



FAQ

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

About the Edmonton Musicians' Association and the AFM

WHAT IS THE MUSICIANS' ASSOCIATION?

The Edmonton Musicians' Association, the EMA, is a professional association that was founded by Edmonton musicians who felt they needed their own local organization to unite and represent them while enhancing their interests. The association received its charter 1907 from the American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada, the AFM. The current officers and directors are all working musicians.

WHAT IS THE AFM?

Membership in the AFM makes us part of a continent-wide family of performers, composers and recording artists. While we benefit immensely from being part of this network we also have our own head office in Toronto that under the leadership of the Vice President from Canada deals with matters of a Canadian nature. We elect local, national and international officers. Because the AFM is a federation of Locals it is also referred to as the Federation.

WHAT DOES THE AFM DO?

The Federation represents musicians in negotiation with the recording, film and television industries, sets standards for employment and provides many benefits and services to musicians. Major offices in Toronto, New York and Los Angeles monitor broadcast and movie use of music to make sure musicians are paid fairly for their work. Our Toronto office offers other services including help with US visas, movie and television contracts, with bargaining national agreements and the collection of additional payments from re-use, new-use and other special payments. The Canadian Office also lobbies various levels of government on behalf of the Canadian members.

Membership makes you part of a vast family of musicians and performers. You can rely on this network when you tour, perform or record. It can help you find places to play, others to play with and support services. It offers you a chance to work together with fellow musicians to influence public policies, working conditions and rates of payment for the work you do.

WHAT SERVICES DOES THE AFM OFFER?

The most important services offered by the AFM are: contracts to protect performers and recording musicians, free legal services to back up these contracts, residual payments to studio musicians for recording studio work, new use payments if recorded music is later used for television broadcast or movies, a great pension plan, affordable worldwide insurance for your instruments and equipment, access to accident and medical insurance, assistance with visas to tour and perform in the United States, help contacting other musicians, employers and setting up performances and grants to pay musicians for free public performances in schools and communities. The EMA generates a lot of work through its referral program.

HOW DO CONTRACTS WORK?

Each time you play under a union contract, there is a legal agreement in place with your engager. That document protects you in case the engagement is cancelled, you aren't paid your contracted fee or the working conditions are not acceptable. The Local files the contract and the AFM provides legal backup and emergency funds. **Minimum** fees for musical services are set by the members and are kept at a reasonable rate to encourage engagements and the use of contracts. Each time you work under a contract, an additional 7-10% of the scale wage may be credited to your pension account. Our Local does not have "work dues" on miscellaneous engagements but a small amount (usually 1.55% - 3%) is collected from you as "work dues" on AFM locally and nationally negotiated contracts, (Citadel Theatre, Mayfield Inn, Edmonton Symphony) and recording contracts. These modest dues cover the cost of negotiating and maintaining these national agreements that are entered into by the EMA or the Federation.

WHO SETS THE WAGES SCALE AND PAYS WORK DUES?

Work dues and minimum or "scale" wages are set by all the members of each Local. Work dues are charged to visiting performers as well as local players working under local or national agreements. Our Local is unique in that we do not collect work dues on miscellaneous engagements, although if you are working in other jurisdictions, you will have to pay their local work dues to that local.

ARE THERE FREE LEGAL SERVICES?

Yes, as a member of the Local and the Federation you have the services of a legal assistance team standing behind you each time you play under an AFM

contract. You can call us for free advice and support at any time. If a contracted gig is cancelled, and you are stranded the Federation can also provide emergency travel funds.

WHAT ARE RESIDUAL PAYMENTS?

Through many years of negotiation with major record labels, a Special Payments Fund has been set up to provide added compensation to those who record music. Musicians who record in Canada or the US under a union contract are entitled to receive these funds. This benefit applies to those who record their own music as well as musicians who work for major record labels.

WHAT IF RECORDED MUSIC IS USED FOR A FILM OR TV?

If you record under a union contract, and the music is later broadcast on television, used in a film, video or in any other new format, everyone who recorded the music will be paid additional monies, each time there is a new use. Some musicians have received five times their original studio fee, as a result! These “new use” payments come from 17 different agreements, already in place, thanks to the power of collective strength through membership in the AFM.

WHAT IS THE PENSION PLAN?

It is a way to set aside money each time you play. This is especially important for younger players. The AFM-EPW Fund (Canada) is one of the best pension plans in North America. Each time you play under contract, you can negotiate that up to 10% of your scale wages is paid by your employer in addition to your fee and deposited in your pension account. Once you are 55 years of age or older, you can qualify for payments that continue as long as you live. These benefits to you and your spouse increase as long as you keep making contributions to your account.

INSTRUMENT INSURANCE TOO?

As a result of AFM Canada’s negotiations, an affordable instrument and professional liability insurance is available to you that protects you and your gear. Coverage is world-wide and claims are easily settled. Our members have used this service and have been well protected against loss and damage to their instruments and equipment.

PLUS HELP WITH VISAS?

If you play in the United States without a visa or work permit you can be barred from entry into the US for a long time. Our AFM Office in Toronto specializes in setting up US visas for Canadian performers. The US immigration services charges a fee for that visa.

WHAT CAN I FIND OUT THROUGH THE FEDERATION?

Because there are Locals in most areas, you can check out an employer before you agree to perform, find other musicians to accompany you or find out about accommodation and touring options through AFM Locals or the internet.

WHAT DOES IT COST TO JOIN THE LOCAL?

Initiation fees are \$40 to the Local and \$65 to the Federation. These fees are paid by anyone joining for the first time, but are not paid by those who are students or under 21 years of age. Each year, you also pay membership dues. Contact us for the amount of the current annual dues.

We are here to serve and support you. We will be happy to answer any question you may have, whether you are a member of our association or not. Please call or email us if you want to find out more.

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