New Opera Basic Agreement achieved

After extensive and difficult negotiations with a group of representative opera employers, AGMA has managed to assemble a package of wages and conditions applicable to most of the operatic industry. National Executive Secretary Gene Boucher and his assistant Thomas Jamerson spent several months meeting around the country with the several employers in sundry cities convenient to assembling the nationwide group. Final sessions occurred in the nation’s capitol.

Prominent in the conflicts evidenced in these negotiations were increased challenges from employers in “right-to-work” states and heightened apprehension about the question of “Who is an employee and who is an independent contractor.”

If neither question was answered comprehensively, the issue has been addressed and debated thoroughly. The recent compromise provision will probably be an issue of legal debate.

The wage package made good gains in salary minimums and big gains in per diems. The overall increase was 15% over the three years, with the per diem up 24% to 30% (the weekly and per performance being different).

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<table>
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<tr>
<th>ALL ARTISTS</th>
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Life insurance increased to $3,000

AGMA is proud to announce: Effective October 1, 1985, the Life Insurance coverage that is part of AGMA membership increases from $1,000 to $3,000.

The long-expressed wish of many members and of the Board of Governors to provide greater life insurance coverage became realized with the recent dues increase. A comparison of several competitive rates produced one of exceptionally low cost, guaranteed for three years.

New forms for enrollment and pertinent information have been mailed to all members, along with “Beneficiary Designation.” All members should return them as soon as possible.

NOTE: Your insurance is not in effect when you are in arrears for delinquent dues or are on Honorable Withdrawal.

ALSO NOTE: Many members have never named a beneficiary, while many others have designated a person from whom they are now divorced or who is deceased. In the first case, the money may go to someone to whom you do not wish it to go; in the second case, litigation and/or investigation to determine “survivor” may delay payment of that to which you are entitled. FILL OUT YOUR BENEFICIARY FORM AND KEEP IT CURRENT!
A patchwork column for the Autumn...

by Gene Boucher
National Executive Secretary

I was recently asked, "Why didn’t you write your column last issue?"

I replied that recent editions of AGMAZINE had too little space (election-filled as they were!) for a picture and byline item. In point of fact, the National Executive Secretary writes most of the journalistic material herein. My very able secretary assembles and edits most other materials, which are certainly considerable at election time.

There have been, however, in the time since I last penned my "overview" a number of items of varying significance that I want to bring to the attention of the membership. While they may not singly warrant a full article, here are several things you should know:

1) The increase in life insurance was long overdue, and I had sought comparative prices for an increase for over a year. This is a very positive step for AGMA.

We are, by the way, the only union in the performing arts that provides this without extra cost to the member.

2) The National office has noted a decided increase in the frequency with which the Immigration and Naturalization Service of the Department of Justice is contacting AGMA for opinions on the classification of aliens contracted to work in the United States as “Artists of Distinguished Merit and Ability.” The statute has not changed, but compliance has. While the entrance of truly "distinguished and meritorious" performers enhances our art forms in the U.S., the H-1 visa (to admit persons in that category) has been much abused, and the new involvement between Immigration and the "union having jurisdiction" is welcomed.

In the same vein (and probably from the same prompting!), the Department of Labor is questioning AGMA regularly in situations involving the H-2 visa (where American workers are not available for the job). Most such inquiries are clearly related to very specialized, ethnic attractions, but AGMA is gratified to reply in many instances that "Americans qualified for the job are available."

3) The National Opera Basic Agreement (discussed on page 1) was put into precise and pristine form with greater speed than in past history! After prolonged and problematic negotiations, the final language was assembled on the word processor of AGMA’s new computer with speed and facility. If the negotiations were rough, assembling of the document for the operatic industry was not!

Election post script

New York Dancer Fredrick Wodin ran for election to the Board of Governors on petition of fellow members. Although he was elected, he chooses not to serve and states that he did not wish to be on the ballot. AGMA regrets his involuntary inclusion; his office will be subsequently filled by action of the Board. AGMA’s policy is to include on the ballot all valid petitions unless notified that the member does not choose to run. While the nominee’s agreement to run is solicited, in its absence the ballot includes the individual in respect for the petition process. Petitions should not be circulated without the cooperation of the nominee.
Career Transition for Dancers is launched

AGMA has joined with sister unions Actors' Equity, AFTRA and SAG to establish a program of assistance and guidance for dancers needing a new profession. The new set-up will be administered by The Actors' Fund.

This innovative program will address a critical need long recognized in the dancing business — most dancers reaching the end of an active dancing career between age 35 and 45 have neither the skills nor inclination for a second vocation. Specialized counseling, professional referrals and funds to pursue retraining will be offered to union members seeking to find their second career.

The brainchild of Equity's West Coast executive Ed Weston, Career Transition for Dancers was born from an initial conference about this unique situation at Lincoln Center in 1982. The great problems, financial and psychological, of forced early "retirement" were analyzed and debated by representatives from throughout the Dance World. A matching grant to inaugurate the program has been achieved with this collaboration of the four unions.

The new Board of Directors includes a veritable Who's Who of luminaries in Dance. The Founding Advisory Committee includes AGMA's National Executive Secretary.

The kick-off press conference at Sardi's in New York City on September 30th announcing the program featured remarks by Agnes de Mille and Actors' Fund President Nedda Harrigan Logan. Film Director Sir Richard Attenborough stressed the importance and future prospect for Career Transition for Dancers by pledging the benefit revenues from the coming premiere of the film "A Chorus Line."

A brochure describing Career Transition for Dancers in greater detail will be mailed to AGMA members before the end of the year. Persons seeking more information in the interim should contact the Actors' Fund offices:

HEADQUARTERS
1501 Broadway
New York, New York 10036
(212) 221-7300

MIDWEST REGION
203 N. Wabash
Chicago, Illinois 60601
(312) 372-0989

WESTERN REGION
444 N. Larchmont Blvd.
Los Angeles, California 90004
(213) 464-4171

Theatre Authority clearance urged

The Executive Council of the AFL-CIO has urged that all AFL-CIO unions clear requests for benefit performances with Theatre Authority before giving financial or other support to any such event, according to Frederick O'Neal, President of the Associated Actors and Artistes of America and a vice president of the AFL-CIO and member of its Executive Council. Theatre Authority, of which AGMA is an affiliate, is the non-profit organization designated by the performer unions to administer and regulate the free performances of performers in order to prevent their exploitation. All contributions it obtains for non-paid appearances are allocated to the emergency welfare funds of its affiliate unions and other theatrical charitable groups.

Changes are required in AGMA Constitution

In a recent study, the U.S. Department of Labor concluded that certain changes would be required in AGMA's Constitution and By-Laws in order to be consistent with Title IV of the Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act (LMRDA), as currently interpreted by the courts and the Department of Labor.

Shortly, all members will be receiving a detailed referendum indicating the changes required.

In 1979 a similar referendum was required by the Department of Labor, and although the changes mandated at that time were subsequently incorporated in the AGMA Constitution dated May 1980, the forthcoming referendum will address changes reflecting the more recent reinterpretation of the Act.

Born

AGMA member Geraldine Martin and Joseph Berkowitz proudly announce the birth of their daughter, Eugenia Rose Berkowitz-Martin in Syracuse, New York on July 18, 1984. Ms. Martin began her AGMA career in the late '60s with the New York City Opera production of Don Rodrigo in Los Angeles.
AIDS is an increasing problem in AGMA membership

Two years ago, AGMAZINE printed a detailed article on AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome), to advise our members and representatives of:

1. what was known about it (limited as the information was at the time)
2. what members could do to protect themselves from it, and
3. whom to contact if it was suspected that a member had AIDS.

AGMA had (and still has!) an incidence much above that of the general population. Twenty-six months and many deaths of AGMA members later, this mysterious disease is an epidemic of such major proportions that it is: "Small wonder that an epidemic of superstition and suspicion is spreading even faster than the disease" (The New York Times editorial, September 15, 1985). The AGMA Board of Governors has recommended an update on the subject.

To quote The New York Times again (September 15, 1985):

"The disease is caused by a virus that destroys the body's immune system, leaving it vulnerable to attack by other infections that then kill the victim. The disease is almost uniformly fatal. Thus far some 13,000 cases have been reported in this country. There is, as yet, no cure and no vaccine to prevent the disease, although scientists are working on both."

One to two million Americans, by several estimates, have already been exposed to the AIDS virus. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control predict that more than 100,000 Americans are carrying the virus without realizing it, because symptoms have yet to appear. The incubation period can be as long as six years.

Most cases of AIDS have been acquired through intimate sexual contact or exchange of contaminated blood or blood products. Sexually active homosexual men and intravenous drug users have been the highest risk groups. Infected by contact with bisexual men or through sharing of unclean hypodermic needles, heterosexual women are able to pass the virus to their unborn children during pregnancy. Recent scientific testing of the blood of donors has proven so accurate that it can be anticipated that there will be very few new cases of AIDS in hemophiliacs and other receivers of transfusions or blood products. Although the virus has been isolated and the federal government calls AIDS research "top priority," the best prospect for everyone lies in prevention! Fortunately, much is now known about how AIDS is communicated, as well as how it is NOT communicated.

AIDS is NOT highly contagious and it is not spread through casual contact. The virus can take hold only if it manages to get into the bloodstream by needle or sexual intercourse. Associating with AIDS patients or with people who might be at risk for the illness does NOT pose any risk of contracting the disease. No cases have been found where AIDS has been transmitted by business-place or household contact. The virus has been found in saliva and tears, but there are no cases in which exposure to either has resulted in transmission. The senior editor of the Journal of the American Medical Association put it this way: "The virus itself can be found in virtually any body fluid, but that's not how you get it."

Precautions against AIDS

(1) Decrease the number of different sexual partners.

(2) Use barrier forms of contraception — condoms for males and diaphragms, cervical caps, foams or jellies for females.

(3) Don't abuse intravenous drugs.

(4) If you use drugs, don't share needles or syringes.

(5) Don't have sex with people who abuse drugs.

(6) Don't use inhalant nitrites (poppers). There is increasing negative evidence about their involvement in some of the opportunistic ailments associated with AIDS.

Although the AIDS virus is described as "fragile," the condition has been characterized as "hard to contract." New cases in the heterosexual non-drug abusing sector are increasing at the same rate as in the non-heterosexual drug abusing sector (continued on next page)
AIDS (continued from page 4) earlier special risk groups — doubling every year.

(5) A thick, whitish coating of the tongue or throat, which may be accompanied by a sore throat.
(6) Extreme fatigue combined with headache and dizziness.
(7) Purple or discolored patches on the skin.

Should a member or a friend or colleague suspect that he/she has AIDS, AGMA provides this updated list of "hotlines" which can provide information and referral to appropriate health care professionals.

National Hotline
(800) 227-8922
(funded by the Centers for Disease Control and operated by the American Social Health Association — 8 a.m.—8 p.m. PST)

In New York City
(212) 807-6655 . . . . . . . . Gay Men’s Health Crisis
In San Francisco
(415) 864-4376 . . . . . . . . San Francisco AIDS Foundation
In Houston, Texas
(713) 529-3211 . . . . . . . . Gay Switchboard
Elsewhere in Texas
(800) 4-CANCER
In Philadelphia
(215) 232-8055 . . . . . . . . AIDS Task Force
In Boston
(617) 424-5916
Elsewhere in Massachusetts
(800) 235-2331 . . . . . . . . Massachusetts Hotline
In Denver
(303) 831-6268 . . . . . . . . Gay Community Center
(303) 458-7777 . . . . . . . . Lifeline of Denver
In Chicago
(800) AID-AIDS
In Baltimore
(301) 837-2050
In Washington, D.C.
(202) 332-2437 . . . . . . . . AIDS Information Hotline
In Los Angeles
(213) 439-3948 . . . . . . . . Long Beach AIDS
(213) 871-1284 . . . . . . . . AIDS Project
In Atlanta
(404) 876-5372 . . . . . . . . Atlanta Gay Center
(404) 872-0600 . . . . . . . . AIDS Atlanta

Reprints of this article and a more detailed pamphlet are available upon request to the New York AGMA office.

Acronyms can lead you astray!

In the notice of Elisabeth Hoeppel’s 50 years on the Board of the Four A’s, the AGMAZINE of July identifies her with the Grand Opera Choral Association. There was no such organization. The original charter was held by the Grand Opera Artists Association. Merging with AGMA in 1937, GOAA’s Miss Hoeppel became one of AGMA’s pioneers. The entrance of GOCA (Grand Opera Choral Alliance) into AGMA occurred in 1938.

Wed

AGMA member Amy Blaisdell, former dancer with the American Ballet Theatre, was married on October 27, 1984 to Kenneth J. Williams. The couple live in Pittsford, New York, a suburb of Rochester, where Amy has her own dance school called the Blaisdell Academy of Dance.

Have You Moved

Sending AGMA notices, announcements, AGMAzine and other Guild documents to wrong addresses is costly and wasteful. Please be certain that AGMA has your correct address in its files. If you have moved recently and have not notified AGMA of your new address, please do so at once.

Deceased

Arthur Backgren
John Bass
Ruth Bauer
Winifred Cecil
Ewa Dobrowska
Coe Glade
Paul Godkin
Ronald Allan Heckman
Alastair Munro
Rafael Romero
Guillermo Sarabia
Jules Sassani
Martha Schlamme
Louis Sgarro
Karel Shook
Muriel Smith

Naming Names

It is a common practice for performers to use a variety of professional names, for their own good reasons. But unless AGMA members notify the AGMA membership department about the various names by which they are known, considerable confusion results. Please take a moment to write or phone the National Office to register with the Membership Department each name by which you are known. It's in your best interest.
Happy Birthday, Joe Hancock!

AGMA saluted the 90th birthday of a man who has served the union well for most of its history — Joe Hancock. Immediately following the Board meeting of October 21st, a celebration with cake and champagne took place at the National Offices.

Former Board members and current Trustees of the Relief Fund joined in the festivities. Member number 2058 arrived with his wife, Trudy, and son Joe, Jr., for a nostalgic reunion with old friends and new colleagues in AGMA.

For many years, member Hancock was the mainstay of the system known as “The AGMA Free-lance Chorus.” His staunch union loyalty and his organizational expertise have contributed immeasurably to AGMA successes for nearly 50 years. Approaching the 50th Anniversary in 1986, our union is lucky to be able to express our gratitude to a jovial, living example of singing professionalism.

AGMA’s Joe Hancock (left) joins in the celebration saluting his 90th birthday. (Below) President Nedda Casei embraces Joe and his wife, Trudy, as (from left) Bob Falk and Glen Ellsworth look on.