

DSO musicians picket board meeting

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With a Friday deadline for canceling summer concerts looming, on Wednesday striking Detroit Symphony Orchestra musicians and supporters picketed the quarterly meeting of the DSO board of directors at Orchestra Hall.

Earlier this week DSO officials informed musicians that if no contract settlement is reached by April 1, summer concerts will be canceled and the fall 2011 concert season will be put in jeopardy. However, management has refused a request by musicians for a face-to-face meeting. It will only accept unconditional surrender to its terms.

Management is making it clear by its intransigent position that it prefers the destruction of the orchestra to any compromise with the striking musicians. After musicians rejected management's "final offer" in February, DSO officials declared negotiations at an end and canceled the balance of the 2010-2011 concert season. Management subsequently rebuffed an offer by musicians to return to work while outstanding issues went to arbitration.

The deep cuts demanded by management threaten the survival of the DSO as a world-class ensemble, making it impossible for the orchestra to attract and maintain top musicians. The further prolongation of the strike means the likely departure of some of the DSO's top talent. Already a number of musicians have been forced to take work out of state. More will likely follow.

The DSO board, which is dominated by wealthy corporate executives, is implementing an agenda drawn up by the right-wing League of American Orchestras. It is attempting to set a precedent for orchestras and art institutions everywhere.

The struggle by DSO musicians deserves the support of every worker and young person. Only the full mobilization by the working class can defend art and

culture against the modern day vandals of corporate America.

The relatively small turnout at the Wednesday picket again underscored the isolation being imposed on the DSO musicians by the official labor movement. The presence of UAW President Bob King and Detroit Metro AFL-CIO President Sandra Williams, mouthing a few pious and hypocritical words of support, could not cover for their failure to mobilize any significant working class support for the musicians. These organizations, which are taking the leading role in imposing massive concessions on their own members, can only organize further disastrous defeats.

Supporters of the striking DSO musicians who participated in the picketing of the DSO board meeting spoke with the *World Socialist Web Site*.

Judith Rosella, said, "I am a big musician supporter. I keep a lot of musicians in my life.

"What is happening to Detroit speaks volumes for why we should be out here. There is a vendetta against Detroit. They are making a point. You crack the back of Detroit, you crack its spine. Its dead.

"We're in 1934 again. We're back into that cycle. What is happening to the worker amazes me. So you can bail out GM but you can't feed our children nor can you educate our youth. I get it.

"I spent 40 years in banking and left more than a dozen years ago. I said 'you are all crazy.'"

A retired DSO violinist said, "I spent 35 years in the orchestra. There are a couple of retirees here. One of them told me about the picket this morning so I made a point to get down here because the board could vote at any time to cancel the rest of the season and the fall. We don't know.

"The board and management are union-busters. They want a nonunion student orchestra; kids who will come

in and work for far less money. They don't have the experience of seasoned players who come here.

"I started my instrument when I was eight years old. I will be practicing this afternoon. It is in my blood. That is who I am. That is who we all are."

Francesca LaPlante, an administrator at Wayne State University, said, "I have never carried a picket sign before in my life. My sympathies are with the orchestra. It would be tragic for the city to lose this orchestra.

"I feel strongly about this. There are so many things the board could do. They have an agenda. They have declared a crisis. They are not going to get people to come forward to support the orchestra unless they show they are interested in saving it.

"(DSO President and CEO) Anne Parsons is collecting a huge salary. I don't want to attack her personally, but I don't see any leadership there.

"I don't feel management is bargaining in good faith. If you are not at the table, you can't bargain.

"I teach administration and public policy. This is so much part of the discussion. It is one piece of the bigger picture. We are all in this together. We took a \$33 million hit in the state budget. You will see larger class sizes. Things will not be available to students. It is not about paper clips and pencils."



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