

AUTUMN 2017 | VOLUME 102 | ISSUE 4

Equity

ACTORS' EQUITY ASSOCIATION

NEWS



MAKING IT WORK
BALANCING FAMILY & CAREER

IN MEMORIAM

*The play is done; the curtain drops
Slow falling to the prompter's bell
A moment yet the actor stops
And looks around, to say farewell.*

— William Makepeace Thackeray's *Miscellanies*, vol. ii

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HOPE ARTHUR
PAUL BERNE
GERRY BLACK
JOSEPH BOLOGNA
MOLLY BRADY
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TOM ZINDLE
DAN ZITTEL

Reported between June 1, 2017 and August 31, 2017

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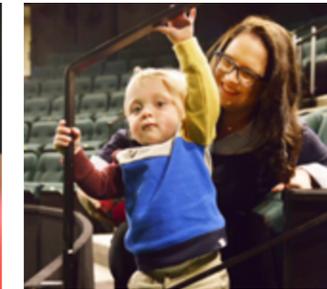
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FROM THE PRESIDENT ON HARASSMENT

Plenty of headlines have been painful this year, but none more so than the last few months as we've seen a spontaneous public conversation erupt around harassment in the workplace.

What has been most frustrating is that so many victims clearly felt powerless – for months, years, or in some cases, decades – to say anything about being harassed. Whether this was because they were afraid that they wouldn't be believed, that they would face retaliation or that nothing would happen if they did speak out, it's clear that we're long past the point of needing a cultural shift.

These fears can create a perfect storm in the theatre, where the very nature of our jobs can require far more emotional and physical intimacy than those of our colleagues in other fields.

But the simple truth is this: harassment is never okay, and it is never justified or deserved. That's one reason why Equity has been working to tackle harassment, even before the most recent headlines.

In March 2016, Equity's National Council passed a resolution affirming our commitment to pursuing harassment claims under our collective bargaining agreements. (You might recall that we devoted the main story of the Spring 2016 issue of *Equity News* to how to handle harassment.) Also in 2016, Equity partnered with the Actors Fund to develop a training model for our business reps that would help them respond to any questions or complaints from members. These trainings have helped serve as a model for others in the entertainment industry.

Everyone should know that it is the employers' job to provide a workplace that is free from harassment, bullying and discrimination. We take that obligation seriously, and hold employers accountable if they fail to live up to their responsibilities. Last month, Equity sent letters to all of our producers reminding them that they need to have a policy on harassment, that it should be provided to you on your first day of employment and that it should be available throughout your work with them.

And that's also one of the reasons why this summer, Equity's National Council developed and adopted a Code of Conduct to remind all of our elected officials that we

should hold ourselves to the same standards we would ask of any of our employers.

If you believe that you or a colleague is being harassed in the workplace, you should call your business rep for a confidential conversation about your options. You may want to file a complaint; you may prefer to speak to a counselor. It's always your choice, but we can't help you if we don't know what's happening. (Also, please remember that the union will not intervene with your employer unless you ask us to, so please don't let fear of repercussion prevent you from contacting us.)

But when you do want to pursue a claim, we can go to battle for you by making sure that your employer properly investigates any complaints and ensures that all workers are protected from any potential retaliation.

In my opinion, the most powerful part of this cultural moment is that so many courageous women and men are coming forward to share their stories. But those personal narratives alone will not solve the underlying issues. I and others at Equity are committed to pushing our industry forward, beginning with a forum on sexual harassment on December 4th, and including efforts to convene sister unions and other stakeholders for substantive talks about how we can unite for change.

Sexual harassment is certainly not an issue that is unique to the entertainment business. But this unacceptable behavior is finally coming out of the shadows and becoming a national conversation. It is, of course, a moment in which we can advocate for our members, something that Equity was made for.

But this moment is also about decency, respect, dignity and safety in the workplace; these have been core Equity principles for more than a century. We'll keep fighting for them, and for you.

Kate Shindle

WHAT TO DO IF YOU EXPERIENCE HARASSMENT

Everyone should be able to go to their job without being afraid that they will be sexually harassed or bullied. That isn't an unreasonable expectation. That's the law.

Unfortunately, recent news events have served as a painful reminder that just because that's the law doesn't mean that everyone is following the law.

Harassment in the workplace is not just a theatre problem – it is a problem across our society. To look at just one example, a recent poll conducted by *NBC News* and the *Wall Street Journal* found that nearly half of all women have experienced harassment in the workplace.

"The entire world is talking about harassment now in the open," said Mary McColl, Executive Director of Actors' Equity. "This is the time for us to remind all employers that there is nothing more important than the safety and security of our members."

What makes theatre different of course is that the very nature of our work requires much more emotional and physical intimacy than workers in other fields. Perhaps for that reason a number of myths about harassment have developed over the years.

Here's the reality: Harassment can take many forms. It is always wrong and it is never justified.

If you experience something in the workplace that makes you uncomfortable or that you think might be harassment, call your Equity business rep. If you don't know who your business rep is, you can find a directory in the member portal, or ask your deputy.

HERE'S THE REALITY:
HARASSMENT CAN TAKE
MANY FORMS. IT IS
ALWAYS WRONG AND IT IS
NEVER JUSTIFIED.

Equity takes harassment very seriously. That's one reason why Council passed a resolution reaffirming our commitment to pursue harassment claims under our collective bargaining agreements in March of 2016. And it's why Equity partnered with the Actors Fund to create a training program for all business reps on how to respond when members have questions about harassment.

There is another resource available to you if feel you may have been a victim of harassment: The Actors Fund. The Actors Fund offers Equity members a free, safe and confidential place to receive advice and support regarding harassment and other workplace issues. If you don't reside near one of the Fund's office locations, call the Fund's toll-free number (800.221.7303) and someone will provide counsel over the phone or assist you in finding a counselor in your community.

THE ROLE OF YOUR EMPLOYER

- Provide a copy of the harassment policy on your first day of employment
- Make the harassment policy readily available throughout your employment
- Follow the policy on harassment when complaints are made

WHO TO CALL

If you believe you have experienced workplace harassment or discrimination, you should contact your business rep immediately. All calls are confidential.

THE ROLE OF YOUR UNION

- Have confidential conversations to help you navigate your options
- Demand employers provide a safe workplace
- Help you navigate the harassment policy
- Take action if employers don't have harassment policies or fail to conduct full and fair harassment investigations
- Protect you from potential retaliation or reprisals



FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR INSIDE YOUR AUTUMN 2017 ISSUE

Our cover story spotlights members sharing their individual life/work balance stories. These stories run the gamut from parents of young children

who are working in the theatre, to members who are working while caring for aging parents.

As I read the stories, I identified with many of the common themes. For so many of our members, whether the issue is the obligations that come with having a family or dealing with any life challenges that could impact you in the workplace, there is often a culture of silence. We don't want our employer to know. That is a natural human reaction for people who are constantly competing in a difficult and challenging marketplace like live theatre. Hopefully this issue of *Equity News* can start a conversation for change on this very important topic.

Another important issue that is surrounded by secrecy and silence is the issue of sexual harassment. You should know that Equity has been working on this issue since before the most recent headlines (see the Spring 2017 issue of *Equity News*), and we will keep working to protect you in the workplace.

You will find more information in this issue about what you can do if you experience something that makes you uncomfortable and that you think feels like harassment.

Finally I am pleased that in this issue we can report more progress when it comes to delivering on the vision of Equity 2020. Over the summer, our volunteer trailblazers made thousands of contacts with fellow Equity members and asked them what they wanted to see from Equity between now and the year 2020.

One of the consistent themes we heard about was creating more resources and infrastructure for members who live outside the office cities so that we could create more work opportunities for Equity members in those areas. And that feedback was reinforced when we brought the leaders of our Liaison Areas together for a conference in Atlanta in July (you can read more about that conference in the Summer issue of *Equity News*).

On pages 16-17 you can read more about how we are now turning that feedback into action. For example, our first decision after the dues campaign concluded was to create a new position and hire Stefanie Frey to serve as our Liaison Organizer.

And now we are working on an organizing project, "Acting Locally," where our Liaison Committees and volunteer Trailblazers will go through each Liaison Area and ask where the opportunities lie when it comes to getting more theaters using Equity Contracts. This information will then go to our business reps who will integrate the information into their work as they expand their travel to Liaison Areas.

You can also read more about new tools we are creating for members in Liaison Areas. In addition to our Hotline system, we have introduced easy to remember email addresses to make it easier to reach your local chair. And finally, we have made it easier to access our "How to Hire Me Letter" by adding it to the Member Portal.

These are just a few of the early changes we have been able to make to better serve you because so many of you voted for the new dues structure as part of the Equity 2020 vision. A record number of members voted in that campaign, and I hope you will stay involved as we move forward and expand our volunteer opportunities in the years ahead.

Mary McColl

DIVERSITY MATTERS ENGAGING TOUGH QUESTIONS TO #CHANGESTHESTAGE



"Do you think the pendulum has swung too far when it comes to casting and inclusion?"

It was our first question in our first in a series of Town Hall discussions on *Expanding the Pathways to Inclusive Casting*. The member who asked the question had submitted it to moderator E. Faye Butler ahead of time, so we knew it was coming. It was a tough question. But I'm glad it was asked.

Our Chicago office was packed full of members for the September Town Hall, and many of them made their own feelings clear about the question. They weren't happy.

But ultimately we cannot facilitate real change by asking the same old questions and doing the same things we've always done. Real change comes when we open ourselves to really engage with a full range of viewpoints. With that comes vulnerability.

Playwright Lydia Diamond was the first panelist to respond: "No, the pendulum has not only *not* swung too far, it isn't swinging enough."

There is no question that the topic of diversity and inclusion is a sensitive issue. So, how do we facilitate those conversations to #ChangeTheStage?

Creating a more inclusive and diverse industry requires participation from the entire theatre community. Convening this panel was one step toward extending the conversation beyond our own membership. Moderated by our own Central Regional Board member E. Faye Butler and featuring Equity's Executive Director Mary McColl and Christine Toy Johnson, chair of our National Equal Employment Opportunity Committee, the panel also included Jim Corti, Artistic Director of the Paramount Theater; Erica Daniels, Managing Director of Victory Gardens Theater and former Casting Director and Associate Artistic Director at Steppenwolf Theatre; Ron Himes, Founding and Producing Director of St. Louis Black Repertory Theatre; Miranda Gonzalez, Artistic Director of the Urban Theatre Company; and Jen Liestman, Artistic Associate/Resident Casting Director of the Guthrie Theatre.

We also push that conversation forward by putting the data in front of members and employers, so that everyone can see what's happening. Prior to our town hall, Mary McColl, Christine Toy Johnson, E. Faye Butler and I sat down over coffee with a reporter from the *Chicago Tribune* to discuss Equity's study. What we found is that Chicago mirrors the trend nationally – women

and members of color are underrepresented, and when they do find work, they are earning lower salaries. If you missed it, you can read the story – which ran on the front page of the *Chicago Tribune* – in the Member Portal.

I hear stories directly from our members who are Latinx, African American, Asian American, MENA, Native



Nicole Smart (center) with (l-r) Lydia Diamond, Christine Toy Johnson, E. Faye Butler and Ron Himes.

American, disabled, transgender and non-binary, women and seniors about how they face serious obstacles. The hiring biases they encounter make it incredibly challenging to find work.

These situations will not change overnight. But we will keep moving ahead with our work. There will be more town hall discussions on diversity and inclusion to come, including in the Eastern and Western regions. And if you missed the discussion in Chicago, you can watch a video of it in the Member Portal.

Nicole Smart

MAKING IT WORK

BALANCING FAMILY AND CAREER

BY DAVID LEVY

Balancing a career and family is challenging for working people everywhere; working in theatre brings specific challenges, from how work is scheduled to the lack of covers for many roles to the grind of constantly auditioning or applying for your next job. But there are also unique joys to be found in the support of your “show families,” the relative flexibility of your day and the pride in sharing your art with those you love.

Every family is unique, and different family situations bring different perspectives to the discussion of making a career in theatre while caring for others, be they your children, your partner or your parents. If there's one common thread in the narratives Equity members shared with us for this story, it's that there is often an unspoken understanding not to discuss our outside obligations for fear it will affect hiring decisions.

“We were doing Equity business when I announced it to the company,” said Stage Manager Amanda Spooner. “We were re-voting on the dinner break or something – and as they were going back and forth, I jumped in and said, ‘Guys, I’m just gonna say, I don’t care how long the break is, I’m going to take a nap anyway because I’m pregnant!’”

Spooner's son Jack was conceived just as she started working on the first production of *Indecent*. She gave birth to a subsequent production of the show entered pre-pro. She made her Broadway debut with the show months after becoming a first-time parent. Although she was nervous about work disappearing due to bias against pregnant women and working mothers, she decided, “I’m just going to be really vocal about it. I just said, this is happening and it’s all going to be okay.”

Her pregnancy and parenthood were embraced by the *Indecent* company – a company, it's worth noting, led by women in the roles of lead producer, director and playwright.

Spooner knew it would be reasonable for the stage manager who took over for her in the previous production to continue with the transfer, but she hoped she would have the chance to go to Broadway with the show. “Whatever people made that decision decided they wanted me to go with it,” she said. “I don’t think that’s a fluke. I think it’s proof that you can have a baby at a totally inconvenient time.”

Not everyone's experience has been as positive. Michael A. Newcomer, a member in New Orleans, spent most of his early adulthood assuming marriage and family would be out of his reach. “With some hard decisions and major life changes, I find myself living in New Orleans with a beautiful wife, incredible son and a life that is very different than even my actor imagination could have scripted,” he said.

“We make a lot of sacrifices to work in the theatre, but now that I am father, I find myself saying ‘no’ a lot more (which is a good thing). I can’t work for the sake of another credit on my resume. In New Orleans, all theatre is done at night and on weekends, and with a family, that only doubles the time away from home. It is too important to me as a father to be a constant presence in my son’s life, and because of that, I don’t work nearly as much as I used to. My situation is such that I have to choose between a life in the theatre and having a family. I fear that is the same for a lot of us out there.”

CHANGING THE CULTURE

Many of the members we spoke to for this article reported encountering a culture of silence in the theatre when it comes to family obligations. This silence can lead to isolation – it’s hard to get support and share resources if no one knows who else is in the same position. Rachel Spencer Hewitt, a Chicago-

(Continued on page 10)

On the Cover & Table of Contents: Amanda Spooner and Jack at the Mizti Newhouse Theatre, photos by Michael Kushner. Below Left: Jay Paranada with his husband Scott and daughter Lily marching with Equity at NYC Pride. Center: Kristen Beth Williams and James Ludwig prepare for their son’s arrival, photo by Jacob Smith Studios. Right: Raymond J. Lee shows Ella around his workplace, the set of *Groundhog Day* on Broadway.



ADVOCATING FOR PARENT-ARTISTS

RACHEL SPENCER HEWITT GROWS FROM BLOGGER TO ACTIVIST

When member Rachel Spencer Hewitt resumed auditioning after the birth of her first child, she kept a journal of her experiences juggling her actor day bag and her diaper bag. Soon she started sharing her observations on her blog, *AuditioningMom.com*. “I was telling a colleague of mine, a single male actor, how it was a positive experience and that I found a lot of support despite the logistical challenges, but I found it very doable because of the resources I had,” she said. He told her not to talk about her experiences, fearful that those without the resources to make it work would be hurt.

“That was shocking to me,” Spencer Hewitt said. “I think what shocked me is that it could hurt people to hear that it was working for them. That made me realize that there must be a hole somewhere in the system.”

That conversation led her to reach out to other parents in the business to hear their stories. As she shared these stories on her blog, readers would look to her for resources, which she herself found difficult to locate.

“That’s when I realized that our employers don’t know how to take care of these women or make it possible for these women,” she said. “So the burden is falling completely on them, the obligation to bring up the conversation is falling completely on them.”

Soon, she connected with researchers at Wellesley Centers for Women who had recently completed a study of obstacles to female leadership in the arts. They found there was a silence around motherhood. Their recommendation was that employers initiate annual conversations with their employees to highlight options available to them and otherwise engage on the issues that arise. Beyond shifting the burden off the workers, Spencer Hewitt notes this would

help identify “allies and advocates for parents” in the workplace.

But how to translate this into the gig-based world of actors and stage managers? “A lot of the women who are disappearing, being left off the grid, are freelance artists,” she noted. “[Asking myself,] what can we do to make their needs known? I said, why don’t we just start our own conversations? So we launched an advocacy league.”

Their first official program was in April 2017, sponsoring a breakout session for mothers at a Women in Theatre Forum. “It gave me a prototype for the kinds of conversations we wanted to have,” Spencer Hewitt said. “Then we brought them to Philadelphia, New Jersey and New York in June. All of these forums are on the theme of breaking the silence. Because we are an independent organization, we are not risking any jobs, so we want to give you the platform to speak your minds, tell us about your needs and go public about the fact that it is a secret that mothers are holding on to.”

Plans for the future include forums focused on Fatherhood in Theatre and events looking at policy and best practices, as well as a handbook on pregnancy and

postpartum for actors and stage managers. PAAL is also quickly becoming national. “I have also been pleasantly inundated with [requests from people in] cities like DC and Minneapolis and Boston,” Spencer Hewitt said.

“There are some cities that need a national effort to bring their regions together,” she explained. “There are some cities that have already started to lead the way. PAAL as a functioning body is a resource hub, which structurally works off of a Chief Rep and representatives in each city, whose basic requirement is to help put on the annual forum. There’s a national steering committee that helps set priorities.”

Like theatre, PAAL’s work happens collaboratively. “There’s someone wanting you to move forward, someone there to help create the path back in when they want back in,” said Spencer Hewitt. “We’re not here to break down any doors, we’re here to knock until they open and then make something really great out of it.”

Learn more about PAAL at paaltheatre.com.



Rachel Spencer Hewitt moderates the panel at PAAL’s forum *Motherhood in Theatre: Breaking the Silence*, co-hosted by Philadelphia Women’s Theatre Festival. Panelists (L-R): LaNeshe Miller, Theatre in the X; Jill Harrison, Director’s Gathering, Daniella Vinitky Moody, Academia/Playwright/Dramaturg)



Moms and kids assemble just before PAAL's Chicago forum on Motherhood in Theater: Post-Partum Care and Career Transition at Vagabond School of the Arts.

CAREER AND FAMILY – (Continued from page 8) based actor with two children, has made it her mission to help break through the silence through the Parent-Artist Advocacy League (see “Advocating for Parent-Artists,” page 9). Based on research about obstacles to female leadership from Wellesley Centers for Women, Spencer Hewett set a goal: “At the very minimum, we recommend that employers have an annual conversation with their employees about what is available to them, how they would like to engage with them around these issues, so it’s something the company initiates” rather than the burden falling on the workers.

“I learned that mystery breeds fear,” said Spooner. “As a stage manager, I previously didn’t have a lot of patience for people who said things like ‘I can’t come to rehearsal because it’s my child’s costume parade at preschool’ or whatever. I would think, ‘are you for real? I have to be here, why aren’t you here?’ Now that I’m on the flip side of it, I feel a great responsibility to keep talking about it and keep saying things out loud and trying to suck even more mystery out of it. The people who are going to listen are going to listen.”

CONNECTING WITH EACH OTHER

As is often the case these days, social media has proved to be an important tool in fighting working parents’ isolation. “I have found so much support and so much genius in Theatre Moms Facebook pages,” Spencer Hewitt said. “There are Facebook pages for Chicago parents, for Minneapolis parents ... they become forums for conversation where people who have never crossed paths before can exchange stories and in doing so find commonality.”

Kristen Beth Williams, an Eastern Principal Councilor and co-chair of the recently resurrected Parents Committee, agrees. “There’s a great community out there,” she said, noting the group NYC Auditioning Moms, where parents who will be at the same calls at similar times connect in advance to watch each other’s kids while they are in the room, is particularly helpful.

Of course, it’s not only moms facing these challenges. Actor Jay Paranada is home with his daughter Lily while his husband is at work as a schoolteacher. “At this point, we haven’t done full-time daycare yet, so she’s being ‘thrown around’ to other fellow actors, some of my very close friends, who are able to watch her,” he said, sharing a story of the presentation day of a recent 29-hour reading he took part in. “She went with one of my friends from 10 to 2, got dropped off with me during my lunchtime, and then she went with someone different – all within the arts community, but it’s a stress.”

When you’re part of a two-actor family, as Williams is, occasionally the audition pass-off works in your favor. “My husband, Jimmy [Ludwig, Eastern Chorus Councilor], and I got called in for the same show. They must have known and scheduled us accordingly. His appointment was a half hour before mine, so we went as a family, and he held the baby while I sang, and I fed the baby while he was in there singing, and we made it work.”

For others, the best-laid childcare plans don’t always pan out. New York-based actor Raymond J. Lee’s daughter Ella arrived (via adoption) just as Lee was preparing to open a new show on Broadway. “My husband works for a PR agency, he’s got a 9 to 5. Once Ella came home, he left his job to be a stay-at-home daddy,” he said. “I was getting ready to do *Honeymoon in Vegas*, and I thought it was going to be running for years.”

When it didn’t, Lee and his husband quickly regrouped. “The moment we closed that show, it was like, okay you gotta go find a job now,” he said. “There was a time when I thought once I had kids I’d have to quit the business and get a 9 to 5 job that has benefits, but luckily my husband helps pay the bills and is more stable, so I’m able to still go out to auditions.”

The privilege of having a spouse with a stable income and regular hours was noted by many others as a key component to their ability to remain in the business. Byron Nilsson, chair of the Greater Albany Liaison Committee, was an occasional actor making a living as a freelance writer when his daughter

Lily was born. “Here I was, a brand-new dad at 40,” he said. “‘I should get a job,’ I complained to my wife. ‘I need you to take care of Lily,’ she said. She, after all, had the full-time job. With benefits.”

Nilsson ended up landing a job at New York State Theatre Institute, a company focused on introducing kids to theatre. “My one-year-old was welcome there,” he said, “and someone always was available to mind her when I had to be on stage. Lily grew up in the green room as I performed in a succession of shows over the next few years (and achieved my Equity membership along the way). As she neared the age of five, we looked at a number of area schools to find her a good fit. She complained after each such visit that the grown-ups invariably talked down to her. ‘The actors don’t do that,’ she added. ‘Nobody at the theater does.’”

Nilsson was able to homeschool his daughter in and around the theatre company for the next decade, before she entered a more traditional school setting – complete with school drama productions. “Lily is now a theater major at Barnard College,” Nilsson reports, “and soon will spend a term in London, studying at RADA.”

LIFE INFLUENCES ART

One of the core values of PAAL is that being a parent-artist is an asset, not an obstacle, to creating great art. This resonated with all of the parents we spoke with for this story.

“Being an actor has taught me to go with the flow so much more,” said Lee. “As an actor, you don’t know where the next gig is or what to expect at an audition, and that’s just like raising a kid – you don’t know what to expect. It teaches you to improv. It makes you think quick on your feet. You’re able to make really important decisions really fast.”

Paranada picked up the other side of the equation: “In terms of the work, it’s always been honest portrayals, but now that there’s someone in this world who’s so much more important and precious, I take that into consideration in the art

“AS AN ACTOR, YOU DON’T KNOW WHERE THE NEXT GIG IS OR WHAT TO EXPECT AT AN AUDITION, AND THAT’S JUST LIKE RAISING A KID – YOU DON’T KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT. IT TEACHES YOU TO IMPROV. IT MAKES YOU THINK QUICK ON YOUR FEET.”

— RAYMOND J. LEE

KIDS WHO WORK

There’s a whole other population of Equity members with their own challenges balancing career and family: kids who work! Actors’ Equity is committed to the protection and welfare of young performers working in the theatre. Under most Equity agreements, there are special provisions for juvenile performers (under the age of 16) which provide for proper security, supervision and education while the young performer is rehearsing, performing or on tour in an Equity production.

The Actors Fund also has two programs specifically focused on the well-being of young performers in California. If you earned money in California as a young performer any time after 2000, you might have unclaimed wages held in trust through the Coogan Law, which set up trusts to protect a portion of professional children’s earnings. The Actors Fund can help you learn how to apply to retrieve them.

Additionally, the Actors Fund’s Looking Ahead program offers a suite of programs and services to support young performers between the ages of 9 and 18. More information about all Actors Fund programs can be found at actorsfund.org.

I do. I had the opportunity to work at Red House in Syracuse, playing the Baker in *Into the Woods* during the time we were pregnant with Lily [who was born via surrogacy]. That was so important and special – I could really put myself in those shoes because I was going through that process. It’s one of those moments where life really does imitate art.”

Eastern Principal Councilor Francis Jue noted that caring for – and losing – his parents had similar effects on his art. (See “Caring For Your Parents,” page 23.) At the time his father passed, he was performing in *The Great Wall*, a rock musical about a father/son relationship. “After going through what I did with my folks and my family, all of my projects became about, in one way or another, introducing audiences to my parents,” he said. “Whether these characters were identifiable as my folks or not, there were aspects to them, like their sense of humor or this particular way of expressing affection or this particular sense of pride, that all had to do with my folks. In a lot of ways, I’ve been so grateful for them because the projects I’ve worked on have allowed me to stay in conversation with my folks after they passed.”

This effect isn’t limited to actors, either. Spooner has noticed how awareness of the scheduling needs of parents could benefit everyone involved in a production by encouraging more thoughtful scheduling of rehearsals. “For example, if you set the outside hours of the rehearsal in advance,” she said, “then I can engage a babysitter and not go into my savings to make that happen.” That same advanced scheduling practice would also make it easier for anyone to see the dentist, book auditions for future work or attend to any other aspects of their

(Continued on page 22)

HOW I GOT MY EQUITY CARD

EMC PROGRAM UPDATE

MICKEY ROWE MEMBER SINCE 2017

I received my Equity Card after being cast as the first actor on the spectrum to play Christopher in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* at Indiana Repertory Theatre and Syracuse Stage, which also made me one of the first actors on the spectrum to play any autistic character ever.

I had always loved circus skills since I was seven or eight years old and got my start in theatre when the Seattle Opera needed a stilt walker to play an ostrich in *The Magic Flute*. I showed up to audition as a 50 lb., eight-year-old stilt walker, but the costume was for an adult and easily weighed more than I did. Needless to say, I didn't get that role, but I went on to do more than ten shows with the Seattle Opera. I then did dozens of shows as an Equity Membership Candidate at other theatres, and when I got cast to play Christopher Boone in *The Curious Incident*, I paid my dues and joined this amazing and wonderful union.

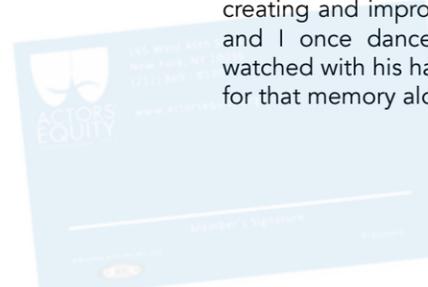


LULU PICART MEMBER SINCE 2010

I am very proud to say that I got my Equity card by getting the best hands-on training I can imagine: by doing shows that ranged from a cappella groups to improvisational troupes to musical theater to hosting — basically anything that a person in a wig and a costume can do while staying in light (or sunshine). I got my card through Walt Disney World, and I'm a better actor for it.

My Equity card let me work in regional theaters while working (and earning a pension) at Walt Disney World, and it enabled me to audition in New York City even before I lived in it. Not only that, but the time I spent at Walt Disney World exposed me to brilliant actors with all different kinds of training. I worked with physical comedians, clowns, singers of all genres, improvisers, hosts, and puppeteers who were both dedicated and at the top of their game, performing full-time.

I'm very grateful for the relationship that Actors' Equity and Walt Disney World have developed, and I'm very thankful to have spent so much time performing, creating and improvising in my early years. Also, Minnie and I once danced to "Single Ladies" while Mickey watched with his hands on his hips, so it was worth it just for that memory alone.



NEW FLEXIBILITY INTRODUCED FOR EQUITY MEMBERSHIP CANDIDATES

If you've followed our How I Got My Equity Card column, you know there are many different pathways to Equity membership. Since 1978, the Equity Membership Candidate (EMC) program has been an important option for actors and stage managers looking to work and hone their craft while becoming part of the union.

The program has changed over time, but the core of the program is an opportunity for membership candidates to work alongside Equity members at Equity theaters, progressively building experience that will serve their development and future employment prospects. These jobs enable the candidates to accrue credit for work weeks completed at approved Equity theatres toward eventual membership. The most recent iteration of the program required candidates to complete 50 work weeks in order to apply for Equity membership. Now, for the #Equity2020 generation, it's changing once more.

Recognizing the diversity of opportunity in different markets across the country and the different needs and career paths of our current and future members, the Entry to Equity Committee proposed adding some additional options to the program, which Council approved in September.

Under the new EMC program — effective immediately — participants will be eligible to join Equity after they accrue 25 creditable weeks of work — compared to 50 under the old



(l-r) Flora Stamatiades, National Director of Organizing and Special projects, Eastern Regional VP Al Bundonis, and John Fasulo, National Director of Membership address EMCs in New York at a recent EMC Seminar.

program. After accruing 25 weeks, participants may also opt to enter "Phase II" and remain an EMC for up to 25 more work weeks.

"Equity Membership Candidates in different parts of the country have different needs and goals. This change brings the program into the time in which we live," said Kevin McMahon, Chair of the Entry to Equity Committee. "With this change, EMCs have more flexibility, more choices and ultimately they will have a better experience. I am thrilled Equity's National Council has embraced these changes with a unanimous vote of support."

EMCs who had already earned 25 creditable weeks when the new option was introduced were eligible to join Equity immediately. Because the recent dues initiative provided

for a higher initiation fee beginning in January 2018, Equity reminded this group of candidates that a decision to join prior to January would enable them to pay the lower rate. As of press time, 161 new members have taken advantage of this opportunity.

Other provisions of the EMC program remain unchanged. Among the key program rules: to accrue weeks, EMCs must complete an EMC registration form each time they work at a participating Equity theatre. EMCs remain eligible to join Equity within five years of achieving 50 weeks, and they must finish any non-Equity work before they join the Union.



NEW OPTIONS FOR EMCs

- EMCs may join Equity after accruing 25 work weeks.
- When 25 weeks are achieved, EMCs have six months to decide between joining Equity or proceeding to Phase II of the EMC program.
- Those opting to enter Phase II may remain an EMC for up to 25 more work weeks.
- Following completion of Phase II, EMCs remain eligible to join Equity for five years.

UNICORN THEATRE



(l-r) EMC Bob Linebarger in *Hand to God* (2016); EMC Ashley Kennedy and members Teisha M. Bankston and Dianne Yvette in *Eclipsed* (2017); Member Matt Rapport and EMCs D'Andre McKenzie and Justin Barron in *How to Use a Knife* (2017)

We asked the staff at Unicorn Theatre to tell us about themselves. Here's what they had to say:

Unicorn Theatre continues to charge full steam ahead into their 44th season of bold, new plays, giving the often underrepresented a voice on the stage. Unicorn's home is in midtown Kansas City, MO, a cultural mecca in the midst of a renaissance. Producing Artistic Director Cynthia Levin focuses on the ongoing mission of "enhancing the Kansas City community by developing and producing high-quality, thought-provoking plays that have never been seen in the region. The Unicorn illuminates social issues by shining a light on diversity and inclusive stories which include race, religion and gender identity. Unicorn creates opportunities for the advancement of emerging and established actors, directors, playwrights, designers, technicians and administrative staff."

Unicorn was founded in 1974 by three University of Missouri-Kansas City graduates. Unicorn Theatre, originally called Theatre Workshop, created a space to give local artists a place for their voices to be heard. In 1979 Unicorn Theatre was looking for a stage manager. Levin (a graduate of Park University) was called in for an interview and was hired. After three years of directing, stage managing, performing and designing at the theatre, Levin was offered the job of Artistic Director in December 1982. She started negotiations with Equity soon after, and the theatre joined under one of the first SPT contracts in 1984.

She also joined the union as an actor/stage manager.

In 1986 the Unicorn built a theatre in the back half of the old Belman Garage on Main Street. Levin's dream was realized in February 2008, after a multi-million dollar campaign, allowing them to take over the rest of the building and add the Jerome Stage. The building was finally purchased outright in 2014. At that time the Board of Directors voted to rename the Mainstage to Levin Stage in honor of Cynthia Levin.

The Unicorn alternates between the two stages during the season. On the Levin Stage audiences see new works like *How to Use a Knife* by Will Snider, *Men on Boats* by Jaclyn Backhaus and *Vietgone* by Qui Nguyen. Productions that take place on the flexible Jerome Stage feature a more intimate setting for shows like *Disgraced* by Ayad Akhtar, *Eclipsed* by Danai Gurira and *Hir* by Taylor Mac.

Levin says, "I want to produce plays that no one else in our area has had the opportunity to see unless they travel to larger metropolitan cities. I only choose contemporary plays, most of which are less than five years old." In the past 44 seasons Unicorn Theatre has produced over 300 plays and this year will stage its 66th world premier. Unicorn is a founding member of the National New Play Network (NNPN), started in 1998. NNPN has fostered the

work of hundreds of new voices in the American theatre and its unique network has created a longevity most plays never find.

The Unicorn has six full-time employees, four part-time, and hires over 125 seasonal artists, designers and technicians. For the past four years Unicorn has made their productions accessible to over 5,500 patrons through their 'Pay What U Can' program because, as Levin says, "we believe art should be for everyone."

Each season Unicorn partners with University of Missouri-Kansas City's MFA program to collaborate. Unicorn Theatre, a decade into their Internship Program, helps over 30 college and graduate students each year to gain professional experience onstage, behind the scenes and in non-profit arts administration. The program is tailored to each individual, giving them exposure to their specific areas of interest. These interns come from schools all over including KU, K State, KCAI, Columbia College in Chicago, Lafayette College, Stephens College, Oklahoma City University, Graceland University, Sorbonne in Paris, Carnegie Mellon and UMKC.

The focus at Unicorn Theatre always remains on the work produced on the stage. Levin says "My hope is that every time you come to the Unicorn, you discover something about yourself you did not know before you walked in."

EVERYTHING'S UP TO DATE
IN KANSAS CITY

Thanks to KC Liaison Committee Chair Sarah LaBarr, Secretary Keith Reece and member Alex Murphy for their contributions.

Kansas City is known as the city of fountains and boulevards. Kansas City is called the Paris of the Plains – it's truly a beautiful city with friendly locals who can't wait to share cool new, trendy places to check out, especially our thriving theatre and art community!

WORKING IN THE REGION

ON BEING A MEMBER IN THE CITY

Kansas City is a tight-knit community, so we all tend to know who is in what show, and what projects are coming up. We have more Monday night "industry nights" than anyone could possibly ever attend. There are lots of new works and play development such as No Sleep November, held annually at The Living Room theatre. This is where a show is written, cast, directed, teched and performed in 24 hours!

WHAT IT'S LIKE WORKING IN THE REGION

Many Kansas City actors were once MFA students at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, and ended up loving KC so much that they stayed. We have some actors who are native to Kansas City, and others who have transplanted here, which creates a good mix of backgrounds and supports our thriving theatre scene.

WHERE YOU MIGHT BE WORKING

Kansas City Repertory Theatre; New Theatre Restaurant; Unicorn Theatre; Starlight Theatre; Kansas City Actors Theatre; The Living Room; Musical Theater Heritage; Metropolitan Ensemble Theatre; Spinning Tree Theatre; Coterie Theatre; Quality Hill Playhouse; Great Plains Theatre Festival; EARTH (Equity Actors' Readers Theatre); Theatre for Young America; Arrow Rock Lyceum Theatre; Kansas City Fringe Festival; Black Repertory Theatre; Heart of America Shakespeare Festival.

Left: Rehearsal photo from *Frida...a self portrait*, written, developed, and performed by member Vanessa Severo with the Kansas City Repertory Theatre's new work series. Right: members gather at the Kansas City Young Workers picnic. Table of Contents: member Francisco Villegas in the Unicorn Theatre's production of *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*, photo by Manon Halliburton.

AROUND TOWN

BEST PLACES TO EAT FOR FOODIES

You can't go wrong with BBQ when in KC! BBQ joints to try while in town include Gates and Sons, Arthur Bryant's, LC's, Joe's Kansas City, Jack Stack, BB's Lawnside, Char Bar, Q39 and Woodyard. KC features more than just BBQ – check out Brown & Loe, Bluestem, Waldo Pizza, Lydia's, Michael Smith's, West Side Local, La Bodega, Pierpont's, Grinders and The Foundry.

WHAT YOU WON'T FIND ANYWHERE ELSE

Set aside half a day and visit the WWI museum – you will not be disappointed! Cross the street and walk around KC's historic Union Station. Take in the amazing sights and sounds of KC's incredible jazz scene while in the 18th and Vine district or at The Green Lady Lounge. Be sure to visit the Jazz Museum and the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum. Walk around and enjoy great shopping on the Country Club Plaza, and then head over to the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art – it's free! And, KC has the 6th largest craft brewery in the country, so head down to the Boulevard Brewing Company for a free brewery tour.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

Part of getting involved in Kansas City means supporting local professional sports team like the Royals, Chiefs and Sporting KC.

BEST WAYS TO EXPERIENCE LOCAL COLOR

While downtown, have dinner and drinks in the Power & Light district, and then take in an event at the Sprint Center. Pick up great local produce in the River Market on weekend mornings. Celebrate local artists in the Crossroads district the first Friday of every month. Tour the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts, and then stay for a performance by the KC Lyric Opera, KC Symphony or KC Ballet.



Photo by Tom Styrkovicz



Photo by Tom Lancaster

ACTING LOCALLY: CROWDSOURCING FOR MORE WORK OPPORTUNITIES IN THE REGIONS

Over the summer, Equity's volunteer team – the Trailblazers – made thousands of contacts with other rank and file Equity members about what they want the Union to look like by the year 2020. And there were several common themes that ran through the conversations.

One point stood out particularly strong in the conversations – members outside the office cities want to see and hear from Equity more, and they want additional help on creating work opportunities in their own communities.

For that reason, during the #EquityStrong campaign, the Union committed to building a strategic and modern organizing department. And that's why the first position created after the campaign concluded was a new Organizer for Liaison Areas. Stefanie Frey was hired to fill this new organizing position.

NEW TOOLS FOR LIAISONS

One of the first tasks on Frey's list was making it easier for members to get involved with Equity in their area. Each Liaison Chair now has an Actors' Equity email address to complement their Equity phone number (see "Connecting with Your Area Liaison," page 17). And each Liaison Area now has a Business Rep assigned to be the primary point of contact, so each area will have an Equity representative who knows their market intimately and works closely with the Liaison Committee.

Additionally, new pages for each Liaison Area are being added to the Member Portal this month, which will collect news and events for each area as well as provide easy-to-find contact information for both the Liaison and the primary Business Rep for each area. Frey is also rolling out new infrastructure, like a Slack workspace, to make it easier for Liaison Chairs nationwide to share strategies and collaborate. These new tools to help Liaison Chairs communicate with each other came out of conversations Equity staff had with the Liaison Chairs at last summer's meeting in Atlanta (for more on that, see the Summer 2017 issue of *Equity News*).

ACTING LOCALLY

Next up is the launch of a new organizing project that enlists our Liaison Committees and Trailblazers to identify where the opportunities lie when it comes to getting more local theaters using Equity contracts. We will be asking that question in each and every Liaison Area around the country.

"Just like finding work is a priority for every actor, organizing new work is a priority of our union," said Kevin McMahon, chair of the Organizing Committee. "I'm excited about getting members more involved in organizing new Equity theaters."

Roy A. Gross, Chair of the Washington, D.C./Baltimore Liaison Committee, piloted the targeting tool.

"Working to identify employment opportunities is one of the most important roles we have in our union,"

Gross said. "Every time we connect with a potential employer, we are doing the hard work of organizing a better future for our brothers and sisters. This project is a perfect opportunity for members outside of office cities to inform the staff which employers are best suited to an

EVERY TIME WE CONNECT WITH A POTENTIAL EMPLOYER, WE ARE DOING THE HARD WORK OF ORGANIZING A BETTER FUTURE FOR OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS.

– ROY A. GROSS

organizing effort."

The project will kick off in late November and run through January. The goal is to then take the feedback from members and share it with Equity's Business Reps, who can integrate the information into their work as they expand their travel to Liaison communities.

"This grassroots organizing project is an exciting opportunity for local members and Equity staff. Together, our focus will be making each market in each liaison area #EquityStrong," Frey explained. "Members outside the office cities want a stronger Equity community and presence. I'm looking forward to working with my colleagues here on staff and the committees across the country to make that happen!"

NEW: DOWNLOAD THE HOW TO HIRE ME LETTER IN THE MEMBER PORTAL

Equity's How to Hire Me Letter is a resource that is intended to pave the way for Equity members who live outside Equity's office cities to get hired by producers who may not have a lot of experience using Equity Contracts.

For members who are auditioning outside office cities, the How to Hire Me Letters help members get hired using a Special Appearance Agreement or a Guest Artist Agreement.

This one-page letter gives a non-union producer or casting director basic information about the salaries and other requirements of the Special Appearance and Guest Artist agreements, along with contact information for your regional

Equity office.

How does it work? Bring the How to Hire Me Letter to an audition or send it in with your resume. The producers then call Equity, and we negotiate a contract.

Previously, the letters were available by requesting a copy from the local Liaison Committee Chair. Now, the letters can be found by visiting the *Resources* section of the Member Portal and requesting a copy of the letter.

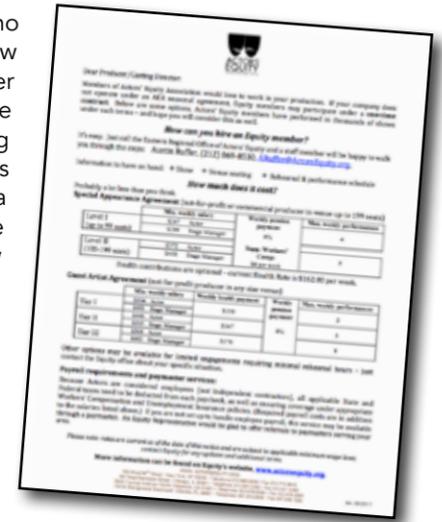
Members who request a copy of the letter online will automatically receive one by email – along with a follow up survey 30 days later that will allow Equity to gather feedback

about how the letters are working, including whether the process led to a contract.

"Members who have used the How to Hire Me Letter told us it is a valuable tool for getting hired by producers who don't have a lot of experience with Equity. Now we've made that resource more widely available," said Actors' Equity Executive Director Mary McColl.

"This change is consistent with the Equity 2020 Vision to be more responsive when members give us

feedback about how we can do better."



CONNECTING WITH YOUR AREA LIAISON

AREA LIAISON PHONE SYSTEM • CALL 877-AEA-1913

Equity has a national toll-free phone system for members who live in liaison areas to reach their Liaison Committee leadership. Dial 877-AEA-1913, then enter your area extension:

810 Albany
811 Atlanta
812 Austin/San Antonio
813 Boston
814 Buffalo/Rochester
816 Cincinnati/Louisville
817 Cleveland
818 Dallas/Fort Worth
819 Denver
820 Detroit

821 Florida – Central
822 Florida – South
823 Houston
824 Kansas City
825 Las Vegas
827 Milwaukee/Madison
828 Minneapolis/St. Paul
829 Nashville
830 New Orleans
832 Philadelphia

833 Phoenix/Tucson
834 Pittsburgh
876 Portland
835 San Diego
836 San Francisco
837 Seattle
838 St. Louis
839 Washington D.C./Baltimore

NEW: AREA LIAISON EMAIL ADDRESSES

Equity has recently introduced easy-to-remember addresses to contact the chairs of each Liaison Area. Please note the chairs are member volunteers, and as such their messages are not official Equity communications.

albany@actorsequity.org
atlanta@actorsequity.org
asa@actorsequity.org
boston@actorsequity.org
buffroch@actorsequity.org
cincilouisville@actorsequity.org
cleveland@actorsequity.org
dfw@actorsequity.org
denver@actorsequity.org
detroit@actorsequity.org

centralflorida@actorsequity.org
southflorida@actorsequity.org
houston@actorsequity.org
kansascity@actorsequity.org
lasvegas@actorsequity.org
wisconsin@actorsequity.org
twincities@actorsequity.org
nashville@actorsequity.org
neworleans@actorsequity.org
philadelphia@actorsequity.org

arizona@actorsequity.org
pittsburgh@actorsequity.org
portland@actorsequity.org
sandiego@actorsequity.org
bayarea@actorsequity.org
seattle@actorsequity.org
stlouis@actorsequity.org
dc@actorsequity.org

NEW WALT DISNEY WORLD AGREEMENT BRINGS **MORE WAGES, OPPORTUNITIES**

It seems that the “Spoonful of Sugar” that made it all go down so well was the longevity of the relationship between so many of the workers and their employer. As Equity entered into negotiations with Disney, having so many members with ten or more years of employment at Walt Disney World, often in a variety of roles and shows, turned out to be an asset that made the process run smoothly and yielded dividends for all members.

Councilor Marjorie Horne is no stranger to Equity negotiations, with several dozen under her belt. However, a variety of circumstances meant she ended up joining the Disney negotiations for the first time just as this year’s were getting started – as chair of the negotiating team. She quickly acclimated herself to the specifics of working at Walt Disney World by listening to members. “[They] were amazingly open about what it was they did and how they felt about what they were doing there,” she said. “Some had been there two years, some had been there 20 years, some even before the contract started. I fell in love with everybody.”

One of those members is T. Robby Piggott, who has been performing at Disney since 1995 and participated in every negotiation between Equity and Disney in the last two decades. Having members bring their long-time relationships with them made for a easier negotiating process, Piggott said.

“I think the biggest difference is that because we’ve been doing them for so many years, it’s become more of an efficient, tight contract, and there wasn’t as much to discuss,” he said. “Back in the day, it was so many things [on the table]: dance belts and socks and greenrooms and things. Now the company knows what our expectations are, and we know what the company’s expectations are, so it ran more



Senior Business Rep Russell Lehrer and Negotiations Chair Marjorie Horne with cast members from *Finding Nemo* at Walt Disney World.

efficiently and respectfully.”

Key provisions of the new contract include a 14 percent wage increase on returning salaries over the life of the contract and increases to the minimum salaries. Members will also have significantly expanded work opportunities through the use of the Chorus contract, earlier access to vacation benefits and expanded paid sick leave.

Horne echoed Piggott’s impressions: “Both teams were going in totally positive, and that made it so dynamic. We listened to each other, we went into our caucuses, said what we wanted and couldn’t do, brought that to them and said ‘how do we find a way?’ and the conversation across the table was totally forward moving at all times, even when we or they said ‘we can’t do this.’ We found a way around.”

Senior Business Representative Russell Lehrer, who negotiated the agreement, concurred. “I think what made this team

so successful was the mutual respect both sides have for each other, a respect which has taken years to develop. Both sides of the table remained open to hearing not only the proposals made, but the underlying causes for those proposals. That – and our team’s intimate understanding of how Disney operates – allowed us to find mutually beneficial solutions to most every concern we wanted to address.”

The negotiating team was able to achieve three historic gains: First, Disney – against years of bargaining history – has agreed to compensate performers for work scheduled but not done when actors are rescheduled to other stages. Second, Disney agreed to make improvements in the Foy harness system at *Finding Nemo* which will restore the weight limits on the performers flown in the show to levels which can be maintained in a healthy manner. Third, an agreement was reached to greatly increase the

(Continued on page 19)

NEW AGREEMENT FOR FAN EXPO

It’s hard to imagine Broadway without Actors’ Equity. Now, participants in the annual convention celebrating the Great White Way won’t have to.

Equity has reached a new three-year agreement with Mischief Management, the organizers of BroadwayCon, a three-day expo where fans can meet and interact with Broadway stars.

The agreement also clarifies rates for short, performance-based appearances, since the majority of events at BroadwayCon require less than one hour of an actor’s time. The new agreement includes a 95 percent increase in the weekly minimum salary for actors. The new minimum weekly salary for stage managers will

more than double. The three-year agreement also includes 2.5 percent annual wage increases.

“This contract is just a small example of the big achievements we’ve made in contract negotiations all over the country in the last year,” said Mary McColl, Executive Director of Actors’ Equity. “I want to thank our staff and the members who worked on this negotiation to make this contract possible. Whether it’s at Walt Disney World, Off-Broadway or LORT, Equity has been able to ensure better wages and more work opportunities for our talented members.”

The BroadwayCon agreement is the latest in a series of strong contracts negotiated by Equity for its members. Equity recently reached

a five-year agreement for members working at Walt Disney World that included 14 percent wage increases and expanded work opportunities.

This summer Equity reached a historic new five-year contract with the League of Resident Theaters (LORT). That contract included substantial salary increases and more Principal and Chorus contracts for members, as well as additional stage manager contracts. And in the fall of 2016 Equity reached a five-year agreement with significant wage increases for theaters represented by the Off-Broadway League and smaller Off-Broadway theaters, previously known as ANTC.



ORLANDO – (Continued from page 18) scope of Equity work opportunity in the parks through use of the Chorus contract.

Even in a relatively smooth negotiation, being part of the process takes commitment and work. Nevertheless, Piggott recommends the experience. “For me, it’s rewarding seeing the benefits year after year,” he said. “I know there are rules in our contract with Disney, in our Equity book, that I helped craft. That my opinions and experience led to a change in the way things are done now, and people are benefiting from those changes – that’s hugely rewarding.”



Equity’s Walt Disney World negotiating team.

#EQUITYWORKS THEATRE NEWS & NOTES



Dee Pelletier in *The Baroness* at Scandinavian American Theater Company.

Ann Arbor, MI – **Kickshaw Theatre** is moving into Phase Two of their Transitional SPT, electing to hire an Equity stage manager for each production of their season.

Burbank, CA – **The Garry Marshall Theatre** has begun Phase 1 of a Transitional SPT.

Cleveland, OH – **Dobama Theatre** has added a summer show, resulting in 16 additional work weeks.

Dallas, TX – **Uptown Players** signed a new LOA to LORT with 10% salary increase and five additional Equity contracts over two years, resulting in 147 work weeks total.

Dayton, OH – **The Human Race Theatre** has brought back their LOA-LORT production after a couple of years off, adding 31 work weeks for our members.

Detroit, MI – **Detroit Repertory Theatre** has signed a new SPT rider, increasing their ratio to no fewer than 12 of the available acting roles in the season on Equity contracts.

Houston, TX – **The Queensbury Theatre** has signed a new SPT seasonal agreement.

Kansas City, MO – **Coterie Theatre**, an LOA to TYA, has renewed their rider and increased salaries by 3%.

Kansas City, MO – **The Living Room Theatre** has moved to Phase 2 of their Transitional SPT process, adding Health to their contracts.

Kansas City, MO – **Quality Hill Playhouse**, an SPT 8, has renewed their rider and increased salaries by 4%.

Los Angeles, CA – 14 new 99-Seat Agreements have been signed since September.

Minneapolis, MN – **History Theatre** is taking their production of *Sweetland* back on the road in northern MN, adding 28 work weeks for our members.

Minneapolis, MN – **The Moving Company** has renewed their rider, adding 12 – 20 work weeks for our members.

New York, NY – **Scandinavian American Theater Company** is now producing on contract after operating as a showcase producer

San Francisco, CA – **Custom Made Theatre Company** is back on MBAT for the first time in five years.

San Jose, CA – **3 Below: Guggenheim Entertainment** has signed a new SPT Seasonal Agreement

Sarasota, FL – **The Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe of Florida, Inc.** has completed transition to a full SPT Agreement and may now participate in the EMC program.

St. Louis, MO – **Saint Louis Actors' Studio** has moved into Phase 3 of the Transitional SPT process, increasing salaries by 4% and adding a stage manager to their required contracts resulting in 40 new work weeks.

St. Paul, MN – **Theatre Latte Da** will tour their production of *All Is Calm*, resulting in approximately 60 new work weeks.

TRACKING WHAT YOU'RE OWED

Eastern Region staff recovered \$350 for a member to restore hair to its original color after being dyed for a production.

During bond clearance, Eastern Region staff recognized that a stage management team was paid less than it should have been and was able to recover \$405 in salary plus benefits.

Staff in the Eastern Region discovered that a cast was paid in half hour installments for rehearsal, which is not allowed under the contract. \$327 in lost wages was recovered.

Following the closing of a long-running production in the Eastern Region, a joint effort between Equity and the company manager produced a total accrued vacation and sick pay out to the company in the amount of \$17,203.40.

Eastern Region staff recovered \$434.70 owed to an actor assigned as the dance captain but never paid and \$63.80 to another member underpaid for dance captain duties.

Eastern Region staff recovered vacation pay totaling \$1,345 for members that had been unpaid due to a theater's abrupt closing.

Eastern Region staff determined that an actor was due an offer or a buyout for a recent project presented on an LOA-COST Agreement in the East. The actor in question had participated in the LA 99-Seat Agreement production within the look back period and was offered the understudy role instead of his original role. The member will receive a buyout of \$2,031.00, subject to pension and dues.

Eastern Region staff identified a Favored Nations clause in an actor's contract that had been triggered, resulting in payment of an additional \$5,175 to the affected member.

Eastern Region staff was able to get a concert produced by an Equity theater as part of their season

under Equity contract using the Experimental Theatre provisions of LORT, resulting in payment of \$8,625.86 in salary (plus two weeks of health and pension benefits) to seven members.

After a dispute of an improper termination notice, Eastern Region staff was able to secure \$550 in salary for a member.

Central Region staff secured additional writing compensation for the cast of a show, totaling \$7,200.

Central Region staff discovered a total of \$5000 for members resulting from missed media payments, tech week bumps and late salary payments.

Central Region staff recovered two additional weeks of salary for an actor whose producer breached the terms of their agreement.

Central Region staff recovered \$296 due to a stage manager for a missed vacation payment.

When a show unexpectedly needed B-roll for a local television commercial, Central Region staff secured media payments totaling \$7,500 for members.

Central Region staff resolved a buyout issue for a member resulting in an additional \$800 and enough health weeks to qualify for insurance.

Western Region staff recovered over \$9,600 in retroactive payments for 12 members with a Most Favored Nation Claim.

Western Region staff recovered over \$4,000 benefits for 4A's member not on contract.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Equity News,

My dear friend and long-ago leading lady at DC's Arena Stage, **Dorothea Hammond**, passed away on April 28, 2017 after an amazing and groundbreaking life as an actress. Though most people knew her to be ageless, Dorothea was actually 101 years young when she died. She had, we believe, shaved off 10 years back around 1947, when her brief Broadway stint as a dramatic ingénue happened. She was Dorothea Jackson then, appearing in *Portrait in Black* with Sidney Blackmer, Claire Luce and Donald Cook – as profiled in the 1946-47 edition of *Theatre World*.

Living in Washington

with her first husband in 1950, she became part of Zelda Fichandler's fledgling company at the new Arena Stage. For the next 30+ years, she played both leading and supporting roles there opposite budding stars like George Grizzard, Robert Prosky, Jane Alexander and Dianne Wiest, to name but a few.

Even in her declining years she clung to the hope that she'd go back on stage again. Indeed, as late as in the 1990's she was playing Carrie in *The Trip to Bountiful* and Dolly Levi in *The Matchmaker*, both at Wilmington Stage Company. Not to mention stock productions of *Driving Miss Daisy* and other plays. She was alert and engaged with the world right up until the end, passing away quietly only two weeks after her 101st birthday, in her Georgetown



(l-r) Longtime Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe artist Ariel Blue with Equity members Syreeta S. Banks and JoAnna Ford in *Broadway in Black*.

Western Region staff recovered over \$5,000 in vacation payments to members on SPT Agreements.

Western Region staff recovered \$286 in chorus parts payments.

Western Region staff recovered \$212.67 in missed vacation payment for one member and \$97.08 vacation for another.

home with her son PJ nearby. A beautiful memorial service followed a month later. She will be missed, but her spirit lives on.

– Ted Snowdon

Dear Equity News,

It is with sadness in my heart to tell you of the passing of my dear, long-time friend **Maureen Byrnes**.

Maureen had an extraordinary life and career working as a dancer/actor in NYC, Chicago, Los Angeles, Boston, Montreal and Paris. Featured in both the original Off-Broadway and Broadway companies of *Oh, Calcutta!* dancing the nude pas de deux, she thrilled audiences with her beauty and grace. Playing the role of Candy Starr in the Boston company of *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest* and roles in the films *Goin'*

South, Cry Uncle and *The Red Machine*, she delighted us with her gift for comedy and drama.

Over the last ten years she did films and theatre in Los Angeles and also used her humanitarian skills working as a counselor helping dancers at the LA branch of Career Transitions for Dancers.

She was a feisty/sweet/tough cookie and will always be remembered for her hilarious quick wit, big heart, love of animals and enormous talents.

September 8, 2017 – R.I.P. Dearest Maureen.

– James Dybas

Dear Equity News,

Bruce William Somerville died on August 2, 2017 at his home in Naples, Florida, his beloved wife Irene at his side as always. He earned an MFA

(Continued on page 23)

CAREER AND FAMILY – (Continued from page 11)
life that might require scheduling.

BABYSITTING

As Spooner hinted at above, the cost of childcare, coupled with the long and often unpredictable hours of a career in theatre, remains a major obstacle for parents working in the business.

Enter Equity members Jen Malenke and Vasthy Mompont, the founders of Broadway Babysitters. Mompont wanted to start a service that catered to parents of children with special needs; Jen wanted to help create jobs for actors in between their showbiz gigs. Mutual friends connected them, and their individual ideas merged to become something even bigger.

“As we started it, we said we should take care of people in our community,” said Mompont. “As we get older, we’re seeing more of our friends having kids, and I saw them struggling with last-minute auditions or having to quit the business because they couldn’t afford childcare, so we said let’s offer a discount and try to help out our community. Now that part of the company is one of our biggest parts – the artists in our community.”

Beyond offering discounts to parents who work in theatre, they’ve tailored their services to meet the specific needs of actors. “It’s more than just about the auditions,” said Mompont. “It’s about them being able to go to class; not feeling like a director’s not able to hire them because of their childcare responsibilities; when they book a show, how much money will go to having to provide childcare, will they have to move out of the city because they can’t afford to live here?”

All their sitters join the company through referral – they either know Jen or Vasthy personally, or have been vouched for by someone who does – and they are all trained, including specific training on caring for children with special needs. “The marriage of artists and special needs children is beautiful,” said Mompont. “We are able to get that training free of charge. People volunteer to teach our sitters because they like what we’re doing, and they’re some of the best in the city who train them.”

This enables a tag-team approach to child care. Each family builds a relationship with multiple sitters, so if one sitter has an audition or class, or books a job, there’s a trusted alternate ready to

jump in. Similarly, if a parent gets a last-minute audition, they have a variety of trained, trusted providers who can step up.

One of their biggest achievements was the establishment of an audition drop-off care center, which was located at Pearl Studios in Manhattan for a number of months, thanks in part to a grant from The Actors Fund’s Career Transitions for Dancers program. The idea seems like common sense on its face: create a place central to lots of audition locations where parents can drop off their kids while they go audition and then pick them right back up.

“We were only charging parents \$25 for three hours,” said Malenke, “and we just didn’t break even on that. We were renting the studio and paying two sitters to be on, so we have to come up with a different solution.” They are currently investigating partnerships and non-profit options for bringing back the service to a new space.

SOURCES OF SUPPORT

The babysitting challenge had also been on the agenda of the previous iteration of the Parents Committee, which according to Williams went silent in 2010. Her co-chair, 2nd VP Rebecca Kim Jordan, had been part of the committee then, and she related to Williams that adding committee meetings into the already challenging schedules of working parents had partially led to the committee’s demise. Williams is hopeful that with the advent of technologies like Zoom that enable committees to meet online, the new iteration of the Parents Committee will be more successful.

Although the new committee is just

**Broadway
Babysitters
Jen Malenke
(l) and Vasthy
Mompont (r)
with a client,
photo by
SmithDavis
Photography.**



getting started, Williams has high hopes for what they can achieve: “I’d love to see us host a forum ‘Been There, Done That’ with parents in the business who have older kids to share what they’ve been through with newer parents like us who are facing the same problems now, to figure out what we can do.”

The Actors Fund also offers a number of services to assist families with a variety of challenges. Their Entertainment Assistance Program employs licensed social workers who can help on a confidential basis with short-term, one-on-one counseling and referrals to helpful resources on issues ranging from children’s special needs to grief, as well as family and marital conflicts that may arise. The Actors Fund also offers an extensive directory of online resources, with robust categories of services for Parents (including adoption, child care and special needs), Health and Human Services (including options for seniors and their caregivers) and Health Care and Health Insurance.

In addition to online resources for Health Insurance, the Actors Fund’s Artist Health Insurance Resource Center can help you identify coverage options and enroll in them. This program provides assistance nationally by phone (Western US: 855.491.3357, Eastern US: 917.281.5975), as well as offering in-person seminars in Los Angeles and New York. The Actors Fund also regularly offers groups for Pregnant Women and New Moms in the Entertainment Industry in Los Angeles.

EYES WIDE OPEN

It’s cliché to say that no one knows what the future will bring, but that’s

(Continued on back page.)

@actorsequity

CARING FOR YOUR PARENTS

Parents aren’t the only Equity Members who struggle with making family obligations work with their careers. Eastern Principal Councilor Francis Jue points out, “Like with many other professions, there are sacrifices we are sometimes asked to make. I spent the majority of 2017 out of town. That meant in five months I got to see my fiancé twice, a couple of weekends when I could fly him out. That’s something we’re fine with. We can negotiate, and I found someone who doesn’t put pressure on me to be home.”

“Whether you’re an actor or not, you make priorities in your life,” Jue continued. He was confronted with this reality a few years ago when he received a message from his sister during an Equity Plenary informing him that their mother’s thyroid cancer had become aggressive, prompting their mother to enroll in hospice.

“I had several gigs lined up,” he said. “I was about to go to Morocco for a gig. I had shows lined up in the summer. I had readings I was doing. I had Equity obligations. At that moment, I just had to decide what the priority was. Whether or not my mom needed me, I was going to be there. So I backed out of everything and I went home.”

In Jue’s case, he was grateful that his employers and his representation all understood his situation and

supported him. Not knowing how much time his mother had left, he soon faced another crossroads: if he backed out of the job he had lined up for the autumn, he would fall short of his health insurance weeks and lose his own coverage. “I told my sisters that, and they decided I should take that job and then come back,” he said. “We were making all kinds of plans like that, and then my mom passed. Two weeks after she died, I was in rehearsal.”

Western Principal Councilor Nancy Daly, who lives in Los Angeles, felt a similar pull when her mother in Washington, D.C., was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s. “Your career is always going to be there,” she said. “You have to put things in perspective. There will always be other work. But this is the one time your parents need you there present, fully, aware, loving, caring, kind, and focused. There’s only that much time when things begin to go downhill.”

As someone who lately works more in film and television than in theatre, Daly was able to plan her times in D.C. around the rhythms of Hollywood. “I know when pilot season is,” she said. “I know when the slow times are. My agents are angels, so I let them know ahead of time when I was going to be on the east coast for a period of time, and they said ‘Go, do what you need to do. We’ll make it work out.’”

THEATRE AUTHORITY

Kate Shindle was elected president of Theatre Authority, the organization designated by the 4A’s for jurisdiction over benefit performances, in October. Theatre Authority sets standards for performers’ participation and maintains insurance covering our members working on these shows, and all monies collected by the Theatre Authority are donated to The Actors Fund. In the last five months alone, Theatre Authority has overseen 117 benefits (not including those put on by Broadway Cares), which have raised over \$11.7 million. More information about Theatre Authority, including how nonprofit organizations can apply to have their benefit cleared, is available at actorsequity.org.

members.actorsequity.org

LETTERS – (Continued from page 21)

from the University of Iowa and soon got a job at Guthrie II. After that he acted at Great Lakes Shakespeare, Milwaukee Rep, McCarter Theatre, Pioneer Theatre, Peterborough Players and Florida Rep. Bruce was an award-winning artist, his paintings and woodcarvings gracing homes throughout the country. He designed and built beautiful, functional furniture. He also painted murals and installed shows at the Museum of the Fashion Institute of Technology; one such exhibit is part of the permanent collection at the Swedish Museum of the Performing Arts in Stockholm. In the last few years he taught himself to play the piano and was good at it. Definitely a Jack-of-All-Trades and a Master of Many. Bruce Somerville was and is much loved and missed by so many of us.

– Bruce’s big sister Phyllis

Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation (All Periodicals Publications Except Requester Publications)

- Title of publication: Equity News.
- Publication No.: 0092-4520.
- Date of filing: October 27, 2017.
- Frequency of issue: Quarterly.
- Number of issues published annually: 4.
- Annual subscription price: \$0 annually.
- Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication: Actors’ Equity Assoc., 165 West 46th Street, New York 10036-2500.
- Complete Mailing address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher: Actors’ Equity Assoc., 165 West 46th Street, New York 10036-2500.
- Full names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor and Managing Editor: Publisher: Brandon Lorenz, Actors’ Equity Association, 165 W. 46th St., New York, NY 10036-2500. Editor: David Levy, Actors’ Equity Association, 165 W. 46th St., New York, NY 10036-2500. Managing Editor: David Levy, Actors’ Equity Association, 165 W. 46th St., New York, NY 10036-2500.
- Owner: Actors’ Equity Assoc., 165 West 46th Street, New York 10036-2500.
- Known bondholders, mortgages, and other security holders: None.
- The purpose, function and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for Federal income tax purposes HAS NOT CHANGED during preceding 12 months.
- Publication name: Equity News.
- Issue Date for Circulation Date Below: August (Summer) 2017.
- Extent and nature of Circulation: Quarterly.
- 15A. Total no. copies printed (Net Press Run): 43,285; 44,466.

- Paid/Requested Outside-County Mail Subscriptions Stated on Form 3541, (Include advertiser’s proof and exchange copies): 30,243; 30,639.
 - Paid In-County Subscriptions Stated on Form 3541 (Include advertiser’s proof and exchange copies): none; none.
 - Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors, counter sales and other Non-USPS paid distribution: none; none.
 - Other Classes Mailed Through USPS: 207; 150.
- Total paid circulation: 30,450; 30,789.
 - Free distribution by mail (samples, complimentary, and other free).
- Outside-County as Stated on Form 3541: 200; 200.
 - In-County as Stated on Form 3541: 0; 0.
 - Other Classes Mailed Through the USPS: 0; 0.
 - Free distribution outside the mail: 100; 100.
 - Total Free distribution (Sum of D 1,2,3,4): 300; 300.
 - Total distribution (Sum of C and E): 30,750; 31,089.
 - Copies not distributed: 100; 100.
 - Total (Sum of F & G): 30,850; 31,189.
 - Percent Paid and/or Requested: Circulation (c divided by 15F times 100) 99%; 99%.

- Paid Electronic Copies: 13,042; 13,827.
 - Total Paid Print Copies (Line 15C) + Requested/Paid Electronic Copies: 43,492; 44,616.
 - Total Print Distribution (Line 15F) + Paid Electronic Copies: 43,792; 44,916.
 - Percent Paid (Both Print & Electronic Copies): 99%; 99%.
- This Statement of Ownership will be printed in the November (Autumn) 2017 issue of this publication.
 - I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnished false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions (including fines and imprisonment) and/or civil sanctions including multiple damages and civil penalties.

Steve DiPaola, Assistant Executive Director for Finance and Administration

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DID YOU KNOW: HOW BONDING WORKS

One of the most important provisions of an Equity contract, the bonding policy, was established decades ago in order to protect union members when working under contract.

This policy helps ensure that you receive at least the minimum guarantee of contractual salary and benefits (including pension and health credits) in a timely manner should an employer default on its obligations to you or Equity. The union ensures that members are always paid first out of the bond. However, it's important to note that filing your contract once it is signed – no later than the first

rehearsal – helps Equity guarantee the agreement is properly bonded.

For single-unit productions, the amount of the bond is based on the number of Equity contracts issued for the show. For seasonal theater, such as Stock, LORT and Letter of Agreement, to name a few, the bond is based on the highest number of active contracts in a two-week period. If Equity receives more contracts than the bond protects, the union will immediately demand additional bond be posted. If, for some reason, the producer fails to increase the bond, actors will have the option to cancel their contract

without any further obligation to the employer.

If a single-unit production defaults, members will receive the minimum contractual obligation out of the bond. If employed at a seasonal theatre that defaults, you may receive only the portion of the contract guarantee that is available in the bond. But Equity will pursue the defaulting employer in an effort to secure the full obligation due to the members.

The Equity bond is just another example of how the union is standing up for its members. #EquityWorks

CAREER AND FAMILY – (Continued from page 22)

doubly true with both children and careers in the theatre.

With his daughter in college, Byron Nilsson has once again adjusted his life. "I'm back to scrambling for a living," he said. "I still make money from writing, both journalism and plays, alongside editing, singing, sound design, photography, catering, and beekeeping. Acting jobs are few but, as chair of the Greater Albany Liaison Area, I'm working with my fellow actors to develop more opportunities for ourselves. And when, as I strongly suspect, my daughter's career proves more glamorous than mine, I'll be delighted to bask in the glow."

Amanda Spooner recognizes that the balance she's found while her son is still young may not last. "My love for Stage Management will never change, but my capacity to do it is going to fluctuate," she said. "I just have to look to the left and look to the right and find people who are bobbing and weaving and figuring it out to see it's actually going to be fine."

SAVE THE DATE : UPCOMING EQUITY MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

Winter Regional Membership Meetings

Monday, January 29, 2018
2pm ET / 12pm CT / 12pm PT

Spring National Membership Meeting

Monday, April 23, 2018
2pm ET / 1pm CT / 11am 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 National Director of Governance Allison Bodwell at 212-869-8530, ext. 318, two weeks prior to the meeting.

If you would like to present a resolution at an upcoming membership meeting, please note 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 Allison Bodwell, National Director of Governance (abodwell@actorsequity.org), by January 15, 2018. Resolutions for the National Membership Meeting must be submitted by April 9, 2018.