Statement from the Associated Musicians of Greater New York, Local 802, AFM, and the American Guild of Musical Artists (AGMA) on new Metropolitan Opera Contract and Initiatives

New York, New York - Friday, September 14, 2018 — The two major musical unions at the Metropolitan Opera, the Associated Musicians of Greater New York, Local 802, AFM and the American Guild of Musical Artists (AGMA) announce the approval of a new contract with the institution, pending final ratification on Monday by the AGMA Board of Governors.

The unions represent several categories of workers at the Met, including the Regular and Associate Musicians of the MET Orchestra and Music Staff and Assistant Conductors, represented by Local 802, and the AGMA-represented Chorus, Soloists, Stage Managers, Stage Directors, Staff Performers, Dancers, and Choreographers. The joint statement is as follows:

“We, the musicians and musical artists of the Metropolitan Opera, believe in the future of opera and are deeply committed to collaborative efforts to guarantee the stability and artistic vibrancy of the Met. Throughout this process, we have worked to achieve a favorable economic agreement, including compensation and benefits improvements, that support artistic excellence and help to ensure that musicians are able to live, work, and raise a family in this great city. Demonstrating a continued willingness to invest in the Met’s long-term stability, we have agreed to add Sunday performances, which we recognize will reach new audiences, while also securing important protections and improvements that will safeguard artists’ work-life balance. Additionally, going forward, musicians will have a stronger voice at the Met as members of the continuing Efficiency Task Force, a newly-created Artistic Advisory Committee, and a new Public Engagement committee tasked with exploring innovative ways to creatively interact with fans, increase revenue, and modernize the institution. We are heartened by the fact the Met is prioritizing the artists who bring grand opera to life for audiences around the world, and look forward to an artistically vibrant season.”

“The Metropolitan Opera’s product is the talent of its skilled musicians and musical artists, who consistently deliver excellence with every performance, both on stage and in the pit,” said Tino Gagliardi, President, Local 802 AFM, “This summer, the committees negotiated a favorable economic package that will allow the Met to maintain its high standard of musical excellence, balancing compromises made to ensure the institution’s long term viability with protections for hard-working musicians. The musicians of the MET Orchestra can now turn their attention to bringing the joy of grand opera to New Yorkers and visitors from around the world.”
“We are delighted to have reached agreement with the Metropolitan Opera through a collaborative and mutually beneficial process. Our respective negotiating committees worked tirelessly throughout the summer to ensure that all Artists in every category were heard and achieved improvements in benefits and working conditions,” stated Leonard Egert, National Executive Director of AGMA. “Recognizing that a safe and supportive environment is imperative to rehearsing and performing at the highest level, we created an innovative process for the unions’ direct involvement and input into preventing sexual harassment and discrimination which have no place at the Met.”

“Every member of the MET Orchestra has devoted their lives to their craft, their artistry and their musicianship. This agreement exemplifies that commitment by ensuring that the Metropolitan Opera we all know and love is well positioned to thrive artistically for years to come,” said Jessica Phillips, clarinetist and chair of the MET Orchestra Committee, “Throughout negotiations, preserving the high artistic standards that have made the Metropolitan Opera among the most important opera companies in the world was the foremost priority. This agreement further empowers musicians and artists by expanding our ability to partner with the Met and be of help in areas related to financial efficiency, artistic evolution, and audience outreach. We believe that the future of the Met Opera is bright and and we’re looking forward to the exciting new season ahead, particularly as we welcome our new Music Director, Yannick Nézet-Séguin.”

“This summer, recognizing that Sunday performances are integral to reaching new audiences, we agreed to a major adjustment to our professional and family life, introducing Sunday matinees to the Met Opera schedule beginning in the 2019-20 season.” Ned Hanlon, chorister and chair of the Met AGMA Committee, “We have been able to balance this with base pay increases and improved benefits, as well as protections to ensure that we, the artists of the Met, will still have time to spend with our families, restore our minds and bodies, and prepare to be at our best throughout the rigorous season.”

About Local 802, AFM:
The Associated Musicians of Greater New York, Local 802 American Federation of Musicians represents over 7,500 highly-skilled musicians who drive the New York City’s thriving cultural and tourism economy, which brings over 58 million visitors each year. Its members—who perform on Broadway, at Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall and Radio City, on Late Night TV shows and in other televised bands, as well as in hotels, clubs, festivals and venues across NYC—are protected by collectively bargained agreements ensuring fair treatment and living wage. www.local802afm.org.

About AGMA:
The American Guild of Musical Artists (AGMA) is a labor organization that represents the people who create and engage in America’s operatic, choral and dance performances across the world. AGMA represents approximately 7500 opera and classical singers, ballet and modern dancers, and production personnel at all principal opera houses, ballet companies and choral groups in the United States. The Union provides forceful advocacy and defense of its members’ employment and artistic rights and is affiliated with the AFL-CIO; Branch of Associated Actors and Artists of America. For more information please go to www.musicalartists.org.