



AMERICAN GUILD *of* MUSICAL ARTISTS

Information  
for  
New and  
Prospective  
Members

Dear New and Prospective Members:

Welcome to the American Guild of Musical Artists, AFL-CIO! AGMA is the labor union that represents professional opera and concert singers, dancers, and production personnel at major opera, dance, and concert companies throughout the United States.

As AGMA's National Executive Director, I serve as the union's chief administrative officer and principal contract negotiator – supervising an exceptional staff of negotiators, attorneys and contract administrators.

By becoming a member of AGMA, you join in a long tradition of people within the United States and throughout the rest of the world who have recognized the inherent value of being part of a union. You and your colleagues collectively negotiate agreements, seek to improve working conditions, and have an effective way to address concerns.

In addition to improving contractual provisions for members' wages, benefits, and other terms and conditions of employment, AGMA strives to expand protections relating to health and safety and seeks to eliminate hazardous workplace conditions such as unsafe raked stages and poisonous smoke and fog. Additionally, we are always available to assist you in any way necessary to protect and enforce your professional and legal rights.

We solicit and welcome your participation in AGMA's activities and encourage you to play an active role in the governance of your union. All members in good standing, including new members, can run for election to AGMA's Board of Governors or to serve on the union's various committees. We encourage you to visit our website ([www.musicalartists.org](http://www.musicalartists.org)) for more information and to explore more opportunities to get involved.

Like the other members of AGMA's professional staff, I am here and available to assist you whenever you have questions or need help. Please feel free to call upon me at any time, at (800) 543-2462 or via e-mail at [legert@musicalartists.org](mailto:legert@musicalartists.org)

Cordially,

*Leonard Egert*

National Executive Director

**AMERICAN GUILD OF MUSICAL ARTISTS, AFL-CIO**  
1430 BROADWAY, 14th Floor  
NEW YORK CITY, NEW YORK 10018-3308  
(212) 265-3687 / (800) 543-2462  
Fax (212) 262-9088

[www.MusicalArtists.org](http://www.MusicalArtists.org)

John Coleman, President  
Gregory Stapp, First Vice President  
George Scott, Second Vice President  
J Austin Bitner, Third Vice President  
Jane Shaulis, Fourth Vice President  
William Buchanan, Fifth Vice President  
Raymond Menard, Treasurer  
Louis Perry, Recording Secretary  
  
Leonard Egert, National Executive Director

**General Counsel**

Bruce Simon  
Cohen, Weiss and Simon  
330 West 42nd Street  
New York, New York 10036  
(212) 265-3687

**Midwest Counsel**

John Ward  
10 S. Riverside Plaza  
Suite 825  
Chicago, IL 60606  
(312) 628-7830

**STAFF REPRESENTATIVES**

**National Office**

Deborah Allton-Maher  
Associate Executive Director  
[deborah@musicalartists.org](mailto:deborah@musicalartists.org)

Griff Braun  
Director of Organizing  
and Outreach  
[griff@musicalartists.org](mailto:griff@musicalartists.org)

Tracy Jones  
Western Business Representative  
[tracey@musicalartists.org](mailto:tracey@musicalartists.org)

**Mid-Atlantic Counsel**

Allison Beck  
[abeck@musicalartists.org](mailto:abeck@musicalartists.org)  
(202) 744-2113

**West Coast Counsel**

Hope Singer  
[hsinger@musicalartists.org](mailto:hsinger@musicalartists.org)  
(424) 390-9524

**San Francisco**

Nora Heiber  
[nheiber@musicalartists.org](mailto:nheiber@musicalartists.org)  
(415) 310-9877

## **WHAT IS AGMA?**

### **AGMA is a labor union.**

Because performing artists live to perform, they are vulnerable to employer exploitation, unfair and unsafe conditions, and illegal discrimination. They can find the protection they need by joining AGMA – the American Guild of Musical Artists.

Performing artists support themselves with their talents and skill, but the beauty they create doesn't necessarily pay the rent or the doctor bills. It doesn't put food on the table or guarantee any of the other necessities of life. It doesn't even ensure that the artists can continue to develop their craft.

Without forceful advocacy of their interests, Artists can be subjected to abuse, poor pay and inadequate benefits, unsafe and unprofessional working conditions, and no job security.

**AGMA members, along with professional assistance from staff** negotiate collective bargaining agreements that provide, among other vital benefits: guaranteed salaries; rehearsal and overtime pay; regulated work hours; vacation and sick pay; access to low-cost health benefits; good-faith resolution of disputes; and protection of members' legal and contractual rights.

**AGMA represents** Artists at most of America's leading opera and dance companies and many other performing arts institutions. These Artists have concluded that being part of our Union has significantly enhanced their earning power.

Throughout the United States, Artists represented by the American Guild of Musical Artists enjoy greater prestige, better performing conditions, and a higher quality of life. That's why we hope you will join us in the mission for which AGMA was first created—to protect performers and enhance the image of musical artists everywhere.

## **AGMA is unique among entertainment unions.**

Despite the fact that AGMA is one of the smaller performing arts unions, it is unique in several important aspects.

Unlike SAG-AFTRA or Actors' Equity, AGMA does not prohibit its members from working non-union jobs within its jurisdiction. AGMA also provides a Guest Artist Agreement that can bring some workplace protections as well as enable a contribution to the AGMA Retirement Plan from non-union employers at no cost to the member.

Although it has one of the lowest initiation fees and dues of any talent union, AGMA has iron-clad, "real world" contracts and a staff of exceptionally skilled negotiators and attorneys to provide extensive services to our members.

AGMA, while being professionally administered, is actually run entirely by its members. Our member-leaders are elected and create AGMA's policies which are then implemented by its professional staff.

AGMA does not have nationwide votes on its collective bargaining agreements. Only those members who actually work for any particular AGMA company can vote on the ratification of their own contracts. Once you have worked under an AGMA contract after working non-union, you will immediately understand the protections from which you benefit.

Despite steadily decreasing union membership across the country, AGMA's membership has continued to grow.

Finally, and perhaps most important, AGMA is an entirely 'open' union and membership in AGMA is available to artists at any time in their careers.

**Through AGMA, performers win the respect and recognition they deserve for the beauty they create.**

## **HOW DOES AGMA WORK?**

AGMA is an entirely democratic and open union, governed by its members.

All union officers are artists chosen through elections in which every member in good standing is eligible to vote.

The Board of Governors, the governing body of AGMA, is responsible for final approval of all contracts, management of union funds, and for protecting all members from unfair or unsafe practices and conditions. Candidates for the Board or National Office must be active members who have worked under an AGMA collective bargaining agreement for an AGMA signatory in the category they seek to represent. Governors and Officers serve for a four-year term. The election of Governors is held biennially while the election for National Officers is held every four years.

AGMA is a National Union, without a system of locals. To assure democratic representation, however, AGMA does have a structure of geographical areas for service on the Board of Governors. Many Areas elect an Area Committee and a Chairperson. Members are encouraged to attend meetings in their Area and other local functions during the course of the year. A member's Area is determined by their primary address on record at AGMA unless he or she designates a different Area based on their pattern of employment. Within each Area, the composition of the Board of Governors is based on a formula of members in good standing (paid to date) for each of the following categories: Soloist, Chorister, Dancer, Choreographer, Actor, Stage Manager and Stage Director.

| <b>AREA</b>          | <b>Coverage</b>   |
|----------------------|---|
| New York             | Connecticut, New Jersey (northern), New York, and Outside the United States   |
| Southern California  | Arizona, California (southern), Hawaii, and New Mexico  |
| Chicago/Midwest      | Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin |
| San Francisco        | California (northern), Colorado, Nevada, and Utah   |
| New Orleans          | Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Tennessee  |
| Philadelphia         | New Jersey (southern) and Pennsylvania (eastern)  |
| Washington/Baltimore | Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Washington D.C., and West Virginia                  |
| Pittsburgh           | Pennsylvania (western)  |
| New England          | Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont  |
| Texas/Oklahoma       | Texas and Oklahoma  |
| Northwest            | Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, and Wyoming   |

## **WHY SHOULD I JOIN?**

### **Do you need AGMA?**

AGMA protects its members. We negotiate contracts, called collective bargaining agreements, that apply to all covered members at a company. These contracts provide guaranteed minimum wages, safe working conditions, rehearsal and overtime pay, regulated work hours, vacation and sick pay, resolution of disputes, and protection against discrimination and abuse in any form. We enforce those contracts. In our collective bargaining agreements we seek provisions for health coverage, retirement, and protection against unreasonable working conditions and unsafe work places. We also make sure that employers abide by their contractual obligations. AGMA protects the legal, civil, and artistic rights of our members through aggressive enforcement and constant vigilance.

## **Does AGMA need you?**

The strength of the Union is in its members. Your membership and participation are crucial to the strength of AGMA when negotiating and enforcing your contracts. It is essential that you make your employer aware, through your active membership, that contract issues are important to you. Strong collective bargaining agreements can be maintained only through a strong membership.

## **Right to Work States**

In twenty-eight right-to-work states (Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming) you have the choice of whether or not to be a dues-paying member of AGMA. If you choose not to join, you give up a number of rights, including the right to participate in the formulation of collective bargaining proposals, the right to be a member of your negotiating committee, the right to attend and participate in local AGMA meetings, the right to run for office and vote for candidates, and the right to participate in contract ratification votes. For all other artists who work in the other states, payment of initiation fees and dues is mandatory and you cannot work for any AGMA signatory employer unless you satisfy those obligations. Working under an AGMA contract is a reciprocal privilege of timely payment of your dues and those dues provide the funds with which AGMA negotiates and enforces your contracts and protects your rights, all at no additional cost to you.

## **HOW DO I JOIN?**

Call AGMA's Membership Department at (212) 265-3687 or (800) 543-2462 for information or an application. You may also complete an application on our website: [www.musicalartists.org](http://www.musicalartists.org).

AGMA has a one-time-only Initiation Fee of \$1,000. This fee may be paid online or via phone with a credit card or by check. The total fee must be paid by the time your income from AGMA engagements reaches \$4,000 or three years from the date of your first AGMA contract – whichever comes first.

Basic dues are \$100 per year, paid in December for the next calendar year. If you are in arrears after February 1, you will be suspended and incur a reinstatement fee of \$250.00.

All members working under an AGMA contract will have 2% of the first \$100,000 of gross annual AGMA income (maximum of \$2,000 per year) deducted from their paychecks and remitted by the employer to AGMA according to the terms of the CBA. Working dues of 2% are uniform for all members regardless of parent membership in another union. If you do not authorize a check-off, it is your responsibility to make payments directly to AGMA.

Both basic and working dues are tax-deductible.

Timely payment of dues and Initiation Fees is the responsibility of each individual member. Failure to satisfy your financial obligations will result in the loss of your "Member in Good Standing" status and make you ineligible to work for an AGMA company.

The Membership Department may be reached by phone at (212) 265-3687 or 1-800-543-2462, or by email at [Membership@musicalartists.org](mailto:Membership@musicalartists.org), for assistance with any dues question or if you do not receive your current AGMA membership card.

## **ADDITIONAL MEMBER BENEFITS**

### **AGMA RELIEF FUND**

AGMA members who need emergency financial or social services assistance can get help from the AGMA Relief Fund, which is administered for AGMA by The Actors Fund. Members who need assistance should call the intake coordinator at:

East Coast      (212) 221-7300 or (800) 221-7303  
Midwest        (312) 372-0989  
West Coast      (323) 933-9244 ext. 55

### **THE ACTORS FUND**

The Actors Fund is a national human services organization that helps all professionals in performing arts and entertainment by acting as a safety net for those who are in need, crisis, or transition. Focusing on the areas of social services, housing, healthcare, and career development, The Actors Fund offers counseling, emergency financial assistance, grants and scholarships, education, career counseling, and more through their many programs and services, all of which are available to AGMA members. The Actors Fund also administers the AGMA Relief Fund, an additional source of emergency financial assistance available only to AGMA members. Visit [www.actorfund.org](http://www.actorfund.org) or call (212) 221-7300 for more information.

### **CAREER TRANSITION FOR DANCERS**

Career Transition For Dancers, now a service of The Actors Fund, enables dancers to define their career possibilities and develop the skills necessary to excel in a variety of disciplines outside of dance.

Core program services include:

- Career Counseling and Guidance Program
- Scholarship and Grant Program

Dancers are also eligible to receive individual and group counseling services, referrals for healthcare and health insurance and, where eligible, access to emergency financial assistance.

Visit [www.actorfund.org/careertransition](http://www.actorfund.org/careertransition) or call (212) 221-7300 for more information.

## **UNION PLUS**

With the savings Union Plus benefits provide, being a union member makes even greater dollars and sense. Visit [www.unionplus.org](http://www.unionplus.org) for information on Credit Cards, Education Services, Insurance, and a variety of Consumer Discounts.

## **ASSISTANCE WITH ISSUES INVOLVING AGENTS**

AGMA can help you with any problems you encounter in dealing with agents or managers. Please contact AGMA's National Executive Director, on an entirely confidential basis, at [Legert@musicalartists.org](mailto:Legert@musicalartists.org).

## **ACTORS FEDERAL CREDIT UNION**

AGMA members are eligible for membership in this not-for-profit banking cooperative. Call (212) 869-8926 for information or visit [www.actorsfcu.com](http://www.actorsfcu.com).

## **USEFUL CONTACTS**

### **AGMA Retirement and Health**

Phone           (212) 765-3664  
Website       [www.agmaretirement-health.org](http://www.agmaretirement-health.org)

### **Administrative Services Only (AGMA Health Plan B)**

Phone           (866) 263-1185  
Website       [www.asonet.com](http://www.asonet.com)

### **Actors' Equity Association**

Phone           (212) 869-8530  
Website       [www.actorsequity.org](http://www.actorsequity.org)

### **AFM (American Federation of Musicians)**

Phone           (800) 762-3444  
Website       [www.afm.org](http://www.afm.org)

### **SAG-AFTRA**

Phone           (855) SAG-AFTRA / (855) 724-2387  
Website       [www.sagaftra.org/home](http://www.sagaftra.org/home)

### **TEIGIT (Dental Insurance/Long Term Care/International Medical Insurance)**

Phone           (800) 886-7504  
Website       <http://www.teigit.com>

## AGMA Signatories

|                                    |                                   |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater | Milwaukee Ballet                  |
| American Ballet Theatre            | Music Before 1800                 |
| Arizona Opera                      | Musica Sacra                      |
| Atlanta Ballet                     | New Orleans Opera                 |
| Ballet Hispanico                   | New York City Ballet              |
| BalletMet                          | New York City Opera               |
| Ballet West                        | New York Grand Opera              |
| Boston Ballet                      | New York Philharmonic             |
| Boston Lyric Opera                 | Opera Orchestra of New York       |
| Central City Opera                 | Opera Philadelphia                |
| Chautauqua Opera                   | Opera Theatre of St. Louis        |
| Chicago Opera Theatre              | Oregon Ballet Theatre*            |
| Chicago Symphony Chorus            | Pacific Northwest Ballet          |
| Cincinnati Ballet                  | Pennsylvania Ballet               |
| Cincinnati Opera                   | Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre         |
| Colorado Ballet                    | Pittsburgh Opera                  |
| Dallas Opera                       | Portland Ballet                   |
| Discovery Orchestra                | Portland Opera                    |
| Florentine Opera                   | Ryan Opera Center/Lyric Unlimited |
| Florida Grand Opera                | San Diego Opera                   |
| Grant Park Orchestra Association   | San Francisco Ballet              |
| Houston Ballet                     | San Francisco Opera               |
| Houston Grand Opera                | San Francisco Symphony Chorus     |
| Joffrey Ballet                     | Santa Fe Opera                    |
| Kansas City Ballet                 | Sacramento Ballet*                |
| Lincoln Center Media Agreement     | Sarasota Ballet*                  |
| Los Angeles Master Chorale         | Seattle Opera                     |
| Los Angeles Opera                  | Tri-Cities Opera                  |
| Lyric Opera Baltimore              | Tulsa Ballet                      |
| Lyric Opera of Chicago             | Voices of Ascension               |
| Lyric Opera of Kansas City         | Washington Ballet                 |
| Martha Graham Dance                | Washington Concert Opera          |
| Melodious Accord                   | Washington National Opera         |
| Metropolitan Opera                 | Wolf Trap Opera                   |
| Michigan Opera Theatre             |                                   |

\*Newly Organized - negotiating first contract