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In This Issue

By *Tim Smith, MMRC Chair, AGMA Governor, Chorister*



In this issue, we bring you stories and advice from some of the many members who discussed “Our Art Goes On—AGMA moving into the future.”

AGMA’s Third Vice President, George Scott, reminds us to keep our Art alive and focused. Dancer Matthew Donnell talks about the organizing of Sarasota Ballet—a great example of how AGMA will go on. Soloist Osceola Davis, a frequent contributor to *AGMAZine*, shares with us how she found herself in music. A peek into AGMA’s future is reflected in the stories of three members of Young Artist’s Programs (YAP) and how they are building their careers. We are also fortunate to have a re-print from the April 2017 KUSC Members Guide about the LA Opera’s training program.

We start this issue with some thoughts about the recent efforts to significantly decrease or eliminate government funding for the Arts, from our National Executive Director, Len Egert. President James Odom discusses the recent referenda on increasing both the Initiation Fee and Basic Dues.

Highlighting the Area News section are updates from Pittsburgh, Washington/Baltimore, Southern California, the Northwest, San Francisco, and Chicago/Midwest. Our issue closes with a way you can help your fellow members keep going on. The AGMA Relief Fund provides support and temporary financial assistance to members who are in need. The AGMA Relief Fund depends on your generosity to assist our members in need. See how groups have been creative in raising funds for this worthwhile member service—you will also find information about working with the New York office, should you wish to create an event in your Area.

I am happy to report that the significant overhaul that AGMA performed on the website has been completed and the site is performing far better than expected. The revision has truly brought AGMA into the 21st century and the website has never been easier to navigate—regardless of the device/platform you use. I have to admit it was kind of cool to see a full view of a CBA from my mobile phone. If you have not done so, please check out the improvements. That being said, we are always looking for pictures of our members doing what they do best—rehearsing and performing—so please, send in your pictures!

The National Office and your elected leaders are always willing to help any AGMA member and direct them to the proper place for help. Never be afraid to reach out and ask a question or raise a concern.

In addition to this issue of *AGMAZine*, remember to check out AGMA on the web (www.musicalartists.org), AGMA on Facebook and AGMA on Twitter (@AGMusicalArtist). Stay connected to your colleagues; get involved with your union; consider serving as a delegate in your shop or joining your contract negotiating team. AGMA grows stronger with your valuable input. As always, we invite you to write an article for *AGMAZine* and include some photographs to go with your article. All submissions should be sent for consideration to dbaker@musicalartists.org. We would also like to SEE YOU! Please send photos of AGMA members doing AGMA work—share your rehearsal and backstage photos.

AGMAZine is YOUR magazine. No issue could be possible without contributions (blurbs/thoughts, articles, and pictures) from YOU, the member. I appreciate that you make the time to share your stories with us. I must also express my extreme gratitude to MMRC and AGMA’s Denise Baker for their tireless work on *AGMAZine*. All involved are hoping that YOU, the membership, enjoys what you see. Thank you so much, everyone, for your part in making this issue a reality—and enjoy the Summer!

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National Executive Director's Report

By Len Egert



In this issue of *AGMAZine* we re-confirm the conviction that “Our Art Will Go On.” Throughout my career, I have had the great honor of representing multiple artists in a variety of media—stage, film, television and fine arts. Recently, my focus with AGMA has been for Artists in Opera, Dance and Concert forums.

However, there is one overriding theme for all artists—they are passionate about their work and are compelled to create. We, as a society, are much better off for this passion and drive.

In many respects, AGMA, like other performing artist unions, helps artists to focus on their creative work. The union sets standards and bargains for contractual terms that guarantee wages, benefits, safety, and other acceptable working conditions. We focus on the business side so that members can concentrate on the creative side—their rehearsals, performances, and perfecting their craft. Importantly, AGMA also monitors potential legislation that may affect our membership as a whole. While our Union does not engage in partisan politics, we will take political positions and advocate for artists' rights.

Most recently, AGMA has strongly opposed efforts to significantly decrease or eliminate government funding for the Arts. Efforts remain underway to eliminate the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), as well as to privatize the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB). Congressional budget proposals and

corresponding lobbying activity indicate renewed efforts to significantly reduced amounts for funding these organizations, many of which provide key grants for Arts organizations.

You may have seen previous postings on our website and Facebook pages asking you to sign a petition urging President Trump to support the arts in America. Further, we have joined with a coalition of entertainment unions to encourage members of Congress, at a minimum, to maintain current funding levels for the NEA, the NEH; and to prevent privatization of the CPB. A joint letter from the coalition was sent to Congress in the Spring.

AGMA also recruited a number of our signatory companies, including the Metropolitan Opera, to sign onto a joint letter to Congress. In a show of Labor-Management solidarity on this issue, the union-employer coalition urged members to maintain current funding levels for the NEA, NEH, and the CPB in next year's budget. The group emphasized the good jobs supported by the three institutions in every state. The letter also cautioned Congress that private funding alone would not fill the void created by the loss of NEA, NEH, and CPB funding (For more information see www.musicalartists.org/employers-and-entertainment-unions-urge-full-funding-for-the-arts/).

Through renewed efforts in negotiations, contract enforcement, safety compliance, and public advocacy, AGMA will seek improvements so that its members can continue creating beautiful performances for audiences to enjoy throughout the United States and the world. The shows must go on! ♦

ORGANIZING UPDATE: AGMA IS GROWING!

Since last March, AGMA has added two new ballet companies to its roster: the Sarasota Ballet in Florida and the Sacramento Ballet in California. As we go to press, we have a third company—Oregon Ballet Theatre (“OBT”) located in Portland—where an overwhelming majority of Artists supports AGMA representation. We have asked management to voluntarily recognize the Union as the exclusive bargaining agent for this group. In the event OBT declines, we are prepared to file with the National Labor Relations Board to hold a representation election.

Artists at these three companies have recognized the benefits of collective action to gain a voice in their workplace. I congratulate and welcome them as they join AGMA's growing membership throughout the country. We are working diligently to negotiate first contracts at Sarasota Ballet and Sacramento Ballet and obtain official recognition at OBT. If you know of any Artists interested in learning more about the benefits of AGMA representation, please ask them to contact AGMA's National Office at (212) 265-3687 (all inquiries will be held in strict confidence). ♦

FROM THE PRESIDENT JAMES ODOM



The election results are in. The new Board of Governors, the 78th in AGMA's history, was seated at the first meeting of the Board year on June 26. Two referenda, one increasing the Initiation Fee and one increasing annual Basic Dues, were passed.

The last time Basic Dues were increased was 1991, twenty-six years ago. Not coincidentally, that was about the same time that the elected leadership of AGMA undertook the task of reforming the Board of Governors. The primary goal of Board reform? To ensure that all AGMA members, regardless of where they lived and worked or what work they did, were represented on the Board and had a voice in setting the goals and policies of the union.

The Board was also concerned about two other issues: AGMA's precarious financial situation and the ineffectiveness of the professional staff. It took time and dedicated work on the parts of both the elected leadership and the professional staff to accomplish, but AGMA now has a professional staff that is responsive to the needs of the membership and works diligently to ensure that contracts are negotiated and enforced. And, for the moment, AGMA is financially stable.

Financial stability, however, cannot be taken for granted. Not all of the careful budgeting and cost savings efforts in the world can make

up for the fact that a dollar today simply does not buy what it did twenty-six years ago. Over the years we have added positions to our full-time staff and filled those positions with experienced labor professionals who off-set the higher labor costs by bringing the benefit of better representation for our members. We have upgraded computer systems and software that has paid off in greater efficiency and productivity of the professional staff. Most recently, we completely redesigned our website in order to make it far more user friendly than it was previously.

All of these improvements were made carefully and with consideration as to how they would affect the budget. As we look forward, we continue to see areas where we can do better. We continue to see new challenges that will require more effort. Those efforts and challenges will require more capital as we attempt to continue to pursue our goal of ever-better member representation. We will continue to be frugal, conservative stewards of the members' money.

And we hope that it will be another twenty-six years before we have to raise Basic Dues again.

There is going to be one more change. When AGMA was founded in 1936, the Board of Governors was concerned that members who were often "on the road"—sometimes on a different continent—would have difficulty receiving dues statements and remitting payments. To address that concern, the Board established a 90-day "grace period" for dues

payments. Over the years, there was some reluctance to change that policy. But today we live in a society where communication is instantaneous, and money can be transferred with just a few clicks on the computer or even your phone. For some time now, AGMA has been accepting dues payments by credit card, both on the website and by phone for those who prefer to call. It is so common now as to be unremarked upon for AGMA members to check their email on their phones and tablets during breaks in rehearsals; they are no longer dependent upon their hard copy mail reaching them wherever they may be. Consequently, the Board has, over the last several years, tried to move towards a more business-like policy for dues collection.

The due date for annual Basic Dues payments will remain January 1. However, beginning in 2018, the date of suspension for non-payment of Basic Dues will be February 1, or the first business day thereafter. Suspension will be an automatic, administrative action. The fee for reinstatement from suspension will remain \$250.

The increases in the Basic Dues and the Initiation Fee are not equal to the cost of living increases over the last twenty-six years, but they will help ensure AGMA's financial stability as we continually work to improve the workplace lives of AGMA members.

[Editor's Note: To enjoy the full benefits AGMA has to offer (including your ability to work in many states), members must be in good standing.] ♦

THE NEWS ON DUES

Beginning in 2018, the annual Basic Dues will be \$100. There is no reduction for prepayment of future dues.

The due date for Basic Dues payments is January 1.

The suspension date for non-payment of Basic Dues is February 1, or the first business date thereafter. In 2018, any member who has not paid their dues by close of business (5:30 p.m. ET) will be suspended.

The fee for reinstatement from suspension is \$250. To be reinstated from suspension, a member must pay the reinstatement fee plus whatever dues and/or fees are owed.

Our Art Will Go On

By George Scott, Third Vice President, Northwest Area Chair, Chorister



I am sure that many of us involved in the performing arts are feeling some levels of anxiety. This may be due to the present political environment that has had an extreme affect on our psyche. I feel like I don't have a level footing on the ground and my body is floating in a suspended space. I have been in this space before and I don't like it. However, I do believe that we as singers, instrumentalists, dancers, actors, writers have a responsibility to keep our art alive and focused. I know that many of us are very concerned at potential funding cuts to the National Endowment for the Arts and Humanities, and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. This may happen, but I believe if we keep our hearts on the relevancy of the artistic gifts that have been given to us, we will prevail. Great art and great music have survived great wars and regimes. We are the gatekeepers of that legacy. So our art will go on, and we should never allow anything to stop it, not even you know who. ♦

The Unionization of The Sarasota Ballet

By Matthew Donnell, AGMA Governor, MMRC Member, Dancer



In January, I was contacted by members of The Sarasota Ballet who had heard about my early involvement leading the Kansas City Ballet to unionize. Just as my colleagues and I had wished to solidify and secure the future of Kansas City Ballet, these dancers also wished to show their commitment to their company and truly bring it to the national level. I was honored to be invited by National Executive Director Len Egert to join him and New York Area Dance Executive Griff Braun on a visit to talk to the members of the company. What followed was a most beautiful story of commitment and love for the art of ballet that is one for the record books.

In a time when many higher-ups in our government wish to weaken and even do away with unions, The Sarasota Ballet's experience shines as a beacon of light. The dancers and management are to be applauded for the grace and unity they exhibited in choosing to become an AGMA company.

I reached out to members of The Sarasota Ballet to learn about their experience.

Matthew Donnell (MD): What do you love the most about The Sarasota Ballet?

Sarasota Ballet Artists (SBA): I have always loved the amazing repertoire that we do here as well as the wonderful closeness of the dancers. The Sarasota Ballet is made up of some of the nicest and funniest people I know. It makes me happy to realize that the people I dance with are like family—especially when we tour.

MD: In what ways do you think the work the Sarasota Ballet is producing is important to Sarasota and the country?

SBA: I think the work we do here is so important because it's historic. A lot of the works we do are revivals that haven't been performed in decades and are close to being lost. It's really great being a part of reviving such special works by such legends. People have flown across the world to come see Sarasota Ballet perform works by Sir Frederick Ashton that are no longer being performed by any other company.

MD: Why did you wish to become members of AGMA?

SBA: I feel like it just became a very clear next step for the company—to help maintain and protect the growth and longevity of the SB and its dancers. The management was not abiding by basic rules. On our end, however, the rules were becoming too restrictive. For example, in our contract, we are not given a single sick day before we are docked pay. As dancers, we felt that there was no one protecting us, and even the little things we would ask for would be blown out of proportion. We needed the help of someone who would understand us and fight for us. We felt we could find that with AGMA.

MD: What were you surprised to discover during early talks with the AGMA representatives?

SBA: How welcoming they were! Everyone had a wonderful, loving, family vibe—a willingness and eagerness to lend a helping hand and be there for us during this transition. We discovered that everything is negotiable, and not all contracts are the same, though there are set standards that all companies are held to.

MD: What fears/concerns did you have?

SBA: There were those who didn't really have many fears or concerns, but there were some who had a lot. We feared being put out of our jobs. We feared that someone would spill and tell

management that we were organizing. We feared that the company would be divided. Some feared the director would leave. Yet, there was a lot of hope as well. Basically, it came to a point where we felt that this was the next logical and necessary progression for the company.

MD: How did AGMA assuage those fears/concerns?

SBA: Everyone at AGMA was so well-informed and clearly explained everything from the process of joining the Union, to the dues, to the contracts. It made us all feel very secure and safe. It was nice to be understood and respected as adults. It was encouraging to hear that the concerns we have are not petty or silly, they are legitimate concerns that we have a right to have addressed. We felt very comfortable putting our faith in AGMA.

MD: Management didn't insist upon bringing in the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) to conduct the union vote. This is rare. Did this surprise you?

SBA: We were surprised, but probably more taken aback by the fact that they moved up our union vote. One major concern was that the process would be stalled and prolonged, but it wasn't. I think it was very clear though that we had a large majority in favor of the union, and management could understand our reasoning for this. It's a good thing for them as well. It will help them achieve more national recognition, and a higher caliber of dancer will be more drawn to being here knowing they will have a contract protecting them and their futures. Being an AGMA company will only make the Sarasota Ballet more attractive.

MD: What are you most inspired by/looking forward to now that you are a member of AGMA?

SBA: Again, I think this has a lot to do with the national recognition and what doors will now be opened. Also, there is a little 16-year-old inside of me who is very excited to finally be getting a union card and getting to work for a union company. Always been a goal/dream of mine.

MD: What does it feel like to know that your fellow artists are all standing with you, not only in The Sarasota Ballet, but also now around the country and across the world due to your new AGMA family?

SBA: I love it! It feels so inspiring! It really feels like we are a true part of the dance community now, which is extremely small, we all know, but sometimes can be very isolating. I think this really opens the doors to some very exciting possibilities!

MD: The theme of this *AGMAzine* issue is "Our Art Will Go On." Do you have a message of hope that you would like to share for the times in which we are living?

SBA: (How Celine Dion!) Yeah, I really think in this day and age anything is possible. All fires start with one small spark! I honestly never in a million years thought I would get to be a part of something like this—something so much bigger than just me, something of such historic stature. It really inspires me to do more, make a bigger change in the world, make a bigger difference. So don't be discouraged. When you don't get your dream job with your dream company right after high school, things always have a way of working out for the best. And just maybe you will land somewhere and get to be a part of making that place your dream company and a destination company for future generations! ♦

My Experience as a Growing Artist

By Ian Koziara, First-Year Tenor, Lindemann Young Artist Development Program



Even after nearly a full season working at the Met, I find myself often feeling unworthy as I walk to the stage door and swipe my ID each day. Nothing in particular qualifies me or disqualifies anyone else my age from working within these storied walls and yet, the dream I'm currently living sometimes feels like one reserved for those older or more seasoned than me. My background isn't remarkable: I'm from Chicago, went to school in Wisconsin and Texas, and then, because Maestro Levine saw something in me, I came immediately to New York City. That was not a call I was going to turn down. The primary honor of being a Lindemann Young Artist has to do with the people that, intentionally or not, will shape my life and career. Just yesterday, I shot the breeze with Francesca Zambello and Dolora Zajick, coached with Anne Murray, talked about score editions with Jay

Hunter Morris, was just a little bit too shy to introduce myself to Yannick Nézet-Séguin when he paraded into List Hall with seemingly limitless passion and energy, and explored the depths of Mozart's secco recits with one of the Met's many incredible coaches. All the while, my amazing teacher Frank Lopardo and my awesome boss Michael Heaston help me shape my career, hopefully for many years to come. The Met, much like any institution at the pinnacle of its field, defines itself by the incredible people who work in its halls just as much as the history it once housed. I am privileged to grow as a young singing artist witnessing this peerless artistic institution at work. ♦

Operatic Speed Walking

By Nicholas Brownlee, Domingo-Colburn-Stein Young Artist Program



“LA Opera’s Domingo-Colburn-Stein Young Artist Program will help ensure the highest standards of performance not only at LA Opera, but at opera companies around the world.” -Plácido Domingo

It’s a Tuesday afternoon, and I’m speed walking through the rehearsal floor of the Dorothy Chandler pavilion, released ten minutes early from a Young Artist concert run-through, and just on track to make the start of that evening’s staging rehearsal for *The Tales of Hoffmann* where I am singing the role of Crespel. The speed walking began that day at 10:30 a.m. and looks like it will stretch to 11:00 p.m. I wouldn’t want it any other way.

For most aspiring young American singers, there seems to be a clear path to an operatic career. You go to an undergraduate program and get a B.M., you go to a Master’s program and get an M.M., and then move on to a full-year Young Artist Program (YAP) with an opera company in America, or a Young Artist Studio at a European opera house. When presented with this path, I initially balked, and thought, “why would I need a continuation of my graduate degree? Can’t I just...go to work?” I have since come to learn just how ignorant that thought was, and how valuable this YAP bridge has proven as I now embark on my professional career.

The most marked difference going from graduate school into a YAP was absolutely the sense that there were no more “due dates.” My end goals were now opening nights and concerts, not papers or juries that relied on me to provide my personal best, which ultimately only I could be held accountable for. The only grade that matters in the professional singing world is the re-engagement, and the quality of work I can provide in that moment, of that performance, on that night. While my singing degrees are responsible for the teaching of the how to make those moments happen, my time as a YAP singer has called on me to actually produce those moments, which have been the first building blocks of my career.

As a member of the Domingo-Colburn-Stein Young Artist Program at Los Angeles Opera (LAO), we are given access to some of the highest level artistic and musical staff in the country, including singing under the batons of James Conlon and Plácido Domingo, dramatic coaching with Paul Curran, musical coaching with Jeremy Frank and Nino Sanidzke, and the invaluable mentorship of Joshua Winograde. One of the most pivotal aspects of the LAO YAP is that we additionally get voice lessons with Dr. Stephen King, continuing my vocal progress from when I worked with him at Rice University in Houston, where I did graduate school. Most notably, I have seen a difference in our personal working relationship from graduate school to my time now as a YAP, where the repertoire in lessons before was delineated for me, and now is almost entirely self-driven based on whatever my current audition/performing needs might be. This independence has shown me the value of knowing my abilities, where if I walked in with Wagner during graduate school, I likely would have been justifiably labeled as overzealous, and now if I were to bring that repertoire in as a YAP singer, we would have a serious conversation about appropriateness and be able to trust my judgment in that process. This demand of artistic ownership from the members of the YAP is applicable to every facet of our training here, from the coachings with Jeremy Frank to which scenes we will be working with Paul Curran. We have access to the greatest musical and artistic talent here, but it is only through them demanding our independent best that we can truly grow and benefit from their expertise.



Marta Domingo directs Diana Damarau as Antonia and Nicholas Brownlee as Crespel.

In my three years here I performed ten roles (fifty-five performances) and five covers, not including outside performing opportunities that I was also lucky enough to have. The sheer amount of repertoire that I was assigned through the program is invaluable to have going forth, knowing that I performed it all at one of the biggest opera houses in America, and with the best possible artistic staff and musical colleagues. If there is one thing I am sure of, it is that I am not the same singer or performer as three years ago, and that is directly attributable to my time at a YAP at Los Angeles Opera.

It’s 11:00 p.m. and rehearsal has just been called for *The Tales of Hoffmann*. We had been staging Antonia’s death scene and as the room broke to pack up their water bottles and remove rehearsal shoes, I found myself in a conversation with the director of exactly how to catch Antonia as she faints into the arms of her father, being played by myself. The director happened to be Marta Domingo, and as her husband Plácido Domingo stepped down off the conductor’s podium to put his jacket on, the Antonia, played by Diana Damarau, leaned in to practice the fall with me. Vittorio

Grigolo, who was performing the role of Hoffman, stood off a little to the side, also listening, and a fellow YAP member snapped a photo of the moment to send to me (photo, above). It is because of the trust, support, and investment of the entire LA Opera Young Artist Program that I could find myself in that esteemed company that night, and more importantly, have the confidence in myself to know I can step up professionally to that moment and really belong in that rehearsal room. The speed walking through the halls of the Dorothy Chandler pavilion may be a close for me now, but I can unequivocally say I am prepared for the rat race to come of this crazy, amazing, high pressure opera career. ♦

A Privileged Purpose

By Michelle Bradley, Lindemann Young Artist Development Program



I can't believe that I am completing my second year in the Metropolitan Opera's Lindemann Young Artist Development Program (LYADP). This is definitely a place where I never saw myself. I have always loved music and singing, but at best I thought I would stay home in Kentucky and be a choir director at my church.

Working in the Met's young artist program has been an awesome experience to say the least. I have grown immensely as an artist, formed wonderful friendships and musical partnerships, and I am living in one of the most successful periods of my life.

I consider it a blessing to wake up and do the work I love. I never dread walking into the Met stage door every day. I never know which famous opera singer I'll see. Whether it's Roberto Alagna rummaging through a stack of papers at the stage door, standing with Anna Netrebko in an elevator, watching Plácido Domingo eat a sandwich in the cafeteria, or seeing Violeta Urmana styling her hair in the bathroom. I only hope that they don't notice when I stop and stare at them and wonder if they know how amazing they are. I work with the great Maestro Levine on a weekly basis and I have had the experience of singing on the Met stage under his baton. Being in the LYADP has afforded me these opportunities. I have won competitions, including the prestigious George London Vocal Competition and have traveled the world singing in France, Germany, and soon, Russia.

After overcoming the initial shock and excitement of being accepted into this elite program, the work begins. During the past two years I have committed to this program, those years have definitely been a sacrifice and a joyful one at that. There are countless rehearsals and even rehearsals for rehearsals, but no one will ever say I don't know my music. The study of an operatic aria or score is detail-oriented and meticulous. My colorful coachings with Ken Noda have prepared me for numerous performance opportunities, my favorite being the Parks Concert Series, which took place in July 2016, and my debut performance of Strauss' *Four Last Songs* in Miami, Florida.

I have unending support from various colleagues. Natalia Katyukova always provides a listening ear and teaches me to patiently think through some of my music's most difficult passages while my pianist, Valeriya Polunina, is the one who knows me best through our late night study sessions of new repertoires. Clare Avery likes to put a smile on my face by singing "Michelle, ma belle." Finally, this year has been one of great change and important decisions for me. Our new director, Michael Heaston, has an open door policy that has been a great help for me. I appreciate having someone to talk to.

I have worked many jobs in my life to keep myself afloat but I am glad to be in a place where I am building a career. I am supported and most of all respected. Every day I go to the Met, there are people who are glad to see me and I am glad to be seen. I have a purpose that I get to fulfill each day by doing what I love. ♦

This article originally appeared in the April 2017 KUSC Members Guide. Reprinted with permission.

A SONG OF SUCCESS

LA Opera's 10 Year-Old Domingo-Colburn-Stein Young Artist Program

Trains Tomorrow's Opera Stars

By Sheila Tepper & Kelsey McConnell

"Competitive" might be an understatement when it comes to getting into LA Opera's Domingo-Colburn-Stein Young Artist Program. Aspiring participants submit applications, audio recordings, and then, if all goes brilliantly, progress through multiple rounds of live auditions. Hundreds of aspiring Carmens and Don José's are turned away each year. From the pool of approximately 500-600 original applicants, 5-6 are accepted into the program each year: approximately one percent.

But for those lucky few singers and pianists who are granted the two- to three-year paid residencies, an experience unlike any other awaits. It's rigorous to be sure, but there's also an entire team of coaches and staff members tailoring instructions to each participant, helping them achieve their own potential.

Nino Sanikidze is the Young Artist Program head coach. She calls YAP "extraordinarily successful," especially considering it only started a decade ago. "In these ten years," she says, "we've raised singers who have gone on to sing on the world's major stages and win major competitions. We're very excited to have such quick success."

There are 12 participants in the program at the moment—two of them pianists and the rest tenors, sopranos, baritones, mezzo-sopranos
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A Song of Success (continued from page 9)

and bass-baritones. Six of the program's singers appeared in LA Opera's production of *Salome* and several of them will also perform in *The Tales of Hoffmann*, which ran through April 15th at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion.

"We think one of the biggest reasons why program participants are so successful is because they have experienced the real opera singer life," says Sanikidze, who trained in her native Tbilisi, Georgia. "They've worked with esteemed conductors such as James Conlon and Plácido Domingo, and sung with the LA Opera orchestra and chorus on stage. We think that's one of the big components of their success."

One tenor living that real opera singer life during *Salome* was program participant Josh Wheeker, who portrayed one of the Five Jews. "It's only 90 measures of music," he said, "but within that 90 measures we're all arguing differing points about theology, so



©Ken Howard/LA Opera

Six of the Young Artist Program's singers appeared in recent production of *Salome*.

we're yelling over each other. We probably spent 15 hours on coaching before we even got to rehearsal."

Baritone Theo Hoffman also sang in *Salome*. He said he was looking for a change when he was accepted to the program. "I had spent my entire life and school years in New York City, and coming out here has really expanded my world view and given me another angle from which to look at this business. The international casts that LA Opera brings in teach us so much. We're young artists just coming out of school, and we only know what we know. But then going from a Strauss cast to a Verdi cast—we don't see these kinds of singers when we're in school, so it's great to expand our bubble."

Hoffman acknowledges that similar programs exist elsewhere in the US and in Europe, but he thinks LA Opera's Domingo-Colburn-Stein Young Artist Program is singular. "To have Domingo's deep wealth of experience matched with the forward-thinking innovation of [LA Opera President and CEO] Christopher Koelsch is unique. And the program is so young that there's a lot of space to grow in it and see what works for each individual. It's not set in stone as so many programs are. And, it's a friendly company. I don't know how to quantify that, but it's just not like other companies I've dealt with."

Tenor Carlos Enrique Santelli says it's because the program is tailored to each artist that he's been able to find his voice. "Coming out of school I think it's pretty typical to not have a solid understanding of your strengths and weaknesses. You have a general knowledge of how to sing and how to interpret different styles, but here I've had free reign to experiment and find a repertoire that fits me."

All of the singers in the program are greatly gifted. Obviously. But why choose *opera*?

"There's no real art form quite like it," says tenor Brian Michael Moore. "It incorporates all of the other arts forms. There's the movement aspect of dancing and using your entire body to sing, as well as the visual aspects of costumes, sets and make-up. Plus, everything wonderful about music and acting."

Moore followed his sister onto the stage after seeing her in high school musicals. "I felt a calling to go up there and perform in front of people. When I was taking voice lessons, I learned both classical music and musicals, but my voice always lent itself to being more of a classical voice. Plus, I tried to sing *Livin' on a Prayer* by Bon Jovi one time and it was just awful, so I knew that wasn't my route."

The participants say that unlike college, where they had a range of classes to worry about on top of other distractions, in the Domingo-Colburn-Stein Young Artist Program, they're able to concentrate on vocal technique and other aspect of opera performance (they're trained in acting and even fake combat) with a singular focus.

"The job of each singer is just to hone their skills," says Sanikidze, "hence the quick development. Since September, everybody has made huge progress."

"There's this vocabulary that really clicks with us," says Wheeker, "and I've learned more about my voice in the last six months than I had in the last seven years of singing." He credits that rapid rise to the caliber of instruction within the program, especially renowned voice teacher Stephen King, who also chairs vocal studies at the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University.

Wheeker and the other Young Artists, plus Plácido Domingo, soprano Sondra Radvanovsky and distinguished alumni of the program joined together for one night of arias, duets and ensembles on April 1st at *Domingo's Young Artists Concert*. And then it's off to a life of performing around the world for these stars of tomorrow.

Kelsey McConnell is KUSC's Assistant Program Director and Executive Producer of Arts Alive, Saturdays at 8AM on KUSC.

Sheila Tepper is a contributor for the Arts Alive blog. ♦

Finding Myself in Music

By Osceola Davis, Soloist



My parents loved music. My older siblings performed together as a troupe, and when I came along I had to join in, but what would be my instrument? My eldest sister played the piano. My next sister played the violin and was a wonderful orator. My brother played the violin and also sang. So, what would I do?

Seeing them, I used the process of elimination. I didn't want to think about my fingers tickling the ivories while sitting for hours to practice, nor did I want to have to carry around an instrument, that would be too bothersome. Would I like to recite dramatic poetry? Nope, because I loved the way my sister recited and I couldn't see myself coming anywhere near her. On the other hand, my brother didn't carry anything nor did he worry about an instrument when he sang. OK, Yes! That sounded appealing. Therefore, during pre-Kindergarten I began to sing little songs I heard on the radio, in church, and from recordings my parents had around the house. It was fun to be one of the performing Davis children.

As years passed and my older siblings were going their individual ways, I was still singing. I took legitimate voice lessons. Eventually I had a younger brother who was given piano lessons in order for me to have a 24/7 accompanist. We had fun rehearsing and giving performances in our community. He looked so cute sitting on phone books in his bow tie and tails while I was in my long chiffon gown. It was when I won First Place in our local Shriner's competition at age 17 and then went on to take Third Place in their national competition that the thought of pursuing singing became a serious possibility to me. I later acquired a B.A. in Music and Music Education from the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, PA—known then as the Philadelphia Musical Academy—and went back to school for operatic instruction at Curtis Institute, also in Philadelphia. After a few weeks of substitute teaching and a few valuable months in the Metropolitan Opera Studio, I went to Germany to audition for the lead role of Rosina in Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*. Much to my surprise, I was hired on the spot to sing that very role. I remained in Germany for many exciting years, often thinking of my path to that point from my humble beginnings.

Ten years later I remembered one of my ultimate goals: I wanted to perform on the stage in New York's Metropolitan Opera House. After accepting their invitation to audition, which by the way was accompanied by Maestro James Levine and operatic coach Sylvia Olden Lee, I was offered the role of Mozart's Queen of the Night in *The Magic Flute*. Wow! What an opportunity! What a debut! That wasn't anywhere in my thought: I expected to be offered a soubrette role such as a young character whose name ended with an "ina," like, Rosina, Despina, Zerlina, etc. But to be offered something regal, something majestic as a queen, was another surprise. I felt truly honored to have been considered for that role. Needless to say, I accepted the contract and I've enjoyed many dinners out as a result of successfully portraying that woman on major stages, at home and abroad.



OSCEOLA DAVIS METROPOLITAN OPERA
Osceola Davis as Queen of the Night in the Metropolitan Opera's The Magic Flute.

As I look back, I am very thankful to God for my talent, my mentors and my success. No child should ever be denied the opportunity to develop creative talent(s). How sad to know that some people want to be entertained and yet are reluctant to support the performing arts, something that is necessary for peaceful humanity. This is one reason we need AGMA, to assist in maintaining the artistic balance in our society.

Over the many years I was on AGMA's Board, it was a great joy to spearhead and to chair MMRC's Pre-AGMA Awareness Committee. Having worked in non-American opera houses, I feel it's very important for potential AGMA members all over the U.S. to receive a mini orientation of their future union.

AGMA is a beautiful union. It will always be very special to me. ♦

Union Plus Scholarship

Helping Union Families with the cost of college.

Scholarship Timeline: Applications due January 31, 2018. Applications reviewed February to May; Awards announced May 31.

Steps: Review the eligibility criteria. Create an online account and login. Complete and submit your application. (*Note—You may return to your application as many times as needed to complete prior to the deadline.)

Information and application: www.unionplus.org/benefits/money/union-plus-scholarships

AREA NEWS

PITTSBURGH

Pittsburgh Opera Ends Season with World Premiere About a Local Legend

By Bill Buchanan, Pittsburgh Area Chair, Chorister



On April 29, Pittsburgh Opera presented Daniel Sonenberg's *The Summer King: The Josh Gibson Story*, the company's first world premiere in its 78-year history. Directed by Sam Helfrich, the predominantly African American cast included Alfred Walker in the title role,

Denyce Graves in her Pittsburgh Opera debut as Gibson's girlfriend Grace, current resident artists Eric Ferring, Taylor Raven, and Brian Vu, resident artist alumni Phillip Gay, Jasmine Muhammad, and Sean Panikkar, Pittsburgh favorite Ray Very, and choristers Scott Cuva, George Milosh, and Mark Spondike as the Mariachi Singers.

Josh Gibson, one of baseball's greatest players, was sometimes referred to as "the black Babe Ruth" and is one of a select few Negro League players to be inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame. Gibson, who grew up in Pittsburgh, played for two Pittsburgh Negro League teams—the Homestead Grays and the Pittsburgh Crawfords—as well as for teams in Mexico and other Latin American countries where there was better pay, greater fame, and less discrimination. He was twice the Negro League batting champion and led the league in home runs three times. Gibson is purported to have had a batting average of .440 one season and to have hit a ball out of Yankee Stadium, a distance of about 500 feet. It was thought that he might be the player to break the color barrier, but that honor went to Jackie Robinson just three months after Gibson's untimely death at age 35.

The opera features African American Pittsburghers such as Gus Greenlee (who owned the historic Crawford Grill and the Pittsburgh Crawfords) and Wendell Smith (a reporter for the renowned African-American newspaper *The Pittsburgh Courier*) as well as teammates Sam Bankhead and Cool Papa Bell. The set, a deconstructed baseball stadium made of black steel and wood, is dominated by three large LED screens similar to those found in ballparks and on which are projected images that help tell the story. Coincidentally, Pittsburgh Opera's headquarters where the opera was rehearsed was once home to the Westinghouse Air Brake Company where Josh Gibson worked as a janitor.

The show opened to great audience response necessitating numerous bows for the company, the creative team, and the composer. George B. Parous wrote in *Pittsburgh in the Round*, "As usual, the singers in the magnificent Pittsburgh Opera Chorus, under the direction of Mark Trawka, were a prominent and very successful feature of the evening." Writing in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, Robert Croan said that *The Summer King* is "a serious, thought-provoking theater piece, musically sound and emotionally moving" citing "superb musical realization under (Pittsburgh Opera Music Director) Antony Walker."

Michigan Opera Theatre in Detroit plans to mount the production in May 2018. ♦



Pictured after The Summer King sitzprobe are, left to right, front row: chorister David Jennings Smith, resident artist Brian Vu, choristers/soloists George Milosh and Scott Cuva; middle row: chorister Robert Pruitt, former resident artist Jasmine Muhammad, soloist and former Pittsburgh Opera chorister Ray Very, former resident artist Sean Panikkar, soloist Alfred Walker, resident artist Taylor Raven, chorister/soloist Mark Spondike; back row: resident artist Eric Ferring, former resident artist Phillip Gay, director Sam Helfrich, soloist Denyce Graves, composer Daniel Sonenberg, choristers Denise Sheffey Powell and Kym Laret, and Chorus Master Mark Trawka.



*The Pittsburgh Opera Chorus heads to Veracruz, Mexico, to open Act II of Daniel Sonenberg's *The Summer King*.*

WASHINGTON/BALTIMORE



Chorus members from **Washington National Opera's** production of *Madama Butterfly*, left to right, first row: Nicholas Houhoulis, Denise Gulley, Amanda Palmiero, Mary Beth Verchot, Courtney Kalbacker; Erin Passmore and Megan Kellogg and in front, all in white, dancer Nancy Flores; second row: Angela Butler, Marta Kirilloff Barber, Luciana Cecille Carter, Annadaire Ingram; third row: Kimberly Christie, Linda Kirk, Tony Torchia, Jennifer Mathews, Alice Dillon, Keith Craig, Michelle Kunz, Amy Allen, Shaina Kuhn, Antonio Chase; back row: James Bailey, Aurelio Dominguez, Grace Gori, Vito Pietanza, Vijay Ghosh, Doug Dykstra, David Artz, Patrick Cook, J Austin Bitner, Suzanne Chadwick and Seong Nam.



Washington National Opera chorister Tony Torchia in *Madama Butterfly* costume is congratulated by Artistic Director Francesca Zambello for completing his 40th consecutive season with WNO.



Eleni Kallas held an AGMA presentation on February 10, 2017, at the **Kirov Academy of Ballet** in Washington DC. Eleni has been doing annual presentations for 10 years.



Florida Grand Opera AGMA leaders: Governor Enrique Estrada, Delegate Miguel Llerena, Delegate Donna Lane Downey, Mid-Atlantic Area Representative and National Director Organizing and Training Eleni Kallas, and Governor and Delegate Michael Testa



On March 30, 2017, an AGMA presentation was held at the **Peabody Conservatory of Music** in Baltimore, MD, by Eleni Kallas, who has been holding annual presentations for 10 years.



Florida Grand Opera closed their season with *Un ballo in maschera*. AGMA members, left to right, front row: Veronica Fink-Menvielle, CJ Baik, Ismael Gonzalez, Everett Ford; back row: Lucia Minervini, Enrique Estrada, Ravenna Maer, Lisa Pitman, Michael Ross, Heather Mcleod, Michael Testa, Ana Maria Conte-Silva, Donna Lane Downey, Danielle Krause, Khrista Orantes, Lievens Castillo and Miguel Llerena

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles Master Chorale

By Dylan Gentile, Chorister



The Los Angeles Master Chorale closed out the 2016-17 season with three performances of *Lux Aeterna*, the seminal work from Morten Lauridsen. The Chorale gave the world premiere of the work 20 years ago and, as Artistic Director Grant Gershon noted, the piece remains “deeply embedded in the DNA of the group.” Also on the program were three world premieres, and an encore performance of *Iri da iri*, a piece from Esa-Pekka Salonen commissioned by the singers of the Chorale. The performance also provided the centerpiece of this year’s Chorus America conference, bringing together hundreds of attendees to celebrate and explore the evolving world of choral music.

In educational outreach, the Master Chorale’s award-winning *Voices Within* program once again provided a unique opportunity to Los Angeles elementary students, as they wrote and performed completely original, multi-movement works. Over the course of a 12-week residency, the students are encouraged to express themselves freely through melody and lyric in a space where all ideas have merit and all students have a voice. This year’s work focused on the immigrant experience in America, a topic that proved very personal for many of the students, giving them insight into how things have changed and how the past repeats itself.

The Master Chorale once again summers at the Hollywood Bowl with the L.A. Philharmonic, and will make a special trip to Santa Barbara to join Alan Gilbert and the N.Y. Philharmonic in a performance of Beethoven’s *Ninth Symphony* on July 31. The Chorale then looks forward to a milestone 2017-18 winter season, which sees its transition to a 100-voice, all-professional group. Programming includes such favorites as *Carmina Burana* and Brahms’ *A German Requiem* along with an innovative production of Handel’s *Israel in Egypt* with live integrative art, and a premiere of a new work by rising star Ellen Reid.

Go to www.lamc.org for more information. ♦



The Big Sing L.A., a free giant singing event, was held at Grand Park on Saturday, June 24. Los Angeles Master Chorale Artistic Director Grant Gershon stated, “[that it] is an opportunity to bring people together from all over the city to share in the joy of singing as part of a large group.” Five choral conductors led participants through well-known songs, and lyric sheets were provided to help. Singers from Los Angeles Master Chorale performed short sets and provided encouragement for the main event.



Los Angeles Opera visited Egypt in the fall of 2016 with *Akhnaten* by Phillip Glass. Above are some of the unusual LA Egyptians!



Los Angeles Opera also visited the canals of Venice at the Venetian Palazzo in April. The *Tales of Hoffmann* was conceived and directed by Marta Domingo under the baton of Plácido Domingo. Above, Chorus Director Grant Gershon joins the Opera’s chorus women.

Arizona Opera Celebrates 45th with World Premiere

By Margaret Ozaki Graves, Doctor of Musical Arts, AGMA Delegate, Chorister



The 2016-17 season marked Arizona Opera’s (AZO) 45th Anniversary, featuring its standard two-cities performances of the 45th Anniversary Sapphire Opera Gala and its first world premiere opera, *Riders of the Purple Sage*, along with the company’s premiere of *Rusalka* as well as productions of *Madama Butterfly* and *La Cenerentola* at Phoenix Symphony Hall and Tucson Music Hall.

The season opened with the 45th Anniversary Sapphire Opera Gala, hosted by mezzo-soprano Frederica von Stade on October 9, 2016. Conductor Ari Pelto and Director Joshua Borths led a cast of 10 guest soloists and the Arizona Opera Chorus, under the direction of Chorus Master Henri Venanzi. The Gala also celebrated the 10th Anniversary of the Marion Roose Pullin Arizona Opera Studio with featured performances by current and former studio artists.

A re-telling of a classic Western, the early-20th century Utah desert environment and melodramatic plot of *Riders of the Purple Sage* resonated with local audiences. Written by composer Craig Bohlmer

©Zachery Hapburn/Arizona Opera



Mezzo-soprano Federica von Stade (center), Chorus Master Henri Venanzi (left of center), and the Arizona Opera Chorus backstage at the final matinee performance of the 45th Anniversary Sapphire Opera Gala concert.

and librettist Steven Mark Kohn, the opera was adapted from Zane Grey’s best-selling novel of the same title. The leading roles of Lassiter and Jane Withersteen were double-cast, portrayed by baritones Morgan Smith and Joshua Jeremiah and sopranos Karin Wolverton and Laura Wilde (an AZO Studio alum). The production featured the Western landscape works of Ed Mell, appearing on a giant LED video wall procured by AZO for this production. *Riders* premiered to critical acclaim and strong sales. [Editor’s Note: See Arizona Opera photographs on AGMA’s website www.musicalartists.org] ♦

NORTHWEST



©Cory Heaver

Portland Opera presented *Man of La Mancha* June 2017.



Portland Opera shop meeting with Nora Heiber on April 22, 2017.



©Angela Sterling

Pacific Northwest Ballet company dancers in Jerome Robbins’ *West Side Story Suite*, which PNB presented as part of *BALLET ON BROADWAY* April 2017.



©Angela Sterling

Pacific Northwest Ballet company dancers in Jessica Lang’s *Director’s Choice*, which PNB presented as part of *DIRECTOR’S CHOICE* March 2017.

SAN FRANCISCO

By Nora Heiber, National Dance Executive



Following a busy year negotiating five of the six Area collective bargaining agreements that expired in 2016, 2017 has been a quiet year in the Area.

That was until AGMA received a call from the artists of the **Sacramento Ballet** to become their formal representative for the purpose of collective bargaining.

On March 15, following three meetings with progressively larger groups of artists, AGMA National Executive Director Len Egert and National Dance Executive Nora Heiber met with the shop to answer any remaining questions prior to taking a shop vote that resulted in a unanimous decision to unionize. Shortly thereafter, on April 21, immediately following the Labor Board election, Sacramento Ballet became the newest AGMA signatory to be born.

From the artists' very first phone call on February 21, 2017, until the Labor Board results on April 21, the entire process of organizing Sacramento Ballet took exactly two months to complete. This could not have happened without the dedicated and unified efforts of the Sacramento Ballet artists. AGMA is proud to represent the dancers and stage managers of this shop.

AGMA was able to secure individual employment contracts for the 2017-18 season, prior to the end of the 2017 season. An enthusiastic negotiating committee led by Nora Heiber will be sitting down to negotiate the first collective bargaining agreement with Sacramento Ballet the first two weeks of August.

At the end of June, Ms. Heiber traveled to Colorado to welcome artists of the **Central City Opera** to their summer season. We congratulate the **San Francisco Opera and Symphony** artists on an amazing 2017 spring season and welcome the artists of the **San Francisco Ballet** and **Colorado Ballet** as they began their 2017-18 seasons in July. ♦



Sacramento Ballet dancers with their stage manager



Central City's new artists for the 2017 season.



San Francisco Opera (SFO) held a Dancer Informational meeting in late June; left to right: Nora Heiber, Tenured Dancer Brook Broughton, SFO Interim Director of Operations Lee Helms, Tenured Dancer Blanche Hampton and San Francisco Area Chair Colby Roberts.



After signing the AGMA/San Francisco Opera 2016-2020 collective bargaining agreement, Colby Roberts and Nora Heiber posed for a photo with SFO General Director Matthew Shilcock and SFO Interim Director of Operations Lee Helms.

CHICAGO/MIDWEST

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



The Chicago/Midwest Area held their annual meeting and banquet on Sunday, February 26, 2017, and had 50 members from nearly every Area shop in attendance! The meeting was chaired by AGMA President and Area Chair Jimmy Odom, who also happily introduced to our members AGMA's new National Executive Director Len Egert, who stated he was very happy to be with us for this event. It was wonderful for us to have the opportunity to both meet and speak with Mr. Egert one-on-one as he informed us about numerous issues and covered many topics, saying his door was always open and to not hesitate to contact him regarding any issue.



The Chicago/Midwest Area held their annual meeting and banquet on Sunday, February 26, 2017. Members from nearly every Area shop were in attendance. The meeting was chaired by AGMA President and Area Chair Jimmy Odom, who introduced to our members AGMA's new National Executive Director Len Egert (above, far right).

The Lyric Opera Chorus finished up their regular season in March with simultaneous productions of Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* and Georges Bizet's *Carmen* before beginning rehearsals on their much anticipated spring production of Lerner & Loewe's *My Fair Lady*, which opened to wonderful reviews in late April and continued its successful run through May. Chicago's Lyric Opera will open their 2017-18 season in September with Gluck's beautiful *Orphée et Eurydice*, which will also feature the wonderful dancing of our AGMA brothers and sisters in the always incredible Joffrey Ballet!

The Chicago Symphony Chorus, having performed Faure's *Requiem* to sold out crowds during Holy Week in April, finished up their 2016-17 season June 22nd through the 25th with performances of Italian Opera Masterworks, singing such well-known Verdi choruses as, "Va, Pensiero" from *Nabucco*, the famous Anvil Chorus from *Il trovatore*, and "Patria oppressa" from *Macbeth*, along with the Prologue from Boito's *Mefistofele*. The Chorus can next be heard on August 8 at the Ravinia Festival, the summer home of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, singing *The Creation* by Joseph Haydn under James Levine. The 2017-18 season will be a grand celebration of the 60th Anniversary of the Chicago Symphony Chorus and will kick off in early October with Poulenc's *Gloria* and Gounod's *Saint Cecilia Mass*.

The Grant Park Chorus, part of the Grant Park Music Festival, opened their season on June 16, joining The Grant Park Orchestra for two performances of Vaughan Williams' monumental *A Sea Symphony*, based on Walt Whitman's celebrated poetry collection, *Leaves of Grass*. On June 28th and 30th, the Grant Park Chorus along with conductor Miguel Harth-Bedoya took on the Grant Park Festival premiere of *Missa Latina*, a large-scale choral work by Puerto Rican-American composer Roberto Sierra, which mixed traditional Latin and contemporary concert music with the irresistible dance rhythms of the Caribbean. Christopher Bell will next lead the Grant Park Chorus in an all *a cappella* concert of Rachmaninov's *Vespers*, as part of Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel's

Night Out in the Parks program where the Grant Park Chorus takes their lovely voices into various Chicago south side and west side neighborhoods! These *a cappella* concerts have become a favorite with Chicago audiences and should not be missed! Concerts were heard at the South Shore Cultural Center and at the Columbus Park Refectory.

On July 22 and 23, the Chorus will be heard in *A Broadway Romance*, featuring music from *Frozen*, *Cinderella*, and classic and contemporary shows including *Carousel*, *Follies*, *Oklahoma* and many more. On July 28 and 29, Carlos Kalmar conducts the Grant Park Chorus and Orchestra for Frank Martin's emotional and spirited *In terra pax*, written to mark the end of the Second World War.



Lyric Opera Chorus and cast of the 2017 production of *Norma*

The final concert of the Festival's 83rd season will open with Brahms' finest choral work, *Schicksalslied* and will come to a thrilling close with one of the best-known works in classical music: Beethoven's glorious masterpiece, *Symphony No. 9*, culminating in the famous movement, "Ode to Joy."

(continues on page 18)

Chicago/Midwest Area News (continued from page 17)

The Joffrey Ballet finished up their season in May with their production of *Global Visionaries*—a collection of three ballets: *The Miraculous Mandarin*, a Chicago Premiere, with choreographer Yuri Possokhov and music by Béla Bartók; *Joy*, a World Premiere, by choreographer Alexander Ekman and music by Brad Mehldau Trio, Django Django, Tiga, Moby; and *Mammatus*, by choreographer Annabelle Lopez Ochoa and music by Michael Gordon. The Joffrey Ballet will begin their 2017-18 season in mid-October with a Joffrey Premiere of *Giselle* staged by Lola de Ávila and music by Adolphe Adam. This tale of passion from beyond the grave will descend into madness, desire and sublime beauty, which will leave you breathless.

Also, throughout the year, members of The Joffrey Ballet's Community Engagement Programs are committed to empowering

individuals and developing life skills through creative and educational dance programming while strengthening ties within Chicago's underserved communities. These programs are designed to inspire a greater appreciation for dance and develop participants' social emotional learning.

Chicago Opera Theater (COT) invited Chicagoans and music lovers to join them for COT's multi-school collaborative performance held on June 15. Presented by the third through sixth graders in COT's Opera for All program, students from across the city came together to perform pieces of their final performances. Chicago Opera Theater will open their fall season in November with Gian Carlo Menotti's *The Consul* and will feature one of the great singing actresses of our time, soprano Patricia Racette, as she shares her artistry with audiences worldwide and makes her role debut as Magda. ♦

Reminder, beginning in 2018, the annual Basic Dues will be \$100. The due date for Basic Dues payments is January 1. The suspension date for non-payment of Basic Dues is February 1. In 2018, any member who has not paid their dues by close of business (5:30 p.m. ET) will be suspended.



Once again, members of AGMA's leadership met face to face in the New York office for a series of meetings to help shape where AGMA should focus in the coming year. This dedicated group is interested in how AGMA can best serve the membership. Participants included: front, left to right: Bill Buchanan, Jimmy Odom, J Austin Biner, Julie Condy, Evelyn Santiago-Schulz and Mark Malachesk; back: Len Egert, Matt Woodbury, Gerry Angel, Maria Leatha, George Scott, John Coleman, Jane Shaulis, Louis Perry, Ray Menard, Linda Mays and Tim Smith.

IN MEMORIAM

Barry Busse, Soloist

Daniel Jay Chaney, Chorister

Barbara Conrad, Soloist

*Fiora Contino, Conductor**

Philip Creech, Soloist

*Giulio Favario, Chorus Master**

Nicolai Gedda, Soloist

Beverly Green, Chorister

Kristine Jepson, Soloist

Dennis Kelly, Soloist

Linda Kelm, Soloist

Rae L. MacDonald, Chorister

Christopher T. Mahan, Jr.,

Director

Kurt Moll, Soloist

Raymond Murcell, Chorister

Roberta Peters, Soloist

Christopher Roselli, Chorister

David Saybrook (Smith), Chorister

*Kathy Schrier, The Actors Fund**

Stephanie Scourby, Soloist

Winona Stanback, Chorister

Linda C. Taylor, Chorister

Janine Ulllyette, Chorister

**Indicates a distinguished individual in a related profession*

2016 Metropolitan Opera Bake Sale and Auction

By Linda Mays, AGMA Relief Fund Director of Development



The promotion team of Laura Fries and Meredith Woodend produced another winning AGMA Relief Fund Thanksgiving Bake Sale, raising over \$4,100. The Chorus

Ladies' Lounge at the Metropolitan Opera was transformed into a Wonderland of sweets and savories for sale. There was also the traditional silent auction bedecked with a magnificent selection of gorgeous and delicious gluten-free and gluten-full delicacies and even a designer hat (really a designer cake).

Since the sale was held just four days before Thanksgiving, pumpkin pies, cranberry relish and other seasonal specialties sold out almost immediately. The bakers came from all segments of the Metropolitan Opera House (choristers, soloists, dancers, stage managers, dressers, stage crew and from the ranks of the

retirees). They were: Jean Braham, Maria D'Amato, Karen Dixon, Suzanne Falletti, Laura Fries, Terry Ganley, Samantha Guevrekian, April Haines, Rob Maher, Linda Mays, Raymond Menard, Asako Nagasaki, Rose Nenchek, Anne Nonnemacher, Martine Ogawa, Deborah Saverance, Christopher Schaldenbrand, Bradley Shelver, Carolyn Sielski, Annette Spann, Mark Sullivan, Jane Thorngren, Holly White, Paula Williams, Sara Wiedt, Meredith Woodend and Carole Wright.

Several special retirees, friends and family came early in the day to assist with the sale set up. They also contributed and sold baked goods AND "ran the show" while the performing artists actually "did the show" (*Aida* to be exact). This ambitious, creative, tireless team was: Louis Brown, Barbara Curran, Linda Mays, Carolyn Sielski, Jane Thorngren, Holly White, Sara Wiedt and Carole Wright.



Metropolitan Bake Sale Volunteers, left to right, front: Louis Brown, Meredith Woodend, Sara Wiedt, Linda Mays and Carole Wright; back: Anne Nonnemacher, Carolyn Sielski, Holly White and Jane Thorngren. (Missing from the photo is Barbara Curran.)

In early December, Laura and Meredith invited an astounding group of vendors for the holiday shopping portion of the AGMA Relief Fund Event. These vendors generously made donations to benefit the Relief Fund.

The moral of this story is that our AGMA members are the best. Because of creative planning, hard work and good hearts, we are able to make huge contributions to brighter futures for our colleagues in need. And we know how to have fun at the same time! ♦

Pittsburgh Opera Chorus Supports AGMA Relief Fund with a Unique Auction

By Bill Buchanan, Pittsburgh Area Chair, Chorister



When Pittsburgh Opera Chorister Corey Wingard planned a pre-opening party for our Spring 2017 production of *Turandot*, he decided to offer his barber skills to shave our more hirsute choristers who had to be clean-shaven for the show. Then Chorister David Knouse came up with a twist: what if we made this a fundraiser for the AGMA Relief Fund? Cue "Hair Today, Shear Tomorrow," an auction that raised \$765 by allowing attendees to bid on having the honor of shaving their colleagues.

In addition to choristers, other attendees included Principal Artist Alexandra Loutsion (*Turandot*, her role debut), Assistant Director Frances Rabalais, Assistant Stage Manager Stephanie Boyd Canada, Pittsburgh Opera Manager of Artistic Administration Robert Boldin, and Chorus Master Mark Trawka who consented to be shaved in support of the cause.



Chorister Judith Jenkins carefully shears Richard Williams while party host Corey Wingard supervises.

Linda Mays, Director of Development for the Relief Fund, said, "This is a great idea. It shows how creative people can help fellow AGMA artists in need while having fun at the same time. I'll certainly encourage other groups to 'steal' your recipe for success." Kudos to Corey, David, and all those who either attended or made contributions. ♦

A benefit concert for the AGMA Relief Fund was held on Saturday, June 3, 2017 at Oneonta Church in South Pasadena. Choristers from LA Opera and Los Angeles Master Chorale joined forces to present an evening of exquisite singing. The concert's theme was "Made In America," featuring music by American composers and arrangers.

If you have an idea for an AGMA Relief Fundraiser, please contact **Susan Davison** (212) 265-3687 at the AGMA office for specific guidelines.



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Actors Federal Credit Union	(212) 869-8926 in NYC (8:00 p.m. EST) Outside of NYC: (800) 2.ACTORS (800-222-8677)	https://actorsfcu.com
The Actors Fund New York City Chicago Los Angeles	www.actorsfund.org (212) 221-7300; (800) 221-7303 (312) 372-0989 (323) 933-9244; (888) 825-0911	info@actorsfund.org
AGMA Relief Fund - Donations Intake New York City Intake Chicago Intake Los Angeles	(800) 543-AGMA (2462) (212) 221-7300 ext. 119 (312) 372-0989 (323) 933-9244 ext. 55	susan@musicalartists.org intakeny@actorsfund.org shaught@actorsfund.org intakela@actorsfund.org
AGMA Retirement and Health (Plan A, AGMA Retirement Plan and AGMA Health Plan)	(212) 765-3664	www.agmafunds.org agmaretirement_health@yahoo.com
AGMA Health Plan B ("Administrative Services Only")	(866) 263-1185 (Toll free) (516) 394-9443 (Outside of the U.S.)	www.asonet.com
Artists Health Insurance Resource Center - New York City Artists Health Insurance Resource Center - Los Angeles www.actorsfund.org/services-and-programs/artists-health-insurance-resource-center	(917) 281-5975 (855) 491-3357	
The Career Center (formerly The Actors Work Program) New York City: Los Angeles:	www.actorsfund.org/services-and-programs/career-center (212) 221-7300 ext. 259 (323) 933-9244 ext. 450	careercentereast@actorsfund.org careercenterwest@actorsfund.org
Career Transition For Dancers New York City Chicago Los Angeles	(917) 281-5992 (312) 414-0500 (323) 933-9244, ext. 454 www.actorsfund.org/services-and-programs/career-transition-dancers	pschwadron@actorsfund.org mlanghout@actorsfund.org skozak@actorsfund.org
Union Privilege/Union Plus	(800) 472-2005; (202) 293-5330	www.unionplus.org