



AGMAZINE

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

BY ALAN S. GORDON

"CHASING THE DIME"

The phrase "Chasing the Dime," created by American writer Michael Connelly, initially referred to the quest for new computer technology and the belief that, within the immediately foreseeable future, it will become technologically possible to create molecule-based computers rather than silicon-chip-based computers. In turn, super computers would then be smaller than a dime, with applicability that now seems unimaginable: diagnostic computers inserted into the bloodstream to seek out and fix aberrations that cause illness or genetic defects; computers set into the roadbed to create "smart streets" that monitor and respond to road conditions; 'desktop' computers in the button of a shirt or imbedded into the paint on office walls. In a broader sense, "Chasing the Dime" implies that anything is possible, if you are willing to devote the focus, time, and effort necessary to achieve it.

While the staff at AGMA are neither futurists nor scientists, we nonetheless try to apply "Chasing the Dime" theory to our work. We really believe that we can accomplish anything on your behalf, so long as we, and you, the members, devote the essential work necessary to achieve it.

Elsewhere in this issue of *AGMAZine*, our Eastern Counsel Deborah Allton-Maher shares with you some of her thoughts about the personal rewards of working for AGMA's members. As many of you may already know, over the past years, while working with your elected leadership, the AGMA staff has managed to effect a sea-change in our operations, specifically shifting from a lackadaisical staff that "tolerated" members to a diligent staff that helps run the union, and in the process, derives both professional and personal satisfaction. Six o'clock comes and goes here usually without the slightest effect on the professional staff, because they're here until whatever they're working on that day is finished. What many of you don't know, however, is that (despite the fact that we do not pay for overtime work for the clerical staff unless they are requested to come in early or stay late to work on a specific task) many of the membership department staff also stay after six, and some of them show up here well before nine in the morning. Some months ago, we closed the office at 3 p.m. because of a snowstorm. When I walked around the office at 4:30, many of the clerical staff were still working. And I can't even imagine what time Gerry Angel, our Director of Operations, goes home at night, but I know I can reach her in the office after eight or nine. Obviously, they don't do it for the money but, rather, because they can see the results of their work in the satisfaction of the members they service and, in turn, derive their own satisfaction from doing a job well.

But our jobs are only half of the function that needs to be accomplished: The union also runs on the literally countless hours of time and effort that are devoted

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VOTE NOW!
BALLOTS ARE
DUE BACK AT THE
NATIONAL OFFICE BY
FRIDAY, MAY 23, 2008

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FROM THE PRESIDENT JAMES ODOM



RESPONSE AND RESPONSIBILITY

I know. If you hear me utter one more word about elections and voting and responsibility, you are going to be ready to hunt me down like a dog in the street. So I'm only going to say this one more thing: This is the election issue of *AGMAZine*. Read the bios of the folks who are running in your Area.

Mark your ballot. Send it back in. Make me shut me up about voting for at least seven or eight months. Historically, only about 10% of AGMA members vote. (You're probably pointing out that 68.3% of all statistics are made up on the spot, but in this case I believe I'm right.) I'd really like to see us do better.

(I reserve the right to urge you to vote in the U.S. and local elections in the fall.)

'Nuff said.

In past issues of *AGMAZine*, I've gone on at some length about some of the responsibilities that individual members have to AGMA. I'm sure you're probably wondering just what exactly Jimmy's responsibilities as President are to AGMA.

I'm glad you asked. First, the President has the same responsibilities that all members have: paying dues, participating in his or her Area, being alert to possible contract enforcement issues and reporting them to my shop delegates/stewards (and hopefully, not being a colossal pain in the backside to those same delegates/stewards).

There are some specifically assigned duties the President has, such as serving as chair of the Board of Governors, serving on certain committees, and dealing with the professional staff on a day-to-day basis.

Then there are the responsibilities that each AGMA President chooses for him or herself. These responsibilities are often influenced by particular needs of the union during his or her term of office as well as the individual's particular interests or concerns.

The areas that I believe to be my particular responsibility are membership representation, contract negotiation and enforcement, and member education.

Fortunately for me, these three areas often overlap.

When I talk about membership representation, I mean that it is my responsibility to represent members at Board meetings, to Management (when necessary and appropriate), and to the general public. But more importantly, I feel it is my responsibility to represent AGMA as a national organization to the individual members in their local areas and shops. When I first served as a shop delegate (more years ago than I am old — that's my story and I'm sticking to it), the only contact I ever had with the national office was once every three or four years when a negotiator from the national office would come in for three days and negotiate a contract. In the three contract periods when I was a delegate in my first shop, I never saw a complete contract, rarely saw a chorus section of the contract, and I had difficulty in getting any answer from the national office on any topic.

Those days, fortunately, are long gone. Oh, occasionally things get away from us, but when we find out about them we work to get them resolved — not always as swiftly as members would like, and not always in the manner members would like — but member issues are no longer ignored.

Some of you, I'm sure, are saying, "Nice, Jimmy. We appreciate what a martyr you are. The point, if you have one?" I'm glad you asked.

(continues on page 3)

A Noble Endeavor

by Deborah Allton-Maher, Eastern Counsel

My work at AGMA is enormously gratifying. Of the many activities I engage in as an employee of AGMA, I consider the cornerstone of my work to be the negotiation of your collective bargaining agreements. Together with dedicated delegates, negotiating committee members and our performing artists, we secure dignified wages and working conditions that reward your individual and collective effort and acknowledge the contribution you make to the arts, to our communities and to our lives. Ultimately, and hopefully, through this collective bargaining process we also establish and nurture productive communication with management, thus facilitating the best possible product of our collective efforts.

Nevertheless, even in this context, occasionally there are experiences that stand out as exceptional and memorable, thought provoking and inspiring. One such experience for me was working with the dancers and management of the Colorado Ballet to establish their first ever union contract.

Looking back in history we are reminded how important, hard fought and hard won the right to organize is. Similar to the right to vote and the right to equal treatment under the law, the right to organize was demanded, and ultimately won,



Colorado Ballet Dancers Negotiating Committee, left to right: Janelle Cooke, John Henry Reid, Sharon Wehner, Nathan VanderStoep, and Jesse Marks

through the repeated efforts of many people willing to risk their jobs, their livelihood, their families and even their lives. The right to sit down to the bargaining table with your employer and negotiate in good faith the terms and conditions of your employment cannot be taken lightly or for granted.

It was within my lifetime and my memory; forty years ago almost to the day, that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. gave his famous "I've Been to the Mountaintop" speech in Memphis, Tennessee in support of the striking sanitation workers who were seeking to organize, against the will of the Mayor and the City Council of Memphis and many of its citizens. Tragically, it was the morning after Dr. King made that speech that he was assassinated. Thousands of supporters joined the striking sanitation workers and eventually the workers succeeded in unionizing and in reaching an agreement with the city, but not without enormous sacrifice. This was a defining moment in the history of the labor movement and of the civil rights movement, but it is only one of many moments that led us to the successes and achievements we enjoy today.

While this may, to some, seem overly dramatic in the context of ballet and opera, I would disagree. This is our collective history. It is only in this context that we can fully understand and appreciate the success of a group of dancers

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Colorado Ballet staff, left to right: Artistic Director Gil Boggs, Executive Director Lisa Snider, Auxiliary & Special Events Manager Kristina Sablatura, General Manager Arthur Espinoza. Not pictured: Tom Sratovich, Attorney for the Ballet

President's Message *(continued from page 2)*

I believe that you cannot represent people you don't know. Unlike other chief executives from the state of Texas, I don't think it's a good thing to live in a bubble. (Please feel free to disagree with me, but remember that I grew up with him.)

That's why the pictures section of the *AGMAZine* often looks like a collection of "Where's Waldo" puzzles, with yours truly in the role of Waldo.

(Trust me, I get a lot of flack about that from my colleagues here in Chicago.) The point is that I try to get to as many area and shop meetings as I possibly can. I'm also happy to sit in at contract negotiations when appropriate and desired. The only thing that limits me is that pesky law of physics that keeps me from occupying two separate spaces at the same point in time. I want to know as many of you as I can.

I want you to feel comfortable about contacting me if you have a problem. And I want to help you know better what your colleagues all over the country are thinking and doing, and how they're dealing with the same issues that you are dealing with.

So look for me at your local meeting. If there's any way I can be there, I will.

(VOTE!)

ELECTIONS 2008

Below you will find election information and short biographies of the candidates for the Board of Governors. Their nominations have been submitted either by a petition or by a nominating committee as defined by AGMA's Constitution.

CANDIDATES FOR BOARD OF GOVERNORS

01 NEW YORK AREA CHORISTERS

(3 Vacancies)

Rose Anderson



I have been honored to serve on the AGMA Board of Governors for 2 years and have been responsive to the concerns of both opera and concert choristers. This year I have served on the Negotiating Committee for both the New York Philharmonic and Musica Sacra contracts, resulting in significant financial increases and improvements for our members. I appeal to you for your support so that I may continue to energetically represent the interests of AGMA's membership.

Brian Baldwin



I am a staff performer at the Metropolitan Opera in New York. I received my education and training from Rutgers University and The American Musical and Dramatic Academy. I am a dedicated member of AGMA, serving on both the New York Area Committee and the National Board of Governors. I look forward to serving further with the union, and making progress on behalf of all fellow artists.

Timothy Breese



I have just served my first full term on the Board of Governors and several years on the Work Rules and Contracts Committee.

Currently I am the New York Area Chair and a member of the Finance and Budget, Personnel Sub-Committee, and Committee on Committees. As a member of the Metropolitan Opera Chorus, I am in contact almost every day with AGMA members. I have taken quite seriously the request for a group health plan which was voiced at the last New York Area Meeting and I have proposed that a sub-committee be formed for further exploration.

Robert Kuehn



Current Board Member. Member of the Work Rules and Contracts Committee, Member of the Concert Singers' Negotiating Committee and New York Area Executive Committee. Serving AGMA is both challenging and rewarding. I would welcome an opportunity to continue working toward a stronger, more effective union.

01 NEW YORK AREA DANCERS

(2 Vacancies)

Jonathan Pessolano

I first joined AGMA over 15 years ago and have served on the BOG for the last two terms. In that time I have found great joy in being able to partake in the progression and advancements our union has made. Being from a "Union" family (my grandfather was the VP of the UBCJA), I find my continued service to the members of AGMA a fitting tribute to my heritage.

I look forward to assisting the union and its members in the years to come...

01 NEW YORK AREA SOLOISTS

(2 Vacancies)

Belinda Oswald



Has been an AGMA member since 1990, served on the Board of Governors for the past 7 years, served on the Work Rules and Contracts Committee, currently is a member on the New York Area Committee, past Delegate for the Metropolitan Opera Principal Singers, and is currently the Metropolitan Opera Ladies Chorus Delegate. During my years as a principal artist, I have been heard throughout the country, Canada, and Japan. Our union is constantly changing and bridging gaps that creates a stronger, more viable union. I would be most honored to continue to serve AGMA on the Board of Governors.

01 NEW YORK AREA STAGE MANAGERS/DIRECTORS/ CHOREOGRAPHERS

(1 Vacancy)

Terry Ganley

I am currently a Stage Manager at the Metropolitan Opera. I have worked at the San Francisco Opera, Washington Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Opera Pacific, Florida Grand Opera, Pittsburgh Opera, Opera Theatre of St. Louis, Glimmerglass Opera, and overseas with AGMA companies. My first term as an AGMA Board of Governors member has intrigued and educated me. I am committed to helping our union stay vital as it meets changes in our industry.

**02 SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA AREA
CHORISTERS**
(2 Vacancies)

Jonathan Curtsinger



Performed with Norman Luboff Choir, Roger Wagner Chorale, New York City Opera, San Francisco Opera, and LA Opera since 1988.

AGMA member 32 years, Delegate beginning 1977. Board of Governors 18 years, Life Member. Former Chair Membership & Member Relations Committee, National Nominating Committee, Board Holiday Relief Fund; past member LA Opera's negotiating/singer's committees, Area Committee and Delegate.

I have always believed it is important to help our colleagues; I am still working in AGMA to that end. Please make a donation to the Relief Fund, YOU can truly help our friends and colleagues.

Thank you.

David Schnell



AGMA member, 25+ years; Multi-term Board member. Current: Executive Council; Chair: Standing Committee for Work Rules and

Contracts; Schedule C Committee; Secretary, Southern California Area Committee; Singer's and Contract Negotiating Team Committees: Los Angeles Master Chorale and Los Angeles Opera (have served as Delegate for both).

Author of a chapter in Opera-America's book, "The Business of Singing" (re: the importance of AGMA and advantages of working under an AGMA contract.) *All AGMA members — choristers, dancers, production staff, and soloists — deserve greater respect and should be given the same considerations and benefits that management is more willing to grant to instrumentalists.*

Tim Smith



AGMA Member since 1996, upon joining the Los Angeles Opera Chorus.

Current: Vice-Chair of Membership and Members Relations

Committee.

Past: Regularly elected as Delegate at LAO; member of Contract Negotiating Team in 2000 and 2004. Pro-active and not afraid to fight for all Member's rights and improved working conditions during productions, contract negotiations and mediation/arbitration sessions.

As an actively-working member, it is an honor and privilege to represent you, my AGMA colleagues. Trusting me to once again represent you on the Board would help me to continue the work I do locally on our behalf.

**02 SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA AREA
DANCERS**
(1 Vacancy)

Peggy Hickey



I have been a member of AGMA for the past sixteen years and worked in many American opera houses as both a dancer and a choreographer. This

has afforded me the opportunity to work under many different contracts and working environments. Last year was my first on the Board of Governors and I hope very much to continue serving the membership in this fashion.

Many thanks.

**03 CHICAGO/MIDWEST AREA
CHORISTERS**
(3 Vacancies)

Joseph Fosselman



I have been a member of AGMA for 21 years, working mainly as a chorister for OTSL and Lyric Opera of Chicago. I have served as a delegate

for LOC, as a member of the negotiating committee for LOC's CBA and as a member of the AGMA Board of Governors for one term, serving on the Finance & Budget Committee.

Through my service as a representative for AGMA, I have gained perspective on the many issues of all the different areas of our membership. I have strived to represent all members for the common good of the union.

Margaret Harden



An AGMA member since 1997, and a professional member of both the Chicago Symphony Chorus and the Grant Park Symphony Chorus, I

have a vested interest in the health, welfare and longevity of our Chicago/Midwest Area performing ensembles. I look forward to providing representation with diplomacy, equity, an even temper and, of course, good humor! I am extremely proud of our union, and I passionately believe in what we all do both individually and collectively for the continuation and betterment of the arts in our world.

**03 CHICAGO/MIDWEST AREA
DANCERS**
(1 Vacancy)

Sonda Karman



Professional ballet dancer for 25 years. Eight years with the Lyric Opera of Chicago. Four years as Delegate. Two contract negotiations at

the Lyric Opera of Chicago.

Election Results
will be posted on
www.musicalartists.org
in late June.

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Election Information (continued from page 5)

**03 CHICAGO/MIDWEST AREA
STAGE MANAGERS/DIRECTORS/
CHOREOGRAPHERS**

(1 Vacancy)

Peggy Stenger



As a working stage manager in Opera I have served for twelve years on the Board. During that time, I have been a member of Work

Rules and Contracts Committee and then on MMRC, through which I organized the Staging Staff Caucus.

I believe that it is our duty to look out for the best interests of all the members. I think I have done that over the years, not just on the Board, but on a local level as well.

I believe that only by being involved can we make AGMA a better union for all of its members.

**04 SAN FRANCISCO AREA
CHORISTERS**

(1 Vacancy)

Mark Hernandez



I have sung in 15 productions with San Francisco Opera's Extra Chorus since 2000, and I am engaged to sing in three productions this

fall. I first became interested in AGMA during the difficult SFO contract negotiations of the early 2000s, and have gradually been schooled on other issues (smoke and fog, evaluation of production artists, relations with principal artists) as well as the mechanics of contracts. In 2007, I was privileged to serve as a shop delegate. Outside of performing, I work as a consultant to grantmakers and non-profit arts providers. Thank you for your consideration.
blazingstage.com

**04 SAN FRANCISCO AREA
SOLOISTS**

(1 Vacancy)

Antonio Nagore



I have been a professional in the classical music field for 24 years and an AGMA member since 1998. I have sat on the San Francisco Area

Committee since 2002 and the Board of Governors since 2007 as a soloist representative. During my tenure with the San Francisco Area Committee and Board of Governors my goal has been to make greater strides to improve relations between AGMA and the performing artists. As a member of the Board, I will strive to continue to represent and fight for the issues that concern performing artists and AGMA.

05 NEW ORLEANS AREA

All Board positions currently filled.

**06 PHILADELPHIA AREA
CHORISTERS**

(2 Vacancies)

Evelyn Santiago-Schulz



I have been a member of both the Opera Company of Philadelphia Chorus, and Philadelphia Singers Chorale for over thirteen years. I

have been the Philadelphia Area Local Committee Chair for almost five years. I currently sit on the Work Rules and Contracts Committee. This has been an invaluable experience in my day-to-day role as Local Area Chair. I believe that in order to have a good relationship with management, you need to have a great contract, and even better member education. I am looking forward to continuing my tenure on the Board,

and continuing my representation of Philadelphia.

**06 PHILADELPHIA AREA
DANCERS**

(1 Vacancy)

No Candidates

**07 WASHINGTON/
BALTIMORE AREA
CHORISTERS**

(1 Vacancies)

Erika Juengst



I became a member of AGMA in 2001. Throughout the past 7 seasons, I have been an active soprano chorister with the Baltimore Opera Company, and

also perform regularly in Baltimore Opera's educational outreach programs. Additionally, I have been the Managing Director of Community Concerts at Second, a non-profit concert series in Baltimore. I appreciate the important role of AGMA in supporting professional musicians.

Christopher Rhodovi



I joined AGMA in 2004 inspired by fellow AGMA member Shawnee Ball and was elected to the Washington/Baltimore Area Committee in 2005

where I also serve on WNO Committee on Media & am a member of BOG. I frequently perform in the Washington/Baltimore area with 3 of the 4 AGMA companies in the Region (WCO, WNO & BOC), and serve on CBA committees for both WNO & BOC. I am committed to helping make AGMA the best union it can be & to further improve the way AGMA works for its members so as to protect our art.

**07 WASHINGTON/
BALTIMORE AREA
DANCERS**

(1 Vacancy)

Barbara Stuckey



During several AGMA Board of Governors terms, I have repeatedly seen how good contract standards translate to the production values

and magic that the audience takes home. AGMA members can share pride in our artistic and professional growth. Meanwhile, we need to remain vigilant and nationally unified regarding changes in media and our performance venues, and communication with managements. Further, the better we communicate with each other, the stronger we will be. Your vote will enable me to continue supporting consistently high standards for both the Washington/Baltimore Area and our national regions.

Thank you.

08 PITTSBURGH AREA

All Board positions currently filled.

**09 NEW ENGLAND AREA
SOLOISTS**

(1 Vacancy)

No Candidates

**10 TEXAS/OKLAHOMA AREA
CHORISTERS**

(1 Vacancy)

Matthew Woodbury



I have been a member of AGMA since joining The Dallas Opera Chorus in 1982. I have served as both Alternate Delegate

and Senior Delegate there. In the summer of 2007, I was appointed to

fill George Eison's unexpired term, and would be pleased to continue serving on the Board of Governors.

**10 TEXAS/OKLAHOMA AREA
SOLOISTS**

(1 Vacancy)

No Candidates

**11 NORTHWEST AREA
CHORISTERS**

(1 Vacancy)

Maria Leatha



I have been a member of AGMA since 1999, a Board of Governor member since 2002, serve on the Administration and Policy Committee, the National Slate Committee for the past 2 national elections, and the Pacific Northwest Area Committee. I am the Shop Steward for Portland Opera in Portland, Oregon where I make my home. As the Northwest Area Governor, I hope to continue to serve our area union members with honesty and integrity, open communication, and bring positive AGMA leadership to our membership community of singers, dancers, stage managers and directors and to maintain solidarity within our region.

fill George Eison's unexpired term, and would be pleased to continue serving on the Board of Governors.

**11 NORTHWEST AREA
DANCERS**

(1 Vacancy)

No Candidates

**11 NORTHWEST AREA
SOLOISTS**

(1 Vacancy)

No Candidates

AGMA Answers

AGMA Answers is a new segment wherein we try to explain some of the lesser-known rules and benefits of membership.

What is Honorable Withdrawal?

Honorable Withdrawal is a special category of membership whereby Members who foresee long-term inactivity within AGMA's jurisdiction may withdraw from active membership. Reinstatement is possible with a nominal fee of \$50, and the payment of Basic Dues for the dues year (January 1-December 31) in which he or she is reinstated. *Once reinstated, a Member is not eligible for Honorable Withdrawal status for three years from the date of reinstatement.* A Member on Honorable Withdrawal is still a Member and subject to all rules and regulations the Union sets forth, but because he or she does not pay dues, that Member is not eligible to vote or enjoy any other benefits of membership.

In general, Honorable Withdrawal is intended for those who are retiring, but those who are temporarily inactive, unemployed, or working in another union's jurisdiction are also eligible to apply. If you become inactive in AGMA's jurisdiction, AGMA advises you to make application for Honorable Withdrawal as soon as possible, as you are responsible for paying Basic Dues for the dues year in which Honorable Withdrawal status is granted. Approval by the Board of Governors is required for all requests for Honorable Withdrawal, so approval can take up to two months from the time application is made, depending on the regular schedule of Board Meetings. Full information on Honorable Withdrawal is available on the website (musicalartists.org) by clicking on "Membership Information" on the home page. Applications may be downloaded there, or may be obtained by calling, writing, or sending an e-mail to the Membership Department at the National Office (membership@musicalartists.org).

A Noble Endeavor (continued from page 3)

achieving their first ever collective bargaining agreement. While we can be deeply grateful that this is no longer a life threatening endeavor, it remains a risk that can be life changing, for better or for worse. There is no guarantee of success. Those seeking to organize must be willing to risk retaliation, confrontation, and the unemployment line. We don't have to reach very far in our "AGMA memory" to recall the sacrifice and courage of those dancers at The Washington Ballet. Ask them what the risks are, and ultimately, thankfully, what the reward is.

When I first met the dancers at Colorado Ballet, it was after they elected to have AGMA represent them and after the company recognized us as the dancers' agent for collective bargaining purposes. There was a sense of elation, but also of trepidation and uncertainty. Literally, the first question they asked me was, "Now what do we do?"

After just a few weeks of researching our contracts, talking to other dancers and then discussing with me and with each other what they had learned, they started to form proposals, one by one, section by section, eventually forming a first complete contract. Throughout this process, I watched and experienced with them a transformation, a maturing process that was palpable. They were taking charge of their professional lives, identifying what was intolerable, what was essential and ultimately what was achievable. They established boundaries, priorities, short term and long term goals, and their "bottom line." Each person found their individual voice, their strengths and their weaknesses. They worked together as a team, for the benefit of all, not the few, to create a foundation upon which generations who follow, could build and improve. Through this process their skills in communication grew — in sophistication, clarity and conviction. In short, they became empowered; they became leaders.

This process is not isolated to the artists alone. Dedication

to an art form and to the performing arts is an endeavor that is shared also by those who employ our artists. They commit their efforts and dedicate their careers to presenting, preserving and promoting the performing arts in our communities. They devote long hours to raising money year after year to employ our artists and to provide the dignified wages and benefits that our contracts demand. Through the collective bargaining process they too must invest themselves in creating a working environment that is nurturing, creative, challenging, supportive, fulfilling and sustainable.

Since a first and complete collective bargaining agreement is the product of this joint effort, I must acknowledge here the commitment of the management team of Colorado Ballet. Their dedication to the artists and their wellbeing was evident throughout the negotiations. Although we experienced the inevitable conflicts, misunderstandings and disappointments inherent in the collective bargaining process, we were able to maintain our focus on the mutual goal of reaching a successful agreement that both they and the artists could support and be proud of. Ultimately, we achieved such an agreement.

I can't adequately describe my admiration for each of the courageous, smart, patient, creative, motivated and industrious men and women who dance for the Colorado Ballet. They join those in "AGMA history" and those in the history of the labor movement who stood up for themselves and for their brothers and sisters, in solidarity.

To each of you who seek to improve your professional life and the lives of your colleagues and the lives of those who follow you, this is a noble endeavor. I congratulate you and I extend my deepest gratitude and respect. Thank you for your efforts. They are meaningful and life changing. You do make a difference.

Offered with gratitude and humility to the memory of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on the 40th anniversary of his assassination, April 4, 1968.

MEMBERSHIP DEPARTMENT NEWS

HAVE YOU RECENTLY MOVED?

If you change your mailing address, it is important that you notify AGMA's Membership Department in writing. **Additionally, AGMA's Retirement Plan and Health Fund Plans must be notified separately.**

IN MEMORIAM

Natalia Bessmertnova
*Kirk Browning**
John Burke
Giuliano Ciannella

Giuseppe Di Stefano
Kim Forbes
John Golitzin
*Danny Newman**

Page Swift
*Richard Westenburg**

**Indicates a distinguished individual in a related profession.*

Executive Director's Report *(continued from page 1)*

to AGMA by your elected officers, which includes the Board of Governors. This being the "election" issue of *AGMAZine*, it seems appropriate to both thank those members who volunteer to run for office and to remind the rest of the membership that voting in AGMA's elections is the way in which you all contribute to the notion that anything is possible. This is, ultimately, your union, and to accomplish the possible you have to be willing to devote time and interest, and to actually vote for the officers that run it.

The Board of Governors, not staff, creates the policies and plans that guide AGMA's future and impact upon your working lives. Additionally, the Governors are charged with the responsibility to assure that the staff not only does its job but is responsive to the membership.

If you don't take the time to vote for those officers, you have forfeited **your** opportunity to share in that planning and oversight. At the end of the day, that lack of participation gives you little right to criticize what the union does or doesn't do. Participation, particularly in elections, is the way that individual members can hold the leaders of the union to account.

By way of example, it had often been said by some principal artists that AGMA did little for them. While that may or may not have been accurate then, it certainly no longer is. As any of the 100 or so soloists for whom we are now conducting agent-related litigation can attest, AGMA has saved them hundreds of thousands of dollars in personal legal fees while, simultaneously, protecting their rights and their livelihoods. And,

frankly, all of that came about initially because one name-recognizable soloist took the time and invested the effort to become involved in AGMA. Another case in point is the concerted effort made in San Francisco where, as reported elsewhere in this issue, AGMA won a major victory in protecting the fees paid to the Opera's principal artists — primarily because a handful of soloists, in addition to outside counsel and AGMA staff members, were willing to devote their time and the effort necessary to accomplish the unimaginable.

So, while your staff may "chase the dime" on your behalf, we only succeed if you, the members, are willing to expend the time and effort to run for elected office and, for those of you who can't run, spend the time and effort to vote in AGMA's elections.

NOTICE ABOUT ILLEGAL VIDEOTAPING

Some agents are illegally, and without any authorization from employers, videotaping performances of their clients' singing and dancing, and then releasing those clips on YouTube and other Internet sites. Making such recordings and releasing such performances is illegal. If the performances were recorded while those artists performed in an AGMA house, the agent's actions are both in violation of the AGMA collective bargaining agreements with those employers and is subject to legal action under those contracts.

We are advising all of our signatory employers of this problem and that, to comply with our contracts, they must confiscate the unauthorized video camera and eject the photographer from the facility. If this practice continues we will have no alternative but to advise the employers of the names of all agents who are engaging in this illegality. Furthermore, we will prosecute those agents to the fullest extent of the law. In addition, we have advised YouTube that these clips are unauthorized, protected content, and should be removed.

To protect yourselves, advise your agent that any videotaping of your performances must be authorized by the employer pursuant to the terms of the AGMA collective bargaining agreement.

V O T E N O W !
BALLOTS ARE DUE BACK AT THE NATIONAL OFFICE BY
FRIDAY, MAY 23, 2008

A R E A N E W S

CHICAGO/MIDWEST

Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Chicago Symphony Chorus!

by Cole Seaton, Chicago Symphony Chorus member and AGMA Board Member, in collaboration with Christopher Slavik, Chicago Symphony Orchestra Communications Assistant

Fifty years ago, on September 22, 1957, Margaret Hillis was invited by Fritz Reiner, the Music Director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, to form, organize and train a symphony chorus. Less than six months later, on March 13 and 14, 1958, the Chicago Symphony Chorus (CSC) made its subscription concert debut performing Mozart's *Requiem*, with Bruno Walter conducting. A few weeks later, Reiner himself led the Chicago Symphony Chorus for the first time in performances of Verdi's *Requiem*. On June 1, 1994, Duain Wolfe was appointed the second director of the Chicago Symphony Chorus, succeeding Hillis, who was named director laureate.



Members of the Chicago Symphony Chorus in this past December's **Welcome Yule!** Christmas concerts, left to right: front row, kneeling: Hyun Suk Jang, Lisanne Barnes-Seymour; second row: James Morris, Jr., Matthew Schlesinger, Daniel Julius Henry, Jr., Emily Joy Lee, Catherine Vartanian-Duke, Beena David, Margaret Harden, Jennifer Kerr Budziak, Cathy Wozniak Gough; back row: Scott Uddenberg, non-AGMA volunteer, Michael Barrette, Maia Surace, Cole Seaton, Mary Ann Beatty, Lisa Nemeth, Alison Kelly, Rebekah Askeland, Katarzyna Dorula, and Rachel Crim

The Chicago Symphony Chorus has performed and recorded virtually all the major works in the choral symphonic repertoire, given important world premieres, appeared with visiting orchestras, and been a part of many noteworthy milestones in the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's history. The CSC has earned critical acclaim as one of the finest symphonic choruses through its performances and concert tours for audiences in Chicago, the United States, and throughout the world. Chicago Symphony Orchestra recordings featuring the Chorus have won nine Grammy Awards from the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences for best choral performance.

These recordings include hallmarks of the choral repertoire, ranging from Verdi's *Requiem*, Beethoven's *Missa solemnis*, Bach's *Mass in B minor*, and two recordings of Brahms' *A German Requiem*. The Chorus made its first commercial recording — Prokofiev's *Alexander Nevsky* with Fritz Reiner conducting — with the Orchestra on March 7, 1959. The Chorus' most recent recording, featuring the women of the Chorus in Mahler's *Third Symphony* and led by CSO Principal Conductor Bernard Haitink, was released in May 2007 as the first recording on the Orchestra's in-house label, CSO Resound.

The Chorus's 50th anniversary season began in November 2007 with Poulenc's *Gloria* and Ravel's *Daphnis and Chloe* conducted by Bernard Haitink, followed by eight performances of Chorus Director Duain Wolfe's popular *Welcome Yule!* Christmas concerts.

(continues on page 11)

Chicago Symphony Chorus (continued from page 10)

In January 2008, the CSC kicked off the new year with Mozart's *Mass in C Minor* and the *Symphony of Psalms* by Stravinsky under Esa-Pekka Salonen. March brought to Symphony Center Debussy's *Nocturnes and The Planets* by Holst, featuring the women of the CSC with Charles Dutoit at the podium. During the first week of April the full chorus will perform the dramatic symphony *Romeo and Juliet* by Hector Berlioz with maestro Valery Gergiev at the helm.

A special 50th Anniversary Tribute Concert will end the Chorus' season on Saturday, April 12, 2008. This performance will be led by Chorus Director Duain Wolfe and will feature the entire chorus as well as smaller ensembles and soloists from within the chorus. Concertgoers will hear an exciting array of choral works ranging from Willan, Elgar, and Vaughan Williams to Handel, Verdi, and Bruckner.

The Chicago Symphony Chorus currently maintains a roster of around 200 singers, of which approximately 175 are AGMA members and the remainder are volunteers.

Chicago/Midwest Area Meeting

The Chicago/Midwest Area held their area meeting on March 2. The Area was pleased to welcome National Executive Director Alan Gordon to the meeting.



AGMA 4th Vice President Sara Stewart and President Jimmy Odom



Chicago/Midwest Area members, left to right: Tim Bradley, Claudia Kerski-Nienow, Ken Donovan, Martin Pooch, and AGMA 2nd Vice President John Coleman



Left to right: AGMA 4th Vice President Sara Stewart, Maia Wilkens, AGMA Treasurer Lynn Lundgren, and Michael Levine



AGMA Treasurer Lynn Lundgren with Chicago/Midwest Area Counsel Barbara Hillman

PHILADELPHIA



On March 4 and 6, Assistant Professor of Dance at the University of the Arts Karen Brown (second from the left) invited AGMA's New York Area Dance Executive James Fayette (center, back) to speak with her students about the role of labor in the dance world and the benefits of AGMA membership. Karen is a former AGMA Delegate at the Dance Theater of Harlem and former AGMA Board Member.

NEW YORK

If you performed with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra in Hindemith's *Sancta Susanna* and/or John Adams' *On the Transmigration of Souls*, there should be money in your AGMA Health Plan B account as a result of AGMA's Internet and recording agreements. Please note that this money must be used within three years.

WASHINGTON/BALTIMORE

by Eleni Kallas, National Director of Organizing and Training and Mid-Atlantic Area Representative



The Washington/Baltimore Spring Membership Meeting

WASHINGTON/BALTIMORE AREA MEMBERSHIP MEETING

The Spring Area Membership Meeting was held on March 8 with over sixty members in attendance.

Nominations were made for the two Area Committee positions vacated by Lourdes Elias (dancer) and Alan Reed (chorister). Expressions of gratitude were extended to them for their years of service on the Area Committee. The results of the mail ballot election will be finalized by mid-April.

The names of Area members who submitted petitions to New York to run for the Board of Governors were announced. Everyone was encouraged to vote in the upcoming Board election.

A special independent presentation entitled "Tax Tips for Artists" was given by Harvey Fort, a dedicated member of the Washington/Baltimore Area Committee who is also a technical economist with over twenty years of experience in the field of taxes.

THE WASHINGTON BALLET

AGMA and the dancers of The Washington Ballet made history by negotiating a new contract in just three days! After the tumultuous unionization of the company in late 2004 and the subsequent shutdown of the Nutcracker in 2005, we are excited to

announce that the relationship between AGMA dancers and Management has matured and grown, allowing this first successor agreement to be negotiated in record time.

Both AGMA and Management were pleased with the amicable tone of the negotiations and mutual respect demonstrated at the negotiation table. The strides made in communicating our needs to each other will serve us well as we move on to complete this season and through the next three years of our new agreement.

Members of the Negotiating Committee included Luis Torres (chair), Chip Coleman, Elizabeth Gaither, Zachary Hackstock, Jonathan Jordan, Sona Kharatian, Morgann Rose, Laura Urgelles, and AGMA National Director of Organizing and Training and Mid-Atlantic Area Representative Eleni Kallas.

Improvements in the three year agreement include: an increase in compensation of 4%, 4.5%, and 4.5% for all dancers; an increase of 40% in transportation reimbursement to \$7 per day; a guaranteed fifteen-minute break

between class and any rehearsal or artist service; half-hour calls for dress rehearsals will be counted into the daily and weekly hours of rehearsal and compensated as such; Easter Day will now



After completion of The Washington Ballet agreement, left to right, front row: National Director of Organizing and Training Eleni Kallas, Jonathan Jordan, The Washington Ballet Executive Director Kay Kendall, The Washington Ballet Associate Artistic Director Jeff Edwards; second row: Zachary Hackstock, Sona Kharatian, Laura Urgelles, The Washington Ballet Artistic Director Septime Webre; third row: negotiating committee chair Luis Torres, Elizabeth Gaither, Chip Coleman; fourth row: The Washington Ballet Director of Artistic Operations Andrea Dickerson

be observed as a holiday; the Artist Reserve Fund will be kept in a free-of-charge interest-bearing account; transportation will be provided to THEARC (Town Hall Education Arts & Recreation Campus); the schedules after lay-offs

will be sent via return-receipt email; and a premium payment of \$75 for dancing in three ballets in one performance will now extend to dress rehearsals. A new level of severance pay was added for fifth and sixth year artists. Management agreed to clearly delineate the amount of time which must be allotted to dancers to get in and out of costume at rehearsals and performances. Other financial increases include: a 6% increase in per diem in the third year of the agreement; an increase in the cap for dancer payment for health premium of \$14 to \$15 biweekly; and a 17% increase in weekly compensation to \$350 for extended sick leave in the first year and a 14% increase to \$400 weekly in the second and third years. An additional member of Management will be added to the Joint Committee. The extraordinary risk pay payments for performances, technical, and dress rehearsals will increase (5% in first year to \$42, 5% in second year to \$44 and 4.5% increase in third year to \$46). Additionally, up to thirty students of The Washington School of Ballet and *DanceDC* may attend rehearsals to broaden their understanding of the art form and its professional practices without the rehearsal being considered a cultivation event. On one occasion only, Management may now compensate artists for up to four hours of overtime accrued during a performance week by scheduling an extra free day for the entire company during the rehearsal week immediately following the performance week. All references to "working day" for posting of pieces and casting were changed from "working days" to

"calendar days." Travel provisions that were changed included: the dancers may vote to adjust the length of their lunch break for bus travel between DC and NY only, all travel time of six to ten hours will be counted as six hours towards the daily and weekly allowances, and all references to travel between midnight and 8:00 a.m. in the agreement will be changed to midnight and 7:00 a.m.

The dancers voted overwhelmingly in favor of this new agreement, which will cover August 1, 2008 through July 31, 2011.

FLORIDA GRAND OPERA DELEGATES

In March, new delegates were elected for the Florida Grand Opera chorus: Donna Lane Creasman-Downey and Michael Testa. The new alternate delegates are Kelly Allocco and Al Rivera. Many thanks go to Pedro Rivera and Kelly Allocco for serving our membership for the past eight seasons as dedicated and conscientious delegates.

JENNIFER WILSON RETURNS HOME

Jennifer Wilson recently sang the role of Senta in Washington National Opera's (WNO) production of *The Flying Dutchman*. Everyone in the Area was thrilled to have a former WNO chorister back home as the leading lady in this production.

On opening night, our Area Chair,



At a recent production of *Tosca*, the outgoing and new Florida Grand Opera AGMA delegates are, left to right: Kelly Allocco, Donna Lane Creasman-Downey, Michael Testa, and Pedro Rivera.

Tricia Lepofsky, stepped forward from the chorus in which Jennifer had previously sung for six seasons and presented her with a bouquet of flowers to express our pride in her stellar performance and accomplishments.

Following the opening night performance, Jennifer joined the entire chorus in singing "Happy Birthday" to Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg, who was visiting the cast backstage.



National Director of Organizing and Training and Mid-Atlantic Area Representative Eleni Kallas and Jennifer Wilson as Senta in Wagner's *Flying Dutchman*



Washington National Opera *Dutchman* Chorus and Jennifer Wilson (Senta) sing Happy Birthday to Justice Ginsberg, who attended the opening night performance.

SAN FRANCISCO

by Nora Heiber, National Dance Executive and San Francisco Area Representative



Ballet West negotiating committee: Christopher Anderson, Kate Crews, Katie Critchlow, Nicholas James Smith; not pictured: Steven Davis

As always, AGMA activities continue to be busy in the San Francisco Area.

BALLET WEST

This past March, AGMA's National Dance Executive Nora Heiber and Ballet West dancers Christopher Anderson, Kate Crews, Katie Critchlow, Steven Davis, and Nicholas James Smith were able to complete the negotiation of a new three-year collective bargaining agreement. Negotiators on management's side included the new Artistic Director Adam Sklute, Executive Director Johann Jacobs, and Nick Mullikin, Company Manager. Nick, as many will recall, was previously a Ballet West Dancer delegate who was also a negotiating committee member for Ballet West's first AGMA contract.

In exchange for fulfilling the dancers' major goals of additional guaranteed



Ballet West Company Manager Nick Mullikin, National Dance Executive and San Francisco Area Representative Nora Heiber, Ballet West Executive Director Johann Jacobs

weeks of employment as well as additional dancers hired, the committee accepted 2%, 2.5%, 3% compensation increase over the three-year contract. Two other substantial gains for the members included Ballet West hiring an on-site, part-time physical therapist, and the introduction of a substantial Exit Pay provision. With approximately thirty proposals from each side, the committee and management were able to address both parties' concerns and ultimately produce a quick and amicable resolution, resulting in the new agreement.

AGMA hopes to resolve a grievance against Ballet West concerning Mr. Sklute's decision to not re-engage three dancers in violation of the CBA as amiably as the contract negotiation went. AGMA attorney Gail Lopez-Henriquez and Ms. Heiber are scheduled to partici-

pate in the arbitration for this grievance on May 7, 2008.

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA

One Area conflict that was successfully resolved recently was AGMA's grievance against San Francisco Opera for unilaterally deducting health and retirement benefits from our principal artists' performance fees. For more details regarding this settlement agreement, please see page 16.

BALLET SAN JOSE

AGMA and Ballet San Jose have commenced negotiations. Ms. Heiber and the dancer committee (Akua Parker, Tiffany Glenn, Jeremy Kovitch, Harriet McMeekin, and Cynthia Sheppard) will be representing AGMA. We hope to complete these negotiations before the company departs for a five-week tour of China in May.

OTHER AREA NEWS

Both the San Francisco Symphony and San Francisco Opera Choruses returned to work in March and April successively. The San Francisco Ballet continues to celebrate its 75th Anniversary season with the presentation of ten new works over three successive nights as part of a two-week festival.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

by Heidi Herzog, Opera Pacific Chorister Delegate, MMRC member

Opera Pacific opened their 21st season on September 15, 2007 with "Opera Under the Stars," an outdoor concert held at the beautiful Irvine Bowl in Laguna Beach, California, conducted by Maestro John DeMain, featuring soloists Robin Follman, Christian Van Horn, James Valenti, Luz del Alba, Zheng Cao, Troy Cook, the Opera Pacific Ensemble of Repertory Artists, and the Opera Pacific Orchestra and Chorus.

In October, the mainstage season started with Puccini's *La Bohème*, conducted by Edoardo Müller. In January 2008, Opera Pacific presented Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* and in May, Opera Pacific will present Carlisle Floyd's "Susannah" as its final performance for the 2007-08 season.

Even though our CBA expired in July 2007, contract nego-

tiations have been proceeding for the past several months. The AGMA Negotiating Committee is represented by AGMA Western Counsel John Russum along with Chorister Delegates C. Lee Coduti, Robyn Frey-Monell and Heidi Herzog; and Choristers Jacqueline Crist-Franzen, Torbjørn Pedersen, Duke Rausavljovich, and Cindy Smith.

There will be a **Southern California Area meeting** on Saturday May 31, 2008 at 2 p.m. The meeting will be held at the AFM Local #47 Union Hall, 817 Vine St., Hollywood.

Teleconferencing will be available for members in Arizona, San Diego and Orange Counties.

A reminder notice will be sent out closer to the meeting date.

A Tribute

I met John Golitzin in the early 80's while singing in a Guild Opera Company production of *Barber of Seville*. Neither one of us knew then that we would perform together, off and on, for almost 30 years. John joined AGMA in 1982, served on the Board of Governors for 16 years, and was accorded Life Member status.

John sang for many years at Founder's Church, and performed with the Los Angeles Master Chorale. He sang on a Western Opera Theater tour of *Rigoletto* in the early 80's with Ruth Ann Swenson, and was an original member of the Los Angeles Opera chorus, having performed in 67 productions between 1987 and 2006. You could often hear him sing at Vitello's Italian Restaurant on Friday nights.

As much as John loved performing, his knowledge and passion for all singers was near legendary. His recording collection was astounding — encompassing, at one time, almost thirty thousand records. He was always available to provide his friends with six different singers doing almost any aria. John was a wealth of information on singers. He knew many great singers, and most importantly, was loved by those who knew him. John, thanks for all that you shared; you will be missed.

After John was diagnosed with cancer, the AGMA Relief Fund, which is administered by The Actors Fund, quickly stepped in to help with his insurance. They also helped his brother get John enrolled in Federal Disability, ultimately giving John the opportunity to fight his cancer and live a little longer.

A matching fund has been set up in John's name. Donations made to AGMA's Relief Fund go to helping your colleagues in their time of need. Contributions over \$25.00 may be made by credit card through Susan Davison at AGMA, (212) 265-3687, or checks in any amount may be mailed directly to the "AGMA Relief Fund," 1430 Broadway 14th Floor, NY, NY 10018. Please consider making a donation in memory of John Golitzin to honor this colleague's contribution to the Union. Thank You.

Jonathan Curtsinger, Chorister Representative, SoCal/AGMA Board of Governors



John Golitzin, in La Fanciulla del West, 1991

AGMA RELIEF FUND DONATION FORM, PLEASE SEND TO:

Susan Davison, c/o AGMA Relief Fund
1430 Broadway, 14th Floor
New York, NY 10018; (800) 543-2462

Make checks payable to the AGMA Relief Fund

My contribution to the AGMA Relief Fund is (contributions \$25 and over may be charged to your Visa or MasterCard):

Card #: _____ - _____ - _____ Exp. Date: ____ / ____ Bank V Code: _____ (last 3 digits on back of card)

\$500 _____ \$100 _____ \$50 _____ \$25 _____ \$15 _____ Other _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

E-mail: _____

In memory of: _____ In honor of: _____

Name of person to receive acknowledgment letter: _____

Address: _____

AMERICAN GUILD OF MUSICAL ARTISTS AND SAN FRANCISCO OPERA

We are pleased to inform you that AGMA and San Francisco Opera (SFO) have amicably resolved the issues regarding payment of health and pension benefits to principal artists in a way that benefits the greatest number of principal artists and ensures the continuity of a harmonious relationship.

As you know, this issue has been in dispute for the past year and AGMA and SFO have been able to resolve this matter as follows:

1. Starting in fall 2008, SFO will pay both the health contributions and retirement benefit contributions as specified in the collective bargaining agreement (CBA) on top of negotiated fees. SFO will issue notices to artists upon arrival in San Francisco for their engagement with a revised fee breakdown for contracts already issued. Copies of these revised breakdowns will



AGMA National Dance Executive and San Francisco Area Representative Nora Heiber and San Francisco Opera General Director David Gockley at the signing of the AGMA-SFO Media Agreement.

be sent to AGMA and the artists' managers.

2. For performances prior to August 1, 2008 (either retroactively or at the time of performance), SFO will pay the health contribution specified in the CBA on top of the negotiated fees, with retirement benefits contributions still withheld from overscale.

We thank the many artists and managers whose input has helped AGMA and SFO resolve this matter. This settlement could not have been accomplished without a shared deep respect by SFO and AGMA for the principal singers and the tremendous gifts that they bring to our art form and the stage of the San Francisco Opera.

AGMA and SFO are also pleased to announce that the side letter allowing expanded media activity was ratified by the AGMA Board of Governors.

Both SFO and AGMA thank you for your support.

CONTACT LIST OF ASSISTANCE, MEMBER-ONLY SERVICES, AND DISCOUNTS

Actors Federal Credit Union	(212) 869-8926	www.actorsfcu.com
The Actors Fund		www.actorsfund.org
The Actors Fund - East Coast	(212) 221-7300	(800) 221-7303
The Actors Fund - Midwest	(312) 372-0989	(800) 221-7303
The Actors Fund - West Coast	(323) 933-9244	(800) 221-7303
The Actors Work Program (www.actorsfund.org/services/Sideline_Work_and_New_Careers/Actors_Work_Program)		
The Actors Work Program - New York	(212) 354-5480	blevinso@actorsfund.org
The Actors Work Program - Chicago	(312) 372-0989	dtowne@actorsfund.org
The Actors Work Program - Los Angeles	(323) 933-9244, ext. 50	ltrotter@actorsfund.org
AGMA Relief Fund - Donations	(800) 543-AGMA (2462)	susan@musicalartists.org
AGMA Relief Fund - Intake East	(212) 221-7300 or (800) 221-7303	
AGMA Relief Fund - Intake Midwest	(312) 372-0989 or (800) 221-7303	
AGMA Relief Fund - Intake West	(323) 933-9244 or (800) 221-7303	
AGMA Retirement & Health (Plan A, AGMA Retirement Plan and AGMA Health Plan)	(212) 765-3664	www.agmaretirement-health.org agmaretirement_health@yahoo.com
AGMA Health Plan B ("Administrative Services Only")	(866) 263-1185	www.asonet.com
Artists' Health Insurance Resource Center - NY	(212) 221-7300, ext. 165	www.ahirc.org
Artists' Health Insurance Resource Center - LA	(323) 933-9244, ext. 32	AHIRC@actorsfund.org
Career Transition for Dancers - Outside of New York and Los Angeles	(800) 581-CTFD (2833)	www.careertransition.org
Career Transition for Dancers - New York	(212) 764-0172	info@careertransition.org
Career Transition for Dancers - Los Angeles	(323) 549-6660	info-la@careertransition.org
TEIGIT (The Entertainment Industry Group Insurance Trust)	(800) 886-7504	www.teigit.com teigit@teigit.com
Union Privilege/Union Plus	(800) 452-9425 (202) 293-5330	www.unionplus.org