



AGMAZINE

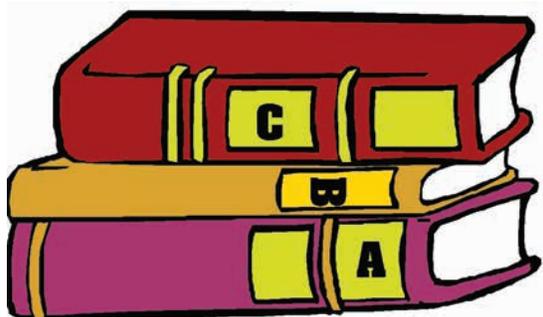
Official Publication of the American Guild of Musical Artists
A Branch of the Associated Actors and Artistes of America • Affiliated with the AFL-CIO

Summer 2013

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Volume 67, Number 1

How AGMA Works For You



AGMA negotiates your Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) for AGMA members.

scheduled
breaks



AGMA negotiates break times for their members into the contracts they make with AGMA companies.



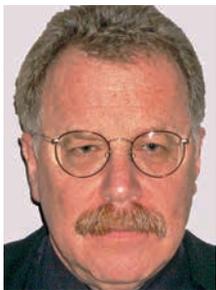
AGMA has a National Smoke and Fog Policy.



AGMA is always watching out for its members' safety in the workplace.

What's The Goal, Who's the Client?

By Alan S. Gordon, National Executive Director



Every entertainment union, including AGMA, represents a diverse group of members. AGMA represents singers, dancers and production staff. Some work full-time, some work part-time, some work sporadically and some are retired. Some work freelance and some on staff. Some work for signatory companies, others work primarily in AGMA categories for non-AGMA employers. My job, and the job of AGMA's executive staff, is to represent "the members"—all of "the members," all categories of members and all current and future members, even though the interests of some groups within the membership are inconsistent with the interests of others.

To do that job, we often have to ask: What's the goal, who's the client?

Defining the "goal" is easy: to us, in the first instance, that means doing the two traditional core functions of any union: 1) to successfully negotiate, draft, administer and enforce collective bargaining agreements that protect and advance the wages, hours and working conditions of members working under those contracts, and 2) to keep AGMA, as an institution, well run, efficient, current, and with sufficient financial and human resources to enable it to perform that core function.

Defining the second part of our goal is likewise easy: To help members. We help any member who asks for help. To a very real extent, however, that part of our job is "hidden," and usually known only to the individual members that we help. Elsewhere in this issue, you'll find stories about some of those individual members. But for each of those stories, there are hundreds of other members that we've helped, with both personal, agent or work-related problems, both directly through the union, legally and contractually, or indirectly through the Relief Fund. The reason that

most of our work is "hidden" is that it involves discreet personal problems of individual members, not appropriate for an open discussion. That's why we're here, however, to help members. That's what you get in return for paying your dues. But...if you need help, you have to ask.

Over the years, we've gotten dozens of thank you notes from the members that we've helped. Of course, thanks aren't necessary, it's our job. But the most satisfying thank you letter I've ever received came from one member who had long been "anti-AGMA," paying their dues late, always complaining that AGMA did nothing for them. That member wrote: "I apologize for the things I've said. When I learned what you did for my friend, (member X), I never realized that AGMA would go to any length and devote its entire key staff and its outside counsel to helping one member with a difficult personal problem. I now realize that what you've said is true: AGMA really is there to help. I'll never be late with my dues again." Generally speaking, apart from collective bargaining and voting on their contracts, only those members that we actually help personally know what AGMA can, and does, do for them.

If defining our "goal" is easy, identifying our "client" is concomitantly difficult. Is the "client" the union as an institution, which has to stay strong and vibrant, now and into the future? Or is the "client" the member or members that need help?

This is not just an abstract philosophical question. It has real consequences. In the recent New York City Opera debacle, there was a bona fide difference between what would be good for the client if the client was identified as the union institutionally, and what would be good if the client was the City Opera members. The ability to close down City Opera and drive it out of existence might well have been better institutionally: Don't mess with AGMA or we'll close you down. But the cost of helping AGMA's reputation would have been the loss of tens if not hundreds of thousands of dollars in sever-

ance pay to members who had worked there, and the loss of some future work, however diminished. How do you evaluate those decisions? In my heart, there was no question but to help the members, but intellectually I knew the "price" that AGMA as an institution paid for that help.

In 1999, the AGMA of 2013 was almost unimaginable. To the extent that AGMA as an institution is the client, there's little doubt that we've done well in accomplishing the client's best interests. We're strong, have extensive human and financial resources, and provide the membership with what a union should provide. Now, however, the Executive Council, the Board of Governors and, ultimately, the membership has to weigh in on what they want from their union over the next ten years. You have to decide whether, if the "client" is the membership, are members getting something of value for their dues, whether those dues amount to \$2,000 a year or \$78 a year; whether what we're doing for you is or is not working; whether it has the intended effect; what can be improved; whether there are better alternatives; and whether the goals are appropriate for the interests of the client. Where do we go from here? And, how far should we stray from the "core functions" that we perform or the "core functions" of a labor union? Absent a different instruction, the staff and I operate under the continuing standard that AGMA should be all things to all members.

I can envision many alternatives for AGMA as an institution: a world in which we stay just as we are, which will probably mean more work for fewer members, at better wages, represented by a healthy union. I can also envision a world where we merge with Equity rather than into it, or where Stage Directors and Choreographers or AGVA become part of AGMA, or the formation of an Alliance of Performing Artists to serve all members better, or a world where AGMA leaves the AFL-CIO, affiliates with the Teamsters, loses some

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(Cough, cough) Nulla, nulla!



FROM THE PRESIDENT JAMES ODOM

I am old. There is no getting around that any longer. The reason I can no longer deny it is because I find myself reminiscing about how things used to be,

back when I first started in this crazy business. I am acknowledging this now, up front, before we get to the point where you roll your eyes and say, “Geez, Jimmy, how did you move scenery before the invention of the wheel?” Let me tell you, it wasn’t easy. And we walked ten miles to school. In the snow. Uphill both ways. With nothing but animal pelts wrapped around our feet. Now you kids get off my lawn!

Sorry, I got carried away.

Now some of you Dancers out there who are too busy... well, being awesome, to spend time memorizing opera libretti and/or have never had the opportunity to be a gypsy maiden or matador in *La Traviata* may not understand the title of this article. (Concert Choral singers, no excuses. You should know this stuff. Production staff, most of you should know it, too, but could be given a pass based on the fact that just getting the rest of us to where we’re supposed to be when we’re supposed to be there is more than enough for any human to be doing.) Violetta, our heroine, has just sung a famous duet with choral back-up and has announced that it’s time to get our party on. Okay, that’s not a literal translation. She’s leading everyone to the back for dancing and more drinking (the more things change, the more they stay the same—I could have said that in French, but it would add a level of translating with which I am simply not comfortable) when she is struck by a fit of coughing, and is forced to sit down and rest for a while. I am not certain how many productions of *Traviata* I have performed in over the years, but I’m fairly certain that it is upwards of five



(Cough, cough) Nulla, nulla!

and probably not so many as nine. So let’s just say that it is somewhere more or less on the order of fifty plus performances and call it art. I believe that in every one of those performances, two small, quiet, light, dry coughs are what cause Miss V. to take to her settee. Of course her guests, concerned about this lack of stamina ask, “Whattup?” Again, I’m not translating literally. Miss V. responds, “Nulla, nulla!” (the title for

our article, which is where we started all those many long words ago), or “no biggy”. Spoiler alert: turns out it actually is a biggy. She falls hard for her duet partner, they move to the country. His old man is a major a**hat and breaks them up. They get back together but only seconds before she starts the big dirt nap because of old opera disease, which she contracted hours ago in the first act. Bring in the curtain and we can all go home.

Now I know most of you out there are rolling your eyes and/or screaming “Jimmy, for the love of all that is holy, if you have a point, get to it!” Fine, you don’t have to yell. I do have a point and here it is, although I have to admit that it is only vaguely related to the above, if at all.

There has been a great deal of discussion on certain social media sites over the last several weeks regarding complaints from certain individuals who believe that singers are irresponsibly cancelling performances for little or no reason, other than to make those certain individuals’ lives a living hell. Perhaps I exaggerate, but not by much. I personally find this notion to be insulting. I also have personal experience to the contrary.

Over the many years of my career, I have seen a fair share of cancellations. I remember one especially exciting performance of *Traviata* during which we went through three tenors—a new one for each act. I suppose you could say it was a tag-tenor *Traviata*. I have also heard more times than I could possibly count, “Mr. (or Ms.) X is suffering from (term of the week for head cold or tickly throat), but has graciously consented to perform in spite of his (or her) indisposition.” I do not, however, believe that it is happening with greater frequency than it did twenty or thirty years ago, in spite of what I believe should be greater frequency, based on the way we do business in the opera world today.

I think that we can all agree that air travel is no longer what it once was. But nowadays we are crowded in ever closer to our fellow passengers and are sharing their respirations in a fashion that makes many married couples I know look like casual pen pals. This cannot be good for general health, particularly in a person who is already tired and somewhat run-down from having just completed the run of a concept production of some major sing and has thirty-six hours to get to the next city and start rehearsals there. And while I love grabbing an Auntie Anne’s jumbo pretzel dog as much as, if not more than, the next boy while I’m waiting for the delayed aircraft to finally pull up to the gate, it is not exactly what one might call a balanced diet, especially when you arrive at the next city and you’re too tired to eat properly and just collapse into bed, hoping that you will have enough energy to be sparkling and brilliant at your rehearsal the next morning. With all that stress, the extensive exposure to every respiratory complaint, and the “grab what you can when you can” method of feeding the nomadic singer, it’s a wonder singers aren’t dropping like flies.

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In This Issue

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



This issue of *AGMAzine* highlights some of the ways AGMA helps its members. The National Executive Director discusses how AGMA must regularly identify and re-identify its goals to stay effective to the membership; the president addresses the right of solo singers to cancel engagements when they are not able to perform; and members shared their own experiences in regard to how AGMA, or being a part of AGMA, has helped them.

This issue is also filled with what have by now become “regular” *AGMAzine* features such as: Area News, In Memoriam, Who Inspired You, and a Day in the Life. However, this issue’s Day in the Life section is truly unique as our president explains why he is a chorister, Susan Taylor Mills pokes fun of several days in her life as a choral singer and Natalie Mann reminds us, with the example of the San Diego Chorus, that diversity is the key to being a professional chorister. Also, fun, and new in this issue is a reprint of Guess That Opera Haiku Contest that every opera buff will enjoy. Try it out if you have not done so already.

Finally, the cover of this issue was designed to highlight a few of the things that AGMA negotiates for its members. Whether that means the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) that you work under, the regularly scheduled break times, health benefits, guaranteed work weeks, safe working conditions (such as the use of smoke and fog effects), rate of pay, and on and on... These items don’t just happen in your workplace. They are actively negotiated by AGMA’s staff of negotiators, contract by contract, one signatory at a time.

Thanks go to the Membership and Member Relations Committee, Denise Baker, Gerry Angel and everyone who wrote articles, edited, and worked so hard to make this issue of *AGMAzine* for you!

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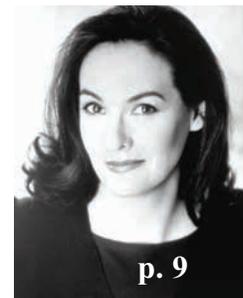
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A View from the Other Side

By Barry Kerollis, former Pacific Northwest Ballet Dancer and former AGMA delegate



When I was a student, I always dreamed of joining a big ballet company. For some reason, even at a young age, I was under the impression that a company wasn't significant unless it was an "AGMA" company. I was more than excited when I was offered my first contract as an apprentice with Houston Ballet. After a short year with the company, I moved up and over to Seattle to join Pacific Northwest Ballet. I spent seven seasons with the company, three of them as a delegate.

As an AGMA delegate, I felt it was my full responsibility to speak for the dancer's needs, whether issues were relevant to me personally or not. In my last year with the company, I helped prepare and negotiate the dancers' future contract with National Dance Executive, Nora Heiber. Though I didn't share this with the dancers, I spent my final season at PNB with the knowledge that I needed to make a personal/career change and had already decided that I would leave the company. This was to their benefit, as I could fight even harder for their rights and needs without concern that I would be jeopardizing my own place in the company. In the end, this process was a great benefit to myself, too. During my three years as a delegate, and that last year closely reading contracts for negotiations, I learned so much about the benefits and workings of the union. In my search for work, though, I found myself moving across the country to accept a job with a non-union company.

To be completely honest, I was quite nervous to join a company that wasn't protected by an AGMA agreement. With my union knowledge, I knew that much of what had been promised to me wasn't necessarily guaranteed. If I had an issue with a change to my contract (like a change in work weeks, salary, or work place rules), the only course of action I could take would be to take the issue up on my own or to hire a lawyer. Nonetheless, I joined the company with much excitement at the prospect of stretching myself as an artist and finding more self-fulfillment.

My short time with this non-union company was eye-opening. Being a former delegate, I noticed every time that we went longer than 55 minutes without a break. I sometimes found this to work to our detriment, while at other times, surprisingly, found it worked to our benefit. The company I danced for almost always used young, up-and-coming choreographers. Rehearsals were almost always run by different people with different ideas on how to run rehearsal. Sometimes, we would work tirelessly for well over an hour because the choreographer just didn't think about breaks. But other choreographers would get in a great flow of creativity and a 5-minute break would have been disruptive to the process. I started to understand why this tiny rule that is in most company contracts is, perhaps, the most debated item.

Other aspects of working for a non-union company that were quite different were rehearsal schedule, performance weeks, and working conditions. With my new company, work could start as early or end as late as they wished. For the most part, what was promised to the dancers in the schedule, which nearly always arrived the night before, held true. Here and there, the schedule would change. Also, additional rehearsal days could be added to the week whenever space was available to do so. Once we entered the theatre, schedules changed considerably. While the company did its best to keep on schedule and maintain safe working conditions, there was no guarantee if something went wrong. But in the company's defense, I feel that they truly did their best to stay true to what they said they were going to do.

In the end, I learned a really valuable lesson from my time working with a non-union company. While rehearsing for a touring conference, I injured my back. Due to the small size of the company, there are rarely understudies. I had to continue into performances with serious back spasms. By the final performance of the tour, I couldn't dance, let alone walk. I was sent home to cover my own physical therapy and figure out how to keep my head above water financially. With no benefits, like worker's compensation, health insurance, or sick pay, I was forced to continue dancing and teaching while injured just to pay my rent. After a few months trying to get better on my own, the company fired me. Around this time, I found out that my employment status had been changed during my time with the company and that this change offered me the benefits of workers' compensation during the last six months of my time there. The company withheld this information from me. To this day, I am still fighting for these benefits, which are my legal right.

It seems that, even before my career started, I always understood that a union was an important part of the ballet world. Now, more than ever, I have experienced the necessity behind certain union protections. While I know that my situation is unique and that most non-union companies truly are looking out for the best for their dancers, when it comes to taking care of a dancer versus company concerns, things can take an unfortunate turn. I am currently my own boss and working as a freelance dancer. But I am fairly certain if I choose to join the full-time company life again, my choice in workplace will most likely be governed by an AGMA agreement. ♦

AGMA to the Rescue—When all else failed, AGMA saved the day!

By David Cangelosi, AGMA Member since 1993



As a solo singer in this business, it is sometimes unclear as to exactly how we should handle a contract issue or dispute. Generally speaking, we attempt to follow a specific chain-of-command, establish a reliable chain-of-custody regarding correspondence, and hopefully resolve any issues amicably between all parties. Despite our best efforts, and recognizing the myriad of variables that a “problem” produces—regardless of its point of origin—we sometimes find ourselves at an impasse.

A few years ago, I began an inquiry through my manager/agent regarding an extra week of rehearsal that was requested for a major project at one of our most visible and respected opera companies. I was indeed available for this extra week, wanted no additional rehearsal pay or overall fee, but *was* expecting a contract revision (a fully executed contract had already been in place) that provided for one week’s worth of living expenses. This exact same issue occurred a few years earlier with the exact same company, and this is how the issue was handled. In fact, the offer of an additional week’s worth of expenses was *their* idea at that time, and it seemed fair to me. The cost? About \$600-\$700.

We began asking for this written addendum some 9-10 months in advance of the start of the rehearsal period. An addendum *was* sent out, but no word regarding expenses was in the document. Luckily we had a reliable email sequence regarding this matter with the Artistic department. To be fair, the role of an Artistic Administrator in this working environment and economy is a tough one. They are forever putting out fires, dealing with critical artistic matters, being tugged-on from every direction, and being told to hold-the-line on all expenses/expenditures that come their way. It is therefore easy to see how my matter could receive low priority when it was queued into their inbox, but I was signing no document until my issue was resolved in writing.

As the months passed, another major opera company offered me the opportunity to perform an outstanding new role on *very* short notice. I was to replace an artist who had to cancel his obligation. *The only problem was that the last week of performances conflicted with the extra week of rehearsal* that I was not yet contracted for because the “one week of living expenses” issue had still not been addressed. Now, of course, I didn’t even *want* to obligate myself to this extra week of rehearsal because an additional contract hung in the balance. When I was no longer available to rehearse, and was not obligated by signature, the company was quick to respond to our 9-10 months of inquiry, and yes...were suddenly willing to discuss additional compensation regarding living expenses.

A tug-of-war ensued; and while I was “in the right” contractually, I simply did not want to be considered a bad colleague. Neither opera company wanted to give-way, and the original company in question felt they were still “in the right.” With my agent/manager now tussling with not one, but TWO different opera companies, an Artistic Administrator, a General Director, and now the actual Director of the original project—all of whom wanted supremacy over the situation—I stood aside and realized that my reputation and thousands of dollars hung in the balance. Let’s be clear; I am NOT a power-player singer. If I were, the situation would have resolved itself quickly. I am, however, a well-respected, reliable artist who must maintain good relations all of the time. But I simply did not know where to turn...

So, I tried AGMA. I emailed Alan Gordon, AGMA’s National Executive Director, late on a Friday night in hopes that he could help sort things out...at least from a contractual perspective.

To my delight and surprise, I received a phone call—*on a Saturday morning no less*—and Alan and I discussed the matter in full. He felt that no “heavy-handed” posturing was needed and asked me to allow him access to the matter. On Monday morning, with one simple email (he cc’d me on all communications) and one phone call, the problem was resolved. He simply posited that reasonable people should all be able to work together, and appealed to everyone’s sense of fairness. Things began to move quickly thereafter. Alan spoke with the Associate General Director, the Director of “project A” spoke with the General Director of “project B,” my agent spoke with both Artistic Administrators; and VOILA, problem solved!

In the end, it was AGMA’s intercession that truly got the ball rolling again. This is the kind of representation for which we pay dues. Make no mistake, I got my entire 20 years’ worth of dues investment back a few times over on just that one occasion. Our head office can be a powerful tool, to be sure; but it did not take “power” to resolve this situation. However, a phone call and an email from our National Executive Director was the one component that made all the difference, and there were (hopefully) no residual hard feelings.

BOTH projects that I was then able to participate in were enormous successes, both artistically and personally. It took some flying back and forth, and some creative rehearsal scheduling, but we did it! Ultimately however (along with the *dedicated* assistance of ALL the players), it was AGMA that saved the day.

Thank You, Alan, and Thank You, AGMA!! This is why AGMA is there. Alan and AGMA staff are well equipped to assist you should the need arise, so do not hesitate to contact them! ♦

Job Saved by AGMA Delegate

By Linda Mays, former AGMA President, Chorister



Forty years ago, I signed a contract to be regular chorister at the Metropolitan Opera. When rehearsals started, it became obvious that I was being cast as a steady extra chorister, which meant that I was a cover for absent choristers and that I would not go on tour. Since the job was not coveted then (as it is now) and since I was planning to “try” the job for only one year anyway, I went to my AGMA delegate, Lorraine Keane, and told her I wanted to quit. Thankfully, she asked me to be patient while she did some investigating. With her usual quiet determination and skill, Lorraine studied my contract and the contracts of other regular choristers. She then asked me if management and I had ever discussed the position of steady extra chorister. My answer was “no.” She met with the general manager and informed him that I was not on a steady extra contract and should not be treated nor paid as one in that position. I didn’t quit and the result is that I have had a very long, productive and happy career. Throughout my AGMA Presidency, I saw many *behind the scenes* miracles performed by professional, elected and volunteer AGMA “saints.”



Lorraine Keane

*Lorraine Keane was a long-time AGMA Governor, AGMA Relief Fund Trustee, and essential historian and chair of many Metropolitan Opera Chorus negotiating committees. Lorraine was memorialized in the October 2008 issue of *AGMAzine*. ♦



General Manager of the Metropolitan Opera Peter Gelb and Director of Human Resources & Labor Relations Ann Marie Hackett present Linda Mays with a plaque, to be permanently placed in the Met’s Chorus Women’s dressing room, reading: “In Commemoration of the Distinguished Forty Year Career of Linda Mays, Former Member of the Met Chorus and Past President of AGMA”.

Executive Director’s Report (continued from page 2)

autonomy but gets more bargaining strength. I can envision an increase in our initiation fee for new members, not that we need it financially, but because it’s simply worth more now to be a member of AGMA. But the worlds that I might envision aren’t meaningful beyond just alerting the leadership and the membership to the possibility of their existence.

To some extent, I am passing the buck. Ultimately, as you know, it’s your union and it’s you, providing leadership to the Board of Governors, that’s going to have to prioritize the identity and the interests of the “clients” before the staff can do its job better to serve them in the future. AGMA occupies an exclusive, and fairly well protected, niche in the entertainment union

labor movement. There are a multitude of paths and choices available to us. But we need to know where you want AGMA to go, before we can work to get it there.

Any member, any reader of *AGMAzine*, who wants to input into these issues, should write to me, directly and confidentially at agmany@aol.com. ♦

Notice to AGMA Health Plan B Participants

The Trustees have now eliminated any annual limits for reimbursement of acupuncture, mental health treatments, alcohol/substance abuse, hearing aids, chiropractic treatments, and well-baby care.

One of My Scariest Experiences

By Susanne Mentzer, Soloist



When working abroad each theater might have various parameters that protect the performing artist where others might have none. When I am working in the United States for an AGMA signatory company, I know that the union has established basic guidelines contractually that provide a better and safer workplace

than what I have sometimes experienced abroad and at non-union houses. No doubt every performer has stories, but here is one of my scariest experiences when I was singing Octavian in *Der Rosenkavalier* in Buenos Aires at the historic Teatro Colón.

It was 1998 and not a particularly good financial time for Argentina. My flight there had even been held up by a week due to a bombing in the air traffic control room over wages. At the theater, I remember being greeted by the strong smell of cat urine. When I inquired, I found that the cats were there for the rats and that there were fleas because of both. We were advised not to get too close to the curtain since it was infested. Great.

More alarming was the news that many of the employees of the theater had not been paid for three months. Below is an excerpt of a fax sent to my friend about the final dress rehearsal:

Amazingly, the performances did go on, after many orchestra walkouts during rehearsals, but I could not wait to get home. We were paid in U.S. dollars at the intermission of each performance and no bank would wire the money back to the U.S. I had to hide it in my armpits during the shows and in food boxes at my apartment. It was truly ridiculous. I worried about carrying that large amount of cash back home on the plane so I bought traveler's checks and ate the fee.

While I am sure things have changed since this scary time in the Argentina of 1998, I sure enjoy performing here in the United States for companies with an AGMA agreement because I know there are strong protections in place. Also, if I don't feel safe, AGMA is just a phone call away.

"I think drama is best left to the stage. If you bleed for your art, it is best to stick to fake blood."

This is Ms. Mentzer's adaption for AGMAzine of her prior blog on Huffington Post titled, "Blood and Other Hazards of Opera" http://www.huffingtonpost.com/susanne-mentzer/blood-opera-hazards_b_1533208.html ♦

Excerpt from Suzanne's Original Fax

Approximately five minutes into Act II, while I was waiting for my entrance to present the rose, I suddenly saw all the supers who enter before me (about 20 cute hussars) running madly out the sides of the stage, the reverse from where they were supposed to run. I then noticed that I heard the orchestra, but no singing. I thought maybe someone was hurt but then more people were running out, I knew there must be something terribly wrong but no one would tell me and no one could speak English.

Finally, I noticed the curtain was down and thought maybe there was a strike, but then a dresser said to the girl playing Sophie, "You need to get out" in Spanish, which was then translated to me. I grabbed my passport and ran, in costume, to the street. Apparently, there was a box in the lobby and they had reason to think it was a bomb. Someone had called it in, and there was the same situation the day before at the airport.

At any rate, I stood on the street bedecked in white wig and costume, for about 20 minutes, with chorus, supers (curiously out of costume), orchestra, onlookers, etc. I told a passerby that it was early Carnivale. It was chilly outside. Someone told me to go back in and change but no one was being let back in. Against my better judgment, I did go back in and changed quickly. I then saw Elizabeth, who was playing Marschallin, who had not left the building and we both saw the Maestro who also had not left. We decided to not wait around since the bomb squad had not yet arrived, only the police. Even though the theater wanted us to continue the rehearsal later, half of the orchestra had left and it was nearing 11:30 p.m. We figured that by the time we would get back in after the bomb squad, a rehearsal would have gone on until 4 a.m. When I left people were still out on the street and were still not being allowed back in.

I am ok, but I am quite shaken up by the lack of communication regarding the whole situation. Our lives were allegedly in danger. If there had been a fire or the bomb had gone off, I would have not been informed. The entire stage staff simply got up and ran and no one said a thing to me or the other singers who were there.

That really makes me uncomfortable. I don't feel safe.

What is Your Opera Hai-Q?

By Jennifer Wallace, Southern California Area Chair, AGMA Governor and Los Angeles Opera Chorister



On New Year's Day an actor friend of mine in New Jersey started a contest amongst his Facebook friends—he would post one Haiku per day which would describe all or part of a movie; the first person to guess correctly would receive a point and, at the end of one month, he would award a gift card to the person with the most points. I LOVED this idea and played along almost every single day (I came in second place overall with 4 points, the winner scored 9).

Just a few days into my friend's contest I started to think, "Is it possible to give enough plot information to guess an opera title using only 17 syllables in Haiku form?" So I started writing... and it was working! I could not write anything based on an individual company's production of an opera (such as costumes, setting or performers); I had to work only with the plot information provided by the libretto so that my friends (singers, dancers, production staff and lay-people) from all over the country and the world would have a chance to play.

On January 7, 2013 I started my own contest which would last up to 28 days (or when a participant was mathematically unbeatable) and the winner would receive a \$15 Starbucks gift card. The rules were simple: I required the full title in either English or original language (accents were not necessary due to American keyboard limitations),

people could take as many guesses as they like each day but only the first completely correct answer would be awarded a point, all operas would be regularly-produced works rather than those that are obscure, new and/or seldom done, and the Haikus themselves would range in difficulty from "medium" to "way too easy."

By the end of the first week of my Guess That Opera Haiku Contest, I had friends waiting online every day for my postings and everyone seemed to be having a lot of fun with them. By day 26 I had a winner; one of my Los Angeles Opera Chorus colleagues, Sarah Bloxham, had accumulated eight points and could not be beaten. I am happy to report that second place (for which there was no prize other than bragging rights) went to Lyric Opera Chicago Chorister and AGMA President, Jimmy Odom with 5 points. Twelve others scored at least 1 point before the contest ended on February 1, 2013.

The Haikus appear below—see how many you can guess quickly and correctly! ♦



Winner Sarah Bloxham poses with her Starbucks gift card in front of a t-shirt the principals signed from the first opera, Otello, that the Los Angeles Opera performed.

GUESS THAT OPERA HAIKU CONTEST

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| 1. Your artist boyfriend
Has date with the firing squad
Loaded with blanks... Right! | 8. So many hot girls
Sometimes they look different
Sometimes just the same | 15. Short relationship
Six people dead all because
Someone crashed party |
| 2. Can't get girl you like?
Replace your whining with wine!
Inheritance helps | 9. Princess loves a guy
But he prefers her servant
A pyramid scheme? | 16. Faded photograph
I've seen fire, I've seen rain
The bird is the word |
| 3. Gypsy hag is burned
Daughter steals babe and 'burns' him
All before show starts | 10. I got your letter
I don't love you, silly girl
Shoot, best friend now dead | 17. Travels through Europe
Banging chicks and breaking hearts
Guess who came to dine |
| 4. He married you, but
He still loves his former girl
Just not into you | 11. Big storm hits Cyprus
Lost hanky creates drama
Hey dude, jealous much? | 18. Sailor and young bride
Have the whole fam'ly over
For some sake—Hou! |
| 5. Gypsies, tramps and thieves
Prove once and for all that cigs
Are bad for your health | 12. Don't tick off the Court
You could end up sans daughter
Time to hit the sack | 19. Christmas Eve surprise
Fancy food and a new hat
Cough cough, she is dead |
| 6. Stonehenge BBQ
Soldier and a High Priestess
Be sure to bring kids | 13. Hot tart with a heart
Falls for a young admirer
His Dad disapproves | 20. People of Peking
Study for the quiz, or else
Risk losing your head |
| 7. Forest adventure
Find witchcraft, murder and carbs
Oven set to high | 14. He sings, schemes, lies, steals
Truly a jack of all trades!
But can he cut hair? | The Opera Hai-Q answers can be found on page 24. |

AREA NEWS

NEW YORK

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



The New York Area meeting was held at the National Office on Wednesday, November 14, 2012.

Prior to the meeting, members enjoyed a delicious buffet and the annual AGMA free flu shot provided courtesy of the Actors Fund.

The first order of business was the election of area committee members. The New York Area Committee welcomed some new and some returning members: Kim Araki, Ruth Ann Cunningham, Jann Jaffe, Robert Kuehn, David Saybrook and Raven Wilkinson. Additionally, I would like to thank the incumbent committee members for their generous service: Osceola Davis, Richard Guido, Tyler Ingram, Renee Jarvis, Linda Mays, Raymond Menard, Roger Ohlsen, Belinda Oswald, Douglas Purcell, Boyd Schlaefer, James Seiler, William Ward and Chad Zodrow.



Seated, left to right: New York Area Chair Louis Perry, Executive Director of AGMA Retirement and Health Funds Derek Davis, New York Area Dance Executive James Fayette, Associate Executive Director Deborah Allton-Maher; back, AGMA Governor and concert chorister Karen Grahn and National Executive Director Alan Gordon

Derek Davis, Executive Director of the AGMA Retirement and Health Funds, gave a report on the funds followed by a Q & A session regarding many aspects of both funds.

The members heard reports from National Executive Director Alan Gordon, Associate Executive Director Deborah Allton-Maher, New York Area Dance Executive James Fayette, and concert chorister Karen Grahn regarding contract negotiations with area signatories and other related area news and business. ♦

PITTSBURGH



Taken backstage during Pittsburgh Opera's 2013 production of Madama Butterfly are left to right: Christina McCann, negotiating committee member; Carol Wolfe, vice-chair of the Opera Executive Committee; AGMA Governor Kellie McCurdy Ryan; negotiating committee chair and delegate Cheryl Bush; Area Chair and chair of the Opera Executive Committee William Buchanan; and delegate Jeffrey Gross.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Tour Redux

By Adriana Manfredi and Scott Graff, Los Angeles Master Chorale Choristers



March 28, 2013, somewhere above Nebraska: As of this writing, 48 happy and exhausted choristers of the Los Angeles Master Chorale are bumping along at a cruising altitude of 36,000 feet, wending their way home after what can only be described as a triumphal tour of London, Lucerne, Paris, and New York.

The Chorale toured as part of the Los Angeles Philharmonic's presentation of the premiere of John Adams' "The Gospel According to the Other Mary." This staged work was a co-commission of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Barbican Centre in London, the Kultur und Kongresszentrum Lucerne (KKL), the Salle Pleyel in Paris, and Lincoln Center in New York. This was an unprecedented opportunity for the Chorale—a hugely expensive and logistically challenging opportunity that simply could not be refused.

From the shop's perspective, one of the first hurdles that had to be negotiated was to establish a platform for wages and working conditions for the choristers performing the work. The collective bargaining agreement (CBA) has no language in it covering touring (this was the first extended international tour in the Chorale's 49-year history), much less the touring of a memorized, staged work. The Chorale's management approached the AGMA delegate and asked for assistance in drafting a Side Letter to the CBA that would define wages, working conditions, rehearsal and rest periods, travel days, contingencies for cancellations, and any other reasonably foreseeable circumstance that might arise during the course of the tour. The Singer's Committee drafted a Side Letter that was shared with the shop for review and input, and, once that input from the shop was included, met with the Chorale's management to discuss details. After some frank and productive conversation, the final Side Letter was agreed to by all parties and approved by AGMA.

This negotiation, coupled with absolutely heroic efforts on the part of the Chorale's staff to plan, prepare, and execute the tour (and on the part of the Chorale's board to raise the funds to transport and house the participating choristers), made this fantastic opportunity a reality. *The Gospel According to the Other Mary* was performed to sold-out houses in four countries and met with significant critical acclaim. The work was recorded and will be available for commercial release with the Master Chorale's name on the label. The tour itself opened doors of opportunity that could not have otherwise happened, opportunity for future work for the Chorale. The entire process was a remarkable example of the fantastic things that can happen when the shop and management work together. ♦



Members of the Los Angeles Master Chorale on their "free day" in Paris posing outside the Louvre Museum.



The touring LAMC members with composer John Adams (center) in front of the KKL in Lucerne, Switzerland.



Members of the Los Angeles Master Chorale with conductor Gustavo Dudamel at an artist's party in Lucerne, Switzerland.

CHICAGO/MIDWEST

By Cole Seaton, AGMA Governor, Chorister



The Chicago/Midwest area held its annual meeting on February 17 and had a good turnout from area AGMA shops. We welcomed our new Midwest Counsel John Ward, whom we are so very happy to have joining us! AGMA's Executive Director Alan Gordon and James Odom, AGMA's President, were also in attendance.

The Lyric Opera of Chicago Chorus continued postseason with an added production of *Oklahoma* that opened in May, even though their regular season ended in April with simultaneous productions of Verdi's *Rigoletto* and Puccini's *La bohème*. The Joffrey Ballet also enjoyed a full and exciting season that included several touring opportunities with performances of various ballets in the cities of Las Vegas, Nevada; Dallas, Texas; Naples, Florida; Cleveland, Ohio and San Diego, California, among others! The dancers finished their season the first week of May with the highly anticipated production of *Othello*.



Chef-Angels and Trees in costume for Lyric Opera of Chicago's 2012-13 production of Hänsel und Gretel

kick off mid-September when the Chorus joins Riccardo Muti and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra for a free and open "Concert for Chicago" at Millennium Park in celebration of Verdi's bicentennial and featuring "Si ridesti il leon di Castiglia" from *Ernani*; Va, pensiero from *Nabucco*; and the Act II finale from *La forza del destino*. Also on the program is the ballet music from *Macbeth* and the Overture to *I vespri siciliani*. ♦

The Grant Park Chorus kicks off its summer season on June 14 at Millennium Park with Prokofiev's *Alexander Nevsky*; other choral offerings will include Britten's *War Requiem* on June 28-29, a Rodgers and Hammerstein Celebration on July 17, and Songs of Praise and Passion, which will be an all *a cappella* concert.

And the Chicago Symphony Chorus just completed a very successful sold-out run of J.S. Bach's *Mass in B minor* and will conclude their season in June with performances of a choral extravaganza including works of Mozart, Verdi and Vivaldi. They will next appear in August at Ravinia in a production of Verdi's *Aida*. Their 2013-14 season will

John Ward Joins Staff, AGMA Opens Midwest Office

By Alan S. Gordon, National Executive Director

Now that Barbara Hillman has retired, we've selected long-time union attorney John Ward to join our staff as Midwest Counsel. He started on February 4 and is available to you for any issues. His e-mail address is John@musicalartists.org and his phone number is (312) 628-7830.

We have also secured a new AGMA Midwest office in Chicago, located at 203 North LaSalle Street, Suite 2300, Chicago, Illinois 60601.

Though no one can truly "replace" Barbara Hillman, I'm sure you will be comfortable with John's able representation of AGMA and its members. As always, you can also contact me at (800) 543-2462 or directly at AGMANY@aol.com. Please take advantage of John's union contract and legal expertise. Like all members of AGMA's staff, he's here to help and protect you. ♦



Governor Sherry Veal, First Vice President John Coleman, Barbara Hillman, Governor Peggy Stenger, chorister Tom Potter and, in back, Midwest Counsel John Ward

SAN FRANCISCO

By Nora Heiber, National Dance Executive



National Dance Executive Nora Heiber and a spirited negotiating committee met with San Francisco Ballet's management to begin negotiating a new contract on March 12, 2013. Across the street, the San Francisco Symphony postponed negotiations scheduled to begin with AGMA on March 18, due to an ongoing strike with the American Federation of Musicians that shut down a weekend of performances and a tour.

The following is taken from a statement published by the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra committee: "The San Francisco Symphony is one of the world's top orchestras. We have won 15 Grammy Awards and our musicians are among the most talented in our profession. Even though the SFS is financially sound

with the second largest endowment of any orchestra in the country and assets of over \$300 million, Management continues to insist on cuts in compensation and benefits which do not allow us to keep up with the Bay Area's high cost of living."

AGMA Choristers of the San Francisco Symphony offered the following words: "As the Professional Choristers of the San Francisco Symphony and members of the American Guild of Musical Artists, we wish to declare our support for our colleagues, the players of the San Francisco Symphony, in their efforts to achieve a fair contract." The strike was settled on April 2, and members of AFM are back to work.

AGMA's next scheduled date for negotiations with the Symphony is May 6. ♦



Left to right are members of the San Francisco Ballet negotiating committee: Courtney Stewart Wright, Alexander Reneff-Olson, Kimberly Braylock, National Dance Executive Nora Heiber, Luke Willis, Steven Morse, Jessica Barker and Myles Thatcher.

Members of the 2013 San Francisco Symphony Chorus negotiating committee meet to discuss this year's contract, left to right: Howard Baltazar, intern Sarah Wenzel, Karen Carle, Nora Heiber, Cindy Wývill, Dianne Terp and Pamela Sebastian; missing: Seth Brenzel, David Meissner, Ruth Escher, Kevin Gibbs and Chung-Wai Soong.



WASHINGTON/BALTIMORE



Over Thanksgiving weekend, AGMA members and staff from Florida Grand Opera (FGO) held a meeting. Attendees left to right, seated: Veronica Fink-Menvielle, Ana Maria Conte-Silva, FGO General Director and CEO Susan Danis, Lisa Pitman, Julia McGuire, and Nina Wall (who was awarded a 30-year gold service pin); middle row: Delegate and Washington/Baltimore Area Committee member Donna Lane Downey, Emilia Acon and Danielle Krause; standing: Fidel Garcia, Fernando Gonzalez, Alejandro Viera, AGMA National Director of Organizing and Training and Mid-Atlantic Area Representative Eleni Kallas, Carlos Danaan, Michael Ross, Delegate and AGMA Governor Michael Testa, Al Rivera, Ismael Gonzalez, FGO Director of Production Kevin Mynatt and FGO Chorus Master John Keene



Washington National Opera Manon Lescaut singer Daniela Mack surrounded by the Madrigal Singers: Grace Gori, Marta Kirilloff Barber, Adrienne Webster and Jennifer Royall Anderson



©Steve Vaccarello

Cinderella's stepsisters, Zachary Hackstock and Luis Torres, from Washington Ballet's Cinderella production.



Approximately 50 members were in attendance at the Washington/Baltimore Spring General Membership Meeting that was held on Sunday, January 27, 2013. From left to right, first row, seated: Michelle Kunz, Andrea McGray, Lynn Krynicki, Kurt Hoffman, Jill Krynicki, Sean Corcoran and Shawnee Ball; second row seated: Grace Gori, Lisa Berger, Alizon Reggioli, Kyle Engler, Marta Kirilloff Barber, Yolanda Bryant, Matthew Joe Minor, David Prager, G. Stephen Stokes and James Shaffran; first row standing: Madeleine Gray, Justin Wilson, Tony Torchia, Christopher Rhodovi, J. Austin Bitner, Wayne Jennings, Louis Davis, Kehembe Eichelberger, Patricia Simmons, Keith Craig, Vito Pietanza, Mimi Legat, Connie Coffelt Bailey and Dorothee Bodner; back row: Jason Buckwalter, Aaron Reeder, John Boulanger, Harvey Fort, Denise Gulley, Peter Burroughs, Tim Augustin, Robert Cantrell and Beth Krynicki.

TEXAS/OKLAHOMA

Dallas Opera Chorus Holds Silent Auction for AGMA Relief Fund

By Kristin Tallett Bittick, AGMA Delegate and Dallas Opera Chorister



The Dallas Opera Chorus held a silent auction on March 14-15 during staging rehearsals of *Turandot*. This show has a large cast so there were hopes to take advantage of the large number of supers, crew, and children's chorus (including parents and additional entourage).

The planning committee consisted of Thom Hawkins, Jeannie Fisher and Kristin Bittick. The group obtained auction items from local businesses as well as from the talented pool of choristers who stepped forward to offer their crafts and artwork. We were truly humbled by the amount of effort everyone put forward. Brent Hughes, of Brent Hughes Photography, attended the first night to take candid photographs. Although there were no principals, supers, or children that first evening, this presented an opportunity for Brent to take photos of the rehearsal. Fortunately, permission was granted to do so from Maestro Marco Zambelli, Garnett Bruce and Stage Management!

At the auction, over \$2,500 was raised, showing how much heart the Dallas Opera Chorus has. Some of the bidders found out that



A pastel picture of the Grand Canyon and pop art prints were the most popular and brought in a great deal of money.

AGMA Governors Kyle Hancock and Matt Woodbury peruse an auction item.

they were outbid moments before the end of the auction and decided to still donate to the Relief Fund afterward. In an update letter, chorus members shared personal stories of their own Relief Fund experiences, with testimonies of those who received assistance at just the right time. The committee then decided to extend donations to the Relief Fund through the end of the run of the show and to include a fundraiser for chorister John Strickland, as well. ♦

AGMA Relief Fund News

By Linda Mays, AGMA Relief Fund, Director of Development

Thank you to all donors who responded so generously to Sam Ramey's Holiday fundraising plea as the Honorary Chair of the annual ARF Holiday Drive. It was so touching to see how you paid tribute to your friends, family and colleagues through holiday and year-end donations. Everyone was a winner!

The Metropolitan Opera Chorus was led by Laura Fries in presenting a gorgeous, delicious, successful seventh AGMA Relief Fund "Baking for Bucks" event that raised \$3,740. Metropolitan Opera choristers, soloists, stage directors, stage managers and dressers created the confections for the sale and auction. Members of all departments of the Met were the consumers. The labor-intensive sale took place three days before Thanksgiving in the midst of a particularly busy Met schedule. At the end of the event, the Met chorus made a surprise \$1,800 donation to the Relief Fund in honor of my retirement.

In January, the AGMA members at the Washington National Opera under the inspiring baton of Maestro Steven Gathman presented their annual AGMA Relief Fund Concert. Kudos to Maestro Gathman for establishing the concert as an annual event to benefit the relief fund. Both he and the artists donated a considerable amount of personal time toward this concert. Their hard work, dedication and boundless talents created a \$4,000 donation for the Relief Fund.



Washington National Opera Choristers participated in the AGMA Relief Concert in January and raised over \$4,000.00.

As you read above, our heroes at Dallas Opera Chorus, led by Kristin Bittick, held an ambitious silent auction that raised awareness, bidding passions and serious money for our great cause. The auction tally was \$2,500 and donations are still flooding in. We know that you worked very hard for your tremendously successful result and you have the gratitude of all you have helped and will be helping in the future.

Raising money and awareness are the keys to keeping the AGMA Relief Fund healthy and utilized. On behalf of the AGMA Relief Trustees, thank you to all of you who care so deeply for your grateful colleagues. ♦

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

Add to that the fact there are precious few companies left in the world where a principal singer can expect to sing more than two productions in a row, let alone spend a whole season.

The thing that knots my shorts is that certain individuals have the idea that these hard-working, quality driven, pushed-to-the-limit professionals are giving two dry coughs and excusing themselves to go lie in the satin sheets on the beds in their luxury hotel suites, where they sip champagne and munch on bon-bons while waiting "to recover". (That whole thing about the hotel is sarcasm, in case you missed it.) And it also knots my shorts that these certain individuals seem to think that AGMA should, if not actually discipline members who cancel, at least try to encourage more professional behavior.

Okay, I can get on board with the idea that AGMA should encourage professional behavior. We should. But what we should not do is buy into the idea that singers are not entitled to be sick. And we need to be certain to be supportive when someone is forced to cancel. Reality check, people! Nobody wants to miss a performance because they're stuck in a hotel room far, far from home and feeling like, well, let's just say it, crap. Not to mention the damage that one can do to the voice when trying to force out a performance when you're not feeling well.

Let's move on now to a second situation. Our favorite diva-du-jour has agreed to sing a new role, and we've really been looking forward to it. But she (or he, because this happens to divos, as well) arrives and discovers that it's just not going to happen. And the cancellation notice goes out. And there is great weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth throughout the land. Again, reality check, people! Singers, at least as long as I've been working, have always booked

years in advance. They have to, it's the way the business works. Four or five years after you book this dream role, you discover that the voice hasn't grown the way you thought it would. Or it has grown far more than you thought it would. Or there have been health problems. Or accidents. I think it is far more professional to cancel when you don't think you're going to give your best performance than it is to try and push through. I sang a piece early in my career that I should never have been hired to do, one of my very few performances as a soloist in a concert choral situation. I won't get into detail, but I was just plain awful. Afterward, the composer caught me before I could make my escape and gave me the worst compliment I have ever gotten, although he was trying to be kind. He said, "I'll say this for you. You never quit trying." The problem is that I should have quit trying about two months before the concert, when I realized that I was completely wrong for the piece, and allowed someone who could have actually done a good job of singing it have the work. (The composer went on to say that he would not hesitate for a moment to hire me to sing something by a more traditional composer. I think that was a compliment.)

I've been ranting on for far too long now, so I'll just make one more point. There is no such thing as a "lost" performance anymore. With YouTube and Facebook and all the other social media sites, the possibility of every performance being posted and analyzed note by note is, for all practical purposes, 100%. And once they're there, they're there forever. When even your good performances are being picked apart, no one wants to take a chance on having a performance posted which is below their personal standards.

So stay strong my friends, and let the certain individual who has never cancelled because of tendonitis in his elbow cast the first stone. ♦

Who Inspired You?



I have fond memories from childhood of my mother and her twin sister singing while playing cards at our kitchen table. They were very talented musicians and loved to sing harmonies together.

With that as a backdrop, several other women in my life served as catalysts for my exploration in singing. The choir director at my church growing up had a deep, sultry quality to her voice and an amazing ear for harmonization. I mimicked her ability to obtain rich tones and a full sound in the lower register. Another member of the church instinctively shaped phrases with a glorious arch that I always paid close attention to during mass. There was something truly compelling about her vocalization. She was probably among the first classically-trained singers I had ever heard. When I was in sixth grade, my English teacher really opened my eyes to the power of song as a communication mechanism. She had a big voice and she always sang with gusto. And finally, my friends' mother helped us found a local singing group. She was our coach, our conductor, our accompanist, and our agent. She helped me learn ensemble and restraint.

All these women were inspirational. Whether they know it or not (and I suspect not), they helped shape the musician and in particular, the singer I am today.

Kate Ambrose Sereno, Pittsburgh Opera Chorister since 1996

How to Get Your Retirement Funds

By Karen Grahn, AGMA Governor, Concert Singer



If you are over 55, no longer having money coming INTO your AGMA Retirement Plan, and—if you're like me—the interest earned on your AGMA Retirement monies doesn't pay for the yearly \$30 maintenance fee, you can call the AGMA Retirement office and apply to get your money out before your funds eventually disappear: (212) 765-3664. If you're over 59½, you can take out your funds without any early withdrawal penalties.

Sounds like an infomercial, doesn't it? But wait, there's more!

The Retirement Plan office has several frequently asked questions up on their website:

http://www.agmaretirement-health.org/faq_retire.html

The first FAQ gives the most important withdrawal guidelines:

Question 1: When am I eligible to withdraw the funds from my Individual Account in the AGMA Retirement Plan?

Answer: You may withdraw funds under the following circumstances:

- a) You have retired (at least age 55).
- b) Termination of employment covered by AGMA collective bargaining agreement payable at any age if you have severed your employment for at least six (6) months.
- c) Disability (payable at any age if you provide satisfactory medical evidence of your permanent and total disability).

My August 2011 statement showed there was less than \$100 in my account. I still work for AGMA groups so I thought the (b) part of the above answer to this question would prevent me from taking out my funds. So, back in early August of 2012, I talked to Derek Davis, the Executive Director at the AGMA Retirement and Health Fund office. When I told him I was still working for an AGMA signatory but no one had contributed to my retirement fund for some time, he explained that even though I might still be working for an AGMA company, if that company (or any other company) had not contributed to my retirement fund for six months, I would be eligible for withdrawal of my funds. That was good news for me! He also reminded me that there would be some tax considerations that depended on whether or not I rolled the money over into an IRA (Traditional only) or took the money directly since I am not yet 59½.

Mr. Davis helpfully told me that the \$30 fee would be applied to my account on August 31 of every year. At my request, he immediately sent out the forms along with other necessary backup information. I filled out the form, gathered the required proof of age papers, and, in order to beat the deadline, quickly sent everything in. Shortly thereafter I received the balance of my account! If it makes sense for you to do what I did, call the Retirement office and ask for the application—and make sure they have your current address.

The people at the AGMA Retirement office answered any and all questions I had about the process. It was easy to do and now I have my money in hand. Thank you, AGMA, for negotiating for that retirement money on my behalf, and thank you, Retirement Plan office, for making the process so easy. ♦

Howard University Meets PAAC

By Osceola Davis, Pre-AGMA Awareness Committee Chair, Soloist and AGMA Governor



This past January, Howard University invited me to give a master class for their music department. With many vocal celebrities having been on staff, I was honored to begin my visit with an interview by the department chair, Dr. Raymond Jackson followed by a mini performance. The master class was very well attended and I had the great pleasure of working with some very talented Howard University students.

During my interview with Dr. Jackson, I gave the students some highlights about being a part of AGMA. I explained just a little bit about what it is like to be a member of a labor union as a performing artist. The student body is now aware of AGMA as it may one day be their union too! To conclude my master class, I handed out copies of the latest edition of *AGMAzine*.

As a member of AGMA's Membership and Members Relations Committee, I know a new prospective member brochure is in the planning stages. I am looking forward to a brochure that can be handed out at future PAAC presentations. Such a brochure could remind potential members of who and what AGMA is and explain why being a union member and a performing artist go hand in hand. ♦



From left: Coordinator of Recitals and Professor of Music (Piano) Dr. Raymond Jackson, Department of Music student Richard Boyer, PAAC Chair Osceola Davis, Department of Music student DaMarra Underwood, Coordinator of Voice Performance Programs and Studies Dr. Charlotte Holloman and AGMA member Kehembe Eichelberger.

Who Inspired You?



I have to thank my parents. Opera, theater and dance were huge parts of my growing up: from attending all of the performing arts to taking ballet, tap and piano lessons, to being a child supernumerary and volunteer for Seattle Opera. My early exposure to the Arts let me know that I wanted opera to continue to be a part of my life. I began working in the field of stage management starting the summer after high school and summers through college, which rolled right into my professional career. During my education I did learn about the other fields that are crucial to putting on a production, but stage management seemed to fit my personality the best and kept me more involved with the actual creative process, which was what appealed to me the most. If I had not had the exposure during my formative years, I don't think I would have gotten the "theater bug" and fallen in love.

Lynn Krynicki, Stage Manager

I started performing as a child, always an ensemble member, at both Seattle Opera and Pacific Northwest Ballet. I knew very quickly I wanted more job security than performing was likely to provide. I kept seeing the same stage manager at the Opera. She seemed to be in charge, clearly had a steady job and that impressed me. Mom and Dad instilled a love of the art form in all of us children from an early age. I can tell you for certain that a five-year-old can fall in love with the Ring Cycle.



©Karin Cooper

Beth Krynicki, Stage Manager



The short answer is that my experiences with opera growing up inspired me to go into stage management. From a very young age, I did a lot of volunteer work and supering at Seattle Opera. The backstage always fascinated me, from the scenery to the props, costumes, lighting, wigs and make-up, and, of course, the glorious music. I loved going backstage to see how the magic was made.

While supering during a production of *Don Carlos*, I caught a glimpse of the assistant stage manager's score, watching the notes, hearing the music, seeing the cues come to life on stage. I didn't know or even fully appreciate the extent of the stage manager's job, I just knew that I wanted to be that person and be a part of the process. It's been twenty years since that production. I'm now the Production Stage Manager at Madison Opera, and frequent New Orleans Opera and Opera Grand Rapids, and I still love making the magic happen.

Jill Krynicki, Stage Manager



In March all three Krynicki sisters worked together on Washington National Opera's production of Manon Lescaut; left to right are AGMA Governor Lynn, Beth and Jill Krynicki.

“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 Choristers. If you are interested in contributing, please send your story to dbaker@musicalartists.org.

A Day in the Life of...Choristers

Why Am I A Chorister?

By Jimmy Odom, President, Chicago/Midwest Area Chair and Lyric Opera of Chicago Chorister



Several years ago one of my dearest friends and colleagues was asked to speak to a group of high school students about the role of the Chorister in opera. She sent an email to me and several other friends saying that she wanted some perspectives in addition to her own as to why one would choose to be a

Chorister. When the question was posed again in discussing this issue of AGMAZine, I remembered my response to her and decided to take another look at it. I find that while my perspective on some of my actions has changed, and I question the accuracy of some of my memories, my philosophy remains the same. The following is my response.

Why am I a Chorister? There are many reasons, and they range from the serendipitous to the practical to the esoterically philosophical. We should begin with how I became a Chorister.

Why Opera?

I never had any intention of becoming an opera singer of any kind. I was a dancer and an actor. My goal was to dance with a major ballet company. Because I could sing, I did a lot of musical comedy to fill in those spaces between ballet gigs, but I never considered opera, even as a dancer. Then, at the ripe old age of twenty-two, injuries ended any prospect for a serious dance career, although in retrospect it is now difficult for me to say with any honesty that a serious dance career was in any way realistic. In any case, I was nursing my injuries, sitting on the sofa, eating bon-bons, watching soap operas and gaining weight when a friend dared me to audition for the Dallas Opera chorus. I had to do something, so I learned an aria and went to the audition. Much to my surprise, they hired me. I thought I would work for a season, maybe two, before someone realized that I didn't have a clue, and fired me. When they rehired me for a second season, I decided that perhaps I should learn how to sing. After nearly fifteen years in Dallas, I decided it was time to move on, and so I auditioned for and got a job in the regular chorus at Lyric Opera of Chicago. After having spent nearly two-thirds of my life earning my living in opera, I'm still wait-

ing for someone to discover that I'm making it up as I go along, and fire me. I'm not sure what I'll do then.

The Majesty of the Chorus

I soon discovered that although my background and training often put me at odds with more “traditional” opera singers, I really enjoyed singing in the chorus. From my perspective and training as an actor and my work in spoken drama, I believed the chorus to be a place of dignity and honor. From the first Greek plays, in which the chorus is the drama, to the venerable tradition of the “Broadway gypsy” (a title in which I took great pride when I discovered it was being applied to me), the chorus is, from my perspective, a vital and indispensable part of story telling on stage. The chorus populates the world of the drama, so that we gain a perspective on the principal characters' interaction. It is a tool used by playwright or composer to help the audience understand the premise they are trying to present. In some cases, such as *Peter Grimes*, the chorus is the protagonist, the main actor that creates the conflict which must be resolved. In others, such as *Boris Godunov*, *Turandot*, or *Susannah*, they function as an additional character against whose responses and reactions the principal characters' actions and reactions can be judged.



Jimmy Odom has worked in every AGMA category. Here he is pictured as a dancer (*The Peruvian*) in *Gaîté Parisienne*... (Photo provided by Peggy Willis-Aarnio, balletuni.com).

Reality Sets In

Don't misunderstand. Once I was in the deep water that is the opera world, I made the obligatory stab at a solo career. And I

(continues on page 21)

Why Am I A Chorister? *(continued from page 20)*

was somewhat successful. I sang roles that were perfect for me. I sang roles that were completely wrong for me. I succeeded in roles that no one thought I would be able to sing, and failed in roles that should have been a walk in the park. I spent time in Germany, trying to find work there. (Reunification sent many a young American singer back home to the States.) But one morning I woke up and realized that even though things were going well, I was in my mid-thirties and still living from hand to mouth, like the Broadway gypsy I had been at twenty. So I looked at my options. I could continue on



...as a chorister in *Lucia di Lammermoor*...

as I was, hoping that someday I would get the big break, praying that I wouldn't get sick because I had no insurance, and trusting that my nieces and nephews would care for me in my old age. I could try to find a "real job", something that would allow me to have a "normal" life. Or I could decide to commit to being a full-time chorister and try to land a position in one of what were, at that time, the "Big Four" (The Met, Lyric Opera of Chicago, San Francisco, or New York City Opera) opera choruses. After remarkably little consideration, becoming a full-time Chorister was what I decided to do. It really wasn't that difficult a decision. I loved the work, I found it artistically fulfilling, and I also considered it in many ways to be a far more difficult job to do well than solo singing. I decided that since I had friends in Chicago, I would try Lyric first. I called, arranged the audition, sang for them, and they hired me. Yes, I know how extraordinarily lucky I am. I have never auditioned for a chorus job that I didn't get, and I know that there aren't many people who can say that. I use that fact as one of the reasons that I'm sure I made the right decision. I believe that the most important thing you can do to have a long, healthy career is know where you fit in, and do that job to the best of your ability.

What's Better?

So why sing in the chorus? It's a good job, doing what I love to do perform. I get to sing some of the most glorious music ever written. I have a life that is stable and rewarding. And I am a part of a process that I think is the most important thing that any of us can do; elevating the human spirit, informing the human mind, encouraging the human endeavor through art. And that ought to be enough for anyone's life. ♦



...and as a soloist (*Rodolfo*) in *La bohème*.

A Day in the Life of an AGMA Concert Choral Singer

By Susan Taylor Mills, Chorister



As a 15-year member of the Los Angeles Master Chorale who's been working as a concert choral singer since age 16, it was an honor to be asked to write about a day in my life on the job. Wait...

On THE Job? Singular? Sorry, that's not how the choral singer's career works.

Indeed, stitching together an annual income that keeps home and family warm has, for many decades, required the choral singer to create a veritable patchwork quilt of gigs—annual, perennial, out-of-the-blue and into-your-lap—and all of them as a journeyman chorister. I love the term “journeyman”; it means, “One who has fully served an apprenticeship in a trade or craft and is a qualified worker in another’s employ.” It also means, “An experienced and *competent but undistinguished* worker.” Wha?! Undistinguished?! *Moi*?! There’s the choral music rub, dear Reader. The concert choral singer banks on being able to subdue the soloistic aspects of the voice in order to blend with a section of two (octet) to 200 (Mahler’s 8th Symphony) other voices. Perhaps a better definition for a journeyman choral singer is, “An experienced and competent but *undistinguishable* worker.” It is the work of discipline and technique, of “music over [I alone] matter,” that makes a concert choral singer’s career, along with the constant maintenance of, and additions to, that patchwork quilt of jobs. Will there ever come a day when choral singers are paid a salary, like an orchestral instrumentalist? Perhaps...but only through the work of strong unions like AGMA. To bring this point home, let’s take a look at a Day in the Life of a Concert Choral Singer: 1972 (pre-AGMA signatory), and a Day in the Life of a Concert Choral Singer: 2012.

A Day in the Life of a Concert Choral Singer: 1972

Woke up this morning to a snot party in my nose. Damned allergies! When are they going to come up with something that helps? I light my first cigarette of the day, hoping it will burn up the phlegm before my rehearsal. And there’s always that hippie-dippy neti pot thing my Uncle Jimmy sent me from the ashram.

We have a High Holy Days rehearsal this morning for just an hour, but boy howdy, it’s all *forte*, all the time! It’s going to be a long day, so I need to pace myself; thankfully, we have a very understanding director, and he lets us sing *mezzo forte* the last 30 minutes of rehearsal.

And now it’s orchestra rehearsal with the No-CBA Chorale and the AFM Symphony from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. We had to stand and sing for two hours straight at a time so they could get a balance between the orchestra and the choir. My dogs are barking, and it’s only 3:00 p.m.! It’s horribly hot onstage in the risers, but there was no water fountain backstage, and we were not allowed into the house because it’s packed with an “invited audience” of folks who will end up hearing a free concert, so we had nothing to drink at our 15 minute break after the two hours of standing and singing. I’ll grab a Coke on my way to the next rehearsal.

It is 3:30 p.m. and here I am, at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, to sing a funeral. The family wants two songs before the funeral, all the service music, and two songs at the graveside. It’s a lot of singing, and some of it outside with traffic noises, but are you gonna look \$20 in the eye and say “No”?

Just enough time for a bite to eat before church choir rehearsal. I am lucky to have this very steady job. We are paid to lead the section from September through June, and rehearsals are only two and a half hours long! Well, if we don’t take a break, that is. And we can sit down for most of that time! Hallelujah! Time to hit the hay, before tomorrow’s 6-hour dress rehearsal, 3-hour recording session for that movie soundtrack (quiet—it’s not union and we don’t want to get busted. It’s another \$20 and I need it to make the rent) and then Erev Rosh Hashanah service. L’Shanah Tovah, everyone! Let’s hope for a sweet new year of more paying gigs for choral singers!

A Day in the Life of a Concert Choral Singer: 2012

Woke up with a raging snot party in my nose; must have been that smoker out walking his dog past my window this morning. Thankfully, I’ve got my sinus rinse and I’m good-to-go. It’s all about your DPL (Daily Phlegm Level), People.

The day begins with a two-hour recording session in Burbank. It’s an octet gig, something we like to call a “Rip-Orff” (*Carmina Burana* choral parts, sweetened, lyrics changed to protect the producers), and I am thrilled to see seven other colleagues walk in the door and sign their AGMA recording contracts. AFTRA contracts are great for pop singing, but classical choral music rates are in the tank with AFTRA. We’ll get a fair wage and excellent working conditions with our AGMA representation. AND we’ll finish on time, so I can make it to...

...the piano-conductor rehearsal for the Los Angeles Master Chorale and Los Angeles Philharmonic. We have a 12:30–3:00 rehearsal today for an upcoming Hollywood Bowl gig, which means we’ll have a twenty-minute break for hydrating and resting voices at some point before 2:00 p.m. (it’s in the CBA). It’s unseasonably hot outside (Can you say “Climate change?”), but the choral risers are blessedly cool and comfy, thanks to our pre-arranged settings via our CBA.

After a mandatory break period of 1 1/2 hours (spent munching and networking with dear colleagues), we are back in the risers for the *tutti* rehearsal with the Phil. The guest conductor wanted us to stand up for the rehearsal, but our CBA stipulates that we can be seated if there is an instrumental section (no singing) longer than a set number of minutes, so our dogs are not barking when we walk off the risers.

Normally, I’d be roaring up the freeway to church choir rehearsal. However, our church choir director understands the professionals have High Holidays coming up, so he cancels the 1 1/2 hour rehearsal but he pays us anyway. As a member of the

(continues on page 23)

A Day in the Life of a Concert Choral Singer *(continued from page 22)*

paid quartet, I am paid \$550 per month, year-round, but I also have a month off with pay and often have Thursdays off due to conflicts such as tonight's. That kind of respect for choral singers is becoming the norm, thanks to the work of our union. Unlike the economy, respect does seem to trickle down! While confirming the rehearsal cancellation, the director books me for a funeral: another \$250 in the bank, and the opportunity to comfort people in a time of loss with soothing music.

Now it's time to pop into High Holidays rehearsal for a quick brush-up before Rosh Hashanah. The music is so beautiful that I can't believe I get paid well over a thousand dollars to sit here and sing it.

What a crazy schedule this year—rehearsing for the Hollywood Bowl feels like summer, and rehearsing for Rosh Hashanah feels like fall. But it's all professional choral work, and all well-paid. I feel grateful for a sweet life, and thankful for my union membership. Now, if I can

just get that dog-walking smoker to take another route... ♦



Susan Taylor Mills (in glasses on the left) has been a member of the Los Angeles Master Chorale since 1998.

Many Careers Make One San Diego Opera Chorus

By Natalie Mann, AGMA Governor, San Diego Soloist Representative



If you walked into a room and met a registered nurse, a senior biotech/pharmaceutical recruiter, and someone in medical product development, you might think you were at a medical convention.

However, if you walked further into that room and met the general counsel from San Diego's Catholic Diocese, a marketing executive from San Diego's Tourism Authority, a contracts manager from a major military manufacturer, an engineer from a nuclear energy company, and a physicist working on fusion energy research, you might think you had wandered into some kind of high-powered business conference. Instead, you are in the midst of the many talented singers in the San Diego Opera chorus.



San Diego Opera chorus, dancers, production staff, and guest principal artist Nadia Krasteva as Delilah taking a break from staging Saint-Saen's Samson and Delilah.

The chorus prides itself on being a highly-regarded part of the San Diego Opera season year after year. But many of these folks are already working a full-time day job. Their love of opera brings them back every season, despite the long hours. There are those who employ their left brain by day in computers, or entrepreneurs sleuthing as a private investigator, and caring for man's best friends as a professional pet sitter. Others, who enjoy more hands-on work, include a piano technician, an auto technician, an upholstery specialist and a classic motorcycle restorer. Professional writers and paralegals work 9-5 in English and from 7-10 p.m. with Italian, French and German scores. Choristers also find steady employment working with churches as both singers and administrators. By night, and many weekends, all these people work an additional 20 to 30 hours a week singing in major opera productions.

As one might expect, there are many full-time educators, as well as retired teachers in the ensemble. When questioned, 69 percent

of the chorus responded they are currently or have been involved in education. College students may also have their first opportunity to perform with an AGMA house, such as a new chorister who is a former Navy officer using her GI Bill benefits to pursue her master's degree in vocal performance.

The equally savvy and talented dancers performing in *Samson and Delilah* are just as busy outside the rehearsal hall. One is a principal dancer with the California Ballet while earning a degree in Business Administration, and another plays at the other end of the artistic spectrum with the comic strip company "Piled Higher and Deeper." Dance teachers find enjoyment teaching ballet and yoga, as well as creative movement dance classes when they are not performing as part of the corps de ballet with San Diego Opera.

So if you find yourself visiting San Diego, don't be surprised if some of the people you meet from many walks of life are also colleagues in AGMA, pursuing a mutual love of music. ♦

Opera Hai-Q (Haikus) (continued from page 10)

Opera Hai-Q (Haiku) Answers

- | | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Tosca | 8. Les Contes d'Hoffman | 15. Roméo et Juliette |
| 2. L'Elisir d'Amore | 9. Aida | 16. Die Zauberflöte |
| 3. Il Trovatore | 10. Eugene Onegin | 17. Don Giovanni |
| 4. Cavalleria Rusticana | 11. Otello | 18. Madama Butterfly |
| 5. Carmen | 12. Rigoletto | 19. La Bohème |
| 6. Norma | 13. La Traviata | 20. Turandot |
| 7. Hänsel und Gretel | 14. Il Barbiere di Siviglia | How many did you get right? |

AGMA Relief Fund Audited Financials

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

To the Board of Trustees of AGMA Relief Fund

We have audited the accompanying statements of financial position of AGMA Relief Fund (the "Fund") as of September 30, 2012 and 2011, and the related statements of activities, functional expenses and cash flows for the years then ended. These financial statements are the responsibility of the Fund's management. 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 includes examining, on a test basis, evidence supporting the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. An audit also includes assessing the accounting principles used and significant estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall financial statement presentation. We believe that our audits provide a reasonable basis for our 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, 2012 and 2011, and the changes in its net assets and its cash flows for the years then ended in conformity 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 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, 2012 and 2011

ASSETS	2012	2011
Assets:		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 392,738	\$ 284,065
Contributions receivable	3,208	3,208
Interest and dividends receivable	1,998	1,834
Due from affiliate	<u>4,490</u>	<u>2,628</u>
	<u>402,434</u>	<u>291,735</u>
Investments, at fair value:		
U.S. government and governmental agencies obligations	33,375	32,900
Corporate bonds	209,027	262,627
Common stock	262,083	197,030
Mutual and exchange-traded funds	<u>336,647</u>	<u>302,024</u>
Total investments	<u>841,132</u>	<u>794,581</u>
Total assets	<u>\$ 1,243,566</u>	<u>\$ 1,086,316</u>
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
Liabilities:		
Accounts payable	\$ 30,235	\$ 28,632
Net assets:		
Unrestricted	<u>1,213,331</u>	<u>1,057,684</u>
Total liabilities and net assets	<u>\$ 1,243,566</u>	<u>\$ 1,086,316</u>

(continues on page 25)

AGMA Relief Fund Audited Financials (continued from page 24)

Statements of Activities: For the years ended September 30, 2012 and 2011

	2012			2011		
	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Total	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Total
Revenue:						
Contributions:						
Theatre Authority, Inc.	\$ 17,500	\$ -	\$ 17,500	\$ 26,250	\$ 5,250	\$ 31,500
Corporations and foundations	85,791	-	85,791	25,000	-	25,000
Individuals	8,423	-	8,423	22,027	-	22,027
Holiday drive	17,004	-	17,004	19,149	-	19,149
Special events	7,482	-	7,482	9,019	-	9,019
Other	38	-	38	212	-	212
Net assets released from restriction:						
Satisfaction of purpose restriction	-	-	-	11,009	(11,009)	-
	<u>136,238</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>136,238</u>	<u>112,666</u>	<u>(5,759)</u>	<u>106,907</u>
Investment income:						
Interest and dividends	28,296	-	28,296	24,597	-	24,597
Unrealized gain (loss) on investments	89,688	-	89,688	(20,443)	-	(20,443)
Realized net gain (loss) on sale of investments	2,961	-	2,961	(705)	-	(705)
Net investment income	<u>120,945</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>120,945</u>	<u>3,449</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>3,449</u>
Total revenue	<u>257,183</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>257,183</u>	<u>116,115</u>	<u>(5,759)</u>	<u>110,356</u>
Expenses:						
Program services:						
Member assistance	30,004	-	30,004	29,603	-	29,603
Supporting services:						
General and administrative expenses	68,297	-	68,297	63,576	-	63,576
Fund-raising	<u>3,235</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>3,235</u>	<u>4,227</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>4,227</u>
Total expenses	<u>101,536</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>101,536</u>	<u>97,406</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>97,406</u>
Change in net assets	155,647	-	155,647	18,709	(5,759)	12,950
Net assets:						
Beginning of year	<u>1,057,684</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,057,684</u>	<u>1,038,975</u>	<u>5,759</u>	<u>1,044,734</u>
End of year	<u>\$ 1,213,331</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ 1,213,331</u>	<u>\$ 1,057,684</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ 1,057,684</u>

Statements of Cash Flows: For the years ended September 30, 2012 and 2011

	2012		2011	
Cash flows from operating activities:				
Change in net assets	\$ 155,647	\$ 12,950		
Adjustments to reconcile change in net assets to net cash provided by operating activities:				
Unrealized (gain) loss on investments	(89,688)	20,443		
Realized net (gain) loss on sale of investments	(2,961)	705		
Changes in operating assets and liabilities:				
(Increase) decrease in interest and dividends receivable	(164)	311		
(Increase) in dues from affiliate	(1,862)	(1,571)		
Increase in accounts payable	<u>1,604</u>	<u>1,724</u>		
Net cash provided by operating activities	<u>62,576</u>	<u>34,562</u>		
Cash flows from investing activities:				
Proceeds from redemption and sales of investments	77,264	189,826		
Purchase of investments	<u>(31,167)</u>	<u>(176,553)</u>		
Net cash provided by investing activities	<u>46,097</u>	<u>13,273</u>		
Net increase in cash and cash equivalents	108,673	47,835		
Cash and cash equivalents:				
Beginning of year	<u>284,065</u>	<u>236,230</u>		
End of year	<u>\$ 392,738</u>	<u>\$ 284,065</u>		



Lyric Opera of Chicago Ballet from the 1998 production of La Gioconda, left to right, seated: Aubrey Dvorak and Michael Ness; standing: Heather Hawk, Gretchen Klocke, Elise Flagg, Vanessa Valicillios, Sara Stewart, Ashley James, Maria Tallchief, Kenneth Von Heidecke, Verna Carter; Randy Herrera; back row: Sarah Dinmore, Anthony Corriea, Guillermo Leyva, Paul Abrahamson, Victor Barauskas and Lilla Makkai

IN MEMORIAM

*Richard Abrams, Stage
Manager*

*Lois Bewley, Dancer,
Choreographer*

Zheng Cao, Soloist

*Ruth Carron Staudinger,
Chorister*

Gloria Davy, Soloist

*Frederic Franklin, Dancer,
Choreographer*

Leo Goeke, Soloist

*Bronwen King, Actor/
Supernumerary*

Florence Kopleff, Soloist

Charles Kuestner, Chorister

David Lloyd, Soloist

Richard McKee, Soloist

Alexandra Z. Nehra, Chorister

Robert Presley, Chorister

Robert Ruddy, Chorister

Risë Stevens, Soloist

Maria Tallchief, Dancer

Paula Tennyson, Dancer

*Robert Van Valkenburg,
Chorister*

Roland Vazquez, Dancer

Sherry Zannoth, Soloist

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discounted movie, cultural and sporting events tickets, low interest credit cards and more. That's in addition to a multitude of other services available through Union Plus.

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Who Inspired You?



At the age of three, while visiting my grandmother's house, I saw a photo in a box of my mother as a young girl dressed in a tutu and tap shoes. It turned out to be her Halloween costume for that particular year. I remember focusing on that tutu, and thinking that is what I'm supposed to be wearing. Something about it just seemed right. My demands for ballet lessons quickly ensued, and I just never stopped demanding until I indeed was the one wearing the tutu. However, on this wonderful journey of becoming a professional

dancer there was one person who inspired me time and time again. For me, it was always Maria Tallchief.

The fascination with Maria Tallchief began in the fourth grade with a book report on her enchanting life.

Born in Oklahoma on an Indian reservation to a full blooded American-Indian father and a Scotch-Irish mother, Maria, as a young girl, went with her mother to Los Angeles to seriously study dance with Ernest Belcher and Bronislava Nijinska. After these exciting beginnings, she was soon whisked away as a young teen to dance with the world famous Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. Then, after much hard work and dedication, she rose to stardom with tremendous success in the title role of the Firebird for the New York City Ballet, where she became the Company's first prima ballerina and also was briefly married to its director, the great George Balanchine. As if that wasn't enough, she also was the first American dancer to be invited to dance with the Paris Opera Ballet; she was often an invited guest artist with American Ballet Theatre, including on the Company's Cold War tour of Russia; and she had a lasting friendship with Rudolf Nureyev as well as with Margot Fonteyn and Erik Bruhn.

Maria Tallchief's life captivated me like no other. In Junior High, I remember yet another book report about her life where I dressed up like her and gave an oral presentation to my class. I also recall the director of my dance school, the Garden State Ballet's



Fred Danieli, speaking of how Maria Tallchief was a one of a kind: "a prima ballerina assoluta." Mr. Danieli was himself a former star of Ballet Caravan, a predecessor company to the New York City Ballet. He was a very exacting teacher who did not give out praise lightly. If he said this about Maria, well, she must have been really something!

Years went by, and in the middle of my dance career, I found myself in Chicago. I went to an open call for the 1990 Lyric Opera of Chicago season, and—what do you know—there she was: Maria Tallchief, right up at the front table. At the time, she was the artistic director of the ballet at the opera house. Out of about two hundred dancers to choose from, Maria hired me for that season and for several seasons afterwards. What a treat to actually have the opportunity to work for the person whose life story had inspired me so much to be a dancer, and then to discover that in real life, she was really something! Maria never sugar coated it. If it wasn't up to the highest quality, then it wasn't fit for the stage. I recall her asking me and a partner to demonstrate a waltz section from the opera *Eugene Onegin*, which was choreographed by Kenneth Von Heidecke, a fantastic choreographer and a protégé of Maria. She abruptly stopped our waltzing midway through and said rather sharply: "Don't waltz like there is an audience. Waltz because you HAVE TO WALTZ! A theatre is like your church. Don't treat it like this is the circus. Never waltz like that again. Now, show it! Show the others how you HAVE TO WALTZ!" And, of course we did. I never forgot that lesson, as well as so many others. I will always remember Maria's passion and commitment to the art of dancing. She was truly one of a kind, and she will always be an inspiration for me.

Sara Stewart Schumann

AGMA Third Vice President and MMRC Chair

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Actors Federal Credit Union	(212) 869-8926 in NYC (8 p.m. EST) Outside of NYC: (800) 2.ACTORS (800-222-8677)	www.actorsfcu.com
The Actors Fund		www.actorsfund.org
The Actors Fund - National Office-NYC	(212) 221-7300	(800) 221-7303 seligson@actorsfund.org
The Actors Fund - Central Region	(312) 372-0989	(800) 221-7303 dtowne@actorsfund.org
The Actors Fund - Western Region	(323) 933-9244	(800) 221-7303 intakela@actorsfund.org
The Actors Work Program (www.actorsfund.org/services-and-programs/actors-fund-work-program)		
The Actors Work Program - New York	(212) 354-5480	blevinso@actorsfund.org
The Actors Work Program - Los Angeles	(323) 933-9244	csorenson@actorsfund.org
AGMA Relief Fund - Donations	(800) 543-AGMA (2462)	susan@musicalartists.org
AGMA Relief Fund - Intake East	(212) 221-7300 ext. 119	or (800) 221-7303
AGMA Relief Fund - Intake Midwest	(312) 372-0989	or (800) 221-7303
AGMA Relief Fund - Intake West	(323) 933-9244 ext. 55	or (800) 221-7303
AGMA Retirement and Health (Plan A, AGMA Retirement Plan and AGMA Health Plan)	(212) 765-3664	www.agmaretirement-health.org agmaretirement_health@yahoo.com
AGMA Health Plan B (“Administrative Services Only”)	(866) 263-1185 (Toll free) (516) 396-5543 (Outside of the U.S.)	www.asonet.com
Artists Health Insurance Resource Center - NY	(917) 281-5975	www.ahirc.org
Artists Health Insurance Resource Center - LA	(323) 933-9244, ext. 432	ahirc@actorsfund.org
Career Transition for Dancers - New York	(212) 764-0172	info@careertransition.org
Career Transition for Dancers - Chicago	(312) 666-0234	info-chicago@careertransition.org
Career Transition for Dancers - Los Angeles	(323) 549-6660	info-la@careertransition.org www.careertransition.org
TEIGIT (The Entertainment Industry Group Insurance Trust)	(800) 886-7504	www.teigit.com; teigit@teigit.com
Union Privilege/Union Plus	(800) 472-2005	(202) 293-5330 www.unionplus.org