

## 2009 AFTRA National Convention: Destination Chicago

The Chicago Local is working hard and plans are coming into place for the 2009 AFTRA National Convention, August 6-8, in Chicago. This biennial gathering of elected member delegates from AFTRA Locals across the country is the highest governing body of AFTRA. The Convention Social is scheduled for the evening of August 6, after opening day of the Convention, at the Adler Planetarium, located on a point on Lake



The Adler Planetarium will be the site for this year's Convention Social. Photo credit: Adler Planetarium

Michigan with spectacular views of Chicago's harbor, lakefront, and skyline. As an added bonus, there will be a full moon, which will make for a lovely evening.

Other social plans include a cocktail hour with live music, a sit-down dinner, and dancing afterward with one of Chicago's hottest bands, plus many other surprises for the delegates.

Also scheduled for unveiling at the Convention will be a new, redesigned AFTRA website. The National Communications Department is planning a workshop to demonstrate the new site to delegates and will have a booth at the Convention that will allow attendees some hands-on interaction.

As plans get set, look for the 2009 AFTRA National Convention page coming soon on AFTRA.com.

## Performers Say "Si" to OYEME USA 2009

More than 100 voiceover performers turned out in Miami on February 28 for OYEME USA 2009—the first voiceover conference of its kind for the Hispanic market in the United States.

The daylong Spanish-language conference was packed with an international mix of Hispanic talent who turned out for the most up-to-date information on voiceover work for talent in the Spanish-language market.

OYEME USA was presented by ALAS (Association of Latino Artists of South Florida) in association with AFTRA and sponsored by Falcon Paymasters, Team Services, and Checks in Motion.

Memo Saucedo, AFTRA Miami President and President of ALAS, and CC Limardo, President of OYEME USA, hosted the energized conference, which included industry professionals and new union and non-union talent interacting in sessions designed to "make it" in the competitive business of voiceovers. The conference was an opportunity for AFTRA members to organize and demonstrate the value of union membership to non-union performers.

Topics addressed at the conference included new marketing methods; what voiceover producers are looking for; how voices are selected; new technology; voice techniques, diction, demos, home studios, and virtual agents; and the importance of being an AFTRA member. The conference concluded with microphone time for each participant and multiple raffles of valuable items



Marketing consultant Jack Hardy of Bootstrap Marketing runs a workshop teaching participants how best to market themselves as voiceover artists.

related to voiceover work.

"I walked away with more knowledge, new friends, business contacts, and fun memories," said one participant, Azury Florio, a newcomer to the business.

Panelists and presenters included Rudy Leschhorn, executive producer, Accent Marketing; Alejandro Barrera, creative director; Aidita Urra-Alamo, president, Bohemian Sound; Gisselle Ospina, talent agent, The Green Agency; George Ortiz, casting director, Miami Talento Casting; Anna Silvetti, actor/voiceover talent; Ricardo Tinoco, audio engineer, Uptempo; Jack Hardy, marketing consultant, Bootstrap Marketing; Gary Travers, executive producer, VoiceOver Miami; Herta Suarez, South East Regional Director-AFTRA; ALAS' Limardo, who is a host/voiceover talent; and AFTRA's Saucedo, who is an actor/voiceover talent.

## Chicago Radio Players Tune In

The AFTRA/SAG Radio Players—comprised of professional stage, screen, and voice actors—were recently featured in the local Chicago labor *Federation News* about their performances of radio shows from the 1930s, '40s, and '50s.

Formed in 1997, the players donate their time to perform free-of-charge at

the Chicago Culture Center's Claudia Cassidy Theatre, giving the audience a taste of the past and a glimpse at what took place in the studio when the original broadcasts were recorded.

Their performances, which include old-time hits like *X Minus One: Chain of Command*, *My Friend Irma*, and *The Lady Eve*, often feature 25-plus casts of actors, along with directors, producers, and sound effects engineers.

The group sees the performances as a way to sharpen their skills in-between jobs. They also invite agents and producers to attend the shows—though the main audience is the public who fill the 300-seat theater.

"A lot of people are reminiscing about their childhoods, having listened to these shows on radio when they were kids," Dan Frick, past president of the AFTRA Chicago Local, told *Federation News*. "To have the live sound effects people making the footsteps and gunshots and all those things that happened during the course of the radio show to make it come alive, many people listen to the show with their eyes closed to feel what it was like."

Frick is also a member of the group's steering committee.

Upcoming performances include *Laura* on May 19 and *The Whistler: Fox & Mr. Sycamore* on July 16.

## AFTRA Leaders Head to DC for Pre-Inaugural Festivities

AFTRA leaders joined their counterparts from Actors' Equity Association, Screen Actors Guild, the American Federation of Musicians, the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, and the Department for Professional Employees, AFL-CIO, in hosting an invitation-only, pre-inauguration reception of elected officials and arts policy leaders in



L-R: AFTRA Associate General Counsel in DC Terrie Bjorklund; AFTRA NY Local member James Lurie; AFTRA National Representative Purvi Patel; AFTRA National Executive Director Kim Roberts Hedgpeh; AFTRA National President Roberta Reardon; AFTRA NY Local member Lainie Cooke; AFTRA NY President and National Vice President Holter Graham; AFTRA NY Local member Ed Fry; and AFTRA San Francisco Local member and National Vice President Bob Butler.

Washington, DC, on Martin Luther King Day, January 19.

The event was attended by nearly 300 members of the House of Representatives and Senate, New York City officials, arts advocacy groups, government staffers, representatives from the Obama Arts Committee, the AFL-CIO, the New York State AFL-CIO, and elected union leaders from New York and Los Angeles. It provided an opportunity for participants to engage in a discussion about the importance of the arts and media to the country and the economy.

President Roberta Reardon was among those who spoke at the gathering. Reardon told the crowd, "American media is the second largest export in the U.S. behind the defense industry. An industry as diverse, dynamic, and profitable as we are, we inevitably have issues that lead us to Washington. Some issues like media consolidation and health care reform affect all of us. Some like the Federal Reporter Shield Law, Performance Rights for Recording Artists, and Qualified Performing Artist tax legislation, affect discrete portions of our members. What is critical for ALL

these issues is your support. We must keep our industry not just competitive, but a global leader."

AFTRA's representatives from National and AFTRA New York who joined President Reardon included Holter Graham, Ed Fry, Lainie Cooke, James Lurie, and San Francisco's Bob Butler. They discussed with lawmakers

and staffers the importance of a number of pressing issues, including the Performance Rights Act, health care reform, New York State Film and Television tax credits, affordable housing issues in Manhattan, and the Employee Free Choice Act.

"AFTRA was lucky enough to be in DC during that powerful, exciting time," said Graham, who is New York Local President and National Vice President. "The anticipation of a change for the better was everywhere, and members of this country's highest bodies of government were very open and interested in hearing the concerns we brought to their attention. It was a great night."

AFTRA First Vice President Bob Edwards served as master of ceremonies.

## Singers Step Into the Spotlight

The Los Angeles Local Singers Committee recently hosted 90 of its own on March 3 for the first in an ongoing program series dubbed "Spotlight on Singers." The purpose of the program is to equip, encourage, and connect singers with their unique community.

The evening's topic was "How to Make a Demo" and began with a smashing showcase by Sixth Wave, a six-member *cappella* vocal group, followed by a panel discussion moderated by AFTRA Los Angeles Local



L-R: Moderator Randy Crenshaw, David Joyce, Bob Wackerman, Cristy Crowl, Scott Wojahn, and Luana Waimey.

member Randy Crenshaw. Panelists included industry veterans Scott Wojahn (Wojahn Bros. Music); Luana Waimey (vocal contractor for film and television); producer Bob Wackerman (Audio by the Bay Entertainment Group); Cristy Crowl (composer/producer/music director/session singer/co-founder of [www.ProSingersAccess.com](http://www.ProSingersAccess.com)), and David Joyce (singer/producer/writer/keyboardist).

The next "Spotlight on Singers" is set for June 9, 2009, focusing on "How to Get Into the Business."

## AFTRA Atlanta Members Interviewed for Student Doc

Students from Georgia Southern University (GSU) in Statesboro, GA, working on a documentary about the Golden Age of radio, recently interviewed veterans of that era as well as advocates and aficionados of old-time radio, including local treasure and AFTRA member Edith Ivey.

"They were extremely focused and had done their homework," Ivey said. "It was a great pleasure working with them. If they are representative of the future of young people in this business, then I have great hope for our industry."

Ivey regaled them with her early New York stories, when our union was still AFRA, where she worked extensively on radio soap operas, many of which were live, such as *The Guiding Light*, *Whispering Streets*, and *Our Gal Sunday*. "My favorite kind of work," she said.

Additionally, Ivey was also seen on TV as every young boy's heartthrob, the lovely "Indian" Princess Summerfall Winterspring on *The Howdy Doody Show*.

The currently untitled project helps kick off an 11-year celebration commemorating the 100th anniversary of radio at this year's annual Broadcast Education Association Convention in April. It's an attempt to chronicle the ongoing history of radio theater as seen through the eyes of those who created it, keep it alive today, and those who have studied it historically—as well as the audience who so fondly listened.

GSU professor Dr. Melanie Stone brought on communication arts majors Jonathan Pope and James Kicklighter to direct, edit, and produce the project. The two have traveled the country, conducting extensive interviews with the individuals who were so willing to share their amazing stories.

Barry Stoltze, AFTRA Atlanta Local President and co-producer of the annual *Lend Me an Ear!*, was also interviewed.

"The art of radio acting is slowly dying off, but thankfully is kept alive in America through such venues as *A Prairie Home Companion* and, to some extent, audio-books," he said. "It would be a terrible shame not to preserve the art form and radio's rich history. We've already lost the skill of silent-picture acting. I'm pleased to see a collegiate interest in

archiving radio's past, especially before all the remaining participants are gone, and at worst, forgotten."

If you have an interest in sharing your recollections and thoughts of old-time radio, they are still eagerly accepting all comers. Contact the Atlanta office for more information.

## AFTRA Leaders Attend AFL-CIO Meeting Featuring U.S. VP Biden



U.S. Vice President Joe Biden and AFTRA National President Roberta Reardon

President Roberta Reardon and National Executive Director Kim Roberts Hedgpeth traveled to Miami, March 2-4, for the AFL-CIO Executive Council meeting where they met with government officials, including U.S. Vice President Joe Biden, U.S. Labor Secretary Hilda Solis, and other leaders in the American labor movement.

Among the topics discussed were the issues and concerns facing all Americans as they struggle to make ends meet and support their families in this difficult economy. Attendees also discussed the importance of mobilizing union members across the country to pass the Employee Free Choice Act (*More on the Act can be found on page 23*), and strategies for even greater cooperation between all unions in the American labor movement on common goals.

Biden addressed the council, expressing his support for the Employee Free Choice Act and stressed that union members are the backbone of the middle class.

"We're not asking for anything we don't deserve," Biden said of the Employee Free Choice Act. "And we're not asking for anything that wasn't intended when the National Labor Relations Board said we should be encouraging unions. We just want to level this playing field again."

He also quoted U.S. President Barack Obama as saying, "I don't buy the argument that providing workers with collective bargaining rights somehow weakens the economy or worsens the business environment."

Biden then added, "If you've got workers who have a decent pay and benefits, they also are customers for your business. I have a simple, basic belief, one that we're going to work hard to put into action: If a union is what you want, a union you're entitled to have."

The meeting was held in the newly renovated Fontainebleau Hotel, where the AFL-CIO had used its leverage to convince the hotel's management to use union construction workers for its renovations.

You can view the full text of Biden's speech at <http://www.aftra.com/aftra/bidenspeech.html>.

## NARM Connects Music Biz with Artists

The National Association of Recording Merchandisers (NARM) and the American Association of Independent Music (A2IM) is offering a day-long "Music Business Crash Course" on June 7 in San Diego.

The program is part of "NARM Connects," the group's annual convention, which connects industry

leaders and experts for the purpose of building new partnerships and developing viable, creative solutions to keep the music industry strong.

The course is geared toward a variety of people, including individual artists, music label personnel, entrepreneurs entering the music space, and music business students. It will begin with an industry overview and then cover fundamental industry issues that all music creators and content users at any experience level need to know.

Moderated by A2IM President Rich Bengloff, course instructors will include music label owners, distributors/aggregators, retailers, and social networking/Web executives. Topics include "Seven Ways to Market Music," "Label War Stories ... I Wish I Would Have Known," and "Publishing: What You Need to Know."

The crash course starts at 8:30 a.m. with a lunch break at noon. It concludes with a welcome reception sponsored by Rhino Entertainment and WEA Corp. from 5:30 to 7 p.m. The cost is \$75 for industry professionals, non-NARM members; \$25 for A2IM members not registered for the convention and artists.

Participants do not need to register for the convention to take part in the crash course. For more information, go to [www.narm.com](http://www.narm.com); contact A2IM's Al Verik at 212.999.6113 ext. 3 or [al.verik@a2im.org](mailto:al.verik@a2im.org) or NARM's Holly Rosum at 856.596.2221 or [rosum@narm.com](mailto:rosum@narm.com).

## Simmons Joins Nat'l Communications Office

On February 5, Leslie Simmons joined AFTRA as National Manager of Communications.

Simmons previously worked as a reporter for *The Hollywood Reporter* and is based in Los Angeles. As

National Manager of Communications, she manages the daily operations of the National Communications Department, including coordinating with AFTRA Locals and National Departments on their communications needs and serves as managing editor of AFTRA's Web site, and its redesign, and magazine. She reports to Christopher de Haan, AFTRA National Director of Communications.

"We're pleased that Leslie is joining the AFTRA staff at such an important time in the industry," said Christopher de Haan. "Leslie's extensive coverage of legal and labor issues in the entertainment and media industries gives her an in-depth understanding of the issues confronting working performers. Her expertise in journalism will make an excellent addition to our team as we work to coordinate the goals and message of AFTRA industry-wide and among our many Locals across the country."



*AFTRA National Manager of Communications  
Leslie Simmons*

For the last 14 years, Leslie has worked as a journalist for various wire, print, and online publications throughout Los Angeles, including *City News Service*, *Inside.com*, and the *Daily Journal*. Most recently, Leslie was film, labor and legal reporter for *The Hollywood Reporter*, where she extensively covered the entertainment industry's labor relations, tracked film projects, and reported on various industry-related legal matters. She holds a bachelor's degree in journalism from Long Island University in Brooklyn, NY, and is currently working toward a master's degree in communication and leadership from Gonzaga University in Spokane, WA.