

Dallas Fort Worth Professional
Musicians Association
1939 Stadium Oaks Court
Arlington, TX 76011

Why We Belong

Messages From Our Members

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UNION MYTHS DEBUNKED

By Jennifer Garner, Esq.

Jennifer Garner is a violinist with the Richardson Symphony Orchestra and is an attorney with the Kellett Law Firm in Dallas.

Myth #1: I can't afford to join the Union.

TRUTH: You can't afford not to join the Union. Union members get higher-paying jobs. Union members are paid travel expenses and mileage. Union members have a 100% employer-paid *PENSION!* What non-union employer cares what quality of life you will have in retirement?

Many economists estimate that the average wage earner works from January 1 to the end of May just to pay federal income taxes. Even if you only work part time, your Union membership will probably pay for itself by Martin Luther King Day! Furthermore, the Union has improved the lives of all working musicians, both members and nonmembers. So, whether you are a Union member or not, you are getting at least some benefit of our bargain--you should be paying your share of the cost.

Myth #2: If I join the Union, I won't be able to keep my current jobs.

TRUTH: Chances are, your current employers can't replace you for less than scale wages. With very few exceptions, all of the competent musicians in the area who are legally authorized to work are earning Union scale. You should be, too.

American Federation of Musician Bylaws prohibit Union members from working for less than the applicable minimum compensation established for the engagement by the Union Local. Wherever there is a strong Union, like we have in Dallas/Fort Worth, you have leverage to demand scale. Your professional colleagues *cannot* do your job for a cut rate.

On the other hand, even if your current employers do refuse to pay minimum scale, once you start getting Union jobs, you may not want to keep your current engagements anymore.

Myth #3: If I join the Union, I will have to do what the Union officers tell me to do.

TRUTH: The role of the Union officers is to support and implement various plans of action as determined by the members based upon those members' articulation and prioritization of their needs and wants. The Union officers do not dictate to the membership what their priorities ought to be. The members of the Union themselves must communicate with each other and come to a consensus about what is necessary and what is aspirational for improving their working lives.

UNION MYTHS DEBUNKED (cont.)

A consensus is not always unanimous. It is important to listen to minority views. However, in order to achieve any progressive benefit in the workplace, it is essential for the workplace unit to speak with one voice. Unionism sometimes requires getting behind your colleagues even if you would have things a different way.

Myth #4: If I join the Union, my employer will look down on me.

TRUTH: Your employer will respect you for standing up for yourself. Employers often express a negative attitude about Unions, because we force them to give you a fair deal, and sometimes that costs them more than what they have been giving you in the past. Even so, the rancor is really about their having to treat you as an equal in the bargaining process, as opposed to their being able to subjugate you entirely to their agenda.

By law, employers are prohibited from discriminating on the basis of Union membership and/or Union activity. If you do get fired, demoted, or are otherwise retaliated against because you joined the Union, you should let the Union know immediately. We have attorneys who will help you, and all legal fees and costs will be paid by the Union.

What myth is keeping you from joining the Union? Get accurate information. Talk to professional musicians about the Union. Call the Local. There is no good reason not to join today!

Union improved our pay for Josh Groban gig

By Paul Capehart

My name is Paul Capehart. I am a horn player and a member of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra. I was engaged to perform a concert at American Airlines Center in March as part of Josh Groban's back-up orchestra. When I didn't recognize the name of the orchestra contractor, I called the Musicians' Union to verify whether or not the contractor was legitimate. For a sold out arena show like Groban's, I wanted to make sure that I'd be receiving Union scale and pension benefits for the engagement. Also, I was very concerned because the rehearsal was to begin in three hours and the show was set for 8:00 pm that evening.

Our Union representative immediately called the tour's contractor in Detroit and determined that the wages and conditions offered for the engagement were below those considered acceptable in Dallas. Our Union advised the tour that unless a valid musicians' union contract was signed in advance of the services, guaranteeing payment of Union scale and pension contributions to all musicians in the orchestra, there would be no back-up orchestra for the show.

Members of the orchestra and I stood at the stage door prior to the rehearsal and watched as our Union representative met with the contractor's agent and obtained a contract for the gig and a pension payment on our behalf. I know that I received at least 20% more for that job because my Union went to bat for all of us. We each received a 10% pension contribution that never would have been paid without the Un-

ion's quick response to my unexpected phone call.

Because of decisive action by our Union, the contractor for Josh Groban's national tour was unable to low-ball us on the money and leave town without paying the pension benefits that we were entitled to. The Union saw to it that we were paid correctly and treated with the dignity and respect that we deserved. It was a better gig because of that.

None of us could have done it alone. We did it together through the Union. There is safety in numbers. Please join with us today. When you do, you'll make the world a better place for professional musicians.

Union Forces Bar Owner to Pay Up

Jim Suhler is one of the hardest-rocking musicians around. He fronts his own all-union blues band, Monkey Beat, playing joints all over town when he's not on the road as lead and rhythm guitarist with George Thorogood and the Destroyers.

On Friday night, February 3, Jim Suhler and Monkey Beat finished their gig at Hot Rods and Hoggs, a biker bar on Watson Road just south of Randol Mill in Arlington. Jim and his band were packing up and looking to pick up their money when the bartender who booked the gig as well as a prior date played at the club in October 2005, told Jim there was a problem.

"The clubowner was with his biker buddies, motioned me over and said that he had decided to pay \$575 on Friday nights instead of the \$800 I

was supposed to get. When I complained, he offered me \$400 and told me to take it or get out. It was an intimidating experience."

Jim called Local 72-147 on Monday morning. "I had Jim go straight to the bank and cash the club's check, even though it was short," said union president Ray Hair. We sent a demand letter to the clubowner for the difference with a deadline of ten days to pay in full. When the deadline passed without payment, we filed suit against the clubowner of Hot Rods and Hoggs on behalf of Jim Suhler and Monkey Beat." Hair said.

Judge Linda Davis set the trial for September 13 at 3:00pm in Tarrant County Justice Court No. 2 in Arlington. Local 72-147 member and attorney Pat Glynn represented Suhler. Just minutes before the trial was to begin, the clubowner who months before had refused pay the band as agreed, appeared and settled the case.

"He came in, opened up his wallet, pulled out the cash, signed Pat Glynn's papers, and walked out without a word," Jim Suhler said. "It was worth the wait. We never would have gotten our money without the union's help. I'll always be a member," he said.

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