

## Orchestra Librarians Keep up in Digital Age

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Orchestra, opera, ballet, military band, and conservatory librarians gathered in Salt Lake City, Utah, in April for the 20th annual conference of the Major Orchestra Librarians' Association (MOLA). Each spring, librarians travel to a different city for the annual conference, hosted by a member organization, to share the latest information in the field about digital publishing, copyright law, critical editions, equipment developments, repertoire databases, and engraving software, as well as practical issues of music preparation problems, library procedures, data storage and retrieval, professional issues, working conditions, and being the musical information source for an entire organization.

The librarians also meet with publisher representatives, composers, copyists, software developers, and other industry specialists to collectively address ways of improving performance parts and influencing the development of digital publishing technologies. This year's conference, hosted by the Utah Symphony, organized by librarians Pat Zwick and Craig Fineshriber, and presided over by 2001-02 MOLA President Kazue McGregor (Los Angeles Philharmonic), celebrated MOLA's past two decades and looked forward to a time of unprecedented technological growth and change in the music world.

Until two decades ago, orchestra librarians toiled away in their libraries with little connection to colleagues around the country, much less the world. They were often charged with nearly impossible music preparation projects which could have been collaborated on with others to benefit more than one orchestra. In 1983, the librarians of Philadelphia, Boston, and Minnesota decided to break down these barriers by forming the Major

Orchestra Librarians' Association. That year, the first conference was held in Philadelphia, and 25 librarians attended, hosted by MOLA founder Clint Nieweg of the Philadelphia Orchestra. Starting with the vision of a few, and the tireless volunteerism of many since, librarians are now in constant contact with each other about a wide variety of issues, and can quickly get help from the membership with problems ranging from a player forgetting a part, to where to find an obscure edition. As one voice, librarians have become a strong collective force in the industry to strive for better, more accurate, more legible, and more performance-friendly parts. In only 20 years, MOLA has grown to encompass approximately 200 member organizations worldwide, actively pursuing the goals of enhanced communication and education with our colleagues around the globe.

The Salt Lake City conference brought together an expert panel to discuss the one topic that will have the most profound impact on all orchestra librarians and performers in the next 20 years digital publishing and distribution. Tom Broido (president of Theodore Presser Company), David Flachs (director of publications at G. Schirmer), William Holab (director of publications at Universal Editions and Schott), Holly Mentzer (editor, *Serious Music*, Boosey & Hawkes), and Douglas Woodfull-Harris (editor, *Barenreiter*) were led in a lively discussion by moderator and 2002-03 MOLA President Robert O'Brien from the Atlanta Symphony. "Working Together: On the Practical Aspects of Music Preparation, Publishing and Distribution in the Digital Age" touched on many aspects of digital publishing.

The panelists' discussion was peppered with insightful questions and frank comments about the practicality (or lack thereof) of various processes from the member librarians. The consensus? There's no stopping technology, but let's get the practical/performance issues solved in an organized and unified way from the start, so that professional standards of music engraving will survive the transitional chaos.

Other workshops focused on a variety of subjects important to librarians:

engraving software (CODA/Finale and Sibelius); repertoire database software (OPAS); hand-copying techniques that are still necessary; basic skills one needs to be a proficient librarian; and a look at some of the music preparation problems inherent in the works of Ravel, operatic literature, and Baroque repertoire. In a special session, AFM Secretary-Treasurer Florence Nelson talked to librarians about their status as musicians, electronic media and contract issues, and offered advice and tips on good communication with orchestra committees and local officers.

One of the most poignant sessions was given by Tom Takaro of the Houston Symphony, whose slide/music presentation of the Houston Symphony flood and recovery showed us all what really matters, and how people working together can rebuild from tragic loss. In a first-ever surprise, AFM President Thomas Lee attended the annual banquet and gave an impromptu speech to the gathered librarians about the importance of their role in the larger community of musicians.

As MOLA librarians get back to their individual libraries, preparing for the summer and fall seasons, the commitment to our goals of education and communication has been reinvigorated and the work on behalf of our performers continues. Plans are already underway for future conferences to be held in Indianapolis, Raleigh-Durham, Los Angeles, and the first non-North American meeting to be held in Zurich, Switzerland, in 2006.

*To learn more about MOLA and its projects, visit [www.mola-inc.org](http://www.mola-inc.org).*