

# AGMAzine

SUMMER 2019 VOL. 73.1



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President



John Coleman  
1st Vice President



Elizabeth Sciblo  
2nd Vice President



Teresa Reichlen  
3rd Vice President



Jane Shaulis  
4th President



Samuel Schultz  
5th Vice President



Louis Perry  
Recording Secretary



J Austin Bitner  
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## 2019-2023 Elected AGMA Officers



SUMMER, 2019

**The American Guild of Musical Artists**

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**Western Business Representative**

Tracy Jones

**Director of Organizing and Outreach**

Griff Braun

**Editor:** Denise Baker



**By Tim Smith**  
MMRC Chair,  
AGMA Governor,  
Chorister

**AT LONG LAST—AND** I know you've been waiting by your mailboxes—the latest issue of *AGMAzine* is here! We took a different path with this issue by not having a theme and asking people to write about things that were timely or they found interesting. Due to the election, we held the issue until after the results were in.

We start this issue with some thoughts about the recent AGMA election and an introduction of the new members of the professional staff, from our National Executive Director, Len Egert.

We had a rather unique situation with Jimmy Odom resigning as President in order to join the staff as of March 1, 2019. First Vice President John Coleman graciously stepped in and did a fantastic job closing out the Board year. Since the election has concluded, we are excited to welcome Ray Menard as our new President—so we have three AGMA presidents offering their perspectives.

Deborah Alton-Maher, who will retire later this summer, shares her thoughts on the post-Weinstein era and how AGMA continues to address sexual harassment. We share the results of the election, and while there were more ballots cast than in previous years, we do encourage every member to participate. Griff Braun, recently appointed Director of Organizing and Outreach, shares plans for the ever-evolving New Member Orientation program.

We received permission from the Canadian Opera Company to reprint Russell Thomas' very thoughtful program note about diversity, activism and blackface in opera. Newly elected

Treasurer J Austin Bitner talks about AGMA's participation in Arts Advocacy Day, as well as telling us how we can all help.

The Area News section is very well represented with news updates and many photographs from the various areas.

The National Office is always willing to help any AGMA member and direct them to the proper place for help, but if you ever feel uncomfortable contacting staff, please know that your elected leaders are also there for you. Never be afraid to reach out and ask a question or raise a concern.

In addition to this issue of *AGMAzine*, we invite you to check out AGMA on the web ([www.musicalartists.org](http://www.musicalartists.org)), AGMA on Facebook and AGMA on Twitter (@AGMusicalArtist) and AGMA on Instagram (@AmericanGuildofMusicalArtists). Stay connected to your colleagues; get involved with your union; consider serving as a delegate in your shop or joining your contract negotiating team. AGMA grows stronger with your valuable input. As always, we invite you to write an article for *AGMAzine* and include some photographs to go with your article. All submissions should be sent for consideration to [dbaker@musicalartists.org](mailto:dbaker@musicalartists.org). That being said, we would like to SEE YOU! We would like photos of AGMA members doing AGMA work—please share with us rehearsal and backstage photos.

*AGMAzine* is YOUR magazine. No issue could be possible with contributions (blurbs/thoughts, articles, and pictures) from YOU, the member. I am grateful that you take the time to share your stories with us. I must also express my extreme gratitude to MMRC and AGMA's Denise Baker for their tireless work on *AGMAzine*. All involved are hoping that YOU, the membership, enjoys what you see. Thank you so much, everyone, for your part in making each issue a reality. ■

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# A Transformative Time



**LEONARD EGERT**  
**NATIONAL EXECUTIVE**  
**DIRECTOR**

On June 1, 2019, the new National Officers and Governors began to serve their terms. I want to congratulate the newly elected leadership, and thank those who continue to serve and those completing their service to the union. I look forward to working closely with President Raymond Menard and our leadership. AGMA is, and has always been, a member-driven organization thanks to the dedicated and talented individuals who volunteer their time and efforts.

At the start of this election cycle, we developed a comprehensive set of

Election Policies approved by your Board of Governors. We also constituted an Election Oversight Committee (EOC) populated with members who were not running for office or campaigning, to oversee all aspects of the election. I want to thank the members of the EOC for their service. We will be doing an assessment of the process and will report recommendations for any policy modifications in the future.

Following the Board of Governors directive to engage, support and serve our membership, I am pleased to report that we have created and filled several new key positions that will fulfill these functions: Don Cavanaugh, Director of Finance and Administration; Griff Braun, Director of Organizing and Outreach; Wendy LaManque, Eastern Counsel; Sam Wheeler, Eastern Counsel; Melinda Fiedler, Eastern Business Representative; James Odom, Midwest Business Representative; Tracy Jones, Western Business Representative; and Joe Conceison, Executive Assistant. Along with our existing

staff, this is a fantastic team of professionals that will propel AGMA to new levels of excellence.

We are planning to initiate comprehensive outreach efforts that will include new member orientations, delegate training and other forms of education to all of our companies in the coming months. Our goal is to have AGMA staff visit each of our signatory companies (over 60) at least two times per year. We also plan to incorporate new technologies for remote and online collaborating and training activity. By working with National and Area leaders in this way, we will re-engage AGMA's membership, strengthen members' connections to their union, help us enforce and negotiate stronger contracts, and eventually grow the union. Our staff is very excited to partner with leaders in these initiatives. Please attend and urge your fellow AGMA members to come out or log on to join these events. As always, your participation and feedback are welcome. ■

## 2019 Leadership Conference



Participants at this year's Leadership Conference dinner: front, left to right: Joseph Gasperec, Jane Shaulis, Carol Wolfe, George Scott, Jan Zelenak, Liz Sciblo; back: Matt Woodbury, Louis Perry, Don Cavanaugh, John Coleman, Jennifer Wallace, Linda Mays, Julie Condy, Len Egert, Joshua Hong; far back: Tim Smith, Ray Menard and Stephen Jones.



Participants able to attend this year's Leadership Conference: front, left to right: John Coleman, Louis Perry, Linda Mays, Carol Wolfe, Joshua Hong; back: George Scott, Andy Garcia, Jane Shaulis, Evelyn Santiago-Schulz, Julie Condy, Jennifer Wallace; far back: Ray Menard, Len Egert, Matt Woodbury, Don Cavanaugh and Tim Smith.

# Presidents' Messages



## FROM THE PRESIDENT RAY MENARD

Letter to the Membership

Dear AGMA Member,

As the recently elected President of AGMA, I will have to wait a bit before I can share with the membership a long list



## FROM THE PRESIDENT JOHN COLEMAN

*[Editor's note: This was to appear in the Spring AGMAzine issue which was delayed due to the election.]*

I never expected to write the President's Letter in *AGMAzine*. I am a stage manager and tend to prefer to stay behind the scenes. Reflecting on what to write about took me back to the last time that a President of AGMA resigned from office in January of 1994, shortly after I had joined the Board in 1993. I well recall what difficult times those were for AGMA and the challenges faced by newly appointed President Gerald Otte. The union was in a near state of insolvency. Decertification was underway at the American Ballet Theater, and an effort to decertify would follow at the Metropolitan Opera. Contracts were routinely negotiated

of accomplishments achieved during my time in office. However, I can look into the future and assure you that the dedicated volunteers who make up the Board of Governors of AGMA will tirelessly continue to devote themselves to improvements in wages, welfare and workplace safety for AGMA members.

I look forward to meeting and working with the members of our Board, Standing Committees, staff and general membership as we move forward in setting the agenda for the next four years.

I would like to thank past Presidents James Odom and John Coleman for their skilled and tireless leadership during my time on the Board of Governors and as Treasurer of AGMA. It is my fervent wish

without member input and the membership did not trust the negotiators. Members and other unions perceived AGMA as weak, and large sections of the shops felt disenfranchised. Even succession was difficult. AGMA's Constitution left it to the Board of Governors to appoint the new President and two months elapsed before President Otte was appointed. Fortunately for all of us, reform was already underway with member leadership hard at work to save the union. Through the efforts of Midwest and West Coast Governors, teleconferencing of Board meetings had been instituted in the fall of 1992, for the first time enabling AGMA to be governed nationally by all elected representatives instead of only those physically in New York City and able to attend in the national office during the work day. The antiquated committee structure of the Board was overhauled in 1993 and seated with members from throughout the country, representing all membership categories. The new committees began work on creating policy to govern the union. Recognizing the financial peril to the union of inaccurate revenue projections, the Treasurer and Board demanded and

that they continue to provide the wise counsel they have shared with me thus far.

In closing, thank you for putting your trust in me and let me assure you that even though I am not always in my AGMA office, my door is always open. (I still have to work for a living!) I want to hear your concerns, try to answer your questions, and see to your welfare. You can reach me at AGMA by using this email address: [president@musicalartists.org](mailto:president@musicalartists.org).

Ray Menard, *President* ■

received the first budget in over 10 years and, with the incoming National Executive Secretary, adopted an austerity program.

What a difference 25 years makes. AGMA has a robust treasury, an excellent and expanded staff to serve members both inside and outside of the New York metropolitan area, and respect from other unions and our employers. What hasn't changed is the dedication of your Delegates, Area Committees, and Board of Governors to ensure that you receive the representation you deserve. I am honored to serve as President and grateful for all the work the Board and Staff have done and continue to do to make our union strong. AGMA Staff and the Board continue to engage the membership and work tirelessly to improve the services provided to you. We stand here today due to the tremendous work that others have done before and look forward to building upon that foundation with you.

Just take a look at the *AGMAzine* on the [musicalartists.org](https://www.musicalartists.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Vol.-48-No.-2-April-1994.pdf) website from April 1994 (<https://www.musicalartists.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Vol.-48-No.-2-April-1994.pdf>) and you will see how far we have come. ■

# “So Long, and Thanks for All the Fish” (with apologies to Douglas Adams)



By Jimmy Odom

There is a tradition in the labor movement of referring to fellow union members in a fraternal fashion. As I search for a way to begin what may well be my last article for *AGMAzine*, at least for a while, this seems to be the answer:

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

The numbers, oh, the numbers! It has been some sixty years since I started training for and working on stage. In that time, I have worked as an actor, a dancer, a singer, a stage manager, a stage director, a dance captain, a choreographer, a composer and arranger, a set, costume and makeup designer, and an artistic consultant. Two-thirds of that time, forty years, has been spent primarily on the operatic stage. I have been a solo singer and a chorister. I've danced roles and I've danced in the corps. I worked for tiny companies struggling to produce on a shoestring budget and I've worked for regional companies and I've worked at major houses. I like to say that it's been a small but insignificant career, but the truth is that it has been a great career and I am proud of it. I'm not famous and I'm not rich, but I have no regrets and I have never been out of work for more than a few weeks at a time, and I have always had a signed contract for work coming up.

And there are the other numbers. It has been just less than forty years since I decided to run for the position of AGMA delegate for the first time and was elected to it. It has been twenty-four years since I ran for one of the Soloists' seats from

the Chicago/Midwest Area on the Board of Governors and was elected to it. It has been twenty-one years since I was elected Chicago/Midwest Area chair. It has been twenty years since I was elected a Vice President of AGMA. And it has been twelve years since I was elected President of AGMA.

It has been just less than thirty years since AGMA leaders from outside the New York area started demanding that members from all over the country should have a voice in determining the direction and priorities of the union, and it has been twenty-seven years since the meetings of the Board of Governors started being teleconferenced, allowing Governors and Officers from across the country to participate. It has been twenty-five years since the first Dancer served as President. It has been twenty years since the first Chorister became President. It has been twelve years since the first President from outside the New York area was elected. And now we have our first Stage Manager to serve as President.

I've lost track, but I believe that I have been at the table for at least thirty AGMA contract negotiations for at least a dozen different shops, have been the lead negotiator on at least two of those, and sat second chair for many or the rest. And I've consulted on even more negotiations in which I was not able to participate.

I don't know how many *AGMAzine* articles I've written, but I think fifty would be a conservative estimate. While I've addressed a large number of topics, the underlying message of everything I've written has been, "The union is only as strong as its members. Union leaders cannot address your issues if you don't tell them what they are."

I have seen the union grow from a bankrupt organization that was so broke we rationed staples to sound fiscal stability. I have seen a dysfunctional staff that

didn't return delegates' phone calls slowly change to the functioning, responsive, professional staff we have today.

Do we still have a long way to go? Absolutely. Are we pushing forward to find methods of helping the union grow and better address our members issues? Absolutely.

It would take far more time and space than I have here to list all the ways in which the union has improved over the last three decades. And by that same token, there is no way that I can list the dozens of leaders who worked tirelessly to ensure those improvements came about. I wouldn't dare try, there are too many and no list could be all inclusive.

The twelve years of my Presidency have given me a great deal of satisfaction. It has been a joy to be able to meet members across the nation and to work with them to find solutions to the issues they face.

Thank you all. Thank you for the support. Thank you for the friendships. But most of all, thank you for your work, without which my work would not have been possible.

Fraternally yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jimmy".

# Post Weinstein Era



**By Deborah Allton-Maher**  
Associate Executive Director

It was just a little over a year ago that the Harvey Weinstein story broke. It is hard to believe it was that recent, given the dense and traumatic year we have experienced since then. It pulled the lid off of sexual harassment to expose its real-life impact and its pervasive presence across all industries and demographics, without prejudice to any social, religious, professional, or economic status. It thrust employers, unions, law firms, legislators, families, friends and citizens into high gear to respond quickly, appropriately, effectively and respectfully to those who have suffered the effect of harassment and discrimination in the workplace.

In the wake of this effort, the driving force has been the courage and sacrifice of those who have come forward with their stories and experiences. Some had to relive the pain of a wrong they experienced in the distant past; some had to come face to face with their harasser in the present and some came forward as witnesses. The surge of this disclosure, coming from

many sources and diversities of circumstance, demanded concrete and decisive action. If you are a “silver linings” person, which I am, this is generating meaningful and fundamental changes in the positive. While there is still much to do and more to learn, AGMA has been a leader in taking consequential steps to ensure a safe working environment free of harassment.

## Training

AGMA staff has undergone extensive anti-harassment training that has been specifically developed for our industry and membership, led by attorneys who are experts in the field. This training will be updated and modified as needed and staff will participate in training sessions accordingly.

AGMA is developing similar training sessions targeted specifically for AGMA Delegates which we have already conducted with several AGMA companies and will continue to expand to include the full roster of Delegates.

AGMA is working with the experts at The Actors Fund together with the leaders of our sister unions to further develop relevant policies and procedures to make available to union membership at large.

## Reporting

AGMA has expanded its anonymous reporting system to include more

senior staff members who are trained to respond to claims of harassment and to guide the individual reporter through available options, resources and actions as needed or appropriate.

## Employers

AGMA requests each of our signatory companies to provide us with their current anti-harassment policy and procedures. We then work directly with them to update their existing policies as needed or to develop new policies and procedures if nothing is in place. When there is a negotiation for a renewal contract, we bargain with them to incorporate more comprehensive and effective anti-harassment terms and conditions directly into the collective bargaining agreement. These include, among other terms, the requirement that the Employer contact AGMA if there is a report of harassment involving an AGMA member and to ensure that an AGMA representative is present at any investigatory meeting, if requested by the member.

In conclusion, our efforts continue as a work in progress, which we encourage all to participate in. We are committed to more effectively address harassment in the workplace, eliminate the fear or threat of retaliation, and provide support and resources to our members who have experienced harassment so they may successfully cope with its effects.

## To Report

Email us at [reporting@musicalartists.org](mailto:reporting@musicalartists.org), or call the National Office at (212) 265-3687 or (800) 543-2462. ■

## Sexual Harassment

If you witness sexual harassment and are not sure what to do, please know that:

- AGMA takes matters of sexual harassment very seriously. If you encounter an issue or receive a complaint, offer whatever support you are able to the target and contact either your local professional staff member or the National Office immediately.
- If you see something, say something—be the upstander. Not reporting harassment is as bad as committing it.

[reporting@musicalartists.org](mailto:reporting@musicalartists.org)

(212) 265-3687

(800) 543-2462

# 2019 National Officer Election Results

## PRESIDENT

David Salsbery Fry 580  
Raymond Menard 873

## THIRD VICE PRESIDENT

Teresa Reichlen 799  
George M. Scott, Jr. 626

## FIFTH VICE PRESIDENT

Vito Pietanza 618  
Samuel Schultz 792

## SECOND VICE PRESIDENT

Elizabeth Sciblo 824  
Tim Smith 601

## FOURTH VICE PRESIDENT

Jane Shaulis 775  
Stephen Wadsworth 667

The following nominated candidates were unopposed and elected by acclamation:

**TREASURER**  
J Austin Bitner

**RECORDING SECRETARY**  
Louis Perry

## FIRST VICE PRESIDENT

John W. Coleman

# 2019 Governor Election Results

## New York Area 1 – Choristers/Actors

Linda Mays 399  
Lianne Coble-Dispensa 339  
Elizabeth Brooks Wentworth 316  
David Frye 272  
Karen Grahn 267  
Charles Perry Sprawls 243

## New York Area 1 – Dancers

Maria Phegan 398  
David Gonsier 397  
Kim Araki 353  
Oriada Islami 278  
Jonathan Pessolano 246  
(serves until 2021)

## New York Area 1 – Soloists

Belinda Oswald 333  
Megan Marino 318  
Katherine Goeldner 302  
Lori Phillips 293  
Osceola Davis 269  
Jonathan Green 262  
Greer B. Grimsley 244  
James Patrick Miller 231

The following nominated Southern California Area 2 candidates were unopposed and elected by acclamation:

### Choristers/Actors

Jennifer Wallace

### Dancers

Richard Bulda

### Directors/Stage Managers/Choreographers

Jonathan Moore

(serves until 2021)

### Soloists

Earl Hazell

The following nominated Chicago/Midwest Area 3 candidates were unopposed and elected by acclamation:

### Choristers/Actors

Michael Cavalieri

Joseph Shadday

Heidi Spoor

Fourth candidate will be appointed

### Dancers

Joanna Wozniak

Two positions were available, second candidate will be appointed to vacancy expiring 2021

### Directors/Stage Managers/

Choreographers

Peggy Stenger

### Soloists

Eric Ferring

<p><b>San Francisco Area 4</b></p> <p><u>Choristers/Actors</u>  <b>C. Michael Belle</b> 90  Seth Brenzel 25</p> <p><u>Dancers</u>  <b>Gabrielle Salvatto</b> 69  (serves until 2021)  <b>Alexander McFarlin</b> 64  (serves until 2021)  Tyler Rhoads 63</p>	<p>The following nominated <b>Pittsburgh Area 8</b> candidate was unopposed and elected by acclamation:</p> <p><u>Choristers/Actors</u>  <b>David Scoville</b></p>
<p>The following nominated <b>Philadelphia Area 6</b> candidate was unopposed and elected by acclamation:</p> <p><u>Choristers/Actors</u>  <b>Mark Malachesky</b>  (serves until 2021)</p>	<p>The following nominated <b>New England Area 9</b> candidate was unopposed and elected by acclamation:</p> <p><u>Dancers</u>  <b>Andres Garcia</b></p> <p>The following nominated <b>Texas/Oklahoma Area 10</b> candidates were unopposed and elected by acclamation:</p> <p><u>Choristers/Actors</u>  <b>Matthew Woodbury</b></p> <p><u>Dancers</u>  <b>Lela Bell Wesley</b></p>
<p>The following nominated <b>Washington/Baltimore Area 7</b> candidates were unopposed and elected by acclamation:</p> <p><u>Choristers/Actors</u>  <b>Enrique Estrada</b>  <b>Abigail Wright</b></p> <p><u>Soloists</u>  <b>Keith Craig</b> 104  (serves until 2023)</p> <p><b>Michael Testa</b> 90  (serves until 2021)</p>	<p>The following nominated <b>Northwest Area 11</b> candidates were unopposed and elected by acclamation:</p> <p><u>Directors/Stage Managers/Choreographers</u>  <b>Kathryn Van Meter</b></p> <p><u>Soloists</u>  <b>Zachary Finkelstein</b>  (serves until 2021)</p>

## 2019 American Guild of Musical Artists Officer and Board of Governors Elections Nominations and Election Policy

On May 17, 2019, an election took place for the American Guild of Musical Artists (“AGMA”) Officers and members of the Board of Governors. The election took place by mail ballot and was conducted by Global Election Services, Inc.

All members of AGMA were sent a copy of the policy, rules and procedure via US Mail to the address the National Office has on file. Further, these documents are available on AGMA’s website. You must be a member in good standing to access the “MyAGMA” section of the website, where the documents are housed. The election was governed by the posted Rules and, where applicable, the Constitution and By-Laws of AGMA and Title IV of the LMRDA (Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act of 1959).

For more information, regardless of member status, please reference: <https://www.musicalartists.org/2019-national-election-portal-is-live/>

# Metropolitan Opera Chorus Retirement Party



A MET replica cake was created by Master Patisserie and AGMA Board member Christopher Schaldenbrand



By Linda Mays  
Chorister



Left to right, front: Juli McSorley, Roger Crouthamel, Will Saive (husband of Garth Dawson), Steve Losito, Elaine Young, Sven Leaf and Bernie Waters; back: Ellen Lang, John Russell, Connie Green and John Shelhart

Continuing over 50 years of tradition, on May 7, 2018, the Metropolitan Opera Chorus honored 12 current retirees, while celebrating a very large group of past retirees and guests.

In the throngs of a brutal work schedule, the choristers prepared a lavish brunch that was elegantly presented at the Met in the Grand Tier Restaurant, Revlon Bar, Terrace and Belmont Room.

The choristers put a great deal of work and skill into researching each honoree's career highlights, musically and socially, to personalize the presentations,

bringing about copious amounts of laughter and tears. Each honoree received a Shutterfly memento of costume photos and candid shots, marking special moments in the individual retiree's colorful career. The honored retirees: Roger Crouthamel, Garth Dawson, Ellen Lang, Sven Leaf, Juli McSorley, Charlotte Philley, John Russell, John Shelhart, Bernie Waters, Elaine Young and honorary

chorister, Steve Losito.

Met General Manager Peter Gelb made a guest appearance and gave a rousing speech about the treasured Met chorus.

The masterminds and the support team behind this extravaganza included Brandon Mayberry, Laura Fries, April Haines, Annette Spann-Lewis, Meredith Woodend, Greg Warren, Karen Dixon, Sara Heaton, John Trybus, Samantha Guevrekian, Jean Braham, Carolyn Sielski, Elyssa Lindner and Janet Wagner. (Sorry if we missed anyone.) The culmination of the perfect event was the presentation and consumption of a MET replica cake created by Master Patisserie and AGMA Board member Christopher Schaldenbrand.

The chorus has earned yet one more BRAVI for keeping the tradition alive in such a resplendent fashion! ■



A two-day staff negotiators meeting was held at the AGMA office on March 11 and 12, left to right, front: Western Business Representative Tracy Jones, West Coast Counsel Hope Singer, Midwest Business Representative Jimmy Odom, Mid-Atlantic Counsel Allison Beck and Associate Executive Director Deborah Allton-Maher; back, Midwest Counsel John Ward, National Executive Director Len Egert, Director of Organizing and Outreach Griff Braum, Western Executive Nora Heiber.



Director of Organizing and Outreach Griff Braum (front row, far left) and Eastern Counsel Wendy LaManque (front row, far right) gather with the dancers of Ballet Hispanico to celebrate the conclusion of negotiations for a new contract on June 5, 2019. Somos AGMA!.



# By-Law Changes approved by the Board on May 20, 2019 and June 25, 2019

On May 20, 2019, the Executive Council and the Administration and Policy Committee brought a seconded motion to the Board to approve amendments to By-Law Article I: Meetings of the Guild; Article III: Officers and Executive Employees; and Article XXIII: Employment by the Guild to be effective 12:01 AM E.T., June 1, 2019. Deleted text is in ~~strikeout~~; added text is underlined.

## **ARTICLE I: Meetings of the Guild**, (February 14, 1989, amended), (May 20, 2019, amended; effective 12:01 AM E.T., June 1, 2019)

Section 2: Organization. At all meetings of the Guild Board of Governors, Executive Council, Committee on Committees, National Conventions, National, Regional and Leadership Conferences, the President, or in the absence of the President the First Vice-President, or in his absence, the succeeding Vice-President, or in his absence, the Treasurer, or in his absence, the Recording Secretary, ~~or in his absence, the Chairman of the Area Committee of the geographic area~~, shall act as the Chairman. The Recording Secretary, or in his absence, any person appointed by the presiding officer, shall act as Secretary of the meeting.

## **ARTICLE III: Officers and Executive Employees**

(May 20, 2019, amended; effective 12:01 AM E.T., June 1, 2019)

Section 2: President. The President shall be the first executive elected officer of the Guild. He ~~They~~ shall preside at meetings of ~~the Guild and of~~ the Board of Governors, Executive Council, Committee on Committees, National Conventions, National, Regional and Leadership Conferences; be a non-voting member of the Personnel Committee, and shall perform such duties as from time to time the Board of Governors may determine.

At the invitation of the respective Regional Area Committees, Shop Negotiating Committees and Shop Organizing Committees and, after consultation with the Executive Council and coordination with the National Executive Director, the President may occasionally attend Regional Area Committee meetings, Negotiating Committee meetings, or Organizing or Collective Bargaining sessions for Areas or Shops of which they are not a member. However, absent specific advance authority from the Executive Council and agreement from the National Executive Director as well as the Shop Negotiating Committee, they shall not sit at the bargaining table nor actively participate other than to issue felicitations and statements of support.

The President may not concurrently serve as the Chair or Vice Chair of an AGMA Regional Area Committee, Shop Negotiating Committee or Shop Organizing Committee. Any current service as such shall be terminated no later than upon assumption of the presidency.

## **ARTICLE XXIII: Employment of Governors by the Guild (June 7, 1993)** (May 20, 2019, amended; effective 12:01 AM E.T., June 1, 2019)

No Officer or member of the Board of Governors or active member of the Guild may be employed by AGMA, ~~and if the situation exists, those employed Board members may serve the remainder of their terms, but in all matters of financial and personnel concerns must recuse themselves. This rule is not intended to affect “casual employment” such as the counting of ballots in an election or where it is deemed beneficial to the union and the democratic process:~~

No Officer or member of the Board of Governors shall receive any form of compensation, including benefits, for serving as an Officer or member of the Board of Governors.

During the meeting, per Counsel the Board also deleted the last sentence in the first paragraph of Article XXIII, incorporated here in ~~strikeout~~. Further, the Board changed “he/she is” to be “they are”, as amended here.

*Motion #3 from the Administration and Policy Committee, For the April 29, 2019 Board meeting – APPROVED AS AMENDED 4/29/19  
APC moves that the following policy be adopted.*

## **Attending Meetings of the Board of Governors**

Paragraphs 1 through 3 remain the same.

Further, APC moves that upon approval of this policy, the prior policy adopted on June 15, 2009, this new policy, and a summary of the changes created by the this new policy, will be simultaneously published in *AGMAzine* and in the members’ section of AGMA’s website. [as amended, 4/29/19]

## **ARTICLE IX: Committees**

(June 25, 2019, amended)

There shall be established six standing committees. These committees will be entrusted with the general business of the Union as outlined below. Each committee is required to make a report to the National Board of Governors a minimum of six times per year and encouraged to make

other reports as often as needed to keep the membership informed. A nationally elected governor or officer wishing to chair either Committee 2 (Administration and Policy), 3 (Work Rules and Contracts), 4 (Membership and Member Relations), or 6 (Personnel) shall be given preference required to have no less than two years of service, which need not be contiguous, on the committee. Each committee must maintain minutes of its actions.

## ARTICLE XXVII: Resolution Creating an Executive Council of the Board

(June 25, 2019, amended)

Beginning of Article remains the same.

At each meeting of the Board, the Executive Council shall report on actions that the Executive Council has taken since the previous meeting of the Board. The Executive Council may also report to the Board on other matters, including providing information and making recommendations for Board action.

1. The Executive Council shall consist of no fewer than six (6) members, nor more than ten (10) members, all of whom shall be National Officers or Governors;
2. The President shall be an ex-officio, voting member of the Executive Council;
3. The remaining members of the Executive Council shall be selected, with due concern for achieving reasonable balance among geographic areas, from among the following groups: National Officers servicing on standing committees, chairs of the Board's standing committees and chairs of the Area Committees. In special circumstances, such as in order to ensure balanced distribution or fair representation, one or more of those other members of the Board who are felt to be especially qualified by virtue of their strong record of participation and leadership on the Board may be appointed to the Executive Council; ■

## IN MEMORIAM

Ryan Allen, *Soloist*

Marilyn Armstrong, *Chorister*

Antonio Barasorda, *Soloist*

Ralph Batman, *Stage Manager*

Harlan Bengel, *Dancer*

Shirlee A. Bolger, *Chorister*

Elaine Bonazzi, *Soloist*

Mary Broussard, *Chorister*

Montserrat Caballe, *Soloist*

Tito Capobianco, *Director*

Gregg M. Carder *Chorister*

Paul Christiano, *Dancer*

Kristine Ciesinski, *Soloist*

Diane Curry, *Soloist*

Virginia D'Ambrosio, *Soloist*

Paul Edson, *Soloist*

Dina de Salvo, *Chorister*

David DiChiera, *Composer and founding general director of Michigan Opera Theatre\**

David Evitts, *Soloist*

Vivian Fisera (aka Vicki Tanner), *Dancer*

Dr. Joseph Flummerfelt, *Choral Conductor\**

Andrew Frierson, *Soloist*

Peter Frame, *Dancer*

Betsy Frost, *Soloist*

Elizabeth Gottlieb, *Chorister*

Heather Harper, *Soloist*

Barbara Hillman, *AGMA's longtime Chicago/Midwest Area Counsel*

Nina Hinson, *Soloist*

Robert Kuehn, *Chorister*

John Lankston, *Soloist*

Carolyn Lockwood Busch, *Stage Director and Stage Manager*

Emily Lodine Overgaard, *Chorister*

Gillian Lynne, *Dancer/Choreographer*

Spiro Malas, *Soloist*

Judith Ann Matheis, *Chorister*

Louis Alexander McKay, Sr., *Soloist*

Sean Miller, *Soloist*

Arthur Mitchell, *Dancer and founder of Dance Theatre of Harlem*

Liliane Montevecchi, *Dancer*

Melvyn Novick, *Chorister*

Tom Oberjat, *Chorister*

Sono Osato, *Dancer*

Melissa Parks, *Soloist*

Nancianne Parrella, *Accompanist\**

Kurt-Owens Richards, *Chorister*

Andres Ramirez, *Chorister*

David Ritch, *Stage Director*

Lawrence Rhodes, *Dancer*

Audrey Stottler, *Soloist*

Sanford Sylvan, *Soloist*

Jeanette Tannan, *Dancer*

Paul Taylor, *Dancer/Choreographer*

Mel Tomlinson, *Dancer*

Nathan Ward, *Chorister*

Raven Wilkinson, *Dancer*

Barbara Wilson, *Chorister*

Ekkehard Wlaschiha, *Soloist*

Franco Zeffirelli, *Stage Director*

\*Indicates a distinguished individual in a related profession

# Russell Thomas on Diversity, Activism, and Blackface in Opera: *“Too bad you’re black.”*



©Fay Fox

By Russell Thomas

*“This article has been reprinted from the Canadian Opera Company’s NOTES, a digital newsletter that provides artists a platform to connect with audiences in their own voice.”*

4/13/2019

No, I didn’t choose that title in order to be provocative or controversial. It’s a direct quote from a conductor that is/was the music director of a small Midwestern American opera company. I was 20 years old and had just sung an audition that I was actually proud of. Following the audition, as my accompanist and I were leaving the hall, the gentleman thanked me for my audition and showered me with compliments. Then, in a very serious tone he uttered those words as if he were compelled to warn me. He continued by apologizing, not for what he had said, but because he knew that I’d “never have the career” that my “talent deserved” because I was black and he hoped that someone had told me “before it was too late.” I remember that audition and that day like it were yesterday. The other panelists sat quietly, my accompanist stared at me in amazement, but as is my way I gave him a piece of my mind, snatched my materials from the table, and walked out of the room.

That was a pivotal moment in my development. While I steadily grew as a young professional from one young artist program and competition to the next, those words always stuck with me. I was determined to prove him wrong, and I believe I have. Now as I’ve reached the heights of

my profession, I believe I have an overwhelming responsibility to make sure that no young singer should ever have to hear “Too bad you’re black,” or any variation on that theme. That is my mission at this stage of my career — to ensure that true diversity penetrates every level of this business.

I’ve been in love with opera since grade school, when I happened upon a radio station and heard people singing weirdly. I had no idea what I was listening to or why I was so captivated by it, but the next day I went back to that radio station to listen again. In my youth I didn’t really know black people sang opera. I’m not sure how I learned, but my earliest memory of singers that looked like me on stage singing opera was a broadcast of the Metropolitan Opera Centennial Gala, where I saw Leona Mitchell, Grace Bumbry, Leontyne Price, and Kathleen Battle sing gloriously. As a member of the local children’s chorus I was privileged to see some of my first live performances, as we got final dress rehearsal passes to the operas. I saw performances in my hometown that not only had black singers on stage like Simon Estes and Curtis Rayam, but a black music director, Willie Waters.

Unfortunately, in North America, no major opera company has a black music director, artistic director, or general director. Most staff at opera companies are white, and senior staff overwhelmingly so. Wayne Brown, the President and CEO of Michigan Opera Theatre, is the only one I’ve found. Most of the leading roles on stages across North America are cast with white singing actors. There is a push to change things by diversifying the stage but there won’t truly be systemic change until the back office looks more representative of the communities that house these organizations. The same should be said of Asians and Latinos; I’m simply speaking

from my black perspective.

Cities throughout North America are beautifully diverse. However, the stages in classical music are not equally diverse. I’m not suggesting that the arts take an affirmative action approach to casting, as the talent should always outweigh any arbitrary need to embrace diversity. That said, arts organizations should be representative of their communities—in their staffing and the artists they present on stage, to members of the board of directors. A major metropolitan city that has a Chinese and South Asian population of nearly 25% should not have only five out of 65 roles listed performed by artists of Asian descent. In New York, a city that’s 25% black, the two major orchestras have very few black musicians—not close to 25%.

Representation matters and these numbers are discouraging to young artists.

Over the past few years there’s been a lot of conversation about blackface, particularly in regards to roles like *Otello* and *Aida*. Painting someone to look like a legitimate character isn’t blackface. Blackface is a racist caricature performed to demean and disrespect black culture. It’s a distraction to suggest otherwise, in my opinion, and a very slippery slope. Even if companies stopped darkening artists to play these roles, it doesn’t guarantee that they will cast a black artist. If we say that only black singers should sing *Aida* and *Otello*, and only Asian singers should sing *Butterfly* and *Turandot*, would we get a black Don Carlo or an Asian Elisabetta? We will essentially make minority artists less marketable with this approach and stages will be even less diverse. Type-casting isn’t the answer.

I truly believe that the ultimate survival of classical music and opera depends on figuring out the issue of diversity, as well as making organizations representative

of the community in a way that engages everyone, without dumbing down or playing it safe and palatable. Artists and arts organizations have a responsibility to not simply entertain but to push boundaries, be better representatives of their communities, and in some ways be social

activists. Diversity in the back office will lead to more diverse stages, and in turn more diverse audiences. This is accomplished by making sure everyone not only has a seat at the table, but that their mind, body, and soul is full.

*Russell Thomas appeared as Otello in his first staged production of Verdi's Otello, on stage from April 27 to May 21, 2019 at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts [Toronto, Canada.] ■*

## Arts Advocacy Day



**By J Austin Bitner**  
Treasurer and Soloist

On March 5, Mid-Atlantic Counsel Allison Beck (who is the Mid-Atlantic Counsel) and I, along with representatives from Actors' Equity Association, AFM, Writers Guild, IATSE, SAG-AFTRA, and Jennifer Dorning, President of the Department of Professional Employees (DPE), visited five different representatives or staff from the House of Representatives for Arts Advocacy Day.

We focused on three issues for all our collective members: Federal Arts Funding (National Education Association (NEA), National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), and Corporation for Public Broadcasting), Intellectual Property, and the Qualified Performing Artist (QPA) tax deduction.

In each of the last two years the Trump administration has proposed budgets eliminating both the NEA and CPB and reducing funding for the NEH. If enacted, these proposals would directly or indirectly impact our members, as private

money can't replace this public money, which often wouldn't come without the "seal of approval" of an NEA grant. Everyone we met with said there is almost no threat of this happening given the current Congress.

Some of those from our brother and sister unions spoke about intellectual property and copyright policy. Many members on the Hill don't realize that some creative professionals earn their living through residuals, and for others their pensions and health care are based on them, so this was an important reminder to them.

However, the bulk of our time with each visit was spent on the current tax code, a.k.a. the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017, and its negative effect on those working in our industries, because eliminating miscellaneous itemized deductions and raising the standardized deduction in the tax bill doesn't help our members. Many in our union spend a great deal of their income on travel, auditions, agent, headshots, etc. just to stay in business. Under the new tax law these are no longer deductible. This has our Members facing increases in their taxes.

We took the position this increase in taxes was unintentional, as it adversely hits the working Artists in our country's vitally important entertainment



*Bitner: Our group met with Chellie Pingree (D-ME, 1st District) on Arts Advocacy Day.*

industries. We advocated for updating the Qualified Performing Artist (QPA) deduction as a solution.

Passed in 1986 under Ronald Reagan, the QPA still exists in the current code, but hasn't been indexed for inflation or updated since it was first added to the code. We advocated for raising the thresholds to \$100K for individuals/\$200K for married filing jointly (currently it is \$16K—for both). The code does require those claiming QPA must get 10% or more of their income from performing artist jobs.

We do have a sponsor for the legislation in Judy Chu (D-CA, 27th District). At the time we met with her in March, she and her staff were currently looking for a Republican co-sponsor for the legislation. Along with DPE, and our fellow performing artist unions, we will be following and supporting their efforts.

I strongly encourage you contact your state's representatives to voice your support of the above legislation. ■

# New Hires



**Donald P. Cavanaugh**  
Director of Finance  
and Administration

**Donald P. Cavanaugh**, CPA, MBA, CGMA, is thrilled to join the team at AGMA as its Director of Finance and Administration & CFO. Donald brings more than 25 years of leadership experience, has devoted most of his career in the not-for-profit sector, most recently being the Director of Finance of The Yale Club of New York City, a large private membership club and Executive Director of its Foundation. In addition, he held various Financial and Administration leadership roles at the American Bible Society. Prior to that Donald was in public accounting, where he assisted labor unions as well as a wide range of industries.

Donald holds an MBA from the Zicklin School of Business, Baruch College, and is a graduate of Kings College, where he received his Accounting and Business Administration degrees. He is a certified public accountant in New York and Pennsylvania and holds a designation as a Charter Global Management Accountant. He is actively involved in the community, serving as a president, treasurer and committee members for various charities.

Donald is very excited for the opportunity to serve American Guild of Musical Artist, AFL-CIO in this role and contributing to long-term strategic success and achievement of the union's purpose. His passion for strategy and accounting and finance operations will help AGMA continue to enrich the lives of their members by providing quality financial services and a strong financial foundation to the Union.



**Wendy LaManque**  
Eastern Counsel

**Wendy LaManque** is thrilled to join the team at AGMA after six years at Cohen, Weiss and Simon LLP (CWS), the nation's premier law firm dedicated exclusively to representing the interests of labor unions and working people. While at CWS Wendy represented public and private sector workers in a wide range of industries, with a special focus on organizing campaigns in the health care industry and advancing the interests of unions in the entertainment industry, including AGMA. Wendy began working with AGMA as part of the legal team that negotiated an agreement to prevent a lockout at the Metropolitan Opera in 2014, and has been enthusiastically representing AGMA in a variety of matters since that time.

Wendy is a graduate of Cornell University's School of Industrial & Labor Relations and Brooklyn Law School. While earning her degrees, Wendy also gained valuable experience at the New York City Office of Collective Bargaining, the Communications Workers of America District 1 (Peggy Browning Fund Fellowship), Region 29 of the National Labor Relations Board, the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (now SAG-AFTRA), and Actors' Equity Association.

As a lifelong musician, performer and artist, Wendy is excited for the opportunity to combine her passion for workers' rights with her love of the performing arts in order to provide the best possible representation for AGMA's members.



**Sam Wheeler**  
Eastern Counsel

**Sam Wheeler** comes to AGMA after spending several years as an attorney at Cohen, Weiss and Simon LLP. While there, he represented both private and public sector unions in contract negotiation, litigation, and administrative proceedings, and provided internal guidance on strategic and governance matters. Last summer, he was part of AGMA's team negotiating the CBAs at the Metropolitan Opera. Prior to joining the firm, Sam previously served in the Office of the General Counsel at both the National Education Association, the nation's largest teachers union, and the United Steelworkers as a 2014 Peggy Browning Fellow. Sam is a cum laude graduate of Harvard Law School, a summa cum laude graduate of the College of William and Mary, and a member of Phi Beta Kappa.



**Melinda Fiedler**  
Eastern Business  
Executive

**Melinda Fiedler** is excited to bring her passion for union organizing and the arts to AGMA as the new Eastern Business Representative. Her introduction to the labor movement began as a high school representative for United Students Against Sweatshops, before continuing her activism and education as a student at American University. She has worked in the labor movement ever since, from organizing adjunct professors and healthcare workers with SEIU, to spending the last

## New Hires (continued)

three years as a national organizer at the NewsGuild, where she conducted internal and external organizing campaigns with journalists and non-profit workers across the country.

Outside of work, Melinda can generally be found cooking for friends or taking her dog on walks around DC. While she has not performed on stage since her time as a background character in her high school's production of *Cabaret*, she has a great respect for the arts and the artists who make it happen. She is thrilled to continue the fight for justice and dignity with the incredible artists of AGMA, and can't wait to see what creative solutions and futures we can build together.



**Joe Conceison**  
Executive Assistant to  
the National Executive  
Director

**Joe Conceison** is very excited to be joining the AGMA team as the new Executive Assistant to the National Executive Director. Joe is a graduate of New York University's Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development, where he received a Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance-Music Theatre. As a musical theater

performer, Joe had the opportunity to work on regional productions, workshops, premieres of new works, and cabarets at local venues, including 54 Below. After traveling the country on the national tour of *Fame—The Musical*, Joe returned to New York and discovered a passion for artistic administration. Since, he's held multiple admin positions, but most notably as the Interim Program Administrator for New York University Steinhardt's Vocal Performance program, and later as a managerial associate with IMG Artists. Joe is thrilled to bring his unique artistic and administrative background to AGMA. ■

# area news

## Chicago/Midwest



**By Cole Seaton**  
AGMA Governor,  
MMRC Member,  
Chicago/Midwest Area  
Committee Secretary,  
CSC Committee,  
Chorister

The members of AGMA's Chicago/Midwest Area held their annual membership meeting on Sunday, February 24, 2019. AGMA President and Chicago/Midwest Committee Chairman, James Odom, presided over the event, which numbered nearly 50 attendees from our Chicago area signatories. There was much business to contend with, but the evening was also filled with much food, fun, laughter and tears as we officially and personally

thanked and said goodbye, to Chicago's own Jimmy Odom as our national AGMA President and Area Chair. For many of the members in our area, Jimmy is the only Area Chair and only National President they have ever known or worked with during their time in our union. It was a bittersweet farewell after his forty plus



Chicago/Midwest Area members, left to right: Cindy Semke, Heidi Spoor, Scott Uddenberg, Jimmy Odom and Cole Seaton.

year career as a singer and elected Board of Governors member of AGMA, where he held numerous leadership positions, including the role of President, for the past twelve years. John Coleman was elected our new Chicago/Midwest Area Chair and as of March 1, he also assumed the role of AGMA's acting National President. We welcomed Mr. Coleman with open arms and look forward to working with him in both of his new positions. We are also happy to report, that Mr. Odom will continue to be a presence in our Area, as he takes on the official appointment of the newly created position of AGMA's Midwest Business Representative.

**The Chicago Symphony Chorus** began their 2018-19 season in September with the men of the Chorus performing the highly anticipated and critically acclaimed *Symphony No. 13 in B-flat minor (Babi Yar)*, by Dmitri Shostakovich. The ladies of the Chorus followed in October, making their first appearance on the stage singing Gustav Mahler's *Symphony No. 3*. During the holiday season, the Chorus was happy to delight audiences with several performances of Handel's *Messiah*,

(continues on page 16)

## Chicago/Midwest Area News (continued)

which received rave reviews. The most recent performances featuring the Chicago Symphony Chorus were on February 21 through 23 when they sang the Mozart's *Requiem* in Chicago's Orchestra Hall. In June the Chorus mounted a concert version of Verdi's *Aida* under the baton of Ricardo Muti.

**The Lyric Opera of Chicago and Lyric Opera Chorus** enjoyed a thrilling start to their season with the October 4th opening of the beautiful and moving new production of *La bohème* that which that featured the Lyric Opera debut of American tenor, Michael Fabiano. Also mounted in October and running concurrently was Mozart's *Idomeneo*, which was a new-to-Chicago production. November saw the opening of a new production of Wagner's *Siegfried* along with Verdi's *Il Trovatore*, and each of these productions offered magnificent casts! December and January brought to the stage another enchanting and stunning new-to-Chicago production of Jules Massenet's *Cendrillon*. The month of February saw the opening of *Elektra*, the intensely powerful one act opera by Richard Strauss along with Giuseppe Verdi's very melodic and romantic *La traviata*. In March the company will bring to the stage the highly anticipated Lyric Opera premiere of G.F. Handel's *Ariodante*. The Lyric Opera will conclude their season in May and June with another Lyric Opera premiere of the Broadway at Lyric series of Leonard Bernstein's Broadway musical, *West Side Story*, filled with the lyrics of Stephen Sondheim and well-known songs "Maria," "Tonight" and "America." *West Side Story* is a co-production of Lyric Opera of Chicago, Houston Grand Opera, and Glimmerglass Festival.

**The Joffrey Ballet** season kicked off in October with one of the most well-known and best loved ballet productions of all time, the gloriously danced and magnificently staged, *Swan Lake*, which was beautifully choreographed by Christopher

Wheeldon and which of course, features the gorgeous score of Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky. In December, they continued the composer/choreographer pairing of Wheeldon and Tchaikovsky to present to Chicago audiences their favorite annual holiday production of *The Nutcracker*, which was set during the 1893 Chicago's World Fair! The month of February brought to The Auditorium Theatre stage Joffrey's World Premier of *Anna Karenina*. The ballet was choreographed by Yuri Possokhov and music composed by Ilya Demutsky, who was the 2016 Gold Mask Award recipient (Russia's most prestigious theater honor). The dancers' upcoming spring program, entitled, *Across the Pond*, will be presented in April and May and will consist of two World Premieres. The first, *Home*, by choreographer Andrea Walker and featuring music composed by Ross Allchurch, is inspired by the personal stories of young DREAMers, through their stories of strength, resilience and the nature of belonging. The second World premiere has not yet been titled but is choreographed by the ballet world's fast-rising star, Andrew McNicol, and is set to music which, as of this writing, is yet to be determined. The third Ballet in this trilogy is a Joffrey premier and is entitled *Vespertine* by choreographer and Royal Ballet Artist in Residence, Liam Scarlett with music by Arcangelo Corelli. Scarlett's inspiration for this ballet came from the spellbinding music of the Baroque period.

**Chicago Opera Theater (COT)** opened their season to rave reviews in November with the Chicago premiere of *Iolanta*, the one act opera by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky. In February, the company mounted their second Chicago premiere, *The Scarlet Ibis*, with music by Stefan Weisman and libretto by David Cote. In April, COT presented yet another Chicago premiere, *Moby-Dick*, with music by Jake Heggie and libretto by Gene Scheer.

**Florentine Opera** in Milwaukee

presented their Studio Artists in several concerts entitled, *Con Amore*, during the month of February. The company will next be presenting Claudio Monteverdi's opera, *The Coronation of Poppea*, in March as a part of their Main Stage 2018-19 Series. This will be followed in May by two concerts honoring the Florentine Opera's 85th Anniversary. Congratulations to all who are involved in this grand event!

**Opera Theatre of Saint Louis** has an exciting upcoming Spring and Summer schedule, kicking off their 2019 season in May with Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*, which will be followed in June with the opening of Verdi's *Rigoletto* and following in the steps of Florentine Opera, they will also be mounting a production of Monteverdi's *The Coronation of Poppea* in June. The final opera of the season is *Fire Shut Up in My Bones*.

**Grant Park Chorus** will kick off the Grant Park Music Festival's 85th Season starting on June 14 and 15 with performances of a World Premiere, *Turn to the World, a Whitman Cantata*, by Composer-in-Residence, Kareem Roustom along with Carl Vine's *Symphony No. 6, Choral Symphony*. Then, during the final weekend in June, the Chorus will perform Beethoven's wonderful *Missa Solemnis*. On July 12 and 13, the Grant Park Chorus will be performing an evening of GRAMMY®, Tony and Academy Award-winning music with some well-known veteran Broadway stars! Also, in July, the Chorus will perform one of my favorite summer concerts each season, when they present an evening of all a cappella works (by all female composers) at Chicago's South Shore Cultural Center and Columbus Park Refectory. Repertoire is yet to be announced as of this writing. In August, the Chorus will be heard in a rarely performed epic work, *A Mass of Life*, by Frederick Delius. The Chorus will then finish their season in mid-August with performances of Gustav Mahler's *Symphony No. 2, Resurrection*. ■

## Chicago/Midwest

### Chicago Symphony Orchestra Strike



**By Cole Seaton**  
AGMA Governor,  
MMRC Member,  
Chicago/Midwest Area  
Committee Secretary,  
CSC Committee,  
Chorister

As of this writing, Friday, March 22, members of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (CSO) have been on strike for two full weeks and are about to enter their third week being on the picket lines in front of Chicago's Orchestra Hall. All concerts for the past two weeks at Symphony Center have been cancelled up through March 25, 2019. The Chicago Symphony Chorus members will of course not cross picket lines, so any rehearsals, auditions or other events they might have had needed to be moved to other off-site locations in the city. The Chicago Symphony Chorus, being in full solidarity with our instrumental colleagues, did not cross the picket lines, so all rehearsals and auditions had to be moved to other locations, including the Lyric Opera and Chicago Cultural Center.

On Tuesday morning, March 19, CSO musicians held an Arts Community rally and were joined in solidarity on the picket line by numerous local unions representing several of the Chicago Arts Community and other organizations, including members of AGMA's Chicago Symphony Chorus, Lyric Opera Chorus, Lyric Opera Stage Artists, SAG-AFTRA, AFL-CIO, Actors' Equity Association, Chicago Federation of Musicians and the American Federation of Musicians. Included in the picketing were dancers,

actors from locally filmed shows like Chicago Fire, Chicago Med and Chicago PD as well as other orchestra members from the Lyric Opera Orchestra.

There were about a dozen speakers, including AGMA's own Midwest Counsel, John Ward, who spoke passionately and eloquently about the strike and its effect on the city, the musicians, as well as the singers and other performing artists. He told a large group of local print media press and local television news reporters that Chicago's unions have each other's backs and are in solidarity with the players best interest in mind. Later that same afternoon, a large delegation from the Illinois State Capitol also marched. Today, March 22, U.S. Senator Dick Durbin also appeared with the striking instrumentalists and gave them his support. I, for one, as a proud AGMA member, will continue to be downtown joining the picketing again for as long as it takes to reach an agreement with the Chicago Symphony Orchestral Association and management. Due to the publishing of this issue of *AGMAzine* being delayed, there were some recent updates to the seven-week CSO strike in Chicago. We wish to thank Chicago's Mayor, Rahm Emanuel, for getting involved and bringing both sides back to the negotiating table at city hall after both sides had walked away from a "best and final offer" during the last week of April. Mayor Emanuel worked with the teams from both the administration and players union and a deal was finally reached, accepted and signed by both sides on Saturday, April 27.

"The new five-year agreement creates long-term stability for the organization and offers a comprehensive compensation



AGMA members supported the Chicago Symphony Orchestra member's strike.

package for the musicians of the Orchestra, including improvements in working conditions, as well as a wage increase of 14 percent over five years," said the Chicago Symphony Orchestra Association in their statement. Mayor Emanuel gave praise to both sides in reaching the deal saying, "This is a fair deal for the Symphony and its musicians, and a great deal for the future of one of our city's greatest cultural institutions."

The Chair of the Musicians Negotiating Committee stated that the musicians' union "declared victory" and said their efforts to pursue a "secure retirement" paid off. "We are victorious in our efforts by protecting and maintaining our secure retirement and gaining lost ground on our annual salaries. Thanks to Mayor Rahm Emanuel's involvement, the musicians are once again looking forward to performing once again at Symphony Center before the world's best audiences."

Rehearsals for both the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Chicago Symphony Chorus resumed on April 29 and 30. ■

# Philadelphia, Washington/Baltimore and Pittsburgh Areas



By Allison Beck  
Mid-Atlantic Counsel

Greetings from the Philadelphia, Washington/Baltimore, and Pittsburgh Areas!

As many of you know, I joined the AGMA staff as Mid-Atlantic Counsel on October 1, 2018. Except for seven years in the Obama Administration as Deputy Director and Director of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMC), I've been a union-side labor lawyer my entire career. I believe that all workers—whether they build jet engines or bring beauty to the world with their artistry or production skills—deserve dignity and respect at work. And, I think the best way to ensure that is through union representation and collective bargaining.

I have had the great pleasure of meeting many terrific AGMA members and delegates and working with Joint Committees and Area Committees over these last few months. I'm becoming familiar with your contracts and the unique issues you face. With my love for the performing arts, my dance background, and my deep admiration for your dedication and skill, it has been a joy to represent you! It's also busy—with seven (7) of the ten (10) contracts assigned to me expiring between December 2018 and August 2019!

Here's an overview of what's going on with the Philadelphia, Washington/Baltimore, and Pittsburgh Area companies:

## Wolf Trap Opera (WTO)

Negotiations for a new CBA with WTO concluded in December. Despite Company efforts to significantly diminish the scope of the AGMA bargaining unit, we held the line on the existing requirement that 80% of all chorus positions be offered to AGMA choristers, allowing the Company only to include Studio Artists in the 20%. We gained the following:

- Inclusion of The Barns' Assistant Stage Managers under the terms of the CBA;
- Clear limits on the Company's ability to pro-rate the weekly rate for production staff; one to three days will now be paid at ½ the weekly rate and 4+ days will be paid at the full weekly rate;
- Clarification to ensure that overtime is properly calculated for production staff (divide base rate by 40, not 60 x 1.5);
- Clarification of the Company's obligation to provide choristers with adequate rehearsal time and additional language making it clear that choristers are not expected to work on music outside of chorus rehearsals;
- The addition of a standard grievance-arbitration clause drawn from the AGMA-Washington National Opera CBA.

Special thanks to our dedicated Negotiations Committee—Sean Pflueger, Cosmo Clemens, Mike Janney, Joshua Hong, Aurelio Dominguez, and J Austin Bitner (Washington/Baltimore Area Committee Chair and AGMA 4<sup>th</sup> Vice President), who spent two very long nights in Vienna, Virginia, and countless hours reviewing proposals and counterproposals. WTO will perform *The Barber of Seville* this summer with an AGMA men's chorus.

## Washington National Opera (WNO)

Washington National Opera's 2018-19 season includes *La Traviata*, *Silent Night*,

*Eugene Onegin*, *Faust*, and *Tosca*. We successfully resolved several chorus issues during the *Traviata* run but continue to deal with complicated Schedule C issues involving *Silent Night*. We remain hopeful that informal discussions will yield an acceptable resolution.

In early January, Washington/Baltimore Area Committee member (and former WNO dancer) Lisae Jordan and I attended dance auditions for *Eugene Onegin* to make sure that AGMA contractual job security provisions were honored. Unfortunately, an insufficient number of returning AGMA male members or non-returning AGMA male members auditioned. We are looking for ways to expand the pool of eligible dancers who receive notice of these types of auditions. Suggestions are welcome!

## The Washington Ballet (TWB)

The Washington Ballet has a busy and ambitious 2018-19 season starting with *TWB Welcomes, Contemporary Masters*, a six-week *The Nutcracker* run, a full-length *The Sleeping Beauty*, and *Three World Premieres*. American Ballet Theater principal dancer Julie Kent became Artistic Director in 2016. The Executive Director and Company Manager are new this year. Not surprisingly, we've experienced a few bumps along the way. With excellent AGMA delegates and a dedicated Joint Committee, we are making progress.

The hard work of the AGMA delegates and Joint Committee members will be critical during upcoming negotiations for a new collective bargaining agreement. AGMA members agreed to extend the last CBA by one year due to the Company's financial condition at the time. All indications are that the financial situation is improving, and we look forward



The Washington Ballet Delegate and Committee Members met. Seated, from left are: Andile Ndlovu, Tamas Krizsa, Daniel Roberge, Alex Kramer, Allison Beck, Esmiana Jani, Nicole Graniero and Stephanie Sorota.

to achieving significant improvements in the upcoming negotiations, scheduled to begin on April 22, 2019. AGMA preparations have begun, and we are planning several Company “lunch and learn” sessions to explain the negotiations process and solicit input from the entire company.

### Washington Concert Opera (WCO)

AGMA leadership, including National Executive Director Len Egert, 4<sup>th</sup> Vice President and Chair of the Washington/Baltimore Area Committee, J. Austin Bitner, and I had a cordial introductory meeting with WCO’s senior management last Fall. We look forward to continuing a collaborative working relationship. The Company presented Gounod’s *Sapho* in November 2018 and Rossini’s *Zelmira* on April 5, 2019. The production of *Sapho* was stunning, and the AGMA chorus was magnificent! Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, an opera lover and WCO regular, received a standing ovation from the audience! The AGMA-WCO CBA expires on 8/31/19.

### The Sarasota Ballet

In late January 2019, AGMA National Executive Director Len Egert and I enjoyed an extremely productive visit to Sarasota. Over several days, and with the tremendous assistance of AGMA Delegates Daniel Pratt, Christina Harward, and Ryoko Sadoshima, we participated in an important Joint Committee meeting focused on dancer health, wellness, and injury issues. We then hosted a well-attended company meeting where we shared information about AGMA and answered dancers’ questions. We also met separately with management.



A reception following the Sarasota Ballet Company’s January 25 performance called “*Transcending Movement*,” from left: Samantha Benoit, Soloist; Amy Wood, Junior Principal; and Mid-Atlantic Counsel Allison Beck.

I had the great pleasure of attending the Company’s opening performance of *Transcending Movement*, a beautiful program of dances by Sir Frederick Ashton, and a remarkable world premiere of Sarasota Ballet’s dancer and choreographer Ricardo Graziano’s astonishing new ballet *Amorosa*.

### Florida Grand Opera (FGO)

Following my visit to Sarasota, I drove to Miami to attend the Florida Grand Opera’s opening performance of *The Marriage of Figaro*. What glorious singing and what a fun, joyful performance! The next day, I had a pleasant and informative lunch with Florida Grand Opera’s General Director and CEO Susan Danis and Director of Artistic Administration Philip Pierce. FGO Chorister and Washington/Baltimore Area Committee member Miguel



Following a Florida Grand Opera membership meeting in January, members gathered at the home of Miguel Llerna: Cory Lachtara, Heather McLeod, Everett Frazier, Allison Beck, Danielle Krause, Donna Lane, Enrique Estrada, Miguel Llerna, and front center: Homemade Cuban Flan!

Llerna then hosted a delightful AGMA meeting at his beautiful home, where we feasted on Miguel’s delicious homemade Cuban flan!

### Pennsylvania Ballet

Under the leadership of new Executive Director Shelly Power, AGMA Delegates Alexandra Hughes and Sterling Baca have developed a very productive labor-management relationship. The delegates meet monthly with Executive Director Power and Company Manager Emily Pratt. Issues are addressed as they come up and they are resolved in a collaborative, resolution-oriented manner.

AGMA’s New York Dance Executive Griff Braun and I met with Company dancers in the Fall, and I have been communicating with AGMA delegates



Pennsylvania Ballet delegates Sterling Baca and Alexandra Hughes

regularly and joining the monthly meetings with management. Negotiations for a new collective bargaining agreement will begin March 18, 19, and 21. Along with AGMA delegates, I am planning at least two meetings with all dancers to provide basic bargaining training and to solicit feedback from all dancers.

### Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre

New York Dance Executive Griff Braun and I visited Pittsburgh from February 13-15. I have been working with our excellent AGMA delegates, Alejandro Diaz, Corey Bourbonniere, and Diana Yohe, via multiple conference calls and was excited to finally to meet them in person! Their collective bargaining agreement expires June 31, 2019, and we hope to begin negotiations as soon as late February or early March. While in Pittsburgh, Griff and I will provide training on AGMA and the bargaining process. We hope to schedule a Joint Committee meeting, and meet separately with management, as well.

### Opera Philadelphia and The Pittsburgh Opera

Collective bargaining agreements for these two companies also expire during the summer of 2019. I will meet with Pittsburgh Opera delegates, members, and management the weekend of April 5-6, as well as attending a performance of *La Bohème*. I hope to schedule meetings with AGMA leadership and members at Opera Philadelphia while I’m in town in March bargaining at the Pennsylvania Ballet. ■

# Pittsburgh



The men of the Pequod prepare to "gather white gold from the sea" and bring "Death to Moby Dick" in Pittsburgh Opera's March 2018 staging of Jake Heggie's *Moby Dick*, a new co-production directed by Kristine McIntyre that premiered in January at Utah Opera and moved on to Opera San José, Chicago Opera Theater, and Gran Teatre del Liceu, Barcelona. This production, less technically demanding and expensive to produce than the original, allows more opera houses to bring this American masterpiece to an ever-growing and appreciative audience. Also in the cast: Roger Honeywell, Sean Panikkar, Musa Ngqungwana, Michael Mayes, Jacqueline Echols, Eric Ferring, Malcolm MacKenzie, Ben Taylor, Scott Cuva, Andy Berry and George Milosh.



©2018 Ken Shen

The chorus of Pittsburgh Opera's 2018-19 season-opener, *Madama Butterfly*, poses for a quick picture before racing off to Nagasaki to celebrate the wedding of Cio Cio San and Pinkerton.

## New York *Metropolitan Opera Negotiations*



By Ned Hanlon  
Chorister

On August 3 at 6:30 a.m., after a marathon 20-hour negotiation session, AGMA and the Metropolitan Opera reached a landmark three-year agreement. The 24-person negotiating committee was joined by AGMA staff and leadership, and the attorneys of Cohen, Weiss and Simon LLP. Thanks to their hard work, dedication, and perseverance, a deal was

secured that will allow the Met to increase revenue while investing in the artists who make the Met the world-class institution that it is today.

The agreement featured increases to salary and pension, while also instituting more artist involvement in important areas such as safety, anti-harassment, and discrimination policy. There were also meaningful changes to the paternity and bereavement leave policies, as well as increased cooperation on matters such as development, outreach, and artistic advisory.

Perhaps the most significant element of the negotiations, however, was the coordinated bargaining between AGMA and Local 802, who represent the



President of AFM's Local 802 Timo Gagliardi, Metropolitan Opera Negotiating Committee Chair Ned Hanlon and AGMA National Executive Director Len Egert signing the negotiated Metropolitan Opera contract.

orchestra, associate musicians, and music staff at the Met. The strength derived from the unity of the two unions and their committees is a testament to the power of union solidarity.

Congratulations, and many thanks to all who were involved in this successful and positive negotiation! ■

# New York

## New York Area Meeting



By **Louis Perry**  
New York Area Chair

The AGMA New York Area 1 meeting was held at the National Office on Monday, November 5, 2018.

For the second year, New York members of the Board of Governors were welcome to teleconference the meeting.

Elected to fill expired positions on the New York Area Committee were Jann Jaffee, Lori Phillips, Mark Rehnstrom, and Raven Wilkin-son. Continuing to serve on the committee are Kim Araki, David Salsbery Fry, Linda Mays, Raymond Menard, Louis Perry and David Ward.

Len Egert, National Executive Director, reported on the hard-fought and successful negotiations with the Metropolitan Opera and Lyric Opera of Chicago. Mr. Egert expressed his deep gratitude to all who participated in those negotiations, noting especially the local AGMA negotiating committees and AGMA counsel, Cohen, Weiss, and Simon, New

York. He addressed, to the extent he could legally, the union's responses to recent sexual harassment allegation issues related to our signatories. Mr. Egert spoke of the union's continuing and planned efforts in the areas of member education and increased communication with members.

Deborah Allton-Maher, Associate Executive Director, and AGMA point person in dealing with sexual harassment issues, spoke to the complexity in dealing with these issues. She, Mr. Egert, and AGMA's legal counsel have invested much time and effort representing our members in ongoing harassment situations and in developing procedures for dealing with sexual harassment in the workplace as well as in other AGMA-related situations.

Griff Braun, New York Area Dance Executive, reported on the successful negotiations with American Ballet Theatre, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, and Martha Graham Dance Company, speaking of valuable insights gained in those negotiations.

Derek Davis, Executive Director of the AGMA Retirement and Health Funds, reported on the news and activities of the funds. He urged members to attend to the disposition of any Plan B insurance monies as soon as possible.

Karen Grahn, co-chair of the Concert Singers Sub-Committee, reported the following: The new New York Philharmonic/AGMA contract was approved and ratified in July. The Musica Sacra/AGMA contract negotiation is currently in progress. The Board of Governors approved a holiday concert waiver request by Voices of Ascension. The concert singers committee can be reached at [agmaconcertsingers@yahoo.com](mailto:agmaconcertsingers@yahoo.com).

The Area's special guest was Susan Davis, partner at AGMA's law firm, Cohen Weiss, and Simon. Ms. Davis spoke to the members

regarding the Supreme Court Janus decision and the ongoing efforts to deal effectively with sexual harassment issues. She explained the potentially serious implications of the Janus decision for private sector unions like AGMA. Ms. Davis is a legal expert in the field sexual harassment issues. Earlier this year, she taught a seminar on harassment to AGMA executives and staff. She congratulated AGMA on being at the forefront of the performing arts industry efforts to develop practices and procedures that will protect union members and the workplace from the occurrences and effects of harassment. We offer our hearty thanks to Ms. Davis.

On behalf of the New York Area, I thank and congratulate Mr. Egert, Ms. Allton-Maher, Mr. Braun and all negotiators, both staff and members, for their successful work on behalf of Area members.

As always, special thanks to Ms. Gerry Angel, Director of Operations, for arranging for the food and drink and for tending to all the details that facilitated yet another smooth and successful Area meeting.

As well, we extend our gratitude to all the National Office staff who keep this Area and the entire union operating so successfully.

We offer our annual thank you to The Actors Fund and Dr. Ramon Pesigan for providing complimentary flu shots prior to the meeting. ■



Dr. Ramon Pesigan and AGMA member Michèle Eaton after receiving her flu shot.



Former AGMA President Linda Mays, former President of AFM's Local 802 Tino Gagliardi and Metropolitan Chorister Ned Hanlon attended a rally/concert in front of CBS studios in New York. Members of the AFM assert that they are not paid residuals for work on live shows such as Jimmy Kimmel Live!, The Late Show With Stephen Colbert, etc., when these live television shows stream on YouTube and network websites. Other performers are all paid residuals when the shows stream, but musicians are not paid. This issue is still ongoing. For more information, [www.afm.org/band](http://www.afm.org/band) for Respect the Band.



At the Alvin Ailey rally, left to right: Rachael McLaren, former AGMA delegate and negotiating committee member and Alvin Ailey dancer, former AGMA President Linda Mays, Membership Supervisor Candace Itow, and LA Opera Chorister and Board member Aleta Braxton.

# Southern California

## Touring with the "Tears"



By **Beth Peregrine**  
Chorister

When singers in Los Angeles refer to “The Dream,” they’re often talking about a Sunday in December, going from a church gig, to a caroling gig, to a performance, followed by rehearsal for something else. “Yup, living The Dream...”

When people ask me what it’s like singing as a member of the Los Angeles Master Chorale’s (LAMC) production of *Lagrime di San Pietro*, I still have to pinch myself. I’m singing Renaissance music, three-on-a-part, staged by Peter Sellars, and I get to travel the world doing it. If you had asked me in high school what my “dream gig” was, this would be it! We are in fact living “The Dream!”

This whole journey started for us in

2016, when 21 singers took to the stage of the Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles to debut a memorized and staged performance of Orlando di Lasso’s *Lagrime di San Pietro*. Staged by Peter Sellars and conducted by Grant Gershon, this was described as one of the Los Angeles Master Chorale’s most ambitious projects ever. When it was over, we cried—a lot—and we thought we were done.

Fast-forward to 2018: LAMC announced that we would be taking *Lagrime* on tour, not only throughout the United States, but on the organization’s first ever independent international tour. So far, we have had the privilege of performing at the Ravinia Festival and the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts in Illinois, the Melbourne International Performing Arts Festival in Australia, the Festival Internacional Cervantino in Guanajuato and Mexico City, and the Wallis Annenberg Center for Performing Arts in Beverly Hills.

One of the best parts of traveling to perform this work has been experiencing



Los Angeles Master Chorale members toured with the *Lagrime di San Pietro* production.

the vastly different cultures of each place we visit. From the coffee and food in Melbourne to the amazing jewelry and Lucha Libre wrestling in Mexico City, there has been something for everyone.

January 2019 found us in Michigan and North Carolina. In May we venture on to Berkeley, CA, then across the pond to London, Newcastle and Paris. Finally, we travel back to the States to Santa Fe, NM.

For me personally, the highlight of this production has been seeing how the work evolves and grows in each new performance venue. No two shows are ever the same, and this need to be constantly on your toes, and trusting of your colleagues, has led to an incredible family-like bond between the singers. I consider everyone in this production—not just the singers, but our amazing conductors, production staff, and crew—to be a part of a living, breathing entity that has changed us all for the better. ■



National Executive Director Len Egert had dinner with Southern California area members in Los Angeles in late November of 2018; left to right, front row: Renee Sousa, Veronica Christenson, Hope Singer, Elyse Willis; middle row: Tim Smith, Eboni Adams, Len Egert, Jennifer Wallace, Aleta Braxton; back row: Steve Pence, Bradley Chapman and Sara Campbell.



The men of LA Opera Chorus heading to stage for the *Satyagraha* Act 2, scene 1 “Garish Men” punishing “Ha Ha” chorus, featuring 1982 utterances of the syllable “ha”.

# Southern California

## *Musings of a First-Year Delegate*



By Elyse Willis  
Chorister

I love the Los Angeles Master Chorale. I can honestly say that the vast majority of the good things I have in my life, both personally and professionally, I have in large part because of my membership in this fantastic organization. So, when the time came to install a new AGMA Delegate this year, it only seemed right for me to step up and give back to this group I cherish so much.

I knew I would be challenged in this new role, but I also felt like I'd been preparing for it for quite some time. I had been a member of the Singers Committee for about four and a half years, and I'd acted as Delegate on a number of individual engagements. I'd also been involved in the last contract negotiation, which was an invaluable learning experience. After all, when you're studying to be a professional musician in college, they don't build "Union Bargaining and Writing Contract Language 101" into your undergrad curriculum (though maybe they should). But as with so much in life, no matter how much you prepare, sometimes you're thrown into the deep end and you just have to figure it out.

This biggest challenge has turned out to be leading our current contract negotiations—something I thought would be done well before I took over as Delegate. In fact, because of scheduling issues, we'd barely gotten started with management when my first day arrived. But I am

fortunate to have the support and dedication of a wonderful Singers Committee, as well as the fount of knowledge of other AGMA representatives and previous Delegates, and the Zen-like levelheadedness of our Western Counsel, the aptly-named Hope Singer—all of which has made this daunting task seem surmountable.

After months of work and countless hours spent in meetings, on the phone, and dissecting contract language with surgical precision, we are still in negotiations. This is not to say things aren't going well; the proceedings have been very productive and extremely cordial. But even when everything is running smoothly, these things take time. Patience is a virtue I've come to embrace as a result of these negotiations, albeit somewhat begrudgingly. Nothing would have pleased me more than to have everything wrapped up nicely with a bow before the holidays, but I've learned that it is much more important to make sure we've done our due diligence to the shop: dotted our Is, crossed our Ts, and fought valiantly and intelligently for every gain and protection we could get.

I recently had to bow out of an LAMC performance, using one of my two sick days when my voice just physically couldn't go through with it. I was really struggling with this, as it was the first time in almost ten years, I'd had to miss a concert. My husband, in his infinite wisdom, asked me what I would say, as AGMA Delegate, to another singer in my situation. I said I would tell the singer that this was something we had fought for and won in our last contract negotiation and that they had every right to use it without hesitation or guilt. It hit me then how crucial our work on the negotiating committee is and how thankful I was to be an AGMA member.

Back on the normal, everyday Delegate front, there are the regular challenges that anyone who has served as Delegate will recognize: a fairly constant stream of questions or concerns coming from both management and the shop; the giving of my break time to deal with emergencies or decisions that have to be made right away; being ever vigilant of inadvertent CBA violations, payroll errors, etc. Again: patience. Patience with other people, of course, but also patience with myself. To expect perfection from oneself is to be guaranteed disappointment. I am only human, doing the best I can to represent our incredible AGMA members while balancing other aspects of life, other jobs, and—oh yes, almost forgot!—actually singing in one of the greatest choral ensembles in the world. I love the Los Angeles Master Chorale, and I am honored to serve as AGMA Delegate.

Post-script, February 2019: The negotiations are finished and the shop has overwhelmingly voted to approve contract ratification. I'm exceedingly proud of the work the Singers Committee and I did to secure many excellent gains and to reshape the contract to serve us in the best way possible going forward. Now, back to our regularly scheduled programming of putting out daily fires (and starting my list of issues to address in the next contract negotiation)! ■

# Southern California

## 150 Productions for LA Opera Chorister Aleta Braxton



**By Aleta Braxton**  
Chorister, Board  
Member

With the current production of *El Gato Montes*, mezzo-soprano Aleta Braxton has been recognized for having performed in 150 productions with LA Opera. She is the first woman to reach this milestone at LA Opera and is possibly the first African American woman to achieve this with any opera company in the U.S. She has been a member of LA Opera since the inaugural season's first production, *Otello*, starring

Plácido Domingo and Sherrill Milnes. With this production of *El Gato Montes* in the role of Juanillo, Plácido Domingo marks 151 roles at LA Opera. Domingo and Braxton shared their milestones together because they've worked together since the first *Otello*.

Her colleague George Sterne has a few more productions with 158.

Favorite production highlights include *Otello*, *Porgy and Bess*, *Oklahoma*, *Orpheus in the Underworld* and *Candide*.

Ms. Braxton serves on the AGMA National Board of Governors and has produced two concerts for the AGMA Relief Fund.

A graduate of California State University, Fullerton with a B.M. in choral music education, Ms. Braxton also performs



At the opening night party for "Otello" where Aleta was recognized by the head of LA Opera Board and Plácido Domingo (above with Aleta).



Aleta pictured above at the first *Otello* with Plácido Domingo.

with LA Master Chorale, McNeil Jubilee Singers, and on several film and TV soundtracks. ■

# New Orleans

## Chorister Finds Value in Being an AGMA Member



**By Andrew Aceves**  
Chorister

Seventeen-year-old Andrew Aceves found out how important membership in AGMA can be. Andrew is an honor

student at St. Paul's High School in Covington, Louisiana, and is a member of the New Orleans Opera Association's Adult Chorus in the bass section. He was hired when he was 15 years old and has sung in *Don Giovanni*, their 75th Anniversary Gala, and in *Turandot*. In May 2018 he attended the Classical Singer Competition in Boston. While visiting the college fair during the competition, Andrew mentioned to one of the schools that he was a member of

AGMA. The school at the next table overheard what he said and asked Andrew if he would discuss with them about studying at their conservatory. After speaking to the voice teacher and a senior student from the conservatory, Andrew was offered a full scholarship to attend their Summer Opera Intensive long after the deadline to apply had passed. The college senior commented, "WOW! I'm not even in AGMA yet!" ■

# San Francisco

## *Singing Through the Smoke*



By **Buffy Baggott**  
Chorister, Board  
Member

The Camp Fire\* broke out a little over a week before the opening of *It's a Wonderful Life* at San Francisco Opera. Sadly, we are beginning to get used to “wildfire season” out here on the West Coast. We had just weathered the Carr and Mendocino Complex Fires during the summer but were not fully prepared for how devastating the air quality would get this time around.

For the first day or so, this seemed like nothing new: the air was a bit dusty, our cars and porches had a coating of light ash and the color of the sky changed hues—giving us incredibly vibrant sunrises and sunsets. Then the real ash clouds made their way across the valley and descended, uninhibited by rain and marine breezes. After a few days of living in the “Red/Unhealthy” zone, most of us began to feel the effects of inhaling fine particulates generated by the fires. By the end of the first week (work days included a final dress rehearsal for “*Wonderful Life*” and SFO Opera Chorus Educational events), we were reaching “Purple/Very Unhealthy” levels of air pollution which caused immediate effects such as dryness/hoarseness, coughing, other respiratory complications, and head-aches. Walking to the opera house, we could see ash particles drifting through the air and a thick haze settled over the entire area. We were advised to avoid going outdoors and to wear masks if we had to. Proper masks and air purifiers sold out quickly throughout the area and online. We were to keep doors



AGMA member *Phil Pickens* using his air mask during the “*The Camp Fire*”.

and windows shut in all houses, offices and cars, air filters replaced, and air conditioners turned on to help purify the air. Even vacuuming was considered a risky prospect as it stirred up dust particles.

Standing in the wings at SF Opera during the final dress rehearsal of *It's a Wonderful Life*, you could see the ash particles adding a soft hue to the stage lighting, giving it an otherworldly feel.

SF Opera management and Lee Helms, our Director of Operations, sprang into action once the severity of the situation became clear. New air filters were immediately installed, and specialized filters designed to catch unusually small particles (such as smoke) were ordered and installed as soon as they arrived. They ordered air filtering machines for a few key places backstage, such as Chorus and Dancer dressing rooms and the Orchestra lounge. A supply of N95 face masks were ordered for company members to wear backstage or in the pit. The crew misted the stage areas (and pit areas as much as was practical) to reduce the particulates in the air that surrounded performers. Several Educational events were cancelled because of the severity of the smoke and many schools rescheduled opera outreach performances. Performers (with the help of dressers who had water bottles always in hand) hydrated and steamed constantly throughout rehearsals and performances and powered through Opening Night and the remaining shows.

And now we come to the point as to why I thought this article should be written for *AGMAzine*. Initially, I felt this might be an interesting account of what we went through during this time. But recalling it has become something more to me. California has been hit hard by these fires. Some of our colleagues at SF Opera were directly and/or indirectly

AQI Key	
Air Quality Index (AQI) Values	Levels of Health Concern
0-50	Good
51-100	Moderate
101-150	Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups
151-200	Unhealthy
201-300	Very Unhealthy
301-500	Hazardous

affected by these disasters as were many family members, friends and neighbors. We've been emotionally roughed up, you might say. Yet, as often happens, this also brought us together. Singers such as Nicole Takesono Flowers organized benefit concerts throughout the Bay Area to raise funds for fire victims. Opera folk networked and shared stashes of masks while others offered rides to colleagues to minimize smoke exposure. And then there were the shows! Jake Heggie's lovely opera was exactly the balm we needed. Audiences wanted an escape from the loss we were all feeling, and his message of hope and friendship resonated for all of us. You could see it from the stage during curtain calls, many of the audience smiling through tears as they stood, boisterously applauding (there may have been a few tears shed onstage as well). So, I suppose I am trying to find the words to say that as a community, people in the arts are the best, and as AGMA members, we do our best to bring a bit of relief and healing to our audiences through whatever art form we practice.

*\*The Camp Fire was the deadliest and most destructive wildfire in California history. Named after Camp Creek Road, its place of origin, the fire started on November 8, 2018, in Butte County, approximately 170 miles from San Francisco. The fire caused at least 85 civilian fatalities, injured numerous civilians and firefighters, covered an area of 153,336 acres, and destroyed 18,804 structures, most of the damage occurring within the first four hours.* [http://cdfdata.fire.ca.gov/incidents/incidents\\_details\\_info?incident\\_id=2277](http://cdfdata.fire.ca.gov/incidents/incidents_details_info?incident_id=2277) ■

# San Francisco: SFO Chorister Takes A Bow



By Tom Reed  
San Francisco Opera  
Chorister 1975-2015

Roberta Bowman has been a San Francisco Opera chorister since 1975 and retired at the end of the 2018 SF Opera season in December, taking her final bow during the curtain call of *It's a Wonderful Life*. Roberta participated in approximately 3,000 performances of some 425 San Francisco Opera productions. Tom Reed wrote and read this tribute at Roberta's retirement dinner in December 2018.

Roberta and I joined the San Francisco Opera Chorus in the same year. That year, 1975, the company put on twelve operas, including big choral operas like *Il Trovatore*, *Flying Dutchman*, *The Queen of Spades*, *Simon Boccanegra*, *Andrea Chénier*, and *Norma*. And for that, we chorus newbies were paid \$4,500. Not per opera. That was for the whole year! Now, I know that doesn't sound like a lot of money to try to live on, but remember, it was 1975. Obviously, things didn't used to cost as much as they do now. Adjusting for inflation, in today's dollars that would be like living in San Francisco on \$21,000 per year, which would cover like four month's rent, and bus fare to the soup kitchen.

So, yes, it was a part-time job. We worked evenings and weekends only. So, choristers in those days took other jobs to survive. In fact, many had full-time 9-to-5 jobs, after which they would grab a bite of dinner, and head off to opera to work three or four hours each evening, seven evenings per week, plus Saturday and Sunday afternoons, for 28 straight days in a row before getting *one* single day off. And then another 28 days before the next single day off, and so on, all the way from February

through November. So, you can imagine that during staging rehearsals, which could be long and tedious, you could get *just a tad tired*. Rehearsal breaks were only 10 minutes long in those days, so many choristers didn't even bother to leave the set to take their breaks. As soon as a break was called, dozens of choristers would just lie down right there on the stage floor where they had been standing and take a nap. And it could be a *deep nap*, sometimes requiring a kick or two to get them back to their feet when break was over. So, I guess you could say that in those days a lot of the choristers used to sleep together.

Now, you choristers that are here this evening may have noticed that as a grueling opera season drags on, some do tend to get *just a wee bit* cranky and out-of-sorts. So, it's always a treasure to find somebody you could feel comfortable standing next to during staging rehearsals. I confess that more than a few times over the years I would keep an eye on where Roberta was standing. And when I knew the director was going to be picking couples, I would *innocently edge... my... way...* over to her so that the director would say, "You two!" And we always had fun.

Now, those were the days when the most SENIOR choristers ruled the roost. THEY were the big stars—well, aside from the principals, of course. And as newbies, Roberta and I and the entire class of 1975 quickly learned our place, as all newbies did. The unwritten rule was that on-stage newbies were not supposed to draw attention to themselves. We were to stay out of the senior choristers' way, preferably behind them. It was even frowned upon for us to ask questions during rehearsals. And, of course the highly coveted *chorus solos* ALWAYS went to the *most senior* choristers. So, our job as newbies was basically to be humble and deferential. And yes, the class of 1975 was a most humble and deferential lot, knowing all the while that one



Roberta taking her final bow during the curtain call of *It's a Wonderful Life*.

day WE would be the senior choristers, and it would be *OUR* turn to shine!

Then, in 1981 things really changed with the coming of the new Summer season, and the chorus became a full-time job. We became one of the very few full-time opera choruses in the country, and instead of just auditioning locally, the company started auditioning for choristers in places like LA, Chicago, Toronto and New York. Choristers moved here from all over, and literally hundreds of people were fighting to take the few available slots. Those were heady times for us!

And so, the years went by, and eventually Roberta and I were *at last* among the senior choristers! But by then it was the *newbies* who were the big stars, so we *STILL* had to shut up and be deferential!

But even with our deep sense of humility, we had fun. I remember once Roberta and I were partnered together in the big orgy scene in the last act of *Samson and Delilah*. And before Samson had a chance to push the columns apart and bring down the whole temple on top of everyone, the two of us came *pretty close* to tipping over one of the statues ourselves. Yes, when the scene called for it, she could be *pretty wild* on stage!

And once, for fun on a day off, we drove up to Bodega Bay where Alfred Hitchcock filmed *The Birds*. We went to the old schoolhouse where one of the bird attacks was filmed, and I actually got her to run screaming down the hill from the school just like the school kids did in the movie! *What an actress!* I swear you could actually see the birds chasing her!

And I'll never forget back when I was on the chorus Union committee, and to help us out, Roberta volunteered to drive all the way from the East Bay to our house in Daly City on a day off, to type up a bunch

of contract stuff for us. It was during a heat wave, and it reached *102 degrees* at the coast! I'm talking the Daly City coast, otherwise known as Fogville!! I mean, people all over town were collapsing in heaps just trying to get their stuck windows to open up for the first time ever. And there sat Roberta in our sweltering computer room typing away for hours. *What a trooper!*

We had a lot of fun over the years. And Roberta did all this while working a second job with the San Francisco Boys Chorus. And yet to this day she remains someone you want to be next to. So, in conclusion, I just want to say congratulations, Roberta, on a long, illustrious career, and most of all, for being the magic that is you! Brava! ■

## Washington/Baltimore Area

*"When it's Time to Retire From the Chorus"*



By **Nina Elizabeth Wall**, Chorister

My name is Nina Elizabeth Wall and I have just this week been retired out of the Florida Grand Opera Chorus after 40 glorious years.

When I first auditioned in 1979, I had no idea what the next 40 years would bring.

Little did I know that I would eventually sing with Luciano Pavarotti, Plácido Domingo, Sherrill Milnes, Beverly Sills and Justino Diaz to name a few. I was new

to opera, having sung in church choirs since I played the triangle at four in my church choir. When I auditioned, I only knew the alto aria from the Messiah. After I sang it, the chorus master asked if I had anything else (prepared). When I said no, he replied, "Well, sing it again." Well, he liked it and I got my first contract for the four-opera season: *Carmen*, *The Tales of Hoffmann*, *Mephistopheles* and *Faust*. Well, many years later we finally became an AGMA chorus, which helped with negotiations. I was also a delegate.

I loved all the costumes, makeup and wigs we wore. Now as I look back, I think what a glorious time I had.

I wasn't ready to retire, I wanted ONE MORE YEAR. I always told people I'm a



*Nina Wall in costume (on right).*

third alto or Mezzo and we can sing forever, LOL. Yep, my knees went before my body. That's a joke.

Well, now I'll continue singing in church, where it all started, but give praise to the chorus masters that saw fit to rehire me for 40 years.

Now **that's** an accomplishment. ■

## Texas/Oklahoma



Above, Dallas Opera shop representatives, AGMA Counsel and management gathered; left to right: AGMA members Meredith Wallace, Matt Woodbury, Lela Bell-Wesley, AGMA Midwest Counsel John Ward, AGMA members Bunny Hodges, Helen Dewey Reikofski, Kyle Hancock and Director of Artistic Administration David Lomeli.



©Jerry Johnston

After the devastation of Hurricane Harvey, The Dallas Opera raised \$2,600 for their friends at the Houston Grand Opera. Houston Grand Opera is finally BACK in its home at the Wortham Center.



©Lynn Lane

Houston Grand Opera's season began in October 2018 with a new production of *The Flying Dutchman*. Most performers used temporary dressing areas.

# Northwest



By **Nora Heiber**  
Western Executive

AGMA completed the negotiating of two agreements in the Pacific Northwest: Portland Opera and Pacific Northwest Ballet.

**Portland Opera** AGMA artists will be receiving increases ranging from 2% to 7% in compensation in each year of this



*Pacific Northwest Ballet negotiators triumph!*

new three-year agreement. Special thanks go to negotiating committee members Paul Wright, Anders Tobiason, Sherrie Van Hine, Brian Langford and Dru Rutledge, AGMA's 3rd Vice President and Northwest Area Chair George Scott and AGMA Board members Maria Leatha and Jennie Spada, who have been participating in negotiating sessions since October of last year.

In contrast, it took nine days to complete the negotiation of a four-year



*Seattle Opera's new home opened in December 2018.*

contract at **Pacific Northwest Ballet** which includes compensation increases of 3% to 3.5% for our AGMA dancers. This feat couldn't have been done without the time and effort offered by the following negotiating committee members: Miles Pertl, Leah Merchant, Maggie Mullin, Leta Biasucci, Kyle Davis, Ezra Thomson, Cecilia Iliesiu, Sarah Pasch, Ryan Cardea and Lucien Postlewaite. ■

## 2018 Metropolitan Opera Bake Sale



By **Linda Mays**  
AGMA Relief Fund  
Director of  
Development and  
Chorister

It is extraordinary to witness the spirit of collaboration, assemblage of baked goods, and tireless commitment necessary to coordinate a Bake Sale at the Metropolitan Opera to benefit the AGMA Relief Fund. The sale has become a glorious Thanksgiving tradition and on November 20, 2018, the triumphant event raised \$3,500 to benefit AGMA members/colleagues in need. This year, the Bake Sale "baton" was passed by Laura Fries to Meredith Woodend, who oversaw the copious aspects from conception to conclusion of this successful and festive event. The site was generously provided by the

Metropolitan Opera Chorus Ladies, who dedicated their lounge for the entire day and evening.

Tireless volunteers Louis Brown, Laura Fries, David Salsbery Fry, April Haines, Linda Mays, Anne Nonnenmacher, Liz Sciblo, Chelsea Shepard, Amanda Tarver, Jane Thorngren, Sara Wiedt and Carole Wright were led by Meredith Woodend, who all arrived early that morning to prepare for the sale.

By 10:00 a.m. the room was filled with delicious and gorgeous baked items for sale, consumption or auction, to be catalogued, priced and displayed. The generous contributors of these baked goods were Karen Dixon, Suzanne Fall-etti, Laura Fries, Theresa Ganley, April Haines, Gina Lapinski, David Lowe, Brandon Mayberry, Linda Mays, Abby Mitchell, Asako Nagasaki, Rose Nenchek, Anne Nonnenmacher, Christopher Schaldenbrand, Liz Sciblo, Carolyn Sielski, Barbara Simpson, Daniel Clark Smith,



*Volunteers Anne Nonnenmacher, Carole Wright, Meredith Woodend, Jane Thorngren, Linda Mays and David Salsbury Fry. Missing from the photo: Louis Brown, Laura Fries, April Haines, Liz Sciblo, Chelsea Shepard, Amanda Tarver and Sara Wiedt.*

Jane Thorngren, John Trybus, Sara Wiedt, Meredith Woodend and Carole Wright.

The legion of current and retired AGMA choristers, stage managers, stage directors, soloists and dressers created a monumental Bake Sale. Employees from every segment of the MET were the enthusiastic buyers and supporters.

The now traditional Thanksgiving Bake Sale has become a holiday party thanks to all who were involved.

The recipients of assistance from the AGMA Relief Fund will feel the benefits from of this spectacular and fun event, far into the future.

So sorry if anyone was inadvertently omitted from this "Thank You." ■

# AGMA Notice and Agency Fee Objection Policy

This notice and policy were developed to comply with applicable legal requirements. It will be published annually by AGMA. A copy also will be provided to individuals who are about to become subject to an AGMA collective bargaining agreement that includes a union security clause and to AGMA members who resign from AGMA membership.

Individuals who are AGMA members enjoy a number of benefits available to members only. These benefits include the AGMA Relief Fund; Union Privilege, insurance, health, and loan benefits; the right to attend and participate in Union meetings; the right to run for Union office and to nominate and vote for candidates for Union office; the right to participate in contract ratification and strike votes; the right to participate in development and formulation of Union policies; and the right to participate in the formulation of Union collective bargaining demands.

You have the right to decide to not be an AGMA member. If you make that decision, you forfeit the right to enjoy AGMA member-only benefits, including all of those listed above.

All individuals working under a collective bargaining agreement between AGMA and an opera, ballet, dance programming, concert, or other company producing operatic music, dance, concerts, or other types of productions containing a union security clause (referred to hereafter as an AGMA collective bargaining agreement) are required, as a condition of continued employment, to pay dues and initiation fees to AGMA. Any individuals covered by an AGMA collective bargaining agreement who elect not to be AGMA members nevertheless remain obligated, under the union security clause, to pay an agency fee to AGMA equal to regular AGMA dues and initiation fees, subject to a possible reduction as set forth below.

Each year, AGMA's auditors will prepare a report that verifies the breakdown of AGMA expenditures, by major categories of expenditures, between those that are devoted to "representational" activities and those that arguably are devoted to "non-representational" activities (the Audit Report). Representational expenditures include those for: negotiations with employers; enforcing collective bargaining agreements; meetings with employer representatives; member and staff committee meetings concerned with matters relating to employment practices and/or collective bargaining provisions; discussion of work-related issues with employers; handling employees' work-related problems through grievance and arbitration procedures, before administrative agencies or in informal meetings; union governance meetings; and union administration, litigation, publications, and professional services relating to any of the above. Arguably non-representational expenditures are those for: community service and charitable contributions; lobbying; legislative

efforts and political activities; members-only benefits; external organizing; and litigation which is not germane to collective bargaining, contract administration or grievance adjustment or advancement of the employment-related interests of AGMA-represented employees. The most recent Audit Report indicated that approximately 97.9% of AGMA's expenditures were devoted to representational activities.

A non-member has the right to object to financially contributing to AGMA's expenditures for non-representational activities. Any non-member who wishes to make such an objection must submit an objection between December 1 through December 31 (the Annual Objection Period) to the AGMA Membership Department Supervisor, 1430 Broadway, New York, New York 10018. All objections must contain the objector's current home or mailing address. Non-members who submit an objection within the Annual Objection Period will have their agency fees (and, if applicable, initiation fees) reduced for the 12 months beginning January 1 and running through December 31 to reflect only the portion of AGMA expenditures spent on representational activities. Individuals who have not previously been subject to an AGMA collective bargaining agreement with a union security clause and who decide to not become AGMA members, and AGMA members who resign their membership, will have thirty days from receipt of a copy of the AGMA notice and agency fee objection policy to submit an objection, and if they do submit a timely objection, their agency fees will be reduced for the balance of that calendar year. Non-members desiring to retain "objector" status must renew their objections during each Annual Objection Period.

The most recent Audit Report will be provided to non-members who submitted timely objections. Timely objectors have the option of challenging AGMA's verified calculation of the reduced agency fees/initiation fees before an impartial arbitrator appointed by the American Arbitration Association. In the event of such a challenge, a portion of the fees charged to such challengers reflecting sums reasonably in dispute will be held in escrow pending the arbitrator's decision. Details concerning the arbitration process will be provided to any objectors who challenge the fees they are charged.

Before anyone decides to become an objector, we would hope they would take into consideration that without the concerted political activity of the union movement many of the most important legislation that protects and benefits working women and men—such as the Social Security Act, the Family Medical Leave Act, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, minimum wage laws and the Occupational Safety and Health Act—would never have been enacted. The role of organized labor remains even more vital today. In our opinion, not only activities characterized as "representational," but also community service, legislative activity, lobbying, political activities, external organizing, and litigation related to broader issues of concern to Union members as citizens, are critically necessary for the improvement of working conditions of all members we represent. It is for this reason that we believe that it is essential for AGMA to support such activities that benefit all working people in the United States. We hope you will decide to be part of this important effort. ■

## Weingarten

"If my responses to your questions could lead to my being disciplined or terminated, or adversely affect my personal working conditions, I respectfully request that you summon my union representative or give me the opportunity to call my union representative. Until my union representative arrives, I choose not to answer any questions."

# AGMA Fund Office



**By Derek Davis**  
Executive Director  
AGMA Retirement  
Plan and Health Fund

At the May Board of Governors meeting, I was able to provide the following update on the activities of the AGMA Fund Office.

The Fund Office is working to bring our new database up to full functionality which will include an online member portal to check employer contributions for Retirement and eligibility for the Health Fund. This system is also being designed to allow us to collect contribution data from employers in electronic form. We are aiming for a September 2019 debut and all eligible members will receive log-in information from the Fund Office when it is ready. If you want to get an email notice when the new system is ready and want to sign up to give your email consent to receive our mailings electronically, please complete and send us your information using this form: <https://bit.ly/31F5Zzt> OR

[http://www.agmaretirement-health.org/pdf\\_docs/june2019/AGMA\\_Electronic\\_consent\\_2019f.pdf](http://www.agmaretirement-health.org/pdf_docs/june2019/AGMA_Electronic_consent_2019f.pdf)

The AGMA Retirement Plan now manages the employer contributions made on behalf of over 7,000 members – both current and inactive members. The Plan was set up in 1995 to replace the AGMA Pension Plan and the Trustees direct a professional investment manager to invest the funds. Currently, they are invested in roughly a 50% equity—50% fixed income split to reflect the diverse population that are our participants. Last year, members earned 7.2% on their balance. Our investments were \$74,732,000 at August 31, 2018 and are now \$78,748,000 at April 30, 2019. The annual statements that were mailed and emailed at the end of March reflect a \$20 annual account fee to the members, the first time it has been lowered from \$30.

The AGMA Health Fund Plan A continues to provide medical coverage for about 500 members on a year-round basis. Our plan renews on September 1, and our Trustees continue to closely monitor the costs and benefits levels of the coverage offered through Aetna.

AGMA Health Fund Plan B continues to provide reimbursement of eligible medical expenses to members. Last fiscal year, there was \$650,000 in checks paid to members as compared to \$613,000 the prior year. While some members continue to have a Plan B balance from before September 2014 (when the Affordable Care Act made significant changes to how

Plan B accounts could be used), there are now about 200 members who are receiving new contributions into the Plan.

Under the rules of the Plan, I also want to note that members with old Plan B money can forfeit unused account assets up to \$500 a year, even if they do claim some small amount. The forfeitures are used to offset Fund expenses. Activity does not stop the process since all of the contributions were received more than three years ago. We will work to make this messaging clearer as we go forward to help members maximize their claims.

One of the responsibilities of the Trustees and the Fund Office is to regularly check and audit employer contributions in order to ensure that the correct contribution payments are being made. We have wrapped up three audits this year—Ballet Hispanico, Pennsylvania Ballet and the Metropolitan Opera—and are setting out to review at least two large employers in the year ahead.

Finally, behind all of this work, the Trustees of the Health and Retirement Funds are fully engaged in a strategic planning process. This group has met regularly over the past year and are taking a detailed and fresh view at the benefits offered through the Health Fund and the Retirement Plan as well as looking at the overall operations and efficiency of the Fund Office to better serve all participants.

Please call us (212) 765-3664 to let us know how we can help you use the benefits you have earned. ■

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## Union Plus

Check out their website ([www.unionplus.org](http://www.unionplus.org)) for benefits and discounts such as:

**Money:** Credit card program, credit counseling

**Home:** Professional moving discounts, home security, mortgage program, flower discounts, etc.

**Travel & Fun:** Car rental, vacation tours, concerts and events, hotels, water and theme parks, etc.

**Auto:** Auto buying, auto club, Goodyear tire discount

**Insurance:** Life, auto, homeowners, renters, accident insurance plan, pet health insurance

**Health:** Retiree health insurance, dental, prescriptions, vision and hearing discounts

**Education:** Union Plus Free College and Union Plus Scholarships

## Greetings from Francesca Zambello

Dear Colleagues and Friends:

As an Honorary Trustee of the AGMA Relief Fund, I want to take a minute of your time to tell you about their valiant work. I am a leader of an opera company, but I am also a member of AGMA (American Guild of Musical Artists) for over thirty years. I try to understand the job on both sides of all union issues, but right now this goes way beyond those matters. All of us in the arts are being called upon now to help many people in need around the world, but I want to talk about folks who are really in our "inner family".

Just to check, do you know about the work of the AGMA Relief Fund? It is a not-for-profit charitable organization, *wholly dependent on contributions*. The Fund's mission is to confidentially provide both financial and other temporary assistance to AGMA members, when accidents, illness or other traumatic events threaten their careers, health or future, and to do so with compassion and the preservation of dignity.

How does someone get help? A member calls AGMA and is referred to the intake department of The Actors Fund, who administer the Relief Fund.

After assessment, the qualifying member will get assistance provided through the immense network of services and assistance. There are offices in New York, Chicago and Los Angeles, but members can be helped in all states.

A lot of things can happen unexpectedly like hurricanes, fires, HIV/AIDS, disabilities, age, accidents, and addictions are some of the categories that can cause emergency needs for singers, dancers and stage personnel. A few examples of emergency assistance are in the form of doctor's payments, medical supplies, bills, hospital costs, dental, funeral, etc. No one likes to think about these things, but they happen to all of us and sometimes we or others we know need help.

Whether you are a performing artist, patron of the arts, friend or a caring humanitarian, if you can contribute anything, any amount, it will send a message of hope to the most fragile members in our artistic community, while they are in the throes of a crisis, whether it be physical, emotional or financial. The heroic mission of the AGMA Relief Fund is often the only lifeline for their situation, which can be fraught with fear and loneliness.

We only reach out once a year, and we never share your contact information. You can be sure that your donation is reaching folks who make up our extended artistic family. A gift of any size makes a difference. Thank you for your consideration.

With kindest regards,

*'Cesca*  
Francesca Zambello

©Ken Howard



### Donation Form — Please send to:

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

Phone: (800) 543-2462; E-mail: [susan@musicalartists.org](mailto:susan@musicalartists.org) Make checks payable to the AGMA Relief Fund

My contribution to the AGMA Relief Fund is (contributions \$25 and over may be charged to your **Visa or MasterCard**):

\$500 \_\_\_\_\_ \$100 \_\_\_\_\_ \$50 \_\_\_\_\_ \$25 \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Card #: \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ Bank V Code: \_\_\_\_\_ (last 3 digits on back of card)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

In memory of: \_\_\_\_\_ In honor of: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of person to receive acknowledgment letter: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# AGMA Audited Financial Statements

## INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

**TO THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS OF AGMA:** We have audited the accompanying financial statements of American Guild of Musical Artists (the "Guild"), which comprise the statements of financial position as of December 31, 2017 and 2016, and the related statements of activities and cash flows for the years then ended. Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of these financial statements in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America; this includes the design, implementation and maintenance of internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

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 involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgment, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal

control relevant to the entity's preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control. Accordingly, we express no such opinion. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial statements.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

In our opinion, the financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the American Guild of Musical Artists as of December 31, 2017 and 2016, and the changes in its net assets and its cash flows for the years then ended in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

– BUCHBINDER TUNICK & COMPANY LLP

## AGMA Statements of Financial Position

December 31, 2017 and 2016

	2017	2016		2017	2016
<b>ASSETS:</b>			<b>Other assets:</b>		
<b>Cash and cash equivalents:</b>			Cash - security deposits	97,580	97,843
Operating accounts	\$1,123,081	\$523,647	Prepaid expenses	53,044	22,274
Money market funds	35,724	20,248	Security deposits	48,467	48,805
Total cash and cash equivalents	1,158,805	543,895	Total other assets	199,091	168,922
Certificates of deposit	104,484	103,959	Net property assets	65,045	33,059
Other assets	-	29,775	<b>Total assets</b>	<b>\$15,377,389</b>	<b>\$13,981,664</b>
<b>Investments, at fair value:</b>			<b>LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS:</b>		
U.S. treasury obligations	12,032,341	11,492,665	<b>Liabilities:</b>		
Mutual funds and exchange-traded funds	1,484,842	1,278,320	Accounts payable and accrued expenses	\$ 1,023,986	\$ 868,326
Total investments	13,517,183	12,770,985	Security deposits payable	97,802	97,802
<b>Receivables:</b>			Total liabilities	1,121,788	966,128
Dues	332,241	330,668	Commitments and contingencies		
Other	540	401	Net assets - unrestricted	14,255,601	13,015,536
Total receivables	332,781	331,069	<b>Total liabilities and net assets</b>	<b>\$15,377,389</b>	<b>\$13,981,664</b>

## Statements of Activities

For the years ended December 31, 2017 and 2016

	2017	2016
<b>REVENUE:</b>		
<b>Membership revenue:</b>		
Working dues	\$2,673,858	\$2,539,989
Basic dues	604,370	607,757
Initiation fees	334,632	313,878
Reinstatement fees	14,135	14,234
Total membership revenue	3,626,995	3,475,858
Visa fees	1,296,250	1,209,251
Unrealized appreciation in fair value of investments	153,353	8,691
Realized gain on investments	83,944	18,194
Interest and dividends, net of investment management fees of \$13,974 for the year ended December 31, 2017	24,936	9,452

	2017	2016
Life insurance proceeds	-	175,350
Other	39,572	45,526
<b>Total revenue</b>	<b>5,225,050</b>	<b>4,942,322</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
<b>Program services:</b>		
Member services	2,566,812	2,487,469
<b>Supporting activities:</b>		
Administrative expenses	1,418,173	1,381,933
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>3,984,985</b>	<b>3,869,402</b>
Change in net assets	1,240,065	1,072,920
<b>Net assets - unrestricted</b>		
Beginning of year	13,015,536	11,942,616
<b>End of year</b>	<b>\$14,255,601</b>	<b>\$13,015,536</b>

## Statements of Cash Flows

For the years ended December 31, 2017 and 2016

	2017	2016
<b>CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES:</b>		
Change in net assets	\$1,240,065	\$1,072,920
Adjustments to reconcile change in net assets to net cash provided by operating activities:		
Depreciation and amortization	16,844	12,148
Unrealized (appreciation) in fair value of investments	(153,353)	(8,691)
Realized (gain) on investments	(83,944)	(18,194)
Changes in operating assets and liabilities:		
Decrease in other assets	29,755	260
(Increase) in dues receivable	(1,573)	(52,840)
(Increase) in other receivable	(139)	(48)
Decrease (increase) in cash - security deposits	263	(97)
(Increase) decrease in prepaid expenses	(30,770)	4,284
Decrease (increase) in security deposits	338	(397)
Increase in accounts payable and accrued expenses	155,660	69,992
Net cash provided by operating activities	1,173,166	1,079,337

	2017	2016
Cash flows from investing activities:		
(Purchase of) property assets	(48,830)	(29,511)
(Purchase of) certificates of deposit	(525)	(1,243)
(Purchase of) Investments	(47,157,571)	(28,155,384)
Sale of Investments	46,648,670	26,632,643
Net cash (used in) investing activities	(558,256)	(1,553,495)
Net increase (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents	614,910	(474,158)
<b>Cash and cash equivalents:</b>		
Beginning of year	543,895	1,018,053
<b>End of year</b>	<b>\$ 1,158,805</b>	<b>\$ 543,895</b>

**FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
ARE AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST.**

1430 BROADWAY 14th FLOOR  
NEW YORK, NY 10018



**CONTACT LIST OF ASSISTANCE AND MEMBER-ONLY SERVICES**

**Actors Federal Credit Union**

(212) 869-8926 in NYC (8:00 p.m. EST)  
actorsfcu.com

**The Actors Fund**

<https://actorsfund.org> info@actorsfund.org  
New York City (800) 221-7303  
Chicago (312) 372-0989  
Los Angeles (888) 825-0911

**AGMA Relief Fund**

Donations (800) 543-AGMA (2462)  
susan@musicalartists.org  
Intake New York City (212) 221-7300 ext. 119  
intakeny@actorsfund.org  
Intake Chicago (312) 372-0989  
shaught@actorsfund.org  
Intake Los Angeles (323) 933-9244 ext. 55  
intakela@actorsfund.org

**AGMA Retirement and Health**

(Plan A, AGMA Retirement Plan and AGMA Health Plan)  
(212) 765-3664  
www.agmafunds.org  
agmaretirement\_health@yahoo.com

**AGMA Health Plan B**

("Administrative Services Only")  
(866) 263-1185 (Toll free)  
(516) 394-9443 (Outside of the U.S.)  
www.asonet.com

**Artists Health Insurance Resource Center**

New York City (917) 281-5975  
Los Angeles (855) 491-3357  
www.actorsfund.org/services-and-programs/  
artists-health-insurance-resource-center

**The Career Center**

(formerly The Actors Work Program)  
<https://actorsfund.org/services-and-programs/career-center>

New York City (212) 221-7300 ext. 259  
careercentereast@actorsfund.org  
Los Angeles (323) 933-9244 ext. 450  
careercenterwest@actorsfund.org

**Career Transition For Dancers**

New York City (917) 281-5992  
pschwadron@actorsfund.org  
Chicago (312) 414-0500  
mlanghout@actorsfund.org  
Los Angeles (323) 330-2472  
skozak@actorsfund.org

<https://actorsfund.org/services-and-programs/career-transition-dancers>

**Union Plus**

(800) 472-2005; (202) 293-5330  
www.unionplus.org