

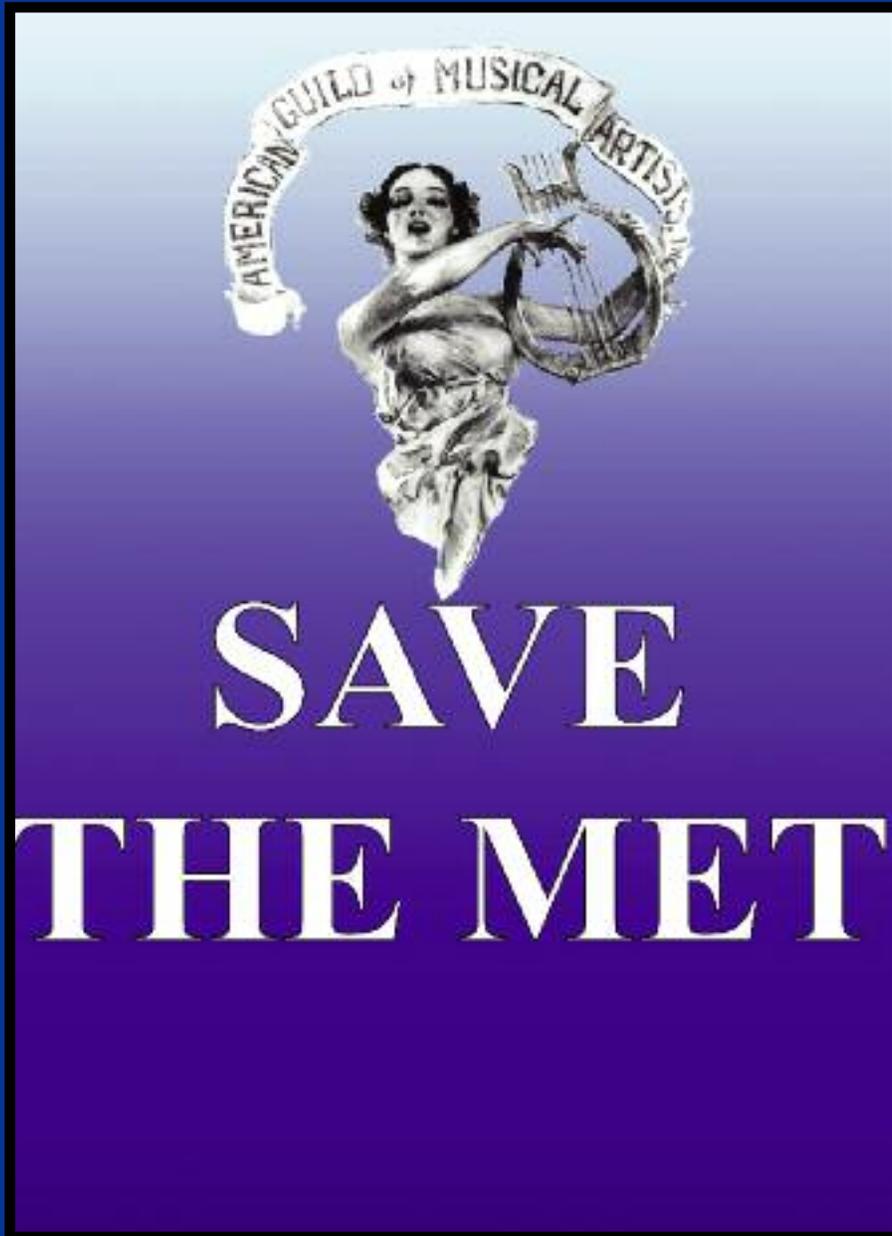
AGMAGINE

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“Oh, so you think this has nothing to do with you”

Meryl Streep to Anne Hathaway, *The Devil Wears Prada*

By Alan S. Gordon, National Executive Director



Principal singers sometimes think that AGMA means nothing to them, that contract negotiations are irrelevant to them, that their fees are secure because of their talent or because they have an agent, that their union can't protect them. Any singer who feels that way should now be prepared to have their current fees reduced by at least 10% and their future fees reduced by 20-30%.

Much as I'd like to write about something upbeat, between this issue of *AGMAzine* and the next, AGMA will (along with orchestra Local 802 AFM and stagehands' Local 1 IATSE) be engaged in a high stakes battle with the future of contracts and contractual protections at the Metropolitan Opera, and ultimately at all other opera companies, at risk.

The Met, under the current leadership of General Manager Peter Gelb has, in essence, declared war on its artists, on the unions representing them, and on the instrumentalists, stagehands and all of its other unionized employees, in an effort to deflect focus from the waste, excess, extravagance and out-of-control spending that has been the hallmark of Gelb's administration.

For its staff choristers, dancers, and production personnel, the Met has proposed a reduction of 20-30% in compensation; a 40% reduction in pensions; an increase of \$15,000 in annual health insurance costs for every family; elimination of overtime pay; drastic reductions in vacation and personal time; an elimination of minimum call requirements; elimination of anything other than base compensation for production personnel; reduction of dancer compensation by 50-60% and elimination of all dancer fringe benefits; the elimination of all fees, benefits and other-than-base compensation for staff Directors; and has proposed increased media and HD work-loads but reduced media compensation.

What he's proposed for soloists is a slashing of media revenue-sharing compensation; more rehearsals on weekends and evenings, including costume fittings, photo shoots, and any other chores the Met may require; and longer days without any breaks—all without any extra compensation or protective work rules.

Worse, a Met "victory" at the bargaining table on these issues would be followed immediately by an emboldened Gelb unilaterally imposing reductions of principal artist fees by 20-30% for future contracts. For already executed contracts for work at the Met, Gelb will ask singers to "voluntarily" reduce already

contracted fees by 10-15%, with the unmistakable implication that a refusal will impact future work opportunities at the Met.

In addition to the things that Gelb has proposed for soloists, equally important is what he hasn't done: The Met continues to refuse to address the safety and negligence issues that have recently led to a career-ending injury to one of our principal artist members. Gelb has refused to acknowledge our proposal that working condition safeguards be put in place to prevent future negligence and has refused to provide supplemental workers' compensation insurance to protect soloist income in the event of an injury.

This war, and it is nothing short of economic warfare, affects all employees working at the Met. The underlying problem for AGMA members, of course, is that if the Met can decimate its union contracts and unilaterally reduce the fees that it's willing to pay to soloists, other employers will try to do likewise.

AGMA's Met negotiating committee understands the nature of this negotiation and the stakes. In concert with the negotiating committees and leadership of the other unions at the Met, they are fully prepared to take up this struggle, both on behalf of their co-workers and all AGMA members. But soloists' thinking that this has "nothing to do with you" would be a mistake of incalculable dimensions.

When Gelb first took over the Met, he hired back Joe Volpe to negotiate the union contracts. We called that a "brilliant move," despite Volpe's reputation as a tough negotiator, because our members shared the view that Volpe cared for the Met, its employees and its performers, and because it consequently meant that there would ultimately be a deal without a lockout. Volpe, in turn, left Gelb a Met with labor peace, a deficit-free budget and a stable box office. Thereafter, Gelb increased the budget by

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Metropolitan Opera Chorus members wore United tee shirts at a music rehearsal in List Hall in early May.

Two Things *(With apologies to Dr. Seuss)*



**FROM THE
PRESIDENT
JAMES ODOM**

Thing 1: By the time you read this, the national election season will be getting into full swing. Not that the election season ever really ends anymore, but campaigns will now be gearing up for the full court press prior to November 4.

AGMA's policy has been, for at least as long as I have been a member of the leadership, pretty strictly "hands off". We do not participate in any kind of direct political action. As a general rule, I think this is a good thing. As I am reminded every day on Facebook, AGMA's membership is extremely diverse in their political and philosophical beliefs, and while there are certainly issues upon which I would like to see the union take a public stance, I have no desire whatsoever to start the discussion—

where certain values of the word discussion include knock-down, drag-out fight—that would be necessary to find a consensus on some of those issues.

What I have no hesitation about is urging you to be active politically as an individual. I have said this before: I don't care who you vote for, I just care that you vote. (Okay, I do care who you vote for, but I'm not going to tell you who I think you should vote for. Unless you ask me on a one-on-one basis, in private.) Mid-term elections are notorious for low turn-out, and yet they are just as important, if not more so, than the quadrennial presidential elections.

AGMA is unique amongst unions in many ways, and our political action policy is just one more way that we exhibit that uniqueness. However, it is my belief that good union members should also be good citizens. That means attending to our civic responsibilities.

Voting is more than just a right. It is a responsibility.

Thing 2: Since I have decided to forego my mother's sage advice and restate the obvious, I will bring up two of the biggest issues the union has faced in some time. The negotiations at the Metropolitan Opera and the announced closing of San Diego Opera.

As I am sure you are all aware, Management at the Met has made some draconian proposals for the new agreement with AGMA. There is some disagreement as to how much of an impact these proposals will have on our members who work at the Met, primarily because we can't get enough information to actually determine how much they will actually cost. Some members will be affected more than others. What does seem clear is that Management is seeking concessions that are a minimum of 16%, with the actual impact being double that or more for individual segments of the shop.

If these proposals had come five years ago, at the height of the recession, as a part of an across-the-board attempt to cut costs, I might have had a very different view of the situation. But they did not. They instead come at a time when the budget has increased by \$100 million dollars during the current administration's eight-year tenure, while ticket sales have steadily declined and donations have peaked, plateaued, and started to drop off. Rather than addressing these problems by attempting to rein in costs created by questionable artistic decisions, the proposals seek to make up the budget shortfall at the expense of the Artists who are the product that the Met sells.

On the heels of the contentious Met proposals came the announcement of the intent to close San Diego Opera. The announcement created enough drama and chaos to inspire a five-act opera of its own. It is still not clear, at the time of this writing, why, exactly, a company with no outstanding debt and the ability to create a new business plan had decided to simply end operations. Fortunately, outrage on the part of the employees and patrons of the company, as well as opera lovers all across the country, has had a positive effect on changing the fatal decision. Members of the San Diego Opera Association met and voted to rescind the decision of the Board to close the company and to make major changes in leadership, and new efforts to raise money to fund the company have been very successful. The SDO Board has now announced a season for 2014-15, which will mark the company's 50th anniversary.

As you know, these are just the latest of the troubled companies that have either folded or teeter on the brink of oblivion. Consequently, I have heard a great deal of discussion regarding what, if any, our responsibility as Artists is to our employers. There is one school of thought that the Artists have some responsibility to find the answers that Management doesn't seem to be able to discover. I believe

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In This Issue

By Sara Stewart Schumann, *AGMA's 3rd Vice President and MMRC Chair*



I am excited to report that the idea for this *AGMAZine* issue came to full blossom with member Wilbur Pauley's submission of an article about his multi-generational AGMA member family. Immediately, the Membership and Member Relations Committee saw the potential for a legacy-themed issue. Sure enough, articles from Matt Woodbury, Terry Ganley, and Lisa Anderson and Ben Bongers followed with their unique legacy stories that are well worth reading. They inspired me to write a little something on the passing of Regina Resnik, who was a brilliant star and a former AGMA president. As a current member of AGMA's elected leadership, which is entirely volunteer (as in unpaid), I constantly marvel on the dedication of AGMA's elected leaders, especially our president, James Odom. I am simply awestruck at the level of dedication that your AGMA leaders have for the well-being of AGMA and every AGMA member. This is truly AGMA's own special legacy! And you can become a part of that legacy by just getting involved: run for the Board of Governors, serve as a delegate at your shop, get involved in some way to show support for your colleagues. Heck, try writing an article for the next *AGMAZine*; it just might spark some ideas for the next issue.

Being a part of AGMA means you are connected through AGMA to a lot of really awesome artists. For example, the Day in the Life series in this issue features dance apprentices. If you don't know anything about being an apprentice in the dance world, these artists are on the cutting edge of potentially making it into a full time position at an AGMA signatory. These young artists are putting it on the line every work day as they are expected to step up and do whatever is required to get to that next level. Much like young opera artists, they have a limited time to prove themselves, and it is full of challenges.

The most important AGMA news in this issue is to be found in the National Executive Director's Report regarding what is happening with the Metropolitan Opera Negotiations. The outcome of this battle will have serious consequences for AGMA members everywhere, so do not miss NED Alan Gordon's report, and check in often to AGMA's website and Facebook page for the latest information. Also, *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and other news media have reported on this story, and it is crystal clear that the Met, under the current misguided direction of Peter Gelb, is intent on having labor pay for Gelb's gross mismanagement of this premier national arts institution. Make no bones about it, the Met's proposals will hurt all of our brothers and sisters at the Met, and these tactics will be duplicated across the country if successful here. AGMA is under attack, and we need to win this battle because poor management cannot be a recipe for cutting our members' salaries and benefits. All the AGMA artists I know perform at the highest quality, giving at least 100 percent. AGMA artists deserve the wages and benefits that AGMA has painstakingly negotiated with management over successive labor contracts. There is no reason on earth that AGMA's members who deliver the highest level of product on stage—who are the product—should be the ones to suffer due to mismanagement.

Finally, thanks go to everyone who submitted, edited, and worked so hard on articles for the creation of this issue of *AGMAZine* for you, the membership. Please enjoy it, and in turn, I hope you are inspired to be a part of our next issue by contributing your own articles and pictures to Denise Baker at dbaker@musicalartists.org. ♦

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Executive Director's Report (continued from page 2)

\$100 million, with a deficit of millions, drove the box office into a free-fall decline, and cannibalized the local live audience by flooding the New York area with HD telecasts. Like the “Saturday Night Massacre” that characterized the Nixon administration, when Gelb wanted Volpe to undertake this year’s contract negotiations pursuant to Gelb’s sledgehammer, slash and burn, lock-them-out approach, Volpe would have nothing to do with it, and Gelb took on the negotiations himself (despite a complete lack of labor negotiating experience) and he replaced the deal-making lawyer that Volpe had used with a new lawyer, apparently known for representing employers who use lock-outs as a way in which to bully employees.

Recognizing that all of us are similarly in peril, we are in regular contact, and constant collaboration, with the heads of the other Met unions, and have agreed upon negotiating tactics, with some of our proposals being identical to some of theirs. We’ve established an in-your-face approach to negotiations, utilizing all available legal and NLRB possibilities and are in more-or-less daily contact with *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal* reporters who cover labor and culture news. We also have an active press and media strategy to supplement our legal and across-the-table activities.

Having had no success with our attempts to deal with Peter Gelb cordially, our across-the-table negotiation strategy is to be aggressive, interruptive, confrontational...we will

not let the Met destroy the careers and livelihoods of our members. Our media philosophy is to constantly push for greater transparency for the negotiations which, in turn, inherently generates more media coverage for our members’ protections and benefits, and more pressure on the Met to recognize the absurdity of its proposals.

Stripped of hyperbole, we’re treating the Met proposals, in essence, as if the Met was asking its employees to make an “investment” in its future by agreeing to contract concessions that might stabilize its fiscal situation. Like all of the Met’s employees, the future welfare of our own members’ careers throughout the industry is, to one extent or another, bound up in the future welfare of the Met. But to make any kind of investment, we need to be treated as actual investors would expect to be treated. Investors are entitled to: 1) complete and thorough knowledge about every aspect of its finances; 2) a meaningful review of and approval over its business and strategic plans; 3) oversight of future spending; 4) an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of its administrative operations; 5) a real opportunity to implement the steps necessary to improve the likelihood of an actual return on our investment. Thus far, the Met has refused to provide us with meaningful financial data, has refused to engage in any measure of transparency, and has announced that its “new business plan” consists solely of “spend less and earn more.” No investor would venture a dime on a business that refuses to supply information and adopts such a vacuous “plan” for its future.

Until the Met can acknowledge and accept basic, sound business practices and conditions, no “investment” in its future would be logical, and we are left instead with economic warfare: Peter Gelb’s threat to lock out all unionized employees vs. the overwhelming lack of confidence in Peter Gelb’s management philosophy or artistic vision.

The only thing that Gelb has to do to bring an end to this battle is to state publicly that he will neither lockout employees nor unilaterally impose a contract. Then, traditional hard bargaining could proceed to work out a contract without harming anyone’s lives.

If Gelb does not have the ability to step back from the precipice and bargain reasonably with the performing artists, the conclusion is inescapable that he should no longer be leading the Metropolitan Opera. ♦

Note from the President: You can show your support for your colleagues at the Met by taking your own “Save The Met” photo. Gather members from your shop or area and take a picture like the ones featured in this article. Post it to Facebook. Send it to agma@musicalartists.org and we’ll post it to the AGMA Facebook page. A “SAVE THE MET” kit is available with a file containing the letters and the AGMA Lady (to use as spacers if you need them) that you can print and use—just ask me for it at president@musicalartists.org. You can also copy the “SAVE THE MET” AGMA logo from the American Guild of Musical Artists Facebook page and use it as your Facebook profile picture.



Grant Park Chorus with their “Save the Met” kit.

PLEASE TAKE IMMEDIATE NOTICE

To All Plan B Participants

The Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) prohibits the continued existence of standalone health reimbursement plans like AGMA Health Plan B. The Plan's Union Trustees, Employer Trustees and the Plan's lawyers have spent the past year trying to find a way in which to let members continue to use the money currently in their Plan B accounts.

The Trustees and the Trust's lawyers have determined that the only way in which to comply with the law and to allow maximum use of the funds in their Plan B accounts by the largest number of participants was to "freeze" the accounts going forward effective September 1, 2014.

Plan B will thus be amended so that accounts with contributions received by August 31, 2014 will be segregated and no further amounts will be credited to such accounts. Such "frozen" accounts will not be thereafter increased based on contributions received after September 1, 2014 or any interest crediting. Such accounts will continue to be subject to the current administrative rules. (Forfeited amounts will continue to be allocated to Plan A and B expenses based on the current rules).

Participants may continue to receive reimbursement from their frozen accounts based on the traditional rules, EXCEPT that no one may be reimbursed for premiums for individual health insurance policies or for copays incurred under such individual policies. In other words, claims incurred before or after September 1, 2014 are eligible for reimbursement from

frozen accounts subject to the above restriction on individual insurance policies as well as the applicable Plan rules (including the deadline for claims submission).

Going forward, AGMA intends to amend all of its contracts so that there will be no further contributions to Plan B. Instead, contributions that previously were directed to Plan B under current contracts will now be directed into individual retirement accounts in your name in the AGMA Retirement Plan.

Obviously, we recognize that this change will disadvantage some current Plan B participants. Please keep in mind that the Affordable Care Act prevents the continuation of current Plan B rules and necessitated these changes, and that all other possible changes would have disadvantaged far more members far more seriously. Also, despite the similarity of names, the AGMA Health Plan is not AGMA and the AGMA Trustees on the Plan had no choice but to comply with the law.

Please note: Different rules affect employers that offer both Plan A & Plan B (or allow the direction of Plan A contributions to Plan B), and members at those companies can contact their local Area representative or the National Office with questions for guidance, although the only definitive answers regarding the rules of the Plan can come from Derek Davis, AGMA Health Fund Executive Director, at (212) 765-3664.

To find your current Plan B balance, sign in at www.asonet.com, or call Administrative Services Only toll-free at (866) 263-1185 for help. ♦

President's Message *(continued from page 3)*

that we, as union members, do have a responsibility to be cooperative and reasonable when our employers are in trouble. It serves no purpose to be intransigent when there are legitimate problems that Management is honestly trying to address. That being said, I do not believe that it is our responsibility as Artists to solve Management's problems for them. Yes, we should be publicly enthusiastic about our work, particularly when we feel that it is good and will encourage further support from patrons and general audience members. But it is not our responsibility to promote the company for the company. Particularly when there is a marketing department whose job that is. Should you attend donor luncheons or other donor functions when invited? Yes, particularly if it doesn't interfere unduly with your time off. But you should also be comfortable saying that you need that time to do laundry or go to the doctor or rest for a performance, if you need to do that. Should you be willing to allow limited simulcasts to help increase public awareness and interest? Twenty years ago, I would have said absolutely not, at least not without significant compensation. Now, I think that they are an inevitable and necessary aid to our employers. Should you take a significant cut in compensation when other areas of the company are not expected to make similar sacrifices? Absolutely not.

I have focused on opera companies here, but the principle is the same for all our signatories. And for every company that has failed, there is another that has successfully overcome their difficulties and not only moved on but grown after their adversity. In my observation, those are companies that saw the real problem and addressed it, rather than asking the Artists to take responsibility for problems they did not create. ♦

My Great-grandfather Helped Create the First Performing Arts Union

By Terry Ganley, AGMA Governor and Stage Manager



Recently, I have been wondering what stars might have aligned to put me here, on the Board of Governors of AGMA, during this strange time for us. My great-grandfather, Nat M. Wills (born Lewis McGrath Wills) was one of the people who founded the first performing arts union in this country.

For a long time I had not known much about this dimension of my great-grandfather's life. Then I read the following quote in Trav S.D.'s website. (He is the author of a book called, *No Applause—Just Throw Money: The Book That Made Vaudeville Famous*.) "In June 1900 Wills joined other headliners like George Fuller Golden and Montgomery and Stone in forming the White Rats, the vaudeville performers union, a precursor to today's Equity. Wills was not only one of the first members but an officer in this path-breaking organization. In February of the following year, the performers went on strike to protest the creation of the United Box Office (UBO), a syndicate of top vaudeville managers which had begun to charge performers a fee for the privilege of being booked. In a matter of weeks the managers capitulated, only to reinstate the fee piecemeal over the next several months."

My grandmother, Natalie Wills Tholl, kept only a few tattered headshots of my grandfather in her bottom desk drawer. But some years ago she was surprised to see an expertly restored photo of him in his tramp makeup at a Vaudeville Retrospective exhibit that Helen Hayes had mounted at the Kennedy Center. After the show, the curators gave the photograph to my grandmother, and since her death in 2001, it has been hanging in my mother's dining room.

My grandmother might not have been surprised. "Nat M. Wills," Trav S.D. continues, "was one of the most promi-



Nat M. Wills in his "tramp" make up (left) and as a young man (right).

nent in a long line of a now-extinct breed of performer known as "tramp comedians". A leading star of vaudeville and musical comedy from the turn of the century until his untimely death in 1917, Wills was also among the first and biggest stars of what we now call comedy albums."

"No entertainer on the American stage today is more popular with the public than Nat Wills," crowed the Victor Talking Machine Company when they released his most popular monolog on disk in 1909... Such a star was Wills at the time that Victor crowed: "The popularity of his cylinders and disks was such that he was still recording them just a few months before he died."

I began to learn more about his career when I was an Assistant Stage Manager at the Pittsburgh Opera. My grandmother came to visit and saw the Old Stanley Theatre, now the Benedum Center, where I was working. She mentioned to me casually, "Oh, my father headlined at this theater." Although he had died when she was three, my grandmother, little by little, told us some of his history. He met May Day (my great-grandmother) when

they worked for the Ziegfeld follies of 1913. She was a "Ziegfeld Girl."

I have since learned much more about him. I even found his grave at the Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx. My great-grandmother is buried next to him in an unmarked grave.

It's strange that I was drawn to this business without realizing much about Nat Will's life. I wonder what he would be thinking of me, his great-granddaughter, stage managing at the Metropolitan Opera. Certainly, Grammie felt the family coming full circle. Personally, I am inspired by his foresight and effort a hundred and fourteen years ago that grew into the legacy we have in hand today. I am proud of that legacy and I trust he is watching out for us even now.

Quotes in the article are from the website Travalanche, by Trav S.D., the author of *No Applause—Just Throw Money: The Book That Made Vaudeville Famous*. <http://travsd.wordpress.com/tag/nat-m-wills> ♦

Intergenerational AGMA

By Wilbur Pauley, Soloist



“Intergenerational” isn’t a common word, but it was used to describe the sense of this article. When combined with our union’s acronym, it leaps off the page like an important scientific discovery: Intergenerational AGMA.

Like mitochondrial DNA, it inspires images of pages flipping in reverse, moved by an infinite wind, or of a colossal billion-member family tree extending skyward like an upside-down pyramid. Accompanying this image is the musical phrase “from one generation to another, to another, to another” from *Psalm 90*, as set by Charles Ives, seamlessly sequencing into the voice of James Earl Jones intoning the biblical list of “begats.”

Something less epic, perhaps? Since AGMA is, after all, one big family, Sister Sledge’s 1979 pan-familial paean “We Are Family” could set this up sonically.

In 2013, my family became an AGMA family. Though I’m sure there are other AGMA “families” out there who may work concurrently, it certainly must be rare to have three AGMA members in one family working in the same season at the same opera house. Verily, how did this come to be?

I joined AGMA in 1978 as a new bass in New York City after auditioning for Jacqueline Pierce, Betty Baisch and Cindy Richards-Hewes, the holy trinity of choral contractors in those days. I became a very busy guy. As my voice grew, so did my assignments, beginning with “step-outs” and moving inevitably into opera.

Fast-forward to my third season at Lyric Opera in Chicago in 1994, where I met a cute dancer in the cast of *Candide* (we were



The Pauley family at Soldier Field: Dad sang the National Anthem for a Bears game! Left to right: Athena (now 10), Dad, wife August, Georgia (now 14), and young Tye in front.

literally, in the Hal Prince production, in the same boat). Well, one thing led to another and, in 1998, I married August Tye, who is now the Ballet Mistress at Lyric. She has been an AGMA member since 1992. After *Candide*, we were in two other operas together at Lyric: *Un re in ascolto* and *The Ghosts of Versailles*.

As the new millennium dawned, we started our family (on the down-beat): our first daughter

was born January 1, 2000. She was hired as a child supernumerary in William Bolcom’s “A Wedding” in 2003. But, as a super, she never got an AGMA card.

Another fast-forward, this time to September 2013. My wife was looking at a full schedule in six of the eight operas this past season at Lyric, and I was in the midst of my first season as a member of the Chicago Symphony Chorus while shoehorning a cameo appearance as a supplemental chorister in *Parsifal*, when we received a casting notice: “Child actor sought for the role of Trouble (Dolore) in *Madama Butterfly*. Should be or appear to be 4 years old. The male character is referred to in the libretto as having blond hair and blue eyes. Paid position.”

“Hmm...,” we thought. “Blond hair...blue eyes...4 years old...male...hey, we have one of those!” But reality intervened: “No way, not with our schedules!” we both exclaimed. However, after a thorough investigation, we realized that there were no “you sunk my battleship!” moments, i.e., direct hits with any of our other obligations, and that at least one of us would be available for all the rehearsals and performances.

It only took a bit to convince our son Tye, born in 2009, that going to work with Mom or Dad would be fun. We did have to promise him a toy if he was accepted. He was put through his paces at the audition, along with thirteen or fourteen other kids, and afterwards we were informed to “come on down!” He got the gig! And not only did he get ONE toy, we created the “Dressing Room Fairy.” Every time he was called for a show, August would have some treasures stowed for him to find. Tye really loved it!



Tye, in his sailor outfit, ready to greet Pinkerton (the cad!)

And lo, it came to pass, a *Butterfly* begat another AGMA member. Now there are four members of the Pauley family that have performed at Lyric, and there are three bona fide, card-carrying AGMA members, although I suspect Tye will be requesting honorable withdrawal soon; the shelf-life of Trouble is short. I also have to give a shout-out to our other daughter Athena who, while she has yet to tread the Lyric stage, IS a member of the Chicago Children’s Chorus.

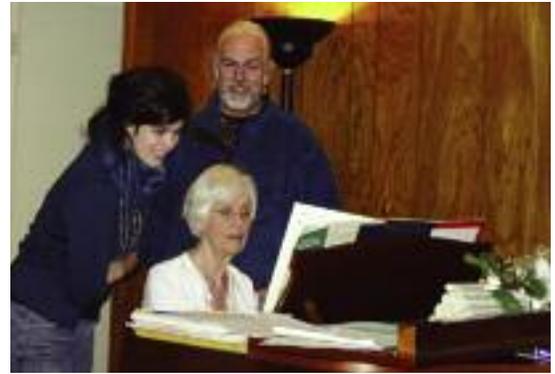
And we all know where chorus jobs can lead! ♦

My AGMA Family Continues To Grow

By Matt Woodbury, AGMA Governor and Dallas Opera Chorister



My parents used to perform songs that my grandparents performed together: some were songs that Dad sang in church with Mom accompanying him, some were sweet, turn of the century romantic duets. We never had the TV in our living room because that would interfere with somebody practicing the piano or another instrument. The musical legacy in our family continued with both of my sisters and all four of my brothers making sure that their children (I have 18 nieces and 17 nephews) received musical training. I believe I was the first member of my family to plan on a career in music. I studied violin and viola with a Major in Music Education in college, but realized after a year that I'd rather be singing, and switched to a vocal emphasis.



Amanda and Matt with his mom, Fern, at the family piano.

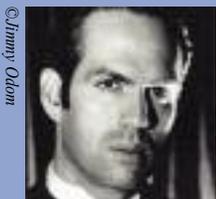
My family were not particularly pro-Union. While I was in college I learned about the history of the labor movement, and when I left, I called the AFM to see if I could join, only to learn that I'd called the wrong union for me. When I was hired to sing in the Dallas Opera Chorus (two auditions and 14 months later), I joined AGMA at the first opportunity, even though Texas is a "right to work" state, and I wasn't required to join a union.

Legacies are not only within families. Many years later, my niece Amanda's high school choir teacher told her that she had the potential for a career as a classical singer. The teacher, Dana Francis Kelly, soon joined the Dallas Opera Chorus and AGMA, as well, and for a summer, she was Amanda's voice teacher. My brother moved his family to Kentucky, and Amanda went on to study voice at Indiana University, then College-Conservatory of Music, University of Cincinnati. After CCM, she was accepted in the Young Artist program at LA Opera, and when she was contracted for a role, she joined AGMA. On March 30, 2014, she was one of the winners at the Metropolitan Opera's 2013-2014 National Council Auditions.

Another niece, Aurelia, married a tenor, Jubal Joslyn, while in college at Brigham Young University. Jubal grew up in rural Nebraska, about as far from classical music and opera as could be. After attending BYU, he fell in love with classical voice and is now a Master's student in Vocal Performance. In January of 2012, Jubal won the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, Utah District, and was awarded the "Best of Utah" Award at the Rocky Mountain Regional finals. Jubal has been an apprentice artist at Santa Fe Opera the last two summers. He has also joined AGMA and is already appreciating the benefits of working under an AGMA contract.

There is an AGMA Stage Manager named Woodbury who is probably a distant cousin, and the Union Legacy in my family also extends beyond AGMA. My nephew, James, is a trombonist based out of Las Vegas, is a member of the AFM, and toured with an AGMA show, "Come Fly With Me." Legacies, by definition, take time to grow. Gradually, we'll turn out to be pro-Union after all. ♦

Within weeks of leaving college, I met a friend who was an AGMA member. He helped me to find a new voice teacher in a new city and to line up an audition for an AGMA company. In general, my friend mentored me as a professional singer and AGMA member. Though we now live in different cities and work for different companies, Jimmy Odom has continued to be a valuable friend and mentor to me, both as a singer and in service to AGMA. I'm very grateful for his friendship and guidance. Besides that, he's funny and fun to be around.



©Jimmy Odom

—Matt Woodbury, Dallas Opera Chorister

Building Memories as an AGMA Family

By Lisa Anderson, Stage Manager, and Ben Bongers, Soloist

Lisa Anderson and Ben Bongers gave AGMAzine a glimpse of the intersection between their professional and personal lives. Lisa, a stage manager, and Ben, a solo artist, tell the story of how they met, fell in love, and built their careers as an AGMA couple.

Lisa: We have two AGMA members in our family. I guess we are a little unusual. Many soloists I know are married to other singers or “normal people.” Stage Managers seem to end up with directors, other stage managers or very understanding “normal people.” I got lucky with a very understanding singer.

Ben: Actually, I’m the lucky one. I know, I know... it could be considered a “cute” answer, but, I honestly mean it. One of the markers of a good marriage (in my mind at least) is *knowing* you’re the lucky one in the relationship.

Question: How did you meet?

Lisa: I think the first time we got to know each other was when we were both in school at the University of Missouri in Kansas City. I was stage managing a joint production for the theater department and for the conservatory. The show was *Working*, by Studs Terkel (a great show if you don’t know it), and Ben was in it. Shortly after that, a friend, the same one who directed *Working*, was doing an opera for the conservatory. She couldn’t find a stage manager and then remembered that I read music. So, the first opera I saw was the first one I called. Ben was involved in that show and then also with the Lyric Opera of Kansas City, where I was an assistant stage manager and where both of us joined AGMA. Ben served as a delegate and on the negotiating committee. I waited until San Francisco to get involved. We started seeing each other a lot and became friends, and then finally we started going out. Then... it all worked out. That was 21 years ago and we have been married for 19 years.

Question: What are the challenges of being an AGMA family?

Lisa: It hasn’t been easy, especially the travelling. In a lot of AGMA couples, there is a partner that stays and maintains a home while the other travels. We mostly switch off. At one point we were both on the road for two years. For those two years we decided to put most of our stuff in a storage locker and save rent. It was a completely logical choice. I also learned that I need to know that somewhere out there I have a home. Lately, I have had a more stable job. For at least six months out of the year I get to work at home and work for the San Francisco Opera. That has been great to actually be able to work at home. It is very unusual and, I know, a luxury. Many if not most members of AGMA don’t get to work in the same city in which they live.



Ben: As Lisa said, we *try* to have someone at home while the other travels, but it’s not always practical. Look, we all know as performers and AGMA members in “the life,” you strike while the iron is hot. If you’re in AGMA, you obviously are a “cut above” and there are times, some short, some not so short, when we are both out and about. The two things I think we’ve both found imperative is you live your *own* life on the road, BUT always with your partner in your mind and heart. And you need to create memories *together*.

You have to have your own career, but you also have to realize that this career came from nowhere and, at some point, will fade into history. Who or what will be there? Your spouse. So, we try not to be complacent, and we always realize that at the end of the day... this is just a job. The “We” we have become is not disposable.

Question: How do you make it work?

Ben: We call each other, text throughout the day. And we listen to what the other has to say. A lot! Look, this person on the other end of the cell phone, Skype, FaceTime... is your partner. They’re not your agent, your costume designer, or your publicist (unless you ARE married to them).

The other thing is, don’t forget in all the fury, crazy rehearsals, score memorization, etc., the little things that make them smile. If you know they like daisies... send them daisies. If they like Belgian chocolates, then guess what, you find fun and interesting ways of gifting them. What you will have at the end of “your run” are the MEMORIES you two created, not the bank account.

Lisa: So, how does all of this relate back to AGMA? There would not be a way that we could actually both afford to work in this business if it wasn’t for AGMA. This way of life, crazy but actually very cool, wouldn’t be possible if we both didn’t belong to the union. I recently saw on a locker a sticker that really stuck with me. “United we bargain. Individually we beg.” ♦

AREA NEWS

PITTSBURGH



Pittsburgh Opera's 75th season started with Aida and Magic Flute, took a turn to the modern with resident artists productions of Dark Sisters and Paul's Case, and finished with La Bohème and the upcoming Pittsburgh premier of Philip Glass' Orphée. The next season includes a gala opening concert in which Pittsburgh area native Marianne Cornetti is joined by Carl Tanner and Angela Meade followed by productions of Otello (last seen in 1990), Carmen, and Daughter of the Regiment (last seen in 1986 with Joan Sutherland in the title role).

The number 307—it's not just the number of years since the debut of Handel's Rodrigo and the death of Buxtehude—it's also the total number of years these AGMA artists have sung with the Pittsburgh Opera Chorus. Ten choristers with 20 plus years (273 years) join three officers (34 years) gathered backstage during a recent production of La Bohème. Posing in front is Bethann Dilione (Delegate, five years); left to right, kneeling, are David Jennings Smith (Delegate, 37 years), Denise Sheffey Powell (32 years), and Rick Mikol (30 years); standing: Cheryl Shenefeldt Bush (24 years) and Barbara McDonough (26 years); in back: Jeffrey Link (20 years), Bob Simoni (30 years), Kellie McCurdy Ryan (AGMA Governor, 12 years), Bill Buchanan (chair, Opera Executive Committee, 27 years), Bill Fisher (Opera Executive Committee, 17 years), Ed Moore (24 years), and Mark Spondike (23 years).

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Members of the San Diego Opera Chorus "braved the elements" and did a gentle six-mile run the day after opening Pagliacci.

Run organizer Colette Gardner says, "I think it's important to help each other stay active and healthy during a sometimes hectic opera season."

The group has met almost every weekend to run between four and six miles—sometimes running after a matinee or on break between three hour rehearsals.

Run participant Garrett Harris comments that, "It's not that hard to do when you have a group of people who want to hang out and stretch our lungs a bit."

Shown, left to right, are Alex Rodrick, Bernardo Bermudez, Emma Dunbar, Garrett Harris and Colette Gardner.



WASHINGTON/BALTIMORE



Washington Concert Opera performed Verdi's *Il Corsaro*, starring Sebastian Catana, Tamara Wilson, Maestro Antony Walker, Michael Fabiano, Nicole Cabell and Sebastian Eduardo Castro with the Washington Concert Opera chorus.



Lyric Opera of Baltimore Chorus ladies were in Verdi's *Nabucco* in early May of this year. Kneeling, left to right: Jemma Lebherz and Kimberly Christie; standing, left to right: Suzanne Balaes-Blair, Phyllis Burg, Suzanne Chadwick, Catrin Davies, Elizabeth Kerstein, Connie Coffelt Bailey, Heather Lockard Wheeler, Shaina Kuhn, Melissa Kornacki, Beth Miller Ryan, Karen Myers Rhodovi, Kirsten Haimila, Gabrielle DeMers, Jessica Hanel Satava, Diane Schaming, Madelyn Wanner and Alexis Tantau



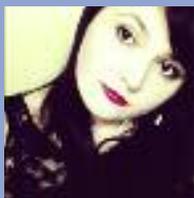
©Scott Suchman

Cast members of Washington National Opera's *Magic Flute* are wearing Nationals hats because the opening night performance was also simulcast to the Nationals Stadium in Washington, D.C. Left to right, first row: Arya Balian, Jared Marshall, Will McKelvain; second row: Grace Doughty, Zoe Kitchen, Malin Moeller; Charlotte Doughty, Chalyn Frazier, Nyla Mickels; third row: Yi Li, Kathryn Lewek, Maureen McKay, Ashley Emerson, Joshua Hopkins, David Pittsinger; Wei Wu; fourth row: John Easterlin, Joseph Kaiser; Deborah Nansteel, Sarah Mesko, Jacqueline Echols, Cory Rotz, James Shaffran, Soloman Howard; and fifth row: Casey Donovan, Maverick Lemons, Jennifer Gorman, Katie Weir, Tanner Schwartz



Eleni Kallas gave an AGMA presentation to graduating seniors at the Kirov Ballet Academy in Washington, D.C.

Who Inspired You?



At first, I started assistant stage managing opera because I was trained in theatre and felt I shouldn't graduate from college without trying a little bit of everything—despite the fact that I could barely read music. The person who convinced me that I, too, could be an opera person was Laura Lee Everett, currently of OPERA America, but formerly of the University of Maryland. She treated me just like any other member of the team, despite the fact that I was still an undergraduate, stage managing for the Maryland Opera Studio. Thanks to her influence and connections, opera projects comprised the bulk of my stage management career ... and I can definitely read music now! My stage management work with AGMA companies has been invaluable as I pursue my Master's Degree in Arts Administration at Goucher College and begin to transition into that field.

—Bridget Woodbury, Stage Manager

NEW YORK

New York Area Meeting

By Louis Perry, New York Area Chair, AGMA Recording Secretary and Chorister



The New York Area held its annual meeting at the National Office on November 20, 2013.

Prior to the meeting, members enjoyed a delicious buffet as well as the annual flu shot provided to AGMA members at no cost, courtesy of The Actors Fund.

The first order of business was the election of Area Committee members. The New York Area is happy to welcome new and returning members to the committee: Kim Araki, Ann-Carolyn Bird, Ann Chiaverini, Ruth Ann Cunningham, Osceola Davis, Richard Guido, Juan Jose Ibarra, Peggy Imbrie, Jann Jaffe, Robert Kuehn, Kathleen Mangiameli, Linda Mays, Raymond Menard, Aisha Mitchell, Roger Ohlsen, Louis Perry, David Saybrook, James Seiler and Raven Wilkenson. Thanks and appreciation goes to the members of the committee who generously serve the New York Area membership.

Alan Gordon, National Executive Director, reported on New York Area news, including the latest information about the New York City Opera (NYCO) bankruptcy filing.

NYCO was an AGMA signatory for almost 70 years. Mr.

Gordon is looking out for the interests of AGMA/NYCO members as the case goes forward. Members may check the AGMA website page under “News & Events” for updates related to the bankruptcy case.



Membership Supervisor Candace Itow answered members' questions at the meeting.

Pamela Smith, Governor and Chair of the Concert Singers Committee, reported that the committee and staff successfully negotiated new collective bargaining agreements with Music Before 1800 and Melodious Accord. They also negotiated a new Media Modification–Internet Use agreement covering those companies, as well as Musica Sacra and Voices of Ascension. Congratulations and thanks to the committee and staff who participated in those negotiations.

Renata Marinaro, Director of Health Services, Eastern Region for the Actors Fund Artists Health Insurance Resource Center, made a comprehensive PowerPoint slide-show presentation regarding issues related to the Affordable Care Act as it affects AGMA and all Americans. She took questions from members, giving them general suggestions regarding the details of their individual health care situations. Entertainment union members may learn more at the Actors Fund webpage dedicated to health care and health insurance: <http://www.actorsfund.org/services-and-programs/healthcare-and-health-insurance>.

Derek Davis, Executive Director of the AGMA Retirement Plan and AGMA Health Fund, attended Ms. Marinaro's presentation. Afterwards, he advised members regarding AGMA Health Plan issues.

Up-to-date retirement and health information may be found at: <http://www.agmaretirement-health.org>.

The Area's thanks goes to Ms. Marinaro and Mr. Davis for helping members' understanding regarding the complexity of health insurance concerns.

The New York Area wants to thank our AGMA staff for their excellent help in bringing our members another successful Area meeting, especially to Gerry Angel, Denise Baker, Candace Itow and Elizabeth Drorbaugh.

In other Area news, in 2013 and 2014, to date, the union has successfully negotiated new contracts or contract extensions with the following area signatories: The Discovery Orchestra, Gotham Chamber Opera, Martha Graham Dance Company, New York City Ballet, and Opera Orchestra of New York. Congratulations and thanks to members and staff participating in all those negotiations. ♦



Governor Pamela Smith spoke about the Concert Singers Committee and recent negotiations. Area Chair Louis Perry looks on.

Griff Braun Joins AGMA Staff as New York Dance Executive

By Alan S. Gordon, National Executive Director



I'm pleased to announce that we have selected Griff Braun to fill the position of New York Dance Executive, recently vacated by the departure of James Fayette.

Griff has a B.A. degree from SUNY, has been an AGMA member for more than 20 years, was a Board of Governors member, and has danced at eight AGMA dance companies including ABT, New York City Ballet and the Metropolitan Opera. He participated in negotiations at all of those companies and led dancer negotiations at several. He was also helpful in securing the return of the ABT dancers to AGMA.

He was selected after an extensive search and interview process, was clearly the better candidate, and is already well known to a great many of the New York area dancers.

Griff joined the staff on March 3, 2014 and since then has been actively involved in negotiations at ABT and the Met. He can be reached at Griff@musicalartists.org. ♦



Fayette Transitions to Los Angeles

James Fayette, an AGMA member for 15 years, who also served on the Board of Governors and as our New York Dance Executive for the past eight years, has left the AGMA staff. He and his wife, Jenifer Ringer, both former principal dancers at New York City Ballet, have launched a pre-professional training program for ballet students ages 14 to 19 in Los Angeles, where James also serves as Managing Director of the Los Angeles Dance Project. ♦



Jenifer and James with some of their students.

TEXAS/OKLAHOMA



On April 8, 2014, the Dallas Opera Board and Trustee Appreciation Dinner was held at the Karayanis Rehearsal Production Center, where former AGMA Governor, Delegate, and current alternate Delegate, Bunny Hodges, was given an award for 40 years of service; Deb Skinner received an award for 30 years of service; and Helen Dewey Reikofski was given one for 10 years of service. Pictured left are: Deb, Bunny and Helen.

CHICAGO/MIDWEST

By Cole Seaton, AGMA Governor, MMRC member, Chicago Area Committee member, Chorister



The Chicago/Midwest Area held their annual Area Meeting on March 16 in Chicago. We had a quorum and enjoyed a fantastic evening together with over 50

AGMA members that represented each of the local Chicago signatories. We were pleased to find that some members traveled from as far away as Wisconsin, Indiana and Michigan to attend this meeting. Attendees were thrilled to have the event hosted by AGMA President and Chicago/Midwest Area Chair Jimmy Odom, and were equally happy to welcome our National Executive Director, Alan Gordon, Midwest Counsel John Ward, and special guest, Metropolitan Opera mezzo-soprano Jane Bunnell, who also serves on the voice faculty of Chicago's DePaul University School of Music.

During the past six months of the 2013-14 season the Chicago Symphony Chorus (CSC) offered several fine performances, including Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem*, the annual *Welcome Yule* holiday concerts in December and Schubert's *Mass in A-flat Major* in mid-February. Due to the heavily programmed early half of the season, the CSC ended their official season at Symphony Center in mid-February, but will resume again at the Ravinia Festival this summer with performances of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* and *Le nozze di Figaro*.

Lyric Opera Chorus enjoyed a great season of singing during the first three months of 2014 with their terrific December/January production of Johann Strauss Jr.'s operetta, *Die Fledermaus*, followed in February by Rossini's comic opera, *The Barber of Seville*. The company finished up their regular season in March with Dvořák's *Rusalka* and Mozart's *La clemenza di Tito*. Lyric Opera is also mounting a production of Rogers and Hammerstein's *The Sound of Music*, which opened on April 25 and ran through May 25, 2014.

The Grant Park Music Festival celebrated its 80th Anniversary season this summer and the Grant Park Symphony Chorus will play a big part in that celebration! The chorus made their first appearance of the season during the weekend of June 13 and 14 in Berlioz's thrilling *Romeo and Juliet* which was followed the last weekend in June by Janáček's *Glagolitic Mass*.

On July 4th, the Grant Park Orchestra and Chorus offered up an Independence Day Salute and then in mid-July the Grant Park Chorus was featured in their always stunning *a cappella* concerts, entitled *Choral Splendor*. The last weekend in July will feature the chorus in Shostakovich's *The Execution of Stepan Razin* and in August we will hear



At the annual Chicago/Midwest Area Meeting, left photo: President and Chicago/Midwest Area Chair Jimmy Odom, Midwest Counsel John Ward, 3rd Vice President and MMRC Chair Sara Stewart Schumann, Jane Bunnell and National Executive Director Alan Gordon. Right photo: 1st Vice President John Coleman, Todd Rhoades, Governor Sherry Veal and Liz Luse.



them in Ravel's *Daphnis and Chloé* which is the concluding concert of the festival.

Our friends and colleagues at the Joffrey Ballet kicked off their 2014 with Contemporary Choreographers featuring three Joffrey Ballet Premieres: *Crossing Ashland*, choreographed by Brock Clawson; *Continuum*, choreographed by Christopher Wheeldon; and *Episode 31*, choreographed by Alexander Ekman. These performances were followed in late April and early May by a U.S. Premiere of *Romeo and Juliet*, choreographed by Krzysztof Pastor with music by Sergei Prokofiev. Touring performances took the dancers to Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Detroit, Fairfax (VA), Tucson and New Orleans.

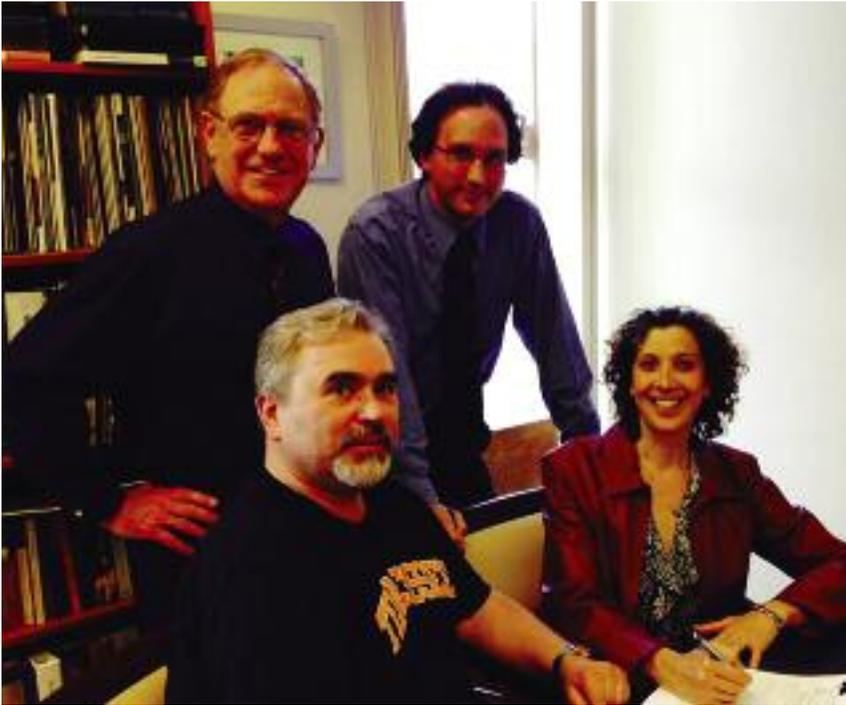
Florentine Opera Company in Milwaukee celebrated their 80th Anniversary this season and brought three productions to the stage, including, Verdi's *La Traviata*, which opened the season, followed by one of Handel's more popular operas, *Giulio Cesare*, and finally, recently closing out their season on May 9 and 11 with a wonderful production of Puccini's *La Bohème*. ♦

John Ward has a new office address: 120 North LaSalle Street, Suite 2600, Chicago, IL 60602-2465. His phone number is still the same: (312) 628-7830.



In March, the negotiating committees for BalletMet (left photo) and Cincinnati Ballet (right photo) concluded negotiations for both ballet contracts. The groups from each company are happy that major goals and achievements were reached during negotiations. Left photo, BalletMet's negotiating committee are: AGMA committee members Emily Gotschall, Adrienne Benz, AGMA Midwest Counsel John Ward, Carrie West, Delegate Jackson Sarver and Ashley Wegmann. Right photo, Cincinnati Ballet: AGMA Delegate Cervilio Amador, Jimmy Cunningham, Artistic Associate Johanna Bernstein Wilt, Artistic Director and CEO Victoria Morgan, Chief Operating Officer Missie Santomo, AGMA Delegate Zack Grubbs and Company Manager Dena D'Andrea.

SAN FRANCISCO



The 2012-2016 San Francisco Opera contract was signed on June 4; seated: San Francisco Area Chair Colby Roberts and National Dance Executive Nora Heiber; standing: Associate General Director Clifford Cranna and Director of Music Administration Matthew Shilvock.

Film About San Francisco Opera Chorus Highlighted at Fundraiser

By Joy Graham-Korst, San Francisco Opera Chorister



On January 17, 2014 a fundraiser featuring members of the San Francisco Opera chorus, who were the subject of the documentary *In The Shadows of the Stars*, was held. The film won the 1991 Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature. The evening was dedicated to the memory of director Irving Saraf and fellow choristers who have passed away since the making of the movie. In attendance were current and past members of the

San Francisco Opera Chorus, along with director Allie Light and the Oscar statuette that was awarded to the husband and wife team of Saraf and Light who co-directed, co-produced and edited the film.

The evening began with the opening chorus from Act 2 of *Die Fledermaus*, followed by the movie and a question-and-answer session. Allie was brilliant in her presentation and the retelling of many special remembrances that were part of the making of the film.

As a result of this fundraiser, the AGMA Relief Fund received a \$300 check dedicated to the memory of all those who were honored during the evening's event. ♦



Present at the fundraiser, left to right, front row: Joy Graham-Korst, Allie Light holding the Oscar, Sharon Navratil, Roberta Bowman, Frederick Matthews, Shelley Seitz and Paul Gudas; back row: Jere Torkelsen, Bill Pickersgill, accompanist Ernest Knell, Julianne Booth, Tom Reed, Sigmund Seigel and Ken Malucelli.

Nathan Gunn Stars as Santa

By Linda Mays, AGMA Relief Fund, Director of Development



Internationally acclaimed soloist Nathan Gunn took on the role of Santa Claus at the Metropolitan Opera Chorus' Christmas Bake Sale and Auction this past December. Nathan read *'Twas the Night Before Christmas* and posed for priceless photos in order to add to the excitement of the event and to raise nearly \$2,500 for the AGMA Relief Fund. Santa's Executive Elf was Linda Gelinas, Metropolitan Opera Dance Captain.

Met chorister Laura Fries was the mastermind behind the entire event with invaluable assistance from Metropolitan Opera Management, House Management, Ladies' Chorus Wardrobe Supervisor Enid Turnbull, and choristers Liz Brooks, Deb Cole, April Haines, Marvis Martin, Jenny Rossetti, Jane Thorngren and Meredith Woodend.

In addition, Laura's army of fabulous bakers and sellers included current, extra, retired choristers, family and friends: John Benson, Rebecca Carvin, Andrea Coleman, Garth Dawson, Karen Dixon, Marie Te Hapuka, Linda Mays, Rose Nencheck, Anne Nonnemacher, Christopher Schaldenbrand, Carolyn Sielski, Janet Wagner, Beverly Withers, McMannus Woodend and IATSE Local #764 dressers Asako Nagasaki and Martine Ogawa.

The entire event was a glorious show of support for the AGMA Relief Fund. Bravi tutti. ♦



©Jason Hendrix

Santa and his helpers; in front, left to right: Patricia Steiner, Belinda Oswald and Laura Fries; middle: Karen Dixon; in back: Anne Nonnemacher, Santa (Nathan Gunn), Steve Losito and April Haines.

AGMA Relief Fund

By Linda Mays, AGMA Relief Fund, Director of Development

Every year the AGMA Relief Fund is able to save eligible AGMA members, in emergency situations, from losing their homes, health, careers and dignity by giving them professional counseling and assistance. The following is excerpted from one such grateful member's thank you letter to the AGMA Relief Fund:

"You went above and beyond the call of duty and saved me from being evicted. A big burden gone! Anxiety gone! Now I can start fresh with a clean slate, breathe, hold my head up high and begin to move forward... Thank you from the bottom of my heart to the depth of my soul. Your generosity will never be forgotten."

You must know that we get many such letters from our colleagues, assisted through your support of the Relief Fund.

I would also like to thank you for so generously responding to the Relief Fund Holiday letter from Jenifer Ringer and James

Fayette printed in the Winter 2013 *AGMAzine* issue. Their horrific, personal story illustrated, so poignantly, how our members need us to provide a safety net when emergencies turn our worlds upside down.

You also help, tremendously, by reminding your colleagues, in crisis, to contact the Relief Fund so that they can be confidentially assessed for appropriate aid and support.

Every year it is touching and gratifying to see how many of you honor or memorialize your friends, family, colleagues, favorite celebrities, teachers, special occasions and pets through a Relief Fund gift donation.

Whether you are a donor or recipient, you are essential to the vitality and profile of the AGMA Relief Fund.

Thank you. ♦

“A Day in the Life” is an ongoing series to acquaint members with the various categories that AGMA represents. This issue features A Day in the Life of Dance Apprentices. If you are interested in contributing, please send your story to dbaker@musicalartists.org.

A Day in the Life of a Dance Apprentice

By Caroline Arnold



Excitement, anxiety, anticipation and dread: these are just some of life's many emotions during audition season... Most of my days begin with a ballet class at 9:15 a.m. and last until 6:00 p.m. with rehearsals. Tuesday through Saturday, it's the same routine each day. But life hasn't

been quite so routine lately. The show must go on, even when a contract may not be renewed for next season.

It all begins in February when we find out if our contracts are being renewed for another season. The writing may have appeared on the wall for some dancers as ballets are set and casting goes up throughout the fall and winter; but sometimes the “we may not have a spot for you next season” comes as a surprise. When a contract is not renewed, the search for a new company begins suddenly and accelerates quickly. Gathering material for performance DVDs, updating resumes and choosing audition photos are what consume my thoughts for the days that follow; and, of course, deciding which companies might be the right fit to send my materials. Then comes the days of waiting for responses. My five-minute breaks in rehearsals are spent checking emails on my phone hoping for a positive response from a company. Having sent out almost 40 audition requests, there will be plenty of “we're not hiring” responses. Some days the thought runs through my mind, is this all worth it? Other days, I feel I just can't give up, not yet. Dancing has been my life for most of my 22 years of life. What will I do, who will I be, if not a dancer?

The first reply comes in. It's positive! But looking at the dates they offer for company class, I realize my company will be in the midst of *Dracula* performances those weekends. The game begins trying to find a date that will work for their Artistic Director and with my schedule. After several rounds of email tag we settle on a day, the Tuesday between performance weekends. Now it's time to rent a car, print out more photos, and print more resumes. I perform four shows Friday, Saturday and Sunday. On Monday morning I pick up my rental car and start my four-hour drive to take company class. It's not a long drive, however after a week of rehearsals in the theater until 10:00 p.m. each night and a weekend of performing, any drive is long. I arrive at a hotel near the ballet studio, eat a peanut butter and banana sandwich that I packed for the

trip, set an alarm, and crash. Sleep does not come that easily, though, as I anticipate the morning's company class audition the next day. The following morning I wake early feeling every minute of last week's schedule in my body, and get ready for class. Having found my favorite leotard stuffed in the pocket of my suitcase, I head to the studio feeling anxious and excited at the same time.

I am greeted by the assistant to the Artistic Director who takes me in to the studio where class will soon begin. Now, most dancers are quite protective of their barre spots, so I walk into the studio filled with company dancers a bit timidly, feeling all eyes on me. I search the room for a familiar face and find a friend from several years back and hope that he still remembers me. By the smile I receive as I approach him I realize he does, and the nerves start to fade. He points me in the direction of an unclaimed barre spot, and the stretching and mental preparation for my first company class audition of the season begins. After an hour and a half class I am approached by the Artistic Director. He is complimentary of my work but explains he has to finish his audition tour and see who returns their contracts before he will know anything about next season. More waiting... I drive back home the same afternoon remembering that the next morning will bring all-day rehearsals followed by a second set of *Dracula* performances Thursday through Sunday. This juggle of rehearsals, performances and auditions is what will consume my life for the next few months.

Two months have passed and I have survived so far. All of my auditions are completed and again I wait. Two months of highs and lows, encouraging words and disappointments, and still I wait as directors figure out if they have spots for next season and if I would be the right fit for their company. When a contract is not renewed it seems like the second half of the year is spent not just trying to finish out the current season, but trying to figure out the next one, or if there will be a next one. It's not easy, and much of the time, not fun, especially when a disappointing response is received; but for dancers, it's life. It's that one more time in the spotlight that we all long for, that opportunity to lose ourselves in music, and to share and express those feelings and emotions with others through our dance. I guess that makes the waiting, the stress, and the tears tolerable. ♦

A Day in the Life of an AGMA Dance Apprentice

Sunday, April 13, 2014, Atlanta Ballet's Production of *Hamlet* by Stephen Mills

By Pablo Sánchez



Atlanta Ballet is an extraordinary company. There are 22 company artists and four apprentices employed by Atlanta Ballet. The company's dancers are not ranked, so it has the "all star, no star" quality which several popular American ballet companies utilize.

For instance, a dancer may appear as a leading artist one night, and blend seamlessly into the ensemble of a different cast the following day. The dancers here are very versatile, expected to be able to dance anything and everything! (Our March program, *Modern Choreographic Voices*, opened with Alexei Ratmansky and closed with Ohad Naharn. Incredible!) That being said, dancing as an apprentice dancer in such a powerhouse company is no small feat. Apprentices are regularly featured in performances, and usually work as covers or swings too.

Today, an apprentice saved the day! It is the closing show of Stephen Mills' *Hamlet*. (The production was last seen in Atlanta in 2003; the Shakespearean tragedy comes to life with a score by Phillip Glass, played by the Atlanta Ballet Orchestra, conducted by Maestra Beatrice Jona Affron.) I arrive at the Cobb Energy Performing Arts Center in the morning for 11:30 a.m. class.



Atlanta Ballet dance apprentices Kelsey Ebersold, Pablo Sánchez, Kelly Prather and Kiara Felder



Atlanta Ballet in Jean-Christophe Maillot's *Roméo et Juliette*.

I come in with a sense of excitement and a little nervousness because I will be dancing with a new partner in the final matinee. Due to injury yesterday, my regular partner is out and one of my fellow apprentice dancers is in!

Kelly Prather, my new partner, was notified just yesterday that she would be performing today in the ensemble. The dancers of the ensemble were called to a one-hour emergency rehearsal between

performances yesterday, where we walked through the spacing, talked counts, and ran it once with a CD. Considering *Hamlet* is presented as a full-length production, there is a lot to think about! Like a model apprentice, Kelly had written down the choreography and reviewed tapes of the weekend's performances. (Knowing Kelly, she probably rehearsed in her living room too!)

Ballet class ends at 12:45 p.m. Our Ballet Mistress, Dale, gives the ensemble a shout-out for dancing well over the weekend. (It is always uplifting to be recognized as a strong corps!) She also encourages Kelly to dance well and leaves us for a last-minute review. The curtain for *Hamlet* comes up at 2:00 p.m. and Kelly and I are dancing center stage! It was as if Kelly had been rehearsing with me from the start! (Our rehearsal period for *Hamlet* was three weeks, including Tech Week.) Kelly had all the steps, danced confidently, and gave lots of face! Replacing an injured dancer in an unfamiliar spot is a typical task an apprentice dancer faces. We have to be ready to jump in and dance as well as company dancers who have been rehearsing in the space for weeks! I congratulated Kelly on a job well done after the curtain came down on *Hamlet*. I look forward to a three-day break; we receive a Free Day for Easter!

I leave the Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre around 4:00 p.m. It is still cool out, even in Atlanta! Our 2013-14 season closes with *Mayhem*, May 16-18, 2014.

Thank you, AGMA, for representing apprentice dancers! Go Hoosiers! ♦

A Day in the Life of a Ballet San Jose Apprentice

By Emma Francis



At Ballet San Jose, our company class starts at 9:30 a.m. every morning and goes till 11:00 a.m. Our Artistic Director, José Manuel Carreño, teaches quite

frequently. His class moves quickly, so I try to get into the studio around 8:45 a.m. to do a little extra warm-up.

The first rehearsal period starts at 11:10 a.m. In our last program, the company performed Roland Petit's *Carmen* and Twyla Tharp's *In the Upper Room*. As an apprentice, I find myself understudying quite a few pieces. In this program, I had the opportunity to perform in *Carmen*, and was an understudy for

Upper Room. Even though I just understudied *Upper Room*, being in the back of the studio was a wonderful experience. Shelley Washington, who staged the ballet, did an amazing job of making everyone feel included. The entire process really helped me grow as a dancer.

We have ten-minute breaks every 60 to 90 minutes, so our first break can be anywhere between 12 noon and 12:30 p.m., depending on the flow of rehearsal. We continue until 1:30 p.m. at which point we have a lunch break. Currently, I am enrolled in the Liberal Education for Arts Professionals program through St. Mary's College, so I frequently find myself catching up on homework or reading during this

time. The "LEAP" program is unique because it allows dancers to pursue a full time ballet career as well as simultaneously work towards a Bachelor of Art degree. The classes are held on Sunday evening, so they don't interfere with our rehearsal or performance schedule.

Rehearsals resume at 2:40 p.m. and continue until 4:00 p.m. We have a break from 4:00 to 4:10 p.m., and continue from 4:10 to 5:30 p.m. At this point, our rehearsal day is done. Depending on how much I have danced during the day, I will either go to the gym or finish up my schoolwork. If I have time, I always try to squeeze in a GYROTONIC® session. It always keeps me mentally and physically fresh. ♦

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Who Inspired You?



I can always remember hearing my mother singing at the top of her lungs, very early in the mornings while I was half awake, "Hey, good lookin', whaaaacha got cookin'?" This is one of those moments in life when you know your loved one so well, you don't have to see what is going on. You already know by the inflections in their voice, what expressions are being made, what movements are being done, and just how much happiness it brings to you. My mother is not a classically trained singer but she has a bold passion for God and life. Her constant love of music and willingness to share that joy was and still is infectious. She sang many bolero and mariachi competitions in the San Fernando Valley area in her youth, using all that passion and energy for God and music. She has inspired me to be a "no excuses," vibrant performer. Thank you, Anna Romero, for your gift.

—Analia Romero, San Diego Opera Chorister

AGMA Relief Fund Audited Financials

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

To the Board of Trustees of AGMA Relief Fund

We have audited the accompanying financial statements of AGMA Relief Fund (the "Fund") which comprise the statements of financial position as of September 30, 2013 and 2012, and the related statements of activities, functional expenses and cash flows for the years then ended.

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of these financial statements in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America; this includes the design, implementation, and maintenance of internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on our audits. We conducted our audits in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgment, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the entity's preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control. Accordingly, we express no opinion. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial statements.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

In our opinion, the financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of AGMA Relief Fund as of September 30, 2013 and 2012, and the changes in its net assets and its cash flows for the years then ended in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

Our audits were conducted for the purpose of forming an opinion on the financial statements as a whole. Such information is the responsibility of the Fund's management and was derived from and relates directly to the underlying accounting and other records used to prepare the financial statements. The information has been subjected to the auditing procedures applied in the audits of the financial statements and certain additional procedures, including comparing and reconciling such information directly to the underlying accounting and other records used to prepare the financial statements or the financial statements themselves, and other additional procedures in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America. In our opinion, the information is fairly stated in all material aspects in relation to the financial statements as a whole.

BUCHBINDER TUNICK & COMPANY LLP

AGMA Relief Fund Statements of Financial Position

September 30, 2013 and 2012

	<u>2013</u>	<u>2012</u>
ASSETS		
Assets:		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 272,538	\$ 392,738
Contributions receivable	-	3,208
Interest and dividends receivable	1,425	1,998
Due from affiliate	<u>5,450</u>	<u>4,490</u>
	<u>279,413</u>	<u>402,434</u>
Investments, at fair value:		
U.S. government and governmental agencies obligations	32,572	33,375
Corporate bonds	102,841	209,027
Common stocks	320,051	262,083
Mutual and exchange-traded funds	<u>584,827</u>	<u>336,647</u>
Total investments	<u>1,040,291</u>	<u>841,132</u>
Total assets	<u>\$ 1,319,704</u>	<u>\$ 1,243,566</u>

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

Liabilities:		
Accounts payable	\$ 26,280	\$ 30,235
Net assets:		
Unrestricted	<u>1,293,424</u>	<u>1,213,331</u>
Total liabilities and net assets	<u>\$ 1,319,704</u>	<u>\$ 1,243,566</u>

AGMA Relief Fund Statements of Activities: For the years ended

September 30, 2013 and 2012

	<u>2013</u>	<u>2012</u>
Revenue:		
Contributions:		
Theatre Authority, Inc.	\$ 15,233	\$ 17,500
Corporations and foundations	36,679	85,791
Individuals	3,002	8,423
Holiday drive	18,225	17,004
Special events	9,825	7,482
Other	<u>-</u>	<u>38</u>
	<u>82,964</u>	<u>136,238</u>
Investment income:		
Interest and dividends	31,547	28,296
Unrealized gain on investments	21,553	89,688
Realized net gain on sale of investments	<u>36,347</u>	<u>2,961</u>
Net investment income	<u>89,447</u>	<u>120,945</u>
Total revenue	<u>172,411</u>	<u>257,183</u>
Expenses:		
Program services:		
Member assistance	18,690	30,004
Supporting services:		
General and administrative expenses	69,516	68,297
Fund-raising	<u>4,112</u>	<u>3,235</u>
Total expenses	<u>92,318</u>	<u>101,536</u>
Change in net assets	80,093	155,647
Net assets unrestricted:		
Beginning of year	<u>1,213,331</u>	<u>1,057,684</u>
End of year	<u>\$ 1,293,424</u>	<u>\$ 1,213,331</u>

(continues on page 24)

Speaking of Legacies...*In Honor of Regina Resnik 1923 to 2013*

By Sara Stewart Schumann, AGMA's 3rd Vice President and MMRC Chair



Regina Resnik was brought into the AGMA leadership by none other than AGMA's founding President, Lawrence Tibbett. Tibbett had also happened to sing the role of Scarpia to Resnik's first ever *Tosca* at the Met. While Resnik was still a young artist, she was AGMA's 4th Vice President, and continued serving AGMA throughout her rise to operatic stardom. Her service to AGMA culminated in her accepting the presidency in 1993. In 1986, when AGMA celebrated its 50th Anniversary, Resnik helped her colleague and friend, Nedda Casei, who was AGMA's president at that point, with the planning of the 50th Anniversary Gala that was held at the New York State Theater. Resnik also contributed a moving speech at the gala that brought together AGMA signatories from all over the country for an unforgettable night of performances in celebration of AGMA's survival as a labor union for fifty years!

In AGMA's Winter newsletter from 1993, Resnik explained her commitment to AGMA stating: "I learned from my noted peers, Frederick Jagel, Gladys Swarouth, John Brownlee—just to name a few—all that was important about protection; not only for soloists, but for choristers and dancers." "[O]ur young dancers, choristers and stage directors faced the same problems of preparation and employment [as our young soloists]."

As with all of AGMA's elected leadership, Resnik voluntarily gave AGMA her time. All of AGMA's elected leadership positions, including that of the president, have always been unpaid. In Resnik's case, in the midst of her international career, she took her valuable time and leveraged her star power to AGMA for free, because she knew it was important to protect young artists. What a gift that is to

AGMA, when AGMA artists are willing to give back to their union. And AGMA really needs the involvement of its members at every level whether you're a soloist, dancer, chorister, or production staff member.

Let's face it, there is never going to be a perfect time to get involved in AGMA, so you just have to dive in. That is what Regina Resnik did, and if you ask any of AGMA's current leadership, it's pretty much the same—the more you get involved, the more you realize how important it is for you to be involved. It is truly AGMA's legacy to have members like Resnik who are willing to selflessly serve AGMA in protecting and supporting their colleagues even as they are in the midst of their own demanding careers.

The next time you don't think you have enough time to be an AGMA delegate, or to sit on your shop's negotiating committee, or to run for the Board of Governors, or to run for an Officer position, just think of Regina Resnik (who clocked over 300 performances at the Met alone) and serve AGMA anyway. I am sure she would be honored. ♦



Regina Resnik with AGMA president Nedda Casei (left) at AGMA's 50th Anniversary celebration at the New York State Theater at Lincoln Center in 1986.



IN MEMORIAM

*Claudio Abbado, Conductor**
Marciem Bazell, Soloist/Director
Willie Brown, Chorister
*Sir George Christie (Chairman of the Glyndebourne opera festival from 1958 to 1999)**
Wanda Cooke, Chorister
Garth Dawson, Chorister
Jeffrey Dinsmore, Chorister
David Düsing, Chorister
Marta Eggerth, Soloist
Akira Endo, Conductor
Ulises Espinoza, Chorister

Ann Howard, Soloist
Calvin Hunt, Stage Manager and Senior Director at Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater
Karen Kalin, Chorister and AGMA Life Member
Tom Krause, Soloist
Ruth Lansché Dimitriadis, Chorister
*Gerard Mortier, Artistic Director**
Ivan Nagy, Dancer

Marc Platt, Dancer
Diane Radke, Chorister
*Julius Rudel, Conductor and Director of New York City Opera for 22 years**
*Paul Salamunovich, Conductor and Choral Director**
Maximilian Schell, Director
Harry Shean, Chorister
Jerome Sherk, Stage Manager
John Shirley-Quirk, Soloist
John Weber, Chorister
Philip Willingham, Dancer

*Indicates a distinguished individual in a related profession

AGMA Relief Fund Audited Financials (continued from page 22)

AGMA Relief Fund Statements of Cash Flows: For the years ended September 30, 2013 and 2012

	<u>2013</u>	<u>2012</u>		<u>2013</u>	<u>2012</u>
Cash flows from operating activities:					
Change in net assets	\$ 80,093	\$ 155,647	Net cash provided by operating activities	21,059	62,576
Adjustments to reconcile change in net assets to net cash provided by operating activities:			Cash flows from investing activities:		
Unrealized (gain) on investments	(21,553)	(89,688)	Proceeds from redemption and sales of investments	300,750	77,264
Realized net (gain) on sale of investments	(36,347)	(2,961)	Purchase of investments	(442,009)	(31,167)
Changes in operating assets and liabilities:			Net cash (used in) provided by investing activities	(141,259)	46,097
Decrease in contributions receivable	3,208	-	Net (decrease) increase in cash and cash equivalents	(120,200)	108,673
Decrease (increase) in interest and dividends receivable	573	(164)	Cash and cash equivalents:		
(Increase) in due from affiliate	(960)	(1,862)	Beginning of year	392,738	284,065
(Decrease) increase in accounts payable	(3,955)	1,604	End of year	\$ 272,538	\$ 392,738

Who Inspired You?



My inspiration was my maternal grandmother, Blanche Hurst. She supported me emotionally and financially when my penchant for singing found an outlet in high school choral groups and musical theater. Not only did she make sure I had my performance outfits and drive me to gigs, Grandma was there in the audience every time. When I got my first gig outside of school, the Old Globe



Madrigals, she came to hear us perform outside the theater before the summer Shakespeare plays.

My first big break came when I auditioned for the internationally acclaimed Los Angeles-based youth group, the Young Americans ("the original show choir"). Grandma got me to my callback audition in Orange County, a 125-mile trip, in an hour and twenty-five minutes! Over 500 kids came to the open auditions and I was one of only twenty-four new members who made it in that year. And, although my own parents were less than enthusiastic about my choice of a career in the performing arts ("*How are you going to support your family on 'that singing and dancing stuff?'*"), Grandma was in the audience in Los Angeles when I did my first show with the Young Americans—including a solo!

In 1982, when I was 23 years old, Mom, Grandma and I attended San Diego Opera's production of *Madama Butterfly* with Martina Arroyo singing the role of Cio-Cio-San. We sat in the upper balcony because that's all Grandma could afford. That night remains in my memory to this day because it's the last time all three of us went out together to a show. Grandma was called home to the Lord a couple of years later, long before I became a professional singer in 1989.

When I enter the Civic Theater stage for the first time each season, I stop, look up into the balcony on house left and say, "My God, Grandma, I'm a member of a professional opera company! Can you believe it?"

It's been twenty-two years since I was accepted into the San Diego Opera Chorus and, after sixty-eight productions, I know Grandma attends every performance I give, and is still proud of me.

—**Vincent Martin, Bass-Baritone**



The annual Leadership Conference was held in New York over the weekend of June 7-8 and the attendees pledged solidarity with our members at the Metropolitan Opera. Above, left to right, on floor: Sara Stewart Schumann, 3rd Vice President and Membership and Member Relations Committee Chair; New Orleans Area Chair Julie Condy; Jimmy Odom, AGMA President and Chicago/Midwest Area Chair; Bill Buchanan, Pittsburgh Area Chair; standing, first row: Linda Mays, former AGMA President; John Coleman, 1st Vice President and Work Rules and Contracts Committee Chair; Candace Itow, Membership Department Supervisor; Jennifer Wallace, Southern California Area Chair; Gerry Angel, Director of Operations; Alan Gordon, National Executive Director; back row: Harvey Fort, Washington/Baltimore Area Chair; George Scott, Northwest Area Chair; Gregory Stapp, 2nd Vice President and Administration and Policy Committee Chair; Matt Woodbury, Texas/Oklahoma Board Member; and J Austin Bitner, 5th Vice President. In attendance at the conference, but not pictured, Treasurer Ray Menard.



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That's No Lady

By Jimmy Odom



The original print of the AGMA lady watches over the reception area of AGMA's National office.

Under the “Ask Jimmy” column a few months ago, I found the following question from AGMA member Joseph Smith in Chicago: “... I’ve always wondered...where is our AGMA, lyre-playing maiden from? She looks like something out of a Maxfield Parrish painting...I love the old-fashioned way of painting.”

Well, Joe, I’m glad you asked. I have always been certain, in the way that only people who make up things and then consider them fact can be, that the name of the maiden in question is “The Spirit of Music” or “The Muse”. I cannot, however, find any documentation of this. And trust me, I’ve looked very carefully, although I have not gone so far as to open the back of the frame. Around the office, we tend to refer to her as “The Lady”. She was a gift to AGMA in 1937 from famed illustrator Howard Chandler Christy. Christy was a contemporary of Parrish and Charles Dana Gibson, and just as Gibson was known for his “Gibson Girl” illustrations, so was Christy known for the “Christy Girl”. Christy first caught the public eye with his combat illustrations during the Spanish American War. After that war he began illustrating magazine covers, although World War I saw him again creating patriotic posters for the war effort. He was also a popular portraitist, counting amongst his subjects President and Mrs. Calvin Coolidge, as well as many other prominent politicians, performers and members of society. His later works include several murals, including the well-known nudes for New York’s Café des Artistes and “The Signing of the Constitution”, which hangs in the capitol rotunda in Washington, D.C.

We do not, perhaps, treat The Lady with as much respect as we should. I have been known to do some photoshopping of her classic features for my own purposes. Someone else pointed out to me recently that she bears a striking resemblance to certain photographs from 1936 of the actress Myrna Loy. In any case, like all classic beauties, she endures with grace and forbearance. ♦

Facing page: The Lady shows up in the most unusual places!



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