

Longy Faculty Union Fights Administration's Unilateral Decisions

On March 5, the faculty members of the Longy School of Music were informed that they would each soon receive a letter indicating whether or not they would continue to hold their teaching positions during the 2010-2011 school year. They were told that there would be a "realignment of faculty" due to a possible merger between the Cambridge, Massachusetts, conservatory and Bard College in New York City.

About a week later, the music educators began to receive their letters of fate. Thirty-one contracts were not renewed; six teachers were granted emeritus status (which, in this case, was a glorified way of being fired); nine were assigned to work exclusively with Longy's community programs for children and adults studying nonprofessionally; 46 were assigned exclusively to the conservatory; and 87 saw no change in their status.

The decision to reduce staff came only two months after the Longy faculty voted to join the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) Massachusetts. Clayton Hoener, an instructor at Longy, president of the newly created Longy Faculty Union, and member of AFM Local 9-535 (Boston, MA),

says he believes "part of the tactic of the administration has been to create this turmoil at the very beginning of our becoming a union."

Hoener adds that the decision to unionize was made because of an ongoing "lack of clear and honest communication from the administration." That lack of communication has continued to be at the heart of the issue over management's unilateral decision to downsize the staff. For example, it is still unclear why faculty members are already being let go, when no agreement between Longy and Bard has yet been finalized. "It's a question that we are in the process of asking, and administration has been very slow to respond with complete and written information," says Hoener. "We're at the table now, but things have been quite slow moving, with big gaps between sessions."

With course assignments taken away from long-time faculty members who helped to develop those courses, and students being left without the teachers they specifically came to the school to study with, Hoener says that the explanations the administration has offered are unacceptable. "The reasons seem to be multi-faceted, and the logic skewed," he says. "They're claiming management rights, which we whole-heartedly deny and refute. They're also claiming a financial crisis, but they aren't saving any money by doing this, because the part-time teachers they've let go are only paid per service."

Hoener says that Longy Faculty Union has been actively working with students, parents, and alumni to bring this situation to light. The group has been leafleting, is in touch with state representatives and city counselors, and is planning community events to raise awareness. Some Longy students have contacted AFT Massachusetts to see if there is anything they can do to keep their teachers on as faculty members.

Longy Faculty Union worries that, without open lines of communication between faculty and administration, and without an agreement that everyone is satisfied with, the reputation of the school may be in jeopardy. "We have to make people aware that, with the decisions that the administration have made, Longy will most likely lose the kind of identity it's had in the past—the identity that the teachers have worked so hard to create over the decades," says Hoener.

Local 1000 Comments on WV Mine Disaster

by John McCutcheon, President of Local 1000

On behalf of the membership of American Federation of Musicians Local 1000 (Nongeographic), I want to extend our condolences to the families of the miners lost in the disaster at the Upper Big Branch (UBB) Mine in Montcoal, West Virginia. The 29 miners who lost their lives, their families, and their entire community are in our prayers and in our thoughts.

But condolences are not nearly enough of a response to this preventable tragedy. Men and women working in 21st century America should not have to worry that there is no recourse for their concerns about workplace safety. For years, the Upper Big Branch Mine and its owner, Massey Energy Company, have been cited for numerous violations, especially for high levels of methane and coal dust, the frequent cause of the kinds of explosions that occurred at UBB. Even in news reports, surviving UBB miners asked for anonymity when relating past safety concerns for fear of losing their jobs. Non-union miners have no protection in such matters. And nonunion mines have no leverage for pressing for the safety of those who mine our coal. To put this into perspective, the miners who died at the Sago, West Virginia, mine in January 2006 were working in a nonunion mine on a federal holiday. There wasn't a union miner in America working that day until they reported for the rescue team at Sago.

Nor are words of outrage a sufficient response to West Virginia's latest sorrow. We at Local 1000 pledge our membership in support of organizing drives in our nation's coalfields. We will be there, both in spirit and in person, to walk the lines, to play at the rallies, and to support our sisters and brothers in their efforts to save their families, save their jobs, and as has been proven to be literally the case, save their lives.

We call on all our brothers and sisters in the American Federation of Musicians, all union members across this great nation, and all people of good will to pledge the same. We can help prevent future disasters by helping workers organize and win the kind of protection only unions can give working people. It's been proven that the companies won't do it. It's been proven the government can't do it. And history has proven that we can do it.

Solidarity forever!

Special Send-Off



Local 47 member Ed Vodicka (accordion), President Vince Trombetta (sax), and member Jack Feerman (trumpet) surprised Local 47 President Emeritus Max Herman at LAX March 17.

At 6:50 a.m. on St. Patrick's Day morning, Local 47 (Los Angeles) musicians surprised Local 47 President Emeritus and AFM Executive Officer Emeritus Max Herman with a mini concert at the United Airlines gate at LAX. Donning the appropriate bright green shirts, Local 47 member Ed Vodicka (accordion) and Life Member Jack Feerman (trumpet) serenaded Herman with a lively set, and current Local 47 President Vince Trombetta even joined in on sax for an impromptu jam.

United Airlines put on the festivities to thank Herman for being a loyal United customer for nearly seven decades, having first flown the airline in 1941. Herman spent the several phases of his professional life busily flying from coast to coast during his stellar career as the first trumpeter for many top name bands of the Swing Era, including the Bob Crosby Orchestra; as music publisher behind Fiesta Music and Herman Music; and as president of Local 47 from 1973 to 1982, for which he is credited for many union advances.

Herman was on his way to Washington, D.C., to attend a ceremony promoting his grandson to the rank of admiral in the US Coast Guard, in which Herman also served during World War II. "Congratulations are in order to Max's grandson, and as always, we wish Max and his family nothing but the very best," says Trombetta.

Haiti Jazz Foundation Organizes Fund

Haitian musicians affected by the January earthquake will receive some relief, thanks to a support fund created by the Haiti Jazz Foundation. Funds that were originally intended for the fourth Port au Prince International Jazz Festival in Haiti, which has been postponed until 2011, will now be reallocated toward the support fund.

Months after the devastating earthquake, many musicians in Haiti are still unable to work, yet the ability to make music is necessary for cultural continuity and the economic recovery of the country. "Haiti's reconstruction plan *has* to include art and culture at a significant level, as art is part of what makes every Haitian," says Milena Sandler, a representative of the Haiti Jazz Foundation. "Food for the body is essential, but so is food for the soul and the mind."

Financial aid will be distributed to affected musicians on a per case basis. To make a donation to the support fund, send checks to: Haiti Jazz Foundation, 12020 SW 93 St., Miami, FL 33186.