



Associated Musicians of Greater New York

City Opera Management Sounds Death Knell For 2012 Season

Mediation Ends As Opera Management Slashes Number of Performances, Imposes Draconian Cuts to Compensation for Musicians and Singers, Departs Acoustically-Superior Lincoln Center Theater and Turns Distinguished Company Into Itinerant Freelancers

New York City—Saturday, January 7, 2012 – At 9 p.m. on Saturday, January 7th, New York City Opera management rejected the final wage concession offered by Local 802, American Federation of Musicians. The company told the mediators and the unions' negotiating committees that all employees will be locked out of work on Monday.

A three-week mediation effort conducted by the Federal Mediation & Conciliation Service centered on New York City Opera General Manager George Steel's plan to dismantle the esteemed 68-year-old professional company and replace it with ad-hoc freelance musicians and performers. The proposals made to the unions **would eliminate dozens of jobs and reduce the annual compensation of the remaining orchestra and singers from approximately \$40,000 per year to \$4,000** – cuts totaling 90%. By contrast, Steel's annual compensation of over \$324,000 plus benefits would far outstrip the pay of the entire orchestra.

City Opera's world-class singers and orchestra members, many of whom have devoted their entire careers to the Opera company, have watched in dismay as poor management decisions **reduced the company's performance schedule from more than 100 performances per year down to 16 planned for the 2012 season**. During his three-year tenure, Steel has proved that he is unable to attract audiences. His tenure has been characterized by **shockingly low ticket sales (down 74%) and subscriptions in free-fall (down 84%)**.

Steel's latest disastrous decision, a hasty and ill-planned departure from the David H. Koch Theater at Lincoln Center – recently renovated expressly to improve opera acoustics – will reduce the company to an itinerant entity playing to much smaller audiences.

Tino Gagliardi, president of Local 802, AFM, said "Management has failed appallingly to produce the kind of quality repertoire that respects our loyal audience and welcomes

the next generation of opera fans. This is a matter of paucity of vision. Steel talks about how the Opera is broke, but doesn't understand that playing to large Lincoln Center audiences is the fastest way out of the fiscal crisis caused by his incompetent management. This limited vision has characterized his tenure—he has made abysmal choices in all areas, from revenue-generation to repertoire.”

Said Gail Krivand, Chair of Local 802's City Opera negotiating committee, “We made a good-faith effort to say that, yes, we are willing to sacrifice – as we have in the past – for the sake of ensuring that the grand tradition of the City Opera lives on. Over the last two years alone musicians have made concessions totaling \$2.5 million, the majority of which came from a 24 % cut in musicians' salaries. During the mediation process that ended unsuccessfully tonight, we offered further economic concessions. Steel's intransigence in rejecting our many constructive proposals is the death knell for one of New York's cultural treasures.”

Now that lengthy negotiations capped by federal mediation have failed, management stated that the musicians and singers will be locked out of the Opera. Rehearsals for the first announced production of the season, *La Traviata*, were slated to commence this Monday, January 9th. If there is a management lockout, rehearsals will be cancelled and the season will be terminated, a tragedy for opera fans everywhere. Hundreds of jobs will be lost and tourism revenue diminished.

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