ROPA President John Michael Smith welcomed delegates and attendees and called the Conference to order at 12:00 p.m. EDT, Monday, July 26, 2021. President Smith introduced the ROPA Executive Board: Vice-President Amanda Swain, Secretary Karen Sandene, Treasurer Matt Oshida, and Members-at-Large Casey Bozell, Lisa Davis, Christian Green, Kendra Hawley, Beverly Setzer, Katie Shields, Cory Tiffin and Steve Wade, and Member-at-Large to the AFM Convention Naomi Bensdorf Frisch.

### **Roll Call**

Secretary Sandene performed the Roll Call, and determined that there was a quorum. Attending the conference were 85 orchestras represented; 76 Full Members and 9 Associate Members. Sandene also stated that there were nearly 200 people registered to attend the virtual conference over the course of the four days. Sandene also recognized four orchestras that have joined ROPA since last year's Conference: Ballet West Orchestra, Boise Philharmonic, Chicago Sinfonietta and Oregon Ballet Theatre Orchestra.

### **John Michael Smith: ROPA President's Address**

President Smith began his remarks by stating that with the recent addition of the Chicago Sinfonietta, ROPA is now made up of 95 member orchestras, which includes nearly 6,000 musicians. Smith then paid tribute to Christopher Durham, SSD Negotiator who passed away in the fall of 2020, and in whose memory the 2021 Conference is dedicated. Smith's remembrances of Durham included his career as a symphonic musician, his early days as a Local officer, his role in the creation of ROPA, and his time assisting orchestras in the negotiation of contracts.

Smith then talked about how the COVID pandemic has wreaked havoc with our professional lives, our orchestral organizations and our Union, and how Locals have struggled financially. He discussed the steps the ROPA Executive Board is taking to accommodate member orchestras and Locals by temporarily lowering dues, to allow for member orchestras to be in good financial standing by the 40<sup>th</sup> annual Conference in 2023. He highlighted the struggles of several orchestras in dealing with management who are taking to heart the management mantra, "Never waste a good pandemic", undermining longstanding contract terms and conditions. Smith spoke of rallies in support of orchestras that he attended to raise awareness with the communities.

Smith finished his talk by highlighting the important work of the ROPA EDI Workgroup, created after discussion during last year's conference.

### **Ray Hair, President, American Federation of Musicians**

President Hair reflected on how the music industry was creative in the ways it maintained relationships with our audiences despite the complete work shutdown. He commented that this is the most critical period in the modern history of the AFM. He paid tribute to the members of the International Board, and the Symphonic Services Division staff.

President Hair also spoke of how the AFM has been addressing the fear and uncertainty and severe financial stress among our locals and AFM members. He celebrated the election of two Democratic Senators in Georgia which made it possible to shore up the multi-employer pension funds. He discussed how troubles in the broader economy pertaining to labor and resource shortages could ultimately impact our orchestras, and how our field is tied to its recovery.

President Hair spoke about the pandemic's effect on the music industry, from orchestras to touring shows and electronic media. The importance of negotiated COVID-19 protocols was stressed. He concluded his remarks by observing that past pension struggles pitted AFM retirees against those currently at work and cautioned the conference attendees to maintain unity amongst our AFM ranks.

### ***Afa Dworkin, President and Artistic Director, Sphinx Organization; Titus Underwood, Nashville Symphony: Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Presentation***

Dworkin and Underwood's presentation dealt with concrete ways our orchestras could work toward the goals of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. Their remarks centered around the position that in order to achieve artistic excellence, it is important to diversify the musical canon, the musicians on the stage and the board rooms.

Underwood underscored the need for specific language in our contracts to hold the industry accountable for moving forward in EDI, just as there are explicit contractual provisions negotiated between musicians and employers to work around the COVID-19 pandemic

Alfonso Pollard joined in on a discussion of how diversification of the orchestra membership could impact audience development and enrichment in communities of color. Dworkin talked about outreach initiatives advanced by The Sphinx Organization, including performances in churches, community centers and schools, and personal outreach to persons in those communities.

They spoke of the value of the National Alliance for Audition Support (NAAS), explaining how to utilize the database of musicians of color, by location, by instrument and how it might be a useful tool to seek out candidates to audition.

### ***Orchestra Reports: Fort Wayne Philharmonic and Colorado Springs Philharmonic***

Dennis Fick and Campbell MacDonald, musicians with the Fort Wayne Philharmonic; and Ann Rule of the Colorado Springs Philharmonic, along with Sarah Wilson, President of AFM Local 154, gave a run-down on their orchestras' long-running struggles with their contract negotiations, and actions both orchestras have staged to raise audience awareness of their plight.

*Tuesday July 27, 2021*

### ***Players Conference Report: Marc Sazer, Recording Musicians Association (RMA)***

Sazer celebrated successes in the area of contract compliance in the recording industry. He said that through research by several entertainment unions, it was found that there was widespread and systemic violation of the AFM basic television film agreement, leading to losses in wages, residuals, work dues, and health care and pension contributions. The national AFM stepped in to resolve the issues and was victorious on many fronts.

### ***Players Conference Report: Robert Fraser, Organization of Canadian Symphonic Musicians-Organisation des musiciens d'orchestre symphonique du Canada (OCSM-OMOSC)***

Fraser talked about how the Canadian orchestras have handled financial and personal health over the past year. He reported that twenty of the twenty-one orchestras managed to pay at least 60% of salary with the help of government, donations, and reduced production costs. Fraser stressed the importance of researching what kind of commitments have been made with musicians from orchestra to orchestra.

Fraser spoke of COVID protocols throughout the OCSM-OMOSC orchestras. These protocols varied from province to province; however, Fraser stated that OCOM-OMOSC did not report a single transmission within their membership. Almost all of their orchestras reported digital media projects.

Fraser thanked the work of Debbie Newmark and Rochelle Skolnick in facilitating the creation of the Canadian version of the Integrated Media Agreement. He said that a few orchestras have already signed on.

Fraser shared a little bit of OCSM-OMOSC history, as it nears its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. He spoke of the passing this season of two of the original five OCSM-OMOSC board members: David Otto, the first Secretary and Ruth Budd, first Chairperson. Fraser spoke of the importance of long-standing members of our orchestras, orchestra committees, players' conference representatives, etc., to document the histories of our orchestras and collective bargaining negotiations. He said that it is important to pass on this information to the next generation of players and committees.

### **Casey Bozell: ROPA EDI Workgroup Report**

EDI Workgroup Chair Casey Bozell (Portland Opera Orchestra and Oregon Ballet Theatre) highlighted the recent discussion of the ROPA EDI Workgroup. She said the group is very interested in the education of committee members and ROPA as a whole. She said there are conversations needed in an orchestra conference with a majority white membership, keeping in mind how to appropriately represent and lift up our non-white colleagues without taking over the discussions. She said the group is trying to find solutions on the macro and micro levels which focus on language and solutions that delegates can take home to their orchestras. Bozell praised NAAS audition guidelines as being very helpful to getting more diverse players on stage. Bozell stated that we need to seriously consider orchestra "culture" and how our colleagues of color might experience things differently than white people.

Bozell discussed challenges in getting orchestra boards to be open to change, both in board make-up and in thoughts toward EDI considerations. She said more meetings are needed on this.

Bozell stated that community engagement is crucial to systemic change, and how programming geared toward specific groups of people might bring in new audiences. Alfonso Pollard contributed thoughts on the topic of community involvement. He stated that he appreciates the seriousness that the EDI committee is taking on this issue. Pollard commented that when musicians of color make it into the orchestra, playing music by people of color, there is a level of enthusiasm that is instilled in those players, which can be utilized to excite and attract members of the community to performances.

### **Janet Horvath: Health and Wellness Presentation**

Horvath's presentation dealt with how musicians can work to minimize discomfort and pain while playing their instruments, and how to work back gradually into sustained playing after taking a break. She covered causes for discomfort, such as repetition, awkward postures, overuse and reacting to conductors.

She shared documents dealing with gradual return to playing (work hardening) and sample home practice schedules to facilitate reentry.

### **Approval of 2020 Conference Minutes**

The Motion, made by Lisa Bressler, Illinois Philharmonic and seconded by Casey Bozell, Portland Opera Orchestra and Oregon Ballet Theatre, to approve the minutes of the 2020 Conference, was approved by the delegates.

### **Audit Report/Approval of Budget**

The Audit Committee consisted of Carmen Bannon, Sarasota Orchestra, Karen Barker, Erie Philharmonic, and Nora Frisk, Kalamazoo Symphony. Speaking on behalf of the committee, Chair Frisk certified that the financials were accurate, to the best of their knowledge. Treasurer Matt Oshida went over the 2021-22 budget with the delegates. The Motion to approve the budget was made by Beverly Setzer, Symphony Tacoma, seconded by Lisa Bressler, Illinois Philharmonic, and was approved by the delegates.

### **Resolutions**

The following Resolutions were approved by the ROPA Conference on July 27, 2021:

**Resolution N°. 1**

*July 27, 2021*

**Subject:** *Resolution Remembering Chris Durham, Founder of ROPA*

Chris Durham Resolution

Whereas, On August 22, 2020, Chris Durham, founding member of the Regional Orchestra Players' Association ("ROPA") passed away; and

Whereas, Chris Durham was a violinist, unionist, contract negotiator, conservationist, family man, and friend to all; and

Whereas, Chris Durham was a leader in the American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada ("AFM"), having been one of the youngest local vice presidents for Local 103 in Columbus, Ohio at the age of 25, and having worked in the Symphonic Services Division as negotiator and briefly as Director since 1989; and

Whereas, Chris Durham helped to found ROPA, served on the ROPA Executive Board, and attended every ROPA conference from 1984 - 2019; and

Whereas, Over the years, Chris Durham personally assisted many ROPA orchestras in the successful negotiations of their Collective Bargaining Agreements, supported their labor actions, and was a champion of ROPA orchestras; and

Whereas, Chris Durham was a mentor and friend to many of the approximately six thousand musicians who play in ROPA orchestras; and

Whereas, ROPA is grateful for Chris Durham's immeasurable contribution to the growth of unionism, solidarity, and the resulting increase in wages and working conditions for ROPA orchestras, and saddened by the loss of this formidable force in our industry; therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That the Regional Orchestra Players' Association ("ROPA") will remember Chris Durham as a founding member and key contributor to ROPA's mission; and be it further

*Resolved*, That ROPA hereby expresses its condolences to Chris's wife Lisa and their son Jacob and to all who mourn his loss; and be it further

*Resolved*, That ROPA pledges to honor Chris's memory as we work to fulfill our purpose, to

promote the interests of our Member Orchestras and their musicians, to enhance communications among those orchestras and with the Federation, its Locals and its Conferences, and to pursue the general welfare and artistic well-being of our members.

**Submitted by:** The ROPA Executive Board

**Resolution N°. 2**

*July 27, 2021*

**Subject:** *Resolution Condemning the Management of the Colorado Springs Philharmonic for failing to bargain in good faith*

**Colorado Springs Philharmonic Resolution**

Whereas, In April of 2020, the musicians of the Colorado Springs Philharmonic (“the Musicians”), members of the Regional Orchestra Players’ Association (“ROPA”) and represented by Local 154 of the American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada (“AFM”), entered into a five-year Collective Bargaining Agreement (“CBA”) with the Management of the Colorado Springs Philharmonic (“Management”), which included wages and working conditions that were fairly and lawfully bargained for; and

Whereas, At the end of the 2019-20 season, Management abruptly and unlawfully cancelled the CBA, leaving the Musicians without work or pay, and placing blame on not being able to present performances during the COVID-19 pandemic, despite having bargained return to work safety protocols and with full knowledge that venues were open with safety measures in place; and

Whereas, Management then planned to present performances, and offered work to the Musicians without the protections of the CBA and on a per-service basis, rather than fulfilling the guaranteed service minimum salary provided for in the CBA; and

Whereas, On August 17, September 1, and October 2, 2020, Local 154 of the AFM filed grievances and on March 5, 2021, Local 154 filed an Unfair Labor Practice; and

Whereas, On March 6, 2021, the AFM placed the Colorado Springs Philharmonic on the International Unfair List; and

Whereas, A neutral arbitrator has been selected to decide whether the CBA was lawfully cancelled, and in the meantime, Management has offered no work in the 2021-22 season to the

musicians even though the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic has been diminished and the orchestra's primary concert hall is open without any restriction on audience capacity; therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That the Regional Orchestra Players' Association ("ROPA") hereby stands in solidarity with the Musicians of the Colorado Springs Philharmonic and commends their fortitude in the face of adversity; and be it further

*Resolved*, That ROPA hereby condemns the Management of the Colorado Springs Philharmonic for using the COVID-19 pandemic as an excuse to cancel the Collective Bargaining Agreement ("CBA") they agreed to and to keep its musicians from earning a living during a global crisis; and be it further

*Resolved*, That ROPA urges the Management of the Colorado Springs Philharmonic to honor the CBA and bring the musicians back to work immediately.

**Submitted by:** Ann Rule, Delegate, Colorado Springs Philharmonic, and The ROPA Executive Board

### **Resolution N°. 3**

*July 27, 2021*

**Subject:** *Resolution Commending Congress for Passage of COVID-Relief Legislation*  
FFCRA, CARES Act, and ARPA Resolution

Whereas, In March of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic swept the world, closing large performance venues and putting orchestral musicians out of work; and

Whereas, The resulting lack of work for musicians exacerbated the failing health of the American Federation of Musicians and Employers' Pension Fund (AFM-EPF); and

Whereas, Congress acted quickly to pass the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) and the Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), which together provided paid sick leave and increased unemployment insurance benefits which were a lifeline to orchestral musicians; and

Whereas, Throughout 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic continued to keep our theaters closed, necessitating further relief; and

Whereas, On March 11, 2021, President Biden signed the American Rescue Plan Act (“ARPA”), which not only provided additional direct payments to unemployed orchestral musicians, such as increased unemployment compensation for traditional and mixed income earners, stimulus payments, and direct interest-free loans to artists and venues, but also provided an important and necessary solution to our pension crisis by providing for direct payments to struggling multi-employer pension funds like the AFM-EPF; and

Whereas, Members of Regional Orchestra Players’ Association (“ROPA”) and International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians (“ICSOM”) rely on the solvency of the AFM-EPF for their retirement; and

Whereas, Members of ROPA and ICSOM, along with staff of the American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada (“AFM”), participated in multiple campaigns to support the passage of ARPA; and

Whereas, The benefits of the FFCRA, CARES Act, and ARPA are instrumental in helping orchestral musicians weather this difficult time; therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That the Regional Orchestra Players’ Association (“ROPA”) hereby thanks each and every musician who took time to contact members of Congress and encourage them to pass the American Rescue Plan Act (“ARPA”); and be it further

*Resolved*, That ROPA commends and thanks the staff of the American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada (“AFM”), including but not limited to Legislative-Political Director Alfonso Pollard, for their hard work and tireless efforts in spreading the word about this important legislation; and be it further

*Resolved*, That ROPA commends the United States Congress on the passage of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (“FFCRA”), the Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economic Security (“CARES”) Act, and especially ARPA, which will have a positive impact on the lives of performing musicians and especially AFM members for years to come.

**Submitted by:** The ROPA Executive Board

**Resolution N<sup>o</sup>. 4**

*July 27, 2021*

**Subject:** *Resolution Setting Forth ROPA’s Work to Increase, Equity, Diversity, and*



*Inclusion Amongst its Member Orchestras and in its Mission*

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Resolution

Whereas, Systemic racism affects Regional Orchestra Players' Association ("ROPA") orchestras at every level; and

Whereas, Centuries of American orchestral culture has perpetuated racialized hierarchies in performance, education, and community outreach; and

Whereas, At the 2020 Conference of the Regional Orchestra Players' Association ("ROPA"), which was held virtually, the Conference Delegates adopted a Resolution pledging to form a ROPA Diversity Committee with the goal of exploring how ROPA can help address this systemic problem; and

Whereas, Accordingly, the ROPA Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion ("EDI") Workgroup, was formed during the 2020-21 season; and

Whereas, The ROPA EDI Workgroup has defined its mission as

The ROPA EDI Workgroup strives to move ROPA forward in the areas of awareness, education, and activism for racial and cultural diversity. We work and communicate together to recognize and counteract implicit bias, create a culturally diverse and equitable work environment, and promote systemic change within our industry; and

Whereas, The ROPA EDI Workgroup has identified several goals, including

- becoming a central, reliable resource for the benefit of all ROPA orchestras;
- recommending and helping to implement best practices of hiring musicians, music directors, administrators, and board members to affect change at every level;
- working with ROPA orchestras to achieve measurable ways of diversifying repertoire and programming, and targeting educational, outreach, and community programs; and

Whereas, The ROPA EDI Workgroup continues to meet to discuss ways in which ROPA can assist its member orchestras in engaging in this important work; therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That the Regional Orchestra Players' Association ("ROPA") hereby applauds and commends the work of the ROPA Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion ("EDI") Workgroup and encourages participation and contribution from all of its members; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the ROPA EDI Workgroup is dedicated to addressing and counteracting the effects of these complicated histories and regressive practices with the goal of making the work environment of all ROPA orchestras a safe and equitable place; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the members of the ROPA Executive Board, as the elected officials of ROPA, pledge to support the work of the EDI Workgroup and further its work in every possible way.

**Submitted by:** The ROPA Executive Board

**Resolution N°. 5**

*July 27, 2021*

**Subject:** *Resolution Congratulating the Musicians of the Fort Wayne Philharmonic on the Restoration of their Season*

Fort Wayne Philharmonic Resolution

Whereas, When the COVID-19 pandemic erupted in the United States in March of 2020, the Fort Wayne Philharmonic ("FWP") and its musicians, members of Local 58 of the American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada ("AFM"), were near an agreement for a successor Collective Bargaining Agreement ("CBA") after 10 months of bargaining; and

Whereas, In April of 2020, the FWP withdrew its bargaining proposal, which included wage increases and other favorable conditions, citing changed circumstances due to the pandemic; and

Whereas, In July of 2020, the FWP announced the furlough of all musicians effective August 31, 2020, using the global pandemic as an excuse to suspend operations and attempt to diminish the pay and working conditions for the musicians of the orchestra; and

Whereas, In September of 2020, the FWP presented a bargaining proposal which sought to completely undermine the size, quality, and professionalism of the orchestra; and

Whereas, Several Unfair Labor Practices were filed in opposition to these unlawful practices by the FWP; and

Whereas, The Musicians of the Fort Wayne Philharmonic fought tirelessly against this effort to gut their livelihoods by bargaining in good faith, and engaging in rallies, pickets, and other job actions to raise awareness for this unjustified action by the orchestra's management; and

Whereas, For the entire 2020-21 season, the Musicians remained on furlough without any pay; and

Whereas, On May 1, 2021, a rally was held in Fort Wayne in support of the musicians which drew huge crowds from Fort Wayne and participants from all over the country; and

Whereas, As a result of the above actions, the parties returned to the bargaining table and were able to agree on terms of a one year contract; and

Whereas, The FWP has now agreed to pay musicians for twenty-eight (28) weeks of work during the indoor season and seven (7) weeks in the summer, which is an increase in total annual weeks from the previous guarantee; and

Whereas, The FWP also agreed to give musicians significant "furlough offset" payments after suffering through a year without pay; therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That the Regional Orchestra Players' Association ("ROPA") hereby stands in solidarity with the Musicians of the Fort Wayne Philharmonic and commends their fortitude in the face of adversity; and be it further

*Resolved*, That ROPA looks forward to the continued growth and prosperity of the Fort Wayne Philharmonic.

**Submitted by:** Dennis Fick, Delegate, Fort Wayne Philharmonic and The ROPA Executive Board

**Resolution N° . 6**

*July 27, 2021*

**Subject:** *Resolution Thanking the IMA negotiating committee and especially Deborah Newmark and Rochelle Skolnick for their tireless advocacy on behalf of musicians during the pandemic through their work on the IMA Side Letter Agreement*

#### IMA Resolution

Whereas, In March of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic swept the world, closing large performance venues and putting orchestral musicians out of work; and

Whereas, Many member orchestras of the Regional Orchestra Players' Association ("ROPA") thereafter wished to share both new and archived content through streaming platforms in order to keep their musicians working and in front of their audiences; and

Whereas, The sharing of orchestral media content through streaming platforms is governed by the Integrated Media Agreement ("IMA"), which is negotiated between the American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada ("AFM") and the Employers' Electronic Media Association ("EMA"); and

Whereas, Members of the EMA expressed their desire for leniency on the terms of the IMA during the COVID-19 pandemic; and

Whereas, After countless hours of negotiations and meetings with the AFM IMA negotiations committee, which includes AFM staff and rank-and-file musicians, including members of the ROPA Media Committee, an IMA side letter was developed which allowed orchestras to more widely create and distribute streaming content in exchange for guaranteed wages and benefits to the musicians; and

Whereas, AFM Symphonic Services Director and Special Counsel Rochelle Skolnick and AFM Director of Symphonic Electronic Media Deborah Newmark worked tirelessly to draft the IMA side letter, implement its terms, and get it ratified by many orchestras around the United States; and

Whereas, The IMA side letter has allowed ROPA orchestras to provide work, wages, and creative outlets for their musicians during this difficult time; therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That the Regional Orchestra Players' Association ("ROPA") hereby applauds the work of the Integrated Media Agreement ("IMA") negotiating committee in developing and agreeing to the IMA side letter; and be it further

*Resolved*, That ROPA hereby and sincerely thanks Rochelle Skolnick and Deborah Newmark for their dedication and service to our musicians.

**Submitted by:** The ROPA Executive Board

**Resolution N<sup>o</sup>. 7**

*July 27, 2021*

**Subject:** *Resolution Urging The United States Senate to Pass the PRO Act*

Protecting the Right to Organize (“PRO”) Act Resolution

Whereas, On March 9, 2021, the United States House of Representatives passed the Protecting the Right to Organize (“PRO”) Act, a bill which “expands various labor protections related to employees' rights to organize and collectively bargain in the workplace”<sup>1</sup>; and

Whereas, The PRO Act, if passed, would provide several important expansions to Federal Labor Law which would benefit the union musicians of the Regional Orchestra Players’ Association (“ROPA”), including, but not limited to:

- It would be unlawful for Employers to coerce employees into attending anti-union meetings;
- Unions would lawfully be able to collect contributions towards the cost of representation from non-members in right-to-work states;
- Elections for union representation could occur at a location other than the place of employment, including remotely and via the internet; and

Whereas, The PRO Act would benefit all workers in the United States, which in turn would improve wages and working conditions for all, including members of ROPA; and

Whereas, Members of ROPA and the International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians (“ICSOM”), along with the staff of the American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada (“AFM”), have supported the passage of the PRO Act through efforts such as phone banking and direct contact with Congress; therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That the Regional Orchestra Players’ Association (“ROPA”) hereby thanks each and every musician who took time to contact members of Congress and encourage them to pass the Protecting the Right to Organize (“PRO”) Act; and be it further

*Resolved*, That ROPA commends and thanks the staff of the American Federation of

Musicians of the United States and Canada (“AFM”), including but not limited to Legislative-Political Director Alfonso Pollard, for their hard work and tireless efforts in spreading the word about this important legislation; and be it further

*Resolved*, That ROPA urges the United States Senate to pass the PRO Act, which will have a positive impact on the lives of performing musicians and all working Americans.

**Submitted by:** The ROPA Executive Board

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/842>

*Wednesday July 28, 2021*

### **Announcements**

President Mike Smith reminded attendees that if they had questions for Liza Medina’s presentation on Thursday to get them sent in to him. He also announced that nominations would be held today, and that any contested vote that would need to take place would occur via the USPS.

### **Alfonso Pollard, AFM Diversity, Legislative, and Political Director**

Pollard’s address covered a wide range of legislative actions and successes over the past year. He said that top AFM focuses have been with organizing, to strengthen organized labor’s standing in the community, and to help revive an industry destroyed by COVID.

Pollard discussed how the entertainment industries are pushing the ability of 501(c)5s (Labor Unions) to apply for grants. He also stressed how additional funding could allow for more local performance opportunities that would allow performers in a variety of genres to improve their conditions, while witnessing the value of AFM membership. Pollard discussed the need for Union access to federal properties and state department cultural activities in order to raise AFM numbers, adding that military musicians who work off base should be required to join the AFM in their local jurisdiction where they work.

Pollard highlighted opportunities that can be made possible with the support of a well-funded National Endowment for the Arts. He also detailed upcoming legislative initiatives in Washington dealing with our industry, such as the QPA act to restore tax deductions for performing artists, the PRO Right-to-Organize act, AFM border crossing provisions, and also celebrated the successful pension protection campaign.

### **Player Conference Report: Meredith Snow, International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians (ICSOM)**

Meredith Snow spoke of the challenging year ICSOM orchestras faced since last fall, and how orchestras are starting to come back. She spoke of the importance of vaccine policies and how they need to be negotiated. She noted that PPP money helped many orchestras stay afloat last year. Snow discussed her work with the National Alliance for Audition Support, and how ICSOM is consciously working on increasing diversity in its orchestras and having them become more accessible in their communities.

### **Lovie Smith-Wright: AFM Diversity Committee**

Smith-Wright shared the names of the members of the AFM Diversity Committee members and read the committee’s mission statement. She said one of the important projects the Committee has worked on this

year was creating a Uniform Organizing Checklist, for institutions that are considering adding more emphasis in implementing EDI in their organizations, in order to achieve national uniformity on how EDI committees should be structured and implemented. She led the attendees through a powerpoint created by the Diversity Committee that can be shared with orchestras and Locals

### **Bob Zagozda: Orchestra Financials Presentation**

Zagozda introduced attendees to the intricacies of the financial documents required and to be requested for the negotiations process. He discussed how to find relevant information on documents, such as IRS forms 990, audited financials, budgets and balance sheets.

### **ROPA Board Nominations:**

Nominations were taken for the office of Vice President. Marjorie Goldberg, Harrisburg Symphony, nominated Amanda Swain, HoustonBallet andHouston Grand Opera Orchestras. The Conference then elected Swain by acclamation.

Nominations for the office of Secretary were taken. Carla Lehmeier, New Mexico Philharmonic, nominated Karen Sandene, Omaha and Lincoln Symphony Orchestras. The Conference then elected Sandene by acclamation.

The following people were nominated for 4 open ROPA Member-at-Large positions ( listed alphabetically):

- Brandon LePage, Flint Symphony and Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra, nominated by Nora Frisk, Kalamazoo Symphony
- Cory Tiffin, Las Vegas Philharmonic, nominated by Meredith Brown, Opera San Jose
- Beverly Setzer, Symphony Tacoma, nominated by Karen Sandene, Omaha and Lincoln Symphony Orchestras
- Sharon Jones, Elgin Symphony, nominated by Cory Tiffin, Las Vegas Philharmonic
- Katie Shields, Arizona Opera, nominated by Lisa Davis, Mississippi Symphony. Shields declined the nomination.

All four Member-at-Large candidates accepting nominations were elected by acclamation.

## *Thursday July 29, 2021*

### **Announcements**

President Smith stated that recordings of the conference sessions would be available online, with sessions being recorded via Zoom being available for 30 days, while those recorded by Smith will be available longer on the ROPA website. Vice President Swain reminded delegates to complete the conference evaluation, and to complete it by Sunday, August 1<sup>st</sup>.

### **Players Conference Report: Tony D'Amico – Theatre Musicians Association**

D'Amico stated that COVID-19 decimated the live theater industry, but there are signs that a rebound is coming, with Broadway reopening in September, and national touring productions going out on the road. He said that negotiated pandemic protocols and access to the vaccine are crucial to the industry's success, and before the lights come on at the theaters, negotiations need to take place. He stressed that the pandemic should not be used as an excuse to reduce instrumentation in orchestra pits. He pointed out the use of KeyComp technology, which creates authentic virtual instrument sounds and unfortunately is being used for performances, displacing live musicians.

**Rochelle Skolnick – Director of the Symphonic Services Division**

Skolnick began by acknowledging the collective trauma experienced by musicians during the pandemic. She pointed out how many musicians of ROPA orchestras fared poorly, because of lack of commitment from their managements to guarantee their salaries and lack of access to PPP monies. She said the industry is coming back, and our audiences are eager to return to the concert hall. On another note, Skolnick talked about positive signs coming from Washington, with recent pro-labor hires at the Department of Labor. She concluded this portion of her presentation with thanks to the other members of the Symphonic Services Division who worked tirelessly over the past stressful year.

**Debbie Newmark – Director of Symphonic Electronic Media / COVID-19 and Symphonic Electronic Media for 2020-2021**

Newmark went over IMA agreement negotiations as they pertain to Covid side letters. She covered the requirements for who can implement the side letter, and which orchestras are working under which version of the IMA agreement. She mentioned that there are three different side letters: March 2020, 2020-2021 and the recent 2021-2022 version. After she went through the terms of the agreement for various tiers, she took questions from the delegates.

**Todd Jelen - AFM Symphonic Services Division Negotiator / Organizer/Educator**

Jelen spoke on the topic of organizing, specifically for informational campaigns. He defined a campaign as any kind of event that we would want to mobilize people and get them involved. He said that is it necessary to refresh organizing skills regularly. Jelen said that a crucial part of organizing is to talk to people 1-on-1 with structured organizing conversation. He stressed that tracking the attitudes of our members, people who are interested in helping us, and even our opposition is essential to formulating effective actions. He added that keeping your members in the information loop is necessary to keep everyone on working for the same goal. He said that three of the most important committees to get set up prior to negotiations would be an Action Committee, Outreach Committee and Media Committee.

**Rochelle Skolnick (cont'd)**

Skolnick spoke at length about safety protocols necessary to have a safe return to the concert hall, for both the performers and the audience. She addressed the topic of vaccine mandates and the permissibility to require them based upon settled law.

**Liza Hirsch Medina – Independent Law Practice Professional: "Ask the Lawyer"**

Medina joined in on the discussion about vaccine mandates and took questions from the delegates on that and other topics.

**Site Selection for 2022 ROPA Conference**

President Smith informed the delegates that Orange County, the intended site for the 2020 and 2021 Conferences, is the designated site for the 2022 Conference.

**Oath of Office**

IEB member Bruce Fife administered the oath of office to the newly-elected ROPA Board.

**Adjourned**

ROPA President John Michael Smith adjourned the 2021 ROPA Conference at 3:00 p.m. EDT on Thursday, July 29, 2021.

Respectfully submitted,



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen Sandene". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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Karen Sandene, ROPA Secretary