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# AGMA RELIEF FUND

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

My name is Sara Mearns, and I am a Principal Dancer with the New York City Ballet. I have been with NYCB since 2003. As a proud AGMA member and supporter of the AGMA Relief Fund, I write to you as I return to stage as the Sugar Plum Fairy in George Balanchine's *the Nutcracker*®!

"Tis the season!" as they say, and even the most "bah humbug" of minds tend to reflect during this time of year. And a shiver goes up my spine when I think back to where we were this time last year, in 2020. My livelihood was taken from me one cold day in March 2020. I know I am not alone. AGMA Artists—from dancers to singers to staging staff—saw layoffs, furloughs, and our bank accounts dwindle. We saw our scheduled performance and freelance gigs disappear. We were the first to lose our jobs, the last to be included in any funding assistance, and the last to return to our careers.

Now, I know I am one of the lucky ones who didn't have to leave their home behind and who was able to return to work. But trust me when I tell you that the Performing Arts Industry is far from out of the woods, and many of your favorite Artists are still struggling to make ends meet, even as we witness the slow and steady reopening of our companies and theatres.

**The AGMA Relief Fund is designed for times like these. Since 1945, the AGMA Relief Fund has helped eligible AGMA Artists in times of critical crises, all thanks to the generosity of donors. Please join me this holiday season to contribute what you can and make a tax-deductible donation to the AGMA Relief Fund.**

The AGMA Relief Fund is a 501(c)3 charitable organization that is 100% dependent on donations in order to confidentially provide both financial and other temporary emergency relief to AGMA members who meet the Fund's qualifying criteria. Since the onset of the pandemic, more AGMA Artists have applied for assistance through the AGMA Relief Fund than ever before.

Thanks to devoted donors, the AGMA Relief Fund was prepared to jump into action during the most unimaginable time of our lives! In addition to emergency funds, The Actors Fund administers the AGMA Relief Fund nationally and provides comprehensive services and programs to AGMA members, including social services, mental health resources, and career counseling. Thanks to these resources provided by the AGMA Relief Fund, many Artists were able to stay afloat both financially and mentally.

The fact is that the Arts and Artists still need support as we enter 2022.

It feels a bit odd to ask for financial support, especially after the last 21 months. Plus, it's difficult for me to write this appeal knowing that anyone this reaches may be in need themselves.

Think back to the most challenging months of the pandemic. What brought you peace? For so many of us, it was art: streaming our favorite shows and movies, listening to an insightful podcast, reading, creating, or watching a live-streamed performance. I have received countless messages from ballet enthusiasts about watching New York City Ballet online whenever they could! Performing Artists have always known this, but the last two years have let everyone in on the secret: art heals us, comforts us, and helps us make sense of our lives.

**For art to exist, Artists need to exist. Supporters can help Artists through the AGMA Relief Fund. For more information, please visit [agmarelief.org/donations/](http://agmarelief.org/donations/).**

Did you know that the Sugar Plum Fairy symbolizes hope and childhood dreams in the ballet? Every AGMA Artist was once a child who only dreamed of performing at the professional level. **Would you please help ensure the next generation of Artists can achieve the same dream?**

From the bottom of my Sugar Plum heart, I thank you in advance!

Happy and healthy holidays to all,

Sara Mearns  
AGMA Relief Fund  
Holiday Drive Chair