

Fall  
2024



ROPA

Regional  
Orchestra  
Players'  
Association

A conference of the American Federation of Musicians, AFL-CIO

**Notes from the President**  
*by Steve Wade, ROPA President*



REGIONAL ORCHESTRA PLAYERS' ASSOCIATION

# The Leading Tone

## Fall 2024

Welcome to the Fall 2024 issue of *The Leading Tone!* In normal times I would devote this column to any number of interesting take-aways from our annual Conference, but more pressing needs have presented themselves as we approach the coming election on November 5. I have written an exhaustive recap on the Conference for the latest issue of the *International Musician*, so I would like to take this opportunity to urge all of our ROPA delegates and musicians to vote, and to encourage all of our friends and colleagues to do so as well.

We took the time in San Francisco to pass a resolution on this subject. At that point, the political landscape looked a lot different.

Since then, the Democratic ticket has changed, and our outlook has

changed as well, dramatically so. As I noted in the October IM, the Harris/Walz campaign has done well so far, but we need to stay focused on the outcome now more than ever. Here is Resolution 14 as we passed it by acclamation on July 31: Resolved, That the Regional Orchestra Players' Association ("ROPA") stands in solidarity with the Democratic Party and the labor movement as they prepare for the upcoming Presidential Election; and be it further Resolved, That ROPA strongly encourages all of its (continued on p. 2)

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**Ropa Delegates: Mark your calendars: next ROPA conference dates are  
July 29-31, 2025. Negotiating workshop the day before, 7/28  
in Philadelphia, PA**



(continued from page 1) member musicians to vote in support of the Democratic Party's pro-labor platform in all elections, especially in the Presidential Election in November 2024.

*"I have spent many hours reflecting on the significance of this election and what it means to me, and I want to share that with you all, in the spirit of encouraging you all to vote. What follows is my personal opinion and does not reflect the opinion of ROPA as a whole or any of its other officers."*

The stakes are high, and elections are about the numbers. Here are some things to remember as you talk to your friends and colleagues.

The Biden administration has achieved notable labor legislation milestones aimed at improving workers' rights and economic conditions. Key accomplishments include the American Rescue Plan, which provided pandemic relief, preserved millions of jobs, and bolstered unemployment benefits. His administration also raised the federal contractor minimum wage to \$15 an hour and supported unionization efforts by advocating for the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act, which seeks to expand workers' ability to form unions. The Democratic Party's commitment to labor rights has long reflected efforts to strengthen workplace safety, improve benefits, and promote wage equity for millions of American workers. If the Republican candidate wins another term, his administration's approach to organized labor will certainly prioritize business interests over union protections. He has historically favored deregulation and sought to limit union influence. He is likely to oppose pro-union legislation and roll back labor-friendly regulations, (continued page 3)



**The ROPA Hospitality Suite is a great place to meet your fellow union members while winding down after long conference days!**



**New to ROPA? Here's some lingo help:**

**ROPA: Regional Orchestra Players' Association.**

**MAL: Member-At-Large (these are our board members)**

**IMA: Integrated Media Agreement**

**EMA: Employers' Electronic Media Association**

**CBA: Collective Bargaining Agreement**

**SSD: Symphonic Services Division**

**OCSM: Organization of Canadian Symphony Musicians**

**ICSOM: International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians**

(continued from p. 2)

making it harder for unions to organize and bargain collectively. Additionally, he may pursue policies that reduce the power of federal agencies like the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), limiting its role in defending worker rights.

President Biden has shown support for the Arts through funding, policy initiatives, and advocacy. His administration secured a historic \$135 million for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) as part of pandemic recovery efforts. He also supported the Save Our Stages Act, which provided \$16 billion in grants to help theaters, concert venues, and other arts organizations recover from COVID-19 closures. His administration has recognized the Arts as essential to our culture and our economy, and emphasized their role in education, community building, and national recovery efforts. By contrast, previous Republican budgets proposed eliminating funding for the NEA and the NEH. The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 (TCJA) primarily benefited corporations and high-income individuals. The law reduced the corporate tax rate from 35% to 21%. Wealthier individuals gained from lower taxes on income, capital gains, and pass-through businesses. Middle-income earners saw some short-term tax relief, but their benefits were small compared to those for the wealthy.

Additionally, many of these middle class tax cuts are set to expire in 2025, while the 2017 corporate tax cuts are permanent. As a ROPA musician, are your taxes too high? Sure they are, and so are mine. But is this the solution? Is a money grab for multinational corporations and a couple hundred hedge fund guys in New York really the way to go?

Trickle down economic theory has never once worked in the way it was described by Ronald Regan and David Stockman 4 decades ago. We have been saddled with this fairy tale long enough. The AFM and its affiliated unions support the Tax Parity Act (PATPA), reintroduced in 2024 by Senators Mark Warner (D-VA) and Thom Tillis (R-NC), and ROPA does too. Spread the word.

So far, I have talked about traditional electoral issues, but the larger crisis remains, rooted in ideological division driven by all of our worst instincts. Even worse, as Michael Caulfield, an information researcher at the University of Washington, has argued in *The Atlantic*, “The primary use of ‘misinformation’ is not to change the beliefs of other people at all. Instead, the vast majority of misinformation is offered as a service for people to maintain their beliefs in face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary.” One of the healthiest things the Harris/Walz campaign has done is elevate our national discourse out of cultish, conspiracy theory, reality show nonsense to a place of sensible human interaction. There is no question we have serious problems to solve as a nation, but we cannot get there if we are continually distracted by the need to prove the Moon is not made of cheese or that birds are real.

Republicans have tried to use several voter suppression tactics in recent elections. Many of us will encounter some of them. Strict voter ID laws, voter roll purges, limitations on mail-in voting, reduced early voting, polling place closures, reducing drop-off locations, shortening the window for returning ballots, cutting back on early voting days or hours, and closing or consolidating polling locations in minority communities are all steps taken to

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disproportionately impact minority and low-income voters. Proponents argue they are meant to ensure election integrity, but the reality is that voter fraud cases are statistically insignificant and do not impact the overall integrity of our elections. Multiple studies and investigations have consistently found voter fraud rates to be minuscule, typically ranging from 0.0003% to 0.0025% of total votes cast.

The Brennan Center for Justice found that most claims of fraud were baseless, arising from clerical errors or other non-malicious reasons.

ROPA is about making the lives of our musicians better. There are about 6000 of us, many in swing states. Elections are about the numbers.

Decisions are made by those who show up.

Let's get out the vote on November 5 and make our voices heard.

*Addendum:*

I must add some thoughts to my article above. As of this writing, on October 21, 15 days before Election Day, a lot has happened in the developing political landscape in the United States. Our election remains a colossally important event on the world stage, and the race

is close. Now more than ever, I want to urge all ROPA musicians to vote, and to implore all your friends and colleagues to vote as well. Don't think your vote matters? Think again. On October 18, the New York Times published a guest essay by Republican polling expert Patrick Ruffini\*. In it, he details how "[t]he best way to tell how a state will vote is to build from the precinct level up, to dig into neighborhood data and to look at the differences in demographics and voting patterns across those precincts . . . Think of them as pieces of a puzzle representing distinct political and social trends that can help us understand the 2024 election. For Ms. Harris and Mr. Trump, each could be a crucial building block in a winning swing-state coalition."

Let's consider just one state, Pennsylvania, which was carried by Joe Biden in 2020 by about 90,000 votes. Ruffino writes that "One-sixth of Pennsylvania voters live in the Philadelphia suburbs, and Ms. Harris has an opportunity to build on Mr. Biden's 19-point margin in 2020 . . . The state's ultimate battleground might be the fast-growing suburbs of smaller metro areas in central Pennsylvania and the Lehigh Valley. These areas account for 9 percent of the state's vote."



*Do you recognize everyone in this picture? See the last 2 pages of this newsletter to put faces to the names!*

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Harrisburg, York, Reading, Lancaster, Lebanon, Reading, and Easton - there are three ROPA orchestras in this region. Don't think your voice matters? Think again.

I was Active Duty in the U.S. Military for 30 years, working in a Congressional band. I had a colleague from Michigan, a bass trombonist married to an Evangelical minister. He was a Conservative in all the ways I was a Progressive. I respect and admire him to this day, because we could always have a good argument regardless of our totally different politics. He's a good man. We worked together for about 20 years, during the Regan administration and throughout the evolution of Right Wing AM radio influence, led by people like Rush Limbaugh. Those times seem almost quaint and harmless compared to now; but of course they weren't. The only thing we really agreed on was about voting. He always used to say, "If you don't vote, don't bitch." I still agree. Let's get out there and make a difference.

*Steve Wade*

10/21/24

\*Patrick Ruffini is a pollster at Echelon Insights.

## Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra: Recording and DEI Initiative: by Brandon LePage, MAL



There is a lot of chatter in the industry about DEI initiatives, specifically when it comes to doing something meaningful and impactful for our communities beyond the initial performance of a piece of music. As a member of the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra, it is my absolute joy to write about our 5 year recording initiative: "Musical Landscapes in Color"! October of 2023 saw the culmination of our first live concert recording; "Harmony in Black." The album itself includes not only works that have been severely underperformed since their premieres (including a piece written by Patrice Rushen that I had the pleasure of premiering with the Detroit Symphony Civic Youth Ensembles in the 90s), but also showcases music that has not yet been professionally recorded. The highlight of the album is a world premiere work written specifically for the WCO by our then Composer in Residence, Dr. Bill Banfield titled "Testimony of Tone, Tune, and Time." Dr. Banfield is also advising WCO management through the entirety of the five year project.

While the album itself is a tangible item that can be purchased and held, in order to go beyond the music itself, the WCO will continue to employ other components to this project in order to have a much greater impact on the community of Madison, WI. An essential part of our initiative, Dr. Banfield worked in the community for a year leading up to our initial recording project visiting local schools, giving presentations at the University of Wisconsin Madison and Public Libraries, and Lecturing before our concert. It is the intention of the WCO that each recording year will also feature educational components involving as many facets of the (see page 6)



**Are you registered to vote?**

**Check with this link:**

<https://www.vote.org/am-i-registered-to-vote>

*The Leading Tone* is the official voice of ROPA and reflects ROPA policy. However, we do appreciate and encourage the the contributions 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, it's officers or members.

(continued from p. 5)

community as possible, exposing citizens not only to the musicians, but also the faces and voices behind the musical compositions. The overall programming of the WCO has been positively impacted as well. While each individual concert still struggles to find balance from time to time, it is clear that throughout the entire season our organization is making a concerted effort to program diversely without tokenizing. This October we will be recording our 2nd CD, "Convergence," featuring the music of composers Andre Meyers, Michael Abels, Patrice Rushen, and Valerie Coleman. As we move into year 3 of this initiative, I am excited to see what else we are able to do to serve and support the entirety of Dane County!

## Using the Conductor Evaluation Bank

By Lisa Davis, Member-at-Large and  
Conductor Evaluation Bank  
Administrator



The ROPA Conductor Evaluation Bank is a valuable resource for organizations engaged in a search for a new music director. Any time a guest conductor comes to lead your orchestra, a thorough (and confidential!) evaluation will provide necessary input for making a decision on a permanent choice.

While the instructions regarding the conductor evaluation survey are on the website at [ropaweb.org](http://ropaweb.org), it's helpful for all musicians besides the delegates to understand the process of using this tool. (continued on page 10)

## Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra: DEI Leaders



## Negotiating Tips from Inside

by Judy Naillon, Wichita Symphony

Orchestra Orchestra Committee, VP Local #297



Negotiating is an essential skill for ROPA musicians. Here are some tips to help you navigate the world of negotiations and secure the best possible deals for your musicians: Do your research: Before entering any negotiation, it's crucial to be well-informed. Know your CBA. I am using the online study card program "quizlet" to create questions to test my own CBA knowledge and plan to invite my Orchestra Committee over for a fun night of CBA trivia as I head into my 20th year with WSO and 4th consecutive negotiation with our board. Fun and games aside, be sure to connect with your MAL group, as they're the group of musicians with the most similarities to your org. in terms of size and budget.

Consider taking advantage of the financial audit available to ROPA orchestras. Your local pays half and the AFM pays the other half. In our last Wichita Symphony negotiations our financial audit was so valuable: without getting into details, we were able to use the audit results to help get what we wanted.

Stressed, depressed, lemon zest: There may be concessions. Once you've agreed to them you have to move on and not dwell on them. This one is really hard for me!

Keep meetings clear and concise. Elect ONE member and one member ONLY of your negotiating committee to do all the talking (if everyone is asked for input keep it as short as possible.) If you have a "talker" in your group consider a code word or secret hand sign for your entire group that means "we've gotten off topic, let's allow our elected speaker to get back to task."

Take advantage of meeting in person online via a program like Zoom with your committee before *and after* your negotiations.

Keep ALL of your notes in a shared drive that you can also share with the future OC members.

Pay close attention to what the other party is saying. Ask clarifying questions and show genuine interest in their perspective. Active listening will help you build rapport and understand their motivations, which can be valuable in reaching a mutually beneficial agreement.

Be open to creative solutions that benefit both parties. Sometimes, a compromise in one area can lead to a better overall deal.

Treat everyone with respect, even when you disagree. Know how to contact your union lawyer (if necessary) if the negotiation involves complex legal terms or significant financial stakes. They will provide guidance and protect your interests throughout the process.

Finally, engage your musicians by asking them to show solidarity to your negotiating committee. Are things getting hairy? Ask musicians to wear a union or solid color shirt (red, white, green; you decide) on a set night of rehearsal. All ROPA orchestra committees should reach out to Rochelle Skolnick if they're interested in utilizing a negotiator, who will help guide your committee through the negotiating process and who will fiercely advocate for your musicians. Do you need a quiet, safe in-person meeting space? Ask all fellow musicians, not just one "regular go-to person" for ideas!

Remember, negotiating is a skill that takes time and practice to develop. By following these tips and staying informed about our industry by attending ROPA conferences, you can increase your chances of securing favorable deals for your musicians. Solidarity!

## ROPA Roundup: News Nuggets

**Opera Philadelphia** has welcomed a new General Director and President, Anthony Roth Costanzo, a highly respected countertenor who took the helm on June 1. Balancing his leadership role with his performance schedule, Costanzo is focused on addressing the organization's challenges, including a significant deficit. He successfully secured funding for the company's first production this September. To boost ticket sales, he implemented a "pay what you can" policy, allowing patrons to purchase tickets for \$11 or any amount they choose for any seat in the house. This innovative approach has resonated with the community, resulting in 68% of ticket holders being first-time attendees, and the hall is already nearly sold out for the season.

*Brooke Beazley, ROPA MAL*



**The Wichita Symphony Orchestra** has appointed Timothy Storhoff as executive director. He succeeds Don Reinhold, who retired from the WSO this spring after 12 years as CEO. Storhoff served as chief philanthropy officer for the Winston-Salem Symphony, and has an extensive background in arts administration and a dedication to community engagement and accessibility. His resume includes leadership roles in both the public and nonprofit sectors. He earned a Ph.D. in Musicology and a Master's of Music in Ethnomusicology from Florida State University, with undergraduate studies in Bassoon Performance and American Studies at the University of Iowa. Storhoff arrives as the Wichita Symphony embarks on its 80th anniversary season.

## ROPA Roundup (continued)

### **The musicians of the Flint Symphony**

**Orchestra** were energized by the Resolution passed at this summer's conference! Negotiations have been forced into mediation for the time being. Both parties met with a mediator in late September, and subsequent meetings will be scheduled throughout October. We thank you all for your support as we enter season 4 of negotiating our contract!

*Brandon LePage, ROPA MAL*

### **Musicians of the Southwest Florida**

**Symphony Orchestra** have agreed to a two-year contract as of March 23, 2024.

The musicians had been working without a ratified contract since 2019. Between the expired CBA in 2019 to present, 16 musicians had resigned.

While the management had claimed to be at an impasse, the musicians continued to play to ensure the survival of the orchestra.

Prior to this, musicians' pay had essentially remained stagnant for the last five years.

The agreement improves some of the working conditions that were imposed on the musicians in 2020, although the musicians still aspire to see a more complete restoration of their previous agreement.

Local news (see picture on p.19 with SFSO members in greens shirts) shared this story with the community. Many thanks to Adam DeSorgo, the AFM negotiator. Read more at: [www.swfsomusicians.org](http://www.swfsomusicians.org)

*Jeanie Phelan*

*Southwest Florida Musicians' Association, Chair*



## **Social Media and Protected, Concerted Activity in an Age of Inflammatory Civil Discourse**

*By Naomi Bendorf Frisch, ROPA Legal Counsel*

As the election draws closer and the future of our democracy appears to hang in the balance, the likelihood that musicians will engage in social media debates over emotionally charged and divisive political issues is dramatically increasing. The ability to post an opinion on social media instead of say it out loud in front of someone else often emboldens individuals to say controversial things that may be offensive to others.

Nevertheless, employers are probably watching, and posting controversial statements on social media may create a risk of disciplinary action by an employer.

Section 7 of the National Labor Relations Act allows employees broad latitude to engage in concerted activity for the mutual aid and protection of other employees. For example, a post encouraging social media followers to vote for Kamala Harris, because a Trump presidency would likely result in a labor board that is significantly less favorable to employees than the most recent Biden Board has been, is likely to be protected under Section 7. An orchestral employer might be upset that a musician is publicly expressing a pro-labor perspective, and may even have a policy prohibiting any political statement by musicians that could be construed as being endorsed by the orchestra. Such a policy would be unlawful as it would interfere with musicians' Section 7 rights.

The key thing to remember when making posts about your workplace on social media is to make posts which highlight the mutual concern you have with other employees. Complaining about a music director on social media would be protected if you mention the impact the music director's actions have on the members of the orchestra as a whole, but would not be protected if it focuses on impacts that only you experienced. Framing a post as a "we" statement, rather than an "I" statement, is one important step to finding that such a statement is "protected, concerted activity" engaged in for the "mutual aid and protection" of others.

Regardless of the protections of Section 7, musicians still must be careful of social media posts which could be construed as discrimination or harassment under Federal and State anti-discrimination laws.

Just because a social media post may not be directly tied to a workplace does not mean that your conduct does not have an impact on a workplace. Recall the definitions of discrimination and harassment:

Discrimination occurs when an employee experiences disparate treatment, or less favorable terms and conditions of work, because of their membership in one or more protected classes.

Harassment occurs when conduct directed towards a person's protected characteristic is unwelcome and has the purpose or effect of altering or interfering with a person's working environment.

Protected classes include race, color, religion,

(**social media** continued from p. 9)

sex/gender/sexual orientation, national origin, age, and disability. Your state law may include other protected classes, such as marital status or ancestry. This election cycle, issues that affect protected classes are at the forefront of the debate. For example, discourse about Womens' health, immigrants' rights, or the conflict between Jewish Israelis and Palestinian Muslims is common. Making comments on social media which are directed towards a colleague's protected characteristic, such as sex, national origin, or religion, could be unwelcome and could interfere with a musician's ability to perform their best. Choosing not to hire someone because of these characteristics, or because of what they said about people who are members of those protected classes, could also be considered discriminatory. Before posting your thoughts on social media, make sure you are speaking respectfully about colleagues and the characteristics that make them unique. For an extra layer of job protection, keep social media comments focused on how certain policies or practices affect all musicians. Keep up that healthy debate, but do so in a way that keeps your job and your colleagues safe!



Naomi Bendorf Frisch, is a Chicago-based attorney, musician, and community leader. She is a labor and employment lawyer, working on worker and union side cases since 2018. Frisch holds a Juris Doctorate, Magna cum Laude, from the Chicago-Kent College of Law.

(**conductor bank** continued from p. 6)

Start by going to the website. There are two ways to access the evaluations. First, there is a drop-down menu that says CONDUCTOR EVALUATIONS. Hover your cursor over this, and choose the drop-down option that says "For Delegates." Or, you can go to DELEGATES and select the drop-down option of "Conductor Evaluations." Both options will lead you to a log-in page. If you don't have a log-in and password, contact Secretary Karen Sandene.

Once you're logged in, try either option to access the evaluations. Once on that page, you will scroll down to the "Procedure for requesting a survey link." You must fill out all the fields, including the emails of all of your colleagues in the orchestra, which will be kept confidential. The musicians' email addresses will be obtained by the delegate and sent to the ROPA administrator. The musicians will be asked to complete the form within one week. A reminder will be sent a few days before the deadline to only those musicians who have not completed the survey.

Management may access the results by completing an online request form and sending to the administrator. The form stipulates that management agrees to keep this information confidential, and that the musicians, the pertinent AFM local and ROPA are immune from any claims of misuse of these results. Information from ICSOM and OCSM surveys is also available; those requests would be made to me as well. (For FAQ see infographic next page.)



## **Are musicians allowed to see the results?**

**Not directly from ROPA.** Management is the sole recipient of the results because management signs a release agreeing to accept all liability for any negative comments made about a particular conductor. **If management chooses to share the results with the musicians, or anyone else, they may do so, but only because they accept liability for any resulting misuse of the information.** Most managements will limit the sharing of the information for that reason. OCSM and ICSON follow the same policy.

## **Can the amount of time for responses be extended beyond one week?**

Yes, upon requesting permission from the bank administrator.

## **I have a musician who forgot to fill it out. Can they access it after the survey's been closed?**

Yes. The administrator will send a link for the survey to the delegate.

## **Can a musician ask to do the evaluation over or retract what they submitted?**

**Yes.** Have that musician ask the ROPA delegate to contact the administrator. The ROPA delegate will provide the email of that musician, the administrator will delete the comments and the musician can access the link from the original email to re-do the survey.

## **What if one of the musicians hasn't received the email?**

If you know someone who has not received this email your ROPA delegate will provide you with a web link to the survey. Ask those musicians to check their spam and junk mail folders first. It's a good idea for delegates to send the musicians a heads-up email letting them know a survey is coming.

## **Is there a possibility of a musician submitting multiple reviews?**

**No, a musician can not take the survey more than once from the same device.** The surveys are also reviewed to make sure only one response is received by each musician.

## **If an orchestra does their own evaluation in-house, can that be submitted to ROPA?** No, The only evaluations ROPA keeps in the bank are its own.

**If you have any further questions** about the evaluation bank, please don't hesitate to contact me at [ropaceba1@gmail.com](mailto:ropaceba1@gmail.com).



**Resolution No. 1**

Subject: Honoring and Celebrating the History and 40th Anniversary of the Regional Orchestra Players' Association

Whereas, The Regional Orchestra Players' Association ("ROPA") was established forty years ago through the inspirational vision of Nathan Kahn (Nashville Symphony Orchestra) to serve the unique needs and interests of musicians in regional orchestras, recognizing the distinct challenges and opportunities faced by these important cultural institutions and becoming a vital organization in advancing the interests and well-being of its members; and

Whereas, The early efforts of ROPA included its inaugural conference held in Columbus, OH, from September 7-9, 1984, where representatives from thirteen orchestras attended and elected its first officers—Nathan Kahn as President, Bruce Schultz (Tulsa Philharmonic Orchestra) as Vice-President, Elizabeth Pistolessi

(Charlotte Symphony Orchestra) as Secretary, Leonard Byrne (Spokane Symphony Orchestra) as Treasurer, and Dana Karr (Nashville Symphony Orchestra) as Newsletter Editor—setting the foundation for future growth and success; and

Whereas, ROPA established and continues to offer a structured platform for regional orchestras to discuss their unique challenges, share best practices, and collectively advocate for improvements in working conditions and compensation; and

Whereas, Over the past forty years, ROPA has successfully contributed to the enhancement of improved wages, job security, and overall working conditions for musicians in regional orchestras, reflecting its commitment to the artistic and professional health of its members; and

Whereas, Since its founding, ROPA has become a critical and respected entity by being the voice of its member orchestras within the American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada ("AFM"), thereby strengthening the collective voice of regional orchestras; and

Whereas, ROPA has consistently adapted to challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, by providing guidance to member orchestras on safe return-to-performance practices, advocating for musicians' rights, connecting member orchestras to resources, and advocating for its members in negotiations over symphonic electronic media contracts; and

Whereas, ROPA has actively addressed matters that are important to the growth of our industry and promoting social change by forming an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion ("EDI") Workgroup and participating in discussions that led to the creation of the National Alliance for Audition Support ("NAAS") Recommended Audition and Tenure Guidelines; and

**2024 ROPA Conference Resolutions**

*Passed July 31, 2024*

Whereas, In the last forty years, ROPA membership has grown from twenty-four charter members to eighty-five full member orchestras and eleven associate member orchestras, increasing its recognition and reflecting its expanding influence in the orchestral community; therefore be it

*Resolved*, That the Regional Orchestra Players' Association ("ROPA") hereby honors and celebrates its 40th anniversary by recognizing the collective achievements and milestones reached over the past four decades, including the pioneering work of its members, continued advocacy, innovations in policy, and the unwavering commitment to improving the professional lives of regional orchestra musicians; and be it further

*Resolved*, That ROPA acknowledges and commends the dedication and contributions of its members, officers, delegates, and collaborators, who have played a crucial role in its growth and success; and be it further

*Resolved*, That ROPA reaffirms its commitment to advancing the interests of regional orchestra musicians, promoting diversity and inclusiveness, and continuing to adapt and evolve in response to the changing musical and professional landscape; and be it further

*Resolved*, That ROPA looks forward to the future with optimism and determination, striving to build upon its legacy of excellence and solidarity as it enters its fifth decade of service to the regional orchestra community.

**Submitted by:** The ROPA Executive Board

**Resolution No. 2**

Subject: Resolution to Modify the Membership Dues Collection Process and Amend Article X, Section 4(a) of the ROPA Bylaws Late Fee Resolution  
Whereas, Timely payment of Regional Orchestra Players' Association ("ROPA") membership dues is necessary for ROPA to exercise fiscal responsibility; and

Whereas, Currently, membership dues are due on December 31st, which falls during a time of year at which the majority of ROPA dues payors are on holiday; and

Whereas, The current schedule of Late Fees, as stipulated in Article X, Section 4, does not act as an effective financial disincentive to members paying their dues after the due date of January 31st; and

Whereas, Nonpayment and late payment of membership dues increase the administrative burden upon the ROPA Executive Board; and

Whereas, Nonpayment and late payment of membership dues increase the financial burden upon ROPA member orchestras that timely pay their membership dues; therefore be it

*Resolved*, That Article X, Section 4(a) of the Regional Orchestra Players' Association ("ROPA") Bylaws be amended as follows:  
Section 4. Late Fees  
Dues Paid

<b>On or After</b>	<b>But Prior To</b>	<b>Late Fee Shall Be</b>
February 1	March 1	\$ 10.00
March 1	April 1	\$ 20.00
April 1	May 1	\$ 40.00
May 1	June 1	\$ 60.00
June 1	July 1	\$ 80.00
July 1	August 1	\$ 100.00

Late fees for Associate Member Orchestras shall be 50% of the amounts listed for Full-Member Orchestras. If membership dues for a given year are paid without including assessed late fees, the late fee amount for that year will be frozen at the amount assessed when the respective membership dues were paid. If the dues and/or associated late fees remain unpaid by the beginning of the next ROPA Conference, the Orchestra shall be expelled from membership and can only be reinstated upon payment of a \$150.00 reinstatement fee, together with all back indebtedness due as of the date of expulsion. The Executive Board shall be empowered to grant an extension for payment and/or waive any penalties if, in its opinion, an extraordinary situation requires the same.

**Submitted by:** Rick Basehore (ROPA Treasurer)

**Resolution No. 3**

Subject: Honoring the Service and Achievements of John Michael “Mike” Smith by Conferring the Title of “President Emeritus” Mike Smith Resolution

Whereas, John Michael (“Mike”) Smith served with distinction as the President of the Regional Orchestra Players’ Association (“ROPA”) from 2016-2022; and Whereas, Prior to his presidency, Mike Smith contributed significantly as a member of the ROPA Executive Board for several years; and Whereas, Mike Smith masterfully guided ROPA through the COVID-19 pandemic, one of the most tumultuous periods for orchestral musicians; and

Whereas, During that challenging time, Mike Smith played a pivotal role in the success of ROPA’s two virtual conferences in 2020 and 2021, and he worked tirelessly with other player conference leaders within the American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada (“AFM”) to support the health and safety of musicians nationwide; and

Whereas, Under Mike Smith’s visionary guidance, ROPA established an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (“EDI”) Workgroup dedicated to improving policies, conditions, and representation within its member orchestras; and

Whereas, Mike Smith continues to lead the ROPA Media Committee, and in that role has strengthened ROPA’s voice in national media negotiations; and

Whereas, Mike Smith devoted countless hours to ensure ROPA’s operational efficiency, fiscal responsibility, and responsiveness to the needs of its member orchestras; and

Whereas, Mike Smith is a tireless advocate for musicians, a steadfast leader, and a cherished friend and colleague; and Whereas, ROPA wishes to bestow its deepest and most profound expression of gratitude upon Mike Smith for his immeasurable contributions to ROPA, the AFM, and orchestral musicians across the country; therefore be it

*Resolved*, That the Regional Orchestra Players’ Association (“ROPA”) extends its heartfelt thanks to John Michael (“Mike”) Smith for his exceptional service and dedication; and be it further

*Resolved*, That ROPA hopes Mike Smith will remain an integral and valued presence within the organization for many years to come; and be it further *Resolved*, That in recognition of his outstanding contributions and unwavering commitment, ROPA confers upon John Michael (“Mike”) Smith the honorary title of “President Emeritus.”

**Submitted by:** The ROPA Executive Board

**Resolution No. 4**

Subject: Recognition of the Service and Contributions of Regional Orchestra Players’ Association Past Presidents Past Presidents Resolution

Whereas, The Regional Orchestra Players’ Association (“ROPA”) has been fortunate to benefit from the leadership and dedication of several exceptional presidents throughout its history, each of whom has contributed significantly to its advancement and success; and

Whereas, ROPA was founded in 1982 by Nathan Kahn, who recognized the unique challenges faced by regional orchestras and spearheaded the formation of a dedicated player conference; and

Whereas, Nathan Kahn’s visionary leadership (1984-1988) laid the foundation for the establishment and growth of ROPA, beginning with the first symposium held in Columbus, OH, in 1984, and continuing throughout and beyond the duration of his term as President; and

Whereas, Rosemary Estes (1988-1990) led and represented ROPA honorably, including notable contributions to the International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians (“ICSOM”) conferences; and

Whereas, Diane Merrill (1990-1994) presided over the earliest implementations of the Roehl Report, which proposed the creation of the Symphonic Services Division (“SSD”), the Electronic Media Services Division, and the Player Conference Council, enabling direct communication between rank-and-file musicians and American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada (“AFM”) leadership in addition to granting representatives from ROPA the right to propose bylaw changes and speak at AFM conventions; and

Whereas, Andrew Brandt (1994-1999), who was honored as President Emeritus in 2000, served ROPA with unwavering commitment from its inception, holding various roles from 1984-1999, including editor of *The Leading Tone*, Member-at-Large, Secretary, and President for six years, and profoundly shaping the development and operations of ROPA; and

Whereas, Ann Drinan (1999-2001), having served as Delegate, Vice-President, and President, was a passionate advocate for ROPA, displaying leadership characterized by dignity, courage, and sincere devotion, earning her the permanent title of President Emerita in recognition of her significant contributions; and

Whereas, Barbara Zmich (2001-2006), who served ROPA as a Member-at-Large as well as President for five years, demonstrated fierce advocacy and compassion, and her courageous initiative in challenging situations, strong leadership, and inspiring impact were recognized by conferring upon her the title of President

Emerita in 2006; and Whereas, Tom Fetherston (2006-2007), who was honored with the title of President Emeritus in 2008, dedicated many years of service to ROPA as Delegate, Webmaster, The Leading Tone Editor, Secretary, and President, and effectiveness and outreach of ROPA; and

Whereas, Carla Lehmeier-Tatum (2007-2016) served as President for an impressive nine years, making her the longest-serving President in ROPA history, and her grace, poise, and tireless advocacy were instrumental in strengthening ROPA’s significance and reputation, allowing ROPA to expand to serve eighty- six orchestras and over 5,000 musicians nationwide and leading to her designation as ROPA President Emerita; and

Whereas, John Michael (“Mike”) Smith (2016-2022), who served as ROPA President for six years and on the Executive Board for five years prior, was designated as ROPA President Emeritus after leading the organization through the challenging COVID-19 pandemic by planning and executing two virtual conferences and advocating for musicians’ health and safety, in addition to participating in the creation of the National Alliance of Audition Support (“NAAS”) Recommended Audition and Tenure Guidelines, serving as chair of the ROPA Media Committee, and establishing the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (“EDI”) Workgroup; therefore be it

*Resolved*, That the Regional Orchestra Players’ Association (“ROPA”) extends its deepest gratitude and appreciation to each past President for their extraordinary service and dedication; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the legacies of Nathan Kahn, Rosemary Estes, Diane Merrill,

Andrew Brandt, Ann Drinan, Barbara Zmich, Tom Fetherston, Carla Lehmeier - Tatum, and Mike Smith have profoundly shaped ROPA and continue to inspire its members; and be it further

*Resolved*, That ROPA celebrates the achievements and contributions of these esteemed leaders, acknowledging their vital roles in advancing the organization and supporting regional orchestra musicians across the United States of America; and be it further

*Resolved*, That ROPA honors the impact and service of each past President, ensuring that their contributions are remembered and cherished as the organization continues to build upon the foundation they established.

**Submitted by:** Stephen Wade (ROPA President) and the ROPA Executive Board

**Resolution No. 5**

Subject: Supporting the Hudson Valley Symphony Orchestra Musicians

Whereas, The Hudson Valley Symphony Orchestra (“the orchestra”), formerly known as the Hudson Valley Philharmonic, has a distinguished history of serving the communities of Dutchess, Ulster, and surrounding New York counties since its inception in 1932; and

Whereas, The orchestra has played a crucial role in the cultural and educational life of the Hudson Valley region, offering classical concerts, educational programs for school children, and performances featuring renowned artists, thereby enriching the community through its diverse programming; and

Whereas, Despite the orchestra’s long-standing tradition of excellence and service, recent financial difficulties and managerial challenges have led to significant operational changes and uncertainties regarding its future; and

Whereas, Management of the Bardavon, who owns the Hudson Valley Philharmonic’s assets, has refused to transfer those assets to the Hudson Valley Symphony Orchestra, obstructing the orchestra’s growth and mission; and

Whereas, The musicians of the orchestra have demonstrated their commitment to continuing their mission by reorganizing under a new name and revitalizing their performances and educational outreach programs, as evidenced by the inaugural concert of the Hudson Valley Symphony Orchestra on May 18, 2024; and

Whereas, The Regional Orchestra Players’ Association (“ROPA”) recognizes the importance of supporting orchestras through periods of transition and financial difficulty, and acknowledges the dedication and resilience of the Hudson Valley Symphony Orchestra musicians in their efforts to sustain and enhance their community impact; therefore be it

*Resolved*, That the Regional Orchestra Players’ Association (“ROPA”) expresses its full support for the musicians of the Hudson Valley Symphony Orchestra (“the orchestra”) in their efforts to continue their mission and revitalize their programming under the new organizational structure; and be it further

*Resolved*, That ROPA encourages the Bardavon Board of Directors and Management to honor their commitment made in March 2022 by facilitating a fair and equitable transfer of assets associated with the Hudson Valley Philharmonic to the orchestra, ensuring the continuation of its legacy and mission; and be it further

*Resolved*, That ROPA calls upon supporters, patrons, and community members to continue their advocacy and support for the orchestra, ensuring that the rich tradition of music and community service in the Hudson Valley can thrive in the future.

**Submitted by:** The ROPA Executive Board

**Resolution No. 6**

Subject: Supporting the Flint Symphony Orchestra Musicians

Whereas, The Regional Orchestra Players’ Association (“ROPA”) is committed to supporting the rights and interests of orchestral musicians, ensuring fair labor practices, and advocating for just working conditions; and

Whereas, The musicians of the Flint Symphony Orchestra have been engaged in protracted and challenging contract negotiations with management for over three years; and

Whereas, The Flint Symphony Orchestra management’s proposed changes to the collective bargaining agreement (“CBA”) include significant modifications that threaten to degrade terms and conditions of work for musicians and undermine the musicians’ rights under the National Labor Relations Act (“NLRA”); and

Whereas, The Flint Symphony Orchestra musicians have faced delays and obstructions in the negotiation process, including management’s lack of responsiveness to availability for meetings and the exclusion of essential staff who could facilitate understanding and resolution; and

Whereas, The recent hiring of orchestra manager Michelle Tschirhart is a productive development, and her presence at negotiations is anticipated to contribute positively to the resolution process; therefore be it

*Resolved*, That the Regional Orchestra Players’ Association (“ROPA”) expresses its unwavering support for the musicians of the Flint Symphony Orchestra in their ongoing contract negotiations; and be it further

*Resolved*, That ROPA commends the Flint Symphony Orchestra musicians for their perseverance and commitment to securing a fair and equitable agreement that preserves the integrity of their working conditions, benefits, and their rights under the law; and be it further

*Resolved*, That ROPA urges Michelle Tschirhart and the Flint Symphony Orchestra management to engage in good-faith negotiations, address the concerns raised by the musicians, and work collaboratively to resolve outstanding issues; and be it further

*Resolved*, That ROPA encourages its members and allies to stand in solidarity with the Flint Symphony Orchestra musicians; and be it further

*Resolved*, That ROPA reaffirms its commitment to monitoring the progress of these negotiations and providing continued support to the Flint Symphony Orchestra musicians as they work towards a successful resolution.

**Submitted by:** Brandon LePage (Flint Symphony Orchestra Delegate) and the ROPA Executive Board

**Resolution No. 7**

Subject: Recognition and Tribute to Leonard Ian Byrne

Leonard Byrne Resolution

Whereas, Leonard Ian Byrne, who passed away on January 22, 2024, at the age of 70, made profound and lasting contributions to the field of music and to the Regional Orchestra Players’ Association (“ROPA”); and

Whereas, Leonard Byrne served as the inaugural Treasurer of ROPA, playing a crucial role in the formation and establishment of the organization and demonstrating his dedication to the betterment of the orchestral community; and

Whereas, Leonard’s remarkable career spanned nearly five decades as the Principal Tuba of the Spokane Symphony Orchestra, a position he held from September 1975 until October 2023, reflecting his unparalleled commitment and passion for music; and

Whereas, Leonard Byrne, born on April 24, 1953, in Renton, WA, was a self-taught musician who overcame significant health challenges to continue his service to the Spokane Symphony Orchestra and the broader musical community; and

Whereas, Leonard’s contributions extended beyond performance as a tireless advocate for the arts, including but not limited to founding the Spokane chapter of TubaChristmas and supporting the Spokane Symphony Orchestra’s Soiree series and community workshops; and

Whereas, Leonard’s impact on the Spokane Symphony Orchestra and the broader musical community is deeply felt, from his extensive collection and knowledge of low brass instruments to his advocacy and contract negotiations that benefited many musicians; therefore be it

*Resolved*, That the Regional Orchestra Players’ Association (“ROPA”) honors the legacy of Leonard Ian Byrne by recognizing his exceptional contributions to the field of music, his service to ROPA, and his dedication to the Spokane Symphony Orchestra; and be it further

*Resolved*, That ROPA expresses its deepest condolences to Leonard’s wife, Helen Eggleston Byrne, his niece, Elizabeth Grace Churchill, and his extended family, and acknowledges their immense loss; and be it further

*Resolved*, That ROPA encourages its members and the broader community to honor Leonard Byrne’s memory by continuing to uphold the values he embodied: dedication, resilience, and a deep love for the art of music-making; and be it further

*Resolved*, That a copy of this resolution be shared with Leonard Byrne’s family, the Spokane Symphony Orchestra, and Local 105 as a testament to his enduring legacy and the profound impact he made on the musical community.

**Submitted by:** The ROPA Executive Board

**Resolution No. 8**

Subject: Honoring Paul Austin for his Contributions to ROPA and ICSOM

## Paul Austin Resolution

Whereas, Paul Austin has been a dedicated member of the Grand Rapids Symphony horn section since 1999, making significant contributions to the organization and the broader orchestral community; and

Whereas, Paul Austin was an exemplary leader within the Regional Orchestra Players' Association ("ROPA"), including but not limited to serving on the Executive Board of ROPA from 2008-2011 as Member-At-Large, as Vice President, and serving as Conductor Evaluation Bank Administrator; and

Whereas, Under Paul Austin's leadership, the Grand Rapids Symphony successfully joined ICSOM in 2013, marking a significant milestone for the orchestra and enhancing its prominence among the top orchestras in the United States; and

Whereas, Paul also made significant contributions to the International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians ("ICSOM"), demonstrating remarkable commitment and service in various capacities, including Delegate, Member-at-Large, Vice President, and President; and

Whereas, Paul Austin has served with distinction as ICSOM President from 2017-2024, contributing to the advancement and support of orchestral musicians across the nation, and has been instrumental in advocating for musicians' rights and improving their working conditions; and

Whereas, Paul has also served the American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada ("AFM") with dedication, serving on the ICSOM Media Committee and as an AFM Strike Fund Trustee, reflecting his commitment to the advancement and welfare of musicians; and

Whereas, As a part of the ICSOM Media Committee, Paul Austin assisted in several negotiation sessions for the Integrated Media Agreement ("IMA"), which led to important protections for musicians during the pandemic and beyond; and

Whereas, Paul Austin will soon step down from his role as ICSOM President; and

Whereas, The end of Paul Austin's term marks the conclusion of a distinguished era of service and leadership that has greatly benefited the orchestral community and inspired colleagues and aspiring musicians alike; therefore be it

*Resolved*, That the Regional Orchestra Players' Association ("ROPA") extends its deepest appreciation and gratitude to Paul Austin for his exceptional contributions and unwavering commitment to the advancement of the orchestral profession and the welfare of its musicians; and be it further

*Resolved*, That ROPA acknowledges and celebrates Paul Austin's leadership, both within ROPA and the International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians ("ICSOM"), his dedication to his craft, and his significant impact on the Grand Rapids Symphony and the broader musical community; and be it further

*Resolved*, That ROPA acknowledges his enduring legacy of excellence in performance, education, and advocacy.

**Submitted by:** The ROPA Executive Board

**Resolution No. 9**

Subject: Encouraging Participation in the Regional Orchestra Players' Association Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Workgroup and Recognizing its Progress ROPA EDI Workgroup Resolution

Whereas, The Regional Orchestra Players' Association ("ROPA") established the ROPA Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion ("EDI") Workgroup ("the Workgroup") in 2020, formally recognizing it by resolution in 2021, to address essential issues related to EDI among member orchestras; and

Whereas, The Workgroup, under the founding leadership of Casey Bozell, made substantial progress in developing a mission statement and making recommendations on best practices for audition protocols and policies, and the Workgroup extends its gratitude to Casey Bozell for her exemplary leadership; and

Whereas, Since the beginning of 2022, Alana Wiesing has served as the leader of the Workgroup, bringing extensive experience and a deep commitment to the role through her staunch commitment to advocacy efforts; and

Whereas, Under Alana Wiesing's leadership, the Workgroup has refined its mission statement: "The ROPA EDI Workgroup provides resources and promotes awareness, education, and activism for furthering racial and cultural equity, diversity, and inclusion in order to recognize and counteract implicit bias and achieve measurable change and representation in ROPA orchestras"; and

Whereas, The Workgroup provides valuable feedback to the ROPA Executive Board, including contributions toward a resolution for the Black Orchestral Network ("BON") and updates to the conductor evaluation surveys, resulting in significant improvements in policies and procedures that implement EDI principles; and

Whereas, The Workgroup is diligently working on developing and compiling resources for unconscious bias training, audition and tenure review guidelines, fellowships, contract language, an EDI data chart, and an EDI advocacy survey that can be referenced, utilized, and/or negotiated into collective bargaining agreements ("CBAs"); and

Whereas, A major objective of the Workgroup is to involve at least one musician from every ROPA orchestra to ensure broad participation and impact; therefore be it

*Resolved*, That the Regional Orchestra Players' Association ("ROPA") commends the ROPA Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion ("EDI") Workgroup ("the Workgroup") for its dedicated efforts, progress, and contributions to advancing EDI within its ranks; and be it further

*Resolved*, That ROPA encourages all member orchestras to actively support and engage with the Workgroup, promoting awareness of its initiatives and assisting in the collection of essential information to foster fairness and equity in the orchestral industry; and be it further

*Resolved*, That ROPA urges musicians interested in advancing EDI efforts to contact Workgroup leader Alana Wiesing at alana.drums@gmail.com to join the Workgroup and contribute to its activities; and be it further

*Resolved*, That ROPA emphasizes the importance of involving at least one musician from every ROPA orchestra in the Workgroup to enhance its effectiveness and reach; and be it further  
*Resolved*, That ROPA reaffirms its commitment to fostering a diverse and inclusive environment within its member orchestras and supporting the ongoing work of the Workgroup; and be it further

*Resolved*, That ROPA will continue to provide support and resources for the Workgroup, and ROPA encourages all members to participate in this critical work for the betterment of the regional orchestra community.

**Submitted by:** The ROPA Executive Board

**Resolution No. 10**

Subject: Recognition and Support of the American Federation of Musicians Change the Culture Committee and their Proposed Measures Change the Culture Committee Resolution

Whereas, The Regional Orchestra Players' Association ("ROPA") recognizes the urgent need to address the systemic and ongoing issues related to discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, and sexual assault within the music industry; and

Whereas, The Change the Culture Committee, spearheaded by Karen Suarez Flint, Secretary-Treasurer of the Chicago Federation of Musicians, Local 10-208

**Resolution No. 10 (continued)**

("CFM") of the American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada ("AFM"), has outlined a series of important measures aimed at establishing meaningful policies, reporting structures, and preventative education to combat these issues; and

Whereas, The proposed measures include the adoption of a comprehensive Code of Conduct by the AFM, the development of accessible reporting mechanisms, the formation of a dedicated working group, and the creation of informational resources to support and protect all members, particularly musicians lacking protections from a collective bargaining agreement ("CBA"); and

Whereas, The Change the Culture Committee's proposals are aligned with best practices already implemented by other major unions and organizations within the entertainment industry, which have taken proactive steps to ensure safe and respectful workplaces; and

Whereas, These measures will not only help to prevent and address instances of discrimination and harassment but also provide essential support for affected individuals, fostering a safer and more equitable environment for all members; herefore be it

*Resolved*, That the Regional Orchestra Players' Association ("ROPA") hereby endorses and supports the Change the Culture Committee's six proposed measures; and be it further

*Resolved*, That ROPA applauds the American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada ("AFM") for adopting these measures and encourages the AFM to promptly implement them, including the establishment of a Code of Conduct, the development of a robust reporting system, the formation of a working group focused on discrimination and harassment, and the creation of educational materials and resources; and be it further

*Resolved*, That ROPA commits to collaborating with the Change the Culture Committee and the AFM in promoting these initiatives, providing feedback, and ensuring that these policies are effectively communicated to and accessible by all members; and be it further

*Resolved*, That ROPA will support and advocate for the dissemination of informational resources and educational materials designed to help members understand their rights and responsibilities in the workplace and access available reporting processes and support mechanisms; and be it further

*Resolved*, That ROPA expresses its gratitude to the Change the Culture Committee for their leadership and dedication to creating a safer and more inclusive environment within the performing arts industry, and reaffirms its commitment to advancing these critical efforts.

**Submitted by:** The ROPA Executive Board

**Resolution No. 11**

Subject: Support and Encouragement for Utilization of the Music Performance Trust Fund

MPTF Resolution

Whereas, The Music Performance Trust Fund ("MPTF") was established in 1948 as a nonprofit public service organization with the mission to enhance public knowledge and appreciation of music, and to ensure that music becomes an integral part of every child's life experience; and

Whereas, MPTF, which operates under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, evolved from a landmark collective bargaining agreement ("CBA") between the American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada ("AFM") and major recording companies, and has since become a crucial entity in delivering live, admission-free musical programs; and

Whereas, Funded by royalties from signatory record labels—including Sony Music Entertainment, Universal Music Group, and Warner Music Group—MPTF supports thousands of free musical events annually, enriching the lives of millions across diverse audiences and locations, from schools and parks to veterans' hospitals and shopping malls; and

Whereas, MPTF's programs span a broad spectrum of musical genres and venues, emphasizing the delivery of quality live music while ensuring that these performances are not used for fundraising, commercial promotion, or any partisan, religious, or closed membership activities; and

Whereas, MPTF provides vital support to musicians by supplementing their income and ensuring that the joy of live music is accessible to all, at no cost to patrons or audience members; therefore be it

*Resolved*, That the Regional Orchestra Players' Association ("ROPA") fully supports the ongoing efforts and mission of the Music Performance Trust Fund ("MPTF"); and be it further  
*Resolved*, That ROPA will assist its members by providing information on the application process to receive MPTF funding; and be it further

*Resolved*, That ROPA acknowledges the importance of MPTF's support in promoting music education, enhancing community engagement, and providing professional opportunities for musicians, and commits to advocating for the Fund's continued relevance and success; and be it further

*Resolved*, That ROPA will promote awareness and encourage participation in programs sponsored or co-sponsored by MPTF.

**Submitted by:** The ROPA Executive Board

**Resolution No. 12**

Subject: Support for Continued Funding of the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities NEA and NEH Resolution

Whereas, The National Endowment for the Arts ("NEA") and the National Endowment for the Humanities ("NEH") are crucial federal agencies dedicated to promoting and funding the arts and humanities across the United States, supporting a broad range of programs that benefit artists, educators, cultural institutions, and the public at large; and

Whereas, Recent legislative developments have seen significant bipartisan support for these agencies, as evidenced by the defeat of proposed amendments aimed at making deeper cuts to their budgets, and the passage of the Interior bill with a recommendation of \$203,895,000 for the NEA and NEH; and

Whereas, The Senate Appropriations Committee has recommended \$209 million each for the NEA and NEH, reflecting a slight increase from current funding levels and demonstrating a commitment to sustaining and enhancing support for these vital programs; and

Whereas, Advocacy and communication with legislators are crucial during this period of budgetary review, especially as the Senate prepares to consider its own Interior bill and adjourns for an extended recess starting August 3, 2024; and

Whereas, Protecting and increasing funding for the NEA and NEH is essential to ensuring continued support for arts and humanities programs, including regional orchestras, which are integral to cultural development, education, and community engagement; therefore be it

*Resolved*, That the Regional Orchestra Players' Association ("ROPA") expresses its strong support for the continued and robust funding of the National Endowment for the Arts ("NEA") and the National Endowment for the Humanities ("NEH"); and be it further

*Resolved*, That ROPA urges all members, affiliated orchestras, and local unions to actively engage in advocacy efforts to support the NEA and NEH, including participating in e-campaigns, contacting Senators, and attending meetings with officials during the August recess to emphasize the importance of these agencies to our communities and livelihoods; and be it further

*Resolved*, That ROPA expresses its gratitude towards Alfonso Pollard, Legislative-Political Director and Director of Diversity for the American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada ("AFM"), for his tireless work in support of all musicians through his lobbying efforts on behalf of this legislation; and be it further



**Resolution No. 12 (continued)**

*Resolved*, That ROPA acknowledges and thanks the bipartisan efforts of Interior Subcommittee Chair Mike Simpson and Ranking Member Chellie Pingree for their support of the NEA and NEH, and commends the collective efforts to defeat damaging funding cuts; and be it further

*Resolved*, That ROPA remains committed to defending the rights and interests of professional musicians and cultural workers, and will continue to advocate for policies that support fair compensation, job security, and the advancement of the arts and humanities; and be it further

*Resolved*, That ROPA will encourage widespread participation in advocacy activities and reinforce the value of the arts in enriching our communities and supporting our members.

**Submitted by:** The ROPA Executive Board

**Resolution No. 13**

Subject: Recognizing the Accomplishments and Advocacy of the Administration of President Joe Biden for Unions and the Labor Movement

President Joe Biden Resolution

Whereas, The Regional Orchestra Players' Association ("ROPA") is committed to the advancement and well-being of musicians and the broader labor movement; and

Whereas, President Joe Biden's administration has demonstrated a strong commitment to supporting unions and advancing workers' rights through various policy initiatives and legislative actions; and

Whereas, The administration has worked to strengthen labor protections, including efforts to improve working conditions, increase wages, and uphold the rights of workers to organize and bargain collectively; and

Whereas, The passage of the American Rescue Plan Act during the Biden administration provided critical relief to workers and families affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, including enhanced unemployment benefits, direct financial aid, and support for essential workers; and

Whereas, President Biden has voiced strong support for the Protecting the Right to Organize Act, aimed at enhancing workers' rights to organize, join unions, and engage in collective bargaining, thereby strengthening labor protections across the country; and

Whereas, President Biden has issued executive orders to promote fair wages, safe working conditions, and increased support for federal contractors who uphold high labor standards, including efforts to raise the federal minimum wage and expand access to paid leave; and

Whereas, President Biden has voiced strong support for the Protecting the Right to Organize Act, aimed at enhancing workers' rights to organize, join unions, and engage in collective bargaining, thereby strengthening labor protections across the country; and

Whereas, President Biden has issued executive orders to promote fair wages, safe working conditions, and increased support for federal contractors who uphold high labor standards, including efforts to raise the federal minimum wage and expand access to paid leave; and

Whereas, The administration's focus on infrastructure investments, such as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, has created numerous job opportunities and bolstered labor standards within the construction and public works sectors, benefiting workers and their unions; and

Whereas, The administration has increased enforcement of labor laws and protections, addressing issues such as wage theft, unsafe working conditions, workplace harassment, and misclassification of workers; and

Whereas, President Biden's administration has fostered dialogue between labor and management, supporting initiatives that encourage cooperative approaches to workplace issues and dispute resolution; therefore be it

*Resolved*, That the Regional Orchestra Players' Association ("ROPA") recognizes and commends the administration of President Joe Biden for its significant efforts to support unions and the labor movement, contributing to the advancement of workers' rights and protections; and be it further

*Resolved*, That ROPA expresses its gratitude for the administration's commitment to improving working conditions, increasing wages, and supporting the fundamental right of workers to organize and bargain collectively; and be it further

*Resolved*, That ROPA encourages continued advocacy and support for labor-friendly policies and initiatives, and calls upon all members and allies to remain engaged in efforts that promote and protect the rights and interests of workers across the nation.

**Submitted by:** The ROPA Executive Board

**Resolution No. 14**

Subject: Resolution in Support of Pro-Labor Candidates in Elections

Pro-Labor Resolution

Whereas, Since January 2021, Joe Biden has been President of the United States of America; and

Whereas, Joe Biden's term as President has led to some of the most pro-labor policy-making and legislative actions this country has ever seen; and Whereas, The pro-labor policies put in place by the Biden administration have directly benefited members of the Regional Orchestra Players' Association ("ROPA"); and

Whereas, In November 2024, the United States of America will hold a Presidential Election; and Whereas, The Republican Party has put forth its nominee for President, a candidate whose record is staunchly anti-union and anti-worker, including but not limited to appointing a management-friendly Labor Board which reversed long-standing pro-worker policies; and

Whereas, The Democratic Party will select its nominee in August 2024; and

Whereas, The Democratic Party's political values, policies, platforms, and plans for the future of the country remain aligned with and supportive of the labor movement in the United States broadly and unions specifically; and

Whereas, It is crucial to the future success of ROPA orchestras, the American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada ("AFM"), and every other labor union in this country that pro-labor, Democratic ideals prevail; and

Whereas, The American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations ("AFL-CIO") and the AFM have endorsed the Democratic frontrunner, who was a part of the pro-labor Biden administration; and

Whereas, All people, particularly working families, throughout the country will be deeply and profoundly affected by the results of the 2024 Presidential Election; therefore be it

*Resolved*, That the Regional Orchestra Players' Association ("ROPA") stands in solidarity with the Democratic Party and the labor movement as they prepare for the upcoming Presidential Election; and be it further

*Resolved*, That ROPA strongly encourages all of its member musicians to vote in support of the Democratic Party's pro-labor platform in all elections, especially in the Presidential Election in November 2024.

**Submitted by:** The ROPA Executive Board

# The Leading Tone

## Volume 38, Issue 3

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- To subscribe to the ROPA Internet Mailing List, visit <http://groups.google.com/group/ropa-discussion>.
- The list is open to musicians in ROPA member orchestras, and AFM Local officers

**EDI Update** *Alana Wiesing, Delegate-At-Large to the AFM Convention, Tucson Symphony Orchestra*



ROPA's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Workgroup continues to meet. Membership has grown by several people since our conference in San Francisco. We recently completed a draft of audition procedure recommendations that we are ready to present to the Executive Board and we are currently working on tenure process recommendations as well. In the most recent issue of the *International Musician*, Symphonic Services Director Rochelle Skolnick wrote about a new document, "Model Standards and Procedures for Probationary Period," which is now available in the SSD Resource Center on the AFM website. ROPA is wholly supportive of the orchestral industry's efforts to examine the tenure procedures in our member orchestras, and in fact, our EDI work group has already been working collaboratively for months on a set of recommendations and guidelines regarding this issue. We encourage members who are considering revising their tenure procedures in their next collective bargaining agreement

to review the Model Standards document to see if there is anything that may be helpful to your orchestra. Note that the Model Standards document was developed independently of ROPA or any of the Player Conferences or their members. As Rochelle says in her article, the Model Standards are not intended as a one-size fits all model, and each orchestra should draft language that works for them to address the issues and circumstances facing its members. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact any member of the ROPA Executive Board.

### What are the Values of ROPA?

**Unity**

**Fairness**

**Democracy in workplace**

**Education**

**Shared Sacrifice**

**We are one with all labor**

**What impacts one, impacts all**

**Collective action to find solutions**

**Identify problems-Identify Successes**

**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.

Pictured Below: Musicians from the Southwest Florida Symphony were interviewed by local news and wore matching shirts in solidarity!



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 Judy Naillon at [ropanewslettereditor@gmail.com](mailto:ropanewslettereditor@gmail.com)

*The Leading Tone* is the official voice of ROPA and reflects ROPA policy. However, we do appreciate and encourage the contributions 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, it's officers or members.

Did you attend the ROPA 2024 conference last summer? Tag conference photos you upload to social media with [#ROPAConference2024](https://twitter.com/ROPAConference2024) and send your best shots to [ropanewslettereditor@gmail.com](mailto:ropanewslettereditor@gmail.com)

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**Steve Wade**  
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*ROPA PRESIDENT*



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**Karen Sandene**  
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**Richard Basehore**  
Annapolis Symphony Orchestra  
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# Meet Your ROPA 2024 Members- At -Large



**Beverly Setzer**  
Symphony Tacoma  
*MAL*



**Marjorie Goldberg**  
Delegate, Harrisburg Symphony  
*MAL*



**Richard Kelly**  
Portland Symphony  
*MAL*



**Brooke Beazley**  
Delegate, Opera Philadelphia  
*MAL*



**Lisa Davis**  
Delegate, Mississippi Symphony  
*MAL, Conductor Evaluation Bank Administrator*



**Sheridan Currie**  
Delegate, Dayton Philharmonic  
*MAL*



**Bandon LePage**  
Delegate, Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra  
Flint Symphony Orchestra  
*MAL*



**Ann Rule**  
Delegate, Colorado Springs  
Philharmonic Orchestra  
*MAL*



**Alana Wiesing**  
Delegate-At-Large to the AFM Convention,  
Tucson Symphony Orchestra



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2024 ROPA Conferences attendees waiting for transportation (above)

Laurence Hoffman, AFM, on Wage Chart Revision (below)





## NEW TO ROPA?



Mark the conference dates in your calendar as soon as they become available.

**2025 Conference Dates:**

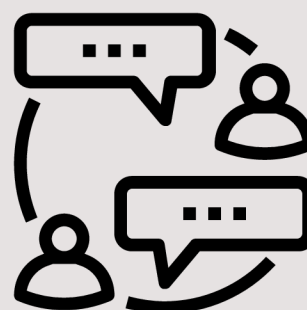
**July 29-31, 2025. Negotiating workshop the day before, 7/28 in Philadelphia, PA**

**Purchase tickets for travel sooner than later to help save your local \$.**

## DELEGATES:

**Don't forget to share this newsletter with your orchestra members.**

**Thank You!**



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## DELEGATES:

**Make sure you can log into ropaweb.org and share this valuable resource with your members!**

## ROPA Member Orchestras

### Full Members

Annapolis 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  
 Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra  
 Knoxville Symphony Orchestra  
 Lansing Symphony Orchestra  
 Las Vegas Philharmonic  
 Lexington Philharmonic  
 Long Beach Symphony Orchestra  
 Los Angeles Opera Orchestra  
 Madison Symphony Orchestra  
 Marin Symphony  
 Memphis Symphony Orchestra  
 Minnesota Opera Orchestra  
 Mississippi Symphony 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  
 Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra  
 Palm Beach Opera Orchestra  
 Pasadena Symphony Orchestra  
 Philadelphia Ballet Orchestra  
 Pittsburgh Opera Orchestra  
 Portland Opera Orchestra  
 Portland Symphony Orchestra  
 Reading Symphony Orchestra  
 Rhode Island Philharmonic  
 Richmond Symphony  
 Sacramento Philharmonic & Opera  
 Santa Barbara Symphony  
 Santa Rosa Symphony  
 Sarasota Orchestra  
 South Bend Symphony  
 Southwest Florida Symphony Orchestra  
 Spokane Symphony Orchestra  
 Springfield 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

Capital Philharmonic of New Jersey  
 Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra  
 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



A conference of the American Federation of Musicians, AFL-CIO

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