

## **Mosaic**

I ran into one of my fellow tall, blond "Die Hard" thugs last week; and in an exchange of "How ya doin'?"s, he rather shamefacedly admitted that not only had he not done any more big-budget feature films, he'd just been doing a little of this, a little of that. "Hey, it's a mosaic," I said. Mosaic is my second-favorite metaphor for our theatrical life. As an actor, our professional lives are far from the 50-years-and-a-gold-watch sort of single employer career (although the fellow who replaced me in PHANTOM - I can't reveal his name, but his initials are George Lee Andrews - is at 22 years and counting.) The good news/bad news of our vocation choice is that no one job lasts too long. We need to put together a mosaic of jobs to create a livelihood.

Some of the pieces in our mosaic are big and bright: national tours, classy LORT productions; and some are smaller: readings, waiver productions. Some pieces are from the domains of our sister unions: television, radio, film, audiobooks, opera. Some pieces are from yet-to-be-organized arenas: cruises, European tours. And some pieces are from our non-acting work: waiting tables, word-processing, bartending.

A buddy of mine with whom I have shared a NYC stage responded to my website column (check it out: [http://www.actorsequity.org/AboutEquity/president\\_archive1.asp](http://www.actorsequity.org/AboutEquity/president_archive1.asp)) on voting by admitting that he hadn't voted. He's worked on Broadway, and he's done leads in LORT, but he's only worked seven weeks in the last year and a half, and he feels "disconnected" from the Union and the business.

The Union is not a snooty club for the constantly working; it is an Association constituted "to advance, promote, foster and benefit all those connected with the art of the theatre." We all have a stake in the business, an equitable stake. We're all in this together; sometimes we're working, sometimes we're not. Since there are more good stage actors than good stage jobs, for most of us the non-working times outnumber the working times. To fill out our livelihood mosaic, we need to look for non-stage work and non-acting work. This is par for the course and no reason to feel disconnected or distant from AEA. And, indeed, our livelihood mosaic is just part of our life mosaic, fitted among the pieces for family, friends, hobbies, exercise, service, religion, community.

The beauty or value of your life's mosaic has nothing to do with the size or number of the Equity pieces; they are just part of a much bigger picture. Know, however, that your elected leadership and your Union staff are working to develop as many new mosaic pieces as they can and to make existing ones larger (i.e., more remunerative) and that you, whether you have been working a lot or a little, are part of Equity's mosaic. You are Family - and that's my favorite metaphor for our theatrical life.