

## **Beginners, Please**

I love fall. It speaks to me of beginnings: the school year, the theatre season. There's a whole new crop of job possibilities. Any show is a potential success. Everything seems possible.

I got my Equity card exactly forty years ago, so I am (absent some cryogenic breakthroughs) hardly at the beginning of my AEA career. But AEA itself has a number of new beginnings to celebrate. Starting in Chicago, we have launched a new campaign -- #AskIfItsEquity -- to draw theatregoers' attention to what they are paying for when they buy tickets to a touring musical in the local "Broadway" series. We plan to maintain, improve and increase our presence in the national touring market. You can follow our campaign on Twitter and Facebook, and you can help us with retweets/favorites and likes/shares.

We have a new beginning in Los Angeles with our gorgeous new building, complete with our first-ever LA Equity audition center. Whether you have an audition or not, go tour the building: I guarantee it will make you proud to be an Equity member. This building, however, is merely the outward and visible sign of our reinvigorated focus on and commitment to our LA members. We are also beginning to survey our members in Los Angeles to discover their understanding of our contracts and agreements in the Los Angeles area, their attitudes and concerns about those agreements, and their ideas and suggestions for the future. Additionally, a number of focus groups will be convened for more in-depth exploration and discussion. All of this research will inform the Council as it formulates its plans for the future of Equity theatre in Los Angeles.

New York also has its part in AEA's new beginnings as the site of the National Council's 2014 Plenary. As I write this, the entire council is meeting in plenary session to review and improve our governance and decision-making process. This is an ongoing effort that began with how we conduct our elections (we are now in compliance), and it will continue as we examine the committee structure. We, your elected leaders, are laboring to ensure that Equity is responsive, efficient and effective as it works on your behalf.

It's an exciting time. Though I'm more of an aging professor, I feel like a kid on the first day of school. Your staff and your elected leaders are committed to giving you the best and most forward-looking union representation in the world. In forty-nine years, AEA will celebrate its 150th anniversary. (You can start now to compose your Double-Dactyls using the word "Sesquicentennial.") I won't be here (blast those cryogenics!) but some of you AEA beginners and near-beginners reading this will be. Please keep up the good work. Keep looking forward. Keep creating possibilities. Keep beginning.