

*CENTENNIAL HISTORY OF  
SAN FRANCISCO  
MUSICIANS UNION, LOCAL 6*



*1885-1985*

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# ***CENTENNIAL HISTORY OF SAN FRANCISCO MUSICIANS UNION, LOCAL 6 1885-1985***

Musician's Mutual Protective Union, Local No. 10, San Francisco, was chartered by the National League of Musicians on September 3, 1885. The present Musician's Union, Local No. 6, was chartered by the American Federation of Musicians on February 2, 1897.

Today the American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada, AFL-CIO, is the largest union of professional performers in the world and is comprised of over 500 locals with a membership of more than 300,000 professional musicians. The constitution for a proposed trade union charter was drafted in October 1896 at a convention in Indianapolis, Indiana; thus, the American Federation of Musicians was born—a development which would change the lives of all American and Canadian musicians. The purpose of the AF of M and its locals are the same today as they were in the 1800s—to benefit and protect musicians; to give them strength through collective bargaining agreements; to insure that they are properly paid for their work; and that the work is performed under fair working conditions. Membership in the AF of M is the badge of professionalism.

This year, 1985, Local 6 is celebrating its Centennial Anniversary. Local 6's jurisdiction covers the City and County of San Francisco, Marin County, San Mateo County, part of Santa Clara County and the cities of Oakland, Alameda, Berkeley, Piedmont, Emeryville and Albany. It has over 3,500 members.

Prior to 1885 there had been several attempts in San Francisco to form a musical organization—one in the year 1869 which was very weak and did not survive, and another made in 1874, but this organization also failed to prosper. However, we can commend these original pioneers who overcame numerous obstacles and planted the seeds for a strong musician's union. These pioneers and the ones who came later and formed a union had no Wagner Labor Act to help or aid them, and certainly the general public had no kind regard for trade unions. For example, in 1850 musicians demanded a wage increase before they would perform in the celebration of California's admission to the union. The demand was flatly refused and the festivities were held without music.

On September 3, 1885 a group of professional musicians of San Francisco met for the purpose of organizing a society for mutual protection and for the furtherance of musical interests. They elected V. Hoffmeyer as President; Eugene Schmitz, Secretary; Marcus M. Blum, Treasurer; and R. Uhlig, G. Dewey, C. Walthers and P. Johanson to the Board of Examiners. "Handsome Gene" Edward Schmitz, a violinist in the San Francisco Symphony, was at one time the President of Local 6 and also served on the San Francisco Board of Supervisors.

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In 1901, he was elected to the office of Mayor of San Francisco, the first union labor leader in U.S. history to be elected as mayor of a city.

The first union headquarters were in a basement at Sutter and Kearny Streets behind Rathskeller's Saloon (a liquid emporium) owned by Harry Grimm. The union then rented a small office on Post Street near Grant Avenue, and then, owing to the growth of membership, the union moved to 39 Fourth Street near Market St. From there the Union moved to larger headquarters in Union Square Hall on Post Street near Mason; then to Powell Street near O'Farrell which was then in the immediate neighborhood of all the theatres in cafes in San Francisco. This was the location of the union at the time of the Great Earthquake and Fire of 1906 which was destroyed completely along with most of the Union records. A special meeting was held at Horay's Hall in Oakland on April 25, 1906 just a week after the quake to reorganize the union. President Jacob J. Kinzelman presided at this meeting along with Jonathan Keogh, Recording Secretary, and J. F. Fitzgerald, Vice President.

Temporary headquarters were secured at Lily Hall on Gough Street near Market Street and from there permanent headquarters were purchased at 68 Haight Street, San Francisco. This location headquartered Local 6 for 18 years.

Now because the membership was growing, plans were made to find a new home. A Building Committee was formed and included the following members: Walter A. Weber, Albert A. Greenbaum, Clarence H. King, James C. Dewey, Fred C. Zeh, Phillip Sapiro, Arthur Morey, Joseph Weiss, Art Guerin, Walter King, Jack Haywood, George Lerond, George Kittler and George Pinto. A property was purchased in the then heart of downtown San Francisco on Jones Street between Turk and Eddy Streets. The committee secured the services of one of San Francisco's best architects, Sylvian Schnaittacher. Ground for the new building at 230 Jones Street was broken on August 23, 1924. Contracts were made between the Building Trades Council and the Builder's Exchange with the help of John O'Connell, Secretary of the San Francisco Labor Council, to insure that the building would be 100% union built.

The By-Laws of the Musicians Hall Association of San Francisco were certified and adopted on March 21, 1940. This organization was set up for the purpose of operating the business of the building at 230 Jones Street. The Hall Association, comprised of members of the Board of Directors, administers the accounts and pays all expenses relating to the upkeep of the building.

In the period before the fire, the local had 10-piece orchestras in all the theaters in its jurisdiction except one. After the fire/earthquake this changed and managers wanted smaller groups in their theaters. It then became incumbent upon the local to establish our classification system which determines the number of musicians to be engaged at theaters and other establishments based on the number of seats and/or square footage of the halls or ballrooms.

In 1907, the local, in conjunction with the Stage Hands' Union, formed the San Francisco Theatrical Federation. This organization has worked to good advantage and cooperation in all the various theatrical crafts. President Wm. J.

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Catalano, Sr., presently serves as one of the Vice Presidents of this organization.

The first demand for a six-day week was made to all the managers of theaters in 1911. It took 15 years to obtain this humanitarian right and a strike had to be called in 1926 to finally win this concession. From this positive action, a Municipal Band (one of the first in the United States) was funded by the City of San Francisco in 1912. The first concert, directed by A. Keogh, took place on July 21, 1912, at Washington Square. This band continued for 58 years. In June 1970 it was voted out of existence.

Currently, the City of San Francisco along with the Music Performance Trust Fund co-funds the Golden Gate Park Band which performs at the open air concert stand in Golden Gate Park during the summer months. Our member, Robert Hansen, has been the conductor of this band since 1972. The City of Oakland still funds the Oakland Municipal Band, and our member, Fred Rose, has been the Conductor and Music Director for 24 years.

The Music Performance Trust Fund (MPTF) is an organization financed by the Recording Industry under agreements with the American Federation of Musicians. It is the largest sponsor of music in the world. It was founded in the early 1940s and is administered by an independent trustee. The current trustee is Martin A. Paulson, an executive with long experience in the field of music, and he was appointed to this position by the U.S. Secretary of Labor. The proceeds are exclusively devoted to the payment of musicians for the presentation of admission-free, live public performances in communities of the United States and Canada. Such performances include concerts in parks, veterans' hospitals, schools and similar places.

#### **The Merger of Local 6 and Local 669**

The American Federation of Musicians, as well as many other labor unions, followed the policy of barring Negroes from membership up through the late 1950s. Congress in the 1960s enacted the Civil Rights Acts which enforced the rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution to all American citizens.

In 1924 the Negro musicians of San Francisco and the Bay Area had applied to the AF of M for a charter and were granted same to do business as Local 648 and headquartered in Oakland. The local had the same jurisdictional boundaries as Local 6.

A complaint was filed in 1934 by Local 6 with the AF of M against Local 648. The result was that its charter was revoked by the AF of M and its members were placed under the stewardship of Local 6 as a Local 6 Subsidiary. As members of Local 6 Subsidiary, the Negro musicians paid work dues and membership dues the same as Local 6 members but had no rights of membership. They could not participate in the death benefit plan, could not vote on matters pertaining to wage scales and working conditions, and had their own officers. This situation continued until 1943 at which time AF of M President James C. Petrillo abolished all subsidiary locals and advised the white locals to either accept the Negro musicians as equal members or the AF of M would grant charters to Negro members. In 1946, when Local 6 would not abide by this policy, the AF of M granted a charter

to the Negro musicians in the Bay Area to do business as Local 669. This charter was accepted in Chicago by Local 6 Subsidiary members, E. V. Lewis and Al Forbes.

Local 669, however, was still governed by the Local 6 Constitution and By-Laws, wage scales and working conditions. They had no voice or vote in establishing same. There were several unsuccessful attempts by both locals to bring about a merger. The AF of M ordered Local 6 to place a proposition to merge the two locals on its union election ballot of December 1956. This proposition was defeated by Local 6's union membership.

In 1959, a formal complaint was filed against Local 6, Local 669 and the AF of M by the Fair Employment Practice Commission of the State of California advising them that they were in violation of the Fair Employment Practice Act. The Boards of Local 6 and Local 669, complying with orders from AF of M President Herman Kenin, took action to bring about a merger of the two locals. In February of 1960, a Sub-Committee of the International Executive Board met with the two local Boards and reached a merger agreement acceptable to both which became effective on April 1, 1960.

#### **World War I & II**

One hundred-eighty five Local 6 members served as members of the Armed Forces during World War I—all returned home. In World War II, nine hundred and thirty-seven members returned home. Seven made the supreme sacrifice.

#### **Symphony, Opera and Ballet Orchestras**

The San Francisco Symphony was founded by the Musical Association of San Francisco and held its first concert on December 29, 1911, at the Cort Theater. Sixty-five of our members performed in this orchestra. The concerts were held in the Civic Auditorium until 1932 when the association moved to the magnificent San Francisco Opera House. In 1980, the symphony moved into their new home, the Louise M. Davies Symphony Hall. Over 105 of our Local 6's musicians perform in this world renowned symphony orchestra under one of the best collective bargaining agreements in the nation. The new maestro of the 1985 symphony season is Herbert Blomstedt who replaced Edo de Waart who conducted the orchestra from 1977 through the 1984 season.

The San Francisco Ballet was created in 1933 to provide dancers for the San Francisco Opera. It is the oldest resident classical ballet company in America, and it has emerged as one of the three largest ballet companies in the country. Over fifty-five of our members perform in this great orchestra. Since 1974, member Denis de Coteau has been its Music Director and Conductor.

The first season of the San Francisco Opera opened on September 26, 1923 at the Civic Auditorium where performances were held until the Opera House was built in 1932. Maestro Kurt Adler conducted this orchestra intermittently from 1942 through 1978. One hundred or more of our members perform in this acclaimed orchestra.

We are also proud of our members who perform in the Oakland Symphony Orchestra, the Oakland Ballet Orchestra, the Chamber Symphony of San Fran-

cisco, the Marin Symphony and Opera orchestras, the San Francisco Chamber Players, in our theatres and hotels, and numerous other orchestras and establishments in San Francisco and the Bay Area.

Now for one hundred years, our professional musicians of Local 6 have enhanced the lives of all the citizens of the Bay Area. We have weathered our own strikes and supported the picket lines of our brother and sister trade unionists. We have negotiated a thousand collective bargaining agreements for the betterment of our musicians. We have amended our Constitution and By-Laws to better conform to our present needs and changing times. We have sent delegates to our International conventions, to the California Labor Federation, AFL-CIO, and the Theatrical conferences to act on the behalf of our membership. We have held tight through good and bad economic times.

We have witnessed severe union busting activities and the passage of restrictive labor laws during the last years, and we can only survive, Local 6 as well as the trade union movement, with the unified efforts and cooperation of each union member to combat these trends.

**SOLIDARITY!**

**Officers of Local 6, AF of M  
1985-1986 Term**

Wm. J. Catalano, Sr., President  
Jimmy Schlicht, Vice President  
Don Menary, Secretary-Treasurer

**Executive Board**

Melinda Wagner, Trustee  
James Matheson, Trustee  
Mark Teel, Trustee  
Diana Dorman  
Carole Klein

**Business Representatives**

Wm. J. Keast, San Francisco  
Audrey "Bud" Moore, San Mateo  
Erich Torrey, East Bay  
Mort Steiner, Marin (Acting)

**Staff**

Ted Noga	Evelyn Guardino
Earl Watkins	Maria Tschirgi
Dave Monheit	Phyllis Kern
Evan Hughes	Lucille Bardoli

Raymond Rey, Asst. to the President

**NOTES:**

*William J. "Billy" Catalano, Sr.* served for 6 years on Local 6's Executive Board and 8 years as Business Representative for San Francisco and Oakland before he was elected as Vice President in 1976. Upon the resignation of President Jerry Spain on August 23, 1984, he assumed the office of the President for the unexpired term. He was elected to the office of the President in the Union election of October 4, 1984.

*Jimmy Schlicht* served as Assistant Treasurer in Local 6 office from 1972 through 1984. He was elected to the office of Vice President in the union election of October 1984.

*Donald R. Menary* was elected to the office of Secretary-Treasurer in 1974 and has served consecutively since then.

*Directors Melinda Wagner, Diana Dorman and Carole Klein* were the first

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women in Local 6 history to serve on the Executive Board. They were elected in October 1984.

*Member Maria Tschirgi* was appointed to serve as Vice President from August 31 through October 4, 1984 to fill a vacancy in this office for the unexpired term. Thus she became Local 6's first woman officer.

**International Officers (1985-86 Term)**  
**American Federation of Musicians, New York**  
Victor W. Fuentealba, President  
Mark Tully Massagli, Vice President  
J. Alan Wood, Vice-President from Canada  
Kelly L. Castleberry II, Secretary-Treasurer  
J. Martin Emerson, *Secretary-Treasurer Emeritus*

*Research and information for this article was from issues of Local 6's monthly publication, MUSICAL NEWS, from pamphlets of the American Federation of Musicians, from an article by member James G. Dewey, a great name in the history of Local 6, which appeared in the 1957 issue of MUSICAL NEWS, and from articles written many years ago by Clarence H. King and A. W. Widenham, who at one time was Manager of the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra.*

*This article was compiled and written by Phyllis Kern, a secretary in Local 6's union office. She is a member of Office and Professional Employees Union, Local 3, San Francisco.*

November 1985

**MUSICIAN'S UNION**  
LOCAL NO. 6  
AMERICAN FEDERATION OF MUSICIANS



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