



# NEW YORK ACTOR

SCREEN ACTORS GUILD



## NEW YORK President's Message

Dear Members:

I am very pleased to have the opportunity to communicate with you in this, the re-launch of the New York Actor.

It is our hope that this forum will be used by you to communicate your questions and concerns about the Guild and your careers as NY Actors. Let us hear from you! Address your letters to [nymember@sag.org](mailto:nymember@sag.org).

One of the biggest concerns affecting all members is the ability to obtain health insurance benefits. This concern is heightened because of the recent WGA strike. As production slowed because of the strike, there were fewer opportunities to work resulting in less and less opportunity to qualify for insurance. While work will resume full force now that a settlement is reached, some of you may have already dropped out of qualification for health insurance during the past three month period.

Some members have asked if the Guild Plan can make special arrangements and change eligibility requirements during a strike. Since the Plan is not administered by the Guild but by the Pension and Health Trustees, (13 appointed by SAG and 13 by management) and is bound by certain federal ERISA laws, it is unlikely that is a viable option. The reality is that the pension and health plans also suffer under these circumstances in the form of reduced contributions, resulting from the loss of work. This is the case in any work stoppage, whether called by another union, like the WGA or certainly in any future strike called for by SAG.

However, there are safety nets available for performers who have lost their health coverage. The SAG Foundation provides one of many opportunities available for performers to remain covered through self-pay as noted in the last SAGazine.

“When it comes to healthcare, the Foundation recognizes that continued coverage is of the utmost importance to Guild members and can offer self-pay premium assistance to eligible members demonstrating need. The Self-Pay Premium Assistance Program provides short-term grants to eligible SAG members and their families who have lost their earned eligibility through SAG Pension & Health and wish to continue their health insurance coverage through C.O.B.R.A.”

If you want more information on many of the programs offered by the SAG Foundation go to [www.sagfoundation.org](http://www.sagfoundation.org) or call (323) 549-6773. Please also visit [www.actorsfund.org](http://www.actorsfund.org) to learn about the many programs they have to

offer not only for performers, but all members of the entertainment industry.

You should also be aware of the Al Hirschfeld Free Health Clinic. This clinic provides free health care to uninsured and underinsured entertainment professionals between the ages of 18 to 64. In addition to urgent, primary and specialty care the clinic, along with the Actor’s Fund Health Insurance Resource Center, also provides onsite health insurance counseling. To make an appointment for a consultation call (212) 489-1939.

We are pleased that the WGA has ratified a new contract that writers, actors and members of all entertainment unions can get back to work. But should hard times fall on any of us, regardless of the circumstances, please remember that these programs are available to help all members of our guild.

In solidarity,  
**Sam Freed**

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# LETTER from the EDITOR

As National Co-Chair of Communications, and Editor in Chief of NY SAGazine, I am proud to re-launch NEW YORK ACTOR, the official printed newsletter of the NY Division of SAG. We hope to bring you three to four issues a year, with news, perks, and vital communication from your NY President Sam Freed, and the NY Board of Directors. We recognize the importance of keeping Guild members connected to what is happening and we pledge to do our best to make this publication your pipeline to the Guild.

I am pleased to introduce this article, written by former SAG National President and current National Board Member Richard Masur.

In solidarity,  
**Liz Zazzi**

Letters to the editor can be emailed to [nymember@sag.org](mailto:nymember@sag.org)

## EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Liz Zazzi – Editor in Chief  
Sam Freed  
Eileen Henry

## EDITORIAL STAFF

Jae Je Simmons  
Nancy Fox  
Richard Baldwin  
Bernadine Goldberg

# SCREEN ACTORS GUILD New York Division Elections CALLING ALL CANDIDATES...

**IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN RUNNING** for the position of **National Director or Alternate National Director** representing the New York Division (whose Directors also serve as New York Division Board members), you must meet all eligibility requirements (see below). Candidates may request an interview with the New York Director Nominating Committee, (“DNC”) to be considered for nomination for each office. To request an interview with the DNC, please send a letter listing qualifications to the attention of Ruth Baptiste, Screen Actors Guild, 360 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10017. The deadline for receipt of all letters is **5 p.m. EDT on Friday, May 9, 2008.** (Please be sure to include membership and phone numbers).

**OR** you may obtain a Nominating Petition from Ruth Baptiste at (212)827-1522 in the Business Administration Department at the SAG New York office. Petitions will be available on **June 2, 2008.** Your petition must be signed by no fewer than thirty-five (35) qualified members in good standing and returned to Ruth Baptiste in the Guild’s New York Office (360 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10017) **by 5 p.m. EDT on Thursday, July 24, 2008.** Additional requirements for the submission of nominating materials will be included in the SAG nominating petition instruction kit.

Five (5) candidate positions\* for National Director and New York Division Board member will be seated for a three (3) year term and nine (9) candidate positions for Alternate Director and New York Division Board member will be seated for a one (1) year term.

Please direct all questions regarding the 2008 New York Division elections and/or candidate eligibility to Ruth Baptiste at (212)827-1522, [rbaptiste@sag.org](mailto:rbaptiste@sag.org).

*\*Please note that the number of candidate positions for National Director could increase if a vacancy occurs during the election process.*

## SUMMARY of ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS for National Directors & Alternate Directors:

- Must be at least 18 years old
- Must be an active member of SAG in good standing for at least two consecutive years
- Must meet all other requirements as defined by SAG Constitution and By-Laws
- Must be paid-up currently within 45 days from the beginning of the dues period as reflected in the following schedule:

PERIOD ENDING	MUST BE PAID BY:
05/01/08–11/01/08	06/16/08 (or date of nomination, whichever comes first)
11/01/07–05/01/08	12/17/07

- For the Hollywood and New York Division Boards only, candidate must have been a Hollywood or New York Division member for at least one year.

## 2008 New York ELECTION CALENDAR

(all times EDT)

### May 9, 5:00 p.m.

Deadline for letters of interest to be submitted to Director Nominating Committee

### June 2

Nominating petitions available

### July 24, 5:00 p.m.

Deadline for submission of petitions to New York office

### July 25, 5:00 p.m.

Deadline for submission of headshots, bios, and any other required documents

### July 21

Cutoff for voting eligibility. Members must be paid to 11/01/08 and in good standing by July 21 to vote

### August 19

Ballots mailed

### September 18, 9:30 a.m.

Deadline for receipt of voted ballot

# THE DEVIL WEARS PRAVDA

BY RICHARD MASUR



**PRAVDA (RUSSIAN: “THE TRUTH”)** was the leading newspaper of the Soviet Union and an official organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party between 1912 and 1991.

During the Cold War, Pravda was well-known in the West for its pronouncements as the official voice of Soviet Communism. Of course “Pravda” was perceived in the West as ironic in the extreme. Rather than presenting “the truth”, Pravda and its party-controlled editors silenced all opposition, stifled all dissent and only printed what the party in power wanted the people to read.

Why mention that in a NY Screen Actors Guild newsletter? To alert you to what is happening here.

There was a time when the Screen Actor national magazine and this union allowed for the free exchange of ideas. The officers of this union wrote their columns (up until very recently) without being subject to “review for factual accuracy” let alone outright censorship. When this union sent referenda to our members, we permitted Minority reports that dissented from the Majority recommendation to be included (when the size of the Minority justified their inclusion), without any meddling or interference from the Majority or this union’s staff. And we also made the membership mailing list (and later, the email list) available to the Minority to communicate their thoughts to the membership, as long as they were willing to absorb the costs of such communications.

Well those days are now officially over. NY President Sam Freed’s last column in Screen Actor, which was a statement of his opinion, was challenged by the Editorial Sub-Committee for “accuracy” and he was told to edit it to the Committee’s specifications. He complied, but then his opinion was further challenged because it did not reflect the opinion of the majority of members on the committee, and so it was censored in its entirety. The Editorial Sub-Committee then passed a motion to prohibit any statement from being printed in any SAG publication

which dissented from the official, Board-approved party line.

On January 12th, the National Board passed a motion to send a referendum to the membership to end the Phase 1 Agreement under which we have negotiated our major contracts jointly since 1981. Even though on February 9th, the referendum was “postponed”, it is important to report the infringements of rights that were being imposed on the Minority in that process.

At the insistence of the 60% of the National Board who constituted the Majority, the Minority Report that was to have been sent out to the members was required to be edited for “accuracy” by National Executive Director Doug Allen, who has hardly been a neutral player in the debate within the union about our relationship with AFTRA. In addition, the Majority that supported the referendum declared that the 40% who voted against the referendum had no right to use the Guild’s mail or email list to send campaign material to you, at their own expense. This policy, which the Majority mandated, broke a long history of past practice in which such mailings were allowed.

The officers of this union had also been put on notice that we were not to discuss anything, while on Guild property, which would be in opposition to the Majority position on this referendum. If we had the temerity to do so, we would have been subject to being reported to the Guild Counsel for immediate disciplinary action.

So, this union is now on record as being officially repressive of dissent, free speech, and the rights of members to freely associate.

And that is the truth, not the “Pravda” that you are being fed by the national leadership of this union.

Is that what you think this union should be?

## Greetings New York Division members:

And welcome to our first edition of the newly resurrected New York Actor (printed) newsletter. Kudos to New York President Sam Freed and national board member Liz Zazzi, who is also this publication’s editor-in-chief, for spearheading this effort. There are a few **resources** and **updates** you should be aware of that we hope will add value to your membership in the Screen Actors Guild.

As we are all gearing up for a very busy and hopefully productive year, it is important that you get involved and stay informed. Please make a note of this email address and direct your general questions, comments to:

**[NYmember@sag.org](mailto:NYmember@sag.org)**

Best regards,  
Jae Je Simmons, New York  
Division, Executive Director



SAVE  
THE  
DATE!

## Come Celebrate SAG's 75th Anniversary!!

Live Music, Presentations and Dancing.  
Light Refreshments will be served.



Friday, June 13

7-11 p.m.

SEIU 32BJ, Ground Floor, 101 Sixth Ave.

(between Grand and Watts Streets)

**Directions:** #1 train to Canal St,  
1 block E on Grand and N on 6th  
Ave. A/C/E train to Canal St, 1½  
blocks N on 6th Ave.

**RSVP:** Sign up at SAG on the 12th  
floor window by Friday, May 16 or  
visit the New York Page of  
[www.sag.org](http://www.sag.org) for more information.

## LOST in Translation

Like every other business, the entertainment industry uses terms and abbreviations which may not be familiar to everyone. Periodically, we will be listing some of these terms to keep our members "in the know." In this issue, we focus on phrases you may hear during the period leading up to our TV/Theatrical contract negotiations.

**FORCE MAJEURE:**

Emergency suspension – a shut down of production due to certain circumstances, including illness in the principal cast, natural disaster, or a strike by another union

**AMPTP:**

Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers – the bargaining unit for all of the major Hollywood studios and production companies

**W&W or W&WC:**

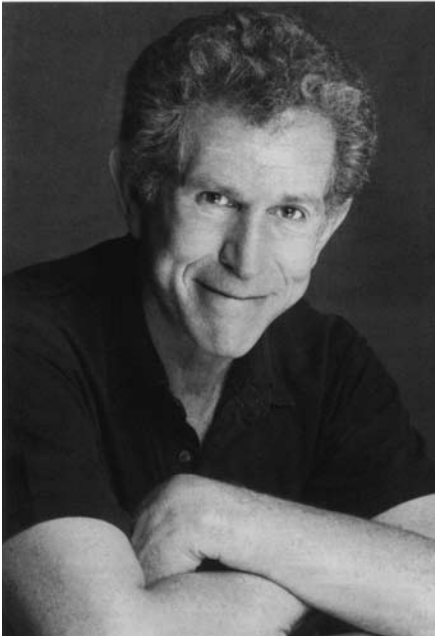
Short for Wages and Working Conditions – the meetings and caucuses that are held prior to negotiations to determine what issues SAG members want to see brought to the bargaining table

## NEW YEAR — NEW LOOK for the SAG Website!

The SAG website has been redesigned, along with the New York Division web page. Go to [www.sag.org/new-york](http://www.sag.org/new-york) to find out the latest news and local events, as well as what services and resources are available to New York SAG members. We think you'll find the new page looks better, and is easier to navigate. Feel free to make suggestions as to what other content you would like to see on the New York page at [nymember@sag.org](mailto:nymember@sag.org).



[www.sag.org/new-york](http://www.sag.org/new-york)



# I AM A NEW YORK ACTOR

BY EILEEN HENRY

# TONY ROBERTS

NYC Actor and Former Board Member ('88 to '93, '01 to '05)

With 23 Broadway shows (2 Tony Award nominations), 17 major films, 4 television series, hundreds of voice over and radio commercials and a winner of the London Critics' Poll Award, Tony Roberts is the quintessential NY actor. Currently starring in *Xanadu* at the Helen Hayes Theater on Broadway (no, he doesn't skate, "I didn't skate when I was 10 and I'm not starting now!")

A native New Yorker and consummate gentleman. I recently spoke with Tony about his long and amazingly diverse career, as well as his service in both Actors Equity Association and Screen Actors Guild.

**Eileen Henry:** When did you know you wanted to become an actor?

**Tony Roberts:** My dad, Ken Roberts, was an announcer for many of the popular radio programs in the 1940s. He would take me to studios when I was young where I was exposed to actors pretending to be other people. Different voices would come out of their mouths. It was like being in a psych ward! I didn't want to do anything else.

**EH:** When was your first job?

**TR:** At 12, I was cast in a role at Madison Square. There were no microphones on the main floor. The actors would move their mouths, while other actors, high up in the bleachers would read the lines into a microphone. I had one line. I got a check for \$25.00. It was just great!

**EH:** Are you a member of all three performers union?

**TR:** Yes. AEA – AFTRA – SAG. Joined them in that order.

**EH:** How did you get your first union card?

**TR:** I did my 1st Broadway show out of college. It closed in two weeks. At opening night at Sardi's Sam Wanamaker said to me, "This is the best thing that could happen to you kid. Everyone should begin a career with a whole string of flops." He was right! If you are in a hit, you have a different experience.

**EH:** How did you land the role as Robert Redford's replacement in Neil Simon's *Barefoot in the Park*?

**TR:** I got the part because the person who was understudying Redford broke his ankle. His big break was my big break!

“ At opening night at Sardi's Sam Wanamaker said to me, 'This is the best thing that could happen to you kid. Everyone should begin a career with a whole string of flops.' He was right! If you are in a hit, you have a different experience. ”

**EH:** So then how did you next get your AFTRA card?

**TR:** While acting on Broadway at night, I played the role of Lee Pollack on *Edge of Night* during the day.

**EH:** You are so well known for your work with Woody Allen. Is that how you got your SAG card?

**TR:** No. My first movie was *Million Dollar Duck* for Disney; I got to play a scheming lawyer. My first scene was disastrous! I had to convince a duck to lay an egg by barking at it like a dog. I was on my hands and knees on a duck farm near Los Angeles on a 100 degree day, barking like a dog at 75-100 ducks. The smell is something I can still remember.

**EH:** Fortunately, you moved from the duck farm to Woody

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

“ The best direction I ever got was from Lumet who said after a take, ‘I want you to do exactly the same thing you did, don’t change anything, but don’t show it to me.’ ”

**TONY ROBERTS** CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

Allen. Tell me about that collaboration with Woody Allen?

**TR:** I first met Woody when he cast me in his first play on Broadway in 1966. I had to audition about half a dozen times. Woody wasn’t convinced that I should be cast. He finally saw me in *Barefoot* and came into my dressing room afterwards. He asked why I had such a bad audition. I had no answer!

It took a very long time to form a deep friendship because he’s very shy. We didn’t begin to socialize until three years later when we were both in *Play It Again, Sam* on Broadway. It was a bonding experience because we were on the same side of the lights. He wasn’t as familiar at stage acting as I was but I was in awe of his imagination and abilities as a writer. This somehow or other equalized us and let us become more trusting of each other. We did play for almost a year and worked again when he cast me in the film version of *Play It Again, Sam*.

**EH:** How was *Serpico* different?

**TR:** Sydney Lumet wasn’t looking for laughs. Pacino was an intense actor so this required a different focus because the material was quite fiery. The best direction I ever got was from Lumet who said after a take, “I want you to do exactly the same thing you did, don’t change anything, but don’t show it to me.” It’s the essence of the difference between film and stage acting.

**EH:** How have you been able to sustain such a great career in NY without living in Hollywood?

**TR:** I worked in five Broadway shows back to back in New York. I wasn’t in need of having to go out to Los Angeles to do TV or movies since I achieved success here. I was afraid of putting down roots in LA. My agent always advised me that it would be “better if they came and found me” and that there was a certain

cache of saying “no.” He felt that the way you get ahead was by creating a false mystique of being in demand by saying “no.”

**EH:** Your father, Ken Roberts, was a founding member of AFTRA. Was it his influence that led to your eventual union involvement?

**TR:** Sure. My father instilled in us that the union was the most important institution you could devote yourself to. It was a way of connecting to and giving back to your community and certainly a way of getting justice in an incredibly unjust business.

**EH:** How did you decide to volunteer for the SAG Board?

**TR:** I was recruited by former NY SAG President, Paul Hecht. The experience afforded me a tremendous education to learn that the union was really made up of different constituencies and I always likened it to a small nation in the sense that there had to be discussions and compromises, with people who didn’t agree with you. I gained tremendous respect for the process of governance. It was a great privilege to be to be involved.

This is a rotten business. It’s cruel, it’s mean and it doesn’t promise you or give you anything. You have to know going in nothing is guaranteed and that you are going to be fighting enormous odds and that your union is your best friend. You can’t hold the union responsible for your hardship. The best people I’ve ever been among, in all ways, were the people who served on the boards of these unions.

*Eileen Henry is a former New York Division President and 2nd National Vice President of the Guild.*

*For more of this interview with Tony Roberts, go to the New York page of [www.sag.org](http://www.sag.org).*

**WIRED FOR WORK.**



**iactor**  **Goes Live**

January 2008 brought the industry launch of iActor, the Guild’s innovative online member directory featuring exclusively SAG talent and offering onsite Station 12 cast clearance. With over 28,000 members featured, iActor is a robust career builder for members and a streamlined production resource for the industry at-large. Here in New York, M.O.R.E. hosted a “Business of the Biz” seminar with invited casting directors to demonstrate how an iActor resume can expand your business as an actor. Personal hands-on training is also available to New York members who wish to become part of iActor. Call the main office number for an appointment: (212) 944-1030.

[www.sag.org/iactor](http://www.sag.org/iactor)

## Have you called the Guild lately? If you have, you may have noticed that it is easier to reach a live staff person.

A few months ago Screen Actors Guild hired two live phone operators to answer your calls and cut down on wait time and misdirected transfers. These improvements are part of an overall campaign by the New York Board and Staff to improve member services here at the Screen Actors Guild's New York Division.

The TV/Theatrical Department has also reached out to New York-based productions to help the Guild better serve its members. The department set up a series of meetings with



background casting directors and key production people for locally-based major motion pictures to streamline the hiring process and to reach an understanding on how to handle certain

production issues, such as proper holding areas, hazardous work rules, and performer upgrades.

Members have noticed the differences. "I'm very happy with the changes made in the TV/Theatrical Department," notes member Avis Boone. "I like that there is more senior staff involvement with member concerns. [Fern (Wakneen) and Stephanie (Perry) want the membership to call them.]Members are happy that they have been able to speak with someone that knows the contract and their questions have been answered satisfactorily, whether they like the answer or not. I appreciate that, and I think most members do too."

The upgrades made to member services would not be complete without giving the Guild's home a little makeover as well. The SAG NY Conservatory studio was moved to a larger space last summer, allowing the conservatory to accommodate more students in each class. Additionally, members who have stopped by the office in the past year may have noticed four computer kiosks in the member lounge where members can conveniently access the Guild's website, [www.sag.org](http://www.sag.org). Members can be found at these kiosks updating their iActor profiles, paying their dues online, or reading the latest news from the Guild.

Besides being a place where members can meet and relax during business hours, the member lounge has also recently been used as an event space for informal meetings. New York Board member Traci Godfrey gives the space high marks: "The room was comfortable for the dozen or so people who were there. We brainstormed and enjoyed the food and drink for about 2½ hours. The lounge was a perfect space, as it was a reminder of the hard-working SAG membership and the unity that we all share."

## WHY WE'RE GREEN

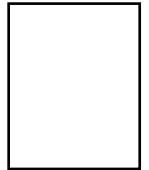
Did you know that the reinstated New York Actor is not only a great resource for news about your New York Guild, but that it is also environmentally friendly? Printing on recycled paper and use of a single color printing process minimizes the carbon footprint of this publication.

Please help us stay green. If you are finished with this newsletter please recycle it. Thank you and we hope you enjoy the inaugural issue of "New York Actor."



## NEW YORK ACTOR

360 Madison Avenue, 12th Floor  
New York, NY 10017



## SAVE THE DATE!

**SAG Day** festivities are still being planned. Look on page 4 for more details.

## NEW YORK MEMBERSHIP 2008 MEETING DATES

Monday, May 12 ..... Monday, November 3

**TIME:** 5:30 p.m.–8:30 p.m.

**PLACE:** Directors Guild of America  
110 West 57th Street  
(between 6th and 7th Avenues)

► **Agenda for Spring Membership Meeting:**

1. President's Report
2. Joseph C. Riley Awards
3. New York Executive Director's Report
4. New Business

