

WINTER 2020 | VOLUME 105 | ISSUE 1

Equity NEWS

ACTORS' EQUITY ASSOCIATION



AGING & ACHIEVING

STAYING ACTIVE IN THE INDUSTRY FOR DECADES

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ActorsFund.org

BROADWAY CARES/EQUITY FIGHTS AIDS

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BroadwayCares.org

ACTORS' EQUITY FOUNDATION

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ActorsEquityFoundation.org

ACTORS' FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

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ActorsFCU.com

EQUITY-LEAGUE BENEFIT FUNDS

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EquityLeague.org

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2020
YEAR OF THE STAGE MANAGER





FROM THE PRESIDENT RAISING THE STANDARDS

If you ask a stage manager or actor to cite a common adage of the theatre, many of them will respond “The show must go on.” As artists, we take seriously our responsibility to deliver the show

to the audience that gathers to spend a couple hours in the dark with the stories we tell. In fact, we believe in it so strongly that we tend to internalize it more than we realize.

Over the summer, I saw a social media post from a major Equity theater, announcing a performance cancellation because an actor had been injured. This is a no-win situation for the performer. There’s often an incredible amount of pressure to go on sick or injured, because not being able to do so means that the show won’t happen. Too often, we cave to that pressure.

For most workers, the answer is simple: When you’re sick, you take a sick day. For those of us who are both workers and artists, the ability to actually do so comes down to whether the theater has hired understudies.

Having proper coverage is unquestionably the right thing to do. Unfortunately, it’s not always the choice that employers make. I want to live in a world where understudies are hired for every single show. Where we don’t have to ask ourselves whether we risk our careers by being sick or injured. That becomes a lot easier when we value our self-worth and agency – as artists *and* as employees.

Ultimately, when we stand together, when we collectively assert that we deserve protections and fair wages, we can raise the standards. And this conversation goes much deeper than understudies.

Recently, I spent several days in California meeting with Equity members and state legislators. You may know that a new law has taken effect in California: AB5. It’s meant to stop the misclassification of workers as independent contractors. While the law covers a broad swath of industries (ride share companies, for example), it also has significant implications for theatrical artists. We’re paying close attention to it not just because we have so many members in California, but because we expect other states to pattern legislation after this model.

Some of the proposed carveouts could have a major impact on Equity members, but an even greater effect on those who aren’t yet in our union. So we surveyed California actors

and stage managers about their non-union experience. 82% reported having been asked to work for less than minimum wage. 50% reported that they felt pressure to perform sick or injured. 98% were not provided health care.

For too long, the theatre industry has relied on a two-class system of employment: those who belong to unions, and those who do not – and thus lack even the most basic employment rights. And it’s important to note, too, that long before the Dynamex case that led to AB5, any reasonable reading of California law would have categorized us as employees. As actors, for example, we arrive at a scheduled time, we stand where we are told to stand. We say the words we’re given. We wear the clothes that are provided. Decades of lax enforcement do not negate these truths.

We must change these dynamics, so that everyone who works in theatre has the same basic protections as those in other industries. Minimum wage. Unemployment insurance. Workers’ compensation. This will only happen if we collectively demand it.

As artists, our work can be fulfilling, inspiring and impactful for both audiences and economies. It can also be extremely dangerous. After my first AB5-related meeting, with a California legislative staffer visiting New York, I went back to Bellevue Hospital to be with a dear friend who’d suffered a major injury while working a one-day load-in as an overhire stagehand. Because that Off-Broadway theater had hired him as an employee – even though he was only scheduled for a few hours – he was covered by workers’ comp. Don’t get me wrong; it was an awful situation for everyone involved. But he’s able to focus on his recovery, rather than tens of thousands in medical bills for a two-week hospital stay. He doesn’t have to choose between groceries and PT. *That* is the difference between being employed or simply being handed a check at the end of your work call.

And because we know that producing theatre is hard, and that we do well when the industry does well, we’ve used the AB5 conversation to push for support for small nonprofit theaters. In February, state lawmakers introduced a request for an additional \$20 million in California arts funding. The state budget process is a long road, but we will stay the course. Because we’re worth it.

— Kate Shindle

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

THE NECESSITY OF DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

Over the last several months, California, New Jersey and New York became the first three states to pass legislation protecting against hair discrimination, a form of bias against Black people and other people of color based on their hair texture or style. Hair discrimination often means workers are required to drastically alter their appearance in order to get a job or stay employed. These new measures are not only necessary to make office environments safer; many of you have shared how our industry has discouraged you from wearing your hair naturally, or has failed to supply stylists who understood how to care for Black hair.

Equity member Viola Davis was among those who spoke out against hair discrimination. Davis, who also has a film production company, publicly vowed before the new law was passed that her business would respect Black performers and their natural hair. This change happened because employees and artists stood up for themselves against unfair practices.

This change would not have come were it not for people like Davis asserting their agency by refusing to work in an environment that discriminates against them and treats them unfairly. In a competitive industry, we are often paralyzed with fear of rocking the boat. That doesn't mean we can't speak up for ourselves to ensure that we are respected. Standing up for yourself and in solidarity with your colleagues is the tide by which all boats rise.

Whether it is about the depiction of marginalized groups onstage, abuse of power or harassment in the workplace, difficult and important conversations are coming to the forefront of our national consciousness. These conversations can be difficult because we're afraid to say or do the wrong thing or we're upset because our worldview has been disrupted. We may be tempted to ignore issues, or to make them about us when they are really not. That only makes things worse.

As I have written in earlier columns, my daughter is of mixed race. I share the worry and concerns that mothers of all people of color carry. Watching her navigate the world has made me acutely aware of the racial inequity in all parts of society, inequities that I may have never seen based solely on my own experience.

The process of learning about how others experience the world is difficult. My daughter has long flown the nest, and I am still learning that oppression hides in plain sight. If I am surprised and disoriented even now after raising my daughter, I

understand why many of you may be even more surprised.

Some weeks ago, I recognized the same type of surprise, disorientation and fear play out on stage. You may recall an incident that went viral on social media, when a talkback for *Slave Play* grew heated as an audience member began to argue with playwright Jeremy O. Harris. The actors were present as well, and this incident reminded me of how different theatre is from other industries. These difficult conversations are happening everywhere, but in the arts, they are often the focal point of the story. Sensitive topics may come up backstage or in the rehearsal room, yes, but they are also outwardly facing. And when that happens, as we observed at *Slave Play* and countless other talkbacks, theatre artists are publicly vulnerable to difficult conversations that do not always go well.

Having these conversations is vital to the survival of theatre as an art form, and to ensure dynamic, truthful storytelling and to moving society forward.

Our challenge though is to ensure that they aren't left to the people who are fighting to make change or have been historically disadvantaged. Our challenge is to have these conversations with ourselves and then each other. We must amplify these conversations and make space for change.

Equity is here to help facilitate these conversations in a healthy way. The Equal Employment Opportunity Committee has launched a seminar series highlighting under-represented and federally protected demographics, such as age, race, sex, gender and disability. These dialogues allow members to talk and listen to one another, beginning those difficult conversations that can lead to progressive change like the new hair anti-discrimination laws.

I will never stop the personal work I need to do to be able to see systemic oppression and learn my relationship to it, in order to best combat it at work and in the world. I want to encourage all of you to have courage in the face of difficult conversations, too, and I hope you'll join us as the EEOC Dialogues roll out over the coming year. Our common goal should be that all of us feel safe and respected within the theatre community, with the audiences we entertain, and in our everyday lives.



— Mary McColl

TAX TIPS FOR THE NEW YEAR

BY SANDRA KARAS, DIRECTOR/CHAIR VITA

As we begin our second filing season since the enactment of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA), signed by the president in December 2017, we have a few reminders and a few instructions to help you prepare for the coming year.

DEDUCT OR NOT TO DEDUCT?

Remember when your Employee Business Expenses were eliminated from your tax return last year? Well, that hasn't changed and it's not scheduled to change until 2025 at the earliest. But stay tuned for updates on restoring those valuable deductions! Our efforts at lobbying our members of Congress (House and Senate) are yielding positive results in support of tax reform for Performing Artists all across the country! We'll keep you posted.

The rules remain the same this year as last year, however: No business expenses may be deducted by employees on the federal return, but if you live in New York or California and one or two other state jurisdictions, you may still use those deductions on your itemized schedules. A little help from the states!

If you have income from self-employment (1099s, independent contractor earnings, fees with no tax withheld), you may still deduct the expenses that apply to that income. For example, if you earn money from recorded books, print advertising, workshop or development income, directing, composing, writing and other independent gigs, go ahead and reduce that income with the business expenses that apply to it – and many, if not most, of them do! For more information, contact your tax advisor or ask us at VITA and we'll be happy to help. Our VITA worksheets outline the ordinary and necessary show biz expenses, as usual.

Caveat: Don't confuse real self-employment from your work under union collectively-bargained contract work. Your union work is paid by your employer and you are an employee when you are engaged in that work. You are not self-employed under those contracts. For those who need additional information about this important distinction, get in touch with your union reps as they are the best sources of information about your union contracts. Resist relying on friends, the deputy, the company manager or anything on social media.



Equity members await free tax advisory services the first day they are available.

HEALTH INSURANCE REQUIREMENT PENALTY ELIMINATED

As part of the TCJA, the penalty tax for not having health insurance has been eliminated. The Marketplace insurance purchase options are still in place for those who want to obtain their own policies, as is Medicaid coverage for those who income-qualify to be covered under their state plans.

EXTENDER BILLS

On December 20th, 2019, Congress extended some tax provisions that were set to expire at the end of 2019. Among those that affect most of us are:

- Mortgage insurance premiums (PMIs);
- Exclusion for qualified mortgage debt;
- Changing the medical deduction back to the 7.5% floor;
- Qualified tuition and related expenses deduction; and
- Reinstated employer credit for paid family and medical leave and work opportunity credit. There are other sweeping changes proposed and we will keep you apprised as we learn more.

VITA WORKSHEETS ONLINE

VITA worksheets are online in the member portal and can be used by any member with any tax preparation service. If you will be using your VITA member benefit, be sure you have all of the worksheets completed and the documentation required before you come in for tax prep assistance.

EXTRA ASSISTANCE

Volunteers are ready to help! Visit the New York Equity office at 165 West 46th Street, 14th Floor, New York, NY 10036 or call (212) 921-2548. You can also learn more in the member portal including how to find your local VITA office at ActorsEquity.org/VITA.

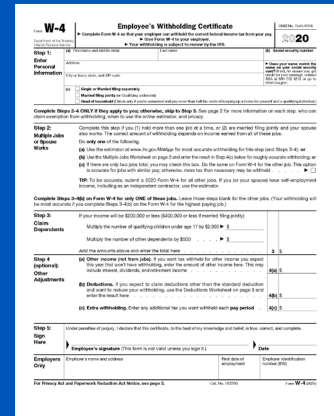


NEW W-4 FORM

Just when you thought you had gotten the hang of completing your W-4 form – the one that your new employer has you fill out to report your marital status and other confusing information about deductions and dependents – they have created a new one that doesn't ask about most of that! Yikes! Let's start with the basics.

The new W-4 form is a one-page form with several worksheet attachments. In order to file in the safest and most correct fashion, you do not have to do any calculations to complete the form.

The 2020 W-4 form.



STEP 1.

The top part asks for your name, your social security number and your current address. (Where do you want your W-2 form to be mailed to you next year, if you can't obtain your wage information online next January?) Next is your filing status. This has changed from the old form.

There are only three choices now:

- a) Single or Married Filing Separately;
- b) Married Filing Jointly or
- c) Head of Household (unmarried and have dependent household members).

Our recommendation for all entertainment professionals is to select Single or Married Filing Separately. The reason for this is that performing artists – whether or not they are married or have dependents – usually have more than one employer during the year. Because each employer does not know about the others, they withhold tax based only on their wages to you, as if you have no other earnings. As a result, many workers have too little tax withholding on many or all of their W-2s each year, often resulting in taxes due when they file returns. Married people almost always have more than one employer because each spouse has at least one job, so the same problem occurs and it can be magnified if each spouse has several employers.

STEP 2.

This directs you to the worksheets to estimate your earnings, including self-employment. We recommend skipping this step because, in our experience, performers have never been able to rely on predicting their income each year, especially before they get the jobs (unless they have a long-running theatre gig, a recurring TV job or some other predictable income). Since you can't predict yours, go on to Step 3.

STEP 3.

This is the section where you calculate your qualifying children and other dependents. If you support others and your income is below \$200K if single or \$400K if married, complete this section.

STEP 4.

This step says it's optional as it asks for more predictions, such as:

- a) income from other jobs or
- b) deductions that exceed your standard deduction (\$12,200 for single, \$24,400 for married).

Remember that show biz deductions do not count! The only deductions that count are State, Local and Real Estate taxes (limited to \$10K), Mortgage interest, Charitable Contributions and Medical Expenses that exceed 10% of your total income. Since most of you won't exceed the standard deduction, you won't have anything to add here. Lastly, they ask you to

- c) voluntarily ask to have additional withholding you want to have paid in on your behalf from the job you are about to start.

Again, since you can't predict how much extra tax you might need to have them withhold, you probably won't put anything on this line either.

STEP 5.

Where does that leave us? Step 5 asks you for your signature and the date you signed the form. Then you're done.

Conclusion: Our best advice is to check the box Single or Married Filing Separately on your W-4 form. And, unless you support other dependents in your home, you'll go from STEP 1 directly to STEP 5, sign the form and call it a day.

By the way, you won't be asked to complete a new W-4 form unless you're starting a new job. You may, however, request to submit a new W-4 for any current employer if you would simply like to update your filing status, dependents or withholding (have more tax taken out).



I'M STILL HERE: AGING AND LONGEVITY IN THE THEATRE

BY GABRIELA GESELOWITZ

Marjorie Horne was about 23 when she got her Equity Card. It was for a chorus contract, earning \$100 a week in summer stock in Michigan's upper peninsula. While rehearsing the third production of the summer, producers ran out of money, and on her very first union contract, they had to use the bond to send her home. Horne was undaunted:

"It was very clear when I was offered my card, there was no going back," she said. "I just looked totally ahead and was there."

That year was 1967, and now Horne is a successful stage manager and Equity councilor who has been working in the industry for over fifty years.

Theatre is for all ages, and that's for audiences and artists alike. For those who have made their careers on or backstage, the industry isn't just a youthful pursuit, but a lifelong occupation. Despite its reputation to the contrary, successful theatre professionals can achieve career and financial stability. Equity members in particular have access to protections that give them the freedom to age on their own terms, and stay active in the industry as senior citizens. Many actors and stage managers slow down or cease working in later years due to dwindling job opportunities, health necessity or personal desire. But some artists continue working well into their sixties, seventies or beyond.

Why keep working at an age when their peers are retiring? Do decades of experience bring the luxury to choose when and how you participate in theatre, or does the hustle last forever?

Marjorie Horne says "hello" to Iron Man at a Stan Lee tribute she recently managed.

Equity News spoke with several working members about aging in the theatre, changing opportunities and, for some, how the drive to make art never goes away.

"I have always thought that I wanted to do this until I die," said actor Anita Hollander, 64.

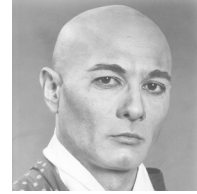
"Actors don't retire. Do actors retire? I'm not retiring," asserted actor Sally Wingert, 62.

The average age of retirement in the United States is 65 for men and 63 for women, thanks in part to Social Security, though that number is likely to rise as Americans have greater difficulty acquiring the resources to stop working. Most would not likely guess that theatre actors could be among those who can choose to retire and live off a nest egg. However, Equity offers a 401(k) plan, and as members reach their 60s, they may start collecting the pension that they have been feeding through union contracts over the course of their career.

Even though Equity affords protections for members as they age, no one spoke of that as a motivation for joining the union. Some members had no idea what Equity was when they joined, and others recalled wanting to earn their card as a sign of prestige, only appreciating later the extent of the practical benefits it would afford.

"I never thought of old age," said Delphi Harrington, 82. "Who would be called an actor and think about old age?"

"It wasn't that I was particularly mature or thinking ahead. Certainly I was not thinking about retirement in the way that I should have been," said Wingert. "The fact is I have told



"THE SYSTEM HAS OPENED UP MORE, IT HAS BEEN OPENING UP MORE FOR THE ASIAN AMERICAN, IN THE LAST TEN YEARS OR SO."

— ERNEST ABUBA



"I THINK IT'S A HUGE CREDIT TO THE BUSINESS THAT I'VE NOT FELT AGEISM AT ALL."

— BOB BENNETT



“THERE’S A PATRONIZING ATTITUDE PEOPLE HAVE ABOUT AGING THAT IN SOME WAY YOU’RE DIMINISHED. I DON’T FEEL DIMINISHED. I FEEL EXPANDED, RICHER, DEEPER, MORE VARIOUS, STRONGER!”

— DELPHI HARRINGTON

so many young performers that I’m working with currently that it is the complete and utter gift of my union to have a solvent, significant pension, and those are going the way of the dodo bird.”

“As a 62-year-old performer that knows I’m going to be using my pension within the next decade, I could not be more grateful that I joined my union when I did,” she added.

With exceptions, members can usually begin collecting on their pension at 65, and they must by age 70.5. Many Equity members belong to SAG-AFTRA as well, and may be pulling funds from multiple pensions, in addition to Social Security payouts. But finances can be a complicated, frustrating matter, as actor Dale Soules, 73, learned firsthand.

“In the years of the recession things weren’t so jolly,” she recalled. “I went to The Actors Fund and talked with them about what to do. I applied for food stamps and after difficulty reapplying for unemployment, it came through – for \$67 a week.

Soules’s fortune improved, first with *Hands on a Hardbody* (her seventh Broadway show), and then, after a career predominantly onstage, when she became a series regular on *Orange is the New Black*. And then, in what she described as a “perfect financial storm,” she, by law, had to begin collecting her Equity pension

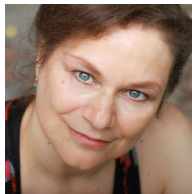
and Social Security, and along with her television work this moved her to a higher tax bracket. She also took a hit from the new tax laws that limited her ability to claim deductions... and then got audited. During that process she received a history of her earnings under Equity contracts over 50 years, and it totaled just under \$500,000 - an average of \$10,000 a year.

“I would not have been able to survive a number of dry patches in my career if it weren’t for the fact I live in a rent-controlled apartment,” she admitted. “The day I can’t make the four flight walk-up things may get a little tricky but for the moment I’m still in shape and it’s like having a free gym!

“Actors often subsidize their own careers, and they subsidize the theatre,” she reflected. “But I do have that pension. And whatever I lost in taxes, even if I were to lose everything I made I would be OK. I could get by because of social security and that pension.”

Some stories are more serene. Stage manager Bob Bennett, 75, began taking his pension when it became available while continuing to work, stage managing fewer shows each season. He doesn’t want to leave the theatre, but the pension allows him to take fewer jobs and pursue other passions in his new spare time.

“It makes it possible for me to do some of the things that I might not be



“I HAVE ALWAYS THOUGHT THAT I WANTED TO DO THIS UNTIL I DIE.”

— ANITA HOLLANDER

able to do as freely," said Bennett, who is a long-distance hiker. "It's one of the great benefits of our union."

"I think it's a huge credit to the business that I've not felt ageism at all," he added, "I don't feel it from my cast; I don't feel it from my crew. The most I hear is, why am I still working? Because I like to. I don't know that I'd find that in other businesses."

Others have not been as fortunate in avoiding discrimination.

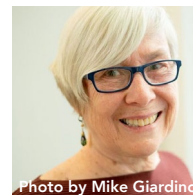
"There's a patronizing attitude people have about aging that in some way you're diminished," said Harrington, who moderated an Equity panel on ageism in the theatre this past spring. "I don't feel diminished. I feel expanded, richer, deeper, more various, stronger! I don't like people to make assumptions about me."

Some theatre artists have actually been denied roles based on their age.

"I've lost work because I was honest," says Marjorie Johnson. She recalls an employer asking her age, and when she answered honestly, they told her they thought she was younger, and she lost the part. It is actually prohibited by federal law to discriminate against anyone 40 or older based on their age, and anyone in a similar situation should contact Equity, but Johnson no longer makes her age public.

"I just thought, 'Oh, I guess I shouldn't have said that,' and so from that point on I just don't," she said.

"I do think that roles are harder to find for women as we age," added Greta Lambert, 63. "They're not impossible, but for example my first season here [at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival]



**"IT WAS VERY CLEAR
WHEN I WAS OFFERED
MY CARD, THERE WAS
NO GOING BACK."**

— MARJORIE HORNE

Greta Lambert with Equity member James Bowen in *Driving Miss Daisy* at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival in 2015.





“AS LONG AS I’M STILL FUNCTIONING AND MY BRAIN IS STILL FUNCTIONING, I’M IN IT FOR THE LONG HAUL.”

— MARJORIE JOHNSON

there would have been six to eight shows where I could have had a role as a young leading lady, and now there’s one show, maybe two in a year where there’s an age-appropriate role.”

“Usually directors like to hire young people and make them look older,” said Virginia Wing, 82, noting that even roles written as older characters are no guarantee.

Many professionals, however, have been surprised to find that their golden years are some of their best working ones.

“When I reached my fifties, I entered into probably the most significant decade of work that I’ve had in my life and it seems to be continuing,” said Wingert, who credits ample job opportunities in the Twin Cities, “Any given year I have worked between 35 and 60 actor work weeks.”

“Actors more than stage managers have the option of not retiring,” explained Horne, since at least some plays have characters of advanced ages that are cast appropriately. And yet, she too is still working, both new and recurring gigs like the Tony Awards.

“I’m making more money than I had ever seen in my whole life in a year. It is nuts,” she said. “I’m still putting into my pension because I’m still working on contract a couple of times a year.”

The land of semi-retirement can be a fertile one, as members work on their own terms. For some, that means declining to take understudy roles, or a refusal to audition. Stepping away from solely acting or stage managing may also mean broadening one’s theatrical horizons, pursuing other technical work, directing, writing or teaching.

Lambert lives in Alabama, and while that meant passing on New York and the opportunities it offers, it also meant that she found an intimate home, where there’s always a way she can participate in the theatre, and where she runs into audience members at the supermarket. She has been part of the

same company on and off since 1985, served as faculty for an MFA program and held titles of Director of Education, Director of Fellowship Company and Associate Artistic Director.

“I’ve had to redefine what success means for myself because it’s not about what the business tells me it’s supposed to be about” said Lambert, “For me, it’s been about playing great roles and being part of a community – not only other artists but the community I live in now.”

Lambert has also found that aging publicly, in front of an audience, can be a daunting proposition.

“I don’t know how much longer I’ll be willing to perform because of my own vanity, that I’ll be able to keep letting audiences watching my growth,” she confessed, “I don’t think my struggle is any different than any other person who ages. If it’s difficult it has very little to do with my business. It’s the culture of aging.”

Ernest Abuba is transitioning in the opposite direction; now retired from teaching theatre and in his seventies, he is looking to act more than he did when he was working at Sarah Lawrence College. (He has also worked as a director, playwright and founding member and resident artist of Pan Asian Repertory Theatre.) He thinks he may have more opportunities now, in part because fewer older working actors means less competition, and because he has seen improvements overall for actors of color.

“For many years it was all about stereotypes,” said Abuba, who has worked in the theatre for 50 years. “Now the way I look at it, the system has opened up more, it has been opening up more for the Asian American, in the last ten years or so.” An activist for better representation and an early member of Equity’s Equal Employment Opportunity Committee, Abuba now hopes to enjoy some of the hard-won progress.



“I’VE HAD TO REDEFINE WHAT SUCCESS MEANS FOR MYSELF BECAUSE IT’S NOT ABOUT WHAT THE BUSINESS TELLS ME IT’S SUPPOSED TO BE ABOUT.”

— GRETA LAMBERT

ONE NIGHT STANDS
OF A
NOISY PASSENGER

Members (and spouses)
Geraldine Page and Rip Torn picket the
Actors' Playhouse where the 1970
Actors' Equity strike against Off-Broadway
theaters delayed the opening of the show
One Night Stands of a Noisy Passenger.

HOW THE 'VEST' WAS WON: EQUITY'S FIGHT FOR PENSIONS

Although Actors' Equity Association is over a century old, it took decades before joining the union would mean access to a pension plan and path to retirement. But now after sixty years, the retirement plan is almost old enough to retire!

Like many other Equity victories, the pension plan was hard won, and the union had to darken Broadway to obtain it.

In 1960, Equity asked producers to begin paying 1% of weekly payrolls into a plan, until it reached 4% in 1965. Employers called the notion "ruinous," insisting that ticket prices would have to

skyrocket as much as 25% to make ends meet. Their counteroffer was to get up to 2% over a 6 year period, which Equity refused.

The New York Post called it 'The Cold War on Broadway.' After two months of failed negotiations, Equity closed Broadway for the second time ever. Their strategy was to close one show a night until their demands were met. On June 1st, 1960, 800 audience members arrived to see *The Tenth Man*, only to learn that the actors would not show. The Broadway League responded by shuttering the other Broadway houses, and the "Broadway Blackout," as the papers called it, was on.

Members were actually split about the action at the time; some young performers, including those from the newly merged Chorus Equity preferred immediate salary increases over longterm benefits.

"They'd say, 'You're forcing me to go out on strike about pensions.

I'm 19 years old,'" recalled Theodore Bikel (1924-2015), who would go on to serve as Equity president from 1973 to 1982. "They didn't see how pensions related to them. I said, 'It may not relate to you today, but it will tomorrow.'"

Despite some internal strife, the members held strong. Technically, Equity referred to this action as a lockout, rather than a strike, but the effect was the same. Equity even distributed pins left over from their other Broadway strike back in 1919. Eventually, Mayor Robert Wagner Jr. got involved.

After 13 days, producers conceded, and the compromise was to contribute 1% in the first year, 2% in the second and third years, and 3% for the following three years. Broadway theaters reopened, and in 1961 the Equity-League pension plan was born.

The details of the plan have evolved over the decades, and qualification is easier than ever.

PENSION PLANS

If you want to learn more about the pension plan today, visit EquityLeague.org/My-Pension-Plan/Benefits-Explained/.



“ACTORS OFTEN SUBSIDIZE THEIR OWN CAREERS, AND THEY SUBSIDIZE THE THEATRE. BUT I DO HAVE THAT PENSION ... I COULD GET BY BECAUSE OF SOCIAL SECURITY AND THAT PENSION.”

— DALE SOULES

Even if the work opportunities are present, other complications arise as Equity members age in the business. For those struggling with health issues, the choice to keep working can be very much a privilege. Some members spoke of actor friends who had to leave the business when they could no longer memorize lines.

“As long as I’m still functioning and my brain is still functioning, I’m in it for the long haul,” said Johnson, “Thank God my memory is still intact.”

Hollander is acutely aware of how to navigate physical wellbeing and an onstage career. When she was 26, she had her leg amputated due to cancer. She was back performing on stage four weeks later, and she spoke about how working with a disability prepared her for aging in the industry.

“I was not only under pressure for how I would make a living, I was now a cancer survivor and an amputee,” she said, “I was definitely not going to ever let anything get in my way. I am aging, and I am noticing, ‘Oh my gosh, this is not easy.’ But I’ve been disabled since my twenties and working in this profession. I didn’t go into this so naïve that it wasn’t going to be difficult and painful and worrisome, but I wasn’t going to give up on that.”



Photo by Ann Marsden



“IT IS THE COMPLETE AND UTTER GIFT OF MY UNION TO HAVE A SOLVENT, SIGNIFICANT PENSION, AND THOSE ARE GOING THE WAY OF THE DODO BIRD.”

— SALLY WINGERT



Delphi Harrington, top continuing clockwise, with Equity members Patricia Randell, Megan Tusing and Dawn McGee, the cast of *i believe in a republic in which money has a great deal to say* at the Ensemble Studio Theatre.

Hollander is one of many members who finds she is working more now than she ever has, in part on the strength of autobiographical solo shows. However, steady work never fully addresses her concerns.

“The results are happening and the irony is, I’m still struggling to get my insurance,” she said, “This industry has been very challenging to navigate as any kind of performer, but particularly a performer with a disability – and add to that an aging performer with a disability.”

Hollander is grateful that in the 1980s she found a home in Manhattan Plaza, a federally subsidized residential complex that takes her medical expenses into account. She is also aware of The Actors Fund Home, a short and long term care facility in New Jersey, as well as other resources.

“I’m just hoping that I can be OK, but I do feel fortunate that The Actors Fund exists,” she said. “I have been working all my life and there may be a time I need help.”

Members agreed that a support network is crucial for survival in the industry long term, not only in terms of health and finances, but professionally and socially. Hollander, for example, directs as well, and she casts her peers who are



“USUALLY DIRECTORS
LIKE TO HIRE YOUNG
PEOPLE AND MAKE
THEM LOOK OLDER.”

— VIRGINIA WING

At right, Dale Soule (left) in a scene from the Lincoln Center Theater production of *Shows for Days*, a play by Douglas Carter Beane, directed by Jerry Zaks. Below, Equity Members Sharon Washington, Marjorie Johnson and Finnerty Steeves in Vineyard Theatre's production of *Dot*.



Photo by Joan Marcus



Photo by Carol Rosegg

also aging actors with disabilities. Horne has decades as a stage manager behind her, and that means decades of connections.

"I have good relationships with the people that I work with," she said. "The new jobs that I've gotten have come from other people that I've worked with and their recommendations."

"I have a group of friends that are very, very supportive of each other," added Johnson. "I have a very strong network of performers in my age category. Even if we have the same audition, we'll work with each other, including gathering to read opposite one another or record one another for virtual auditions."

By now, members know that a spate of good working years does not mean permanent comfort, and that a dry spell does not spell the end.

"For the last ten years I would say I'm in my retirement mode, and then the next week I'd have a job," said Johnson, who in 2016 received critical acclaim for a leading Off-Broadway role in *Dot*, playing an aging woman struggling with Alzheimer's.

Soules was optimistic, thinking that a general aging population would create a mirroring effect in the arts world. But she knows that all she can do is continue to perform as best and as long as she can.

"You never really know on what criteria you're being judged," she noted, "The only thing you have any control over is the work that you put into it."

"When you love what you do," said Harrington, "You don't quit." 🍷

Right, Dale Soules in *The Magic Show* on Broadway in 1974. On the cover, *Half Time* at Paper Mill Playhouse (2018) from left with Equity members Donna McKechnie, Lori Tan Chinn, Lillias White and Lenora Nemetz. Photo by Jerry Dalia. Directed and choreographed by Jerry Mitchell, co-choreographed by Nick Kenkel, David Rockwell (Scenic Design), Gregg Barnes (Costume Design), Kenneth Posner (Lighting Design), Jason Lee Courson (Projection Design) and Josh Marquette (Hair and Wig Design).



Photo by Kenn Duncan

YEAR OF THE STAGE MANAGER: COLOR OF BACKSTAGE

2020 marks 100 years from when stage managers were formally recognized as Equity. To celebrate, we're highlighting news from stage managers every issue this year.

This past August, Equity hosted "Color of Backstage," a panel for and by stage managers of color. Equity stage manager Councilor Lisa Dawn Cave moderated a panel of other stage managers, as dozens of attendees gathered in person and more joined over Zoom to listen to one another share their experiences as minorities on a production team.

The conversation focused on getting one's footing in a field that's not only competitive, but where relationships can be key to finding job opportunities. Like many other exclusive industries, it can be very white.

"For years we'd never really acknowledged that there's a diversity issue behind the table," said panelist Cody Renard Richard. "You mostly hear about it being onstage because it's what you visibly see."

Panelists talked about everything from educational background, to networking, to what it's like being the only person of color in the room (a common experience). They noted that simply having a non-white person on your production team is not enough to break barriers.

"Having the Black person as the PA, OK... so they're there for six weeks? Great," said panelist Beverly Jenkins. "But don't congratulate yourself just yet, 'We hired someone Black!' What else are you going to do? Is there a plan to mentor this person?"

Speakers agreed on the importance of successful stage managers supporting newer stage managers as they navigate the industry.

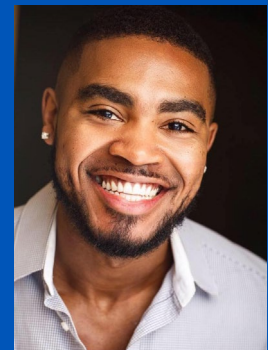
THE INTERVIEWEES



BEVERLY JENKINS



CHERIE B. TAY



CODY RENARD
RICHARD

"Stage managers who are in positions like me have to reach out and help the ones coming up; let them know it is possible to have a career in this industry. They shouldn't feel that just because they didn't go to 'that' school or don't know 'that' person it's impossible to succeed," said Jenkins. "Don't let that shut you down or keep you from believing that you can work and thrive in this business. There are many of us, and not just people of color, who are willing to open a door and make sure that people of color are on the team."

Panelist Cherie B. Tay spoke about her efforts to network with and educate young people interested in the industry.

"It's a rough subject," she told *Equity News*. "You just have to be good at what you do. Whatever your skin, your religion, your sexual or gender orientation you have to be good at your job and work well with the people around you.

You also need to try to open doors for people you might really get along with who might not get the opportunity to network."

In addition to volunteering with young professionals and high school students alike, Tay runs a Facebook group for stage managers. Posting jobs there have resulted in stage managers getting their first job.

Attendees were encouraged to continue the conversation about being a minority backstage, and also appreciated the validation of a forum to share their stories.

"It was really incredible," said Richard. "It was really nice to look out and be able to speak freely on experiences and not feel like what you're going to say is going to impact people in a negative way."

"The hope is that we're all working hard to make sure that everybody has a seat at the table," he added, "The doors are starting to open a little bit more."

EQUITY CELEBRATES ITS FIFTH ANNUAL SWING DAY

On Wednesday, January 15, Equity celebrated Swing Day for the fifth year, honoring the hard-working performers who stay ready to go on at a moment's notice, for multiple roles.

The day included swings around the country taking over Equity's social media and sharing their experiences. In addition, swings nationwide received special swing swag: a branded beanie!

"Swings are an indispensable part of a show's cast," said Jennifer Cody, Actors' Equity Association's second vice president and chair of the Advisory Committee on Chorus Affairs (ACCA). "They're like the first responders of the theatre: On call, and ready to save the day at a moment's notice."

Equity member Antuan Magic Raimone is a universal swing for *Hamilton*, and he is especially proud of his pinch-hitting abilities.

"I often tell people when I'm signing Playbills, 'The only reason I'm onstage is if something has gone unplanned,'" he added, "So I want to do everything I can to make sure that people onstage feel comfortable in their show and don't feel uncomfortable with where I'm supposed to be, what I'm supposed to be doing."

Being a universal swing is rare; Raimone is in the unusual position where he is flown at short notice across the country to perform in other productions of the hit musical. In fact, he celebrated Swing Day with news of just that!

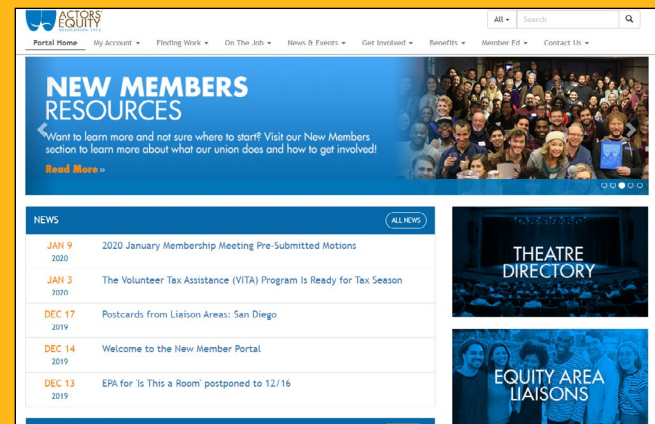
"On Swing Day I was told I'd be swinging my way to Florida!" he told *Equity News* from Fort Myers. "It's nice that Swing Day exists so that we can get a little extra love that day for the work that we do throughout the year."

CHECK OUT THE NEW MEMBER PORTAL!

Have you seen Equity's new and improved member portal?

In addition to being all-around prettier, the new portal is easier and more intuitive to use, including a refined search feature. Staff, councilors and members worked together to ensure that navigation puts pages where users expect to find them, and to update language to be inclusive of stage managers. There is also a new section about ongoing union campaigns for which you can volunteer!

Whether you want to learn more about benefits, sign up for auditions, learn about Equity happenings or get involved with the union, you can access it in the portal at Members.ActorsEquity.org.



NEA MAKES HUGE GAINS IN 2020

In December, Congress approved new funding for the National Endowment for the Arts, raising its budget to \$162.5 million.

"I'm thrilled to see that once again a bipartisan majority of Congress agrees that the National Endowment for the Arts is a vital program that creates middle-class jobs all across the country," said Equity President Kate Shindle. "The arts add more than \$760 billion to our economy and help drive tourism and local businesses in cities large and small. With protections to ensure that performing artists who receive grants are paid a living wage, the NEA is a critical part of supporting the national arts economy. Actors' Equity will continue to fight for arts funding like the NEA, which provides important seed funding for countless new theatrical productions."

The 2019 budget was \$155 million, and this is the largest budget the NEA has seen since 2010. This huge increase didn't happen on its own, and Equity is proud of the work the union and so many others did to push this budget to approval. Equity was part of a coalition of a dozen national unions representing four million workers pushing for NEA funding. Equity was also a National Sponsor of Arts Advocacy Day, an annual coordination with Americans for the Arts. This year, that meant Equity members held 34 meetings with Republicans and Democrats alike to directly appeal to Congress about the importance of the NEA. In addition, members across the country also signed thousands of petitions urging an increase in NEA funding.

Thank you to everyone for crossing this finish line!



HOW I GOT MY EQUITY CARD

XAVIER KHAN MEMBER SINCE 2019



I earned my Equity card while working for several seasons at the Cleveland Play House. I was honestly scared to take my card at first. I wondered whether I would be able to find work anymore for having become Equity, whether anyone would hire me and whether or not that was the right step for my career at the time. I didn't know if I was really ready to do it. I grappled with those thoughts for a while and, despite my inner saboteur, I took the leap of faith

and joined. Since then, being a part of Equity has been a badge of my commitment to holding my work to a certain standard.

I recently moved from Cleveland to New York in order to grow as a stage manager. The culture here in New York City is definitely different from that of regional theatre, but I'm very lucky to have the career that I've made for myself thus far. My favorite part of working in this city has been all of the growth that I've witnessed in terms of diversity and representation. Back at home, I was one of only two Equity stage managers of color. Here, however, I am one of many more who strive to represent diversity in theatre.

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MADDIE CORMAN MEMBER SINCE 1982



Photo by Blanche Mackey

Many moons ago, in a land called suburbia, a littler me was doing school plays and community shows and falling deeply in love with the theatre. The incredibly talented guy who played Scrooge to my 10-year-old Ghost of Christmas Past was a semi-retired actor and longtime member of Actors' Equity; which, he told me, meant that he was a real life professional actor. He also told me that all of the actors I saw on Broadway had their Equity Card. I imagined that this coveted card was some sort of golden bedazzled item which all of those fancy actors kept in their safes.

This veteran actor was brilliant, funny and kind, and I dreamed that maybe some day I too could be in Equity... whatever that was.

A few years later, I had a local acting teacher who became my "manager," which pretty much meant that she read Backstage and called my mom to tell us about open calls. My mother (who was never one who would stand in a line for anything... except for the TKTS line) grudgingly agreed to take me to one open call for an unnamed Off-Broadway play. I worked with the director and, along with a bunch of other girls, we played theatre games and became animals and read some crazy sounding dialogue. I was in heaven.

A few weeks later, my mom greeted me in the driveway as I walked home from middle school.

"What would be the best Hannukah gift I could ever get you?"

"Um... tickets to a Broadway show?"

"How about you get to be in a show in New York City?"

"What!?"

"Ok... well you may not be in it, but you will be a part of it... That audition you went on? They've offered you the chance to understudy the two little girl roles!"

"What!? HOORAY!... What's an understudy?"

The play was James Lapine's *Twelve Dreams* at the Public Theatre, produced by Joseph Papp. James also directed, and the cast included Carole Shelley, James Olsen, Tom Hulce and Valerie Mahaffey. Rehearsals were joyous, and I did indeed go on... which was terrifying and thrilling and sealed the inevitable deal—I was madly, deeply, forever in love with the stage.

A few weeks after closing night a letter arrived in the mail for me. I was 13 and didn't get a lot of mail so this was already pretty exciting. I opened my letter from Actors' Equity and my flimsy little paper card was included at the bottom of the page. It was a bit of a shock that the card was neither golden nor bedazzled, but I was still thrilled to carry my card (in my Donny and Marie wallet), and to be a part of the tribe.

All these years later, I am still thrilled, honored and delighted to be a theatre artist and a proud member of Actors' Equity.

THEATRE

SPOTLIGHT

SOUTHERN REP



Above, Equity members Ian Hoch and Meredith Long from the production of *Mandatory Merriment* at Southern Rep in New Orleans.

While the Big Easy has always been a vibrant center for the arts, the theatre scene has often had trouble finding its footing. There has always been engaging, professional work, but individual companies have often struggled, and union opportunities have been limited. Now, the tide is finally starting to turn, and Southern Rep Theatre is at the forefront of New Orleans' growing theatre scene.

"I left New Orleans in 1978 to pursue my career in Los Angeles," says Lance Nichols, an Equity member and actor in Southern Rep's company. "I came back here to a completely different theatre scene than I had left 24 years earlier. I asked, 'Who's this Southern Rep theatre?'"

Southern Rep was founded in 1986, but after several homes they officially completed renovations for their permanent home in a former church in January of 2019. Their two venues, a mainstage and the Sanctuary Stage

cabaret space, host everything from drag shows to readings to full productions of old and new works. They also recently developed their own company, including Equity members, who this season are celebrating Ntozake Shange and Bertolt Brecht. This recently culminated in the company's mainstage debut in a production of Shange's translation of *Mother Courage and Her Children*.

"In the next three to five years they'll put themselves on the map nationally," predicts Nichols, who has been in eight productions at Southern Rep.

Southern Rep also made a big change for Equity members in 2017, moving up to a Small Professional Theatre contract. "It's a big step for us. It comes from that conviction of, 'I want to be able to pay Equity artists a stronger wage,'" says Aimée Hayes, the theatre's Producing Artistic Director, as well as an Equity member herself, "Taking care of artists is

number one." As a result of this increased commitment, they wrote the most Equity contracts in Louisiana in the last year.

But what makes Southern Rep unique is not only their dedication to challenging, professional theatre or its embrace of Equity Members; it's their commitment to members of the artistic community offstage as well as on.

Sarah Zoghbi used to be an Equity stage manager; she left the theatre to pursue a career in mental health counseling. While completing graduate school, she began the Care for Creatives program with Southern Rep in 2018, in partnership with the New Orleans Musicians' Clinic.

"Amongst creative people there's a higher prevalence of mental illness," explains Zoghbi, "And when you look

CONTINUED ON PAGE 25

EQUITY ACROSS THE NATION

LIFE & THEATRE IN THE BIG EASY

Special thanks to New Orleans Liaison John Bostic for his contributions to this article.

New Orleans isn't just a city – it's a lifestyle. It's a totally different attitude and vibe than anywhere in the US. Its distinct culture arises from its unique history as a home to many ethnic influences. The intermingling of French exiles, Spanish colonists and enslaved Africans gave rise to the Cajun and Creole cuisine, music and dialect for which NOLA is renowned. Today, it remains racially diverse and majority Black. New Orleans boasts festivals, events and music that all developed locally. There is something to do 365 days a year, and that certainly includes theatre.

WORKING IN THE REGION

WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE AN EQUITY MEMBER IN THE REGION

Being an Equity member in New Orleans is a challenge. There aren't many living wage theaters in south Louisiana, and exceptions are as far-reaching as Baton Rouge, 75 miles from New Orleans. Most members have survival jobs, and theatre is something that happens in the evenings and on weekends. But members are very active, and opportunities are growing. Thanks to hard work by local members, as well as Equity staff and elected leadership, the century-old Le Petit Théâtre Du Vieux Carré (known as Le Petit) has become a professional theater on an SPT contract, ensuring more work for Equity members!

WHAT IT'S LIKE WORKING IN THE REGION

It's wonderfully collaborative; the theatre community is very tightly knit. Union actors are often older, and have lived and worked other places before life brought them here. The theatre has some incredible talent and wonderful, supportive audiences. It just is not a high paying area; it's not a place where you can make a full time living in the theatre... yet.

WHERE YOU MIGHT BE WORKING

Lots of places! Le Petit, Southern Rep, the New Orleans Shakespeare Festival or Summer Lyric Theatre at Tulane University, The NOLA Project, Rivertown Repertory Theater, Swine Palace (so-called because it used to be a livestock pavilion). The Lafon Performing Arts Center is only in its second year, and has already offered opportunities to Equity members. The National WWII Museum's Stage Door Canteen hires Equity performers for their original pieces on the weekends.



Photo by John Barrios

Above, Loyola student Charis Gullage and Equity member Troi Bechet in *Caroline or Change*, produced by Jefferson Performing Arts Society with Loyola University.

AROUND TOWN

BEST PLACES TO EAT FOR FOODIES

The top-rated restaurant in the city is August, for formal dining. Then there's K-Paul's Louisiana Kitchen, where they invented blackened redfish. At R&O's Restaurant in Bucktown, the seafood comes right off the ships and right onto your plate!

WHAT YOU WON'T FIND ANYWHERE ELSE

Voodoo shops! All in all, New Orleans is a place where there is something happening on every corner. The weather is gorgeous, and the city is very walkable and has won awards for being bikeable. There's always somebody who's willing to give you advice or tell you a story or led you to an adventure. The New Orleans City Park is really special, including a famous sculpture garden and canals that you can explore with gondolas.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

If you email NewOrleans@ActorsEquity.org and say you're in town, the Area Liaison Committee will have something for you to do! It could be a party or an audition or a benefit, and they're very welcoming.

BEST WAYS TO EXPERIENCE LOCAL COLOR

Pick a neighborhood and find a cafe or coffee shop and sit down and just start talking to people, and you'll get more local color than you can imagine. You can also ride the ferry across the Mississippi River to Algiers Point and have po boys and drinks at one of the old restaurants there. The local people have wonderful personalities and unique stories.

THEATRE NEWS & NOTES

Bloomington, MN – **Artistry Theatre** will be moving from an SPT 5 to an SPT 7 contract for the second year of their transitional program, resulting in higher salaries and health contributions for members.

Brooklyn, NY – Equity has signed a special three-year agreement with the **Brooklyn Academy of Music**, an institution that has only used members for one-off productions in the past.

Indianapolis, IN – Equity has signed a new agreement achieving a salary increase of 13% over five years with **Beef & Boards Dinner Theatre**.

Lincoln, NE – Equity signed a one-year agreement with **Nebraska Repertory Theatre** resulting in 16% salary increases.

Los Angeles, CA – Equity has signed 23 productions to the 99-Seat Theatre Agreement, for a total of 136 contracts with 1,159 workweeks.

Minneapolis, MN – **Dark & Stormy Productions** has a new SPT Rider, with a ratio increase from 30% of all available roles to 45%, as well as salary increases.

Nantucket, MA – **Theatre Workshop of Nantucket** will begin their first phase of a three year transitional agreement on the SPT after producing only SA/GA since 2002.

Equity members Sara Marsh, Luverne Seifert and Jane Froiland in the Dark & Stormy Production of *The Norwegians*.



TRACKING WHAT YOU'RE OWED

As part of the process to remove a producer off of the Do Not Work list, Eastern Region staff procured \$1,544.31 in back payment to Equity League and membership for a Special Appearance Contract.

After an audit, Eastern Region staff found that three members were due vacation for their work in a summer season. The amount received by the actors totaled more than \$1,000, plus pension.

An actor with a Favored Nations clause in their contract was paid less than other actors in the cast. Eastern Region staff helped them claim \$1,071.36.

A split-week SETA tour planned on paying 4/8ths of contractual salary for a four-performance week that headed into a layoff earlier than the week's end. Eastern Region staff enforced the position that full week's contractual salary was due instead of 4/8ths as the agreement doesn't allow for proration into a layoff. Management ultimately agreed with this position and the members on the tour were paid a full week's salary.

A one-nighter SETA tour had a bus that did not fulfill the required measurements of distance between seats. After Eastern Region staff made this claim with management, management replaced the bus within less than a week so members have more seat space on bus travel days.

Eastern Region staff raised a concern with a SETA tour's management regarding the way overage was being calculated in a series of venues. This was due to what seemed to be an unusual arrangement between the producer and venues. After a series of discussions between staff and general management, staff maintained the union's position that higher

amount overage was due in all of the affected venues on this tour. Ultimately management agreed and members received additional overage for several engagements.

For an annual production at a stock theater, Eastern Region staff's response to a Member's inquiry uncovered an inadvertent underpayment to the cast for the combined rehearsal/performance week. This resulted in additional payments to 17 Equity Members totaling \$9,203.33.

Eastern Region staff concluded a wrongful termination claim with a LORT theater recovered six weeks' wages totaling \$6,600 along with an 8% pension contribution and six weeks of health contributions for an actor who was one week away from losing health coverage.

The Central Region recovered monies from an Indiana Theatre for unpaid media fees for four members totaling \$648.

The Central Region recovered monies from a theatre for vacation shortage to actors totaling \$1,220.

The Central Region recovered monies from a theatre for additional monies owed under the contract for a stage manager of \$719.

Due to a flight scheduled earlier than allowed, a 12-hour rest period was violated. Western Region staff recovered ten hours of overtime for 16 actors, totaling \$4,437.50, including pension.

Western Region staff recovered over \$7,500 in media breach penalties for 14 actors.

Western Region staff collected nearly \$10,000 in unpaid vacation payouts.

Western Region staff recovered vacation pay to a member in the amount of \$356.60.

LABOR DAYS: WHY THE CENSUS MATTERS

The 2020 Census is fast approaching! For various reasons, in past years a significant number of people have not participated in the Census. Without a complete count, our communities' fair share of congressional representation is at stake, as are billions of dollars in federal funding for health, education, infrastructure such as bridges and tunnels, transportation and many other programs that our members rely on.

Specifically for the arts community, the Census has the potential to seriously impact the distribution of dollars from federal cultural agencies. But population-based funding allocations also exist throughout the government, including in the Departments of Education, Housing and Urban Development, Agriculture and others, all of which also have pockets of funds that in

part stream to the arts. Additionally, special government grants are given to areas with large populations of historically marginalized communities. If the U.S. Census doesn't get an accurate count of these populations, then arts organizations engaged with those populations could be hindered in the amount of money they can get through government grants.

For all these reasons, it's critical that our members participate in the Census, and that we as union members engage with our friends, family, and communities to make sure that every person is counted. Beginning in mid-March 2020, you can respond to the Census online, by phone, or by mail. It's up to us to shape the future of our communities!

Learn more at 2020Census.gov.

EQUITY APPROVES **NEW COST CONTRACT**

On December 17, Council voted to approve the new COST (Council of Stock Theatres) contract. This new four-year deal has many gains for members, but one highlight is its annual increases to minimum weekly salaries – that’s 14.74% compounded over four years.

“I think that the salary gains are a big deal,” said Councilor Erin Maureen Koster, who served on the negotiating team. “They are much more aggressive than what we have achieved in the past, and I think that we’re rolling on some good momentum right now. Wages are the thing that are guaranteed to impact everybody on the contract.”

The new contract also increased the number of required assistant stage managers on a production, which was a particular point of pride for Rebecca McBee, a stage manager for whom COST was her first negotiating team.

“I learned so much. I wish that everybody could have a chance to do this,” she said. “You make such a

difference in just a few days.”

This contract was hard-fought by a team that originally met over the course of three days in October. When they were not yet satisfied with the terms of the new agreement, they took a break from negotiations and reconvened nearly two months later.

“It was fine because we were sitting there not hearing the things we felt we should be hearing and it felt good to say, ‘Let’s take a break and when you’re ready to listen more then let’s come back,’” said Koster, “I viewed it as a very comfortable choice.”

Several members of the negotiating team also pointed to Equity 2020 inspiring them to be more aggressive, inclusive and responsive during this process.

“I’m hoping that the takeaway from negotiation, especially from the other side of the table, is that the Equity of 2020 is what we said it’s going to be,” said Rashaan James II, Eastern chorus councilor and COST team member.

“Equity is stronger than ever right now in 2020, and it’s a beautiful thing to see the union on a trajectory to really make gains in a way that we haven’t before.”

Other contract gains include dance captain increment increased to 20% of minimum, harassment-free workplace policy terms and diverse and inclusive language updates.

“As someone who works Stock pretty regularly and it’s part of my bread and butter, this negotiation was really important to me,” said James, “Not only as a councilor but as a member who will benefit from this contract.”

“I am very pleased at the accomplishments of the COST negotiating team, said Committee Chair and Eastern Stage Manager Councilor Ruth E. Kramer. “This was truly a TEAM effort!”

The COST team included Ariane Dolan, Michael Dotson, Rashaan James II, Erin Maureen Koster, Ruth E. Kramer, Rebecca McBee, Kate Shindle, Allyson Tucker and Kirsten Wyatt. Staff support included Russell Lehrer, Aaron Thompson, Kylie Kirk, Jeffrey J. Bateman and Joe Barnes.

*Standing from left: Joe Grandy, Michael Stotts, Rebecca McBee, Fred T. Paul, Teresa Sanpietro, Ariane Dolan, Russell Lehrer, Aaron Thompson, Kylie Kirk, Michael Dotson, Michael Rader, Jeffrey J. Bateman and Christopher Slavik.
Seated from left: Rashaan James II, Erin Maureen Koster, Mark S. Hoebee and Kate Shindle.*



EQUITY STAFF UNDERGOES FIRST RESTRUCTURE IN 20 YEARS

For Equity 2020, the union has vowed to be more aggressive, inclusive and responsive for members. To that end, for the first time in 20 years Equity has gone through a major national staff restructure.

What does this mean for members? It means more direct contact with staff, no matter where you live. The new position of field representative is specifically designated to meet with members, organize new work and support

business representatives. You can also expect to meet them more often at first rehearsal meetings – perhaps you already have! This new role also means that business and associate business representatives can focus on working with members and producers to resolve issues, negotiate agreements, pursue grievance claims and more.

You can find an updated directory of Equity staff at ActorsEquity.org/Business-Reps or on the directory on page 2.

SAVE THE DATE! UPCOMING MEMBERSHIP MEETING

September 14, 2020
2 pm ET / 1 pm CT / 12 pm PT

All meetings will be held in the Regional Offices. Please visit the Member Portal for further information and any changes.

Members with disabilities who would like to request accommodations to participate in the Membership Meetings: please contact Governance Associate Alexander Curran at 212-869-8530, ext. 327, two weeks prior to the meeting to make arrangements.

If you would like to present a resolution at an upcoming membership meeting, please note that the

resolution must be submitted in writing to Equity at least two weeks in advance of the meeting. All motions that will be discussed during the Membership Discussion Period will be posted in the Member Portal one business day prior to the Membership Meeting. Resolutions for the Winter Regional Membership Meetings must be submitted to National Director of Governance Allison Bodwell at ABodwell@ActorsEquity.org by August 31, 2020.

SOUTHERN REP - CONTINUED FROM PAGE 20

at national mental health, the state of Louisiana has low access to care and high prevalence of mental health issues.”

Care for Creatives includes Wellbeing Workshops which outreach to the larger community as well as a weekly Healing Power Hour, where creatives come together for a mixer with healers who offer reiki, massage, aromatherapy and a wellness processing group with offerings on various forms of movement, medication, expressive arts activities and psychological education. Held in Southern Rep’s building, it only costs five dollars.

In addition, Zoghbi is conducting research based on her efforts for publication, so that other communities can learn from these programs.

“This place actually values mental wellness and community building, and

because they value it they support this program,” says Zoghbi. “That’s not everywhere, that’s not every producer.”

This mental health initiative is a good fit for New Orleans, where the theatre professionals (and city residents in general) are a tightly-knit group, and hold a strong sense of community.

“We all know one another,” says Nichols. “It’s not uncommon during the preview of a show, half of the people sitting out in the audience are actors who are there to support one another.” He also spoke of Southern Rep as emblematic of increased diversity in New Orleans theatre, where now casts and audiences alike are now more reflective of the community on a whole, as opposed to the mostly white theatre of the city when he started his career.

“I see change, and I see positive change,” he says, “It is a reflection of what this country is about now.” He is also hopeful about increased working opportunities for theatre professionals, and Equity members specifically. And from original works to regional debuts of contemporary Broadway plays, the caliber of the art has only risen.

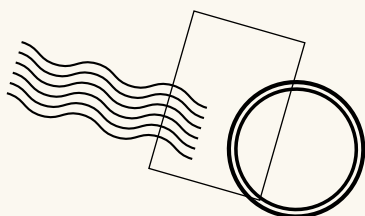
“It seems like they’re trying to expose audiences here to some newer things,” says Nichols.

For residents and visitors of New Orleans, visiting Southern Rep is not only experiencing groundbreaking theatre, and not only patronizing Equity members. It’s supporting a community that is dedicated to taking care of one another and staying intertwined with the city on a whole. 🍷

POSTCARDS FROM LIAISON AREAS

DETROIT

Detroit area Equity members donated over \$800 to brighten the holidays for three siblings. Warm clothes, coats, boots and toys were waiting for the children at the huge Detroit Adopt-a-Child event on December 6.



Above, Equity members Kelli Crump, left, and Peggy Thorp bringing holiday cheer to a local family.

SAN DIEGO

The San Diego Annual Equity Meeting was held on Monday, December 2 at Lamb's Players Theatre. They were joined by Senior Business Representative Alison Harma and Business Representative Albert Geana-Bastare. The hot topic of the night was the recent explosion of SPT contracts from companies that had previously been Special Appearance Agreement. They also previewed 2020 events such as Tax Night, CPR Training, Tony Awards Party and AIDS Walk.

Below, Equity staff and members gather for the annual meeting in San Diego.



IN MEMORIAM

Reported October 1, 2019 to January 31, 2020

*Equity Councillor

"Death ain't nothing but a fastball
on the outside corner."

— August Wilson, *Fences*

ARTHUR ABELSON	JUSTIN CLARKE	CHRIS GOMEZ	MIKEL SARAH LAMBERT	ANNA QUAYLE	MEZ VAN OPPEN
GRAZIELLA ABLE	LISA J. CLARSON	TED GOODRIDGE	RON LEIBMAN	FAY REED	KIT VAN ZANDT
DANNY AIELLO	JACK CLAY	LAUREL GRIGGS	CHARLES LEVIN	LEW RESSEGUIE	JENNIE VENTRIS
DELTRA EAMON ALMEIDA	CHEVI COLTON *	ERNEST HARADA	PAMELA LINCOLN	MARK RHEIN	YVONNE VINCIC
LEIF ANCKER	KEVIN COTTER	JOHN HEALD	JACK MICHAEL LINDINE	MARY RITENHOUR	JOE VIVIANI
FRAN ANTHONY	ANN CRUMB	ELLEN HEARD	MICHAEL LINDSAY	RUTH RIVERA	MIMI VONDRA
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RENE AUBERJONOIS	ALLEN DAVIS	JANE GALLOWAY HEITZ	ALLAN LOTSBERG	STEVEN ROSS	ANNIE WAUTERS
NINA BAEZA	HENRY DEWING	KATHLEEN HENDERSON	JANE LOWRY	STEVEN SALZMAN	ANDREW WEEMS
LESLIE BARNI	STEVEN DOLAN	JAMES J. HENDRICKS	ROBERT LUSSIER	BARBARA SANDS	JOHN WESLEY
ROB BARRON	JACK DONNER	MARY LOU HENNESSY	CAROL LYNLEY	STEVEN SCHOCKET	SUZANNE WHANG
P.J. BARRY	BOB DORIAN	NICKY HENSON	BILL MACY	MICHAEL SCHOTT	CHRIS WHELAN
JONATHON V. BAYRE	DOLORES DORN	JERRY HERMAN	MURIEL MAIDA	ALAN SEMOK	COLEMAN WHITE
GRACE BENTLEY	RICHARD EASTON	FRUMETH HIRSH	BARBARA MARCH	MARTE BOYLE SLOUT	MICHAEL WIEBEN
MARCIA A. BERRY	JOSIP ELIC	JACK HOWELL	HELEN MASLOFF	LUCY SORLUCCO	PAMELA WILD
DICK BOCCCELLI	JOHN FAIRHURST EVANS	GLORIA HOYE	PATRICIA MC GINNIS	SALLY SPENCER	LOU WILLS
W. PAUL BODIE	ISABELLE FARRELL	PAUL HUGHES	PHILIP MCKEON	DANIEL SPIRA	GEORGE A. WILSON
WILLIAM BOGERT	R. TERRELL FINNEY	RHETTA HUGHES	CONRAD MC LAREN	BOB SQUIRE	WILLIAM WINTERSOLE
ROBERT BRITTON	TOM FOLEY	DAVID HURST	STEPHEN MOORE	LIBI STAIGER	DAN WOODARD
DANIEL S BROUN	JEANNE FORNADEL *	EDDIE JONES	SHELLEY MORRISON	JOAN STANLEY	DAN WRIGHT
BETTY BRUNETTI	POPE FREEMAN	WILL KAYNE	STEPHANIE NIZNIK	THEO STEVENS	MAX WRIGHT
STEPHEN BURNS	DAN FURST	JACK KEHOE	GERALD ONEIL	BARBARA SWIFT	DALE YOUNG
EDD BYRNES	ARTHUR P. GAFFIN	JOHN EDWARD KELLY	LEE PAUL	BRIAN TARANTINA	WALTER ZUKOWSKI
BRUCE D. CAMERON	GARY GARTH	LINDA MARIE A. KENNEDY	PAMELA PAYTON-WRIGHT	KEITH TAYLOR	
DIAHANN CARROLL	PENNY GASTON	KEN KERCHEVAL	JONATHAN PECK	RIP TAYLOR	
WALLY CARROLL	DIANE GIBBONS	INGEBORCK KJELDSEN	JAMES PENROD	FRANK S TOROK	
J. CENTER	MICHAEL GILBERT	JOSEPH M. KLEIN	ALICIA HELEN PETRIDES	KATHLEEN M. TOSCO	
VALDA CLAIRE	ELLIOTT GOLDWAG	GABRIEL KUTTNER	DAVID PURDY	EJAYE TRACEY	

JEANNE FORNADEL (1934-2019)

Stage manager and Councillor Emeritus Jeanne Fornadel passed away on November 16, 2019, at age 85 at Brother Bonaventure Care Center.

Fornadel was born on June 16, 1934 in Elizabeth, New Jersey, to John Peter Fornadel and Rose Bush. She first received her Equity card in 1957, and was a union member for over 60 years.

Her roles in the union were

numerous, and she worked tirelessly on behalf of members for decades. She served as a principal councillor from 1974 to 1983, and as a stage manager Councillor from 1978 until 2004; she became a councillor emeritus in 2005. She also served as a member on several committees, and was chair or vice chair of National TYA, Entry to Equity, Stage Managers and Children's Theatre

Committee. She also participated on many contract negotiating teams.

Fornadel's long career as a stage manager included multiple national tours, including for *La Cage Aux Folles* and *The Wiz*. She is survived by her brother John Fornadel, and her niece Julia Bowman.

CHEVI COLTON (1921-2019)

Actor, singer and Former Equity Councillor Chevi Colton passed away at the Actors Fund Home in Englewood, New Jersey, on June 24, 2019, just shy of her 98th birthday.

Colton was born on December 21, 1921 in New York City, as Evelyne Colton to Lou and Josephine Colton.

Colton's career spanned several decades, accruing eight Broadway credits over the course of 54 years. Her

debut was in 1948 in *The Insect Comedy*, and her final appearance, in *The Tale of the Allergist's Wife*, was in 2002, when she was 80. She continued performing for years afterwards. She also worked extensively in television.

In addition to serving as an Eastern principal councillor from 1974 to 1979, Colton was also appointed to the Election Procedures Committee in 1975. She also believed strongly in broader social

and political causes, and participated in movements such as the Women's Strike for Peace.

Colton is predeceased by her husband, Equity actor Joe Silver. She is survived by her two children, Moshe Silver and Jennifer Silver, as well as eight grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

EquityNEWS

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