

# THE AMERICAN GUILD OF MUSICAL ARTISTS



INFORMATION  
FOR  
NEW AND PROSPECTIVE MEMBERS



# AMERICAN GUILD OF MUSICAL ARTISTS, AFL-CIO

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# AGMA

Dear New and Prospective Members:

Welcome to the American Guild of Musical Artists, AFL-CIO! AGMA is the labor union that represents professional opera and concert singers, dancers, and production personnel at major opera, dance concert and choral companies throughout the United States.

As AGMA's National Executive Director, I serve as the union's chief administrative officer and principal contract negotiator -- supervising an exceptional staff of negotiators, attorneys and contract administrators.

By becoming a member of AGMA, you join in a long tradition of men and women within the United States and throughout the rest of the world who have recognized the inherent value of being part of a union. You and your colleagues collectively negotiate agreements; seek to improve their working conditions; and have an effective way to address concerns.

In addition to improving contractual provisions for members' wages, benefits, and other terms and conditions of employment, AGMA strives to expand protections relating to health and safety and seeks to eliminate hazardous workplace conditions such as poisonous smoke and fog and unsafe raked stages. Additionally, we are always available to assist you in any way necessary to protect and enforce your professional and legal rights.

We solicit and welcome your participation in AGMA's activities and encourage you to play an active role in the governance of your union. All members in good standing, including new members, can run for election to AGMA's Board of Governors or to serve on the union's various committees. We encourage you to visit our website ([www.musicalartists.org](http://www.musicalartists.org)) for more information and to explore more opportunities to get involved.

Like the other members of AGMA's professional staff, I am here and available to assist you whenever you have questions or need help. Please feel free to call upon me at any time, at 1-800-543-2462 or via e-mail at [Legert@musicalartists.org](mailto:Legert@musicalartists.org)

Cordially,

*Leonard Egert*

Leonard Egert  
National Executive Director

## WHAT IS AGMA?

**AGMA is a labor union.** Because performing artists live to perform, they are vulnerable to employer exploitation, unfair and unsafe conditions and illegal discrimination. They can find the protection they need by joining AGMA – the American Guild of Musical Artists.

Performing artists support themselves with their talents and skill, but the beauty they create doesn't necessarily pay the rent or the doctor bills. It doesn't put food on the table or guarantee any of the other necessities of life. It doesn't even assure that the artists can continue to develop their craft.

Without forceful advocacy of their interests, artists can be subjected to abuse, poor pay and inadequate benefits, unsafe and unprofessional working conditions, and no job security.

**AGMA, along with its members, - negotiates** collective bargaining agreements that provide, among other vital benefits: guaranteed salaries; rehearsal and overtime pay; regulated work hours; vacation and sick pay; access to low-cost health benefits; good-faith resolution of disputes; and protection of members' legal and contractual rights.

**AGMA represents** artists at most of America's leading opera and dance companies, and many other performing arts institutions. These performers have concluded that being part of our union has significantly enhanced their earning power.

**AGMA artists throughout the U.S. enjoy greater prestige;** better performing conditions and a higher quality of life because of the American Guild of Musical Artists. That's why we hope you will join us in the mission for which AGMA was first created-- to protect performers and enhance the image of musical artists everywhere.

**AGMA is unique among entertainment unions:** Despite the fact that AGMA is one of the smaller talent unions, it is unique in several important respects: First, unlike SAG-AFTRA or Equity, AGMA recognizes the need for performers to accept as much work as is possible and, consequently, AGMA does not prohibit its members from working non-union jobs. Second, although it has one of the lowest initiation fees and dues of any talent union, AGMA has iron-clad, 'real world' contracts and a staff of exceptionally skilled negotiators and attorneys to provide extensive services to our members. Third, AGMA, while being professionally administered, is actually run entirely by its members. Our member-leaders are elected and create AGMA's policies which are then implemented by its professional staff. Fourth, AGMA does not have nationwide votes on its collective bargaining agreements. Only those members who actually work for any particular AGMA company can vote on the ratification of their own contracts. Once you have worked under an AGMA contract after working non-union, you will immediately understand the protections from which you benefit. Fifth, despite steadily decreasing union membership across the country, AGMA's membership has continued to grow. Finally, and perhaps most important, AGMA is an entirely 'open' union and membership in AGMA is available to artists at any time in their careers.

***THROUGH AGMA, PERFORMERS WIN THE  
RESPECT AND RECOGNITION THEY DESERVE  
FOR THE BEAUTY THEY CREATE.***

# HOW DOES AGMA WORK?

AGMA is an entirely democratic and open union, governed by its members.

All union officers are artists chosen through elections in which every member in good standing is eligible to vote.

The Board of Governors, the governing body of AGMA, is responsible for final approval of all contracts, management of union funds, and for protecting all members from unfair or unsafe practices and conditions. Any active member in good standing is eligible to run for a seat on the Board for a four-year term. The election of Governors is held biennially while the election for National Officers is held every four years.

AGMA is a National Union, without a system of locals. To assure democratic representation, however, AGMA does have a structure of geographical areas for service on the Board of Governors. Many areas elect an Area Committee and a Chairperson. Members are encouraged to attend meetings in their area and other local functions during the course of the year. A member's area is determined by their primary address on record at AGMA unless he or she designates a different area based on their pattern of employment. Within each area, the composition of the Board of Governors is based on a formula of members in good standing (paid to date) for each of the following categories: **Soloist, Chorister, Dancer, Choreographer, Actor, Stage Manager and Stage Director.**

| AREA                           | Coverage   |
|--------------------------------|--|
| <b>01 New York</b>             | Connecticut, New Jersey (Northern), New York, Any locations outside of the United States   |
| <b>02 Southern California</b>  | Arizona, California (Southern), Hawaii and New Mexico  |
| <b>03 Chicago/Midwest</b>      | Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin |
| <b>04 San Francisco</b>        | California (Northern), Colorado, Nevada and Utah   |
| <b>05 New Orleans</b>          | Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Tennessee  |
| <b>06 Philadelphia</b>         | New Jersey (Southern) and Pennsylvania (Eastern)   |
| <b>07 Washington/Baltimore</b> | Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Washington D.C. and West Virginia                  |
| <b>08 Pittsburgh</b>           | Pennsylvania (Western)   |
| <b>09 New England</b>          | Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont  |
| <b>10 Texas/Oklahoma</b>       | Texas and Oklahoma   |
| <b>11 Northwest</b>            | Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, and Wyoming  |

# **WHY SHOULD I JOIN?**

**Do you need AGMA?** AGMA protects its members. We negotiate contracts, called collective bargaining agreements, that apply to all covered members at a company. These contracts provide guaranteed minimum wages, safe working conditions, rehearsal and overtime pay, regulated work hours, vacation and sick pay, resolution of disputes and protection against discrimination and abuse in any form. We enforce those contracts. We assure that our collective bargaining agreements provide for health insurance, pension coverage, and protection against unreasonable working conditions and unsafe work places, and we make sure that employers abide by their contractual obligations. We protect the legal, civil and artistic rights of our members, through aggressive enforcement and constant vigilance.

**Does AGMA need you?** The strength of the Union is in its members. Your membership and participation are crucial to the strength of AGMA's when negotiating and enforcing your contracts. It is essential that you make your employer aware, through your active membership, that contract issues are important to you. Strong collective bargaining agreements can be maintained only through a strong membership.

In twenty-eight right-to-work states (Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska Nevada, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin and Wyoming) you have the choice of whether or not to be a dues-paying member of AGMA. If you chose not to join, you give up a number of rights, including the right to participate in the formulation of collective bargaining proposals, the right to be a member of your negotiating committee, the right to attend and participate in local AGMA meetings, the right to run for office and vote for candidates, and the right to participate in contract ratification votes. For all other performers who work in the other states, payment of initiation fees and dues is mandatory and you cannot work for any AGMA signatory employer unless you satisfy those obligations. Working under an AGMA contract is a reciprocal privilege of timely payment of your dues and provides the funds with which AGMA negotiates and enforces your contracts and protects your rights, all at no additional cost to you.

## **How do I join?**

Call AGMA's Membership Department for information or an application. You can also download an application from our website, [www.musicalartists.org](http://www.musicalartists.org).

AGMA has a one-time-only Initiation Fee of \$1,000. This tax-deductible fee may be paid on-line, or via phone with a Visa or MasterCard credit card or by check. The total fee must be paid by the time your income from AGMA engagements reaches \$4000, or three years from the date of your first AGMA contract – whichever comes first.

Timely payment of dues and Initiation Fees is each members' individual responsibility. Failure to satisfy your financial obligations will result in the loss of your 'Member in Good Standing' status, and make you ineligible to work for an AGMA company. If you are in arrears for more than 30 days you may be suspended and incur a reinstatement fee of \$250.00.

Basic dues are \$100 per year, paid in December for the next calendar year. Working dues are 2% of the member's earnings up to a maximum of \$2000 per year, and can be deducted automatically by the companies for which you work if you sign a check-off authorization. If you do not authorize a check-off, it is your responsibility to make payments directly to AGMA. Both basic and working dues are tax-deductible.

Call or email the Membership Department – (212-265-3687 or 800-543-2462 [Membership@musicalartists.org](mailto:Membership@musicalartists.org)) -- for assistance with any dues problem or if you do not receive your current AGMA membership card.

## AGMA Signatories

|                                    |                                   |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater | Melodious Accord                  |
| American Ballet Theatre            | Metropolitan Opera                |
| Arizona Opera                      | Michigan Opera Theatre            |
| Ascension Music                    | Milwaukee Ballet                  |
| Atlanta Ballet                     | Music Before 1800                 |
| Ballet Hispanico                   | Musica Sacra                      |
| BalletMet                          | New Orleans Opera                 |
| Ballet West                        | New York City Ballet              |
| Boston Ballet                      | New York City Opera               |
| Boston Lyric Opera                 | New York Grand Opera              |
| Central City Opera                 | New York Philharmonic             |
| Chautauqua Opera                   | Opera Orchestra of New York       |
| Chicago Opera Theatre              | Opera Philadelphia                |
| Chicago Symphony Chorus            | Opera Theatre of St. Louis        |
| Cincinnati Ballet                  | Pacific Northwest Ballet          |
| Cincinnati Opera                   | Pennsylvania Ballet               |
| Colorado Ballet                    | Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre         |
| Dallas Opera                       | Pittsburgh Opera                  |
| The Discovery Orchestra            | Portland Opera                    |
| Florentine Opera                   | Ryan Opera Center/Lyric Unlimited |
| Florida Grand Opera                | San Diego Opera                   |
| Grant Park Orchestra Association   | San Francisco Ballet              |
| Houston Ballet                     | San Francisco Opera               |
| Houston Grand Opera                | San Francisco Symphony Chorus     |
| Joffrey Ballet                     | Santa Fe Opera                    |
| Kansas City Ballet                 | Seattle Opera                     |
| Lincoln Center Media Agreement     | Tri-Cities Opera                  |
| Los Angeles Master Chorale         | Tulsa Ballet                      |
| Los Angeles Opera                  | Washington Ballet                 |
| Lyric Opera Baltimore              | Washington Concert Opera          |
| Lyric Opera of Chicago             | Washington National Opera         |
| Lyric Opera of Kansas City         | Wolf Trap Opera                   |
| Martha Graham Dance                |                                   |

# ADDITIONAL BENEFITS AVAILABLE TO MEMBERS

## AGMA RELIEF FUND

AGMA members who need emergency financial or social services assistance can get help from the AGMA Relief Fund, which is administered for AGMA by the Actors Fund of America. Members who need assistance should call the intake coordinator at:

East Coast 212-221-7300 or 800-221-7303  
Midwest 312-372-0989  
West Coast 323-933-9244 ext. 55

## THE ACTORS FUND OF AMERICA

The Actors Fund offers AGMA members access to health & social services as well as employment training. Programs include counseling on a broad range of life transitions as well as referrals to housing, legal, child care, and health services. Visit [www.actorsfund.org](http://www.actorsfund.org) or call 212-221-7300 for more information.

## ACTORS FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

AGMA members are eligible for membership in this not-for-profit banking cooperative. Call 212-869-8926 for information or visit [www.actorsfcu.com](http://www.actorsfcu.com).

## UNION PLUS

With the savings Union Plus benefits provide, being a union member makes even greater dollars and sense. Visit [www.unionplus.org](http://www.unionplus.org) for information of Credit Cards, Education Services, Insurance, and a variety of Consumer Discounts.

## ASSISTANCE WITH ISSUES INVOLVING AGENTS

AGMA can help you with any problems you encounter in dealing with agents or managers. Contact AGMA's National Executive Director, on an entirely confidential basis, at [Legert@musicalartists.org](mailto:Legert@musicalartists.org).

# USEFUL PHONE NUMBERS

## **AGMA National Office**

Phone 212/265-3687  
Fax 212/262-9088  
Website [www.musicalartists.org](http://www.musicalartists.org)

## **AGMA Retirement and Health**

Phone 212/765-3664  
Fax 212/956-7599  
Website [www.agmaretirement-health.org](http://www.agmaretirement-health.org)

## **Administrative Services Only (AGMA Health Plan B)**

Phone 866/263-1185  
Website [www.asonet.com](http://www.asonet.com)

## **Actor's Equity**

Phone 212/869-8530  
Fax 212/719-9815  
Website [www.actorsequity.org](http://www.actorsequity.org)

## **AFM (American Federation of Musicians) Local 802**

Phone 212/245-4802  
Website [www.local802afm.org](http://www.local802afm.org)

## **SAG-AFTRA (Screen Actors Guild – American Federation of Television and Radio Artists) NYC Office**

Phone 855/724-2387 (National Headquarters)  
Phone 212/944-1030 (New York Office)  
Website [www.sagaftra.org](http://www.sagaftra.org)

## **TEIGIT (Dental Insurance – Long Term Care – International Medical Insurance)**

Phone 800/886-7504  
Fax 518/348-1273  
Website <http://www.teigit.com>

## **UNION PLUS (Special Deals and Discounts for Union Members)**

Phone 202/293-5330  
Fax 202/293-5311  
Website [www.unionprivilege.com](http://www.unionprivilege.com)

## **AGMA'S NATIONAL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Phone 800-543-2462  
Direct E-Mail: [Legert@musicalartists.org](mailto:Legert@musicalartists.org)

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR ALL CONTRACTED ARTISTS

By signing an AGMA contract, you are stating that you are or will become a member in good standing of AGMA. Your ability to work is contingent upon payment of the following fees:

1. **Basic Dues** – a fee of \$100, billed once per year. The AGMA office must receive the first \$100 payment within one week of the start of the rehearsal period. Subsequent payments are due by January 1<sup>st</sup> of each year. Invoices are sent out to all AGMA members - however, it is the member's responsibility to make sure that their account is current, whether or not they receive an invoice. Basic Dues are a continuing membership obligation unless a member requests Honorable Withdrawal status. Members whose accounts are over one month in arrears will lose their Member in Good Standing status, be Suspended and be ineligible to work for an AGMA company.
2. **Initiation Fee** – all AGMA members are required to pay a one-time Initiation Fee of \$1,000. This amount is due by the time an artist's income from AGMA venues has reached \$4000, or within three years of the first contract date – whichever comes first. Artists who fail to pay the initiation fee will lose their Member in Good Standing status and be ineligible to work for AGMA signatories.
3. **Working Dues** – all AGMA members are required to pay working dues in the amount of 2% of their gross AGMA income. This 2% fee is only applicable to the first \$100,000 of AGMA income in any given year; any income over \$100,000 is not subject to the working dues fee. Working dues are normally deducted directly from the Artist's check; several AGMA signatories require the artist to fill out a Deduction Authorization before they will deduct Working dues. It is the AGMA member's responsibility to verify, upon arrival at an AGMA venue, that the company has the authorization necessary to deduct the 2% Working Dues. Artists who do not wish the company to deduct Working Dues directly from their checks must pay AGMA directly, by credit card or money order, within one week of the performance in question. If payment is not received by the National Office the company will be notified that the Artist is not in Good Standing, and therefore cannot complete their engagement. Artists will not be invoiced by AGMA until these amounts are Past Due.

If you have any questions about AGMA, please call the National Office at 212/265-3687 and ask for the Membership Department or email us at [Membership@Musicalartists.org](mailto:Membership@Musicalartists.org).



## THE AGMA LOGO

AGMA's logo is an original drawing by renowned American artist Howard Chandler Christy, created in 1936 and given to AGMA in recognition of its devotion to the interests of American artists.

The original hangs in AGMA's National Office at 1430 Broadway, in the city and state of NEW YORK.