

"If you really want to help the American theatre, don't be an actress, darling. Be an audience."
—Tallulah Bankhead

A New Decade of Taxation

By Sandra Karas
Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program

Begin this year's articles on a personal note. My friend and one of the founders of Equity's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program, Conard Fowkes, died this past December, leaving a legacy of assistance to actors that is unparalleled in the program's history – indeed, rarely seen at any level of union volunteerism. In 1977, Conard, Michael Enserro and Shorling Schneider formed an unofficial committee of individuals who ventured bravely into the Internal Revenue Code and founded AEA's VITA Program in an effort to help fellow performers navigate the waters of the IRS. Since that time, VITA has served tens of thousands of AEA, SAG and AFTRA members, saving them millions of dollars in taxes. Yours truly joined the effort a year or so after VITA was founded and, inspired by our founders' examples, I was determined to learn everything I could learn about performing artists and their relationship to our system of taxation. Michael Enserro and Schorling Schneider passed away many years ago and, with Conard's death, we have lost our last founding member of VITA. But, we continue the work on behalf of our fellow performers, as we have for more than 30 years. We hope that each member who has benefitted or will benefit from this program will pay a tribute of thanks to the founders and

especially, our late Conard Fowkes, whose dedication to them and this program were valuable gifts indeed.

We are Volunteers – As Mr. Fowkes often stressed, we are unpaid and well-trained volunteer members of the Internal Revenue Service's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program. This particular program, located at the Equity building in New York and at other union offices as available, is supported by Equity, SAG and AFTRA to provide tax assistance to members of those three unions. It is not a function of union staff in any of its locations, in spite of the perception to the contrary. We remind each member who may benefit from the free tax help that the individual assisting you is probably a union member him or herself and is doing his/her best work possible to help you file your tax returns in accordance with the terms of our agreement with the IRS. Questions may be directed to the VITA Site Coordinator at your location or sent to the IRS nearest you.

Are you being audited? – The New York office of VITA is currently compiling audit information and providing some assistance to these members in the form of official correspondence and other means. If you are one of our members who has experienced an audit or examination, we ask you to please contact our office and provide information for our files and determine if we may be of help in resolving your case.

Unemployment benefits: Taxation and Withholding – While most of you already know that you pay tax on unemployment insurance, this year you might be pleasantly surprised to learn that you'll get some relief in receiving the first \$2,400 tax-free! We recommend that you withhold both federal

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Mark Zimmerman Resigns as Equity President; Paige Price Carries Out Duties

Mark Zimmerman resigned as Equity President, effective December 11, 2009. First Vice President Paige Price is carrying out the duties of the Office until a new President is elected.

In his resignation statement to the Officers and Council, Mr. Zimmerman said he wanted to devote more time to his personal life and his career. "I didn't go into this business to be a President of a Union. I did it to be an Actor. I miss that, and I want to devote my time to doing what I love." Mr. Zimmerman is currently in the Broadway company of *West Side Story*.

"Mark has been an important part of the Equity family, first as a Vice President and then as President," said Ms. Price. "He has helped to shape the direction of the Union with energy and vision. The Officers

and Council will continue to build upon our solid foundation of leadership and serve the members with the same dedication that Mark has demonstrated."

A member of Equity since 1976, Mr. Zimmerman stepped into the role of President in 2006 when then-President Patrick Quinn resigned to become the Executive Director. Mr. Zimmerman led the Union through the difficult time following Mr. Quinn's sudden passing and the extended search for a new Executive Director. Under Mr. Zimmerman's leadership, Equity achieved a 401(k) plan for its members through collective bargaining and, together with his fellow officers and executive staff, conducted Expanded Regional Board meetings from which the Union's strategic long term plan was set. He also

created the groundwork for Equity's centennial, which will take place in 2013.

Paige Price was elected to a Principal Council seat in the Eastern Region in 2001 after serving on the Production Contract Committee and being a member of the 2000 Production Contract Negotiating Team. She served again on the 2004 Production Contract Negotiating Team and was elected to a second Council term in 2006. When Mark Zimmerman was elected President to fill the position vacated by the late Patrick Quinn in 2006, the Council elected Ms. Price to fill Mr. Zimmerman's post as First Vice President until the next election in 2007. At that point, she was elected by the membership to serve until 2009 and was reelected to that office in 2009.

Council Resolves to Continue Efforts to Improve Health Care; Commits to Lobbying Campaign

By Rachel Laforest
Public Policy Director

At its meeting on January 19, 2010, Council committed to continue its efforts to improve health care and resolved that "upon passage of any health care reform bill by Congress, Equity agrees to commit to a lobbying campaign over the next three years that seeks to address the ills of the bill. Either by legislative amendments or by the regulatory process and rule-writing, we will work to eliminate the worst components of the bill

and to safeguard the best components."

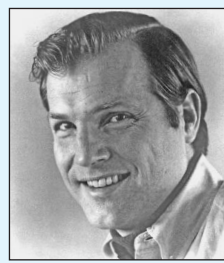
It has been a long and difficult road to health care reform. Reform - which is crucial

for millions of Americans - hangs in the balance and the picture is becoming bleaker with each passing day. Rapidly escalating health care costs are crushing family, business, and government budgets. Employer-sponsored health insurance premiums have doubled in the last nine years, a rate three times faster than cumulative wage increases. This forces families to make impossible choices between paying rent or paying health premiums. Given all that we spend on health care, American families should not

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Equity Mourns Passing of Conard Fowkes

(See page 4)



BC/EFA Contributes \$100,000 for Haitian Relief

In response to the devastating earthquake in Haiti on January 12, 2010, Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS has contributed \$100,000 to UNICEF in the name of the theatre community to assist in the Haitian relief efforts.

Paul Libin, President of the Board of BC/EFA, and Tom Viola, Executive Director of BC/EFA, said, "Thanks to the

theatre community's remarkable fundraising efforts prior to the recent *Gypsy of the Year* Competition, BC/EFA has been able to make a contribution to UNICEF to support the UN's Haitian relief efforts."

For more information on how to help and a listing of other organizations accepting contributions, visit Equity's website, www.actorsequity.org.

Help for Haiti

If you would like to help the people of Haiti who have suffered in the devastating tragedy of the January 12, 2010 earthquake, the AFL-CIO has compiled a listing of service organizations accepting donations. They are: Doctors Without Borders, Partners in Health, Red Cross International Response Fund, RN Response Network, Solidarity Center Education Fund, United Way Worldwide Disaster Fund and

Yéle Haiti. You may visit the Equity website, www.actorsequity.org, to click on any of these organizations to make a donation.

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REMEMBERING CONARD FOWKES

Dear Editor:

For many of us, Conard Fowkes was synonymous with the best our union has to offer. He was welcoming, inclusive, and brought a sense of brotherhood. When I was a young actor starting out in New York, Conard's enthusiasm for our profession was strong enough to keep me going and approach the difficult work of getting work with integrity. In those years I made only a few thousand dollars, but thanks to Conard's leadership in helping establish VITA, and his calming empowerment, I was able to keep most of my earnings and remain optimistic that perseverance would be rewarded. Although I never saw him act, never sat at his kitchen table, and never knew him well enough to feel comfortable calling him Connie, he made an indelible impression on me and, undoubtedly, on so many others with his rare combination of intelligence, generosity, and charm.

Stephen Berenson
Trinity Repertory Company

LOVELY MEMORY

Dear Editor:

Your story re Gertrude Berg (Equity News, July/August 2009) brought back a lovely

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.

memory.

In the summer of 1957, my husband, Rex Partington, was touring as Cornelius in Gertrude Berg's production of *The Matchmaker*. I was in Virginia with my mother awaiting the birth of our first child.

Before Rex III was born on September 18, Mrs. Berg hosted a baby shower for the expectant father. Everyone said it was the best shower of any kind, and "new baby" received some nice gifts.

In fact, I still have the booties Mrs. Berg gave "the Partington heir."

Not only was she a beloved actress, but also a charming, loving hostess.

Cleo Holladay

MEMORIAL FOR SHIRLEY RICH

Dear Editor:

There will be a memorial held for Shirley Rich [renowned casting director who died on December 28, 2009] in New York in the spring of 2010. Her daughter, Lisa Krohn, would like to hear from anyone who would like to participate in the service. She can be reached at (917) 856-1234 or lisakrohnllc@gmail.com. The date, location and time of the memorial service is still to be determined and will be announced shortly.

Lisa Krohn

IN MEMORIAM

Dear Editor:

I am writing with sad news. My dear friend and mentor, the actress Collin Wilcox Paxton, passed away on October 14, 2009 from brain cancer. Sad as this news is, I cannot help but smile when I think of her, as she always made me laugh.

My first AEA show was in 1984, *Foxfire*, at the Alliance Theatre in Atlanta, GA. *Foxfire* was Collin's last AEA show; she played the Jessica Tandy part, and I played the ingénue. She left Hollywood to return to her mountain home in Highlands, NC to attend to her dying mother. She only ventured forth for special parts. Somehow Artistic Director and friend, Fred Chappell, got her off her mountain to Atlanta to play the part which fit her like a glove.

I was so fortunate to have had the rare chance to work with her and even luckier that she became a lifelong friend. We referred to each other as T.M. (Theatre Mother) and T.D. (Theatre Daughter). She taught

me plenty about acting, men, and life. She loved champagne, dogs, America Spirit cigarettes, and smart people. She collected a family of artists—people came from far and wide to hold court with her on her idyllic mountain. Every woman I know held her in great awe, as she married a devoted man, Scott Paxton, 18 years her junior. Their loving 30-year marriage was an inspiration to all who knew them.

She and Scott founded the Highlands Studio for the Arts which provided a free arts education to the local public school children. Collin was also a talented writer. Her play *Papa's Angels*, was published by Samuel French and made into a film for CBS starring Scott Bakula and Cynthia Nixon.

She is best remembered for her brilliant performance as "Mayella Violet Ewell," the white-trash girl who accuses a black man of raping her in the classic 1962 film, *To Kill a Mockingbird*. She received AEA's Clarence Derwent Award for her Broadway debut in *The Day the Money Stopped*. She worked with Mike Nichols and Elaine May in the improv troupe Compass in Chicago. She was a member of The Actors Studio and was a particular favorite of Lee Strasberg.

In 1995, Collin was coaxed off her mountain again to play the part of a magical homeless woman who adopts a dog named "Fluke" in the film of the same name. I had a small role in the film, which was directed by the Italian director, Carlo Carlei. I was thrilled to be able to work with Collin one last time. At the end of filming, Carlo agonized over what to do with the puppy. Of course it was decided that the lucky puppy would "retire" to a fabulous dog's life with Scott, Collin and all their dogs.

My darling T.M., I love you and miss you, but I promise to keep laughing.

Clarinda Ross

Dear Editor:

On August 15, 2009 Phil DiMaggio, AEA stage manager and casting director, passed away in his beloved adopted state of Vermont where he lived with his companion of 33 years, Lee Groghan.

I was lucky enough to have worked with Phil for many years when he joined Julie Hughes and me at Hughes Moss Casting. He was beloved by the

entire acting community and he loved them back. Phil was one of the sweetest men you could ever meet. He was also an excellent stage manager and was production stage manager on Broadway's *Precious Sons* as well as the National tours of *Tap Dance Kid* and *On Your Toes* (with Leslie Caron). Other National tours he stage managed were *Good Evening, Pippin, Hellzapoppin'* (Jerry Lewis), and *Guys and Dolls* (Debbie Allen). He remembered The Actors Fund in his will and I'm sure he would like to have any contributions in his name go to The Actors Fund as well. Phil will be greatly missed.

Barry Moss, New York

REMEMBERING DOUGLAS CAMPBELL

Dear Editor:

I write this to call attention to the extraordinary life and work of the great actor, director and theatrical artist, Douglas Campbell. Douglas died of a heart attack on October 6, 2009. Nearby were his children and his wife, Moira Wylie, a woman of strength, warmth and wit.

In the US, Douglas will be remembered as the man who succeeded Tyrone Guthrie as Artistic Director of the Guthrie Theater Company, and for his performances on Broadway in *Gideon* opposite Frederic March and later as Martin Dysart in *Equus*. In England, he was a leading actor with the Old Vic and was mentored by Sir Lewis Casson, whose daughter Ann was his first wife. In Canada, he was one of the founding company members of

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2010 Annual Election Calendar

Tuesday, February 23, 2010	Deadline for Reports of all Nominating Committees
Friday, March 5, 2010	Deadline for Nominations by Independent Petition (Materials due in all three Regional Offices by 2 p.m. Eastern Time)
Wednesday, March 10, 2010	Deadline for Candidates' Statements for Equity News, Equity Website, and Ballot Brochure (Due in all three Regional Offices by 2 p.m. Eastern Time)
	Lottery for Ballot Placement (National Office)
Friday, April 9, 2010	Annual National Membership Meeting (All regions via teleconference) Candidate Speeches
Monday, April 12, 2010	Distribution of ballots (from balloting company)
Friday, May 21, 2010	Deadline for receipt of ballots
Saturday, May 22, 2010	Tabulation Day

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



ACTORS'
EQUITY
ASSOCIATION 1913

EQUITYNEWS

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Decade of Taxation

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and state tax on your benefits. New York State will withhold a maximum of 2.5% state tax on your unemployment benefits. For more information about New York withholding, contact Valerie LaVarco at the New York Equity office: (212) 869-8530, Ext. 327.

Other 2009 Highlights are as follows:

1. Withholding payments to the Social Security Administration

are assessed on higher amounts this year, as in every previous year. You and your employer will pay 6.2% on every dollar you earn up to \$106,800 – up from last year's \$102,000. There is no limit on the earnings amount for the 1.45% tax to Medicare.

2. Mileage rates for 2009 have been lowered to 55¢ for business mileage, 24¢ for medical and moving mileage and remain at 14¢ for your charitable miles driven. These rates are for those who do *not* claim actual auto expenses. A reminder that business mileage consists of the driving you do in search of work, driving out of town on a job in your own vehicle and any miles you incur driving for your employer for which you are not reimbursed. It does not include commuting back and forth to work.

3. Purchasers of a new (first-user) vehicle, truck or motor home may claim the

sales tax paid as either a standard or itemized deduction this year. Qualifications apply.

4. Convert your IRA to a Roth and pay your taxes over the next two years (2011 & 2012) on the converted amount. The new law waives the \$100,000 income limitation, but the 5-year holding rule still applies for these accounts.

5. New York Metropolitan Commuter Transportation Mobility Tax levies an additional tax of .34% on New York metropolitan area net income from self-employment, a partnership or a limited liability company that exceeds \$10,000. Separate estimated taxes must be filed by those affected by this new provision.

(Due to space constraints, the following topics are discussed on the web site: Making Work Pay Credit, Economic Recovery Payment, Foreclosure Relief, Mortgage Insurance Premium Deduction, First-time Homebuyer and Long-time Homebuyer Credits, Increased College Credit, Capital Gains Rates, Kiddie Taxes, and Property Tax Standard Deduction.)

Sandra Karas is Secretary-Treasurer of Actors' Equity, a member of SAG and AFTRA, a VITA Volunteer and an attorney in private practice in the areas of tax, estate planning and business law.

From the EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Strong and United

By Carol Waaser

I feel privileged to be addressing you as Acting Executive Director of Actors' Equity. I joined the Association 40 years ago as a rookie stage manager and it has been the one constant in my career and my life. And Equity remains constant even in transition. Although we have had an unexpected change in leadership, the union remains strong and united. We are moving forward.

The December issue of Equity News contained the Annual Report, giving many statistics for the 2008-9 season and comparing those statistics to years past. Many of you have little interest in statistics. That's as it should be – you give the world your artistry and the Equity staff in turn takes care of the mundane. However, what you should know from the comparison of the past season with seasons ten and 20 years ago, is that Equity has grown. During a period when most unions in the United States have

contracted, losing both members and jobs, Equity has made gains in virtually every category: membership, workweeks, average number of open companies per week, percentage of members who worked during the season, and median annual earnings.

We will continue to grow. We will continue to negotiate fair wages and working conditions while making more job opportunities available to members. And we will continue to administer contracts with great diligence. What enables us to do this is the extraordinary talent of you, the membership, and your steadfast belief that you are professionals who should be compensated and treated fairly. You are well-represented by the members you elect to be Officers and Councillors and by the members who volunteer to be Deputies and serve on committees. Not everyone has to volunteer, but every one of you must stand up for your right to be a professional.

For as long as I've been on the Equity staff (some 27 years), the leadership has debated how to balance our need to create more job opportunities with our desire to improve terms and working conditions. In many instances, the only way to create more job opportunities is

initially to lower the terms under which we're willing to work in a particular venue, then try to improve those terms as the venue gains audiences in response to better productions. It will be a never-ending balancing act. Those who are not working will urge the union to organize non-union sectors and recapture jobs that we've lost. When we do bring these job opportunities under contract, those who take the jobs will decry the lowering of standards. We need all your voices in the debate in order to stay in balance as we continue to organize.

We also have an opportunity over the next three years to bring Equity and the value of live theatre to the attention of current and potential audiences and of legislators throughout the country. Equity turns 100 in just under three and a half years! You will be seeing more over the coming months about plans for a year-long celebration that will begin in the spring of 2012. And while it will be a very personal birthday celebration for Equity and its membership, it will also be a public celebration of professional live theatre and its importance to our culture and to our national character. As former Councillor Madeleine Sherwood used to declare, "Long live live theatre!"

Producer Carleton Davis Dies

Awarded AEA Life Membership in 1999

Carleton Davis, former Artistic Director of the Cape Playhouse in Dennis, MA, who received a Life Membership in Equity in 1999, died in Sarasota, Florida on October 30, 2009. He was 77.

Mr. Davis was a professional singer who performed with the Metropolitan Opera Company and New York City Opera, as well as in Broadway musicals and national touring companies. Later, he was a producer of touring musicals and plays for leading summer theatres throughout the country and the artistic director/producer at the Cape Playhouse, America's oldest professional summer theatre. So great was his influence, that the COST (Council of Stock Theatres) group of theatres with which Equity negotiated was informally known as the Carleton Davis Circuit.

On November 16, 1999, upon retiring from the Cape Playhouse, he was awarded a Life Membership in Equity.

Councillor Larry Cahn made the presentation on behalf of



Councillor Jeanne Lehman is flanked by Carleton Davis (l) and Richard Natkowski.

the Stock Committee and the Advisory Committee on Chorus Affairs, calling Mr. Davis "a great friend of this union and a great member of this union... who had a deep and abiding affection" for Actors and who had provided countless work weeks to Equity members over the years. Mr. Davis, in turn, said that his aim at the Cape Playhouse was to make it the most Equity Actor friendly theatre in America.

Retired Equity staffer Richard Natkowski, Mr. Davis' partner for 48 years, is his lone survivor along with Mr. Wesley, their pet Schnauzer.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Actors' Equity Foundation, 165 West 46th Street, New York 10036.

Health Care

Continued from page 1

have to face that choice.

There is a great deal of talk now about scaling back health care plans and it is looking more and more like a bill will be passed piecemeal, include a tax on health care and an individual mandate with subsidies that are regulated state-by-state. At press time, this is where things stood:

The outcome of the special senatorial election in Massachusetts changed the balance of power in the Senate. The Obama administration no longer has a filibuster-proof Senate forcing the Executive branch and House to reset their sights with regard to the content of a health care bill as well as the method for getting it passed.

There are a few options open to lawmakers in order to move forward:

1. They can go back to the formal reconciliation process. Rather than modifying the Senate bill alone, a small committee made up of House and Senate members would address both bills simultaneously and blend various components of each. In reconciliation it would be possible for both houses to get rid of the worst pieces of the bill and the process requires only 51 votes in the Senate to pass it. Because of the reconciliation rules agreed to early in the reform process, a filibuster would not be allowed. It is unclear however, whether or not

there are enough favorable votes in the Senate for a reconciled bill to pass.

2. There can be a "fix it" bill submitted to the Senate that would function as an amendment to the original Senate bill. This "fix it" bill would include several of the compromises agreed to in mid-January. It would also be subject to the reconciliation process but not all items would meet the test for what can be done via reconciliation (items must have a budgetary impact to be considered). It will then have to be passed by both houses in addition to the House having to pass the original Senate bill.

3. The House could pass the Senate bill as is and wait to make amendments to the worst pieces of it bit by bit over time. It is also uncertain in this instance whether or not there are enough favorable votes in the House for the bill to pass as is.

4. Finally, they could scrap the entire process and start over from the beginning. This is an unlikely step but a possibility nonetheless and an idea being championed by several lawmakers.

President Obama has announced that he does not want Congress to move forward until Scott Brown has been sworn into office (the schedule for which remains up in the air) and has advised that Congress "try to move quickly to coalesce around those elements in the package that people agree on," but it is unclear what direction

things will take once that is done. The bottom line is that Americans cannot afford rising health care costs and something must be done.

Either bill in its current form will affect the Equity Health Trust Fund. Even the best case scenario of the available options will have an impact. Member participation in this fight has made a difference. We were heard and were instrumental in the compromises that were reached with regard to the tax, affordability and minimizing the effects on multi-employer plans. We will have to continue this work to ensure those compromises are retained in the final bill or inserted over time.

Equity will be tracking the process as it unfolds over the next few weeks and, as always, will pay particular attention to the bill components that are tied to our specific concerns. Of utmost importance are:

1. A Nationally-regulated exchange rather than one regulated state-to-state. This helps to keep costs down and is closer to functioning like a single payer system.

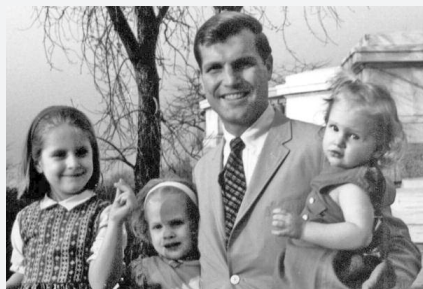
2. The possibility of a 40% tax on health care.

3. The affordability of an individual mandate, and

4. Any adverse effects the bill would have on multi-employer plans such as Equity's.

For more information and recommended reading visit www.actorsequity.org

Conard and I became friends because we had so much in common. We graduated from New York's School of Performing Arts and then went on to Yale — undergraduate: an unusual journey. We even had the same reunion year for the two schools. We did shows at Yale's Dramat; were members of Mory's; worked on the daytime drama, *As the World Turns* and did shows at the Westport Country Playhouse. We both owned the first edition of the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language



Conard with his daughters (from l) Cly, Amy and Katherine.

and enjoyed meeting in diners and coffee shops. He claimed I knew every "lunch counter" on the island of Manhattan. Always ready to discuss figures of speech and literary devices, we also enjoyed picking pennies up off the pavement. I have been proud to serve alongside Conard on the Council of Actors' Equity Association for the past fifteen years.

Now, I could talk about Conard's passion for taxes and his service to Equity, or his devotion to fellow actors and respect for correct English grammar and usage, but my colleagues say it beautifully so...

I'll talk about the kids and the jokes. Conard really loved kids. The small ones, toddling on their toes, made him laugh. The older ones, he believed, should be handled by their parents with "benign

neglect." He enjoyed vetting the college scholarship applications for AFTRA and we spoke about the components of a good college essay: content and form. He was my most loquacious speaker on a panel that I moderated for Equity Young Performers this past fall and he spoke eloquently, yet clearly, about taxes, to parents and kids who were new to show business. My friends from Performing Arts enjoyed Conard. He delighted in their jocular and they were impressed with all his stories of the original school. He was, after all, in the second graduating class. He liked reminding me that Sidney Lumet was one of his teachers.

Finally, there was always humor. Conard saw the humor in everyday life. It was easy to make him laugh and he gave people the benefit of the doubt. He liked meeting new people and hearing their stories, which is why, he told me, he enjoyed doing taxes. A new client meant hearing a whole new story; a former client was like seeing an old friend.

I just saw Conard's photo on display at the Library of Performing Arts in New York — in memoriam along with a handful of other

REMEMBERING CONARD FOWKES

prominent theatrical figures who had recently passed away. When I told the librarian to change the spelling from *Conrad* to *Conard*, a reversal of letters that he was always battling, I swear I saw a twinkle in his eye. I shall miss Conard terribly. Quoting Robert Browning, he always said to me, "the best is yet to be." Now I'll answer, quoting George Gershwin, "who could ask for anything more."

— Nicole Flender



Conard and Cody.

Having known and worked with Connie Fowkes for so many years, my love and respect just grew with each encounter and each Equity meeting. Connie loved language, literature, and liberally tasty theatre humor. More, as Treasurer of Equity, he attempted to keep the Council and membership constantly aware of the importance of our economic viability. I

think that we were fortunate to have Connie with us for so long. He made my life better and wiser, and for his personal gift of friendship, I shall always be grateful.

— Jeanna Belkin



Conard with the VITA volunteers.

Conard Fowkes: A man of noble spirit, flawless grammar and disarming humor.

With big affection,
— André De Shields

It's difficult to remember Conard Fowkes as anything other than a hero. His legacy as an advocate for Actors is profound and far-reaching. He was indomitable, whether testifying before Congress, wrestling with the IRS, or reminding Equity Council of its fiscal and moral responsibilities. His sense of humor and exquisite articulation made us all feel smarter than we probably deserved. Personally, I still can't believe he was working on my tax audit while dealing with his illness up to the very end. He encouraged the better angels of our natures, and I will miss him, comforted by the certainty that he lives on in all of us, who are better for his touch.

— Francis Jue

If there was a "Lion of the Council

Award," Connie would win it. Strong, a real leader, one who put the betterment of the anonymous Actor ahead of his own ego. What a man...we all owe him a lot.. He is missed.

— Dev Kennedy

I've known Connie since I first started attending meetings at Equity. His booming and authoritative voice would call from the back of the room, either to correct grammar or educate us all on tax law, but always, he spoke with humor and passion. We will miss him.

— Paige Price

Conard was a true gentleman. He was the consummate union member who always acted with clarity, fairness and truth. He will be missed by all, but remembered forever. Thank you, Conard, for your enduring work on our union and members' behalf.

— Nancy Slusser

Conard's leadership, sense of humor, generosity of spirit and profound wisdom all wrapped up in one divine curmudgeonly package taught many of us so much. Generations of actors to come will never know how much his tireless work changed their lives. But he lives in all of us whose lives he touched...which means he will live on forever.

— Christine Toy Johnson

Equity Mourns Passing of Conard Fowkes

Conard Fowkes, Equity's long-time Secretary/Treasurer and a co-founder of the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program (VITA), died on December 14, 2009 following a long battle with pancreatic cancer. He was 76.

Mr. Fowkes was elected to Equity's Council in 1973, and served as the Association's Secretary-Treasurer from 1988 until May, 2009. He co-founded VITA in 1977, and in the years since, has assisted thousands of AEA members with their income taxes. In 1986, his advocacy led to the creation of the Qualified Performing Artist deduction in the Federal Tax

Code. Acting Executive Director Carol Waaser said: "We are tremendously saddened by the passing of our dedicated and esteemed colleague and Councillor, Conard Fowkes... His work has touched the lives of thousands of our members in countless ways. He knew the challenges that actors

and stage managers faced and worked tirelessly to improve their circumstances. Conard always brought wit and charm to our Council Room and will be sorely missed. We wish to extend our condolences to his family and friends at this difficult time."

In 1958, Mr. Fowkes made his Broadway debut in *Howie* and got his Equity card. He worked in all facets of the entertainment industry—theatre, television, film and radio—and was a contract player on eight different soap operas, including *As The World Turns*, *Search For Tomorrow*, and *The Edge of Night*, as well as numerous episodes of the cult series, *Dark Shadows*.

Mr. Fowkes' union service is as extensive as his theatrical biography. During his 36 years on Council, he chaired or served on numerous committees, including House Affairs;

LORT; Film, Recording and Pay TV; Investments and the National Plenary. He also served as Treasurer for the Actors' Equity Foundation and Actors' Equity Holding Corporation and was a Vice-Chair of the Staff Pension Plan Trustees. He served on the LORT Negotiating Team in 1984, 1985 and 1988. He also served on the Boards of National AFTRA and its New York Local.

In 2009, Mr. Fowkes received the Patrick Quinn Award for Distinguished Service to Actors, which recognizes and rewards those who give of themselves to improve the lives of actors. In her tribute, read at the

presentation, Sandra Karas, Equity's newly-elected Secretary-Treasurer, said:

"What would arguably become his most notable and enduring contribution to our Union was the founding of the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program—VITA—with Michael Enserro and Schorling Schneider in 1977. Of signal importance was the successful

Congressional lobbying campaign in 1986 to include theatrical artists in the Internal Revenue Code for the first time in its history. Mr. Fowkes was part of Equity's delegation, along with representatives from SAG and AFTRA, whose efforts resulted in landmark legislation, recognizing our members' work and creating a special provision for low-income performers.

Mr. Fowkes is survived by his wife of 52 years, former actress Jacqueline Hernly; his daughters, Cly, Amy and Katherine; his eight year old grandson, Matteo Neri, and a sister, Diane Zellers.

Contributions may be made to the Actors' Equity Foundation, 165 West 46th Street, New York, NY 10036. Please indicate that the contribution is for the VITA program.

A memorial service is to be announced.



Ensign Fowkes circa 1954.



POSTCARDS from the Regions

Chicago, Los Angeles

Programs set for Black History Month

The **Western Region Equal Employment Opportunity Committee** is presenting *Standing on My Sisters' Shoulders: Celebrating the Classical Works of African American Women Playwrights* for Black History Month. The event will be held on Monday, February 22, 2010 at the state-of-the-art Nate Holden Performing Arts Center, home to the Ebony Repertory Theatre Company, the only Black Equity theatre company in Southern California. Featured playwrights include Georgia Douglas Johnson, Eulalie Spence, Marita Bonner, Alice Childress, Zora Neale Hurston and Adrienne

Kennedy.

The **Central Region EEO Committee** is presenting *Spirit 2010: A Celebration of Diversity* on Monday, March 15, 2010 at 6 p.m. This year's celebration, once again, will be hosted by Chicago's award-winning Goodman Theatre and will honor members of color and minority-focused theatres. Co-Chairs Cheryl Lynn Bruce and E. Faye Butler will present the 2010 Spirit Award to several independent directors that have made non-traditional casting a major part of their careers. For more information, contact Luther Goins, (312) 641-0393 or lgoins@actorsequity.org.

New York

New Off-Broadway Pact Includes Improvements in Salaries, Working Conditions

Equity and the Off Broadway League have reached a new three year agreement, which will extend to the end of October, 2012.

Highlights of the agreement include:

- A salary increase in the first and third years, with retroactivity to November 9, 2009.
- Media payment of .5 percent in years one and two and 1.5 percent in year three.
- For the first time, replacement auditions are required for long running shows.

With the economic downturn impacting the theatrical community, two significant changes to the contract were made in the spirit of addressing the heavy burden affecting Off-Broadway. Members of the Off-Broadway League may now produce shows in the Broadway Box in Off-Broadway-sized houses of 499 seats or less without paying a salary premium. This would not apply to any productions that have been on Broadway within six months of the Off-Broadway opening. In addition, actors who perform in productions that fall under the D and E categories in the Off-Broadway agreement may no longer leave for more remunerative employment and then return to the production. In the A, B, and C categories, actors may leave for no longer than two weeks and only then if it is for employment on a Union contract.

"Despite the economic challenges faced by the Off-Broadway community, Equity was able to achieve an agreement that includes increased salaries and important achievements in working conditions that we have wanted for some time," said Rick Berg, Eastern Regional Director and Chief Negotiator for the contract. "I applaud the dedication and perseverance of our negotiating team for their pursuit of a strong and viable contract for our members who work Off-Broadway."

There were 6,127 workweeks for Equity members in the 2008-2009 season, compared to 7,083 workweeks in the 2007-2008 season. On a weekly average, there were 13 Off-Broadway companies during the 2008-2009 and the average weekly salary was \$647.

The Off-Broadway negotiating team was chaired by Brian Myers Cooper. Vice Chairs were Third Vice President Ira Mont, Jeff Williams, Nancy Slusser and Nick Wyman. The team included members Linda Cameron, Wally Dunn, Jana Llynn, Melissa Robinette, Bernita Robinson, Irma Rogers, Julia Breanetta Simpson, Eastern Regional Vice President Kate Shindle, Roger Preston Smith and Allyson Tucker. In addition to Mr. Berg, staff included Maria Cameron, Michelle Kelts, Frank Stancati and David Westphal.

Anchorage, Alaska

Not an Igloo in Sight in The Great White North

By Selena Moshell

When one thinks of Alaska, certain images come to mind: grizzly bears, snow-capped mountains, salmon spawning, and... a captivated, cultured, appreciative theatre audience? Well, I didn't imagine that last one either before our run in Alaska with the Gazelle Company of *The Lion King*. But after six weeks in the Great White North, all of my pre-conceived notions of Alaska were gone.

Initially, when our touring schedule read "Anchorage, Alaska – September to October," I inwardly groaned. Imagining igloos and ice-fishing camps littering the horizon, I didn't expect to have anything to do beyond exploring the tundra with typical tourist outfits and once I had exhausted all of my touristy options, being bored for the rest of our run. I also expected the community to be lackluster in its support of a Broadway tour. After all, the residents would all be too busy hunting and fishing, or so I assumed. Well, I'm relieved to say that I couldn't have been more wrong.

We arrived and performed our opening week to roaring



The Lion King in Alaska: (l to r, back) Michael Henry, Melissa Palmer, Tony Freeman, Christine Horn, Reuven Weizber, Jason Veasey; (middle) Maurica Roland, Jeremy Weatherspoon, Alex Lykins, Selena Moshell, Christine Weizber, Susan Dunstan; (front) Eric Hagenbarth, Todd Kunze, Electra Weston.

crowds, which at first we discounted as "Opening Week Fever," when everyone is excited, no matter the caliber of the show. But as week four approached and the crowds swelled in number and exuberance, we knew that Alaska loved us. In fact, I later met a local who had seen our show no less than four times in six weeks.

As for our free time, there was no lack of activities to occupy us. From gorgeous glacier tours, to flight-seeing around the mountains, to whale-watching cruises, there were too many breathtaking adventures

to fit into six weeks.

Furthermore, there wasn't an igloo in sight—rather, a cute little downtown area complete with a mall filled with all the amenities you could need. (In other words, it had a Nordstrom's among its many stores. We were set!!)

In all, our time in Alaska was beyond our wildest expectations: fun, exciting and appreciated. The location, the community and the conveniences were well above average, and I know my fellow cast members and I have many cherished memories of our time in Alaska.

Chicago

Chicago, UK Theatres Meet And Greet

Chicago Shakespeare Theater welcomed the leadership of some of the United Kingdom's best-known and most prestigious theatres and representatives of Chicago's theatre community at a meet and greet luncheon in Chicago Shakespeare's Dress Circle Lobby on December 11, 2009. The visit was organized by Britain's leading cultural advocate, the British Council. Attendees included CST Board members and representatives of Chicago's culture community, tourism industry and the media.

Following a welcome by CST Artistic Director Barbara Gaines and Executive Director Criss Henderson, the group was addressed by the British Council's Sally Cowling and Chicago Tribune theatre critic Chris Jones. The leadership of five elite UK companies: the Royal National Theatre, the Royal Court Theatre, English Touring Theatre, National Theatre of Wales and Chichester Festival Theatre were there to forge relationships that would open the

doors for increased collaboration and touring opportunities.

Among the Chicago theatres and organizations represented were The Auditorium Theatre, Steppenwolf, Remy Bumppo Theatre, Northlight Theatre, Victory Gardens Theater, American Theater Company, Timeline Theatre, Goodman Theatre, Harris Theater, Chicago Dramatists and Broadway in Chicago.

Central Regional Director Kathryn V. Lamkey, who represented Equity, praised the event, saying: "It is important for Equity to be a part of discussions that involve future initiatives for cultural exchange and collaboration. We are an integral element in the facilitation of such relationships. We welcome discussions that serve our membership and help to enrich the world theatrical scene."

Chicago

Members Discuss Flying Solo

The Central Membership Education Committee has scheduled a free solo performance workshop and



seminar, *Flying Solo*, on Saturday, February 27, 2010 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at The Theatre Building, 1225 W. Belmont Avenue in Chicago. There will be guest panelists, a Q&A, resource lists and door prizes. Expand your creative talents with your fellow artists. For more information: dmdorsey@aol.com.

Chicago**“Hairspray” is Concerned**

The company, of *Hairspray*, including Central Regional Board member E. Faye Butler, at the Marriott Lincolnshire Dinner Theatre raised \$11,206 in December 2009 for Season of Concern, the Chicagoland theatre community's fundraising effort to support the fight against HIV and AIDS.

**New York****Gypsy of the Year Sets a New Record**

The audience leapt to its feet when Bernadette Peters and *Superior Donuts*' Michael McKean announced that a record breaking \$4,630,695 had been raised by 60 Broadway, Off-Broadway and national touring shows in the six weeks of fundraising leading up to the 21st Annual Gypsy of the Year Competition.

More history was made when *A Steady Rain* – led by stars Daniel Craig and Hugh Jackman – raised the most money of any show in the history of the event, collecting \$1,549,952! This total beats the previous all-time fundraising record of \$632,998 set in 2003 by Jackman and the

company of *The Boy from Oz*.

Hosted by Julie White / *The Understudy* and Broadway personality Seth Rudetsky, audiences at two packed performances at The Palace Theatre were treated to a bevy of talent and show-stopping presentations created by the casts of 18 shows.

Judges awarded “Best Presentation” to the merry men of *Chicago*, while cast members from the current revival of *West Side Story* closed the show and received the

“First Runner-Up” prize.

Top Broadway fundraiser, raising \$161,060 was *The Phantom of the Opera*. The company of *Phantom* has participated in every Gypsy of the Year Competition since the first in 1989. For a complete story and more pictures go to www.broadwaycares.org.



Daniel Craig (l) and Hugh Jackman.
(Photo: Peter James Zielinski)

André De Shields Receives Sixth AUDELCO Award**But What in the World is AUDELCO?**

Answer: One of the best-kept secrets in all of New York City. AUDELCO, an acronym for Audience Development Committee, is the nation's foremost not-for-profit organization dedicated to recognizing, promoting awareness of, and celebrating excellence in Black Theatre.

Early in her career as a reviewer of theatre for the venerable *Amsterdam News*, Vivian Robinson—noting the paucity of Black theatre in Broadway venues and decrying the meager size of audiences in attendance at nontraditional theatres off and off-off Broadway—single handedly went about resolving the situation. Eventually in 1973, a quartet of determined women—Ms. Robinson, Renée



André De Shields and Julia Breanetta Simpson.

Chenoweth, Winnie Richardson and Doris Smith—founded and incorporated the Audience Development Committee. It was not long thereafter that the pioneering four instituted an award bearing AUDELCO's moniker.

After the death in 1997 of Vivian Robinson, the 25th

Anniversary Awards Event featured the renaming of the AUDELCO Award as The Viv in honor of its founder.

This year marked the 37th Annual Vivian Robinson/AUDELCO Recognition Awards for Excellence in Black Theatre. The highlight of this year's event was the presentation to Councillor, André De Shields, of The Viv for Outstanding Performance in a Musical/Male for his title role in the Classical Theatre of Harlem's production of *Archbishop Supreme Tartuffe*.

For more details regarding AUDELCO, please go to www.AUDELCO.net. Thanks to Grace Jones, AUDELCO's current Executive Director, for her help with researching the information provided in this article.

Central Region**Staff Attends Meetings in Liaison Cities**

Central Region Director Kathryn V. Lamkey, Central Region Vice President Dev Kennedy and/or Regional staff members attended membership meetings in Milwaukee, New Orleans, Detroit and St. Louis in November 2009.

In **Milwaukee**, discussion at the November 9 meeting centered on the Members' Project Code, which has not been used for some time in that area. Members thought it was something they wanted to know more about as it could be useful in their community.

The meeting in **New Orleans** on November 14 was the first since New Orleans received Liaison City designation. Approximately 30 members attended and all wanted to be involved with the Liaison Committee. It was noted that New Orleans has no geographic theatre district. It was also noted that there is a great deal of film activity in the area, resulting in an increased Screen Actors Guild membership. National Equal Employment Opportunity Coordinator Luther Goins was

commended for his outreach efforts in the area. Mr. Goins said that there has been increased outreach to Equity from the members and producers in New Orleans, adding that “the word on the street is, ‘just call Equity.’”

In **Detroit** on December 14, discussion focused on the members' need to work together and stay motivated during tough times. Central Regional Vice President Dev Kennedy answered questions, which everyone appreciated. While there, Equity Reps were able to see productions at Detroit Rep and The Gem Theatre.

In **St. Louis**, members gathered on November 16 expressed concern about the lack of local hiring at the larger LORT theatres. Beyond that, however, members were pleased that Equity is working to get theatres using Special Appearance contracts to sign on to standard Agreements. One success in this area is the New Jewish Theatre, which is to become a Small Professional Theatre (SPT) in Fall 2010.

Houston**No Scrooge in Texas**

A cast of 22 in *A Christmas Carol* and a cast of one in *The Santaland Diaries* joined forces at Houston's Alley Theatre and over 32 performances in four weeks raised more than \$50,000 for Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS. “I'd never done this before,” said Charles Swan, Equity deputy at *A Christmas Carol*. “But when the materials arrived from BC/EFA, I went

around to the cast, got permission from management and got things started. The first night was really overwhelming,” he adds.

Meanwhile across the way at The Alley's Hugo Neuhaus Theatre, Todd Waite faced a more lonely task as a cast of one. “I wasn't sure how I was going to pull this off,” said Todd, “but I really wanted to do it.”



(L to r) Margery Beddow, Marge Champion, Nicole Barth, DO40 President John Sefakis, Gemze de Lappe and Billie Mahoney.

New York**Dancers Over 40 Honors Five**

Dancers Over 40 honored Nicole Barth, Margery Beddow, Marge Champion, Gemze de Lappe and Billie Mahoney before a full house at Swing 46 on December 13, 2009. The five women, “whose careers, lives and deeds have exceeded expectations and whose contributions to the art of dance have been considerable,” received DO40's Legacy Award. Guest Hostess was Carol Channing a/k/a Richard Skipper.

Video clips from the event are

available at www.youtube.com/dancersover40 and on their Facebook page, Dancers Over 40, along with over 60 photos. A video of the Awards will be donated to the Jerome Robbins Dance Collection at Lincoln Center Library for the Performing Arts.

Sadly, Marge Beddow died on January 3, 2010. A memorial service is being planned for April. For information, visit www.margerybeddow.com or www.dancersover40.com.

New York**Credit Union Sets Annual Meeting**

The Annual Meeting of Actors Federal Credit Union will be held on Friday, March 6, 2010 from 3:30 – 5:30 p.m. in the Council Room on the 14th Floor of the Equity Building, 165 West 46th Street. Included on the agenda are Board and Credit Committee elections as well as the State of the Union address by ActorsFCU President Jeff Rodman. There will also be refreshments and door prizes.

New York

Equity Foundation Presents Classic, Shakespeare Awards

Three acting awards were presented by the Equity Foundation at the Eastern Regional Membership Meeting on January 8, 2010. Foundation President Arne Gundersen was on hand to talk about the Foundation, and Councillor Francis Jue emceed the presentation.

Joe A. Callaway Award

Kate Forbes and John Douglas Thompson received the Joe A. Callaway Award honoring the best performance by a female and male actor in a professional production of a classic play (one written prior to 1920) in

The Irish Repertory Theatre.

Ms. Forbes was unable to attend the meeting. Nevertheless, Jeffrey Horowitz, Artistic Director of Theatre for a New Audience, spoke on her behalf.

Equity Councillor André De Shields presented John Douglas Thompson's award

Bayfield Award

David Pittu received the St. Clair Bayfield Award honoring the best performance by an actor in a Shakespearean play in the New York metropolitan area. He was recognized for his perform-

ance as the clown, Feste, in the Public Theatre's Shakespeare in the Park production of *Twelfth Night*. The award was presented by Jay O. Sanders.

The awards include crystal plaques and \$1,000 checks for all three recipients.

The Judges Panel included Joe Dziemianowicz, Daily News; Adam Feldman, Time Out NY; Susan Haskins, Theater Talk; Harry Haun, Playbill, Michael Kuchwara, Associated Press, and David Rosenberg, Back Stage.



(L to r) Jay O. Sanders, David Pittu, Arne Gundersen and Francis Jue at the Callaway and Bayfield Award presentation.

the New York metropolitan area. Ms. Forbes was recognized for her performance in the Theatre for a New Audience production of *Othello*. Mr. Thompson was cited for his performances both in *Othello* and in the title role of *The Emperor Jones* presented by

Los Angeles

AEA's Lucy Jordan Award Goes to Diane Ronnenberg

This year's recipient of the Lucy Jordan Humanitarian Award is Diane Ronnenberg, wardrobe mistress and dresser.

Members and colleagues have sung Diane's praises: "She truly goes 'above and beyond' in taking care of the performers' needs. She's more sensitive than any other dresser I've worked with in terms of how to approach the performer," says Lewis Wilkenfeld, Artistic Director, Cabrillo Music Theatre. "Diane is patient beyond belief... and compassionate," says Lise Lange, wardrobe. "She solves problems before you even know they're problems. She's almost entirely unflappable even in the face of the biggest backstage meltdown. I remember thinking that if they were tasked with the same job, my own mother or husband or brother wouldn't have taken care of me as completely, as calmly, as cheerfully, as Diane," according to actor Jill Van Velzer. "She goes the extra several miles always serving the production, selflessly. Diane sets the standard and helps any theatre with which she works to brand

themselves with a gold star," adds Linda Purl, Producer, California International Theatre Festival. And, from actor Shannon Warne: "Diane



Shannon Warne (l) congratulates Diane Ronnenberg.

deserves to be acknowledged because she is an incredible nonsense, ultra-organized, professional dresser, with a big heart and a warm hug."

Upon learning she had received the Lucy Jordan Award, Diane was surprised and honored, noting she is just doing her job. "For all these wonderful people I've taken care of, it's been a blessing. I've thoroughly enjoyed it, and I hope to do it for a while longer."

Chicago

Members Discuss Changes in LORT, CAT Contracts

The Central Region Membership Education Committee held a meeting on November 9, 2009 entitled *Media, Money and Me—Changes in LORT and CAT*. Senior Business Rep Christine Provost discussed the changes in the new LORT and CAT contracts and provided documents outlining the changes.

Committee Chair Ariane Dolan reports: "Of particular interest to the members attending were the new Media capture rules, which allow producers much more flexibility in where, when, and how much capture they do. The discussion was lively, and all agreed that we are traveling through new waters with media. In the CAT contract, Equity members' signatures are

no longer required for archival taping, and greater flexibility in scheduling of performances has been granted to producers. It is the advice of the Membership Education Committee that members working under these new agreements take a look at the changes before starting rehearsals, and *always* read your contract and rider before you sign them."

New York

"In the Spotlight" Brings Joy to Residents of Actors Fund Home

By Leslie Barrett

For those Equity members who have never visited the Lillian Booth Actors Home across the river in Englewood, New Jersey, a visit would surprise and please you. The Home and the grounds have been beautifully renovated. And if you were to have come on October 30, 2009, you would have seen Heather MacRae and her piano accompanist Mark Nadler perform.

Before the scheduled time of 2 p.m., the residents and patients (many wan, wrinkled, bent and gnarled) rolled into the lounge in wheelchairs, with walkers and with canes. They were aided by nurses and attendants, all knowing they were in for a treat. Most of them, former actors, singers, musicians, dancers, and yes, even producers of some note (like Philip Rose), are always pleased to have one of their own, like Heather MacRae, come to entertain. It brings back memories and relieves their aging pain and boredom.

[Equity Councillor] Maureen Moore, an actress and singer who volunteers, arranges to bring them here. The program is called *In the Spotlight*. Belle Vener, Maureen's mother-in-law whom she loves and cares for, is at the Home and that love emanates to all the residents.

At 2 p.m., the stage lights lit up and the pianist settled in. Then Heather MacRae in



Sheila and Heather MacRae.

glorious voice sang songs her father Gordon sang in his film musicals: *Oh What a Beautiful Morning*, *Surrey with the Fringe on Top*, *Tea for Two*, and several more. She was so pleased by the response coming from her aged audience, she sang encore after encore.

There was also an interlude when the pianist Mark Nadler sang and played a medley of Gershwin tunes.

But the piece de resistance was having Heather's elderly, charming mother, Sheila MacRae, and her two brothers join in.

It is always a joy to have the visiting performers spot one in the audience and stop the performance to greet the patient they knew so well from the past.

Assisted by nurses and caregivers the residents were returned to their rooms, still glowing from what they heard. Such entertainment is a real joy for those who will be here for the rest of their lives.

So when these performers came and were followed a few weeks later by Victor Garber, as a guest of John Erman who

every month brings stellar performers from stage and screen to the Home, all the residents were most appreciative. Victor is starring on Broadway in *Present Laughter*. He also charmed and sang for the assembled residents.

It is a treat to have today's talented performers share with the talented from years past, now living in the care of The Actors Fund Home.

In the Spotlight brings pleasure to those who all too often believe they are lost and forgotten. Maybe by family and friends of yore, but not by their peers in the present.

(Equity member Leslie Barrett is in Assisted Living. His wife, Ruth Livingston, is in the Enhanced Unit.)

Tax Help Available

In New York, the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) office is open from 11 a.m.-4 p.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays—*never* on Tuesdays. The office is on the 14th Floor of the Equity Building, 165 West 46th Street. You must come in person and show your paid-up union card in order to receive a packet of worksheets and make an appointment. Worksheets must be completed before your appointment. Walk-ins will be seen on a first-come, first-served basis provided worksheets have been completed.

Due to changes in regulations, the IRS-sponsored VITA program will *not* be offered in Los Angeles this year. However, SAG's Tax Assistance Program Committee will offer some assistance (similar to that offered in previous years) through the Packet Workshop (dates, times and location to be determined) and the Tax Helpdesk, which can be reached at (323) 549-6666. Packets can be picked up in the Kathleen Freeman Conference Room, inside the Committee Office on the first floor of the Museum Square Building, 5757 Wilshire Boulevard.

In Orlando, appointments will be scheduled in mid-February. Call the Equity Orlando office,

(407) 345-1522 for more information.

In Seattle, VITA will be open by appointment on Saturdays from March 13 through April 10, 2010 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. at Theatre Puget Sound, 305 Harrison Street on the fourth floor of the Seattle Center House. The site will also be open Monday evenings from 6-10 p.m. from March 15 through April 12 and on the 13th through 15th by appointment at the AFTRA Seattle office, 123 Boylston Avenue East, Suite A. Appointments may be scheduled beginning February 27. To make an appointment, call VITA Site Coordinator Chris Comte at (206) 459-2793 or email ccomte@aftra.com.

New York State

Taxes May Be Withheld From Unemployment Benefits

The New York State Department of Labor (DOL) has announced that claimants who are receiving NYS Unemployment Insurance benefits can now voluntarily elect to have state income tax withheld from their benefit checks. Previously only federal income taxes could voluntarily be withheld.

For more information, visit www.labor.state.ny.us/ui/claimantinfo/

[onceyouhaveappliedfaq.shtml](#) or call the NYS Unemployment Insurance Telephone Claims Center, (888) 209-8124.

For more information about Unemployment Insurance benefits, call AEA Business Representative Valerie LaVarco at (212) 869-8530 x 327. Tax assistance can be obtained from the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) office, (212) 921-2548.

New York

“Billy Elliot” Receives EEOC Diversity Award

The Eastern Equal Employment Opportunity Committee presented the second “Extraordinary Excellence in Diversity on Broadway Award” to *Billy Elliot, The Musical* on December 10 at the Eastern Regional Board meeting. The production was honored for its multi-ethnic casting of the role of Billy.

Eastern EEO Co-Chairs Christine Toy Johnson and Julia Breanetta Simpson presented



Trent Kowalik, Liam Redhead and Alex Ko.

the crystal plaque award to *Billy Elliot* General Manager Nina Lannan.

Go Green!

Pre-Register Now for Online Voting

In 2003, Equity became the first actors' entertainment union to offer online voting. This option has been tested and proven in six national elections and will again be offered in the upcoming 2010 Council elections.

Why vote electronically? If you're working out-of-town or on the road, you won't have to wait for a snail-mail ballot. It's fast, easy and secure — saving you time and Equity money.

Here's how it works: Go to

AEA's homepage actorsequity.org and click on the E-Voting link. After you have pre-registered, you will not receive a paper ballot in April. Instead, you'll receive an email from Election Services Corporation (AEA's election firm) with a unique log-on and instructions for e-balloting. The e-ballot website will have the candidates' statements and photos - the same information that you'll receive in your Equity News.

Parents Post Articles on Equity Website

The Equity Parents' Committee is providing regular articles on subjects of interest to parents for publication in Equity News and posting on the Equity website—www.actorsequity.org. Due to space constraints, however, it may not always be possible to include the articles in the News or the articles may have to be edited and shortened for publication. The full articles will continue to appear on the website.

Alive and Well

The In Memoriam listing in the October/November 2009 issue of Equity News included the name of Equity member Bill Grey. This has caused some confusion as another member, William Daniel Grey, sometimes known as Bill Grey, wants friends to know he is very much alive and well.

Office Closing

All Equity offices will be closed on Monday, February 15, 2010 in observation of Presidents Day.

Changes in Health Coverage Effective January 1, 2010

Physical Therapy and Chiropractic Benefits

A recent study commissioned by the Equity-League Health Fund Trustees has shown a higher than average utilization by Fund participants of certain Physical Therapy and Chiropractic services, especially by out-of-network providers. This has led to costs to the Fund that are much higher than for most health plans. In response, the Trustees have taken the following steps, effective January 1, 2010:

1. The Trustees have requested that CIGNA make vigorous efforts to recruit more Physical Therapy and Chiropractic providers into their network, particularly the providers who treat a high volume of Equity-League Fund participants. At the same time, the Fund is asking participants currently using out-of-network providers, to ask those providers to consider joining the CIGNA network.

2. The Trustees also have reduced co-pays for in-network Physical Therapy and Chiropractic providers from \$25 to \$15 in order to encourage members to use in-network benefits.

3. Finally, a \$4,000 combined calendar year annual cap (January through December of each year) has been placed on certain Chiropractic and Physical Therapy treatments in order to limit costs to the plan. However, if participants have suffered a severe injury or have a severe illness and are participating in CIGNA's Case Management program (a service that assists individuals with treatment needs beyond the acute care/hospital setting), benefits above \$4,000 may be authorized by CIGNA as part of an approved treatment.

For questions or further information, visit the website: health.equityleague.org or in New York, call (212) 869-9380 or outside of New York, (800) 344-5220.

Prescription Drug Plan

The study also identified another area of concern—the lack of use by Fund participants of CIGNA's Tel-Drug Home Delivery Pharmacy, the mail order service for prescriptions for maintenance drugs.

Therefore, effective January 1, 2010, the use of the CIGNA Tel-Drug Mail Order Service for maintenance drugs will be required after a prescription has been filled twice at a local retail pharmacy in 2010. If you choose to fill your prescription for such drugs at a retail pharmacy after the first two fills, you will be required to pay the full price (the prescription will not be covered by the Plan) and you will not receive any discounts offered by CIGNA under the Health Fund. However, for drugs that are newly prescribed to you, or for situations in which a new dose of a drug you have been taking is ordered by your physician, it is recommended that you secure your first 30-day supply at a retail pharmacy. This helps to assure that the drug is effective and does not generate serious side effects before you begin to take it on a long-term basis.

Prescription drugs from the CIGNA Tel-Drug Home Delivery Pharmacy may be ordered by telephone at (800) 285-4812 or by mail at CIGNA Tel-Drug Home Delivery Pharmacy, PO Box 1019, Horsham, PA 19044.

It should be noted that CIGNA's Mail Order Service can deliver drugs almost anywhere, including hotels and theatres, at no additional charge for a standard delivery. In addition, the address to which drugs are

sent can be easily changed many times per year, without any change being made to your permanent address, making it convenient to use the mail order service even if you are working out-of-town or on the road.

For questions regarding the CIGNA Mandatory Drug program, you can contact CIGNA Tel-Drug Home Delivery Pharmacy Service directly at (800) 835-3784, or call the Health Department at the Fund office: in New York (212) 869-9380 or outside of New York, (800) 344-5220.

Correction

P&H Cost Overstated

In the December issue of Equity News (page 6) in an article on administrative cost containment initiatives adopted by the Equity-League Pension & Health Trust Fund, it was erroneously reported that the Fund's leasing agreement with Standard Data (SDC), “which costs approximately \$750,000 per year” for technological services was being severed. In fact, the annual cost of the SDC system to the Fund is actually around \$400,000 per year.

Nevertheless, following extensive research and interviews, a new “state-of-the-art” system has been purchased from Comprehensive Consulting Solutions (CCS). This will provide technological capability to the Fund at even considerably lower cost than the actual SDC figure. It is hoped that this new technology system will be fully implemented in the middle of 2010.

Letters

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the Stratford Festival, where he played many leading roles during an association of half a century with the company. Of particular note was his portrayal of Falstaff...

Douglas and my father, John Barnes, co-directed several films. Consequently he was always a presence in my life. He attended one of my first performances, in an original piece called *The Ghoul*. I was seven or eight. Douglas said it was ghastly. I saw him play Dysart when I was twelve. After, we were lucky enough to go to Sardi's with him. I smartly told him he was very good. He said, “I know.” While a college student, I spent a week at his

home in Stratford during the summer season. It was my first exposure to the world of a professional theatre company. Douglas was astounding in pitch perfect performances of *Arms and the Man* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*...

But the day did come that we shared a stage, performing at the Bristol Riverside Theater in Pennsylvania, which became an artistic home for him in the last decade. The play was inspired by Dickens' *Christmas Carol*. In rehearsals Douglas would give me suggestions about business to try. I attempted everything he offered. Not for him the notion that actors should not suggest things to each other. Seven decades of a craft developed in the company of Sybil

Thorndike, Lewis Casson and Tyrone Guthrie was being passed on to those of us lucky enough to be in the rehearsals...

Many times in a company of actors I would find someone else who had worked with him, or knew someone who had. All recognized in him the unique qualities of an iconoclastic mind, an artist whose craft matched his poetic insight, and a man fiercely devoted to the value of theatre—not for personal gain, but for the nurturing of community. He never stopped mentoring or sharing his knowledge with others. At eighty-seven, he still had much too much more work to do, and he will be missed.

Ezra Barnes
Brooklyn, NY