



# AGMAGAZINE

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## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

BY ALAN S. GORDON

### ***Signatory Companies in Financial Trouble***

Because of the economic meltdown, arts institutions are suffering catastrophic losses of donated income from patrons. Board members of some of these companies have had to resign because they simply no longer have the funds with which to meet their financial obligations. Consequently, many of AGMA's signatory employers, both ballet and opera companies, all of which depend heavily upon their donors, are in serious trouble and have asked us for contract concessions.

Because AGMA shares the obligation to assure that the companies that hire its members remain financially viable, AGMA's professional staff and its lawyers, along with members in each of those companies, are willing to meet with employers claiming financial distress. In those situations, we first insist upon complete financial transparency so that we can make an independent evaluation about the companies' finances. Then, in any subsequent discussions, AGMA's overriding focus is on maintaining jobs for its members. If an employer is willing to maintain its existing number of AGMA members, we make every effort to help it solve its financial problems in other ways.

In the opera world, if companies are forced by financial concerns to reduce the number of productions or performances, the number of jobs for AGMA members is consequently reduced; in these cases, we consider whatever else might be done to limit these reductions.

In the world of dance, the problems for our members are more severe; a mid-career non-reengagement is nothing less than a professional death sentence. Given today's economic climate, we've observed that dance companies are not hiring experienced dancers, and there simply are no jobs for a dancer who is not re-engaged. Thus, we try to find ways to maintain jobs and current salaries through contract concessions that might extend the contracts or defer certain payments to a later date.

However, when an employer unilaterally cuts the number of AGMA members or refuses to let us see its books, that's the end of the ballgame, and we hold them to the terms of their collective bargaining agreements. Likewise, we are not willing to make concessions in situations where the number of jobs remains constant, but those jobs are maintained by firing older artists and replacing them with younger, less expensive ones.

Thus far, most requests for contract concessions have come from dance companies, which typically rely on donors who make annual contributions of between \$100,000 and \$250,000. The number of donors who can contribute at that level, however, is drying up, as those donors begin to experience financial distress, perhaps for the first time.

The larger opera companies depend heavily upon donors who have annually

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**VOTE NOW!**  
**BALLOTS ARE DUE BACK**  
**AT THE NATIONAL**  
**OFFICE BY WEDNESDAY,**  
**MAY 20, 2009**

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**FROM THE  
 PRESIDENT  
 JAMES  
 ODOM**



***Straight From the Horse's Mouth***

Over the years, I have written and told a lot of stories about my Grandma Beck. For those of you who may have been napping for the last couple of decades, Grandma used to utter such pearls of wisdom as, "Don't look for a gift in a horse's mouth" and "What's sauce for the gander will cook your goose." When I would find myself in what we call in the South "a fix," she would often say to me, "You've dug your own grave, now lie in it." She would show up at my school at lunch time with a huge homemade cheesy grease burger with fries and fuss at me about my being too fat as I ate it. That ended abruptly after I left for college. At that point, every time I came home, I was too thin and was going to die of malnutrition. The last twenty-five years of her life, every time I said good-bye to her, she would say, "Take a good look at me; I'll probably be dead before you come home again."

But there was a side to Grandma that I don't talk about very much. She and Grandpa married in the first years of the Great Depression, and like everyone who lived through those bleak years, it colored the rest of their lives. Grandpa served in the Navy during World War II, and Grandma stayed alone in Texas with their three little girls and did the best she could. I would not say that they were stingy in any way, but they were very careful with money. To this day, my brother David believes that there is a stash of cash hidden at their house somewhere.

They tried not to teach us their fear of economic disaster, but we couldn't help but notice that when some times were not as good as others, Grandma and Grandpa would institute austerity measures. But they always told us that if we were careful with our money, we would always be able to weather the bad times.

I'm not sure if you've noticed, but these are bad times. If there is an AGMA signatory company that is not feeling the economic pinch, I don't know which one it is. Some are in better shape than others, but everyone is hurting.

There is, however, good news. AGMA is doing just fine. Due primarily to the diligent oversight of Director of Operations Gerry Angel, and the innovative creation of new revenue streams by National Executive Director Alan Gordon, we have a strong financial position. AGMA still has the lowest initiation fee and basic dues of any performing arts union. It has literally been decades since there has been a dues increase, and we do not anticipate that there will be the need of one in the foreseeable future.

AGMA's professional staff is prepared to deal with concession requests from our signatories, and policy is in place to guide any action that might need to be taken. We are being pro-active in protecting our members, while at the same time maintaining as cooperative an attitude as is possible.

Not all of our signatories are going to survive this crisis. Some of them have already failed. Others are going to be required to make drastic changes. It's going to be hard for a while, but I believe that we will get through this.

All we have to do is work together.

And you never know, there may actually be a gift in that horse's mouth. I think that would make Grandma Beck very happy.

## Baltimore Opera Company files Chapter 7 Liquidation

by Richard M. Seltzer, AGMA Bankruptcy Counsel and Eleni Kallas, National Director of Organizing & Training and Mid-Atlantic Area Representative

The Baltimore Opera Company (BOC) has become a victim of the economic downturn, ending 58 years and over 200 productions of fine opera.

On December 9, 2008 the Baltimore Opera Company filed a Chapter 11 bankruptcy petition in the United States Bankruptcy Court in Baltimore, Maryland. AGMA retained bankruptcy counsel to represent it in the bankruptcy proceedings, filed a Notice of Appearance with the Court, and applied for appointment to the Official Committee of Unsecured Creditors. A Creditors' Committee represents the interest of the general class of unsecured creditors and monitors management's progress — or lack thereof — in the bankruptcy case and the prospects for a successful reorganization. After two months, a committee of five creditors, including one position for AGMA, shared by Eleni Kallas and Richard Selzer, was appointed on February 6, 2009. A number of conference calls were held between the Committee and representatives of the BOC.

However, in mid-March, the BOC filed a motion to convert the case to a Chapter 7 bankruptcy, which is a liquidation proceeding. During the course of the bankruptcy, the creditors, including AGMA, were compelled to reach the same conclusion as the Company — that there was no realistic chance for a successful reorganization. AGMA, continuing to work on behalf of our members, will now collect and file bankruptcy claims to pursue a distribution on such claims from whatever funds are available for creditors. This process will take a considerable amount of time and members should check the AGMA website ([www.musicalartists.org](http://www.musicalartists.org)) for updates.

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

contributed in the million-dollar range, and most of those donors can continue to make substantial gifts. But even the Metropolitan Opera, which gets gifts of multiple millions of dollars, is claiming financial distress and has asked its unions for an across-the-board 10% wage reduction. However, the leadership and committee members of AGMA, AFM Local 802, and IATSE Local One believe that the Met has caused its own problems through grossly unnecessary expenditures. Working together with the orchestra's and the stagehands' unions, we are preparing to conduct an extensive audit of the Met's books and records to more closely examine the cause of the Met's alleged problems.

Please feel free to contact me at [AGMANY@aol.com](mailto:AGMANY@aol.com) if you are experiencing any of these issues with your employer; as I've said in AGMAzine many times, we can't fix a problem unless we know about it.

### 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 also be notified separately.**

### Election Cycle, Part II: Time to Vote

When you took out your AGMAzine, ballots and envelopes probably fell out too. What does that tell you?

It's time to VOTE!

June 1 is when one-third of the Board will be seated, and, this year, all of the National Officers will be elected.

The members whose names you see on the ballots have already sent in their petitions, and their biographical information can be found inside this AGMAzine.

Did you receive two ballots, each a different color? The white one is for voting for National Officers, a process that happens every other year. The colored ballot is for your geographical Area. If you only received the white ballot, it means there are no open seats in your Area this year.

If you think you know someone who would be a good rep-

resentative, talk to them. Ask them if they're interested in running for the Board. It's not too late to put your favored advocate in a leadership position through a write-in campaign.

**WHY** vote? It's an important part of being a member of your union as well as your right and responsibility.

Fill out your ballot(s) and place them in the "secret ballot envelope." Then put that envelope inside the white one that has a flap. Your signature under the flap on the outer envelope is required to make the ballots valid and countable.

Do it right away! The ballots must arrive at the National Office by Wednesday, May 20. Envelopes received after that date will not be counted.

Now is the time. Make your voice heard.  
VOTE!

# ELECTIONS 2009

Below you will find election information and short biographies of the candidates for the National Offices and 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 NATIONAL OFFICE**

### **PRESIDENT**

#### **James Odom**



AGMA member: 30 years. Current and past service: President, 2nd, 3rd Vice President, Board of Governors, Executive Council; Board Committees: Finance and Budget, Merger and Affiliation, Administration and Policy, Personnel Sub-Committee; Chicago/Midwest Area Committee (Chair);

Negotiating Committees: Les Six, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Dallas Opera, Florentine Opera, Chicago Opera Theatre, Opera Theatre of St. Louis, Cincinnati Opera; Shop Delegate (Dallas Opera). AGMA Relief Fund (Chair), AFL-CIO Convention Delegate, Alternate Representative to the Four A's.

*My term as President has only strengthened my belief that AGMA members can best be empowered and the Union strengthened through member education, effective contract negotiation, and diligent contract enforcement. While I believe that we have made great strides in these areas, there will always be more work to be done. I will continue my attempt to visit all AGMA's geographical areas, and to work to ensure that all members receive fair and effective representation.*

### **1st VICE PRESIDENT**

#### **John Coleman**



AGMA member since 1990. Currently: Stage Manager for Lyric Opera of Chicago, National 2nd Vice President (16 years service on the Board of Governors, 14 as an Officer), Executive Council, Work Rules and Contracts Committee, Chicago/Midwest Area Committee, Lyric Opera of Chicago Negotiating Committee, Production Staff Delegate for Lyric Opera of Chicago.

*We are a diverse organization, but are united by common goals: regular employment, a living wage, reasonable working conditions, a safe working environment, and quality health insurance and retirement benefits for all our members. Your participation in your Union helps ensure that AGMA has the best interests of all members in mind, and I will continue to do my best to serve the needs of all AGMA members in these uncertain times.*

### **2nd VICE PRESIDENT**

#### **Gregory Stapp**



Currently: 5th Vice President, AGMA; Chair, Administration & Policy. Served: Governor; Chair, Membership & Member Relations; Chair, Merger & Affiliation; Executive Council; TEXCOM; Auxiliary Committee on Negotiations; Work Rules & Contracts; Schedule C; ADAPT; SF Area; Soloist's Caucus.

Spearheaded inaugural Leadership Conference; Guided Manager/Artist Ethics Code adoption; *Classical Singer Convention* delegate; Designated spokesman in many negotiations, helping achieve unprecedented gains with San Francisco, Los Angeles and New York City Opera.

*Performing across America for decades as well as abroad (Europe, Canada, Japan, Mexico, China) has given me an appreciation and understanding of AGMA artists' concerns, particularly those of traveling soloists. If elected, I shall endeavor to ensure the best possible representation and service for all AGMA members.*

*In these hard times, AGMA can protect jobs, wages, working conditions, health & retirement benefits while strengthening the viability and vitality of the performing arts. Together we will not only survive, but thrive!*

### **3rd VICE PRESIDENT**

#### **Sara Stewart**



*All AGMA members can be proud of this union's progress! As a currently serving Fourth Vice President and Executive Council member, as well as a Governor for over 14 years, I feel partly responsible for that growth. Thus, it is a great honor to have the opportunity to continue to serve my colleagues.*

*My career spans work as an AGMA dancer, ballet mistress, and choreographer, and has inspired me to attend Chicago-Kent College of Law where I am currently completing my second year. Moreover, Chicago-Kent's "Law in the Workplace" program has awarded me two scholarships funded by labor organizations, and the Board granted me Life Membership in AGMA.*

*My additional AGMA services include: Vice Chair of Work Rules and Contracts; member of the Disciplinary Hearing Panel, National Officers Nominating Committee, and the Chicago Area Committee. In these challenging times, I will*

endeavor with your support to raise AGMA's standards.

## 4th VICE PRESIDENT

### **Colby Roberts**

Currently Third Vice President, San Francisco Area Chair, Trustee of the AGMA Health and Retirement Plans, Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Reform and member of Administration and Policy. *Current and founding member of AGMA's Executive Council, I have previously served on all standing committees of the Board, as well as on Merger and Affiliation. I joined AGMA while working in New York as a freelance singer, before being hired as a chorister in San Francisco. I have worked as a concert chorister, opera chorister and soloist under AGMA contracts, and have participated in negotiations for opera, symphony chorus and ballet contracts. It is my firm belief that AGMA should be the vehicle to strengthen artists' rights, and to ensure decent wages and working conditions for all artists. AGMA must see that all members are well represented and protected in negotiations, grievances and arbitrations.*

### **George Scott**

Member of AGMA: 1977 to Present. Currently, chorister Seattle Opera, Northwest area chair, Board of Governors, Executive Council, Committee on Committees, Finance and Budget Committee, Personnel Sub-Committee. I have also served in the past as Fourth Vice President. I am extremely honored to be nominated for the position of Fourth Vice President and if elected will serve in this position to the best of my ability.

## 5th VICE PRESIDENT

### **Sara Blann**

### **LeRoy Lehr**

In Fall 2009, I will enter my 19th Season as a Soloist at the Metropolitan Opera. Joined AGMA in 1959. Member of Board of Governors since 1997. A Founding member of Center Opera Company (now Minnesota Opera). Experience as a shop delegate, NY Area Committee, Negotiating Committee for Collective Bargaining Agreements at New York City Opera and the Met, plus Met Opera Media Negotiating Committee and currently serving on AGMA Disciplinary Hearing Panel.

Appearing as a soloist internationally, and in regional opera companies and concerts with most major symphony orchestras,

tras, has given me a good perspective on the conditions and issues involved in both the opera and concert world. If elected 5th Vice President, I pledge my best efforts to help AGMA be responsive to the needs and concerns of its members. Please vote! Your participation helps keep AGMA strong and effective.

## TREASURER

### **Lynn Lundgren**

Despite the current global economic circumstances, as Treasurer of AGMA I have been instrumental in assuring that AGMA maintains a sound financial position. As the global economy founders, AGMA's risk adverse philosophy has protected all of our assets and leaves us in a strong position to protect our members against the hardships being experienced by our signatory companies.

With my oversight we continue to make very conservative investments which are unaffected by the vagaries of the markets.

As the women's chorus delegate and member of the negotiating committee at the Lyric Opera of Chicago, I also have the hands-on experience necessary to understand how best to prioritize the use of AGMA's resources to solve the day to day problems encountered by our members in their work environment.

With your support, I would like to continue serving as Treasurer of AGMA and keeping the union strong.

### **Ray Menard**

I am concerned that a vital fiduciary responsibility has been neglected. As Treasurer, I will take steps to guarantee that your dues paid become fully insured under the Transaction Account Guarantee Program, FDIC and any government programs applicable during these tumultuous financial times. I look forward to working with the AGMA Board, the Finance and Budget Committee, AGMA staff and financial consultants to weather the instability of the U.S. economy while providing the fiduciary vigilance necessary to stay current with changing government guidelines. Through my experience as president of a NYC housing cooperative and other business activities, I am well-versed in budgeting, accounting and leadership responsibilities. During periods of turmoil I have remained a staunch supporter of AGMA both at NYCO and at the MET. I have served as a Governor on the AGMA Board, NY Area Committee, and Met Negotiating Committee and am ready to serve you as Treasurer.

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Officer Candidates (continued from page 5)

## RECORDING SECRETARY

### Louis Perry



AGMA member 36 years; Governor, 2002-2006; Current: National Recording Secretary; Administration and Policy Committee; Executive Council; Personnel Sub-Committee; NY Area Committee; NY City Opera chorus delegate; AGMA/NYCO negotiation committees, 1979-2008; AGMA

representative to the New York City Opera Board, 1997 to present.

*It has been an honor to serve the membership as Recording Secretary since May 2008. With your support, I would be happy to serve again. The opportunity to work with all the Governors and the great AGMA staff has been an enormous pleasure as well.*

## CANDIDATES FOR BOARD OF GOVERNORS

### 01 NEW YORK AREA CHORISTERS

(4 Vacancies)

#### David Frye



*I lead the AGMA negotiating team at the Metropolitan Opera and am chairman of the Chorus Committee. I serve as liaison between Met management and AGMA shops, as well as between our union and the unions for stagehands and orchestra. My position is: Cutbacks in pay, pension and health care for the Met's administrative staff indicate that AGMA is approaching a tough negotiation. We've been asked for salary givebacks but so far have held the line. I'm running for my second term on the Board of Governors to hold that line at all our companies.*

#### Karen Grahn



AGMA member since 1988, Governor since 1996. Concert singer and negotiating team member for New York Area concert singer contracts. Membership and Member Relations Committee secretary since 1996, and

MMRC liaison to the AGMAZINE.

*One of the reasons I ran for the Board of Governors was to help effect change within the union. Being on the Membership and Member Relations Committee and acting as the liaison to the AGMAZINE has been a way to work on improving member/union communication. I would be honored to continue serving on the Board to make sure the needs of all AGMA members are met.*

#### Richard Guido



*I am currently a Staff Performer with the Metropolitan Opera. I was one of the Core Supernumeraries who was instrumental in coordinating and organizing a proposal to AGMA to represent our group. Our successful groundbreaking negotiations enabled us to become union members.*

*Also, having been a Guest Principal Artist, I have a broader perspective on issues important to all union members. I would welcome an opportunity to represent our members, be involved in helping our union stay strong and continue our effectiveness as we meet the challenges ahead.*

#### Linda Mays



AGMA President/AGMA Relief Fund Chair 1999-2007; Personnel Committee Chair; Administration and Policy Committee; NY Area Committee, Vice Chair.

*Your informed vote for officers/board members in this election is essential. Many tough decisions will be necessary in the future as the AGMA elected and professional leadership deals with shortened performance seasons, company closings and lay-offs in our artistic community. I take my fiduciary responsibilities seriously and pledge to do my utmost to preserve and promote the vitality of AGMA and its service to you. Vote, encourage your colleagues to vote and please donate to the AGMA Relief Fund.*

#### Pamela Smith



*I have been a member of AGMA since 1981 and a Governor since 1987. My service includes: former 2nd and 5th Vice-President of AGMA, current Chair of the New York Area Concert Singers Committee and negotiating committee, current Delegate to the New York City Central Labor Council, former Vice-Chair*

of Unions for the Performing Arts, former delegate to the Four A's (Associated Actors and Artistes of America), and former lobbyist in Albany and Washington, D.C. for funding of the Arts and Arts education and securing employee status for musicians.

**01 NEW YORK AREA  
DANCERS**  
(3 Vacancies)

**William Agliata**

**Rebecca Hermos**

**01 NEW YORK AREA  
SOLOISTS**  
(5 Vacancies)

**Richard Bernstein**



I am an American bass-baritone and have been a principal artist with the Metropolitan Opera for 14 years and an AGMA member for 20 years.

I have performed leading roles with most of AGMA's signatories. I would like to help the AGMA leadership provide valuable services for the union's members. I have a deep interest in the AGMA contract and its interpretation and enforcement. I am also concerned that other members may not have understood their rights. My mission as an AGMA board member would be to help them to do so, and to advocate for greater Plan B coverage.

**Cherry Duke**



My career as a professional mezzo-soprano has included principal roles with New York City Opera, Opera Omaha, Chautauqua Opera, Glimmerglass Opera, Connecticut Opera and Nevada Opera, as well as solo engagements with orchestras from coast to coast, including appear-

ances at Carnegie Hall and Avery Fisher Hall. I traveled to Japan with NYCO in their 2005 tour. In addition to my singing career, I maintain a freelance business which includes Web design and marketing services for arts companies and performers. I have served on AGMA's Board of Governors since September 2008. For more information on my career, please visit [www.cherryduke.com](http://www.cherryduke.com).

**Jeremy Galyon**



I am making my Met debut in La Sonnambula, and I will be living in New York City for at least one entire year. I have been singing opera for 10 years, singing in Westminster Choir College, Tri-Cities Opera, Glimmerglass Opera, Florida Grand Opera, Chicago Opera Theater, Merola Opera, San Francisco Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Opera Theater of St. Louis, Opera San Jose, and the Metropolitan Opera. I am willing to participate in whatever is necessary to get done.

**Greer Grimsley**

**Keith Miller**



Before pursuing a career as a singer, I played professional football for 5 years. I recently graduated from the Academy of Vocal Arts and became an AGMA member in 2007. I have since appeared in several opera houses including the Metropolitan Opera, Florida Grand Opera, Portland Opera, and Crested Butte Festival. For the past few seasons, I have been developing a strong relationship with the Metropolitan Opera, where I have appeared in their productions of Rigoletto, Madama Butterfly, and Macbeth. Next season I will continue that relationship when I appear in the Met's new productions of Carmen, Armida, and Tosca.

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

**Jonathan Curtsinger**



Has performed with Norman Luboff Choir, Roger Wagner Chorale, LA Master Chorale, New York City Opera, San Francisco Opera, & LA Opera.

AGMA service: member 33 years, delegate beginning 1977; Board of Governors 18 years; Life Member; Chairperson, Membership & Member Relations Committee; Chair, National Officers Nominating Committee; Chair, Board Challenge Holiday Relief Fund Drive; LA Opera's negotiating and singers committees, delegate and area committees.

Now, more than ever, it is important to assist AGMA in helping our members. Please, make a contribution to the Relief Fund today. **YOU** can truly help our friends and colleagues.

Thank you.

**Joseph DeStefano**



A core chorister with San Diego Opera since 2002, I served as Shop Delegate for four seasons, and served a term on the SoCal Area Committee, and on the Board's Administration and Policy Committee. As Chief Negotiator for the SDO Collective Bargaining Agreement, I was instrumental in negotiating a 5-year deal, providing artists with 25% over 5 years, and other important wins for stage management, principal artists, and for the first time, dancers. I've also been an active member of SEIU Local 2028 for more than a decade. I look forward to serving our membership for a second term.

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## Election Information (continued from page 7)

**Mark Kelley**

 I have sung with Los Angeles Opera (LAO) and been a member of AGMA since 1999. In 2008 I joined the LAO Shop Committee and have recently started to serve as delegate with LAO. After years of watching all of the AGMA traffic here at LAO, I've decided it's time to step up my game and become more involved. I welcome your support as I take another step in this endeavor.

**02 SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA AREA SOLOISTS**

(1 Vacancy)

**Robert MacNeil**

 As a Tenor I regularly perform at Los Angeles Opera, most recently in that company's productions of Tannhäuser, Der Rosenkavalier, Il Trovatore, Fidelio and La Bohème; I return this 2008-2009 season for Il Tabarro. I made my San Francisco Opera debut in October 2008 as the High Priest of Neptune in Idomeneo. I made my debut with the famed Ojai Festival under Kent Nagano in Orff's Die Kluge, and recorded the role of Martin in Copland's opera, The Tender Land, which was released on the Koch International Label. AGMA member since 2004.

tract, and have been the supplementary chorus men's delegate at Lyric for 2 years. I would love the opportunity to represent the Chicago/Midwest area and to help protect the interests of that membership. I thank you for your consideration. It would be a privilege to serve you.

**Matthew Carroll**

 Three years ago I was elected to AGMA's Board of Governors with a promise to take on responsibilities and encourage younger members of our union to become more involved with its future. Currently, in addition to my duties as a Governor, I am also the acting secretary for the Administration and Policy Committee, as well as the chair of the Young Artist Reform working group. My name is Matthew Carroll and I would appreciate your vote so that I may continue to serve and represent you on the Board of Governors.

**Cole Seaton**

 It has been my privilege and pleasure serving the Chicago/Midwest region and each AGMA member as a whole the past three years on the National Board. I am proud of what this Board has accomplished! We have worked together, communicated and voiced opinions in making decisions which have strengthened our union membership, our benefits and contracts while continuing to be fiscally responsible with a healthy balance sheet, and superb management in our national office. I also serve on the Chicago area committee, the CSC committee and it's with great pride in our union that I ask for your vote!

**03 CHICAGO/MIDWEST AREA CHORISTERS**

(3 Vacancies)

**Stephen Cannon**

 I have been an AGMA member in good standing for 7 years. I perform regularly with the Lyric Opera, Grant Park, and Chicago Symphony Choruses. I most recently served on the negotiating committee for Lyric Opera's current con-

the Pacific Northwest Ballet. After one year as an apprentice at GRB, I joined the Joffrey Ballet in 2002. In January I was named one of Dance Magazine's "25 to watch" for 2009. I am one of Joffrey's AGMA delegates, and I served on the negotiating committee for almost three years. During this time I've enjoyed working alongside my husband and fellow artist, Brian McSween, and our brilliant AGMA lawyer, Barbara Hillman, without whose expertise and commitment Joffrey would still be at the table today!

**03 CHICAGO/MIDWEST AREA SOLOISTS**

(1 Vacancy)

**Christopher Feigum**

 Christopher Feigum has appeared with the opera companies of Chicago, San Francisco, Houston, Seattle, Los Angeles, Santa Fe, Dallas; in concert with New York Philharmonic, Atlanta, Houston, Chicago, San Francisco, Dallas and Cleveland Symphonies. He spends his time as an AGMA board member educating fellow soloists about the benefits of our union. Many of our soloists are unaware of the assistance offered by Plan B. The 'Pay or Play' provision negotiated by AGMA has proven extremely valuable in these difficult times. We must remember that AGMA isn't just taking a percentage of our checks but is arbitrating on our behalf.

**04 SAN FRANCISCO AREA DANCERS**

(1 Vacancy)

**Nicholas Smith**

As a current AGMA Governor, I have represented dancers in the San Francisco Area for three years. My background includes dancing for Ballet West for eight years. I also have a degree in Business Management. During my term as Governor I have sat on the Membership and Member Relations Committee and worked towards making

**03 CHICAGO/MIDWEST AREA DANCERS**

(1 Vacancy)

**Megan McSween**

I grew up in Michigan, training at the School of the Grand Rapids Ballet and

sure dancers' needs are brought to the Board of Governors. I look forward to serving you for another term.

#### 05 NEW ORLEANS AREA CHORISTERS

(1 Vacancy)

##### **Julie Condy**

 New Orleans Area board representative since 2000; chorister at New Orleans Opera (NOO) for over twenty years. Through my efforts on the board, chorus membership increased to its current level of 75% union membership in a right-to-work state. My leadership efforts after Katrina allowed chorus members to stay connected via email at a time when communication by normal means was impossible. Current: Finance and Budget and Officer Recruitment Committees; attended the last three Leadership Conferences. Past: Work Rules and Contracts. I founded and run Crescent City Lights Youth Theater, a nonprofit organization which provides the children's choruses for NOO productions.

#### 06 PHILADELPHIA AREA CHORISTERS

(1 Vacancy)

##### **Maren Montalbano**



I have held a Board of Governors position in Philadelphia (chorister) for three years, and have been a delegate for Philadelphia Singers. During my term, I

have negotiated contracts with Philadelphia Singers and Opera Company of Philadelphia, and have taken an active role in organizing the members of the Philadelphia area. I am also on the Membership and Member Relations Committee, where I have played a major role producing the membership handbook, which will be published this year.

Contracts Committee. My professional credits include roles with Washington Opera, Opera Colorado, Austin Lyric Opera, Santa Fe Opera, and the Aspen Music Festival. I have also sung in the choruses of Austin Lyric Opera, and AGMA signatories Santa Fe Opera and New York City Opera. I am currently a member of the Pittsburgh Opera chorus.

#### 07 WASHINGTON/ BALTIMORE AREA STAGE MANAGERS/DIRECTORS/ CHOREOGRAPHERS

(1 Vacancy)

##### **Lynn Krynicki**

 Ever since I joined AGMA in 1997, I've been a Stage Manager and ASM for both union and non-union houses of variable sizes across the country. I participated in the last Washington National Opera CBA negotiating committee and the WNO media committee. Because I am currently finishing a Board term for a colleague, who had to withdraw, I would like the opportunity to complete a full term of service. Thank you for your support.

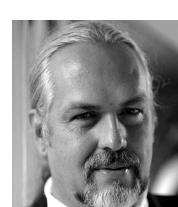
#### 09 NEW ENGLAND AREA

All Board positions currently filled.

#### 10 TEXAS/OKLAHOMA AREA CHORISTER

(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.

#### 08 PITTSBURGH AREA CHORISTERS

(1 Vacancy)

##### **Kellie McCurdy Ryan**

Representing the Pittsburgh region, I have been on the AGMA Board of Governors for three years. I am also a member of the Work Rules and

#### 11 NORTHWEST AREA

All Board positions currently filled.

#### IN MEMORIAM

*Nora Kovach*

*Pearl Lang*

*Inga Nielsen*

*Deborah Riedel*

*Ron Silver\**

*Marina Svetlova*

*Chuyler Chapin\**  
*Carolyn George d'Amboise*  
*Vivian della Chiesa*  
*Lukas Foss\**

\*Indicates a distinguished individual in a related profession.

# A R E A N E W S

## CHICAGO/MIDWEST

### Chicago/Midwest Area Membership Meeting

by James Odom, President, Area Chair, and Lyric Opera of Chicago Chorister



*Left photo: Cincinnati Ballet Delegate Zack Grubbs; center photo: clockwise from left front: Larry Montgomery, Valerie DeBartolo, John Trybus, Martin Pooch, Stephanie Chamberlin, and Jillian Bonczek; in background: Marie Sokolova and Philip Sokolov; right photo: Joffrey Ballet negotiating committee member Brian McSween*

The Chicago/Midwest Area held a Membership Meeting on February 22, 2009. Forty members attended. After a social hour, the business meeting was called to order and reports were given by representatives of Area shops. President Jimmy Odom reported on the "the state of the Union" and on the effect the economic situation is having on AGMA signatories and shops. Treasurer Lynn Lundgren reported that AGMA is strong financially. AGMA Retirement and Health Fund Trustee Carolyn Berghoff reported

that the trustees continue to search for ways to improve and increase coverage, and that while the Retirement Fund has lost some value, it has not lost nearly as much as comparable funds. Chicago/Midwest Area Representative Barbara Hillman gave an update on negotiations.



*Left photo: Opera Theatre of Saint Louis delegate Peggy Stenger; right photo: 2nd Vice-President John Coleman and Board member John Concepcion-Wall*



## SAN FRANCISCO

### Musings from San Francisco...

by Colby Roberts, 3rd Vice President, Area Chair, and San Francisco Opera Chorister

It is a glorious day in San Francisco; our lilac is in bloom and the hummingbirds are flying. The feral cats in the backyard are sunning themselves and a light breeze is blowing. So I sit at my computer and compose a brief piece for AGMAZINE.

I know that all of us are concerned about the current economic climate. Companies, our employers, are asking for help in cutting costs, which means cutting our salaries and our benefits. Some have closed their doors and jobs have been lost. Our union is working very hard to protect its members and safeguard our contracts, with the understanding that without viable employers there will be no union work. But what I am struck by, and what moves me the most, is our members themselves.

In the face of cutbacks, loss of jobs, fear of the future, our members, we ourselves go out every day and do the very best job we possibly can. There is no lower standard of performance; no less care for the product we put on the stage. This is what makes us a very special organization. Yes, sometimes it hurts us at the bargaining table that integrity in our performing will always come first, but it is also a source of pride and our strength.

I congratulate and thank each of you for this professionalism and care for the art. I have no doubt that these qualities will carry us through this rough time as we show to our employers and our audiences that we are the very best at what we do.

# NEW ORLEANS

## New Orleans Opera Returns Home

by Julie Condy, Board member and New Orleans Area Chair



Outside the Mahalia Jackson Theater for the Performing Arts.

The city-owned Mahalia Jackson Theater for the Performing Arts had undergone \$22 million in renovations after being severely damaged by the floodwaters of Hurricane Katrina. The arts center had been closed since the 2005 storm, having taken on 14 feet of water, leaving the New Orleans Opera, Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra and New Orleans Ballet without a home.

On January 19, 2009, a ten-day grand reopening of the Mahalia Jackson Theater culminated with a Gala Opera Concert featuring tenor Plácido Domingo along with the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra and the New Orleans Opera Chorus. Mr. Domingo was joined by baritone Mark Rucker, mezzo-soprano Kristine Jepson, soprano Sondra Radvanovsky, tenor Lawrence Brownlee and soprano Sarah Jane McMahon (a New Orleans native), in a sparkling evening of opera that marked the return of the New Orleans Opera to its home theater after three years of performing at Tulane University.

Mr. Domingo's

New Orleans Opera Chorus gathered on the Domingo stage during intermission of the January Gala with General and Artistic Director Robert Lyall and Plácido Domingo.

fundraising efforts and long connection to the city were recognized that evening with a half-dozen awards and proclamations, chief among them was the naming of the Mahalia Jackson Theater's stage after him.

Fifty-plus-year choristers and AGMA members, Karen Kalin and Mary Bertucci, remembered Mr. Domingo's early operatic appearances at the New Orleans Opera fondly. "We are thrilled that Plácido thought enough of us to give his time and talents to New Orleans after the hurricane. We remember his performances with us in the early 60's at the start of his career. We were so young then. After rehearsal, members of the chorus would get together and walk to a pizza parlor for dinner. Plácido would join us and leap over the fire hydrants on the way! Yes, those were good times!"

On March 20 and 22, 2009, the New Orleans Opera Association celebrated its return to grand opera on the Plácido Domingo Stage with Bizet's *Carmen*. The sold-out performances to standing ovations demonstrate that opera, which made its North American debut in New Orleans in 1797, is here to stay in New Orleans.



After introducing Plácido Domingo, Gala emcee, Academy Award nominee and New Orleans native Patricia Clarkson receives a kiss.

Patricia later reported that Plácido had been "thrilled" to meet her and that he knew her characters in all of her movies. Smiling in her dressing room, she said, "I can't believe that Plácido is a big fan of mine. Wow!"



Tenor Plácido Domingo and soprano Sondra Radvanovsky perform during the Gala.



# PHILADELPHIA

by Maren Montalbano, Board member and Opera Company of Philadelphia Chorister



Opera Company of Philadelphia's Chorus Master  
Liz Braden surrounded by the Wise Men.



Left to right: Ellen Peters, Jessica Kasinski,  
Renee Cantwell, and Kate Mallon-Day



Choristers ready for Act 2



Ladies in Waiting, left to right: front  
row: Amy Tefft Spencer and  
Nathalie Dalziel; back row, Rebecca  
Fetrow and Ruth Ann Cunningham



Ladies Chorus getting into character before the  
top of Act 1.



Turandot Chorus back stage getting ready to sing.

©Renee Cantwell

The Opera Company of Philadelphia (OCP) finished its run of *Turandot* this month. Due to budgetary concerns, a highly-anticipated original production design was replaced with a tried and true set and costumes from Dallas Opera. Like true artists, the Philadelphia Area singers and dancers took it all in stride and performed to critical acclaim.

This past October, OCP performed a production of *Fidelio* designed by world-renowned artist and sculptor, Jun Kaneko, putting an abstract expressionist twist onto Beethoven's only opera. Kaneko's designs will be back in Philadelphia for the 2009-10 season with *Madama Butterfly*, which he had designed originally for Opera Omaha in 2006. All photos, unless otherwise noted, are ©Ellen Grace Peters.

## AGMA PARENTS, TELL US YOUR STORY

Dear AGMA Members,

We are doing research for an upcoming edition of AGMAZINE that will explore the pregnancy and maternity leave provisions of AGMA collective bargaining agreements and how these provisions have affected AGMA members throughout their pregnancies or adoption procedures, and their post-birth work experiences. Union-related family pictures would be greatly appreciated also.

If you would like to share your story with us, please contact Deborah Allton-Maher at:

[Deborah@musicalartists.org](mailto:Deborah@musicalartists.org); or

Deborah Allton Maher  
Eastern Counsel  
American Guild of Musical Artists  
1430 Broadway, 14th Floor  
New York, NY 10018  
(212) 265-3687 Ext. 447

Thank you and we look forward to hearing from you!

# SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

## LAMC Hits the Road

by Michael Freed, Los Angeles Master Chorale Chorister

Sure, we've done "run-out" concerts before, usually by bus or car and just for the day. But in March 2009, the Los Angeles Master Chorale (LAMC) did a "run-out concert" to Madison, Wisconsin. That's a long way to run!

We were scheduled to perform in Overture Hall, a beautiful space, both physically and acoustically, but its most striking feature is its massive concert pipe organ, which was used to accompany our concert. Not only is the sound impressive, but it is physically beautiful, with waves formed by the tops of the visible ranks of pipes, mimicking the nearby lakes and rolling hills. You would think it was in a fixed position on stage, but, in fact, the entire organ, enclosure, and wings (which keep sound from being "caught" behind the proscenium) close up like a "Klappaltar." The massive structure rolls to and from the back of the stage area on railroad-like tracks.

The Overture Center for the Arts was a gift to the city of Madison by W. Jerome Frautschi and his wife Pleasant Rowland, creator of American Girl® dolls. In the wake of 9/11, Ms. Rowland listened to a Los Angeles Master Chorale recording of "Lux Aeterna" by Morten Lauridsen, which gave her such comfort during that difficult time that she began to dream of having the Master Chorale perform in Overture Hall.

Ms. Rowland and her husband were in attendance at the morning dress rehearsal when we ran the whole program. Afterward she told us through tears of joy that this was indeed a dream come true, and that we would never have a more appreciative audience than herself.

The concert featured the music of Morten Lauridsen, Distinguished Professor of Composition at the University of Southern California and a long-time friend and colleague of the Master Chorale. He was "Composer in Residence" for the Master Chorale when he wrote the now-ubiquitously performed "O Magnum Mysterium" as well as "Lux Aeterna." And, happily, he joined us in Madison to accompany us on his "Nocturnes."

Pieces by Bruckner and Copland were also performed, as well as spirituals arranged by Moses Hogan, and "Wana Baraka," arranged by Chorale member Shawn L. Kirchner.

The performance was a moving experience, as we built on the musical magic we felt in the morning. Not a sound was heard between the pair of Bruckner motets, and there was a hushed silence after pieces that ended *ppp*. When Maestro Grant Gershon announced that our encore would be "O Magnum Mysterium," audible excitement was heard in the house.

Together with the dress rehearsal and concert, we really performed twice in Madison: once for a large, supportive audience, and once in the morning for an amazingly appreciative pair of arts patrons who have given the City of Madison so much — a beautiful concert hall and arts complex, a magnificent pipe organ, and a musical dream come true.



Photo left: Overture Hall's massive pipe organ; photo right: left to right: Maestro Grant Gershon, concert sponsors W. Jerome Frautschi and Pleasant T. Rowland, composer Morten Lauridsen, and Los Angeles Master Chorale Executive Director Terry Knowles



Photo left: Maestro Grant Gershon rehearses with Los Angeles Master Chorale members in Madison, Wisconsin; photo right: Chorale members relax before their concert: from left to right: Bob Lewis, Michael Freed, Mark Beasom, Samela Beasom, and Jody Golightly.

# WASHINGTON/BALTIMORE

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

The cherry blossoms in Washington, D.C. are in bloom and the city has been transformed into a spring wonderland.

## Membership Meeting

The Spring AGMA General Membership Meeting was held on February 28 with over forty members in attendance. The first order of business was to nominate members for three open positions on the W/B Area Committee. We were delighted to have the nominations of four members, and ballots were subsequently mailed from the National Office. [Elected to the Area Committee were: Chip Coleman (dancer), Don Schramm and Connie Coffelt Bailey (singers).] Lynn Krynicki

was introduced as the candidate for the stage manager seat on the National Board of Governors. Teresa Reid, chair of the Wolf Trap Opera negotiation committee, gave an update on the status of negotiations. Don Schramm presented a report on the progress of the creation of a Washington National Opera media agreement. As a member of the Creditors' Committee of the Baltimore Opera Company bankruptcy filing, Eleni Kallas gave a synopsis of the current status (see story on page 3).

Area Chair Tricia Lepofsky gave a talk on the meaning of professionalism in the workplace, which included respecting delegates and the value of union membership. Tim Kjer announced that the proposed increase to \$50 million for the National Endowment for the Arts was signed into law, and urged our members to write to their U.S. Representatives and Senators to ask for their continued support of all increases in NEA funding. After listing all the companies that had closed, and others that were affected greatly with cancellations or modified seasons, Tricia Lepofsky made an AGMA Relief Fund plea and collected over \$500 on behalf of members around the country who are in need of support during this economic downturn. Tricia will continue her campaign for AGMA Relief Fund contributions at rehearsals, so please join our Area in making those much-needed contributions.

## AGMA Presentation

Every winter, Eleni Kallas gives a presentation about AGMA at the Kirov Academy of Ballet in Washington, D.C. to graduating seniors who are about to embark on professional dance careers. Since many young artists have no understanding about why unions exist and what they do for their members, she provides them with a folder containing information about AGMA and discusses with them the benefits of union representation, the differences between an individual artist contract and a collective bargaining agreement (CBA), and what AGMA CBAs contain. She stresses that signing a contract is legally binding and that both parties are committed to a fully executed contract. The importance of keeping a file of contracts, paycheck stubs, and



Members at the Washington/Baltimore Area Spring Membership Meeting. Front: dancer Mimi Legat; seated, production staff members: Jeanette Gager Stair, Beth Krynicki, Lynn Krynicki, Laura Krause, and Sean Corcoran; singers: Denise Gulley, and J. Alan Garcia; first row, standing: Connie Coffelt Bailey, James Bailey, Laura Zuiderveen, Leah Inger, WNO Peter Grimes delegates Stephen Stokes, and Luciana Cecille, Don Schramm, Shawnee Ball, Tony Torchia, Lisa Berger, Pat Hussey, Dorothy Bodner, Tricia Lepofsky, and Tracy O'Neill; back row: Sara Stewart, Christopher Rhodovi, Kurt Hoffman, Paul Edson, Don Carter, Yolanda Bryant, J Austin Bitner, Bill Commins, Alan Reed, Jeffrey Tarr, and Tim Kjer



Washington/Baltimore Area Committee Members at the February 28, 2009 Spring Membership meeting, left to right: Laura Krause, J Austin Bitner (Area Vice-Chair and Governor), Don Schramm, Tricia Lepofsky (Area Chair), Tim Kjer, Christopher Rhodovi (Governor), and Eleni Kallas (National Director of Organizing and Training and Mid-Atlantic Area Chair). Missing from photo: Lisae Jordan, Harvey Fort, Teresa Reid, and Jennifer Blades.



National Director of Organizing and Training Eleni Kallas with members of the Kirov Academy of Ballet in Washington, D.C.

expenses is talked about; and she describes the process of making application to AGMA for membership and the fees that are associated with union membership. The role of delegates elected within a shop for enforcement of contracts is also explained.

Ms. Kallas presents a similar program geared more towards singers at Wolf Trap Opera Company each summer for their Young Artists and Studio Artists.



Washington Ballet's Elizabeth Gaither with American Ballet Theatre guest artist David Hallberg in The Washington Ballet's production of *La Sylphide*.



Washington Ballet's *La Sylphide*, left photo: Aurora Dickie, Corey Landolt, and Rui Huang; right photo: Jared Nelson surrounded by Jade Payette, Laura Urgelles, and Aurora Dickie



## NEW YORK



Members of the Metropolitan Opera production of *Madama Butterfly* met to remember and celebrate the production's creator, Anthony Minghella, and to honor his wonderfully talented wife, Carolyn Choa, who brilliantly directed and choreographed the world famous production recently seen in movie theaters. Left to right: front row: Theresa Ganley, Linda Mays, Carolyn Choa, and Belinda Oswald; second row: Patricia Steiner, Paula Williams, Jean Braham, Deborah Saverance, Donna Racik, Laura Fries, and Karen Dixon; top: Melissa Lentz



On March 15, The Metropolitan Opera celebrated its 125th Anniversary with a lavish gala. It also paid tribute to Plácido Domingo's 40 years at the house. Photos taken backstage: top: Kenneth Floyd, Dimitri Hvorostovsky, and Jason Hendrix; middle: Deborah Voigt, Jason Hendrix, and Plácido Domingo; bottom: John Relyea, Sondra Radvanovsky, and Jason Hendrix

## AGMA Answers

***Some friends of mine stopped doing AGMA jobs a number of years ago, didn't go on Honorable Withdrawal, but now have the opportunity to work for an AGMA signatory again. What should they do to reinstate their membership?***

The best thing to do is to contact the Membership Department at AGMA's National Office at (212) 265-3687 or (800) 543-2462.

Essentially, if members haven't paid their Basic Dues 90 days after the due date, they are suspended by the Board of Governors and are no longer a "member in good standing." In order to be reinstated to full membership, they

must pay what they owed at the time of their suspension, a \$250 reinstatement fee, and the basic dues (\$78) for the year in which they will now be working.

***Just to be clear, if my friends haven't worked for an AGMA company in ten years, do they owe ten years worth of dues?***

It depends. In the case where a member is suspended and has not worked, the member is only responsible for what was owed at the time of the suspension plus the reinstatement fee of \$250.00 and the current basic dues.

***Does it work the same way if a per-***

***son has been on Honorable Withdrawal?***

Not quite. A person who would like to become an active member again must pay a \$50 reinstatement fee in addition to the current basic dues.

So, tell your friends that if they have any questions at all about their status, they shouldn't hesitate to contact the Membership Department, whose representatives will be very happy to help them.

*Do you have a question for AGMA Answers? Write to [AGMA@musicalartists.org](mailto:AGMA@musicalartists.org) and perhaps your question will appear in a future column.*

## Ninety Years Young

by Audrey Keane Hill

On March 10, Elissa Minet Fuchs celebrated her 90th birthday. This fantastic woman continues to teach at the Greensboro Ballet school in North Carolina and is Ballet Mistress for its company.

Having started her dance career at age 16, Elissa worked in a Mike Todd Revue on the vaudeville circuit and then toured the States with the Ballet Russe for a year before joining the Metropolitan Opera Ballet. She remained at the Met from 1938 to 1950, where she was the AGMA representative. She was the first dancer to be



elected to AGMA's Board of Governors.

Elissa married conductor Peter Paul Fuchs, traveled the world with him, and organized a ballet school in Baton Rouge, LA, where she taught and choreographed ballets, operas and musicals. Her most recent choreography last fall was for *Hänsel and Gretel*, a 45-minute ballet with story and music from the Humperdinck opera. It was a huge success! Bravo Elissa! Keep on Dancing!

*Audrey Keane Hill was a soloist with the Metropolitan Opera Ballet 1946-50 and 1955-63, and then served as Ballet Mistress and Administrator until 1979. She has been friends with Ms. Fuchs for 63 years.*

## AGMA Relief Fund is now on Facebook

by Linda Mays, AGMA Relief Fund Trustee

You too can become a "friend" of the AGMA Relief Fund on its new page on the Facebook website ([www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)). Jonathan Curtsinger, loyal Relief Fund donor, advocate, fundraiser and innovator, recently made the suggestion that we have a Facebook page. And voilà — the AGMA staff made it happen! At this moment, there are well over one hundred "friends" exchanging information and ideas. In these troubled times, we need you all to be donors, advocates, fundraisers and innovators.

There is good news for our current and

future donors who are 70-1/2 years of age or older. The Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008 includes important provisions relating to charitable giving. If you meet the age requirement, you can instruct your IRA trustee to distribute funds (up to \$100,000) directly to the AGMA Relief Fund. You *will not* have to report the withdrawal for tax purposes and this distribution *will* also count towards your mandatory withdrawal amount. Even though you won't get a charitable deduction,\* your adjusted gross income will be reduced. Be sure to

check with a tax advisor regarding this issue. Please encourage your friends, families and colleagues to explore this benefit and give, give, give!

We are extremely grateful to those of you who donated during the past year(s) because we cannot survive without you. Your donations of \$5 or \$500 send a beautiful message of hope for the future. **We need all AGMA members to follow your shining example.**

*\*All other donors will be given the customary charitable donation acknowledgement.*