

SEP candidate D'Artagnan Collier offers support to striking DSO musicians

Lawrence Porter
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D'Artagnan Collier, Socialist Equality Party candidate for the Michigan State House of Representatives in the 9th District, voiced his support for striking Detroit Symphony Orchestra musicians on Sunday.

The DSO musicians put on a concert at Temple Beth El in the Detroit suburb of Bloomfield Hills. (See, "Support for striking Detroit Symphony Orchestra musicians at weekend concert").

Collier, a city worker, expressed his solidarity with the musicians, who are fighting against the attempt by management to cut base pay by 33 percent, with a 42 percent cut for new hires. Management is also demanding drastic revisions in work rules.

City workers, including Collier, have had a 10 percent wage cut imposed on them by the Democratic administration of Detroit mayor Dave Bing. Collier explained that the attack on the DSO musicians was part of a broader assault on the working class and on culture.

Many of those attending the concert, both DSO musicians and their supporters, said they had read and appreciated the coverage of the strike on the *World Socialist Web Site*. Collier and SEP supporters distributed copies of the recent WSWs perspective, "The assault on culture and the crisis of American capitalism."

In an exchange with two musicians, Kenneth Thompkins and Robert deMaine, Collier noted that at the same time DSO musicians were striking, workers in Indianapolis had been forced into a struggle against both their union, the United Auto Workers, and GM management over attempts to impose a 50 percent pay cut. In Lake Orion, Michigan auto workers with less

than 11 years seniority were being told by the UAW and GM to take a 50 percent pay cut.

"What is happening to musicians at the Detroit Symphony Orchestra is part of an attack on all sections of the working class," Collier said. "Many orchestra members may have thought of themselves as outside of the class struggle. But what is happening is forcing them to change their minds."

Thompkins, principal trombonist for the Detroit Symphony said, "We are workers. We are talking about issues that affect everyday normal people. Some look at what we make, \$100,000, and can't get over that. But there are plenty of mid level managers making \$180,000. Some people think we don't work. They don't understand the effort that goes into every event—the hours of practice we do on our own."

DeMaine, the principal cellist for the Detroit Symphony Orchestra and one of the most accomplished cellists in the world, was also upset with the way management has treated the musicians. "I don't think we have to redo the business model to make the DSO viable," added deMaine "They are making it up on the fly. What they really want is to lower the budget. That's it. The changes in working conditions are a ploy to keep our wages down."

Collier and the musicians agreed there was a need to take a stand in defense of culture. "This isn't just an economic issue," added Collier. "We believe you should take this fight into the working class, to the high schools and colleges. The DSO is an enormous social and cultural achievement that is being destroyed by the ruling elite."

For more information on Collier's campaign, visit the [campaign website: www.socialequality.com/detroitelection](http://www.socialequality.com/detroitelection)



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