



INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF MUSICIANS

2nd International Orchestra Conference

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Final Declaration

I. ORCHESTRA FINANCING

1.1 Public funding / private funding in the current economic environment

- In several countries with a symphonic tradition, a number of orchestras are threatened with budgetary cuts, downsizing or closure. The reasoning behind these decisions may vary, but the financial crisis is currently being used as an additional argument to severely reduce the public and private contribution to Culture and the Arts.
- Although orchestras should not be disconnected from the rest of the economy, policy makers and private sponsors must see the big picture and bear in mind their social and cultural responsibilities to keep musical institutions alive and preserve them for future generations as a precious gift, making this world a better place.
- At the same time, keeping orchestras relevant to the quality of life in the communities, even when resources are declining, is a priority now more than ever.

1.2 Interdependence of stakeholders within the economy of live music

- When decisions are considered that may impact an orchestra's ability to fully accomplish its role and mission, it is essential to involve the other actors of the live performance sector and interact with the other industries concerned, so as to take account of all dimensions of the live music sector.
- The degree of support is directly proportionate to the level of positive impact on local and national economies (tourism, restaurants and bars, instrument makers, record producers...).

1.3 Visionary orchestra management

- The orchestra's role is manifold. It may be regarded as a pillar of cultural heritage as well as a place for musical creativity and innovation. A relevant benchmarking of its activity and success must take due account of its many dimensions: not only its average audience level but also its contribution to the creation of new works or its capacity to reach a wide cross-section of the public.
- The orchestra management is the interface between the institution's human resources, its financial partners and the audience, which involves specific skills, know-how and experience with respect to each of these aspects. It must also ensure that the organization adapts itself successfully to the digital era while respecting the musicians' intellectual property rights.
- Today, any orchestra, whatever its reputation, could be suddenly faced with a struggle for survival. It is the responsibility of the manager to be imaginative, creative, innovative, so that the orchestra be perceived as a vital component of society.
- The orchestra's ever changing environment requires a renewed relationship between the management and the musicians that assures an inclusive partnership in governance.

II. HEALTH, RISK PREVENTION & WELFARE

2.1 Towards efficient risk prevention policies

- Progress has been made in the field of risk prevention in professional orchestras. However, it is still too often the case that musicians are exposed to risks that could easily be reduced or even avoided, in particular by improvement of working conditions.
- Efficient risk prevention requires a constant interaction between the management and the musicians' representatives, so as to identify the risks and invest in both short- and long-term policies. Specific items of attention may include distribution of the workload over time, monitoring of the noise level, replacement of chairs, consultations with physiotherapists and ergonomists, physical impact assessment of the repertoire (in terms of both noise exposure and muscle stress).
- Detection of health risks including inadequate postures or behaviours by teachers and parents during early music training is required, thus avoiding future issues.
- Professional musicians, just as professional athletes, should be afforded access to the best medical specialists and treatments.

2.2 Towards the recognition of occupational ailments

- Focal dystonia's prevalence amongst professional musicians is 50 times as high as in the rest of the working population. This fact in itself would justify that a public policy be developed in order to properly address this risk. But there are also other ailments that are directly and exclusively caused by the musician's professional activity within the orchestra.
- The experience of medical experts as well as specific surveys can better help society to understand how these troubles appear in a musician's career and get them recognized as professional ailments.

2.3 Support for orchestra musicians

- Working as a professional musician entails a high exposure to psychological stress and anxiety, due to cumulative factors that may include job insecurity, extreme dependence on physical condition, permanent exposure to the public, working schedules incompatible with a normal family life etc.
- A musician may encounter difficult times in the course of his/her career, as a result of any of the problems listed above. When it happens, it is crucial that support be offered. For instance, health issues like focal dystonia may take a long time before a relevant diagnosis is made. In the meantime, a musician who is unable to play may feel that his/her problem is not taken seriously, which may have heavy psychological consequences, not to mention possible financial difficulties.
- Therefore, co-operation between all parties is vital to assure the welfare of the musicians.

III. WORKING RELATIONSHIPS – WORKING CONDITIONS

3.1 Employment situations

- Employment precariousness is demonstrating a tendency to grow in many sectors, including live music. This usually takes the form of either a recourse to short term contracts where permanent employment used to be the norm, or a pressure from the employer aimed at forcing the performer to declare him/herself as independent/self employed in order to escape the payment of social charges as well as the other responsibilities attached to a labour contract.
- It is generally accepted – and it is also common sense – that an orchestra can't fully deliver unless it is built upon a stable artistic architecture, which requires permanent jobs. The sound, the soul, the image, and *in fine* the reputation of the orchestra depend on a subtle interaction between musicians who work together on a day-to-day basis, something that cannot be achieved with a constant turnover.
- Precariousness in the musician's life creates one more cause of stress and tends to act as a disincentive for the performer to identify him/herself to the orchestra, which is clearly detrimental to the latter's efficiency and success. Thus, fighting against all forms of precariousness in the live music sector is a necessity.

3.2 Working time

- There are similarities and differences between orchestras as regards working time. Working time may be addressed in terms of, for instance:
 - Total working hours
 - Distribution of working hours (length of rehearsals and performances)
 - Whether and to what extent stand-by time or travel time (on tours) count as working time.
- Whatever the perspective adopted, the objective must remain twofold:
 - Fulfil the orchestra's artistic mission
 - Take due care of the musicians' health condition and personal balance.

Therefore, exchange of information on best existing practices may help improve the organisation of work to the mutual benefit of the orchestra and the musicians.

3.3 Wages – Mobility – Relocation – Unfair competition

- There are many examples of orchestras that are artificially created for the sole purpose of a tour and disbanded once the tour is over. The name may remain over the years but the musicians may come from any place, provided that they accept the usually extremely low wages offered, not to mention the poor travelling and accommodation conditions. These tours are most often organized by unscrupulous tour operators to the detriment of the whole local sector and the audience, which is never informed about the conditions of the tour.
- The tour manager generally claims that performers work under a service provider status, which may result, depending on the legislation of the country where the performance is delivered, in no obligation to abide by the collective agreements in place nor to comply with the laws and regulations applicable to employers in the sector.
- These situations are influenced by the economic and/or legal disparities between the performers' countries of origin and the performance venue.
- Cultural exchanges contribute to mutual enrichment and cultural diversity and should therefore be encouraged and facilitated, provided that mobility remains based on artistic objectives and not on unfair business practices. However, it can't displace local permanent orchestras who provide a service of general interest.
- Therefore, manager organizations, unions, consumers and public authorities should join forces to fight against these unfair practices.