

The 23rd annual Theatre Musicians Association conference was held this past August at the new AFM Local 47 offices in Burbank, California. It was a day and a half of interesting and informative addresses, presentations, and discussions. Our host, Local 47 president John Acosta, couldn't have been more welcoming and generous, and their new home is nothing short of beautiful. The theme of the conference was loosely structured around the topic of the current state and future of the musical theatre business. For my column this month, I'd like to share some of the highlights of the presentations and remarks given during the conference.

- In my president's remarks, I encouraged all TMA members to get involved in the organization by bringing in new members or starting new chapters. I also addressed the issue of national touring acts such as Evanescence or Il Volo, who come into our cities and hire local musicians for below-scale wages. While not theatre work per se, the musicians hired for these shows are often the same players that are hired to play the traveling Broadway shows that come into local theatres.
- Vice president Heather Boehm gave an impassioned address about gender equality in the musical theatre pits, and how we still have a long way to go before this equality is achieved.
- AFM President Ray Hair updated us on the SLRA negotiation, the work being done to collect unallocated pension contributions, and the 2019 jingle agreement negotiations, which will most likely focus on licensing. Finally, President Hair spoke a bit on the efforts to relocate the AFM offices, and how in the end it made sense to remain at 1501 Broadway, but make a move to the 9th floor.
- AFM Secretary-Treasurer Jay Blumenthal reported the AFM has a \$2,000,000 surplus, and 187 locals, with 9 mergers taking place in the last year. Secretary-Treasurer Blumenthal gave details about the 2019 AFM convention, taking place next June.
- AFM Local 802 President Tino Gagliardi gave a report on the state of the Broadway theatres, noting there are currently 28 musicals on Broadway employing about 418 musicians. Next season there are 31 musicals slated to come in, which is the most in recent history.
- AFM Touring/Theatre/Booking Division Director George Fiddler gave his report outlining the amount of dollars Broadway and touring musicals generated this past season, as well as the number of theater-goers these shows attracted. He gave a listing of the FM sanctioned shows that were on tour during the 2017-18 season, and how many travelers and local musicians each show employed. George also discussed how the overages on SET agreements affected the traveling musician's paycheck, and how that compared with musicians on full Pamphlet B shows. Finally, he gave a preview of what shows we can expect to be on the road in the 2018-19 season.
- AFM President Ray Hair returned to the podium to give a history of the Pamphlet B agreement.

- Michael Manley, AFM Director of Organizing & Education gave a presentation on organizing, including a screening of the film “1,000 People In The Street”, a documentary about the 1997 5th Avenue Theater musicians’ strike in Seattle.
- TMA SoCal President Paul Castillo led a panel discussion entitled “Organizing, Unity, and the Future of Musical Theatre Employment”
- AFM President Ray Hair and AFM Local 802 President Tino Gagliardi led an AFM-EPF report that also included participation by Fund actuaries and lawyers.

All national TMA officers were re-elected by acclamation: myself as president, Heather Boehm as vice-president, and Mark Pinto as secretary/treasurer. We began discussions about the location of next year’s TMA conference.

It is always a pleasure to attend these conferences and meet with theatre musicians from all over the United States and Canada. Our organization has done some truly great work over the past 20-plus years of its existence, but there is so much more that must be done. Negotiations for a Pamphlet B successor agreement are right around the corner, and TMA will be at the table for these talks. Whether you only occasionally play musical theatre productions, or you make life in the pit your full time job, I think you will find TMA membership worthwhile. Please go to afm-tma.org to learn more about our organization, or contact me at president.tma@afm-tma.org.