

Cleveland Orchestra players support striking DSO musicians

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Striking members of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra will be joined by members of the Cleveland Orchestra in a show of solidarity at an October 24 support concert. The walkout by DSO musicians against massive concession demands is entering its third week. Meanwhile, orchestra management says it is canceling all scheduled concerts through November 7 as well as a recording project.

DSO musicians struck October 4 after management imposed the terms of its final contract. DSO musicians say the cuts demanded by management would mean the destruction of the symphony as a top rated orchestra. Management's final contract offer included a 33 percent pay cut for current musicians, a 42 percent salary reduction for starting players, drastic changes in work rules and cuts in benefits.

At least one dozen musicians from the Cleveland Orchestra, one of the top US orchestras, are planning to travel to Detroit to play in the concert to be held at Christ Church Cranbrook in the Detroit suburb of Bloomfield Hills. The event will feature award-winning violinist and conductor Joseph Silverstein and violinists Sarah Crocker of New York's Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, Elayna Duitman of the Cleveland Orchestra and DSO Associate Concertmaster Kimberly Kaloyanides Kennedy.

Independent television station WADL-TV38 says it will broadcast the concert live. In an interview following the announcement Steve Antoniotti, the station's vice president and general manager, said, "We're just trying to provide the opportunity for everyone to see what a great community asset this orchestra is."

The struggle by the DSO musicians is attracting the attention of artists and musicians nationally, who see the efforts by management to drive down the living

standards of the DSO artists as a fundamental attack on culture.

A statement posted on the web site of the Cleveland Orchestra Musicians calling on players to join DSO members at the support concert warned, "The future of the venerable Detroit Symphony Orchestra, one of the country's great cultural institutions, is being threatened." Members of the Cleveland Orchestra carried out a one-day strike last January against demands for a 5 percent pay cut. The players settled for a two-year wage freeze.

Last week world renowned violinist Sarah Chang cancelled a recital scheduled by DSO management as a replacement concert after she received an outpouring of protests from musicians across the United States.

However, one quarter where the DSO musicians are receiving no support is from the official trade union movement. Since the strike began, no top representatives from major unions in the Detroit area, such as the United Auto Workers, Teamsters or American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees, have offered even verbal support. The web site of the Metropolitan Detroit AFL-CIO does not even carry a report of the strike.

The silence reflects the deep fear and hostility of the trade union apparatus to any sign of resistance to the corporate assault on jobs and living standards, which the unions are playing an active role in enforcing. The day before the walkout by DSO musicians, the UAW told workers at the General Motors assembly plant in the Detroit suburb of Lake Orion that the union had agreed to a 50 percent pay cut for workers with less than 11 years seniority. The UAW has waged a months-long campaign to impose a 50 percent pay cut on workers at the GM stamping plant in Indianapolis.

DSO management, echoed by much of the major

media, insists that Detroit can no longer afford a world class orchestra and that players have no choice but to accept drastic cuts to their standard of living. In backing its demands management has pointed to a \$9 million deficit and pressure from banks.

The musicians union, Local 5 of the American Federation of Musicians, has offered a drastic pay cut of 22 percent. However, players say the steep cuts demanded by management would mean the orchestra could no longer attract the top talent required to maintain its high quality.

Management has refused to modify its proposals and no meetings between representatives of the striking players and the DSO are currently scheduled.



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