



A version of this letter was sent personally to Senator Schumer, Senator Gillibrand and Representative Nadler on behalf of Local 802 and the American Ballet Theatre Orchestra Committee:

July 26, 2021

Dear Senator Schumer, Senator Gillibrand and Representative Nadler:

On behalf of the New York City musicians' union (AFM Local 802) and the American Ballet Theatre Orchestra Committee, we are reaching out to you because we know how much you care about the revitalization of the arts in New York, and we are troubled by the actions of the American Ballet Theatre management during our current contract negotiations. At present, we write to inform you of management's decision not to pay for the orchestra's health benefits as required by our contract.

To date, the American Ballet Theatre has accepted \$7.5 million in PPP loans, plus a Shuttered Venue Operator's Grant of \$10 million, totaling \$17.5 million in government rescue. Despite all the aid received, the ABT management has stated that none of the musicians' wages lost this contract year will be paid, and they will not remit the contractually required amount towards our health benefits fund. As a result, many orchestra members will lose their health insurance at the end of August.

When Senator Schumer addressed our union a few months ago, he eloquently stated that pandemic aid is available to all employees of our arts community, and that the acceptance of grants was not to be used as a means to weaken and strip longstanding collective bargaining agreements.

Unfortunately, the ABT management is doing precisely that.

Our specific requests are the following:

- The management of the American Ballet Theatre should negotiate in good faith with the musicians.
- Management should not let the musicians' health care lapse. Moreover, management should not threaten to withhold health care payments as a bargaining chip to gut the musicians' contract.

Last year, the American Ballet Theatre also received PPP money. At that time, management paid our orchestra from this grant and did not let our health insurance lapse even though we were not able to offer live performances. It is imperative that ABT make the same payments for the 2021 season and utilize government resources in a comparable manner.

We want to alert you to the unconscionable way we are being treated by the ABT management while they are receiving government aid. We appeal to your sense of fairness and your understanding of how the pandemic created difficult economic conditions for musicians, particularly in New York City, where shuttered venues are opening very slowly.

While we aren't considered essential workers in the usual sense, we absolutely believe that performing musicians and artists are an essential part of any thriving democracy. We sincerely hope that the spirit of pandemic aid for the arts does not allow for this kind of behavior from any performing arts company towards the very artists who make the performances possible.

We look forward to hearing from you and hope you will help us save our embattled musicians.

Sincerely,



Local 802 President Adam Krauthamer

and

The ABT Orchestra Committee