



UNA VOCE

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From the Editor

That time of year...negotiations

If your contract expires at the end of this season (or even the end of the next season) you're probably already thinking about negotiations (I know some of you are thinking about negotiations *all the time!*).

In this issue we provide some helpful tools for the preliminary stages of negotiation. Barb Hankins (2nd V-P, OCSM) and Eline Brock Sanheim (SSD Assistant) have prepared an article on the duties and responsibilities of the negotiating committee. This article grew out of a presentation given at this summer's ROPA conference.

Mark Tetreault, the SSD Director for AFM Canada, has provided some material for the preliminary stages of negotiations, namely, how to do a financial analysis of your orchestra and how to do an orchestra mandate survey questionnaire. This material is also available from SSD through the AFM website (www.afm.org), along with a host of other useful tools. The whole SSD package (including all AFM orchestra CBA's) is also published each year on a CD-ROM, which is available by contacting the AFM Canadian Office (1-800-463-6333).

One of the principal reasons the AFM and OCSM exist is so you don't have to work in isolation. If you're facing a problem in negotiations, chances are every other orchestra in Canada has faced the same problem. The more information we can share amongst OCSM orchestras, the better.

Crisis averted in K-W

No sooner had I received a settlement bulletin from Kitchener-Waterloo's OCSM delegate, Katherine Robertson, when I read a press release of the orchestra's imminent demise if \$2.5 million could not be raised in one month. We see this sort of thing too often in this country. Thankfully, the crisis has been averted, but at great cost to the musicians, who took a 15% cut in their salaries (although their management has promised to repay this).

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From the President

It is difficult to believe that, in the relatively short time since the last issue of Una Voce was being prepared, we heard about a "surprise" deficit of \$1.2 million which threatened the very existence of the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony, and we witnessed a blitz campaign that raised \$2.6 million and saved that same orchestra – at least for the time being. Let us all fervently hope that this never happens again, in Kitchener or in any of the other OCSM orchestras. Let us also hope that the musicians of the KWS are given proper credit for the financial sacrifice they made by taking an immediate 15% cut in their salaries.

As I mentioned in the article about the OCSM conference that was published in the October issue of the International Musician, and as you may have heard from your OCSM delegate, we had an enlightening and entertaining presentation at last summer's OCSM conference about the AFM-EPW (Canada) fund. We were encouraged by this report from the administrators of the fund, in which all twenty OCSM orchestras participate. The fund, which is separate from the one in the US, is quite healthy, and we were treated to graphic demonstrations of how pension contributions invested in the fund can grow over the years, compared to contributions going to RRSP's. Ellen Versteeg-Lytwn and Humbert Martins recently visited my Local (180 in Ottawa) to give a similar presentation at our Local General Meeting and then again the next day at an orchestra meeting.

This pension is the only one available to most of the OCSM musicians. Some of us are lucky enough to have been able to put some money into RRSP's over the years, but it behooves all of us to find out as much as possible about the fund and about our own payouts upon retirement. You may have noticed in this fall's first issue of Una Voce that OCSM has asked the Trustees of the fund to investigate the possibility of indexing the payouts. In the past, there have been ad hoc increases to the payout rate, but these do not occur at specific times; they come when the fund is healthy enough to bear an increase. I have been told that the issue will be discussed by the full Fund board next spring, when the next actuarial analysis is done.

Continued next page...

President's Report cont'd...

We can take pride in the fact that all of our orchestras participate in the fund, with contribution rates ranging from 5-10%. The average rate is 7.5%. With our ongoing discussion within OCSM about what would constitute an ideal retirement clause, we should keep the EPW fund in mind. Now that the maximum contribution rate has been raised to a high of 12%, we should keep that figure as a goal during our CBA negotiations. It would also be A Good Thing if all of our subs and extras were to enjoy the same contribution rate as our full-time players. Fourteen of our orchestras have achieved this (all figures are from the 2004-2005 Wage Chart).

That's the upside of playing in an orchestra in Canada - the fact that we do enjoy access to a healthy pension fund, although there is improvement possible for most of our orchestras.

As of this writing, the CBC negotiations have not been concluded. There have been three separate weeks of negotiations, with some major issues still to be discussed. Dates have not yet been set for the next (and final?) round.

Preparations are under way for the AFM Convention, to be held next June in Las Vegas. If you would like to see improvements in any of the AFM bylaws, please contact the OCSM executive as soon as possible, since the deadline for us to submit proposed changes is March 1st. We have also begun preparing for next summer's OCSM conference, which will be held in Quebec City from August 8th to 12th. If there are topics of discussion which would bring any of you to the conference, do let us know about those as well.

It is not customary for OCSM board members to talk about their own orchestras, but I would like to make an exception for this issue. Many of you are aware that the musicians and staff of the National Arts Centre Orchestra have been working through a facilitation process to try to improve internal communications. We all spent a most fruitful day discussing our personal and collective vision for the future of the orchestra - what we would like things to look like in five or six years. As part of that meeting, we heard some inspirational words from the CEO of the NAC, Peter Herrndorf. Peter talked about the need for all of the orchestras in Canada to support the others. This is what OCSM is all about, but it doesn't hurt for it to be pointed out from time to time.

Francine Schutzman, President

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Editor – Robert Fraser

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Windsor Symphony Orchestra	Greg Sheldon
Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra	Arlene Dahl

...Crisis (from p. 1)

This situation outlines more than ever the need for an orchestral "safety net" in our country – in the absence of adequate, stable, indexed core funding from government, our orchestras need to build private endowment funds. I would put to you that a national endowment fund for Canadian orchestras is an idea whose time may have come.

In the meantime, life goes on... in this issue you'll find some useful nuts-and-bolts for negotiations.

New hirings in your orchestra? The IM would like to hear from you...

The International Musician would like to publish the names of successful candidates for orchestra openings on an ongoing basis. They would like to list both audition winners and appointees. It would be greatly appreciated if you would coordinate among yourselves and arrange to have a list sent to IM on a periodic basis, maybe spring and fall or as they occur.

Please include the names and positions and forward to afollett@afm.org for publication.

Check out www.polyphonic.org

This is a new website that will be of interest to all OCSM members. Its mission is: "To enhance the professional development and broaden the perspectives of musicians who are participants in North American symphony orchestras and other musical arts organizations."

Polyphonic.org contains articles, streamed video interviews, the archives of "Harmony" (the former journal of the Symphony Orchestra Institute), panel discussions, blogs, orchestra "spotlights", and much more.

This past month featured Canadian orchestras. But why read about it here when you can see for yourself? Go online and have a look.

While you're on the Web...

I would encourage you all to go to ocsm-omosc.org and join the OCSM members e-mail list. This is an e-mail list (hosted at Yahoo Groups) for OCSM musicians, other Player Conference musicians, and AFM officials. Discuss orchestral-related issues with your colleagues, read news articles from various sources (including updates from Orchestras Canada and the Canadian Conference of the Arts) and keep up with the orchestral scene in this vast country. It's spam- and virus-free, it costs nothing and it won't clog your Inbox with promises it can't keep!

OCSM Membership Directory out soon

Following close on the heels of this issue of Una Voce will be the new OCSM Membership Directory. If you would like one, please notify your OCSM delegate. If your personal entry in the directory is incorrect, please contact OCSM Secretary Bob Fraser directly (aslanshowe@telus.net).

Negotiating Committee Responsibilities

By **Barbara Hankins, 2nd Vice-President, OCSM**
& **Eline Brock Sanheim,**
AFM-SSD Associate, Canadian Office, AFM

It's a thankless job - we all know that, yet it's one that can affect the lives of our colleagues and the future of the orchestras in which we play. There is no job more important or dreaded than that of Negotiating Committee member. Because this is such an important job, it is equally important to give serious thought to who among your colleagues would be best suited for the job, since they will be speaking for you and your colleagues at the bargaining table. It's important that NC members

negotiate for the interests of the whole group and not just to satisfy their personal agendas.

We have to choose our NC members carefully, support them in every possible way, and thank them vociferously. Having said that, the NC has a number of responsibilities to its colleagues to which it must conscientiously adhere.

This subject was discussed at the ROPA conference this past August. Janice Galassi, AFM Director of Education and Organization, moderated a panel consisting of AFM negotiators and musicians. The panel was convened because of recent problems in the field which need to be addressed. Here are some of the issues that were discussed. We've also included suggestions from SSD staff.

1. Make-up of the Committee

"No one serves on a Negotiating Committee except for fear of who might do it," (Nathan Kahn). The committee should be comprised of both new and experienced members. There is a need for continuity and an understanding of the history of the contract.

"Kvetchers" are good candidates for committee membership. Complainers should put their energies into fixing the problems.

2. Scheduling and attendance

NC members need to be committed to the job. Some Players' Association bylaws stipulate that business cannot be conducted without a requisite number of people (known as "quorum").

The NC is a Union committee (as well as an orchestra committee) and the Local must be informed of and involved at all meetings. If there are problems with the Local, players should contact the SSD office for assistance.

3. Surveys and research

Surveys are needed to give the NC an idea of the important issues. SSD has model surveys available. The committee must also identify issues that the orchestra may not be aware of, such as problems with the grievance procedure.

Lots of leg-work must be done before meeting at the bargaining table. Research includes comparing issues with those of other orchestras, looking for useful contract language in other CBA's, and obtaining internal information from the management such as financial and vision statements.

It's important to have the whole orchestra behind the committee—solidarity is key. The committee should ask, "Is the rank and file sufficiently well organized, involved and willing to work toward achieving the common goals sought in the negotiations?" (Nathan Kahn).

4. Communication

The orchestra must know what issues are on the table and must be kept involved, so that the committee and the players are "on the same page". Hold meetings as necessary and give regular updates, including management offers. However, the committee must always keep confidential their bottom line.

The committee must keep a finger on the pulse of the orchestra and must feel comfortable that they know what their colleagues want.

5. Chief Negotiator

The Chief Negotiator acts in an advisory capacity and should provide options, but ultimately, decisions must be made by the committee as a whole.

6. Personal Agendas of Committee Members

If personal issues have a wide application, they are relevant. However, they are problematic if they get in the way of the committee representing all colleagues. This is another reason why surveys are important.

7. Committee Communication

E-mail is no substitute for face-to-face conversations and should not be over-used. Don't argue by e-mail! Also, never discuss anything strategic by email. This information is easily passed on to management. When management knows what you want, negotiations are over!

8. Internal Committee Disputes

Look at all of points of an issue, weigh the pros and cons, and aim for a consensus. As a last resort, the committee should vote.

9. Meeting Protocol

Be sure all committee members know who is speaking and when, and don't hesitate to call a caucus, if necessary.

10. Perseverance

Don't let management push you for time. There should be no hurry to settle, especially if management wants concessions". If you need the answer today, the answer is "No."

11. Press Black-out

If management demands a press black-out, be sure it is in writing, with an option to lift the black-out with 48 hours notice.

12. Justice for subs and extras

Keep in mind that these colleagues also need their issues addressed. If you show them that you are working for their best interest as well, they will be more likely to support you if and when you need them, for example, during a strike or lock-out.

Negotiating for your colleagues requires absolute commitment in order to have as good an outcome as possible. One must bear in mind that the outcome of your negotiation affects not only your orchestra, but also the future contract conditions of your colleagues across the country.

A good committee will play straight, communicate regularly, and maintain good faith throughout the negotiation process. They need creative problem solving abilities, proper preparation, the support of their colleagues... and a little bit o' luck.
