

SUMMER 2018 | VOLUME 103 | ISSUE 3

Equity NEWS

ACTORS' EQUITY ASSOCIATION



SUPREME ATTACKS!

**WORKERS FACE NEW THREATS:
HERE'S HOW WE CAN FIGHT BACK**

IN MEMORIAM

Reported between May 1, 2018 and July 31, 2018

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*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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EquityNEWS

Actors' Equity

Director of Communications

Brandon Lorenz

Editor

Doug Strassler

Contributor

Joyce Vinzani

Got a question or
comment? Email us at

equitynews@actorsequity.org

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#Equity
STRONG





FROM THE PRESIDENT THE FIGHT AHEAD

The past several weeks have presented some major challenges for those of us in the labor movement, and accordingly, Equity has been busy participating in the new concentrated push toward preserving workers' rights to organize and bargain for fair contracts.

On June 27, the Supreme Court finally issued its ruling on *Janus v. AFSCME*, a case that had been closely watched by unions across the country. In short: it didn't go our way. Overturning a 40-year precedent, the court ruled that non-members working under union contracts cannot be compelled to pay fees to those unions.

As you may know, workers cannot be forced to join a union when they are hired on union contracts. But for many years, the unions who bargained those contracts were able to collect fair share fees (sometimes also referred to as "agency fees"). These fees represented only the cost of negotiating and administering the contracts, while exempting the cost of the union's other activities, like political advocacy. The argument has been that non-union workers shouldn't be forced to pay working dues for activism and other activities that they either feel they don't need, or outright object to.

What the *Janus* ruling has now established is that although the affected unions have a legal obligation to allow anyone to work under their contracts, and to administer and advocate in the same way for those individuals, those workers no longer have to contribute a percentage of working dues in return.

This has several outcomes for labor. First, unions that are obligated to perform services under federal law will be starved of revenue. Second, the actual members of those unions are essentially now going to have to underwrite the costs for those non-members working under contract. This is why right-to-work legislation is so dangerous: it's about making this the law of the land for all unions. And rest assured that although this ruling specifically affects public-sector unions, there is no doubt that these activists are teeing up to gut private-sector unions – like Actors' Equity – as well.

If we want to have a union 10 or 20 years from now, we have to raise our voices now. Do you want to know what you can do? Great.

First: take to the streets. On the day after the ruling, Equity joined with other union members in rallies across the country. I was downtown in the financial district with a terrific turnout of Equity members. We have to be visible as part of

this movement. When we support other unions in their actions, they will in turn support ours. We are a broad coalition of many different varieties of workers, whether they be artists, tradespeople, administrative staff, teachers, law enforcement and firefighters, or many others. What affects one of us affects all of us. Pay attention to what's happening when you see the inflatable rat or workers flying outside a building; today it's them, but tomorrow it may be us.

In early July, I was invited to speak at the convention of the International Association of Masters, Mates and Pilots; they represent many different types of workers on everything from tankers to passenger ferries. In researching the work they do, I was reminded of how much we have in common. Even though we operate in completely different industries, we share things like continuous and often unpredictable travel (sometimes far from home), and a perception that our work and careers are a lot more romantic than the reality may be. It's this kind of union-to-union relationship that we are working very hard to build.

Ten days later, I was invited by *The Chicago Tribune's* Chris Jones to be a guest speaker at the National Critics' Institute at the Eugene O'Neill Theatre Center, an intensive retreat for professional theatre writers from all across the country. We had a wide-ranging discussion, a focus of which was driving home the "Ask If It's Equity" message – especially to audiences who attend touring shows. (Here I should also note that Jones himself has been exemplary in regularly pointing out the differences to his readers.)

To me, these three fronts – activism, building union solidarity and underscoring the importance of unions to the casual theatregoer – are tremendously valuable in ensuring that our members continue to succeed. A union is only as strong as the collective force of its members. I hope you will join us in raising our voices.

Kate Shindle

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STRONGER TOGETHER



A week doesn't go by as your executive director when I am not reminded just how important unions are in our current moment in history.

One recent Tuesday served as an especially vivid reminder. My afternoon started with the memorial service for Jeff Loeffelholz, a member of the cast of *Chicago* who tragically committed suicide.

You may have read media reports about the situation. Equity has hired outside counsel to investigate. Every morning I think of Jeff. I say his name and spend a few minutes thinking about him before I start my day.

During the service, members of the Broadway community sang "You Will Be Found" from *Dear Evan Hansen*. It was a touching show of community support.

I ended my day that Tuesday evening watching the results from Missouri, where our brothers and sisters in the labor movement had forced a vote to repeal Missouri's Right-to-Work for Less law. Union members had worked for months, gathering more than 300,000 signatures to call the referendum.

Ultimately, the law went down to defeat by a 2:1 margin. That didn't happen by itself – thousands of Union members and supporters knocked on doors and made phone calls about what was at stake. Those volunteers included dozens of Equity members.

These kinds of attacks aren't just about unions. We know that states with these laws have lower wages and weaker education systems. I'm glad to see this law was struck down by the people of Missouri and grateful for all the members of the Equity family who volunteered to make it happen.

These are challenging and difficult times for the labor movement. But Missouri reminded me that when we work together, good things can happen – even when as a movement we have to fight in red states and against billionaires and special interests like the Koch Brothers.

There are lessons for Equity in that success. Consider our recent New England Area Theatre (NEAT) contract. Our negotiating strategies often vary to fit the needs of an area. In this case, we called on members who worked the contract to observe the process. And they were willing to stand up and be seen.

When our producers had to look across the table and into the eyes of people they had hired over and over again and hear from our chief negotiator how hard it was under the current contract for those members to make ends meet,

they met our demands and we achieved a breakthrough. That is the power of solidarity.

I will close by returning to Jeff, a member I have spent a lot of time thinking about. My goal is to work toward a time when Jeff's legacy can lead to a future where employers get the training they need to ensure a workplace free from bullying and harassment. Our ability to achieve that depends not just on our staff, but on solidarity. And on you.

In the year since #MeToo began, I have heard from our business representatives and from our members that they are afraid to speak out and say something if they are the victim of harassment or bullying. Sometimes we hear from members who want to report an incident, but then ask us not take action because they are afraid of retaliation or that they will not be able to find another job in the industry.

I understand that impulse. But I want you to know that we are stronger together. That you are not alone. And that the mental and physical safety of all our members is a top priority at Equity.

I know that it takes courage to report a problem in the workplace. We have tools we can use to address workplace problems, from bullying to harassment or unsafe working conditions that don't put a spotlight on you as individual members.

I want to state emphatically the importance of coming to Actors' Equity. If you feel that you have been bullied or harassed, or know someone who is, call your business representative. Your conversation will remain private and confidential. We can help you sort through your options and give you access to resources to help. If you do that, and if you allow us to take action, we will all be stronger for it.

Mary McColl



DIVERSITY MATTERS HELP US HELP YOU

The past few months have seen some exciting events on our team's end that reinforce our mission to promote equal opportunity, diversity, gender parity and inclusion to benefit our membership. In June, more than one hundred Equity members, staff, EMCs and guests marched the streets of New York City to celebrate Pride and honor the LGBTQIA+ community. Next year will mark the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall Uprising and WorldPride NYC, so we hope that you will join us for this momentous occasion to celebrate equality.

This month we also had the pleasure of handing out the Extraordinary Excellence in Diversity on Broadway Award to the cast of *Once on This Island*. This accolade acknowledges the efforts taken by Broadway productions to truly reflect the tapestry of the American cultural landscape and reinforce the ways that theatre can spearhead inclusion. It is our hope that the legacy of the Diversity Award will create even greater awareness for our #ChangeTheStage initiative by highlighting the contributions that are made at such a visible level to promote diversity, inclusion and equal opportunity in our industry.

We are also excited to announce that Equity is updating its self-identification features in the Member Portal. This marks the first time that Actors' Equity has expanded its features in the Portal to account for specific classifications including gender/gender identity, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation and veteran status. It is important to note that this information remains confidential and is for Equity internal purposes only.

What is the purpose of this, you might ask? We understand that disclosure is a personal decision, but this information will actually help humanize our membership and provide a clearer picture about your individual needs. It is a call to action that can help eradicate stark and pervasive barriers that occur in our industry. When we have comprehensive data for our membership, we can foster change by advocating for more authentic representation, ensuring that there are accessibility requirements for members with disabilities in all aspects from auditions to employment, and utilizing inclusive methods to develop resources to aid in eradicating those barriers. In updating this feature, Equity will obtain greater insight to make sure that hiring practices mirror best practices – and if not, we will continue to make it a priority to educate our employers to make necessary improvements.

In tandem with this self-identification feature, in our most recent New York City town hall we also discussed actionable steps to help foster expanding the pathways to inclusive hiring in our industry (video of which can be found in the

Member Portal). This panel comprised a mosaic of members with disabilities and represented different races, gender and gender identities, ages and national origin. It gave us insight into a wide array of topics that will benefit members, including tactics on how stage managers and actors can network more effectively, recommendations on how to improve accessible accommodations for members with disabilities, how to be a better ally and ways to ensure that your individuality, skills and talent always remain at the front line of available work opportunities. We eagerly anticipate what we will learn when our members discuss their shared experiences at the next town hall, which will take place in Boston this fall.

All members can use our email address, diversity@actorsequity.org, to inquire about issues surrounding diversity & inclusion. This email was created for members to schedule meetings to discuss your community's concerns or surrounding a diversity topic; to share news articles or your own blogs related to diversity and inclusion within the theatre industry; to get involved with the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Committee or volunteer to help with an EEO event; or to request accessibility accommodations in relation to any Equity events (Remember, if you have a discrimination-related concern regarding a current or past employer contract, please contact your Equity business rep. To find your business rep, ask your show's Equity Deputy or visit the member portal "Find Your Business Rep" in the "Resources" tab at: actorsequity.org/business-reps.)

And don't forget that you can gain further insight into our efforts and learn about upcoming events on the Diversity & Inclusion page on Equity's new website. These growing efforts are a testament to our constant striving to improve the ways in which we can best serve your needs. Remember: a problem is just an opportunity for a new solution to be created.

Nicole Smart

INVISIBLE WOMEN PANEL CHARTS A NEW PATH FOR THOSE CAUGHT IN THE GAP

BY DOUG STRASSLER

A panel sponsored by Equal Employment Opportunity Committee member Claire Karpen and Equity member Rachel Spencer Hewitt sought to dig deeper into the obstacles facing stage managers and performers over the course of their careers.

Entitled "Invisible Women: Navigating Ageism in the Fight for Gender Equity," this event referred to the "gap years" faced by the members of the panel. This occurs when performers age out of the ingénue role but often see "grande dame" roles go exclusively to celebrities or established performers.

Hewitt moderated the panel, which included Equity actors Adriana Gaviria, April Matthis and Deirdre O'Connell, Equity Councillor and Stage Manager Amanda Spooner and Joan Jeffri, director and founder of the Research Center for Arts and Culture at The Actors Fund. They all discussed experiencing a work drop-off that extends beyond the assumed amount of time between the ages of 35 and 55; in fact, they all acknowledged that the downward trend continues beyond that age as well, and not because of any waning interest or ability. Many female artists long to create satisfying work during their later years, but encounter a lack of equitable work opportunity for women in mid to late stages of their career.

Hewitt emphasized the importance of coming together and sharing stories in order to establish a better work-life balance and enjoy a career that offers financial stability, flexibility and support. "When we stay individualized and our conversations stay secret, it's much easier for them to curate what our expectations are," she said. She cited the Kilroys, a group of playwrights who have collected works created by female and transgender writers in order to stymie the underrepresentation of female and trans playwrights in the American theatre, offering proof that "the pathways that block our progress are optional; they are not mandatory."

Everyone acknowledged that these obstacles affect female stage managers just as much as they do performers. If a stage manager does not have an established Broadway contract on her resume by a certain age, it hinders their career; many will not offer them a Production Assistant contract, which is often the only way to break in. Panel members and attendees concurred that it is crucial to increase pathways of access for mid- to late-career Stage Managers to sustain an upward career trajectory that includes access to high-paying contracts.

The panel agreed that the gender pay gap needs to be addressed for actors and stage managers, particularly in terms of stage manager career sustainability and growth. They also discussed how motherhood discrimination affects all women. A key goal is to eliminate a "you have to choose" ideology that forces motherhood to be a separate element from art or life and to establish a work culture that appreciates both child-rearing and caregiving as a part of expression.

Matthis spoke to the intersectionality of age, gender and race as well. "My resistance to 'I'm nowhere near fifty! When am I going to play the age I am?' has shifted," she said, to "Is that the more interesting role? What do I get to do as a 50-year-

old that I didn't get to do as the wife of the guy who has the problem?"

"What I find helpful is that there is a community of us," Matthis said. "I see less competition and more support, more collaboration. I find that really valuable."

Other topics of discussion that arose included the importance of mentorship. All those in attendance agreed that there is value in theaters taking chances on mid-career artists. Additionally, younger artists should seek mentorship in collaborators of all ages – people at both ends of the spectrum of age and experience can empower the other. No older artist should be seen as "other" or be removed from consideration.

In addition to a list of resources for women in the industry (see below), another key takeaway from the event was the establishment of a mission statement that encapsulates the EEO's understanding of what the current situation is as well as how it is to be disrupted: "If we are contributors to the art of the human experience," Hewitt said, "our art must include and support the evolution of the human experience intergenerationally, instead of falsely freezing age and misrepresenting it, altering and excluding the truth about how we evolve as artists, leaders, and social participants."

RESOURCES

The following organizations work to create opportunities for women and awareness about the need to continue the conversation about issues including the gap years:

Women in the Arts & Media Coalition
Parent Artist Advocacy League for the Performing Arts
Statera Foundation
Women's Project
New Georges
League of Professional Theatre Women
Trans Women of Color Collective (TWCC)
Women Arts
The Lilly Awards Foundation
Philadelphia Women's Theatre Festival
Berkshire Leadership Summit
artEquity
The Athena Cats
Women's Voices Theatre Festival
Age and Gender Equity in the Arts (AGE)

WHY STAKES FOR WORKING PEOPLE HAVE NEVER BEEN HIGHER: **SOLIDARITY IS THE KEY** TO KEEPING OUR UNION **#EQUITYSTRONG**

BY DOUG STRASSLER



During the 1919 Actors' Equity strike, members like the ones seen above protested against the unfair conditions enacted by the Producing Managers' Association, eventually winning all demands.

This past May, President Donald Trump escalated the long-running war against unions with an executive order making it easier to fire federal workers represented by a union. That executive order came just a few months after the Department of Education attempted to illegally curb workers' protections.

Then came Janus. The Supreme Court ruling in the *Janus v. AFSCME* case (see "What Does the Janus Ruling Mean?" p. 12) followed just a few weeks after the executive order. This was a major decision that threatens to severely undercut the bargaining strength of public sector labor unions.

Meanwhile, as attacks on organized labor escalate, arts funding is also under threat. For the second year in a row, the Trump Administration has proposed entirely eliminating funding for the National Endowment for the Arts.

No matter how you look at it, the environment has radically shifted since 2016, creating challenges unions haven't seen in decades. The right to form unions is the very bedrock of any democratic society, and can be a powerful tool for workers in any industry to achieve economic and social justice. The grounding principle is power in numbers: a collective body can achieve more gains, and fight obstacles with greater resistance, than any individual can.

Labor unions, of course, work to improve wages, benefits, hours and other working conditions that affect workers' ability to perform their jobs. They provide workers with a voice on the job, and protect them when they feel that their rights have been violated.

The impact of a union also extends beyond the workplace.

Workers who are economically secure and protected from emotional and physical harm on the job contribute more within their community and to society as a whole, particularly in an industry where so many define themselves by the work that they pursue.

While Actors' Equity has a long history of bargaining for and achieving major wins on behalf of its membership, who have gone on to achieve fulfilling careers and lives, the shifting political landscape serves as a stark reminder that such fights are never easy, and often require members to stand together with greater resolve than ever.

According to Susan J. Schurman, Distinguished Professor of Labor Studies and Employment Relations at Rutgers University, all unions share a common trait that extends beyond a specific trade or skill set. "Workers' movements are the oldest civil rights movements – they struggle for both political and economic rights but also for human rights," she said. In an era of increased awareness and engagement, Equity's mission of advocacy falls right in line with much of the activism happening all over the country as human rights have been taken under siege.

And because Equity members are performers or those who manage live public performances, they are more equipped at harnessing both their passion and their position to espouse their cause. "They're uniquely positioned to have a platform that others might not, to leverage that and speak truth to power," Paul E. Almeida, President of the Department for Professional Employees, said. "They can be a voice for positive, progressive change, because we all benefit from that. Not everyone is comfortable in those roles, but it is important to speak out for the greater good of all members."

What both Almeida and Schurman circled back to is that the key to a union's success is internal solidarity. "It is the only source of power and influence that workers have," Schurman maintains. Unions are built through the active participation of their members, who participate in advocacy at grassroots and national levels. "There is a strong need to collectively organize and have your voice heard," Almeida advised. "Unions are the only counterbalance to strong powers like corporate interests and well-to-do billionaires. They feel threatened by unions having a voice in workplace and society. Unions are the only counterbalance."



Equity members in the Munny production of *Gypsy* who phonebanked against Proposition A proved that they had the unions' back.

"Folks often ask me, 'But what is solidarity?' and I think the simple answer is standing together for core human rights," said Melissa Robinette, 1st Vice President of Equity. "Humans – stage managers and actors, of any color, gender/gender identity, race, religion, etc. – deserve a good wage, fair treatment and safe working conditions. We can and should disagree on other issues but the string that binds us is human rights."

Schurman points out that historically, a lack of solidarity has been any union's

greatest kryptonite – the easiest thing for businesses to exploit at the bargaining table. "Disagreement is fine, it's how we learn and grow, but at some point when you have an adversary, employers recognize this as a weakness and they know it in a heartbeat," she said. "For centuries, employers have become expert at how to exploit any kind of division within a workforce, therefore weakening their ability to be unified, and weakening their bargaining power. Once that happens, the union is powerless."

THE SHIFTING POLITICAL LANDSCAPE IS A STARK REMINDER THAT FIGHTS FOR WORKERS' RIGHTS ARE NEVER EASY. NOW, THEY OFTEN REQUIRE MEMBERS TO STAND TOGETHER – WITH MORE RESOLVE THAN EVER.

That is one reason why Equity has begun building out a stronger, modern and strategic organizing program, part of the commitment made to members in the first year of the Equity 2020 campaign. (See “Making #EquityStrong,” Summer 2017).

“Look at the teachers in the West Virginia strike,” Schurman said (see sidebar). “When you have mass solidarity, you are going to win – but you can’t have

tiny bits and pieces. If one county in West Virginia had done this, they’d have been crushed. I think of the expression ‘go big or go home.’”

Schurman praises the active membership of Equity, which is more vocal and visible than in many other unions. “Equity has retained volunteer activism for a large group of people that other unions are trying to recover.” This bodes well for the kind of public

unity members are likely to continue displaying.

When Equity members come together and speak with one voice, good things can happen. Since stepping into her official role as Organizer, Stefanie Frey has traveled the country galvanizing members across a range of advocacy efforts. She is not only impressed by the passion she has seen on display, but is also happy to note that the number of



MEETING UNION GOALS

The following examples of protests are sterling examples of how solidarity helped union members meet their goals:

1909

NEW YORK SHIRTWAIST STRIKE

Clara Lemlich led a general strike on behalf of garment workers, many of whom were Jewish women, in protest of abusive sweatshop conditions: they were required to supply their own sewing materials and were often locked in so as to prevent them from taking breaks. 15,000 shirtwaist workers walked out of the factories – a number that grew from November 1909 through February 1910, when the workers received better pay, shorter hours and equal treatment of union and non-union workers.

1919

ACTORS' EQUITY STRIKE

After being forced to give hundreds of hours of unpaid rehearsal time, spend money on their own costumes and travel and being subject to firing at the whim of management, Equity members struck against the Producing Managers' Association in August, shortly after signing with the American Federation of Labor. After a month, during which musicians and stagehands stood in solidarity with the actors, the managers gave in to all of Equity's demands. To succeed, they were required to organize, even while members were working on the road.

1933

LOS ANGELES GARMENT WORKERS STRIKE

Mexican workers in the dress industry went on strike when their employers refused to comply with their demands of union recognition, a 35-hour work week, minimum wage, the elimination of having to work at home and safer working conditions. During the 26-day strike, the International Ladies Garment Workers Union gave strikers benefit cards. The strike ended when the workers received minimum wage and a 35-hour work week. This strike, led largely by Mexican women, is considered to be one of the most significant strikes following the passing of the New Deal.



Left, members of Actors' Equity during the 1919 strike. Right, members in the San Francisco area rallied against the Janus ruling this summer, proving that even a century later, the union remains #EquityStrong.

those involved continues to climb.

"Solidarity among Equity members has increased immensely over the past three years, and something that excited me about Equity 2020 is getting a chance to see the solidarity and engagement continue to increase," she said. "We saw the sparks of solidarity in the Off-Broadway negotiation of 2016, we saw it in the roll-out of Equity 2020 in 2017, and several times in 2018 with *Rocktopia*,

D.C. Arts Funding, NEAT negotiations and our fight against 'right-to-work' in Missouri. The momentum is building and we are just warming up!"

The New England Area Theatre (NEAT) agreement provides a clear example of strength in numbers when facing a common goal. "We had a team of about ten people, mostly working stage managers and actors local to the area," Frey said. "And then we had a list

of 65+ people who were ready, willing and able to literally back us up and stand with us at the table to show employers that we are one solid unit. To me, that's solidarity."

And sometimes solidarity means supporting another union. Almeida cites the 40-day strike at Boeing International in 2000 that he helped lead as President of the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers



1960

ACTORS' EQUITY STRIKE

Actors' Equity went on strike again, this time in order to obtain a pension for their members. When the company of *The Tenth Man* walked out of the Booth Theatre, the League of New York Theatres (what we now refer to as the Broadway League) retaliated by closing the rest of the Broadway houses in what was known as the Broadway Blackout. After thirteen days, a skittish Mayor Robert B. Wagner brokered a compromise. Of the 22 shows that had closed, three would never reopen. But a pension fund had been created.

1970

UNITED STATES POSTAL STRIKE

Back then, postal workers were part of eight separate craft unions, all of whom were denied the freedom to bargain collectively. A Congressional decision to raise the wages of postal workers by only 4% (less than the inflation rate) while at the same time raising their own pay by 41%, triggered a strike. On March 17, 1970, New York City letter carriers went on strike, leading to a wildcat strike across the country that saw over 200,000 postal workers join. President Richard Nixon declared a national state of emergency and ordered 24,000 military personnel to deliver mail instead, but they were unable to. After eight days, the strike ended, postal workers won full collective bargaining rights, and five federal postal unions merged to form the American Postal Workers Union, the largest postal workers union in the world.

2017

WEST VIRGINIA TEACHERS & SERVICE PERSONNEL STRIKE

In a true demonstration of solidarity, rank-and-file teachers and public school employees from all 55 counties in West Virginia shut down schools to protest low salaries and exorbitant health care costs. The strike achieved a five percent pay raise but did not provide guarantees to control rising health care costs. Still, it has inspired teachers in Colorado, Oklahoma and Arizona to take similar action. Teachers in such states as Kentucky and North Carolina have also coordinated protests and walkouts on smaller scales.



(IFPTE) as an example of those attached to the labor movement coming to the aid of an ally.

"This action was one of the largest strikes by professional workers in the nation's history," he said. "Unions that they knew and unions that they didn't know donated money and came to their picket lines to support them. They didn't

question why, but gave their support, and the strike was a total success, yielding everything they wanted at the bargaining table."

Frey referred to another example of union solidarity, which appeared in the way members rallied against Proposition A in Missouri this summer. A vote in favor of Prop A, the 'Right-to-

Work' Referendum, would have also further weakened union strength within the state. To vote no would repeal the contested legislation, Senate Bill 19, which would have enacted a 'right-to-work' law mandating that no one can be required to pay dues to a labor union, nor be forced to join a labor union as a condition of employment.

Continued on page 27

WHAT DOES THE JANUS RULING MEAN?

BACKGROUND: The 1977 ruling in *Abood v. Detroit Board of Education* stated that while public sector employees cannot be required to join a union and pay union dues, they can be required to pay an "agency shop" or "fair share" fee to the union. The amount of the fee is determined by deducting from the amount of union dues whatever portion of those dues were spent on political or ideological activities, adjusted yearly. This is because public-sector employees benefit from the various activities of the unions, including collective bargaining. Unions are critical to growing and maintaining the middle class, reducing inequality by raising wages for both union and nonunion workers, and whittling away at the gender and pay gap.

WHO IS MARK JANUS? Mark Janus is a childcare specialist, employed by the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services, who argued that he has a First Amendment right to choose not to pay fair share fees. Despite working for the government, he refused to join the union because he disagreed with political causes promoted by the union. Janus has been required to pay the union fees totaling about \$535 per year. His suit, *Janus v. American Federation*

of State, County, and Municipal Employees, Council 3, plays right into the hand of corporate interests, who want to take away the ability of ordinary workers to build strength in numbers. Since the ruling, Janus has left state employment and joined a right-wing think tank linked to the Koch Brothers.

WHO BANKROLLED THE CASE?

The Koch brothers, among others. The organizations backing the Liberty Justice Center, who represented Mark Janus, have names like the National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation and the Center for Individual Rights and purportedly protect the rights of citizens – but these legal sponsors have received funding from the Charles Koch Institute and numerous other billionaire organizations headed by powerful right-wing families.

WHAT DOES THE RULING MEAN?

On June 27, the Supreme Court ruled in a 5–4 decision that public-sector government employees cannot be forced to pay unions "agency fees" as a condition of employment, overturning the *Abood* ruling. In a sharply worded dissent, Justice Elena Kagan noted that the decision,

"overthrows a decision entrenched in this nation's law — and in its economic life — for over 40 years."

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT? Martin Luther King called "right-to-work" a "false slogan" for a "law intended to rob us of our civil rights and job rights," and unions say roughly five million government employees in 24 states will be impacted by the court's decision in *Janus* – a bloc that includes union-represented teachers, firefighters, health care workers, government employees, and police. Everything from affordable health care and retirement security to quicker medical emergency response times is under threat. "The Supreme Court's decision in *Janus v. AFSCME* is another predictable attack on hard working people across America who seek to re-balance the economic scales by joining together in their workplaces," Paul E. Almeida said. Still, he remains optimistic. "We are confident professional employees will continue to see the value of unions and grow the labor movement into the future."



A BOON FOR THE ARTS: NEW SALES TAX WILL BENEFIT D.C. ARTS COMMUNITY

BY DOUG STRASSLER

The District of Columbia is one of the leading metropolitan areas when it comes to professional theatre opportunities; according to Actors' Equity's Regional Theatre Report, it generates nearly seventeen weeks of theatre employment for each Equity member in the region. That means it creates more work than all other locations except for the larger theatre centers of New York, Los Angeles, Chicago and Orlando.

In late June, the nation's capital received other news about which they could rejoice. The Council of the District of Columbia approved a dedicated sales tax that is expected to generate \$30 million annually to fund the local arts community, including theatre productions.

A passionate regional approach to policy lobbying led to the successful levying of this new tax. Local Equity members wrote hundreds of letters to councilmembers in support of the arts funding legislation, and Equity President Kate Shindle also submitted testimony to the council. This groundswell of public interest had a direct effect on the outcome.

"Equity members are the heart and soul of theatrical productions that generate millions of dollars in economic activity in the District of Columbia," said Shindle. "A strong cultural economy helps create a stronger economy for the whole city. This move will create good jobs and benefit everyone in the District of Columbia."

This tax was created thanks to the D.C. Commission on the Arts and Humanities Dedicated Funding Amendment Act of 2018, which dedicates a quarter of a percent of the existing sales and use tax to the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities. The sales tax rate will be raised from 5.75 percent to 6 percent.

The D.C. Commission on the Arts and Humanities has provided grants and educational opportunities to support nonprofit organizations, including arts education in public schools and public charter schools throughout the District, for more than fifty years. The Commission will manage grants generated by the new tax.

This tax decision arrives against a backdrop of severe arts funding

"YOU TAKE NOTICE WHEN ALL OF A SUDDEN YOU START GETTING 100, 300, 500 EMAILS ABOUT A TOPIC. IT ABSOLUTELY MADE A DIFFERENCE. IT WAS VERY EFFECTIVE."

— COUNCILMEMBER JACK EVANS



elimination. Overall funding for the National Endowment for the Arts has been cut by \$20 million annually since 2010, and state funding for the arts is 42.5 percent down from its all-time high levels dating back to 2001, according to the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies.

Despite those statistics, there are plenty of reassuring reports as well. A 2017 study by the non-profit organization Americans for the Arts estimated the economic value generated by the audiences who attend performing arts events in the District of Columbia exceeded \$1.2 billion. Additionally, local arts organizations generated another \$1.6 billion in economic activity, totaling a combined impact that approached \$3 billion.

This amendment act was introduced earlier this year by Councilmember Jack Evans, who chairs the council's Committee on Finance and Revenue, along with Mary Cheh, David Grosso, Brianne Nadeau, Brandon Todd and Robert White.

"The arts have always been very important," said Councilmember Evans, who has played a major role in funding the arts in Washington, D.C., since his 1991 election. He has enabled renovations of Arena Stage, Ford's Theatre and Studio Theatre, and is the single largest donor to Shakespeare Theatre Company's Sidney Harman Hall.

"The arts are the color in an otherwise black and white canvas. John F. Kennedy said that you remember societies for their art and their culture."

Councilmember Evans said that the groundswell of public support was very persuasive. "As a politician with an iPhone, you take notice when all of a sudden you start getting 100, 300, 500 emails about a topic," he said. "It absolutely made a difference. It was very effective. The more messages you can send the better." He also takes special pride in knowing this new tax will have a significant effect on smaller local theaters.

Roy A. Gross, Chair of Equity's Washington, D.C./Baltimore Liaison Committee, thinks that the high number of arts funders and grants in the District of Columbia have led to its ability to thrive and create a continually growing number of union-hiring theatrical opportunities.

"We think the District of Columbia is a model for other cities that want to both support the arts and create new jobs," he said. "Having this dedicated funding stream will enable theatres to apply for multi-year matching grants which will further boost arts funding and benefit the arts and those who make their living on the stage and behind it and for all those who work at bars, restaurants, parking garages and other businesses near theatres."

#EQUITYWORKS

THEATRE NEWS & NOTES

Hillsboro, OR – **Bag & Baggage Productions** has been signed to a Special Appearance contract.

Honolulu, HI – **Kimeejay, Inc.** has been signed to a Guest Artist contract.

Irvine, CA – **New Swan Shakespeare** will operate under Phase 1 on an SPT-4 contract.

Kamuela, HI – **Kahilu Theatre Foundation** has returned on a Guest Artist contract.

Lakewood, CO – **Benchmark Theatre** has been signed to a Special Appearance contract.

Logan, UT – **Lytic Repertory Company** has transitioned from Guest Artist to an LOA-LORT with a seasonal guarantee of four Actor and one Stage Manager contracts.

Los Angeles, CA – **East West Players** has signed an LOA/LORT contract.

Los Angeles, CA – **Shakespeare Center of Los Angeles** has signed an LOA/LORT contract.

Milwaukee, WI – **Milwaukee Chamber Theatre** has increased their salaries by 5% for their 2018-19 season on an SPT-8 contract.

Minneapolis, MN – **Frank Theatre** is on an SPT-1 contract and will begin their 2018-19 season in the fall with salary increases ranging from 4 to 10%.

Ojai, CA – **Ojai Performing Arts Theater** will operate under SPT-1 and -3 contracts with six new productions.

Ogden, UT – **Good Company Theatre** has been signed to a Special Appearance contract.

Philadelphia, PA – **Quintessence Theatre Company** has moved from a Special Appearance Agreement to an SPT-4 contract.

Phoenix, AZ – **Now and Then Creative Company** has been signed to a Special Appearance contract.

Redlands, CA – **LifeHouse Theater** has been signed to a Special Appearance contract.

Rolla, MO – **Ozark Actors Theatre** has signed a new SPT-2 agreement that utilizes an SPT-5 contract during their summer season and will cover additional fall and winter programming. In its first year, this will add seven additional work weeks for members.

San Diego, CA – **Diversions Theatre** in San Diego will operate under Phase 1 of the SPT-1 contract.

San Diego, CA – **Lamb's Players Theatre** has moved from Phase 2 to Phase 3 under SPT-8 & 10 contracts with an increased commitment from 7 to 28 actors.

Sarasota, FL – **WestCoast Black Theatre Troupe** is now on a full SPT contract.

Shelton, CT – **Valley Shakespeare Festival** finished their transitional SPT and is now a full SPT Theatre. They operate as an SPT-2, offering 19 work weeks and 6 contracts.

St. Louis, MO – **Insight Theatre** has increased salaries to meet a SPT-1 minimum. This is an 8% increase for the actor salary and a 15% increase for the Stage Manager and Assistant Stage Manager salary.

Stanford, CA – **Stanford Repertory Theater** has been signed to a Guest Artist contract.

Stonington, VT – **Opera House Arts** has moved from producing on an SPT-4 to an SPT-5 contract, with two additional contracts. Repertory Theater has been signed to a Guest Artist contract.

Sturgeon Bay, WI – **Third Avenue Playhouse**, which uses an SPT-4 contract for their summer season and an SPT-1 contract for their winter season, increased salaries by 8% for both riders in the upcoming year.



Michael Mendez in a WestCoast Black Theatre Troupe production of *In the Heights*.

Vancouver, WA – **Lighthouse Arts** has been signed to a Guest Artist contract.

Wichita Falls, TX – **4 Kidz Sake of Wichita Falls** has been signed to a Guest Artist contract.



Photo by Paul Ruffolo

Brian J. Gill and Kay Allmand in Milwaukee Chamber Theatre's production of *Sherlock Holmes and the Case of the Jersey Lily*.

TRACKING WHAT YOU'RE OWED

Central staff recovered \$411.67 for a member who wasn't paid the dance captain increment at a Missouri theatre.

Central staff discovered that a LORT theatre used unapproved video footage for a commercial and was able to recover payment for 25 members, totaling \$16,175.

Central staff was able to recover \$4,309.06 in salary and overtime for one member at a BAT theatre.

Central staff was able to recover a week's salary plus health and pension for a member who walked on for one performance at a theatre that failed to hire an understudy.

Central staff recovered \$641.00 for a Stage manager who had not been paid for pre-production.

Central staff recovered a total of \$1793.28 for eight actors at Southport Theatre LLC for a media appearance.

Eastern staff was able to recover \$78.83 for an Assistant Stage Manager who had not received payment for pre-production.

Eastern staff determined that several participants of a showcase production of a new work did not receive bona fide offers for an LOA-COST agreement of the same work which was recently produced. They were able to recover \$7,680.00 in pension and dues to two actors and one Stage Manager who did not receive a bona fide offer.

Eastern staff determined that an actor was owed a buyout for a recent project presented on the LOA-COST agreement. The actor in question had participated in the 99-Seat Agreement a few years ago and was offered an understudy role instead of their original track. Staff was able to recover \$2,031.00 in pension and dues for the member

Eastern staff was able to recover \$60.00 in overtime to the cast and Stage Manager of an LOA theatre that restaged a work following press opening.

Eastern staff was able to recover \$23,395 in salary, \$1,871.60 in pension and \$7,875 in health payments for nine actors on a showcase producer that extended beyond the showcase code.

Eastern staff discovered that insufficient notice of a canceled extra performance was given, resulting in additional compensation of \$1,286.89 for twelve actors.

Eastern staff was contacted by members regarding an unexpected payment for theatre parking. They then required the theatre to reimburse the members for this miscommunication, which resulted in payments to members totaling \$1,750.00.

Eastern staff recovered unpaid vacation payments in the amount of \$2,586.00, plus pension.

Upon clearance, Eastern staff realized that the dance captain on an LOA-LORT show was being paid the previous years' rate. They required that the member be paid the difference, resulting in over \$200.00 to the member, plus pension.

Eastern staff discovered that a performer working under a contract which includes severance pay when employment is terminated after a certain number of years of continuous employment did not receive the appropriate severance pay. They made a claim on behalf of the performer, and the producer agreed with Equity and paid the performer two weeks' severance totaling \$2,172.00.

Eastern staff discovered that a group of dancers provided their own pointe shoes for rehearsals and one-time performance. During dress rehearsal, it was discovered that the stage surface was a little slick for the pointe shoes, so the producer rubberized the shoes, ruining them for future use. Staff was able to get the producer to replace the performers' personal shoes with new shoes.

During collective bargaining, Eastern staff discovered underreported pensionable salaries from an employer, resulting in a back payment to the Equity League Pension Trust Fund of \$553,060.35. Interest payments will be paid on this amount as well.

Eastern staff recovered \$1,531.00 in unpaid vacation payments from two theatres who neglected to pay during the run.

Eastern staff recovered \$1,775.00 in unpaid pre-production wages for two Stage Managers in a season.

Eastern staff found that actors on a LORT transfer were not paid for vacation accrued on a hiatus period between the two theaters, resulting in vacation pay of \$1,650 for three actors.

Eastern staff found that a production incurred sliding scale payments for five weeks, resulting in an additional \$8,631.61 in salaries and pension credit for nine members.

Western staff reported on the collection of retroactive payments for five actors who worked on a cast recording, resulting in a total of \$9,870.00

Western staff reported that over \$450,000 in member earning have been reported under the 99-Seat Theatre Agreement.

THEATRE

SPOTLIGHT

HANGAR THEATRE

Located within the 100-mile radius that defines the Buffalo/Rochester Liaison Area is the Center for the Arts at Ithaca – better known as the Hangar Theatre. How did it get that name? Once upon a time, it was a municipal airport hangar. In other words, the location that was once best known for having people come and go now gives them a reason to stay.

“The Hangar Theatre is committed to providing exceptional theatre experiences of high professional quality to enrich, enlighten, educate and entertain the diverse audiences in the Finger Lakes region,” said Mary Beth Bunge, the Hangar Theatre’s Managing Director. “Strong education and training programs are central parts of our commitment to the local and national artistic communities. We focus on experiences for artists and audiences at the local and national level.”

Part of the Hangar’s charm is its serene location, according to Bunge. “Its lakeside location and the fun, funky repurposing of a decrepit airplane hangar into a beautiful, inspiring theatrical performance space reflect how theatre can spring from ‘nothing’ into something essential, meaningful and beautiful,” she said.

Artistic Director Michael Barakiva also feels that the intergenerational sense of community fostered at the Hangar is one of its most defining features. “There is a unique synergy between the institution of the Hangar Theatre and its surrounding Ithaca/Finger Lakes community that makes for exciting, progressive, community-based possibilities,” he said. “More and more, I see how the Hangar is at its best when its artistic and educational mission intertwines. This happens in the some obvious ways, like our Fall, Winter and Spring Break-A-Leg programs, in which students develop original pieces over the course of a week.

“But even on our nationally-acclaimed main stage, I see it happen,” she said. “We just opened our spectacular production of *Chicago*, and having artists in all points of their career – from seasoned Broadway vets to members of our newly-minted Young Professional Company to Lab Company members – creates opportunities for cross-pollination that enriches everybody involved.”

Equity performer Kate Loprest, who worked in this summer’s production of *Chicago*, has high praise for the young talent groomed under the Hangar staff’s tutelage. “The Hangar has two summer training programs and some of the students were in our production as well as backstage,” she said. “I had the pleasure of meeting and working with so many wonderful young actors and apprentices. It’s my honor to be their first glimpse into what life could look like as a professional working actor.”

You don’t have to look far. Ask anyone who has worked at the Hangar about what they love most, and the answer remains the same: the people.

“There really is a strong feeling of creative support up here in the Ithaca community and certainly from the Hangar and Michael Barakiva,” said Equity member and performer Austin Jones, who has recently joined the Department of Theatre Arts faculty at Ithaca College. “The people are the strongest asset to working at the Hangar. The creative teams and directors are all at the top of their game and your fellow actors range from seasoned veterans to emerging recent grads and young professionals entrenched in their training. I’ve always

Continued on page 22

Amelia Pedlow and Ian Lowe star in the Hangar Theatre production of *Fortune*.

Photo by Rachel Philipson



BUFFALO/ROCHESTER

Thanks to Buffalo/Rochester Liaison Committee Chair Don Gervasi for his contributions!

Buffalo and Rochester have always been working-class towns, leaders in manufacturing at a time when waterways transported everything. Now, they are becoming known as white-collar towns with the philanthropy to support thriving arts communities including theatre and film.

WORKING IN THE REGION

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

While Rochester and Syracuse still have their LORT theatres, Buffalo boasts over 20 smaller theatre companies, each with their own artistic niche, allowing our members to create diverse and compelling work. The Buffalo/Rochester Special Appearance Agreement has made a huge difference attracting demand for our members, and a few of our professional companies regularly employ our members in almost every show throughout their season.

WHAT IT'S LIKE WORKING IN THE REGION

The Buffalo/Rochester area now stretches to Syracuse, which includes Ithaca, opening up more LORT and SPT opportunities to local members, well worth the drive up and down the NYS Thruway to be seen by respected directors. There are also more film opportunities popping up in the region.

WHERE YOU MIGHT BE WORKING

Buffalo: Kavinoky Theatre, Irish Classical Theatre Co., Shakespeare in Delaware Park, Chautauqua Theatre Co.; Rochester: Geva Theatre, Merry-Go-Round Playhouse; Syracuse Stage; Ithaca: Hangar Theatre, Kitchen Theatre.

Owais Ahmed and Mari Vial-Golden appeared together in Geva Theatre Center's world premiere production of *Heartland*. Table of Contents image: David Lamb in *The Father* at Kavinoky Theatre. Photo by Gene Witkowski.



Photo by Goat Factory Entertainment Media

AROUND TOWN

BEST PLACES TO EAT FOR FOODIES

Buffalo's own Anchor Bar may be the birthplace of the Buffalo Wing, but Duff's is the local favorite. Go to Schwabl's for something we call beef-on-weck: slow roasted beef on kimmelweck (a hard, salted Kaiser roll). Ted's has the best charbroiled hot dog around. Or is it Louie's? Dinosaur Bar-B-Que is the place to be in Syracuse (and find a salt potato somewhere), and they have restaurants in Buffalo and Rochester too. Oh, if you love home fries, French fries, macaroni salad, baked beans, spicy mustard, chopped onions, meat of any kind and hot sauce, then don't leave Rochester without trying them all at once in a "Garbage Plate" at Nick's Tahou Hots. Trust me.

WHAT YOU WON'T FIND ANYWHERE ELSE

Opened in 1926 as a silent movie house and saved from the wrecking ball in the 1970s, Shea's PAC (originally Shea's Buffalo) is the heart of Buffalo's Theater District, hosting comedy, concerts and Broadway tours. The Mark Twain Room at Buffalo & Erie County Public Library's features the original handwritten manuscript of "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn", as well as an extensive collection of unique editions and Twain memorabilia. Traditionally set for third shift workers, Buffalo bars are open until 4am, convenient for winding down after a double show day. To the north, Niagara Falls is a sight to behold, but to experience the true power below the Falls ride the Maid of the Mist, walk the Cave of the Winds, or fight the currents of Devil's Hole Rapids on a jet boat! With such close proximity to Canada, enjoy a show at the Shaw Festival after touring a winery or seven. Traveling east, we have Genesee Country Village, a nineteenth century living history museum; and Corning Museum of Glass, dedicated to the art, history and science of glass.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

After strutting your stuff at the Theatre Alliance of Buffalo's annual auditions for over twenty theatre companies, experience CURTAIN UP in September, the official kickoff to Buffalo's theatre season, complete with black tie gala and street party. In June you can network at the Arties, Buffalo's annual theatre awards.

BEST WAYS TO EXPERIENCE LOCAL COLOR

Get outside! There are so many festivals that happen on what seems like a weekly basis like Buffalo Wing Festival, Allentown Arts Festival, Rochester International Jazz Festival, Brantling Bluegrass Festival or NY State Blues Festival and NY State Fair in Syracuse. There are also many trails to bike, hike, and walk in the warmer months, but there are also plenty of places to ski, tube or toboggan when the snow begins to fly.



EQUITY SHOWS ITS **PRIDE**

Equity members came out in full force during Pride month as a show of both support and solidarity.

Above, members marched on July 15 in the 2018 Disability Pride NYC Parade, where the theme was creativity.

To the right, Equity members stood together in the Portland, Oregon Pride Parade. Sponsored by Pride Northwest, Inc., the Pride festival is the single largest platform to draw attention to the region's LGBTQ community.

Below, Equity members marched at the New York Pride Parade, commemorating the 49th anniversary of the Stonewall riots. "Defiantly Different" was the theme of the parade, which attracted nearly 2 million onlookers and saw tens of thousand marchers participate.



PANEL OFFERS ADVICE TO STAGE MANAGERS ON HOW TO **RESPOND TO HARASSMENT**

In the current #MeToo era, it is important for any employee to understand what their rights and responsibilities are. A panel entitled "Harassment in the Work Place & Stage Management," held at the Broadway Stage Management Symposium in New York this May, clarified some of the options that those who may be experiencing some form of harassment can pursue.

Stage manager Matt Stern moderated the panel, which included Mary McColl, Executive Director of Actors' Equity, Barbara Davis, Chief Operating Officer of The Actors Fund and Bernita Robinson, a Stage Manager and Equity Councillor.

McColl emphasized that all Equity employers have now been tasked with providing a copy of their policy or working to create one in the cases where none currently exist. "Every employee has the right to that," she said. "When you take a job, ask for that policy. If they won't give it to you, call us."

She also reminded all stage managers in attendance about what a crucial resource The Actors Fund – what Stern dubbed "the HR department for an entire industry" – can be for them when dealing with matters of sexual harassment.

"This is an industry where people feel that their reputations are how people get work, so a lot of people fear calling out something that shouldn't be happening," Davis said. "Everyone on our staff understands the workplace of theatre, and that it's an unusual workplace. They understand how it translates to what it's like to work on a show where there's nudity, where there's touching going on. There is confidential, individual counseling about these issues."

LEARN MORE

For more information on the training program developed in tandem between Actors' Equity and the Actors Fund, go to:

ActorsEquity.org/Harassment

Both McColl and Robinson also averred that the stage manager is just as much an employee of a production company as a performer is.

"You can never be afraid of going to work," Robinson said. "Call the union if necessary. Do not be afraid to do the right thing, to step forward when you are supposed to step forward. Otherwise that behavior will continue. That harassment will continue."

"We've been going to theaters and doing safety checks and site visits," McColl said. "If you call us, we might be able to reassure you that we are already dealing with that employer. Lots of times, employers have already taken action on things being brought to their attention before we've gotten involved. The theatres are doing investigations like they should do, taking action and informing us. That's because people had the personal agency to say something about what they saw happening to others."

GEORGE M! CELEBRATES **FIFTY IN STYLE**

Earlier this year, members of the cast and creative team of *George M!* convened at Sardi's to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the show, which honors the life of performer George M. Cohan. Those in attendance included, from left to right: Kathie Savage-Rinaldi, James Dybas, Bill Gerber,

Bernadette Peters, Mack Schlefer (pianist), Joel Grey, Kathy Conry, Patti Mariano, Jamie Donnelly, Harvey Evans, Sheila Sullivan, Ed Goldsmid, Ron Young, Karin Baker-Kayne, Ray Becker, Loni Ackerman, Jill O'Hara and Bill Becker. Seated are co-producer David Black and co-writer Francine Pascal.



Photo courtesy of James Dybas

EQUITY BESTOWS ANNUAL AWARDS

Actors' Equity Association and the Equity Foundation have distributed several awards in recent months. While the recipients range in terms of age and experience, they are bound by one important shared trait: continued excellence.

Recipients of the Clarence Derwent Award (seen to the right with Foundation President Judy Rice), which honors most promising new female and male on the New York stage, were Sean Carvajal for *Jesus Hopped the A Train* and Ashley Park for her work in *KPOP* and *Mean Girls*. The Richard Seff Awards, which are presented to veteran female and male actors for their work in supporting roles, were given to Margaret Colin for *Carousel* and Michael Potts for *The Iceman Cometh* (they are seen bottom left).

Darlesia Cearcy, Rodrick Covington, Alysha Deslorieux, Tyler Hardwick, Cassandra James, David Jennings, Grasan Kingsberry, Loren Lott, T. Oliver Reid and Aurelia Williams each received the 2018 ACCA Award for Outstanding Broadway Chorus for their work in *Once on This Island*. The Alan Eisenberg Award Scholarship, which consists of a \$5,000 award, went to two University of Michigan Musical Theatre graduates: Jessica Gómes-Ng and Noah Kieserman (bottom right).





HOW I GOT MY EQUITY CARD

JAMES VINCENT MEREDITH MEMBER SINCE 2000

I'd bounced around at non-union theaters in Chicago for a few years. I was never really in a rush to do EMC or join Equity because Chicago's non-Equity scene was and is very strong, with amazing non-Equity theaters and actors. But I was running into a brick wall every time I auditioned at the big Equity Houses – non-union jobs at those places were hard to come by.

In 2000, I auditioned at the Goodman for the great Chuck Smith. Somehow, I got cast, in *A Raisin in the Sun*, as Joseph Asagai. The non-union money wasn't great, but what did I care? I was at the Goodman! And I'd worked with one of the actors before. Harry J. Lennix, playing Walter Lee Younger, had worked with me in the same play sixteen years prior, at Northwestern University, where I had played Travis and he had played Bobo!

Just before rehearsals started, I was asked if I'd be willing sign an Equity contract and join the union. I didn't have the cash to join, but they offered to deduct a nominal amount from each check until I met my initiation fee. I still hemmed and hawed

– until they told me my salary, which amounted to over three times what my non-union check would be. I talked to a local actor who I respected and admired greatly, the late Freeman Coffey.

He said, "that iron ain't always gonna be hot, so strike!" I did, and I haven't looked back.



HOPE VILLANUEVA MEMBER SINCE 2014

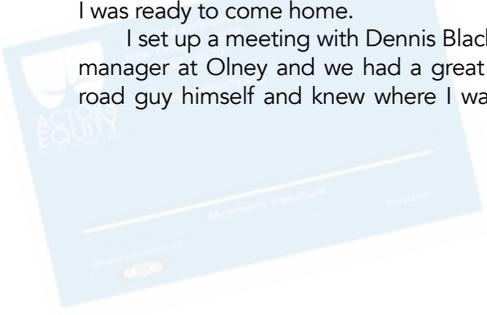
I got my Equity card from Olney Theatre Center in Maryland, just outside Washington, D.C., after almost giving up on ever making the shift.

I started looking into joining the union back in 2009. At the time, I was the Resident PSM at Honolulu Theatre for Youth, a great TYA house. However, Hawaii is pretty isolated, so it's not financially sensible for theaters there to be part of the union. I started researching my options. I'd come up as a non-Equity PSM and had lots of luck, but as I explored the union, I found that I didn't have the card to qualify me for those jobs, but also that I couldn't get the production assistant or assistant stage manager gigs to allow me to earn my EMC points either. After moving to D.C., I got lucky and booked some PSM slots on national tours... but still no card. After several years on the road, I was ready to come home.

I set up a meeting with Dennis Blackledge, the production manager at Olney and we had a great talk. He was a former road guy himself and knew where I was emotionally. He was

generous enough to trust me to PSM *Awake and Sing!* the next fall and give me my card outright.

Since then, I've been able to work regularly in the D.C. area and even do some projects in New York City. Maybe I'll even go back on the road at some point. The union has given me career stability and has been there on multiple occasions when I've needed backup. As I write this, I'm in tech for my third Equity production this year. May it all continue!



LEGACY ROBE: CONTINUING AN OLD TRADITION WITH A NEW NAME



Justin Prescott, center, with Kathy Valentine, Charlotte Caffey and Jane Wiedlin, of the Go-Go's.

Following a multi-step process that included a vote of Equity's National Council, and recommendations from Equity's Advisory Committee on Chorus Affairs (ACCA) and National Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Committee, Actor's Equity announced a new name for the tradition formerly known as the "Gypsy Robe."

Moving forward, the Robe and tradition will be referred to as the "Legacy Robe" – a name chosen by members in a survey.

This tradition occurs on opening night of every Broadway musical with a chorus. The Robe is given to the Chorus member who has worked the most Broadway Chorus contracts on opening night

by the previous recipient.

"The Legacy Robe reminds us why our tradition exists. It emphasizes the history of Chorus performers, their years of dedication and hard work and just how essential they are to every Broadway musical," said Executive Director Mary McColl. "The ceremony on opening night will go on like it has for years, and I look forward to celebrating another season's long serving Chorus performers with recognition of their professionalism as they receive the Legacy Robe."

The first presentation of the Legacy Robe took place on July 26, when the musical *Head Over Heels* opened at the Hudson Theatre.

THEATRE SPOTLIGHT – Continued from page 16

believed that the people are why we get into this business and at the Hangar that has been exceptionally true."

And this sentiment is shared among those who work backstage as well. Kristin Loughry is one of the young professionals who worked at the Hangar in the past. She returned this summer as an Equity Production Stage Manager after working there as a non-union Assistant Stage Manager earlier this decade. "I started working here shortly after graduating from college, so I spent some pretty formative years here," she said. "There are many new faces since the last time I was here, but in some ways it feels like I never left. In addition to the main stage shows, we produce shows for children, experimental theatre and late-night cabarets. The bustle of

such a robust season keeps everyone on their toes and pumps up the energy all summer long. I also absolutely love Ithaca and am thrilled to share it with new people and long-term residents alike."

That tradition of camaraderie and education is one that Jones sees continuing.

"One of the most gratifying opportunities of working at the Hangar has been to act with some of my recent students," he said. "In a whole new way it's a wonderful reminder we are all just actors sharing in the roller coaster ride together. It makes it real and important to continue a legacy of love."

With that kind of love, one can go very far – certainly farther than any destination that can be reached from an airport.

#EQUITYWORKS

NEW NEAT CONTRACT BOOSTS SALARIES AND WORK OPPORTUNITIES

Equity's most recent New England Area Theatres (NEAT) agreement for theatres in the Boston area will last through September 4, 2022. Key changes to the new contract include a 28 percent increase to minimum salaries; increases to the number of required Principal contracts, Chorus contracts and Stage Manager contracts.

Travel reimbursement will be a requirement for actors who live between 50 and 75 miles from the theater. Furthermore, should nudity be required, the member must be put on a contract for the callback, thus not only receiving salary for the callback, but more importantly being covered by the producer's staff harassment policy as a clear employee.

"We told the producers how much jeopardy they faced if they didn't change

the current situation," Senior Business Representative Russell Lehrer said, "and they came back and really provided us with what we felt we needed."

But the results of the NEAT negotiation are not the only noteworthy aspect of this negotiation. Also of note is the role that members of Boston's liaison committee played in the negotiation process. Nearly a dozen members formed an action group and attended the negotiation, assisting the representatives and witnessing firsthand how negotiations work and what unions do for their members.

"We always have local membership involved in the preparing of the negotiation but here we were able to expand the room to include a really large portion of the membership," Lehrer said. "You felt the temperature change the moment the

producers walked in and saw these faces that they want to see in the audition rooms."

Equity organizer Stefanie Frey agreed: "When the producers looked across the table, they were not just saying 'yes' or 'no' to people in from New York, they were saying 'yes' or 'no' to the people it actually affects."

Citing this agreement as "the best we have ever reached," Boston Liaison Chair Michael G. Dell'Orto concurred that the presence of observers in the negotiation made a big difference.

"Isn't it amazing what we can do when we put the resources to work?" he said. "More money means more resources for us, and more ability to serve people in our region."

Producers in the Boston area were equally thrilled with both the process and results. "As someone who has been

negotiating this contract for so many years, I was thrilled to see so many Equity members in the room talking about how we could move forward together to create a stronger professional theatre community for Boston actors and stage managers," said Spiro Veloudos, President for the Producers Association of New England Area Theatres.

And while it's safe to say all parties walked away from this negotiation happy, it also reaffirmed a larger lesson about communication and solidarity.

"We don't have to be on the same page or agree," said Equity actress Rachel Policare. "The most important part is that we are all in the same room discussing these issues and we're trying to find solutions that are beneficial to everyone and make the theatre community in Boston stronger as a whole."

Members of the negotiating team gathered to celebrate the new NEAT agreement.



Photo courtesy of Brandon Lorenz

AUDITION DISCRIMINATION LEADS TO PAYOUT

BY DOUG STRASSLER

Recently, an Equity member auditioned for a production of the Joshua Harmon play *Bad Jews* and received a callback. Over the course of these auditions, which took the form of Skype interviews, the actor received positive feedback from members of the production staff.

"The actor has a traditionally ethnic last name but one that is not necessarily Jewish," said Equity senior business representative Russell Lehrer, "and, rather inappropriately, at the final callback, they asked him if he himself was Jewish."

In the moment, the Equity member answered honestly that he was not. He then began to hear from multiple sources attached to the production that he was not going to be considered for the role because he was not Jewish.

"They made inappropriate statements saying that he would have been the first choice for this role but for this fact, and he had evidence to support it," Lehrer said. "His religion or ethnic background had no bearing on whether he was capable of performing the role as directed. He gave a good performance in his audition, and he was told they wanted him for the role."

Equity advised the member about

potential courses of action, including state and federal court options. Finally, Lehrer and business representative Kathleen Munroe presented their evidence to the theatre, who "did not contradict any of it – they realized they were fully in the wrong," according to Lehrer.

Significantly, Equity was able to take the maximum penalty for this kind of contractual violation, even though the member was never on contract. The member received \$1,060, as well as pension payments, and the representatives were able to continue a conversation with the theater about appropriate casting procedures.

"Because this discrimination occurred as part of the Equity audition process, we were able to protect his rights, and did so to his satisfaction, to clarify for the theatre why and how their approach to casting this role was unacceptable, and what we expect for our members moving forward on future productions," Lehrer said.

This payout is certainly a win for the member, but this incident is a reminder about hiring biases that persist. Do the gatekeepers within the industry make assumptions about a performer's ethnicity or religious background just

from seeing their name? "There are definitely people who are experiencing this type of discrimination," Equity Principal Councillor Allyson Tucker said. "In this climate there are all kinds of biases that everyone is facing, there are issues where people who self-submit and aren't seen are curious if it is because they have a name that others perceive isn't mainstream.

"A last name may sound one way or another, but everyone needs to be more aware so that they are not making decisions based on their perception of ethnicity," she said. "No one should be typed out because of their name, only because of their talent."

Tucker feels that a dialogue needs to continue so that this form of discrimination doesn't occur at the very beginning of the casting and audition process. "I feel that the way to build bridges is not to judge someone by their name but to truly see the artist who possesses that name and to see their talents and to continue to educate each other about various cultures," she said. "This dialogue has led to some of the best conversations I've ever had."

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Equity News,

We in the Washington, D.C., theatre community are sad to report the sudden and unexpected passing of beloved stage manager Scott Hammar. Scott passed away on June 3 of natural causes.

For the last 25 years, Scott was the Production Stage Manager of *Shear Madness* at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

A native of Garden City, Michigan, Scott received a BFA in Directing from Central Michigan University and earned an MFA in Design from Trinity University. His stage management work took him to China, England, India, Japan, Mexico and Nepal. In Oman, Scott stage managed Debbie Allen's *Oman O Man*. He also stage managed at the Dallas Theater Center and toured with the National Theater of the Deaf.

Scott at last found his home in Washington, where in addition to his quarter-century with *Shear Madness*, he brought his stage management skills and designer's eye to the Shakespeare Theater Company, Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, Factory 449 and Taffety Punk.

For those of us fortunate to count him as both colleague and friend, Scott was a kind and generous man. Other than perhaps his cats, nothing delighted Scott more than taking an active role in the lives of the children of many cast members as baby sitter, "uncle," godfather and mentor, opening his home and his heart and giving his time and indeed his unsparing love.

Scott deeply touched many, many lives over the years, always making us laugh in rehearsal (the perfect Mrs.

Shubert), nursing us when we were sick, encouraging us to shine, keeping us in line when we strayed and always letting us know we were cared for and loved.

Scott is survived by his sisters Laurie Ziolkowski and Pamela Hammar-Safah, brother, Mark Hammar and their children.

We miss you terribly, Scott. Rest in peace.

—Bob Lohrmann

Dear Equity News,

Virginia Robinson died peacefully in her home in New York City on Friday, June 8. She was 99.

Ms. Robinson was a New York City resident for over sixty years and a working actress from the age of nineteen until the age of ninety-eight. She was born Virginia Routh on March 27, 1919, in

Continued on page 27

LORT AGREEMENT BUMPS ASM OPPORTUNITIES

Among the changes made regarding rules for employment in League of Resident Theatres (LORT) during the most recent contract negotiations were provisions for additional Assistant Stage Managers. Now that the agreement is in its second year, the number of contracted ASM positions has begun to increase for multiple tiers at those theatres.

"As of February 12, 2018, all LORT main stage theatres are required to have one additional ASM where one is not currently mandated," Senior Business Representative Beverly Sloan said. "A theatres were already required to have an ASM, but the majority of LORT theatres have more than one stage," Sloan said. "So, for example, an A main stage theatre will now add an ASM to one of the shows on its B, C or D stages. And it can be on any of those stages, a D stage even if there is also a B or a C stage."

These gains are part of a broader determined push to increase the number of opportunities for all stage managers in the Union. The recent New England Area Theatres agreement also included additional ASM guarantees. According to the most recent Theatrical Season Report, Stage Manager opportunities have steadily increased and are the highest they have been in over a decade, with 49,468 work weeks.

LORT contracts are broken down into lettered categories: A+, A, B+, B, C and D. The A+ theatres are the Tony-eligible not-for-profits, and theatres in the A category are a fixed group. The LORT agreement distinguishes the remaining categories, B+ through D, based on a multi-year rolling average of box office receipts: B+ companies earn a weekly average of \$176,000 or more weekly, while D theatres make \$62,999 or less per week.

In 2020, which is the fourth year of the five-year agreement, A, B+ and B theatres will add a second additional ASM for a total of two additional ASMs. Starting in February 2021, the fifth year of the contract, A, B+ and B theatres will add a third additional ASM for a total of three. Also in 2021, C stages will add a second additional ASM for a total of two. (A+ stages added a second ASM for their musicals, effective

the first year of the agreement.)

"Our challenge is how do we track these additional ASM contracts?" said Sloan, who acknowledged that Equity representatives are already reviewing the number of ASMs hired last year (2016-17) as a baseline to track the increased number of contracts. She also said that the Seasonal Listing form, which all Equity producers are able to access to provide information about upcoming seasons or productions, has been amended to alert LORT theatre managers to note which specific stage will be utilizing the additional ASM. "While Equity staff is being proactive about tracking these additional ASM contracts, we will also need the cooperation of managers at these theatres."

In addition to the changes in the numbers of ASMs to be engaged in LORT Theatres, the ratio that determines the number of non-professionals that are permitted at LORT theatres also will be adjusted starting in February 2019, Year 3 of the contract. While most A theatres are typically all Equity, all B+, B, C and D theatres have a minimum number of Equity contracts they are required to have before they can hire the first non-professional.

For example, under the current ratio, a B+ theatre must hire thirteen Equity contracts before it can hire the first non-professional. In 2019, the number of Equity contracts required before the first non-professional can be hired to work will increase at all category levels. On the B+ stage, the number of standard contracts increases from 13 to 14 contracts.

B category stages, which currently must hire 11 Equity contracts under the standard ratio before hiring a non-professional, will be required to hire 12 contracts starting next year. C category stages currently must hire nine Equity contracts, and next year must have ten. D stages that currently must have seven contracts before engaging the first non-pro under the ratio will have to have eight contracts next year. In 2021, the number of required contracts will increase by one more in categories B+ and B.

The agreement also created additional contracts for chorus performers in musicals on C and D stages.



SAVE THE DATE!

UPCOMING MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

Fall Regional Membership Meetings
Monday, October 15, 2018
2pm ET / 12pm CT / 12pm PT

Winter Regional Membership Meetings
Monday, January 28, 2019
2pm ET / 12pm CT / 12pm 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. 213, two weeks prior to the meeting.

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

be submitted in writing to Equity at least two weeks in advance of the meeting. All motions that will be discussed during the Membership Discussion Period will be posted in the Member Portal one business day prior to the Membership Meeting.

Resolutions for the Fall Regional Membership Meetings must be submitted to Allison Bodwell, National Director of Governance (abodwell@actorsequity.org) by October 1, 2018. Resolutions for the Winter Regional Membership Meetings must be submitted by January 14, 2019.

EQUITY MAKES DEAL WITH CRUISE LINE



Actors' Equity reached an agreement with Norwegian Cruise Line to cover members on the cruise line's new ship, the Norwegian Bliss. From May 3 to May 5 while in New York, the Norwegian Bliss was under Equity Agreement, marking the first time that a full Equity cast has been used on a cruise ship.

The agreement added \$575 per day for actors and \$750 per day for stage managers to the cast's NCL salaries. Members earned a one-week credit towards their health care and pension benefits. (Equity

members who work at least eleven weeks on contract are eligible for six months of health care coverage).

"I'm thrilled that Norwegian Cruise Lines hired members of Actors' Equity while the Bliss was docked in New York," said Mary McColl, Executive Director of Actors' Equity. "This is a first step, but one that underscores the big changes we are making to go out and organize new work for Equity members, wherever live theatre might be happening."

EQUITY'S BONDING POLICY & HOW IT 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 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. 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.

Here's how it works: The bond is simply determined by how many contracts are needed for the agreement. For productions that are individually produced by one or more producers ("single unit" productions), it's especially important that the union receives your contract in a timely manner.

It's also important that we have your contract in timely manner for seasonal theaters. For seasonal theater, such as Stock, LORT and Letters 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 a seasonal theater does default, you may only receive the guaranteed portion of your contract from the available bond. But know that Equity will do everything it can to legally pursue a defaulting employer in an effort to secure the full obligations due to members.

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

The prospect of this additional dagger in the union's side set off a vigorous campaign on behalf of Equity to educate voters and encourage them to vote no on Prop A. The Kansas City Liaison Committee became actively engaged across many active fronts, from canvassing to get signatures on the ballot against Prop A to conducting meetings both over the phone and in person with the Kansas City AFL-CIO.

Kansas City members took part in five separate phone banking events, and they were not alone; the cast of *Gypsy* at St. Louis' Muny Theatre also participated in a phone banking event to rally Missouri residents to vote against Prop A. Cast member and 2nd Vice President Jennifer Cody recalls being moved by watching her cast mates – who hardly had any time off – donate their time. "They listened and understood that this was a larger cause and ultimately, the proposition went against their ideals," she said. "Listening to new members gain confidence with every phone call and seeing them stand up for the union and believe that they can make a difference was amazing."

Kansas City Liaison Chair Sarah LaBarr also feels that the

experience of rallying against Prop A will pay dividends moving forward both in terms of empowering unions and increasing solidarity. "We wanted to not only defeat Prop A, but defeat it by such a huge margin to send a message that Missourians need unions and union supporters," she said. "It's my hope that Equity members in Kansas City now feel more a part of the union, and see themselves as part of something bigger than the individual contracts they work," she said. "Moving forward, the greater KC AFL-CIO has been screening candidates for the November elections, and will endorse union-friendly candidates."

Unions also provide a structure for accomplishing tasks beyond the members themselves, according to Almeida. Witness Operation Agua, the campaign established by the American Federation of Teachers to aid Puerto Ricans this past year in the wake of Hurricane Maria. They provided small water purification systems to homes, schools, churches and community centers in affected areas.

"These are people who saw the need and answered the call," Almeida said. "The cause

isn't about serving only union members but serving a need that goes beyond the core message of the union."

Closer to home, of course, is Broadway Cares / Equity Fights AIDS, which has raised funding and awareness for AIDS and HIV-related issues for over three decades.

Frey points out that activism can take many forms. "One of the interesting parts of my job as an Organizer is inspiring union activism in those who may have never been involved before," she said. "Many think, 'Committees aren't for me so there's no place for me to be involved,' and that couldn't be more false. Okay, committees aren't for you, I get that. But can you join us for a Labor Day parade or a union rally? Can you be a body of support at a hearing on arts funding? Solidarity takes many forms, but at the end of the day showing up and being a part of a collective action is what it's all about."

In keeping with the aforementioned strength-in-numbers theme, Almeida's colleague Katie Barrows, Communications Manager at Department for Professional Employees, stressed the importance of reaching out to

members of other unions as well.

"Make alliances with other unions, even internationally, before you need their help," she said. "Today is the Janus decision, but no bad idea stays in one place. The next rule could affect people in the theatre industry and onstage, a good step is to make friends so when the next attack on working people happens, you are all banded together." Perhaps because they are so clear, the challenges ahead can dominate our thinking. Even now, with solidarity, we can achieve important success. Just like workers achieved a win in Missouri and repealed right-to-work for less, Equity members banded together to achieve more dedicated arts funding in Washington, D.C. this year (See "A Boon For the Arts," Page 13).

There is plenty of hope despite these many attacks. According to a recent Gallup poll, labor union approval is at a fifteen-year high. Hopefully this optimism will motivate union members to mobilize now that it matters most.

"An informed electorate is a powerful organism," Almeida said. "It may not be easy, but when unions raise their voice in the halls of Congress, change can happen."

LETTERS – Continued from page 24

Newark, New Jersey. She trained in London, and was acting and modeling professionally by the age of 19.

During World War II, Virginia was a member of the USO, entertaining troops in Africa and Italy. After the war she worked for the Dupont Radio Hour, and began a serious acting career. She performed in fifteen Broadway plays, working with such directors as Elia Kazan, Franco Zeffereilli, John Gielgud and George S. Kaufman. She was a standby for Vivien Leigh in *Duel of Angels*. She also worked Off-Broadway and in Regional Theatre. She appeared in

numerous films, including *Diary of a Mad Housewife*, and spent many years in daytime drama, where she had long-term roles on *Loving* and *Love of Life*. She is known to current audiences as the hilarious and strange Garol in *Broad City*. *Broad City* paid a tribute to her on their website two years ago. Until a stroke at 98, Virginia auditioned and worked frequently as an actor.

—Alexandra Neil

Dear Equity News,

He wasn't a close friend, and he wasn't family, but the loss of Gary Beach is heartbreaking for me. He was a very special gift

to my theatrical development, a treasure that will remain with me forever. My fledgling stage life was never the same following the moment I first saw him on a Broadway stage. I had just scored my first job as swing for the second national tour of *Annie*, which was scheduled to depart for Los Angeles the following day. I stood in the back of the Alvin Theater to catch a performance, and an already-brilliant cast paled next to the Rooster Hannigan who took that stage. When he danced through "Easy Street," I could have sworn that lightning bolts exploded from his fingertips!!!

The memory of that energy inspired my work on the tour, and when I was considered to replace the Rooster in that company, I considered it an honor not to be given the role, as the great Gary Beach had consented to return to it with us. I was now his understudy, and spent the final six months learning from the best.

Gary Beach's inspiration was, and always will be, present every time I am blessed to take the stage, because his memory will show me how to make any role better. Rest, Gary. Your legacy will surely go on.

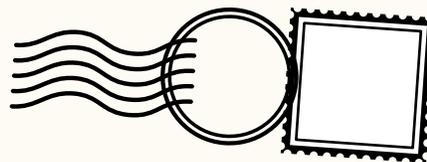
—Eric Richardson

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PHILADELPHIA

On July 28, the Philadelphia Liaison Committee, along with their Equity Business Rep Gary Dimon, hosted the Philadelphia Equity Picnic and Expo. Members came and enjoyed a barbecue, Philly pretzels and more. After the food was served they sat for two “car-port breakout sessions” where local member David Nikisther and Vice Chair Corbin Abernathy ran a “How to Market Yourself” session followed by an open discussion led by Liaison Chair Christopher Sapienza and committee members Drucie McDaniel and Cathy Simpson on the progress and workings of the local theatre market. “I couldn’t have been happier with the turnout of what is the beginning of more education of our membership,” Sapienza said.



CINCINNATI

Professional Actors of Cincinnati, a group of working Equity actors in Cincinnati, are delighted to be partnering with our local Equity Liaison Committee to create monthly two-hour workshops which are free for our members and EMC candidates. Some workshops were even opened up to include the larger theatre community.

Topics included meet-and-greets with local artistic directors, Monologue Boot Camp, an introduction to the Alexander Technique, Bystander Training, and Making The Most of Social Media.

The workshops were held at our three Equity theatres, Ensemble Theatre, Cincinnati Shakespeare Company and Cincinnati Playhouse In The Park – we are very grateful for their generosity and support!

PHOENIX

The Phoenix/Tucson Liaison Committee welcomed Western Regional Director Gail Gabler, Business Representative Gwen Meno and Western Principal Councillor Barbara Callander to the Arizona Equity General Meeting, held June 6 at Phoenix Theatre. Arizona's newest Equity member, Johanna Carlisle-Zepeda, attended her first Equity meeting, and long-time Equity member Ted Raymond was presented with a copy of *Performance of the Century* in recognition of his contributions as a Liaison Committee Member and a Trailblazer.

