

ROPA Electronic Media Committee
2026 ROPA Conference Report – Dallas, Texas

The 2023-2026 Integrated Media Agreement (IMA) with the Symphony, Opera and Ballet Employers Electronic Media Association (EMA) continues to be the primary AFM media agreement in which ROPA orchestras have been doing recording work. On Nov. 17-18, 2025, representatives of the AFM and EMA met at AFM offices in NYC to begin negotiations on a successor agreement.

Leadership changes had occurred in both the AFM and EMA. The AFM is now led by President Tino Gagliardi, and the EMA President is Jeff Alexander, President of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra Association. The negotiating teams from both the AFM and EMA were made up of members who have been at these negotiations before, and new members. In addition, several Local officers, AFM staff, and AFM Executive Board were also in attendance. Legal representation for the EMA was again led by Bill Zukerman, with legal representation for the AFM by Rochelle Skolnick, Legal and Symphonic Services Division, Assistant to the President.

Jeff Alexander began the meeting by reading an opening statement. The conclusion made in his opening statement was that electronic media is no longer an income-producing product, yet it is essential to put our orchestras in front of our audiences and communities.

In the following 2 days, much of the conversation was held in small group meetings, with the two groups spending much of their time in caucus with their own members.

There have been meetings since the November first meeting. Those meetings have been in a small group in person at the AFM New York office, with ROPA and ICSOM media committee representatives on Zoom call for consultation and discussion.

There have been no meetings this summer, with many orchestras having concluded their seasons, and the 103rd AFM Convention being held in June. There has been progress made, but there are still several outstanding issues yet to be resolved. At this point, it looks like negotiations will continue this coming fall.

Here are some facts about the IMA and EMA:

- There are currently 48 ROPA member orchestras who participate in the EMA, and an additional 3 ROPA associate member orchestras.
- There are currently 16 ROPA member orchestras who have non-EMA IMAs (Individual orchestra agreements) with the AFM, and an additional 4 ROPA associate member orchestra.
- There are several ROPA orchestras who have signed on to a previous IMA, but who have not signed onto the current IMA.
 - 9 ROPA orchestras are signatory to the 2019-2022 IMA.
 - 2 ROPA orchestras are signatory to the 2015-17 IMA.

- These orchestras continue to work under the rules and rates of these older agreements
- The EMA currently has 127 member orchestras, and an 11-member Board of Directors.
 - Their membership requires a membership fee, which is based on a sliding scale depending on budget size, similar to the League of American Orchestras.

The ROPA Electronic Media Committee continues to encourage delegates whose orchestras are doing IMA projects to encourage good bookkeeping by the managements, orchestra committees, and Locals. It's hard to go back to create documentation; please be timely in making reports; and don't throw away important files and paperwork. It's much more difficult to "re-create" documentation. B Forms need to be submitted, with the proper forms going to the Local, AFM and AFM Pension. Also, when projects are approved by the OC and management, the expiration dates should be noted by both parties and put on calendars, so all are aware of the date that projects expire.

We look forward to our work on a successor IMA with our ICSOM Media Committee colleagues, Symphonic Services Director and Special Counsel Rochelle Skolnick, Director of Symphonic Media Debbie Newmark, AFM President Tino Gagliardi, and other AFM staff and support in the upcoming negotiations!

We are stronger together!

Respectfully Submitted,
The ROPA Electronic Media Committee:

Naomi Bensdorf Frisch, Illinois Philharmonic
Marjorie Goldberg, Harrisburg Symphony Orchestra
Mike Smith, Chair, Minnesota Opera Orchestra
Steve Wade, Hartford Symphony, ROPA President (ex officio)