



FEBRUARY 2026

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Tuesday, February 24th @ 7:30 PM

Join us at the Union Hall or via Zoom

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.

Click to Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85172453861?pwd=VuJ6s1W6BnTz1LJlj9wvTGgraGEySb.1>

Meeting ID: 851 7245 3861

Passcode: 333803

FIRST READING OF RESOLUTIONS

As we go to press with this RONDO, the Executive Board is discussing these changes without a recommendation. We may have one by 7:30 February 24th at the General Membership meeting. What is important is that we hear from you at the upcoming General Membership meeting for the first reading and then at the General Membership meeting in May for the second reading and final & binding vote.

#1 RESOLUTION FOR FIRST READING ON FEBRUARY 24th

WHEREAS racially segregated locals were not uncommon across the AFM for years and
WHEREAS many locals today reflect that history with hyphenated numbers and
WHEREAS Black Local 702 was an important part of the AFM for many years in southeast Virginia and
WHEREAS Local 125 merged voluntarily with Local 702 in 1966

RESOLVED that Local 125 recognize and honor that part of our history by incorporating 702 into our official designation as AFM Local 125-702 upon final approval of the AFM.

#2 RESOLUTION FOR FIRST READING ON FEBRUARY 24th

WHEREAS "Norfolk Musicians Association" fails to describe the full jurisdiction of Local 125 and
WHEREAS that jurisdiction extends from Williamsburg to the oceanfront and from the Eastern Shore of Virginia into North Carolina and
WHEREAS the term Hampton Roads describes a region around a specific historical part of the Chesapeake Bay that is central to our jurisdiction

RESOLVED that Local 125 change our name from "Norfolk Musicians Association" to "Hampton Roads Musicians' Association" upon final approval of the AFM.

The Second Reading and final vote is scheduled for the May 2026 General Membership Meeting.

President's message...

Greetings Local 125 members! We made it to February! Did you have any New Year's Resolutions? Are you continuing those resolutions in February? My annual resolution to read more is actually still going strong. One of the books I found while shopping in my own bookshelves is a book I bought for my son a few years ago but never read myself. If you haven't read The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini, I highly recommend it. This book is a powerful tale of two boys growing up in Afghanistan. It's a glimpse of Afghanistan beginning in the 1970s through to the Taliban takeover. I couldn't put it down and can't stop thinking about it.



One of my other New Year's Resolutions was to update Local 125's website. I thought it was a monumental task that required a computer whiz, but I found that I can update the site easily myself. Our website is [Norfolk Musicians' Association AFM Local 125 – Serving Professional Musicians since 1900](#). Here you can find a lot of useful and interesting information. Under the members section you will find the current price list and bylaws. You can access the members section with your AFM login information. I'm interested in adding a teacher database to our site to help people find our incredibly talented members. Many of you responded to my email questionnaire but if you haven't done so please go to this link [Teacher Database Survey](#) or scan the QR Code below. Once I hear from a significant number of you, I will post the database to the website.

I was reminded by updating the website that our Local is called the Norfolk Musicians' Association. The name does not really reflect the scope of Local 125's jurisdiction. The Executive Board proposes a change to call us the Hampton Roads Musicians' Association. This proposal is in addition to our proposed resolution to change our Local's name to Local 125-702 to honor our segregated black Local 702 that formed in 1946 and merged with Local 125 in 1966. Please read the proposed name change resolutions in this issue of the Rondo. Come to the **General Membership meeting on Tuesday February 24 at 7:30** to help us discuss this topic and more.

Please welcome our newest member of Local 125, **Sebastian Stoger**, principal cellist with the Virginia Symphony. Read more about Sebastian below.

I'm sure you all are worried about the situation at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. There are grave concerns about the musicians and staff that make their livelihood there and the many freelance musicians who depend on the work that is already less plentiful now that artists are cancelling performances. Union contracts need to be honored though that doesn't help freelancers. I have reached out to the DC Local to see what action we can take to support our fellow musicians in this uncertain time. We will let you know if there are ways we can show our support. Of course, we can and should let our voices be heard at the ballots.

In Solidarity,
Joanne

**ADD YOUR NAME TO THE TEACHER
DIRECTORY BY SCANNING
THIS CODE**



Meet our new member...

Native New Yorker and cellist, **Sebastian Stoger**, is a virtuosically passionate soloist, chamber musician, and orchestral musician who has performed at prestigious concerts, festivals, competitions throughout the world. Sebastian enjoys being an avid player of violin classical repertoire, jazz music, and a wide range of contemporary music. As one who grew up with intense musical training, he is committed to be an advocate for aspiring young artists through his performances and collaborations with educational programs. In April 2025, Sebastian won the Principal Cello position of the Virginia Symphony Orchestra.

In May 2022, Sebastian made his solo debut at Seiji Ozawa Hall with the Empire State Youth Symphony, premiering Fabrizio Cassol Concerto for Solo Cello, Electronics, and Orchestra. He has also made a variety of appearances as a soloist, from performing the Dvorak Concerto with conductor Stephen Czarkowsky and the Central Pennsylvania Symphony in Hummelstown, Pennsylvania to playing for President Biden at The White House as part of the St. Patrick's Day Luncheon in March 2024.

Supporting young emerging artists Sebastian has been a member of Omega Ensemble, playing sonatas and chamber music works throughout the New York City/Metropolitan area. He is also a Dacamera Young Artist Fellow in Houston, Texas, where he performs a variety of classical and contemporary repertoire, and serves as a teaching artist in the Houston Public Schools.

On the East Coast, Sebastian has performed in David Geffen Hall at Lincoln Center with the New York Philharmonic, playing works by Mozart. In the summer of 2024, he served as principal cellist of the League of Composers Orchestra in New York City.

In Summer of 2024, Sebastian became a member of the Verbier Festival Orchestra in Switzerland, collaborating with soloists Alisa Weilerstein and Yunchan Lim, and performing under conductors Sir Simon Rattle, Klaus Makela, Antonio Pappano, and Vasily Petrenko. Other festival credits include the Pacific Music Festival in Sapporo, Japan, where he performed with members of the Vienna Philharmonic and Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, and the Kneisel Hall Chamber Music Festival in Blue Hill, Maine.

Sebastian Stoger grew up in Manhattan, NYC. He began his cello studies starting at the age of 5 at the Special Music School, a public elementary, middle, and high school at the Kaufman Music Center, dedicated to providing young talents with serious musical training. At the age of 9, Sebastian won his first concerto competition. In May 2022, Sebastian was a semifinalist at the 2022 Washington International String Competition. In Spring 2017 he was named a National YoungArts Winner. Sebastian was also featured at the NPR Radio From The Top Show, where he received a Jack Kent Cooke Artist Award.

In May 2025, Sebastian graduated with his master's degree at The Shepherd School of Music at Rice University, where he studied with Brinton Smith. He completed his undergraduate studies at The Juilliard School under the tutelage of Joel Krosnick and Timothy Eddy.

Sebastian currently plays on a Gaetano Sgarabotto cello, generously loaned to him by Curtis Bryant Fine Cellos.



Celebrating Black History Month: A Local Icon



Robert Nathaniel Dett (1882-1943) was born in Drummondville, Ontario, Canada. Drummondville was originally founded by *freedom seekers*: people who had escaped from American slavery through the Underground Railroad. Nathaniel Dett's ancestors were freedom-seekers.

Dett took piano lessons when he was a child and went on to study music at the Oberlin Conservatory in Ohio. In fact, he was the first Black student to earn a Bachelor of Music degree there. He was a dedicated scholar and continued to study composition as a graduate student. He even went to Paris to study with Nadia Boulanger, one of the most famous composition teachers in the world.

Dett became a college professor, teaching at many schools throughout his career, including the **Hampton Institute in Hampton, Virginia** where he taught from 1913 until 1932. The Hampton Institute was an HBCU (Historically Black College or University), a college founded by and for African-Americans in the 1800s. Today the Hampton Institute is called **Hampton University**.

Dett was a choir director at the Hampton Institute. He conducted their college choir, the Hampton Singers, and he helped make the group famous. The Hampton Singers performed Spirituals and other music by Black composers, spreading awareness of this music in international tours, and singing for the then-President of the United States, Herbert Hoover.

[The Nathaniel Dett Chorale](#) remains an essential force in preserving and promoting Dett's legacy. Recent performances of his choral works across North America have sparked renewed interest in his contributions to African-American music, especially in HBCUs where his influence remains strong.

Greetings AFM Local 125 members!

I had the opportunity in November to attend Melinda Whitley's seminar on conflict resolution and communication styles, and I spoke with her about the union steward "hat" yesterday. What I gleaned from the class and our conversation is that there are different styles of conversation.

We can be inclusive, open, and creative about navigating differences and conflicts. A useful communication technique is to "mirror" what we hear others say by repeating their words to clarify what was said. Also, we can acknowledge another person's feelings and emotions. What I'm discovering is that even with conflicts and disagreements in the workplace, we all have the ability to de-escalate heated debates with a non-reactive approach and pointing to our common goals. In an orchestra that is to make music together. We won't always agree with our colleagues, but we can show respect and concern. It is too easy in our work environment to be competitive and dismissive of others. Active listening, mirroring and courtesy tend to make disparities seem smaller. While there is chain of command to be honored, we are all working towards the same goal. Making great music!



When it comes to an insurmountable problem, we have our contractual language to turn towards. Articles 16 and 17 in our master agreement covers this. I also uncovered a resource for dealing with conflict and disagreements in an app called "Waking Up" created by Sam Harris. A lady named Diane Musho Hamilton has a series in the app called simply "Resolving Conflict". She also has a series of books she has written on the subject. "Compassionate Conversation, how to listen and speak from the heart", is one such book. Available on Amazon, I'm ordering it. I recommend the lectures on the Waking Up app. Very illuminating.

The only other thing I have is that the Eastern Virginia Labor Federation has endorsed candidate Elaine Luria for the second congressional district. She has the support of Governor Abigail Spanberger and is committed to repealing the commonwealth's "Right to Work" law. Jenn Kiggans was not helpful for labor causes. Melinda and I have made a commitment to stay in touch on the union shop steward work.

Scott Harris
Union steward for the Virginia Symphony

Warm up with Tom's hot chocolate recipe...

- **One packet SWISS MISS hot chocolate mix**
- **One cup 2% milk**
- **Dark chocolate candy bar (max cocoa % as you can stand)**
- **Dr. Stoner's Smokey Herb Infused Whisky**
- **Mini marshmallows**

DIRECTIONS

- **Heat milk**
- **Stir in Swiss Miss**
- **Add chocolate, whisky and marshmallows to taste**
- **Mix well and ENJOY!**



Welcome Musicians Union 15% off



Africa in Norfolk!

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

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.....

NEW MEMBERS

Sebastian Stoger
Jesse Burdick
Doug Earlenbaugh

REINSTATED

Rachel Ordaz

A few members haven't
paid their Annual Dues
that were due on 1/25.
Please, avoid suspension
by paying ASAP. THX!



DIRECTORY CHANGES

Jesse Burdick— Banjo, Guitar,
Mandolin, Upright Bass
302 Ridgeland Drive
Smithfield, VA 23430
(757)777-2204
jesse@riverside-studios.com

Sebastian Stoger—Cello
125 W. Tazewell St., Unit 106
Norfolk, VA 23510
(347)380-0256
sebastiancello@gmail.com

Doug Earlenbaugh—Saxophones, Flute
4600 Paul Revere Road
Virginia Beach, VA 23455
(757)761-5582
earlenbaughd@gmail.com

Laura Leisring
1490-5A Quarterpath Rd., #344
Williamsburg, VA 23185

Lui Berz: luiberz88@gmail.com
Eldon Sully: besully926@verizon.net
Bruce Hornsby: kyhornsby@cox.net
Beth Argiro: Beth@andiloveherviolins.com
Mark Henry: (757)439-0612

RESIGNED

Scott McElroy

SUSPENDED

Lauren Avery Staples
Nate Kinnison

EXPELLED

Daniel Knipple

DECEASED

Dennis Honan

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.**



AROUND TOWN WITH LOCAL 125

Executive Board holiday gathering



Tom's shoes



The TORCH concert was held on November 15th at the Harrison Opera House. Pictured here from left to right: Dianna Starkey, Marketing Director of the VA Arts Festival (Co-organizer); Tom Reel (the Visionary); Karen Forget, Executive Director of Lynnhaven River NOW (the Community Heros); Rebecca Gilmore, Local 125 Board member and VSO cellist.



Scott attended the ICE OUT! rally for Renee Good and Alex Pretti in downtown Norfolk.



Want to share pics of your gigs or events? Send photos to Linda at afmlocal125@verizon.net