

SPRING 2018 | VOLUME 103 | ISSUE 2

# Equity

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# NEWS



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## **Equity**NEWS

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#Equity  
STRONG





## FROM THE PRESIDENT TAKING PROACTIVE STEPS TO PREVENT HARASSMENT

In late 2017, America experienced a watershed moment regarding sexual harassment in the workplace. The conversation spread and amplified as quickly as anything I've ever seen, and deservedly so. My Facebook feed – like, I imagine, yours – was filled with mostly female friends posting #MeToo experiences, flabbergasted male colleagues who were truly seeing the depth and breadth of this issue in a way they had never understood and, yes, a few “not all men” responses illustrating why we still have a lot of progress to make.

Obviously, the reach of this issue goes far beyond social media. Those of us here at Equity recognized that it was time to boost our focus on harassment prevention, which has been on the front burner since early 2016. We sent a letter to every single one of our hundreds of employers across the country, requesting three things: First, that the theatre or producer send us a copy of their sexual harassment policy. Second, that every member of every cast be provided with that policy on the first day of rehearsal. And third, that the policy remain easily available throughout the employment period.

To their credit, many producers quickly forwarded their policies to us. We also heard from a number of them – mostly smaller or younger companies – that they didn't realize they needed to have such a policy, but that they would address it quickly. Members began reporting to us that they immediately saw a difference when they arrived at a new gig. Harassment prevention was being prioritized in a new and visible way.

On a personal note, I have to give a shout out to Paper Mill Playhouse: on our first rehearsal day in February, the theater scheduled a full hour on the subject, with an HR rep and a video defining everything from quid pro quo to hostile work environments. The best part was that preventing harassment became a total group effort throughout the run: if anyone strayed into questionable territory, it took about two seconds before someone would yell, “first day lady!” Yes, it was fun and goofy. But it also meant that the message had been heard loud and clear. And that we, as actors and stage managers, can be an active part of the effort to make our workplaces comfortable and safe. No, employers shouldn't make sex jokes at work. But neither should we. And we can all help police things so that we're safe, even if it becomes a game.

Of course, one theater doing an effective training and a file full of sexual harassment policies doesn't solve the problem. To that end, we have continued our collaboration with The Actors Fund, which offers a first stop for entertainment professionals who need to talk to someone and maybe aren't sure yet that they're ready to report an experience to a union business rep. (Pro tip:

we can do a lot more to help you, even if you want it to remain confidential, if you call your business rep. And it raises a flag that allows us to protect others from serial predators, as well.) We have explored different models and web platforms for reporting harassment. You can read more about that in the member portal. We are having conversations with high ranking officials at other unions and guilds like IATSE, SSDC and the Dramatists Guild.

And a few weeks ago, I asked Equity's National Council to establish the President's Committee to Prevent Harassment, which they promptly did. We have dozens upon dozens of committees, and we rarely create new ones without a very good reason. But this is such a reason. This task force will study the best practices of other unions and workplaces and make recommendations on how we can better protect our members and help establish clear policies in all of our theaters. It is also important to me to remember that while much of #MeToo has rightfully focused on the harassment of women, our business in particular creates a similar imbalance of power for men. The federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission recently reported that men file 20 percent of the harassment complaints they receive. There are plenty of chorus boys on those same buses to the big city with those same stars in their eyes, and we have to keep them safe too.

I am thrilled to have the opportunity to be your President for two more years. And I am equally thrilled that the leadership at Equity, both on the elected side and the staff side, shares a commitment to eradicating harassment and hostile work environments. I once had to file a complaint on behalf of a coworker who was being harassed, so I understand that it is a weird and scary process. Please remember that the more people who speak up, the safer it is for each of us. And stay tuned for more information on what Equity is doing today to make tomorrow's workplaces better.

Kate Shindle

# FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ON THE FOREFRONT OF CHANGE



As we look back over the past year and to the future, one thing is clear: The world is changing with increasing speed. Whether it's the way we communicate, organize, advocate or create new opportunities – the one constant is change.

At Actors' Equity, we've been the vanguard for change for 105 years. One hundred and five years of organizing, fighting and expanding opportunity for our members. At our centennial in 2013, we were one of only 30 labor unions that had reached that hallmark. I am so proud to say we are among the first to fight for the rights of live performing artists.

It's easy to forget that Equity was born out of necessity. Performers were being bullied and taken advantage of. All those decades ago, we organized, fought for and won basic rights. Those victories have helped shape our industry and our nation. We should be proud of our place in history and the rights we fought for in the past and continue to fight for today.

It's clear to me that in order to grow and thrive, we must meet change with energy and resolve. Change can be unsettling, but we see it more as a clear opportunity to strengthen our mission, break down barriers, protect our members and expand opportunities.

At Equity we've done our best to be out in front rather than lagging behind. Contained in Equity's DNA is the unwavering mission to protect the physical, mental and professional safety of and opportunity for every one of our members. Easy to say. Harder to do. But at the end of the day, we want you to know that we have your back. I believe a toxic work environment – where livelihoods hang in the balance – is the biggest threat to opportunity and empowerment. Today, against the backdrop of #MeToo, our members are keenly aware of the need for a workplace free from bullying and harassment. Many organizations say they are against harassment and bullying. But in the end, actions speak louder than words.

Actors' Equity has been working on the issues of harassment and bullying since our inception. The historical outcomes were, of course, different than we demand them to be now. What was considered an appropriate resolution in 1980 is not appropriate today.

One thing that every union in our industry understands is that harassment of our members quite often starts before anyone is in an actual workplace – and harassment is sometimes perpetrated by people who are agents of our employer, not necessarily the employer of record.

To make it further complicated, oftentimes the perpetrator is a member of our own union or of one of the

other many unions that are part of our industry. Either way, it all trails back to the employer.

In October of last year, Equity sent an email to every single employer of Equity actors and stage managers across the country. We reminded them of their obligations under the law and told them that we thought they could only meet their obligations by having an anti-harassment policy, by training their staff on how to appropriately enforce the policy and by then giving a copy of the policy to our members, including the name of the employee responsible for enforcing the policy, on or before their first day of work.

At the same time, we were communicating with you about your rights under the law, informing you that your employer should be providing their policy to you and how the union can protect you.

That's not all we have done. More than a year ago, we partnered with The Actors Fund to create a training module to further train our business reps on how to respond to harassment complaints. This module was created as a template for the rest of the industry to use as well.

Here's what you need to know as a member – we work best when you tell us what is happening in the workplace. If you see something, say something. Call your Equity business rep.

There is still much to do to ensure all of you can feel safe at work and so you can be fully empowered to do the tremendous work you do. If you are being harassed or bullied or know someone who is, call your business rep for a private and confidential conversation. We will take action. That action could be a grievance under the contract, or if you don't want to be known to have made a complaint, it could be a standard site visit. We have many tools available to us. The important thing is that we know there is an issue.

This is about community, in all its forms. In the end, it will require action by the entire community to end harassment.

Mary McColl



## DIVERSITY MATTERS A MORE PERFECT UNION

As this issue goes to print, I am nearing my first anniversary as Diversity Director at Actors' Equity, which gives me an opportunity to reflect on important strides this office has made in the last twelve months. During the year, we have made great progress, establishing a number of firsts in the ongoing promotion of an inclusive and

supportive work environment – but by no means have we seen the last of anything. We are just getting started.

I am incredibly proud of one our most recent efforts to advance our #ChangeTheStage initiative – the launch of our employee resource groups in February. Employee resource groups are voluntary, employee-led groups that serve as a catalyst to foster a diverse and inclusive workplace. The four that have launched so far – People of Color AEA, SAGA (Sexuality and Gender Alliance), Equity Women+ and Busy Hands: A Skill Building and Community Service Group – mark the first ever in the union's history.

Employee resource groups are proposed by staff members. During meetings, attendees can share their experiences and ideas in order to engage in mentoring, networking, leadership and professional development opportunities. (These meetings are also open to everyone – allies and advocates are welcome!) They also serve to encourage retention and aid in recruiting diverse talent.

Employee resource groups make good business sense on their own. But launching this initiative is also a sign that Equity is living our values and walking the walk when we talk to our employers about diversity and inclusion.

Actors' Equity has encouraged staff to propose additional resource groups for historically underrepresented demographics such as people with disabilities, those with veteran status and people of various ages. Equity doesn't create these groups – they should emerge organically from employee interest – but always provides unwavering guidance and support.

Several recent events demonstrate the commitment Equity's Equal Employment Opportunity committee has to ensuring increased employment opportunities for our membership regardless of race, culture, age, gender/gender identity, disability, religion, national origin, sexual orientation and veteran status. This winter saw a series of EEO-sponsored events honoring Black History Month and Women's History Month, and the very first cultural celebration to recognize and raise awareness for the MENASA (Middle Eastern North African South Asian) community.

I also gave a speech to highlight our progress for change and interacted with the honorees at this year's Spirit Awards: A Celebration of Diversity, including members of the deaf community,

with whom I was thrilled to discuss ways in which we can better engage the community.

In April, we held the latest in a series of town halls designed to engineer a dialogue on how we can expand inclusive hiring in our industry. Attendees had the opportunity to engage with our panelists on how we can continue to explore ways in which Equity can #ChangeTheStage and increase opportunities in our industry for our membership.

And what have we learned from this series of meetings? Among the many takeaways from our series is that casting directors want to hear how they can be more inclusive in the audition process and more accommodating for members with disabilities.

And how can we succeed in our efforts to #ChangeTheStage? This depends on how you define the term "success." I view success as the authentic representation of women, members of color, members with disabilities, gender and gender identity, veteran status, race and age on stage. Success is equal pay for equal work.

So how do we continue to align our words with action? In order to succeed at making our industry truly diverse and inclusive, we will need to continuously engage the entire industry about how we can #ChangeTheStage. We will need to challenge stereotypes and bias and maintain a gender parity mindset as we #PressForProgress to join voices around the world for women in theatre; we call not only for hiring and equal pay, but also for elevating and amplifying women's stories on stage. It is #Time4Transparency to close the gender wage gap.

I am also aware that not everyone views the term "diversity" in the same way. Some don't even think it applies to them. I want to make it clear to them that I hear you as well. As our missions move forward, I will continue to educate not just on what we are doing, but also why.

My plea is that you don't let diversity fatigue deter you from our objectives. We all must work together to create a diverse workforce that makes better business sense not only for monetary reasons, but because that it is the right thing to do. I am always here to discuss any concerns or suggestions you might have. Change will come only if we work together. And it is easier than ever to create a dialogue now that the diversity department has its own email address: [diversity@actorsequity.org](mailto:diversity@actorsequity.org).

I look forward to continuing that conversation.

Nicole Smart

# ALWAYS BE YOUR OWN ADVOCATE

## DON'T JUST RELY ON YOUR CONTRACTS – READ THEM

When Eastern Region member Reji Woods embarked on a summer contract, he was hit with a big surprise. Because the theatre was attached to a university, he and his colleagues would be considered university staff and follow their payment schedule: every two weeks!

"I had budgeted being paid weekly," Woods said, "but the entire cast found out abruptly on what we thought would be our first week of pay that we had to follow the university's pay schedule. No one was prepared for that!"

Stage manager Erin Joy Swank, a member in the Western Region, remembered a similar experience as well. "We definitely had to budget weirdly," she said, "and hope that no one was expecting to work paycheck to paycheck."

Sound familiar? Scenarios like this are an important reminder that there actually remains work to be done between booking a job and starting a job.

"So often, in the excitement of booking the job, or under pressure from the producer to sign while the director is (im)patiently waiting to begin rehearsals, members sign on the dotted line with barely a scan of the multi-page rider with those fateful terms until the producer points out that you agreed to shave your lovely locks or to dye your rich brown hair hot pink," said Senior Business Representative Beverly Sloan.

"And it's not just about hair," she said. "Maybe you agreed to share an apartment with someone of another gender. Or you missed that clause about appearing nude yourself or opposite someone else who is nude."

Not all situations might be that extreme, but, to Sloan's point, actors and stage managers need to ensure they are prepared for all aspects of their employment experience. It is also important to remember that members might not see their contracts until their first day of work. This is why it is important that they are fully aware of what the rule book says.

"Forewarned is forearmed," said Maggie Kettering, a member in the Central Region. She pointed out a production company with whom she worked on multiple occasions where the housing situation was akin to going to camp.

"The bedrooms weren't equipped with a kitchen," Kettering said, pointing out cafeteria-style feeding arrangements can affect people's dietary needs and personal eating schedules. "That can throw a major wrench into the whole process. If people get surly or tired, it screws up the room during rehearsal."

Kettering said she has worked with artistic directors who make a point of trying to make sure everyone understands the contract before they accept it. "I learned they've had the experience of actors showing up, having not really read their riders and having no idea what to expect," she said. "That makes for a bad experience for all."

She also cites another must: reading your contract to ensure that you have a More Remunerative Employment (MRE) clause. "Auditioning for a lucrative day of TV shooting, getting the gig

**"EVEN IF YOU SIGNED THE CONTRACT WITHOUT READING IT, READ IT NOW. IT MAY BE TOO LATE TO CHANGE OR CHALLENGE A FUNKY CLAUSE THAT YOU HAVE NOW ACCEPTED, BUT AT LEAST YOU KNOW. YOU HAVE TO KNOW WHAT YOU AGREED TO DO."**

and then realizing you can't get out is bad on a number of levels. Your agent is annoyed, you're annoyed, the production company is annoyed. All because you didn't read the contract."

Sloan points out plenty of other potentially dicey scenarios that could be prevented by reading through one's contract. "Maybe the rustic theatre in the woods on a crystal lake doesn't have Wi-Fi service," Sloan said. "How about the two understudy roles you agreed to take? Or there are 12 performances during Christmas week. The list is nearly endless.

"Even if you signed the contract without reading it, read it now," Sloan said. "True, it may be too late to change or challenge a funky clause that you have now accepted, but at least you know. You have to know what you agreed to do."

Swank, too, agrees with this sentiment. "Actors often don't realize that one contract does not fit all," she said. "There are different rules about having a run without breaks, about how big a dressing space is, who provides health insurance."

The message is clear: don't expect others to take care of you. Be your own advocate. "Read the handbook to understand the differences between all contracts," Kettering said. "Double-check your riders. I volunteer to be the deputy on my shows now in order to know all the rules – it's really no extra work but will force you to be more familiar with the rules.

"It makes you grateful that the Union has done so much work," she said. "They are there for a reason."

No matter what, the results will always be beneficial for the next job. You can learn for the next contract what particular clauses you need to be aware to reject or, in the alternative, insist on having. And it's never too late to ask a question and understand your rights.

# HOW I GOT MY EQUITY CARD

## KAREN PITTMAN MEMBER SINCE 2008



I had just graduated from NYU graduate acting and had all the tools for getting my theatre career started except for one – my Equity card. Before grad school, I had been one of those actresses who stood in line early in the morning, cradling a cup of Dunkin' Donuts coffee, hoping to get seen in one of the many open calls to finally be discovered. Years later, my callback at the McCarter Theatre for their *A Christmas Carol* was really exciting because I would receive my Equity Card. When I booked the job, I realized it would mean that I had finally arrived in American theatre and would stand amongst my idols, Ruby Dee, Lena Horne, Tonya Pinkins and many others. I was thrilled.

Ten years after that, my Equity membership means a lot more. After having worked at the McCarter, Lincoln Center, Second Stage, regional theatres in Los Angeles and Boston and of course, on Broadway, my Equity card means I'm protected, my work is protected, my income is protected and I can provide health insurance for myself and for my children. I love our Equity representative, who I know really cares about the actors who work in the union, and the community of actors who take care of each other as union members. And frankly, I didn't realize how important a union is for actors who are as physically active as I have been on stage. Many young actors don't realize the physical toll acting takes on your body. Equity protects our instruments as well.

I'm so proud to have my Equity card as it represents my accomplishments in my career, but also the commitment to a good quality of life for actors across America.

Thank you, Equity!

## LISA HOWARD MEMBER SINCE 1997



I was a senior at the University of Cincinnati's College Conservatory of Music. I was months away from graduating with a BFA in musical theater, and Paul Blake (the artistic director of the Muny in St. Louis) came to our school to workshop a new musical he was putting together. After that experience I desperately wanted to work at the Muny, a 12,000 seat outdoor amphitheater. The best shot I had for getting hired there was

to be a "local," so a group of fellow students and I flew to St. Louis on our own, auditioned for their upcoming season and got cast in the ensemble! We all got our Equity cards that summer. I did *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, *South Pacific* and *The Wizard of Oz*.

That fall, I moved to New York City. I remember being very proud that when I moved, I did so with my Equity card in hand, officially a professional actor. Having that card meant I could go to more auditions, get better contracts and be a part of a community. Having that card meant that when I booked a job, I knew I had a community of leaders behind me looking out for my well-being. I'm very proud to say I'm still a part of the Actors' Equity community and we are going strong!

# THE FIGHT FOR FUNDING

In early March, a delegation of Actors' Equity representatives headed to Washington, D.C., to attend the 31st annual Arts Advocacy Day, a summit meeting designed to teach and equip attendees with the tools to successfully lobby for increased funding for the arts. The meeting now has special urgency given the current state of political affairs and imperiled arts funding.

"The budget proposed by the White House would have completely eliminated funding for the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting," said Thomas Carpenter, General Counsel for Actors' Equity. "There were zero dollars in the budget for any of those programs."

Carpenter, along with a delegation comprised of five other Actors' Equity representatives, headed to Arts Advocacy Day in order to present information on the importance of the arts and arts education before Congressional representatives. The Actors' Equity delegation included a mixed group of veteran advocates and those for whom this year's meeting was a first – Carpenter and Marjorie Horne (Councillor) have attended for many years, but Karen D. Howell (Atlanta Liaison

Chair), Sarah LaBarr (Kansas City Liaison Chair) and Joel C. Sandel (Houston Liaison Chair) all attended the event for the first time. (Roy A. Gross, Washington D.C./Baltimore Liaison Chair, also attended with a different delegation.)

This is a significant change to the makeup of past groups sent to represent Equity. Typically, councillors from the National Public Policy Committee have attended Arts Advocacy Day. But this was a deliberate decision made to assure the widest representation possible, across all regions. "As we started prioritizing outreach, we invited members to come from our Liaison Areas," Carpenter explained. "To be able to send people from Georgia and Missouri and Texas meant that we were able to have a stronger impact across the country."

"Being there with the team from Actors' Equity was wonderful," Sandel said. "We had the perfect blend of experienced advocates and newbies, like myself."

The meeting, sponsored by Americans for the Arts and attended by more than 85 national arts organizations and 700 grassroots advocates, maintains a two-day structure. During the first day, the delegation receives training on

Continued on following page

**Attendees Thomas Carpenter, Karen Howell, Marjorie Horne, Joel C. Sandel and Sarah LaBarr.**



how to be effective advocates when they lobby on the Hill.

"Training sessions are very helpful because they give advocates an understanding of the issues they will be talking about the next day," Carpenter said. And there were different interactive sessions for attendees who were new to Advocacy Day. "The training was comprehensive and geared towards people of all different levels," Carpenter said. "There were some breakout sessions throughout the day where new advocates would get a different kind of briefing than experienced advocates."

All of the trainings, however, offered practical advice from experienced speakers that would benefit the next day's lobbying techniques. "What was emphasized over and over was that we each present a personal story," Howell said. "We were told that was often much more effective than simply throwing out facts and figures."

On the second day, the attendees met in the Capitol Hill offices with their respective state representatives – primarily the aides of Congressmen, Congresswomen and Senators. The members of the delegation met in groups with their respective offices (Carpenter met with a New York contingent; Horne met with the Florida office).

"The meetings were very encouraging, generally, and listening to my fellow advocates make their personal pitches was amazing," according to Sandel. "The sessions occasionally became a sort of relay game in which one advocate would make a point and then another would take that idea and expand on it; the cumulative effect was quite powerful."

The guiding message that the delegation agreed upon was clear and simple: the arts benefit everyone. "The arts create jobs that drive the economy," Horne explained. "We make a printout of the Congressman's or Senator's district and all of the arts elements within that district. I say, 'You see that Equity theatre there? It hires actors, designers, box office people and staff for the theatre. Those designers go out into the community and buy lumber and paint for the sets from your community, they buy material for costumes from the community. Then the audience goes out to dinner and pays to park. That's all income generated in the community.' That's impressive; they like that."

"We have a unique message," Carpenter added, "because by sending people who directly benefit from these grants in their working lives we can communicate better than anyone that arts jobs are good jobs and that they need to be funded."

"We made the case," he continued, "that when the NEA gives funds to a theatre, even if it is for an educational program, that supports that theatre and gives them the opportunity to hire our members and that, in turn, fuels all sorts of other investments – state arts councils give donations that match NEA grants, in many cases, so it is a good investment in real solid middle class jobs for actors."

"I think all artists believe that the work they do is important, but when you start to show our effect on the overall economy, percentage of GDP, and how creative industries fuel so many other businesses, we really can take

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**—KAREN D. HOWELL**

pride in the work we do as an important part of the American economy," Gross said.

And he wasn't alone in his proud sentiment: "I'd been worried, before leaving for Washington, that I would be so nervous talking to all these government bigwigs that I wouldn't be able to function optimally," Sandel said. "What surprised me was just how calm and centered I felt in those meetings. It's absolutely true that when you're speaking from the heart about something you believe in nerves simply melt away."

The delegation can also draw great satisfaction from the fruits of their labors. Following those meetings, the federal 2018 Omnibus spending bill allotted \$152.8 million each to the NEA and NEH for the year – an increase in funding to each organization.

"Our union bringing Liaisons and rank-and-file members to DC for Arts Advocacy Day was a great decision," Gross said. "I've been doing Arts Advocacy for nearly 10 years on the local and national level, and seeing these members gain an appreciation for the bigger picture and then to find their part to play in that picture is really exhilarating."

"Never did I dream I would one day be walking the halls of Congress as an advocate!" Howell admitted. "I have always believed the arts were essential for many reasons... but I learned about so many programs and read so many study results about arts education and arts therapy, and came away with more passion and a determination to be more vocal about support for the arts! I am very grateful to have had this opportunity."

That opportunity will likely come again. "This is an evergreen issue," Carpenter said. "Every year these agencies have to be funded, so we'll be back next year."

# TONY SEASON: EQUITY IS FIGHTING FOR #EVERYONEONSTAGE

BY DOUG STRASSLER

**"Why isn't there an ensemble award?"**

Harvey Fierstein posed this question while accepting his 2003 Tony Award as Best Actor in a Leading Role in a Musical for *Hairspray*. And he had a point.

That isn't the only time a Tony winner has expressed such a sentiment. In 1978, Richard Maltby, Jr., Best Director of a Musical for *Ain't Misbehavin'*, similarly extolled the virtues of his show's ensemble: "Someday I would like the Tony committee to find some way to honor what I consider to be the highest achievement in theatre: the collective effort of an ensemble of actors."

It is clear that there is a history of widespread support for the performers

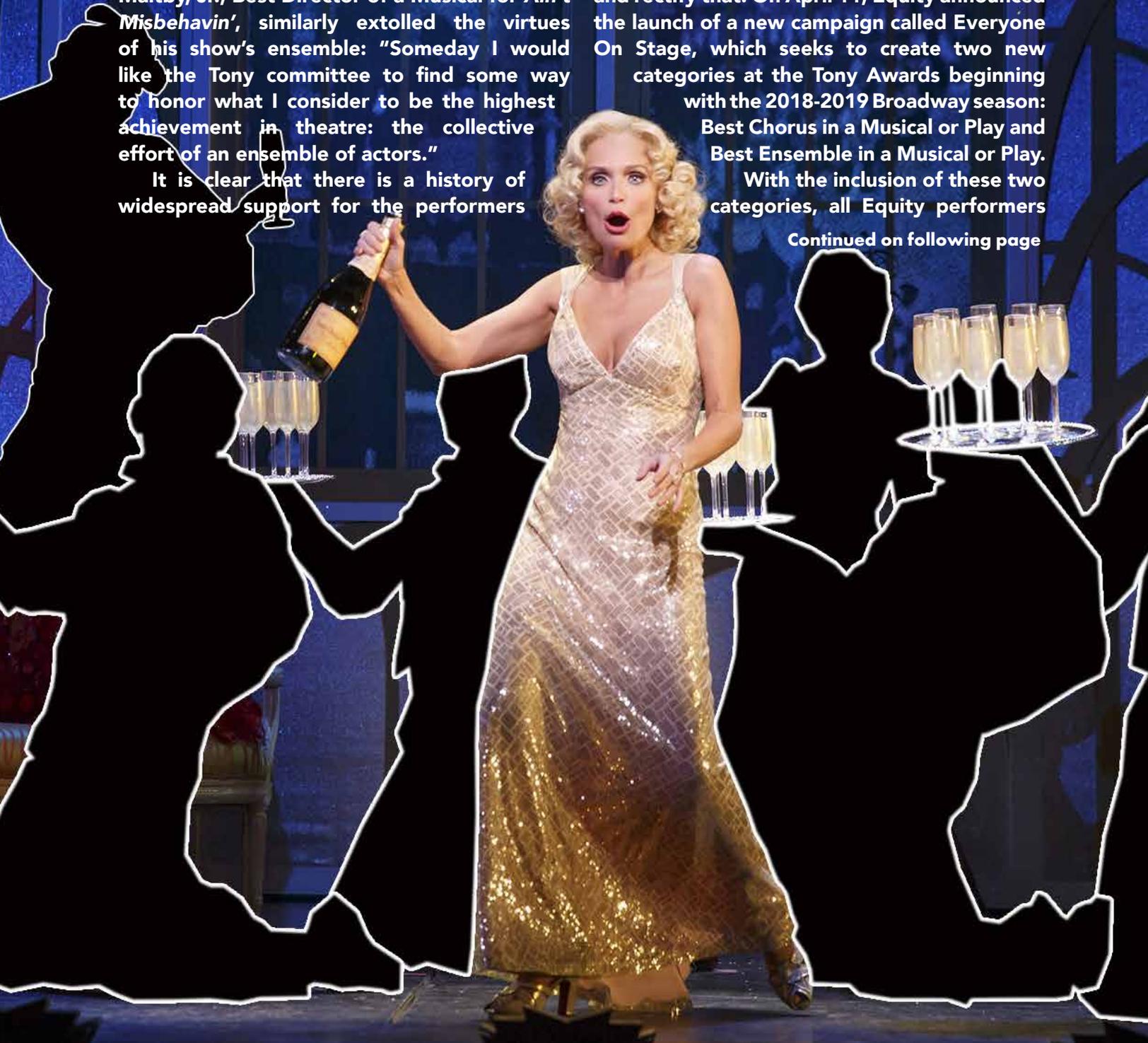
who comprise the choruses and ensembles of Broadway musicals and plays. Yet so far, they remain the one segment of stage performers to never win a Tony – not because they are not deserving, but because there aren't categories to recognize them.

Actors' Equity has taken a bold step to try and rectify that. On April 11, Equity announced the launch of a new campaign called Everyone On Stage, which seeks to create two new categories at the Tony Awards beginning with the 2018-2019 Broadway season:

**Best Chorus in a Musical or Play and Best Ensemble in a Musical or Play.**

With the inclusion of these two categories, all Equity performers

Continued on following page



who appear on a Broadway stage would finally receive award recognition – appreciation of the valuable contribution they provide that would be visible throughout the entire industry.

"It's not an exaggeration to say that the ensemble is frequently the hardest-working group on the stage," said Kate Shindle, President of Actors' Equity. "Today, the Equity members who work in the chorus or ensemble are often expected to do it all: act, sing, dance, even play one or more instruments."

This push was kicked off when Equity sent an official letter of request to the American Theatre Wing and the Broadway League, the two bodies that produce the Tony Awards. At launch, this campaign included a new website, EveryoneOnStage.com, which includes a look at famous

"THIS IS THE EQUIVALENT  
OF WHEN A SPORTS TEAM  
WINS THEIR CONFERENCE.  
**EACH CONTRIBUTOR GETS  
RECOGNIZED.** IT'S A 'YOU  
MAKE ME BETTER' THING."

- R. KIM JORDAN

It would have been a lot harder for Harry Connick Jr.'s Sid to conceal himself at Hernando's Hideaway in this 2006 revival of *The Pajama Game* without the assistance of a chorus. Pictured on cover is Loretta Ables-Sayre in *South Pacific* and on page 2 is Kristin Chenoweth in *On the Twentieth Century* (All photos by Joan Marcus).





# EVERYONE ON STAGE

choruses and ensembles of the past, a hypothetical look at what certain productions would have looked like without the contributions of its full chorus and, most importantly, a petition for supporters to sign, committing to their championship of this cause.

"These new Tony Awards Categories can be a win for everyone, from the performers to the producers," said R. Kim Jordan, 2nd Vice President and Chair of Equity's Advisory Committee on Chorus Affairs (ACCA). "It's not too soon to start thinking about the next Tony season and how we can ensure that the chorus and ensemble members who are such an important part of bringing a Broadway production to life can be recognized for their invaluable contributions."

Other bodies have, in fact, honored these talents. The campaign points to a precedent of similarly-minded awards created at other voting bodies in both regional theatre (e.g. Chicago's Joseph Jefferson Awards, Washington, D.C.'s Helen Hayes Awards) and at SAG-AFTRA, which created ensemble acting awards for film and television at their annual televised awards ceremonies more than two decades ago.

It was while watching a telecast of the SAG Awards that Jordan brainstormed the two new categories. She feels that this recognition is unquestionably deserved for all performers, and that their inclusion also paints a more accurate picture of the team spirit it takes to ensure success onstage.

"While I was watching, I noticed that the award that got the most enthusiasm was the ensemble award," Jordan said, "and I get it. This is the equivalent of when a sports team wins their conference. On the team that wins, each contributor gets recognized. It's a 'you make me better' thing."

ACCA was among the first groups to decide that Broadway choruses deserved award recognition; they began handing out their Outstanding Broadway Chorus Award in 2007. This honor is currently the only industry award specifically designed to recognize the contributions of the original chorus of a Broadway musical.

Reaction to this campaign was quick and overwhelmingly positive. "Having proudly spent a large part of my career as a member of the chorus, I support Equity's effort wholeheartedly," said Eastern Chorus Councillor Kirsten Wyatt. "We are triple (sometimes quadruple and quintuple) threats, and I think it is recognition that is long overdue."

"For generations, members of the Chorus have been the unsung heroes of Broadway's musical legacy," said Joanne Borts, Eastern Principal Councillor. "Can you imagine *West Side Story*, *Oklahoma!* or *Fiddler on the Roof* without the singers and dancers of the chorus? Or modern-day musicals like *Kinky Boots* and *Hamilton* without the women and men who help to tell these vibrant stories? It's impossible – these performers are truly the backbone of the American musical: the people who make theatrical magic happen."

Jenn Colella, a member in the Eastern Region, echoes that sentiment completely. Colella has been performing in the breakout feel-good musical *Come From Away* on Broadway since it opened last year, and was the one member of the cast to receive a Tony nomination, as Best Featured Actress. Still, "It would have been so incredible to have shared that nomination with my family at *Come From Away* last season!" she said. "I am wholeheartedly in support of the Tony Awards honoring the chorus and the full ensemble of Broadway shows. I truly hope that this comes to fruition."

Eastern Principal Councillor Stephen Bogardus certainly knows a thing or two about awards selection. He has been a Tony Award voter as well as a nominator, and understands that certain principal roles lend themselves to nominations. "There are certain arcs, certain things people are asked to do, that you say, 'That's a Tony kind of role,'" he said.

He even played one of those roles himself, garnering a 1995 Best Featured Actor in a Play nomination for the Terrence McNally hit *Love! Valour! Compassion!* He was one of three actors nominated for a play that consisted of seven actors, all of whom played substantial, demanding roles that interfaced with one another.

"I think everyone in that show would have been very honored to be recognized as an ensemble," he said. "When you're in a show you're not there to get a Tony nomination; that's the icing on the cake if you get that recognition. Look

## BEFORE AND AFTER

### STEP 1

Think of your favorite Broadway show.

### STEP 2

Rename the show if you took out the chorus and ensemble.

Examples:

*Cat*

*Jersey Boy*

*Le Miserable*

### STEP 3

Reply with the new name of the show using **#EveryoneOnStage**.

at all the August Wilson plays – the fabric of a play is that it's an ensemble piece. Everyone makes the piece what it is."

Eastern Chorus Councillor Jonathan Brody also believes that these categories will echo the sentiment of many in the community. "I've so often heard people say, 'What a strong ensemble a show has' or 'The chorus works harder than the leads!'" he said. "There are well-known and respected performers working on Broadway who have made careers going from one chorus to another, never getting mentioned in reviews or getting the recognition of their more featured peers. They contribute so much to a show's success and often its development, it's high time they are recognized for this."

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

**SIGN** the petition at [EveryoneOnStage.com](http://EveryoneOnStage.com)!

**SHARE** the petition on social media using the hashtag **#EveryoneOnStage**.

**TELL** us if you have a story. We need the theatre community behind us. If you have a story about how the chorus is a team that deserves recognition, email us at [EveryoneOnStage@ActorsEquity.org](mailto:EveryoneOnStage@ActorsEquity.org).

Among the other instant proponents of the Everyone On Stage campaign is Andy Karl, who began his career as a chorus member (he even lists his ACCA Award in his bio!) before transitioning into the role of Tony-nominated principal actor (*Groundhog Day*, *On the Twentieth Century*, *Rocky*).

"I'm very much in support of chorus and ensemble recognition," he said. "I've had good fortune in the theatre over the years, and it has always been obvious that a great ensemble deserves special credit, never more so than when I was a principal in a show."

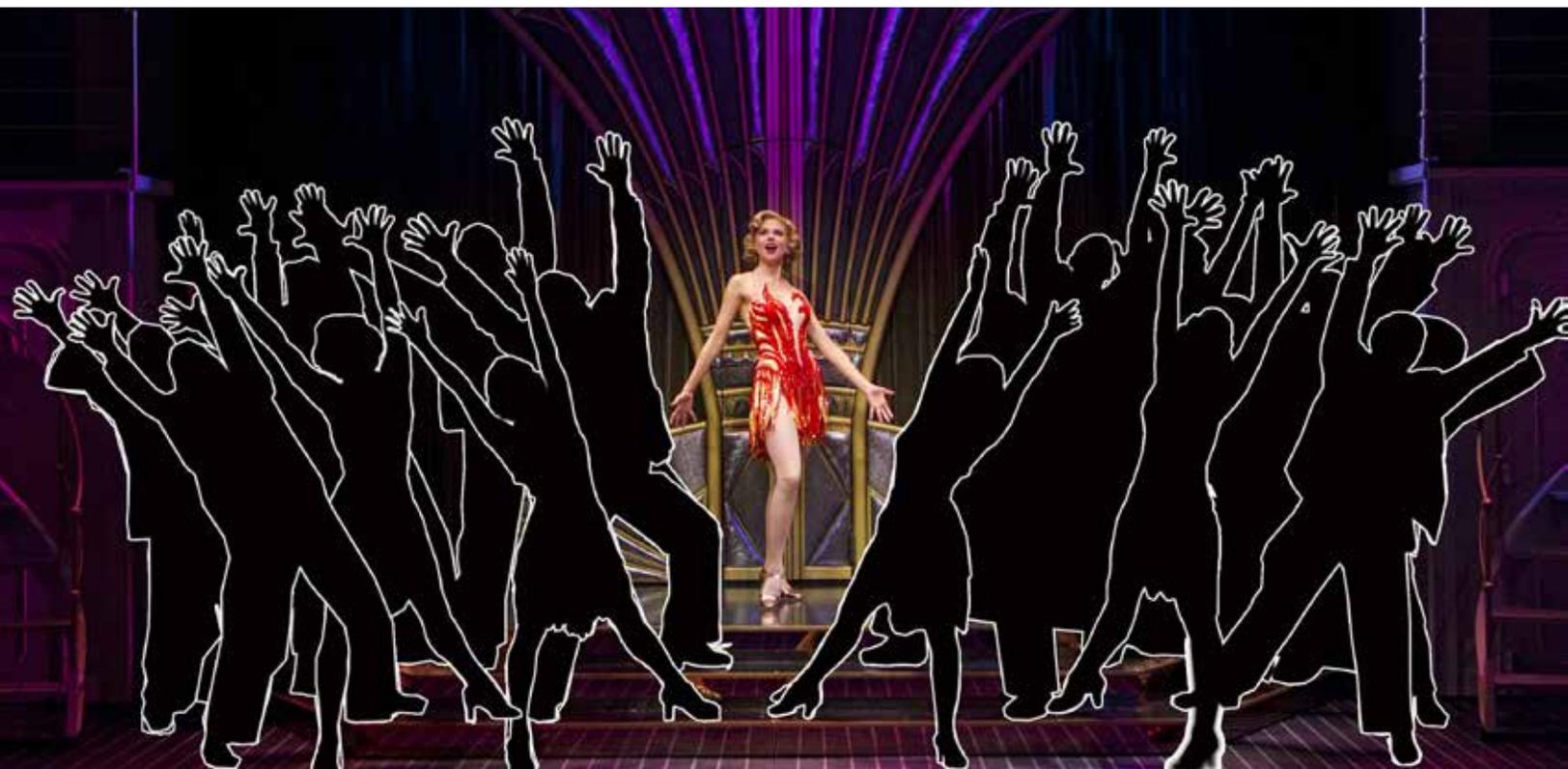
"The ensemble gives an incredible amount of effort to tell the story, and in *Groundhog Day* especially the ensemble had to produce as much storytelling as I had in the 'lead' role. Personally, every role I've ever had, either ensemble or principal, I've been asked to create, practice, nuance and energize my performance to make the production its best. Ensembles absolutely deserve recognition for their incredible efforts."

According to Lindiwe Dlamini, an original chorus member of *Sarafina!* and the last original chorus member still performing in *The Lion King* on Broadway, this kind of appreciation is a long time in coming: "I've always felt that chorus people are not often recognized, but they do a lot of the work. They're just as important to the show. We say in *The Lion King*, 'the chorus members are the true principals of the show – we are in it from the beginning to the end;' more than the actual principals, some of whom are only onstage for fifteen minutes! We also understudy the principal roles."

Chorus and ensemble members clearly do a significant amount more than just fill the background of a scene. The

**EVERYONE ON STAGE** – Continued on page 21

Sutton Foster's Tony-winning performance in *Anything Goes* would have looked a lot different without a chorus. It would have looked more like *Everyone Went* (Photo by Joan Marcus).



# EQUITY ACROSS THE NATION

## SEATTLE THE EMERALD CITY & BEYOND

Thanks to Seattle Liaison Committee Chair Roger Curtis for his contributions!

Tucked between the Cascade Mountains to the east, Puget Sound and the Olympic Mountains to the west and towering Mt. Rainier to the south, Seattle – “the Emerald City” – is a beautiful place to live and work. From the magnificent, landmarked home of the 5th Avenue Theatre to the sylvan setting of Island Stage Left and the Port Townsend home of Key City Theatre, our actors and audiences enjoy performance venues as varied as the environment.

### WORKING IN THE REGION

#### WHAT IT'S LIKE WORKING IN THE REGION

Seattle's actors and stage managers are a mix of those who've moved here from elsewhere and those who've been through college here and can't imagine living anywhere else. Some bring extensive Broadway and regional credits; others have risen from Seattle's vigorous non-union scene. Actors enjoy working across genres here, performing in musicals, contemporary plays and classical works like Shakespeare, in addition to opportunities for writing, directing, and producing. Seattle's producers have found success with diversity in casting, which is enriching experiences for audiences and welcome in the acting community.

#### WHERE YOU MIGHT BE WORKING

The 5th Avenue Theatre and the Village Theatre stand out as employers of actors in musicals. Seattle Children's Theatre produces a full season. Seattle Repertory Theatre and ACT Theatre are LORT houses with multiple stages, producing homegrown works as well as occasional co-productions. Producer inclination and excellent local talent mean that their casts are primarily Seattle residents. In addition, we have a number of vigorous companies working under SPT. Seattle Shakespeare, Book-It Repertory Theatre and Taproot Theatre are the largest of these, rounded out by a number of smaller SPT companies and a couple dozen using Guest Artist, Special Appearance and LOA contracts.

#### HOW TO GET INVOLVED

If you've come to stay, contact the Seattle Liaison Chair to start receiving notices of local auditions and Equity events. Take advantage of the yearly Equity auditions hosted by Theatre Puget Sound. Take advantage of Equity discounts at many of our Equity houses. Visit Solo Bar and introduce yourself. Some of us are very nice!

Above, Daniel Mayes in Island Stage Left's tour of *The Tempest* (Photo by D. Waldron). Right, Terry Edward Moore and Betsy Schwartz in *The Impossibility of Now* at Thalia's Umbrella (Photo by Annabel Clark).



### AROUND TOWN

#### BEST PLACES TO EAT FOR FOODIES

If you're looking for good food in Seattle, you have many excellent choices. No matter your personal comfort food, make sure you sit down to wild salmon. And make sure it's wild, not farmed or Atlantic. After a show at Seattle Center, which houses Book-It, the Cornish Playhouse, Seattle Rep, Seattle Shakespeare and itinerant companies, head over to Solo, the bar for actors, which serves good food including a great salmon spread. Any Tom Douglas restaurant is a good bet, and other options abound.

#### WHAT YOU WON'T FIND ANYWHERE ELSE

If you're looking for experiences that are unique to Seattle, a ferry ride across the Sound gives wonderful views. Take a walk at Alki in West Seattle, Discovery Park, the Arboretum or Sculpture Park at the Seattle Museum. If you have time, take a day trip to Port Angeles and up to Hurricane Ridge for a magnificent view of the high mountains on one side and the Strait of Juan de Fuca on the other. In a shorter time frame visit Pike Place Market, take a tour of Theo's Chocolates, visit the Chihuli Glass Museum or ride to the top of the Space Needle.

#### BEST WAYS TO EXPERIENCE LOCAL COLOR

For local color, go outside, hike, bike or ski in the mountains. Take an Underground Seattle tour, take in some music or a burlesque show at the Triple Door in Belltown or see the Fremont Solstice Parade. Have a dinner of wild salmon. I know I said that already, but do.



# THEATRE

## SPOTLIGHT

### EQUITY LIBRARY THEATRE

Equity Library Theatre (ELT) in Chicago has been putting actors first for over sixty years. Founded in 1952, the work produced focuses attention squarely on its actors, all of whom are Equity members.

"In the early years, it was more of a showcase-type situation," said Carrie Lee Patterson, who is currently the president of Equity Library's board of directors, all nine of whom are Equity members. "It was a way to get noticed, and get work, with casting directors and agents in the audience. That's not the way things are done anymore."

As times changed, so did the practices of the theatre. For a while, performers did full productions of material as their schedules allowed, but never with any consistency. In 2015, five years after Patterson joined the theatre, she was able to get an individual artist's grant from the city of Chicago and approached the board about the creation of a reading series.

This became the All Access Reading Series, which solicits scripts from around the world. Patterson serves as de facto literary manager during the month-long selection process. "I work very hard to get as diverse a set of readers as I can, and that includes different generations," Patterson said.

That diversity extends to the content of the submissions as well. Each submission has a protagonist who identifies as being a

person of color, a woman, having a disability or being LGBTQ+, in order to provide additional perspectives on underrepresented groups in storytelling. One script is selected, and produced as a free staged reading with an experienced director and an all-Equity cast.

"The plays featured in the series are carefully chosen through a well-regulated vetting process and give voice to characters that are often 'othered' in society," said Central Region member Julie Proudfoot, who appeared in a reading of Sheila Crowley's *Flying* during the August 2015 All Access Series. "It is so important to continue this excellent work of celebrating plays that are driven by characters that are underrepresented in theatre -- more so now than ever. Equity Library Theatre is doing very important work to increase diversity in Chicago theatre."

The playwrights whose work is chosen, blindly, by the committee receive \$300 for these productions. Most of them travel to attend the series as well, which never feel less than professional. "Every single one has said that the most exciting thing about this for them is to have a reading with an all-Equity cast," Patterson said. "People are always amazed at how they feel like they've seen a performance even though people have scripts on stands."

Equity Library Theatre encourages playwrights from all over

**THEATRE SPOTLIGHT** – Continued on page 18

Keven Kaddi, Caren Blackmore, Stephenie Park and Saren Nofs-Snyder (Photo by James Holbrook).



# THE HEALING POWER OF MUSIC

## PARKLAND STUDENTS CREATE MOVING TRIBUTE THROUGH SONG

Everyone's heart broke upon hearing the news of the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida this February, a shooting that left seventeen dead and another seventeen wounded.

In the wake of the tragedy, however, many have been able to find inspiration in the examples set by many of the students, whose ability to organize and speak out against gun violence have served as a remarkable tribute to the schoolmates they have lost. And those who attended the Carbonell Awards, the annual South Florida theatre awards ceremony dubbed as their "theatre prom," held on April 2 at the Broward Center for the Performing Arts, could also find comfort in a special performance.

Seven students from MSDHS – Isabela Barry, Kali Clougherty, Sawyer Garrity, Delaney Metcalf, Alex Moscou, Andrea Pena and Melanie Weber – performed an anthem entitled "Shine" at the ceremony. The song, which is about a commitment to turn sadness into action, was co-written by Garrity and Pena.

"We wrote this song during a really dark time in our lives," Pena said, "when we both needed a little light and we thought the best thing was to do what we really love, which is music. This song is not only dedicated to the 17 victims... it is dedicated to anyone who needs a light."

As moving as this occasion was, it almost didn't happen. Daniel Burns, an Equity member and a graduate of MSDHS, posted a request on the Equity Stage Door Facebook group for support. South Florida Equity member Gary Cadwallader, the Director of Education and Community Engagement at Palm Beach Dramaworks, looked for a way to incorporate the students at the Carbonell ceremony, but the board of directors initially voted this choice down, citing it as too political.

**"THESE STUDENTS ACTIVATED THEIR ARTISTRY AND WROTE A SONG THAT EXPRESSES THEIR GRIEF AND ANGER, HONORS THEIR FALLEN AND LOOKS FORWARD TO A TIME WHEN SCHOOLS ARE SAFE SPACES IN WHICH TO LEARN AND CREATE."**

**—GARY CADWALLADER**



**Sawyer Garrity performing at the Carbonell Awards  
(Photo courtesy of Irene Adjan).**

Irene Adjan, South Florida Liaison Chair, brought this topic up at her area membership meeting, and led an email campaign to the Board. "One of the Carbonell's main functions is to give scholarships to theatre students," said Adjan. "How could we not support these students when they needed it most?"

After reconsidering, the Carbonell Board of Directors eventually invited the students to be a part of the ceremony, which Cadwallader credits to Adjan's dedication and to the subsequent campaigning from the Actors' Equity community. "I am so proud of my theatre community for taking their cue from these students and being inspired by their activism to make something happen," said Adjan. "This horrific event has touched the entire country, but it is so very present here in South Florida. It was unthinkable to me that these theatre students would not be invited to our biggest community theatre event of the year, and I'm very grateful it turned out the way it did."

Cadwallader believes that everyone at the Carbonell Awards ceremony benefitted from the spirit of the young MSDHS students who performed. "In order to move forward, these drama students activated their artistry and wrote a song that expresses their grief and anger, honors their fallen and looks forward to a time when schools are safe spaces in which to learn and create.

"Not only did the audience experience first-hand the shift that MSD students are leading across the globe," said Cadwallader, "but we responded by saying 'We. Hear. You.' From a dark, horrid tragedy came creativity and beauty. These young people are changing the world!"

# LIN-MANUEL MIRANDA HONORED WITH ROSETTA LENOIRE AWARD



**Equity President Kate Shindle, Rosetta LeNoire honoree Lin-Manuel Miranda and EEO Committee Chair and award presenter Christine Toy Johnson.**

At the Eastern Regional Membership Meeting in April, Actors' Equity Association honored Lin-Manuel Miranda with the 2018 Rosetta LeNoire Award. The award, established in 1988, is given for outstanding artistic contributions to the universality of human experience in American theatre. It goes to an individual, theatre or producing organization with an exemplary record in the hiring or promotion of people of color, women and actors with disabilities through diverse and inclusive casting.

"Lin-Manuel Miranda has changed the face of American theatre with his intentionally multi-cultural re-telling of American history in the musical *Hamilton*," said Christine Toy Johnson, Equity's National Equal Employment Opportunity Committee Chair. "Miranda has taken history and turned it on its head. In casting non-Caucasian actors to portray Alexander Hamilton, Aaron Burr and other founding fathers, as well as their families, Miranda has created new opportunities for performers of color and proven that non-Caucasian performers can be the face of massively commercial works of art."

*Hamilton* won the 2016 Pulitzer Prize for Drama, 2016 Grammy Award for Best Musical Theatre Album, Extraordinary Excellence in Diversity on Broadway Award from Actors' Equity and the 2016 Tony Award for Best Musical, where it earned a record-setting sixteen nominations. Miranda himself has earned three Tony Awards, three Grammy Awards, an Emmy Award, the Pulitzer Prize and a MacArthur Fellowship. He has also been a human rights advocate, including doing major work to raise awareness and funding for hurricane relief in Puerto Rico.

"I believe what Miranda has created in *Hamilton* is a game-changer for us," Johnson said. "The meteoric success of the show has inspired diverse and inclusive casting all across the country. Now there is precedence. And box office. And hope."

## THEATRE SPOTLIGHT – Continued from page 16

to submit their work for the series, and according to Patterson, they do receive submissions from all corners of the globe. But according to Beth Kander-Dauphin, whose play *Hazardous Materials* was selected as a winning script for the 2017 All Access Series, one of the benefits of the series is the sense of community it breeds for participants.

"It's been inspiring to be connected to the talented artists who collaborated on ELT's presentation of *Hazardous Materials*, none of whom I had worked with prior to this collaboration and all of whom were so excited to work on this project," she said. "One of the coolest aspects of the experience was how global-and-local the experience wound up being, which in some ways mirrored my play itself. On the 'global' side, the director ELT brought in

to work on my show was the phenomenal Jill Harper of Toronto, marking ELT's first international-directorial collaboration. On the 'local' side, in the blind submission process, I was the first Chicago playwright ever selected!"

These staged readings do not require stage managers, but Patterson also uses the All Access Series to create backstage experience as well, using them as mentoring opportunities for younger stage managers. "Every cast gets one, which is great for a staged reading," Patterson said.

Kander-Dauphin was effusive about Equity Library Theatre's mission. "From putting out the call for Equity actors to audition, seeing the cast deliver such powerful, thoughtful performances and continuing the conversations post-show,

ELT clearly excites and attracts artists committed to 'doing the work' in a meaningful way," she said.

And why not? Patterson assures that all the work involved is a labor of love. "We're a small group, but oh, how we love this," she said.



## ROCKTOPIA ON BROADWAY

Equity scored a major victory this March when the producers of the Broadway show *Rocktopia* agreed to put the members of the show's choir on Equity contracts.

*Rocktopia*, a show with a short-term run, has performed in limited runs around the world. It is not a book musical but a "mashup" show, in which a group of solo performers (including such famous singers as Train's Pat Monahan and Cheap Trick's Robin Zander), backed by a five-person band and a twenty-person orchestra, marry famous rock songs like "Baba O'Riley," "Don't Let the Sun Go Down On Me" and "We Are the Champions" to such classical works as Handel's "Lascia ch'io pianga" and Strauss's "Also sprach Zarathustra."

Typically, most Broadway producers are members of the Broadway League, which requires them to negotiate contracts with Equity for their members. But *Rocktopia's* were not a member of the League.

In keeping with the mission of Equity 2020, which strives to find new work opportunities and higher wages for Equity members, Actors' Equity believed that there were enough factors to pursue Equity contracts on behalf of the members of the *Rocktopia* choir. The show charged Broadway-level ticket prices, between \$49 and \$157, according to Telecharge. (Ironically, even the very venue where *Rocktopia* takes place is the Broadway Theatre.)

Agreements can often be reached between the union and shows with producers who are not members of the Broadway League, as seen with the recent *Home for the Holidays*. When attempts at a good-faith negotiation between Actors' Equity and the producers of *Rocktopia* did not work, the members of Advisory Committee on Chorus Affairs (ACCA) decided it was time to take action.

"Keeping Broadway all union is important to the health of our industry," said R. Kimberly Jordan, ACCA chair. "It was important that our members see how hard we will work to improve their situation. Organizing *Rocktopia* was a perfect example of that."

The campaign's first defining measure took place across social media. An email urged Equity

members to leave one-star reviews on *Rocktopia's* Facebook page and leave messages about the show's treatment of its choir, with emphasis on the show's presence on Broadway. "Producers are advertising this as a Broadway show and charging Broadway ticket prices – but their Broadway Chorus isn't being offered an Equity contract," the email that was sent out to members read.

This tactic was clearly a success – within hours, those associated with the show disabled Facebook reviews. Members then turned their attention to Twitter, where they continued to call attention to the show's low pay and lack of benefits.

On the morning of March 20, the day previews for *Rocktopia* were to begin, an agreement was announced, providing "wall-to-wall" contracts. All members of the part-time Choir received \$18.50 an hour, which more than doubled the pay the performers were initially offered as compensation. The contract also included an Actors' Equity agreement for the show's stage managers.

All together, the six-week production resulted in 41 Equity contracts. As a result, *Rocktopia* was taken off the Equity "Do Not Work" list.

"I hope that every commercial producer who is thinking about a run on Broadway has heard the message loud and clear that all performers on Broadway deserve not only to be fairly compensated but also to have the protection of an Equity contract," said Kate Shindle, President of Actors' Equity Association.

"This was a big deal because if we are to show our strength as a labor union, sometimes we have to take up arms and do some thing," said Rashaan James II, 8th Vice Chair of the Eastern Regional Board, one of several council members to serve as volunteers who phonebanked to generate member support for the negotiations. "This was our way as an association of showing, 'Hey, subpar conditions and subpar wages are things that Actors' Equity will not allow to happen.'"

While the provision of Equity contracts to all those hired to work on *Rocktopia* is indeed a victory, the *Rocktopia* campaign was also significant



as a means of demonstrating how Actors' Equity supports its own. "I am encouraged by and grateful for the thousands of Equity members, as well as all the members of our sister unions, who raised their voices," Shindle said. "Those declarations of solidarity led directly to this contract."

Cast member Jay Poff is also appreciative for the efforts of Actors' Equity. "Equity could have left it as a non-Equity production with other union affiliation in place, but they saw an opportunity to rally the membership and also support those who were seasoned and deserving of joining the

## #EQUITYWORKS

### THEATRE NEWS & NOTES

*Baileys Harbor, WI* – **Door Shakespeare** has renewed their SPT-5 rider for another two years, increasing their salaries by 6.5% over those two years and adding one more actor contract. This will add 15 workweeks in that region.

*Flint, MI* – **Flint Youth Theatre** will expand their programming. While their larger Bower stage will continue to operate on the LOA-TYA for the three TYA shows each season, their smaller 150-seat Elgood stage will become an SPT theatre producing six shows each season. They will begin in the 2018-2019 season on the Transitional SPT as a Category 3 theatre, and have chosen to pay health beginning in Phase One. The new SPT stage will be named **Flint Repertory**.

*Iowa City, IA* – **Riverside Theatre** has agreed to a three-year LOA-LORT.

*Las Vegas, NV* – *Marilyn! The Musical* at the **Paris Casino** will be on the Casino Agreement, in Tier IV, with 27 contracts.

*Los Angeles, CA* – **Reprise 2.0** will return on a LORT D agreement with 22 Contracts.

*Portland, OR* – **The Portland Playhouse** has returned as an SPT company.

*Spring Green, WI* – **American Players Theatre** has extended their usual agreement to LORT for another three years.

*Williamstown, MA* – **Williamstown Theatre Festival's** Nikos Stage has transitioned to CORST, including a 52.3% salary increase over a five-year term and three additional contracts in the non-pro ratio.

*Winona, MN* – **Great River Shakespeare Festival** has agreed to a three-year LOA-LORT with over 100 new workweeks over its life and with 12% raises (including 6% in year one). In moving from summer only to fall and spring, they have created between 90 and 150 workweeks each year.



(l-r) Carolyn Hoerdermann, Mark Corksin and Deborah Staples in a 2017 Door Shakespeare production of *Twelfth Night* (Photo by Len Villano).

### TRACKING WHAT YOU'RE OWED

Eastern staff recovered a total of \$6851.18 in unpaid vacation accrual for a total of 21 members at COST theatres and recovered \$605.30 in unpaid vacation accrual for three members at a LORT theatre, identified during the clearing process.

Eastern staff also secured a payment of \$369.32 for seven members for two hours of overtime that intruded on the Daylight Day of Rest.

Eastern staff reported that \$567.66 was recovered and paid retroactively to six members after catching a discrepancy in chorus part payments.

Eastern staff identified and secured payment of \$362 for five members for chorus parts in a new musical.

Eastern staff received \$1,810.56 in additional payments for a breach of continuous employment provision on an Experimental Theatre contract for 15 actors at a LORT theatre.

Eastern staff received payment to 26 actors for an unauthorized recording initiated by an outside party without the management's knowledge or consent, totaling \$2,916. The recording was destroyed.

Eastern staff reported that an SM on a transition contract was not paid for either pre-pro or for operating the light and sound board, resulting in payment of \$730.

Eastern staff reported the achievement of four contracts and \$3528 in salary for members in a Showcase production that extended their show by two weeks.

Eastern staff reported that due to the early closing in technical rehearsals of an Off-Broadway production in October, the cast was owed an overall debt of \$32,993.95. Staff was able to get immediate compensation of \$26,551 out of the bond and to create a payment plan for the remaining \$6,442.00.

Eastern staff also reported that after another Off-Broadway production recently was cancelled before going into technical rehearsals, they were able to have the producer make the final payroll for the rehearsal period and quickly paid the two-week performance guarantee out of the bond, for a total of \$19,104.

Central staff recovered close to \$500 for two stage managers at MUSA after resolving an issue regarding tech week bumps being changed under LORT for an LOA to LORT.

Central staff reported that Contract Associates were able to secure \$1000 from missed vacation payments and media fees.

# JOIN THE CROWD

Other Equity members have also sung the praises of **#EveryoneOnStage**. This is what they have had to say!

**EVERYONE ON STAGE** – Continued from page 14

manner in which chorus and ensemble members weave together the fabric of a narrative requires much technical aplomb. “They are the hardest-working people on Broadway,” Bogardus said. “They’re there in the background, and when they have finished a dance, they do all the work in transitioning to the next scene, and they do it with panache, with élan, enhancing the whole scene.”

These categories could also serve to demystify the notion that chorus parts are only a stepping-stone to principal roles and eventual fame. As both Brody and Dlamini referenced, it would be incorrect to assume that chorus or ensemble roles are a temporary career step on the way to principal roles or greater fame. Many performers are proud to carve out a lifelong career in such roles, which provide stability, the opportunity to employ the skills they have honed over a lifetime and the ability to surround themselves with similarly-minded professionals.

“Some of the most important and wonderful performances I have seen onstage have come from chorus members, including those who constantly understudy stars who play leading roles,” Equity business representative Corey Jenkins said. “They are extraordinary performers who make their lives and careers out of chorus work. They are the stabilizers onstage across the entire company.”

“Without the ensemble,” Dlamini said, “I don’t think *The Lion King* would be what it is. There are many people who have been with the company for a long time. They have made being in the chorus their career. I am actually surprised a decision to recognize the chorus hasn’t been made before.”

Jennifer Cody, Eastern Chorus Councillor, has appeared in the ensemble of such Broadway shows as *Urinetown*, *The Pajama Game*, *Taboo* and *Shrek the Musical*. Like Dlamini, she knows firsthand what it feels like for a hit show to be celebrated and for non-principal performers to feel overlooked.

“You create this new show and are such a part of developing it as an ensemble member, and all this hoopla happens,” she said, “but only the principals of the show are celebrated – they’re given gifts, they’re taken to

dinner and we go, ‘We did this too!’”

Cody also points out that due to the changing economics of Broadway, choruses and ensembles have gotten smaller – making each member on a production that much more valuable. “We are now elite,” she said. “Where there were once twenty people on a show, now maybe there are eight. And we have to sing and dance and play multiple roles within a show and understudy roles too. The ensemble members take on so much more of a load than they ever have before.”

It frequently falls on the members of a chorus or ensemble to physically guide the audience’s view. They serve as a spotlight, the stage equivalent of a zoom lens, focusing attention in the direction of a certain principal or set piece and away from something else. Their ability to literally help set the stage makes it all the more bittersweet that they go unrecognized at Tony time.

“Look at the history of choreographers,” said Bogardus. “These people told stories with their dancers and they told amazing stories with their ensemble. Choreographers are recognized for their work, but what about the actor-dancers who provide the extraordinary palette and bring

the picture to life with their collective individuality? It’s long overdue that they have an award that recognizes their extraordinary contribution to making a successful show.”

Perhaps the greatest value in Tony Awards for chorus and ensemble might be their literal payoff, serving as a way for producers to market their shows.

Brody agrees: “Having this recognition from the Tony Awards would certainly add cache to a show and add to the nominations and awards counts that help advertise and sell a show,” he said. “It would also help burnish the careers of countless performers.”

Such a win, of course, is also great for the individual. “Producers often undervalue the Equity chorus member,” said Ben Liebert, Eastern Chorus Councillor. “Maybe this will wake them up. If the Tonys care about the chorus, then the audience will care about the chorus, and the producers have to care about the chorus. That changes the bargaining game and could put real money in our pockets.”

The message is loud and clear: the time is now to sing a different tune at the Tony Awards – for those who comprise the backbone of a show to get some face time.



## ARIANE DOLAN

“The chorus and ensemble are the most versatile, hardest working actors, and are responsible for making a show fly. Recognition for them by the Tony committee is long overdue.”



## FRANCIS JUE

“It’s time to honor the chorus with a Tony Award, to acknowledge their impact on their shows and the art form.”



## SAYCON SENGBLOH

“I absolutely believe in a Tony Award for the ensemble! I was thrilled to receive my first Tony award nomination for *Eclipsed* – being a part of such a strong Broadway ensemble was one of the highlights of my career.”



## JENNIFER SMART

“It’s beyond time that choruses and ensembles be recognized for their amazing contributions. Let’s do this!”

Please let us know your thoughts about this campaign at **EveryoneOnStage@actorsequity.org!**

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Equity News,

In my 30 years of service to Actors' Equity (serving as President, 1st VP, Councillor and P&H Trustee), I have always been amazed at the dedication and service of the staff I have had the pleasure of working alongside. I would like to recognize and acknowledge four staff members who have retired in the past year.

Anne Fortuno, Tom Miller, Flora Stamatiades and Louise Foisy were employees who were always devoted to the task of striving to improve the lives of actors. Anne served as assistant to the President (and I always welcomed her insight on issues that arose during my tenure as President). Tom virtually created a program to welcome new members that introduced actors to the benefits of Equity membership. He traveled across the country speaking at colleges and universities answering questions about

our union. Flora was brilliant in her grasp of how to fashion language in contracts to Equity's advantage. She was always finding new ways to approach issues that often seemed impossible to solve. Louise represented actors and stage managers working the Production Contract. She administered the contract so that both parties were fairly represented, but she always fought hardest for our members.

What these four people had in common was a love of actors and a willingness to devote many extra hours to the service of those members. They deserve our thanks and best wishes. Happy trails...

In Solidarity,  
Mark Zimmerman

Dear Equity News,  
The first time I heard the name **Nina Dova**, it was

probably spoken by Julia Migenes, the original Hodel in *Fiddler on the Roof*. She was with percussionist Stanley Koor (who had also worked on the original *West Side Story*, *Candide*) during the out-of-town tryouts in at the Fisher Theater in Detroit, Michigan. And Julia, now famous as an opera star, was raving about this woman.

Nina started as a dancer when she was a young girl only to see that the main parts in musicals went to the singers. So she became a singer — and an actress, and a formidable guitarist, and eventually a director and a teacher. She was a powerful personality. Stanley met Nina when they were both working at what was then Theater de Lys, and is now known as the Lucille Lortel Theater, when they were both working on *The Threepenny Opera*. They got married in 1955.

She perhaps gained the most recognition doing commercials. She'd play

any ethnicity. Although Jewish, she became known as the Italian Grandma in commercials. Nina would go to a commercial audition with an array of wigs in her bag: a blond one if the character was a WASP, gray if it was an old lady, black if a fortune teller. She had quite a range — and a wide range of wigs.

For many years, Nina volunteered with the unions doing workshops in one thing or another, having people like me come in to talk on various subjects. She also coached and taught privately.

On Broadway she worked in *Filumena*, *Strider*, *Saturday Sunday Monday*, *The Rothschilds*, *Zorba and Yerma*. She also played Aunt Irene on *As the World Turns*. Nina spent the last seven and a half years at the Actors' Fund Home. She is survived by her husband, Stanley.

— Robert Aberdeen

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## REMEMBERING GENE FRANCIS



Eugene Francis, a Member and Councillor Emeritus, died on April 13, 2017. He was 100 years old.

Francis appeared in several of the "East Side Kids" movies as Algernon "Algy" Wilkes, including *Boys of the City*, *That Gang of Mine*, *Pride of the Bowery* and *Flying Wild*. He also made guest appearances on such television series as "Martin Kane" and "Pulitzer Prize Playhouse," and wrote for the series "Appointment with Adventure," "Justice," "The

Loretta Young Show" and "Matinee Theatre."

In 1985, Francis was elected as a founding board member of the Screen Actors Guild Foundation (now SAG-AFTRA Foundation), and he served for 33 years as a board member. He also served as treasurer of the Foundation's board, and worked on its finance committee. He also served as an Actors' Equity Councillor.

Francis was devoted to the lives of working actors. He advocated for children's literacy, growth in performers' programming and scholarships, and the establishment the Robin Williams Center in New York City, a SAG-AFTRA event space.

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## REMEMBERING CI HERZOG

On February 25, 2018, Ci Herzog, a former Councillor at Actors' Equity, passed away. He was 89 years old.

In September 1961, Herzog appeared on Broadway in the play *Purlie Victorious*, written by Ossie Davis and directed by Howard Da Silva. He played the role of The Sheriff in the play, which ran until May 1962. The cast also included Alan Alda, Ruby Dee, Gloria Foster and Beah Richards. It was later adapted into the 1963 movie *Gone Are the Days!* and the Tony-winning 1970 Broadway musical *Purlie*.

He also served as both assistant stage manager and understudy on the Broadway musical *Minnie's Boys*, a portrait of the early days of the Marx Brothers that ran at the Imperial Theatre during the spring of 1971. The show, which included a book co-written by Groucho Marx's son, Arthur, also featured Lewis J. Stadlen and Shelley Winters.

Herzog's experience as both performer and stage manager made him a jack-of-all-trades at Equity, where he served as an Eastern Principal Councillor from 1965 until 1975. In later decades, he was also a member of multiple committees, including the Stage Manager committee from 1995 until 1999, the EPA committee from 1995 until 2007, Off-Broadway committee from 1996 until 2016 and the Off-Off-Broadway committee during 2009. In 2002, he was also part of the Off-Broadway Negotiating Team, and from 2003 through 2009, he was an observer on the Equal Employment Opportunity/ Senior Performers committee.

Dear Equity News,

I was glad to see your profile of Nashville Children's Theatre (NCT) in the winter issue of Equity News. I have NCT to thank for a 50-year career in live theatre. Way back in the summer of 1967, Artistic Directors Chuck Doughty and Carol Silver Doughty cast me in their production of *I Sincerely Doubt That This Old House is Very Haunted*, written by Paul Crabtree (who would later become the driving creative force behind multiple musical revues at Opryland). The Doughtys had an inspirational magic formula for, and

devotion to, producing quality theatre for children. Plus, long before technology took over, NCT's amazing design team in the 60s, headed by Ruth Ann Maddox, produced stunning special effects the old-fashioned way. From fire-belching dragons to maidens whose tears turned to sparkling jewels right before our eyes, from timely fairy tales like James Thurber's *The 13 Clocks* to classic stories such as *Don Quixote*, NCT has long produced remarkable, memorable theatre for children and adults. Thanks for the memories!

– Vance Ormes

membership," he said. "Truly, thank you, to all the team at Equity that took up the yoke of bringing *Rocktopia* over. You rode a difficult path and I appreciate your efforts. I'm also grateful to have a forum where all ideas may be 'heard.'"

James was also impressed by the way Equity was able to galvanize its members, applauding the union them for the way it asserted itself throughout the campaign. "This was Actors' Equity putting its foot down and throwing its weight around," he said. "I don't remember seeing anything at

this scale before."

This agreement also bodes well for future negotiations. "Organizing *Rocktopia* is a win for the union," R. Kim Jordan, ACCA President, exclaimed. "Not only did we get the choir on contract, we got them an increase in salary and, most importantly, we got a new producer to agree to come to Equity for anything he produces in the Box."

"Keeping Broadway all-union is important to the health of our industry," she said.

## IN MEMORIAM

Reported between January 1, 2018 and April 30, 2018

\* Equity Councillor

*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

ANNUNZIATA AIELLO  
SEAN ALLAN  
MARTY ALLEN  
JERRY ANDERSON  
KIM ARNAUT  
NORMAN BEIM  
FRED W. BENNETT  
BOB D. BERNARD  
CHARLIE BETHEL  
WILL BLANKENSHIP  
JACK BLESSING  
ALAN BLEVISS  
ROBERT BOARDMAN  
MELANIE BOLAND  
MITCHELL BONTA  
CHRIS BOUCHARD  
JOHN MCCOOL BOWERS  
PAUL BRNO  
GERRY BURKHARDT  
DIANA CAMERON  
SCOTT J. CAMPBELL  
JACQUELINE CAROL  
DAVID CASSIDY  
REG E. CATHEY  
BARRETT CLARK  
JO DEODATO CLARK  
LAVERNE CLAY  
JEANNETTE CLIFT  
OLIVIA COLE  
JENNIFER MATHESON  
COLLINS  
JOHN CONBOY  
A D COVER  
GEORGE DARVERIS

CLIFFORD DAVID  
BARBARA DILKER  
FRANK DOLAN  
DAVID DOWNING  
ELLEN DREXLER  
CAROLYN DROSCOSKI  
CHARLES DUVAL  
SUNNIA EASTWOOD  
HARRY R. EGGART  
DON EITNER  
PATRICIA ENGLUND  
ROGER ERICKSON  
NANETTE FABRAY  
BARRY FORD  
LYDIA FRANKLIN  
JOHN FREIMANN  
RICHARD G. GLOVER  
BRUCE GRAY  
MARYELLEN GREGORY  
EDWARD D. GROVER  
ROSE MARIE GUY  
DELL HALLMAN  
VINCENT HARTA  
CHELSEA HASBRO  
ADAM HAYES  
CI HERZOG \*  
RICHARD-CHARLES HOH  
DANNY HOLGATE  
DAVID HOLLAND  
HOLLEY JACK HORNER  
RANCE HOWARD  
WILLIAM JAMES  
GERTRUDE JEANNETTE  
JERRY JERGER

JEREMY JOHNSON  
CHRIS JORDAN  
MICHAEL L. KAVANAGH  
JAMES P. KISICKI  
KATHY KNIGHT  
GEORGE A. KOLLER  
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BERIT LAGERWALL  
TERRY LAMB  
JAMES D. LANNON  
HARVEY LEVINE  
JOHN MAHONEY  
JULES MANDEL  
RALPH P. MARTIN  
MEA MARTINEAU  
JAN MAXWELL  
KATHERINE MCGRATH  
MICHAEL MCGUIRE  
JOE MCKERNAN  
KRISHEN MEHTA  
MARGARET MIDDLETON  
RUTH MILLER  
KEITH MILLS  
BOB MORRISEY  
WOOD MOY  
ALAN NAGGAR  
P. J. NELSON  
ALAN OGLE  
CELY CARRILLO ONRUBIA  
ART OSTRIN  
JAN OWEN  
CHARLOTTE PATTON  
RICK PESSAGNO

GEORGE W PHELPS  
HARRY PHILIBOSIAN  
P J PHILLIPS  
JOE PONAZECKI  
ROBERT PRICE  
ROCKY JOE QUARLES  
CHRISTOPHER REGAN  
DICK ROBISON  
NED ROMERO  
CONNIE SAWYER  
WILLIAM SHUST  
DORIS SIEGEL  
MIKE SKLOOT  
CLARE MELLEY SMITH  
DENNIS SOOK  
HAL SPENCER  
DAVID OGDEN STIERS  
FABIAN STUART  
BOB SWAIN  
CHRISTOPHER N. TISONE  
JAN TRISKA  
RUDY TRONTO  
DICK TURMAIL  
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## UPDATES FROM OUR MEMBER MEETINGS

READ MORE IN THE MEMBER PORTAL



The Acting Locally campaign has identified 330 non-union theaters across the country as potential organizing opportunities.



Sixteen theatres in the Central Region have been brought onto Equity contracts for the first time.



New Member Orientation was made available to all members live via Zoom webinar, with members participating from as far as Bangkok.