AGMAZINE

Official Publication of the American Guild of Musical Artists
A Branch of the Associated Actors and Artistes of America • Affiliated with the AFL-CIO

October 2004 | Volume 58, Number 3

Executive Director's Report

By Alan S. Gordon

The State of the Union

In 2001, after working for AGMA for a year, I thought that it might be a worthwhile idea to write an annual report to our Board of Governors describing the accomplishments of the preceding year and commenting on the state of our union. I've just sent my fourth such annual report to the Board and have included an abridged version of it here for the entire membership.

In the last year, AGMA's membership has continued to grow, our services to that membership continue to improve; and we continue to expand our jurisdiction and our interaction with the talent-union community.

Our collective bargaining negotiations consistently improve the professional and financial rewards deserved by our members; our delegate training program is in operation and available to any interested AGMA Area; we are on the verge of promulgating a new Code of Professional Conduct for Agents representing our members; the administration of our Health and Retirement Plans has emerged from its dismal past and is now being modernized; we've expanded our defense of members' interests and rights through aggressive, pro-active litigation; and the union is in excellent financial, administrative and operational shape.

Looking backward, it's easy for me to identify three very satisfying accomplishments of the past year: the employment of a new Southern California Area Representative, the hiring of a new Northwest Area Representative, and a start to the reclamation of our media release jurisdiction at the Metropolitan Opera and San Francisco Opera.

In March, we hired Beth Millman, a Los Angeles-based attorney, to serve as our new Southern California Area Representative. Beth, who previously worked for IATSE, AFTRA and SAG, quickly found wide acceptance among the local leadership and membership. An apparently tireless and thoroughly energetic employee, Beth quickly involved herself in renegotiations of the LA Opera and Opera Pacific contracts, and has already met with members and officers throughout the Southern California Area.

Working with Northwest Area chair George Scott and the local leadership in the Northwest Area, we have selected a new Northwest Area Representative, Martha Schmidt. Martha, a Seattle-based attorney, has an extensive background in both union matters and in organizing. She began work as of October 4.

Another satisfying accomplishment was the demonstration of strong support from our members at the Met (and also at the San Francisco Opera) who have now asked us to take back from AFTRA the jurisdiction to renegotiate their compensation for audio, video, and sound recording releases of their work product. Despite our

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From the President Linda Mays

AGMA does not endorse political candidates or political parties. However, we do urge our membership to VOTE. The upcoming national election is of obvious importance to all of us. Don't underestimate your power and responsibility to influence government on federal, state and city levels.

AGMA's membership in the Department for Professional Employees (DPE) branch of the AFL-CIO provides formal national and global political advocacy and protection of union interests. We also hold membership in local Central Labor Councils in cities where our members perform and where we negotiate on behalf of our members. Federal, state, and local politicians are either a help or hindrance during difficult contract negotiations. Don't take your union rights for granted. Choose your politicians wisely.

On those occasions when AGMA formally engages in political advocacy, the union does so in a coalition of entertainment unions to specifically advocate legislation directly targeting benefits and protection for members. Our members often mobilize to make a union "point" and lobby local politicians to vote in favor of union positions.

You will read in this issue about two successful projects that affect our members and our industry (see Manhattan Plaza article on page 14 and COBRA article on page 24). If housing and health insurance protection for union members are priorities for a politician, chances are **that** politician should be a priority for you.

Regulations regarding the right to organize, multi-employer pension plans, the power and philosophy of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), subsidized housing, college tuition assistance, health care, and your safety and security are issues that are vital to you and your loved ones. They are also issues that are in the hands of the politicians you vote into office.

Available online is a printable voter registration form which is accepted in almost all states (except North Dakota, where they have no voter registration; Wyoming and New Hampshire). Visit the http://www.eac.gov/register_vote_faq.asp website and follow the instructions for your state.

Encourage everyone you know to:

1. Register
2. Become acquainted with the issues, and
3. VOTE!!

State of the Union *(continued from page 1)*

previous successful reclamation of this jurisdiction at all other AGMA companies, the Met and San Francisco Opera presented a more difficult legal problem because AFTRA had long ago entered into collective bargaining agreements directly with both companies and our members at the Met acquired additional pension and health coverage through AFTRA. Recently, however, AFTRA raised the eligibility thresholds for these benefits such that no one working under an AFTRA contract at the Met or San Francisco Opera could ever again become eligible. Once our members asked us to take over this jurisdiction on their behalf, we accordingly advised AFTRA. AFTRA's leadership, in turn, agreed to take a proposal back to its Board to relinquish this jurisdiction to us and we are, of course, prepared to litigate if their Board declines.

Collective Bargaining: Because the negotiation, administration, and enforcement of collective bargaining agreements is our core function, it is the task to which our professional staff devotes most of its time. Despite a relatively "down" economy, our negotiators continue to achieve significant wage increases in most contracts, and meaningful improvement in all contracts.

After a year of difficult and extraordinarily contentious negotiations, we successfully concluded the renegotiation of the San Francisco Opera contract. Despite their extreme financial crisis, which limited the amount of funds available for wage increases, we were nonetheless able to negotiate a host of meaningful contract improvements, including the incorporation of AGMA's National Smoke and Fog policy into the contract, and direct access to San Francisco Opera's Board of Directors. In addition to that contract, we also renegotiated collective bargaining agreements with the Lyric Opera of Chicago, San Francisco Ballet, Pittsburgh Opera, Pennsylvania Ballet, Milwaukee Ballet, Opera Company of Philadelphia, Dallas Opera, Joffrey Ballet of Chicago, Tulsa Ballet, Atlanta Ballet, Washington National Opera, Washington Concert Opera, Philharmonic Orchestra of New Jersey, Musica Sacra, Ballet San Jose, Lyric Opera of Kansas City, Arizona Opera, Santa Fe Opera, Opera Theatre of St. Louis, and Cincinnati Opera.

We have already begun our active preparation for the renegotiation of two of our most significant collective bargaining agreements, those with the Metropolitan Opera and the New York City Ballet. Negotiations have already begun at the Los Angeles Opera, where we have hired the Opera's former Executive Director, Ian White-Thomson, to conduct the negotiations for us. Over the next year we will also renegotiate contracts with the LA Master Chorale, San Diego Opera, Boston Lyric Opera, Opera Pacific, Opera Theatre of St. Louis, Cincinnati Opera, San Francisco Symphony, Ballet Hispanico, Central City Opera, New York Grand Opera, Dance Theatre of Harlem, Alvin Ailey Dance Company, New York Philharmonic, BalletMet Columbus, Boston Ballet, Houston Ballet, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and Western Opera Theater.

Beyond these contract renegotiations, we've also restructured the way in which we represent the New York Area concert singers, such that we can finally begin to address their particular concerns and contracts in an effective manner.

Conferences: 2004 also saw an expanded participation in industry-wide meetings and conferences.

In June, we attended the First National Performing Arts Convention in Pittsburgh, a joint meeting of Opera America, Dance/USA, and Chorus America. In addition to improving our relationship with both AGMA and not-yet-AGMA opera companies, we held the first ever meeting with the executive directors of all principal AGMA ballet companies. That meeting afforded us an opportunity to resolve several ongoing problems in a non-adversarial manner and to meaningfully improve the relationships between our dancers and their employers

We also attended the First Annual Classical Singer Convention, convened by *Classical Singer* Magazine, which gave us an opportunity to let our Pre-AGMA Awareness Committee begin to implement its campaign to interest emerging singers in AGMA at a point early in their careers.

Our participation in that convention made it clear to the Committee that it is possible both to recruit some new singers as members before they secure employment with signatory companies, and to begin to familiarize other young singers with what will eventually become "their" union.

AGMA Retirement Plan and Health Fund: Finally, we have been able to spark the reorganization of the administration of the AGMA Retirement Plan and Health Fund Plans with the employment of a new Administrator, Jackie Dowling. In addition to vastly improving Fund staff efficiency and morale, Dowling has begun to modernize the Plans, create an interactive and useful website, and improve services to participants. Early next year, the Plan will move into new offices in our building at 1430 Broadway, further improving interchange between AGMA and the Plans.

Revenue: Perhaps one of our most pressing challenges in the future will be to find a way to accommodate the ever-increasing costs of litigation, as signatory employers more frequently compel us to resort to arbitration as the only effective way in which to assure the compliance with our negotiated contractual provisions and protections. At a time that most unions representing talent are being forced to raise their dues to cover increased costs, AGMA has adopted a different approach towards accommodating the increased costs of operations and litigation. We try instead to develop as many new sources of revenue as are possible. In that regard, for the period August 2003 — August 2004, we have taken in a total of $310,000 from the visa-processing fee program we created and $180,000 from our jurisdictional agreement with Actors' Equity. Building on those successes, the staff continuously explores new ways in which to cut our expenses and to expand our non-dues income.

(continued on page 9)

2004 Board of Governors Election Results

TOTAL BALLOTS MAILED:	4,909
TOTAL BALLOTS RETURNED:	771
TOTAL INVALID BALLOTS:	25

01 New York Area

Choristers (3 Vacancies)

Robert Maher (2007)	**233**
Charlotte Philley (2007)	***36***
Joseph Turi (2007)	***35***
Other write-in votes	45

Dancers (2 Vacancies)

Thomas Patrick (2007)	**221**
Paul Sackett (2005)	**206**
Write-in votes	1

Soloists (4 Vacancies)

Osceola Davis (2007)	**223**
Frances Ginsberg (2007)	**223**
Peter Kazaras (2007)	**225**
Anita Terzian (2007)	**219**
Write-in votes	11

Stage Managers/Directors/ Choreographers (1 Vacancy)

Jan Holland (2007)	**227**
Write-in votes	5

02 So. California Area

Choristers (2 Vacancies)

Jennifer Wallace (2007)	**79**
Tim Smith (2007)	***17***
Other write-in votes	14

Stage Managers/Directors/ Choreographers (1 Vacancy)

Lisa Kable (2007)	***1***
Other write-in votes	7

03 Chicago Area

Choristers (3 Vacancies)

Chuck Coyl (2007)	**119**
Lawrence Montgomery (2007)	**118**
Lorene Richardson (2007)	**117**
Write-in votes	3

Soloists (2 Vacancies)

Buffy Baggott (2007)	**123**
Christopher Feigum (2006)	**122**

04 San Francisco Area

Choristers (1 Vacancy)

Julianne Booth (2007)	**25**
Daniel Harper	13
Virginia Pluth	16
Carol Schaffer	11
Jere Torkelsen	7

Dancers (1 Vacancy)

Courtney Wright (2006)	***3***
Other write-in votes	4

05 New Orleans Area

All Board positions currently filled

06 Philadelphia Area

Soloists (1 Vacancy)

Sara Blann (2007)	**32**
Write-in votes	1

07 Wash./Baltimore

Choristers (3 vacancies)

Dorothey Bodner (2007)	**85**
Tim Kjer (2007)	**88**
Jennie Ritter (2005)	***29***
Other write-in votes	16

Soloists (1 vacancy)

Laura Zuiderveen (2007)	**88**
Write-in votes	1

08 Pittsburgh Area

All Board positions currently filled

09 New England Area

Choristers (1 Vacancy)

***Jason McStoots* (2007)**	***1***
Other write-in votes	3

10 Texas Area

Dancers (1 Vacancy)

Mireille Hassenboehler (2007)	***1***
Other write-in votes	1

11 Northwest Area

Choristers (1 Vacancy)

George Scott (2007)	**53**
Write-in votes	2

Dancers (1 Vacancy)

Alexandra Dickson (2007)	***15***
Other write-in votes	2

KEY

Bold = Newly elected Governors | Italics = Winners by write-in | Year = Term expiration

2003-2005 National Officers

President: Linda Mays

1st Vice President: Tim Jerome

2nd Vice President: James Odom

3rd Vice President: John Coleman

4th Vice President: Colby Roberts

5th Vice President: Burman Timberlake

Treasurer: Lynn Lundgren

Recording Secretary: Mitchell Sendrowitz

2004-2005 Board of Governors*

01 New York Area

Choristers

Glenn Bater	2006
Karen Grahn	2006
Robert Kuehn	2005
Gregory Lorenz	2005
Robert Maher	2007
Mary Meyers	2005
Louis Perry	2006
Pamela Smith	2006
Joseph Turi	2007
Kenneth Young	2005

Dancers

James Fayette	2006
Stephanie Godino	2006
Gerald Otte	2005
Thomas Patrick	2007
Paul Sackett	2005

Soloists

Jane Bunnell	2005
Luretta Bybee	2006
David Cangelosi	2005
Osceola Davis	2007
Frances Ginsberg	2007
Greer Grimsley	2006
Peter Kazaras	2007
William Ledbetter	2005
LeRoy Lehr	2006
Belinda Oswald	2005
Joel Sorensen	2005
Anita Terzian	2007

Stage Mgrs/Directors/Choreographers

Bruce Donnell	2005
Jan Holland	2007

02 So. California Area

Choristers

Scott Blois	2006
Jonathan Curtsinger	2005
David Schnell	2005
Tim Smith	2007
Jennifer Wallace	2007

Soloists

Michael Gallup	2006

Stage Mgrs/Directors/Choreographers

Lisa Kable	2007

03 Chicago Area

Choristers

Chuck Coyl	2007
Sandra Cross	2005
Richard Livingston	2005
Lawrence Montgomery	2007
Lorene Richardson	2007
Jeanne Scherkenbach	2006
Richard Similio	2006
Susan P. Steele	2005

Dancers

Michael Anderson	2006
Sara Stewart	2005

Soloists

Buffy Baggott	2007
Christopher Feigum	2006

Stage Mgrs/Directors/Choreographers

Margaret Stenger	2005

04 San Francisco Area

Choristers

Julianne Booth	2007
Jay Moorhead	2006
Sally Mouzon	2005

Dancers

Michael Doerner	2006
Courtney Wright	2006

Soloists

Gregory Stapp	2005

05 New Orleans Area

Choristers

Julie Condy	2006

06 Philadelphia Area

Choristers

Evelyn Santiago-Schulz	2005

Soloists

Sara Blann	2007

07 Wash./Baltimore

Choristers

Dorothey Bodner	2007
Tim Kjer	2007
Paul Klingenberg	2005
Jennie Ritter	2005

Dancers

Barbara Stuckey	2005

Soloists

Paul McIlvaine	2006
Laura Zuiderveen	2007

Stage Mgrs/Directors/Choreographers

Cathryn R. Olson	2006

08 Pittsburgh Area

Choristers

Barbara Crigler	2006

09 New England Area

Choristers

Jason McStoots	2007

Dancers

Pollyana Ribeiro	2006

Soloists

Marilyn Bulli	2005

10 Texas Area

Choristers

George Eison	2006

Dancers

Mireille Hassenboehler	2007

11 Northwest Area

Choristers

Maria Leatha	2005
George Scott	2007

Dancers

Alexandra Dickson	2007

*As of the September 20, 2004 Board Meeting.

AGMA Attends *Classical Singer* Magazine's First Annual Classical Singer Convention

By Alan S. Gordon, National Executive Director

AGMA President Linda Mays and Classical Singer Convention Keynote Speaker Carol Vaness

Because AGMA shares with *Classical Singer* Magazine the common goal of protecting the rights and interests of American singers, *Classical Singer* invited us to participate in its First Annual Classical Singer Convention, held in May at the Hartt School of Music, a part of the University of Hartford, in Connecticut. Attended by more than 500 people from thirty-eight states and foreign countries, the Convention brought together singers at all stages in their careers and provided us with a unique opportunity to reach out to hundreds of singers and explain the benefits available to them through union membership in the early stages of their careers. Run as a project of the Pre-AGMA Awareness Committee, chaired by Board of Governors member Osceola Davis, AGMA's presentation was a resounding success.

We told the attendees that, as AGMA views the world, there are only two categories of singers: current AGMA members and future AGMA members. As their careers progress, many emerging professional singers will perform at AGMA signatory American opera companies and will work under AGMA collective bargaining agreements. As current members know, pursuant to federal labor law, each of those contracts require that all artists become, and remain, members of AGMA as a condition of being employed by those opera companies.

Since many 'emerging professionals' attending the Convention were not yet members of AGMA, *Classical Singer* Magazine asked us to talk with them for two reasons: First, because they will someday reach the point in their careers where membership becomes compulsory, we thought it a good idea to introduce them to what will become their union and explain to them what it is that we do for our members. Second, since membership in AGMA is open to all singers at any point in their career, we also thought it important that they know what benefits emerging professionals can obtain from joining AGMA now, even before they debut at a major house.

Because many of our current members have also recently joined, we thought it a good idea to also review some of those matters here in *AGMAzine*.

To help our members, we do what every talent union does: we protect them. We negotiate collective bargaining agreements, i.e. contracts with major opera houses that provide for guaranteed wages, standardized working conditions, rehearsal and overtime pay, regulated work hours, vacation and sick pay, resolution of disputes and protection against abuse. We enforce those contracts on behalf of our members at no cost to them. We protect the legal, civil, and artistic rights of our members wherever they need protection, at no cost to them. We assure that our collective bargaining agreements provide health insurance, pension coverage, and protection against unreasonable working conditions and unsafe work places. We solve problems for our members in every sphere and can help them with these issues even when they are performing at a non-AGMA house. For choristers, our contracts provide for job tenure. For principal artists, our contracts provide for pay-or-play provisions, so that once they are contracted for work, they get paid, even if their contract is terminated. All AGMA contracts provide for absolute equality of workplace opportunity, and members' rights under AGMA contracts are enforced by our staff lawyers and outside counsel — attorneys who comprise the most skilled legal team available at any entertainment union. Under an AGMA contract, Deborah Voigt would not only have been paid, she would have performed, because no AGMA company would risk being subjected to AGMA's aggressive legal attack and resultant damages for having discriminated against her illegally.

As in any entertainment labor union, AGMA's structure includes both a professional staff of employees and a system of internal government of elected officers who are members of the union and who are elected by the members of the union. The Executive Director is the union's chief lawyer and contract negotiator and its administrative executive. He supervises a staff consisting of lawyers and administrators that is available to assist members out of our offices in New York, Philadelphia, Washington DC, Miami, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Seattle. Linda Mays, the union's national president (and one of only three female national union presidents in all of the AFL-CIO unions) is the highest ranking elected official of the union, and presides over the other seven national officers, the seventy-five members of our Board of Governors and all of our local elected officials. Together, the staff and the elected officers provide a network of coverage that has one purpose: to protect members' rights and to secure for them the maximum level of available benefits.

Those who are already members of AGMA take advantage on a daily basis of the resources available to them through union membership; however, we can also provide a substantial level of benefits to singers early in their careers, if they decide to become members even before they are required to

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do so by contract. Some of these benefits include:

AGMA Only Auditions: Most companies that have a contract with AGMA hold special auditions, open only to AGMA members.

TEIGIT: The Entertainment Industry Group Insurance Trust (TEIGIT) offers AGMA members several options for affordable, private health insurance coverage.

Left to right: AGMA President Linda Mays AGMA National Executive Director Alan Gordon, Editor, Classical Singer *Magazine, CJ Williamson*

Union Privilege/Union Plus: The AFL-CIO provides a wide variety of benefits, discounts, consumer services and prescription drug plans that are available only to union members.

Actors' Work Program: AGMA members are eligible to participate in programs for personal and professional development, including sideline jobs while developing their singing careers.

AGMA Emergency Relief Fund: AGMA members who need financial or social services assistance can get immediate and comprehensive help from the AGMA Emergency Relief Fund.

Actors Federal Credit Union: AGMA members are eligible for membership in this not-for-profit banking cooperative which provides low cost credit cards; worker-oriented payment options; prompt, member-friendly banking; mortgage assistance; high returns; and low fees.

Other Benefits: Members get discounted membership in our sister union Actors' Equity, discounts on tickets to events, assistance with legal and contractual matters, and a subscription to the *AGMAzine*.

The value of these benefits was driven home to attendees at the Convention by the stories told by three different singers. The first, a woman from Los Angeles, had joined AGMA early in her career because she had heard about it and the benefits it offered to members. "AGMA literally saved my life", she told attendees. "I was between jobs, and had no health insurance, when I developed diabetes. No health insurance company would consider insuring me. Then I turned to AGMA and learned about TEIGIT. Since health insurance was immediately available to me as an AGMA member through TEIGIT, I could obtain it without regard to my pre-existing condition. It saved my life, let me get healthy, and go on to have a successful career."

The second, a New York City based singer told a similar story. She too had joined AGMA early on in her career, and had no health insurance. While visiting a relative in Long Island, she broke her leg in multiple places. She literally had no money with which to have a cast put on, or to take a cab back to her apartment. One phone call to the AGMA Relief Fund and, by return mail, she received a check for $2,000 to cover her emergency expenses.

A third singer, an accomplished solo artist, had a different tale. She developed breast cancer, treatment for which was covered by her health insurance. While undergoing treatment, however, she couldn't perform. Quickly, she became overwhelmed by unpaid bills, a diminished career, and the emotional consequences that confront cancer survivors. We told her to contact the AGMA Emergency Relief Fund, and her call brought her the full array of the social services, counseling, financial assistance and moral support provided AGMA members through the Actors' Fund of America, which administers the Relief Fund for us, and the other Actors' Fund programs that we co-sponsor, the Woman's Health Initiative and the Actors' Work Program. Her recovery complete and her career back on track, the initiation fee she once paid in installments to AGMA has been repaid hundreds of times over in the value of the benefits her union membership afforded her.

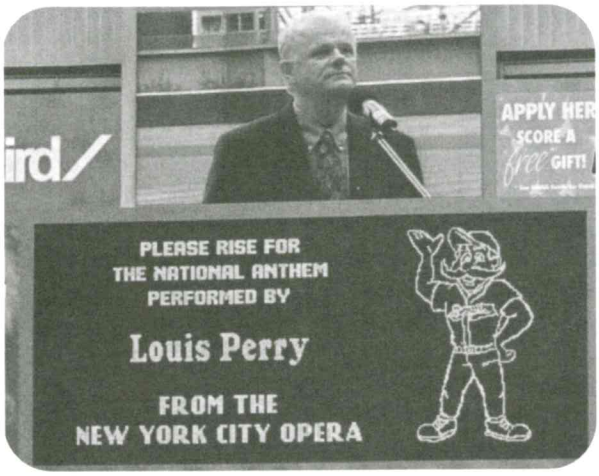
Emerging singers are often surprised to learn that although AGMA is one of the smallest entertainment unions, it now has the reputation of doing an exceptional job of protecting its members' rights and welfare. It has the lowest dues and initiation fees of any talent union, but provides the most extensive and comprehensive net of legal and contract protections and other membership services. It has negotiated beneficial collective bargaining agreements for its members and has always done so without ever having to strike. It is by far the most democratic of entertainment unions and it is the only entertainment union that is truly run entirely by its members.

The movie *Ghostbusters* popularized the catch phrase: "Who you gonna call?" AGMA members know whom to call, whenever they need help. Whether emerging artists join AGMA now, or later in their careers, we look forward to and welcome their membership. Together with the other members of AGMA's staff and its elected leaders, AGMA's National Executive Director and its President are available to assist any member whenever he or she has a question, or needs advice or protection.

Left to right: Managing Director, The Actors' Work Program Kathy Schrier, Kurt Steinhauer, Nathan Resika, Paula Liscio, Paula Hostetter, AGMA President Linda Mays, Pre-AGMA Awareness Committee Chair and Board member Osceola Davis.

Area News

New York



In August, AGMA Board Member and New York City Opera Chorus member Louis Perry performed the national anthem before a Milwaukee Brewers-New York Mets game at Milwaukee's Miller Park.

After his New York cabaret show, "Ungrateful Heart" (Core 'ngrato), AGMA President Linda Mays and Southern California Representative Beth Millman met Dominic Chianese (Uncle Junior of The Sopranos*).*

SAVE THE DATE
New York Area AGMA Membership Meeting
Monday, February 7, 2005

Pittsburgh

Fifty AGMA members (representing Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre dancers and Pittsburgh Opera chorus and production staff) braved the floods and road closures left in the wake of Hurricane Ivan to attend the Pittsburgh Area Meeting held in September 2004. Left to right, ***front row:*** *Pittsburgh Local Area Committee Vice-Chair Carol Wolfe, Maribel Modrono, Cheryl Shenefelt-Bush, Janice Garrone, AGMA Board member Barbara Crigler, David Jennings-Smith, John Johnson, Denise Sheffey-Powell, Area Chair Bill Buchanan, Jeffrey Link;* ***second row:*** *Erin McEachren, Betsy D'Emidio, Veronika Schmidt, Pittsburgh Opera chorus delegate Cindy Pratt, Lilly Abreu, Jeffrey Gross, David Knouse, Arthur Miller, David Murray, John Hastings, Robert Simoni, Pittsburgh Opera chorus delegate Chris Laret, Eric Einhorn, Ed Moore, Sean Donaldson;* ***third row:*** *Lauren Zelt, Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre delegate Laura Nicoll, Kaori Ogasawara, William Fisher, Kellie McCurdy-Ryan;* ***fourth row****: Graham Pontorolo, Steve Hadala, Chris Rendall-Jackson;* ***last row:*** *Area Committee member Barbara McDonough, Amanda Serra, Kori Anthony, Patricia Musick, Pittsburgh Opera production delegate Christine Schott, Julie Barkovich, Rachel Henneberry, Robert Pruitt, and Peter Bianchi.* ***Not pictured:*** *Area Committee member Kathryn Ambrose, Aaron Ingley, Rachel Spataro, Laurie Orth, Sylvia Hollinshead, Hank Alviani, Corey Rieger, and Julia Erickson.*

PHILADELPHIA

By Rebecca Whitlow, Philadelphia Area Co-Chair

*Performers from **The Grand Duchess of Gerolstein**, top to bottom: Karen Blanchard, Abigail Wright, Renée Cantwell, Maila Trazyck, Kate Mallon-Day, Rebecca Siler, and Julie Ann Whitely.*

Pictured above, Liz Braden is surrounded by Opera Company AGMA delegates Christine Nass, Philadelphia Area Co-Chair Evelyn Santiago-Schulz, Renée Cantwell, Robert Phillips, Philadelphia Area Co-Chair Rebecca Whitlow, and Matthew Principe.

*Opera Company of Philadelphia artists from a performance of **Don Carlo** this past spring. Left to right: Philadelphia Area Co-Chair Rebecca Whitlow, Robyn Shapiro, Susan Lance-Polack, Renée Cantwell, and Jessica Kasinski.*

Recently, the Philadelphia Area membership welcomed Elizabeth Braden as our new Chorus Master for Opera Company of Philadelphia. We first met Ms. Braden this past spring when she auditioned by preparing the chorus for OCP's production of *The Grand Duchess of Gerolstein*. She officially took her place as Chorus Master this June and will lead us in the operas *Faust*, *Don Pasquale*, *Aida* and *Die Fledermaus* this season.

NEW ENGLAND

AGMA Board Members Jason McStoots and Marilyn Bulli met with AGMA President Linda Mays to plan an AGMA Northeast Area membership meeting and to discuss other Northeast issues.

State of the Union *(continued from page 3)*

Conclusion: It would be incomplete to report our progress over the past year without extending thanks and recognition to our terrific staff. In four years, our staff has developed from a group of undirected individuals into a cohesive team of hard working and dedicated professionals, focused on the goal of providing exceptional services to the membership.

Nothing that the staff has accomplished in the recent past, however, could have been possible without the continuing and strong support of active and creative leaders and a committed Board of Governors. Now that we have had an opportunity to interact much more closely with other unions, it is all too apparent how many of them are hampered in doing their own core job by unsupportive leaders and a burdensome bureaucracy that stifles creative initiatives. Your willingness to support our own initiatives remains AGMA's ultimate strength.

Washington/Baltimore

By Eleni Kallas, Mid-Atlantic Area Representative

The successful negotiation of two Washington/Baltimore collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) marked the summer of 2004. Unanimous ratification of both the Washington National Opera (WNO) and Washington Concert Opera (WCO) agreements took place at the general membership meeting on August 14 with eighty-five shop members in attendance (see photo below). At the meeting, Tim Kjer was recognized for his outstanding service to W/B Area members as chair of the W/B Area Committee and to all AGMA members nationally for his years of service on the Board of Governors, Administration and Policy Committee, Committee on Committees, Personnel Committee, and numerous negotiating committees. To demonstrate their appreciation of his excellent service, the W/B membership promptly re-elected him to another term on the Area Committee. Vickie Miller, another dedicated leader, was also elected to the Area Committee for a second term.

The Washington/Baltimore negotiating committee

WNO Negotiations: History was made during the WNO negotiations in that they were successfully concluded in just three days! The mutual respect and collaborative spirit demonstrated at the negotiations by the shop's negotiating committee and WNO management served everyone well in concluding the negotiations promptly with improvements that are beneficial to our members and reasonable to the company. Recognition by the company that all AGMA artists need Health Plan B contributions and the step forward to provide Production Staff with pension contributions were key factors to our mutual collaboration. The excellent response by our membership to the negotiation survey also contributed prominently to our ability to demonstrate these needs to management. Improvements to the new three-year WNO CBA include wage increases of 4%, 5% and 5% for Choristers, Corps Dancers and Principal Performing Artists, with Choristers and Corps Dancers gaining Health Plan B contributions of 3% and 5% in the last two years of the agreement. Existing Health Plan B contributions for Principal Performing Artists will increase to $73, $77 and $80 per performance. In addition, Principal Performing Artists' overtime compensation will no longer be credited to over-scale payments and Principal Performing Artists' Free Days will now be posted by Wednesday for the following week. Excluding onstage rehearsals, the maximum length of any rehearsal cannot exceed four hours unless it is the only rehearsal of the day for all artists. Choristers and Corps Dancers now have paid bereavement leave, minimum meal breaks, and fees for educational services specified in the new agreement. Additionally, Corps Dancer Covers will now be paid full rehearsal and performance compensation and receive all the benefits afforded Corps Dancers. The definition of a Dance Captain has been enhanced and WNO has agreed to hire a Dance Captain in each opera in which six or more Corps Dancers are hired, except when an Assistant Choreographer is under contract. There is an increase in the requirement of dance employment per season, and dance audition notices will now include the number of dancers to be hired and the type(s) of shoes required for the audition. Warm-ups within a production will increase from ten to fifteen minutes for both Choristers and Corps Dancers as long as it does not infringe upon the guaranteed half hour for uninterrupted dressing/make-up time. Production Staff will receive compensation increases in the amount of 4%, 4% and 5%, with pension contributions in the second and third years, of the agreement at 3% of their gross income. Existing Health Plan B contributions for Production Staff increased to $75, $80 and $80 per performance for the three years. For the first time, payment for educational services was realized for Production Staff at the rate of an additional 1/6 of the AGMA weeklies, while protecting their Free Day provisions. Other gains for Production Staff include earlier notification of Free Days, a newly established housing allowance, provision of adequate parking at the Takoma rehearsal facility, and a leave of

Shop members at the general membership meeting on August 14.

(continued on page 11)

(continued from page 10)

absence policy that preserves their right of first consideration for rehire status. The AGMA logo and credit will now appear in all WNO programs. Special thanks to our chief negotiator and National Executive Director Alan S. Gordon, the negotiation committee chairperson, Paul Edson, and all those members of the committee who worked so diligently to achieve our goals: Don Schramm, Andrea Dickerson, Laura Krause, Tricia Lepofsky, Vito Pietanza, Teresa Reid, Barbara Stuckey, Cristy Langan, Dorothey Bodner, John Boulanger, Shawnee Ball, Tim Kjer, Cindy Oxberry, and David Prager. (see top photo on previous page)

WCO Negotiations: Right on the heels of the conclusion of negotiations with WNO, the WCO negotiating committee began its work to reach a new agreement. Serving as chief negotiator, I was most fortunate to have a dedicated committee: Stephen Stokes (chair), Bailey Whiteman, Denise Gulley, Grace Gori, Rosemary Fisher, and Lonel Woods. Once again, the shop negotiating committee prioritized the needs of the Artists within the realm of reasonableness for a company that is now firmly back in full operation. Improvements to the new three-year CBA include compensation increases of 4%, 5%, and 5% for all Artists and Staging Staff, limited reimbursement for parking while rehearsing or performing at Lisner Auditorium, clarification of the definition of dress rehearsal, and some break time limitations for rehearsals onstage with orchestra.

The **Wolf Trap Opera** CBA will expire on December 31, 2004. If you are interested in serving on the negotiating committee or have input or concerns for the negotiations, please contact me directly at AGMADC@comcast.net or (301) 869-8266.

CHICAGO/MIDWEST

Lyric Opera of Chicago Chorus Raffle Raises $4,160!

Bryn Terfel drew the Grand Prize ticket for Season Tickets to the Lyric Opera's 2004-2005 season, which were donated by Lyric General Director Bill Mason. Rose Guccione, a supplementary chorister at Lyric, won the tickets. Left to right: Sherri Veal, Scott Holmes, Raffle Co-Chair Lynn Lundgren, Bryn Terfel, and Raffle Co-Chair Carolyn Berghoff.

Susan Graham draws the winning ticket for First Prize, a portable DVD player donated by AGMA members Martha Edwards, Scott Holmes, and Carolyn Berghoff. The winner was Tim Bobrowski, father of new AGMA member Sara Bobrowski.

Karita Matilla draws the winning ticket for Second Prize, a $200 gift certificate for Gene and Georgetti's restaurant. Board of Governors member David Cangelosi arranged for the donation. Lyric Opera Chorister Martha Edwards won the prize.

Ildebrando D'Arcangelo and Isabel Bayrakdarian drew the Third and Fourth Prize tickets. Third Prize was two tickets to the Joffrey Ballet Spring Season, courtesy of Ray Vos, and was won by Ewa Kowcz. Fourth Prize was a gift certificate for the Exchequer Restaurant and Pub donated by Jimmy and George Mannos. Board of Governors member Larry Montgomery arranged the donation. Nicole Nienow, daughter of Lyric Opera Choristers Mark Nienow and Claudia Kerski-Nienow won the Fourth Prize. A Bonus Prize, a designer scarf custom knit by Lynn Lundgren, was awarded to James Wognum.

Southern California

By Beth Millman, Southern California Area Representative

Negotiations, Negotiations, Negotiations

It has been seven months since I started as Southern California Area Representative for AGMA and thanks to incredible member support and participation, we are off to a great start!

Negotiations continued in September and October with the Los Angeles Opera and a tentative agreement was reached. A mail ballot will be sent out so that members can vote on the new agreement. Ian White-Thomson, former Los Angeles Opera Executive Director, proved to be an incredible asset to AGMA as our Chief Negotiator and ably lead a dedicated negotiating committee that includes Hally Albers, Natalie Frierson, Scott Blois, Marjorie Curtsinger, Michael Geiger, Lisa Kable, Adrien Raynier, David Schnell, Tim Smith, Renee Sousa, Burman Timberlake and Jennifer Wallace. It has been a long process, but the committee has shown great enthusiasm and willingness to put in the time and hard work necessary to achieve the best level of contractual improvements.

Opera Pacific Negotiating Committee, left to right, first row: AGMA Director of Legal Affairs, Linda Bartlett; Lee Coduti; Southern California Area Representative, Beth Millman; Annette Nicolai; back row: Cindy Smith; Heidi Herzog, Southern California Area Chair, Burman Timberlake

Down in Orange County, negotiations happened at a fast and furious pace the week of August 21 with Opera Pacific. We went back into negotiations on September 17 and negotiations will be continuing. AGMA's Director of Legal Affairs, Linda Bartlett, is the Chief Negotiator and is also ably leading a motivated and dedicated negotiating committee that includes Lee Coduti, Dea Franck, Robyn Frey-Monell, Heidi Herzog, Lisa Marie Lange, Joanie Llaneza, Annette Nicolai, Torb Pedersen, Beth Sari, Cindy Smith and Burman Timberlake. The committee has put in incredible time and effort to make this negotiation as successful as possible for all members who work at Opera Pacific.

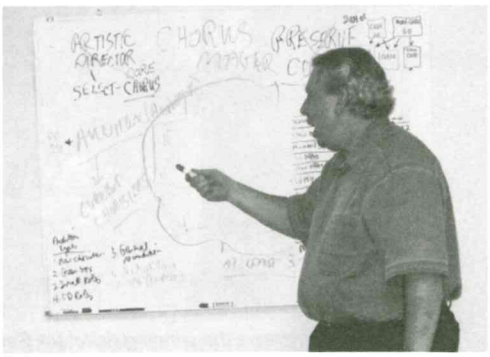
Linda Bartlett also recently concluded negotiations with a terrific committee at the Arizona Opera and a new contract was ratified by the membership. Linda complimented the creative work this committee did in making this contract happen. The negotiating committee included AGMA Steward, John Cleveland; Phoenix Vice-Steward, Bob Altizer; Tucson Vice-Steward, Stan Kruggel; Member-at-Large, Dorothy Hemmo; Secretary/Treasurer, Dave Wolfson; and Committee Members Renee Summers and Jim Rakers.

Arizona Opera Negotiating Committee, left to right: Phoenix Vice Steward Bob Altizer, Tucson Vice Steward Stan Kruggel, Member-at-Large Dorothy Hemmo, Committee member Renee Summers, Chief Negotiator Linda Bartlett, AGMA Steward John Cleveland, Secretary/Treasurer Dave Wolfson, and Committee member Jim Rakers.

At the end of October, negotiations begin with Los Angeles Master Chorale. For those members who wish to provide input, please contact me at AGMALosAngeles@aol.com.

I also want to encourage the San Diego members to get in contact with me. I am planning a trip to San Diego in the fall and would like to meet and begin working with as many members as possible. I want to find out how AGMA can best serve your needs.

Finally, I would like to encourage all members in the Southern California Area to please take the time and thank the negotiating committee members from your shops who have worked so hard on your behalf. These volunteers, like you, have other work commitments, family obligations and "lives," and yet have put aside huge amounts of time and made many sacrifices to serve on their respective committees with the single goal of achieving the best contract possible. I salute them and hope you will join me in showing your appreciation.



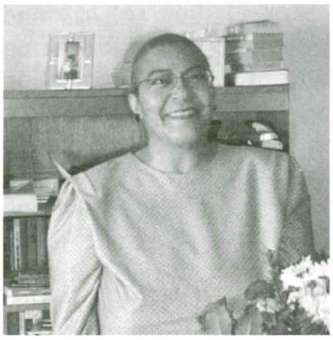
AGMA Steward John Cleveland at work during negotiations for the Arizona Opera.

San Francisco

By Nora Heiber, San Francisco Area Representative

On the heels of completing three contract negotiations, union activity in the Bay Area continues to be energized. On September 10, AGMA's Director of Legal Affairs, Linda Bartlett, joined Area Representative Nora Heiber and the San Francisco Symphony Chorus negotiating committee to begin their contract negotiations.

In an ongoing effort to effectively represent the needs and concerns of our principal artists, AGMA met with San Francisco Opera (SFO) principal artists in one of many meetings that will be held annually for the purpose of offering an open forum as well as implementing the new Solo Relations Committee recently negotiated into the SFO collective bargaining agreement.



After 31 years, San Francisco Symphony Chorister Linda Taylor retired at the end of the 2003-2004 season.

Ms. Heiber and senior dancers and stage managers of the San Francisco Ballet welcomed new dancers to the San Francisco Ballet in a specifically designed union orientation meeting held just before the company's September departure to Athens and London.

We also look forward to welcoming the dancers of Ballet San Jose back to work in October.

San Francisco Symphony Chorus negotiating committee, left to right, back row: San Francisco Area Representative Nora Heiber, Dianne Terp, David Peters, Kevin Gibbs, Sonja Wohlgemuth; front row: AGMA Director of Legal Affairs Linda Bartlett, Jay Moorhead, Brenda Bonhomme. Not present: Maria Meyer and Howard Baltazar.

Erie Mills/OPERA America

By Linda Mays, AGMA President

Congratulations to Erie Mills, renowned soprano and teacher, who has been invited to join the Board of Trustees of OPERA America. This is the first time that a performing artist has been invited to join the OPERA America Board, whose members have traditionally been the general managers and staff of opera companies. A quote from OPERA America's invitation to Erie reads, "We would now like to add a performing artist to the Board to deepen our understanding and service to singers." Erie has already been selected to serve on both the Membership and Artistic Initiatives Committees.

Erie was an AGMA Vice President, Board member, vital Board committee member, and an active proponent of AGMA Health Fund Plan B and soloist issues in the former National Opera Basic Agreement negotiations. Erie's involvement with OPERA America will be a tremendous benefit to both solo artists and opera managements.

AGMA is a member of OPERA America, and for the past several years has participated in OPERA America conferences and the recent groundbreaking National Performing Arts Convention. AGMA's goal of being proactive (instead of reactive) in assuring the future health of our art form is now taken seriously by many organizations that were formerly antagonistic or, at best, ambivalent to AGMA. AGMA has become a respected presence in the arts community.

Manhattan Plaza: "The Miracle on 42nd Street"

By Linda Mays, AGMA President

A dramatic example of the effectiveness of union advocacy in cooperation with responsible politicians is the positive resolution of the many issues that were threatening the affordable housing of our members who reside in entertainment-industry subsidized housing at Manhattan Plaza in New York City. Because our industry has a strong, ongoing New York State AFL-CIO Labor Entertainment Industry Committee, we were poised to challenge new landlords as they considered business decisions that could eventually erode the protections inherent in the initial 1977 Manhattan Plaza arts and entertainment subsidized housing proposal. The successful negotiation and resolution of the outstanding issues has taken eight months of passionate advocacy and ingenuity by union volunteers and union staff to reconcile government regulations, tenant rights and issues, and the integration of the landlord's financial responsibilities in conjunction with a compassionate conscience.

Related Management Company President Jeff Brodsky, U.S. Congressman for the 8th District of New York Jerrold Nadler, Manhattan Plaza Management Policy Advisory Committee Chair and National Director of Policy Actors' Equity, Mary Lou Westerfield, and Manhattan Plaza Tenants Association President Marisa Redanty

AFTRA New York Local President Roberta Reardon, Manhattan Plaza Management Policy Advisory Committee AFTRA Member Mary Ann Konk, and AGMA Life Member William Cason

AGMA is represented on the Manhattan Plaza Management Policy Advisory Committee (MPMPAC) by President Mays and William Cason. William Cason, who lives in the complex, is an AGMA (Soloist) Life Member, a tax accountant, and former AGMA Treasurer.

Mary Lou Westerfield, Chair of MPMPAC and staff member at Actors' Equity Association (AEA), and Marisa Redanty, President of the Manhattan Plaza Tenants Association (MPTA), with the support of city and state elected officials, tenant advocacy groups and the leadership of AGMA, AEA, the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (AFTRA), Screen Actors Guild (SAG), and American Federation of Musicians (AFM) Local 802, led this process to an outstanding conclusion, nicknamed "The Miracle on 42nd Street."

New Northwest Area Representative

AGMA is pleased to announce the selection of a new Northwest Area Representative, Martha Schmidt.

Martha is a Seattle-based lawyer with an extensive background in union affairs and in organizing.

Northwest Area chair George Scott and a committee of Area members, assisted by San Francisco Area Representative Nora Heiber, interviewed numerous candidates and, with further input from National Executive Director Alan S. Gordon and the AGMA Personnel Committee, selected Martha.

Martha holds a BA degree from Vassar College, a Juris Doctorate degree from the University of Wisconsin and a Masters of Laws degree from the University of Washington.

Her employment background includes work as a labor and employment lawyer, in private practice and for the American Federation of Musicians, the International Union of Operating Engineers, and the King County AFL-CIO.

Martha began working for AGMA on October 4 and will be responsible for assisting members throughout the Northwest Area, including those members at the Seattle Opera, Portland Opera and Pacific Northwest Ballet.

Code of Professional Standards for Singers at Religious Institutions

We have been asked to draft a Code of Professional Standards to assist those of our members who perform at churches, synagogues and other religious venues in negotiating their compensation and working conditions. Please send us any suggested provisions, standards, rate information and comments that you think might be appropriate for inclusion in such a Code. Send to AGMANY@aol.com.

Job Security — Does Your Contract Protect You?

By John Hanriot, Southern Area Representative

Congratulations, you've been hired. All your hard work has finally paid off — the years in school, the hours in a practice room and all of those lessons (with how many teachers?). You finally have a real job. Now you can concentrate on learning your scores and performing instead of what had been your job, auditioning.

Congratulations, your first season at The Grand Opera of Wherever has gone really well. The chorus master has watched your work and thinks you are just wonderful; however, as the end of the performing season approaches thoughts turn to next year and the inevitable re-audition. As is the case, with a few exceptions, choristers must re-audition either yearly or every other year to be re-hired.

The problem that exists is that every year your job is up for grabs. The basic agreement with the company says that the reason for re-auditioning is to make sure that performers maintain the standards of the company. That is all well and good, but what do we do if other issues become part of the process?

No one can deny that a company has the right to set the standards and maintain those standards to ensure the artistic health and integrity of the company. Without insisting on the highest possible standards and guarding those standards, how can our art form continue to be viable and relevant surrounded by today's hip-hop culture? But while a company does its job, AGMA must be on the scene to make sure that the rights and jobs of our members are protected. That means that each and every member must be vigilant in watching over the rights of our colleagues. There is no service that the union can provide its members that is more important than job security. It is the one aspect of the union/management relationship that is not affected by economics, and it is arguably the most important section of any collective bargaining agreement.

How do we ensure the job security of our membership? The company insists on the right to maintain their standards, but can we be sure that "standard" is not interchangeable with "taste?" How are "standards" affected when there is a change in the management, or when there is a new chorus master or musical director? Do the "standards" change to reflect the "tastes" of the new leadership? How do we protect the jobs of our members in light of changing ideals?

When auditions are held, the group hearing the auditions for the management usually consists of the chorus master and maybe the artistic administrator and the shop delegates or some other union representative (but usually only as an observer). If a vocal or musical problem is thought to exist, the auditioner is usually given a period of time to correct the problem and allowed to re-audition, but for the same group of judges. AGMA representatives are not allowed any input. The only ones with any say in the final decision are the ones who brought the original complaint. The problem is that this procedure does not allow for an impartial judge. It is important for management to understand that due to the subjective nature of the re-audition process, there must be a way to ensure that the process is fair. There must be assurances that those auditioning have an honest chance of proving that they have corrected any complaint.

In the mid-70's, the Metropolitan Opera Chorus established (with the help of the highly respected labor attorney Herman Grey) a procedure for re-auditioning when a problem (e.g. vocal deterioration) was alleged. This procedure allowed for a member who had a complaint lodged against them to re-audition before a panel of three judges, one from management, one from the union, and one impartial judge chosen from a list of mutually-agreed-upon experts. This process, with some changes, remains in place today and has proven to be fair and equitable for all. The concept of introducing an impartial judge to the re-audition process is imperative for the fair treatment of our members.

It is also important that members be made aware of any problems that are perceived by management as soon as possible. The more time that a member has to fix a "problem," the better the possibility of a favorable outcome. Management should be encouraged to be honest with members and offer suggestions when needed. It is sometimes hard to accept what we don't want to hear, but information is power, and knowing how one's work is received can only serve the performer well.

When contract-negotiation time rolls around, consider that after you have settled on a new agreement the next thing that you may do for the company is to re-audition. We all hope that the loyalty that we show in our dedication to the companies for which we perform is returned to us many fold, but it is important to have assurances built into our agreements. Today's friendly management can be replaced by an unfriendly one tomorrow.

AGMA Retirement Plan and Health Fund is Moving

We are pleased to announce that effective January 1, 2005 the AGMA Retirement Plan and Health Fund office will be located in the same building as AGMA. The new address is:

1430 Broadway, 12th Floor
New York, NY 10018

You may continue to reach us at (212) 765-3664; agmaretirement_health@yahoo.com

First National Performing Arts Convention in Pittsburgh

By Linda Mays, AGMA President

AGMA President Linda Mays with former AGMA Board of Governors member Mary Kay McGarvey, who is also Northeast Regional Governor for the National Opera Association (NOA). AGMA has been invited to participate in NOA's 50th Anniversary which will be held in New York in January 2005.

Pittsburgh Opera General Director and Chairman of the Pittsburgh Arts Alliance, Mark Weinstein; Director — Women's Board Activities Lyric Opera of Chicago, Lisa Bury; and Director of Operatons Lyric Opera of Chicago, Nick Martin.

Dance/USA Executive Director Andrea Snyder and AGMA President Linda Mays

Linda Mays and Alan Gordon attended the First National Performing Arts Convention (OPERA America, Dance/USA, and Chorus America) held in Pittsburgh in early June of this year. While in town, they saw and heard AGMA members in a Pittsburgh Opera performance of *Dead Man Walking*. They also met with Board member Barbara Crigler and Area activists Janice Garrone, Cindy Pratt, and Carol Wolfe to discuss many Area issues, including ways to welcome and assist guest artists and ways to increase soloist involvement in preparing for contract negotiations.

AGMA Pittsburgh Local Area Comitttee, left to right: AGMA Board member Barbara Crigler, Cindy Pratt, AGMA National Executive Director Alan Gordon (in back), AGMA President Linda Mays, Janice Garrone and Carol Wolfe.

IN MEMORIAM

Gabor Andrasy
Homer Avila
Arthur Bell
Ovide Coutu
Robert de Ceunynck*
Annette Daniels
Joseph DiFrances
Gil Gallagher
Nicolai Ghiaurov
Sofia Golovkina*
Marita Napier
Sylvia Olden Lee*
Carlos Orta*
John Person
Argeo Quadri*
Tony Randall*
Leonard Reed*
Daniel Rule*
Arthur Silhan
John Stamford**
Carlton Sterling
Douglas Steppes
Carlton Sterling
Kathleen Sullivan
John Taras*
Yoko Watanabe
Leila Weisholz (Kantro)
Casimir M. Zielinski

*Distinguished individual in a related profession. **AGMA Life Member

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 1-866-263-1185.

The Actors' Fund — General Services

For more information, please contact:

East Coast: 212-221-7300 or 1-800-221-7303
E-mail: lseligson@actorsfund.org
Midwest: 312-372-0989 or 1-800-221-7303
E-mail: dtowne@actorsfund.org
West Coast: 323-933-9244 or 1-800-221-7303
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: ltrotter@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. Obtain 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 throughout the U.S. Credit Union member benefits include more than 150 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 Emergency Relief Fund Audited Financials

The audited AGMA Emergency Relief Fund financials for fiscal years October 1, 2002—September 30, 2003 and October 1, 2001—September 30, 2002 are printed below.

The administration of the AGMA Emergency Relief Fund was officially transferred to the Actors' Fund of America on March 1, 2002. The October 1, 2001—September 30, 2002 audited financials reflect the five (5) months prior to the administration change and the first seven (7) months of the current Actors' Fund administration. The 2003 column reflects the first full year of administration by the Actors' Fund of America.

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

Board of Trustees
AGMA Relief Fund

We have audited the accompanying statements of financial position of the AGMA Relief Fund (the "Fund") as of September 30, 2003 and 2002, and the related statements of activities, and cash flows for the years then ended. These financial statements are the responsibility of the Fund's management. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on our audits.

We conducted our audits in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement. An audit includes examining, on a test basis, evidence supporting the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. An audit also includes assessing the accounting principles used and significant estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall financial statement presentation. We believe that our audits provide a reasonable basis for our opinion.

In our opinion, the financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the AGMA Relief Fund as of September 30, 2003 and 2002 and the changes in its net assets and its cash flows for the years then ended in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

Our audits were made for the purpose of forming an opinion on the basic financial statements taken as a whole.

BUCHBINDER TUNICK & COMPANY LLP

AGMA Relief Fund
Statements of Financial Position
September 30, 2003 and 2002

	2003	2002
Assets:		
Cash and cash equivalents (Note 2)	$185,188	$147,320
Receivables:		
Interest receivable	5,719	5,256
Due from Actors' Fund of America	-	15,837
	5,719	21,093
Prepaid expenses	-	-
Investments, at fair value (Note 2):		
U.S. government and governmental agencies	391,760	421,685
Common stock	205,803	165,481
	597,563	587,166
Total assets	$788,470	$755,579
Liabilities and net assets:		
Accounts payable	$57,530	$40,317
Net assets - unrestricted	730,940	715,262
Total liabilities and net assets	$788,470	$755,579

Statements of Activities
For the years ended September 30, 2003 and 2002

	2003	2002
Revenues:		
Contributions (Note 1):		
Theatre Authority, Inc.	$17,687	$15,860
Corporations and foundations	21,500	9,750
Special events	8,677	1,860
Annual appeal	-	22,082
Other	12,804	3,153
	60,668	52,705
Investment income:		
Interest and dividends	26,635	30,348
Appreciation (depreciation) in fair value of investments	29,413	(67,150)
Gain on sale of investments	731	13,867
	56,779	(22,935)
Total revenues	117,447	29,770
Expenses (Note 5):		
Assistance payments:		
Age/disability assistance	-	11,494
Emergency assistance	-	4,288
Assistance thru Actors' Fund	42,861	19,163

Financials *(continued from page 18)*

	2003	2002
Fund-raising	-	3,405
Salaries, payroll taxes and employee benefits	-	118,983
Professional fees - legal, accounting and investment advisory and custodian fees	16,428	18,313
Administrative expenses	42,292	33,718
Contributions to organizations	188	365
Total expenses	101,769	209,729
Change in net assets	15,678	(179,959)
Net assets:		
Beginning of year	715,262	895,221
End of year - unrestricted	$730,940	$715,262

Statements of Cash Flows

For the years ended September 30, 2003 and 2002

	2003	2002
Cash flows from operating activities:		
Change in net assets	$15,678	$(179,959)
Adjustments to reconcile change in net assets to net cash provided by (used in) operating activities:		
Depreciation	-	-
(Appreciation) depreciation in fair value of investments	(29,413)	67,150
(Gain) on sale of investments	(731)	(13,867)
Changes in operating assets and liabilities:		
Decrease in prepaid expenses and other receivable	-	1,053
(Increase) decrease in interest receivable	(463)	1,336
Decrease (increase) in due from Actors' Fund of America	15,837	(15,837)
Increase (decrease) in accounts payable	17,213	(1,857)
Net cash provided by (used in) operating activities	18,121	(141,981)
Cash flows from investing activities:		
Proceeds from redemption of U.S. government and governmental agency investments	75,005	163,342
(Purchase) of U.S. government and governmental agency investments	(55,258)	-
Proceeds from sale of common stock	-	73,105
(Purchase) of common stock	-	(8,369)
Net cash provided by investing activities	19,747	228,078
Net increase in cash and cash equivalents	37,868	86,097
Cash and cash equivalents, beginning of year	147,320	61,223
Cash and cash equivalents, end of year	$185,188	$147,320

Notes to Financial Statements — September 30, 2003 and 2002

Note 1 - General: The AGMA Relief Fund (the "Fund") was formed by resolution of the American Guild of Musical Artists ("AGMA"), Board of Governors to provide assistance to members who are needy, aged or infirm, or unable to meet their basic financial obligations.

During 2003, the Board of Trustees entered into an agreement with the Actors' Fund of America to administer benefits of the Fund.

Funding:Theatre Authority, Inc. and Theatre Authority West, Inc. are non-profit charitable organizations administering and regulating the free appearances of performers and providing assistance to members of the theatrical community. Theatre Authority, Inc. and Theatre Authority West, Inc. contribute to the emergency relief trust funds of the performing unions, to be used for member services and financial assistance to benefit needy, sick and indigent performers.

Note 2 - Significant Accounting Policies

Basis of Accounting: The accompanying financial statements have been prepared on the accrual basis of accounting.

Estimates: The preparation of financial statements in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets and liabilities and disclosure of contingent assets and liabilities at the date of the financial statements and the reported amounts of revenues and expenses during the reporting period. Actual results could differ from those estimates.

Cash Equivalents: Highly-liquid investments (invested with high-quality banks) with an original maturity of three months or less are included in cash and cash equivalents.

Valuation of Investments: Investments in U.S. government and governmental agencies and common stock are stated at fair value, as determined by quoted market prices.

Note 3 - Concentration of Credit Risk: Financial instruments that subject the Fund to concentrations of credit risk include cash and cash equivalents. The Fund maintains accounts at high-quality financial institutions. While the Fund attempts to limit any financial exposure by maintaining accounts at high-quality financial institutions, its deposit balances may, at times, exceed federally insured limits. The Fund has not experienced any losses on such accounts.

Note 4 - Functional Classification of Expenses: In the accompanying statements of activities, expenses have been reported by their natural classification, a method of grouping expenses according to the purpose for which they were incurred. The primary functional classifications are program services and supporting activities. Program services are the activities that result in services being provided to members that fulfill the purposes or mission for which the organization exists. Supporting activities are all activities of an organization other than program services. The following is a summary of expenses by functional classification:

	2003	2002
Program services:		
Member services	$ -	$89,237
Financial assistance	43,049	35,310
Supporting activities:		
General and administrative expenses	57,574	78,147
Fund-raising	1,146	7,035
	$101,769	$209,729

Note 5 - Tax Status: The Fund is exempt from federal income tax under the provisions of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

AGMA Emergency Relief Fund

By Linda Mays, AGMA President

Finding ways to help raise money for the AGMA Emergency Relief Fund is a goal to which many of our members devote themselves.

Kenneth Young, AGMA Life Member, member of the Board of Governors, and baritone with the Metropolitan Opera Chorus, gave a recital entitled, "English Songs and Canciones Español." Ken graciously asked his audience to donate to the AGMA Emergency Relief Fund in lieu of paying an admission fee.

Southern California Area Board member Jonathan Curtsinger ran a Board of Governors' donation-matching campaign in honor of AGMA President Linda Mays.

AGMA Emergency Relief Fund Liaison Susan Davison, AGMA Life Member and Board of Governors member Kenneth Young, and AGMA President Linda Mays

Washington-Baltimore Area Board member Cathryn (Raymond) Olson and husband Daniel Olson, also an AGMA member, honored their wedding guests with a Relief Fund donation in lieu of individual wedding favors. Each table at the wedding had notes that read:

On this day of celebration, we hope to pass on the gift of friendship and caring we have shared with all of you. In lieu of favors, a donation has been made on behalf of the wedding party and guests. Thank you for the unique difference you have made in our lives and the lives of others....

Marty Singleton, Metropolitan Opera chorister, New York Area Committee member and former Board member, organized an auction as a social portion of the most recent New York Area meeting.

Lynn Lundgren and Jimmy Odom, AGMA National Officers from the Chicago Area, traditionally raise thousands of dollars by raffling tickets generously donated by local AGMA employers. This year a cookbook will be offered for sale (see below).

These AGMA members and many others are generously using their talents and imagination to raise money and awareness for the AGMA Relief Fund which helps our colleagues in crisis.

The Relief Fund survives primarily through private donations, planned giving, and scheduled monthly donations by check or credit card. Each donor receives a donation-confirmation thank-you letter (for applicable federal Schedule A tax purposes) and a copy of the donation certificate, while a formal version of the certificate is sent to the honoree or to the loved ones of a memorialized individual. Each certificate is customized according to the wishes of the donor. Our creative donors give to commemorate births, deaths, special performances, holidays, birthdays, and weddings; to say thank you, or simply because they want to take care of colleagues in need.

The holidays are approaching. Remember your colleagues. Remember the AGMA Emergency Relief Fund.

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 call: 1-800-543-AGMA (2462) or by 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: 1-800-221-7303.

Please place your holiday orders *no later than* **Monday, December 6**. (If large orders are received after this date, we cannot guarantee their timely delivery.)

Long Awaited Chicago Cookbook Arrives

Chicago Board of Governors member Sandra Cross realized during a potluck at the Lyric Opera one afternoon that people were engaging in as much recipe trading as eating. The idea of a cookbook to benefit the AGMA Relief Fund seemed to be just common sense. Sandra and her intrepid crew of members in Chicago gathered nearly two hundred recipes from AGMA Artists who perform in Chicago. The cost of the book is $17.50, of which $10.00 is tax deductible as a donation to the Relief Fund.

This very attractive book, featuring original artwork from Chicago members, will make an excellent holiday gift. Order your copy(ies) by filling out the order form below.

COOKBOOK ORDER FORM

Please make your check payable to *AGMA Emergency Relief Fund* in the amount of $17.50 (plus $3.50 shipping) and fill in the address the cookbook should be shipped to. Please send your order form and check to:

Susan Davison c/o AGMA Emergency Relief Fund, 1430 Broadway, 14th Floor, New York, NY 10018

Name: _____

Address: _____

Address: _____

E-mail: _____

Check here if you need a receipt for your donation: _____

Staging Staff, Are You Looking for Help or Advice? AGMA Has a Caucus for That!

By Jonathan Waterfield, Stage Manager

When AGMA was formed, it was a union organized by singers, and set up *for* singers. The major signatories were opera companies, and the majority of members were choristers and soloists. Although that remains true to this day, AGMA has developed enormously and now counts not only singers among its members, but also dancers, choreographers, supers, stage directors and stage managers — and the numbers in these groups are steadily increasing!

For those of you who are performers, I would urge you to remember that there is a good chance that the majority of directors and stage managers with whom you work are also your fellow union members. When it comes to negotiating time, don't forget that we also need representation, and often have grievances and issues that differ significantly from your own. Please try to be *inclusive* of us in your negotiating discussions, and understanding of the many basic issues which may be covered in your contracts but which are often excluded from our own, such as Health Insurance, Job Tenure, Meal Breaks or 'Extra' Duties. Those of you who take on soloist work are probably more aware of the problems we face, as you share many of them yourselves.

For those of you who are Stage Directors and Stage Managers, I want to reassure you that your union IS here to help you. A decision was reached a few years ago that it would be beneficial to the smaller groups within the union if a series of caucuses were set up to pool information about working practices and problems, and to discuss relevant issues. The Principal Singers Caucus was the first to be established, quickly followed by separate ones for Concert Choristers and Staging Staff.

The Staging Staff Caucus had its first meeting in April 2002, and it was clear from the start what a useful and important tool had been created. That first meeting was attended by Stage Directors and Stage Managers of opera and ballet companies from around the country, both large and small. What also became clear almost immediately, was that many members in these particular disciplines felt misunderstood and sidelined by the union which was supposed to be representing them, and also that we were all experiencing the same problems with contracts and working practices.

The Caucus meets approximately every two months, usually on a Sunday, and we use a teleconferencing service which AGMA sets up for us so that we can all communicate easily from home or work. Our discussions are varied and lively, covering all aspects of our work and also our varying relationships with our employers and our union. We see ourselves as a resource for Stage Directors and Stage Managers within the union — a resource we would all love to see more widely known and better used.

Recently, we've been working on a list of contract wants and needs, as it's becoming apparent that many representatives of Staging Staff going in to negotiations are unclear about what they should be asking, and also of what is important to us concerning our own specific problems within what are often the very generalized contracts under which we work. When it comes to discussions about Plan A or Plan B Health Insurance, hours in the work week, allowances for personal items such as computers and printers, or even basic levels of pay for different grades and different companies, we think that it's vital that a basic list is put together, highlighting many of the topics that need to be investigated during negotiations — topics that might not be immediately obvious to singers. We're also looking into ways of making sure that a member of staging staff is able to attend any relevant negotiations to make sure that our needs are addressed — something which often does not happen.

Anyone who has watched what Stage Managers and Stage Directors do will realize that we often find ourselves in an awkward 'middle ground.' For ourselves, we know that we're not performers, but we're not management either. Although we're not responsible for disciplining other members of the union, we are often the 'police' who *are* responsible for the disciplining that takes place — in some performers' eyes, that makes us management. To management, we're sometimes perceived as a small and relatively weak group within the company who are often taken advantage of to put in extra hours without overtime, or 'save the day' at the last minute by driving to pick up a singer who's arriving late, or clean up after a company party because no-one has thought to arrange for cleaners.

Stage Managers and Stage Directors — we know what your problems and concerns are, and WE ARE HERE TO HELP. If you feel your position is being taken advantage of, if you're not sure how to deal with a particular issue at work, or if you're simply feeling overwhelmed by upcoming contract negotiations, call the AGMA office, and they can put you in touch with us. If you want to join, we're happy to welcome new members to the Caucus, but if all you want is some advice or guidance, we're here for that too. Your union, and more specifically the Staging Staff Caucus, will do its best to address your concerns, and offer help and direction. Don't struggle on alone — with around thirty members in the Caucus, there's a good chance at least one of us has faced the same problem in the past. There is most certainly strength in numbers!

VISIT US ON THE WEB:
www.musicalartists.org

Another Union Plus Benefit: Health Savings

Save hundreds of dollars! AGMA members ***in good standing*** are eligible for a Union Plus benefit that provides substantial savings.

For just $14.95 *per year*, you can enroll in the Union Plus Health Savings Standard Program and take advantage of a variety of discounts and health care services for members, spouses, children (and parents). This same Standard Program is free to members who register using their Union Plus Credit Card.

The Health Savings Premium Program is $49.95 *per year* for members, spouses, children (and parents), and includes access to dental care discounts and a Nurse HelpLine.

Enrollment includes a 30-day, free trial to ensure your complete satisfaction. To enroll, or to get more information, call 1-800-228-3523, or go to the Health Savings section of unionplus.org.

Reminder: The Union Plus Scholarship application deadline is January 31, 2005.
Go to www.unionplus.org/scholarship to download an application.

Membership Department News

Have you Recently Moved?

If you change your mailing address, it is important that you notify AGMA's Membership Department in writing. Additionally, AGMA's Retirement Plan and Health Fund Plans must also be notified separately.

Receive Your Bill by E-mail?

Yes, the Membership Department has the ability to send bills by e-mail. If you would like to receive your bill by e-mail, please contact the Membership Department at: membership@musicalartists.org.

Actors' Fund Offers Assistance in Finding Affordable Health Care

The Actors' Fund's Artists' Health Insurance Resource Center (AHIRC) provides assistance to all members of the entertainment community — from actors to broadcasters to technicians and others — in finding affordable health insurance and health care nationwide. Visit the web site: www.ahirc.org or call the Resource Center at (212) 221-7300, ext. 265 for information.

AGMA Emergency Relief Fund

If you are in need of assistance, call an intake worker at The Actors' Fund, which administers the AGMA Emergency Relief Fund. Your request will be handled confidentially.

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

Bylaw Change

On March 15, 2004, the AGMA Board of Governors voted in favor to amend Bylaw Article III, Section 5 as follows:

The Recording Secretary shall record and keep minutes **for** meetings of the Board of Governors. **The Recording Secretary shall register any and all emendations to the Constitution, these Bylaws, and the Guild's Standing Rules, and shall maintain the official version of same.** The Recording Secretary shall have such other powers and duties as the Board of Governors may determine.

AGMA Health Fund Plan B

By Linda Mays, AGMA President

Thanks to the recent *AGMAzine* advocacy letter written by James Morris and Susan Quittmeyer, and extensive networking, use of AGMA Health Fund Plan B monies has finally increased, according to information from the newly-appointed Administrator of AGMA Retirement Plan and Health Fund, Jacqueline (Jackie) Dowling. Ms. Dowling brings vast experience in union benefit plans as a former union member, Secretary-Treasurer of SEIU-Local 2, innovator, and now as our administrator. The staff of the AGMA benefits office and our members enrolled in the plans are responding enthusiastically to Jackie's positive energy, efficiency, and pro-member commitment. AGMA Board of Governors members Jane Bunnell, Luretta Bybee, David Cangelosi, John Coleman, Greer Grimsley, Peter Kazaras, LeRoy Lehr, and Belinda Oswald have also been urging colleagues to use their Plan B monies and to help spread the word about this outstanding AGMA benefit.

Contact AGMA National Executive Director, Alan S. Gordon (email: AGMANY@aol.com; telephone: 1-800-543-AGMA [2462]) if you would like to have AGMA Health Fund Plan B proposed for principal artists at the upcoming Metropolitan Opera negotiations.

AGMA needs to know that thousands of our members value and support this benefit!!

AGMA Health Fund Plan B is a tax-free medical **reimbursement** benefit, funded by AGMA employer contributions directed by provisions of the individual collective bargaining agreements with the AGMA signatories listed below. 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 heath insurance policies.

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 office (ASO) at 1 (866) 263-1185,
for assistance with AGMA Health Fund Plan B benefits.

AGMA Plan B Contributing Employers

American Repertory Theatre
Aquila Theatre Company
Ascension Music Chorus and Orchestra Inc.
Ballet Hispanico
Ballet Tech Foundation, Inc.
Baltimore Opera Company, Inc.
Boston Lyric Opera
Central City Opera Association
Chautauqua Opera Association
Chicago Opera Theatre
Cincinnati Opera Association'
City Center 55th Street
Classic Stage Company
Dallas Opera
Florentine Opera Company, Inc.
Florida Grand Opera
Gotham Chamber Opera, Inc.
Grant Park Music Festival
Houston Grand Opera
Jena Company
Joffrey Ballet of Chicago
Kaye Playhouse at Hunter College
Los Angeles Opera
Lyric Opera of Chicago
Lyric Opera of Kansas City
Melodious Accord
Michigan Opera Theatre
Movin' Out Broadway
Movin' Out Touring Company
Music Before 1800, Inc.
Musica Sacra
New York City Opera
New York Concert Singers, Inc.
New York Grand Opera Society, Inc.
Opera Company of Philadelphia
Opera Pacific
Opera Theatre of Saint Louis
Philharmonic Orchestra of New Jersey
Pittsburgh Opera, Inc.
Portland Opera Association, Inc.
San Diego Opera Association
San Francisco Opera Association
Santa Fe Opera
Seattle Opera Association
Tri-Cities Opera
Washington National Opera
Western Opera Theater

Union Solidarity Succeeds

New York State Governor Signs COBRA Bill

By Linda Mays, AGMA President

New York City now has unprecedented solidarity among the arts and entertainment unions. The artistic community began working with city and state officials four years ago to create a subsidy for COBRA (Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985) payments for eligible members who are episodically employed and therefore sporadically covered by union health plans. The subsidy will cover up to 50% of the COBRA costs for eligible individuals. As AGMA's representative on Entertainment Industry Health Insurance Coalition and the New York State AFL-CIO Arts and Entertainment Committee, President Mays worked with local AGMA members, city council members, state legislators, and other committed arts and entertainment union leadership to persevere against all odds. While this is a New York State bill, its passage creates a template for proposals in other states where our members work.

Left to right: Director of Health Insurance Resource Center at The Actors' Fund, Jim Brown; Chief Program Officer at The Actors' Fund, Barbara Davis; Lobbyist from Meyer, Suozzi, English, and Klein, Richard Winsten; AFTRA New York Vice President, Ed Fry; AGMA President, Linda Mays; New York State AFL-CIO President, Denis Hughes; SAG Health Committee National Co-Chair, Catherine Lilly; and Executive Director at The Actors' Fund, Joseph Benincasa.

Guided by James Brown, who is the Director of Health Insurance Resource Center at The Actors' Fund and heads the Artists' Health Insurance Resource Center (AHIRC), the artistic community found its voice and ultimately succeeded in convincing New York State Governor Pataki to sign this important bill. What began with COBRA bill meetings has grown to become a solid wall of support for Actors' Equity Association (AEA) and American Federation of Musicians (AFM) Local 802 during difficult contract negotiations.

OP-ED

What's Your Schedule on November 2?

By Jimmy Odom, Second Vice President

Unlike some other labor organizations, AGMA has long had a policy of not becoming directly involved in political action. AGMA does not endorse candidates for public office and does not lobby for legislation. And it is not my intention to break or alter that policy in any way. That being said, I am going to do this. I am going to challenge you — yes, you the individual reading this right now — to make certain that your schedule for this November 2 includes the item "VOTE". Take a cab, strap on your rollerblades, put on your pointe shoes and pas de bourrée, hitch Old Dobbin to the buggy with the fringe on top, but get to your polling station. I don't care who you vote for (okay, that's not true, but it's not the point here), just vote. "But Jimmy," you say, "I live in a red/blue state and my vote won't really count." WRONG! Your vote may be the one that changes your state's outcome because everyone else said but my vote won't count. And if nothing else, your vote will cancel out that hateful person's who so wrongly believes that you are wrong.

Seriously, voting is more than just a privilege. It is a responsibility. And not just in national elections. In your states, counties, and cities. For your contract ratifications and shop delegate elections. Your elected representative — whether Senator, Congressperson, or shop delegate — is going to give your opinion more weight if he or she knows that you are a voter. Voting is your power, and you should use it.

November 2. Your district's polling station. Be there. Aloha.