



Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra Cancels Two Concerts Due To Musicians' Strike

FORT WORTH, TX – September 14, 2016 – The Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra Association (FWSOA) announced today the cancellation of upcoming concerts through September 25 due to the ongoing strike by its musicians. The canceled concerts include *The Music of David Bowie*, scheduled to be performed Saturday, September 24 at Bass Performance Hall, and a community concert, scheduled to be performed Sunday, September 25 at Arborlawn United Methodist Church. No other FWSOA concerts are affected at this time. If this changes, the FWSOA will immediately communicate with its patrons.

“It is with deep regret that we had to cancel these additional concerts,” stated FWSOA President and CEO Amy Adkins. “We recognize the inconvenience and disappointment this causes our patrons, and we appreciate their patience during this difficult period.”

The FWSOA will notify ticket holders immediately regarding options for handling unused tickets. Patrons are encouraged to hold onto their tickets and wait for notification before calling the ticket office. Information regarding the concert cancellations is available at www.fwsymphony.org.

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Background and FAQ Regarding Negotiations

What is the general disagreement?

Since June 2015, the FWSOA management and Union have been discussing the Orchestra’s precarious financial condition. Financial records documenting the condition have been provided to the Union. The disagreement is over how to address the financial condition. The Union has asked the Association to spend more on musician salaries and borrow money that we would have no means of paying back. Management maintains that there are short and long term solutions. In the short term, the solution must be two-fold: new revenue generation and cost-cutting measures. Simply put, in the short term we must turn to our musicians for a portion of our solution. In the long term, the solution is to raise endowment funds which produce the returns necessary to stabilize our institution, while enabling us to provide pay increases to our musicians by the end of the contract.

Why is the FWSO facing such serious financial challenges?

For many years, the Orchestra has been combating deficits caused by external factors. For the current and future seasons, we project a deficit of nearly \$700,000 on a budget of \$12 million. Corporate giving is significantly down due to mergers, acquisitions, and changing giving priorities. Local government giving is a fraction of its previous levels. The downturn in oil and gas has negatively impacted the level of philanthropic gifts. Meanwhile, expenses have been on the rise. Recognizing that the issue is acute, we are asking the musicians to help in the short term to preserve the Orchestra’s future.

What is being asked of the musicians?

The FWSOA's final offer is identical to what the Union tentatively agreed to on August 31 during federal mediation. It calls for a four-year contract that incorporates a reduction in the number of paid weeks from 46 to 43 in the first two years of the contract, increasing to 44 paid weeks in years three and four. The terms would result in an approximate 6.5% reduction in annual pay in the first year, with restoration in years two and three. In the fourth year, the Association has agreed to a wage increase that would result in a musician earning approximately 3.5% more than their current wage.

How much do musicians earn?

The current minimum salary of an FWSO musician is \$54,953, and the average salary of an FWSO musician is \$60,564. At this time, musicians are paid for 46 weeks annually, which includes 42 days of paid vacation, as well as many other benefits including generous sick leave and pension contributions. Currently, 46% of the Orchestra's \$12 million budget goes directly to musician salaries and benefits, a percentage competitive with orchestras of a similar size.

Didn't the musicians already take pay cuts?

During the recession, the musicians accepted salary reductions in 2010. Since that time, musicians have received increases in wages and benefits in 2012, 2014, and 2015 totaling approximately 5.5%.

Is management being asked to take cuts, too?

FWSOA President and CEO Amy Adkins has offered to accept a pay cut at the same percentage rate as the musicians. The administrative staff has endured layoffs for positions that have not been restored, and contributions to the staff pension plan have been frozen since 2009.

Can the short term financial needs be met by other means?

In the short term, the concessions being asked of the musicians only address half of the deficit, and the FWSOA must raise hundreds of thousands of new dollars from fundraising and ticket sales. Along with the musician concessions, targeted and innovative marketing and fundraising plans are in place to secure the funds necessary to enable us to continue to pay our bills.

Press Contact

Tamara Clement

Vice President of Marketing

Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra

tclement@fwsymphony.org

817-665-6500