

Why Be A Member of TMA?

By Tom Mendel

I was talking to a musician recently and asked him if he was in TMA. He told me that he used to be ten years ago, but after he joined, he didn't get a show for several years. Therefore, he wasn't sure about rejoining. I want to address this issue.

Ten years ago, theater work in the loop was in a transition. Broadway in Chicago (BIC) was just coming into existence. Many of the theaters were dark most of the year. Today, you could say we are in a theatrical renaissance. BIC is flourishing with several theaters having musicals. I was fortunate enough to be among those asked by CFM President Matts to be on the negotiating committee for the new BIC contract. Not only is it a great contract, but I also got to see that Lou Raizin and the folks at BIC sincerely want to present shows in all of their theaters simultaneously, and are working hard to keep the Chicago Theater scene flourishing. I've heard through the grapevine that certain musicians have chosen not to join TMA because they question its relevance. They see no advantage to being in it over just being a CFM member. The CFM has the Vice President's office handling most of theatre business. New York has a Theatre division and a six-man Theatre negotiating committee. We in Chicago should especially be grateful that Gary Matts, and Ed Ward before him, not only allowed, but encouraged the TMA to be part of the negotiating committee for theater collective bargaining agreements, especially the BIC one. They realize the value of having TMA leadership represent its members at the bargaining table. Therefore, why wouldn't someone want to be a member of an organization that is influencing the contract that they're working under? As a member, they can vote for officers that they feel will best represent their interests.

Off loop and suburban theatre work is also a big concern for us on the Executive Board. We are listing current and upcoming shows on our new website chicagotma.com. We are printing pictures of all band/orchestras that have a CBA (collective bargaining agreement) with the CFM in our Newsletter. As with all our members, we invite your concerns, comments and criticisms to help us to better serve you.

Nationally, TMA is a player conference of the AFM. As director for Chicago, I can assure you that we are addressing problems and concerns for our membership. The more members we have, the more clout we have with the AFM.

Why be a member? Here are a few reasons:

- Promote solidarity for all theatre musicians
- TMA is a recognized player conference of the AFM
- To receive the Newsletter about the Chicago Area Chapters news and concerns
- To receive the Pit Bulletin about the national TMA's news and concerns and also listings of tours and instrumentation (traveling and local).
- It's a collective voice to represent your opinions with contract negotiations, working conditions, virtual orchestras, etc.
- It's tax deductible.

Will joining TMA ensure you getting a show? Of course not, but it will certainly help represent your and your fellow musicians theatrical music work needs and concerns.