



# AGMA newsletter

A publication of the American Guild of Musical Artists • Winter 1993

## A Special Message from the President

Dear Colleagues:

As your newly elected President, I am honored to send you my warmest greetings for the Holiday Season and my sincerest wishes for a healthy and prosperous artistic New Year.

I am privileged to hold the office of our founding President, Lawrence Tibbett, who not only brought me into AGMA, but was the Scarpia to my first Tosca at the Met. As a young artist, I sat as 4th Vice-President to Jascha Heifetz as 1st Vice-President. I learned from my noted peers, Frederick Jagel, Gladys Swarthout, John Brownlee—just to name a few—all that was important about protection; not only for soloists, but for choristers and dancers. My continuing association as a Board member, and, to this day, a dues-paying artist, like all of you, keeps me ever vigilant about our needs. As long as I remain in this high office, I pledge to you, my dedication to keep every one of you democratically informed about all the aspects of the Union's work in your behalf. It is very important that we hear from all of you, too.

My first appearance as the voice of AGMA was the New Orleans convention of the National Opera Association on November 9. It was an historic gathering of the major operatic associations of our nation: the National Endowment of the Arts, Opera America, Opera for Youth, the National Association of Teachers of Singing, Opera Guilds International, the National Association of Schools of Music, etc. The subject was the young singer and his preparation. These important groups were not entirely aware of the protection given and the many concessions made by AGMA in behalf of its youngest members to keep them working, studying and even aided by our Relief Fund. I did not fail to say that our young dancers, choristers and stage directors faced the same problems of preparation and employment. I may even have rallied these groups whose aggregate membership numbers 100,000 to march on Washington, April 4, 1994, when the American Council for the Arts will bombard the government about the sadly declining support for the arts.

Lastly, but so important, as Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the AGMA Relief Fund, I urge you to continue your support of your fellow artists in need. The recession has hit hard—hit all of you; but we need to live, work and survive in the dire time of the AIDS epidemic and the loss of employment. Stay with us in the Relief Fund. We need you. You need us.

Best wishes—Always faithfully,  
Regina Resnik

## Greetings from the National Executive Secretary

Greetings of the season to everyone in the AGMA family. I wish you a healthy, prosperous New Year in which you have ample creative opportunities for work which is greatly appreciated and fairly compensated.

Recently I attended a beautiful choral program presented by the AGMA Concert Choristers as a benefit for the AGMA Relief Fund and in commemoration of Day Without Art. The music, solos, and choral work were exquisite. Unfortunately, perhaps due to the weather, illness, schedule conflicts or other problems, few AGMA members attended. This reminds me to encourage all of you to support one another's art forms. It is my hope that audiences for classical singers will include those in the classical dance fields and vice versa; that stage directors and stage managers from one area will attend productions in the others. This is an informal method of making our Union more cohesive, augmenting our understanding of the problems and challenges of the allied fields, and of supporting one another's artistic endeavors.

Union solidarity would also benefit from expanded input by Board members in other cities during the AGMA

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*The Board of Governors,  
the National Officers and  
National Staff of AGMA  
extend to members and friends  
everywhere warmest greetings  
for the Holiday Season and  
best wishes for a New Year  
of health, peace and  
prosperity.*

## Victory for Women's Rights in the Workplace

AGMA has had a most recent success in enforcing the rights of a female dancer's return to the workplace following pregnancy/childbirth.

The employer was hesitant to allow the female dancer to return to work and to collect her contracted AGMA weekly salary. It questioned whether the artist was able to fulfill her function and duties as a principal dancer, at full capacity.

AGMA was able to ascertain that when male dancers return to work from a serious injury or illness, the employer allows them to ease their way back into the rhythm of the company's schedule and perform ballet roles which are graduated in difficulty.

AGMA drew this parallel for management and an understanding was achieved whereby this female dancer returned to work in less demanding roles at first, and received her contracted AGMA weekly salary in full.

It is necessary to point out that state and federal laws may vary from state to state.

## New York City Opera to Hold 50th Anniversary Party

To all present and former artists, directors, etc. of New York City Opera:

A party is being held to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the first performance of the New York City Opera company. It will be held at the Radisson Empire Hotel on February 21, 1994 from noon to 6:00 P.M. There will be a buffet meal, and the cost will be \$30 per person. A postcard with more information will be sent out to all company members.

## Planned Giving Ideas and Bequests to Benefit the AGMA Relief Fund

Our counsel, Mortimer Becker, Esq. is pleased to offer his services, free of charge, in advising and preparing a will that can be used to make bequests to the AGMA Relief Fund.

Recently, the AGMA Relief Fund has been named in the wills of some of our members. Bequests of this nature are a humanitarian way in which to provide critical support to the Relief Fund's efforts in these difficult economic times.

Information and assistance is also available to prepare a planned giving document. For instance, with a Charitable Remainder Trust you can benefit the AGMA Relief Fund, retain a lifetime income, and provide for the future of your loved ones.

For more information, please call Mr. Becker at (212) 541-7070.

Greeting, Continued from page 1

Board of Governors and committee meetings. Our teleconferencing capabilities presently serve only Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, and Chicago on a regular basis. Does anyone have suggestions for economically feasible methods of expanding our instant communications capabilities?

It has been exactly two months since I arrived in New York from Houston, via

moving van. During this time I have been aided immeasurably by the AGMA staff, Board members and officers, delegates, representatives, and members. I want you to know how deeply thankful I am for all of your help, support, and friendship, and how much joy and gratitude I feel being your National Executive Secretary. Happy holidays! Have a wonderful New Year!

Sincerely,  
Louise Gilmore

### THE SEASON OF RENEWAL



Once again it's that time of year  
When people come together  
From far and near...

It's the spirit of giving  
That marks the yuletide season.  
Your support is the reason  
For our stability,  
Strengthening our ability  
To renew the lives  
Of colleagues in need.

And so we'll be watching  
Our mail with great care,  
In hopes that your gift  
Soon will be here.

The AGMA Relief Fund...  
You can depend on us,  
For financial assistance  
And advice you can trust.

*Please send your tax-deductible contribution to the AGMA Relief Fund, 1727 Broadway, NYC 10019,  
Attention: Katherine Leonard.*

## Report on Dance

**Alexander Dubé  
Administrator for Dance**

The major aim at the outset of all of our negotiations was that the artists must be on a higher level of awareness of the company's totem pole of priorities. Despite the recession, the effect of tax reform and the uncertainty of the economic climate for the next several years, AGMA continues to make headway in negotiations. Having achieved a 9.21% increase for corps de ballet and a 9.44% increase in soloist level over the life of the National Dance Basic Agreement, increases in seniority and no change in the 100% Employer-paid premiums of health insurance. Dorothy Kochiras and I are in the process of negotiations on the Letters of Modification for Milwaukee and Pennsylvania Ballets, and the New York City-based companies Martha Graham Dance Company, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre, Dance Theatre of Harlem, Merce Cunningham Dance Company, and Feld Ballets/NY.

The Cincinnati Ballet was a part of the National Dance Basic Negotiations and is our most recently organized company. It has been the mandate of the Artists and this Guild to attain National rates as soon as possible. Due to an accumulated deficit of \$800,000 plus, this has not been attainable or even within reach—that is, not until now.

With the guidance of a new Administrative Director, the

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## Update from Your Membership Department

**Dolores Galdi & Linda Landi  
Co-Directors of Membership**

Having completed our first year as Co-Directors of the AGMA Membership Department, we have tried very hard to see that all telephone calls to our department are answered quickly and to your complete satisfaction, and that all correspondence is answered as received, with at most, a few days delay to verify information. In order to give you the speedy service that you request and deserve, may we ask that you help us by including your Social Security number on any inquiries, HW requests, contracts, etc. sent to the Membership Department. We can access your computer record in a second with the Social Security number; without, it can take quite a bit longer. Also, if you have changed your name in any way, please be sure to notify us as this too can cause confusion.

Reminder: If you wish to place your membership on inactive status, known as Honorable Withdrawal, your Basic Dues and Working Dues must be paid current, and we must have the request in writing. In addition, HW's are only

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## Health Plan Contributions Begin for Principal Artists

**Thomas Jamerson  
Assistant to the National Executive Secretary**

Effective August 1, 1993, many AGMA Opera Companies began contributing an amount equal to 5% of the gross AGMA compensation of each Principal Artist (defined as Solo Singers, Stage Directors, Stage Managers, and their assistants, Solo Dancers, Choreographers, and people with speaking parts who have been signed on AGMA contracts), with a limit of \$1,000 contribution per Artist per production, towards the qualification of one year's health coverage for that Artist in the Health Plan currently in existence and beginning in 1995.

It is important to note that not all AGMA opera companies have agreed to the contribution. A list of the companies currently contributing to the plan is below. It has been agreed that a few companies will begin contributing to the plan in the future. Those companies are listed with their beginning contribution dates. We are working very hard to have other companies join the plan.

The Artists' qualification level will initially be determined by the total contributions made to the fund and the number of premiums this total amount will purchase. Obviously, there will be some Artists who may not qualify. For this reason, it is essential that every company for which you work contributes to the fund to insure your qualification. This is where you can help. Insist that your employer be a participant in the plan.

Every Principal Artist we have spoken with has indicated to us the need for such a plan and we are very pleased at last to be able to provide it. The plan is in its infancy and it will grow. We will keep you informed of its progress.

### Signed Opera Companies

Boston Lyric Opera	New York Grand Opera
Central City Opera	Opera Pacific
Chautauqua Opera	(as of 1/1/95)
Colorado Opera Festival	Piedmont Opera Theatre
Dallas Opera	Portland Opera
Florentine Opera	San Diego Opera
Greater Miami Opera	San Francisco Opera
Houston Grand Opera	(as of 10/15/95)
Lake George Opera Festival	Santa Fe Opera
Los Angeles Music Center Opera	Seattle Opera
Lyric Opera of Chicago	Toledo Opera Association
Lyric Opera of Kansas City	Tri-Cities Opera
(Currently 3%, 5% as of 8/1/94)	Washington Opera
Michigan Opera Theatre	Western Opera Theatre
(as of 2/1/97)	
Mobile Opera Guild	
NYCO National Company	

**Dance, Continued from page 3**

company will all but retire the \$275,000 balance of the deficit by the end of this collective bargaining agreement. A new performing arts center is now under construction in downtown Cincinnati. The company will be performing in this new venue in the 1995/96 or 1996/97 season, and the company will have first choice of dates.

As a result of a company focus group by an outside firm, meeting with our Artists in two 3-hour sessions in place of rehearsal time, it has been resolved by the Board of the Cincinnati Ballet that the staff and artists will be relocating into a new facility, which will greatly improve the quality of life for our members in the workplace. AGMA can take great pride in all but realizing our original mandate to the members of the Cincinnati Ballet—parity with the National.

The minimum wage for the level of corps de ballet—the 93/94 percentage increase alone is 12%, which equals 94% of the National minimum rate. This was a true collective effort which began a long and tedious journey with the National negotiations in November 1992, culminating almost one year to the day with this Guild's all but fulfilled goal that our newest members at last have parity with the National in our grasp.

AGMA has successfully negotiated the Houston Ballet's Letter of Modification achieving a higher minimum wage scale, an increase in the pension contribution from 2% to 3% and additional sick days. AGMA achieved an additional 1% in the minimum wages of the corps level in each of the next three years totalling 12.21%.

AGMA's proudest achievement is the Boston Ballet's first Basic Agreement. Highlights include a 5% increase in wages in each of the next three years, C.O.L.A. provision, Career Transition Pay, posting the daily rehearsal schedule at 12 noon, three working days in advance. This Agreement, a paradigm for any and all other National Dance Companies desirous of their own collective bargaining agreement, includes 40 work weeks in the third year.

New York City Ballet Committee has finalized their proposals for a Basic Agreement, and we will commence our negotiations during December.

We have recently completed the Joffrey Ballet negotiations. This was a very difficult negotiation on many levels. The company has an enormous accumulated deficit and although they have this full-length mega-hit, BILLBOARDS, music and lyrics by rock superstar Prince, the company continues its struggle to clear up its past debts and look to the future. Regardless, through the collective efforts of a relentless Dancers' Committee, the following was achieved:

First to second year dancers will receive an 11% increase, and second to third year dancers will receive a 13% increase.

Overscale Artists will receive an 8% increase in each year of the agreement.

Increases in supplemental unemployment benefits, per diem, pension contribution, supplemental sick pay and medical reimbursement.

Employer will continue to pay 100% of the Artists' medical coverage.

The production stage manager receives a 25% increase in wages and the stage manager receives a 14% increase in the first year of the agreement to achieve near-parity with the National Dance Basic Agreement.

**Membership, Continued from page 3**

beneficial if you expect to be inactive for more than one year (not working under AGMA's jurisdiction).

Please be aware that when any Basic Dues are deducted from your wages while working with an AGMA company, these amounts are credited to your account when the money is remitted to the AGMA office, which may be anywhere from 2 to 6 weeks after the final performance. After the money is credited, a receipt is generated and sent to you. If you do not receive a receipt after approximately two months, please call us, as there may be a discrepancy in your records; we may have an incorrect address; the company may have erroneously not sent us your dues; etc.

Best wishes for a healthy and happy holiday season!

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