

June 28, 2014

George Lepauw, President and Artistic Director
International Beethoven Project
P.O. Box 14149
Chicago, Illinois 60614

Dear Mr. Lepauw,

On behalf of the Chicago Federation of Musicians (“CFM”), I am writing regarding the failure of the International Beethoven Festival (the “Festival”) to pay the wages it owes to the musicians who participated in last year’s orchestral performances.

Because the Festival did not file a musical services contract with the CFM, the CFM is unable to take any action on behalf of the affected musicians. I have, however, followed this story with great concern; and given your recent announcement that you are proceeding with a 2014 Festival despite failing to honor your commitments to the musicians who performed in 2013, I am compelled to go on the record and state, in no uncertain terms, the CFM’s opposition to the Festival’s actions.

The Festival’s treatment of its musicians has been atrocious. You engaged some of the best musicians from Chicago and beyond; you promised to pay them; they performed, by all accounts admirably; and then you failed to pay them. Citing financial difficulties, you promised at various points over the past ten months that payment would be forthcoming. According to what you said in the *Chicago Reader*, only “a quarter” of the sixty-plus musicians in last year’s orchestra have been paid in full. The other three quarters have received only partial payment and, ten months after the performances, are still waiting for the rest. It is unclear why certain favored musicians received payment before others.

In an email just a few months ago, you assured the musicians that you would “not proceed” with a 2014 Festival “unless finances allow and our debt to you is paid.” But you have now announced plans to present the Festival in August 2014, and engaged a new roster of musicians – many of whom are not the same musicians who played in 2013, and to whom you still owe wages. Your assurance of payment has proven false; and now it appears that you intend to exploit another group of musicians with the 2014 Festival.

Recently, in comments on the blog *Slipped Disc*, you vigorously defended your decision to proceed with a 2014 Festival without paying last year’s musicians. Worse, you tried to paint yourself as the victim of musicians who “complained on social media.” In an

email to the unpaid musicians last November, you complained that you “had to give up on gigs in order to” deal with this issue.

Mr. Lepauw, you are not the victim here. Given your background, you should know through personal experience the struggles that free-lance musicians face when trying to earn a living, and how each and every gig counts when bills come due each month. You should also be keenly aware of the harm that results when employers say “if you want to get paid, keep your mouth shut and don’t complain” or “you should do this for the love of the music.” Yet that is precisely the tactic you have chosen. Your words claim you are a “musician’s advocate,” yet your actions make public an alarming lack of regard and respect for your musician colleagues.

Be advised that the CFM will be urging all musicians to decline employment with the 2014 Festival, or, if they have already accepted employment, to withdraw. The CFM will also be calling for the public to boycott the Festival until last year’s musicians are paid.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gary Matts". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "G" and "M".

Gary Matts, President
Chicago Federation of Musicians