

April 17, 2003

### Houston Symphony Ratifies 4-Year Agreement

On April 1, 2003, the musicians of the Houston Symphony ratified a four-year agreement following a three-week strike. The musicians continued to work under the terms of their agreement that expired in early October. The agreement runs from April 1, 2003 through September 30, 2006. Musicians' salaries were cut 3.86% in year 1, 5.75% in year 2, 1.47% in year 3, and an increase of 5.97% over 2001-02 wages in year 4.

**LENGTH OF SEASON:** [was 52 weeks]  
Year 1 — 50 weeks (2 week unpaid furlough by Sept. 30, 2003)  
Year 2 — 49 weeks (3 week unpaid furlough)  
Year 3 — 49 weeks (3 week unpaid furlough)  
Year 4 — 51 weeks (1 week unpaid furlough)

<b>WAGES:</b>	<b>[2001-02]</b>	<b>2002-03</b>	<b>2003-04</b>	<b>2004-05</b>	<b>2005-06</b>
<b>Annual Salary</b> —	[\$74,100]	\$71,250*	\$69,825	\$73,010	\$78,540
<b>Weekly Salary</b> —	[\$1,425]	\$1,425	\$1,425	\$1,490	\$1,540

\* figure does not include wages lost during 3-week strike

**EMG:** The above salary includes \$75 per week that may be applied to Electronic Media

**VACATION:** 9 weeks.

**PENSION:** AFM-EPF increases in year 3 from 5% to 5.5%, and in year 4 to 6%.

Musicians retiring during this agreement will receive any increases negotiated in the next settlement.

#### **ORCHESTRA SIZE/EXTRA SCALE:**

- Minimum orchestra size will remain at 97 musicians; however, 5 vacated string positions will not be filled for the length of this agreement. Extra musicians will be hired for subscription services. Four vacancies currently exist; however, a side letter will guarantee that either a fifth position is vacant or the entire orchestra could have the option of either seeing their salary further reduced, or take an additional \_ week furlough, to cover the savings (approximately \$85,000) caused by this vacancy.
- Extra musician scale reduced from \$140 per service to \$125.

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**INSURANCE:**

**Health** — Medical plan (United Health Care) 100% employee/80% dependents coverage as before

**AUDITIONS:** Use of personal days is guaranteed for auditions.

**WORKING CONDITIONS:**

- [New] Use of 2 paid personal days plus unlimited unpaid leave for religious events, family events, etc., is now spelled out in the agreement.
- Two full 2.5-hour rehearsals will be exchanged for one 3-hour Pops rehearsal with no overtime until 5.5 hours on that particular day is reached.
- Second chair winds relief guaranteed for sections with 3 winds and sections with 4 winds when no substitute must be hired.

**MISCELLANEOUS:**

- Mayor's Symphony Advisory Committee formed consisting of musicians, community and Society representatives will oversee/advise/discuss progress of orchestra maintenance.
- Admission of sacrifice and compensation goal will be stated in a side letter and will agree to bring orchestra salaries to the median level of full-time U.S. orchestras in the next contract.
- NLRB filing and charge of unfair labor practice dropped with the ratification of new agreement.
- Trigger language allowing either side to terminate the agreement early — after years 2 and 3.

**NOTE FROM ROGER KAZA:** The Board and Management of the Houston Symphony have had their hearts set on a large wage cut since last summer, and they ultimately achieved it. Their original cut, along with increases in health care premiums, ranged from 13-19%, depending on how many dependents a player had under the health plan. The cut in the final deal, created through unpaid weeks, came in at around 6% in the middle years of the contract. As such, the orchestra gained some ground, but at tremendous cost. Next year there will be between 12 and 15 players who have either taken other jobs permanently, or are taking indefinite leave. These include many principals or associate principals. However, the alternative to a concessionary contract was quite possibly

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Chapter 11 bankruptcy, which had been threatened on several occasions. The current contract, while losing tremendous ground in terms of parity with peer orchestras, preserved the current entity of the Houston Symphony Society, in hopes of a better day in the future. This negotiation experience strengthened the unity and resolve of the union.

The orchestra would like to thank Negotiating Committee members Roger Kaza, (Chair); Eric Arbiter, Fred Edelen, Christopher French and Philip Stanton, Legal Counsel Susan Martin, A.F. of M. Local 65-699 President Lovie Smith-Schenk, and Orchestra Spokesperson David Kirk for their hard work and sacrifices. Special thanks to Mayor's representative Ed Wulfe, mediator Alvin Zimmerman and the public relations firm of Varoga, Rice and Shalett.

*This bulletin was prepared by ICSOM Secretary, Laura Ross with the assistance of the Houston Symphony ICSOM Alternate Delegate, Amy Teare.*

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