

Report from the ROPA convention:

January, 2015

Dear Palm Beach Opera Musicians,

This summer it was my pleasure to attend the Regional Orchestra Players Association conference as the representative for the Palm Beach Opera Orchestra. The conference took place in Pasadena, CA from August 1-3. During the conference I attended many interesting and valuable workshops and I had the chance to meet with many players from around the country. It was a pleasure to see our dear friend and former member, Rochelle Skolnick, and to attend her workshop, 'Cant we all just get along', which covered how to negotiate an equitable solution when players do not get along. The emphasis of Rochelle's break out included a well thought out look at the causes of workplace contention as well as strategies for resolutions that protect all individual's rights. I also met Chris Durham, a union negotiator who worked on our initial contract. I was particularly inspired by the guest speaker from the opening ceremonies, Maria Elena Durazo from the Afl-CIO in Los Angeles. Ms. Durazo is a gifted and inspiring speaker and her speech emphasized the importance of all the different unions working together and supporting each other. Her work as a union activist in the L.A. Area shows that workers can unite and support each other to improve working conditions, strengthen communities, and respect the dignity of all workers. The conference also included an appearance by U.S. Representative Judy Chu, who is working to prevent the out sourcing of jobs for film scoring and to strengthen copyright laws.

I presented an annual report for the Palm Beach Opera Orchestra and I received reports from all the other ROPA orchestras. It was interesting to see that several other companies are experiencing similar trends such as reduced services and operating with out a music director.

The importance of Social Media such as Facebook and Twitter was a significant theme of the conference. For example, last summer the Hartford Wagner festival was forced to cancel a production of "Das Rheingold" that was going to use a canned orchestra. This production was canceled after backlash from social media, not by the AFM! (See the August edition of the Musician for more.) Social media also played a significant role in saving the San Diego opera from closing.

The most important point that I took away from the convention is the we are our best advocates and that it is in our best interest to organize and represent ourselves through social media and that it is important to establish our online networks now rather than waiting for a crisis. In addition, we have the right to create and maintain accounts on Facebook and Twitter such as "Musicians of the Palm Beach Opera Orchestra". I myself am no social media whiz but I am willing to learn. I will propose at our next meeting that we work on networking through social media and I would ask that if you have an interest and experience in this area please share!

Other important topics from the convention include the "Listen Up" campaign which has been organized to stop the outsourcing of recording jobs in movies and legislation regarding rules for air travel with musical instruments.

During this production I will leave a file out that includes some pamphlets and my program from the convention. I will also leave my copy of the August 'International Musician' which has the

article about the Hartford production I have mentioned as well as articles by many of the presenters at the convention. Please feel free to look at these.

It was a great pleasure to represent the orchestra at the ROPA convention. I have learned a lot and I have gained an even deeper appreciation for our contract and for the hard work of the orchestra committee, and I am looking forward to working with you all in 2015.

Laura Winters