



INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF MUSICIANS

FIM
21 bis rue Victor Massé
F-75009 Paris
France

Tel. +33 145 263 123
Fax +33 184 178 572

office@fim-musicians.org

www.fim-musicians.org

MOTION OF PROTEST AGAINST THE UNLAWFUL AND HARMFUL DISMISSAL OF 134 WOK ARTISTS

Montreal – 14 May 2017

The Warsaw Chamber Opera (WOK), founded sixty years ago, has played an important role in Polish, European and world musical life, successfully touring all over Europe and other continents. Thanks to the outstanding dedication and tireless efforts of Stefan Sutkowski, WOK's founder, it has become a unique world musical centre with three permanent orchestras, having in their repertoire all operas and symphonic works composed by Mozart and of other major classical music composers.

Although having a rather small concert hall in Warsaw, Stefan Sutkowski managed to make his Opera an important and significant institution, employing about 300 musicians on a permanent basis, being able to perform the WOK classical chamber music repertoire, by either the MACV baroque orchestra on period instruments or the Sinfonietta symphony orchestra on contemporary instruments. For many years, WOK has been organizing its yearly Mozart Festival, where all of Mozart's works are performed.

Stefan Sutkowski was dismissed from his position as WOK's director in 2012. His successor tried to keep this unique project alive, but was also dismissed last year, before the end of his term. The overall number of artists permanently employed at WOK had been gradually reduced under his leadership, with 80 artists decently dismissed without harm or change of WOK's statutory mission.

The new temporary director who took over, without due competition appointment procedure, initiated a brutal policy, aiming at merging opera performances and symphonic concerts which will be performed by a baroque orchestra only and by musicians and orchestras hired on a case by case basis. Despite massive protests, not only from WOK artists and trade unions but by most known Polish musicians' critics and musicologists and far beyond, the new manager decided that 3 out of 5 WOK's artistic permanent teams would be liquidated under the group redundancy procedure, thus undermining the statutory repertoire and program of WOK, without due public consultation and observance of a prior notice as required by law. This has now led to a dismissal procedure of 72 musicians employed at Sinfonietta, 55 solo singers and 6 conductors, that are still employed at WOK.

Despite the intervention of the Polish 1st Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Culture and National Heritage, who offered 1 million EUR extra funding to WOK, subject to the dismissals of WOK artists being withheld, the decision to dismiss the 134 musicians has been maintained.

The Trade Union of Polish Artists Orchestra Musicians made public appeal for solidarity and support for all the WOK musicians. After an internal referendum, the artistic staff of WOK has authorized the collective work conflict procedure, protest actions, including a strike, if necessary and voted for dismissal of the temporary WOK manager.

Trade union delegates at the 4th International Orchestra Conference express their support to all WOK musicians and call on the Marshal of Mazovian Region and the Mazovian Self-Government Parliament, and to the Polish first Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Culture and National Heritage to oppose the on-going WOK redundancies and dismissal procedure of 134 musicians. They also call upon solidarity action and mass protest of musicians and their trade unions against this unprecedented treatment of their colleagues and the destruction of WOK.