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The American Guild of Musical Artists
1430 Broadway, 14th Floor
New York, New York 10018-3308
(212) 265-3687
Fax: (212) 262-9088
www.MusicalArtists.org

Lawrence Tibbett, *Founding President*
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General Counsel Bruce Simon
Cohen, Weiss, & Simon
(212) 563-4100

Special Counsel Gail Lopez-Henriquez
Freedman & Lorry
(215) 925-8400

Midwest Counsel John F. Ward
John@musicalartists.org
(312) 628-7830

Western Counsel John C. Russum
AGMALA@ca.rr.com
(310) 215-9554

**New York Area
Dance Executive** Griff Braun
Griff@musicalartists.org
(800) 543-2462

Area Representation

Mid-Atlantic Eleni Kallas
National Director of
Organizing and Training
AGMADC@comcast.net
(301) 869-8266

San Francisco Nora Heiber
National Dance Executive
nheiber@earthlink.net
(415) 552-2800

Editor Denise Baker

*In Memoriam

In This Issue

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



Life goes on. AGMA has been forever changed by National Executive Director Alan Gordon, and his sudden passing on New Year's Day came as quite a shock. In the 15 years that Alan led us, we have experienced tremendous improvement and growth and have all benefitted from his keen and strong leadership. We were just about to go to press with this issue when the news of his passing came. Naturally, we held the issue to include a tribute to Alan. Thank you to everyone who shared pictures and memories.

In this issue, we bring you stories from some of the many members who live "On The Road." Since a good portion of our membership moves from city to city and job to job, we thought it would be helpful to share their stories. What's good? What's not so good? How do you make a "home away from home" and keep a good work-life balance? As you will see, we had a very nice response.

We hear from a dancer who performed in the same opera on both coasts, a well-traveled soloist with a charming canine companion, an actor/supernumerary who followed her singer mother onto the stage, a director/choreographer who gives excellent advice on how to adjust to new time zones, perspectives from two soloists with tips on making the "road life" more bearable, and a soloist who changed his priorities after his family had health issues. We also feature an article about some differences between working for many years in Equity and then an AGMA opera house.

We start this issue with what turned out to be the last report from Alan Gordon. He leaves us with a reminder of how life goes on, with a recap of 2015 and a look to the future. An additional article advises us of the rules regarding "Pay or Play." It pays to be aware of what that phrase means, so be sure to check it out on page 9.

Highlighting the Area News section is Governor Julie Condy's report on New

Orleans ten years after Hurricane Katrina, as well as a novel approach to Christmas caroling from the LA Master Chorale. You'll find many photographs in this issue from the various Areas.

The National Office is always willing to help any AGMA member and direct them to the proper place for help, but if you ever feel uncomfortable contacting staff, please know that your elected leaders are also there for you. In fact, MMRC has created sub-committees called caucuses, which are designed to make it easy for members to bring their concerns about the union forward in a confidential way. This committee can then bring the concerns to AGMA's Board of Governors for action. After a hiatus, the Principal Singers Caucus will be re-activated as of January '16, so please don't hesitate to contact me if you are interested in joining.

In addition to this issue of *AGMAzine*, do not forget 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. That being said, we would like to SEE YOU! We would like photos of AGMA members doing AGMA work—please share with us rehearsal and backstage photos.

This issue would not have been possible without all of the members who contributed articles and pictures; I am appreciative that you took the time to share your stories with us. I must also express my extreme gratitude to the MMRC and AGMA's Denise Baker for their tireless work on this issue. 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. ♦

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“Desmond has a Barrow in the Market Place”

By Alan S. Gordon, National Executive Director



The start of each calendar year is traditionally a time to take stock and review where things are and where they're going.

Where we are:

As we begin 2016, I can unequivocally say that AGMA is a vibrant, relevant, fiscally secure, fully professionally run, excellent union. Our legal and negotiating staff is second to none and our long-term administrative and clerical staff, under the management of Director of Operations Gerry Angel, is dedicated to their jobs and understands how what each of them does helps our members.

Our protection of members' assets is absolute, with multiple internal and external checks and balances and an annual forensic audit of income and expenses. Our zero-risk investment policy might limit our investment profit somewhat but because of it we have never lost a penny of members' funds. (On a personal note: In part because we had an absolutely “clean” audit, I find it pleasing that we are probably the only union in the nation that still maintains a friendly relationship with the Department of Labor auditor who conducted our Bush-era audit, as he progressed from combat veteran, to DOL auditor, to reenlistment as an Army lawyer and now as an Assistant US attorney). We remain the only one of our sister unions that doesn't run at a deficit and, as we closed out 2015, our visa review income exceeded \$1,115,000 and we had more than \$12 million in the bank.

Like every union, our job is to protect our members. Some of the things that underpin that job and which, in turn, make AGMA unique among our sister entrainment unions, are part of our institutional philosophy: 1) We believe that there are only two kinds of professional opera singers or ballet dancers—those that are members of AGMA now and those that will become AGMA members later; 2) That whatever hurts one singer or dancer anywhere hurts all singers

or dancers everywhere; and 3) We believe that members should have as much work as is possible and, thus, we do not prohibit non-union work, as does Equity, SAG/AFTRA and the orchestra locals.

That philosophy lets us help not only members working for AGMA signatories but also (to the extent legally possible) members working for non-union employers, and future AGMA members early in their careers.

In dance, we have truly become the home of the ballet dancer in America. The tipping points came with the successful and bitter battle of the Washington Ballet dancers for unionization and the return of the ABT dancers to AGMA.

In opera, where we are compelled to take a more adversarial negotiating posture, recent experience has shown us that it is possible to forge effective alliances with the orchestra and the stagehands' unions so as to resist a common “enemy.” We've also embarked upon a more sophisticated level of bargaining, hiring our own investment banker (in partnership with the other unions) to analyze management proposals better to effectively tailor our contracts to economic realities.

Where We're Going:

Over the past year we've become aware of an underserved segment of our opera membership: Principal singers who do occasional AGMA jobs but who spend much of their careers working for non-AGMA-signatory employers. Their interests are diverse but they share many of the concerns of other, more regularly-AGMA soloists: The need for better communication with, and from, AGMA, resolving agent issues, and help in combating illegal discrimination.

We are, in turn, completely revamping our website and working towards facilitation of other issues this group has raised. Our confidential abuse and harassment reporting system, at dallton-maher@musicalartists.org arose as a direct result of their input.

Because it's our continuing responsibility to protect the union, I have been working with our outside counsel on a broad-based series of recommendations for strategic changes in AGMA's long range administrative operations. Our recommendations should be ready for presentation by mid-2016.

Although there remains much work to do, with new possibilities and opportunities to explore, and a continuing number of collective bargaining agreements to renegotiate, your union is already great. Our job is to make it better.

The paragraph that concluded my initial report to the Board of Governors at the end of my first year here remains all the more true today:

Nothing that I and the staff have accomplished in the past, however, could have been possible without the continuing and strong support of active and creative leaders, a devoted Executive Council and a committed Board of Governors ... or without the active support and encouragement of those Board members upon whom I have relied for guidance and advice and, for that, I thank you most sincerely.

During the past year I have repeatedly turned to your President and various members of the Executive Council and Board for help, insight and constructive criticism and it would be inappropriate for me to fail to acknowledge the magnitude of their assistance in achieving all that we have been able to do.

Ultimately, the union belongs to its members and, as their leaders, you bear the responsibility for charting its course and protecting its welfare. My job, and the work of the staff, is to advise you of the possibilities and the perils along the road and to offer you advice about which courses of action to pursue. Your willingness to explore the various opportunities that present themselves to us makes our jobs satisfying and worthwhile.

The staff joins me in wishing you all a happy holiday season and a happy and prosperous new year, one of good health and peace. ♦

Wherever You Go, There You Are



FROM THE PRESIDENT JAMES ODOM

During my long and somewhat inglorious career as a performer, I have engaged in a certain amount of traveling and touring. It is my considered opinion that some people are more felicitously disposed to constant travel and those persons flourish as they scamper about the world. Others find it less enchanting, but are able to balance the stress of travel with the excitement of new experiences and revisiting of previous happy situations.

And then there's me.

Don't misunderstand. I do enjoy traveling. But I enjoy it more when I can do it on my own terms. So I made the conscious decision some years ago to lay that burden down. Every time I start packing my bags, I reflect upon a quotation from Bette Midler's dresser, Miss Fran Frank:

"The road! Why, it's the Devil's Walkway, and anyone who trods it is bound to Hula in Hell."

Traveling is not all bad. I recall a *Turandot* in Shreveport, for which a quartet of young singers were hired as chorus "ringers". I'll just say that you can play a lot of Spades in three weeks and that Mardi Gras parades are taken quite seriously in the entire state of Louisiana. "But weren't you there to work, to bring your skills, talents, and experience to one of the great operatic masterpieces?" I hear you ask. Well yes, but you can rehearse only so many hours a day.

I also recall schlepping what seemed to be all my worldly possessions throughout Germany and Austria, and a lovely experience when I shared a sleeping car from Vienna to Cologne with a group of Chinese students. Finding a

common language is sometimes a literal exercise, and in this case it happened to be Italian. Broken, ungrammatical, Italian, but a common language, nonetheless.

A concert in Toronto. The producer specifically asked that I do "La donna è mobile" as an encore. I explained that the aria was not really in my rep. He insisted. I pointed out that the program was already long and that I would be tired at the end of it. He insisted. So I did what any sensible person would. I went to my accompanist and arranged a signal to let him know if I needed the piece transposed down. At the end of the concert, I felt I really shouldn't risk it, so I gave what I thought was the universal sign for "down a half step, please". It did not go particularly well. Afterwards, over an adult beverage, I said something about being so very tired that even in B flat, the aria was a problem. My accompanist later confessed that he had gotten confused and played it in C, a half step higher. No, I do not have perfect pitch.

Not all my touring was done with classical work, and occasional pranks from colleagues were not unusual. During a tour where we were being housed with patrons, my hosts were informed—without my knowledge—that there was a rider in my contract that required I be awakened by having freshly brewed coffee placed outside my door. It was several days and three patrons before I realized that this was not simply very civilized behavior.

But as amusing as my recollections are, the actual logistics of travel are challenging. Not the least reason for which being that I am the kind of boy who tries to anticipate every possible thing I might need while on the road. In truth, it could be said that I'm not just compulsive about it, but that my behavior actually borders on the pathological. Which is, I suppose, ironic when one considers that I'm typically a tee shirt and jeans sort of person and have a tendency to look somewhat rumpled. I am always hopelessly over-packed, and people across the globe have cursed me at baggage checks as I hastily rearrange my packing in order to get my

checked bag under the weight limit. But if you've dripped your marinara on your tie and need a spot removing wipe, I've got you covered. Need nail clippers or tweezers, I've got 'em right here. If your flight is delayed and you decide that playing cards would be a good way to pass the time, I'll have a deck. I have a friend from college who swears that I was able to produce an 8X10 autographed picture of Carmen Miranda from my dance bag upon request. I don't recall it, but there are chunks of my college history that are somewhat vague in my memory.

There is no question that for the performing artist, travel is a mixed bag. So let me remind of you something. Elsewhere in this issue you will find a list of AGMA professional staff and elected leaders who can help you when you need it. So I'm not going to repeat that list here. But I am going to remind you that the most important thing you can pack are these two numbers: (212) 265-3687 and (800) 543-2462. Those are the numbers for the AGMA National Office. Regardless of where you are, someone in the office will be able to connect you to the person who can help you.

And remember, we can't help you fix a problem if we don't know about it. ♦



All Roads Led to the San Francisco Opera

By Valentina Simi, Actor/Supernumerary



My first experience with AGMA and with the opera was “on the road.” In March 1969 I was five years old going on six when the San Francisco opera toured to Los Angeles in the days before the Los Angeles Opera existed. The company was touring *Turandot*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *The Barber of Seville* and *Il Trovatore*, all performed at the Shrine Auditorium. My mother, Lola Lazzari Simi, joined the San Francisco Opera chorus in 1967, so wherever my AGMA chorus member mother went, I followed. While in L.A. I spent my sixth birthday at the Beverly Hills Hotel and my party guests were my grandparents, my mother, SFO chorus master Maestro Danieli and his family, and all the ladies from the San Francisco Opera chorus. We were in Los Angeles for one month and at age six I thought, I could get used to this life.



Lola Lazzari Simi as the grandmother in *Madama Butterfly* with daughter Valentina, San Francisco Opera chorus dressing room, 1968.

was on stage. Much to my disappointment she never waived back. I later understood why.

Although San Francisco Opera’s touring years were few, they still ventured away from the War Memorial Opera House to perform in venues including the Curran Theatre on Geary Street in San Francisco for Spring Opera Theatre, as well as performances at the Herbst Theatre in Berkeley. There was a *Magic Flute* performance in Berkeley at which I was determined to join the animals onstage. Kurt Herbert Adler looked at my mother and said, “Your daughter is crawling onto the stage...” It was another early indication for my love of being onstage as well as off. My journey with the opera continued and AGMA would figure into my own life soon enough.

My visits to the opera house continued throughout high school. I remember sitting backstage one day thinking, “I’d like to work here someday.” I joined my mother and all of the opera chorus ladies for every dressing room party and celebration. We had “Italian” dinners, pot-luck parties, and in the years when the opera had performances on Thanksgiving Day, the ladies would all bring

a feast in the way of leftovers which we all shared in the dressing room prior to the performance. Of course these were the years when the company turned a blind eye to food or drink being anywhere near a costume.

Post-graduation with a B.A. in Acting and Drama Education from San Francisco State I applied for a seasonal position with the San Francisco Opera and worked as a Rehearsal Assistant for three seasons. Mother and daughter became colleagues until her retirement from the chorus in 1990. That year I joined the Artistic Department as Artists Services Coordinator, and now twenty-eight years later, I am also the Assistant to the Music Director.



Valentina and her mother, Lola Lazzari Simi, both performed in *Manon Lescaut* in 1988.

I always had a passion for the stage and whenever possible, I auditioned to be a supernumerary. I have been a waitress, a beggar, a prostitute, a slave, and one of my most favorite moments, a student in *The Tales of Hoffman*, replacing an ailing male super. It was my one and only “pants” role so I could be onstage with the great Plácido Domingo. Mother and daughter also shared the stage in *Manon Lescaut*; mom was in the chorus, I was an insane prostitute. Later I auditioned for speaking roles and was thrilled to join AGMA when I was cast in the small role of the servant in *Manon*. Now I was acting on my favorite stage on earth—a dream gift—and my mother and I had something new in common: we were both AGMA members! I had a few acting roles following that one, and today, while I am on “honorable withdrawal” I will always consider my membership a gift and a privilege.

Since her retirement, mother and I have reversed our roles. She joins me for occasional dress rehearsals and performances and she especially loves coming to the opera on every Opening Night to celebrate—an annual tradition we have had since the 1960s. These days life at the opera continues to keep me on my toes and I’m so blessed to say, it’s like coming home every day. Whether on or off the stage, or on or off the road, it has been a very special and memorable journey, one which I hope will continue to bless my life. ♦



Valentina Simi shares a toast with her mother, Lola Lazzari Simi, on San Francisco Opera’s 2015 Opening Night.

What It's Like Working on Broadway versus an AGMA Opera House

By Tony Roberts, Soloist



When AGMA's Deputy Membership Department Supervisor/Contract Compliance Officer Betsy Schrott suggested that I write an article comparing my experience as a member of Actor's Equity Association (AEA) for over 50 years, under whose jurisdiction I had worked on Broadway in 24 different shows, to working for the first time under an AGMA contract in the Lyric Opera of Chicago revival of "Carousel," I was delighted. I had always loved opera and befriended an usher at The Metropolitan Opera in New York while still a teenager who allowed me to buy a standing room ticket and then permitted me to sit in the Dress Circle during unsold-out performances. I was a voice major at the High School of Music & Art in Manhattan but my real ambition was to become an actor. Although I had served as deputy in several of the Equity shows I was in, at that time I wasn't in a position to evaluate the fine points or evolution of the contract I was working under.

What I did find of interest was the effect that working in an opera house had on my overall state of mind versus working in the usual Equity theatre venue I'm used to. In the "show biz" world the verdict comes quickly as to one's immediate future. Many shows run less than two weeks, but some are instant hits and a lucky cast can expect a run of at least a year, or often several years. The AGMA gig is usually of a predetermined length defined by schedules set far in advance. For this reason, it's easier to form friendships and a sense of community among the AEA crowd than those who join various opera companies or tours that often give them the opportunity to sing roles they have mastered during their entire careers.

There is also a vast disparity between the usual dimensions of the opera house and the relative size of the typical Broadway theatre. The Lyric occupies a huge building beyond the scale of any house on Broadway. This factor affects the intimacy, or lack of it, for all who inhabit the backstage area. This includes the convenient proximity of dressing rooms, and even the availability of a "green room" located and accessible to all who wish to make use of it. At Lyric, elevators are required to transport the chorus and dancing ensemble to and from the stage each time they need to make an entrance. As harmoniously as everything worked, I missed the close quarters of a smaller workspace along with the intimacy and camaraderie that such conditions encourage. At Lyric, the star dressing rooms are enormous compared to those in a Broadway theatre and are often equipped with pianos, showers, upholstered arm chairs, and even free Kleenex, something unheard of on the Great White Way. There is also less opportunity to hear the chit chat of other cast members, the local gossip, and to visit with others between scenes.

There are so many people employed in an opera house, with so much room to wander around in, that when you consider the limited number of performances likely to be given, and the often transient makeup of the cast, it's safe to say that those working under an Equity contract are likely to enjoy a more inclusive social atmosphere.

This particular revival of "Carousel" was set in the Great Depression of the 1930s as opposed to the original production in 1945, which was set in the 1880s. The film version, shot in the 50s, relished the use of Technicolor and painted a sunny background for the goings on of two sets of lovers whose stories turn out differently. The intent of the Chicago production was to be more naturalistic with a dark sense of foreboding. To achieve this, the designers chose to minimize the amount of light projected onto the stage from the usual balcony rails. Instead, the players were lit by bright beams of light emanating from the wings. The effect was satisfying to the critics, but it created an odd sense of detachment for the actor/singers. It was almost impossible to identify the features of one's scene partner standing a few yards away when they were backlit. They often appeared to be no more than a silhouette.

As far as the sound system is concerned, I am one who remembers the days when musicals on Broadway were never "miked." I believe the habit of using microphones in the theatre began with "Promises, Promises," a show I spent almost two years performing in London and the U.S. Burt Bacharach's score required underscoring produced by three amplified singers in the pit, which was the order of the day in pop recorded music at the time. Naturally, once the singers in the pit were "miked" and the instruments in the pit were enhanced by electronics, it became impossible for the singers on stage to be heard over the orchestra and "miking" became obligatory. In a Broadway house if a mike breaks down, or a battery fails, it is still possible for the spoken words to be heard at the rear of the house because stage actors are trained to project to the back wall. (At least in the old days they were.) However, my own battery pack failed during a performance at Lyric and, try as I might, I could hardly be heard beyond the first five rows of the orchestra pit. I knew it had failed because I could no longer hear the familiar echo, or reverb, from the house speakers positioned throughout the huge cavernous space.

Despite these caveats, I still managed to make some wonderful friends during my stint at Lyric and will be forever grateful to the crew member who dragged me out of the way of a descending light pole that almost split me in half as I awaited my cue in the wings. Like the

(continues on page 11)

©Todd Rosenbergs



Steven Pasquale and Tony Roberts during a staging rehearsal for *Carousel* at Lyric Opera of Chicago's 2014-15 production.

Operatic Doggie Diary Blog

By Brian Jagde, Tenor



Life on the road can be a lonely place from time to time for a working opera singer. My situation was no exception to that rule. I've always been a dog person so it only made sense to look into getting one.

I decided to get a dog after I did the role of Cavaradossi for the first time at Santa Fe Opera in 2012, hence his name, "Cav." He arrived while I was singing the same role at the San Francisco Opera later that Fall. He was only 9 weeks old. I trained him myself to be used to being on the road. Cav is a half Cocker Spaniel mix and the other half is Cavalier King Charles Spaniel. I am thankful to have my trusty companion Cav with me wherever I go!

Where have Cav and I been since then? Let's find out in what I call my Operatic Doggie Diary!

Starting in fall 2012, I was singing Cavaradossi in *Tosca* at San Francisco Opera. Here we are, after the show and I'm still in my costume. This photo (left) was taken right after I had gotten Cav!

In the Spring of 2013, I was singing Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly* with the Orlando Philharmonic and then we were then back to San Francisco for the Summer of 2013 where I covered the title role in *The Tales of Hoffmann*.

In July of 2013, we were off to Ischia, Italy, where I studied with a voice teacher and enjoyed some much needed rest and relaxation.

This next photo pretty much defines Cav and I on the road with our shadows (right) showing us walking around Rome, Italy just after we had left Ischia, Italy, in August 2013.

In early August we were off to Prague for a quick visit before a concert in the northern Czech Republic.



Here is Cav's headshot (left), he's such a ham!

More R&R followed, where we basked on the gorgeous island of Santorini, and there was some more vocal study with a teacher (a singer is always learning). Cav loved playing on the rocky beaches of Santorini!

In January 2014, I was singing in *Carmen* in Limoges, France.

In May 2014, we were in Los Angeles where I was lucky enough to win a First Prize Zachary Award.

Again, we are returning to *Tosca* at the San Francisco Opera (right) where both of us were a little more grown up by 2014!

In 2015 we were off to The Royal Opera for a run of *Madama Butterfly*.

Cav travels everywhere with me and my wife and has been to more countries than some people we know! He will always be our number one pup!

Where will this operatic duo end up next? In Napoli, Italy, making their Italian Debut at Teatro San Carlo in a new production of *Carmen*, as well as *Rusalka* in Houston after the New Year, and some other great *Carmen* productions at the Deutsche Oper Berlin and back again to San Francisco Opera! Make sure to snap a shot if you see this adorable pup playing in one of the many cities that we will be in! ♦



Finding a Balance

By Malcolm MacKenzie, Soloist



my career as a resident artist at LA Opera.

In 2000 I was a few years out on my own from the L.A. program with a big agency behind me, a toddler at home and a supportive wife with a non-opera career of her own. We had just left Los Angeles to be closer to the grandparents and were expecting the arrival of our second child. I had contracts in Europe and the U.S. It was a very good year... Then came the wakeup call. Our second daughter was born with an undetected congenital heart defect, which on her ninth day of life caused her to turn gray and go into respiratory arrest. Thanks to an amazing pediatrician she survived this initial crash, but our life was upended. Work was cancelled and my wife and I settled in for our daughter's long recovery process.

As the fall of 2001 rolled around, I was scheduled to fly to France for a job at the Bastille. Our daughter was doing well, but I didn't want to leave. I was deathly afraid that something would happen while I was away, but with hospital bills mounting, we needed the money. About two weeks before I was supposed to leave for France, the Twin Towers came down. Once again, the world changed. My flight out of SFO was the first international flight to leave after 9/11. You can imagine my state of mind as I got on that plane, not to mention my wife's. I got the message. As I was in France, wishing I was home with my family, I made a decision. I would never take my time with my family for granted ever again, and if starving my career caused it to die, I would be okay with that. It was better than letting it eat the most important part of me.

I've often said that a career is like a wild animal. You have to feed it or it will die, but if you're not careful, it will eat you. I had the great advantage of starting my career in opera during the highs of the late 90's before the dot-com crash. There was money everywhere and the future for young singers seemed to be eternally bright. I'd started

To my surprise I found a balance, or, rather, it found me. I moved to a smaller agency that understood my priorities. I decided not to work in the summers, a decision I've reversed only once and regretted it. I've happily taken parts small and large at companies big and small, enjoying the process and trying not to get too caught up in whether my career was fitting or starting. I'm on the road about four months out of the year, and when home I'm a stay-at-home dad, making bag lunches and driving a minivan. I would not be able to do this if it weren't for my wife having a wonderful job herself, and for her taking up the slack at home when I go gallivanting off for a month at a time. And here it is, 23 years later, and I'm still a working singer. I feel extremely fortunate to have stretched my little career out this long, and at any moment I expect it to end. When it does end I'll be sad, but when I look at the faces of my nearly adult children, it's easy to see what was my best role of all.

Malcolm MacKenzie is a dramatic baritone based in northern California. Recent roles include Count di Luna in Il trovatore, Iago in Otello, Enrico in Lucia di Lammermoor, Belcore in L'Elisir d'amore at San Diego Opera, Jack Rance in La fanciulla del west, and the title role in Simon Boccanegra. This season, Mr. MacKenzie will create the role of Roger Chillingworth in Colorado Opera's world premiere of The Scarlet Letter by Lori Laitman. Recently, he returned to LA Opera as Stubb in Jake Heggie's Moby Dick and at the Metropolitan Opera as Dancaire in Carmen. ♦



As Escamillo in Carmen



As Belcore in L'Elisir d'amore

You're Entitled to be Paid

By Alan S. Gordon, National Executive Director

All AGMA Standard Artists' Contracts for Employment contain the following language right below the fee that your agent has negotiated for you:

"The above compensation shall be PAY OR PLAY"

For per-performance opera singers this means that once you have a signed contract, you're entitled to be paid, even if you are replaced or

if you are fired by the opera company for no reason or any reason.

Over the years, AGMA has recovered tens of thousands of dollars for members whose employment was terminated for "voice issues," "artistic considerations," because they "were pregnant" or they were "too old."

Pay or Play compensation is a principal benefit of working under an AGMA con-

tract, and protects your fundamental right to get paid for the time, often years in advance, that you've blocked out for an AGMA employer.

If you find yourself in an uncomfortable, embarrassing, or troubling situation, let us know immediately at dallton-maher@musicalartists.org. AGMA's lawyers are here to help you but, as always, we can't do anything about it unless we know about it. ♦

AGMA on the Road

By Richard Bulda, Dancer



My first AGMA job was with the Los Angeles Opera in 2001. I had already been travelling to L.A. from my home in San Diego for auditions, had worked in Santa Barbara and San Bernadino, not to mention numerous summer stock seasons in Sacramento however, this was a REALLY big job in Los Angeles for a very prestigious company, and for a new union. Not really knowing anyone in L.A. with whom to stay, and having a five-year-old and a two-year-old at home, I commuted every day for rehearsal and for the shows. Ah, the folly of youth! That made for four-hour round trips on top of seven-hour rehearsal days. Thankfully, at that time gas was a little cheaper, and the paycheck made up for the costs. But still, it would have been nice to save some of that money. After that, I had made enough friends that subsequent trips to L.A. meant I had a couch or two or even a bedroom to spend nights, so I didn't have to drive up and back in the same day. Some of those friends I can still call when I have an audition or a gig in the L.A. area.

Since then I have done many AGMA jobs in Orange County, Houston, Dallas, San Diego, and Arizona. Being a gypsy in musical theater, travel is old hat to me. I'm always on the road for auditions and jobs. After so many years, I've gotten used to waking up in another city and not having anxiety as to how I got there and what I was doing. I started travelling since before my kids were born, so they were also used to me being gone at a very young age.

One of the hardest things about travelling for me was when my kids were young. Knowing that I was leaving my wife as virtually a single mother to two young children was hard. Thankfully, my parents are retired and live close to us, so child care or the random emergency school pick up was readily available to my wife while I was gone. Still, it did weigh heavy on me. In 1997 I was in Chicago with the Radio City Christmas show. I had left my wife and one-year-old daughter in San Diego for the holidays. I remember one particular day when I silently wept while holding a castmate's toddler as I missed my own daughter thousands of miles away. As we've gotten older, and as technology has advanced, those thoughts of anxiety and missing my family decreased somewhat as we were able to keep in touch via cell phones, text, and eventually video chat.

Whenever I've been out of California for work, the companies I worked for provided housing, so I would come off a plane to a nice extended-stay establishment or a nice hotel. As previously stated, I stay with friends who graciously allow me to stay in their homes or apartments. I am very fortunate that these friends of mine are people who I consider family. That means that when

I stay, there isn't any awkwardness by being there. I treat it as my home. I have cooked dinner for everyone in the house. I clean up after myself and sometimes my hosts if they have not the time to clean up themselves. I have walked dogs not my own, and babysat more than a few children, even allowing the parents to go out for a much needed date while I watched the young one(s) for the evening. Generally, my hosts would allow me to help myself to anything in the kitchen, and I always try to replace anything I've eaten, as well as telling them to help themselves to any groceries I bring home. I try to stay very respectful of their space and property, and when my show has closed, I ALWAYS try to leave the place better than when I found it. I am forever grateful to those friends with whom I have stayed and their love and generosity.

One of the many benefits of being a freelance artist is getting to travel for my work. I often consider work as a paid vacation from my real job of being home and raising a family. I get to go off and do what I love to do, and would do for free. (But it's DEFINITELY better to get paid for it!) But the best part about my job is that with every show, I am exposed to incredible companies that put on amazing productions that entertain thousands of people. I meet incredibly talented artists who impress me, inspire me, challenge me, and amaze me with their skills, talents, passions, and energy. And on those special occasions when I work again with a certain artist, there is the fun of rekindling those friendships after months or even years since having last seen each other.

Having said this, it's always nice to come home. After so many years of the travel, coming home is very, very easy for me. There is almost no adjustment, save perhaps jet lag. Once I'm home and greeted by my beautiful wife, kids, and the family dog, I unpack and life resumes as if I've never left. When the kids were younger I would immediately resume driving them to and from school, karate classes, team practices, etc. These days I take over the morning dog walks to get my exercise, I start making the dinners so that the family has a meal ready after school. As the house husband I do the cleaning, laundry, grocery shopping, and all the "mundane" things that make home life what it is. While my job affords me many opportunities to travel and meet amazing artists and friends, it's always the ultimate pleasure to return to my happy place: home.

An AGMA member since 2001, Richard Bulda is a freelance actor/singer/dancer living in San Diego with a wife, a daughter in college, and a high school junior son. He has done numerous productions with musical theater companies in many states. His opera credits include LA Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Dallas Opera, Arizona Opera and San Diego Opera. He has also acted as assistant choreographer to the likes of Nicola Bowie, Ken von Heidecke, and Tony Award recipient Peggy Hickey. ♦

Some Secrets to Traveling

By Michelle DeYoung, Soloist



The nomadic life of an international opera/concert singer can be challenging as well as thrilling and joyous. Every year varies slightly as to the amount of time that I am on the road, but on average I am home a total of two months. Because I sing both concerts and operas, the length of my trips vary quite a bit.

At times, I am only gone for a few days; yet for other engagements, I can be gone up to four months. It has always been important for me to have a place to call home, even though I am very rarely there. For many people, the amount of time away would be impossible, or at least very difficult. I find that I thrive with this lifestyle. In fact, after a couple of weeks at home, I am antsy to get on the road again.

The types of challenges that I have encountered in my life on the road range from mundane to arduous. There are certain products I prefer using that I can only buy in the United States; therefore, I need to make sure I pack a sufficient amount. In addition, I have to make sure that I have enough prescriptions and other necessities for the entire time that I am away. Some of the more difficult challenges come in the form of loneliness, long travel days, stressful situations without the support of family and friends, and holidays spent alone. Some of the elixirs that help are Skype, Candy Crush, single malt whisky, and great colleagues.

For me, it is very important to stay in close contact with loved ones via email, Skype, or phone. After 20 years in this business, I am extremely blessed to have best friends in every corner of the world, and I often see them when I am on the road. The physical distance, busyness, time difference, and other circumstantial situations that come with my crazy life require very supportive and understanding friends and family; therefore, I make a conscious effort to stay in touch with loved ones.

Working on Broadway (*continues from page 7*)
majority of stage hands in the Big Apple, they take care of their own!

Opera singers often travel to various cities around the globe and join already assembled casts and crews. They can't be expected to familiarize themselves with the actual physical layout of their surroundings. Consequently, they are ushered by assistant stage managers, or handlers, and accompanied to the correct spot in the wings from which they can make their next entrance (a tap or a whisper, perhaps). There is usually someone standing right next to them to guide them and cue their entrance in some personal way. There is also an ever present and

sometimes insistent voice heard through the speakers backstage, and in the dressing rooms, that alerts the cast as to which actor or actors should be making their way to the stage from their dressing rooms, depending on how far away they may be. This constant helicopter control over the proceedings is not the norm where I have spent the bulk of my career. It's a pragmatic and courteous tradition, but in the world of Actor's Equity, if an actor misses an entrance it's his own fault and it hardly ever happens twice. There is nothing worse than being left on stage to invent a life when someone is late for an entrance. For both AEA and AGMA, such a miscalculation is tantamount to committing murder, even though it's only aesthetic mur-

Invariably, major life crises happen... whether it be personal, a loved one, or a world event. This can be a huge challenge to face while alone and away from home. I have found the comfort and support of amazing colleagues to be invaluable, and I place importance on extending the same friendship to the people I work with.



As Princess Eboli in Don Carlo at Opera Philadelphia

Much more importantly, this career is thrilling and joyous. I love visiting different parts of the world, especially if the lifestyle is unlike mine. In all of my travels, which have spanned Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, South America and North America, I have only really disliked one place. Nope, not telling...

I adore the music I have the opportunity to sing. The conductors, directors, choruses, orchestras and many incredible singers satiate the experience. This is my real secret to how wonderful it is to get to travel all the time. Bottom line, there are challenges and difficulties with life on the road; but for me, the joy and fulfillment of singing all over the world outweighs them.

Mezzo Soprano Michelle DeYoung has performed with many of the world's leading conductors, both on the opera stage and in the concert hall. As a recitalist, she has performed around the world and is also a Grammy-winning recording artist.
<http://www.opus3artists.com/artists/michelle-deyoung> ♦

der. It's always best to be as close to the action as you can get, as long as you avoid being run over by a moving platform, or hit on the head by a piece of flying scenery. But don't get me wrong. I loved being in "Carousel" for three terrific weeks in Chicago and hope that it finds its way to Broadway with the same cast intact. I'd like the chance to get to know them better, and maybe I will.

If anyone is interested in more of my musings, I have written a memoir called, "Do You Know Me?" which can be purchased at Amazon.com as a hardcover book or downloaded from Audible.com in a narrated version. (Narrated by me, of course!) ♦

Alan S. Gordon

The American Guild of Musical Artists has lost a bright light. Alan Gordon, AGMA's National Executive Director, died New Year's Day in New Hampshire—a fitting time and place of departure for one of the labor movement's most independent, iconoclastic, and forward-looking leaders.

As National Executive Director of AGMA, representing the most accomplished singers, dancers, and stage production staff at opera and dance companies throughout the United States, Mr. Gordon was a strong and dedicated visionary—fearless and unrelenting in protecting the rights of union members. When Mr. Gordon assumed the helm



Alan and his wife Susie

in 2000, the union was financially unstable and struggling to effectively represent its members. As a result of his work over the last 15 years, AGMA contracts are now stronger, members are now consistently well represented, and the union's financial situation is secure. By pushing boundaries and upturning conventional thinking to confront the many challenges

faced by labor and by the Artists represented by AGMA, Alan Gordon set the highest standard for effective union representation, and we have all benefited immensely from his leadership.

Thank you Alan Gordon. Your legacy is secure.

The Leadership and Staff of AGMA and the family of Alan Gordon greatly appreciate all the condolences received for Alan. It is truly a testament to the amazing person he was and for that we thank all of you.



Alan's eldest daughter Jessica Goldfarb.



Alan and grandson Max Goldfarb



In August Alan walked his daughter Elizabeth down the aisle. It was one of the happiest times of their lives.



Alan Gordon and Jimmy Odom at the Met UNITE rally held on Friday August 1, 2014.

This is a devastating loss both personally and professionally for me. It would be difficult for me to name anyone who has done more for AGMA since the founding of the union. Alan came to a union in disarray. The professional staff was unresponsive and ineffective and the financial situation was less than stable at best. Over the course of his tenure he turned the union around completely. His leadership developed a responsive and truly professional staff. Financially, the union is not simply stable, but is secure. Contracts are negotiated in a timely fashion and are stronger and effectively enforced.

It was one of his principle goals to make certain that the union would be able to function in the short term if anything should ever happen to him. This was wise in so many ways. His last gifts, perhaps, were time to mourn before we must move forward and a clear direction in which to proceed.—Jimmy Odom

Alan's passing has made me aware that I was part of something very special—an unbeatable team. We were so much more than boss/employee (terms he would get angry about and never use in reference to us) or mentor/mentee—after 43 years together we were friends and even family. During that time I was honored to have had the opportunity to see the many sides of him that only a rare few got to experience—the tough labor relations side, the soft vulnerable side, the husband, father and grandfather side and more importantly, the friend who would do anything for you. Thank you, Alan. You were a one of a kind, special unique individual and I along with so many others are devastated by your loss will sorely miss you.—Gerry Angel



Gerry Angel, her husband George and Alan Gordon at a friend's wedding.

Following my election as AGMA President in 1999, the leadership decided that AGMA needed to search for an Executive Director/Magician/Pied Piper who could save us from the brink of disaster. The first candidate I called was Alan Gordon. We talked, or rather, I listened.

Alan: "You have the worst Union. Even the name is stupid. What made you choose that lady as your emblem? Word on the street is that you are run by meddling elected dilettantes. No one respects you. Your members, your members' employers, the press, see AGMA as a joke."

AGMA President: "So... would you like to come in for an interview?"

Alan: "Sure. When?"

Ultimately, Alan was the only candidate who could fiercely represent our members at the negotiating table, while making AGMA vibrant, powerful, relevant and solvent.

Thank you, Alan, for making us a top Labor Union while giving us a wonderfully wild ride.—Linda Mays



Linda Mays and Alan Gordon at The Metropolitan Opera



At the Met UNITE Rally held on August 1, 2014 in Dante Park across the street from Lincoln Center plaza and home of the Metropolitan Opera: front, AGMA' staff members Eleni Kallas, Alan Gordon and Deborah Allton-Maher; in back, Met Negotiating Committee Chair AGMA member David Frye

*There is so much that can be said and has already been expressed in tribute to Alan and the tremendous contribution he has made to the union, its members and the strength of the collective bargaining agreements so I would like to share what Alan has meant to me personally. Knowing him has shaped my life in profound ways. He opened the door for me to a career that is meaningful, that helps people and makes a difference in their lives and in the lives of generations that follow. He has been a powerful mentor and compelled me to access the strongest part of me to become a more effective advocate. He taught me to reject fear, demand what you want and what is deserved, don't back off but know when to apologize. He was audacious, irreverent and endearing all at the same time. He was a dear friend. I deeply mourn his loss, but he remains an inspiration and I am deeply grateful to have known and worked with him.—**Deborah Allton-Maher***

*Simultaneous with his coming to AGMA as National Executive Director, Alan was thrust into the last twelve tumultuous and difficult years at New York City Opera. There were so many problems that he became the regular union representative to the company. He always came when we needed him, and he never failed to advocate and negotiate in heroic fashion on behalf of our members. He was a mentor and role model for me. I am so grateful to have known him and I will always miss him.—**Louis Perry***



Alan Gordon, AGMA Recording Secretary Louis Perry, Local 802 President Tino Gagliardi, counsel Bruce Simon and AGMA President Jimmy Odom at a negotiating session in 2011 for New York City Opera.



Alan Gordon and Eleni Kallas

I am privileged to have worked for AGMA with National Executive Alan Gordon, one of the most brilliant negotiation strategist and I believe one of the strongest union executives in the country.

In addition to his guidance and collaboration in negotiations, he was deep down one of the most caring individuals I have met. He was a unique executive in that he valued the input of all his staff and encouraged our individual strengths while giving us the freedom to do our jobs to represent the membership effectively. Alan arrived at AGMA during a very critical time in our union's history and managed to transform AGMA into a formidable union. Although he liked to say he was the "Savior of Dance", in actuality he was the "Savior of AGMA".

*I will forever be grateful to him for all he has taught me and for his friendship. Alan, you were one in a million.—**Eleni Kallas***

Alan was dedicated, humble, full of compassion, honest, trustworthy, loyal, kind, humorous and smart. I will miss you dearly and I was glad to have known you. You were a great inspiration.

Rest in peace.—Jannett Chickorie

When someone passes on, there is always a void. However, when that same person happens to also work with you, there is a different type of emptiness that one feels. The AGMA office was always humming along whenever Alan was in—there was always some noise coming from his office. He generated a lot of energy just being here. He was always asking someone for something and I could hear him from my office. He always had a story to tell you and I miss his smart wit.

I miss him. I miss his laughter, his love of books, his humor and his generous and compassionate spirit. I miss him being here. I am glad to have worked so many years with him.—Denise Baker



In 2006, the AGMA staff gathered at a wedding reception for Deborah Allton-Maher; above are, left to right: Denise Baker, Jannett Chickorie, Deborah, Susan Davison, Gerry Angel and Elizabeth Drorbaugh; in back are James Fayette and Alan Gordon.

Coming from the perspective of a Life Member and a current staff member, I feel that Alan Gordon's passing is a tremendous loss to AGMA. He came to AGMA at a time when only his strength and knowledge could have pulled us together and through the bad times that we were experiencing. He brought financial stability, and gave AGMA a presence and stature in the business that no one else could have. Personally, I enjoyed his humor and appreciated the love he had for his family. He will be sorely missed.—Candace Itow

Alan and I met in the 1980s when I was a candidate for the Directors Guild training program. The last phase of the testing was an interview with the trustees. The setting was designed to intimidate. The trustees were firing questions like bullets, but Alan was examining my application. Suddenly he said "Quotidian," a word in my essay. "Do you think the teamsters are going to be able to understand you?" I answered, "Are you having trouble understanding me?" The trustees chuckled, Alan laughed and I knew I had made a friend.

Since that time, I have always felt fortunate that Alan was my friend and my mentor. After years of freelancing, Alan offered me a job at AGMA. I loved the work, the environment and the fact that Alan's door was always open.

Alan came to me with odd requests like Yiddish words appropriate for negotiations and items he thought no one else could find. He asked that I get him a specialty key. I did. He looked at it, saw the key shaped as a handgun and threw his head back and laughed. This was Alan—never too busy to laugh.—Betsy Schrott



Alan Gordon laughing as he opened a "gag" gift from Gerry Angel.



Alan, Grace, and Jenifer Ringer-Fayette (James' wife and their daughter) spread holiday cheer.

He hated it when I called him 'my boss' but he was my boss for 9 crazy years. He instead liked to be called 'Savior of Dancers' as he led the union to support and serve the interests of all dancers nationwide along with the incredible work he did for opera singers.

At work he was a hero but not the traditional 'white knight' kind of hero and instead, more of a vigilante kind who took the bad guys out in the dark alley. He was passionate about justice and fighting for the weaker and underserved and was uncompromisingly aggressive in that pursuit. If you ever had the privilege of getting to know him, you will absolutely never forget him because he took such joy in getting a reaction out of you and ultimately brought out your truer self.

I will never forget in my darkest hour after my son and I were attacked in the park, he was the first person to arrive at the hospital and sat with Jenifer as they stitched up my son's arm. He found me on my way to Intensive Care to say, "Stop screwing around and get back to work!" A figure of strength, stability and humor in the midst of a storm.

*Alan was always very nostalgic and I expect he is somewhere now listening to one of his favorite singers, Dion. I will miss him but will carry so much of what he meant to me always.—**James Fayette***

I worked with Alan for ten years and his presence was so prevalent that I was always cognizant of when he was here and when he wasn't even though his office seemed an ocean away from me. His ubiquitous and often stentorian presence was a source of both comfort and confidence. There was never a concern that things wouldn't be all right within the halls of AGMA with Alan around. The man inspired that type of assurance.

*I wish I had known Alan Gordon better. I can honestly say I really miss him. He inspired that too.—**Oliver Bailey***



AGMA staff, left to right, sitting: John Ward, Nora Heiber, Alan Gordon and Deborah Allton-Maher; standing: Gerry Angel, Eleni Kallas and James Fayette.

*In 1999, I joined the AGMA staff in hopes of doing all I could to offer the representation I had craved as a member. It wasn't until Alan Gordon became our Executive Director, that I finally felt empowered to do so. Alan was an unprecedented force in improving the lives of our artists. Although this is obviously a huge loss, one of his greatest gifts was his ability to empower us with the strength, confidence and tools to continue his work. Alan was a great leader. He was my mentor, friend and the best boss I could have ever hoped to have. He was also quite a character, unpredictable, complicated and colorful, leaving us with loads of great stories to share. He is irreplaceable. I will continue to do all I can to make sure his spirit lives on in my work. He will forever remain in my heart.—**Nora Heiber***

*Everyone knows that Alan could be a tough cookie when representing his Artists. I always said: "I'm glad I'm on Alan's side." But, he was also one of the most colorful persons I have ever met with a great sense of humor. He made me laugh. One day he offered to drive me from the AGMA office to my father-in-laws' place in Westchester County. I couldn't stop laughing the entire trip—that was Alan—a passionate advocate for his members, always with a great story, and a great boss to his staff.—**John Russum***

Early in 2015, I never guessed that Alan Gordon was going to become my friend. Honestly I was a little afraid of him and we were often found arguing in the comments section of Facebook about various things. But thanks to the formation of a group of soloists who decided they wanted to become more active in AGMA, I ended up communicating with Alan by email, phone, and in person during 2015, and so got to know him much better.

He took the time to consider and respond to all the issues the soloist group brought to him and he took action right away to protect his members. One of the biggest changes that occurred was the institution of a sexual harassment policy which allowed AGMA members to report incidents of harassment through protected channels. This policy gave members who had experienced harassment a feeling of security they hadn't felt before. People told me they cried tears of joy when they heard that someone was ready to stand up for them, and it happened because Alan made it happen—he was ready to be that person who would protect them.

At first my encounters with Alan definitely had that antagonistic quality he was known for. It is no secret that there are people even within the union who didn't always agree with his methods and I was one of them. The more I got to know Alan on a personal level however, the more I began to understand the level of his commitment for those he represented, and in spite of our differences of opinion, we began to develop a camaraderie. He made himself available to every member of the union in a way that I know is unreplicated in other unions. He was very opinionated, but in the end, was willing to listen to people when he believed their ideas would help his members.

Since the news of his death, I've been thinking about all of our interactions, especially one conversation. Alan called me to ask permission to republish one of my Huffington Post articles in AGMAZine and one of the things I mentioned in the article was the sexual harassment policy now instituted by AGMA. He asked me "Why didn't you take credit for that? That was because of you. You did that. People should know that." It was such a human, supportive thing to say, and it stuck with me because of course, it wouldn't have happened without him. He also took time to give me advice about my bird feeder and asked how our son was adjusting to our recent move. That conversation in particular was what eventually made me totally reconsider my original opinion of him, and realize that I really liked him. Honestly—he had no reason to like me—I was like a little gnat always buzzing in his ear, asking him questions, asking for him to change the way he'd been doing things for a long time, bugging him about policy things, arguing with him about so many things. But for some reason, he decided he did like me. And I think it was because I was a member of his union who he could tell cared about doing things for other people. So in spite of our differences, he listened to me and even remembered to send me holiday greetings. The last message he sent me was on Christmas, wishing me a merry one.

Thank you Alan, for reminding me that people can connect and even care about each other even when they disagree. You will be greatly missed.—**Jennifer Rivera**

SAG-AFTRA mourns the death of Alan Gordon, National Executive Director of the American Guild of Musical Artists. The 70-year-old Gordon passed away Jan. 1, following a stroke. Our hearts and thoughts go out to his family, friends and the members of AGMA.

RIP Alan Gordon, AGMA National Executive Director and founding Model Alliance Advisory Board member. Our deepest condolences go out to Alan's family and our friends at the American Guild of Musical Artists. He will be missed.—**Model Alliance**

Sending our deepest condolences.—**Stage Directors and Choreographers Society Staff**

It was with great sadness that we learned of Alan's untimely passing. He will be greatly missed. Please accept our condolences. Our thoughts are with you during this difficult time.
With deepest sympathy, **Robert, Bennett and the Ailey community**

Alan was the bargaining force in my career at ABT; his skill was unparalleled. Even more, he was a phenomenal exemplar & mentor to so many. Wishing peace to all who he left behind.—**Sasha Dmochowski**

He was an energetic, exasperating, excitable, and pugnacious man who could challenge the toughest of souls. But beneath the bluster and bravura stood a compassionate, caring, diligent, tireless man who dedicated his life to the members of AGMA for over 16 years. This was Alan Gordon.

I came to know Alan and appreciate his fearsome loyalty after suffering a traumatic injury which would change the trajectory of my life. Alan greeted me with an open heart, filled with compassion, support, and an unwavering determination to advocate on my behalf. We spoke often and developed a special bond of friendship and respect for one another's talents and abilities. I learned just how many members of AGMA he has aided and defended over these many years and witnessed firsthand the commitment he felt to each and every one of us.

Recently, a friend mentioned a perplexing issue referring to it as a "Gordian Knot". Having never heard this expression I asked my friend to define what it means. The definition is "one who acts quickly and decisively in a difficult situation, one who solves problems boldly". Alan was constantly untying "Gordian Knots". It was his life's blood. He was a warrior for each member of AGMA. How apropos that this knot would be named after Mr. Gordon!!!!

Dear Alan, we will continue to be challenged by Gordian knots. We will strive to undo them with the same courage, boldness, and strength with which you have demonstrated to us.

Rest in peace, my friend, and know that I will never forget you.—Wendy White

On Wednesday, January 13, 2016 the Metropolitan Opera dedicated their performance of *La Bohème* in memory of Alan Gordon.

On Sunday, January 17, 2016 the Lyric Opera of Chicago dedicated their performance of *Bel Canto* to Alan Gordon.



Ann Hackett and Alan Gordon at The Metropolitan Opera



**Thank you Alan.
We are going to miss you.**

AGMA Going Forward

At its January meeting, AGMA's Board of Governors authorized the Executive Council, the President and such staff as deemed necessary to begin the process of the search for the position of National Executive Director.

Current Associate Executive Director Deborah Allton-Maher will serve as Interim National Executive Director and she and Director of Operations, Gerry Angel, will report to the President, the Executive Council, and the Board of Governors. Information will be shared as it becomes available.

The New York Times' obituary link:

http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/07/arts/alan-s-gordon-longtime-union-leader-dies-at-70.html?_r=0

The Gordon family has asked that any donations
be directed to the following:

Burke Rehabilitation
c/o Liz Walsh
785 Mamaroneck Avenue
White Plains, NY 10605

In memory of Alan Gordon.
Please direct the donation to "Neuro Rehabilitation".

AREA NEWS

NEW YORK

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



The New York Area meeting was held on Monday, November 16, 2015, preceded by complimentary flu shots provided by the Actors Fund.

After the meeting was called to order, elections for the Area Committee were held. Re-elected to the Committee for a term of three years were: Kim Araki and Raven Wilkinson to fill the Dancer seats; Jann Jaffe to fill the Soloist seat; Ruth Ann Cunningham and Robert Kuehn to fill the Chorister seats and the final Chorister position was filled by newly-elected Mark Rehnstrom. Remaining on the Committee is: Anne-Carolyn Bird, Ann Chiaverini, Osceola Davis, Juan Jose Ibarra, Peggy Imbrie, Kathleen Mangiameli, Linda Mays, Raymond Menard, Aisha Mitchell and Louis Perry.



Left to right: AGMA National Executive Director Alan Gordon; AGMA New York Area Dance Executive Griff Braun; New York Area Chair, AGMA Recording Secretary and Chorister Louis Perry; AGMA Associate Executive Director Deborah Allton-Maher; AGMA Relief Fund Director of Development Linda Mays; AGMA Governor and Chorister Pamela Smith; and National Director of Social Services for the Actors Fund Tamar Shapiro

The elections were followed by a presentation for the AGMA Relief Fund by AGMA Relief Fund Director of Development Linda Mays and the National Director of Social Services for the Actors Fund, Tamar Shapiro. They explained the services that were in place to help AGMA members and the process for obtaining assistance. They provided extremely helpful information and answered questions from the members present.



AGMA dancer Alicia Weihl receives her free flu shot courtesy of The Actors Fund.

There were then reports from AGMA's senior staff, Deborah Allton-Maher and Griff Braun, regarding completed and ongoing negotiations in the New York Area as well as a report on the work of the Concert Singers Committee by Pamela Smith.

During the open forum portion of the meeting, both Alan Gordon, AGMA National Executive Director, and Derek Davis, Executive Director of the AGMA Retirement and Health Funds, fielded questions from the members.

After the meeting concluded there was a delicious buffet dinner for all present!

On behalf of the New York Area, we want to thank Gerry Angel and the rest of our national office staff for helping to make a terrific meeting. ♦



In August 2015 the New York Area Concert Singers Committee met with Musica Sacra at AGMA's National Office and successfully negotiated a three-year agreement; left to right: Musica Sacra Contractor Margery Daley, Mark Rehnstrom, Musica Sacra Executive Director Thomas Reynolds, Governor Charles Sprawls, AGMA lawyer Gail Lopez-Henriquez, Governor and Committee Chair Pamela Smith, Governor Doug Purcell, former Governor Rose Anderson, Musica Sacra Music Director Kent Tritle, and Governor Karen Grahn. Not shown: Committee members Rachel Rosales and former Governor Robert Kuehn.

NEW ORLEANS

New Orleans Ten Years After Katrina

By Julie Condy, AGMA Governor, New Orleans Area Chair, Chorister



If you have not visited New Orleans at some point, you should. A most unique city in the U.S.!

Yes, you can have a wonderful visit and not have any idea that in 2005 the situation was quite different.

As you can imagine, the 10 years after the Katrina flood disaster have been rather challenging.

All of the large performance venues are back to business. The Mahalia Jackson Theater for the Performing Arts returned in spring of 2009 and this fall, the Orpheum Theater, the concert hall of the Louisiana Philharmonic, has reopened. The Saenger Theatre, which hosts the touring Broadway shows, reopened in September of 2011. (All of these buildings had severe flooding damage.)

In the interim, the New Orleans Opera performed at Tulane University in a hall not built for the performing arts. The Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra had been itinerant, holding concerts in churches and convention halls until the Mahalia Jackson Theatre reopened.

All of the universities are back, however, many of them have had severe budget and programming cuts. Some have returned to their full facilities and others still have buildings on campus that need renovation.

An interesting change has been the actual community of people. Local residents were displaced across Louisiana and the U.S. after the flood for housing and employment. Some returned to the New Orleans area or other areas in southeastern Louisiana or southern Mississippi. Others stayed where they evacuated and created a new life for themselves.

That difference is reflected in the music community, including the opera company. The

chorus composition has changed. A number of the long-time local choristers moved away and others have developed new interests such as the new Mardi Gras groups that have sprung up since 2005. The chorus is younger than it was and has a larger number of undergraduate and graduate students from Loyola University. The majority of these students are from out-of-state and don't stay with the chorus for more than a few years. The pre-Katrina chorus was heavily local and stable, whereas the post-Katrina chorus is transient with a handful of long-term local choristers.

I am conflicted about this anniversary. Truth be told, I don't want to revisit it. We have spent years moving forward, and going backward to revisit the emotional pain is not moving forward to me. Katrina is omnipresent in New Orleans. For years after the storm, our conversation was peppered with pre- and post-Katrina references. When you met people for the first time, the talk would go back to "how did you make out after the storm." You would casually ask someone what part of town do you live in and have a full blown Katrina story. Everyone was affected on many levels. Now, those stories are buried under the surface.

This past summer I did the final thing I had put off doing for ten years—I thawed out the family vintage photos from the late 1800's to separate and dry them. (In the storm aftermath, the advice was to freeze photos and dry them out later.)

Ten years on and it needed to be done. I can handle it now. The photographs came through better than I thought they would, too. They still smell like Katrina (dirty mold) though, but at least the smell dissipated within an hour. After the flooding, that was all you could smell for months to years, depending on what part of town you were in.

My neighborhood has been reborn. Out of 22 houses located in my block, 16 were torn down. (NOTE: The final un-gutted house was

torn down just in 2014!) Of those, only three lots remain as blank slates for a new house. The rest have been rebuilt, including my own. It is a new old neighborhood.

New Orleans has fewer AGMA chorus members. Several of our regular AGMA members have moved on to other endeavors. Getting the younger choristers to join AGMA is a hard sell in a right-to-work state where a chorister may be cast in just one or two operas a season. The concept of a union is difficult for young people to grasp when they have not grown up in that type of social culture and they are used to volunteering their musical services to churches and community groups.



Julie: "My neighborhood has been reborn. Out of 22 houses located in my block, 16 were torn down. Of those, only three lots remain as blank slates for a new house. The rest have been rebuilt, including my own. It is a new old neighborhood."

Where will New Orleans be in another 10 years? Katrina stories will become less important. The big three arts groups (opera, symphony and ballet) will continue in their refurbished venues. There is an exciting youthful theater community that has sprung up in alternative spaces. There are more music venues and more restaurants than pre-Katrina. Katrina stories will be moved to the back burner. There will be fewer people in the area that experienced the 2005 flood and/or a hurricane. The New Orleans in 2025 will be a newer New Orleans that is moving forward yet grounded in the history of this most unique city, the northernmost city of the Caribbean. ♦

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

By James Guthrie, Southern California Area Chair



The Los Angeles Master Chorale was busy this past holiday season on the Carol Bus. They experienced “mobile music” with members touring in a double-decker bus performing “pop-up” concerts at the Los Angeles Zoo, Museum of Art, The Grove and entertainment outlets all over the city. Two shifts of 32 singers sang a capella arrangements under the direction of Associate Conductor Lesley Leighton, delighting young and old. They found folks wanting to join the fun and ride the bus too! Sorry, but this was a SOLD OUT AGMA Ride providing laughter and song for all.



Winter fun in the Los Angeles sun, caroling along with the Los Angeles Master Chorale

Kudos to the LA Master Chorale for taking it from the concert hall to the Street!!!

Looking Great @ 30!!!!!!

Los Angeles Opera opened its 30th Anniversary Season with a *tour de force* double bill featuring Plácido Domingo in BOTH productions—Franco Zeffirelli’s production of *Pagliacci* and Woody Allen’s production of *Gianni Schicchi*. Plácido served as Maestro for *Pagliacci* and sang the title role in *Gianni Schicchi*.

What a night at the opera for sold out audiences in Los Angeles! The second fall production was the LA Opera premiere of Jack Heggie’s *Moby Dick* which set sail with an almost all male cast on the high seas—Jacqueline Echols was on board in the role of Pip.

LA Opera concluded the fall lineup with *Norma*, featuring Angela Meade, Jamie Barton, Craig Thomas and Morris Robinson sharing outstanding Bel Canto singing with Los Angeles audiences—a special treat every performance.

The 2015-16 main stage season continues with *The Magic Flute*, *Madama Butterfly* and *La Bohème* with Gustavo Dudamel making his conducting debut at LA Opera.

Since 30 looks this great for LA Opera, we cannot wait to see it at 31—which promises to be even better.

Everything gets better with age, right?! ♦

All photos below ©Craig T. Mathew/LA Opera



Los Angeles Opera’s 30th Anniversary Season productions: above, left, the opening scene with the entire cast of Zeffirelli’s *Pagliacci*; center, Woody Allen’s *Gianni Schicchi* with Plácido Domingo (on the bed) surrounded by Kihun Yook, Liam Bonner and Meredith Arwady; and, right, a scene from *Moby Dick* showing Matthew O’Neill as Flask facing Babatunde Akinboboye as Daggoo, with Mark Beasom as Knife Grinder and Sal Malaki as Tashtego.

PITTSBURGH

By Bill Buchanan, Pittsburgh Area Chair and chorister



On September 26, 2015, 49 dancers, production staff, choristers, and soloists attended Pittsburgh's Area Meeting at the Spaghetti Warehouse.

Guest speaker Griff Braun, AGMA's New York Area Dance Executive, spoke on the topic, "Strength in Bargaining: Preparation, Planning, and Participation." Among his points were that the strength of the union lies in a membership that is active, involved, and informed, and that having a collective bargaining agreement that is enforced by a strong union allows artists to concentrate on their art.



A few of the attendees at the Area Meeting, left to right: Corey Bourbonniere (Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre Corps de Ballet dancer), Julia Erickson (Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre Principal dancer), Griff Braun (AGMA New York Area Dance Executive), Carol Wolfe (Pittsburgh Area AGMA Governor and Pittsburgh Opera chorister), Alejandro Diaz (AGMA Delegate and Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre soloist), Olivia Kelly and Diana Yohe, both Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre Corps de Ballet dancers.

Bill Buchanan was re-elected as Area Chair, and the Pittsburgh Opera shop elected a new Opera Executive Committee (Bill Buchanan, Jara Dorsey-Lash, Bill Fisher, J. Patrick McGill, Edward Moore and Joshua Mulkey—Carol Wolfe serves ex officio as Board Representative). There was considerable talk about increased cooperation between the ballet and opera shops as they prepare for upcoming collective bargaining agreement negotiations next year. ♦

SAN FRANCISCO



©Dan Harper

It is negotiation season in the San Francisco Area. Negotiations have already begun or will begin soon for San Francisco Opera, San Francisco Ballet, San Francisco Symphony Chorus and Colorado Ballet. San Francisco Opera Chorus negotiating team (shown above) worked through their Meistersinger breaks.

WASHINGTON/BALTIMORE



The 2015 Washington/Baltimore Fall General Membership Meeting was held on Saturday, September 5, and 65 members attended.



©Theo Kossentis

Sona Kharatian and Brooklyn Mack from The Washington Ballet's program Latin Heat



Washington National Opera Carmen corps dancers, front: Edwin Aparicio; standing, left to right Daniel Paredez, Nancy Flores, Sara Jerez, Heidi Kershaw, Alexa Miton, Cristina De Jose and Jose Moreno



The Washington Ballet Joint Committee: Tamas Krizsa, Daniel Roberge (Delegate), Francesca Dugarte, Kateryna Derechyna (Delegate) and National Director of Organizing and Training and Mid-Atlantic Area Representative Eleni Kallas



Washington National Opera Appomattox Yankee Soldiers: left to right, kneeling: Alex Albuquerque Jarrod Lee, Prince Havelly, Jonathan Champ and Devandas James; standing, first row: Peter Burroughs, Joe Minor, William Powell, Frederic Rey, Matthew Osifchin, Keith Craig, Wayne Jennings; second row: Adam Caughey, Morris Thomas, Darnell Roulhac, William Jones, Harvey Fort, Norwood Robinson, Aaron Reeder, Keith H. Pennick, Robert Cantrell, Spencer Adamson and David Morris

NORTHWEST

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



AGMA is alive and well in the Pacific Northwest representing three great performing arts companies: Pacific Northwest Ballet, Portland Opera, and Seattle Opera. The Pacific Northwest, or Area 11, covers the states of Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington and Wyoming. It is a great privilege and honor for me to represent our region as Area Chair and Third Vice President of AGMA. The representatives to the Board of Governors from our Area are Maria Leatha from Portland, and Roxanne Foster and Craig Grayson from Seattle.

While preparing to write this article, I did a little research as to the origin and beginning of each company. According to AGMA's archive records, Portland Civic Opera had an AGMA contract performance of *La Traviata* on October 23, 1953 and a contract for *Don Giovanni* in 1954. Portland Opera was founded as Portland Opera Association in 1964 and became a signatory company with AGMA in November of 1970. I have had the opportunity to attend several of Portland Opera productions, and my most memorable production was *Nixon in China*. The Portland Opera Chorus has a core of 48 singers. Upcoming productions are *The Magic Flute*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Eugene Onegin* and *The Italian Girl in Algiers*. The shop steward for

Portland Opera is Wade Baker.

Pacific Northwest Ballet was founded in 1972 as Pacific Northwest Dance Association under the aegis of Seattle Opera Association. It became an independent organization in 1977 and was renamed Pacific Northwest Ballet in 1978. The company became an AGMA signatory in 1983. The present company consists of 45 very talented dancers and their 2015-16 season includes: *See the Music*, *Emergence*, *George Balanchine's The Nutcracker™*, *Romeo et Juliette*, *Director's Choice*, *Le Corsaire: A Pirate's Tale*, *Coppelia* and *American Stories*. The delegates for Pacific Northwest Ballet are Jonathan Porretta and Carrie Imler.

From a historical perspective, for the 1962 World's Fair, and as part of the Seattle Symphony's 1962 season, the opera *Aida* was produced and performed in the brand new Seattle Opera House. Seattle Symphony was the first company to sign choristers, dancers and principal singers to AGMA contracts for the duration of the production. Soon after this significant and successful Seattle operatic debut, the Seattle Opera was born in 1963.

I have had a long association with this company, from 1992 to January of 2015, as a regular chorister. Seattle Opera is world renowned for its production of Wagner operas and most notably *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. There have been many productions that I have enjoyed, but I think my all-time favorite production was Britten's *Billy Budd*.

The Seattle Opera Chorus has a core of 36 very fine singers, and works well with a very fine staging staff. This season includes:

©Lindsay Thomas



Pacific Northwest Ballet (PNB) company dancers with PNB Artistic Director Peter Boal (far left) and ballet masters Anne Dabrowski and Paul Gibson (far right).



Attendees at the Portland Area Meeting, left to right, sitting: Kate Strohecker, Aimee Chalfant, AGMA Third Vice President and Northwest Area Chair George Scott, AGMA President Jimmy Odom and Jenny Spada; standing: Raoul Bellis-Squires, AGMA Governor Craig Grayson, AGMA's National Director of Organizing and Training Eleni Kallas, Wade Baker, Patrick Scofield and Chrissy Roccaro.



Seattle Opera's Ring Chorus from 2013

©Alan Aldabastro



Seattle Opera's grand scale 2015 production of Tosca's Act 1 finale, featuring the chorus, supers, and Greer Grimsley as Baron Scarpia, was also the last opera in which George Scott sang in.

©Philip Newton



"Va pensiero" chorus from Seattle Opera's 2015 production of Nabucco

Nabucco, *An American Dream*, *The Pearl Fishers*, *Mary Stuart*, *The Marriage of Figaro* and *The Flying Dutchman*. The shop stewards for Seattle Opera are Laura Eichelberger and Mike Janney. ♦

Same Show, Different Coast

By Matthew Steffens, Dancer



I have toured often during my professional career, but nothing like the fall of 2014. One boat, two productions in two different cities with two different casts, back to back. When I signed on to do Daniel Catán's *Florecia en el Amazonas*, I knew the show would be an adventure, as we were performing it at both Washington National Opera and LA Opera. I had previously lived and performed in both cities and thought it would be fun to revisit them ten years later.

As we put each show together, the processes were very different, yet yielded the same great production. In one production, a makeshift boat had been built to allow the performers to get used to the multi-levels of the boat. In the other production, the conductor would rotate around the room as a muslin boat rotated so the cast got used to the rotational aspect of the boat. Each presented their own challenge, and by the end we knew the *El Dorado* was the extra member of our cast, sometimes having a mind of its own.



Washington National Opera's production of *Florecia en el Amazonas*, left to right: Norman Garrett, Durrell Comedy, Nancy Fabiola Herrera, Alison Mixon, Michael Todd Simpson, Andrea Carroll, Christopher Pennix, Patrick O'Halloran, David Pittsinger, Ricardo Zayas and Matthew Steffens

Having lived in New York City for the past ten years, both D.C. and L.A. offered a nice break from the busy bustle of the Big Apple. After I learned the public transport system in each city (always a challenge) and bought a \$100 bike at Wal-Mart, I was able to connect with old friends in both cities. One of the best things about being on the road with *Florecia* was that I had the time to see many friends I hadn't seen in years because we were in the respective cities for several weeks.

Being on the road also meant being away from my apartment for a third of the year. Having grown up the son of a Navy SEAL, I have moved around my entire

life. I found subtleties in both cities with great locations, but each had their respective obstacles. I found a great gym and yoga studio in both cities, and life was good. I was fortunate to live with one of my best friends in both which made me feel somewhat like we were at home (and his dog jumping into my bed every morning provided even more comfort). But the 40-minute bike ride to work each day in one city, or the second bed that was really an air mattress (REALLY!?!?) in the other city made me miss home.

It's in those moments that you turn to the art you're creating to find the comfort to get through those small inconveniences. A hug from a fellow cast member you hadn't seen in eight years. The sound of that first violin as the orchestra tunes. The excitement of a returning cast member singing or dancing one of your favorite moments. The hidden pass-off from the crew each night accompanied with a smile. The butterflies from wondering how slick or sticky the floor might be that night. Looking up two stories to connect with a fellow cast member as you race past them. The only thing that is constant when you are on the road is that you are always exploring. And THAT is what makes the journey exciting!

Matthew Steffens is a New York-based performer, director and choreographer. He has fought, flown and danced his way through 12 operas at the Metropolitan Opera and can currently be seen in *Cavalleria Rusticana/Pagliacci*. Broadway credits include *Promises, Promises*, *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*, and *Doctor Zhivago* (Associate Choreographer). He served as Associate Choreographer for the immersive Off-Broadway hit *Queen of the Night*, as well as Resident Director during their Drama Desk Award win. Visit matthewsteffens.com. ♦



Matthew Steffens and Alison Mixon



Choreographer Eric Sean Fogel with Alison Mixon and Matthew Steffens

IN MEMORIAM

Theodore Bikel, Soloist

Luc Bondy, Director

William J. Brooke, Chorister

Patrice Chéreau, Director

Patricia Clarke Person, Chorister

Richard Cowan, Soloist

Yvonne Craig, Dancer and Actor

Ronald D. Curameng, Chorister

Mattiwilda Dobbs, Soloist

Albert Evans, Dancer

Franck Ferrari, Soloist

Alan S. Gordon, AGMA

National Executive

Director

Nikolaus Lehnhoff, Director

Daniel Levins, Dancer

Zale Kessler, Soloist

Gloria Lind, Soloist

Johan Renvall, Dancer

Mario Sereni, Soloist

Christopher Thomas, Director

Joyce Tomanec, Chorister

Dick Van Patten, Soloist

Jon Vickers, Soloist

Necessary Ingredients to Make Traveling Engagements Feel Like You Were Home

By Morris D. Robinson, Soloist



As a Principal Artist, I often tell others that I spend about 90% of my time on the road. In a nutshell, to make it plain to my neighbors and friends, if I'm at home, I'm not working. Although the logic of this is very easy to comprehend, that statement, in my world, serves a duality in purpose. It justifies to me sometimes

why it's imperative that I must be away. As I've said on many occasions, "Opera companies don't bring checks to my house and drop them off, so I have to go get them!"

That being said, the tough aspects of being on the road can never be rationalized such that it makes it an easier pill to swallow. There are indeed two sides of the coin. And, quite honestly, there is some truth to the old adage that the "grass is always greener..."

There are lots of folks who think I'm living a dream. I understand that train of thought, and it makes perfect sense on the surface. I've been blessed to consistently grace the stages of the most prestigious opera houses and symphonic halls in our beloved country and, on occasion, abroad. As a result of such, I am always in places like New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Miami, Houston, Atlanta, Cincinnati, Montreal, Vancouver, Sydney, São Paulo, Detroit, Dallas, etc. Because there are levels to this business, it appears that I live the life of a "Rock Star." The reality, however, is much more sobering than the average outsider would expect.

As a younger artist, I was always afforded the assistance of what we call "Patron Housing." This benefit is tremendously helpful and greatly appreciated when one is starting out in the embryonic stages of a career. Simply put: Early in your career, your fees are considerably lower. It wouldn't be financially feasible to pay for corporate housing and subsequently realize a profit from doing a job. The sheer generosity of the patron is invaluable to a young artist and, I believe, a very necessary entity to help formulate the groundwork for a career as a traveling performer. THAT BEING SAID, these situations aren't always ideal.

In my career, I've come to learn that a lot of the times, patrons, who are incredibly generous, are also very interested in what we do as artists. Their curiosity, respect and admiration sometimes makes these living arrangements more arduous than pleasurable. There have been several occasions when some of my colleagues (including me) have become more exhausted physically and vocally just trying to "entertain" the host and their other guests. Our appreciation of their generosity and kindness morphs into an obligation to appease their desire for conversation and attention. This is what I like to refer to as being "on."

All professionals, in any field or discipline, understand the aspect of



Sitting, Morris's son, Miles, watches while his dad sings in San Francisco Opera's Showboat.

being "on." You are not "on" when you are at home, alone, or with your family. The moment you walk into your place of employment, you're "on." Such is the case exponentially as an artist. By the very nature of our business, we are always aware of the fact that we are being perpetually scrutinized. If you understand that you're under scrutiny at the office (or the opera house, symphony hall, etc.), it's logically conclusive that you feel the same way TEN FOLD if you're living with someone who donates enough money or time to keep your employer afloat.

Inasmuch as these scenarios are difficult, they are also necessary and quite manageable. After all, the generosity of these folks is unprecedented and tremendously appreciated. Some of them keep our respective fields of artistic expression viable. In addition, for the most part, they all are involved because they love what we do. God bless them!

Once you're out and in the big leagues, making the road as comfortable as home is paramount in importance. It's impossible to give your best if you're not completely comfortable on the road. There is, however, an art to making completely strange surroundings your "home away from home" whilst away.

I learned early on that you get what you pay for with regards to housing. I've tried cheap. I've tried moderate. I've tried ultra high-end. At the end of the day, I've found that knowing the necessary ingredients to achieve my level of comfort makes the road more appealing.

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As we all come from a variety of backgrounds, nationalities, cultures, etc., one's specific demands are just as varied. In general, however, I think, universally, singers need some basic ingredients: high-speed Wifi, a functional kitchen, a comfortable bed, "quietness," cleanliness (no dust, pet hair etc.), and an accessible location with regards to the rehearsal space and opera house.

Wifi: As we are always working whilst on the road, we need access to our emails, our management and so forth, in order to keep the "Business" of our careers going. In reality, we, as independent contractors, are mini corporations, bridled with the responsibilities of any other small business. To that end, very often we are actively negotiating contracts for future jobs, as well as monitoring our schedules in an effort to organize our study habits, such that we are adequately prepared for the next few gigs etc.



As Sarastro in The Magic Flute at Sydney Opera House

In this technology-driven world, Internet access (for most of us) is the main tool we utilize to maintain some sort of continuity and communication with our loved ones. On a personal note, it is a very normal occurrence for my 10-year-old to "FaceTime" me, seeking help with a homework assignment. While this is important to him as my kid, it's just as important to me and my colleagues.

Being on the road is a very lonely existence and technology affords us the opportunity to feel as if we belong and are relevant. The visual connection capabilities of our many devices helps bridge the separation gap that we all experience while traveling. Although it may seem minimal, most of us depend on this implementation as it has proven to be an important entity while simultaneously trying to maintain a relationship with our loved ones, and manage a career.

The other ingredients are typically individual choices that may or may not make the universal list in the same order of importance as expressed by me. However, I've learned that having a kitchen is important both financially and emotionally. The financial impact of eating three meals a day is obvious, especially when working in major cities. For me, there is nothing that further exemplifies loneliness than having to eat in a public place, alone.

Preparing my own meals helps to eradicate that awkward feeling when having to navigate very public, family-oriented environments. For me, personally, it's a painful reminder of how much I miss the human interaction we all need and desire. On the other end, cooking at your temporary environment gives the illusion that you are making this habitat more personal—more "yours."

The other things mentioned on my list of ingredients are also a matter of personal taste. Some have terrible animal hair allergies. Some singers travel with pets (usually sopranos and tenors). I also have tremendous dust allergies. Most people who know me are very familiar with the fact that I buy a warm mist humidifier at a drugstore in practically every city I visit. It's a minor \$20 investment on making my environment comfortable, and giving me some of the amenities I enjoy while in my real home.

I also live in a very rural environment, in a small Georgia town, south of Atlanta, with a lake in my backyard and lots of wild birds, turtles, etc. Performing in New York, Chicago and Los Angeles, etc., take a lot of adjustments for me because I'm not the type of guy who can rest in a metropolitan environment. Some people need and require the types of sounds associated with city life.

In a nutshell, life on the road is just tough. It can be fun and exploratory and exciting indeed. However, it can also be very lonely, isolated and uncomfortable. Over time, and with meticulous preparation, one can put in place the necessary ingredients to make their travel environment manageable.

In addition to the physical and environmental and technological aspects of travel, I always try to remember that the life I lead is a calling. It is a responsibility placed upon those of us who have been blessed with the gift to communicate musically to the world. To that end, what we do is bigger than those of us who possess the gift. It's our DUTY ... to service the music ... service the world. And using our respective gifts, in my opinion, is a wonderful way to give thanks to the Creator for allowing us to be one of the Chosen.

A graduate of the Metropolitan Opera Lindemann Young Artist Development Program, Mr. Robinson made his debut at the Metropolitan Opera in their production of Fidelio. He has since appeared there in numerous roles. He has also appeared at the San Francisco Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Dallas Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Boston Lyric Opera, Pittsburgh Opera, Opera Philadelphia, Seattle Opera, Los Angeles Opera, Cincinnati Opera, Boston Lyric Opera, Opera Theater of St. Louis, Vancouver Opera, Wolf Trap Opera, Opera Australia, and the Aix-en-Provence Festival. Also a prolific concert singer, Mr. Robinson has appeared with major performing organizations across the country. Mr. Robinson's first album, Going Home, was released on the Decca label. He also appears as Joe in the newly released DVD of the San Francisco Opera production of Show Boat. An Atlanta native, Mr. Robinson is a graduate of The Citadel and received his musical training from the Boston University Opera Institute. <http://www.opus3artists.com/artists/morris-robinson> ♦

The Little Things

By Eric Sean Fogel, Opera Director and Choreographer



“Some people have to travel for work, some people get to travel for work, and sometimes it’s the little things that make a big difference.” This is the tagline in a popular commercial airing right now, and it could not be more accurate.

In today’s Freelance Opera world, travel is a given. This past year I have been fortunate to travel from Washington, D.C. to Los Angeles, Paris, Hawaii, Chicago, Beijing, Berlin and Cooperstown, New York, all for work.

Going from one opera house to another doesn’t guarantee much consistency in your life. Even AGMA rules vary from house to house around the country. The challenge of memorizing the names of 30-60 choristers in several different companies a year can also get confusing, and comical.



Washington National Opera, Kennedy Center: Ricardo Zayas, Durell Comedy, Christopher Pennix, Eric Sean Fogel, Alison Mixon and Matthew Steffens

With smart phones and Internet, travel is a whole lot easier than it used to be. There is pre-travel check-in (with TSA and with your individual airline app), Airbnb, Yelp, Uber, and every possible app to make travel easier and get what you need. However, on the road it is the “little things” in a simple routine that provides me consistency and happiness.

On the first day of travel, I immediately honor the time zone—no napping! I visit the local grocery store and stock the fridge, and I find that if I unpack and set up the closets and drawers the same as I do at home, the consistency brings me comfort. When I travel, I typically stay in apartments, or houses through the company, or Airbnb—that are all pet friendly.



Eric: “My dog Cooper is a Boston Terrier and loves to travel as much as I do. Here he is at Glimmerglass Festival in Cooperstown, New York, kayaking.”

Nothing makes me happier than settling in the first night with a glass of red wine. I find that taking the time to relax and “live” in your new environment will make it feel like home.

Most importantly, I love to travel with my pup Cooper, a Boston Terrier who loves to travel as much as I do. Getting to travel with my dog has changed everything. Finding a dog store, groomer, and hanging out with locals at the dog park immediately embeds me into the community. You cannot top coming home after a long rehearsal day to a happy pup, making me a happy traveler.

Eric Sean Fogel is a freelance Opera Director and Choreographer, and has been an AGMA member since 2000. ♦

PAAC Visits Manhattan School of Music

By Karen Grahn, AGMA Governor, MMRC Secretary, Chorister



When the facilitator of the Pre-AGMA Awareness Committee (PAAC), Osceola Davis, asked me to join her on September 18, 2015, for a PAAC presentation at Manhattan School of Music (MSM), I was a little nervous about it, but also excited because I looked forward to sharing my experience with AGMA and making sure the students received enough information to confidently join AGMA.

The Masters and Professional Studies voice majors at Manhattan School of Music are lucky to have Gordon Ostrowski, MSM’s Assistant Dean/ Opera Producer, working on their behalf. He organized the fourth annual week of morning classes relating to making a career in music. On our day, the students also heard speakers from the National Opera Association, Actors’ Equity and Opera America. Osceola and I saw a familiar face: former AGMA Governor Mary Kay McGarvey,



Voice majors at Manhattan School of Music with (in the middle row, from left) MSM Assistant Dean/Opera Producer Gordon Ostrowski; AGMA New York Area Dance Executive Griff Braun; and PAAC Facilitator, Soloist, and AGMA Governor Osceola Davis.

who gave the National Opera Association presentation.

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AGMA Procedure on Dues Objections

This is a formal notice, required by law, for all members, new members, joining members, and all other persons working under, or being hired to work under a collective bargaining agreement between AGMA, the American Guild of Musical Artists, AFL-CIO, and an opera, ballet, dance programming, concert, or other company producing operatic music, dance, concerts, or other types of productions. This notice covers all such singers, dancers, stage and production personnel, choreographers, and others rendering services to or employed by such opera, ballet, dance, concert, or other companies producing operatic music, dance programming, concerts, or other types of productions.

The following notice and the procedures related thereto were developed in response to the holdings in a U.S. Supreme Court case known as *Communication Workers of America v. Beck*, relating to the expenditure of dues income for non-representational purposes.

All persons working under an AGMA collective bargaining agreement containing a union security clause are required, as a condition of employment, to pay dues and initiation fees to AGMA. Employees have the right to decide whether they wish to be members of AGMA. Employees who decide not to join AGMA remain obligated, under the union security clause, to pay an agency fee to AGMA equal to regular AGMA dues.

Employees who are not members of AGMA, but who pay dues to AGMA pursuant to a union security clause of a collective bargaining agreement, have the legal right to object to supporting certain activities which are not related to collective bargaining, contract administration, or grievance adjustment (representational activities) and may obtain a reduction in their dues and initiation fee.

Employees who choose not to become AGMA members and object to paying full dues should be aware that by electing not to become full members, they forfeit the right to enjoy a number of benefits available to members only. Among the benefits available only to full AGMA members are the AGMA Relief Fund; Union Privilege, insurance, health, and loan benefits; the right to attend and participate in Union meetings; the right to run for Union office and to nominate and vote for candidates for Union office; the right to participate in contract ratification and strike votes; the right to participate in development and formulation of Union policies; and the right to participate in the formulation of Union collective bargaining demands.

Audited financial statements are prepared for AGMA which calculate the percentage of expenditures made for representational and non-representational activities. While the exact amount varies slightly each year, approximately 99% of the expenditures each year are for representational activities. Non-members may object to payment of that portion of AGMA dues which are spent on non-representational activities. These include expenditures such as community service and charitable contributions; lobbying; legislative efforts and political activities; members-only benefits; and litigation which is not germane to collective bargaining, contract administration or grievance adjustment. Non-members are legally obligated to pay for expenses connected with representational activities, which include negotiations with employers; enforcing collective bargaining agreements; meetings with employer representatives; member and staff committee meetings concerned with matters relating to employment practices and/or collective bargaining provisions; discussion of work-related issues with employers; handling employees' work-related problems through grievance and arbitration procedures, before administrative agencies or in informal meetings; and union administration, litigation, publications, and professional services relating to any of the above.

We believe that without the concerted political activity of the union movement, the great social legislation of this century such as the Social Security Act, the Family and Medical Leave Act, minimum wage laws and the Occupational Safety and Health Act would never have become law. This remains truer than ever today. In our opinion, community service, legislative activity, lobbying, political activities, and litigation related to broader issues of concern to Union members as citizens are critically necessary for the improvement of working conditions of all members we represent. It is for this reason that we believe that it is essential for AGMA to support such activities which benefit all working people in the United States.

You have the right to decide whether to be a part of this important effort.

AGMA's procedure regarding non-member dues-payers and their right to seek a partial reduction of their dues and initiation fees has been developed in response to decisions of the United States Supreme Court.

Pursuant to AGMA's procedure, there is an annual period for a non-member to indicate an objection to AGMA's expenditures.

Objections filed within thirty days of your receipt of this notice will be effective immediately. If you choose to object at a later time, an objection may be filed in the thirty days following your resignation from membership or in the objection period. The objection period is from December 1 through December 31. Non-members who express their objection within that period will have their dues (and, if applicable, initiation fees) reduced for the 12 months beginning January 1 and running through December 31. AGMA estimates that any such reduction will be less than 1% of total dues and fees otherwise due.

The AGMA objection procedure works as follows:

Dues and initiation fees payable by objectors will be based on AGMA's expenditures for those activities it undertakes to advance the employment-related interests of the employees it represents, described above as representational activities. Non-members who object to payment of full dues will receive an explanation of the basis for their reduced dues/fees. That explanation will include a list of the major categories of expenditures for activities deemed to be both "representational" and "non-representational," and an accountant's report verifying the breakdown of these "representational" and "non-representational" expenditures. Objectors have the option of challenging AGMA's verified calculation of the reduced dues/fees before an impartial arbitrator appointed by the American Arbitration Association, and a portion of the objector's dues/fees reflecting sums reasonably in dispute will be held in escrow pending the arbitrator's decision. Details concerning the arbitration process will be provided to any objectors who challenge the dues/fees.

Non-members who have objected to payment of full dues will be required to pay that percentage spent on representational activities and will have their dues reduced by the amount spent on non-representational activities. They will not receive any members-only benefits or privileges.

Objections should be directed to the AGMA Membership Department Supervisor, 1430 Broadway, New York, New York 10018. All objections must contain the objector's current home or mailing address. The reduced dues/fees of objectors will be calculated and reflected in the dues/fees bills. Individuals desiring to retain "objector" status must renew their objections during each annual objection period. ♦

AGMA Relief Fund Donation Form

Please send to: Susan Davison, c/o AGMA Relief Fund; 1430 Broadway, 14th Fl., New York, NY 10018

Phone: (800) 543-2462; Fax: (212) 262-9088; E-mail: susan@musicalartists.org. **Make checks payable to the AGMA Relief Fund**

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

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

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

Your name: _____

Name of person to receive acknowledgment

Your address: _____

letter: _____

Your e-mail: _____

Address: _____

Donation: In memory of: _____

Donation: In honor of: _____

AGMA: Don't leave home without it!

The theme of this issue of *AGMAZine* is "Life on the Road," and our members, whether traveling or at home, are only a call or a click away from help for any work-related issue.

Deborah Allton-Maher and Griff Braun are available 24/7 to help members in the New York Area (which includes foreigners) and New England Area, as well as the rest of the country.

During normal business hours, 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., we can be reached at (212) 265-3687 or (800) 543-2462.

You can e-mail us anytime, Deborah at dallton-maher@musicalartists.org and Griff at gbraun@musicalartists.org. We also have senior staff members around the country to assist you.

Washington/Baltimore/Florida: Eleni Kallas (301) 869-8266, agmadc@comcast.net

Chicago/Midwest and Texas: John Ward (312) 628-7830, john@musicalartists.org

Southern California and Arizona: John Russum (310) 215-9554, agmala@ca.rr.com

Northern California and Pacific Northwest: Nora Heiber (415) 310-9877, nheiber@earthlink.net

In some Areas, there are also Area Chairs—members who are elected by members in that Area to serve as volunteer contact resources for other members working in those Areas:

New York Area: Louis Perry, Louisperry@mac.com

Southern California: Jim Guthrie, operajrg@aol.com

Chicago/Midwest: Jimmy Odom, president@musicalartists.org

Northern California: Colby Roberts, deuxchants@astound.net

New Orleans: Julie Condy, jcondy@bellsouth.net

Philadelphia: Evelyn Santiago-Schulz, escoqui@msn.com

Washington/Baltimore/Florida: Harvey Fort, hdfort2010@gmail.com

Pittsburgh: Bill Buchanan, burghbill@yahoo.com

Pacific Northwest: George Scott, geoinmarshall@yahoo.com

Members should not hesitate to contact us for help even if they are working for non-AGMA employers. Even in those instances we can be of assistance.

To use AGMA's abuse, harassment and illegal discrimination reporting system, contact dallton-maher@musicalartists.org. All communication will be kept strictly confidential.

Remember, whether traveling or at home, members are only a call or a click away from help for any work-related issue. ♦

PAAC Visits Manhattan School of Music *(continues from page 29)*

Griff Braun, former dancer with American Ballet Theatre and the Metropolitan Opera Ballet and AGMA's New York Area Dance Representative, substituted for Deborah Allton-Maher, who often does these presentations. He gave a well-rounded introduction to unionism and AGMA. "It was my great pleasure to speak to these young artists," Braun said, "and to introduce them, not only to what AGMA does and how it works, but to the importance of labor unions in the performing arts, and the strength that comes from an engaged and informed membership." Osceola Davis, whose first AGMA contract was for singing the role of Queen of the Night at the Metropolitan Opera, entertained us with her story of how the late Nico Castel assured her that joining AGMA was a good thing and what it meant. I then talked about starting out as a concert chorister in New York City in the late 80s and am now on the negotiating team for the local AGMA concert companies, because it didn't

take me long to realize that we, as members of a union, are stronger standing together than alone.

To round out our presentation, Mr. Ostrowski posed some questions that we gladly addressed. Afterward, I enjoyed acting as photographer of the group.

According to Ms. Davis, "AGMA visitations to colleges are win-win opportunities for both our union and for the sponsoring colleges. Please let us know of any college or conservatory you believe may have an interest in hosting one of our presentations. After all, we are mentors too."

Please contact Osceola Davis at oa4d@yahoo.com or Deborah Allton-Maher at dallton-maher@musicalartists.org to arrange for a PAAC presentation at your alma mater or a school near you. ♦

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1430 BROADWAY
14th FLOOR
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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	www.actorsfund.org	info@actorsfund.org
National Headquarters-NYC	(212) 221-7300 (800) 221-7303	
Central Region	(312) 372-0989	
Western Region	(323) 933-9244 (888) 825-0911	
AGMA Relief Fund - Donations	(800) 543-AGMA (2462)	susan@musicalartists.org
AGMA Relief Fund - Intake Eastern Region	(212) 221-7300 ext. 119	intakeny@actorsfund.org
AGMA Relief Fund - Intake Midwest Region	(312) 372-0989	shaught@actorsfund.org
AGMA Relief Fund - Intake Western Region	(323) 933-9244 ext. 55	intakela@actorsfund.org
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) 394-9443 (Outside of the U.S.)	www.asonet.com
Artists Health Insurance Resource Center - Eastern Region	(917) 281-5975	www.ahirc.org
Artists Health Insurance Resource Center - Western Region	(323) 933-9244, ext. 432	
The Career Center (formerly the Actors Work Program)	http://www.actorsfund.org/services-and-programs/career-center	
New York:	(212) 221-7300 ext.259	careercentereast@actorsfund.org
Los Angeles:	(323) 933-9244 ext. 450	careercenterwest@actorsfund.org
Career Transition for Dancers - Eastern Region	(212) 221-7300 ext. 259	careercentereast@actorsfund.org
Career Transition for Dancers - Central Region	(212) 221-7300 ext. 259	careercentereast@actorsfund.org
Career Transition for Dancers - Western Region	(323) 933-9244 ext. 472	careercenterwest@actorsfund.org
	http://www.actorsfund.org/services-and-programs/sideline-work-new-career/career-transition-dancers	
Union Privilege/Union Plus	(800) 472-2005 (202) 293-5330	www.unionplus.org