

DSO members win voice in picking Dorati's successor

By Tim Richard
staff writer

The 100 musicians in the Detroit Symphony Orchestra will have a voice in judging the merits of potential conductors, but no chance to the management's hands by approving only one name.

"We got rid of the adversary relationship," said musicians' union spokesman Douglas Cornelien, a clarinetist, as he announced the members had ratified a new three-year contract Tuesday by a vote of 87-1.

Salaries will be increased 30 percent over three years, he added.

The musicians' role in selecting a successor to Antal Dorati had been a major stumbling block in negotiations. The musicians went on strike Dec. 9 for the first time in DSO history.

The compromise also seemed to satisfy the objections of Oleg Lobanov, DSO executive vice president and managing director. Lobanov was concerned that under the previous procedure, the musicians might vote to submit only a single name as meeting their artistic standards.

THE SELECTION procedure will work like this, according to Cornelien.

The musicians and the board of directors each will select three members to a six-member search committee. A majority of the committee will recommend approved names to the board.

The committee majority may recommend guest conductors, too.

If the search committee splits 3-3, each side will be able to present its case to the board of directors through a spokesman. The board, by secret ballot, will decide whether to add that name to its list of candidates.

The board will hire from the list of candidates.

CONTRACT language calls for "honest and prudent discussion" aimed "at developing a list of candidates." In answer to a question, Cornelien agreed the language would prohibit musicians from "ganging up" to submit only one name to the board.

No other major American orchestra is believed to have such a procedure, although some European orchestras elect their conductors.

The previous contract, which expired Sept. 26, provided management could pick a music director only from a list approved by the musicians.

Lobanov and DSO spokesmen were not in their Ford Auditorium offices Tuesday afternoon, reportedly because they were in a meeting, and could not be reached for comment.

THE MUSICIANS' vote came at midday Tuesday following a rehearsal in Orchestra Hall, where they performed their own concert that evening to help pay their health insurance costs.

Cornelien, announcing the vote from the Orchestra Hall stage, gave this rundown of contract provisions:

- Pension benefits were increased to \$14,000 a year from \$10,000. Management reportedly had not wanted to increase this benefit.
- A clause allowing management to cancel the contract and season was dropped at the insistence of the union.
- Starting salary was raised from \$625 a week in the previous contract to \$625 retroactive to Sept. 20; \$830 for the first half of the second year; \$680 for the last half of the second year; \$700 for the first half of the third year; and \$780 for the last half of the third year.

THE FINAL \$780 salary will leave Detroit musicians behind the \$830 that will be paid Chicago Symphony members in their third year and the \$810 to be paid at the New York Philharmonic in the same year.

The DSO members had hoped to achieve parity with Chicago and New York.

Nevertheless, the settlement is better than the \$715 offered by management in the last meeting prior to the strike.

Actually, about 85 percent of DSO members are paid above the union scale, according to both Lobanov and Cornelien.

TICKET-HOLDERS who missed any of the nine concerts cancelled by the strike will have several options for reimbursement.

They may present their tickets to the Ford Auditorium box office and receive refunds.

They may mail their tickets to the box office, and the DSO will send them tax-deduction receipts. In effect, they would be donating the price of the tickets.

They may get a cash-credit certificate and apply it toward purchase of season's tickets next year.

Or they may trade in their tickets for any other concert this season, including any of the holiday season "Nutcracker" performances or the April 22 and 24 pops concerts featuring Peter Nero.

Meet George Skrubbs

A planner the public doesn't see

By Suzie Rollins Singer
staff writer

Oakland County's future is always on George Skrubbs' mind.

His professional life revolves around looking for better and more efficient ways to streamline county government, keep up with highly technical trends and aid the county executive in research planning.

Skrubbs heads Oakland's Advanced Programs Division and oversees a two-person staff.

"Our mission is to look at new technology the county may use, automating more activity and improving management methods to save money," Skrubbs said.

THE DEPARTMENT, which takes its directions from County Executive Daniel T. Murphy or the board of commissioners, is presently working on two projects:

- Examining the history of the county's expenditures and revenues from 1970 to 1982.
- Developing a unified emergency communications system for the county.

"When it's completed, it will have an overall view of the future of 911. Eight subcommittees were formed to look into area frequencies. More than 70 people were involved, and they're writing up a recommendation," Skrubbs explained.

He expects the formal recommendation to be presented to the board of commissioners in late January or early February.

SKRUBBS DESCRIBES his department as a behind-the-scenes group which primarily serves the needs of Murphy and the deputy county executives.

He doesn't field calls from the public, although his work ultimately affects county residents.

"If the county executive meets with a senior citizens club or historical group and needs some background material, we supply it to him," Skrubbs said.

"Last year the county executive testified before Congress on a transportation issue and wanted some background information on interstate highway funding which we supplied," he said.

The department, formed in 1977, usually conducts 11 or 12 studies a year, he added.

"Recently, we were asked to look into food preparation methods and see if there was a better way for providing food service for the whole county. The study reviewed the entire kitchen network, then recommended some solutions," he said.

Skrubbs also sends a staff member to the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority meetings to keep tabs on all information discussed there.

"We also look at what policies need to be revised and at the future space needs and new technologies we could use here," Skrubbs said.

SKRUBBS TAKES a keen interest in developing automated mapping and drafting techniques using computers, as well as keeping in tune with the future energy needs of the county.

Skrubbs said he constantly visits with faculty members of area universities for ideas to keep employees updated on new technologies.

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