The 2022 ROPA Conference was held in Orange County, CA, on July 26, 27 and 28. This event was our first live, in-person conference in three years. Virtual conferences served ROPA well during the pandemic, but the value of face-to-face interactions between delegates and guests was apparent from the moment we started to arrive at the hotel. AFM Local 7 officers Edmund Velasco and Tammy Noreyko, and a great group of volunteers from Locals 7 and 353 gave us a wonderful experience in Costa Mesa.

About 60% of our delegates were able to attend in person, which represents an excellent turnout, given the circumstances at the time. Airfares had spiked, and there had been a couple of COVID-19 spreader events reported in the summer conference scene. A committee from the board, headed by Member-at-Large Brandon LePage, assembled testing, masking and distancing procedures that would be followed during the conference. Our delegates and presenters were great about following them, showing the kind of care and consideration for each other that has become a hallmark of ROPA. A couple of positive tests were caught prior to the Conference, and those delegates made the difficult decision not to come for everyone’s safety. As far as we know, there were only two positive COVID tests among the delegates after the conference.

The Conference itself went remarkably well, and featured a number of important sessions. The highlight of the conference was mock negotiations role play, led by SSD Director Rochelle Skolnick. Delegates were divided into teams and assigned roles on either a musicians negotiating committee or members of a management committee. The lively discussions that ensued during the exercise helped delegates formulate arguments for their negotiating positions and recognize potential obstacles that management might put in the way of a progressive agreement.

Alana Weising, principal timpanist with the Tucson Symphony Orchestra, reported on ROPA’s EDI Workgroup. Formed in 2020 and formally recognized by resolution in 2021, this committee has developed a clear and concise mission statement. Near-term goals include compiling resources and getting them up on the ROPA website, and developing a membership that would include at least one player from every ROPA orchestra. There are 19 musicians on the committee at the moment. Any player in any ROPA orchestra can participate. You don’t have to be a delegate or a board member to jump in. This a great way to reach out and get rank and file players involved in orchestra working conditions and policy making.

(Conference Report, continued on page 7)
Notes From the President: One Person’s Journey
by Steve Wade, ROPA President

It’s hard to believe that Fall is here. It seems like yesterday that we were in Orange County enjoying the great weather and having a super, in-person conference. I was elected President of ROPA just a few weeks ago, and already a lot has happened. I have held board meetings, written articles like this one, given Conference reports at TMA, ICSOM and OCSM, met with the Player Conferences Council, attended IMA negotiations, followed up with delegates who could not get to Orange County, traveled to Atlanta for a site visit for next year’s Conference and led my own orchestra’s negotiating team in several preparatory meetings and two sessions with a cranky, just-say-no management.

As I catch my breath today, I can’t help but think about the journey it has been to get to this point. As I’m sure many of us have found, life in music can be crazy, hairy and fun, often thrilling, and occasionally improbable.

I grew up in the pleasant Boston suburb of Arlington, Massachusetts. We didn’t have music in school, but we did have a parish CYO Band (Catholic Youth Organization) led by a larger-than-life musical savant named Ed Denon. Through the sheer force of his personality, he inspired a huge collection of parish kids ranging in age from 4th grade to college, showing us everything from Chick Corea to Igor Stravinsky. It certainly wasn’t glamorous. I never played an instrument that wasn’t held together with rubber bands and masking tape until my sophomore year in college; and we never heard of All-State or GYBSO or MYWE or anything like that. It hardly seemed to matter, though, playing Ed’s arrangements of Ottorino Respighi or Stan Kenton. He eventually hired a young freelancer from New Mexico named Steve Young to help teach his woodwind players, and that was how I met the guy who got me my first gigs as a professional.

Steve was a great bassoonist and doubler, a tenacious negotiator, and a masterful practical joker who eventually became President of Local 9 in Boston and later of the AFM itself. You always had to be on your toes with Steve around. I remember once playing with him in a really tight pit with a lot of doubles, and sensing some kind of rustling down by my feet. I looked down to see Steve padlocking my tenor sax to the chair. The concerts he did with John Miller, David Carroll and Bob Williams as the Buddhist Bassoon Trio at Boston’s Gardner Museum every Labor Day became legendary. I worked with terrific players on the Cape. They were great doublers and real stylists who could make anything sound good. I was so green, though. I made the mistake of telling one of the guys I had a place to stay, a basement in a little house a family friend owned a few miles away. Before I knew it, there were five guys crashing there that week!

I am a 1980 graduate of the University of Lowell College of Music, which is now part of the UMass system. Back then, tuition was $780 a year, and we could study with all the best freelancers in Boston. I subsequently got a Master’s degree at New England Conservatory, where I studied oboe with Wayne Rapier of the Boston Symphony. Wayne was incredibly generous to me as a teacher, telling me all about the Philadelphia tradition and life with Marcel Tabuteau. NEC was an amazing experience for a local mutt like me. Jordan Hall remains one of the great halls in the United States, and I made many friends for life there, communicating mostly by leaving scraps of paper taped to the statue of Beethoven in the hallway.

I got lucky one day and won an audition for the U.S. Coast Guard Band, one of our nation’s several premier Congressional bands. I ended up working there for 30 years, retiring as Principal Oboe in 2012. The U.S. Military is a huge employer of classical musicians, and my colleagues there were wonderful. Their talent and dedication were beyond reproach. We did bus and truck tours all over the United States, and we participated in some truly historic international travel as well, including a concert tour in and around Leningrad, USSR, two months before the Berlin Wall came down in 1989. We were in England in 1994 commemorating the 50th anniversary of D Day, and we were in Japan in 2008 to mark the 60th anniversary
A letter to the editor?

Do you have news about your orchestra?
An article to submit?
A letter to the editor?
We’d love to have you contribute to The Leading Tone!
Submit articles to Sharon Jones at bellsauf@gmail.com

The Leading Tone is the official voice of ROPA and reflects ROPA policy. However, we do appreciate and encourage the contribution of articles and letters by others. These submissions may cover topics on which ROPA has no official position; the opinions expressed therein are solely those of the author(s) and not necessarily of ROPA, its officers or members.
Clockwise from right: Our very gracious hosts: AFM Local 7 officers Tammy Noreyko and Edmund Velasco; former ROPA president Mike Smith and newly elected president Steve Wade engage in a peaceful transfer of power; L to R: Rebecca Kiekenapp, Sheridan Currie, Karen Fisher, Lisa Bressler and Carmen Bannon; L to R: Lisa Davis, Katie Shields, Amanda Swain and Kelli Nelson in the Hospitality Suite; delegates engage in a negotiation role-play exercise. Photos courtesy of Leslie Lashinsky and Sharon Jones.
Clockwise from top: Rochelle Skolnick (far right) swears in the new ROPA Executive Board. L to R: Members-at-Large Sharon Jones and Brandon LePage, Secretary Karen Sandene, Delegate-at-Large to the AFM Convention Naomi Bensdorf Frisch, Vice President Amanda Swain, Members-at-Large Ann Rule and Marjorie Goldberg, Treasurer Rick Basehore, Member-at-Large Lisa Davis, President Steve Wade; L to R: Leslie Lashinsky, Pat Mullen, President AFM Local 353 Long Beach Area, Carmen Bannon, Adam DeSorgo and Rochelle Skolnick at the Bootleggers Brewery mixer; L to R: Sharon Jones, Tom Park, Alfonso Pollard, Caitlin McSherry and Karen Barker Ferren at a Topic Dinner; L to R: Gigi Dang, SSD Negotiator Todd Jelen, Beverly Setzer and Christian Green in the Hospitality Suite. Photos courtesy of Leslie Lashinsky and Sharon Jones.
Hello ROPA musicians!

At the recent ROPA Conference which I attended over Zoom, during a discussion, I briefly mentioned a coalition that we have here in Portland, and the value of it as it relates to most of our bargaining units. Steve Wade followed up with me after the Conference and asked if I would contribute an article to The Leading Tone and go into more detail on this coalition. Of course I said yes, so here I am.

From a 1938 set of bylaws, this group, then known as the Theatrical Federation of Portland and Vicinity, was, and had been, in place and constituted the Amusement Section of the Northwest Oregon Labor Council. I have no idea when it actually formed, but clearly has been around for a long while. As far as I know, it was made up of the other entertainment Unions that were affiliated with the AFL-CIO at that time, which probably included the AFM, IATSE (Stagehands and Ushers) and AFTRA, before it merged into SAG-AFTRA, and possibly others which are lost to history. Over the years, it appears that the activities and participation were somewhat sporadic, but when I came into office as President of Local 99 in 2001 and first learned about this group, there was an effort to rejuvenate it. Despite best efforts, our meetings continued to be somewhat irregular until 2018, a couple of years before COVID-19 introduced itself to us. We started to schedule regular meetings, and also decided that for our purposes, it was more important to include all the Unions working in our industry, regardless of their local affiliation status with the AFL-CIO.

We invited Actors Equity (AEA), the American Guild of Musical Artists (AGMA), IATSE and Local 488 (Studio Mechanics-Film) to join the other Unions mentioned above. This rebirth of this Federation led to monthly meetings that proved to be valuable before COVID hit us, and invaluable after, as all of us were negotiating safety protocols and working conditions, and the more that we could get all the Unions on the same page, the safer all our workers were.

For instance, with our Oregon Ballet Theatre, your newest ROPA orchestra from Portland, AGMA represents the dancers, IATSE the stage hands and ushers, and of course, the AFM represents our musicians, all working in fairly tight spaces and groupings, both in the pit and on stage. Consistency of protocols was critical, and we were mostly successful at keeping everyone healthy throughout the pandemic and leaned on each other at every stage of negotiations to make sure we were united in our efforts. That bond has continued throughout the negotiations of our successor agreements, as we keep in close communication and share our successes and challenges in bargaining.

We are also working with the Stagehands and Studio Mechanics in regard to our Film Industry in Oregon and specifically, working to get as many projects as possible under contract, as well as jointly working with our city, county, regional and state governments to advocate for numerous issues facing our members in the workplace, such as lobbying for the continuation of film incentives and efforts to turn a regionally owned Expo Center into a film stage and rehearsal studios, as well as other beneficial uses to our industry.

Of course, because of these close relationships that have been built, should anyone need support for job actions, we are all ready to provide support for each of our battles. Currently, the IATSE stagehands are in a fight with our regional government, which is trying to eliminate their jobs at our convention center. We have supported their pickets and lobbying efforts. Who knows when we’ll need the same type of support, but we know our Union siblings will be there to support us, should that need arise.

Our most recent activity was the creation and then announcement in the local Labor newspaper on Labor Day, regarding the launch of our new website, called Oregon Union Made Entertainment: https://oregonunionmadeentertainment.org.

While this is a very basic website, we have three specific pages that are linked from the home page. One covers all the Local contracts and employers that our various Unions work under. Another provides an overview on all the Unions that do work in our industry. The third, which is still expanding, shows the electronic media work that is/has been done in Oregon, again, under Union contract. Our goal is to highlight all the Union entertainment to the community so that they know how to “buy Union”.

Here is our statement from the home page:

Go see union-made entertainment!

A commitment to buy union-made goods extends to entertainment—please use this website as a resource when making your decisions about what live entertainment to attend. Click below to find options for live entertainment in Oregon with unionized entertainment workers.

We will keep growing and expanding this page as we continue to negotiate new agreements, advocate for more Union productions and expand our list of freelance musicians and bands that are made up of our union members.

I encourage everyone to use this coalition of Unions and our activities as an example of Union unity that can be replicated in all Locals. While our Theatrical Federation has been around for many years, there is nothing keeping Locals from starting their own coalition at any time. To restate, we have found our work together to be incredibly helpful, educational and supportive, and an example and foundation for how we should be working with our siblings in the entertainment industry. Feel free to reach out if you have any questions, comments, or suggestions for improving or expanding these efforts.
The warning bells sounded by TMA President Heather Boehm about KeyComp cannot be ignored. ROPA represents musicians in 25 different pit orchestras, and technology being used to replace live musicians in the pit endangers the livelihood of thousands of players in all branches of the AFM. We all need to be vigilant, and draw a line to protect the livelihoods of our colleagues where they are threatened.

Other presenters at the conference included AFM President Ray Hair, California State Senator Josh Newman and our friends from the other players’ conferences: Meredith Snow (ICSOM), Robert Fraser (OCSM-OMOSC), Marc Sazer (RMA) and Heather Boehm (TMA). And as always, SSD provided a superb and valued resource for our member orchestras. ROPA would like to thank Debbie Newmark, Laurence Hofmann, Todd Jelen, Adam DeSorgo and Alfonso Pollard for being generous with their time and welcoming to our delegates at the conference.

Eight resolutions were passed by the delegates at the Conference, including a resolution in memoriam of Pat Varriale, AFM Electronic Media Services Director; a resolution urging the orchestral community to act to protect the rights of women in the wake of the Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization decision by the United States Supreme Court; a resolution responding to the Call to Action from the Black Orchestral Network (BON); a resolution in support of the Musicians of the San Antonio Symphony; and a resolution thanking out-going ROPA President Mike Smith for his long and valued service.

Elections were held for several open positions on the ROPA Executive Board. The current board now includes Steve Wade, President; Amanda Swain, Vice President; Karen Sandene, Secretary; Rick Basehore, Treasurer; Naomi Bensdorf Frisch, Delegate-at-Large to the AFM Convention; and Members-at-Large Lisa Davis, Marjorie Goldberg, Sharon Jones, Richard Kelly, Brandon LePage, Ann Rule, Beverly Setzer and Cory Tiffin.

The 2023 ROPA Conference will be held in Atlanta, sponsored jointly by the Atlanta Ballet Orchestra and the Atlanta Opera Orchestra.

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(Conference Report, continued from page 1)

Delegates...

Did you attend the 2022 ROPA Conference? 🤔

Don't forget to write a conference report for your Orchestra and your Local!

Need help? Contact ROPA VP Amanda Swain at ropavicepresident@gmail.com.
Resolution Nº 1

Subject: Resolution Proposing to Change ROPA’s Fiscal Year and Amend the Bylaws Accordingly

Fiscal Year Change Resolution

Whereas, The Regional Orchestra Players’ Association (“ROPA”) currently uses the Fiscal Year of July 1 – June 30; and

Whereas, ROPA’s annual conference usually takes place in July or August; and

Whereas, ROPA incurs expenses for the annual conference, including but not limited to Board Member travel and hotel deposits, in June each year; and

Whereas, ROPA incurs additional expenses for the annual conference when the conference is completed; and

Whereas, Incurred expenses for the annual conference in two different fiscal years creates confusion and difficulties in planning and reporting the annual budget; and

Whereas, Accordingly, the ROPA Executive Board wishes to amend the fiscal year to September 1 – August 31; therefore, be it

Resolved, That Article X of the Regional Orchestra Players’ Association Bylaws be amended, as follows:

Section 4. Late Fees
(a) Each Member Orchestra shall pay annual dues no later than December 31 of each Fiscal Year (September 1 – August 31). Late fees will be assessed to any orchestra whose annual dues are received after December 31. Late fees shall be calculated as follows:

and, be it further

Resolved, That the Regional Orchestra Players’ Association (“ROPA”) will implement this change beginning on September 1, 2023 and the ROPA Treasurer will follow the applicable guidelines for reporting the change in fiscal year to the Department of Labor.

Submitted by: The ROPA Executive Board

Resolution Nº 2

Subject: Resolution Proposing to Raise Honorariums for President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer

Honorarium Resolution

Whereas, The Regional Orchestra Players’ Association (“ROPA”) relies on the service of the Executive Board to complete its mission; and

Whereas, The Executive Board is made up of Members-At-Large who all volunteer their time, and are led by four officers: President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer, who receive a small honorarium in accordance with Article VI, Section 5 of the ROPA bylaws as a token of appreciation for their time and dedication; and

Whereas, The President of ROPA is traditionally called on to produce and direct the majority of annual conference planning and complete other necessary functions of ROPA, dedicating several hours per week to ROPA-related tasks; and

Whereas, The Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer of ROPA all dedicate significant amounts of their personal time to complete the necessary functions of ROPA; and

Whereas, ROPA is incredibly grateful for the service provided by those who have served as officers of ROPA; and

Whereas, The honorarium for officers has not been increased in at least ten years; therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Regional Orchestra Players’ Association (“ROPA”) hereby approves honorariums for its officers as follows, beginning with the payment for Quarter 1 of this Fiscal Year as paid to officers installed at the 2022 ROPA Conference:

- President: $1600 annually/$400 per quarter
- Vice President: $1200 annually/$300 per quarter
- Secretary: $1200 annually/$300 per quarter
- Treasurer: $1200 annually/$300 per quarter

Submitted by: John Michael Smith

Resolution Nº 3

Subject: Resolution Responding to the Call to Action From the Black Orchestral Network

Black Orchestral Network Call to Action Resolution

Whereas, Systemic racism affects Regional Orchestra Players’ Association (“ROPA”) orchestras at every level, making it difficult for musicians of color to obtain positions in our orchestras and have a voice in the future of classical music; and

Whereas, ROPA is committed to promoting and increasing equity, diversity, and inclusion in our member orchestras; and

Whereas, On May 2, 2022, the Black Orchestral Network (“BON”), an organization which seeks to create an inclusive and equitable environment for Black people in the orchestral field, put out a Call to Action to orchestral stakeholders, including the American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada (“AFM”) and its player conferences, including ROPA; and

Whereas, ROPA hears BON’s Call to Action and pledges to work with BON members to improve the landscape for Black orchestral musicians in ROPA orchestras; therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Regional Orchestra Players’ Association (“ROPA”) hereby encourages all of its members to sign on to the Black Orchestral Network (“BON”)’s Call to Action open letter petition and work to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion in their orchestras; and be it further

Resolved, That the ROPA Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (“EDI”) Workgroup pledges to review the ROPA Conductor Evaluation Surveys in conjunction with BON members in order to evaluate the principles of equity, diversity and inclusion when engaging conductors; and be it further

Resolved, That the ROPA EDI Workgroup pledges to review ROPA’s Wage Chart surveys and any other applicable documents and processes, in conjunction with BON members, in order to respond fully to the BON Call to Action; and be it further

Resolved, That the members of the ROPA Executive Board, as the elected officials of ROPA, pledge to prioritize and support the work of the ROPA EDI Workgroup and to work with BON to help support Black orchestral musicians.

Submitted by: The ROPA Executive Board and Alana Wiesen, Chair, ROPA EDI Work Group
Resolution Nº. 4

Subject: Resolution Remembering Pat Varriale, AFM Electronic Media Services Director

Pat Varriale Resolution

Whereas, On May 13, 2022, Patrick Varriale (“Pat”), Electronic Media Services Director for the American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada (“AFM”), suddenly passed away; and

Whereas, Pat had an almost fifty-year career with the AFM, having been hired in 1974; and

Whereas, Pat was instrumental in growing opportunities for members of the AFM to earn a living through electronic media; and

Whereas, Many musicians who play in orchestras which are members of the Regional Orchestra Players’ Association (“ROPA”) are also recording musicians, and directly benefited from Pat’s work and advocacy; and

Whereas, ROPA is saddened by the sudden loss of this formidable force in our industry; therefore, be it

Resolved, That the ROPA hereby expresses its condolences to Pat’s wife Patricia and their son Nicholas.

Submitted by: The ROPA Executive Board

Resolution Nº. 5

Subject: Resolution Urging The Orchestral Community to Act to Protect the Rights of Women

Women’s Rights Resolution

Whereas, In June of 2022, the United States Supreme Court issued its opinion in Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization, No. 19-1392, 597 U.S. (2022), overturning long-standing precedent set by Roe v. Wade, 410 U.S. 113 (1973) which limited States’ ability to restrict American women’s rights to reproductive healthcare; and

Whereas, The loss of such a long standing cultural institution will have devastating effect on the citizens of the City of San Antonio and all patrons of this great orchestra; and

Whereas, The closing of the San Antonio Symphony will cause the Musicians to seek work elsewhere, creating a loss of educational opportunities for residents of San Antonio who study music with these Musicians; and

Whereas, These kinds of actions hurt our industry; and

Whereas, What affects one of us, affects us all; therefore, be it

Resolved, That the ROPA hereby urges all members to fight for the best possible working conditions; and

Resolved, That ROPA hereby calls on the management of its member orchestras to ensure that all ROPA members have access to necessary healthcare and to agree not to take adverse action against any musicians who may suffer the consequences of new laws restricting reproductive rights; and be it further

Resolved, That ROPA calls on the United States Congress to Act to protect the rights of women once and for all.

Submitted by: Naomi Bensdorf Frisch, Delegate-at-Large to the AFM Convention, and The ROPA Executive Board

Resolution Nº. 6

Subject: Resolution In Support of the Musicians of the San Antonio Symphony

Musicians of the San Antonio Symphony Resolution

Whereas, The San Antonio Symphony was the first symphony orchestra in the state of Texas, and was formally organized in 1939; and

Whereas, The Musicians of the San Antonio Symphony are members of the International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians (“ICSOM”), which, like the Regional Orchestra Players’ Association (“ROPA”) is a player conference of the American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada (“AFM”); and

Whereas, In 2021, the Musicians of the San Antonio Symphony went on strike to protest proposed draconian cuts to their wages and to the size of the orchestra; and

Whereas, In the spring of 2022, the Board of the San Antonio Symphony unanimously voted to file for Chapter 7 bankruptcy, choosing to close its doors rather than support its musicians; and

Whereas, The loss of such a long standing cultural institution will have devastating effect on the citizens of the City of San Antonio and all patrons of this great orchestra; and

Whereas, The closing of the San Antonio Symphony will cause the Musicians to seek work elsewhere, creating a loss of educational opportunities for residents of San Antonio who study music with these Musicians; and

Whereas, These kinds of actions hurt our industry; and

Whereas, What affects one of us, affects us all; therefore, be it

Resolved, That the ROPA hereby urges all members to fight for the best possible working conditions; and

Resolved, That ROPA hereby calls on the management of its member orchestras to ensure that all ROPA members have access to necessary healthcare and to agree not to take adverse action against any musicians who may suffer the consequences of new laws restricting reproductive rights; and be it further

Resolved, That ROPA supports the efforts of the Musicians of the San Antonio Symphony to build a new orchestra in the City of San Antonio that reflects the size and available resources of the city and surrounding community.

Submitted by: The ROPA Executive Board

Resolution Nº. 7

Subject: Resolution Proposing to Create an Honorarium for the Conductor Evaluation Bank Administrator

Conductor Evaluation Bank Administrator Honorarium Resolution

Whereas, One of the benefits of membership in the Regional Orchestra Players’ Association (“ROPA”) is the ability to access and contribute to the ROPA Conductor Evaluation Bank; and

(Resolutions, continued on page 10)
Whereas, The ROPA Conductor Evaluation Bank must be housed and administered by a volunteer; and

Whereas, Whenever there is a submission to or an inquiry regarding the Conductor Evaluation Bank, the Conductor Evaluation Bank Administrator must dedicate several hours of time to process the request; and

Whereas, Individuals who serve in other similar adjunct positions for ROPA, such as editor of The Leading Tone, receive honorariums as a small token of appreciation for the work they do to support ROPA’s mission; and

Whereas, ROPA is incredibly grateful for the service provided by the volunteers who have served as Conductor Evaluation Bank Administrator; therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Regional Orchestra Players’ Association (“ROPA”) hereby approves an honorarium for the Conductor Evaluation Bank Administrator in the amount of $200.00 annually; and be it further

Resolved, That Article VI, Section 5 of the ROPA bylaws will be revised as follows:

Section 5. An Honorarium for the office of President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Webmaster, The Leading Tone Editor, Conductor Evaluation Bank Administrator, and Social Media Coordinator shall be set by the Executive Board, subject to the approval of the general membership.

and, be it further

Resolved, That Article VII, Section 1 of the ROPA bylaws will be revised as follows:

Enumeration: The Adjunct Positions shall include an Editor of The Leading Tone, a Social Media Coordinator, a Historian, a Webmaster, a Conductor Evaluation Bank Administrator and a Conference Coordinator.

and, be it further

Resolved, That Article VII, Section 6 of the ROPA bylaws will be revised as follows:


Submitted by: The ROPA Executive Board

Resolution Nº. 8

Subject: Resolution In Honor of John Michael Smith, Outgoing President of ROPA

Mike Smith Resolution

Whereas, John Michael (“Mike”) Smith has served as the President of the Regional Orchestra Players’ Association (“ROPA”) for six years; and

Whereas, Mike Smith also served on the ROPA Executive board for five years prior to taking on the role of President; and

Whereas, Mike Smith led ROPA through one of the most challenging times for orchestral musicians, the Coronavirus Pandemic; and

Whereas, Mike Smith was instrumental in helping ROPA to thrive during this time, planning and spearheading ROPA’s two virtual conferences in 2020 and 2021, meeting weekly during the height of the Pandemic with the leaders of other player conferences of the American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada (“AFM”), and helping to promote the health and safety of ROPA musicians throughout the Country; and

Whereas, Under Mike Smith’s leadership, ROPA created the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Workgroup which is actively striving to improve working conditions for people of color and under-represented populations in the orchestral industry; and

Whereas, Under Mike Smith’s leadership of the ROPA Media Committee and participation on the Players’ Conference Council, ROPA has gained a stronger voice in our Union; and

Whereas, Mike Smith has given countless hours to ensure that ROPA runs efficiently, is fiscally responsible, and is attentive to the needs of its members; and

Whereas, Mike Smith has worked tirelessly to ensure that ROPA continues to provide valuable services to its members; and

Whereas, Mike Smith leaves his role as President, ROPA expresses its gratitude to his immeasurable contribution to ROPA, the AFM, and orchestral musicians nationwide; therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Regional Orchestra Players’ Association (“ROPA”) thanks John Michael (“Mike”) Smith for his invaluable service; and be it further

Resolved, That ROPA wishes Mike Smith well in his future endeavors; and be it further

Resolved, That ROPA hopes Mike Smith will continue to be a presence in our organization for years to come.

Submitted by: The ROPA Executive Board
ROPAS Guiding Principles

What is the Regional Orchestra Players’ Association (ROPAS)?
- Professional orchestra musicians of large and medium-sized budgets with AFM contracts;
- Service organizations networking with over 6,000 musicians and over 90 orchestras;
- Representatives of Regional Symphony Musicians at International/National forums.

Who does ROPA serve?
- ROPA rank and file musicians;
- Future musicians by protecting today’s jobs;
- All orchestras. What affects one affects all;
- The American Federation of Musicians;
- The communities our orchestras serve;
- Elected representatives—Delegates and Orchestra Committees.

Why does ROPA exist?
- To give knowledge and tools to union orchestras’ musicians and to assist in establishing fair working conditions;
- To educate the membership about industry standards, labor law, procedures and practices;
- To empower and enable our colleagues to better their lives in their workplace;
- To communicate during a time when labor is being dismantled in our country.

Other important principles identified:
- ROPA is a place for our member orchestras to turn to for support;
- ROPA establishes a forum for our member orchestras to discuss concerns and to educate orchestras on current trends and solutions;
- ROPA provides assistance for orchestras in crisis with advice and contact information;
- ROPA works to create fair collective bargaining agreements, fair working conditions and fair compensation.

What are the important defining roles the ROPA Executive Board performs in the organization?
- Assist orchestras in need and identify resources for the issue at hand;
- Build relationships to develop industry contacts to provide sound advice;
- Provide professional musicians of ROPA with labor education and strengthen networking;
- Collect regional orchestra data for the industry;
- Strengthen rights and working conditions of our member musicians;
- Educate our membership on what is possible and how other musicians have arrived where they are;
- Work to bring our constituents together: AFM Player Conferences, Locals, Orchestra Committees, and Musicians.

What are the crucial components ROPA utilizes to accomplish its goals?
- Information sharing with orchestra to orchestra, musician to musician and person to person;
- The information is shared through website, emails, Facebook, telephone calls, conferences and newsletters;
- Work to create an atmosphere within each ROPA Orchestra of concern and commitment;
- Create awareness of issues through Delegate communicating to the ROPA Executive Board.

What are the results of the work of ROPA?
- Inclusion in a labor community;
- Better professional lives and contracts than we otherwise had;
- Solidary and support;
- Greater awareness of management tactics;
- Knowledge of what works and what doesn’t work;
- Education of membership;
- Orchestra profiles: wage and scale charts, orchestra reports.

What are the Values of ROPA?
- Unity
- Fairness
- Democracy in work place
- Education
- Shared Sacrifice
- We are one with all labor
- What impacts one, impacts all
- Collective action to find solutions
- Identify problems—Identify Successes

Working for Musicians since 1984

ROPAS Orchestras, 2021
A conference of the American Federation of Musicians, AFL-CIO

The Leading Tone
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ROPA Member Orchestras

Full Members

Akron Symphony Orchestra
Albany Symphony
Allentown Symphony
Ann Arbor Symphony
Arizona Opera Orchestra
Atlanta Ballet Orchestra
Atlanta Opera Orchestra
Austin Symphony Orchestra
Ballet West Orchestra
Binghamton Philharmonic
Boise Philharmonic
Boston Ballet Orchestra
Boulder Philharmonic
California Symphony Orchestra
Canton Symphony Orchestra
Cape Symphony
Central City Opera Orchestra
Chattanooga Symphony & Opera Orchestra
Chicago Sinfonietta
Colorado Springs Philharmonic Orchestra
Dallas Opera Orchestra
Dayton Philharmonic

Delaware Symphony Orchestra
Detroit Opera Orchestra
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
Kalamazo Symphony Orchestra
Knoxville Symphony Orchestra
Lansing Symphony Orchestra
Las Vegas Philharmonic
Lexington Philharmonic
Long Beach Symphony Orchestra
Los Angeles Opera Orchestra
Marin Symphony
Memphis Symphony Orchestra

Minnesota Opera Orchestra
Monterey Symphony
National Philharmonic Orchestra
New Haven Symphony Orchestra
New Mexico Philharmonic
New West Symphony Orchestra
Oakland Symphony
Omaha Symphony Orchestra
Opera Philadelphia
Orchestra Iowa
Oregon Ballet Theatre Orchestra
Palm Beach Opera Orchestra
Pasadena Symphony Orchestra
Pittsburgh Opera Orchestra
Portland Opera Orchestra
Portland Symphony Orchestra
Reading Symphony Orchestra
Rhode Island Philharmonic
Sacramento Philharmonic & Opera
Santa Barbara Symphony
Santa Rosa Symphony
Sarasota Orchestra
South Bend Symphony
Southwest Florida Symphony Orchestra
Spokane Symphony Orchestra
Symphony San Jose
Symphony Tacoma
Toledo Symphony Orchestra
Tucson Symphony Orchestra
Vermont Symphony Orchestra
West Virginia Symphony
Wichita Symphony Orchestra
Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra

Associate Members

Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra
El Paso Symphony
Flint Symphony Orchestra
Glimmerglass Opera Orchestra
Lincoln Symphony Orchestra
Milwaukee Ballet Orchestra
Opera San Jose
Pittsburgh Ballet Orchestra
Southwest Michigan Symphony Orchestra
Tri-Cities Opera Orchestra
Tulsa Opera

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