Why Does AGMA Need a Dues Increase? Where Will The Money Go?

You will soon be receiving a dues referendum in the mail. You are urged to read it carefully and vote "YES." Here are some questions that have been raised regarding the dues increase. The answers are important and will reiterate why AGMA needs additional income.

QUESTION: How would you answer a member who feels AGMA's dues rates are high enough already?

ANSWER: AGMA's dues income produces $1.5 million a year from which the AGMA Board of Governors and staff must cover every expense of running a national labor union.

Q: That seems like a lot of money to me, why do you need more?

A: It's not a lot of money at all when you're talking about servicing 11 geographical areas coast to coast, each having several opera and dance companies of various sizes, each requiring agreements to be negotiated and administered, grievances and arbitrations to be handled as well as dealing with the day to day problems that confront the membership.

Q: How many AGMA companies are there?

A: There are currently 50 opera companies, 19 dance companies and 18 choral groups signed to AGMA agreements, all separately negotiated.

Q: How many members are employed by these companies over the course of a year?

A: About 4,500, which is 80% of the active membership.

Q: How does that compare with other performing arts unions?

A: AGMA has a small membership by comparison. However, in the larger unions only 40% or less of the membership have any earnings in their union's jurisdiction in any given year. Approximately twice as many AGMA members are working. And, AGMA must provide the same services that are provided by other performing arts unions with twice as many members.

Q: Why not just cut costs rather than ask the members for more money?

A: If you're in the business of making soup, you can cut costs by watering it down and you still come out with the same amount of soup for less money, and maybe nobody will notice. But if someone does, you are out of the soup business. If you're in the business of providing services, the only way you can cut costs is to cut services, and that everybody notices. I don't think you will find too many members who feel AGMA provides too much service.

Q: I've heard members here in New York complain that AGMA spends a lot of money for executives and staff to travel around the country. Is this necessary?

A: Yes! More than half of the members live and work outside the New York area and their needs are no less important than those of their colleagues here in New York. As a matter of fact, we need to be able to do far more in all areas. But we don't want this to become a New York versus California or Chicago question. AGMA is a national organization, and as such must, and we emphasize must, be financially able to respond to the needs of all of its members wherever they live and work.

Q: Will this dues increase do that?

A: If the members approve the referendum it will produce about $300,000 more a year with which to work. In an age when many opera productions cost more than our total annual income and when even a small regional dance company works with a budget two and a half times our income, we have to be realistic about how much we can hope to do. It will let us put people where they're needed and when they're needed more often than we can now, without having to rob Peter to pay Paul.

Q: What will happen if the members turn it down?

A: We will continue to stretch each dollar as far as we can, which is what we will do in any event. But if the dues increase is rejected, we will have to find more ways of cutting costs, and that translates to services. Let's hope it doesn't come to that.

Our New Look

Beginning with this issue, you will be receiving a new AGMAzine — new in design and new in scope. We hope you will find it livelier, more informative and more interesting. AGMA hopes to increase communication between members throughout the country and the Association. We welcome your comments and your participation. Articles as well as letters to the Editor are welcome and should be sent to AGMAzine, c/o AGMA, 1727 Broadway, New York, NY 10019.
A Look Back

Long-time AGMA Board member (and a Life Member) Luigi Vellucci enlisted the aid of his son, Michael, to help on an informational picket line mounted at the Beacon Theatre in New York in the mid-1970s. Vellucci, who has been an AGMA member for almost 50 years, now teaches in New York and Rutherford, New Jersey and is the Director of Music at the Rutherford Congregational Church. Member of a proud AGMA family, Michael's mother is Miriam Broderick, who sang in the Metropolitan Opera Chorus for 25 years.

We Would Rather Sing than Picket
but
We have no choice

From the President

We're Trying Harder

by Nedda Casei

I hope you like the new format, the "new look" of AGMAzine.

Just like Avis we, the members, own this "company" and your officers and staff continue to "try harder."

In the past two years I have continued to visit members at meetings and informally throughout the country. I am impressed with the strides we've made in our efforts to bring to all the members nationwide the service needed and deserved.

It has struck me often that here at AGMA, really a small union in the performing arts, we have to do the same things that our sister unions, from seven to ten times our size, are charged with doing. We have to do it all over the country, with no locals, a much smaller treasury and greatly abbreviated staff.

The dues restructuring you are asked to approve is only $13 every six months — $26 per year and one-half of one percent in the work dues. Little enough to assist bringing AGMA into the 1990s.

We have four executives, a Director of Membership and a Comptroller; 87 opera, dance and choral contracts nationwide and numerous "ad hoc" contracts for specific performances such as the ill-fated Aida, tour of the Music of Andrew Lloyd Webber, American Pop'ya and numerous others annually.

Our entire staff, other than the six mentioned above, numbers nine and seven "part timers" who are only called upon when needed.

I am so proud of the local Representatives and the National staff that I pray we will give them the financial wherewithal they will need to fight the good fight for all of us.

During the hottest and most humid weather I've experienced in New York City in my 22 years here, your staff in the National Office worked without air conditioning (actually, without air!), with a minimum of grumbling and a maximum of understanding.

This is my official "Thank you" to all of them.

Bud
An interview with JEROME HINES

I hope everyone can love their profession as much as I do

In a wide-ranging and exclusive interview, Jerome Hines discusses his career, his union and Opera Music Theatre International, which he founded to assist young singers beginning their professional careers.

Jerome Hines, world renowned operatic bass, made his professional debut with the San Francisco Opera in 1941 and has gone on to perform in all the major opera houses throughout the world. He is the first native-born American to sing Boris Godunov in the Soviet Union, and the first to sing the role of Mephistopheles in the major European theatres. He debuted at the Metropolitan Opera in 1946, and has the distinction of being the only singer in the history of the Met to perform in 41 consecutive seasons.

Mr. Hines has over 80 roles in his repertoire, has appeared in more than 1,300 recitals and concerts with major symphonies and orchestras, and has recorded extensively, music ranging from Gospel Hymns to requiems and oratorios to complete operas and live performances from the Bayreuth festival.

In addition to his busy performance schedule, Mr. Hines has composed two operas and a song cycle, and has published 11 books and articles on singing and mathematics.

He served as Treasurer (1950-52) and First Vice-President (1969-72) of AGMA and Chairman of Newark Symphony Hall (1977-86). He was appointed to the New Jersey State Council on the Arts by Governor Thomas Kean in 1984 and has served as President of Christian Arts, Inc. since 1965.

Among his many honors and awards, Mr. Hines has nine Honorary Doctorates for both his artistic achievement and his humanitarian efforts. He has given generously of his time and talent to benefit worthy causes throughout his career, and his desire to assist young singers in receiving needed professional training has led him to found Opera Music Theatre International which provides professional atmosphere and experience for those on the threshold of operatic careers.

With performances scheduled through 1991, Mr. Hines continues to thrill audiences with his voice, while becoming an impresario whose contribution in presenting new artists will be felt for years to come.

QUESTION: Most operatic careers last a maximum of 25 years. Yours is nearly twice that. Do you have any insights that you can pass along to those who want maximum longevity?

ANSWER: I'm a firm believer in the good Lord. If he didn't want me to be singing, I wouldn't be, so I'll give star billing there.

After that, there are many factors. One was that I began to suffer from arthritis when I was 40. In my early 50s, I went into a strenuous health routine to try to cure it. That did me a lot of good generally. It didn't cure the arthritis, but it did slow it down. I finally had to give in last year and have both knees replaced. And, fortunately, it worked out extremely well, so I can dash up and down stairs and all that sort of stuff with no problem. I had been having problems with that.

As a side-effect, the health routine seemed to rejuvenate the voice a bit, too. It included real healthnut stuff like fasting once a week and then a couple of times a year even fasting seven days on water, to clean the body. Also, we have a home in the Caribbean where we spend a minimum of six weeks every year. Three of my sons and my wife and I are all avid scuba divers, and so we spend time snorkeling and scuba diving three or four hours a day, which puts you back in shape again to face the next year.

Another thing that's very important is the way you use your voice. I learned not to kick the voice around and demand things of it, but to coax it and treat it gently at first.

When I made my 30th year at the Met, Bob Merril had made his 30th also, and Dorothy Kiersten. So the New York Times had the three of us in for an interview. I said, "Do you realize that two out of the three people sitting here studied with the same teacher — Bob Merril and I?" I kept thinking about it, and what was unique about our teacher's approach is that he would take a potentially big voice like Bob's or mine, and he would train (continued on next page)
us almost exclusively on fast coloratura-type scales. But for maximum sound, quick, fast-moving scales that kept the flexibility in the throat. And it keeps the voice younger and more flexible. It was also a system of scales that lasted from 30 to 40 minutes. With rare exceptions, I have faithfully subjected myself to that set of scales at least every second day of my life.

In other words, it is a discipline. You just don't get up in the morning and say, I wonder what it sounds like, and sing a high F. I wait until four in the afternoon if I'm going to sing at eight. I do my scales for at least a half hour, and then I shut up until ten minutes before the curtain, wake it up again strenuously and go. That kind of a routine, I think, is terribly important. It's a track that the voice knows, like a horse knowing the way home to the stable. If you're off-line, you feel the difference and it tends to want to go back to the right track. So, I think that discipline is enormously important. You start adding all these together and you start getting a picture of what makes it work.

Q: Tell us about the Opera Music Theatre International, which you created. I know that its purpose is to assist young singers beginning their professional careers, who are already trained and accomplished.

A: Right.

Q: How do you find them; how do they find you? What are the requirements?

A: We began to become known as a result of an article in Metropolitan Opera News. We had a press conference in which Marilyn Horne was supposed to be our first Vocal Director. She decided she was just too busy, so she left us. And in her place, she gave us Dodi Protero, who for 30 years was a leading coloratura in Europe, and then we brought in Franco Corelli, who has been with us, now, for two years. But we got this photograph of Marilyn Horne with Tony Randall, who's on my board and helping us, and Henry Lewis and all these people, and Opera News took the picture and published it and told the world what we were doing. We got inquiries immediately. Soon we were getting reviews and we were getting attention from the New York newspapers. Then Frank Corsaro came aboard right at the beginning. We just won the Annual Critics' Award for New Jersey for the best opera performance of the year because of Corsaro's concepts and staging.

Now, what we've done is the following: We have people apply through tapes. The ones who look promising, if they're in town, we ask them to sing in the studio, and we hear those who pass that preliminary audition. Then comes the final audition, in Newark Symphony Hall. That is the great hurdle — that is a big theatre: big in scope; it's like being in the Met or the Dallas Fair park. It's a big hall, where the back wall is a city block away. It intimidates just to look at it. And we have made 1,600 young singers audition in the hall over three years. We don't take just good singers. We take the ones that we say, "Hey, what was that?" A voice that sounds world class.

Q: Is there any objective way that a singer can know whether or not they have that indefinable thing called "star quality?"

A: They won't know until they have tried the big auditoriums themselves. You know, I started off in big auditoriums. That was the difference. When I was 19 and got my contract with San Francisco, immediately I was singing in places like The Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles, which holds 7,000. My teachers used to say, "The greatest teacher of all is the theatre." Most of these kids have never set foot in an auditorium with more than 1,000 seats. And it psychs them out. And I tell you, I've heard people that were sensational, but when they sing on that big stage they just blow it. I'm so disappointed when that happens. I think, "How could I be so wrong?" But maybe if they tried again, they would steel themselves and get through it. But, boy how they do fall apart! They wobble, they crack, they do everything you can imagine.

Q: Do you have scholarships? Or is there tuition?

A: Up to this time, we have provided each person a $15,000 a year stipend to live on. Plus the instruction. Some are subsidized by foundations or private organizations.

We have an exciting new program under which two opera companies and two symphony orchestras in New Jersey agree to do their basic casting from the OMTI pool and perhaps hire one or two stars from outside to sell the house. But, their basic casting would be the OMTI singers. Now, if you have four or five such groups around the state, you are essentially serving the whole state, and you're getting a lot of productions and performances for your singers so that they will get their showcasing with our having to pay for the productions. Except that the singers go free because they're getting their stipend from us.

Q: What can AGMA members do to assist OMTI?

A: Well, to assist us, first of all, get the word out that we're here and get people applying to come to us. Secondly, once we've established this prototype of the artists-in-residence for the State of New Jersey, we would like to have similar training and performance projects in other states.

Q: Pretend that I am a performer, and I ask you, "How can I enhance my career opportunities? How do I best present myself at an audition? What do you look for when you cast or hire people?" What would you tell me?

A: Well, I think there's one very important aspect that I can see that is not fulfilled by most of the young people I hear sing. They get up to sing for me in master classes and in auditions, and my first reaction to 99% of them is, "Will you stop giving me a voice lesson and give me an experience."

They get up here, and you see that the eyes freeze in some position, "Here comes the high C, here comes the B flat, am I singing this scale cleanly, is my coloratura clean?" And all I'm getting is a voice lesson. A voice box in search of an audience. They're not giving me a real, live experience that thrills me. They've got to learn to become a real person on that stage, even if it's an audition, even just singing an aria.

We had a young man whom we took in the program. He was very handsome, very personable, and he was standing there joking with us and talking, and they got to the piano, and the moment the first chord struck on the piano, he froze in this funny, awkward, pseudo-operatic stance; he became an opera singer and ceased to be a human being. And it looked so funny and so phony-baloney, I thought, "He's not going to give me an experience; he's going to teach me something about how to sing." That's not what I'm here for! I want him to take me and shake me up, make me cry, make me laugh, make me whatever has to be done!

Q: Even if he misses a note or two?

A: Who cares about the note or two? I want an
"I want [a singer] to take me and shake me up, make me cry, make me laugh, make me whatever has to be done! I want an experience."

experience! Sure, I want vocal skill. I don't want to hear him crack the high notes. But we just took a	
tenor recently who cracked his high B flat in one number in the Hall. But everything else was so	
blasted marvelous, we said, "Come on, that can happen once. Skip it, take him." Because he was an	
extraordinary singer and he gave you an experience. But it was really a beautiful technique. He just had a bad moment.

When a kid gets up and sings an aria for me, I say, "Have you ever sung this opera in its entirety?"

But, I can tell that. "Where are you when you're singing this aria? What kind of a room are you in, or are you out in the open air? Who are you singing to, or what are you singing to? Where are the familiar objects around you? You're thinking about the time when you were sitting on your throne and the astrologer was kneeling before you. Where's the throne in your mind's eye? Where was the astrologer in your mind's eye?"

They have to create a reality. And so, we try, with all things, to give them the full experience: dramatic, vocal, everything. And, if they have emotional hang-ups, Frank Corsaro's a genius at shaking them loose and getting them to do that which does not come naturally at first, getting the whole personality functioning.

Q: It's not easy to get great stars to take an interest in their union, and yet, you've served as Treasurer and also a Vice President at AGMA, and on the Board of the AGMA Relief Fund. How did you get interested, and why?

A: There were times there, when I was with the Metropolitan so many months of the year, that I was in New York a lot and could attend meetings regularly. Sometimes a need would arise and I thought that I could help, and so I would pile into it. In those days, when I was most active in AGMA, I was essentially at the Met most of the season so I was able to give a lot more time and provide continuity.

Q: Did you learn anything from the experience of being connected with the union?

A: I observed an interesting phenomenon. I observed Rudolf Bing, when he came in in 1950, and I observed him when he left us, about 1970.

I was AGMA Treasurer when he came in and was Vice President when he left, and I learned a lesson from it because I saw what broke Mr. Bing. Bing came in with a basic thought: He was going to break the unions. He came in and said immediately, "I'm going to audition everybody in the company, including the orchestra, chorus and everybody. I'm going to clean the place up and get it all brand new." Well, we at the union said, "Oh, no you don't. You've got the union to deal with." So, in the early '60s, he tried to shut the Met down.

He decided, all of a sudden, to shut the house down for one solid year, so that we would all go looking for other jobs. And then we would have to reapply. In that way, he figured he could break the union. He thought he had it made, but the intervention of President Kennedy forced him to open the house.

Mr. Bing came as close to being a broken man as I've ever seen. There was the old Bing saying he was going to break the union, and instead, the union broke him. He got so upset about this that he took Cornell MacNeil, then AGMA President, and me as the symbol of his demise, because he was forced by the Met Board to resign because he couldn’t handle the unions anymore — and he booked both of us out of the season. And his re-mark to my agent was, "I thought Jerry would retire with me." He said the same thing, apparently, to MacNeil's agent, too. He thought he was getting his revenge. The thing that broke Bing was the fact that he would not bend. He was determined to break the union, and the union broke him. A man has to be willing to be flexible, and Bing was not. It was his inflexibility that broke him.

Q: Is there anything else that we haven't covered that you'd like to say?

A: Just one final little comment. I have now put in 50 years of professional singing, and I must say, I'm very glad I did it. The opera world has been good to me. I hope I've been good to it. I have loved being in the profession; I've loved being on the stage, and I'm overjoyed to have had the opportunity. I hope everybody else can come out loving their profession as much as I do.

"Discipline is enormously important."
Dancers Gain Through Negotiations

by Alexander J. Dubé
Administrator for Dance

Early in 1989, AGMA devised and sent out to its members nationwide a questionnaire to determine and ascertain proposals to be addressed at the bargaining table. These questionnaires were then tabulated and the official proposals that resulted contained, in addition to increases in wages, overtime, penalty, free day rates and improved working conditions, such new concepts as severance (exit pay), extended sick pay (supplemental disability), and a provision for pregnancy/chilbirth leave. Clearly, the members directed AGMA to attempt to achieve these new provisions in a new three-year collective bargaining agreement.

NYC Ballet is first

The first contract to be negotiated was the four-year New York City Ballet Basic Agreement. With the assistance and tenacity of the NYC Ballet’s Committee headed by Michael Byars and Patrick Hinson, this negotiation proved to be a bellwether in such areas as exit pay and a dental plan. The minimum salaries, percentage increases and a fifth year for dancers would be as follows: 1989-90, $905 or 5.85%; 90-91, $955 or 5.52%; 91-92, $1,020 or 6.8%; 92-93, $1,080 or 5.88%.

National Dance Basic Agreement

The negotiations for the National Dance Basic Agreement commenced in Houston with employers representing the Houston, Pennsylvania, Pacific Northwest and Boston Ballets. Subsequent negotiations occurred in Seattle and a final session was held in Boston, with dancer representatives from each of the five companies in attendance. Never before did we witness our dancers uniting on so many fronts, thus creating a solid chain of support. This bonding resulted in major improvements in the National Dance Basic Agreement in the areas of severance, extended sick pay and a pregnancy/chilbirth leave provision.

The 1989-90 season saw the San Francisco Ballet’s first individual Basic Agreement and with the support of a very well informed negotiating committee headed by Jo Ellen Arntz and Larry Pech, a successful three-year agreement was attained. With the establishment of a new third year corps and over, a wage package was agreed upon to address the concerns of the high cost of living in the San Francisco/Bay Area. Other improvements include seniority increased to ten years at $7 per year with a cap of $70; severance with a five-year service trigger and a ten year maximum to equal ten weeks of minimum compensation; vacation pay of 2%, 2.5% and 3% of the base minimum weekly salary; dental insurance; disability insurance plan; a provision for pregnancy/maternity leave and further improvements in the areas of overtime, penalty, free day rates, meal money and working conditions.

Despite the National Endowment’s precarious future and touring prospects all but evaporating, AGMA has successfully negotiated improvements in wages, overtime, penalty, free day rates and working conditions and, most importantly, your union has maintained that these employers will continue to pay the premium for health care, which is currently $140 per month for a full 12-month period.

With these agreements firmly in place as a paradigm, AGMA and its members can take pride in the achievements accomplished by the solidarity of the membership.

Baltimore/Washington Newsletter

The Baltimore/Washington membership has launched a Newsletter to keep members up-to-date on the progress of local negotiations and, according to Eleni Kallas, Chair of the Baltimore/Washington Executive Committee, to keep members better informed about the profession locally and “to make performing a profitable profession” for them.

Included in the inaugural issue is announcement of a Welcome Committee from AGMA which will be present at the first rehearsal of each opera production at the Washington Opera. The committee will welcome newcomers to the union, answer questions, help with the election of AGMA Reps and distribute important materials. Issue also contains names and phone numbers of the Baltimore/Washington Executive Committee.

Help is Available

In New York State, there is the New York State Division of Substance Abuse, 1-800-522-5353 and the Alcoholism Hotline, 1-800-ALCALLS.

In New York City, there is the Recover Hotline, run by Addictions Anonymous® Information and Education Project. The number is R-E-C-O-V-E-R (732-6837).

Nationally, there is the Cocaine Hotline, 1-800-COCAINEx, National Institute on Drug Abuse, 1-800-622-HELP, AIDS Hotline, 1-800-342-AIDS.

For general tax information, call the Internal Revenue Service, 1-800-424-1040.

Deceased

Don Abrams
Robert A. Dodd
Donald Eryck
Shellie (Farrell) Filkins
Clifford Haruvot
Paul Imbach
Carlo MoreSCO
Ray Morrison
Thomas R. Motto
Wayne Turnage

AGMA Hotline
(212) 247-0247

Philadelphia Singers Plan Ambitious Season

International soloists and a world premiere will highlight the 1990-91 season of the Philadelphia Singers under the leadership of Artistic Director Michael Korn.

The world premiere of William Bolcom’s The Mask will be featured in the season opener, Bach and Beyond. The Singers commissioned the Pulitzer-Prize winning composer to write this new choral work, which is a cycle of five poems for chorus and piano, dedicated to the memory of famed Philadelphia pianist, Natalie Hinderas.

Messiah, in the version that Handel himself, conducted at the Covent Garden Theatre in 1749, will be heard in its 16th consecutive season by The Singers. Over the three centuries of its existence, Messiah has become the world’s most performed oratorio.

The season concludes with a commemoration of the 200th anniversary of Mozart’s death, with The Singers performing his final work, Requiem, which was left unfinished at his death, and the Coronation Mass, from his early years in Salzburg.
Report From The Road
by Thomas Jamerson
Assistant to the National Executive Secretary

AGMA's efforts in representing its members with opera companies throughout the country have continued with success. Two new companies have signed contracts and substantial improvements have been negotiated into existing contracts.

The Chicago Opera Theatre, a company which generally performs in the Athenaeum Theatre in Chicago, signed an agreement with AGMA during their spring season of 1990 calling for an immediate 5% increase in salaries for Choristers and Dancers. Likewise, an artist who was cut from the roster for reasons of space on the stage, received compensation because the company was an AGMA signatory. The management of Chicago Opera Theatre has shown great respect for the AGMA agreement and has cooperated with us in a most professional manner.

The Opera Guild, Inc., otherwise known as Ft. Lauderdale Opera, also has signed an AGMA agreement covering Principal artists. This company will soon be moving into a new theatre complex in Ft. Lauderdale.

43% increase

An agreement has been reached with the Lyric Opera of Chicago which achieved an overall increase of approximately 43% over four years for the Chorus. Wages were increased an average of 7% per year. AGMA was also able to greatly increase the company's contribution toward health insurance for the fully employed members (up 133%) by the end of the contract. This was accomplished during a period of tremendous concern among our members over the increasing cost of health insurance. In addition, severance pay was introduced to the contract — a first for the Lyric Opera. Other improvements were made in areas of sick leave, tour provisions, lunch breaks and free days.

The success of these negotiations was due in large part to a committee that was fully prepared, willing to work hard and able to make some very difficult decisions.

There are still several negotiations with opera companies in progress around the country: Cincinnati Opera, Michigan Opera Theatre, Pittsburgh Opera, San Diego Opera and Washington Opera. Within each of these companies AGMA has a very active and effective negotiating committee working with the principal negotiator from the National office.

Gains for Chorus

Not only have opera and dance seen improvements gained through negotiations, a three year agreement has been reached with the Chicago Symphony Chorus containing guarantees of 14 performances and 150 hours of rehearsal in each season, approximately 7.5% wage increase in each of the three years and a compression of the seniority scale to four levels with a top of seven years. There have been several other increases in this contract, as well.

Once again, the AGMA committee showed excellent preparation and enabled the Local and National Representatives to clearly express the concerns of the membership to the employer.

Input sought

By this time next year, the terms and conditions of the National Opera Basic Agreement will have been negotiated. It is this document which provides the basis of AGMA's protection of its members while performing with the regional opera companies throughout the country. This is the time for AGMA members who perform with these companies to give the union their support and to inform their union of the problems which need to be addressed. It is this input and support that will allow AGMA to best represent its members. AGMA is only as strong as its members because AGMA is its members.

Some Members Speak

"I have been a member of Cincinnati Ballet for many years, and with each passing year our reputation and artistic achievements grew. Unfortunately, along with its growth we were faced with many unforeseen problems that could not be resolved within our 'family.' Three years ago we joined the union. As a member of the negotiating committee I saw a situation in chaos change into a newly organized group with a guiding and helpful hand. This time whenever a problem arose (i.e. dangerous dance floors, endless bus trips, unexpected illness, etc.), AGMA was there to help us and continue to do so.

"As with everything in the world, nothing comes free. Our union needs money to continue to help us. I truly believe if each of us recognizes all our union has done for us, you will pass the slight increase to ensure that we may continue to better our respective art forms."

Tami Alesson
Cincinnati Ballet co-Delegate

"I agree with all Tami says. I have been a co-rep for only one year, but have already experienced the strength and support of the union. Without the support of AGMA, Cincinnati Ballet would at worst have cut dancers and/or weeks of work, and at best would presently be in arbitration. I heartily endorse strengthening the union's financial position so that all AGMA artists have firm support behind them in difficult times."

Beth Ferreira Magner
Cincinnati Ballet co-Delegate
Singing praises

Dear Ms. Casei:
This is a belated but very sincere note to "sing the praises" of Barbara Hillman and Tom Jamerson.

As a member of the Negotiating Committee for Lyric Opera of Chicago Chorus, I was extremely pleased that Tom was at every meeting with management. The combination of Tom's knowledge and expertise in the field and Barbara's strength as a negotiator made for a great team and resulted in a very good contract.

Also, I personally feel with the addition of Barbara to the Chicago scene, AGMA has grown in strength and number.

On behalf of the Negotiating Committee, we thank AGMA for your support and assistance.
Marilyn Vitale-DeStefano

Vote "Yes" on dues

Dear Members:
I am writing this letter to the membership because I feel AGMA has reached a perilous crossroad. A dues referendum will soon take place: We will have to make a decision whether we want the union to move forward or stagnate from lack of sufficient funding. We all have expectations and opinions about what AGMA can and should do for us. But we also know that it takes money to accomplish these goals, whether they be national or local in scope.

Recently, AGMA has successfully negotiated contracts for our members with the Pacific Northwest Ballet, the San Francisco Ballet and the San Francisco Opera, among others. I served as Chairman of the Negotiating Committee for the San Francisco Opera contract negotiations. I can tell you first-hand that the San Francisco Office (Don Tayer, representative and Ann Sebastian, Administrator) and National Office (Sanford "Bud" Wolff, Executive Secretary) were instrumental in helping us obtain substantial gains for our members. Many of these contract improvements would not have happened if we had not been represented by local and national figures of such ability and stature. These individuals know our needs, know the law, and know the history of AGMA and how the events of today link both the past and the future.

When we are asked to contribute our fair share to the maintenance and improvement of our union, I hope you will join me with a "yes" vote — a vote of confidence, a vote of thanks, a vote of support. I, for one, want to see AGMA move into the '90s and the 21st century a strong and respected group. We are proud to be professional artists; let us give the administration of AGMA the means to serve us with that same pride. Our dedication to the Arts deserves nothing less.

Gregory de Silva, San Francisco

Dear AGMA:
We the members of the AGMA Chicago Board of Governors from Lyric Opera and the Lyric Opera Chorus Negotiating Committee are writing concerning the proposed AGMA dues referendum.

We feel that the support we have received in the past three years, particularly in the last seven to eight months, has been of the highest quality both from Barbara Hillman and her staff here in Chicago, and from Tom Jamerson and his staff in New York.

Ms. Hillman's outstanding and tireless efforts on our behalf required countless hours of work in preparation for negotiations, during negotiating meetings with Lyric Opera and follow up work both with our committee and on the phone with Lyric management. Her advice on strategy and her ability to grasp the idea behind every one of our proposals in addition to her performance at the negotiating table resulted in what amounted to an almost total rewrite of our basic agreement, increasing its strength as well as its scope.

Mr. Jamerson did not miss one of our 14 or so negotiating meetings with Lyric management. His presence as well as Ms. Hillman's formidable performance made Lyric management see us in a new light and with a seriousness never before shown to us. His input which draws on having negotiated so many other of this country's opera and ballet agreements was most vital and appreciated.

We at Lyric have never had that sort of contribution of time and dedication from the New York office. During and shortly after our negotiations, Mr. Jamerson also succeeded in making Chicago Opera Theatre an AGMA house and at this writing both Mr. Jamerson and Ms. Hillman are involved in initial talks with Lyric's Opera Center for American Artists with the goal of obtaining an AGMA basic agreement with them. As our fall season takes shape, new issues requiring Ms. Hillman's and Mr. Jamerson's attention will doubtless arise, so you can see the work goes on. If it requires a dues referendum to continue and augment the efforts of these two experts and AGMA staff like them, then we cannot help but support it . . .

Scott Holmes
Bryan Miller
Bette S. McGee
Lawrence Montgomery
Robert Prindle
Skipp Buss

Carolyn Berghoff
Martha A. Edwards
Deborah Fair
Mark Nienow
Marilyn Vitale-DeStefano

AMERICAN GUILD OF
MUSICAL ARTISTS
1727 Broadway
New York, New York 10019