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UNITY • HARMONY • ARTISTRY

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## ***AFM Expresses Disappointment in Suspension of Syracuse Symphony Orchestra Season***

The American Federation of Musicians (AFM) is disappointed in the decision of the Syracuse Symphony Orchestra (SSO) board of directors to suspend symphony operations. All SSO employees, including 63 core musicians, 16 part-time musicians, and 4 substitute musicians, along with most of the administrative staff, were laid off effective Sunday, April 3. In addition, the board voted to file for Chapter 7 bankruptcy.

"Management's shutdown of the Syracuse Symphony Orchestra is a loss for SSO musicians, for their patrons and audiences, for the entire community, and for arts lovers everywhere," says AFM President Ray Hair. "The closure points to a systemic failure to manage that has adversely affected the livelihoods of orchestra members and has silenced another great orchestra."

The SSO has been plagued with financial difficulties for the past eight months. Since July, SSO members have made concessions worth \$720,000. The SSO's situation became dire at the end of January, when management staff went public with the news that the orchestra was in danger of shutting down and launched a fundraising campaign called "Keep the Music Playing." In addition, management came to musicians for more concessions, this time asking for \$1.3 million.

The musicians countered with an offer that would save the SSO \$715,000. However, management threatened that without \$1.3 million in salary cuts from musicians, the board would likely vote to suspend operations. With base salaries already below the \$30,000 range, musicians determined that they could no longer afford such drastic cuts to their salaries and rejected the proposal.

After the decision to suspend the season was made official, musicians were informed that the only basis by which the board would restart the season would be if the orchestra were to immediately accept a cut in season length from 40 to 30 weeks through 2012, with 12 fewer core musicians. Unwilling to lose 12 of their colleagues, the musicians instead proposed a plan that would recover losses over time through a contract extension; the proposal, however, was immediately rejected by the board.

"Suspending symphony operations indefinitely is a curious way to thank our community for its generous support of the 'Keep The Music Playing' campaign during the past two months, as contributions and ticket revenue will not be returned," states AFM Local 78 President Philip MacArthur. "We are presently being confronted by an arrogant and clueless board which defiantly refuses to support and promote its own orchestra, even in its 50th anniversary season, choosing to kill it instead. Their actions are a far cry from the role of community stewardship with which this SSO board has been entrusted."

### **ABOUT THE AFM**

Founded in 1896, the American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada (AFM), AFL-CIO, is the largest organization in the world dedicated to representing the interests of professional musicians. With more than 90,000 members, the AFM represents all types of professional musicians, including those who record music for sound recordings, film scores, videogames, radio, television and commercial announcements, as well as perform music of every genre in every sort of venue from small jazz clubs to symphony orchestra halls to major stadiums. Whether negotiating fair agreements, protecting ownership of recorded music, securing benefits such as health care and pension, or lobbying legislators, the AFM is committed to raising industry standards and placing the professional musician in the foreground of the cultural landscape.

**For more information, visit the Web site at [www.afm.org](http://www.afm.org).**

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