San Francisco Symphony Negotiation Information

The collective bargaining agreement for the musicians of the San Francisco Symphony expired on November 26, 2022. Negotiating sessions between the administration and the union representing the musicians have been ongoing since September 15, 2022. Both parties have agreed to continue negotiations while concerts continue beyond the contract expiration date. As of February 10, 2023, the two parties have entered into mediation.

The Orchestra is the core of everything the San Francisco Symphony does—our musicians are always, and continue to be, the top priority. The Symphony's administration has offered the musicians the most competitive contract possible, within the parameters of what the organization can support financially.

The proposal is extremely competitive

- The administration's latest proposal to the musicians offers a three-year contract with minimum base salaries that keep the San Francisco Symphony among the top three highest-compensated orchestras in the United States—higher than those in Boston and New York, where the cost of living is also very high.
- The total average compensation the musicians have been offered is more than $213,000 per musician in the first fiscal year, with multi-year increases to more than $229,000 by the end of the proposed contract.
- In addition, musicians receive 10 weeks annual paid vacation, paid sick leave, a maximum pension of $82,000 annually upon retirement, and a full coverage health plan with very modest monthly contributions. For reference, the 2022 estimated annual cost for health care coverage per musician was $38,800, of which the San Francisco Symphony paid $37,712 and the musician contributed $1,088.

The proposal is the most the Symphony can financially support

- COVID-19 has proved extremely challenging for the performing arts and the San Francisco Symphony. Pandemic mandates caused more than a year of canceled performances, resulting in drastically reduced ticket sales and donations. As audiences return slowly to live events, the Symphony expects to feel the pandemic's long-term financial impact for years to come.
- The Symphony has long faced persistent and increasing operating deficits. Pandemic-related federal funding masked this reality for two recent years, but the fundamental economic challenge and unaffordability of the current cost structure has not changed.
- A majority of the Symphony's endowment is legally restricted in how it may be used. Where there is flexibility, the endowment is already leveraged to the maximum extent that is fiscally responsible for the long-term health of the organization. The endowment consists of legally restricted funds that are not available to be redirected in response to labor pressures.

The proposal prioritizes the musicians above anything else

- In response to the challenging financial reality, over the last several years the Symphony has implemented extensive cost-cutting measures across all other areas of the organization, including two rounds of staff layoffs (reducing staff headcount by 23%), temporary staff furloughs and salary reductions, strict limits across all concert overhead costs, and cuts to education programming.
- The Symphony invests more in the orchestra than in any other part of the organization, allocating more than a third of all budgeted revenue to orchestra compensation, benefits, and related taxes.
- The administration's proposal to the musicians reflects the maximum economic cost that is reasonable and prudent to commit to without jeopardizing the future and stability of the San Francisco Symphony.