

FALL 2024 NEWSLETTER

Grand Rapids Federation of Musicians/AFM Local 56



2024 AFM Local 56 Executive Board Members

(Left to right): Robert Johnson, Sterling Jenkins, Christina Fong, Paul Austin, Kevin Murphy, Bennie Keys, and Charles Johnson.

Not Pictured: Michael S. Doyle.

Photo Credit: Local 56 Photographer Daniel Terpstra.

NOVEMBER 2024 MEMBERSHIP MEETING

We have exciting plans for our final membership meeting of 2024. It will have a festive atmosphere, as live music will be sounding in a unique space in Grand Rapids.

Built in 1915, the Masonic Center will be the site of our November membership meeting. This Art Deco building includes an amphitheater on the fifth floor, which is where our meeting will take place.

Tuesday, November 19th, 4:30pm to 6:30pm
Masonic Center Amphitheater (5th floor)
233 Fulton Street E, Grand Rapids MI 49503

You won't want to miss this excellent opportunity to mingle, get to know other members, and hear the talents of four different musical groups. In addition, our new AFM Local 56 t-shirts will be introduced at this meeting and available for purchase at the reasonable price of \$15.00.

Afterwards, Local 56 will provide pizza and non-alcoholic drinks, beginning at 6:30pm, in the West Kitchen on the fourth floor of the Masonic Center. Free parking will be available in the Masonic Center's lot (on the corner of Fulton Street and Lafayette Avenue).

Our four candidates for the two open Member-at-Large positions will speak at this meeting: Barbara Corbató, Michael S. Doyle, Carsten Forester, and Frederick Mitchell, Jr. Their candidate statements and details about the election are featured on the following pages of this newsletter.

We hope to see you there for this special afternoon for Local 56 members! Special thanks goes to our Executive Board Members-at-Large who are organizing this meeting: Christina Fong, Robert Johnson, and Sterling Jenkins.

CANDIDATE STATEMENTS/MEMBER-AT-LARGE

Barbara Corbató

Hello Local 56 Sisters and Brothers,

I am currently running for one of the two available Member at Large positions on the Local 56 Board. Many of you already know me, but I'd like to introduce myself to those of you who might not.

Currently, I am the Assistant Principal Viola of the Grand Rapids Symphony, where I have worked for over 30 years. During that time I have held a number of committee positions. I have served as a member and Chair of the GRS Orchestra Committee and co-Chair of GRS Negotiation Committees during the 2020-22 pandemic. Additionally, I also served as the ICSOM (International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians) delegate for the Grand Rapids Symphony from 2015-2022. From 2017-2022, I served as administrator of the ICSOM Conductor Evaluation Program. Other committees that I have served on are: GRS Music Director Search Committee, GRS President Search Committee, GRS Artistic Advisory Committee, and GRS Board of Directors. I also served as a Member at Large on the Local 56 Board during the Ray Gill era.



Additionally, I work playing various gigs in the area and chamber music on different local series. As an active private Viola teacher, music education is very important to me. Students are the future of live music- whether as performers, audience members, tech production, or administrative side of live music.

Diversity on the L56 Board is something that is very important to me, which is why I am running for this position- in my opinion, there has always been a lack of women on the L56 Board, and I want to help turn that around. During my years with the GRS, I have learned how important being a union member is, and how we all must work together as a collective so that we are all treated well, and fairly. If elected, I hope to bring the experience from my committee work with the GRS, my dedication to music education, and the desire for a more diverse L56 Board to help me be a valuable member of the Local 56 Board in representing all the musicians for Local 56.

CANDIDATE STATEMENTS/MEMBER-AT-LARGE (continued)

Michael S. Doyle

My goal as a board member is to be a great asset in regard to the opportunities available to our musician union members.



Carsten Forester



I have been a freelance musician and teacher in the GR area since I moved here 7 years ago. I have always been a multi-instrumentalist and genre hopper but these days I mostly play bluegrass mandolin and flat-pick guitar. I split my time between performing as a sideman, the occasional solo gig, recording work and teaching lessons. I consider promoting music as a community activity to be at the core of what I do, whether that is hosting jams, playing benefit shows or giving my students the opportunities and encouragement to play music with others in a collaborative setting.

My primary goal as a candidate is to help bridge the gap with the segment of professional musicians who are unfamiliar with the AFM and the benefits of joining.

My own experience in AFM has taught me the importance of solidarity and the real value of collective knowledge and experience. Given my own experiences and the many conversations I have had with fellow freelance musicians, I see a lot of potential to grow our membership among freelancers to strengthen Local 56.

CANDIDATE STATEMENTS/MEMBER-AT-LARGE (continued)

Carsten Forester (continued)

I would also like to use this opportunity to assist and learn from our other board members and gain the organizational experience needed to be an effective advocate for my fellow musicians. As someone whose network is primarily in the folk, bluegrass, old-time, and jam band parts of the music scene, I bring a different perspective to the table than most. With that I recognize that our strength as a union comes from our diversity of careers, experiences and needs. I will endeavor to work for all members of Local 56.

Frederick Mitchell, Jr



Hello! I would like to introduce myself. My name is Frederick Mitchell, Jr, and I was born and raised in Grand Rapids, Michigan. While living in Grand Rapids, I retired from a prosperous business in the mortuary services, while still pursuing my music since the age of 12 years old.

I studied music and adventured into learning different instruments, where the love of a bass guitar became my choice to perfect. Along with vocals, I gained my experiences by performing with various groups of all musical genres, being booked in the 1980s through the l'Oreal Ross entertainment company in Troy, Michigan, with a group called Azz-Izz. We played all the big hotel circuits and other venues, also opening for known artists such as Peaches and Herb, Betty

Wright, The Dramatics, Midnight Star, comedian Pat Paulson, Jeffrey Daniels, Shalimar, and Kool & the Gang.

While living in Grand Rapids, I helped in forming an up-and-rising band in the 1970s: Captain Crunch in the Funky Bunch, playing all the local venues and clubs. I am currently in a band called GR Just Us. We are a trio that plays many of your old school contemporary music favorites. Last, I also play on Sundays for Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church. Thank you.

LOCAL 56 ELECTION PROCEDURE

Nominations for the two available Member-at-Large positions on the Local 56 Executive Board closed on September 3, 2024, and there are four members running for office:

Barbara Corbató, Michael S. Doyle, Carsten Forester, and Frederick Mitchell, Jr.

Here is the timeline for our process:

October 2024: Candidate statements from each nominee appeared in the Fall 2024 Local 56 online newsletter, along with their photo.

November 19, 2024: All four candidates have been invited to speak at the Local 56 membership meeting, which begins at 4:30pm at the Masonic Center.

November 20, 2024: A ballot will be mailed to the home address of Local 56 active members. Note that, per our bylaws, inactive members are not eligible to vote in Local 56 elections. A return stamped envelope will be included in the mailing in order to make the voting process easier.

IMPORTANT NOTE TO ACTIVE MEMBERS! Please be sure that the Local 56 office has your current mailing address so that you will receive your ballot.

December 9, 2024: Completed ballots must be returned via mail, or in person to the Local 56 office, on or before this date.

December 10, 2024: Ballots will be tallied by the Election Committee at the conclusion of the 4:30pm Executive Board meeting. The results of the election will be communicated to the Local 56 membership that evening via email, and the term of office begins in January 2025.

Direct any questions that you may have about the election process to President Bennie Keys. Thank you to the four candidates who stepped forward to run for the two available seats on the Local 56 Executive Board.

UPDATE/GRFM SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Cellist Ethan Snapper is the recipient of this year's \$600 Madura scholarship, which allowed him to attend the Intensive Cello Week at the Interlochen Center for the Arts in June. Upon returning, Ethan sent a message of appreciation to Local 56.

"In my time at Interlochen, learning and performing with many excellent cellists, my own playing was certainly improved, and I was even fortunate enough to create some lasting friendships that have endured after the camp ended. The amazing teachers there gave me all the tools that I needed to better my playing in the year ahead, while also showing me career options I hadn't yet considered. Interlochen's Cello Intensive Week expanded my musicality to the fullest, and I have been very grateful for that chance to explore this art that I love."



The Donald A. Armstrong, Thomas A. Erickson, and Robert Madura scholarships provide funds for talented young musicians who live within the Local 56 area to attend summer music camps.

Tax deductible donations from our members and friends provide funding for these scholarships, and this link provides details:

<https://grandrapidsmusicians.org/resources/>

Thank you, Local 56 members, for your consideration in making an end-of-the-year donation to the GRFM Scholarship Fund.

MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT BENNIE KEYS

Happy fall, everyone. I want to share a few things with you to let you know how Local 56 is keeping current with the Federation for your benefit.

In September, Joe Boettger (President, Flint Federation of Musicians/AFM Local 542) came to Grand Rapids to give a presentation to our members about AFM recording contracts. Joe is very knowledgeable in this area and explained the Joint Venture Recording and Single Song Overdub Agreements. We plan to have Joe return soon for another presentation about this important aspect of AFM membership.



In October, Secretary-Treasurer Paul Austin and I are traveling to Chicago for AFM Officer training sessions. Over the span of four days, these meetings will cover topics such as duty of fair representation, inclusive leadership skills, cultural awareness, grievance and arbitration, and electronic media. We aim to stay on top of all of these issues so that Local 56 keeps up with the trends in our industry.

We are here for all of you and want your ideas to help us grow. Please attend our membership meetings when you can and share your thoughts with us. We want you to be motivated to understand the importance of your Union membership. There is power in numbers! The purpose of our organization is to make sure that you are made to feel that you are a part of the Local and that you are proud of your membership.



NOTES FROM SECRETARY-TREASURER PAUL AUSTIN

This fall, I was very pleased to devote time towards two important projects for Local 56.

Later this month, I will put the finishing touches on an online version of a member handbook and email it to you. Originally conceived as a document for new members, it has pivoted to become an excellent resource for all members. I am confident that you will find the information provided in our Local 56 member handbook to be of value to everyone.

In addition, we have designed t-shirts for Local 56, which will be unveiled at our November 19th membership meeting. Our t-shirts will make excellent stocking stuffers for the upcoming holidays and will cost \$15. Contact me directly to purchase our new Local 56 t-shirt, and join me in wearing it proudly to events when our presence should be known.

Local 56 continues to grow! Since our Summer 2024 newsletter, we have welcomed nine new members who have joined or been reinstated:

Ronald Evans (trumpet)

Octavius Hernandez (bassoon)

Shirley Kim (cello)

Darryl Malone (saxophone)

Randolph Morris (percussion)

Carlton Newton (trombone)

José Ortiz (guitar)

Rodney Rhodes (drum set)

Nancy Steltmann (cello)

We are on track to end 2024 with nearly 300 members in Local 56, and that certainly is something to celebrate!

ANNOUNCING NEW PLATFORMS/AFM LOCAL 56!

Website
GrandRapidsMusicians.org

Facebook page
Grand Rapids Musicians AFM Local 56

Instagram account
@GRMusicians56

Email addresses:
Office: GRFM@GrandRapidsMusicians.org
President@GrandRapidsMusicians.org
Secretary@GrandRapidsMusicians.org

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Grand Rapids Federation of Musicians, AFM Local 56
233 Fulton St E, Suite 210-G, Grand Rapids MI 49503

Email GRFM@GrandRapidsMusicians.org

Website GrandRapidsMusicians.org

Phone (616) 451-4374