

# Those Pesky Librarians

BY KAREN SCHNACKENBERG

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It might seem comical to imagine 40 orchestra librarians gathered together for three days to talk about the issues of their profession. I've laughed along with the quip more times than I can count—"Orchestra librarians have an annual conference? Boy, that must be a wild time!"

Another image of orchestra librarians is that we are often pesky people who bother conductors, orchestra players and managements alike with seemingly unimportant details. Details like getting the list of concert repertoire; determining whether or not the orchestra owns that music and in what edition; or if a set needs to be purchased; or if it is not in the public domain and needs to be rented, and from which publisher; then ordered, received and checked to see that all parts are there and in what condition.

Details like communicating with the operations department, cleaning and repairing the parts as necessary; proofing for errors; checking for rehearsal letters and measure numbers and inserting them as needed; coordinating with the music director or conductor about markings, cuts and/or inserts; doing the markings cuts, and inserts; coordinating the bowings and the string principals; putting the music into the individual fold-individual folders by instrument and string stand; and making it available to the players for practice.

But it's the overwhelming responsibility for these details that dominates a librarian's life—and that provided the original motivation to form the Major Orchestra Librarians' Association (MOLA) as a network of support.

This past spring MOLA held its 12th Annual Conference in Dallas, Texas. I was honored to be the host, along with my associate Mark Wilson, on behalf of the Dallas Symphony. Fellow Texas librarians Greg Vaught (San Antonio Symphony), Kristi Sloniger (Houston Grand Opera), Peter Conover (Houston Symphony) and Mike McMurray (Houston Symphony) all helped coordinate the conference activities. Braving Texas tornado season, colleagues traveled mostly south from all over North America and one member even made the trip from Rotterdam to participate and enjoy some Lone Star hospitality (and salsa!).

In addition to librarians representing member orchestras, a number of guests attended including non-member librarians, publisher representatives, AFM representatives, and guest speakers. Participants were welcomed by Dr. Eugene Bonelli, President of the Dallas Symphony Association, and Mark Melson, Director of Orchestra Operations. The annual OLIS training seminar (specialized, repertoire-driven database) was headed by Heather Dinwiddle, Director of Information Services at the American Symphony Orchestra League. Other events included the annual banquet dinner and a Dallas Symphony Orchestra Subscription Classics performance.

## Music of Many Cultures

Following the business meeting and election of officers, a variety of

presentations was made, including those related to the conference theme of cultural diversity. The main conference motif was chosen in response to the current industry-wide discussions of "multi-culturalism" and the symphony orchestra's future in the next century. While

others in the symphony organization try to make the music more accessible to broader audiences, the librarian has to actually find and prepare new and obscure works for performance once the repertoire has been decided. We are often asked what is available for a certain instrumentation or by specific composers, and the questions frequently become even more direct—"Do you know this music? Is it any good?" Having up-to-date and reliable information is vital in our jobs, so that those who ask these questions can be confident in the answers we give.

One particularly thoughtful session in this area was given by Christopher Wilkins, Music Director of the San Antonio Symphony. "The Philosophy and Presentation of a Diverse Repertoire" went behind concert logistics and gave us an insight into how Wilkins incorporates his vision of the orchestra's message into its perfor-

mances for audiences in San Antonio. The orchestra is actively commissioning and developing works that have a foundation in the Hispanic community, and uses the elements of multi-media, cultural themes and local artists to strengthen the appeal.

Other reports focused on important resources for music written by Latin American, Native American, Texan and women composers. Guest orchestra librarian Peter Backman-Moore gave a comprehensive presentation on the Center for Black Music Research at Columbia College in Chicago, as well as other sources for African-American music.

As usual, members gave reports on the areas and issues we deal with daily. Those discussions focused on such areas as copyright, grand rights, public domain materials, editions, errata, and sharing stories on how we deal with being the musical information source throughout our organizations.

## Union Do's

Important aspects of the librarian's professional life were addressed by AFM representatives Lew Waldeck and Jack Furlong in a

session entitled "The Librarian and the AFM—An Historical Perspective." Waldeck, former head of the AFM Symphonic Services Division, spoke eloquently about the Federation's long-held view that the librarian is a member of the orchestra doing musician work and, as such, should be covered under the orchestra's master agreement. He stressed that the union continues to fight for the librarian's position, even in cases where it has been taken away from the contract, or was never included.

Jack Furlong, Supervisor of Music Preparation in the AFM's West Coast office, focused his remarks on the librarian's status in regard to payments for television and recording services. We learned that if an orchestra is a signatory to the AFM national recording agreements, the librarian is to be paid the prevailing rates for any of these media services, just as the players and copyists are paid.

When this point was made both AFM representatives were surprised to discover that many orchestra librarians are not being paid what they are entitled to be paid for media services. Among the reasons that the librarians in attendance had received from their orchestras for not being paid properly were that the media services are considered part of the librarian's "regular duties" as a salaried employee; or

the music was prepared originally for prior performances; or the librarian is not a member of the bargaining unit; or is not a member of the union. In all cases, according to both Furlong and Waldeck, none of these reasons are valid if the orchestra is a signatory to any of the national agreements. If the librarian is present at the session he or she is to be paid the additional rates; if the music was prepared for prior performance the librarian is to be paid under the "new use" provisions of the particular agreement, as are the players and copyists.

### Closing Time

The conference closed with a look at MOLA's future role as a supporting network for orchestra librarians (there are now over 50 member orchestras in the U.S., Canada, and Europe), a source of information, and a strong group that can effect positive changes in the quality of published orchestral materials. A resolution was passed to have at least one librarian attend future player conferences to facilitate communication between librarians and their orchestras, and to let those conferences know what we are doing on behalf of the orchestra musicians to improve the quality of materials from which they perform. Next year's conference was

set for the spring of 1995, to be hosted by the St. Louis Symphony. And the meeting was adjourned—not a moment too soon—the tornadoes began rolling in before the planes could take off!

Besides learning what a privilege it was to host the conference (and learning that I never want to do it again!). I've learned something else since joining this organization five years ago, orchestra librarians may sometimes be peculiar and pesky, but I've also found them to be very intelligent, talented, resourceful, resilient and funny individuals who do enormous amounts of work. I am proud to call them my colleagues.

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