



Tuesday
Wednesday
Thursday
10 to 12:30
Phone
(757) 622-8095

OFFICIAL BULLETIN
OF LOCAL 125
AMERICAN
FEDERATION OF
MUSICIANS
Affiliated with
A. F. L. - C. I. O.

FEBRUARY 2024

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Tuesday, February 20th @ 7:30 PM
At the Union Hall and via ZOOM

Click to Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89879233946?pwd=P9QwzUlQGLVkcW0GgXuBY1zUCbpeuK.1>

Meeting ID: 898 7923 3946 Passcode: 441322

From the President...

Happy New Year Local 125!

Hoping you had a holiday season filled with music and peace and are off to a wonderful 2024. Thank you to those who joined us for our holiday party.

The Rondo is an excellent place to showcase our musicians. This month we feature **Alexis Colner** and **Jim Nesbit**. Alexis is new principal harpist with the Virginia Symphony. Jim Nesbit is a longtime Local 125 member and is the newest member of our Executive Board. As a busy freelancer Jim brings a wealth of knowledge to the board which will help us fully represent our musical community.

Thank you to Scott Harris for his contribution to this issue and his continuing union advocacy. Please read his article and be inspired to urge a fellow musician to join the union.

There was a time when Monday evenings were a guaranteed night off for us working musicians. Nowadays most of us fill our Mondays with teaching, coaching, and other various side hustles. We juggle our union meeting times to accommodate our busy schedules. The next **General**

Membership meeting is Tuesday February 20th at 7:30 at the union hall. You can join us in person or on Zoom. If you come in person you will see the continued improvements to the hall by our vice president, **Dennis Herring**. He has done some amazing work.

In Solidarity,
Joanne



Dear colleagues and brothers and sisters in solidarity,

I am writing this article with three intentions. First, I'd like to tell my story as a Union member. Second, I will explain the many reasons to be a Union member. Finally, as an appeal to advocate for YOUR Union.

I first heard about Union membership for musicians when I auditioned for a position with the Atlanta Chamber Orchestra in 1981. The founder and Music Director was a former conducting fellow with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, named John L. Naskiewicz. John and the manager of the Atlanta Chamber Orchestra (cellist Alice Williams) told me I needed to join the Union to work for the orchestra. I drove to the Union office on Dutch Valley Way and joined the Atlanta Federation of Musicians Local 148/462.



I remained a member of the Atlanta Federation of Musicians until I moved to Norfolk VA in 1991. In the 80s, I worked with many orchestras in the southeast. Very likely I would not have made such valuable connections were it not for my Union brothers and sisters. Like Virginia, Georgia was, and still is, a “right to work” (for less) state. “Right to work” is a deceptive title. It means that workers are not required to join a union to work, even if the majority of workers are members of an established Union. I felt obliged to join.

In 1991 I auditioned for, and won the principal bass position with the Virginia Symphony Orchestra. Much like before I was urged to join the local musicians Union, American Federation of Musicians Local 125. At the time the VSO job did not pay during the summer off-season weeks. In the early 1990s Local 125 made it possible to collect Virginia Employment Commission benefits during dark weeks. Prior to my joining the VSO, in 1988 AFM Local 125 negotiated a guaranteed day off and a cap on the number of services per week management could schedule. Paid health insurance was negotiated as well as paid sick days and personnel days. Then we got per-diems at government recommended rates. None of this is small stuff friends.

In the past ten years AFM Local 125, our negotiating committee and management agreed to buy new stools and chairs made for performing. The Community Engagement Services (CEP's) now pay all musicians at the Assistant Principal rate and Principal scale for solo or chamber performances! Substitute musician pay was brought up to equal the pay of musicians with contracts. Also, two musicians are now elected **by the musicians** to serve on the VSO Board of Directors. The AFM also publishes the International Musician newspaper. In that publication, other employment opportunities around the U.S. and Canada are advertised.

When I first started working with the VSO, the salary was \$20,000 per year and management could schedule 3 services on some days. Now, no more than two services can be scheduled on a given day and only rarely on consecutive days. In addition, salaries have nearly doubled! Another valuable benefit negotiated by the Union is participation in the Employer's Pension Fund (AFM-EPF). The VSO is required to make monthly contributions to the Pension Fund on behalf of ALL contracted musicians, **Union or not**. None of us would have such a benefit if it were not for the work of union advocates!

Finally, I want to urge all musicians to join and advocate for union membership. If anyone reading this article knows anyone that is working in the VSO or any other ensemble that is not a Union member, remind them what Union advocacy has done much for all local musicians, not just Virginia Symphony Orchestra members. Service rates for theater, opera and other engagements have increased as well. Working conditions and compensation would not have improved if not for Union led negotiations and the hard work of committees. Union presence is intended to serve both musicians and their employers equitably. Union membership makes sense, and moreover supporting the Union is the right thing to do considering what advocacy has done for every one of us.

Solidarity forever,
Scott Harris



JAMES NESBIT NAMED TO LOCAL 125 EXECUTIVE BOARD

James Nesbit was recently appointed to the Executive Board of Local 125. A long-time member of Local 125, he has previously served as Vice President and as a Board member. Jim is a native of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and received his B.S. from Duquesne University. Jim has had a diverse and extensive journey in the world of music, performing with numerous renowned artists and ensembles across various genres. From his early days as a solo clarinetist and lead alto saxophonist with prestigious groups like the New York Harlem Opera Ensembles and the Tommy Dorsey Orchestra to his ongoing involvement with The O'Jays. Jim currently performs with the *American Saxophone Quartet* and can be heard on the *Great American Music Ensemble's* 2016 Release *"It's All In The G.A.M.E"* that reached #4 on the jazz charts.

His performances at Carnegie Hall and with the Virginia Symphony showcase his prowess as a soloist, and his contributions to the Great American Music Ensemble's album highlight his talents as a jazz musician. His participation in *Lynyrd Skynyrd's "Last of the Street Survivors"* tour and the subsequent release of a CD and Blu-ray DVD demonstrates his versatility in adapting to different musical contexts. Jim has certainly left his mark on the music scene.

Furthermore, his teaching roles at various universities and institutions, including the Armed Forces School of Music, Old Dominion University, Hampton University, the College of William and Mary, and the Governor's School for the Arts, showcase his dedication to nurturing young talents and passing on his musical expertise.

Notably, his tenure as the Personnel Manager for the Virginia Symphony and his role as President of the Board of Directors of the Hampton Roads Chamber Players underscore his leadership and organizational skills within the music community.

Jim's rich musical journey encompasses a wide range of experiences and collaborations. We are so pleased to welcome him to the Local 125 Executive Board!



NEWS FROM THE AFL-CIO *Daily Brief*, Jan. 23, 2024...

American Federation of Musicians 'Prepared to Do Whatever It Needs' for AI Protections and Streaming Residuals

Top Cut:

After a year where entertainment industry workers on strike won powerful contract victories for writers and actors, the American Federation of Musicians (AFM) has now begun negotiations of its own with the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP).

Why It Matters:

AFM represents some 70,000 instrumental musicians working in orchestras, bands, clubs and theater who create the music we know and love for film, television, commercials and other mediums. And, much like its fellow union members in SAG-AFTRA and the Writers Guild of America (WGA), musicians are fighting for things like artificial intelligence (AI) protections, higher wages and residual payments for streaming content in their next contract.

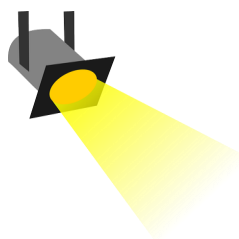
"Music is what gives our favorite movies and shows their soul, and these workers expect and deserve to be treated fairly and given the contract they've earned," said Tino Gagliardi, AFM president and chief negotiator.

"We are going into these negotiations in good faith, and we hope the AMPTP is doing the same."



AFM members walking the picket line in SOLIDARITY with SAG-AFTRA in Los Angeles, CA.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



Alexis Colner is the newly appointed principal harpist of the Virginia Symphony Orchestra in Norfolk, Virginia. Outside of her role at the VSO, Alexis has appeared as guest principal harp with the Minnesota Orchestra, Seattle Symphony, St. Louis Symphony, Kansas City Symphony, Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra and Omaha Symphony and has also performed in past seasons with the New York Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony and Seattle Opera. Alexis served as principal harpist of the Aspen Chamber Symphony in both the 2017 and 2018 summer seasons as a recipient of the Harp Fellowship. She has also spent summers at the Britt Music Festival, Artosphere, Spoleto Music Festival, Music Academy of the West and The Orchestra of the Americas.

Alexis holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Anthropology from USC and a master's degree in Harp Performance from The Juilliard School where she studied with New York Philharmonic principal harpist Nancy Allen.

Dedicated to spreading her love of the harp to the next generation, Alexis maintains a private studio and also serves on faculty at the Governor's School for the Arts in downtown Norfolk.

Notes from the Secretary/Treasurer...

DIRECTORY CHANGES:

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Wayla Chambo
222 W. 35th Street
Norfolk, VA 23504



RESIGNED:

Jocelyn Smith
Peter Greydanus

**Want to pay your annual dues with
a credit card?
Go to afm.org**

2024 Quarter 1 dues were due on **January 25th. If you haven't yet paid, please send it as soon as possible. Thank you!**



For Members Contributing to the AFM Pension Fund:

The American Federation of Musicians and Employers' Pension Fund (AFM-EPF) is committed to providing you with the knowledge and resources necessary to maximize your pension planning and benefits. For a direct link to the participant information section for quick reference, please visit <https://www.afm-epf.org/Participants/ParticipantInformation.aspx>