



Hamilton Musicians' Guild

OPERA HAMILTON PLAYS GRINCH TO LOCAL MUSICIANS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Toronto, ON December 23, 2013 - Christmas stockings may be empty in the homes of some local freelance musicians. They are each owed hundreds of dollars for their work in Opera Hamilton's production of Falstaff last October.

Thirty-two musicians are awaiting full payment for their work last fall. "Everyone from the Falstaff Production has been completely paid, including the singers, stage hands, Opera Hamilton office staff, and even the janitor, however, the musicians are the only ones that have not received their full payment for the production. The musicians are still owed approximately \$20,000.00," explains Brent Malseed, Secretary/Treasurer of the Hamilton Musicians' Guild. Opera Hamilton have told musicians that they are awaiting a large promised donation.

It is apparent that the Board of Directors of Opera Hamilton chose to put on the production of Falstaff before securing full funding. Mr. Malseed went on to say, "The Opera Board gambled that a large donation would come through in time. It did not, and now they are forcing the musicians to cover their losses. This is completely unacceptable."

Freelance classical musicians are often low-wage earners. They have high expenses related to their training and equipment. These artists depend upon prompt payment from engagers to pay their bills and feed their families. Some of the musicians who performed Falstaff have reported incurring debt as a result of the non-payment.

Mark Tetreault, Director of Symphonic Services for the Canadian Federation of Musicians, said, "This situation is unusual in Canada. Despite having tight budgets, most performing arts organizations at this level demonstrate good business practices. The Opera Hamilton Board is made up of people of wealth and means. Certainly between them, they could loan OH the money until the promised donation arrives, without suffering at all. That is the moral and decent thing to do, especially this time of year."

At this point, no professional musicians have been engaged for Opera Hamilton's upcoming production "Popera". Hamilton Musicians' Guild President Larry Feudo explains, "The musicians doing this type of work are all CFM members. We have informed the Opera that they will not be able to engage professional musicians unless they are now paid in full, in advance. Perhaps the Opera should consider changing the name of the upcoming performances to 'Opera Karaoke'."

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