

Minutes **2025 ROPA Conference** **Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**

Tuesday, July 29 – Thursday, July 31, 2025

Full Members

Akron Symphony Orchestra
Albany Symphony
Allentown Symphony
Annapolis Symphony
Ann Arbor Symphony
Arizona Opera Orchestra
Atlanta Ballet Orchestra
Atlanta Opera Orchestra
Austin Symphony Orchestra
Binghamton Philharmonic
Boise Philharmonic
Boston Ballet Orchestra
Boulder Philharmonic
California Symphony
Canton Symphony
Cape Symphony
Chattanooga Symphony
Chicago Sinfonietta
Colorado Springs Philharmonic Orchestra
Dallas Opera Orchestra
Dayton Philharmonic
Delaware Symphony Orchestra
East Texas Symphony Orchestra
Elgin Symphony Orchestra
Erie Philharmonic Orchestra
Fort Wayne Philharmonic
Fresno Philharmonic Orchestra
Harrisburg Symphony Orchestra
Hartford Symphony Orchestra
Houston Ballet Orchestra
Houston Grand Opera Orchestra
Huntsville Symphony
Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra
Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra
Knoxville Symphony Orchestra
Lansing Symphony
Las Vegas Philharmonic
Lexington Philharmonic
Lincoln Symphony Orchestra
Long Beach Symphony Orchestra
Madison Symphony Orchestra
Memphis Symphony
Minnesota Opera Orchestra
Mississippi Symphony Orchestra
Monterey Symphony

New Haven Symphony Orchestra
Oakland Symphony
Omaha Symphony Orchestra
Opera Philadelphia
Orchestra Iowa
Orlando Philharmonic
Palm Beach Opera Orchestra
Philadelphia Ballet Orchestra
Portland Symphony
Reading Symphony Orchestra
Rhode Island Philharmonic
Richmond Symphony
Santa Barbara Symphony
Santa Rosa Symphony
Sarasota Orchestra
South Bend Symphony
Spokane Symphony Orchestra
Symphony San Jose
Symphony Tacoma
Toledo Symphony Orchestra
Tucson Symphony Orchestra
West Virginia Symphony
Wichita Symphony Orchestra
Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra

Associate Members

Capital Philharmonic of New Jersey
Central City Opera
Eastern Connecticut Symphony
Flint Symphony Orchestra
Lancaster Symphony
Milwaukee Ballet Orchestra
Southwest Michigan Symphony Orchestra

Member Orchestras Not Represented

Ballet West
Detroit Opera Orchestra
Duluth/Superior Symphony
Eugene Symphony
Glimmerglass Festival Orchestra
Los Angeles Opera Orchestra
Marin Symphony
New Mexico Philharmonic
Opera San Jose
Oregon Ballet Theatre (continued on p. 2)
Pasadena Symphony
Pittsburgh Ballet Orchestra
Pittsburgh Opera Orchestra

Portland Opera Orchestra
Sacramento Symphony and Opera Orchestra
Springfield Symphony
Tri-Cities Opera Orchestra
Tulsa Opera Orchestra

Tuesday, July 29, 2025

Opening Proceedings

The opening proceedings were held in the Wyeth Ballroom of the Sonesta Rittenhouse Square Hotel, Philadelphia, PA. ROPA President Steve Wade (Hartford Symphony) welcomed the delegates and guests, and called the Conference to order at 9:30 a.m., Tuesday, July 29, 2025.

Roll Call: Karen Sandene, ROPA Secretary

Secretary Karen Sandene (Omaha and Lincoln Symphonies) performed the Roll Call, and it was determined that there was a quorum. **Seventy-seven (77)** orchestras were represented at the Conference: **seventy (70)** Full Members and **seven (7)** Associate Members. Sandene also recognized ROPA's newest orchestra: the Lancaster Symphony, represented by delegate Erica Milbourne.

AFM Local 77 Welcome: Ellen Trainer, President, AFM Local 77

Ellen Trainer, President of Local 77, celebrated Philadelphia's legacy of activism, unionism, and music, calling it a city "where protest isn't just tolerated, it's part of the DNA." She noted Local 77's historic role in the AFM and the city's reputation as home to jazz legends and world-class classical musicians. Trainer praised freelance musicians – "the backbone of live music" – for their resilience during the pandemic, while questioning whether their contributions have been fully recognized. As the AFM's largest players conference - with over 6,000 members - Trainer stressed that ROPA can drive real change only if its musicians organize, speak out, and take on leadership roles. Citing John Lewis's "good trouble," she urged delegates to confront injustice, fight for better conditions, and shape their profession's future through solidarity, integrity, and collective action.

Conference Announcements: Amanda Swain, ROPA Vice President

Vice President Amanda Swain (Houston Ballet and Grand Opera Orchestras) continued opening remarks by presenting ROPA's anti-discrimination/harassment policy that was adopted at the 2022 Orange County Conference. She then explained how attendees could receive scheduling updates by text and then gave instructions for how to sign up.

President Report: Steve Wade, ROPA President

President Wade opened his remarks by thanking Local 77 – represented by President Ellen Trainer, Vice President Marjorie Goldberg, and Secretary/Treasurer Jarred Antonacci – along with the host orchestras, the Philadelphia Ballet Orchestra and Opera Philadelphia, and ROPA Board Member at Large Brooke Beazley. He also acknowledged Nathan Kahn, one of ROPA's founders.

Wade reflected on the past year's activities, including representing ROPA at the TMA and ICSOM conferences. He expressed honor in representing ROPA at the International Orchestra Conference in Malmö, Sweden, organized by FIM (Fédération Internationale des Musiciens), where discussions focused on working conditions, funding challenges, equity, and climate change. He shared stories highlighting

musicians' cultural connections and advocacy worldwide. Wade noted that while many European countries allocate substantial public funding to support artists and cultural projects, there is growing concern that such government funding could lead to political influence over artistic expression—a trend emerging in the United States.

Wade conveyed his growing enthusiasm for building positive connections and clear communication with Locals across the country. He remarked that the more Local officers he encounters, the more he appreciates their dedication and hard work. Wade outlined the logistical challenges involved in organizing ROPA conferences, down to specifics like coffee costs, explaining that saving on such expenses helps reduce the financial burden on Locals for reimbursements.

To boost ROPA and the Union's visibility among younger musicians, Wade took part in several panels representing the AFM at events hosted by Sphinx, New World, and the AFL-CIO Joint Council in Philadelphia. Observing the young musicians' hesitation toward organizing, he encouraged them by saying, "Courage is a thing you can practice." Wade shared his involvement in labor rallies this season, including the "No Kings" rally at the Hartford State Capitol, which drew approximately 7,000 attendees. He highlighted two Calls to Action this spring related to the Eastern Music Festival and the Southwest Florida Symphony Orchestra, expressing gratitude to everyone who supported these musicians. Wade also contributed articles to *The Leading Tone* and *The International Musician*. Additionally, he promoted the ROPA EDI Workgroup, noting that it welcomes any ROPA orchestra member and aims to include at least one representative from each orchestra. Wade concluded his remarks with a call for unity, positivity, and community engagement, emphasizing the role of orchestras as powerful forces that inspire and energize.

Keynote Address: Jordan Konell, Associate, Willig, Williams & Davidson

Jordan Konell, a union-side labor attorney with Willig, Williams & Davidson, welcomed attendees to Philadelphia and reflected on the state of music unionism and the broader labor movement. He highlighted two influential Philadelphia institutions—the Philadelphia Eagles and AFM Local 77—praising Local 77's leadership, bargaining strength, and organizing efforts as trailblazing in a proud union city. While acknowledging the importance of labor law, he emphasized that real power comes from solidarity, political action, and public presence.

Konell noted musicians' unique cohesion but urged them not to become insular, reminding them that their issues connect to the broader labor and arts ecosystem. He cited the recent example of Philadelphia Museum of Art workers, who organized, struck, and won a strong contract, raising standards across arts institutions. He drew a parallel to musicians, stressing the need to resist a "race to the bottom" in wages and benefits and affirming that those who bring music to communities should earn family-sustaining wages and protections. Konell also drew parallels with Philadelphia longshoremen, noting shared challenges: automation threatening jobs (canned music) and pressure to perform multiple roles without fair compensation (doubling). Konell recalled moments of mutual support between longshoremen and musicians at rallies and on picket lines.

Konell emphasized the importance of engaging beyond immediate labor circles. Using the example of the Philly Pops' collapse and rebirth, he showed how musicians can gain strength by building relationships with elected officials, community leaders, and power brokers, who are more likely to advocate when they know musicians personally. He closed by reiterating that labor law is inconsistent and cannot always be relied upon; real power comes from collective organizing and solidarity, concluding: "the fact of the matter is that we only get what we are organized to take."

Presentation of the Nathan Kahn Award

President Wade presented the Nathan Kahn Award to the musicians of the Philly Pops Orchestra. Executive Director Matthew Koveal represented the musicians of the newly-formed orchestra and he expressed appreciation on behalf of those musicians for the honor. He described the foundation of the new non-profit union orchestra and the steps they have taken to foster open communication amongst all parties and the efforts to maintain a positive atmosphere in the organization.

"Mobilizing the Membership": Robert Bruno, School of Labor and Employment Relations, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

Bruno's presentation centered around the importance of engaging and mobilizing union members to ensure that key issues are effectively addressed. He explained that union activities and strike activity have played a vital role in increasing union membership and raising public awareness of labor issues. The discussion also highlighted the many benefits of union membership, including improved wages and benefits, protections against discrimination, and greater access to healthcare and workplace protections. Bruno noted that public approval of unions is currently at a historic high, particularly among younger generations. He discussed concerns about growing income inequality, with corporate profits continuing to rise while employee compensation has not kept pace. Bruno shared that nearly half of non-union workers would choose to join a union if given the opportunity. He described the approximately 20 percent "union wage premium," that workers typically can enjoy when they become union members. Discussion focused on how this wage advantage helps attract and retain members while strengthening workers' economic security. Bruno concluded the presentation by reaffirming the important role labor unions play in promoting economic justice, strengthening democracy, and ensuring that workers have a meaningful voice in the workplace and in society.

Member-at-Large Groups

Delegates met in closed session with their Member-at-Large groups to discuss the conditions in their orchestras and to share ideas.

Wednesday, July 30, 2025

Electronic Media: Debbie Newmark, AFM Director of Symphonic Electronic Media

Newmark differentiated between those orchestras who are working with employers signed onto the previous version of the IMA and those that are working with the most recent version. She also named orchestras that are part of the EMA and those choosing not to join the employers group, and how negotiations work differently between those groups. She also spoke of the upcoming bargaining of the successor IMA agreement this fall. Newmark also wanted to bring to the delegates' attention the availability of the SSD Resource Center on the AFM website for useful documents, such as both versions of the IMA (labeled EMA/IMA and the Individual Employer/IMA), and also forms that need to be filled out throughout the recording process.

Treasurer Report: Rick Basehore, ROPA Treasurer

Basehore used his segment to go over financial statements showing the current fiscal health of ROPA's accounts. He also prepared the delegates for a vote on the 2025-26 proposed budget by discussing the possibility of raising dues and by how much. There was discussion amongst the attendees about whether a dues increase could be done gradually rather than all at one time. It was decided that further discussion

was warranted before Resolution 1 - dealing with the raising of ROPA dues - could be voted on, which would be necessary before a proposed 2025-26 budget could be presented and voted on.

"Connections That Count": Ben Waxman, Representative, District 182 of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives; Evan Kassof, Organizer, Philadelphia AFL-CIO; Marjorie Goldberg, Vice President, AFM Local 77; Carmella Green, Labor & Community Liaison for Philadelphia Councilmember & Majority Whip Isaiah Thomas

The panel showcased how sustained partnerships between unions, legislators, community organizers, and cultural workers can lead to tangible results – such as improved working conditions, new performance opportunities, and stronger legislative advocacy. Although the panelists worked in diverse fields and encountered different types of challenges, they all agreed on the importance of making connections and staying engaged across labor sectors; this mutual support benefits both labor and the arts. Each panel member talked about their day-to-day schedules, challenges that they faced, and what kind of help they shared with each other to successfully navigate through their challenges.

Evan Kassoff emphasized the importance of *showing up for each other* and being physically present in solidarity with workers and organizers. Some key points brought up by each of the speakers drawing from their own experiences:

- Successful collaboration requires communication, building long-term relationships, and aligning diverse groups around shared goals.
- Combining political support, community engagement, and union involvement can produce impactful outcomes.
- Large-scale collective action, such as a May Day march, demonstrates the power of unity and organized labor in the city.
- Creative events that appeal broadly help connect legislative work with public participation.

AFM International Secretary-Treasurer Address: Ken Shirk

Shirk began his remarks by explaining his attendance at the ROPA conference on behalf of AFM President Gagliardi, who was representing the AFM at the IATSE International Convention in Honolulu. He described how forging strong ties with other large unions will help the AFM with future legislative battles. Shirk noted how the AFM has been going it alone in some of their fights and have been getting left behind in areas such as AI, intellectual property, etc., and working together with other unions provides more clout in these times.

Shirk then celebrated the success of achieving a fully staffed Organizing Department, led by Gabe Kristal. The department is implementing a strategic plan to strengthen organizing efforts, particularly within the freelance and independent music sectors where union density is lower. These efforts have already resulted in the first-time recognition of musicians at the Vista Philharmonic. Shirk also noted the hiring of Ben Kessler, formerly of the National Endowment for the Arts, as the union's congressional liaison and intellectual property attorney to advocate on Capitol Hill for issues affecting musicians, including artificial intelligence legislation, copyright protections, and work visa policies.

The speaker emphasized that the union's responsibilities extend beyond negotiating wages and benefits. Addressing criticism that the union has become too politically partisan, Shirk argued that advocating for government integrity, fairness, justice, and the protection of workers is not a partisan issue but a fundamental responsibility. He called on attendees to become actively engaged in the upcoming midterm

elections, describing them as critical to the future of organized labor, the arts, and democratic institutions. Drawing upon Lakota teachings, Shirk described the qualities of a truly great nation as one that feeds its people, provides shelter and healthcare, values diversity, protects the environment, shares prosperity, offers honest education, applies laws fairly, celebrates art and culture, and pursues peace. The address concluded by reminding attendees that musicians understand the value of working together toward common goals.

AFM Legislative and Political Report: Ben Kessler, AFM Director of Government Affairs

Kessler discussed recent bipartisan efforts in Congress to protect creators' rights against unauthorized AI use. The TRAIN Act would give rights holders subpoena power to check if their work is used in AI development. The CLEAR Act, would require AI developers to register with the Copyright Office, helping musicians and creators enforce their rights. Kessler described efforts by lawmakers to hold those who misuse others' copyrighted content accountable, and he encouraged attendees to stay informed about developments. Kessler briefly covered federal funding for the National Endowment for the Arts. Despite past proposed cuts, Congress has so far maintained or only slightly reduced funding, and he remains hopeful for continued support.

Kessler emphasized the importance of preserving cultural institutions like the Kennedy Center and the National Endowment for the Arts, urging people to continue supporting them by attending events rather than boycotting, especially since boycotts should be worker-driven. He covered progress being made on the American Music Fairness Act, streaming rights, airline instrument handling, tax policies, and protecting cross-border work opportunities for Canadian musicians. Kessler encouraged union members to utilize the AFM's Action Network to stay informed and involved in advocacy efforts. Additionally, Kessler took a question about the Performing Arts Tax Parity Act, explaining that while there was a strong coalition pushing to update outdated tax deduction limits for individual performers, it wasn't included in recent legislation focused more on corporate benefits. He remained hopeful for future opportunities, particularly through reconciliation in Congress.

Players Conference Report: Keith Carrick, Chair, International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians (ICSOM)

Carrick opened by expressing solidarity and admiration for musicians who continue to organize and advocate despite difficult conditions. He highlighted a busy year for ICSOM, including labor-management meetings on royalties, streaming, and AI concerns, as well as supporting orchestras facing tough contract negotiations like San Francisco Symphony and Opera. He spoke of attending the FIM Conference in Malmo, noting common global issues like workplace harassment, pay equity, and work-life balance. He emphasized that ICSOM and ROPA are ahead of European counterparts in certain areas due to strong organizing cultures.

Carrick discussed ICSOM's recent efforts, including wildfire relief for affected musicians, supporting EMF faculty musicians in contract fights, aiding the Puerto Rico Symphony with local oversight challenges, and continuing partnerships such as with RAINN for education and training. The Union also held sexual harassment training and focused on improving communication and handling difficult conversations. He acknowledged difficult realities—musicians facing toxic workplace cultures, burnout, inequity, and pressures to accept unfavorable conditions—but stressed that change requires refusing to accept the unacceptable and fighting entrenched power structures.

Looking ahead to ICSOM's upcoming conference, Carrick called for building relationships and imagining a union that is courageous, compassionate, inclusive, and values musicians beyond their stage roles. He

challenged listeners to expand their solidarity beyond immediate circles to a “radical solidarity” that supports all who struggle for a better life and world. He closed by thanking attendees for their leadership and quoting the late Representative John Lewis, urging everyone to use their time to leave the world better than they found it.

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

Bob Fraser, giving his report via Zoom, highlighted upcoming OCSM events, including the 50th anniversary celebrations of the OCSM, with a joint conference in Toronto with the Canadian AFM Locals. The conference will cover topics such as workplace culture, human rights, hearing health related to acoustics, inclusive programming, and combating workplace harassment through initiatives like the Safe Orchestras program. Fraser reflected on a generally positive year for Canadian orchestras, noting successful bargaining and increasing audience attendance, including record numbers for his own orchestra. However, he raised concern over potentially contentious negotiations with the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, encouraging support for them as they prepare for possible strike action.

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

Marc Sazer highlighted the importance of solidarity and collaboration across unions. He praised President Tino Gagliardi's outreach to IATSE's leadership, emphasizing how such cross-union relationships benefit all members, especially freelancers whose careers rely heavily on strong networks. He discussed the strategic campaign for film and TV tax credits, which requires coordinated efforts across multiple states. Organizing efforts in the union now rely heavily on thorough research, and Sazer was excited about the work that the AFM has begun prioritizing in internal organizing research. He spoke of the importance of rank-and-file involvement in all aspects of organizing, bargaining, contract administration, etc., because the more the musicians are involved, the stronger the Union is. Sazer also shared a powerful recent experience in Los Angeles, where over 1,400 people attended a mass nonviolent direct action training organized by labor groups, clergy, and community organizations to respond to ICE raids. He viewed this as a model of union solidarity and community empowerment in the face of political challenges.

Players Conference Report: Heather Boehm, President, Theatre Musicians Association (TMA)

Boehm thanked volunteers who serve as orchestra reps. She noted that the TMA is celebrating its 30th anniversary. She outlined the current Broadway agreement, which is an 18-month term with a 4.5% raise, aligned with Actors Equity contracts. She warned that producers are pushing to eliminate minimum guarantees and urged vigilance, especially around “immersive experiences” and shows reopening in smaller venues. Boehm highlighted a major industry shift: many shows are now originating at regional theaters or on tour rather than on Broadway. This decentralization affects contracts and local agreements, with shows starting outside traditional 802 jurisdiction.

Boehm emphasized the importance of protecting music preparation work and the risks of losing union security clauses for orchestrators and copyists. She also warned about the misuse of “B roll” footage and the necessity to ensure proper contract language for media usage. She addressed issues arising from recent Actors Equity contract language that counts musicians as actors in certain situations, which threatens pit orchestra size and jobs. Additionally, she raised concerns about technology like KeyComp being introduced without adequate union protections. Boehm mentioned ongoing collaboration with

other unions like IATSE to address challenges like click tracks and electronic replacements. She also described difficulties involving “travelers” – musicians who tour independently – who remain disconnected from union representation, posing challenges for collective bargaining. Finally, she invited attendees to reach out with questions and promoted the upcoming TMA conference, to be held in Cleveland in August.

"Detection, Intervention and Deflection: The Union Member's Role in Addressing Employee Conflict and Creating Safe and Inclusive Workplaces": Naomi Bensdorf Frisch, ROPA Legal Counsel; Karen Suarez Flint, Secretary-Treasurer, Chicago Federation of Musicians, Local 10-208

Suarez Flint's and Bensdorf Frisch's presentation on handling workplace conflict covered both musicians' and Locals' responsibilities. Suarez Flint discussed her experiences with the implementation of the #Not Me app within the Chicago Federation of Musicians and how its use has spread, explaining how it allows anonymous reporting of workplace concerns. The app has led to earlier interventions and increased member satisfaction. Bensdorf Frisch also reviewed federal and state laws that protect workers from discrimination.

The presentation also examined the role of just cause and the union's duty of fair representation when addressing workplace bullying. Suarez Flint and Bensdorf Frisch emphasized the importance of including clear policies in collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) and employee handbooks to ensure fair investigations and disciplinary procedures. They stressed that the duty of fair representation requires unions to represent all members equally and fairly throughout the process.

ROPA Delegate Business Meeting

ROPA EDI Workgroup: Alana Wiesing

Wiesing stated that the Workgroup's top priority has been developing its mission statement. It has been providing feedback to the Black Orchestral Network and for the Conductor Evaluation Surveys. She shared that the new Audition Guidelines have been finalized, approved by the ROPA EB, and placed on the ROPA website. The Workgroup is invested in the progress of the tenure review document crafted by Rochelle Skolnick and that the ROPA board has been examining, and is working on crafting their own to best suit ROPA orchestras. Wiesing reiterated that the Workgroup has the goal of having one member from every orchestra in their group.

Leading Tone Editor: Judy Naillon

Naillon encouraged the attendees to submit articles to be included in *The Leading Tone* to ropanewslettereditor@gmail.com.

ROPA Conductor Evaluation Bank: Lisa Davis, Conductor Evaluation Bank Administrator

Davis provided the attendees some historical perspective on the Conductor Evaluation Bank, from the time it was first created and administered on paper to current times when it is done electronically. Since it has been administered electronically (commencing on September 28, 2019) 311 surveys have been conducted, with 4829 musicians taking part in evaluations, and 44 orchestras requesting evaluations.

ROPA Vice President Report – Amanda Swain

Swain detailed the duties she fulfilled this past year and described goals for recruiting new member orchestras. She asked delegates to consider possibilities for other orchestras to bring into ROPA. She reminded delegates to prepare their conference reports for their orchestra members. She reminded attendees that the exit survey would be online, and she encouraged everyone to consider making a donation to TEMPO.

ROPA Secretary Report: Karen Sandene, ROPA Secretary

Sandene used her presentation to discuss the differences between the two ROPA discussions lists: the ROPA Delegate Discussion list and the ROPA General Discussion list.

Approval of 2024 Conference Minutes

Secretary Sandene led the delegates through an examination of the 2024 Conference minutes prior to delegate approval. The Motion to approve the minutes was made by Judy Naillon (Wichita Symphony), seconded by John Gruber (Akron Symphony), and approved by the delegates.

ROPA Board Nominations

Nominations were taken for the office of Vice President. Laura Longman, Toledo Symphony, nominated Amanda Swain, Houston Ballet and Houston Grand Opera Orchestras. The Conference then elected Swain by acclamation.

Nominations were taken for the office of Secretary. Leslie Lashinsky, Santa Barbara Symphony, nominated Karen Sandene, Omaha and Lincoln Symphony Orchestras. The Conference then elected Sandene by acclamation.

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

- Brooke Beazley, Opera Philadelphia, nominated by Steve Heitlinger, Allentown Symphony
- Steve Heitlinger, Allentown Symphony, nominated by Valerie Trollinger, Reading Symphony
- Beverly Setzer, Symphony Tacoma, nominated by Emily Hauer, Lansing Symphony
- Laura Winters, Palm Beach Opera Orchestra, nominated by Jessica Findley Yang, Minnesota Opera Orchestra

As the number of nominations equaled the number of open positions, the Members-at-Large nominees were elected by acclamation.

Resolutions

The following Resolutions were approved by the ROPA Conference July 30-31, 2025:

Resolution N°. 1***July 31, 2025***

Subject: *Increasing Full-Member and Associate-Member Dues for ROPA Orchestras*

ROPA Dues Increase Resolution

Whereas, The current Regional Orchestra Players' Association ("ROPA") dues are \$700 for Full Member Orchestras per fiscal year and \$220 for Associate Member Orchestras per fiscal year; and

Whereas, The last ROPA dues increase of \$20 to both Full and Associate memberships, effective beginning with the 2019-20 season, was the only dues increase since the 2005-06 season; and

Whereas, Costs, especially those related to travel, have increased significantly over the last twenty years; and

Whereas, Without any dues increases, ROPA's Treasurer projects a deficit of approximately 4.3% of total revenues in the next and foreseeable fiscal years; therefore be it

Resolved, That Article III, Section 5(f) of the Regional Orchestra Players' Association ("ROPA") Bylaws be amended as follows: *The dues for Associate members shall be ~~\$220 per year~~, payable in accordance with the regulations set forth in Article ~~VIII~~ X of the ROPA Bylaws.*; and be it further

Resolved, That Article X, Section 3 of the ROPA Bylaws be amended as follows:

Dues

(a) Regular Payments: Dues for a Full Member Orchestra shall be ~~\$700~~ \$825 annually. Dues for an Associate Member Orchestra shall be ~~\$220~~ \$260 annually.

(b) Hardship Clause: Annual dues for Full Member and Associate Member Orchestras may increase from \$700 and \$220 respectively to the aforementioned amounts over the course of three fiscal years, upon application to and approval by the Executive Board. Applications for hardship accommodations are due by November 15, 2025. Upon approval, Full Member Orchestras would pay \$745 in fiscal year 2026, \$785 in fiscal year 2027, and \$825 in fiscal year 2028. Upon approval, Associate Member Orchestras would pay \$235 in fiscal year 2026, \$250 in fiscal year 2027, and \$260 in fiscal year 2028.

Submitted by: Rick Baschore (ROPA Treasurer) and the ROPA Executive Board

Resolution N°. 2

July 30, 2025

Subject: *Support of the National Labor Relations Board and its Independent Authority*

NLRB Resolution

Whereas, The National Labor Relations Board ("NLRB") is an independent federal agency established in 1935 under the National Labor Relations Act ("NLRA") to enforce and protect the rights of workers to organize, bargain collectively, and engage in concerted activities for mutual aid or protection; and

Whereas, The NLRB is essential to the functioning of labor unions, including those representing musicians, by ensuring fair elections, investigating and remedying unfair labor practices, and enforcing collective bargaining rights in the private sector; and

Whereas, In January of 2025, NLRB Member and Chair Gwynne Wilcox, the first Black woman to serve on the Board, was unlawfully removed from her position by the current President, and her unprecedented removal has been challenged in the Courts and remains unresolved, resulting in Member Wilcox's inability to serve in her role and leaving only two sitting members; and

Whereas, Under the law, the Board cannot issue rulings or enforce decisions without a quorum of at least three members; and

Whereas, This lack of a quorum undermines the rights of all workers, including Regional Orchestra Players' Association ("ROPA") members, by halting the Board's ability to issue final decisions in unfair labor practice cases, enforce good-faith bargaining obligations, and issue binding interpretations of the statutes it is tasked with interpreting and enforcing; and

Whereas, Former NLRB General Counsel Jennifer Abruzzo, who was also abruptly terminated by the current President early in his second term, worked tirelessly to increase funding and resources for the over-worked and under-staffed NLRB Regional Offices; and

Whereas, Despite General Counsel Abruzzo's hard work, the backlog in Regional Offices is large and only growing larger as a result of further cuts by the current Administration and the lack of a quorum at the Board; and

Whereas, The resulting slow processing time in Regional Offices, coupled with the absence of a functioning Board, effectively denies musicians and other workers timely remedies and legal recourse when their rights are violated; and

Whereas, The removal of Member Wilcox, as well as the abrupt termination of General Counsel Abruzzo and many of her staff, threatens the independence of the NLRB and sets a dangerous precedent that politicizes the enforcement of workers' rights; and

Whereas, Continued interference with the NLRB jeopardizes the collective power of musicians and all working people to negotiate fair contracts, address workplace abuses, and improve their working conditions; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Regional Orchestra Players' Association ("ROPA") affirms its strong support for the National Labor Relations Board ("NLRB") as an independent agency, and for its mission to protect workers' rights under the National Labor Relations Act ("NLRA"); and be it further

Resolved, That ROPA supports a restoration of full funding to the NLRB and a restoration of the Board's quorum without further delay, including the reinstatement of unlawfully removed members and the confirmation of qualified nominees committed to the fair and impartial administration of the law.

Submitted by: The ROPA Executive Board

Resolution N°. 3

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July 30, 2025

Subject: *Support of the National Endowment for the Arts*

NEA Resolution

Whereas, The National Endowment for the Arts (“NEA”), established by Congress in 1965, is the largest national funder of the arts and arts education in the United States, playing a vital role by enriching communities, supporting creativity, and expanding public access to the arts; and

Whereas, The NEA has awarded over \$5.5 billion in grants to arts organizations and artists in every congressional district, including many Regional Orchestra Players’ Association (“ROPA”) orchestras, supporting cultural programming, educational outreach, and community engagement across the country; and

Whereas, On Friday, May 2, 2025, hundreds of arts organizations nationwide, including orchestras and nonprofit arts presenters, received sudden notice of grant terminations or withdrawals from the NEA, via non-reply emails, just hours after the current Administration proposed the agency’s elimination in the fiscal-year 2026 federal budget; and

Whereas, These terminations, despite prior approvals and pending disbursements, have disrupted programming, undermined financial planning, and disproportionately harmed small- and mid-size organizations that depend on NEA funding, including ROPA member orchestras; and

Whereas, The impact of NEA grants to American communities is both cultural and economic, generating a high return on investment, creating jobs, and stimulating local economies through the support of live performance and creative industries; and

Whereas, Bipartisan support has historically protected the NEA from political interference, affirming its value as an independent agency committed to broad, inclusive access to the arts; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Regional Orchestra Players’ Association (“ROPA”) expresses its unwavering and enthusiastic support for the continuation of the National Endowment for the Arts (“NEA”) and affirms its indispensable role in sustaining the cultural vitality of the United States and the professional success of ROPA member orchestras; and be it further

Resolved, That ROPA strongly opposes the current Administration’s proposal to eliminate the NEA and condemns the abrupt and unilateral cancellation of already-approved grants as damaging to artistic freedom, economic stability, and the democratic ideals embodied in public arts funding; and be it further

Resolved, That ROPA encourages its members and supporters to engage in advocacy efforts at the local and national levels to protect federal arts funding, and stands in solidarity with affected organizations and artists whose work has been disrupted by these actions.

Submitted by: The ROPA Executive Board

Resolution N°. 4

July 30, 2025

Subject: *Support of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service*

FMCS Resolution

Whereas, The Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (“FMCS”), established in 1947 under the Labor-Management Relations Act (Taft-Hartley Act), has served as a neutral and independent federal agency essential to the resolution of labor disputes and the promotion of labor-management cooperation for nearly eight decades across the United States; and

Whereas, FMCS has historically mediated thousands of labor negotiations annually, providing more than 5,400 mediations and 10,000 arbitration panels in fiscal year 2024 alone, and, in doing so, has saved the American economy over \$500 million annually while operating with a modest budget of \$55 million, which is less than 0.0014% of the federal budget; and

Whereas, FMCS has played an indispensable role in preventing and minimizing labor disruptions that would otherwise threaten wages, working conditions, employer operations, and the free flow of commerce in both public and private sectors, including service to orchestras and other performing arts institutions; and

Whereas, On March 14, 2025, the current presidential Administration issued an Executive Order mandating the reduction of certain federal agencies, including FMCS, and, by March 26, nearly all FMCS mediators were placed on administrative leave pending termination, effectively dismantling the agency’s core functions in defiance of its Congressional mandate; and

Whereas, This Executive Order disproportionately harms professional musicians and their unions by eliminating a trusted, cost-effective, and neutral mechanism for resolving collective bargaining issues and labor disputes, forcing parties toward longer, costlier, and more contentious negotiations or strikes; and

Whereas, Legal challenges to the Administration’s Executive Order have resulted in the restoration of more of FMCS’s services, but have also led to significant uncertainty about the future of the FMCS and its ability to provide much-needed services to smaller private sector bargaining units like symphony orchestras; and

Whereas, The orchestral bargaining units represented by the Regional Orchestra Players’ Association (“ROPA”) rely on fair and timely labor negotiations to maintain artistic excellence, community engagement, and financial stability for its musicians; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Regional Orchestra Players’ Association (“ROPA”) formally expresses its unequivocal support for the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (“FMCS”) and its historic mission of promoting labor peace and fair negotiations; and be it further

Resolved, That ROPA condemns the unlawful and economically damaging actions to curtail and effectively dismantle FMCS in violation of federal statute and democratic process; and be it further

Resolved, That ROPA supports the ongoing litigation and advocacy efforts to restore full operations and funding to FMCS; and be it further

Resolved, That ROPA stands in solidarity with all working people who depend on the impartial and crucial services of FMCS.

Submitted by: The ROPA Executive Board

Resolution N°. 5

July 30, 2025

Subject: *Honoring the Life and Legacy of Charles Burrell*

Charles Burrell Resolution

Whereas, Charles Burrell, born October 4, 1920, in Toledo, Ohio, and raised in Detroit, Michigan, broke barriers and made history as the first African-American to sign a full-time contract with a major American symphony orchestra when he joined the Denver Symphony Orchestra (later the Colorado Symphony) in 1949; and

Whereas, Mr. Burrell, often referred to as “the Jackie Robinson of classical music,” not only excelled as a classical bassist but also as a gifted jazz musician, performing alongside legendary artists such as Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holiday, Duke Ellington, Charlie Parker, Nat King Cole, and Sarah Vaughan; and

Whereas, Mr. Burrell pursued his musical dreams despite the deep racial discrimination of his time, including being told he would never be hired as a Black music teacher, and nonetheless went on to perform with the San Francisco Symphony and serve on the faculty of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music as one of its first Black professors; and

Whereas, Mr. Burrell was a trailblazer who opened doors for generations of musicians of color, mentoring notable artists such as Ray Brown, George Duke, Purnell Steen, and his niece, Grammy-winning vocalist Dianne Reeves; and

Whereas, Charles Burrell contributed immeasurably to the musical fabric of Colorado and the nation through his long tenure with the Denver Symphony Orchestra, his membership in American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada (“AFM”) Local 20-623, and through his foundational role in Denver’s vibrant jazz scene, especially in the historic Five Points neighborhood; and

Whereas, Mr. Burrell's commitment to his craft remained unshaken throughout his life, performing into his 90s and being honored with tributes including the Martin Luther King Jr. Humanitarian Award, the Denver Mayor’s Award for Excellence in Arts and Culture, induction into the Colorado Music Hall of Fame, and the naming of both the Charles Burrell Visual and Performing Arts Campus and The Burrell housing complex in his honor; and

Whereas, Charles Burrell passed away on June 17, 2025, at the age of 104, leaving behind a towering legacy as a performer, mentor, pioneer, and humanitarian; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Regional Orchestra Players' Association ("ROPA") hereby honors and celebrates the extraordinary life, enduring contributions, and lasting impact of Charles Burrell on the worlds of classical and jazz music; and be it further

Resolved, That ROPA expresses its heartfelt condolences to the family, friends, colleagues, and students of Mr. Burrell, and affirms that his courage, musicianship, and advocacy for racial equity will serve as a lasting inspiration to orchestral musicians and artists everywhere.

Submitted by: The ROPA Executive Board

Resolution N°. 6

July 30, 2025

Subject: *Honoring the Life and Legacy of Alfonso M. Pollard*

Alfonso Pollard Resolution

Whereas, Alfonso M. Pollard, a lifelong champion for musicians, passed away on June 27, 2025, leaving behind a profound legacy of advocacy, artistry, and leadership; and

Whereas, Mr. Pollard was a distinguished timpanist, holding degrees from The Juilliard School and the Catholic University of America, and he served as Principal Timpanist for the Annapolis Symphony Orchestra, the Baltimore Opera Orchestra, and the Filene Center Orchestra; and

Whereas, His early service in the United States Air Force Band and Symphony Orchestra at Bolling Air Force Base catalyzed his passion for arts advocacy and introduced him to a lifetime of service in government affairs on behalf of musicians and creative professionals; and

Whereas, Mr. Pollard was appointed the National Legislative Director of the American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada ("AFM") in 1995, and he later served as National Political Director for the Communications Workers of America before returning to the AFM as its Director of Government Affairs and the Taskforce for Employment of Musicians Promotional Organization ("TEMPO"); and

Whereas, He worked tirelessly across seven presidential administrations, building lasting bipartisan relationships with Congress, federal agencies, and arts stakeholders to advance musicians' rights and protections; and

Whereas, Mr. Pollard was instrumental in securing federal reforms that directly improved the lives of working musicians, including the successful passage of the Music Modernization Act, protections for air travel with musical instruments, revisions to the Endangered Species Act to accommodate traveling musicians, and legislative victories safeguarding labor rights, copyright law, and pension security; and

Whereas, He penned over 225 articles in the *International Musician* on legislative and political issues as well as diversity, equity, and inclusion, and served as a consistent and insightful voice within the AFM community; and

Whereas, Mr. Pollard's tireless commitment was recognized with numerous honors, including the Maestro Alfonso M. Pollard Recognition Resolution from the D.C. City Council, the Speaker's Challenge Coin from Speaker Nancy Pelosi, and the 2023 AFM Lifetime Service Award; and

Whereas, Alfonso Pollard's work has made an indelible impact on the lives of musicians, and his leadership, grace, and dedication to justice and equity will be deeply missed by all who knew him; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Regional Orchestra Players' Association ("ROPA") honors the life, service, and enduring contributions of Alfonso M. Pollard; and be it further

Resolved, That ROPA extends its heartfelt condolences to Mr. Pollard's family, colleagues, and the entire American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada ("AFM") community, and expresses its gratitude for his lifelong dedication to the welfare of musicians.

Submitted by: The ROPA Executive Board

Resolution N°. 7

July 30, 2025

Subject: *Support of the Musicians of the Southwest Florida Symphony Orchestra*

Southwest Florida Symphony Orchestra Resolution

Whereas, The Southwest Florida Symphony Orchestra ("SWFSO"), founded in 1961 and based in Fort Myers, Florida, has served the region for over six decades as the only fully professional orchestra in Lee County, contributing significantly to the cultural, educational, and economic vitality of the region; and

Whereas, SWFSO has presented outstanding musical programming through its Masterworks, Pops, Chamber, and Youth initiatives, including the long-standing Youth Orchestra and Young Artists Competition, fostering musical excellence and youth development; and

Whereas, The musicians of SWFSO have consistently demonstrated professionalism, dedication, and artistic excellence, contributing to the orchestra's reputation and success through community engagement, education, and performance; and

Whereas, On April 29, 2025, the SWFSO Board of Trustees announced its intention to permanently cease operations at the close of the fiscal year on June 30, 2025, citing financial hardship, leadership turnover, and revenue decline; and

Whereas, This decision was made without prior notification to musicians or meaningful consultation with their union representatives, despite SWFSO being a unionized workplace represented by the American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada ("AFM") Local 427-721; and

Whereas, The musicians and union leadership have expressed serious concerns regarding the lack of transparency, erosion of public trust, disbandment of youth and educational programs, and apparent mismanagement by SWFSO leadership, including failure to follow prior recovery plans and ongoing instability in executive staffing; and

Whereas, The musicians have also raised concerns regarding the resignation of former Music Director Radu Paponiu, high staff turnover, the elimination of core programs including the Youth Orchestra, and bylaw changes that removed term limits for key board leadership positions; and

Whereas, The community, including audiences, donors, and arts advocates, have shown enduring enthusiasm for classical music, contradicting assertions that orchestral music lacks support, as evidenced by the success of other orchestras in Florida such as the Sarasota Orchestra, Orlando Philharmonic, Jacksonville Symphony, and Florida Orchestra; and

Whereas, ROPA recognizes that professional regional orchestras like SWFSO are critical to maintaining a region's cultural identity and deserve strong, transparent, and accountable leadership; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Regional Orchestra Players' Association ("ROPA") expresses its full, unequivocal support for the musicians of the Southwest Florida Symphony Orchestra ("SWFSO") and commends their long-standing service, resilience, and continued commitment to the community; and be it further

Resolved, That ROPA condemns the unilateral decision by the SWFSO Board of Trustees to dissolve the orchestra without collaborative input from key stakeholders, including the musicians and their union representatives, and without a clear public exploration of viable alternatives to closure; and be it further

Resolved, That ROPA urges the SWFSO Board of Trustees to reconsider closure plans and enter into good-faith discussions with musician representatives, civic leaders, donors, and other stakeholders to pursue avenues for reorganization, leadership restructuring, and financial recovery; and be it further

Resolved, That ROPA supports initiatives led by the musicians, concerned citizens, community organizations, patrons, donors, and civic leaders to sustain and reestablish a thriving professional orchestra in Southwest Florida that reflects the values, needs, and aspirations of its community.

Submitted by: The ROPA Executive Board

Resolution N°. 8

July 30, 2025

Subject: *Solidarity with the Faculty of the Eastern Music Festival*

EMF Faculty Resolution

Whereas, The Eastern Music Festival ("EMF") has, for over six decades, provided invaluable educational and performance opportunities to young musicians through the mentorship of a distinguished faculty of professional musicians; and

Whereas, The faculty of EMF are represented by the American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada (“AFM”) Local 342 and have been engaged in good faith negotiations with EMF management since January 2024 for a first collective bargaining agreement; and

Whereas, EMF’s decision to unilaterally cancel the 2025 season rather than continue to bargain with the faculty, despite decades of uninterrupted operation, even during the COVID-19 pandemic, has caused widespread concern and disruption for faculty, students, alumni, and the Greensboro community; and

Whereas, The EMF faculty have publicly expressed their willingness to continue bargaining and their unwavering commitment to the festival, its students, and the community; and

Whereas, The decision to cancel the 2025 festival, taken without agreement or adequate consultation with the faculty’s bargaining representatives, has led to the filing of an Unfair Labor Practice charge with the National Labor Relations Board; and

Whereas, The Regional Orchestra Players’ Association (“ROPA”) believes that EMF’s programs will only grow stronger if the professional musicians who comprise the bargaining unit of EMF faculty are given the opportunity to bargain fairly over their contract as the law allows and they deserve; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Regional Orchestra Players’ Association (“ROPA”) stands in full solidarity with the Eastern Music Festival (“EMF”) faculty in their efforts to secure a fair and sustainable collective bargaining agreement; and be it further

Resolved, That ROPA calls upon EMF management to restore the status quo and return to good-faith negotiations that uphold the festival’s legacy and the rights of its faculty; and be it further

Resolved, That this resolution be shared with the American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada (“AFM”) Local 342, the leadership of EMF, the National Labor Relations Board, Senators and Representatives from the state of North Carolina, and other relevant stakeholders to affirm ROPA’s support for the faculty, the integrity and importance of collective bargaining, and the continuation of high-quality music education at the festival.

Submitted by: The ROPA Executive Board

Resolution N°. 9

July 30, 2025

Subject: *Supporting the Continuation of Federal Funding for Public Broadcasting*

CPB Resolution

Whereas, The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (“CPB”), established by Congress in 1967, exists to ensure universal access to high-quality, non-commercial educational content and trusted local journalism, particularly in rural, tribal, and underserved communities; and

Whereas, The CPB does not distribute federal funds directly to national entities such as National Public Radio (“NPR”) or the Public Broadcasting Service (“PBS”), but rather allocates support to more than 1,500 locally owned and operated public radio and television stations that form an interconnected and interdependent national system; and

Whereas, These local stations provide essential services including educational programming for children, emergency alert systems, and fact-based journalism - often serving as the only reliable news source in remote areas - all at a cost of approximately \$1.60 per American household annually; and

Whereas, The United States House and Senate recently approved a \$1.1 billion rescission of CPB funding, eliminating all federal support through September 2027 - a decision that NPR has described as “an unwarranted dismantling of beloved local civic institutions” and one that CPB President Patricia Harrison warned will have “profound, lasting, negative consequences for every American”; and

Whereas, Without this funding, over 100 combined radio and television stations - many serving small and rural pockets of the country and Native American communities - are at risk of going dark, creating what experts have called a “doom loop” in which fewer stations mean reduced program purchasing power and declining donations, potentially leading to the collapse of additional stations and content producers nationwide; and

Whereas, Polling from Pew Research and a 2025 Harris Poll indicates that 66% of Americans, including majorities of both Republicans and Democrats, support federal funding for public broadcasting; and

Whereas, Rescinding CPB funding undermines the public’s access to educational content, emergency communications, and nonpartisan civic information, especially in communities with limited internet, cellular, or traditional news access such as those affected by Hurricane Helene in North Carolina, where public radio funded by CPB remained the sole news source during widespread outages; and

Whereas, The action to eliminate funding disregards the bipartisan nature of the original appropriations and has drawn criticism even from lawmakers who supported parts of the rescissions bill, with Sen. Lisa Murkowski and Rep. Don Bacon among those urging future restoration of funds to safeguard local public stations in their states; and

Whereas, Public broadcasting is a uniquely American institution that reflects local voices, fosters civic life, and offers unparalleled cultural and educational programming, and its continuation is essential for a functioning democracy; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Regional Orchestra Players’ Association (“ROPA”) affirms its full support for the continuation and restoration of federal funding for public broadcasting through the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (“CPB”); and be it further

Resolved, That ROPA condemns efforts to rescind, defund, or politicize CPB funding, as such actions threaten constitutional protections for a free and independent press and jeopardize access to critical information and services; and be it further

Resolved, That ROPA urges Congress to reject current and future rescissions of CPB funding and calls for bipartisan cooperation to uphold the CPB’s mission in service to all Americans - particularly rural, tribal, and economically vulnerable populations - and to prevent further destabilization of this public good; and be it further

Resolved, That ROPA calls upon musicians, arts organizations, educators, journalists, and civic leaders to advocate collectively for the preservation and strengthening of public broadcasting as a vital partner in supporting the arts, public education, and a free and egalitarian process.

Submitted by: The ROPA Executive Board

Resolution N°. 10

July 30, 2025

Subject: *Support of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Efforts and the ROPA EDI Workgroup*

EDI Resolution

Whereas, The Regional Orchestra Players' Association ("ROPA") affirms its longstanding belief that equity, diversity, and inclusion ("EDI") are foundational to a fair, representative, and vibrant orchestral community, and that all musicians deserve access to opportunity and advancement regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or background; and

Whereas, The ROPA EDI Workgroup was established in 2020 and formally recognized in 2021 to lead internal and external equity work by developing inclusive best practices, revising policies, supporting education, and providing guidance to address systemic inequities across member orchestras; and

Whereas, The Workgroup has been effective in collaborating with national partners, creating inclusive evaluation tools, reviewing hiring and audition practices, and shaping model contract language that reflects ROPA's collective commitment to justice and opportunity for all musicians; and

Whereas, On January 21, 2025, the current President of the United States and his Administration issued an executive order that aggressively dismantles federal equity and anti-discrimination programs, revokes Executive Order 11246 (a cornerstone of equal opportunity law since 1965), and directs all federal agencies and federal contractors to terminate EDI-related programs, policies, training, and staffing across both government operations and federally funded sectors; and

Whereas, This Administration has since instructed all federal agencies to place EDI staff on paid leave, dismantle EDI offices, cancel training and related contracts, and prepare to carry out widespread layoffs targeting EDI personnel; and

Whereas, The Administration has expanded this anti-EDI campaign to include a government-wide review of federal grants, contracts, and benefits programs with the stated intent to eliminate equity-based criteria; and

Whereas, Legal and civil rights groups, including the American Civil Liberties Union ("ACLU"), have condemned these actions as a "shock and awe" campaign designed to obfuscate and weaponize civil rights law, undermine bipartisan anti-discrimination efforts dating back to the Johnson administration, and intimidate both public and private institutions into abandoning lawful equity work; and

Whereas, Many EDI programs currently targeted by the Administration - including inclusive hiring practices, anti-bias training, recruitment from underrepresented communities, and performance evaluations tied to diversity goals - have been shown to increase profitability and long-term success of institutions that use them, and are not only lawful but necessary for compliance with federal and state civil rights laws; and

Whereas, These actions pose a chilling threat to the orchestral world, which continues to grapple with historic and ongoing underrepresentation and barriers faced by marginalized groups, making it critical that ROPA and its members continue to promote equity, transparency, and access at every level; and

Whereas, The current political environment has emboldened challenges to EDI programs across sectors including education, arts, and corporate hiring, even though no court has ruled EDI efforts inherently unlawful and many such programs remain firmly grounded in legal precedent and supported by civil society; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Regional Orchestra Players' Association ("ROPA") unequivocally reaffirms its support for equity, diversity, and inclusion ("EDI"), and for the mission, vision, and continued work of the ROPA EDI Workgroup; and be it further

Resolved, That ROPA condemns the rollback of EDI programs by the current federal administration and views such actions as a regressive departure from American civil rights tradition, antithetical to the values of fairness, merit, and equal opportunity; and be it further

Resolved, That ROPA encourages all member orchestras, American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada ("AFM") union Locals, and bargaining units to stand firm against political intimidation and continue pursuing lawful, mission-aligned EDI efforts that promote representation, inclusion, and excellence in orchestral workplaces; and be it further

Resolved, That ROPA commits to advocating for musicians whose access to opportunity is jeopardized by these federal actions, and ROPA wholeheartedly supports and actively works toward a future in which the orchestral field reflects the full diversity and talent of our society.

Submitted by: The ROPA Executive Board

Resolution N° 11

July 30, 2025

Subject: *Support of the Arts and Cultural Organizations in Florida*

Florida Arts and Culture Resolution

Whereas, The State of Florida announced a sudden elimination of all \$32 million in state funding for arts and cultural grants for fiscal year 2025, a decision that has left hundreds of arts organizations across the state scrambling to fill sudden and unexpected budget shortfalls; and

Whereas, This elimination represents the first time in recent memory that Florida would provide zero dollars in support for the arts through its standard competitive grant process, a system long used by nonprofit arts institutions including orchestras, museums, theaters, and heritage centers; and

Whereas, This funding cut has resulted in significant operational impacts, including layoffs, cancelled programming, reduction of community services, and the potential closure of organizations that provide critical cultural, educational, and economic contributions to Florida communities; and

Whereas, On or around July of 2025, the State of Florida announced that it would provide only \$18 million in arts funding for fiscal year 2026, resulting in a drastic reduction in the amount of funding available and the number of arts organizations eligible for state funding; and

Whereas, Arts and culture are essential components of a vibrant, healthy society and contribute over \$5.7 billion annually to the Florida economy, supporting more than 91,000 full-time jobs and generating nine dollars in economic activity for every dollar spent; and

Whereas, These cuts disproportionately affect underserved communities, people of color, LGBTQ+ organizations, and smaller institutions that lack access to large private donor networks, thereby exacerbating inequality and limiting access to the arts for all Floridians; and

Whereas, The arts are not just a luxury but a public good and a civic necessity that promote empathy, civic dialogue, education, economic vitality, and community identity; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Regional Orchestra Players' Association ("ROPA") strongly condemns the elimination of any state arts and culture grant funding by the Florida executive branch and expresses its unwavering support for the arts and cultural workers of Florida, including orchestras and their musicians - many of whom are ROPA members and whose work enriches communities throughout the state; and be it further

Resolved, That all ROPA member orchestras and musicians are encouraged to advocate publicly and privately for the arts, to reach out to elected officials, and to support their colleagues in Florida in any way possible, including but not limited to pursuing partnerships, shared programming, and solidarity; and be it further

Resolved, That ROPA is committed to working with national arts service organizations, labor unions, and advocacy networks to support efforts that protect and expand public investment in the arts in Florida and across the United States.

Submitted by: The ROPA Executive Board

Thursday, July 31, 2025

ROPA Resolution #1 Discussion

Resolution #1 dealing with a proposed dues increase was compared with an amended version of the resolution presented by Treasurer Basehore, based upon the discussion held with delegates following Wednesday's session. Budgetary implications were compared based upon the approval of each of the versions of the dues increases.

***"Protecting the Musician's Mind and Body" - Christine Guptill, Professeure agrégée, École de réadaptation, Université d'Ottawa
Cross appointed, School of Music, University of Ottawa; Adjunct Professor, Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine, University of Alberta; Status Professor, Faculty of Music, University of Toronto***

Christine Guptill presented an overview of musician health, drawing on her experience as a professional oboist, occupational therapist, and researcher. She explained that musicians experience exceptionally high rates of work-related physical and mental health problems, with approximately 80% reporting playing-related injuries and up to 75% experiencing mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression, and performance anxiety. Guptill also discussed her research on music students, noting that health education, injury prevention, and hearing conservation should become standard parts of music training to better prepare future professionals.

The presentation also addressed concerns about air quality and ventilation in rehearsal and performance spaces, highlighting the importance of improved filtration systems to reduce the spread of airborne illnesses. Guptill encouraged musicians to seek healthcare providers familiar with performance-related injuries, to address physical or mental health concerns early. She stressed the importance of speaking up about unsafe work environments. The discussion also covered topics such as hearing protection, stress management, occupational therapy, accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), stretching before rehearsals, and the value of bringing instruments to medical appointments so healthcare providers can better evaluate performance-related issues.

Leadership Roles: Becoming an Orchestra Committee Member or a Union Officer; and Key Legal Cases for our Union - Rochelle Skolnick, Director, AFM Symphonic Services Division

Skolnick emphasized the importance of leadership development within orchestras and unions, urging current leaders to plan for succession by recruiting and training new musicians—especially those recently hired after many retirements due to COVID-19. She noted that many new musicians hesitate to take leadership roles due to uncertainty or lack of knowledge, but she reminded the delegates that the AFM offers training resources, including negotiation workshops and modules on committee best practices, grievance handling, disability issues, etc. As a liaison to the AFM's Change the Culture committee, Skolnick helped push for a new, comprehensive Code of Conduct adopted by the International Executive Board. This Code applies broadly to member conduct, not just at AFM events, and promotes professionalism while condemning harassment and discrimination. She also discussed the launch of the "Not Me" app, which enables members to confidentially report violations of the Code of Conduct and other workplace issues. Skolnick highlighted efforts to support probationary musicians. In partnership with the Black Orchestral Network, the AFM developed model standards and procedures for probationary periods to ensure fairness and opportunities for these musicians to demonstrate their value. Skolnick also pointed out the AFM's strong presence at recent important events, including the Sphinx Connect event in Detroit, and the International Federation of Musicians (FIM) conference in Malmö, Sweden.

Regarding the shutdown of the Southwest Florida Symphony, Skolnick expressed concern that the board's decision was influenced by musicians' union activity. She countered claims that classical music is struggling, citing data showing strong growth in ticket sales, particularly among younger audiences, increased subscription revenue, and a broader base of donors. She stressed that orchestras overall are thriving, and if any institution struggles, leadership must critically examine their efforts rather than blaming the genre's popularity.

Skolnick discussed the challenging current legal climate affecting the union and the broader justice system, especially attacks on the judiciary and agencies like the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). She explained how critical an independent judiciary and functioning NLRB are for protecting workers' rights, including musicians'.

Skolnick discussed a 2017 case involving the San Antonio Symphony musicians, where the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) ruled in 2022 that the Tobin Center for the Performing Arts could not prevent musicians from leafleting on its sidewalk, even though the musicians were off duty and the symphony only leased (did not own) the performance space. This decision affirms that workers can leaflet on employer property, even if the employer leases the facility, a ruling with broader implications for workers in subcontracted or leased workplaces.

She then highlights the importance of the NLRB in supporting musicians' rights to organize and bargain collectively. For example, the Lancaster Symphony case established that orchestra musicians are employees (not independent contractors), thus protected by labor laws – this precedent is often used to counter employer claims denying union rights. Skolnick also explains how orchestra librarians have successfully used NLRB processes to join bargaining units and gain workplace protections.

Skolnick emphasizes the powerful role of music in resisting authoritarianism by fostering shared humanity. To succeed, unions must continue organizing, educating, bargaining, and fighting boldly for fair pay, safe workplaces, and dignity for all members.

Orchestra Spotlights: Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra, Southwest Florida Symphony Orchestra, Eastern Music Festival Orchestra, Milwaukee Ballet Orchestra

Representatives of these orchestras gave reports on the status of their orchestras. In the case of the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra, Brandon LePage shared several successes with its 5-year recording project highlighting music by BIPOC composers. He also shared discussions the musicians and management have had over how the word "talented" is used, and how to craft anti-harassment/anti-sexual harassment language into their contract.

Kathleen Beard of the Southwest Florida Symphony Orchestra gave a first-hand account of the shuttering of the orchestra this past season. She shared that after the final concert of the 2025 season the Board of Trustees informed the musicians that the orchestra was shutting down, and that the public was notified that all operations were to cease on June 30, 2025; bankruptcy was not declared and the endowment had between two and a half to \$3 million in funds. Beard discussed the institutional failures which for years led up to that point, and the messaging the musicians engaged in to let the public know what was going on behind the scenes. She did also share that there were steps being taken to create a new union orchestra in the area. She concluded by advocating for all musicians to advocate for themselves, have a strong CBA, and learn the skills to communicate with management.

Eastern Music Festival. They started by thanking everyone for the photos and testimonials in support and solidarity with their cause. They described how their program works, with both teaching and performing being part of their mission. They discussed the concerns they had after the pandemic when fifteen of their colleagues were let go, and remaining faculty's workloads were increased. Their concerns led to a desire to unionize, and the vote occurred in 2023. The presentation then told the sequence of events of the subsequent unsuccessful negotiations which commenced in 2024. The main sticking point continued to be the reduction in staff. At that point the Board of Management canceled the festival in part, believed the speakers, because they feared the musicians were going to call a strike. They concluded their portion of their talk by highlighting several of their previous and upcoming rallies and concerts.

While a representative from the Milwaukee Ballet Orchestra was unable to attend in person, they provided a written summary of their struggle to retain live music for the annual productions of The Nutcracker.

ROPA Resolution #1 Approval

The amended version of Amendment 1 covering a ROPA dues increase was briefly discussed with the attendees, and was approved unanimously by the delegates.

Equity Arc: Magee Capsouto, Associate Director, Equity Arc

Magee Capsouto, the Associate Director of Equity Arc, discussed the organization's mission of promoting diversity, equity, inclusion and excellence in classical music as core values, aiming to build a representative future by creating a level playing field. Since its founding in 2018, Equity Arc has supported young musicians from underrepresented backgrounds by securing partnerships, scholarships, performance opportunities and mentorships. Despite setbacks, such as the withdrawal of federal funding, Capsouto shared that Equity Arc's efforts have led to significant achievements by BIPOC students. She shared that Equity Arc made news recently by salvaging a cancelled performance that would have put young musicians and the US Marine Band on the same stage together; without access to federal funding, another concert was held jointly with those music students and retired military personnel.

2026 Conference Site Selection

The ROPA Delegates selected Dallas, TX to be the site of the 2026 Conference.

Audit Report

The Audit Committee consisted of Valerie Trollinger, Reading Symphony (chair); Debbie Spangler, Oakland Symphony and Symphony San Jose; and Matt Barwegen, South Bend Symphony. Speaking on behalf of the committee, Chair Trollinger certified that the financials were accurate, to the best of their knowledge.

Approval of Budget

Treasurer Basehore went through the 2025-2026 budget with the delegates. The Motion to approve the budget was made by Steve Heitlinger, Allentown Symphony, seconded by John Gruber, Akron Symphony, and was approved by the delegates.

TEMPO Drive

After several pitches to the attendees to contribute to TEMPO, the total amount collected by the conclusion of the conference was \$2026.

Oath of Office

Ellen Trainer, President of AFM Local 77, administered the oath of office to the newly-elected ROPA Board.

Adjourned

ROPA President Steve Wade adjourned the 2025 ROPA Conference at 3:00 p.m. on Thursday, July 31 2025.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Karen Sandene". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Karen" and last name "Sandene" clearly distinguishable.

Karen Sandene, ROPA Secretary