



NOVEMBER 2025

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

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING Tuesday, November 18th @ 7:30 PM Join us at the Union Hall or via Zoom

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



Click to Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88254397023?pwd=T5UHLxfvqjHYwkO6U9NIH8zfufGtWo.1>

Meeting ID: 882 5439 7023

Passcode: 938109



President's message...

Dear Members,

Happy Fall to everyone!

Have you ever played a gig where there was total disorganization and disrespectful behavior towards musicians? Probably all of us have. I, unfortunately, experienced this just a short time ago. The situation improved the following day and so did our working conditions, but they might not have without union representation. One of the core missions of the AFM is that we live and work in dignity. It seems like such a simple thing, but it has been a hard-

fought battle that continues today.

President Emeritus, John Lindberg has written a detailed history of our Local for this issue of the Rondo. It is a fascinating read. I think we should have it on the wall of the union hall.

At our last General Membership meeting Margaret Albrecht presented her report from the ICSOM conference. As someone who has attended the conference, I know the abundance of information and ideas you are presented with. The Local is proud to support our representation there. Margaret's written report can be found in this issue. Please take a moment to read.

I'm happy to report we will have another agreement with the Virginia Stage Company for their upcoming production of Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat. This is a valued partnership for our Local. I look forward to seeing another one hundred percent union ensemble in the pit.

On November 15 the Virginia Symphony will play a TORCH benefit concert for Lynnhaven River Now, an organization that works to restore and protect our waterways. Tom Reel is the founder of **TORCH** which stands for **Thanking Our Resident Community Heroes**. TORCH helps community organizations, supports our members, and shines goodwill upon all involved. Purchase your ticket for this event at vafest.org. The concert is on November 15 at 4:00 at the Harrison Opera House.

I would like to applaud the social activism of my fellow board members. Tom's Torch fundraiser, Scott dedication to Eastern Virginia Labor Federation, and many board members who turned out for the No Kings demonstrations. These wonderful humans care deeply for our community. It is an honor to serve with them.

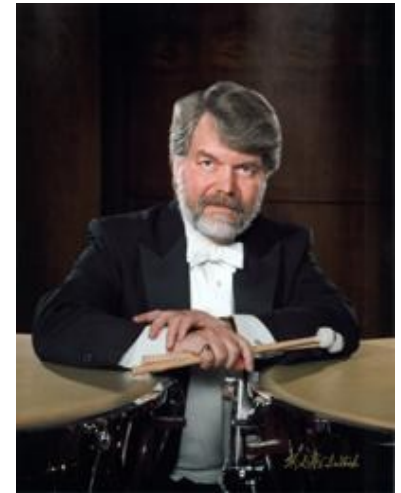
My final thought for today is a quote from one of my flute students. She said, "I'm excited for my future self to be able to play this" regarding learning a new and challenging piece of music. How amazing is that attitude? It has really stuck with me. Let us all be excited for our future selves.

In Solidarity, Joanne

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE RACIAL INTEGRATION OF AFM LOCAL 125

...or maybe not so brief

By John Paul Lindberg, President Emeritus Local 125



John Lindberg

To understand the complexity of this subject I think it important to start at the beginning, the very roots of our local. AFM 125 was chartered on November 1, 1900. We were the second local to receive membership in Virginia. Our 125th anniversary was on first of the month (11-1-2025). *Richmond Local 123 received their charter two days earlier.*

This was in the middle of the Jim Crow era. Minorities could not join their AFM locals in segregated localities or anywhere else where bigotry prevailed. It was not a national by-law, but locals had the right to audition members before their application was approved. The result of that policy should be obvious. Jim Crow laws (separate but equal) were the law of the land and remained so until the 60's & 70's. President Woodrow Wilson segregated the Armed Forces during WW1. This policy remained in force until President Harry Truman reversed the policy after WW2 in 1948. Soldiers of all races returning from the European theater of the war had experienced the free society of France and England before their return. When they re-entered the U.S.A. after the war, they were greeted by signs that read, BLACK TO THE LEFT, WHITE TO THE RIGHT.

Many black musicians stayed in New York to work in the clubs. They joined Local 802 and, after one year's probation, entered the AFM in full membership. As a few years passed many of these Local 802 members came back to the Hampton Roads area only to realize that Jim Crow was still enforced. They could not transfer their membership to Local 125. Rather than drop their membership in the AFM, they applied for a new local charter from the national. At their request the new local received the number 702. It was the closest number to 802, which was their local of entry.

I feel the turning point to this arrangement was when Esras Ben Lubin, a very fine jazz bassist, got out of the navy. He was working in some clubs in the area, and wishing to pursue a career in music, joined the union. I believe he was the first white artist to join Local 702. He was playing with black artists, and it made perfect sense to join the local to which they belonged. He had broken the color line.

From here it is conjecture on my part. I believe 702 was having some financial problems at the time as most small locals were, and since 702 was now integrated and 125 was not, it was a good time to discuss the merger of the two locals. Negotiations were started and it was agreed that the combined local would remain 125. In return, 702 would have representation on the local's executive board. As I remember it, there were at least 2 members from 702.

It needs to be stated that Local 199, from the Virginia Peninsula, also merged with 125 and the President of 199 was seated as the Vice President of the three combined locals.

All of this was done with the approval of the National office before other jurisdictions were forced to merge, thus integrating the entire AFM. Local 125 remained a singular rather than a hyphenated local. The AFM is an international labor organization but, to my knowledge, it had no effect in the Canadian provinces which never practiced Jim Crow.

On a personal note: I joined Local 60 in Pittsburgh, PA when I was 18 years old. That was 61 years ago. It is now Local 60-471. I had no idea I was joining a segregated organization. The first black member of the Pittsburgh Symphony was Paul Ross, a violinist, in 1968. That is two years after James Reeves, a bassist, integrated the Virginia Symphony in 1966.



Lynnhaven River Now Musicians of the Virginia Symphony Orchestra Benefit Concert

Join us for a joyful concert honoring the heroes who work to protect and restore our local waterways. This special performance celebrates Lynnhaven River Now, a nonprofit dedicated to restoring and protecting Virginia Beach waters and natural areas, ensuring clean and healthy waterways for wildlife and our community.

Experience the beauty and inspiration of music that reflects the flow, life, and vitality of rivers and water. Featuring music performed by talented Musicians of the Virginia Symphony Orchestra, this family-friendly event will uplift your spirits while highlighting the importance of preserving our natural treasures.

Bring your friends and family, enjoy the sounds of river-inspired music, and support the mission of Lynnhaven River Now. Together, we can celebrate the environment, our community, and the joy of music!

PROGRAM

HOSAY *Rivers of the Chesapeake*

1. *The Elizabeth*

SMETANA *Vltava (The Moldau)*, from *Má vlast*

Deep River, arr. Morton Gould

HANDEL *Suite No. 2 in D major, HWV 349*, from *Water Music*

STRAUSS *An der schönen blauen Donau (The Blue Danube)*

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 4 PM

HARRISON OPERA HOUSE, NORFOLK



TICKETS & INFO: VAFEST.ORG OR CALL 757-282-2822

**15%
Discount for
Local 125
Members**

Welcome Musicians Union 15% off



**PURE
LAGOS**



**Africa in
Norfolk!**



Pure Lagos African Art Gallery
251 W Bute Street, Suite A
Norfolk, VA 23510
757-944-8506
purelagos.com

**PURE LAGOS
is located on the 1st
floor of the
Union Hall**

THE FACES OF LOCAL 125: STRENGTH IN UNITY

Protests & Potluck

Linda Dennis & Judy Gutterman with Randi Weingarten (center), national president of the American Federation of Teachers at the rally to support AG Letitia James



Local 125 musicians (*mostly*) at the recent potluck dinner between rehearsals of the Virginia Symphony (below)



Scott Harris at the "No Kings" protest in VB



Jim Nesbit at the "No Kings" protest in VB



Linda Dennis at the rally to support Filipino Seafarers in Norfolk on 9/28/25



Spread the word...



LOCAL 125 FALL MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

Starting
September 1st



**Join Now!
Local & Federal Initiation
Fees Waived
Save \$90!
Join at AFM.org**

Annual Dues \$150
Questions? Email us at
afmlocal125@verizon.net

WHY JOIN THE UNION?

Joining a union means that you believe that **all musicians** and performers should be **treated with the dignity and respect** that the art form deserves, and together, we can have the **strength to uphold the standards** and values we expect.

Secretary/Treasurer's Notes...

DIRECTORY UPDATES:

REINSTATED

Christina Havens Byerly
Wilford Holcombe
John Vitale



NEW ADDRESS

Alexis Colner
108 Park Road
Portsmouth, VA 23707

Jeremy Garnett
104 Wilderness Lane
Williamsburg, VA 23188

Haley Schricker
426 Pembroke Ave., Apt. 2
Norfolk, VA 23507

SUSPENDED

Dan Knipple

EXPELLED

Christine Kilbride



CREDIT CARDS

Want to pay your dues online? Go to www.afm.org

The AFM mission statement:

- ♦ **We can live and work in dignity;**
- ♦ **Our work will be fulfilling and compensated fairly;**
- ♦ **We will have a meaningful voice in decisions that affect us;**
- ♦ **We will have the opportunity to develop our talents and skills;**
- ♦ **Our collective voice and power will be realized in a democratic and progressive union;**
- ♦ **We can oppose the forces of exploitation through our union solidarity.**



ICSOM Conference 2025 - Cleveland, OH

Report by Margaret Albrecht, Delegate

Tues 8/19: New Delegate Orientation

Wed- 8/20: Welcome and Introduction, Governing Board remarks, membership and officer reports, nominating committee reports, President and Chairperson Address, Player Conference reports, conference site selections

*** Toledo Symphony voted to become an ICSOM member! (39% salary increase by 2028)

*** 2024 conference minutes available on ICSOM website

***Treasurer report- ICSOM in sound financial standing. Peter De Boer stepped down as Treasurer (motion approved to elect him Treasurer Emeritus). Small general fund deficit (due to conference expenses) hefty surplus in Emergency Relief Fund (ERF)

- \$150K raised in ERF raised for wildfire impacted orchestras.
- discussion of re-allocating ERF funds or Call to Action to create a fund for ICSOM musicians impacted by ICE. (Proposed that each orchestra to give \$1k. If funds not used, the money will be returned to each orchestra). General fund \$400K ERF \$750K.

Player conference reports:

- copyright protection, intellectual property theft through AI, consider putting in protective language in next CBA.
- OCSOM: trump presidency takes too long for Canadian counterparts together work visas. This hurts everyone
- Sound recording labor agreement and Integrated Media Agreement both in negotiations (SSD resource center for copies)
- Theater musicians impacted by AI and canned music in pits. Also more and more shows originating off Broadway. New chapter added in Minneapolis.
- ROPA 96 orchestras represented. Calls to action. SW FL folded. Eastern Music Festival. (See ROPA notes).

Thursday 8/21:

Misconduct- AFM's Code of Conduct- how to report

*** www.afm.org/code-of-conduct

*** #Notme app

- reports can be anonymous
- chat feature for communication between reporter and investigator. Can upload supporting documents
- you can simply document something and save for the future without immediately reporting, in case someone changes their mind about launching investigation.

***RAINN- nation's largest anti-sexual violence organization. Provides training, crisis support, consultation and policy review Employers need to have a reporting mechanism in place and musicians need to know

- VSO should consider letting new hires and fellows know who functions as "HR"- include a welcome packet with CBA and important info???
- AFM/locals will pursue contractual violations if employer doesn't report
- internal union charges can be filed against an offending member
- when member is accused, we have an obligation to fairly represent. Suggested to include in next negotiations expanded language to include bullying, disrespectful behavior, retaliation etc. have a specific anti-bullying contract.

Tools for Difficult Conversations- Jessica Schmidt (Orchestrate Inclusion)

- focus on 'I' statements
- plan and prepare- think about what to say, how to say, where to say (neutral location- maybe not in workspace).
- sit in conversation. Practice curiosity not judgement -follow up with colleague - expect a lack of closure.

Fri 8/22: Milwaukee Symphony Audition and Tenure Process revamp

Key highlights- audition process

- solo rounds are screened
- audition committee, not Music Director, decides if there will be an ensemble round after final solo rounds
- for title positions, audition committee, not music director, determines if ensemble round is screened
- ensemble round performed with section musicians not serving on the committee- could be argument for diversifying our audition committee representation
- qualifying vote from MD of winner from candidates qualified by audition committee
- orchestra round- used if multiple qualifying candidates (I think this is in place of invitation for trial week?).

Key highlights- tenure process

- reduction from 18mo tenure process to 1 yr.
- audition committee continues as tenure committee
- written audition feedback provided to candidate prior to starting work
- Background checks of resumes (make sure of history of misconduct and also ensure denial of tenure elsewhere wouldn't affect candidate's audition or tenure process here- fresh start)
- view audition and tenure process as 2 halves of the whole. Tenure must be earned, but candidate needs to be set up for success. Concept of a "tenure buddy"- a tenured musician of similar title (principal candidate paired with principal tenure buddy, PS candidate paired with PS tenure buddy) to act as advocate/voice for candidate to the audition committee. Emphasis on frequent feedback throughout tenure process.
- tenure feedback- polling questionnaire sent to tenure committee. No anonymous comments
- Feedback is aggregated and shared with tenure committee chair- who decides what to share with probationary musician. When this aggregated info is shared, it is shared anonymously.
- Copy is sent to the union
- **Set feedback dates Nov 1- written feedback. May request meeting with MD Apr 1- written feedback and meeting with MD, PM and union rep June 1- final decision

Individual Agreements vs Collectively Bargained Individual Agreements

- not calling for the elimination of Individual Agreements, but that the Individual Agreements are collectively bargained for during negotiations. The hope here is to elevate all our colleagues contracts and provide transparency from management in what they are allowing NOT to diminish our colleague's worth.
- Librarians should be part of CBA

Ramifications of Trump Presidency

- reduction in available funding, budget bill (gutting of National Endowment for the Arts)
- ICE
- misinformation and manipulation of data (actions against media accounts) Weaponization of justice dept (paralysis of National Labor Relations Board, gutting of Federal Mediation (FMCS, DEI) SCOTUS shadow Docket
- Tariffs, Inflation, rising cost of living avg 18.6% tariff increase, costing households an avg of \$2000 in 2025 alone. **Musicians will need raises now more than ever!**
- low protections against AI
- denial of climate change ** look into contract language surrounding weather and force majeure

What can we do? In next negotiation round

- manage expectations among members (now may not be the time to push)
- more focus on increased cost of living and less on peer or-chestra comparisons
- organized labor can take the lead. Talk to people. Reach out to local gov. Officials
- rallies?
- partner with other AFL_CIO organizations in area (shipyard, electricians? Healthcare? Look up what other unions have a presence in our area. If we support them, they will support us)

Things to think about- Negotiations Workshop (ROPA)

- make sure orchestra has regular meetings, newsletters, social functions (so everyone is informed and on the same page)
- make sure local union is aligned/on same page for negotiation expectations and expenses
- 1 yr out form negotiations committee. Establish 1 spokesperson for committee to speak and report back (ensures professionalism, decorum and smooth communication)
- Establish subcommittees under OC or local union (action committee, outreach committee media committee)
- Ramp up social media presence. Garner public support ahead of time, especially if expecting contentious negotiations
- "Know your enemy"- request financial analysis of employer (\$850 cost split between AFM and union to use. Requested by local, requires 6 yrs of audited financials, 990s and employee compensation reports. Frequent communication with musician reps on board. Who is on your employer's bargaining team? Research Peer Orchestra contracts (helpful to see how certain problems have been solved and fundamentally what musicians want)
- 60 day notice to employer. F-7 to FCMS and state agency (deadline is 30 days before). Send certified return receipt
- ID organizations/ individuals in the community that the musicians could turn to for support or resources if bargaining turns sour (religious affiliations- all of the churches we play at, Labor council, Arts council, United Way, charitable organizations, media contacts, politicians-mayors of all the cities we service, businesses that are music or arts related Social Justice Organizations. Alumni of orchestra. If you have connections with big donors, apply strategic pressure, use hobbies you may have in common- golf outings to chat about what going on etc.)

When proposing:

- keep it short and sweet. Bulleted in contract order
- be purposefully vague- you want some wiggle room
- propose biggest asks first. Don't list too many easy, throw away items (or this may be the only concession you are able to negotiate!)

Tasks for me as delegate:

- update directory by November
- assess union feelings about higher strike fund payout through chosen (not imposed) dues increase
- wage chart

