

America's New Health Care System Impacts Equity Members, Families

By Rachel Laforest
Public Policy Director

The new health care reform legislation passed by Congress will have immediate and long term impacts on Equity members and their families.

It will create stronger accountability mechanisms for insurance companies, make it law for most Americans to carry health insurance, try to keep premium costs down and subsidize many who cannot afford coverage. It is far from a perfect solution but it represents a significant step towards affordable health insurance for the thousands of Equity members and all Americans who cannot presently afford it.

What kicks in this year?

- Insurance companies will no longer be able to put a lifetime cap on their costs. Annual caps will be severely reduced and totally eliminated in 2014.
- Insurance companies will not be allowed to deny coverage to children because of a preexisting condition. A special program will help adults with preexisting conditions find coverage, until 2014 when insurers will be required to cover *everyone*, regardless of preexisting conditions.
- Rescission - the technical term for canceling coverage on grounds that the insurance company was “misled,” will end. Rescission has been found to be practiced when plan holders find themselves sick with something they had not mentioned on their

insurance application. Most times it is an ailment that developed over time or was unknown to the plan holder and their doctor.

• Insurers with unusually high administrative costs have to offer rebates to their customers, and every insurance company will have to reveal how much it spends on overhead. Insurers will be required to spend between 80 to 85 cents of every dollar of their premium revenues on medical claims. The largest for-profit insurance companies currently spend about 74 cents out of every dollar on medical care.

• Those insurers who raise prices excessively could be barred from State insurance exchanges and premiums for older people cannot be more than three times the premium for young adults.

• Children will be considered “dependent” until the age of 26 and therefore eligible for coverage on a parent’s health plan. Within six months, all health plans, including employer-sponsored plans, must cover children of policyholders.

• Over three million Medicare recipients will get a one-time rebate of \$250 towards closing the Medicare D “donut hole” in their prescription drug coverage. Next year, 50% of the donut hole will be covered and the entire gap will be eliminated by 2020.

• Medicare will now provide a free visit to primary care physicians every year to plan out prevention services.

• Small businesses will get tax credits - up to 50% of premium costs - for offering health insurance to their workers.

• Employer plans that cover early retirees ages 55 to 64 will receive a subsidy.

• Beginning in 2011 a voluntary federal program will be established to provide long-term care insurance and cash benefits to people with severe disabilities. The amount of benefits will vary, depending on the degree of a person’s disability, but could not average less than \$50 a day.

Starting in 2014, the bill will provide:

Insurance Exchanges

These on-line insurance marketplaces will help individuals and employers to shop for insurance and compare prices and benefits.

Government Contracted Insurance

While there is no Public option, like a “Medicare for All”

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Equity Reviewing Options to Close Budget Gap

By Steven DiPaola
Assistant Executive
Director for Finance and
Administration

On March 16, 2010, the Equity Council approved the budget for the 2010-2011 fiscal year that began on April 1. This budget projects an operating deficit of \$1.9 million. Fortunately, Equity has a healthy reserve fund that can cover a deficit of this size, but many may be wondering, “How did we get here?”

For one thing, the budget for the 2009-2010 fiscal year carried

a projected deficit of its own, though a much smaller one of \$285,000. A number of budget restraints were put in place last year to keep that deficit low, and they worked very well. As a matter of fact, those restraints, combined with better than expected working dues income from the Production contract (a common trend during economic downturns because the prevalence of star-driven shows on Broadway drives earnings up), actually resulted in a small surplus of about \$300,000 by the time last fiscal year came to an end on March 31, 2009.

However, many of the budget restraints put in place last year were necessarily short-term because continuing them would result in a decreased ability to maintain member services and provide responsible stewardship of Equity’s resources. In addition, some unusual costs will occur during this fiscal year, such as those associated with the search for a new Executive Director. Finally, costs that are outside of Equity’s control continue to rise and the impact of the recession lingers in various ways.

Consequently, all of this has
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Los Angeles

Equity Joins Rally Protesting Anti-Union Activities at L.A. Film School

Equity, AFTRA, the Directors Guild, Writers Guild, AFM and several locals of IATSE rallied on March 24, 2010 outside the Sunset Boulevard offices of the Los

Angeles Film School protesting efforts by the school to block union organizing by 125 faculty members.

Union supporters alleged the school had fired one union

sympathizer and disciplined another since the California Federation of Teachers had begun organizing activities. The school also required faculty to attend anti-union meetings.

Eastern Regional Vice President Kate Shindle spoke at the rally, saying: “It is time for the employer to stop denying the Los Angeles Film School and Los Angeles Recording School faculty their democratic right to form a union... It is a violation of the National Labor Relations Act for an employer to intimidate, harass or interfere with employees who seek union representation. Those who want it are legally protected in their efforts, and must be able to do so without implicit or explicit threats about their job security

(continued on page 3)



Eastern Regional Vice President Kate Shindle speaks at the protest rally in Los Angeles.

All of Ohio Now in Central Region

For more than 15 years, the State of Ohio has been divided in half by Equity—the western portion of the state belonged to Equity’s Central Region and the eastern portion of the state was part of Equity’s Eastern Region. That’s all been changed now as Council has approved the transfer of administration of the eastern portion of Ohio from Equity’s Eastern Region to the Central Region. “All theatres and all members in Ohio will now have their contract and membership issues handled by the staff of the Central Regional Office in Chicago,” reports Central Regional Director Kathryn V. Lamkey.

“Responsibility for each theatre in the area is being transferred to the Central Region when they begin their next season. All Guest Artist and Special Appearance theatres are being transferred when they seek new contracts.”

All members in the Central Region, including the members in eastern Ohio, are eligible to participate in a separate election held each summer to elect the non-Councillor portion of the Central Regional Board (CRB). Under the National Representation Plan, the Central Region is entitled to only six Councillors (based on population). In order for the CRB to function, an additional 12

non-Councillor CRB members are elected by the membership living in the Central Region to serve on the Board. All members resident in the Central Region are entitled to seek election to these non-Councillor positions as well as to vote in the election.

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Letters to The Editor

Letters received from paid up members on subjects of concern to Equity members will be considered and published as soon as possible. The Editor reserves the right to limit letters to 150 words and to select one or two representative letters when many similar letters are received. Letters must be signed, but names will be withheld on request for those letters which may affect members' employment. Signatures will not be withheld on letters antagonistic or accusatory, either implied or expressed, against other members. Opinions expressed in Letters to the Editor are not necessarily those of Actors' Equity Association.



GOOD ADVICE

Dear Editor:

I have been a member of Actors' Equity since 1991. I write to try to protect fellow members from what I have endured. If you use your body for your livelihood, you need to read on.

I was hired for an industrial contract by ADM products in 1999. I had to promise to be available for two contracts that were one month apart. Both jobs would take place in Las Vegas. We were doing a 15-minute show about Philips Electronics products for the Comdex Convention when my accident occurred.

We were in a two-story set. The guy playing my son could not get downstairs fast enough to satisfy the director. While we were on break the director had them put in a trap door. They hired a union tech to open the door after I passed by. On November 17, 1999, the second day of the show, I walked off stage and fell through the trap door. I caught myself, but that did not prevent me from tearing my left hamstring, hurting my left hip and herniating a disc in my back.

I went into physical therapy immediately upon returning to New York City and remained there until July, 2000. From that date forward is when the real nightmare began. I really do not want to go into all the details, but

I will tell you that I had attorneys get in my face and tell me I was a washed up, hack actor looking for a way out of my career. I kept reminding myself that I had been offered the *Evita* national tour by Hal Prince and that I had worked constantly for years. And that I also had reviews in The New York Times. However, that did not help too much after my life had been turned up-side-down.

I am going to fast forward to [November 2009]. I was sitting in the Workers' Compensation office in Manhattan listening to these people quantify my injuries. My physical ability was compared to a factory worker. As I sat there lost in my own thoughts while these people carried on, I realized what I should have done. If someone had told me to go to an orthopedic doctor for a full exam of my mobility while I was well they would have had to recognize exactly what my damages were.

And this is why I write to all of you.

It does not matter if you are a dancer, a singer or an actor. You use your body for your livelihood. If you dance, go to an orthopedic doctor and ask him to evaluate you "as if they were doing an Independent Medical Exam." If you are a singer go to your ENT and have them document the health of your voice and your range. Even if you do not sing you should do the same.

If your extension is to 12 o'clock and you get hurt, leaving you with a ten o'clock extension, you will be compared to someone who is considered completely healthy if they have a nine o'clock extension. It is hard enough to get work when we are at our peak. Unfortunately, the Workers' Compensation Department does not have a model for our profession. We are compared to everyone else.

I was told my left hip was worth \$17,000. If you divide that by the ten years it took to resolve this issue, it is \$1,700 per year. If you divide it by the amount of time I had left in my career from the date of the accident, it is \$566 per year.

I don't know anyone that would throw themselves through a trap door to get out of anything, let alone a career that they lived, breathed and dreamt about their entire life.

Do yourself a favor and make it a habit to get a full exam ever year, or at the very least upon being hired for a show. If you happen to have an accident you will thank me for it.

Richard Lear

THANK YOU

Dear Editor:

In 2006, you published a letter I wrote asking members

who considered themselves beltlers to respond to a questionnaire that would be used to help establish the scientific and scholarly basis for evaluation of beltlers. The information was also to be the foundation for future research on vocal production and health.

A paper based on that survey is currently in progress and preliminary results were presented at The Voice Foundation Symposium in Philadelphia in June 2007 and again in January 2009 at the Physiology and Acoustics of the Singing Voice in San Antonio.

We thank all who participated and will let Equity know when the final results are available.

Donna Gullstrand
Professor of Voice
Shenandoah University,
Winchester, VA
and
Jeanette LoVetri, The Voice
Workshop, NYC

IN MEMORIAM

Dear Editor:

This letter is in memory of Herb Foster Quebec, who passed away on December 8, 2009. Regarding his service as a Monitor and on the Audition Center staff, Herb said, "The performers are what I like best about the job—and the challenge. Theatre has been my life and I understand actors. I want to help members achieve their goals and succeed."

In New Orleans, Herb originated the role of Rev. Otis in *Keep on Kicking*. Other credits include *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*; *The Wiz*; *Godspell*; *Mo' Tea*; *Miss Ann*; *The Road to Lorraine*; *Don't Bother Me*; *I Can't Cope*; and *Five Guys Named Moe*. His association with AMAS Repertory and his annual presence in Black History Month productions were highlights of his career. Herb also directed an acclaimed production of *Penny Candy* for Queens Theatre in the Park, worked on many productions with Prometheus' Fire and participated in McDonald's Gospel Festival. He was last seen onstage in the lead role of a new musical, *Up On the Block*.

Herb's loss came triply-hard to those of us in New York, as we had just lost our long-time Monitor, staff member and VITA volunteer Jerry Alan Cole in June, and our long-time Councillor and Monitor Hal Blankenship in September.

I've known all three men since coming to New York as an aspiring actress from Iowa in 1983; they were eternally optimistic and supportive to their fellow performers. I was lucky enough to perform with Herb in

President Obama Names Two to Labor Relations Board

Over the holiday recess, President Obama filled two vacancies on the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) with Mark Pearce and Craig Becker, individuals who, throughout their careers, have been strong advocates for workers' rights and unions. The NLRB is the federal body that enforces the National Labor Relations Act and protects the rights of workers.

Pearce has been a labor

lawyer for his entire career and practices in the State of New York. In 2008, he was appointed by the New York State Governor to serve as a Board member on the New York State Industrial Board of Appeals. Craig Becker currently serves as Associate General Counsel to both the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and the AFL-CIO. He has practiced and taught labor law for the past 27 years.

"The Fantasticks" is 50

On May 3, 2010, The Fantasticks marks its 50th Anniversary. The original Off Broadway production opened on May 3, 1960 at New York's Sullivan Street Playhouse. Original cast members included Jerry Orbach, Rita Gardner, Kenneth Nelson and the show's librettist Tom Jones (using the stage name Thomas Bruce). It closed

on January 13, 2002 after 17,162 performances, making it the world's longest-running musical. On August 23, 2006, a revival opened at Off Broadway's Snapple Theatre Center. This production, directed by Tom Jones also featured Mr. Jones (again using the name Thomas Bruce) in the role of "The Old Actor." At this writing, the production continues to run.

Citykids, at Macy's and in my revue, *Two For the Show*; played Hal's wife in a reading and worked with him on *Saturday Night Live* and though I never performed with Jerry, I enjoyed hundreds of his ever-present jokes and witticisms.

Herb, Hal and Jerry had smiles that could light up the room and the number of those attending their memorials in New York attests to how much they were respected, admired and loved. They will be missed.

Jami Simon, New York

Dear Editor:

Betty Lou Keim passed away on January 27, 2010, 22 days before our 50th anniversary, leaving four children, eight grandchildren and a very proud husband, who is a parent and blessed grandparent.

Betty appeared on Broadway in *A Roomful of Roses* with Patricia Neal, *Strange Fruit*, *Crime and Punishment* with John Gielgud and in the Johnny Mercer 1949 musical, *Texas Li'l Darling*. Films include *Some Came Running* with Frank Sinatra, *Teenage Rebel* with Ginger Rogers, and *These Wilder Years* with Barbara Stanwyck and James Cagney. On early television, she appeared on such shows as *My Son The Jeep* and *The Philco Television Playhouse*. Her last acting job was in *The Deputy*, a TV series with Henry Fonda that ran from 1959 to 1961. She retired at the height of her career to raise our growing family.

Betty remains a shining example for all of us. She was a Lady who taught her family nothing less than self-respect.

Warren Berlinger
Chatsworth, CA

AEA Launches National Area Liaison Hotline System

Call 877-AEA-1913

Equity has established a new National toll-free hotline system for members who live in Area Liaison and office cities. The new number is 877-AEA-1913 (honoring the year of Equity's founding). Each Area Liaison city has its own extension, where members can access news and information in their region.

(1) Dial 877-AEA-1913

(2) Dial your city extension:

811 Atlanta
812 Austin/San Antonio
813 Boston
814 Buffalo/Rochester
815 Chicago
816 Cincinnati/Louisville
817 Cleveland
818 Dallas/Fort Worth
819 Denver
820 Detroit
821 Florida – Central
822 Florida – South
823 Houston
824 Kansas City
825 Las Vegas
826 Los Angeles
827 Milwaukee/Madison
828 Minneapolis/St Paul
829 Nashville
830 New Orleans
831 New York
832 Philadelphia
833 Phoenix/Tucson
834 Pittsburgh
835 San Diego
836 San Francisco
837 Seattle
838 St. Louis
839 Washington DC/Baltimore



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The Short Engagement Touring Agreement — Recapturing Lost Equity Employment

By Russell Lehrer
Senior Business
Representative

When the 2008 Production Contract negotiations discussed touring, it became clear that both sides were looking for changes in the lower-cost one-week and split-week markets. Presenters across the country were opting to book shows with weekly guarantees — the amount

of money the Producer is assured weekly — under \$220,000, while most Equity national tours were asking over \$350,000 or \$400,000 in weekly guarantees. This left Presenters to book non-Equity tours into their seasons, and Equity members began to lose access to touring opportunities aside from the blockbuster road shows. Both sides wanted to capture these lost opportunities, and decided to build on the working model

developed for the Production Tiered Tours which were negotiated in 2004 and effectively drove out the non-Equity competition in the one-week and multi-week market.

Using our extensive historical, economic, and anecdotal knowledge about touring, Equity and the League met for six months and negotiated terms for the Short Engagement Touring Agreement, an attempt to similarly recapture lost employment in

the split-week and one-week market. One year into Equity's newest national agreement, there has been broad interest by Producers to use the Agreement in the very areas where Equity members had previously been denied access.

By the fall of 2010, the Short Engagement Touring Agreement will have been used by Producers in all three regions of the country, on a wide spectrum of shows: small-cast dramas in the one-night market, long-running musical tours which historically would have closed and re-opened as non-Equity tours, even large-cast tours of less-successful titles which, without this Agreement in place, would have gone out non-Equity from day one, if at all.

The minimum terms and the Agreement itself (labeled as "Language Not Finalized" while the parties agree upon final wording for the Media Rule) can be found online in the Document Library at www.actorsequity.org. Here you can read the qualification requirements as well, which include well-documented expense and budget information, detailed itineraries, and guaran-

teed number of Equity members employed. In order to capture as much of the touring landscape as possible for our membership, there are six categories of tour size with their own financial terms appropriate to the different levels of touring.

In each category, though, when the Actor is more than 50 miles away from home, the Producer must provide free housing to the Actor, in addition to a per diem to help defray the cost of life on the road. The scheduling rules for both performances and travel itself have been eased to a small degree in order to accommodate split-week realities. The added flexibility allows the tours to play in some venues that have not booked Equity productions in many years. Members are reminded that these tours may be under working conditions that are different from Production Contract tours that have been out in the last several years, so they should evaluate the itineraries and financial offers carefully before accepting a SET Agreement tour to assess their individual touring and financial concerns.

BUDGET GAP

Continued from page 1

resulted in the large projected deficit for the new fiscal year.

In the face of such a deficit, neither the Council nor staff of Equity will stand idle, for our reserves cannot continue to be tapped to account for short-falls of this magnitude. For, even though the reserves have now recovered most of the losses sustained during the worst days of the recession, continuing to use the reserves would over time significantly weaken our ability to withstand crises such as the recent downturn, and other unexpected events. So, during this year, we will be reviewing a variety of options both on the income and expense side of the budget to close this gap for future fiscal years. Equity's investment in both a new core database system and its own building in Chicago

are both examples of these efforts that have already occurred. These two capital investments will help trim hundreds of thousands of dollars from Equity's operating budget for years to come. In addition, we continue to examine all of our internal processes and practices so as to recognize new efficiencies, eliminate redundancies, and to take advantage of newer technologies. These efforts and the choices and solutions they will yield are necessary because at the rate at which expenses are increasing, dues increases alone will not be sufficient to keep the budget in balance.

All of this work is already under way, and I am confident that by next year at this time, a plan will have been developed to enable Equity to meet its financial obligations while continuing to deliver on its responsibilities to our members.

EQUITY JOINS RALLY

Continued from page 1

or longevity. There may also be no efforts at intimidation of employees who may be considering signing a card to allow them to vote on whether to join a union. This protection is the cornerstone of United States labor law, and we cannot stand by and watch as our colleagues are deterred from the legal process they have initiated."

Correction

Member Delphine T. Mantz was the Stage Manager of New York's Black History Month celebration, *Harlem On My Mind*, at New World Stages on February 8, 2010. Her name was inadvertently omitted from the report of the event that appeared in the March issue of Equity News.

HEALTH CARE

Continued from page 1

plan in the new legislation, the Federal government will be entering the insurance market indirectly. There will be at least two national health plans to individuals, families and small businesses. At least one of the plans will have to operate on a nonprofit basis.

Individual Mandate

It will require most Americans to have a minimum level of health insurance or else pay a penalty.

Individual Subsidies

Low and middle-income people will receive tax credits to offset premium costs, co-payments and deductibles.

Employer Mandate

Most employers having more than 100 workers will either have to offer coverage or pay a penalty of \$2,000 for each full time worker forced to receive federal subsidies to buy insurance on their own.

Employer Subsidies

Employers with less than 25 workers and annual average payroll of less than \$50,000 per employee could qualify for tax credits. Employers with less than

ten workers and average payroll of less than \$25,000 per employee will automatically get the tax credits.

Medicaid

Expanded Medicaid will cover an estimated additional 16 million low income and impaired people, including parents and childless adults who are not eligible under current rules.

Benefit Requirements

Insurance plans will be required to offer a federally-defined minimum package of health insurance benefits.

Paying for the bill

In order to cover the cost of the legislation new fees and taxes will be imposed and Medicare payments to hospitals and many other health care providers will be curbed.

Starting in 2014 a 40% "excise tax" will be leveraged on employer-sponsored group health plans with premiums over \$10,200 for individual coverage and \$27,500 for family coverage. Beginning in 2020, the tax thresholds will rise by the inflation rate.

Starting in 2013 the Medicare payroll tax rate will increase by just under 1% for individuals

earning more than \$200,000 a year and families earning more than \$250,000. In addition, a 3.8% tax on capital gains, dividends, interest and other "unearned income" will also be applied.

There are obviously many more details of the new system that are not covered in this article. Future issues of Equity News will provide in-depth coverage of all that is mentioned here as well as any new developments in the law.

The Equity-League Pension, Health and 401(k) Trust Funds are administered by a Board of Trustees made up of an equal number of representatives from Actors' Equity Association, and the Producers. The Funds are legal entities separate from the Union and from any Producer. If you are currently a plan participant, please direct your questions to the Funds office at 212-869-9380 in New York City; if you are outside of New York, please call 1-800-344-5220.

ActorsFCU Wins Award for "Website of the Year"

Actors Federal Credit Union's Website was honored as "Website of the Year" by the National Association of Federal Credit Unions (NAFCU) on March 11, 2010. Competing against 26 Credit Unions across the nation, ActorsFCU's site won top honors in all five categories: Content, Design, Effectiveness, Functionality and Originality.

"Our current Website, launched in 2008, was the culmination of many months of work and the efforts of the entire Credit Union staff," said President Jeff Rodman. "It continues to be the pride and joy of our Marketing Department."

ActorsFCU Director of



AFCU's Steven Sobotta accepts the website award from NAFCU's Jessa Foor.

Marketing Steven Sobotta accepted the crystal award on behalf of ActorsFCU from NAFCU Associate Director of Marketing Jessa Foor at Bally's Las Vegas.

No AEA Contract: Do Not Work at New Candlelight Dinner Theatre

AEA, AFTRA, AGMA, AGVA and SAG members are advised that as of April 24, 2010 Actors' Equity Association no longer has a contract for New Candlelight Dinner Theatre (producers: Chris Alberts and Robert Miller) in Ardentown, DE. AEA, AFTRA, AGMA, AGVA and SAG members may NOT accept employment at this theatre without an Equity

contract.

Equity Franchised Agents are reminded that it is a violation of the Agency Regulations to submit Equity members for non-Equity work.

If you are approached about employment at this theatre, contact Flora Stamatiades, National Director, Organizing and Special Projects, at (212) 869-8530, or by email at flora@actorsequity.org.

ACCA Implements New Policy for Production Contract Six-Month Replacement Calls

The Advisory Committee on Chorus Affairs (ACCA) has implemented a new policy for Production Contract Chorus Call Replacement Auditions. This policy will apply only to Production Contract Chorus Musicals.

The Production Contract requires that "at least every six months after the first paid public performance" Chorus replacement calls be held.

The new policy allows Producers the option of combining replacement Chorus calls for two companies of the same show after their initial six month replacement calls are held separately. Specifically, once a Broadway Chorus Musical or National Tour has

had its initial six month replacement calls, subsequent replacement calls for the Broadway production and Tour production may be combined. For example: Once the Broadway production of *Wicked* has held its initial six month Chorus replacement call and the National tour of *Wicked* has held its initial six month Chorus replacement call, then subsequent replacement calls for the *Wicked* Broadway production and the *Wicked* 1st National tour may be combined.

If a third production runs concurrently with the first two, then the third production must have its own, separate replacement ECCs.

This policy will be reviewed periodically by the ACCA.

Equity's Bonding Policy And How it Works

The Equity Bond is one of the Union's cornerstone provisions to protect its members. It has been in place in Equity's contracts for decades, and has been used on numerous occasions to rescue members from defaulting producers or theatres.

Almost all producers are required to post a bond with Equity. (There are a few exceptions, where producers "pre-pay" salaries and benefits, e.g. under the Guest Artist agreement.) This bond ensures that if an employer defaults in his/her obligations to Equity, you will receive the minimum salary, pension and health credits guaranteed by the agreement (generally two weeks contractual salary and benefits). However, your guarantee is contingent upon the proper filing of your contract.

If you are working under any Equity agreement, you *must* file a signed copy of your contract with Equity no later than first rehearsal. This helps the Union to enforce your contract, assuring that your production is properly bonded. Filing contracts in a timely manner takes on even greater significance since Equity has introduced electronic employment contracts, which may be released to producers via email after a bond is secured.

Here's how it works: The amount of the bond is determined by whether or not you are employed by a "single unit" producer or a seasonal theatre.

Single Unit Productions

Only single unit productions are fully protected by a bond—

to the extent contracts have been filed with Equity. A single unit production is one that is individually produced (whether by one or more producers) that is not part of a regular season of plays presented by a specific theatre. Production Contract, Cabaret, HAT, BAT, Off-Broadway and Mini-Contract shows are examples of single unit productions.

Seasonal Theatres

Seasonal theatres post a bond for the largest number of active contracts in a two-week period. Seasonal theatres include all Stock, LORT, Dinner Theatres, Letters of Agreement and Small Professional Theatres.

When Equity receives more contracts than are protected by the bond, the Union demands that additional bond monies be immediately posted (except in summer stock where the season is too limited and the run of the shows too short for this to be administratively possible). Should the producer fail to increase the bond, the member will have the option of canceling the contract without any further obligation to the employer. Therefore, filing your contract may make the difference in Equity's ability to obtain a bond increase that will protect your contractual guarantees.

If you are employed at a seasonal theatre that defaults, you may receive only the portion of the contract guarantee that is available in the bond. Equity can't make up any difference, but will pursue the defaulting employer legally in an effort to secure the full obligation due to the members.

Leveling the Playing Field

By Anita Hollander

Bass For Picasso is a wild ride of a play by Kate Moira Ryan, a playwright with a wonderful track record. This spring, Kate's work gains even greater significance as this particular play is produced by Theatre Breaking Through Barriers on Theatre Row in New York. The play is about a rather unusual dinner party hosted by Francesca Danieli, head food

non-disabled actors in disabled roles.

But there is even more about this production which is unusual in our business: two other roles in the play which are non-specific with regard to disability are being portrayed by actors with disabilities. A lesbian playwright with a five-year-old son and a gay playwright and bartender at Splash are both played by actors whose disabilities will not necessarily be detected by the



Felice Neals (l), a new Equity member, holds Anita Hollander's prosthesis at a rehearsal of *Bass For Picasso*.

writer for The New York Times, who also happens to be a one-legged lesbian. Yes, the central character of this new play is an amputee. And in this world premiere, the role will be originated by an actress who is also an amputee.

Why this should be anything more than a no-brainer is a mystery to most performers with disabilities, but sadly, our industry more often than not refuses to see the no-brainer and continually accepts the casting of

audience, but just in case you're keeping score, one uses a prosthetic limb and the other uses hearing aids.

Unlike our industry in general, this type of casting is nothing new to Theatre Breaking Through Barriers (formerly known as Theatre By The Blind). TBTB has been producing work performed by actors with disabilities for some 30 years in New York City. Artistic Director Ike Schambelan began the company with blind actors, and

in the past few years has expanded his vision to embrace actors with disabilities of all kinds, as well as non-disabled and ethnically diverse actors.

Performers with disabilities are in the midst of a three-year tri-union national campaign called I AM PWD (Inclusion in the Arts & Media of People With Disabilities), which seeks to transform people with disabilities into people with *visibility*. AEA, SAG and AFTRA actors are working to gain the two goals that *Bass For Picasso* is meeting: (1) characters with disabilities portrayed authentically and accurately by actors with disabilities; (2) actors with disabilities play roles where disability is irrelevant. So while you may see *Richard III* played by an actor with a disability, you may also see a disabled Romeo. While you may see a blind and/or deaf Helen Keller, you may also see a three-legged Grizabella. All of the above have occurred in various theatre companies (TBTB, Nicu's Spoon, Ivoryton Playhouse, Cleveland Signstage and Surflight Theatre), but they are more the exception than the norm. When the playing field is finally leveled, then *all* actors may finally be able to be considered for *all* roles, and the truth of the human experience may finally triumph on stage and in our media.

Anita Hollander is National Co-Chair of the tri-union PWD Committee and the IAMPWD (www.iampwd.org) campaign. She will be participating in AIDS Walk New York, walking ten kilometers on one leg, before a matinee performance of *Bass for Picasso*.

Central Region

Central Regional Board to fill Six Non-Councillor Seats

As per Equity's By-Laws, the Central Region will be filling six non-Councillor seats on the Central Regional Board for the 2010 election. Only members living in the Central Region are eligible to run and to vote for these positions.

The following two-year terms are available: four Principal, one Chorus and one Stage Manager.

All candidates must meet the same eligibility requirements as the Councillors in their category. The Nominating Committee that was seated for the Council election will also serve as the Nominating Committee for these CRB positions. If you wish to be considered for any of the seats, submit your candidacy according to the following schedule:

June 3, 2010	Deadline to reconvene Central Regional Nominating Committee
June 10, 2010	Deadline for Candidate submission to the Nominating Committee. Letters of Intent due in Chicago office by 3 p.m. (CDT)
June 23, 2010	Deadline for all Candidate material for the Nominating Committee by 3 p.m. (CDT)
July 12, 2010	Deadline for Nominating Committee report to the Central Regional Board
July 19, 2010	Deadline for Independent nominations. Petitions and all Candidate material due in Chicago Office by 3 p.m. (CDT)
August 2, 2010	Deadline for mailing of ballots*
August 20, 2010	Deadline for return of ballots to Chicago Office by 2:30 p.m. (EDT)
August 23, 2010	Tellers' Committee picks up ballots and tabulates results
September 13, 2010	Report of Tellers' Committee to the Central Regional Board; Seating of new Board members

* In accordance with the Equity By-Laws, should there be no independent nominations for these non-Councillor Central Regional Board seats, and therefore no contest, there shall be no balloting. Those uncontested members chosen by the Nominating Committee will be deemed elected and will be seated at the September 2010 meeting of the Central Regional Board.



POSTCARDS from the Regions

Chicago

Diversity Honored for Black History Month

Central Region independent directors William "Bill" Brown, Frank Galati, Ron "OJ" Parson and Russ Tutterow received the Central Regional Equal Employment Opportunity Committee's 2010 Spirit Recognition Award at Equity's annual observation of Black History Month at the Goodman Theatre on Monday, March 15, 2010. The presentation was part

Goodman, the event also recognized the following theatres: About Face Theatre, Black Ensemble Theatre, Chicago Dramatists, Collaboraction, Court Theatre, Congo Square Theatre Company, Detroit Repertory, Goodman Theatre, Hansberry-Sands, Mixed Blood, Penumbra, St. Louis Black Repertory Company, Teatro Vista, Unicorn



(From l): Ron OJ Parson, Frank Galati, Chicago Contract Associate Lacey Holmes as the Spirit of Equity, William "Bill" Brown, Russ Tutterow and Central Regional Director Kathryn V. Lamkey.

of the Committee's *Spirit, a Celebration of Diversity* program honoring Members of Color and Central Region theatres whose mission is to present work that is by, for and about diverse racial and ethnic groups as well as women, seniors, the disabled and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) communities. Wydetta Carter and Ron Keaton made the presentation in the absence of Committee Co-Chairs Cheryl Lynn Bruce and E. Faye Butler, who were both working out-of-town.

Now co-sponsored by the

Theatre, Urban Theatre Company and Victory Gardens.

National EEO Coordinator Luther Goins introduced the new brand, *EEO: Once Voice*.

"Agreed upon in January 2010 at the first National EEO Summit, *EEO: One Voice* quickly and easily states the mission of Equity's EEO Committees and the ongoing work that needs to be done," said Mr. Goins.

"Nationally, it gives Equity a stronger and more powerful presence in the performing arts industry."

For a complete report visit the website, www.actorsequity.org.

New York

Equity Sponsors Team In Annual AIDS Walk

Are you interested in joining team Actors' Equity for this year's AIDS Walk New York on Sunday, May 16, 2010?

Register for the team today. Visit www.aidswalk.net/newyork and click "Register to Walk" and "Join a Team." Then select the team name, Actors' Equity – 1989 from the drop-down menu.

AIDS Walk New York, the world's largest AIDS fundraising event, benefits Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC) and over 30 other tri-state area AIDS service organizations. GMHC is

the nation's oldest and most comprehensive AIDS service organization, serving approximately 15,000 people living with HIV and AIDS and their families each year, and countless more through its prevention and advocacy work locally and nationally.

To learn more about Equity's involvement, contact Chris Williams at cwilliams@actorsequity.org or call (212) 869-8530 x 355.

Everyone is welcome to participate.

New York

Second VP, Staff in Albany For Arts Advocacy Day

Second Vice President Rebecca Kim Jordan, Eastern Regional Director Rick Berg and National Public Policy Director Rachel Laforest were in Albany on February 24, 2010 for NY Arts Advocacy Day.

The annual event, sponsored by NYS Arts, brought together members, leaders and staff from arts-related organizations across the state. The message of the day was "Hold the Line," keep funding for the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA) at \$41.6 million in the upcoming Executive Budget.

The Equity trio met with staff from the offices of Senator Pedro Espada Jr., Senator Jeffrey Klein, Senator Diane



New York State Senator Jose M. Serrano, Chair of the Senate's Committee on Cultural Affairs, Tourism, Parks and Recreation, is flanked by Eastern Regional Director Rick Berg and Second Vice President Rebecca Kim Jordan.

Savino and Senator Liz Kruger, none of whom sits on the Senate's Committee on Cultural Affairs, Tourism, Parks and Recreation. Equity's strategy in speaking with these representatives was not to preach to the choir, but rather to begin a dialogue and to help other legislators understand the economic impact of the arts in the state.

The Equity delegation was well received, but ultimately told that budget cuts would be felt across the board, including "essential services," such as

education, transportation and fire fighters. Equity stressed that cuts to the arts mean a loss of jobs in more areas than the arts alone. In the theatre specifically, the loss of a job has a ripple effect on the ancillary services supported by the industry: restaurants, hotels, cabs, convenience stores and other businesses.

"Equity will continue to monitor the situation and fight to protect and grow the arts budget in New York State and throughout the country," said Rick Berg.

San Francisco

Equity Member Recounts History of Asian-American Theatre Artists in Bay Area

Lily Tung Crystal, a San Francisco AEA member, has written an in-depth feature about the struggles of Asian-American actors in the Bay Area for the March 2010 issue of *American Theatre Magazine* (online at www.tcg.org.) The article, entitled *Opening the Golden Gate*, profiles actors aged 18-92 winding through the 1930s' Chop Suey Circuit of all-Asian cabarets, to the founding of the Asian American Theatre Company in the 1970s, to the hopeful yet challenging environment of multiethnic casting today.

Ms. Crystal is one of this year's grant recipients of Theatre Communications Group's Bay Area Commissioning Fund. The grant is designed to bring Bay Area theatres and artists to national attention by expanding *American Theatre Magazine's* coverage of the region. She also is a recipient of the 2009 Theatre Bay Area Titan Award. Created by ATLAS (Advanced Training Leading Actors to Success), this award addresses the problems of actors struggling to earn a living in the Bay Area and provides a \$2,500 grant to support career projects and training, plus a yearlong mentorship with a professional. Ms. Crystal's mentor is Equity member Velina Brown.

Ms. Crystal plans to use her grant to continue her acting and singing training and to diversify her skills into on-camera work

and classical theatre. Some of her award will also go toward studio space for workshops and seminars for an Asian-American Actors group she is creating with Asian-American Theatre Company.



Lily Tung Crystal.

"Growing as an actor is all about opportunity, but getting work as an Asian-American performer can be challenging," says Ms. Crystal. "I hope my article in *American Theatre Magazine* will help raise consciousness and create opportunity. I hope artistic and casting directors will consider, not necessarily diversity, but rather reality—the reality that the world around us comprises people of all races and genders—and if theatre is to survive, it must reflect that reality. And finally, I hope the stories of the pioneers before us will inspire Asian-American actors today to work hard and commit themselves to the theatre."

Chicago

Networking Event for Stage Managers Set

The second annual Chicago-Area Stage Managers Networking Event will be held on Monday, May 17, 2010 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Steppenwolf Garage space, 1624 Halsted Street in Chicago. Based on feedback from theatres and members following the first event in October 2009, this will be an annual happening to take place each spring as theatres gear up for their fall seasons. It will also provide an opportunity for Equity Stage Managers to meet with producers and production managers from Chicago theatres to exchange resumes and get a few minutes of face time as a precursor to having an interview when positions become available.

Similar to the October session, this one will have a "speed dating" format. Stage Managers will sign up for a "rotation hour" during which they will be guaranteed to meet for a few minutes with all of the theatres in attendance. Participants should plan to bring at least ten resumes to exchange.

To sign up for the rotation hour (10 a.m., 11 a.m. or 12 p.m.) or for more information, call Margie Cangelosi at (312) 641-0393 between 12 Noon and 5 p.m. Slots will be available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Chicago**From One Conversation a Workshop Grows**

**By Diane Dorsey
Member Central Regional
Board Chair, Central
Membership Education
Committee**

Because actors usually rely on general auditions or agent submissions, and forever hope past employers will call, they don't usually think about creating their own work. So when several of us on our Membership Education Committee learned they were each into the solo process, two questions got asked: "Who else is?" and "Who else wants to know how?"

The seed was planted and five months later on February 27, 2010 the first AEA-sponsored Solo Performance Workshop/Seminar was held at The Theatre Building in Chicago. Moderator Ron Keaton guided a professional panel comprising performer/educators Tom Mula, Stephanie Shaw, Arlene Malinowski; A Red Orchid Theatre Artistic Director Kirsten Fitzgerald; director/writer/producer Kevin Theis; marketing maven Noreen Heron; and AEA Business Representative Luther Goins.

This eclectic group covered five basic categories: (1) The Idea and Process — getting started,



Central Membership Education Committee members (l to r) Ron Keaton, Carrie Lee Patterson, Diane Dorsey, and Alma Washington with Central Regional Director Kathryn V. Lamkey. (Not pictured: Committee member David Kaplan)

how to stay committed, using developmental support. (2) Choosing the Genre — source materials such as autobiographical, historical personas, literary adaptation. (3) The Collaborators — hiring the right director, designers, musicians, and (if needed) an editor. (4) Producing Issues — the best venue, finding the money, marketing, whether or not to self-produce. And most importantly, (5) "Doing it Equity" —

types of contracts or agreements and procedures for members to follow. A lively Q & A stimulated even more topics.

So what happens now? Maybe a follow-up workshop, or weekly writing group, or monthly Open Mic, or In-Home Salon? Not to worry. I think our members will let us know what they want next. And that's as good as it gets!

Los Angeles**Black History Month Celebrates, Honors African American Women Playwrights**

**By Barbara Roberts
Chair, Western Equal
Employment Opportunity
Committee**

Standing on My Sisters' Shoulders: A Celebration of Classical Works of African American Women Playwrights, the Western Region Equal Employment Opportunity Committee's 2010 Black History Month event, was presented on February 22, 2010 at the Nate Holden Performing Arts Center in Los Angeles.

The evening brought together the profound and innovative voices of these pioneering women whose works covered a wide range of subject matters, style, topics and themes, each expressing

thought-provoking experiences and dynamic characterizations and speaking to the issues of their time. Included in the program were: Georgia Douglas Johnson's *Safe*, Alice Dunbar's *My Eyes Have Seen*, Eulalie Spence's *Fool's Errand*, Marita O. Bonner's *Purple Flower*, Alice Childress' *Wedding Band*, Zora Neale Hurston's *Spunk*, Adrienne Kennedy's *Funny House of a Negro*, Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*, Ntozake Shange's *For Colored Girls*, Pearl Cleage's *Blues for An Alabama Sky*, Judi Ann Mason's *Livin' Fat*, Anna Devereaux Smith's *Fires in the Mirror*, and Cheryl West's *Before It Hits Home*.

Standing On My Sisters'

Shoulders was directed by L. Scott Caldwell and Mirron Willis; cast members were: April Adams, Ryan Anderson, Tyreese Burnett, Doug Cox, Kim Estes, Babe Evans, Ray Ford, April Grace, Tijuana Gray, Simbi Kali, Joyce Lee, Jeris Poindexter, Clarinda Ross and Musical Director Deborah Sharpe Taylor. Shine Mawushi - Women's Drum Corps and Maia, provided music.

The EEO Committee was proud to celebrate and pay homage to the contributions made by these African American women playwrights, who in some cases have been overlooked and left to "yesterday." This event bought about an awareness and appreciation of these amazing women who, through their words, bring to life the human condition that reflects the African-American experience, but also speaks to everyone. The power of these voices is timeless.

Special thanks to EEO Committee members Ivy Bethune, Annette Young, Kim Estes, Harrison White, Kelsey Scott, Ann Stocking, Felecia E. Taylor, Kelly Ground, Mirron Willis, Deborah Sharpe Taylor, Pat Loeb, Linda Tross and Clarinda Ross.



Western EEO Chair Barbara Roberts (c) with Clarence Williams (l) and Wren T. Brown.

Los Angeles**East West Players Hosts Benefit for BC/EFA**

The Los Angeles theatre community raised \$10,143 for Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS at East West's home base, the David Henry Hwang Theatre, with a production of *The Last Five Years*. "I ran the idea by composer Jason Robert Brown, specifically to see if he would waive the rights," said Kim Varhola, Associate Manager of

Events and Promotions at Center Theatre Group. "Jason not only waived the rights, he wanted to participate." Kim adds: "The night of the benefit, we realized we forgot to get buckets to collect, so we emptied a couple of cookie containers. At the end of the night, we had quite a few chocolate covered bills."



Participants in the benefit for BC/EFA are (l to r): Michael Bulger, Kim Varhola, Jennifer Paz, Jason Robert Brown, Michael K. Lee, John Lawrence Rivera, Skyppe Cananas.

Denver**VA Idol and AEA Helps**

By Betsey Cassell

Denver members continue volunteering to help contestants participating in the annual National Veterans Creative Arts Festival sponsored by the Veterans Administration.

For over 15 years, the VA has



Orlanda Marque a VA performer.

encouraged veterans from every era and geographic location to bring their talents, in whatever genre, to a series of workshops preparing them for participation in a national competition.

The annual Festival is the culmination of these local talent competitions in art, creative writing, dance, drama and music for veterans treated in the VA's national health care system. From the thousands of entries, approximately 130 veterans are invited to exhibit their artwork or to perform in a gala variety show, accompanied by a professional orchestra. This year's Festival Gala will be held October 18-24, 2010 in La Crosse, Wisconsin.

Since the addition of AEA members' support, encouragement and expertise, the Denver VA members have been winning many of the

competitions. AEA members work with the veterans in a series of three two-hour coaching sessions, ending in a local talent show/taping held at the VA Auditorium. This year's show and taping, held on March 13, brought a wonderful group of vets with a wide variety of talent and range of experience.

Denver AEA Liaison member and Mistress of Ceremonies, Valerie Hill presided over the taping, while AEA members Betsey Cassell, Marilyn Feinstein, Susan Long, James Nantz, Rob Reynolds and Erin Joy Swank helped with backstage duties, the taping, and aided veterans on and off the stage. Along with these volunteers, other AEA members Stuart Barr, Candy Brown, Chaz Grundy, Karen LaMoureaux, Susan Ann Lee and Billie McBride shared their expertise during coaching sessions. The response of the veterans to the coaching sessions was wonderful and greatly appreciated.

AEA members interested in helping their local VA with the competition should contact either the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20420, or Elizabeth Mackey, National & Event Director (320) 255-6351 or via email at ElizabethMackey@va.gov, or contact your local VA facility.

For a complete report visit the website, www.actorsequity.org.

Betsey Cassell is an AEA member formerly from Chicago and now in Denver and a member of the Denver Liaison Committee.

Washington/Baltimore**Kennedy Center Takes Seven Helen Hayes Awards****Edward Albee Honored**

Washington's John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts led all contenders with 20 nominations for the 26th annual Helen Hayes Awards presented on April 5, 2010.

As the final chords of the orchestra played and the house lights came on, The Kennedy Center had won the night with seven awards including Outstanding Resident Musical *Ragtime*, and Outstanding Non-Resident Production *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

The Shakespeare Theatre garnered four awards including Outstanding Resident Play *King Lear*.

The Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company tied with itself. *Antebellum* by Robert O'Hara and *Eclipsed* by Danai Gurira each received the Charles MacArthur Award for Outstanding New Play or Musical.

The Robert Prosky Award for Outstanding Lead Actor in a



(L to r): Terrence McNally, Edward Albee and Stacy Keach. (Photo: Gregory Gorton)

Resident Play also resulted in a tie: Karl Miller for his performance in The Forum Theatre's *Angels in America: Millennium Approaches* and Stacy Keach for the title performance of *King Lear* at the Shakespeare Theatre.

Upon accepting his Lead Actor award, Mr. Keach remarked, "I began my career in Washington. I've spent most of my theatrical career in Washington and have felt blessed to do so."

Jim Brochu, Outstanding Lead Actor in a Non-Resident Production for *Zero Hour* at Theater J, expanded on this feeling. "I have played in many theatres in our country. I have never seen any with the passion for theatre that I see in Washington D.C."

Eric Hissan, taking the Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Resident Play for *Arcadia* at Folger Theatre summed up the these feelings; "I have worked in a lot of towns. DC is the best!"

There was a very touching and poignant moment during the evening. After receiving the award for Outstanding Choreography in a Resident Production for his work with the MetroStage production of *Cool Papa's Party*, Maurice Hines thanked the many people involved with the show and then told the audience, "Remember, when you see me, you see my brother, Gregory."

The *Washington Post* Award for Innovative Leadership in the Theatre Community was presented to restaurateur, activist, arts supporter and theatre angel Andy Shallal.

Mr. Shallal encouraged everyone to contact their representatives in Washington and urge them to increase funding for the arts, noting, "Without the arts you cannot have business."

A highlight of the evening was The Helen Hayes Tribute Award, sponsored by Jaylee Mead, to playwright Edward Albee. Ms. Mead called upon Terrence McNally (the 2004 recipient of this award) to assist her with the presentation. Mr. McNally said of Mr. Albee, "Edward reminded us of the

guts of Americans. He has always been a brave writer and always supports the next generations behind him." A short film, narrated by McNally, showed many of the amazing moments, including three Pulitzer Prizes, and theatrical brilliance in the lifetime and works of Edward Albee, as well as his creation of the Albee Foundation.

As the standing ovation receded, Mr. Albee, a native Washingtonian, told the audience, "When I was six years old I was taken to New York to see my first play. It hooked me on the absurdity and wonder of theatre." Upon accepting the Helen Hayes Tribute award, Mr Albee commented that he was, "surprised that someone would give me an award for something I've so enjoyed doing all of my life."

For a complete list of the recipients go to www.helenhayes.org and click on the Washington/Baltimore link.

Equity member Gregory Gorton is a regular contributor to Equity News.

Staff in Equity Offices Receive CPR Training

On Friday, February 26, 2010, Equity staff from New York, Chicago and Los Angeles became certified by the American Red Cross in Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), First Aid and Automated External Defibrillators (AED). The certification class taught the skills necessary to prevent, recognize,



Craig Merriman and Pam Spitzner in Chicago.

and provide basic care for injuries and sudden illness until advanced medical personnel arrive. Staff in the Orlando office was certified on April 6. The project was initiated by Steven DiPaola, Assistant Executive Director for Finance and Administration.

"In the event that a fellow employee, member, or guest suddenly became ill or suffered an injury, we wanted our employees to have the skills and confidence to respond quickly and responsibly," said Megann McManus, Staff Development Director, who organized the training. Mr. DiPaola added: "The

safety and health of the many members and employees who are in our offices every day is one of our top concerns."

Certified staff members in New York include: Chris Williams, Associate for Finance and Administration; Ms. McManus; Russell Lehrer, Senior Business Representative; Jeffrey Bateman, Business Representative; Karen Nothmann, Business Systems Analyst; John Fasulo, National Director of Membership; Keith Howard, Director of Auditions, and Angel Wuellner, Auditions Associate.

In Chicago, eight staff members participated in the training and all passed the certification test. They are: Craig Merriman, Office Manager; Luther Goins, Business Representative; Tim Bruns, Business Representative; Cynthia Hanks, Membership Associate; Pam Spitzner, Member Services Coordinator; Ashley Dawe, Business Representative; Chris Provost, Senior Business Representative, and Elizabeth Oropeza, Bonding Director.

In Los Angeles, ten people were certified: Maura Murphy-Barrosse, Office Manager; Lawrencia Colding-Souza, Contract Associate; Carlos Dardon,



First Aid training in Los Angeles.

Membership Associate; Alice Smith, Business Representative; Bethany Umbach, Business Representative; Erica Gowland, Receptionist; Jason Palmer, Contract Associate; Joseph Voves, IT Administrator; Kathey Wilson, Bonding Director, and Richard Ostlund, Western Regional Board Secretary and Assistant to the Regional Director.

Orlando staffers certified are: Jennie Davis, Business Representative; Pam Galbraith, Assistant Business Representative; Jackie Dames, Administrative Assistant, and Joyce Vinzani, Council Secretary.



Practicing CPR in New York.

New York**Dancers Explore Hope, Change at Career Development Seminar**

Career Transition For Dancers sponsored a free day-long seminar on April 8, 2010 to address the changing economic climate and current career needs of dancers. The event at

Executive for the American Guild of Musical Artists and Karen Giombetti, former Broadway dancer who now owns her own public relations firm and has extensive teaching



Participants in the Career Transition For Dancers seminar.

the Equity Building included guests, panels and break-out sessions.

Speakers were James Fayette, former Principal dancer with New York City Ballet and current New York Area Dance

experience.

Breakout sessions, led by professionals in the field, explored survival work, hot careers, going from dancing into a second passion-based career, and networking.

New York**Dancers to Celebrate Michael Bennett**

Dancers Over 40 will present *Michael Bennett: A Joyful Noise*, a panel/performance event celebrating the career of Michael Bennett from *A Joyful Noise* to *Ballroom* on Monday, May 17, 2010 at 8 p.m. at St.

Luke's Theatre, 308 West 46th Street. Bob Avian will be a special guest. For more information call the DO40 Hotline, (212) 330-7016 or visit the website dancersover40@aol.com.

Dallas-Fort Worth

Equity Actors Honored By Theatre Community

The Column Awards, a 501(c)3 non-profit honoring excellence in theatre in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, presented its 11th annual awards on March 8, 2010. Seventeen theatre companies shared 62 awards, divided between Equity and non-Equity productions. Pam Dougherty, Equity's Dallas-Fort Worth Liaison Chair, was among those honored, and was cited as



(L to r): Dennis Yslas, Connie Colt-Kitchens, Column Awards nominee Ron Bohmer, Pam Dougherty, Sharon Garrison and John Garcia at the Column Awards.

Yslas said, "The Column Awards has a proud history of honoring Equity productions and members in their own division, and we are pleased that so many members received awards this year. We also are grateful for the continued partnership with AEA, which graciously purchases an ad in our program and sponsors the Liaison Committee to attend the gala."

The evening's top Equity honors were taken in the Best Play category by *The History Boys*, produced by Uptown Players, and, in the Best

Musical category, *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, produced by Theatre Three.

AEA members taking home awards in addition to Pam Dougherty were: Jeffrey Schmidt, Scenic Design of a Musical, *Spelling Bee*; Doug Miller, Stage

Manager of a Musical, *Spelling Bee*; Wendy Welch, Supporting Actress in a Play, *The History Boys*; Liz Mikel, Actress in a Play, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Dallas Theater Center; Bradley Campbell, Actor in a Play, *The History Boys*; and Diana Sheehan, Actress in a Musical, *Grey Gardens*.

Equity contract theatres receiving awards were: Uptown Players (ten awards), Theatre Three (nine awards), Flower Mound Performing Arts Theatre (three awards), Dallas Theater Center (two awards), Water Tower Theatre (two awards) and Contemporary Theatre of Dallas (one award).

Nominees and winners are selected by readers of "The Column," a national entertainment newsletter distributed via the Internet.

More than an awards show, the organization is the only awards organization in the United States to be a major fundraiser for Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS, with all money raised (after operating costs) going to BC/EFA.

Featured Actress in a Musical for her performance in *Grey Gardens* at the Water Tower Theatre.

Executive Vice-President of The Column Awards, and Equity Dallas-Fort Worth Liaison Committee member Dennis

New York

The Wedding's Back On

Producer of Off Broadway's *Tony 'n Tina's Wedding* Keeps Equity Actors After Threatening to Go Non-Union

Members of the cast of New York's long-running *Tony 'n Tina's Wedding* were sure they were headed towards divorce when the producers sent a notice that the company would be moving to a "non-union" venue and offered them their roles if they "resign from Actors' Equity Union."

It had already been a rollercoaster ride for the cast, many of whom had been with the show for seven or more years. Members had been performing under AEA contract at Sofia's

Restaurant when they first got word that the show would shut down until further notice. Then came the communication about the non-union venue. While they were left scratching their heads, Equity's staff received word from the producer that the show would reopen non-union.

Because a series of email exchanges with the producer yielded nothing, Equity filed an Unfair Labor Practice on Thursday, April 8, 2010. Media was quick to pick up on the rift

and the cast was eager to use the momentum to push the issue. A meeting of the Equity cast and staff resulted in plans for handbilling that Saturday night. Word of the plans went out via Facebook and Twitter, and many people posted or tweeted their support.

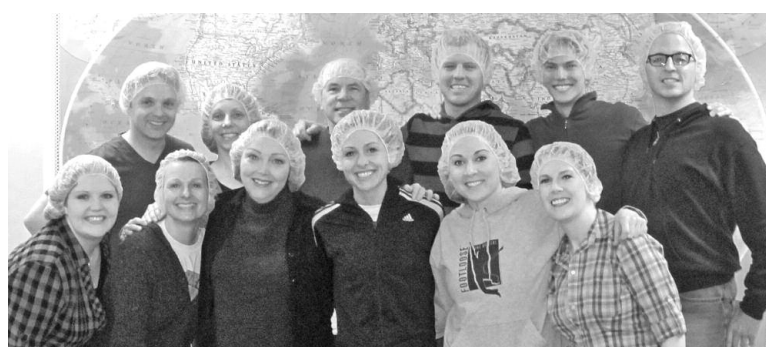
While all the behind-the-scenes work was being planned, the producers reached out to Eastern Regional Director Rick Berg, and agreed to utilize the Equity contract, with the understanding that a meeting would be held later to discuss non-economic changes to the contract. Kudos to Business Rep Kathy Mercado and Senior Business Rep Russell Lehrer for their efforts in the *Tony 'n Tina's Wedding* success story.

Chanhassen, MN

Actors Don Hair Nets, Donate Time to Charity

Equity Actors and design staff from the company of *Footloose* at the Chanhassen (Minnesota) Dinner Theatres took time on Wednesday, April 7, 2010 to pack 23,616 meals—between shows—to benefit Feed My Starving Children (FMSC). Participants included Quinn Berger, Sue Ellen Berger, Janet Hayes Trow, John Trow, Maureen Sherman-Mendez, Ben Bakken, Lisa Bartholomew-Given, Nickie Kromminga, Robb McKindles, Tinia Moulder, Chad M. Anderson and Mark King. The entire process took just 90 minutes.

FMSC provides a team-



Actors in their hair nets are (front, l to r) Quinn Berger, Janet Hayes Trow, Sue Ellen Berger, Maureen Sherman-Mendez, Lisa Bartholomew-Given, Nickie Kromminga; (back) Robb McKindles, Tinia Moulder, John Trow, Ben Bakken, Chad M. Anderson and Mark King.

building environment where people of all ages come together for a common cause: packing nutritious, life-saving meals for starving children. These meals are then shipped to nearly 70 countries around the world, offering hope to the hungry. From its beginnings, FMSC has worked to develop a food mixture that would be easy and safe to

transport, simple to make with only boiling water and culturally acceptable worldwide. A single bag of food—which provides meals for six children—costs around \$1.15 to produce, and 94% of all donations go directly toward the food program.

To donate, or learn more about FMSC, go to www.fmsc.org.

New York

Human Resources Team Obtains Certification

Equity congratulates the members of its Human Resources team—Marie Gottschall, Megann McManus, Craig Merriman, Maura Murphy-Barrosse and Chris Williams—for having achieved their Certifications in Human Resource Management as a result of their attendance at

a rigorous course in March 2010 sponsored by the Council on Management Education and George Washington University's Business School. With this certification, they have achieved a higher level of proficiency in their skill area than any previous HR team at Equity.



Showing off their certificates in Human Resource Management are (l to r): Maura Murphy-Barrosse (LA), Marie Gottschall (NY), Sue Walaszek (instructor), Megann McManus (NY), Craig Merriman (Chicago) and Chris Williams (NY).

New York

Binder Recycling Brings Benefits

As a member of the Broadway Green Alliance (BGA), Equity has started a binder recycling program for script binders that are used by Actors, Stage Managers and other entertainment industry personnel. We are collecting binders from all sources and encourage everyone to drop off binders at the Equity Building, 165 West 46th Street, 15th Floor Reception during regular

business hours (Monday-Friday, 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.).

Also, you may pick up binders free of charge, provided that you agree to return them after use.

For further information, call Louise Foisy, (212) 869-8530, ext. 344, or email production@actorsequity.org.

Visit the BGA website for more information: www.broadwaygreen.com. Become a Facebook friend.



Supporting Equity's binder program are (l to r) Bret Shuford, Mulch, John Tartaglia and Kate Wetherhead.

New York

O-B Stage Managers to Meet-and-Greet

Equity and the League of Off Broadway Theatres and Producers are sponsoring the annual Off Broadway Stage Managers networking event on Thursday, May 27, 2010 in the Council Room on the 14th Floor at the AEA office. Equity Stage Managers will have the opportunity to meet-and-greet producers and general managers from both Equity commercial ventures as well as institutional not-for-profits. Last year's event included representatives from Playwrights Horizons, NY Theatre Workshop, Women's Project & Productions,

Manhattan Theatre Club and Primary Stages.

The informal, speed-dating format will allow Stage Managers to learn about the theatres' upcoming seasons, schedules and hiring practices, and present their resumes for future consideration. Those planning to attend should bring at least 20 copies of their resumes and be able to commit to a "rotation hour" during which they will be guaranteed to meet with each Off Broadway League participant. To RSVP (by May 21) or for more information, call Joanna Spencer, (212) 869-8530, ext. 377.