

***American Federation of Musicians
Symphonic Services Division
Canada***

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SSD Report

This is my first SSD Report, so let me take a moment to introduce myself. I'm Mark Tetreault and I have been working as an SSD Assistant since last December. Currently the Canadian Office is looking for an SSD Director to replace Laura Brownell, who has moved to the SSD Director job in New York. I was Secretary of the Toronto Musicians Association, Local 149 for about 6 years and have been on orchestra committees both in the Toronto Symphony and the Jacksonville Symphony. I have been warmly welcomed by the Canadian Office, which is full of busy, dedicated union folks.

Francine Schutzman asked me to write something about how things are going in the Toronto Symphony and Calgary Philharmonic orchestras, both of which recently suffered major cutbacks.

I am finishing my 19th season playing tuba in the Toronto Symphony, so it is easy enough for me to report on what is going on here. During that time we have been threatened with bankruptcy twice and were on strike for 11 weeks. As a result, I am somewhat cynical, but I'll try to put that aside for now.

On to the TSO report – We got paycheques last week and contracts for next year, so on that level things are good. The orchestra is playing very well and audiences are up, both in size and enthusiasm. There is a lot of excitement about our new Music Director, Peter Oundjian. Despite all of this, the TSO lost about \$2.2 million last year. Some of this was a one-time occurrence due to an accounting realignment. We have engaged a fund-raiser, who has big plans. I hope they work out.

There is positive news out of Calgary as well. The Philharmonic has hired a new Artistic Operations Director, Michael Wall, who is a person well-known to many Canadian musicians. Michael began his career with the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra as a French Horn player and was instrumental in the formation of the Organization of Canadian Symphony Musicians, serving as its first ever Vice-President. He was also a French Horn player and an Administrator with the Vancouver Symphony and most recently was the Orchestra Personnel Manager of the San Francisco Symphony. Ticket sales for the new season started off slowly, but have improved steadily as the season has gone on. The orchestra is currently on a music director search and is looking forward to the interest that will be generated with the appointment.

Both orchestras have come through some very rough times and are moving positively ahead. Major concessions are hard to swallow, especially when you have been keeping up your end of the bargain. There are always lessons to be learned, both good and bad. I was sad to see the St. Louis Symphony management borrow one of the tactics used against the TSO musicians. They used their endowment as leverage against the musicians in order to gain financial concessions.

Cutbacks always have a negative effect artistically. Orchestral vacancies are left unfilled for longer periods. String sections are understaffed and use an increasing number of extra musicians for larger concerts. Musicians trying to make up lost income suffer more injuries and are

more likely to come to work sick or injured. The list goes on and no one is immune. Our jobs become more challenging as we try to juggle various elements of a career and maintain our health and sanity.

These challenges make me appreciate the talent, pride and commitment of my colleagues, who make amazing music week in and week out. There is a core of musical artistry that no one can take away. It is quite a marvel.

Tax Status

My first task as SSD Assistant was to attend a meeting of the Canadian Conference for the Arts regarding tax status for artists. One area of concern is the interpretations of tax code that are given to CRA officers. There have been a number of drafts that have raised concerns of the CCA. These drafts have been withdrawn pending further submissions from the CCA. The CCA's 2004 national policy conference on Status of the Artist (SofA) issues was held in Regina, Saskatchewan on November 19 and 20. At the conference the CCA launched a campaign to solve two of the problems which professional artists and the organizations which engage their services have with Canada's tax system. The CCA campaign will work with the government to achieve certainty for professional artists and arts organizations in relation to the income tax system. The stated Objectives are:

1. Ensure that
 - All professional artists will be presumed to be self-employed for purposes of their artistic activity artists and
 - The organizations which engage them will be free to negotiate a contract of service (employer-employee relationship) if they explicitly agree
2. Have a community-agreed test of "professionalism" replace the "reasonable expectation of profit" test now in use.

The Regina Manifesto was an initial stage of a longer-term advocacy project. In February the CCA made further submissions to CRA. As a result of these meetings the CRA has agreed to hold back further Interpretive Bulletins until the CCA develops a more detailed position paper. This brings us to Phase 2. CCA has hired marketing consultants to prepare a draft position paper, which will be distributed among industry stakeholders for input. The CCA is aware that the AFM has concerns about the Phase 1 objectives, especially the second part of number 1 (if they explicitly agree). All of this means that things are as unclear as ever for orchestras.

Finally, I look forward to the opportunity to assist orchestral musicians and the locals who represent them. Please feel free to contact me. My e-mail is ssdmark@yahoo.ca.

Mark Tetreault

Symphonic Services Assistant, AFM Canada

***Symphonic Services Division
Cristina Zacharias, czach@afm.org
Mark Tetreault, ssdmark@yahoo.ca
416.391.5161 / 1.800.463.6333***