

For Immediate Release
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**WCO Musicians' refuse to
give assurances to end strike.
October 24th Halloween concert canceled.**

(Madison, WI) The musicians of the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra (WCO) today refused to give any assurance that they will end their strike and commit to play the WCO's upcoming popular Halloween concert while still negotiating their contract. Because the musicians are continuing their strike, the WCO's October 24th family-friendly Halloween concert has been canceled.

"We've been negotiating in good faith", says Doug Gerhart, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra. "The fact that the musicians won't commit to our audience while we continue to negotiate is very disheartening. To be clear, calling off this concert has nothing to do with receiving proposals as we welcome the Union proposal at any time. This is about their lack of commitment to come back to the concert hall and proceed with the concert while negotiations are ongoing."

The Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra contract with the musicians expired on August 31, 2008. In the prior contract, ratified in 2003, the musicians received a 244% increase in pay, and in return, the musicians agreed to make the WCO a top priority in their professional lives. The Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra musicians are some of the most highly compensated part-time orchestra musicians in the United States. Their commitment to attend 90% of WCO rehearsals and concerts dramatically improved the quality of the concerts and substantially facilitated program planning. During the past two years virtually all the musicians honored the 90% requirement

and those who could not were granted further leave. No musician lost their job as a result of this commitment to excellence.

Beginning in September 2007, the WCO attempted to begin negotiations with the musicians. Despite the WCO's best efforts to begin negotiations, the musicians would not meet with WCO management until February, 2008, five months after the WCO's initial request. During the past eight months, the WCO has made numerous concessions to Union demands, including the following:

- Increased wages
- Agreed to contribute to a National Union pension plan for the musicians
- Increased yearly work opportunities
- Increased mileage pay for travel
- Increased meal allowances
- Continued a mechanism for additional excused absences
- Agreed to a Screening Committee staffed by musicians for auditions
- Agreed to incorporate National Union media language wherever the current agreement fails to address a media issue
- Agreed to Union security provisions
- Agreed to establish a Peer Review Committee populated by musicians
- Significantly increased attendance flexibility

In spite of the major concessions made on the part of WCO management, the musicians still refuse to give assurances to the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra, and remain on strike.

"I feel the WCO has listened carefully and conceded to some major requests from the musicians, only to be met with more and more demands", says Tom Grantham, WCO board president. "We truly hope our musicians will recognize the fairness of the most recent offer, and take pride in our collective vision." He adds, "The Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra is a non-profit organization, and will not waste any resources on marketing, production, and concert hall rental for concerts that do not take place. Most importantly, our commitment to our audience must be honored. We simply cannot let them down by cancelling concerts at the last minute".

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