Executive Director’s Report

By Alan S. Gordon

AGMA & Joseph Volpe’s Retirement

Joseph Volpe, General Manager of the Metropolitan Opera, recently announced his retirement after forty years of dedication to the world of opera. While some people may disagree with his artistic choices, no one criticizes his successes as a brilliant and charismatic administrator.

Although every newspaper story about his announcement remarked on his reputation for “being tough with unions” and for keeping us “under control,” most of our members at the Met felt a profound sense of loss when learning of his prospective departure. Although it’s true that Volpe is tough for us to deal with, for all of his alleged toughness with unions, Joseph Volpe is devoted to his singers and does what he can, within the confines of his job, to help them pursue their careers and reap the professional and financial rewards to which their art entitles them. Moreover, our negotiating committees at the Met have inherently understood that his bargaining positions flowed from his ultimate desire to make the Metropolitan Opera not only the world’s premier opera house, but also a good place to work, and a dynamic and thriving institution that epitomized the confluence of New York City’s cultural heritage with its leadership role in today’s world of artistic creativity.

Collective bargaining with Joseph Volpe was indeed a grueling experience, but for me and for the members of our negotiating committees, it was an undertaking based upon the symbiotic recognition that what was good for the singers, dancers and production staff also had to be good for the Met, and what was good for the Met wouldn’t be viable unless it was also good for its AGMA members.

(continued on page 7)
FROM THE
PRESIDENT
LINDA
MAYS

AGMA members obviously have an inherent need to maintain an acute sense of hearing. Over the past few years, it has repeatedly come to our attention that varying degrees of hearing loss affect many of our members. Consequently, I thought it appropriate to devote part of this article to urge all members to take continuing care of this precious sense throughout their careers. In addition to environmental noise pollution, our members are, by profession, surrounded by powerful singers, stage bands, and stage noise effects. Modern technology offers a remarkable range of earplugs to protect us from noise damage. Since protecting your hearing can lengthen your career, discuss this issue with your health care professional regularly.

AGMA’s elected leadership and professional staff will have a unique opportunity to interact with members at the Classical Singer Convention in May and operatic employers at the Opera America Conference in June. To assist us in maximizing the productivity of these events, we would like to hear from AGMA members as to which non-AGMA opera and/or dance companies should be top priorities for organizing into AGMA signatories when the time is right. Strengthening the current AGMA structure has been the leadership’s primary goal for the past ten years. AGMA has made great progress in contracts, services, and fiscal conservation. AGMA members advise us that their preference is to work for AGMA signatories whenever possible, so we ask you to give us information — confidentially, of course — that would help us pick a “top ten” for future organizing. (Contact me at LMAYS102@aol.com, or at the AGMA office, telephone number: 1-800-543-2462.)

Throughout this issue of AGMAzine there are offers of valuable discounted or free services that are available to you as AGMA members in good standing. Your AGMA membership is important in many tangible and intangible ways. Be a pro-active “consumer.” One of our most recent membership-service programs involves delegate/steward training. We encourage each member with special interest and/or curiosity to attend these sessions when held in their Areas.

It is important for every AGMA member in good standing, those actively engaged in union business and those who work under AGMA contracts, to vote in every AGMA election. Your right to vote for your choice of Officers and Board members assures that hard-working, committed leaders charged with maintaining and improving AGMA are accomplishing your goals.

Participating in your union’s elections is an effective way in which to protect your future. VOTE!
Elections 2004
Candidates for Board of Governors

01 NEW YORK AREA

SOLOISTS
(4 Vacancies)

Osceola Davis
AGMA is on the verge of wider recognition, as for many years it has been known mainly among its members and the signatories involved. As a soloist and a four-year member of the Board of Governors in New York, I hope to see the awareness of this union expand; that is why I started The Pre-AGMA Awareness Committee, "PAAC" for short, to introduce aspiring artists to union participation. PAAC will visit musical institutions and venues. With your help, I can continue to oversee the growth of Pre-AGMA respect.

Frances Ginsberg

Peter Kazaras

Anita Terzian

Received Bachelor's and Master's degrees from Juilliard School. Has performed leading Mezzo Soprano roles with major houses throughout Europe, South America and the United States. Appeared in concert and on recordings with major orchestras and conductors.

As a long-time Governor, I have the background and experience necessary to actively participate in promoting the interests of our members. With your vote of confidence, it will be my privilege to continue.

01 NEW YORK AREA

CHORISTERS
(3 Vacancies)

Robert Maher
AGMA continues to prove itself as a viable Union serving its membership. Hard work and good leadership are the key to continued reform, and better representation and protection for all of us.

I've been with the Met Chorus since 1990 and helped to lead negotiations that have brought about contracts that improve working conditions and provide a dignified wage/benefits package for all members of the shop. It has been an honor to be your representative on the Board and I hope you will continue to support me in making AGMA an even better Union for all of us.

Paul Sackett
AGMA member 35 years; Currently: Board member and AGMA Relief Fund Trustee. Formerly: Policy and Administration and Personnel Committees.

Past service: Committee IV; Search Committee; Dancer with NYC Ballet 18 years; ongoing theatrical involvement; BA in Arts, MBA in Finance, Phi Kappa Phi, Beta Gamma Sigma; published author and dealer in fine arts. Our union has made remarkable progress thanks to the efforts of a dynamic and motivated Board. It would be a pleasure to serve another term with such a distinguished group of dedicated members.

01 NEW YORK AREA

DANCERS
(2 Vacancies)

Thomas Patrick
AGMA member since 1988...currently member of the Board of Governors, Membership and Member Relations Committee, and the NY Area Committee. Helped organize the Cincinnati Ballet and negotiated their first AGMA contract. Previously a delegate in two companies, I'm a dancer and dance captain with the Metropolitan Opera. Also a member of IATSE (Local 764) and AFTRA. I believe that the key to our past and future successes as a union is participation. Taking an active role in AGMA is important for all of us, and is vital to our strong citizenship in the world of the arts.

Jan Holland
Member since 1974; Board since 1999. Currently Chair, Personnel Joint Subcommittee, member Executive Council; also Budget & Finance Committee, Staging Staff Caucus. Contracts under AGMA jurisdiction include Stage Manager, Stage Director, (continued on page 4)
**Election Information (continued from page 3)**
Principal, Opera Chorus and Concert Chorus; also Equity Stage Manager. Much has been accomplished since I joined the Board, but much remains to be done. I love working—hard—for the benefit of my colleagues, and hope you will let me put my experience and good will to work on the challenges facing all performing artists in these difficult times.

**02 SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA AREA**

**CHORISTERS**
(2 Vacancies)

Jennifer Wallace

I have sung with Los Angeles Opera and the Master Chorale for over 18 years. I once just let AGMA "do for me" but in 2001 (after returning from a "non-union" town), I could no longer sit silently and watch. Since then I have been a vocal member of the LA Opera Shop Committee and AGMA Delegate on several productions. I am currently serving on the LA Opera Contract Negotiation Committee and acting as liaison between LA Opera members and AGMA’s NY office. I wish to take the next step and represent all of my colleagues on the Board of Governors.

Christopher Feigum

AGMA member for 10 years. Has worked with the following Operas: Lyric of Chicago, Washington, Santa Fe, Houston Grand. Although relatively new to the business, I believe I can help address the unique perspectives and concerns of solo singers. I believe soloists face an entirely different set of priorities and pressures than others working in the business, but I also feel that there must be a stronger dialogue between these groups. AGMA has embarked on a new phase in its representation of artists and I would be proud to take an active role in this exciting time of change.

Lawrence Montgomery

Lyric Opera of Chicago Chorus member and AGMA member for 21 years. Elected union delegate/shop steward and assistant delegate various times throughout the years. Member of the AGMA Basic Agreement contract negotiating committee.

AGMA Board of Governors member and new member to the Budget and Finance Committee.

Lorene Richardson

I have been a member of AGMA for about 35 years; on the Board of Governors for over 20 years; granted Honorary Life Membership status.

AGMA has progressed from a New York-centered union to one that encompasses its members nationwide. Eternal vigilance is the watchword to keep the Board focused so that members believe that they are "the union.

I serve on the Administration & Policy Committee, which is dedicated to addressing the needs and interests of AGMA members. Re-election would make this my continuing endeavor.

**02 SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA AREA**

**STAGE MANAGERS/DIRECTORS/CHOREOGRAPHERS**
(1 Vacancy)

**03 CHICAGO AREA**

**SOLISTS**
(2 Vacancies)

Buffy Baggott
Delegate and Bargaining Committee (Ensemble), Lyric Opera of Chicago. Member of the Chicago/Midwest Area Committee.

Has sung with Lyric Opera of Chicago (One of the "Girls," Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny; Dryade, Ariadne auf Naxos; Stephano, Romeo et Juliette, Carmen student matinees), Santa Fe Opera, Nevada Opera, West Bay Opera, Oakland Opera, Berkeley Opera. Canadian Opera Company: Mère Jeanne, Dialogues des Carmélites; Béatrice (cover), Béatrice et Bénédict. Lyric Opera Center: Angelina, Cenerentola; Laura, Iolanta; Carmen (Grant Park Music Festival); soloist in Moses and Aaron (Chicago Symphony Orchestra).

Christopher Feigum

AGMA member for 10 years. Has worked with the following Operas: Lyric of Chicago, Washington, Santa Fe, Houston Grand. Although relatively new to the business, I believe I can help address the unique perspectives and concerns of solo singers. I believe soloists face an entirely different set of priorities and pressures than others working in the business, but I also feel that there must be a stronger dialogue between these groups. AGMA has embarked on a new phase in its representation of artists and I would be proud to take an active role in this exciting time of change.

Chuck Coyl

AGMA member since 1999. Member of the Chicago/Midwest area committee. Served as a part of the Lyric Opera of Chicago negotiation committee. Served on the committee to gain AGMA representation for Fight Directors. Currently serving as president of the Society of American Fight Directors.

**03 CHICAGO AREA**

**CHORISTERS**
(3 Vacancies)

Chuck Coyl

AGMA member since 1999. Member of the Chicago/Midwest area committee. Served as a part of the Lyric Opera of Chicago negotiation committee. Served on the committee to gain AGMA representation for Fight Directors. Currently serving as president of the Society of American Fight Directors.

**04 SAN FRANCISCO AREA**

**CHORISTERS**
(1 Vacancy)

Julianne Booth

AGMA Member since 1982.
San Francisco Opera Chorus since 1987.
Past service: negotiating committee for the 1997 AFTRA/SF Opera CBA, Health and Safety Committee, Women's Delegate to San Francisco Opera Joint Committee, various nominating committees.
Current service: San Francisco Opera/AGMA negotiating committee.
We have been in active negotiations since April of 2003 and I am very proud of the progress we are making and the hard work that is being done by everyone on the committee. I would be honored to serve on the AGMA Board of Governors and would do my best to represent my peers.

Daniel Harper
Virginia Pluth
Carol Schaffer
Jere Torkelsen

04 SAN FRANCISCO AREA
DANCERS
(1 Vacancy)

05 NEW ORLEANS AREA
All Board positions currently filled.

06 PHILADELPHIA AREA
SOLOISTS
(1 Vacancy)

Sara Blann
Member of AGMA since 1992. Since that time I have been deeply committed to soloists' concerns, and have fought successfully for Plan B at the Opera Company of Philadelphia while on the Negotiating Committee for those contract negotiations.

I am currently on the Board of Governors as the Soloist representative for the Philadelphia Area, a member of the Soloist Caucus, and serve as the Chair of the Membership and Member Relations Committee. My primary concern is to implement Plan B for all soloists throughout the signatories, as well as protecting American jobs in American houses.

07 WASHINGTON/BALTIMORE AREA
SOLOISTS
(1 Vacancy)

Laura Zuiderveen
I have been an active AGMA member for 24 years. If elected, this will be my first term on the AGMA Board of Governors representing the Washington/Baltimore area. As a member of the Board, I will help address issues such as those regarding agents, working in various AGMA venues, safe working conditions, and professionalism of both the artist and employer. I will strive to be honest and fair on all discussion of these issues. Thank you for your consideration.

I have performed with the Washington National Opera, Washington Concert Opera, Wolf Trap Opera and Baltimore Opera

Timothy Kjer
I have performed as an AGMA chorister with the Washington National Opera, Wolf Trap Opera, and, most frequently, with Baltimore Opera. I have served on the Board of Governors, Budget & Finance and Administration & Policy Committees. I currently serve as Chair of the Washington/Baltimore Area Committee. AGMA is a union, and I am proud to be part of America's organized labor force. Unions serve a vital function in our system of democratic capitalism. If AGMA members want a union that will support them with effective and aggressive representation, we must all stand together in solidarity.

08 PITTSBURGH AREA
All Board positions currently filled.

09 NEW ENGLAND AREA
CHORISTERS
(1 Vacancy)

10 TEXAS AREA
DANCERS
(1 Vacancy)

11 NORTHWEST AREA
CHORISTERS
(1 Vacancy)

Dorohey Bodner
I have been with The Washington Opera (Washington National Opera) for seven seasons and am presently working with our Negotiation Committee on the upcoming contract. Having performed in a non-union house, it is very clear to me what our union does for us. Because of this, I would like to be elected so I can give back to our fine organization.

George Scott
Member of AGMA since 1977. Presently, member Board of Governors, serves as Area Chair, and Shop Steward for Seattle Opera. Member of Seattle Opera Chorus since 1991. (continued on page 6)
Election Information (continued from page 5)
I serve on the Committee on Committees, Budget & Finance Committee, and Personnel Subcommittee, and am a member of the Executive Council. It has been an interesting and learning experience working with AGMA members locally and nationwide. I look forward in serving our members and prospective new members.

Entertainment Unions Rally for Affordable Housing
By Linda Mays, AGMA President
Since 1977, the Manhattan Plaza has provided affordable housing for our members and the members of other entertainment unions who live in Manhattan. Recently, the existing income/market rent formula has come under attack and is in jeopardy. Presidents of entertainment unions in New York have rallied together to combat this potential threat. Roberta Reardon, AFTRA New York Local President, Patrick Quinn, Actors’ Equity Association President, and Linda Mays, AGMA President are lending their aid to Mary Lou Westerfield, Actors’ Equity National Director, Policy, who is Chair of the Manhattan Plaza Management Policy Advisory Committee (MPMPAC). John McGuire, Senior Advisor at Screen Actors Guild, and other entertainment union executive directors are also lending their support.
William Cason, former AGMA Treasurer, professional singer, tax specialist, and Manhattan Plaza resident, has been appointed by the AGMA Board of Governors to represent AGMA and over sixty AGMA members who reside at Manhattan Plaza. Our thanks to Eileen Schauer and the late Beno Foster who were our representatives during the first successful decades of this unique entertainment community housing model.

Humor in the Arts
My grandmother, who was a sweet and generous soul, never really understood what I did in New York as a struggling young opera singer. Once in the early 80’s I went home for a visit and she gave me $25 to use as I pleased. I hugged her and exclaimed, “Thank you, Grandma, this is great! I’m going to use this for a voice lesson.” The next year I went home for another visit, and again she gave me $25. I gave her a hug and a kiss on the cheek and said, “Thanks, Grandma, this will just pay for a voice lesson!” Confused, she looked at me and said, “Oh. You need another one?”

If you have a “story to share,” please submit it to Denise at denise@musicalartists.org for the next issue of AGMAzine!

BLOCH – Dance Supplies
BLOCH offers a 10% discount to AGMA members presenting a current AGMA card.
BLOCH also offers a 15% discount to AGMA members with current I.D. from AGMA signatory companies.
BLOCH’s first flagship store in the United States, located in New York City at 304 Columbus Avenue between 74th and 75th Streets (212-579-1960), carries the complete BLOCH range of footwear and apparel for ballet, jazz, tap and yoga for men, women and children.
With the state-of-the-art shoe fitting area, equipped with camera and flat panel monitor, the BLOCH staff offers expert shoe fittings. You can schedule an appointment with the professional pointe shoe fitter for custom pointe shoes and ballet flats.
When both sides renegotiate a contract knowing that the end result, however difficult to achieve, will of necessity be the best possible deal for both sides, bargaining becomes less adversarial and more of a participatory, interest-based process.

Joe Volpe would sometimes offer us things that we had not even yet sought. If he believed that something was right to do, he did it. Known for his hard-driving tactics with unions, he successfully made deals with us because of his underlying commitment to fairness and to the welfare of the Met. When he came to us to negotiate the first midseason break, to allow the Met to suspend performances during the winter months and extend the season into the more profitable spring, he won our support because our members respected his leadership and trusted his plans. In turn, he scheduled the break in such a way as to ensure that the singers would not lose any income.

I’ve negotiated hundreds, perhaps thousands, of collective bargaining agreements during my thirty-year career as a union lawyer, but never have I enjoyed a negotiation as much as I enjoyed bargaining with Joseph Volpe.

Even his departure reflects his commitment to good labor relations. His willingness to stay on until he renegotiates the AGMA contract will give his successor a settled labor situation so that he or she can have a few years of freedom to focus on the artistic concerns of the Met, as well as an opportunity to become familiar with the Met’s AGMA employees. I think that his retirement will be a loss to the Met, to the world of opera, to our union, and to the members that we represent.

In New York’s darkest hour, Joseph Volpe brought the Met’s unions together to give the public his splendid World Trade Center Benefit. If for nothing else, I would remember his tenure at the Met for that night when, standing on the Met stage with the AGMA chorus, dancers, production staff, and honorary AGMA member Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, Joe Volpe led the group in singing *God Bless America* and *The Star Spangled Banner*. Their collective voices, and his creative leadership, cemented his legacy while assuring New Yorkers that, despite tragedy, the magnificence of music can help heal the soul.

**Which Side Are You On?**

“Come all of you good workers, good news to you I’ll tell, Of how the good old union, has come in here to dwell, Don’t scab for the bosses, don’t listen to their lies, Us poor folks don’t have a chance unless we organize.”

Florence Reece’s 1931 song “Which Side Are You On?,” popularized by Woody Guthrie and widely regarded as the anthem of the labor movement, was a product of the turbulent era of American labor relations that also resulted in the creation of our own union. The song highlights the notion that, in the struggle for workers’ rights, there are no neutrals. Either you were for the union, or you were the union’s enemy.

In today’s arts environment, however, this formerly clear-cut division has become significantly blurred, and the old tenets of the movement often no longer reflect the current needs of talent employees, particularly in the not-for-profit world. Unquestionably, AGMA needs to remain vigilant in its efforts to continuously improve the wages, hours, terms and conditions of employment for its members, allowing them to practice their art while we protect their legal and contractual rights. But our members simultaneously remain aware of the symbiotic relationship between themselves and their employers. So long as employers recognize their need for professional respect and financial reward, our members in turn recognize the need to work together with their employers to create and present the best possible product. Ultimately, our members want what every worker wants—a fair and adequate wage, reasonable working conditions, a pleasant place to work, and respect for what they do.

We are now trying to work “outside of the box.” One of the ways in which AGMA tries to accomplish that goal is to utilize the services of professionals known for being on “the other side.” Specifically, we have been experimenting with augmenting our professional staff with the services of highly experienced, artist-friendly lawyers and negotiators who have previously represented opera or dance managements.

Last year, we retained Jim Ireland, formerly of the Houston Opera, to oversee the drafting and subsequent negotiation of an overall AGMA Electronic Media Agreement. Next, we retained the services of a pro-management law firm, willing to represent us because they too recognized our shared obligation to keep their clients’ labor relations stable.

Now, as our contract with the Los Angeles Opera nears its expiration, we’ve asked Ian White-Thomson, former LA Opera Executive Director, to represent us and serve as AGMA’s chief negotiator. He epitomizes the need to achieve the greatest level of contractual improvements while simultaneously ensuring that those improvements do not cripple the company.

We’ve applied a similar approach in the world of dance. Having worked with Federal Mediation & Conciliation Service mediator Joel Schaffer in the recent San Francisco Ballet negotiations, we and several dance companies have asked him to conduct a series of mediated discussions with AGMA and dance company managers so that we can explore issues of mutual concern in a non-adversarial, neutral atmosphere.

Our willingness to go beyond the traditional union philosophical positions by bringing the resources of “the other side” to bear in the interests of AGMA’s members hopefully will move us closer to the day in which all of our employers will recognize that what’s good for the company isn’t okay unless it’s also good for our members.
New York
A Fun Time Was Had By All

By Mitchell Sendrowitz, New York Area Chair

The New York Area held an interesting, useful, and fun meeting on February 5 at the Council Room at Actors' Equity. The highlight was an auction led by Marty Singleton, auctioneer extraordinaire. The Area raised over $1,500 for the AGMA Relief Fund! A huge debt of gratitude is owed to Suzanne Falletti (Bella Gioia), Alan Gordon, Paula Liscio, Linda Mays, Mark Oswald, Annelies Richmond, Marty Singleton (Wal-Marty), and Yolanda S. Williams (Metropolitan Opera Media Department), who donated all the wonderful items. At times, the bidding was truly hot and heavy! Thanks, as well, to everyone who bid and bought and made the auction the success it was. If I've left anyone out, we thank you, too!

The annual election for Area Committee members was conducted at the meeting. We wish to thank outgoing Committee members Lee Bellaver, Jean Braham, Rob Maher, Kurt Steinhauer, and David Ward for their contributions and participation during their terms on the Committee. Jane Bunell, Stephanie Godino, Nicola James, and Bob Kuehn were all re-elected, and Patrick Carfizzi and Charlotte Philley are joining us for the first time. In addition to those already mentioned, the New York Area Committee members whose terms are continuing are Glenn Bater, David Frye, Frances Ginsberg, Paula Hostetter, Tim Jerome, Peter Kazaras, Greg Lorenz, Krisha Marciano, Ray Menard, Belinda Oswald, Gerald Otte, Tom Patrick, Louis Perry (Secretary/Vice-Chair), Mitchell Sendrowitz (Chair), Marty Singleton, Pamela Smith, Joe Turi, and Jonathan Waterfield. Please be sure to contact any member of the Committee with your AGMA-related concerns.

I'd like to thank Deborah Allton, Linda Bartlett, and Alan Gordon, who spoke to us about the current state of AGMA affairs. Thank you, too, to the other members of the staff who contributed to the success of our meeting: Gerry Angel, Denise Baker, Susan Davison, and Garrett Dodge.

And lastly, thanks to Linda Mays, AGMA's President, for all her help, all the time.
**PHILADELPHIA**

By Rebecca Whillow, Philadelphia Area Vice-Chair

Left to right: Philadelphia Area Chair and Work Rules Committee Member Evelyn Santiago-Schulz, Pennsylvania Ballet Delegate Jonathan Stiles, Pennsylvania Ballet Delegate Martha Chamberlain (front), Philadelphia Area Vice-Chair Rebecca Whillow, Mid-Atlantic Area Representative Eleni Kallas, Recording Secretary and New York Area Chair Mitchell Sendrowitz and AGMA President Linda Mays


Saturday, January 24, was a special day for the Philadelphia Area membership. Area members were pleased to welcome Eleni Kallas, Mid-Atlantic AGMA Representative, as part of the ongoing delegate/steward training program recently instituted by the Union. Ms. Kallas presented *Contract Enforcement Begins with You*. This creative presentation covered delegate/steward duties and responsibilities and creatively presented a wide variety of hypothetical situations and solutions which might be encountered in the workplace. Ms. Kallas gave a lively and interactive presentation, and she distributed an informative reference guide with pertinent information at the end of the day. In attendance were AGMA delegates/stewards from the Opera Company of Philadelphia (OCP) and Pennsylvania Ballet as well as stage management and a large number of choristers from OCP. The session began with a few words from AGMA President Linda Mays and AGMA Recording Secretary and New York Area Chair Mitchell Sendrowitz.

Philadephia Area Members enjoyed learning more about serving as delegates/stewards and contract enforcement, and urge that other members take advantage of this splendid training opportunity. Thank you, Eleni!

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**CHICAGO/MIDWEST**

By Jimmy Odom, Chicago/Midwest Area Chair

AGMA dinner membership meeting, left photo: Carolyn Berghoff, Richard Livingston, Martha Edwards; right photo: John Coleman, Peggy Stenger, Chicago Counsel Barbara Hillman

Following a performance of Samson et Dalila at the Lyric Opera of Chicago, a few members gathered, left to right: Cathy Dunn, John Coleman, Deb DeNoon, Larry Montgomery, AGMA President Linda Mays, Chicago/Midwest Area Chair Jimmy Odom, AGMA Treasurer Lynn Lundgren, and Sara Stewart.

The Chicago/Midwest Area held its Annual Membership Meeting on Sunday, February 29. Members gathered for a social hour before the business meeting began. After elections to fill expiring terms on the Area Committee and the positions of Area Chair and Financial Secretary, reports were given by delegates from Chicago Symphony Chorus, Grant Park Chorus, Joffrey Ballet, Opera Theatre of St. Louis, Chicago Opera Theatre and Lyric Opera of Chicago. AGMA Health Fund trustee Carolyn Berghoff and AGMA Treasurer Lynn Lundgren also gave reports. Members were glad to have an opportunity to relax and "catch-up" with their colleagues.
The Spring General Membership meeting was held in February and attended by fifty-five members. George Ingram was elected to fill the vacancy on the W/B Area Committee. The membership acknowledged the dedicated service of Rosemary Fisher to the Area Committee for a number of years with a hearty round of applause. Her activism and participation on numerous committees such as the Washington National Opera (WNO) Negotiation Committee, WNO Japan Tour Negotiating Committee, Washington Concert Opera Negotiation Committee, AGMA Board of Governors and the Work Rules and Contracts Committee have served our membership exceptionally well locally and nationally. Thank you, Rosemary! Petitions for W/B Board of Governors positions were distributed and signed. Candidates seeking election are Tim Kjer and Dorothy Bodner for chorus positions, and Laura Zuiderven for the soloist position. Negotiation surveys were distributed to choristers and dancers who perform with WNO. Members not able to attend the meeting yet wishing to participate in the chorister and dancer survey, please contact Eleni Kallas directly at agmadc@comcast.net or (301) 869-8266. A discussion of WNO negotiation concerns ensued covering various topics including compensation, rehearsal conflicts with church jobs, media coverage, health plan coverage, professionalism, and parking. Ms. Kallas announced the implementation of a plan whereby WNO Delegates would be given explanations of the payroll on a weekly basis to assist members in identifying all components of their compensation. Volunteers signed up to serve on the Washington Concert Opera Negotiation Committee.

WNO negotiating subcommittees continue meeting to discuss issues and address member input. The participation in the subcommittee meetings has been exemplary. The Subcommittee Chairs are: Don Schramm, chorus; Andrea Dickerson, dance; and Laura Krause, production staff. The overall Negotiating Committee Chair is Paul Edson.

The Washington Opera officially became the "Washington National Opera" in late February by a vote of the Board of Trustees. This name change reflects an act of Congress passed in 2000 designating the company as the "National Opera" of the United States. A move back to the newly renovated Opera House at the Kennedy Center for the remainder of the 2003-04 Season is in progress. Blair Caple has been appointed Chief of Staff at WNO and will oversee finance, human resources, information technology, and staff development as well as support the President of the Board, Michael Sonnenreich, and General Director Placido Domingo in the overall management of the company. WNO has also announced the formation of the "Washington National Opera Center for Education and Training." The company’s new center will be comprised of the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program, the Educational Outreach Department and its new Intern and Apprentice program. The training of aspiring opera stage technicians, production staff, lighting personnel, costume as well as future arts administrators is all encompassing in the newest of the programs.

WNO has announced the 2004-05 season: Andrea Chenier, Billy Budd, Luisa Fernanda, Maid of Orleans, Samson and Dalila, Die Zauberflöte, Tosca, and Il Trovatore. Washington Concert Opera’s Season consists of performances of Roberto Devereaux on March 21 and La Donna del Lagao on May 21 at Lisner Auditorium under the direction of Antony Walker.

Wolf Trap Opera Company’s Season will include productions of Sallier’s Falstaff on June 18, 20 and 22 and Donizetti’s L’Elisir d’Amore on July 23, 25, 28 and 31 in the Barns and Puccini’s La Bohème in concert at the Filene Center on July 30.

Ms. Kallas continues her regular site visits to rehearsals and performances. On March 11, she met with many of the artists in Salome at the Baltimore Opera Company (BOC) while attending the dress rehearsal. In addition to enjoying their artistry onstage, she was able to spend time with them.
in their dressing rooms answering questions regarding AGMA work rules, health plan contributions, etc.

BOC has announced the 2004-05 season which will include La Fanciulla del West, I Puritani, Le Nozze di Figaro, and Les Contes d’Hoffman.

Members of the W/B Area extend our deepest sympathy to Laura Vicari whose mother passed away suddenly on February 29. Laura has been a very active member of the W/B Area Committee and the BOC Negotiating Committee. Laura will be relocating to Florida in June.

Northwest

By Cristine Reynolds, Northwest Area Representative

With the burst of the dot-com bubble and Boeing continuing into its third year of aggressive layoffs, the Northwest performing arts scene is still holding its own.

Seattle June 28, 2003: After eighteen long months performing in a renovated ice hockey rink/rock concert venue, Pacific Northwest Ballet dancers joined the Seattle Opera chorus and soloists Vinson Cole, Jane Eaglen, Greer Grimsley, and Doug Jones in a production introducing the newly renovated theater to the city of Seattle. The hall has been named in honor of Marion Oliver McCaw.

In August 2003, Seattle Opera had the honor of hosting the McCaw Hall with a new production of Parsifal directed by Francois Rochaix. AGMA, AFM, and IATSE members now enjoy a level of backstage comfort unavailable in the hockey rink or the previous opera house. All artists who work in this new venue now have a performance space that supports and graces the work they do. Throughout the year, AGMA and Management for PNB and Seattle Opera have been working together to get through the myriad little problems that come with a renovated venue.

Pacific Northwest Ballet (PNB) opened its season in McCaw Hall with a breathtaking new production of Swan Lake. Innovative mixed repertory programs have filled the season including an evening of George Balanchine, staged by Franca Russell, to mark the 100th anniversary of the choreographer’s birth. PNB will close the season with Balanchine’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream.

Pacific Northwest Ballet recently announced that Kent Stowell and Franca Russell will officially retire as Co-Artistic Directors of PNB at the end of the 2005 season. Although not unexpected, this news was still a bit of a shock. Kent and Franca have been at the helm of PNB for more than twenty-six years.

Portland Opera is also experiencing big changes this year including hiring a new general manager, Christopher Mattaliano, and moving into a fine new home for the administrative offices, costume shop and rehearsal studios, with a view of the Willamette River. Mattaliano is working to expand the company’s repertoire and increase the number of performances. This season the company produced Le Nozze de Figaro, Turandot, Lucia di Lammermoor and Il Barbiere di Siviglia, each opera being performed four times.

Seattle Opera: General Director Speight Jenkins celebrated his 20th anniversary leading the Seattle Opera. Thus far this season, the company has produced all new productions of: Parsifal, Mourning Becomes Electra, Carmen, Ariadne auf Naxos, and will close the season with La Fanciulla del West. Carmen was a huge box office success adding, for the first time in recent memory, a lucky 13th performance to the production’s run.

All three companies have great web sites: www.pnb.org www.portlandopera.org www.seattleopera.org

Contract Negotiations: Any member who has worked under a Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) with Pacific Northwest Ballet, Portland Opera or Seattle Opera during the 2002-2006 contract period, and who wishes to provide input toward the next CBA negotiations, should contact the following people: for Pacific Northwest Ballet, Rebecca Johnston at rjohn@gmail.com; for Portland Opera, Maria Leatha at MLeatha@aol.com; for Seattle Opera, George Scott Jr. at Georgescott4@aol.com. Rebecca, Maria and George will make sure that members have the opportunity to communicate with a member of the negotiating committee.

Meetings to evaluate these Collective Bargaining Agreements begin in January 2005. Both the Pacific Northwest Ballet and Portland Opera CBAs expire June 30, 2006. Seattle Opera’s CBA expires on August 31, 2006. Input from Principal Singers, Directors, Choreographers, Stage Managers, and Assistant Directors will be welcome and greatly appreciated.
The Chorus of The New Orleans Opera met with AGMA Southern Representative John Hanriot and Chorus member, Board member and Area Chair Julie Condy. The New Orleans Opera is the only AGMA company in a four-state area, including Louisiana, Alabama, Arkansas and Mississippi.

Although always fighting the problems of being a Union Shop in a Right to Work State, The New Orleans Opera Chorus remains a proud, vibrant, great-sounding and, dare we say, a growing group. Much credit for continuity within the Chorus goes to long-time members Mary Bertucci and Karen Kalin. Things look and sound great; it seems the South is on the rise!

New Orleans Opera Presents Das Rheingold

Celebrating its 60th anniversary, New Orleans Opera presented performances of Richard Wagner’s opera Das Rheingold in early March. AGMA-member Wagnerians appearing in Rheingold included Clayton Brainerd (Wotan), Peter Strummer (Albrecht), Peter Kazaras (Loge), Luretta Bybee (Fricka) and Anthony Laciura (Mime). In addition to Das Rheingold, the Company presented the world premier of the opera Pontalba, by Thea Musgrave, to mark the 200th anniversary of the Louisiana Purchase. Productions of Cavalleria Rusticana and I Pagliacci are planned for April.

The financial pinch felt by many companies this year affected plans in New Orleans, forcing the company to cut the number of productions from four to three. However, with optimistic resolve, the company plans a revitalized schedule for the future.

The company plans to return to four productions next season with productions of La Traviata, Les Contes d’Hoffman, Jenufa, and The Merry Widow. In 2005-2006, productions of Otello, Le Nozze di Figaro, Siegfried, and Madama Butterfly are planned; and the 2006-2007 season will bring Aida, Die Fledermaus, Don Pasquale, and Götterdämmerung.
SAN FRANCISCO

By Nora Heiber, San Francisco Area Representative

AGMA is Fighting for Serious Improvements in the Bay Area

With the recent completion of one contract, the ongoing negotiations of two others, and the preparation for a fourth, there is certainly much going on in the Bay Area.

On November 24, 2003, San Francisco Ballet negotiations came to a successful completion with a unanimous shop vote accepting the contract. The joint efforts of an incredibly dedicated and focused negotiating committee, the unified support and attendance of the entire company, and the wise financial strategies of AGMA's Director of Legal Affairs, Linda Bartlett, had much to do with the ability to secure solid percentage increases in all financial areas and significantly improve working conditions for our members. The improvements include lower eligibility requirements for severance and exit pay; a 20% increase in penalty and free day rates; a 10% increase to Apprentice rates; increases in vacation pay and retirement contributions; an eleven-hour rest-span and dinner break provision for Stage Managers; and acceptance of the AGMA National Policy on Smoke and Fog.

Perhaps most significant was the employer's break in the pattern of percentage increases recently given to AFM and other performing arts unions which had been a 3% increase each year for three years. Their final offer (3%, 4%, and 4.25% increases to minimum weekly compensation and overtime rates) was made after AGMA made it clear that the union was serious about lessening the economic gap between AGMA members and those of other performing arts unions. Corps de ballet member Garen Scribner writes, "Participating in the negotiations was especially rewarding because I was able to witness and involve myself in the process that gained us so many benefits we can appreciate together. This being my first year in the company, it was great to see how AGMA and the company work so well together to achieve their goals." Along those lines acknowledgement is owed to Federal Mediator, Joel Schaffer, who gave up part of his Thanksgiving holiday to assist us in the successful completion of these negotiations, and sufficient thanks can never be given to the exceptional negotiating committee; Garrett Anderson, Ticia Baratta, Peter Brandenhoff, Megan Low, Steven Norman, James Sofranko, Catherine Winfield, and Courtney Wright, who offers the following comment: "I learned so much about myself, how to be more assertive, how important our rights are, and how the Union can make a difference in our contract."

San Francisco Opera negotiations are ongoing as AGMA’s National Executive Director, Alan Gordon, continues to offer his leadership in an exceedingly difficult and contentious process. After over a year of negotiations, the company has offered a financial proposal of two years of frozen wages and a 1% increase in the third year. They have also threatened to remove tenure and health benefits for dancers. The negotia-

Ballet San Jose dancers, left to right, front row: Christina Hall, Patricia Perez, Ramon Moreno, Travis Walker, Erena Ishii, Tiffany Glann, Hao Bo, Shingo Yoshimoto, Maria Jacobs; second row: Alex Lapshin, Karen Gabay, Willi Anderson, Michael Doerner, Beth Ann Namey, Le Mai Linh, Stephanie Dalle; back row: James Strong, Alexsandra Mejjer, Catharine Grow, Zuri Goldman, Dalila Rawson, and Peter Hershey.

tion process will commence the week of April 12th with the hopes of coming to some kind of amicable resolution in spite of tremendous obstacles.

With each new negotiation an increasing fervor has been demonstrated on the part of AGMA membership and leadership to obtain equal compensation and working conditions for our members and those of fellow performing arts unions. Although some managements are willing to acknowledge the historical financial discrepancy between our members' rates and those of other unions, some have been unwilling to make any serious movement toward change.

One such management is the San Francisco Symphony. The Guild has spent the past three years working on a conflict resolution plan in the hopes of improving the relationship after the extremely adversarial negotiations in the Spring of 2001, stemming, in part, from AGMA's assertion that the chorus deserved the same compensation as members of the Symphony orchestra.

In contrast, AGMA has been able to work closely with Ballet San Jose Silicon Valley to address difficult financial obstacles currently facing the company. With the assistance of a committed negotiating committee, a brave new CEO, Charles Hart, and a devoted and supportive Artistic Director, Dennis Nahat, a one-year contract that assists the company in weathering its difficulties, while offering dancers a 5% increase to minimum rehearsal compensation and a 10% increase to performance pay, was secured. Unfortunately, despite our efforts, it was impossible to arrive at a solution that did not include lessening the dancer guarantee. To those AGMA dancers who were affected the most by this unavoidable outcome, please do not hesitate to call for assistance.

These dramatic results are evidence that AGMA has begun the new year by asserting a very strong presence in the Bay Area.
Sweeney Advocates Strength Through Cooperation

By Tim Jerome, AGMA First Vice President

Baz Luhrmann’s production of Puccini’s La Bohème recently concluded a two-month run at Ahmanson Theatre in Los Angeles under the new “crossover production” AGMA-Actors’ Equity Association contract.

During my time with the production, I was fortunate to receive an invitation from John Connolly, President of AFTRA, to meet the President of AFL-CIO, John Sweeney, at a private reception at John Connolly’s home near the Hollywood Bowl. It was an honor to meet the person who, for so long, has spoken for working Americans in the halls of government, the media, and at the bargaining tables of many of our most powerful employers.

I asked President Sweeney for his views respecting artists and the arts in America. He indicated the AFL-CIO’s position in the following statement:

“Artists share common cause with all working people respecting freedom and fair pay. American union artists must continue to stand together to protect wages and working conditions; and all working people must be vigilant to guard against the erosion of our constitutional freedoms from which all American art is born.”

As artists, we don’t always recognize or acknowledge our connection to other “wage-earners.” Because our artistry makes us each professionally unique, not fungible, we can be flattered into thinking of ourselves as belonging to a special employee class — not subject to the garden-variety of employer abuses that are generally addressed by collective bargaining. On closer inspection, of course, we discover that we are just as vulnerable as any other sector of the labor force, perhaps more so. Periodically, we must flex our collective muscles to show that we will not be taken advantage of, that we deserve—and have the right to demand—a living wage, safe and relatively comfortable working conditions, and sufficient respect from our employers to allow us to maintain a healthy sense of self-worth.

So when legislative policies affect us adversely — as when management lobbyists are writing the laws — it is important to remember that there is an organization like the AFL-CIO with a leader like President Sweeney who can and will take up our cause, mobilizing the largest labor consortium in the country, to battle for our interests right to the top, prepared to stay the course until we prevail.

Actors’ Fund Benefit

Kitty Carlisle Hart (Metropolitan Opera’s legendary Prince Orlofsky) hosted a cocktail party for members of The Actors’ Fund’s In The Spotlight program, where they enjoyed a performance by rising opera star and AGMA Board of Governors member Frances Ginsberg—who talked about the resources available to AGMA members through the AGMA Emergency Relief Fund’s administrative networking with the Phyllis Newman Women’s Health Initiative.

Washington Concert Opera

Backstage at the Washington Concert Opera’s performance of Roberto Devereux, AGMA Mid-Atlantic Representative Eleni Kallas and Elizabeth Bishop who sang the role of Sara.
AGMA Salutes Actors' Equity on its 90th Anniversary

By Linda Mays, AGMA President

Left to right, left photo: AFM Local 802 President David Lennon, AGMA President Linda Mays, Actors’ Equity Association (AEA) Executive Director Alan Eisenberg, and AGMA Executive Director Alan Gordon. Center photo: AEA President Patrick Quinn, Linda Mays and Alan Gordon. Right photo: Linda Mays, Alan Gordon, and AGMA Board of Governors member and Equity Delegate from Aida Krisha Marcano.

AGMA congratulates Actors’ Equity Association on the occasion of its 90th anniversary. Equity and AGMA are partners in representing performers in several "crossover productions" and have established an ongoing jurisdictional understanding designed to eliminate years of friction between the two unions. In the same spirit of inter-union cooperation, AGMA and the other unions of the Coalition of Broadway Unions and Guilds (COBUG) formally support the British Musicians’ Union’s opposition to the use of a computer-generated virtual orchestra and/or similar devices threatening to replace live musicians. We all understand that the replacement of live musicians in one venue threatens all live music. Last summer AGMA members Marilyn Horne and Deborah Voigt provided a dramatic example of entertainment union solidarity when they resigned as Trustees of the Board of the Opera Company of Brooklyn in protest of the company’s impending use of a virtual orchestra.

Please inform AGMA if you become aware of any threat to the traditional use of live performers.

News From the National Dance Executive

By Deborah Alton, National Dance Executive and Staff Counsel

This has been a challenging year for the performing arts. Not for profit organizations in general have suffered from the financial crunch but we are pleased to report that in spite of the difficult financial climate, we have successfully negotiated several dance contracts within the past year and have made significant monetary gains and achieved even better working conditions for our dancers in each of these companies.

Among the companies that we have recently renewed contracts with are the San Francisco Ballet, Pennsylvania Ballet, Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre, the Joffrey Ballet of Chicago, Atlanta Ballet, and the Boston Ballet. We have achieved an average of 12% increases in base salaries over three-year periods, increased the guaranteed number of work weeks by three to six weeks in almost every contract; and increased exit/severance pay, per diem rates, overtime rates and performance fees. We have also improved the health and retirement benefits, added more protective working conditions, and improved the touring conditions.

Some negotiations have been more difficult than others, but what has been consistent throughout all of them is the hard work, dedication and commitment of our delegates and negotiating committees. Without exception, they have identified and articulated the issues that are most critical to the well-being of the dancers in their respective companies and have proposed practical solutions. They have put the interests of the whole above those of the individual and have asserted their positions thoughtfully, reasonably, with strength and with unity. We are grateful to them all and congratulate everyone on jobs well done!

We are confident that these recent successes indicate a positive outlook for the performing arts industry and for dance in particular. This past year I have visited several of our dance companies and have attended many rehearsals and performances. The companies are presenting daring new works by up-and-coming choreographers and restaging the classics in fresh and innovative ways. The technical and artistic level of our artists has never been higher.

Ticket sales are on the rise again, and audiences are returning to the theaters. A study cited in a recent Backstage article concluded that dance is a major economic contributor to a community, not only directly but as a “significant creative force, a catalyst for economic growth and a critical component of a community’s cultural identity.” All of these factors come together to forecast a bright, creative and exciting new era for dance. So it is a great pleasure and privilege to report to you that we are emerging from a difficult time in the industry and are coming back even stronger. We wish all of our artists continued success and a wonderful summer!
New Southern California Area Representative

Left to right: Mid-Atlantic Representative Eleni Kallas, Southern California Area Representative Beth Millman, Director of Legal Affairs Linda Bartlett, and Dance Executive and Counsel Deborah Allton.

Southern California Area Representative Beth Millman and AGMA President Linda Mays

AGMA is very pleased to announce the selection of a new Southern California Area Representative, Beth Millman. Beth, who began working for AGMA on March 20th, is a Los Angeles-based attorney who has previously worked for IATSE, SAG and AFTRA.

She has extensive experience in representing and assisting union members and in contract enforcement and interpretation. Initially, she will be working with Ian White-Thomson and the Los Angeles Opera negotiating committee on the renegotiation of that contract and will assist Linda Bartlett with the renegotiation of the Opera Pacific and San Diego Opera contracts.

Over the next few weeks, meetings will be scheduled throughout the Southern California Area so AGMA members have a chance to meet Beth and talk with her about their concerns and issues. Beth can be reached directly at (323) 819-2911, or at AGMALosAngeles@aol.com

Classical Singer Convention

AGMA has been asked to participate in the first Classical Singer magazine convention, to be held in Hartford, Connecticut, on May 28, 29, and 30, 2004. The AGMA presentation will take place at 1:00 p.m. on Saturday, May 29th. For additional convention information go directly to the Classical Singer website at www.classicalsinger.com

In Memoriam

Lila Zali

AGMA Plan B Signatories*

| Ascension Music                      | Florida Grand Opera                   | New York Grand Opera            |
| Baltimore Opera Company             | Joffrey Ballet of Chicago              | Opera Pacific                    |
| Boston Lyric Opera                  | Houston Grand Opera                   | Opera Theatre of St. Louis       |
| Carnegie Hall (Sail Away)           | The Kaye Playhouse at Hunter College  | Philharmonic Orchestra of New Jersey |
| Central City Opera                  | Los Angeles Opera                     | Pittsburgh Opera                |
| Chautauqua Opera                    | Lyric Opera of Chicago                 | Portland Opera                  |
| Chicago Park District               | Lyric Opera of Kansas City             | San Diego Opera Company         |
| (Grant Park)                        | Melodious Accord                       | San Francisco Opera             |
| Cincinnati Opera                    | Michigan Opera Theatre                 | Seattle Opera                   |
| City Center 55th Street             | Music Before 1800                      | Tri-Cities Opera                |
| Classic Stage Company               | Musica Sacra                           | The Washington Opera            |
| Henry Street Settlement             | New York City Opera                    | Western Opera Theater           |
| The Dallas Opera                    | New York Concert Singers, Inc.         |                               |

*See page 19
CONTACT LIST OF ASSISTANCE, MEMBER-ONLY SERVICES, AND DISCOUNTS

AGMA Emergency Relief Fund
The AGMA Emergency Relief Fund provides emergency assistance to AGMA members. To make a donation or for more information, contact Susan Davison at:
AGMA Emergency Relief Fund
1430 Broadway, 14th Floor
New York, NY 10018; or
Telephone: 1-800-543-AGMA (2462)
E-mail: susan@musicalartists.org

If you are in need, call an intake worker at The Actors’ Fund, which administers the AGMA Emergency Relief Fund:
East coast: 212-221-7300 or 1-800-221-7303
Midwest: 312-372-0989 or 1-800-221-7303
West coast: 323-933-9244 or 1-800-221-7303

AGMA Retirement and Health
For assistance with AGMA Health Plan A and B, AGMA Pension Plan, and AGMA Retirement Plan, contact AGMA Retirement and Health at:
Address: 1841 Broadway, Suite 507
New York, NY 10023-7649
Telephone: 212-765-3664
E-mail: agmaretirement_health@yahoo.com
For assistance with AGMA Health Plan B, contact Administrative Services Only at 1-877-999-3555, ext. 5522

The Actors’ Fund — General Services
For more information, please contact:
In the New York Area, call 212-221-7300;
E-mail: lseligson@actorsfund.org
In the Chicago Area, call 312-372-0989;
E-mail: dtowne@actorsfund.org
In the Los Angeles Area, call 323-933-9244;
E-mail: intakela@actorsfund.org
Website: www.actorsfund.org

The Actors’ Fund — The Actors’ Work Program
For employment and training information and services, contact:
In the New York Area, call 212-354-5480;
E-mail: blevinso@actorsfund.org
In the Chicago Area, call 312-372-0989;
E-mail: dtowne@actorsfund.org
In the Los Angeles Area, call 323-933-9244, ext. 50;
E-mail: ltrout@actorsfund.org
Website: www.actorsfund.org/actors/human/work.html

Artists’ Health Insurance Resource Center — The Actors’ Fund
This resource offers comprehensive health insurance information. Find out information from their website, at www.ahirc.org. E-mail them at: AHIRC@actorsfund.org. Or send your inquiries by mail to: The Actors’ Fund, National Headquarters, 729 Seventh Avenue, 10th Floor, New York, NY 10019. If you need to speak with someone, call The Actors’ Fund in New York at: 212-221-7300, ext. 165, or in Los Angeles at 323-933-9244, ext. 32.

TEIGIT (The Entertainment Industry Group Insurance Trust)
TEIGIT administers health insurance plans for members of participating associations in the arts and entertainment industry. To find out if you are eligible, to enroll, or to have your questions answered:

Telephone: 212-758-5675; or
Toll-free: 1-800-886-7504
Fax: 212-888-4916
Website: www.teigit.com
E-mail: teigit@teigit.com

Union Privilege
Union Privilege, created by the AFL-CIO in 1986, takes advantage of the collective buying power of large numbers of union members to provide you and your families with valuable consumer benefits. Contact them at:
Address: 1125 15th Street, NW, Suite 300
Washington, DC 20005
Toll-free Union Plus Benefits Number: 1-800-452-9425
Telephone: 202-293-5330
Fax: 202-293-5311
Website: www.unionplus.org

The Conrad Cantzen Shoe Fund
Conrad Cantzen left money to create a fund to help out-of-work actors get shoes for auditions. One can get reimbursed for up to $40.00 for shoes. Contact the Actors’ Fund for more information (see The Actors’ Fund — General Services, left column).

Career Transition for Dancers
The Career Transition for Dancers (CTFD) was established to give dancers the opportunity to obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for new careers after dance. Nationwide and local assistance includes career counseling and reference materials, scholarship aid, peer support and mentoring programs.
Website: www.careertransition.org
Toll-free Career Line: 1-800-581-CTFD (2833) — nationwide career-counseling and referrals for dancers outside of NYC and LA

CTFD office in New York
The Caroline & Theodore Newhouse Center for Dancers
165 West 46th Street, Suite 701
The Actors’ Equity Building
New York, NY 10036-2501
Phone: 212-764-0172
Fax: 212-764-0343
E-mail: info@careertransition.org

CTFD office in Los Angeles
5757 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 902
Los Angeles, CA 90036-3600
Phone: 323-549-6660
Fax: 323-549-6810
E-mail: info-la@careertransition.org

Actors Federal Credit Union
Actors Federal Credit Union is a full-service non-profit financial institution serving the entertainment community. Credit union member benefits include more than 140 ATM’s in the NY metropolitan area as well as standard banking services, often at lower cost. Main office: 165 West 46th Street, 14th Floor
New York, NY 10036
Phone: 212-869-8926
Website: www.actorsfcu.com
E-mail: mservices@actorsfcu.net
AGMA MEMBERS ARE ELIGIBLE FOR THE ACTORS’ WORK PROGRAM (AWP)

Take advantage of FREE programs for your personal and professional development

For a:
- Survival Job
- Sideline Job
- Parallel Career
- Second Career

services are available by e-mail/phone/fax/regular mail.

Attend an orientation in New York City:
Orientation takes place every Monday except major holidays, at 729 Seventh Avenue (between 48th and 49th Streets), on the 11th floor. Orientation begins promptly at 12 p.m. and ends at 2:30 p.m. Please plan to be present for the entire orientation. No reservation or pre-registration is necessary — just show up. If you need to speak to a representative in advance, the New York AWP office phone number is (212) 354-5480.

Attend an orientation in Los Angeles:
Orientation takes place every other Monday except major holidays, at 5757 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 400. Call the Los Angeles office at (323) 933-9244, x50, or e-mail ltrotter@actorsfund.org to find out which Monday! Orientation begins promptly at 10 a.m. and ends at 12 p.m. Please plan to be present for the entire orientation. No reservation or pre-registration is necessary.

If you cannot attend an in-person orientation:
Call the Actors’ Work Program at the Actors’ Fund national headquarters in New York at (212) 354-5480 for assistance.

THE ACTORS’ WORK PROGRAM UPCOMING EVENTS IN NEW YORK

These events are open to AGMA members in good standing. Have your current AGMA membership card with you.

All programs will meet at:
- Actors’ Equity Building
- 165 West 46th Street
- Council Room, 14th Floor

Wednesday, May 12, 2004, from 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.
The World of Arts in Education — Hear from AWP members doing rewarding work as teaching artists and enhancing the learning experiences of New York area students through a variety of performing and visual arts techniques and activities.

Wednesday, June 16, 2004, from 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.
Healing Careers — Drama, Dance, and Music Therapy, Massage Therapy, Personal Training, Social Work, Psychotherapy, and Speech Therapy are some of the healing occupations that build on the mind-body connections developed by entertainment professionals. Come hear from AWP members who have pursued education and training to develop therapeutic sideline and second careers.

Wednesday, July 14, 2004, from 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.
Sideline and Parallel Careers for the Entertainment Industry Professional — Hear from your peers who have developed satisfying work to complement their industry experience in such fields as arts in education, real estate sales, graphic design, training, and administrative support.

For additional information, visit the AWP website at:
www.actorsfund.org/actors/human/work.html

All paid-up AGMA members are eligible for membership in the Actors’ Work Program. Take advantage of this free and ongoing member benefit.
JAMES MORRIS AND SUSAN QUITTMeyer
ABOUT AGMA HEALTH FUND PLAN B*

Are you one of the many AGMA Soloists who has not claimed your money in your AGMA Health Fund Plan B account? You have earned this money. Do not let the window of availability run out for you to claim it.

We basically ignored the first mailings about this important AGMA benefit. We were traveling, we were busy, and we assumed that AGMA Plan B wasn’t something that would benefit us. We were very wrong!! If the AGMA President hadn’t warned us that we were about to lose a “pot of gold,” we would have wasted a lot of money that was very helpful to our family in terms of our medical expenses.

The newest benefit is the reimbursement of eligible over-the-counter drugs, and you can submit receipts dating back to January 1, 2004. There are so many ways to utilize this money! You can use it for medical bills, prescriptions, mental health issues, etc. We use the money from our Plan B account to help pay for our medical insurance premiums.

Since most of us AGMA Soloists pay enormous amounts of money for our own medical expenses, Plan B is a way to help defray some of these costs. Don’t lose this benefit. Use your account.

We urge every eligible member to use your account!

Call today: Administrative Services Only office (ASO) at 1 (877) 999-3555, x5522.
Find out if you have an account.
Find out what your balance is.
Find out if any portion of your account is at risk of forfeiture (there is a three-year window).
Does the AGMA Health Fund Plan B office have your correct contact information?
Does the AGMA National Office have your correct contact information?
Does the AGMA Retirement and Health Fund office have your correct contact information?

As AGMA Soloists, it is important that we support advocacy for continuing and expanded AGMA Health Fund Plan B coverage. Our AGMA negotiators can present a much stronger proposal when high usage of the benefit is readily demonstrable to an employer who may not yet subscribe to Plan B, or an employer who needs a positive demonstration in order to agree to increase contributions on your behalf in a contract re-negotiation. Your usage of Plan B validates their advocacy.

Join us in networking with our colleagues to maintain this amazing AGMA benefit.

OVER-THE-COUNTER (OTC) DRUG EXPENSES ARE NOW REIMBURSEMENTS THROUGH YOUR AGMA HEALTH FUND PLAN B* ACCOUNT

By Linda Mays, AGMA President

Due to recent Treasury Department and IRS rulings, the Trustees of the AGMA Health Fund voted on February 9, 2004, to amend Plan B effective January 1, 2004, to include reimbursement for over-the-counter drugs, as is now permitted by law. Over-the-counter (OTC) drugs such as antacids, allergy medicine, pain relievers, cold medicines and other similar items can now be paid for through health care reimbursement accounts. However, not all OTC expenses are reimbursable:

—Drugs intended for the “diagnosis, cure, mitigation, treatment, or prevention of disease, or for the purpose of affecting any structure or function of the body” ARE reimbursable.

—Vitamins and other dietary or nutritional supplements that are designed merely to maintain the general good health of a person ARE NOT reimbursable.

—In addition, other OTC items that are by nature cosmetic ARE NOT reimbursable.

As with standard flexible spending account claims, the AGMA Health Fund Plan B office will require claims to be properly substantiated. Claims must be from an independent third party (e.g., the store or pharmacy) and include:

—Date of purchase,
—Cost of the drug, and
—The name of the drug. (For example, Robitussin DX, Claritin, Tylenol, or other drug names must be on the receipt.)

When purchasing an over-the-counter drug for which you will be requesting reimbursement, be sure that the provider can give you an itemized receipt for submission to the Plan B office. A receipt that does not indicate the name of the OTC drug purchased by the participant will most likely be rejected.

Submit your claims! It is a very simple process. Access the ASO website at www.asonet.com to look up your account balance and contributions. Download the Plan B claim form from the AGMA website. Enter the AGMA website at www.musicalartists.org. Click on Important News and then click on the Plan B claim form (pdf file). Call the Administrative Services Only (ASO) office at 1 (877) 999-3555, x5522, for assistance with AGMA Health Fund Plan B benefits.

AGMA Health Fund Plan B is a medical reimbursement benefit, funded by AGMA employer contributions directed by provisions of the individual collective bargaining agreements with the AGMA signatories listed on page 16. The funds in your account can be used to reimburse you for a wide variety of qualifying expenses (incurred in any country) including primary and secondary health care premiums, deductibles, and co-payments as well as treatments and medications not normally covered by health insurance policies.
Fifty Years Ago...
By Linda Mays, AGMA President

For some of our members, fifty years ago was "just yesterday." And for others, fifty years ago is ancient history.

Fifty years ago, Charlie Anthony, né Calogero Antonio Caruso, made his Metropolitan Opera debut as the Simpleton in Boris Godunov at the "Old Met" at 39th and Broadway.

Fifty years later, during the intermission of the March 6th, 2004, performance of Tosca — Mr. Anthony's 2,882nd Metropolitan Opera performance — Met General Manager Joseph Volpe led the audience, Charlie's 39th and Broadway. The Empire Theatre was home to the original 1905 productions of Peter Pan and Life With Father, and hosted the Barrymores, Sarah Bernhardt, Lillian Gish, Gertrude Lawrence, John Gielgud, Ethel Waters, Judith Anderson, Julie Harris, Lunt and Fontanne — all of the great dramatic artists of the era.

Fifty years ago, the "Old Met" was across the street from the Empire Theatre, AGMA's current home, and Charlie Anthony and other AGMA members were making operatic history. Meanwhile, the Met had been an AGMA signatory for little more than a decade.

Fifty years ago, a group of AGMA Dancers were performing at 39th and Broadway (the "Old Met"), making history and forming friendships that spurred a fifty-year reunion at the Metropolitan Opera this past fall (see photo left). Elissa Fuchs Minet was at the Met in the early 1940's when AGMA (formed in 1936) first represented the bargaining unit and negotiated the first AGMA contract. Elissa was also the first dancer to be elected to the AGMA Board of Governors.

Charlie Anthony's fifty-year AGMA anniversary, a fifty-year AGMA Dancer reunion, and the inspiring spirit of the Empire Theatre are causes for celebration.