

# KMU Newsletter

A quarterly Journal for the Kingston Musicians Union Local 518  
ISSUE 9: JANUARY 2015

## Still Swinging in Quinte

The Commodores' Orchestra – 87 years and counting



In May 1927, Charles Lindberg completed the world's first solo transatlantic flight, and a shiny new Ford Model A cost \$500.

In Belleville, dancers celebrated the opening of the Bay of Quinte Golf Club to the music of a freshly-formed band called the Commodores' Orchestra. Who knew it would still be laying down the big band soundtrack in east-central Ontario 87 years later?

In its heyday, there were 350 people a night, four nights a week at the band-owned **Club Commodore** at the Belleville Fairgrounds. There were gigs at Toronto's Royal York, Queens University graduations, and thousands of others that made the Commodores an enduring piece of Quinte's cultural fabric.

**Johnny Mitchell** was a Commodore for 66 years until he retired two years ago. He remembers the night they put the price of Coke up a nickel to 15 cents at the club. "We nearly had a riot," he laughs.

Or the time the cops raided the Club and put an end to dancers bringing their own booze. For years, the police tolerated it until a teetotalling chief decided enough was enough.

Or when the Commodores got stuck on an ice-bound train out of Kingston with the **Duke Ellington** band, and the locals shot the breeze for hours with legends like **Johnny Hodges** and **Billy Strayhorn**.

There were lean years. Sometimes the local players would play for nothing, so as to pay musicians brought in to keep the band going.

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### 2015 MEMBERSHIPS

Membership fees for the year are due January 1, but may be paid up to the end of the month without penalty.

- Regular member \$154
- \*Youth member (20 & under) \$120
- Life \$80
- \*Life retired \$50

\*new categories this year, see secretary's report for details

### ARE YOU A NEW LIFE OR 50-YEAR MEMBER THIS YEAR?

*IF SO, PLEASE CONTACT THE OFFICE .*

Life—minimum 35-year AFM member & at least 65 years of age

50-year member— 50 years cumulative AFM membership, regardless of age

Commodores continued from page 1.....

One gig in Trenton was designated the band's last stand. But so many people turned up, the members decided to soldier on.

These days...the Commodores are enjoying a renaissance, due in part to a connection with the revered **Boss Brass**, led by the late **Rob McConnell**. Former Boss Brass percussionist **Brian Barlow** is contributing fresh arrangements of old swing classics, and 25-year BB saxman **Bob Leonard** occupies the lead sax chair. Juno-nominated tenor man **Dan Bone** adds another world-class sax sound. Rehearsals are twice a month in Trenton; musicians come from an area bounded by Kingston, Peterborough, Cobourg, and Picton.

Recently, the band has raised nearly \$10,000 in concerts for military families, scholarships, and the high school music program at Trenton High School. These concerts have drawn paid audiences from 250 to 400.

There's a new CD coming in May. It's a live recording done at the **Stirling Theatre** in September 2014.

The band has also created the **Quinte Youth Jazz Ensemble** - comprised of Quinte-area student musicians. It rehearses twice a month under the leadership of Commodores' member and Albert College teacher **Scott Mills**, with assistance from other bandsmen when they can drop by. The plan is to have "The Navy Blues" perform at various functions with the Commodores.

The band will host the fourth **Trenton Big Band Festival** July 18 & 19. It will feature the **Brian Barlow Big Band** in a show commemorating **Frank Sinatra's** 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, as well as the **Toronto All-Star Big Band**, and Kingston's **Swingmasters**.

(Details at [trentonbigbandfestival.com](http://trentonbigbandfestival.com))

Somebody forgot to tell the Commodores the big bands are dead!

[www.commodoresorchestra.com](http://www.commodoresorchestra.com)



- *Andy Sparling*

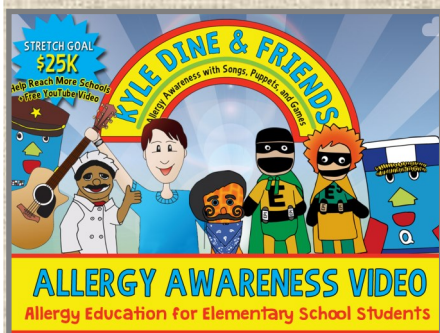
## Success with Crowdfunding

After performing musical assemblies at schools for the past seven years, my goal has been to reach more and more students about a specific message that I am passionate about: food allergy awareness. I thought there would be no better way to further my reach than creating a DVD that I could send to schools. The problem: it's very expensive to create a 60-minute video with songs and puppets!

After striking out several times applying for grant money, I decided to take a different approach – crowdfunding. I thought it might be a fun way to involve fans and others to be a part of a project together.

I did my research on crowdfunding websites, and chose Kickstarter. There are many options with different benefits and risks for creators and musicians. I slowly, but carefully planned out the details of my campaign months in advance. I studied successfully crowdfunded projects, and the ones that flopped.

I noticed the successful crowdfunding campaigns, whether for a new CD, video or gadget, were grounded in gratitude for their ever-growing community. They really empowered people by bringing them "behind the scenes" with updates on their project progress.



I started building a buzz for my campaign by creating my "A-Team" mailing list months in advance and started engaging these fans in project decisions/surveys. Once launched, they were the first ones to back the project and share with friends. My campaign has grown in leaps and bounds within two weeks, and has actually become the most successful Kingston-based Kickstarter campaign raising over \$23,000 to-date. I'm thrilled that my project will become a reality in 2015, all because of my fans.

*Kyle Dine*

[kyledine@gmail.com](mailto:kyledine@gmail.com)



## FROM THE SECRETARY/TREASURER'S DESK....



As 2014 comes to a close, we are able to reflect on the achievements of the past year. The year began by recognizing a group of long-serving members: life members

(over 65 years of age) who had been in the AFM for 35 years plus, and those who had been members for over 50 years (regardless of age). Both groups had been long overdue to receive acknowledgement and lifetime pins. One of the recipients was the former secretary/treasurer Dick Baldwin, who sadly passed away in July. A tribute in the summer newsletter commemorated Dick's dedication to KMU and the helping hand he had extended over the years to many of Kingston's young musicians. In October, on Dick's birthday, the KMU membership celebrated Dick's life by gathering together to play and share memories of his contributions to music. In honour of Dick's lifetime commitment, the Richard Baldwin Memorial Scholarship has been created to provide a 2015/16 scholarship for a motivated young musician.

This year's summer park concert series was a success despite our initial worries over a reduction of funds from the Music Performance Trust Fund. In the end, we cobbled the funds together and managed to employ musicians at scale rate to keep the programme alive and active. Performances took place at several locations in Kingston and at a weekly performance venue in Gananoque. We are in the process of exploring additional summer options, including support for regular performances in Kingston's East.

Late in 2013, we initiated a programme of music performances at the Cancer Clinic in Kingston which continued until the end of May, when the hospital was no longer able to accommodate musicians in the space provided. This programme provided regular opportunities for small groups to play in a community environment. Community response was overwhelmingly positive, so it was disappointing to lose the space. However, I am sure other opportunities will present themselves in the future.

Throughout much of the year, a large amount of our time was spent writing, reviewing, rewriting and editing an updated Tariff of Fees document. This document had not been reviewed or updated for several years. We had a great deal of discussion and input from members and help from

Local 180 (Ottawa) who donated time to help with the process of creating a sound document relevant to Kingston's Local. The updated tariff was passed in the October general meeting and comes into effect Jan 1st 2015. You can find the document on the KMU website in the members' area (password= kingstonmusic). We will be reviewing the document again next year and will refine the tariff if necessary. So be sure to pass on your input as you use the updated fee schedule; and we hope you will bring your feedback to one or more of the general meetings in 2015.

Our membership (currently at 240 members) has continued to increase, gaining approximately 40 new or reinstated members during 2014. We have tried to keep fees reasonable with no increase in spite of the new financial demands of an office that is more active. We also have created two new categories: Youth membership for members 20 and younger with a significantly reduced membership, \$120 (no initiation fees); and Inactive life membership for those Life members who wish to remain in the union but no longer are actively performing, \$50. We hope to further increase membership throughout 2015 as we actively work to raise awareness of KMU's benefits among young club musicians and college music students.

With the increased activity that we are seeing within the Local we felt the need to add a secretarial assistant to help with the growing amount of administrative work. Joan Voros has been helping out for about 12 months, and at the last general meeting we created an official position so that any future Secretary/Treasurer will be able to benefit from this support. We also realize that as the local grows there will be a greater need for us to liaise with the music community. With this in mind we created a position for a business representative/liaison for Kingston, and hope to find a similar business rep for the Belleville and area region.

Our final activity this year was to open up talks with the Kingston Symphony. The Symphony is a vital part of the region's music culture and we wish to have it remain well established in our community. Our meeting was encouraging and we can feel proud of the dedication of members that regularly perform in the Symphony. We will continue our conversation in the new year.

Best wishes for 2015!

*Sue Moore*



### CFM-sponsored Insurance Plans

In response to a request at the Oct general meeting, liability and other group insurance plans are outlined below.

#### Commercial General Liability:

- Bodily injury, property damage, medical payments, tenants legal liability and non-owned automobile.
- Loss of earnings up to \$5,000 due to loss or damage to venue.
- Up to \$2,500 coverage on promotional material: t-shirts, CDs, posters, etc.
- Up to \$5,000 loss of earnings due to loss or damage to equipment.
- Rates:  
\$1,000,000 limit - \$50 / member.  
\$2,000,000 limit - \$100 / member.  
higher limits available on request
- \$500 deductible

#### Instruments & Equipment:

- Instruments and music-related equipment are protected from vandalism, breakage, water, fire, lightning and theft up to the full replacement value.
- Rental reimbursement: up to \$10,000 in coverage, if you need to rent instruments or equipment in the event of a loss (\$100 deductible).
- Rate: \$2.00 / \$100 sum insured

#### For more info, contact:

Hub International:  
Toll Free: 1 800 563-9441  
**Email: Sandra.Sween**  
**@hubinternational.com**

#### Medical / Health-related plans

- Travel Medical
- Health and Dental
- Personal Accident Disability
- Critical Illness

For details and contact info, see:  
**<http://www.cfmusicians.org/services/insurance-packages>**

## **I didn't want to write for pay. I wanted to be paid for what I write.**

### **Leonard Cohen**



When **Kevin Mallon** embarked on a career as a professional musician, he did not foresee that the most challenging part of his career would be “the fact that interest in music and the arts

is more than ever in decline.” Mr. Mallon points out that for artists belonging to a long established profession these are challenging times where “we see more closures of long established arts institutions, which were once held in esteem. (The demise of New York City Opera is but one recent example).”

Mr. Mallon's most disturbing observation is the “change in the general environment and appreciation of classical music.” His estimation that concert attendance is flagging and young people are less and less interested in the “virtues of classical music” appears to be reflected in all centres around Canada. The impact of cuts to Ontario music education in the 1990s produced a generation of young professionals who have had little exposure to classical music, rendering them unable to break into this genre even if they wanted to. Additionally, Mallon notes, the format of our orchestras and ensembles, “tails and all”, often contributes to presenting an “unapproachable” and “antiquated” format of music-making. He feels an overwhelming responsibility to be an advocate for classical music in addition to conducting. Who else other than the artists, the practicing musicians, are best able to promote the importance of classical music?

Mr. Mallon stresses “there should be an understanding, an unwritten social contract, that if and while we make these efforts to keep music alive and try to make sure that our world doesn't fall into a total cul-

tural black hole, that we be honestly paid or compensated for such.” He has in mind the 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 2013, article in the British Telegraph entitled: ***US orchestras are greedy and overpaid:***

<http://bit.ly/1ckA4He>. At one point the author, Ivan Hewett, asks: “Why does a musician need to be ‘compensated’ for doing what he/she loves?” Mr. Hewett is referring to the Minnesota Symphony Orchestra which at that time had been on strike for over a year, not wishing to suffer a 30% pay cut. He quotes the average orchestra pay as nearly \$108,000 in 2011/12, and questions whether they deserve it.

Mr. Mallon refutes Mr. Hewett's description of the orchestra musicians as “greedy and overpaid” through researching other professional fees in Minnesota. He looks at the average starting salaries of new law graduates with no experience (\$110,000, median) and city clerks (\$93,976 -138,199). “Is it really so unreasonable that a musician at the top of his profession earns less than a newly graduated lawyer or a city administrator? Clearly, I don't think so!” concludes Mr. Mallon. He goes on to make comparisons between UK orchestra salaries and Mr. Hewett's writing salary which is often higher, noting that this does not make newspaper writers “greedy and overpaid”; it's more likely that orchestras are underfunded.

Reaffirming his dedication to the value of music, Kevin Mallon ends with the words of Winston Churchill: “The arts are essential to any complete national life. The State owes it to itself to sustain and encourage them....Ill fares the race which fails to salute the arts with the reverence and delight which are their due.”

**To see all of Kevin Mallon's post visit:**

[bit.ly/181fpEQ](http://bit.ly/181fpEQ)

## 2014 NEWSLETTERS IN REVIEW

During the past year, editors Sue & Joan highlighted a number of CFM/AFM members' services: AFM Entertainment, Pension Plan vesting, pension availability for private teachers, group insurance plans, Petrillo fund for disabled musicians. We also explained the purpose of work dues, shared tips for first-time performing musicians, and discussed the importance of contracts. If you would like to read further clarifications about any of these topics or about other AFM services, please let us know.

For 2015, we will continue to cover KMU Local business, activities, events and general interest news; and we welcome your input to help keep us informed. We are particularly in need of Belleville area and Peterborough region event news reporters. You are also invited to suggest future member spotlight features, and topics that may be of interest to Local newsletter readers.

Kindly send newsletter suggestions and queries to: [kmu518.office@gmail.com](mailto:kmu518.office@gmail.com)

We appreciate member participation and would like to thank all those who provided copy and/or recommendations last year. We look forward to hearing your ideas for 2015. Happy New Year!

*Sue Moore*

*Joan Voros*

Welcome All!

### New members:

William Bosworth, piano\*

Lise de Kok, violin\*

*\*Billisemo Duo*

### Re-instated:

Clare Gordon

Sarah McCourt

### Transferred:

Jean-Pierre Montminy

### Congratulations new life members:

Eric Brunner

Alex Voros

### Know anyone who would like to join KMU?

2015 is the first year of our reduced Youth membership rate. Anyone 20 or under pays only \$120 annually, with no initiation fee.

Regular membership: one-time cost of \$249 includes 2015 annual membership fee (\$154) + Federation and Local initiation fees (\$95).

When 2 or more members from the same group join together, initiation fees are not applied....Cost is \$154, each.

Check out our [Facebook](#) page: Kingston Musicians' Union

We accept credit card payments, and debit payments through PayPal. Call the office for details.

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