

members, who through extenuating circumstances, need emergency assistance. Medical, financial and emotional emergencies can hit any one of us and affect all of us in our special artistic community. For example, one colleague could no longer pay her rent, yet had an upcoming long-term AGMA contract. The Relief Fund saw how emergency assistance could provide a lifeline and save a career, and it did. Another member needed help because she could not sing during chemotherapy treatments. Time after time, the Relief Fund has provided the means to weather the storm.

Abba Bogin has been a trustee since the Fund's inception on December 3, 1945. He vividly recalls that the Relief Fund was formed and supported by the artistic luminaries of the 1930s, '40s and '50s, who used their professional clout to help fellow members. From the time of its formation to the present, AGMA leaders and professional giants such as Nedda Casei, Plácido Domingo, Renée Fleming, Jerry Hadley, Marilyn Horne, Anna Moffo, Patricia Racette, Regina Resnik, Beverly Sills and many others have been key advocates, donors and/or fundraisers.

Many AGMA performing groups have raised money by using their artistic skills, raffle-producing "chops," baking prowess and limitless creativity. Many members and other fans make annual contributions, bequests, tributes, memorial donations, and give Relief Fund calendars and other personalized treasures as gifts. Grateful members who have received assistance "pay it forward" by becoming donors to the Fund, holding fundraisers, encouraging other donors, and by letting members know that help is available.

In all likelihood, everyone reading this article knows someone who either has been or will be assisted by the Relief Fund. Please continue the open-hearted legacy of our predecessors and contemporaries by keeping the AGMA Relief Fund umbrella open for the future.

No gift is too small or too large!

Who Inspired You?

Ironically, even though I have been a professional AGMA singer my entire adult life, my inspiration to become a performing artist came from seeing the ballet *Coppélia* danced magically by **Maria Tallchief** and André Eglevsky. When I was about eight years old, my family took me to the only large town for miles around to see a touring company performance of *Coppélia* featuring world class dancers. I didn't sleep for many nights. Instead, lying awake, I imagined myself dancing on the stage. My own ballet studies and career lasted until my teens and then my passion turned to singing and ultimately opera. One huge highlight of my AGMA Presidential career was attending, at the invitation of President Clinton, the presentation of the National Medal of Arts award to Maria Tallchief by the National Endowment of the Arts on September 29, 1999.

**Linda Mays, Metropolitan Opera Chorister,
AGMA Past President, 1999–2007**

For more information about or to make donations, contact Susan Davison at the AGMA National Office: (800) 543-2462 or susan@musicalartists.org.

Financial Resources and Support Available to AGMA Members at The Actors Fund

By Jan-Kees van der Gaag, Los Angeles Opera Chorister, and Social Work Supervisor, Western Region at The Actors Fund

While the economy is struggling to stabilize, many performers, including AGMA members, are trying to figure out how to make ends meet consistently. Since 1882, The Actors Fund has made certain that everyone in entertainment has a place to turn that recognizes and supports their needs. The Actors Fund is unique in that it has created a safe and confidential environment in which it operates programs designed to care holistically for the individual singer or dancer (or anyone who works professionally in our community).

As part of this holistic plan, The Fund awards grants designed to help a person stabilize financially for a period of time in emergency situations. These grants,

administered by The Actors Fund, come from the AGMA Relief Fund and are available to AGMA members in good standing or on honorable withdrawal. You will not be asked to pay this money back! AGMA members who meet certain financial criteria can also be eligible for funds granted through The Actors Fund as well as other Entertainment Assistance Programs we can link you to. These funds can be used to help pay towards your rent or mortgage, utility bills, health insurance, food, and other basic needs.

To support all aspects of one's holistic plan, The Fund has a broad spectrum of programs available, including: The Entertainment Assistance Program, a counseling and informational service; Mental Health Program, covering crisis intervention and evaluation along with referral services; Chemical Dependency Services, covering anything from evaluation to treatment; Senior and Disabled Care, helping to maintain independence through a connection to essential resources; HIV/AIDS Initiative, supportive individual and group counseling with a linkage to health care and other resources; The Dancers' Resource, support services for injured dancers; Phyllis Newman Woman's Health Initiative, a patient navigation program

for women who have received a serious health diagnosis; and the Conrad Cantzen Shoe Fund, a service providing one free pair of shoes each year to qualifying performers for audition purposes.

There are also some exciting health services provided such as: the Artists Health Insurance Research Center (AHIRC), providing information on accessing cost-effective health insurance and quality health care; Al Hirschfeld Free Health Clinic, the Fund's free health clinic in New York City serving the under- or un-insured; and the Performing Artists' Clinic at Venice Family Clinic in Los Angeles, a clinic for individuals who are low income or publicly insured.

Finally, the Fund helps in the areas of employment and training, and housing. Some of the programs are: the Actors Fund Work Program, a sideline and parallel career training program; The Lillian Booth Actors Home in Englewood, New Jersey, a state-of-the-art assisted living and skilled nursing home for performing arts professionals; The Palm View, a 40-unit low-cost garden apartment complex in West Hollywood for those living with HIV/AIDS; The Dorothy Ross Friedman Residence (formerly The Aurora), 178

units in midtown Manhattan for low-income working professionals, people living with HIV/AIDS, and seniors; and The Schermerhorn House, a 216-unit "green" facility in downtown Brooklyn with affordable, supportive housing for single adults and a multipurpose community room/performance space for resident activities. The Actors Fund is there to help all AGMA members in times of need, crisis or transition.

The Actors Fund operates nationwide, and if you're not familiar with it or its two dozen programs, you should know what's out there for you. I'm very proud to be part of an organization that helps more than 12,000 people every year.

www.actorsfund.org

AGMA and Career Transition For Dancers, Stepping Together

*By AJahi Nicole Adams,
Director of Development,
Career Transition For Dancers*

The American Guild of Musical Artists and Career Transition For Dancers have maintained a relationship that has spanned nearly three decades. This partnership began when members of AGMA and various other unions sought to address the trauma facing professional dancers both during and at the culmination of their careers. From an investigatory conference organized at Lincoln Center in 1982 and chaired by Agnes de Mille, Career Transition For Dancers was born. With the support of AGMA and in partnership with other performing arts unions and major foundations (including the National Endowment for the Arts and the AFL-CIO Labor Institute for Human Enrichment), Career Transition For Dancers, Inc. was formally founded in 1985, and the funding provided by AGMA and its fellow unions continues today. Career Transition For Dancers received their not-for-profit 501(c)(3) status in 1989 with the goal of providing assistance for dancers transitioning into new professions that would make use of their

individual backgrounds, talents and skills. Allied with dance companies, musical theatre productions, television studios, and film establishments, Career Transition For Dancers became and remains the only arts-service organization in the United States dedicated solely to the planning and post-performance needs of all dancers nationwide—entirely free of charge. This organization has created a tremendous support system to the dance community, but the true soul of its value is as varied as the chosen career paths of each individual dancer across the United States.

Executive Director Alexander J. Dubé best rearticulates the organization's philosophy and passion as helping dancers transition with confidence. "Every member of Career Transition For Dancers realizes that the demands of rehearsing, performing and perfecting one's technique and artistry can create an insular world in which time and focus are almost entirely given over to dance. As a result, most often dancers are unprepared for the daunting challenges involved in preparing for and eventually making a career change. The endless regimen of staying in shape, auditioning, and touring, compounded with worry about advancing age, competition, and financial security coalesces toward a breaking point which illuminates the need for a new path."

AGMA members have expressed elation and relief for services such as individual career counseling, group counseling, exploration of options through Career Conversations programming or receiving a scholarship or grant provided by Career Transition For Dancers. Since the beginning, Career Transition For Dancers has provided 1,205 AGMA members with over \$1.3 million in scholarships and grants, over 4,300 one-on-one counseling hours and countless hours of additional programming and services. Former AGMA member, Career Transition For Dancers dancer-client and current American Ballet Theatre Executive



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AGMA President Jimmy Odom accepts the Career Transition For Dancers Award on behalf of AGMA at the 25th Anniversary Silver Jubilee on November 8, 2010.