

Intermezzo

Annual Meeting, in person:
September 14h at 6pm

Summer 2026
Vol. 84, No. 3

Inside the 103rd AFM Convention

*Member Feature: Josh Jones
Coming Home*



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chicago federation of musicians

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Cover photo: Aidan Kranz

Local 10-208 of AFM CHICAGO FEDERATION OF MUSICIANS OFFICERS – DELEGATES 2023-2025

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From the President, BJ Levy

Change, Dedication, and Forward Momentum

It has been a momentous month at the CFM! First, I would like to congratulate our wonderful Secretary-Treasurer Karen Suarez Flint on her election to serve as Vice-President of the American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada. Don't worry, we still get to keep her. She will be taking on the office in addition to continuing to serve here as our Financial Officer and will participate going forward in the vital work of reshaping the AFM from the highest level.

The triennial convention is an essential element of how our Union functions, and a historic and foundational part of our Union democracy. During the period that the Convention is in session, the power and authority normally held by the International Executive Board (IEB) is transferred to the body of delegates present at the convention. During this time, changes to the bylaws and increases in fees, among other things, are discussed and determined in a manner stipulated in rules through a process of recommendations from the IEB and resolutions from rank-and-file members. There are also nominations and an election for all leadership positions at the AFM.

At this convention, there were many important topics to discuss. I arrived five days before the official start in order to serve on the Finance Committee. That committee, along with the Law Committee, are two that consider the recommendations and resolutions in a small group setting in order to facilitate efficient presentation to the convention and act as a deliberative body hearing concerns from delegates. We met as a joint committee for certain proposals, and separately for items that were specific to Finance or Law.

There was a proposal from the IEB to implement an increase in the per capita dues by \$20. This was presented in response to the previous convention where the delegates directed the AFM to enter into an organizing plan. Leadership has made efforts on that front, hired additional staff, and sought the increase in order to facilitate additional hiring and program costs. This increase in yearly membership dues would be passed on to all rank-and-file members and result in an increase of \$1.2



million in income annually to AFM. Though \$20 may not seem much on paper, to many of our members and small locals it presents a fear of loss in membership, among other very real concerns. We heard impassioned testimony from delegates for nearly three hours in joint committee on the complex elements of recommendations One and Two. The Joint Committee then took the two recommendations, combined them into one dropping most of the controversial positions, directed the AFM to engage and investment professional and adopt an Investment Policy Statement, and proposed an increase in the per capita dues of \$4 per year for the next three years for Regular Members and \$2 per year for the next three

years for Life Members. The delegates in full session adopted the new recommendation, among other transformative measures. We are supportive of President Gagliardi, and hopeful for a bright future of growth and transformative change. Our profession remains under attack from downward pressure on wages and a streaming business model that dehumanizes our recorded products.

In this environment, it was an incredible experience to support and watch Dr. Karen Suarez Flint work through her decision to run, campaign, and ultimately emerge victorious as the first woman in the AFM's 130-year history to serve as International Vice-President. The work that we are doing locally has made a difference to our colleagues across the country, and Chicago showed up to this convention as a voice of consensus, power, and reasoned principle. She, along with current leadership, four new Executive Board members, and the input and support of AFM officers and working musicians across the US and Canada, is about to set the stage. Let's all take our places, as we always do, to show the audience that artists make this world livable. We ask, in return, the dignity of a thriving wage.

Thank you for your membership, talent, support, and courage. If you have any questions about the convention or any other topic, my line is always open. I hope you enjoy this issue! ■

From the Vice President, John Floeter

We Are the Union

Last month, I had the privilege of attending the 103rd Convention of the American Federation of Musicians as a delegate from the Chicago Federation of Musicians. It's an experience that always reminds me just how large—and how connected—our profession really is.

The AFM represents more than 70,000 working musicians across North America. We don't all play the same music, work the same jobs, or agree on every issue. In fact, the convention floor is full of spirited debate. Delegates bring different perspectives, challenge one another's ideas, and sometimes disagree passionately. That's not a weakness of a union—it's one of its greatest strengths. Every voice has the opportunity to be heard, and every decision is made democratically.

One thing, however, is never in doubt: our shared commitment to improving the lives of working musicians.

That commitment begins at the local level. It's easy to think of "the union" as something separate from ourselves, but the truth is much simpler: the members are the union.

Whenever I hear someone complain that "the union should do more," I can't help but ask a few questions. Have you attended a membership meeting? Have you volunteered to serve on a negotiating committee or as a steward? Do you know who your officers and board members are? Have you ever stopped by the union hall just to see what we do?



Participation matters because our strength has never come from an office building or a set of bylaws. It comes from musicians who are willing to invest a little of their time for the benefit of everyone.

The music business has changed dramatically since the AFM was founded in 1896. We've adapted to radio, television, recordings, digital downloads, streaming, and now artificial intelligence. The challenges keep changing, but our mission hasn't. Individually, we have limited leverage. Collectively, we negotiate fair wages, establish safe working conditions, protect pension contributions, and ensure professional standards that benefit all musicians.

That's especially important today. Non-union employers often advertise pay that appears competitive, but the fine print frequently tells a different story. Pension contributions may be missing. Musicians may be classified as independent contractors, shifting additional taxes onto the worker. Workplace protections that union members take for granted simply aren't there.

The benefits we enjoy today didn't appear overnight. They were won because musicians before us chose to stand together. It's now our responsibility to preserve—and improve—them for the musicians who follow.

The next time you wonder what the union is doing, remember that the better question may be: What can we do together? That's how unions remain strong, and that's how musicians continue to move our profession forward. ■

APRIL CASH RECEIPTS

CFM JOINING FEES:	\$1,750.00
AFM JOINING FEES	520.00
MEMBERSHIP DUES	16,629.00
WORK DUES	98,106.66
CFM-EW EXP RECOVERY	5,143.00
MUSICIANS RELIEF FUND	65.00
TOTAL CASH RECEIPTS:	
	\$ 122,213.54

Respectfully Submitted,
Karen Suarez Flint
Secretary-Treasurer

MAY CASH RECEIPTS

CFM JOINING FEES:	\$1,800.00
AFM JOINING FEES	260.00
MEMBERSHIP DUES	11,495.00
WORK DUES	174,497.41
CFM-EW EXP RECOVERY	5,179.00
LYRIC STRIKE FUND	4,275.00
MUSICIANS RELIEF FUND	65.00
TOTAL CASH RECEIPTS:	
	\$ 197,535.41

Respectfully Submitted,
Karen Suarez Flint
Secretary-Treasurer

JUNE CASH RECEIPTS

CFM JOINING FEES:	\$800.00
AFM JOINING FEES	195.00
MEMBERSHIP DUES	10,543.00
WORK DUES	78,257.92
CFM-EW EXP RECOVERY	5,143.00
MUSICIANS RELIEF FUND	15.00
TOTAL CASH RECEIPTS:	
	\$ 94,953.92

Respectfully Submitted,
Karen Suarez Flint
Secretary-Treasurer

From the Secretary-Treasurer, Dr. Karen Suarez Flint

Inclusivity is Key

Happy Summer! There's been a whirlwind of activity at the CFM. On June 8, we hosted the musicians of the Chicago Sinfonietta to discuss the current situation with management, answer questions, share our communications strategy, pass out CFM T-shirts, build solidarity (and eat some pizza!). The next few months will be challenging, but we believe our union musicians have an important role to play in re-establishing the Chicago Sinfonietta in the vision of Maestro Paul Freeman and ensuring the orchestra's future for years to come.



a proud CFM member and Soulistic360 is the newest R&B label signed as a signatory with the AFM! We are planning a CFM informational event for all recording artists at Soulistic360 in October to discuss all of the benefits and AI theft protections for musicians when registering their work with the AFM. In July, the CFM also welcomed Shonny Jones, the newest Chicago indie label to sign on as a signatory with the AFM! Both Soulistic360 and Shonny Jones are labels built on high standards of treating artists with respect, care and equity. Protecting their artists from AI theft while providing pension payments on their behalf make them an example for all local and national record labels. We can't wait to celebrate these musicians and their music!

At this year's AFM Convention in Ottawa, Vice President Floeter, Director Caitlin Edwards and I were incredibly honored to stand alongside President Levy as he accepted the AFM President's Local Award on behalf of the CFM. A huge thank you to Megan Elk, our Director of Communications & Organizing, for their work creating our winning application which described in extraordinary detail our commitment to inclusivity and diversity in all that we do here at the CFM. As we approach the 125th anniversaries of both Local 10 (white musicians) in September 2026 and Local 208 (Black musicians) in July 2027, we will highlight our past, celebrate the present and dream together for our future.

In the weeks leading up to the Convention, I ran a national campaign with a forward-thinking vision for the AFM based on the belief that when ALL musicians feel seen, heard and represented, power is built and transformational progress can occur. The delegates overwhelmingly agreed and elected me, the first woman in the AFM's 130 years, to the office of Vice President of the American Federation of Musicians of the US & Canada. I am deeply honored and look forward to helping the AFM diversify, expand and unite membership, engage in empathetic leadership, change the culture, magnify the challenges musicians face, and build broader coalitions to protect live performance and recorded music.

In June, Dean Rolando, CFM Electronic Media guru, and I visited Soulistic360 Recording and Production Studio in Homewood, IL. This brand-new, world-class studio includes a large recording space with tremendous ceiling height, multiple isolation booths and an incredible mixing console, formerly owned by Paul McCartney, and acquired from Abbey Road Studios. We are thrilled to announce that the owner Arnell Newman is now

As we enter the final days of summer, my wish for you is time-time to relax and unwind, time to enjoy all of the music in this amazing city of ours, time to listen to the *America's Workforce Union Podcast* episode where I discuss the Live Nation Monopoly and Streaming Injustices, and time to get in one last summer moment, weekend, and adventure with your loved ones. ■



Karen stands in front of Sir Paul McCartney's old mixing board with with Arnell Newman of Soulistic360 Recording and Production Studio

Scan the QR code here to listen to Karen's appearance on the America's Workforce Union Podcast:



By: Megan Elk

When Josh Jones accepted the Principal Percussion position with the Kansas City Symphony, it looked like the next logical step in an extraordinary career. The Chicago native had already accomplished what many orchestral musicians spend a lifetime pursuing. A product of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra Percussion Scholarship Program, Jones had earned principal positions with the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra and the Kansas City Symphony while establishing himself as one of the country's most respected young percussionists. National recognition had followed him since his teenage years, and opportunities as a soloist, educator, and clinician continued to grow alongside his orchestral career.



Photo credit: Aidan Kranz

By every measure, Kansas City should have been the job that carried him into the next stage of his professional life. Instead, it became the most difficult chapter of his career.

Today, Jones is back in the city where that career began. As Principal Percussion of the Grant Park Music Festival Orchestra, he now leads a section that includes Douglas Waddell, one of the very teachers who introduced him to orchestral percussion through the CSO Percussion Scholarship Program.

"I never thought in a million years that I would be number one working alongside my teachers," Jones says with a palpable air of reverence.

For the members of our local, Doug and his wife Patricia Dash

(who also subs in the Grant Park section) need little introduction. Through decades of playing with Chicago's most esteemed orchestras, including the CSO and the Lyric Opera of Chicago Orchestra; along with teaching in the Scholarship Program, they have helped inspire generations of young percussionists to pursue orchestral careers. Long before Jones won major auditions across North America, he was one of the students learning fundamentals, orchestral repertoire, and professional expectations under their guidance.

Looking back, Jones credits those early years with shaping not only the musician he would become, but the way he approaches every aspect of his career.

"They're like my mom and dad professionally," he says. "My parents call them my percussion parents."

The lessons extended far beyond technique. The scholarship program emphasized preparation, consistency, professionalism, and responsibility; qualities that would become defining characteristics of Jones's career. Those qualities were tested almost immediately. Like many young musicians, Jones entered the audition circuit expecting rejection to be the norm.

"I was under the impression, based on how Doug described auditions, that I'd be lucky to get third percussion in some deep-neck orchestra somewhere," he says with a laugh. "I would've been completely happy about that."

Instead, he began winning major auditions almost right out of the gate. First came prestigious fellowships in Detroit and Pittsburgh. Then came principal positions with Calgary and, later, Kansas City. For a percussionist still early in his career, it was an extraordinary run of success. Throughout those years, though, Jones always felt Chicago calling him back home.

"Chicago is always a city that I was always hoping I would win an audition in."

That opportunity eventually arrived, but not before Jones experienced a professional setback that would become one of the most widely discussed tenure disputes in recent orchestral history.

Much has already been written about Jones's tenure process in Kansas City, most notably in *The Washington Post*. Jones has also spoken publicly about the experience, describing what he believes was a deeply flawed process marked by inconsistent evaluations, procedural concerns, and workplace experiences that left him questioning whether he still belonged in the profession.

Among the incidents reported by *The Washington Post* were Jones's concerns about an orchestra gathering held at a former plantation estate outside Kansas City. Jones immediately recognized the historical significance of the property and later learned that enslaved people had once lived and worked there. He expressed concern to the orchestra about what the Post described as the venue's "antebellum nostalgia," believing the choice reflected a lack of awareness about how such a setting might be experienced differently by Black musicians.

The newspaper also reported an incident in which Jones felt singled out by security personnel while attempting to enter the performance hall. In another instance, Jones questioned what he viewed as a conflict of interest when a musician whom he had defeated in the audition process was permitted to privately offer criticism during his tenure review.

For Jones, those incidents formed part of a larger pattern, causing his concerns to extend beyond individual interactions to the tenure process itself. During our conversation, Jones returned repeatedly to the subject of feedback; how it is delivered, how it is documented, and how it is used to help musicians grow. He speaks of his experience at Grant Park now as being a collaborative one. Musicians receive feedback, they improve, and that improvement is recognized. His experience in Kansas City, he says, felt very different.

"I feel like with Kansas City, there was no acknowledgment of improvement."

Jones points to several examples that he believes illustrate the problem. One involved a performance of *The Nutcracker*, where he recalls receiving criticism that his crash cymbals were too soft. Later, when he reviewed documentation related to his dismissal, he noticed that criticism had somehow transformed into a discussion of "entrance issues", a much escalated characterization from the initial discussion of dynamics.

Another example involved a rehearsal break during which Jones began adjusting a snare drum that he believed had developed a problem during the performance. As principal percussionist, maintaining the section's instruments fell within his responsibilities. Jones says he was publicly questioned about making the adjustment before eventually discovering that a broken lug had caused the instrument's imbalance.

For Jones, the issue was never that criticism existed. Every musician receives criticism. The issue, he says, was how those criticisms evolved over time and how they were documented.

"There has to be accountability for documents being misrepresented by management and musicians," he says. "If there was accountability for that, this wouldn't have happened."

As the tenure process unfolded, Jones became increasingly concerned about the effect it might have on a reputation he had

spent nearly two decades building.

"I've been in the public eye since I was fifteen," he says. "For something this negative to happen, I was obviously worried that it would taint my reputation."

Those concerns intensified as rumors surrounding the process spread beyond Kansas City. According to Jones, private information from his tenure review began circulating among musicians outside the orchestra, eventually reaching colleagues as far away as Cleveland and even Estonia. He says the experience left him feeling that he had little choice but to respond publicly.



Photo credit: Greg MacKay

"I kind of had no choice but to go public because they'd been so publicly trying to ruin my career."

When *The Washington Post* published its extensive investigation into Jones's case, the story quickly expanded beyond one musician and one orchestra. It became part of a broader discussion throughout the profession about equity, transparency, and due process in tenure review.

One of the article's most quotable moments came when Kansas City Symphony Executive Director Danny Beckley acknowledged shortcomings in the organization's process, describing it as "outdated, out of touch and flawed."

For Jones, however, the publication of the article brought another challenge. He suddenly found himself walking into rehearsals wondering whether everyone in the room had already formed an opinion about him.

"You kind of feel like everybody's watching you to see if you still got it."

(continued on next page)

Little by little he felt the confidence that had carried him through years of auditions begin to erode.

"I was just like, 'Yeah, I think I'm done. I can't do this anymore.'"

Then his phone rang. Chief Programming Officer Andre Dowell was calling on behalf of the Sphinx Virtuosi. One of the ensemble's percussionists had become unavailable just days before a performance, and Dowell needed someone who could learn an entire drum set concerto in less than a week. Jones remembers the conversation vividly, and still speaks with awe about receiving that call.

"He said, 'I couldn't think of anybody else who could do it.'" Jones accepted immediately.

What came next in our conversation surprised me. Jones paused for a long beat to gather himself before telling me, "I learned it in *six hours*", after which he immediately began to weep. These were not tears of exhaustion or defeat, but rather, of gratitude and the rediscovery of joy in his craft.

At a time when Jones was questioning whether he belonged in the profession at all, someone he respected never questioned it for a moment.

"Sphinx was still believing in me when I was ready to walk away.", he said while wiping away his tears.

The request itself was extraordinary. With only days before the performance, Jones had to learn an unfamiliar drum set concerto, rehearse it with the ensemble, and perform it at Carnegie Hall, of all places. It was the kind of opportunity that only comes to musicians whose colleagues have complete confidence in both their ability and their professionalism. It was a reminder that his career had never been defined by one orchestra or one tenure committee. The musicians who knew him best still recognized the same artist they had always known.



*Jones plays "Drill" by Curtis Stewart at Carnegie Hall with the Sphinx Virtuosi.
Photo courtesy of the Sphinx organization*

That experience marked the beginning of a new chapter. Not long afterward, Jones was named a recipient of the Sphinx Medal of Excellence, one of the organization's highest honors recognizing artists who demonstrate extraordinary leadership, artistic achievement, and commitment to expanding opportunities within classical music.



*Jones is a proud recipient of the 2026 Sphinx Medal of Excellence, pictured here
Photo courtesy of the Sphinx Organization*

For Jones, the award carried special significance because it came from an organization whose mission had always extended beyond performance.

"They're now big enough that when they do something, the entire industry listens," he says of Sphinx. "The biggest thing is giving musicians a platform to be seen."

That philosophy resonated deeply with Jones because visibility had become one of the defining themes of his own career. The attention surrounding Kansas City had not been something he sought, but he understood that once his experience became public, it also created an opportunity to improve the profession for musicians who would follow him. Rather than stepping away from those conversations, Jones chose to become part of them. Working alongside the Black Orchestral Network, the American Federation of Musicians, and the League of American Orchestras' Inclusive Stages Coalition, Jones has contributed enormously to ongoing discussions about tenure review, probationary processes, and workplace culture. Those conversations have helped produce model language and recommendations that are already finding their way into collective bargaining agreements and institutional policies across the country.

However, Jones is quick to point out that no policy can undo what happened to him. Speaking matter-of-factly about the end of his time at Kansas City, he shakes his head and laments that there was "No restitution. No justice" for him.

The silver lining? Jones says, "What I think is most rewarding is that orchestras are actively trying not to be them now."

What happens to the future of the craft is important to Josh, not only as a performer, but as someone who has now become a celebrated educator and method book author himself. His groundbreaking series, *Spatial Studies for Hitting Things*, now spans six published volumes, with additional books already in the works, but the project began as somewhat of a creative accident.

"I started writing exercises for myself because I wanted more challenging exercises," he says.

At the same time, he found himself helping younger scholarship students navigate technical concepts that were often difficult to explain. Another motivation grew out of his own studies with Cleveland Orchestra Principal Percussionist Marc Damoulakis.

"I also wrote it because Marc would always talk in riddles," Jones says with a laugh. "I tried to write a book that would teach what he was saying in a more understandable way."

The result is a method unlike most percussion literature currently available. Jones draws not only from traditional percussion pedagogy, but from movement science, martial arts, meditation, biomechanics, and decades of practical orchestral experience. The books encourage students to think about efficiency of motion as carefully as they think about rhythm and sound. The project has found audiences well beyond his own studio, appearing in conservatory libraries and percussion programs throughout the country (even the *bass* program at Rice University), yet Jones insists the work is far from complete. Josh still has much more to say and much more he wants to do.



Photo credit: Aidan Kranz

While Grant Park provides an artistic home each summer, it is not a full-time orchestra. Throughout the rest of the year he continues performing, presenting clinics and masterclasses, writing, and pursuing the next orchestral opportunity. Josh is hopeful that another full-time principal position is still ahead. In the meantime, he dreams of appearing as soloist with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, continuing to expand his international teaching schedule, and developing more opportunities for both he and his wife, professional bassist, Sara Neilson to travel and perform overseas together.

Near the end of our conversation, I asked Josh what separates Chicago from the many places his career has taken him. His answer came without hesitation.

"I'm always putting people, orchestras, the work environment, the community, and the *union* up against what I know works best in Chicago," he says. "Chicago has never let me down."

Coming from someone whose career has taken him from Calgary to Kansas City, from Carnegie Hall to concert stages around the world, it is a remarkable endorsement of the city that first invested in him. It is also a reminder that careers are rarely built by individuals alone. Teachers, mentors, organizations, and unions that advocate for dignity in the workplace make all the difference.

For all that lies ahead; whether it's another principal chair, more performances abroad, more books, or more students—there is something fitting about where the story stands today.

The young percussionist who once walked into the Chicago Symphony Orchestra Percussion Scholarship Program hoping simply to earn a place in the profession has come home. He now sits at the front of the Grant Park percussion section, making music alongside the teachers who helped shape his career. It is not the ending he imagined when he accepted the Kansas City Symphony position. In many ways, it is a better one. ■

Grant Park Music Festival is the nation's only free, summer-long outdoor classical music festival. Audiences can see Josh perform with the Grant Park Orchestra in Millennium Park through August 15th.

For more information about Josh's other upcoming performances and publications, please visit:

www.drummojo.com

Secretary-Treasurer Suarez Flint Elected AFM International Vice President in historic first



Dr. Suarez Flint expressed her awe at the significance of the moment, addressing the delegates by saying, "So this is what making history feels like!", as she delivered her acceptance speech in Ottawa on June 23rd. Photo credit: Kris Durlen



Photo credit: Megan Elk



Karen is sworn in as VP alongside the officers and International Executive Board
Photo credit: Megan Elk



A fitting campaign image taken by Karen's son, Isaac Suarez Flint, in front of the "Evanston Women's History Mural" near her home. Karen has now earned her own place as a history-making woman from Evanston

A Momentous 103rd AFM International Convention

The 103rd AFM International Convention met in Ottawa, Ontario from **June 19-23, 2026**.

In a convention year marked by spirited debate, the delegation ultimately demonstrated an appetite for new leadership. 4 of the 5 International Executive Board members turned over as a result of the shared desire for transparent communication between locals and the International. A long-time advocate for building broader coalitions and changing the culture within the AFM, **Karen clinched the win by an overwhelming majority to become the first woman Vice President in our union's 130 year history.** In accepting victory, she remarked:

"I am so grateful to all of you for your tireless efforts here and at your home locals. The work we do is immensely important, but it can also be equally exhausting. So let us make sure we leave here with a renewed commitment, not only to our mission and our members, but also to each other.

Let us continue to reach out to one another, learn from one another, and support each other. This week, we have experienced the power of transformational growth when we ALL feel seen, heard, and represented.

I see you, I hear you, and I am immensely honored to represent you as the first woman Vice President of the American Federation of Musicians." ■

CFM Receives 2026 AFM "Presidents' Local Award" for Commitment to Diversity



CFM receives the Presidents' Local Award from AFM Diversity Chair, Beth Zare
Left to right: Karen Suarez Flint, Beth Zare, BJ Levy, Caitlin Edwards, and John Floeter
Photo credit: Kris Durlen



CFM President BJ Levy accepts the Presidents Local Award on behalf of our local as AFM President Tino Garghargi (seated far right) presides. Photo credit: Megan Elk



In the spirit of diversity, President Levy reminds those assembled that we are not only the union of Canada and the United States, but also of the territory of Puerto Rico where, at the time of proceedings, members of the Puerto Rican local faced critical water and power shortages. Photo credit: Kris Durlen



April 22, 2026

Dear Local Officers and Members of AFM Local 10-208:

On behalf of the American Federation of Musicians, it is my great pleasure to extend our heartfelt congratulations to your Local on being selected as the recipient of the 2026 AFM Presidents' Local Award.

This recognition reflects your Local's meaningful commitment to advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging within both the union and the broader community. By actively shaping opportunities, strengthening representation, and building a more just and vibrant future for all musicians, you demonstrate that this work is not simply aspirational.

The impact of your work is felt not only within your membership, but across the wider landscape you help to shape. The very notable strategy of connecting the *what* to the *why* leads us to organizing through the lens of diversity. Your Local is a thriving example.

Please accept our sincere appreciation for your dedication, and our congratulations on this well-deserved honor. We look forward to presenting this award to you at the upcoming 103rd Convention.

In Solidarity,

Beth Zare

Beth Zare, Chair
AFM Diversity Committee

In April, CFM officers learned that we would be the recipients of the Presidents' Local Award. Application materials for the award included a full report of board demographics, culturally diverse engagement activities, and an assessment of the overall artistic diversity represented by the musicians of our local.



CFM's contingency of delegates included CFM Board Member Caitlin Edwards, Secretary-Treasurer Karen Suarez Flint, President BJ Levy, and Vice President John Floeter. Photo credit: Megan Elk

Let the Spirit Out!

On Thursday, June 18th D-Composed, Chicago's very own Black chamber music collective, participated in a special Juneteenth celebration titled "Let the Spirit Out!" As a part of the **Millennium Park Summer Music Series** at the Jay Pritzker Pavillion.

D-Composed joined forces with **Kahil El'Zabar's Ethnic Heritage Ensemble**, with appearances by legendary funk vocalist **Nona Hendryx** and master saxophonist **David Murray**.

By combining D-Composed's chamber music with the Ethnic Heritage Ensemble's jazz legacy, the event created a unique, culturally rich musical experience that honored history while engaging contemporary audiences.

Congrats on the incredible work! ■



Members of D-composed are seen in "split screen" as they play both live on the stage of the Jay Pritzker Pavillion, and are simultaneously broadcast on the big screen just above them, so that everyone in the park can see their performance. From left to right: Caitlin Edwards, Khelsey Zarraga, Anya Brumfield, Seth Pae, Wilfred Farquharson, and Lindsey Sharpe. Photo credit: Amy Barwan

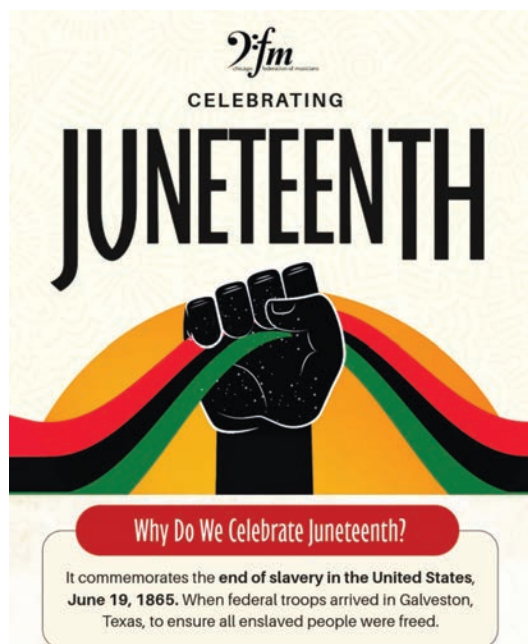


CFM Board of Directors member, Caitlin Edwards plays the violin on Thursday, June 18th in Millennium Park. Photo credit: Amy Barwan



Violist Seth Pae and Cellist Lindsey Sharpe are featured on the big screen, projected high atop the Pritzker Pavillion. Photo credit: Amy Barwan

CFM members join together in song throughout the city



*Hip-Hop Musicians perform onstage at Morgan Park on June 20th, 2026.
Photo courtesy of Tai'Lexxis Productions*



Photo courtesy of Tai'Lexxis Productions



Photo courtesy of Tai'Lexxis Productions

Unity through Music

On Saturday, June 20th Tai' Lexxis Entertainment received MPTF support to produce the collaborative concert event, *Power in Music People* at the **7th Annual Juneteenth Celebration in Morgan Park.**

The collaboration brought together twelve different Hip-Hop Artists from across the city who used creativity, storytelling, and cultural expression to promote healing, awareness, unity, and positive change. Producers say the concert was important to produce, *"because the power to influence people has always been in the music"*.

We hope to see them return to Morgan Park next year! ■



One of our youngest members, King Zyah leads a group of seasoned pros in honor of Juneteenth. Photo courtesy of Tai'Lexxis Productions



Retired Sergeant Major Emily Randle plays the violin for a special Workers' Memorial service with the Chicago Federation of Labor at the Haymarket Memorial



Flowers were laid on the Haymarket Memorial in honor of those workers who have lost their lives on the job in the past year, as families and community members gathered to mourn the loss of their loved ones.

Out & About



For the past three years, Board of Directors member Joe Sonnefeldt has dedicated countless hours of his evenings and weekends to attending the DePaul University Labor Education Center in pursuit of his Certificate of Labor Leadership. Here, he celebrates his graduation with President BJ Levy and Labor Education Center director, Dr. Jessica Cook-Qurayshi



Members of the CFM Board of Directors were honored to attend Arise Chicago's 35th Annual Faith-Labor-Action Breakfast. L to R: Bobby Everson, Catie Hickey, Joe Sonnefeldt, Caitlin Edwards, and Rich Daniels



Attendees were treated to music by our very own Rich Daniels and company



A bassoon's eye view of the orchestra, shared with us in a post by Lamar Carey Curtis, who thanked his bassoon, named 'Miss Celie' for all of her work this season. Congrats Lamar and Miss Celie!



The Americana Concert Band plays a July 4th concert at the Chicago History Museum with vocalist Michelle Thomas



*Raices Latin Jazz at the Oak Park Jazz Festival on May 30th
Left to right: Stewart Seale, Eric Ferrer, Jorge Leal, Bobby Delgado, and Joe Sonnefeldt*

Out from behind the camera

This summer, I've had the privilege of attending several conventions, most notably the 103rd AFM convention in Ottawa. I was also honored to attend the Pride at Work convention in Minneapolis. Pride at Work is the official 2SLGBTQIA+ constituency of the AFL-CIO, and the convention was a meaningful way to kickoff Pride month!

Though substantively different, each convention addressed themes of equity and justice for workers, while seeking to build solidarity amongst delegates. It was also an opportunity to flex my colorful union t-shirt collection! ■ -Megan Elk



Attending the Pride at Work convention in Minneapolis on June 1st, with the other members of the Pride at Work Illinois Executive Board, Ethan Southwell (TWU) and Zoe Karns (IBEW)



With BJ Levy at the 103rd AFM Convention in Ottawa on June .23rd. Shout out to Local 555 President, Fermin Segarra for insiting on taking this picture to capture the pink shoes that matched my shirt!

Standing with the Musicians of the Chicago Sinfonietta

By: Megan Elk

For nearly four decades, the Chicago Sinfonietta has been one of our city's most distinctive musical institutions, known not only for artistic excellence, but also for its commitment to expanding opportunity and reflecting the diversity of Chicago's musical community. Many members of the Chicago Federation of Musicians have proudly performed with the orchestra over the years, helping build its reputation as one of the nation's most forward-thinking ensembles.

As many members are now aware, the Sinfonietta recently announced that it will enter what it has called a "Strategic Renewal Period," temporarily suspending performances and educational programming while the organization works to stabilize its finances and chart a path forward. The decision, reported by WBEZ and other local media, means that performances will be paused through 2027 while the organization focuses on restructuring and long-term sustainability.

While much remains uncertain, one thing is not: the musicians who have brought the Sinfonietta's mission to life continue to represent the very best of Chicago's professional music community. Their artistry, commitment, and service have inspired audiences, mentored young musicians, and helped shape the orchestra's remarkable legacy. Although



the institution itself is taking time to regroup, musicians continue their work throughout the region as performers, educators, recording artists, and union professionals.

The Chicago Federation of Musicians stands with every member affected by this pause. We know firsthand the challenges that interruptions in artistic work create—not only financially, but personally. We also know that the

strength of our musical community has always been found in the solidarity we show one another during difficult moments.

We encourage all members to show their support by following Musicians of the Chicago Sinfonietta on both Facebook and Instagram. Their pages celebrate the artists behind the orchestra, share updates during this transition, and remind the public that while performances may be on hold, the musicians themselves remain an indispensable part of Chicago's cultural life. Members are also invited to share Sinfonietta memories by tagging these pages.

Institutions may experience periods of change, but great musicians continue to create, perform, and serve their communities. We look forward to the day when the Chicago Sinfonietta returns to the stage, and until then, we stand proudly with the musicians who have made its legacy possible. ■



Follow the "Musicians of the Chicago Sinfonietta" on social media, and help keep their legacy alive!

← Follow on Facebook

Follow on Instagram →



Welcome New & Returning Members



Doug Broderick

Originally from New York, **Doug Broderick** began his clarinet studies at age 9. During high school he studied with Donald Lituchy at the Julliard School of Music's pre-college division and was principal clarinet with The Long Island Youth Orchestra. Doug holds a BM degree from Northwestern University, where he studied privately with Clark Brody and Robert Marcellus while performing with NU's Symphonic Wind Ensemble and The Civic Orchestra of Chicago. Post college, Doug was a member of The Northshore Concert Band and was the long-time principal clarinet of The Park Ridge Civic Orchestra until its closure in 2024. Most recently, Doug has joined the newly formed Third Coast Symphony, as both a board member and a musician. Doug lives in Skokie, IL, with his dog Tizzy, and enjoys travel, cooking, golf, and swimming when he is not playing the clarinet. ■



Alex Chao

Alex Chao is a versatile orchestral, chamber, and marching percussionist based in Chicago, IL.

As an orchestral percussionist, Alex has performed with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, Sinfónica de Minería, Chicago Lyric Opera Orchestra, and Grant Park Festival Orchestra. He is currently a Section Percussionist in the Ann Arbor Symphony Orchestra and is an alumnus of the Civic Orchestra of Chicago.

Alex is the Founder and Artistic Director of Bridge Percussion, a Chicago-based collective creating engaging, accessible performances centered on percussion ensemble music. Bridge Percussion's past highlights include a performance at Chicago Symphony Center in collaboration with the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, regular appearances in Constellation Chicago's Frequency Series, and presenting the Chicago premiere of Andy Akiho's Seven Pillars at Fulton Street Collective.

Alex is also a performing member of the Rhythm Messengers, a professional event drumline in Chicago and the resident drumline for DJ duo Two Friends, whom he has accompanied at Lollapalooza, Bonnaroo, and North Coast Music Festival. He is a former snare drummer of the Chicago Bulls Stampede Drumline and The Cavaliers Drum and Bugle Corps.

As an educator, Alex is the former Percussion Ensemble Director of the Midwest Young Artists Conservatory. He also previously served as a Civic Mentor, where he worked with the percussion programs at Lincoln Park High School and Northside College Prep. Outside of music, Alex works part-time as a Computer Science Patent Analyst and enjoys cooking, playing soccer, and swimming in Lake Michigan.

Alex holds a Bachelor of Music in Percussion Performance and a Bachelor of Science and Master of Science in Computer Science from Northwestern University. His teachers include She-e Wu, Cynthia Yeh, Christopher Lamb, Eric Millstein, and Vadim Karpinos. ■



Gwendolyn Goble

Gwen Goble is the newest member of the Grant Park Orchestra oboe section, starting as second oboe in 2026. As an orchestral musician, she has appeared with the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra and the Boston Pops. Equally at home on the English horn, Goble is a regular attendee of Robert Walters' English horn Masterclass and Carolyn Hove's Seminar and has appeared as substitute English horn with the New World Symphony. Goble has spent her summers at Music Academy of the West, National Orchestral Institute, Hidden Valley Festival of Winds, and the Colorado College Summer Music Festival, where she won the concerto competition in 2021.

As a soloist, she was featured on PBS's *Now Hear This* playing the *Mozart Oboe Concerto in C Major*. During the school year, Goble resides in the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex in Texas,

where she teaches middle and high school oboe students in the public school system.

Goble holds degrees from New England Conservatory and Oberlin Conservatory, where she studied with John Ferrillo, Anne Marie Gabriele, and Robert Walters. Additional mentors include Carolyn Hove, Eugene Izotov, and Erin Hannigan.

Growing up, Goble enjoyed summers at Interlochen and Boston University Tanglewood Institute which sparked her love of orchestral playing. When not playing the oboe, she enjoys exploring local bookstores, restaurants, museums, and finding the best cup of coffee ■



Jennifer Debiec Lawson

Jennifer Debiec Lawson has performed with the Grant Park Orchestra as Piccolo/Assistant Principal Flute since 2001. She also is the Associate Principal/2nd Flute with the Richmond Symphony and is the Principal Flutist with the Williamsburg Symphony in Virginia. Ms. Lawson is on the faculty at the University of Richmond and maintains a private studio. Jennifer is a graduate of the North Carolina School of the Arts, where she completed high school and received her bachelor's degree, studying with Philip Dunigan. She received her Master of Music degree from The Juilliard School, where she studied with Julius Baker. ■



Daniel Kaler

Joining the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and Chautauqua Symphony Orchestra in 2022 and 2024, respectively, cellist **Daniel Kaler** has been a top prizewinner at the Medici International Music Competition, BACH International Music Competition, Maurice Ravel Competition, Muse International Competition, among others. In recent years, he has performed with the Asheville Symphony Orchestra, West Virginia Symphony Orchestra, Bogotá Philharmonic Orchestra, Boca del Río Philharmonic Orchestra, Chautauqua Music School Festival Orchestra, and the Cleveland Institute of Music Orchestra.

Kaler attended and gave performances at many summer programs and festivals, such as the Chautauqua Music Festival, Keshet Eilon Summer Mastercourse, Sarasota Music Festival, Heifetz International Music Institute,

Bowdoin International Music Festival, North Shore Chamber Music Festival, Music In The Loft, Young Steinway Concert Series, and Chicago Cultural Center. He has appeared on WFMT's "Introductions", WCLV, as well as WCPN's "Applause Performances".

Kaler began his initial studies with Donna Davis and Gilda Barston. He continued his private studies with Hans Jørgen Jensen of the Northwestern University's Bienen School of Music and Stephen Balderston of the DePaul University School of Music. He received his Bachelor of Music in Cello Performance from the Cleveland Institute of Music and Master of Music in Cello Performance from Rice University's Shepherd School of Music, having studied with Mark Kosower and Brinton Smith, respectively. ■



Shinae Ra

Shinae Ra is the newest member of the Grant Park Music Festival cello section. She also serves as the Assistant Principal Cello of the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, a position she has held since 2023. Ra has also performed with the Charleston Symphony Orchestra, Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra, Columbus Indiana Philharmonic, and has appeared alongside musicians of the New York Philharmonic and the Minnesota Orchestra. Her performances have taken her to some of the world's most distinguished venues, including Carnegie Hall, David Geffen Hall, Lotte Concert Hall in Seoul, and Suntory Hall in Tokyo.

Ra made her solo debut with the Raleigh Symphony Orchestra at the age of 16. She earned her Bachelor of Music degree from Indiana University and her Master of Music degree from The Juilliard School. As a student, Ra served as Principal Cellist of the Juilliard Orchestra, several Indiana University orchestras, and the National Repertory Orchestra. She has participated in renowned

festivals including the Spoleto Festival, Pacific Music Festival, and the New York String Orchestra Seminar.

Her primary teachers have included Natasha Brofsky, Peter Stumpf, and Emanuel Gruber. Ra is passionate about connecting with audiences through live performance and believes in the unique ability of music to inspire, communicate, and bring people together. Outside of music, she is an avid baker and enjoys spending time with her two cats. ■



Veronica Rokicki

Veronica Rokicki is a graduate of the Eastman School of Music where she studied violin with Renee Jolles. She is now studying for her Masters at Northwestern University with Professor Blair Milton.

An active orchestral musician, Veronica frequently performs with orchestras around the Chicago area. She is currently assistant principal of the Holland Symphony, and associate member of the Civic Orchestra of Chicago. Additionally, she also frequently plays with the Rockford Symphony, Peoria Symphony, New World Symphony, and Elmhurst Symphony.

In addition to orchestral performances, Veronica enjoys playing chamber music. At Eastman, she was part of the Cantante Quartet which has received the 2024-2025 Celentano String Quartet Award. This allowed the group to put on a full quartet recital while also performing and speaking about classical music with communities around Rochester. The Cantante Quartet was also a part of a program called *Music for All*, where musicians would travel to public areas to perform parts of their program while catering to the community population, especially children looking to start a musical instrument. Common performances locations would be public libraries, elementary and middle schools, and community centers.

Previously, she had won 1st place at the Midwest National Chamber Competition, 2nd Prize at the International ENKOR Competition for Chamber Music, and was chosen as semi-finalists for the Saint Paul String Quartet Competition and Fischhoff Chamber Competition.

Currently at Northwestern, Veronica is concertmaster of the Northwestern Baroque Orchestra and has been assistant principal of the Northwestern Symphony Orchestra. At Northwestern, she is also on an Eckstein scholarship and received a graduate assistantship. Veronica has also been to numerous prestigious summer festivals, including Aspen Music Festival, Chautauqua Institution, and Bowdoin Music Festival. Most recently, she has been accepted and will be attending the National Repertory Orchestra for their eight week session. ■

Welcoming the Freelance Musicians Association: The AFM's Newest Players' Conference

The 103rd Convention of the American Federation of Musicians marked an important milestone for one of the largest (and often least visible) segments of our membership. **For the first time, the Freelance Musicians Association (FMA) was recognized as a Players' Conference, giving Freelance Musicians a voice in the Federation's convention proceedings.**

For many AFM members, freelancing is more than just a stepping stone between full-time engagements, it is the entirety of their career. From club dates and weddings to recording sessions, theater productions, houses of worship, educational work, festivals, and independent touring, Freelance Musicians make up a substantial portion of the profession. Their careers are built by balancing multiple employers, multiple contracts, and an ever-changing marketplace, often requiring entrepreneurial skills alongside musical excellence.

While these musicians have always been represented by their local unions, the creation of a dedicated Players' Conference recognizes that freelance work presents challenges distinct from those faced by musicians employed by a single orchestra, theater, or record label. Contract enforcement, fair wages, pension contributions, streaming issues, workplace safety, and the increasing role of technology all affect Freelance Musicians in unique ways. The new conference provides a forum for members from across the United States and Canada to share ideas, develop policy recommendations, and advocate collectively on issues that directly affect freelance careers.

Players' Conferences have long played an important role within the AFM by bringing together musicians who share common professional experiences and concerns. Their work helps inform Federation policy, develop educational resources, and ensure that the voices of working musicians are represented as the industry continues to evolve. The addition of the Freelance Musicians Association expands that tradition by recognizing their growing importance in today's music economy.



L to R: AFM Freelance Services Director Wages Argott, FMA Secretary-Treasurer Milton Salazar, FMA Vice President Leni Kreienberg, and FMA President Nate Omdal; photo: Kris Durlen

For delegates attending the 103rd Convention, the FMA's inclusion represented an acknowledgment of the changing realities of professional music making by the AFM, that has traditionally prioritized musicians working under a cba. Now, the FMA joins the ranks of the AFM's established players' conferences: the International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians (ICSOM), the Regional Orchestra Players Association (ROPA), the Organization of Canadian Symphony Musicians (OCSM), the Recording Musicians Association (RMA), and the Theater Musicians' Association

(TMA) as a players' conference dedicated to the concerns of Freelance Musicians who produce their own creative projects. Representation that reflects those realities strengthens the Federation's ability to advocate for *all* of its members.

The work of the FMA intends to foster greater communication among freelance musicians from different regions, encouraging the exchange of successful organizing strategies, contract language, educational initiatives, and approaches to emerging challenges. As the profession continues to adapt to changes in technology, audience engagement, and the economics of live performance, that collaboration will become increasingly valuable.

The inclusion of the Freelance Musicians Association at the 103rd AFM Convention demonstrates a new investment in the artistic diversity of our membership. Whether you perform in theatres, with a symphony orchestra, make recordings under the SRLA, or play in a weekend wedding band, every musician deserves strong representation, fair working conditions, and a meaningful voice in the future of our profession.

For freelance musicians across the United States and Canada, that voice now has a permanent seat at the table. **If you are one of the many freelancers in the CFM, please pull up a chair and join the FMA.** ■ -Megan Elk

For more information: visit afmfreelance.org, or scan the QR →

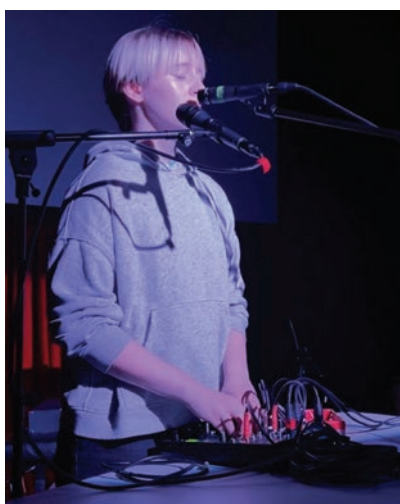
Meet the leadership of the FMA:



Nate Omdal, photo courtesy of artist

FMA President Nate Omdal also serves as President of Local 76-493 in Seattle. He is an adopted Korean-American jazz bassist, who grew up in the middle of nowhere in Washington State. There was a cow pasture across the street from the high school he went to. There was no orchestral program, but there was a lot small town music to be played, including a lot of big bands with retirees, which is how he got his start. Currently, he plays in bars, restaurants and the always fruitful wedding gig.

Nate says of the FMA, *"I personally have been inspired by campaigns that other unions utilize to make an impact in their members lives, such as Justice for Janitors from SEIU. I hope that the FMA becomes an organizing tool for musicians to make an impact on affordability, social justice and race/ gender equity. Our voices are indeed stronger together, but as musicians we are also able to bring some of the fun that is so important to any organizing. I hope that together we can create new pathways for collaboration, enforcement and the improvement of our whole industry."* ■



Leni Kreienberg, photo: Alexa Letourneau

FMA Vice President Leni Kreienberg is originally from Albany, NY, but now makes their home in New York City. Formerly an international organizer for the AFM, they currently work as a freelance vocalist, composer, and improviser in the free improvisation, experimental, and DIY scenes.

They hope the FMA can be both a hub for resource sharing and organizing strategy, and a catalyst for national and international campaigns that raise labor standards for independent musicians. Speaking from the dais at the convention, Leni remarked:

"Independent musicians across the US and Canada are demanding that the AFM meet this moment and truly represent us as our union, the only musicians union in the US and Canada. It's time for the AFM to put effective, modernized material support behind independent musicians. But, our leadership can't wave a magic wand. Our movement will only be successful if we commit to member-driven, grassroots organizing that puts the rank-and-file in the driver's seat." ■



Milton Salazar, photo: Christian Amonson

FMA Secretary-Treasurer Milton Salazar is a First Generation Mexican-American freelance percussionist living in Southern California. Mostly playing in orchestral settings; he subs frequently with Pacific Symphony and is principal with Orchestra Santa Monica. Milton drives all over SoCal to teach, perform, and make a living. He is a proud board member of Local 7, Orange County, and is also a member of Local 47, Los Angeles.

Milton sees the FMA as a place where all musicians can come together to meet, trade ideas, and support one another in the struggle that is building a career as a freelancer, saying that,

"Sometimes, you need to hear someone else say the thing you are thinking to encourage you to step up. Organizing is all about communication and understanding, and we are building the space for that here at the FMA." ■



The FMA meets the first Wednesday of every month and annual membership dues is only five dollars.

Join the FMA today!

Celebrate Your Independence

Are you a Freelance Musician who writes, records and produces your own music?

Did you know that by becoming a signatory to the AFM's Sound Recording Labor Agreement (SRLA), you can not only vest into the pension fund, but you also become eligible for additional **SPECIAL PAYMENTS** for 5 years after filing the contract for the recording?

If you're interested in learning more about how you can take advantage of yet another AFM benefit for independent artists, please reach out Electronic Media guru, Dean Rolando to set up a time to come into the office and talk more about the SRLA. Drop him an email at: drolando@cfm10208.org

With the advent of AI, it has never been more important to protect your intellectual property. The best protection for your work is now and has always been a union contract. ■



Chicago Grammy Chapter Member and R&B recording artist Arnell Newman made his record label, Soulistic360, an SRLA signatory after realizing how he and his artists stood to benefit from union contracts. Left to Right: Karen Suarez Flint, Arnell Newman, BJ Levy



Chicago Neo-Soul label, Simply Being Records (Shonny Jones LLC), signed onto the the SRLA with their record label, after meeting and talking with our team at the Chicago Independent Venue League "Green Expo" at The Color Club this spring. Left to Right: Dean Rolando, Karen Suarez Flint, Daniella Smith, Steve Jackson, and BJ Levy

Important reminders from the Fair Employment Practice Committee (FEPC)

Are you a member of a Chicago-area freelance Orchestra? Have you ever played with Chicago Sinfonietta, Elgin Symphony, or the Illinois Philharmonic?

If the answer is, "yes", did you know that you have access to all the benefits of membership in ROPA? You can visit the ROPA website for some great resources, including wage scale charts, bulletins, newsletters, and other great resources for musicians.

If you're a member of a ROPA orchestra, a great way to get involved is to join the ROPA EDI Committee, which is open to all musicians and meets quarterly via zoom to discuss ways to make ROPA orchestras more welcoming and inclusive workspaces. Check out the latest version of ROPA's newsletter by visiting their website at: www.ropaweb.org ■

Got the #NotMe app?

Speaking of resources, as we head back to work this fall, the FEPC hopes that everyone can enjoy a safe, supportive working environment.

But, in the event that something happens, don't forget about the #NotMe app! It's as important as your pencil. Sign up for an account today and link it to the CFM with PIN 2224 ("BACH"). App download available at the QR here:



Above: members of last year's FEPC Mentorship cohort meet and get to know each other at the 2025/26 Mentorship program kickoff. Photos: Megan Elk

2026/27 Mentorship Program Applications open now!

The FEPC Mentorship program partners new CFM members with established CFM members to create a more connected community within our Union and foster the workplaces we all want to see.

Apply now at the QR codes below!

Important Program Dates:

- APPLICATIONS DUE: AUGUST, 15 2026
- FIRST MEETING: SEPTEMBER 14, 2026

*Mentees must be a current CFM member in good standing or willing to join if selected.



**Interested in Joining
the FEPC Mentorship Program?**

← Find a mentor

Become a mentor →





Walter Parazaider, courtesy of Legacy.com

Walter Parazaider (1945–2026)

The Chicago Federation of Musicians mourns the loss of longtime member Walter Parazaider, founding woodwind player of the legendary rock band Chicago, who passed away on June 17, 2026, at the age of 81 following a lengthy battle with Alzheimer's disease.

Born in Maywood, Illinois, Parazaider was a classically trained clarinetist and graduate of DePaul University before helping assemble what would become one of the most successful and influential bands in American popular music. Inspired by the idea of combining rock music with a horn section, he brought together the musicians who first performed as The Big Thing before evolving into Chicago Transit Authority and, ultimately, Chicago. Bandmates frequently credited Parazaider with the original vision of creating "a rock and roll band with horns," an idea that helped redefine the sound of popular music. As Chicago's principal woodwind player, Parazaider's saxo-

phone, flute, and clarinet became integral to the band's signature sound. His flute solo on "Colour My World" remains one of classic rock's most recognizable instrumental passages, while his soprano saxophone work on "Just You 'n' Me" helped define another of the band's best-known recordings. During a career spanning five decades, he contributed to a catalog that sold more than 100 million records worldwide and included enduring hits such as "25 or 6 to 4," "Saturday in the Park," "Beginnings," and "If You Leave Me Now."

Parazaider remained with Chicago from its founding in 1967 until retiring from touring in 2017 because of health concerns. One year earlier, he was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame with his bandmates, recognizing a career that helped expand the role of horns in contemporary popular music.

Beyond his musical accomplishments, Parazaider was remembered as a devoted husband, father, and friend. He is survived by his wife of nearly six decades, JacLynn, and their two daughters, Laura and Felicia. In announcing his passing, his family remembered his kindness, generosity, and the joy he brought to those around him.

Walter Parazaider's vision helped create one of the defining bands in American music history, while his artistry left an indelible mark on generations of listeners. The officers, staff, and members of the Chicago Federation of Musicians extend our deepest condolences to his family, friends, bandmates, and countless fans. His legacy will continue to resonate wherever the music of Chicago is heard. ■



Photo Credit: Kris Durlen

AFM Convention Remembrances

One of the most moving portions of the AFM convention was the memorial service, honoring all those officers, delegates, and distinguished members who have left us since the prior convention in 2023.

Notably, Former 10-208 President Ed Ward, who passed away in August of 2023, was honored during the service. Another former 10-208 president, Terry Jares was on hand to deliver a touching eulogy, during which roses were placed in a large arrangement by AFM officials, as is the long-held custom.

Music for the service was provided by Strings À La Carte, and served as a stirring accompaniment for the memorial observance. ■



Samuel Magad (1932–2026)

CFM mourns the loss of longtime member Samuel Magad, the longest-serving concertmaster in the history of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, who passed away on May 25, 2026, at the age of 94. For nearly half a century, Magad's artistry, leadership, and dedication helped shape one of the world's

Samuel Magad, courtesy of Chicago Symphony Orchestra

great orchestras while his influence as a performer, conductor, and teacher extended throughout Chicago's musical community.

Born in Chicago on May 14, 1932, Magad displayed remarkable talent from an early age. At 11, after winning the Chicago Symphony Orchestra Youth Auditions, he made his solo debut with the orchestra performing the first movement of Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto under the direction of Désiré Defauw. He later studied at DePaul University with violinist Paul Stassevitch before serving in the United States Army Orchestra in Washington, D.C.

In 1958, at the invitation of Fritz Reiner, Magad joined the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's first violin section. Jean Martinon promoted him to assistant concertmaster in 1966, and Georg Solti appointed him concertmaster in 1972, a position he held

until retiring in 2007. His 35-year tenure remains the longest in the orchestra's history. During those years, he worked under many of the twentieth century's most distinguished conductors and helped lead the orchestra through one of its most celebrated artistic eras.

As concertmaster, Magad was admired as both a soloist and chamber musician. He appeared regularly with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra under conductors including Solti, Daniel Barenboim, Claudio Abbado, Rafael Kubelík, Erich Leinsdorf, and James Levine. His solo playing is featured on landmark Chicago Symphony recordings of Richard Strauss' *Ein Heldenleben* and *Also sprach Zarathustra*, Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade*, and Beethoven's *Missa solemnis*. He also performed chamber music with artists including Itzhak Perlman, Pinchas Zukerman, Maxim Vengerov, and Mstislav Rostropovich.

Beyond Orchestra Hall, Magad also served as concertmaster of the Grant Park Orchestra and founded the Northbrook Symphony in 1980, serving as its music director and conductor for two decades. He was equally devoted to teaching, mentoring generations of young string players who went on to distinguished careers.

Samuel Magad's career reflected the highest ideals of orchestral musicianship through artistic excellence, quiet leadership, and lifelong service to music. His legacy lives on through the musicians he mentored, the performances he led from the concertmaster's chair, and the extraordinary tradition he helped sustain in Chicago for nearly five decades.

The officers, staff, and members of the Chicago Federation of Musicians extend our deepest condolences to his family, friends, colleagues, and all whose lives were enriched by his remarkable artistry. He will be deeply missed. ■



10-208 President Emeritus Terryl Jares honors her late friend and colleague, Ed Ward
Photo Credit: Kris Durlen



Ed Ward's contribution to both the CFM and the AFM is recognized at the 103rd AFM convention. Photo Credit: Megan Elk



Rockford, Illinois
AUDITION ANNOUNCEMENT

Section Cello October 22, 2026

The deadline to apply is **October 1, 2026**
Visit www.rockfordsymphony.com/audition
for complete audition materials and to apply.



Rockford, Illinois
AUDITION ANNOUNCEMENT

Assistant Principal Violin II November 11, 2026

The deadline to apply is **October 21, 2026**
Visit www.rockfordsymphony.com/audition
for complete audition materials and to apply.



ELMHURST
SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA

Announcing
September 4th & 5th
Auditions for

**Associate Concertmaster
Trombone 2
Principal/Assistant Principal Viola**

Email audition@elmhurstsymphony.org
by the August 28, 2026 deadline

ELGIN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Chad Goodman, Music Director

Announces the following audition

Associate Concertmaster SEPTEMBER 2, 2026

The ESO is located approximately 40 miles west of downtown Chicago and guarantees a minimum of 54 services for the 2026-2027 season, which takes place from September to May. Associate Concertmaster scale is \$217.01 per service for the 2026-27 season. All positions receive mileage and 13.189% AFM/EPF pension. As a condition of employment, the winning candidate of this audition must become a member of the Local #10-208 Chicago Federation of Musicians by the 30th day of their employment.

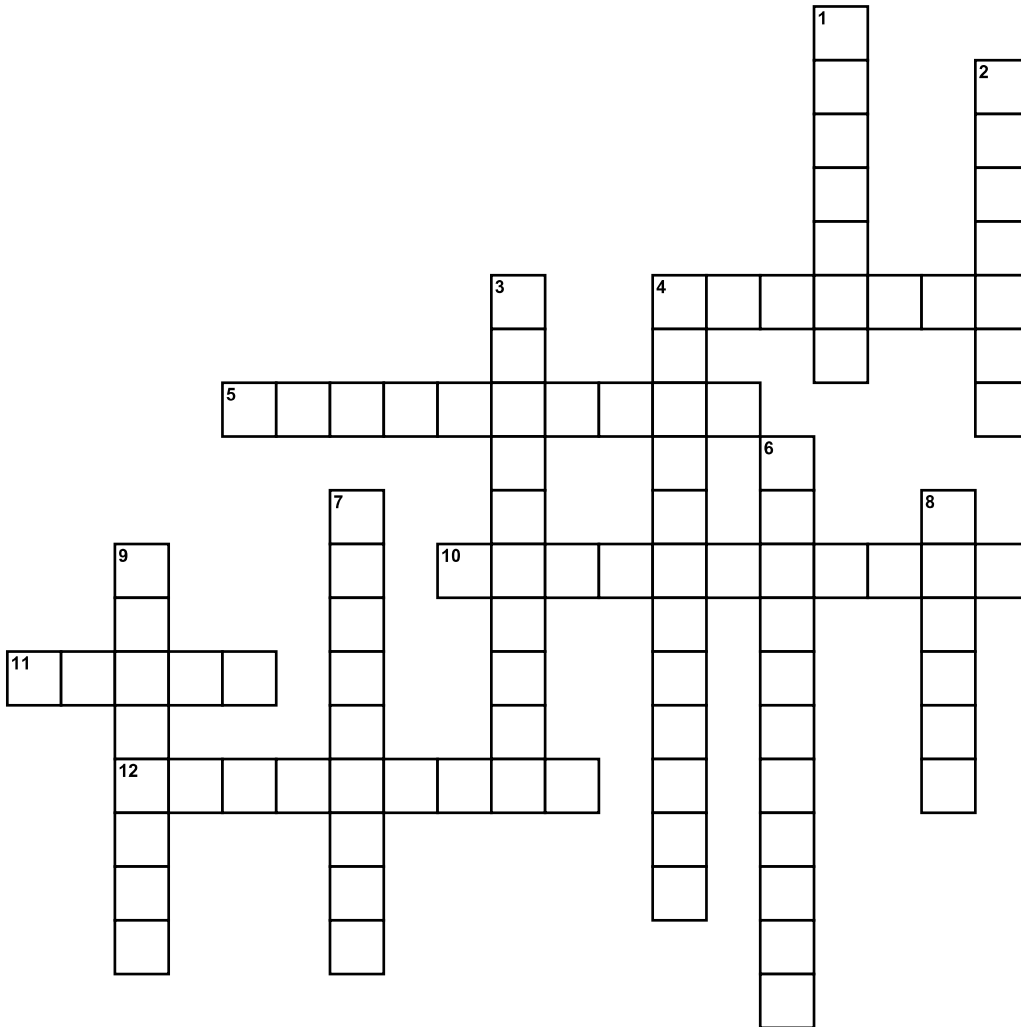
For audition information and repertoire,
visit our website:
www.ElginSymphony.org/auditions

CALL FOR INFORMATION:

The Intermezzo is our communication between the Local and our members. In addition to the printed version, we also post each issue on the CFM website. Most of the magazine is available to the public.

We are always looking for events, accomplishments, and things of interest to other members and the public. Share your announcements, reviews or anything you would like to see printed to CFM Director of Organizing & Communications, Megan Elk at melk@cfm10208.org. The Board of Directors reserves the right to determine whether material shall be published. ■

Intermezzo Crossword



Across

- [4] Parliamentary rules of order used at the 103rd AFM convention
 [5] Holiday observed to commemorate news of the end of slavery reaching Galveston, Texas
 [10] Instrument played by Josh Jones on the cover (2 words)
 [11] Governing rule of a union or other organization
 [12] The nation's only free outdoor music festival

Down

- [1] Musician playing multiple instruments, often in a theatre pit
 [2] Original Name of Parazaid's band, the Chicago _____ Authority
 [3] Worker who has several different income streams, rather than working for a single employer
 [4] Process by which members agree to a contract
 [6] Process by which a collective bargaining agreement is reached
 [7] formal signer of a contract
 [8] Performances supported by the Music Performance Trust Fund must be free and open to the _____.
 [9] Credentialed, voting member at a convention

Across: [4] Roberts, [5] Juneteenth, [10] Talking Drum, [11] bylaw, [12] Grant Park,
 Down: [1] doubler, [2] transit, [3] freelancer, [4] ratification, [6] negotiation, [7] signatory, [8] public,
 [9] delegate

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Electronic Media Department	Dean Ext. 150
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Health and Welfare Department	Margie Ext. 119
Death Benefit Information	Patty Ext. 0
1% Solution	Patty Ext. 0
For all other Information, contact the	
President's Office	Ext. 111
Secretary/Treasurer's Office	Ext. 333
Vice President's Office	Ext. 222

Other Helpful Numbers:
American Federation of Musicians of the
United States and Canada:

New York (Headquarters)	(212) 869-1330
West Coast Office	(323) 461-5401
Canadian Office	(416) 391-5161
AFM-Employers' Pension Fund (NY)	(800) 833-8065
Film Musicians Secondary Markets Fund	(818) 755-7777
Live Television Videotape Fund	(818) 755-7777 ext. 611
Sound Recording Special Payments Fund	(212) 310-9400
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