

THE PERFORMERS ALLIANCE:  
CONFLICT AND CHANGE WITHIN  
THE SCREEN ACTORS GUILD

by

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## CHAPTER 1

### THE SCREEN ACTORS GUILD

“An organization of, by and for actors alone!”

- Eddie Cantor, October, 1933 (Rose, 1995, p.65)

Labor unions, born of the struggles of the nineteenth century, continue to face changes in management, economics, technology and public opinion. The pace may be increasing exponentially. This paper will study how one group, professional working actors, has been forced to deal with this change through the actions of a movement within their union and the demands of the membership the union represents. It will also show why the Screen Actors Guild (SAG) and its political factions are worthy of consideration as a laboratory to review the evolution of organized labor well into the new century. This paper will view the dynamics of dissident rhetoric utilizing historical, dramatist, fantasy theme and social movement rhetorical analysis models.

The Screen Actors Guild, in particular the rise of a political faction within the union, can be seen as a model for political, ideological or social movements within contemporary unions and for the ability of organizations to adapt to change.

As a union on the forefront of the rapidly evolving entertainment technological revolution, the Screen Actors Guild faces political and economic forces from outside and within. The causes and nature of these changes, and the conflicts they create are already surfacing within larger, more traditional unions. There is a model, as a parallel exists between current day union struggles and the struggles at the time of the formation of the Guild in 1933. This paper will show that the union's current political factions have common roots with the founders of SAG. Both movements grew from times of rapid change, shifting economies, and dominant new technologies. In addition, several periods of evolution can be studied, as the Guild grew to face increased political, social, economic and technological change both within and outside the jurisdiction of SAG contracts.

This paper will look at the history of the Guild, similarities in challenges faced during the evolution of the Guild and the formation of a dissident movement and successful revolution within the union. It will look at the nature of acting as a profession, of labor in Hollywood and change within one of the highest profile unions in the world.

The Screen Actors Guild prides itself on being the crown jewel of international entertainment unions. It was formed during the Great Depression as a union to stand up for the rights, working conditions and position of actors as laborers in two of the growth industries of the Twentieth Century, motion pictures and broadcasting. As a political faction within SAG, the Performers Alliance (PA) is a contemporary dissident membership movement, which in four short years rose to sweep political control of the Guild. The group did so by mounting campaigns for and capturing all national officer positions, majority control of the powerful National Executive Committee and by

dominating over one third of the seats on the SAG National Board of Directors. The Performers Alliance also took control of the chair and thus the primary structure of all functional committees within the union.

As a union, the Guild faces new challenges: divisions within its ranks, rapid changes within the industry from technological advances and changes in business structure. All three may be reflective of the issues and challenges facing not just American Labor Unions, but society as a whole, in the first decade of the twenty-first century.

Communication studies will be advanced through the further study of three basic themes explored in this paper. First, by an historical critical review of how a twentieth century generated industry is adapting to change in the early twenty-first century. Second, by looking at the effects resulting technological and corporate change are having within the film and related media industries. Third, and primary to this paper, communication studies will be advanced by looking at how small movements have an effect on established institutions (unions). The use of persuasion within a dissident movement and an evolution in the basic foundation of unionism will be discussed, along with technologies which may accelerate such evolutionary forces.

### The History of the Screen Actors Guild

Illustrating the tenuous nature of the creative profession which is central to the Guild, Former SAG President William Shallert said, “Making a living as an actor is like trying to cross a rapidly running river, by stepping from one slowly sinking rock to another” (Prindle, 1988, p.11). To understand the profession and the union, it is necessary to review the history behind the Screen Actors Guild and its members.

The Wall of Presidents in the James Cagney Room of the Guild's headquarters contains the portraits of Ronald Reagan, Patty Duke Austin and a host of other high profile celebrity leaders. The Guild they chaired was founded and raised through adolescence in an age when a mass produced moving images meant film projection and the most readily available distribution was the local movie “house.” The members of this union were seen by millions, often on a weekly basis, with some raised to the level of celebrity star (<http://www.sag.org>).

Like other unions, the Screen Actors Guild was formed to end eighteen hour work days (without overtime or meals) and one sided binding contracts (which amounted to indentured servitude), to provide basic contractual protections, a “fair” wage and a safe environment for the screen actor (<http://www.sag.org>). Like many other unions, the birth and growth of the Guild began with management taking what talent almost unanimously considered unfair advantage of their labor, including a cut in pay while the same owners invested heavily in buying movie theaters and other luxurious facilities and real estate.

SAG National Executive Director Ken Orsatti (1995), the highest-ranking employee of the Guild, relates what life was like in 1933 for screen actors:

Imagine working on a film with unrestricted hours, no enforced turn-around and no required meal breaks. Imagine working under a seven-year contract that you cannot break and more than likely will be forced to renew, for a producer who can tell you who you can marry, what your morals must be, even what political opinions to hold. This was Hollywood for actors in 1933 under the studio system. Rebel against the studio and you were in for a hard time, better to quit while you’re ahead. Fortunately, a group of actors risked their careers to start the Screen Actors Guild. (p.34-35)

Even in those conditions, there were those who preferred to see the Guild as a mutual benefit confederation over a full-fledged union, in part because the reasons for its founding surpassed hourly wages and working conditions. There was much discussion at the formation of the Guild as to how much of a union it would really be, with several founders seeing it as a way to get past current problems but not as a traditional trade union. None-the-less, the union was formed as much to bring, no demand, respect for the profession of acting as to win employment for its members. The name Guild was selected to create the image of craft and art while offering the solidarity of the union movement (Prindle, 1988). Anthropologist Hortense Powdermaker (1951) says that the studios of the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s looked upon actors as “children who do not know what is good for them; immature, irresponsible, completely self centered, egotistical, exhibitionistic, nitwits and utterly stupid” (p. 254). When, in the wake of the stock market crash and after forming their own studio-controlled union, the studios reduced pay by 50 % and sought to take away basic employment freedom of choice, a group of actors decided enough was enough.

Today, the Guild, as SAG calls itself, represents a wide range of ‘on camera’ and ‘voice over’ talent (on film, on video and digital media), including actors, background extras, dancers, singers, stunt performers, puppeteers, ‘folley’ and sound effects workers (see APPENDIX: Glossary for definitions of these and other film industry terms). The common element is that all SAG members use some or all aspects of their physical body as the instrument of their performance. Large studios, independent producers, production companies, advertising agencies and in some cases their clients are “signator” to Guild contracts and agreements. Traditionally, these employers utilized moving picture film in

the production of movies, documentaries, commercials and marketing or training presentations (<http://www.sag.org>). As video evolved as a production format, organization of the video media extended Guild contracts and protections to actors and performers on video.

The evolution from film to video, video to digital interactive and on to formats not even dreamed of a decade or so ago provides unique challenges to and often conflicts of interest for the Guild and its sister unions (Rose, 1995).

### How This All Began

The American Motion Picture Industry began in heavily ethnic European dominated environments of New York and Chicago. Changing seasons, political payola pressures and undue influences by the underworld sent early movie moguls searching for a new home. After brief stops in cities and towns including St. Louis, Missouri and Flagstaff, Arizona, they found what they needed in ‘sunny’ southern California. Here they were free from the political and criminal nightmare of the eastern cities and here they had land, lots of land to expand. Smog is not a new development, for the foggy, somewhat smoky layer created by campfires, dust and the morning haze, provided the ideal natural filter for early motion picture cameras and film. Of greatest importance, and it goes hand in hand with politics and the criminal element, labor was inexpensive and higher paying industries had yet to gain a foothold in primarily agrarian California (<http://www.sag.org>, see also Prindle, 1988 and Rose, 1995).

In the days before commercial airplanes, before jets and fax and telex, it took a lifestyle commitment for a craftsman, whether it be actor or cameraman, set or costume designer, to relocate to the other side of the nation, almost the other side of the world.

Once they did, for the most part, they were stuck there, and management knew it. They also knew that the audience was oblivious to the details of how talent was groomed and how films were made. The public's only interest was in the final product. It was only a matter of time before the American Labor Movement would stretch into 'tinsel town' and management of the new glamour industry would find themselves dealing with many of the pressures they fled west to avoid (J. Hookey, 1999; also R. Weimer, 1998, personal communication).

By 1915, Hollywood had become a production center, with many movie studios in place. This particular period, the Progressive Era, was a time of growing corporate wealth and discontent and agitation among workers. From a labor point of view terrible working conditions dominated industry. Los Angeles was an "open shop" (non-union or competing union presence) town. With recent, significant organizing drives in other cities and industries to his credit, in 1916, Samuel Gompers, president of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) initiated an organizing drive, targeting skilled craft workers (such as carpenters, electricians, painters). With the movie industry centralizing in Los Angeles, instead of scattered across the country, it now seemed there was a chance for a union drive to succeed. The AFL considered the organization of the craft workers as the doorway to organizing other trades in Los Angeles. Over the next several years, the new unionists had several strikes, and survived agitation, strife, and problems with competing unions fighting over workplaces, especially the "open-shop" studios. (Ross, 1941; see also Nielson & Mailes, 1995). The decades ahead, through the depression, formed an era of union agitation, union organizing and growth, and corporate resistance.

As Franklin Delano Roosevelt entered the presidency in 1933, the Great Depression was at its historic height. On the West Coast a free spirited form of anti-union Republicanism prevailed. On June 16 FDR's National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA) passed, forming the National Recovery Administration (NRA) (Prindle, 1988). The National Labor Board (NLB) was established under the rules of the NRA in August 1933. According to Neilson & Mailes (1995) the NLB formalized the conduct of labor relations, but did not have the authority to enforce the rules.

Actors' Equity, the stage actors union, made an unsuccessful attempt to organize the field in 1929. Four years later, in 1933, actors held informal organizing meetings at a private men's club, The Masquers, and at an affiliated club for women, the Dominos. Meetings were held in secret, using passwords, backdoors and alleyways to elude detectives hired by the studios. The group's objective was to correct abuses it felt was "heaped upon free-lance players" and to negotiate wages and working conditions for all performers (Prindle, 1988, see also <http://www.sag.org/>).

Equity's efforts to organize motion picture talent met with strong opposition from the studio bosses including MGM's strong willed young chief of production, Irving Thalberg. Thalberg is quoted as saying, "Actors are like children, no matter how many gifts there are on the Christmas tree, they always want the ornament at the top" (Rose, 1995, p. 55). Thalberg and others formed the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences as a way of countering a union movement in the industry, providing certain protections and benefits, but only those which were acceptable or even profitable for management. In effect, at its formation in May, 1927 under its first president, Douglas Fairbanks, Sr., the non-profit corporation offered the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences as an

alternative to the growing trend among all crafts toward unionization. Today the mission statement and official history clearly state that the "Academy's field of activity does not include economic, labor or political matters" (Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, <http://www.oscars.org>, see also Rose, 1995 and <http://www.sag.org>).

The studios and management may have had themselves to blame. With the arrival of sound in 1927, tremendous amounts of money were spent to incorporate the new technology into their production and distribution practices. Many silent era stars could not compete in the sound era because their voice did not match the sound image the public had built into its own minds. The studios had to invest in new talent, new technicians, new writers and make one of the most difficult and rushed transitions in the history of the technology of film. In addition they spent large amounts of money on the image of lavish studios and on acquiring theater chains at inflated prices. In short, when the stock market crashed, the studios were already operating so close to "the line" that they could not absorb the impact of a complete change in the economy and in banking. Rumors swept the industry that the studios would shut down and simply stop making motion pictures all together (Rosten, 1941).

To counter those rumors and keep what few investors that were still in a position to put money into their studios, the movie moguls announced that they had found a way to avoid disaster. Reacting to the federal government's banking moratorium in March, 1933, the studios announced temporary salary cuts of 50% for most workers, including actors, while requiring a six day work week of often more than a dozen hours a day. Five days later, after protest from employees, the Academy came up with a formula that still represented sizable cuts (Ross, 1967). The pay cuts were the catalyst that led to the birth

of the Screen Writers Guild on April 6, 1933, and gave new energy to actors who had been seeking union representation for almost a decade (Prindle, 1988).

Inspired by the efforts of the Writers Guild, six Actors met at the home of actor Ken Thompson to discuss formation of “a self governing organization of actors.” On June 30, 1933 SAG’s articles of incorporation were filed with eighteen actors signing on, with Ralph Morgan appointed as president of the fledgling union (Prindle, 1988).

#### The Motto: He Best Serves Himself Who Serves Others

The Guild’s Founding Board of Directors was made up of eighteen actors who risked their careers. At the time none of them were considered noteworthy stars. They included Leon Ames, Boris Karloff, Bradley Page, Alan Mobray, Ralph Morgan, Noel Madison, Kenneth Thomson, Alden Gay Thomson, Ivan Simpson, Richard Tucker, Clay Clement, Claud King, Morgan Wallace, Arthur Vinton, James Gleason and Lucille Gleason (Prindle, 1988). At this point, the Academy was the publicly recognized representative of actors. In early October, in protest of the Academy influenced NRA code and after resigning from the management created pseudo-union, The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Groucho Marx and Charles Butterworth arranged a meeting at which twenty-one stars agreed to join the new union. They included people like Jimmy Cagney, Gary Cooper, Fredric March, George Raft and Adolphe Menjou. Four days later, rallied by the stars, over 800 actors gathered in a Sunday night meeting at the “lavishly appointed” El Capitan Theater and cheered when the first elected president of SAG, Eddie Cantor, called for an organization “of, by and for actors alone” (Rose, 1995, p.65).

The move to unionize actors was far from unanimous. Among the actors who opposed the formation of SAG, at the cost of having their memberships in Actors Equity revoked,

were the following well entrenched studio system stars: Rosalind Russell, Lionel Barrymore, Robert Warwich, Harry Worth, Elizabeth Allen, Wallace Beery, Edmund Breeze, George Brent, Richardo Cortez, Roy D'Arcy, Eric Linden, Lucien Littlefield, Conrad Nagel, Jack Oakie and Reginald Owen (Prindle, 1988).

While over half of the members of the new Guild earned under \$2,000 a year (a figure which has not changed in over fifty years), the new union needed to counter an image of high paid and glamorous stars earning \$5,000 in a single week or as much as a quarter of a million dollars a year, to a public out of work and under the full pressure of the depression. To do so, they joined with Hollywood's most militant union, the Writers Guild, in drafting a joint telegram to President Roosevelt pointing out that "the motion picture companies are not being bankrupted by salaries to talent but by the purchase and leasing of theaters at exorbitant prices, caused by the race for power of a few individuals desiring to get a stranglehold on... the box office" (Rose, 1995, p. 66). While talk of an actors' strike grew on the street, on November 13, 1933 President Roosevelt invited his personal friends and political supporters, SAG President Eddie Cantor and producer Joe Schenck, one of a handful of Hollywood management who supported the formation of the actor's union, to his retreat at Warm Springs, Georgia, to discuss the National Industry Recovery Act of 1933, which called for fair practice codes to be drafted and enacted for every industry, standards to be administered by the National Recovery Administration in Washington, D.C. (Rose, 1995).

Frank Rose (1995) writes that the industry's code "enshrined every monopolistic procedure the studios had put into practice since they were formed as well as several they tried to achieve but hadn't" (p. 64). Cantor's meeting with the President, coupled with

the recent conversion of super star Mae West to the union, led to the elimination of sections giving power to the studios in such areas as talent raiding, agency conduct and stars' salaries by executive order. It was the first of many victories for the fledgling actors' union (Rose, 1995).

A new union requires a fresh mission statement. Founded under the banner “He best serves himself who serves others” (SAG, 2000 [http](#)), it became obvious from the start that the new union would represent the full range of professional talent, from the lowly background performer (extra) to the biggest star. The new union's mission was spelled out by President Eddie Cantor in the March 15, 1934 premiere issue of the Screen Actors Guild newsletter, then titled The Screen Player:

The Screen Actors Guild is, as far as I know, the first organization of all actors in Hollywood. It was born of the realization that the high-salaried star and the struggling extra have certain problems in common, as employees in the actors' branch of the motion picture industry. The conduct of the Guild and its experiences during its first year of existence have borne out the existence of the economic fraternity of the star, the freelance player and the extra. (Krizman & Yaros, 2000, p. 24)

In the Studio System that existed, the vast majority of actors, stars or otherwise, were full time employees of a studio, loaned out to other studios in ways similar to today's baseball trades, with little say in the process. It is significant that Cantor refers to background players and freelancers as equal to stars in the studio stables:

For the first time, the actors have an organization which is constantly battling for their rights and the betterment of working conditions, along the lines of justice, fair play and general public welfare....It is, however not purely for selfish motives that the

Screen Actors Guild exists. What benefits the actors, benefits the entire motion picture industry, through the harmony which it engenders. The Screen Actors Guild has worked, and will continue to work sympathetically with every organization striving to attain the general betterment of working conditions through the entire field of motion picture activity (Krizman & Yaros, 2000, p. 24).

1934 SAG proposed the Motion Picture Code of Fair Practice. The same year efforts Actors' Equity (AEA) ended efforts to unionize the motion picture industry (<http://www.sag.org>).

In 1935 SAG became a national organization, joined The American Federation of Labor and the Equity spearheaded Associated Actors and Artistes of America [correct spelling for 4A's]. By 2000, the 4A members' unions include three large unions and several smaller, principally New York City area associations. These include the Screen Actors Guild, The American Federation of Television and Radio Artists, Actors Equity Association, American Guild of Musical Artists, American Guild of Variety Artists, Guild of Italian American Actors, and the Hebrew Actors Union (<http://www.sag.org>).

In 1936 The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences finally stated that it did not represent professional actors as a bargaining unit, but only did so after pressure was brought by celebrities under the SAG banner who boycotted the Oscars in large numbers. Studio boss Irving Thalberg had sworn he would die before accepting the Guild. In 1936, Thalberg died and in 1937, the studios accepted defeat and signed a contract with the Guild that, for the first time in Hollywood, gave actors a sense of power. (<http://www.sag.org>).

In the summer of 1937, 96% of Guild members authorized a strike if necessary over the issue of union representation. As a result, major studios began to accept the Screen Actors Guild as the bargaining organization representing their on camera talent and membership in the union became mandatory for anyone with a strong interest in acting for the camera (<http://www.sag.org>). Many of those early members of the Guild voiced the same praise for its early work, saying, “we were finally treated like human beings, not cattle or slaves” (<http://www.sag.org>).

By 1937, which was also the founding year for the American Federation of Radio Artists (AFRA, later expanded to include Television), SAG membership ranks grew to 5,000. Also in 1937, with the support of the Democratic Party and President Roosevelt, jurisdiction was clearly set as a national union, with offices in New York and Los Angeles. Major labor issues included recognition of the Guild as the sole bargaining agent for motion picture actors, stunt performers and extras, ensuring Guild access to sets for contract enforcement (Krizman & Yaros, 2000). Spurred on by a hostile attempt by the International Association of Theatrical and Stage Employees (IATSE) to invade SAG and AFRA’s jurisdictions, the first of a long series of merger talks begins between the unions (<http://www.sag.org>).

#### Seven Decades, Similar Challenges

The 1940’s, under strong highly patriotic union presidents such as James Cagney, saw SAG’s full support of the war effort, including encouraging the donation of time and talents to the Armed Services, American Women’s Volunteer Services, and resolutions of full patriotic support of the U.S. Government. Stars, such as James Stewart, put their careers on hold. Stewart became a decorated Army Air Corps Bomber pilot. Meanwhile

other celebrities including John Wayne and Ronald Reagan kept making films, which were tailored to fire up the home front or, in some cases, train both troops and civilian industry workers (<http://www.sag.org>).

The Supreme Court dealt a fatal blow to the studios in 1940 with its anti-trust Paramount Decree ordering that the motion picture industry be broken up, clearing the way for independents to enter the industry. Suddenly, actors had the power to control their own careers (<http://www.sag.org>).

The 1940s represented important changes in the Guild and the industry, many of which were paralleled in the 1990s. Main labor issues of the war and early post-war period included a possible merger of all performer unions, the continuing development of new technologies (then defined as television and refinements in sound technology), and the 1945 formation of an extra's autonomous Screen Players Union. Later renamed the Screen Extras Guild (SEG), the background performers' union eventually gained national jurisdiction, with the exception of New York City, where actors chose to remain affiliated with SAG. By the late 1980s, SEG went bankrupt, with the jurisdiction reaffirmed for SAG by an emergency resolution of the SAG National Board of Directors. The price was significant, as in 2000 background actors continue to earn lower wages than might have if SEG had remained solvent (Krizman & Yaros, 2000).

SAG helped end a violent 1945 strike between IATSE and the Conference of Studio Unions (CSU) by refusing to honor CSU picket lines. A year later SAG refused to support Actor's Equity when it was under government criticism as being an organization "seeking to propagandize the U.S. into a Communist form of government" (<http://www.sag.org>).

McCarthyism and a booming economy divided SAG in the late 1940s and into the 1950s. In 1947 the “Hollywood Ten” were questioned by the House Un-American Activities Committee. While First National Vice President Gene Kelly, Board members Marsha Hunt, Humphry Bogart and Bogart's wife, Lauren Bacall, went to Washington to defend the ten, their union did not support their actions. Under SAG President Ronald Reagan the Guild became one of the first unions to require a loyalty oath. The Hollywood Blacklist split the union politically and left scars that veteran actors felt well into the 1990s. John Randolph starred in or co-starred in over 100 motion pictures and was active in the early days of television prior to his refusal to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). For his stance, he was kept from working in film or television for over a dozen years. His career continued on Broadway under the state actors union's (Equity) contracts. Actors Equity Association (AEA) refused to require an oath and was branded by McCarthy as a Communist sympathizer organization (J. Randolph, personal communication, January, 1998; see also <http://www.sag.org>; and see also Prindle, 1988).

As SAG President, Ronald Reagan fought for and gained Guild jurisdiction over filmed television, commercials and industrials. SAG historian Ken Orsatti views the commercial and television contracts as a significant reason in the growing weakness of the Studio System. With the advent of television, the studio system was dealt its final blow. SAG was able to win rights for actors through its first commercials contract in 1950, residual payments for television reruns in 1952 and, in 1960, after a strike, residuals for films shown on television. With the implementation of the Pension and Health Plan, won in the 1960 negotiation, and residual gains, SAG's role in filling the

studio system void and finding the means to empower its members was well on its way (K. Orsatti, personal communication, 1999; see also <http://www.sag.org>).

In 1953, SAG President Walter Pidgeon oversaw the Guild's first contract strike, resulting in full national jurisdiction over filmed television commercials. Meanwhile Reagan continued to establish sound health and pension plans and was a prime mover in the area of launching a residual based compensation package. Heavily industrial Detroit, home of the television advertising driven automotive industry, became the first official branch office outside of New York and Hollywood (<http://www.sag.org>).

In the late 1940s the Studio System officially crumbled, as the Supreme Court ordered studios to divest themselves of their theater or distribution and exhibition chains.

In 1950 another major shift occurred for the Hollywood actor, with James Stewart becoming the first actor to agree to make a major motion picture in return for a back-end share of the profits. Orsatti writes, "When Jimmy Stewart negotiated to work on Winchester '73 (1950) for a percentage of gross receipts, he set a precedent for star deal power that is still in force today." (p.34) This, according to Orsatti (1995), proved to be a two edged sword:

While there was reason to rejoice at the empowerment stars enjoyed with the dissolution of the studio system, for the non-star contract players, risk and insecurity were the inevitable side effects. The great dominant parents had sent their children out into the world to fend for themselves: guaranteed employment as it existed with the old studio contract was obsolete. However, while the studios were gone, a more benign guardian angel remained to fill the void in the form of the Screen Actors Guild. (p 34)

By 1960, under SAG President Ronald Reagan (president from 1950-1952 and 1959-1960), Guild membership grew to 13,685 members with offices added in San Francisco, Chicago and Boston. Labor issues included the sale of theatrical motion pictures to television without compensation to performers. The joint funding by producers of the Guild's first Pension, Health and Welfare fund was established. The 1960s also saw the launch of joint contract negotiations with the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (AFTRA) for TV commercials, live broadcast TV and taped television programming.

President Dana Andrews (1963-1965) pushed for the creation of the National Foundation for the Arts and Humanities, which became the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts. As president between 1965 and 1971, Charleston Heston supported war efforts in Vietnam with several visits to the front. To encourage documentary and new filmmakers, Heston also sought the Guild's first low budget film and television contracts (Krizman & Yaros 2000). In 1969 the Guild board, "cognizant of the innate desire and need of actors to practice their craft, even under disadvantageous conditions" and "to encourage employment opportunities for Guild members," proposed the first low-budget theatrical contract (Orsatti, 1995, p. 34). It was approved by the largest membership vote in the history of the Screen Actors Guild. Heston warned of the monopoly of television networks.

As a result of increased international production of films and the spread of movie technology across the country, the late 1960s saw a serious "productions slump" for California. As president, Heston fought "run-away production", which was defined as any production which filmed outside of Hollywood or New York City. While many Guild

members still refer to "run-away production" in this manner, the official meaning of the term involves production outside of the United States of product intended for consumption of use within this country (Krizman & Yaros, 2000).

Reflecting the expansion of the motion picture beyond Los Angeles, by 1970 offices were added in Florida, Dallas, Denver, Cleveland and Minneapolis. Membership expanded to over 22,000. SAG jurisdiction now included theatrical motion pictures, television films, TV commercials, as well as industrial and educational motion pictures. Once again, new technologies were the focus of major labor issues addressed in the 1970s, including cable, pay television, and the advent of home videocassettes. Changes in the Guild's collective bargaining agreement were made to encourage domestic production, fight "run-away production" and encourage smaller or new filmmakers to sign union contracts. Between 1971 and 1973 SAG President James Gavin fought to unionize film and television product produced by the United States Government (Krizman & Yaros, 2000).

In 1973 a minor revolution occurred within the Screen Actors Guild, as a slate of candidates representing day players, film and television bit players, swept the election, led by popular television star Dennis Weaver. Weaver became the first candidate to unseat an incumbent SAG president. In 1974 television residuals in perpetuity were sought and won, for the first time protecting actors whose shows entered the popular and profitable domain of syndication reruns. The proliferation of nudity in films and a rapid expansion of non-franchised talent agents were other issues of the turbulent 1970s (Krizman & Yaros, 2000).

In 1975 Kathleen Nolan succeeded Weaver, becoming the first female president of any American union. She became a fearless fighter against discrimination of any kind. As the appointee of Jimmy Carter, Nolan became the first performer of any kind to be appointed to the Board of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (Krizman & Yaros, 2000).

With increasingly liberal leadership, under William Schallert from 1979 to 1980, Ed Asner from 1981 to 1985, Patty Duke from 1985 to 1988 and Barry Gordon from 1988 until 1995, the Guild entered its most militant strike period. In 1980 a four month strike was fought over the future of compensation for pay TV, cable, videocassette and the yet to be named predecessor to DVD, the videodisc. Setting the stage for the 2000 commercial contract negotiations, SAG members in 1979 and 1980 were told that once negotiated compensation terms would be difficult to change later. SAG struck again over similar issues in other areas of jurisdiction in 1987 and 1988. But the longest and most devastating strike of the decade effected SAG as a supporting sister union to the Writers Guild, which struck for 154 days in 1988, in effect shutting down production for an entire broadcast television season (Krizman & Yaros, 2000).

In 1974 the Nevada branch of the Screen Actors Guild was formed in Las Vegas. In the later 1970s and early 1980s additional branches were formed in Philadelphia, San Diego, Atlanta, Arizona and Houston (<http://www.sag.org>).

In 1980, the over 50,000 members looked with interest at a possible reuniting merger with the Screen Extras Guild and with their independent sister, the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (AFTRA). Meanwhile the negotiating units for management did merge into the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers,

against whom SAG negotiates theatrical, meaning film and television, contracts (AMPTP) (<http://www.sag.org>).

In 1990, after two failed merger ballots and the bankruptcy of SEG, by emergency action of the National Board of Directors, the Screen Actors Guild regained background talent or extras jurisdiction on a national basis. Precedent was found in SAG's continuous jurisdiction over background talent in the New York City market, dating back to the formation of the Guild. As a result of failed merger initiatives, SAG could not assume full jurisdiction and had to enter into and accept a lower base of compensation for background talent. Despite a lack of support from membership, the National Board of Directors felt that to allow a large segment of performers to be left without union representation was not an acceptable alternative. This division within membership remains an issue today (<http://www.sag.org>).

According to SAG statistics, in 1996 more than 85 percent of SAG's 90,000 members earned less than \$5,000 a year under Guild contracts (SAG Annual Report, 1997). While seven-digit movie deals make headlines for some stars, creating a false impression that all actors are highly paid, the reality is far less glamorous. The second half of the 1990s saw a major call for increased income, stronger contract protection and the protection of performers' images and talents using any and all legal and contractual means possible.

The union joined the international fight for intellectual, property and human rights through aggressive and expensive membership in organization such as the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and a legislative lobbying focus on basic human rights. SAG supported unsuccessful attempts at a National Health Plan, stepped up a renewed fight against run-away production, this time defining it as any production

filmed or taped for principal distribution within the United States which is shot in its entirety or in principal amount outside of this country. The use of member funds in what some perceived as political pursuits contributed to dissident opposition, which as the decade progressed became a part of more organized dissension against elected officers and staff. Under presidents Gordan (1990-1995) and Richard Masur (1995-1999), SAG took aggressive steps to become a truly national union, with membership representation coast to coast. At the same time as talks of a merger with AFTRA began to bear fruit, an aggressive expansion of branches from Puerto Rico to Hawaii occurred, with SAG's branch offices numbering 36 by 1999, 52 when joint AFTRA-SAG offices are considered (Krizman & Yaros, 2000).

#### Change and Challenges for the Membership of the Guild

In 1999 the membership of the Screen Actors Guild exceeded 97,000. The three-decade long talks of merger with AFTRA came to an end, when SAG's membership rejected the proposed merger structure and documents. After decades of joint contracts, a joint office or caretaker arrangement of shared responsibility in many cities and a tacit approval to overlap jurisdictions in the areas of video and the Internet, it became apparent that the two unions would not join forces on a formal basis (see APPENDIX for information on the planned merger of the Screen Actors Guild and AFTRA). The issue became how to keep the pre-merger cooperation, referred to as Phase One, intact and continue to operate as separate but equal unions with some gray areas of cross jurisdiction (Krizman & Yaros, 2000).

During the 1990s, successful actors gained more control of their career and future by the taking on the role of producers and studio executives. Orsatti (1995) wrote, "Today,

the freedom and power for stars brought about by the demise of the studio system, is evident in the fact that most stars have their own production companies, becoming, in essence, their own mini-studios. The actor who produces, directs, initiates his/her own projects is no longer a phenomenon but an accepted part of the industry” (p. 35). But, for those actors “who pound the pavement to act, who choose not to direct or produce, who do not have the option of becoming their own studios,” Orsatti wrote, "the challenge is to face an “increasingly complex and diversified industry that, with technological advances, morphs almost daily...an industry with unemployment rates that remain shocking” (p. 35). How the Guild faced those challenges and the plight of the self proclaimed rank and file working actor led to a division in leadership, which may bring major changes in the first decade of the twenty-first century.

One of the challenges facing the Guild in 2000 is how to attract the celebrity actors back into its government and committee ranks without violating any labor law restrictions on producers (management) becoming directly involved in the union. The stars who carry the most weight in any labor dispute, legislative battle or membership rallying efforts, may be limited in their ability to serve on committees or elected office by the very financial reality of the business. To earn top dollar, under maximum tax and legal protection, stars often become producers or the owners of production entities. Orsatti's reference to "becoming their own studios" includes the production interest, which may be necessary to make a living in the motion picture, television or commercial talent industries. In addition the issue of salary compression, or the increased difficulty of earning more than scale on a single job and working enough days to earn a living as an

actor, is of paramount concern to the rank and file in Los Angeles. All actors are affected by a decrease in payment relative to an increased use of their talents, images or voice.

Going into the new century over 100,000 SAG members earn over 1.6 billion dollars in contract dollars each year. This compares to 1980 with \$385 million, 1960 with \$70 million and 1930 with an unadjusted earning of \$35 million dollars per year (Krizman & Yaros, 2000, see also <http://www.sag.org>).

### An Actor's Life

When an actor does his/her job, the audience suspends disbelief and believes the actor is the character they are portraying. Actors are paid to make their job look easy and to minimize the percentage of the audience who perceive them as acting. Meanwhile actors face a constant chain of employers, ever changing in name, employment entity, job requirements and demands of their skill. It takes time, talent, dedication and study to aspire to earn a living as an actor.

The Screen Actors Guild of the new century is unique among unions in many ways. Perhaps the most unique feature of the Guild is that its membership consists entirely of film and television performers who work on a per contract basis and move routinely between employers over the course of most years, much less careers (Prindle, 1993). This structure is different from conventional industries with relatively stable work forces and an organized, structured business environment because most film and television industry projects are put together from scratch, with new payrolls, different crews, different talent needs and even different locations on a national or international basis. Gone is the studio system where films were shot within the stone walls or motion picture

communities in Hollywood or New York. Gone is the nurturing yet at the same time abusive system which hired starlets by the hundreds, put them through school, provided rigorous training and graduated the lucky few into full time employment on the studio lot (Prindle, 1993).

Understanding the nature of actors, the way they make their living, their motivations and aspirations is important in understanding why some of the members of the Screen Actors Guild would prefer to remain autonomous from other unions.

Most actors see their work as a craft, an art and a way of life. Others are attracted to the industry by the glamour and promise of fame and fortune and the outside perception of an easy way to make a living. According to a survey conducted by David Prindle (1988) film actors tend to be more mercenary and politically conservative while stage actors are more idealistic and artistic minded. Prindle and other sources confirm that within the SAG board room there are elected officials with views covering the full range of American politics and economics. Yet all have several things in common, including an interest in working for the betterment of their industry and their peers.

As artists and workers, actors are among the most misunderstood of professionals. According to actor Anthony Zerbe, "Acting is easy, or perceived to be, because we work so hard to make it look natural, to not let the work show, to suspend an audiences' disbelief and to play the play" (personal communication, August 29, 1999). The Bureau of Labor Statistics describes the profession of acting:

Acting demands patience and total commitment, because there are often long periods of unemployment between jobs. While under contract, actors are frequently required to work long hours and travel. For stage actors, flawless performances require tedious

memorizing of lines and repetitive rehearsals, and in television, actors must deliver a good performance with very little preparation. Actors need stamina to withstand hours under hot lights, heavy costumes and make-up, physically demanding tasks, long, irregular schedules, and the adverse weather and living conditions that may exist on location shoots. And actors face the constant anxiety of intermittent employment and regular rejections when auditioning for work. Yet in spite of these discouragements, the “passion to play,” as Shakespeare called it, still motivates many to make acting a professional career. (<http://www.sag.org>)

Being an actor is perhaps one of the most difficult ways to actually make a living. Of the over 100,000 members of SAG nationwide, over 46,000 live within the greater Los Angeles area (<http://www.sag.org>). There are estimates of four to as many as ten times that number of qualified non-union actors available in the same talent pool. Union and non-union actors compete for individual roles, which in film may be as little as one day of work for a few hundred dollars, or a day as a background extra for under \$100. It may take one or several hundred non-paid auditions to land that one-day's work. An actor may work dozens of days a year or none at all. Then too there are the expensive classes necessary to keep their skills up, the cost of professional photographs, video and audio tape, of postage and time spent marketing themselves to potential employers. Casting Director and producer Don Finn says of actors, “They are not acting for a living, they are acting for their craft. What they are doing for a living, besides waiting tables and taking 'day jobs', is auditioning. You might as well call them auditioners” (personal communication, March 15, 1997). Finn went on to point out that each actor "should think of themselves as their own little corporation," and part of the requirements to be a

successful corporation is to join and participate in one or more professional actors unions. Longtime SAG Board member Joe Ruskin, whose career includes appearances on the original "Star Trek" and many other television and film projects, states that, "Actors live in fear of rejection each and every day. If they are successful they fear it will end, if they are struggling they fear they will have to do something else for a living and give up a very important part of themselves" (personal communication, January, 1999).

For these and other reasons, many actors think of themselves as different from the rest of society. They sit on the outside looking in, observing, studying, emulating and imitating what they see. Many members of other unions view actors as not working for a living, because actors do not work nine to five for five work days in a row and do not always have to get their hands dirty or work up a daily sweat. Actors know that they are working every waking hour, even as they do other jobs, developing their craft and being ready when the time comes to be able to do what they consider to be the most important thing in their life, to do a role and to act.

### A Truly Democratic Union

The Screen Actors Guild represents a membership which may not be steadily employed (an estimated 90% of serious full time actors are out of work at any given time, with as high as 80% of the SAG membership not employed in the field their union represents), may or may not be serious about their trade, and which outside of the craft remains a part of the myth of Hollywood. Most of society fails to understand what it is to be an actor, beyond the performances they witness. Today 85% of union actors make under \$2,000 a year at their craft, with fewer than four percent living their upper middle

class to wealthy lifestyles solely on their income from acting. (Prindle, 1988, see also <http://www.sag.org>). Published reports vary, however most agree that as many as six out of ten members of the Screen Actors Guild go without any acting related income in any given year.

The Guild has been called the one truly democratic union in the United States because it functions with freely elected officers who, even at the level of the national president, are not paid or compensated for the time they invest. It is a union made up of actors working for actors, who in turn hire paid staff to carry on the day to day functions of the Guild, including legal counsel and financial consulting. While this may sound altruistic, it is also true as a long list of presidents, officers and board members have had to put their careers on hold, spend time away from family and jeopardize their own relationship with agents, casting directors and management in the interest of what is good for the membership of the Guild (Prindle, 1988).

Screen Actors Guild Nevada Branch Treasurer Vickie Sutton summarized her view of why the Screen Actors Guild is unique:

This union is unlike any other union. Our union is so different. It's about a dream, working in that dream, pursuing that dream. Members are much closer to their union and what it represents. The membership is so diverse, yet under one banner, able to vote on all contracts and be a part of every aspect of the union. I take great pride in my union (personal communication, March 2000).

Membership in the Guild differs from most other unions. In addition to full time actors, dancers, singers and other performers, SAG membership includes others who do not earn their living within the industry, yet are as proud of their union and their union

card as any Hollywood star. The vast majority of SAG's membership are not 'actors' in the true sense. The Guild has among its members people who may have looked right for a part and were in only one movie for a few lines, actors and extras who work on movie sets more for the enjoyment than the paycheck, those who are more management in their political leanings than pro-labor, and many who never took their jobs on a movie set seriously. There too are the producer or director's friends, under the obvious influence of management, who were given a part or given a letter of intent to allow them to join the Guild. While representing professional performers, the majority of voting members of the Screen Actors Guild are not themselves full working professionals within the industry or the craft (Back Stage West, 1994).

SAG is a national union, with a structure that centers on elected officers and a national board of directors. Local branches assist in providing services to local members and recommending any local contracts or variations from national contracts to the national board. All funds are distributed through the national office, with general budgets and appropriate specific requests administered by the elected treasurer and voted on by the National Board of Directors (SAG, Constitution and Bylaws, 1996-2000).

#### A Sister Union: AFTRA

As briefly mentioned in the review of the Guild's history, a second union formed to provide work place protection for radio broadcasters and radio actors, later expanding to include a new electronic media, television. The American Federation of Radio Artists was formed in 1937. To reflect the inclusion of television, in 1946 it was re-named The American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (AFTRA). This historic expansion

into new media, while SAG remained a “film industry union”, set a precedence, which occasionally produces conflicts between the two usually cooperative unions. SAG remains a performers union, primarily representing actors on film, television and in commercial or industrial presentations. While AFTRA began as a performers union, it now represents a widening range of professional crafts within the broader scope of the communications and entertainment communities. AFTRA represents newscasters, sportscasters, disc jockeys, talk hosts, announcers, on camera actors, video background performers, voice artists, dancers, singers, musicians, recording artists, music video talent, interactive technology performers, a small segment of television and radio producers, a small segment of electronic technicians and professionals in specific writing fields. While SAG’s membership moves rapidly from production to production and employer to employer, a politically powerful segment of AFTRA’s membership hold regular ongoing jobs, most notably the on air broadcast talent who work fixed hours five or six days a week for a specific employer. AFTRA also represents another segment of the entertainment industry whose lifestyle and motivation is surprisingly similar to those of a Screen Actors Guild actor: recording artists. So, in effect there may be more in common between the unions than detractors admit (Harvey, 1996; and S. Scott personal communication, January, 1998).

There are real issues to address if the two unions are to co-exist into the future. Will they cooperate or will there be a jurisdictional turf war? AFTRA activists point out, with some degree of accuracy, that by rights of the original intent of the two unions, AFTRA should have jurisdiction over all video and most certainly have jurisdiction over the new digital interactive media. A mutual agreement exists that provides case by case individual

decisions on jurisdiction, sometimes decided by which union the producer / employer prefers to reach an agreement with. As an example, television situation comedies, which are produced on videotape and not film, are produced under Screen Actors Guild jurisdiction. Soap Operas, even if they are shot on film, fall under AFTRA contractual jurisdiction. Both unions agree that this scenario could one day pit the unions against each other on a grand scale (SAG Board Room, personal communications, 1995-2000).

A major structural difference lies in the democratic concept of open membership, by which entry level membership may be purchased without meeting any work or professional credentials. AFTRA's board and conventions have consistently refused to revoke open membership. It is referred to as an "open door" policy. (Harvey, 1996) To the actors in SAG, this means that anyone can claim to be an actor, simply by joining AFTRA. This process continues today despite pleas from the Screen Actors Guild and Equity. It can be argued that AFTRA's open door policy may make the broadcaster union flexible enough to adapt and survive changes (SAG Minutes, personal communication, 1998, and SAG Board Room, personal communications, 1995-2000).

AFTRA is structured as both a local and national union. AFTRA locals have widely divergent responsibilities, jurisdictions, dues and sometimes structures. They generate and manage their own treasuries while contributing to the national fund. National officers and a national board of directors are responsible for negotiating and enforcing national contracts while an independent union congress of members at large, including proxy voting, holds the power to override the board and create national policy, including the nomination of a slate of national officers. Like SAG, AFTRA elected officials are volunteers, without a salary or benefit package (Harvey, 1996).

While a percentage of AFTRA members have consistent single employer incomes, most do not. SAG and AFTRA have sometimes conflicting responsibilities in representing on camera talent in television commercials, on television programs, in industrials, on interactive entertainment and in most every category of voice over. When the two unions formed, AFTRA's work by its nature included the broadcast and recorded voice, while SAG's workers were employed in projects recorded on film. As audio recordings began to be used in film production and, with the advent of video, film began to be broadcast on television, both unions had legitimate arguments for claiming representation of workers who traditionally fell clearly under the other union. Cooperation between AFTRA and SAG is common, however there remains the potential, and indeed in some cases the reality of producers playing the two unions against each other or seeking out the contract which is the least expensive or least restrictive for their project (R. Masur, personal communication, 1996).

An example of how the interest of the two unions may sometimes be in conflict came in early 1997, after both union boards had voted with a strong majority in favor of moving forward on merger. Concerns on the unilateral front of the two unions were raised over the World Intellectual Property Organization Treaty (WIPO) and its 1997 ratification by the US Senate. AFTRA and its national board strongly supported the ratification of the WIPO treaty, while SAG National President Richard Masur (of Los Angeles) vowed that his Guild "would actively oppose it" (Robb, February 4, 1997, p. 1). AFTRA National President Shelby Scott (who lives in Baltimore) fired off a letter to Masur saying that SAG's opposition to the treaty "causes those of us who spent the past five years conceptualizing and constructing a new merged union to question whether the

new union really is capable of understanding and addressing the needs of its diverse but contemporary constituencies” (Robb, February 4, 1997, p. 1). The WIPO treaty was drafted to protect the work of recording artists, including for the first time, protection of their intellectual property rights from misappropriation of their work in cyberspace.

In addressing his membership, Masur wrote that “our sister union, AFTRA, seems to have made some headway in securing treaty inclusion of some protections for sound recording artists...however, the lack of any protections for audiovisual performers places us in a position where we have no choice but to vigorously oppose...ratification of this treaty. And we will oppose it until such time as it includes real protections for audiovisual performers” (Robb, February 4, 1997, p.1).

Cooperation between the unions under Masur was never in dispute, in part because of his historic pro-merger stance and his friendship with AFTRA President Shelby Scott. Both were strong hands-on chairs, exercising parliamentary control under Roberts Rules of Order and interpreting those rules to gain the benefit for their presidential agendas. Both had been reelected by large majority mandates of their national memberships.

### Chapter Summary

Actors are a unique mix of artist, craftsperson and employee. They view their needs as unique. Actors move between jobs and employers, resembling casual labor or self employed consultants, yet fight to remain classified as employees working for a single monolithic entertainment and information industry. Performers shoulder the individual economic burden of their own training, wardrobe, and an almost constant search for work. They face an increasingly competitive work force. At the same time, they rely on

their unions to negotiate and enforce contracts, protecting performers' wages and working conditions within the entire entertainment and information industry.

The Screen Actors Guild was formed in an age when things were different. A few major studios with a handful of powerful owners functioned as factories, producing entertainment and information for a world wide public. SAG was formed under pressure of large pay cuts for all actors and performers. Even though this occurred at the height of the Great Depression, from a labor perspective it also occurred simultaneously to large expenditures by management on the new technology of "talkies" and on the purchase of and building of large ornate movie palaces for the theatrical exhibition of management controlled films. The 1930s and 1940s saw record growth and profits for motion picture studios and broadcast companies. Over the decades that followed, the Guild adapted to changes in economics, politics and technology. These changes reflect Prindle's evaluation of SAG as a "truly democratic union." (1988)

The democratic nature of governance, geographic concentration of membership and flexibility of structure allow for direct observation and study of the internal operations of the Screen Actors Guild. Chapter Two will look at methodology and through a review of literature, the nature of entertainment union studies. This paper will look at the rapid growth within the Screen Actors Guild of a faction known as the Performers Alliance, which will be studied in further detail in the chapters that follow.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND METHODOLOGY

Documenting history as it is happening, while reviewing the evolution of a creative communications union, required a multi-disciplined and flexible approach, anchored in an historical critical observation of events. Primary observation as a participant member of the Board of Directors of the Screen Actors Guild offered both opportunity and challenge, with access to primary sources on the history and development of the Screen Actors Guild, the Performers Alliance and the overall Hollywood union movement. A study, which began as an observation and analysis of the rhetoric of union merger, evolved into watching first hand the growth of and evolution to the level of establishment, a dissident movement within one of the two unions being studied. This movement effected and eventually eclipsed merger arguments in its long-term effect on the Screen Actors Guild, the union being studied. In addition, a strong parallel between technology and events within the Screen Actors Guild exist and needed to be studied to fully understand changes within the union.

A historical critical approach, utilizing a social movement model, best lent itself to the observation and analysis of a pattern of elements which have led to major change within the Screen Actors Guild at various times in its history. In addition elements of

dramatist and fantasy theme analysis help to explain the rhetorical techniques used by both sides in each conflict to influence the evolution of the Guild.

The primary focus of this study is a contemporary on-going evolution within the politics of the Screen Actors Guild. Primary literature sources include first hand observation, interviews and primary source evaluation, along with contemporary resources including the news media, trade press and the Internet. Additional resources included both academic and journalistic accounts of the formation of the Screen Actors Guild. An historical critical approach was used to observe and report whether or not the development of and cycle of the Performers Alliance fits dominant definitions of social movements and can be studied and used as a model for viewing the role of social movements within unions, its history and the current forces affecting its internal structure and politics.

### Review of Literature

There are several areas of literature reviewed for the purposes of this study: a) studies focusing on investigations of the history of the entertainment and communications industry; b) sources which contain references to the Screen Actors Guild, AFTRA, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences or Actors Equity; c) archive and primary resource materials (including interviews, correspondence, meeting minutes, notes and first hand observation) concerning the history of SAG and the politics of the entertainment industry; d) literature which documents the emergence of new entertainment technologies; e) sources which document merger efforts and integrated marketing philosophies of entertainment industry corporations; g) communications

studies focusing on social movement analysis and h) studies on which the methodology on which this thesis is based.

This thesis demonstrates that the union and its current political factions have common roots in times of rapid change, shifting economies, dominant new technologies and the will to define an elusive segment of freelance based creative performers as a cohesive unit within the labor movement. These changing conditions, and the importance of serious study are addressed by Danae Clark in Negotiating Hollywood: the Cultural Politics of Actors Labor (1995)

Actors are laboring subjects who encounter and must negotiate the ongoing economic, political and discursive practices of their profession within the film industry. From a contemporary prospective, film scholars need to address the changing political economy of the film industry and how this affects the role of actors and other film workers. In addition to analyzing the diversity of production sites, we need a better sense of the relations among actors within the profession's hierarchy; of how various material and discursive conditions affect their current struggles over defining subject identities; and how the interrelations among different entertainment media influence the construction of the acting profession. Although cultural studies theorists have thus far reserved ethnographic analysis for spectators, ethnographic techniques would undoubtedly benefit research in this area. (p. 126)

A dependence and need to react to rapid changes in business structure as well as technology is studied in Gray & Seeber's (1995) Under the Stars: Essays on Labor Relations in Art and Entertainment. In the collection, Gray and Seeber

(1995) have chosen a broad look at the "Arts, Entertainment, and Electronic Media (AEEM)". The authors maintain that entertainment is a driving force in new technology, is highly visible, has high impact on society, is consumed by everyone, is made up of highly unionized labor segments, and has a high level of mutual labor-management interdependency" (p. 2). According to Gray and Seeber (1995), unlike traditional union workers "actors, writers and performers often hold other jobs to sustain them"(p.6) or participate in multiple professions simultaneously. While other unions branch out and represent workers in multiple professions and industries, most entertainment unions are insulated to their primary field. The Screen Actors Guild represents performers, and except for a small number of technicians, The American Federation of Radio and Television Artists represents only performers and broadcasters. Other aspects of labor within the entertainment industry include membership in and proportionate employment through multiple unions, and union members contracted as individuals on a job by job basis, often under diverse multiple employers. The labor-management relationship becomes one of employee to the industry, rather than to a single employer (1995, Gray & Seeber).

Recent dissertations concerning the film industry include Studio Labor Relations in 1939: Historical and Sociological Analysis (D. Hartsough 1987) in which the author discusses dissension and reform within the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees. A second study is Actor's Labor and the Politics of Subjectivity: Hollywood in the 1930s (D. Clark, 1989) in which the author looks at actors identity as laborers and struggle for self-representation. Another study by

M.P. Lasky (1992), Off Camera? A History of the Screen Actors Guild During the Era of the Studio System looks at SAG's relationship with trade unionism, the studio system and critiques SAG's "accommodationist ethos".

The corporate changes in the film industry may be further researched in communication studies such as Is Hollywood America? The Trans-nationalization of the American Film Industry (Wasser, 1995) and Hollywood In The Information Age (Wasco, 1995). Trends towards multi-national mergers and global technology developed are reported in Policy Issues in Communications Technology Use (Dunn, 1995).

Studies about unions were researched and are readily available for further research. Recent examples that can be used include The New Economic Law and Democratic Politics: Unions and Public Policy, (Gould, 1995), The Transformation of U.S. Unions: Voices, Visions and Strategies from the Grassroots: Transformations in Politics and Society (Tillman and Cummings, 1999), The Imperfect Union, (Hutchinson, 1972), and Hollywood's Other Blacklist: Union Struggles in the Studio System, (Nielson and Mailes, 1995).

S. Judson Crandall (1947) was one of the first scholars to analyze the birth and development of social movements. In Crandall's model, movements begin with a tangible need for change, from which someone begins to speak out with frustration and urgency. The second is a phase of propaganda and agitation. The third has followers growing in identity with the movement and evangelizing to expand the movement's reach and power. The fourth is formal or informal organization. The fifth involves leadership, action and the development of new converts. Sixth finds the movement becoming its own institution or changing the institution it sought to change by becoming a part of it.

Seventh is eventual bureaucracy and the potential for a new movement to take on this new or revised institution.

The primary sources to illustrate the social movement aspects and characteristics of the Performers Alliance and Screen Actors Guild, fundamental to this study, were found in The Rhetoric of Agitation and Control (Bowers, Ochs & Jensen, 1993) and Persuasion and Social Movements (Stewart, Smith, & Denton, 1989). E.G. Bormann's various studies of rhetorical fantasy (1972, 1981, 1982, & 1985) have also been extensively applied to this study.

There are many well-researched texts on the industry as well as on the Screen Actors Guild. Books used in thesis research include studies of the industry and biographies of key individuals within the entertainment union movement. The primary sources used for this study include The Politics of Glamour, Ideology and Democracy Within The Screen Actors Guild (Prindle, 1985) Risky Business, The Political Economy of Hollywood (Prindle, 1993), The Agency (Rose, 1995) Stars and Strikes, Unionization of Hollywood (Ross, 1941).

Also utilized and available are the archives of trade publications such as the Hollywood Reporter and Daily Variety, newsletters, film and entertainment industry journals, biographies and memoirs. Articles by David Robb of the Hollywood Reporter have been used extensively as an outside source of record for Screen Actor Guild events. The Screen Actors Guild and AFTRA both have bound and in some cases microfilm minutes of their board and committee meetings, the AFTRA Congresses and of other select other entertainment labor organizations available for inspection at their offices in Los Angeles. Interviews and conversations were conducted with actors, SAG board

members , SAG staff members and other members of the film community (see also APPENDIX for a partial list of interview sources).

While ample support materials exist, there remains little substantial or even cursory material directly concerned with the proposed merger of the Screen Actors Guild and AFTRA, the Performers Alliance or the direct effects of rapid technological change on contemporary entertainment union contracts. The fact that secondary book publication resources are dated supports the argument that this study updates and adds to the volume of communication studies resources and provide a springboard for future studies. In addition, the author brings a personal and professional background in both media production and consumer electronics with the resources to investigate the effects of both on entertainment and communication industry unions. The author of this thesis has written articles on new technologies and how they will effect electronic consumers. This suggests the study and thesis are viable and contribute to the academic body of knowledge for future researchers and further study.

### Methodology

A combination of research methodologies has been used in this study, including historic chronology, historical critical analysis and social movement rhetorical analysis. The researcher's role as a participant observer must be considered in evaluating observations, interviews and conclusions within this thesis. This study takes place over a six-year period, starting in 1994, with primary observations occurring between mid 1997 and early 2000.

The problem addressed is the issue of whether or not social movements are possible within the framework of unions, governments or businesses. Can a movement, which reacts to the perceived need for change within an established union, be seen as a social movement, or is it simply a faction within an institutionalized process? Even if the movement is not a true social movement, can a rhetorical social movement model help to observe and explain the dynamics of a dissident movement within a union?

As a participant observer, the use of subjective language may be necessary, although that use will be restricted when it is necessary to do so. This also creates the same challenges to neutrality as are faced by journalists, contemporary historians and biographers. The researcher of this study brings to it background and training in journalism and mass media marketing.

The primary focus of the study is the rise of the Performers Alliance, a group of agitators within the Screen Actors Guild. The formation of the Performers Alliance and its rise to prominence within the Guild will be studied and referenced to the overall structure and history of the Guild.

For this thesis, the work of Stewart, Denton & Smith (1989) will be used to test the validity of the Performers Alliance as social movement. The stages of a social movement as outlined by Stewart, Denton & Smith include a) genesis b) social unrest c) enthusiastic mobilization d) maintenance and e) termination. The concepts of agitation and control as described by Bowers, Ochs and Jensen (1993) will be applied to the actions of the Performers Alliance. The authors state that agitation exists when "people outside the normal decision-making establishment advocate significant social change and encounter a degree of resistance within the establishment such as to require more than the

discursive means of persuasion. Control is the response by the establishment to agitation" (p 4).

The researcher / author is not a member of the Performers Alliance. The researcher remained as neutral as possible and at times was sympathetic to the PA and its cause. At times both sides in the conflict studied have attempted to categorize the researcher as being sympathetic to or a member of the other side.

The argument that unions can give rise to a dissident movement motivated by the desire for reform will be studied using the Performers Alliance as a model. As a movement within a union, the Performers Alliance used a full range of marketing tools to support its platform and rapid rise from informal living room gathering to political dominance within the Guild. From traditional rallies and informational meetings to the aggressive use of the Internet, the Performers Alliance utilized a full arsenal of communications based organizing techniques to make its point of view the dominant view in governing the Screen Actors Guild.

A chronicle of events within the film industry and Screen Actors Guild is necessary to provide context and comparison with current issues. A modified participant observer approach was used to study recent events. Qualitative research methodology, according to Taylor and Bogdan, (1984) means, "collecting descriptive data and people's own words and behavior." (p. 5). To this end, liberal use of personal observations and verbatim quotes allow for greater, unfiltered understanding, and offer strong comparisons and contrasts between the conflicting players. Taylor and Bodgan (1984) further state that participant observation, what is termed a phenomenologist approach, is research that "involves social interaction between the researcher and informants in the milieu of the

latter, during which data are systematically and unobtrusively collected" (p. 15).

Flexibility is an important part of this approach. As a participant observer, the ability to do this, while maintaining enough distance (literally and figuratively) for objectivity, has allowed both access and understanding of the unfolding events as the Performers Alliance formed and developed. As a participant observer, caution must be used to avoid "taking sides" and to respect privacy and confidentiality issues, with the ultimate goal of seeking validity. An important component of this research method is understanding the meaning of events from the perspective of the players involved, within the context of the background and environment of the members of the group.

### **CHAPTER 3**

#### **THE PERFORMERS ALLIANCE**

The history and evolution of the Screen Actors Guild is continued in this section, which will examine developments since early 1997. These observations may shed light on the impact of new technologies, corporate mergers and the evolution of the entertainment industry into what may be the dominant economic force of the new century. As a case study, this paper will look at how, even in the international mega-merger economy of the entertainment industry, a small group of dissatisfied individuals, acting as a dissident movement, may still effect the future of and shape of an industry.

The purpose of this portion of this thesis is to review the formation, aspirations and rise of the Los Angeles based Performance Alliance (PA) and to look at the rhetoric and

social actions of performers active in reinventing the Screen Actors Guild. The evolution of the PA as a movement using rhetoric and organizing methods will be examined primarily using the models of Stewart, Smith & Denton (1989) and Bowers, Ochs and Jensen (1993) and fantasy theme writings of Bormann (1972, 1981, 1982, 1983 & 1985).

The social movement model of Stewart, Smith & Denton is divided into five stages: genesis, social unrest, enthusiastic mobilization, maintenance and termination.

In the first stage of a social movement, individuals will become deeply concerned about a problem over the course of months, years or decades while the other side, perhaps an institution, will be unaware of the problem or not give it a high priority. As anger and frustration builds, the leaders agitate for change, gaining others to their cause and gaining recognition from the offending institution. As the movement grows, members become committed to the cause, various tactics of persuasion, unity and confrontation are employed, and strong lines are drawn between friend and enemy. Next comes a time of either defeat, or victory, which will require new leadership and tactics to sustain the movement. Finally, comes the termination stage, in which the movement will take over, be absorbed into or become a new institution, or disappear. Early radical leaders of the movement may either adapt or go on to new causes.

Bowers, Ochs & Jensen describes agitation and control as it relates to social organization. In this model, a social organization is made up of structure, goal orientation and power. Different types of power, including reward, coercive, legitimate, referent and expert are used by either agitators or those in control to events. These groups also use rumor to direct information and influence results. The strategies used by agitators include petition of the establishment, promulgation, solidification, polarization, nonviolent

resistance, escalation/confrontation and Ghandi/guerilla. Groups in control, or the establishment, use avoidance, suppression, adjustment, and capitulation. Various tactics are used to carry out these strategies.

In Bormann's Fantasy Theme Analysis a rhetorical vision, transformed by dramatic incidents, gives a group identity, purpose and unity and become for the group a social reality. Attitudes can change and be reinforced without the group being aware that persuasive forces are influencing it (1972).

#### The Birth & Formation of the PA: The Cause for Revolution

The Performers Alliance (PA) started to build a grass roots movement of Los Angeles actors dissatisfied with the 1996 Commercial and Industrial National contracts, in particular the only minor gains made in cable rates (Robb, October 8, 1997). The Performers Alliance, as a movement of its own, formed in reaction to what the founders saw as the lack of responsiveness by elected union leadership to threats to the livelihood of professional actors (Robb, 1997 and Board Room, personal communication, 1997-2000).

The founders of the PA felt their livelihood was being eroded by over-exposure to the audience on cable, by a lack of accountability for talent re-use in new technological mediums, by an industry move to pay only scale (the minimum wage allowed under a given contract) and by production leaving the country. Coming from outside the governmental structure of the union, they saw their union, the Screen Actors Guild, as

being unresponsive to changes occurring as distribution and production technologies evolved beyond traditional film and broadcast television.

In March 1997, a small group of actors banded together to build a coalition for change. They were acting in response to a situation, which they perceived as negative for both themselves and their profession. Dissatisfaction over what was perceived as a weak three-year contract with management (film companies and agencies) for commercial provided a clear triggering event (Robb, March 11, 1997).

The genesis period, as termed by Stewart, Smith & Denton (1989) started when mounting frustrations began to be directed at the union, which was perceived as not doing a good job in negotiating the new contracts. This led to concerns over a perceived lack of attention to the careers of actors by their unions. The union believed the issue was a minor one, one of many facing their membership, and in the negotiating process put a lower priority on the concerns of what became the Alliance, than on other equally pressing wage, working conditions and contractual concerns. The policy of the unions was to negotiate and avoid a direct and possibly violent work stoppage, which would eliminate all professional acting income and benefit payments for their membership. During the genesis phase, the negotiators for the union establishment were working in a world of management-labor compromise and co-existence, only mildly aware that there may have been a growing concern that more radical changes were necessary.

The new coalition of actors identified their common interests and developed a common plan of action (Burke, 1969). As a group and as individuals, they feared real challenges to their livelihood, their profession, their craft and their art forms. These challenges were coming from corporate conglomeration, mergers, new media, new ways

of disseminating what they contributed to producing as talent, new ways for others to benefit from the use of their talents, voices and images. The PA pursued a clear agenda of agitation and social change (Bowers, Ochs & Jensen, 1993). They drew on stereotyped images of corrupt unions, on the perception that their elected representatives were too close and maybe even "in bed" with management. They were displeased with what they saw as unnecessary compromises and shifting priorities, with attention taken from their way of making a living in favor of other areas of employment by Guild members. Their shared vision was one of discontent, disenchantment and the need for a return to a back to basics role for union representation. Their need as a group was for hope and empowerment. They perceived their union, SAG, as drifting away from its primary mission, which they see as providing for the well being and income of membership (P.A., 1999, [http](http://www.sag.org) and SAG Board Room, personal communication, 1997-2000). The Alliance responded to and used perceived weakness in the contracts, a contested internal election and a perception of a union being led by those who are not working actors or who have lost touch with the struggle of those seeking to make all or most of their living as performers. In this way they met the definition of agitation as "a style of persuasion characterized by highly emotional argument based on citation of grievances and alleged violation of moral principles." The PA came from "from outside the normal decision making establishment" advocated significant change and encountered a degree of resistance within the establishment such as to require more than normal discursive means of persuasion (Bowers, Ochs, Jensen, 1993, pp. 3-5).

In keeping with the industry in which they made their living, in its early stages the Alliance used a Dramatistic Approach to illustrate issues and gain early converts. In

reviewing the Dramatistic Approach and its applications to the Alliance, key elements are identified. The event itself is a theatrical one, in terms of profile, execution and actual profession. Symbols were used heavily to communicate at first dissatisfaction and common ground among dissenters, and eventually in the form of election rhetoric, ranging from petitions to signs, letters and fliers to speeches and rallies. There was a clear symbolic representation of the Performers Alliance as the party for working actors who fear a loss of or erosion of his or her livelihood. Rhetoric was used to seek common identification and eventually to persuade others that, in view of recent decisions, including the trade off in negotiating the commercial contract, it was time for a change. The combined rhetoric of the Alliance then went on to explain why it was time for a change in elected leadership. A clear hierarchy existed in the form of a National Board of Directors and various committees of that board, including the Wages and Working Conditions Committee, which did the negotiating, and the Executive Committee, which serves as a work horse and filter before anything reaches the full board.

### **A Deliberate Choice of Change**

The hierarchy of the existing union structure, at the time already in preparation for a dramatic transformation with the planned merger with AFTRA, represented the structure this new group of actors needed to choose to work within or to confront head on. Concerned with their identity as actors and what they believed was the union's preoccupation with a much broader definition of performers, the Performers Alliance felt it was time to derail the merger, focus on protection of actors captured performances and aggressively fight for stronger contracts in the expanding media of cable and interactive media. (Robb, November 20-22, 1998). Acknowledging the reality that not all performers

on camera or microphone consider themselves to be “actors,” Alliance members rejected the term Actors Alliance or AA. The Performers Alliance coined their own name as a rhetorical rallying flag for working actors to rally around in the name of justice and making a living (J. Hookey, personal communication, 1998 and L. Carley, personal communication, 1997).

Behind the rise of the Performers Alliance a simultaneous debate occurred concerning the long sought after proposed merger with the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists. Actors and motion picture, television and commercial performers were divided on a merger which would have put actors in a significant minority within their own union. A merged union, it was said, could have a broadcaster or a recording artist at its head and a board made up of artists who had little or no understanding of what it is struggle to make a living as a working actors. Fear existed that the needs of traditional Screen Actors would be sold out by the heavily pro-merger Masur and his administration (Robb, November 11, 1998 and November 17, 1998). Concerns about SAG's handling of the merger and possible negative effects of the merger became an early rallying cause among actors attracted to the arguments of the PA's founders. Anti-merger actors handed out leaflets to fellow actors at a Screen Actors Guild membership meeting at Sheraton Universal in June 1997. The flyer headline read: "This is another in a long line of bad deals for SAG." The rhetoric was clearly chosen as a critique of SAG management in general, not just the merger process (Robb, June 2, 1997, p. 1).

The founders of the Performers Alliance had strong convictions about what was needed. In order to bring their ideas to life, the members decided they would have to energize their fellow actors and begin a revolution within their unions. This restoration

vision (Bormann, 1981) would have to go beyond discussion; it would take organization and common action to come to fruition. The rally call to membership and eventual secret ballot votes may have been directly dependent on voting actors drawing from their own established vision of their union, one of unions representing fair compensation for labors, the worker's right to earn a living and support their families (Bormann, 1982). The Alliance may have been able to undermine support in the sitting SAG Board of Directors because actors, their immediate audience, viewed issues in terms of what was best for themselves and their personal interest without perceiving the larger picture of all performers in all situations. Critical to the restoration vision is "the reliance on persons acting on values drawn from established visions" (Bormann, 1982, p.141). The appeal was to the concepts of fair compensation and to a worker's right to earn a living and support their families. Within any union, picket signs, fliers, leaflets, speeches and the privilege of running for office are accepted methods of advancing within the hierarchy. These actors would eventually approach their situation using all of these tools and, as will be examined later, the resources of the Internet and e-mail.

Acknowledging the perhaps unperceived need for referent power, the PA quickly expanded beyond its small core group of highly visible commercial actors. At first this was done by reaching out into the commercial community at auditions and on work sites. Later rhetoric was shifted to include all working actors, including background talent and performers of other backgrounds or interest. The use of referent power to persuade and enhance identity will become increasingly obvious as this paper progresses (Bowers, Ochs, & Jensen, 1993).

The Alliance expanded to include television series regulars, day-players, voice artists and other working actors. Day-players are actors hired on a day to day basis to speak only a few lines. The Alliance moved into Stewart, Smith and Denton's phase two (1989) when they began to publicly voice their frustrations. As they began to do so in an organized mode, they entered Stewart, Smith and Denton's phase three, enthusiastic mobilization. Meanwhile the union establishment responded by trying logically to explain the contract negotiation process and why not all of the union's goals and demands were met this time.

The Alliance was least successful garnishing support among actors who earned their primary livings outside of the industry. These professional part-time actors were more concerned about the continuation of auditions and work opportunities than about any possibility of over-exposure which some even saw as a goal that they would like to achieve. There was also a geographic schism, and while the Alliance did recruit and include east coast actors who regularly work on both coasts, their early east coast efforts at expansion were far less successful than in Hollywood. Since the majority of union commercial work is concentrated on the two coasts, the Alliance failed to seek or garner support from the numerous SAG branches or AFTRA locals geographically between New York and Los Angeles.

The solidarity of the Alliance helped individual members cope with frustrations over their perceived professional jeopardy and adapt to a political method of action. Believing that change was necessary and that they had the formula to bring about their desired change, these early members set the parameters for scope and message while setting out on the consciousness raising leg of their rhetorical mission. Perhaps without intending to

do so, the Alliance and its membership created consciousness-raising communication, which fertilized the growth of their own membership while at the same time reinforcing some of the basic beliefs of the founders of the Screen Actors Guild and in a way the entire American labor movement (Bormann, 1983; see also Bowers, Ochs, & Jensen, 1993). Positioning themselves under a common identity, a single umbrella, as the good guy working actors, those who are threatened by evil giants and what they felt was an under-responsive elected SAG leadership, they chose to take action and make a difference. These actors sought an audience in agreement with their own beliefs in order to reinforce those beliefs and build a strong case for change.

The move to phase three (Stewart, Smith and Denton, 1989), full enthusiastic mobilization, occurred when it became obvious that their union boards were unwilling to take the strongest action in their labor movement arsenal, over the “cable issue.” SAG and AFTRA were not willing to strike.

In part because of a lack of first hand experience or exposure to the government process, the PA existed on a stable diet of rumor and innuendo concerning the hierarchy of the Screen Actors Guild slow moving dinosaur they presented the Guild to be. As the movement progressed, successfully with the election of some Performers Alliance members to the National Board in 1998, a strategy of taking credit for any movement in the direction of the positions they advocated was adopted. Using a mix of interpersonal and media techniques, the story of PA initiated change was told and retold. Perception by the faithful and the converted alike was that of Alliance generated positive change, reinforcing the Performers Alliance as a political and social force (Bowers, Ochs, & Jensen, 1993).

Members of the Alliance were unified by the belief that the commercials contract ignored threats to their livelihood created by over-exposure, and by what they perceived as under-compensation on cable and in new technologies. In response, the Alliance sought to present an image of unresponsive unions (SAG and AFTRA) made up of “old-timers” and/or those who have forgotten what is to be a struggling working actor, whose primary livelihood was acting. There is much truth to their assumptions. However, what those inside the negotiating process believed the Alliance failed to understand is that corporate management is growing in strength and the unions are fighting to gain often tiny and symbolic ground against industries which would probably not care if the unions disappeared. From a corporate management viewpoint, actors are viewed as replaceable, disposable workers, a vast supply of labor.

### **Shared Experiences and Language**

The battle for identification with working actors, and thus control of the union, begins with the use of strategic definitions. The formation of the Performers Alliance included the conscientious choice of a name that would imply unity and attract quick identification for the working members of the union. The founders deliberately chose to leave the word ‘actor’ out of the title in an acknowledged move to attract voice artists, stunt professionals, singers, dancers and others into their movement.

The group plays on the commonalties of any alliance using the tools of grass roots organizing. They use the same basic public relations tools, which were used to form the star-driven power base upon which the Screen Actors Guild was built. The PA uses much of the same rhetoric, both in language and action, as the founding fathers of the Guild in their break with the management formed "union". In 1933 the dozen founders of the

Screen Actors Guild gathered in a back room to formulate plans to take on management. In the summer of 1997, the founders of the PA met in an actor's home. [The names must remain confidential.] SAG's founders reacted to high profile actors who were willing to conform to the studio's company line. The founders of the PA felt the existing SAG National Board of Directors had "sold out" their interest in favor of other concessions and contract gains from a management some felt had become too friendly with the Guild's top officers and staff.

This rhetoric of change feeds on the audience's tendency to believe that those in positions of power do abuse that power or at the very least grow too comfortable and complacent in their positions. The PA redefined the currency of symbols. It used them to shape perception of the union among members, to call for common action, and to publicly proclaim common interest easily identified with by most members of the Screen Actors Guild. They wave the same flag of unionism as the opposition they hope to unseat. Lippmann refers to the way we see the world as being a fabric of "fictions", which are facts and reality as understood and processed by our own perceptions (1922//1997). The PA carefully crafted a world of fictions, telling working actors that those in power and the strong representation of non-working actors elected from other parts of the country threatened all real actors' (Hollywood based) ability to earn a living under Guild Contracts.

During a privileged and confidential conversation against the backdrop of a contract adjustment meeting with producers, a PA member openly stated that branches have an unfair advantage because they do not have to adhere to the one voting board member per every 1,200 dues paying members electoral formula, and that branch members are out of

touch with the needs of the majority who live and work in Los Angeles. During the same lunch meeting, a second member of the PA openly commented that for too long board members from the branches have voted on and decided contract issues on contracts under which the branches have little or no work experience. In an e-mail correspondence, PA WebMaster Gordan Drake openly said that those who do not make their living under a contract have no right serving on the National Board and deciding whether or not to recommend the contract to the membership. In reality the percentage of work under commercial contract is roughly equal between Los Angeles and the rest of the country, and elected board members constitutionally are required to weigh and vote on whether or not to recommend contracts issues in any member referendum.

Utilizing the most current industry news of any given week, the PA applied press relations to keep a constant communications line open with the media, primarily the Hollywood Reporter and Los Angeles Times and with the non-union *e-entertainment* cable network. As reported in Daily Variety, the Hollywood Reporter and the Los Angeles Times, the Performers Alliance organization staged protest rallies in front of the Screen Actors Guild offices and at high profile industry events, such as film openings and awards programs.

An analysis of the Performers Alliance and its rhetorical arguments may support Doyle's (1986, p 24) contention that dramatic plots, if repeated, can be persuasive. The Alliance used much of the same rhetoric, both in language and action, as the founding fathers of the Guild in their break with the management formed "union", the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. Burke states (1966) that society is created and maintained through symbols, which are used to control behavior and that for any

common action to take place, common interest must be publicly proclaimed. The flag of unionism, in this case, works in favor of the Alliance, whose audience consists of fellow actors and entertainment industry employees who understand what life in a creative and unpredictable environment is like and who identify with each other.

Their fellow working actors, and those members of the Screen Actors Guild who identified themselves as working actors (whether employed or not) were ready to hear a plea for change. Shared experiences and shared frustrations proved fertile ground to generate a grass roots movement and respond with a new voice to those who they perceived as representing the status quo. While the National Board of the Screen Actors Guild, its contract negotiating committee, its staff and their counterparts in AFTRA may have indeed come back with the best possible contracts and highest compensation, those “on the outside” could not easily be convinced of that fact. For most individuals the question is “what have you done for me?” In this case those who work in commercials and stunts for a living felt the answer was “not enough.” Sufficient numbers of actors, as the audience, were easily convinced by the Alliance's message, because they did, indeed, perceive it as true (Combs & Mansfield, 1976). The Alliance found unifying elements in their appeals for the support of the working actor in the very rhetorical foundation of the union movement and more specifically the roots of their own union. Actors persuaded by the PA's message may reflect Bormann's (1972) statement that "audiences may gradually form new attitudes or have currently held attitudes reinforced without being aware they are being persuaded" (p. 116).

### Strategies for Change

A shared rhetorical vision formed as the Alliance began to congeal into a unified force for change. By joining in the vision, members of the Alliance began to focus on how, working together, they could achieve desired change. The shared fantasy was one of being able to “put SAG back on track” as a union representing the interest of primarily actors in being able to make a living in the trade they love so much. Illustrating the model of a chain effect, going from individual to small group, to other groups, to larger group, to the media and in the near future to the board room, in a few short months what began as a small community of actors meeting at their homes, became a formalized political movement for change and a common future (Bormann, 1985). These actors went from concentrating on individual careers to being willing to contribute often large amounts of time and portions of their personal income toward the advancement of their alliance and its missions.

The Alliance chose a multiple front strategic approach to forcing or agitating toward change. Their grievances were presented through all available communications channels, with the clear aim of creating opinion within the Guild and the Hollywood community favorable to their cause. The strategies of agitation as discussed in The Rhetoric of Agitation and Control by Bowers, Ochs & Jensen (1993) can be used illustrate the growth and eventual success of the Alliance.

The PA's founders staged media events designed to embarrass the power structure and edge them toward the desired change (1993). These events included picket lines, direct statements to carefully chosen reporters and a march on the Los Angeles national headquarters. On June 16, 1997, 80 performers picketed the L.A. offices of the SAG,

AFTRA and Actors Equity headquarters to protest negotiations on the cable contract. According to a story in the Hollywood Reporter, the protesters marched with a dummy in effigy, and shouted "Vote no, contract stinks" (Robb, June 16, 1997, p. 1). While still in the formative stages, elements of the "selection of motive appeals, selection of target audiences, selection of types and sources of evidence, and selection of language" are all present early in the process of movement toward change (Bowers, Ochs & Jensen, p.16). When the members of the commercial acting community agreed to address the joint board of AFTRA and SAG, who were meeting on merger related issues, they fulfilled the requirements of petition and gave credibility to their as yet unofficial movement.

As evidence of the promulgation stage of agitation, the PA lobbied one-on-one with fellow actors in the workplace, in workshops and on the streets. They sent out publicity releases, created public relations scenarios, stood vigil outside joint board meetings and actively lobbied existing board members to their point of view. In doing so, the PA fulfilled the promulgation strategy of agitation "designed to win social support for the agitator's position" (Bowers, Ochs, & Jensen, p. 20).

They used the full spectrum of techniques, including the lobbying and winning of a handful of potentially influential existing members of the National Board as "legitimizers for their cause" (Bowers, Ochs & Jensen, p. 22). To solidify and unite followers a conscious decision was made to gather under the banner of Performers Alliance, implying a unified voice for change and the potential, using a PA slogan, to take back your union (PA, 1997, http). Internal PA publications came in the form of a fledgling newsletter, which quickly became costly as numbers of membership and interested parties grew geometrically. As part of modern solidification, the newsletter was later replaced by the

much more efficient, accessible, and most important national vehicle of an Internet Web page, professionally and deliberately linked to search engines under a range of names including "actors", "performers", "union actor", "alliance" and "SAG" (G. Drake, 2000 and J. Shaw, 1999, personal communication). The PA chose not to directly attack sitting President Richard Masur during their 1997 and 1998 formative seasons. Moving into the 1999 elections the decision was reversed with Masur made a direct target, charged with tolerance of alleged vote fraud in the NEC elections, intolerance of opposition within the board room, being a "nazi" as chair (G. Gordan, PA, 1999, <http://www.pro-act.org>) and in taking too much an interest in the affairs of AFTRA and national issues at the expense of Hollywood and alleged working actors. Masur was in effect made a flag individual and in black and white terms, made to look like the enemy, the devil.

PA efforts led to the creation, for the first time since the early 1970s, of two distinct political parties within the union. The polarization strategy is best evidenced in the formation of Pro-Act by a group of "working professional performers" to support Masur, his slate and the reelection of standing board members (<http://www.pro-act.org>). A strong illustration of the feeling that members should be either for or automatically against the goals, aspirations and platform of the PA lies in an e-mail to a member of the national board from the Webmaster of the Performers Alliance, Gordon Drake, who wrote, "If you were a working actor, I would care what you say. But you're not. What are you even doing on the union board trying to represent people who work? You will hear no more from me" (G. Drake, personal communication, October 2000).

For reasons of time constraints, as well as political considerations, recorded votes are seldom used by the Screen Actors Guild Board of Directors. Most key votes since the

primary election victory of the Performers Alliance in 1998 have required recorded votes, with those votes being used against specific candidates in forthcoming elections, a sign that in their view "that any individual who has not committed to the agitation supports the establishment....any uncommitted individual is assumed to be for the establishment rather than neutral" (Bowers, Ochs, & Jensen, 1993, p.34). The November 16, 1998 Hollywood National Executive Committee representation vote, along with an alleged attempt to skirt the issue, became flag issues in the 1999 elections. The NEC is a core committee made up of the elected officers of the Guild plus a proportional representation of elected board members from Los Angeles, New York and the other branches, elected by their fellow board members by region. Much of the actual business of the Guild passes through the NEC, which is often empowered to take action in place of the full National board. Several staff members were called into question but cleared in an inconclusive investigation (Robb, January 15, 1999).

Other than in Internet rhetoric and the occasional heated board room debate, escalation of issues had not led to violent confrontation. In various releases to the media and Internet postings referring to Masur as a communist, Nazi and accusing him of McCarthy tactics reflected the full political extremes used by the PA to discredit their flag opponent (PA, 1999, [http](#)). Meanwhile, Richard Masur continued to invite those sympathetic with the PA to become a part of the political process through committees and in advisory functions to the board. Pro-Act also chose the high ground. Instead of attacking the Performers Alliance, they stated Masur and the Guild's achievements, goals and elements and actions already in place toward change. The PA used the NEC election as an issue, amplified by a full resolution of the board, the Kemmerling Resolution, to put the issue

behind and move forward with the business of the Guild. The closest to a confrontational issue was in a strong feeling by the PA that the questions of the NEC were not resolved.

The evening a vote on the Kemmerling resolution was called, Performers Alliance member and later Commercials Contract Negotiations Chair, [name withheld for confidentiality], tearfully called for a healing of the wounds and a joint resolution of the conflict through the support of the resolution to put the NEC election into the past. The next day, at the National, General Membership and Hollywood Membership Meeting, the same actor walked up and down the aisles, clapping his hands and calling for the heads of those who voted to bury the issue of the NEC election. This public tactic of agitation illustrates the Performers Alliance role as instigators for change within the union. A deliberate "us" versus "them" tactic was clearly evident.

Finally, the PA chose to challenge the incumbent board in the direct court of union elections. The need for any form of violent confrontation was averted, and may never have been planned. The emotional level of the protestors and the Performers Alliance movement was high enough, that had the establishment chosen direct confrontation or to completely closed the doors to protest, violence was within the realm of possibilities. Phase three of the Stewart, Smith and Denton's dramatic lifecycle of social movements was in full form.

Risking potential violation of National Labor Relations law, which has restrictions concerning communications and relations between management and labor, including how the physical space of offices is used, the Alliance took the battle to the offices of casting directors. Permission was granted to gather signatures, pass out leaflets and solicit members (J. Hookey, personal communication, 1999). Since the casting directors

(considered management) did not actively encourage or coerce actors visiting their office to sign on with the Alliance, the potential for a court challenge of their movement was minimized, although not entirely eliminated. Early on, a moral decision was made that in order to have access to the voting members of SAG, and thus counter the inherent advantage of the incumbents they opposed, the risk was a necessary one (confidential personal communication, 1999).

Interpersonal communication skills were applied in the formative weeks by expressing their anger, beliefs and plans one on one with casting directors, agents and their primary target of those actors who were actively seeking work. They quietly lobbied on the sets of productions, in coffee shops, in restaurants and wherever else actors congregate. In mid 1998 the Performers Alliance claimed their position and rhetorical vision helped membership grow to over 20,000 actors. By mid year 1999, PA unsubstantiated membership claims rose to over 60,000 members. For perspective, there are just under 100,000 active members of the Screen Actors Guild and 126,000 card-carrying members. While the organization had not come out for or against merger, many of its members were opposed to merger on the grounds that it would water down or decrease control of the Guild by working actors (Robb, November 24, 1999).

In June 1997 a hard fought and hard negotiated three year commercial contract agreement was approved by the national membership of the Screen Actors Guild, but not until after vocal protest by the Alliance whose members were upset because of the relatively low compensation package for commercials that are broadcast on cable when compared to national or spot market broadcast contracts (Robb, June 27-29, 1997). These protests were heard both inside and outside the confidence of the National Board room,

including "off the record" speeches made to the closed joint national boards of SAG and AFTRA on Friday evening, January 16, 1998, at the invitation of SAG President Richard Masur and AFTRA President Shelby Scott. At this meeting leaders of the Performers Alliance, which represented itself as "working professional commercial actors" strongly voiced their dissatisfaction over the commercial contract. For reasons of professional security, their names are not in the public record.

The Performers Alliance target audience was found in three directions, each requiring a different combination of rhetorical vehicles and environments. The first was to let their voice be heard by the National Board of SAG. To do this, they earned allies within the existing board, passed on a petition to let their views be known, and spoke out clearly in the trade press, which, dependent on advertising support from the producers and production companies, seemed anxious to amplify discontent or disagreement amid the unions. As an information filter, The Hollywood Reporter, and to a lesser extent Daily Variety and the Los Angeles Times, proved to be sympathetic or neutral transmitters of the intended message. For example, a story in the Hollywood Reporter:

A group of actors called the Performers Alliance is fielding a slate of candidates in the Screen Actors guild elections, a move the group's leaders are calling "an open challenge to SAG's leadership." The Performers Alliance was born out of the heated discussion over SAG's new television commercial contract. (Robb, October 8, 1997)

Their second audience consisted of fellow actors, approached in person, through mailings and by exposure to press coverage of events. The third audience was the general public, a difficult target as the majority of the public, even in a town like Los Angeles, find it hard to understand how the relatively high wages earned by SAG actors

when they work, could be seen as endangered or poverty level based on the small amount of work actually available.

The Performers Alliance used strong rhetoric and argument, using the media as a primary channel, before retrenching and taking the political election avenue to meet their goals. While its goals and intent are the same as the existing National Board of Directors of the Screen Actors Guild, there may have been a need for the Alliance to position itself as outsiders fighting for fundamental change in order to drive home the specifics of their agenda, including protection from what they see as abuse by the powerful cable and satellite segments of the industry.

Within the first few meetings, the decision was made to work within the system while also bringing their fight to the streets. The PA sought proactive change within their unions, rather than the establishment of a new order or radical change to the entire entertainment union structure. To accomplish this, the commercial actors who formed the PA chose early on to actively recruit high profile individuals who could help their cause from the “top down” within both unions. These recruited opinion leaders included, but were not limited to, John Connolly (a regular in police dramas and films who works out of both New York and Los Angeles), Paul Napier (established commercial actor and already an example of top down movement leadership as a major behind the scenes player within the system in AFTRA), Patrick Pankhurst (a recognizable Los Angeles character actor who served as the Alliance’s unpaid campaign and public relations director), Gordon Drake (a commercial actor who also owns and operated an Internet Design and Advertising firm) and Sumi Haru (a television talk host, actress, Asian-Pacific Community Activist, former acting President of SAG and at the time AFL-CIO 6<sup>th</sup> Vice

President.). Television and industrial actor Chuck Sloan added his background as a speechwriter and his talents as a handler by becoming the primary advisor to the 1997 and later 1999 slate of officers (<http://www.pro-union>).

The Performers Alliance became a political force to take seriously when it threw up informational picket lines at the national headquarters of SAG, on Sunset Boulevard. Their petition drive led SAG's Western National Board (those members who live in Hollywood or states geographically closer to Hollywood than New York City) to vote against the 1997 commercial contract by only one vote. At a meeting of the remaining board members in New York City, the vote was nullified as all of those who voted in the eastern board session voted for the contract, giving it a clear majority of the full National Board. When the contract was sent to the membership for ratification, it earned a traditional overwhelming approval vote (Robb, May 5, 1997 and June 27-29, 1997). Here is a direct conflict between the fantasy and the reality. Alliance members blamed the entire board for the terms of the new commercials contract, and sought to defeat not only those who voted against their interest, but even those who supported them (confidential personal communication, 1997-2000).

#### *Partial Victory and Unexpected Allies*

“SAG dissidents rule election but Masur back” was a headline on the cover of the Hollywood Reporter (Robb, November 10, 1997, p. 1). According to the story, Richard Masur "handily earned reelection in 1997 to a second two year term as the national president of the Screen Actors Guild," however most of his loyal slate of incumbents, including those vice president offices assigned to the Hollywood membership, was defeated. The exception was also an often-dissonant voice, Sumi Haru, who was on the

record as being against merger. She served as “acting president” after previous National SAG President Barry Gordon resigned to run for Congress, to the election of Richard Masur to his first term as president. As the incumbent first vice president and possible next in line for the presidency, Haru chose to run against New York actor and Performers Alliance member John P. Connolly for national recording secretary. The official nominating committee had selected Connolly, who retained his seat on the National Board elected by the New York City Branch (Robb, November 10, 1997).

Haru later resigned her seat as first Vice President, citing time conflicts with a similar role in AFTRA and her elected position as the first ever performer to serve as the 6<sup>th</sup> Vice President of the powerful AFL-CIO. It can be speculated that her differences with Masur over merger, and the structure of national committees (Haru favored a Hollywood dominance in committee membership) may have been the true reasons for her resignation. This set the stage for a 1999 run for the First Vice-Presidency of SAG, with Haru jumping to the Performer's Alliance slate, against Masur's VP, Amy Aquino. Under SAG's constitution, Haru maintained her seat on the National Board despite her resignation from her officer position. Reflecting SAG as a Hollywood based union, the first vice president, who serves as president in the absence of, or at the will of, the president, is an elected position selected by the Hollywood and General Membership (SAG Constitution and By-Laws, 1996-2000).

#### A Road Built On Contracts and Elections

In the 1997 elections, the Performers Alliance earned fourteen of the nineteen Hollywood seats up for election, defeating board members who have been seated

incumbents for ten, fifteen and in one case twenty-seven years (Robb, November 10, 1997). Following the 1997 elections, thirty-six additional Hollywood seats were filled by incumbents who would end their three-year terms between 1998 and 2000. After the election in 1997 the Performers Alliance held one third of the Hollywood Board seats and fourteen percent of the overall National Board vote. Following an apportionment formula set forth in SAG's Constitution and By-Laws, there are 105 seats on the National Board of the Screen Actors Guild. While still working in a phase three position (Stewart, Smith and Denton, 1989) the Alliance was, through its own 1997 victory, moving into phase four, maintenance, while there were still battles to fight. The question was, would the Alliance remain unified and consistent in this new position within the existing institutional system?

## **The Theatrical Film and Television Contract**

As members of the Screen Actors National Board of Directors, in the spring of 1998, the Alliance spearheaded a movement to defeat the Theatrical (film) and Television Contract. As with the Commercial Contract, it was felt that performers were under-compensated for residual reruns on cable and made for cable or video programming. As explained in the history section of this paper, the contracts for cable and video were recent and were written to organize what were in the 1960s to early 1980s, experimental new technologies. Under Phase one of a merger plan, the Screen Actors Guild and AFTRA jointly negotiated most national contracts with management. Already evident was some division, as several vocal members of the Alliance jumped ship and argued for contract ratification.

Unsuccessful in board room efforts to block the contract, the remaining Performers Alliance members garnered a 40% support level among the joint boards of SAG and AFTRA to force a minority report to be sent to the national membership along with the contract ratification ballots. It set a new precedent. SAG President Richard Masur and AFTRA National President Shelby Scott were in a position to block this effort, as there were no provisions allowing or governing minority reports from the joint boards in any Phase I merger document. Instead they chose to bring the issue to the eastern joint section board in New York City. That body strongly turned down any such report. Further breaking established precedent, principally because the Performers Alliance is a predominately Los Angeles coalition, Masur and Scott empowered the PA by decided to allow the western joint boards to vote on the minority report motion which was made in New York and turned down there. Under normal circumstances a defeated item would not show up on the deferred agenda of the western body. The vote to send out a minority report met with an overwhelming western majority, for a combined national percentage in excess of 40%. At this point it became clear that the Alliance had become a part of the governing body the officers and staff needed to work with, listen to and if necessary placate to achieve their own individual goals or agendas (Robb, May 8, 1998).

The theatrical contract did pass. As reported on the Screen Actors Guild Web Site on Thursday, July 2, 1998 only 22.2% (27,127) of the 122,295 eligible voting members of AFTRA and SAG cast ballots. Of those who cast votes, 70% (18,539) were for the contract and 30% (7,916) opposed it (Robb, July 2, 1998).

## **The PA Gains a Foothold**

Following the 1998 elections, the Hollywood percentage reversed, and in 1999 the PA managed to sweep into a 90% majority of the Hollywood board, and with it over 40% of the seats on the National Board of Directors (Robb, November 8, 1999). Because of the importance of Hollywood, a PA victory over three elections also guaranteed majority control of the most powerful national committees and the appointment, and after earning the presidency in 1999, of the chairs of all national committees.

It is important to affirm that members of the Screen Actors Guild are not paid or compensated for the time they commit to serve on Guild boards, committees or participate in voluntary services for the membership of their union. As with the board members they replace, the newly elected Alliance members have committed to between two and three years of service, ranging from ten or so hours a week to, when including travel and phone calls, full time to the benefit of and advancement of their fellow actors (Prindle, 1988).

During the 1997 formation period, the Performers Alliance had not endorsed a candidate for president, noting that their political advisor and campaign manager Patrick Pankhurst indicated Masur would win his bid for reelection handily, despite holding many beliefs that were contrary to those of the Alliance. In press coverage of the 1997 election, SAG President Richard Masur welcomed their dissenting voice, saying, "It's a very positive development that a group of active, working performers has gotten involved in the process and put so much energy and focus into getting elected. It always helps this union when active, working people are engaged in the process" (Robb, November 10, 1997).

In 1998, jumping ahead to after the election, Masur's early acknowledgement of this dissenting voice proved valuable to the Performer's Alliance's strategy. Masur proceeded to make decisions to allow the Alliance an often-unprecedented leeway in both the boardroom and in access to the general membership. While he could have chosen to use his position as National Board Chair to control the room and limit the voice of the PA minority, on many occasions Masur went the other direction, granting many liberties to Performers Alliance speakers (R. Masur, personal communication, August, 1999).

In what would become a potential political misstep, a small group of members of the Alliance were invited by New York Board member John Connolly to address the joint boards of AFTRA and SAG, meeting as committee of the whole, to voice their concerns about the impact of the new commercials contract on their livelihood. This meeting occurred prior to the election, and may have been done as a way to defuse the potential impact of Alliance dissatisfaction. At the meeting, Masur was joined by others in the room in inviting the dissenting commercial actors to join in the regular union political process and work toward the changes in which they so strongly believed. In effect, the establishment defused some of the “devil” image, by appearing willing to work with the dissenters. To Masur's frustration, the group took him to heart, not by joining the existing political process, but by solidifying as an opposition party in the form of the Performers Alliance. The dissidents continued in a lack of action and in some cases steps in a direction differing from their own by Masur and the elected leadership. John Connolly later converted to Masur's team and helped to form Pro-Act, a hastily assembled movement to counter the Performers Alliance and its momentum ([www.pro-union.org](http://www.pro-union.org) and [www.pro-act.org](http://www.pro-act.org))

The Alliance created a platform that dealt primarily with aggressively challenging the status quo with producers and increase both compensation and employment guarantees for working union actors. Members tended to align with those against a merger with AFTRA, but fragmentation on this issue among the Alliance was high. The Performers Alliance was concerned that SAG has lagged behind in protecting performers in the commercial, cable and new technologies fields.

### Chapter Summary

As indicated earlier in this paper, the social movement model of Stewart, Smith & Denton is divided into five stages: genesis, social unrest, enthusiastic mobilization, maintenance and termination.

In the first stage of a social movement, individuals become deeply concerned about a problem over the course of time while the institution appears to be unaware of the problem or not to give it a high priority. Since negotiations and much of the activities of the Board of Directors remained under the shroud of either legal privilege or the transient nature of compromise, those outside of the actual negotiating committees were unaware of the day to day battles fought by their union. The membership remained unaware of what the existing institution was doing to meet the needs of working actors, specifically those who earned their living in commercials. In addition an increasing number of new technology Internet savvy members of the union grew concerned that their union might be too entrenched in the age of 35 millimeter film, the studio system and a reliance on broadcast television for primary revenue.

As anger and frustration built, the leaders agitated for change, gaining others to their cause and gaining recognition from the offending institution. This occurred against the backdrop of a heated merger debate that distracted the institution of the Guild and its existing power structure from giving the full attention the new movement, the Performers Alliance. In addition, the Masur administration and staff were putting energy and efforts into such issues as the protection of performers image as international intellectual property, providing service to a growing membership outside of Hollywood through the opening of new branches and/or offices and into the modernization of staff offices, functions and resources. Recognition by the union as an institution came when members of the Performers Alliance, introduced as "commercial actors" were invited in by presidents Masur and Scott, to voice their frustrations with the commercials contract at the conclusion of a 12 hour joint session of the AFTRA and SAG boards, a gesture the PA faithful felt was too little and too late.

As the movement grew, members become committed to the cause, various tactics of persuasion, unity and confrontation were employed, and strong lines were drawn between "friend" and "enemy". As the PA snowballed in membership and political clout, exchanges between SAG members became heated, using both conventional and new interpersonal communications methods, including e-mail, to insult, belittle and attempt to limit the power of the opposing side. Rallies, T-shirts, web sites, slogans and mission statements helped solidify power for the leaders of the PA and launch a formal opposition representing the established union board, Pro-Act.

Next came a time of either defeat, or victory, which would require new leadership and tactics to sustain the movement. Finally, comes the termination stage, in which the

movement will take over, be absorbed into or become a new institution, or disappear.

Early radical leaders of the movement may either adapt or move on to new causes.

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## OVERVIEW

Accomplished communications field professional with combination of academic and field experience. Experience with multi-cultural student populations and blended web-assist instruction. Field experience includes broadcast and print journalism, marketing, advertising and public relations, film industry and theater work, also organizational development and leadership and volunteer supervision experience. Teaching includes communication, media, marketing, education, theater, acting and related fields.

## EDUCATION

PhD, Education **In progress, expected 2009-2010**

### **Capella University, Minneapolis**

Specialization: Professional Studies in Adult Education

- Relevant courses: grant writing, distance education instruction and administration, curriculum design, critical thinking, evaluation and assessment (48+ credit hours).

<b>Post Masters Certificate in College Teaching</b>	(October, 2008)
<b>PhD in Education</b>	(Estimated June, 2010)

M.A Communications **2000**

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Thesis: *The Performers Alliance: Conflict and Change Within the Screen Actors Guild.*

Honors: Phi Kappa Phi, Phi, Theta Kappa, Lambda Pi Eta

- Postgraduate courses in a variety of fields (67 credits total) including theater (37 credits), public affairs, public administration.

**B.A, Speech / Theater / Mass Communications / SDC** **1977**

University of Illinois, Chicago

- Program /Operations Manager WUIC, Chicago, reporter for Chicago Illini
- Recipient of Theater Honors and Production Awards, academic honors and awards
- Communications Honor Society, National Activities Honor Society, Key Club, Deans Honors
- Faculty included Dr. Harry Skornia, media and international broadcasting scholar.
- Guest faculty included R. Buckminster Fuller, Studs Terkel and others for SDC program

#### ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY EXPERIENCE

**Screen Actors Guild:** National Board Director, 14 years + (see supplement later in C/V)

**Talent:** Actor, Voice Artists, Singer, various productions

**Professional Audio Visual Association:** Past president, 12 years

**Production:** Creative Communications / A Personal Vision: commercial producer, director, and writer

Advertising: all roles as owner of agency

**Educator:** coach acting, voice, theatre, and film at Kim Flowers, JRP, Studio Casting, and CSN

Communication professor, theater instructor, marketing, production

**Broadcaster:** producer, director, host for entertainment centered talk radio and news

### **ACADEMIC TEACHING EXPERIENCE**

*Adjunct Instructor*

**1998 to present**

*University and Community College System of Nevada, Las Vegas, NV*

- Full time equivalency, 21 credit hours per semester at College of Southern Nevada.
- Courses taught: *Communication, Public Speaking, Interpersonal Communication*, full college,  
plus at-risk Student to Teacher Enlistment Project on high school campuses and satellite campus locations.
- Teach regular semester and one month long courses using blended environment including Blackboard. Web CT and Angel instruction to maximize student participation and teaching opportunities
- Developed support and resource materials for online use to foster understanding of communication theory, models, public speaking including study reviews, links to primary resources and examples.  
Linked sections for larger study and resource “community.”
- Taught *Contemporary Radio* at University of Nevada, Las Vegas (2004)

### OTHER TEACHING EXPERIENCE

*Arts Instructor*

**2008-current**

*Boulder City Parks and Recreation* **as needed, various courses and projects**

**Acting Instructor****1998 to 2008****John Robert Powers Intl. / Style Entertainment, Kim Flowers Talent Development Academy**

- Taught audition, scene, improv, and industry knowledge, competition preparation for beginning to

Elite students for film and commercial work. Coached working actors and business community.

- Developed curriculum for commercial and acting for camera classes, requiring establishment of requirements and goals in stepped programs established for beginning, intermediate and advanced students. Crafted and implemented assessment for student advancement and faculty evaluations.

**Studio Casting**

1996 to 1998

- Director of Education and Training
- Established program from ground up including all acting and modeling courses and showcases.

**Acting Coach**

1984 to current

- Teach various private and group classes in theater, film, television, commercial, event, spokes-modeling, voice over, and character voice. Adapted to each student and group as needed.

**Instructor**

1984 to 1987

**Las Vegas Business College / Phillips College**

Courses taught: *Marketing, Advertising, Public Relations, Communications, English.*

## RELATED PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

*Announcer, Producer, Host*

**2001 to present**

*Nevada Public Radio (KNPR/KCNV/network),*

- ***On air / live hourly announcements during programs, responsible for programs and underwriter***

***broadcast within scheduled timeframes, news, promotions, troubleshooting of engineering problems.***

*Communications Consultant*

**1990 to 2002**

*A Personal Vision / Creative Communications*

- ***Provided advertising, marketing, public relations, creative directing, media planning and account***

***supervision consulting to wide variety of clients.***

- Clients included Canyon Rent to Own, Hammargren for Lt. Governor (successful), retail and professional clients, entertainment industry.
- Produced, directed, supervised and/or wrote commercials or videos, plus print, web and other advertising resulting in awards, response and image recognition for clients.
- Member Better Business Bureau (maintained to current) and Chamber of Commerce.

**Advertising Manager, Marketing Director  
Canyon Rent To Own**

1984 to 1991

- Locations in Hawaii, Utah, California, Guam, Massachusetts, and Arizona.

- Developed successful marketing plans to expanded market recognition and share resulting in “Top of Mind” status in all markets. Produced award winning advertising with direct response impact.

#### PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS, SERVICE AND VOLUNTEER WORK

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Alexandria, Virginia  
 Phi Kappa Phi Honors Society, Baton Rouge, Louisiana (April 28, 2005)  
 Founder and President of Us Company, Boomtown Players, Vintage Theater, others (various years)  
 National Board of Directors, Screen Actors Guild 1996-2006, currently co-chair on New Technologies Committee and New Media Task Force, active in Communications, Young Performers, Right-to-work, Organizing, Web, and Background Performers (see *Screen Actors Guild* section)  
 President, Nevada Branch of the Screen Actors Guild 1995-96; VP 1994-95, Council 1990-95  
 Founder / Director / Chair, Screen Actors Guild Nevada Conservatory 1994-2004  
 Editor, *Nevada Actor* 1990-2001 Editor, *CDW News* 1985-87 Editor, *AdAGlance*, 1991-94  
 Reader, Radio Reading Service for the Print Impaired, KNPR, 1993 to present  
 President, Professional Audio Visual Communications Association 1986-93; VP 1985-86  
 Board Member, Las Vegas Ad Club 1986-93, Publicist and/or Newsletter Editor 1986-1995  
 Chair of the National Tourism Awareness Week Logo Contest (NV/Chamber) 1992-93  
 Us Company Theater, 1972-1977, (cast included Dan “Homer Simpson” Castineletta, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, Dale Calandare, Sean Grennan, Trish Grennan),  
 Founder, President, Director or Producer volunteer theater projects, 1973-86  
 Nevada Recreation and Park Services 2009 Off-Site Institute  
 Produced election coverage, UICC 10th Anniversary Concert and other events WUIC 1974-1977  
 Program & Operations Manager / Organized and Supervised volunteers at WUIC, Chicago 1974-1977

#### PROFESSIONAL AWARDS

APRO Awards (national) for Canyon Rental, 1995, 1996, 1997  
 Telly Awards (International and National) for Canyon Rental, 1995  
 Addy Awards of Excellence for Young People Inc. for TV under \$2,000, 1993, YPI. for TV Campaign,  
     1993, Hammargren for Lt. Governor, Campaign 1994, 1995 Hammargren for Lt. Governor, TV under \$2,000, 1994, 1995  
 IABC Award of Excellence for *Ad A Glance* Newsletter, GLVAF / Las Vegas Ad Club, 1992  
 AP California Spot News Awards, 1983, 1984; AP California Small Market News Station of the Year, 1983, AP Instant News Award (national), 1981 / Special Event Coverage Award (regional), 1982  
 Wyoming Association of Broadcasters Station of the Year, 1979, News Station of the Year, 1979, 1981  
     Program of the Year, 1980, Special Event Coverage, 1981  
 Associated Press (Rocky Mountain and Wyoming), News Station of the Month (numerous), 1978-1981  
     Station of the Year (Wyoming), 1979  
 United Press International (Rocky Mountain Region) Correspondent of the Year, 1979  
 Rocky Mountain  
     Spot News Award, 1980  
 Inter Mountain Radio Network / ABC Station of the Year, 1979, Spot News Awards, 1979-1981  
 Chicago Broadcast Association Awards coverage of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of UIC and election coverage.  
 Who's Why Among America's Teachers 2005  
 Chancellor's List, 2005  
 Nevada's Most Distinguished several years  
 Who's Who and Equivalent 1973-current (several categories)

#### TECHNICAL SKILLS

Experience with WebCT 4.1.5, Blackboard/Web CT CE 6.2, BlackBoard Learning Systems, Angel, Virtual College, MS Word, PowerPoint, broadcast video and audio, technical theater

#### COMMUNICATION INDUSTRY EXPERIENCE

Extensive broadcast and print journalism, talk host, operations manager, news director, producer, talent, film and television (various). Employers include Group W, UPI, ABC/IMN networks and various stations or employers.

Marketing including public relations and public affairs, including University of Illinois Medical Center (internship), A Personal Vision/ Creative Communication, Canyon RTO, theater events, various clients.

Various motion picture, television, on-line and theater production experience including: Hearst Entertainment, Ted Mikels /TVM Global (Script Supervisor), Creative Communication, UIC, Biograph.

## SCREEN ACTORS GUILD

### Writing Samples

<http://www.sag.org/node/914>

### Elected Positions:

- 2001-2010 Co-Chair, National New Technologies Committee (by National Board, President)
- 2004.2008 Co-Chair, National Communications Committee (by National Board and President)
- 2004.2009 Co-Chair, National Background Committee, Regional Branch Subcommittee
- 2001.2003 Chair, Standing Trial Board Committee, Nevada Branch (by Nevada SAG council)
- 1994-2009 National Board of Directors (by membership)
- 1999-2004 Chair Election Nominating Committee for Nevada (by Nevada SAG council)
- 1998-2001 National Communications Editorial Supervisory Committee (by RBC)
- 1997-2001 National Nominating Committee (by Regional Branch Conference)
- 1997-2001 8<sup>th</sup> National Vice President Nominating Committee (by RBC)
- 1995-1996 Nevada Branch President (by membership in Nevada)
- 1994-1995 Nevada Branch Vice President (by membership in Nevada)
- 1991-1995 Nevada Branch Council Member (by membership in Nevada)

### SAG National Presidential Appointed Positions:

- 2007-current New Media Task Force, co-chair
- 2006-current Honors and Awards (Lifetime Achievement) Committee
- 2005-current National Equal Ethnic Opportunity Task Force
- 2004-current National Spanish Language Media Task Force
- 2002-current National Right-to-Work Presidential Task Force
- 1999-current Web Oversight and Steering Committee
- 1999-current Editorial Sub-Committee
- 1998-current New Technologies Committee
- 1998-current Communications Steering Committee
- 1998-current Merchandising and Marketing Sub-Committee
- 1995-current Communications Committee
- 1999-2000 National Contract Adjustment Committee
- 1995-2002 National Conservatory Committee
- 1995-2002 Young Performers Committee
- 1995-1996 National Executive Search Task Force
- 1997.2000 Guild Government Review Committee
- 2002-2005 Indy Outreach, Low Budget, Documentary, Merchandise, New Member Orientation, Steering, Health Care Task Force, Dancers, Global Rule One, New Technology,

SAG Nevada Branch Appointments:

2001-current Chair of Standing Trial Board and Investigative Committees  
1998-current Communications Committee Chair  
1996.2003 Wage and Working Conditions (Vice-Chair)  
1992-2003 Nevada Actor Newsletter Editor  
1999, 2006 Nominating Committee Co-chair  
1992-2001 Chair and Director of SAG Nevada Conservatory Program  
1994.1995 Executive Search Committee Chair  
1995, 1998 Election Committee Chair

# Art Lynch

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## CURRENT PROFESSIONAL / ACADEMIC REFERENCES

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248-342-0773

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Jim Austin, Broadcaster (GM/OM/PD/SM), [resqd1@bellsouth.net](mailto:resqd1@bellsouth.net) (704) 947-3345 / 578-5464

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"Part of teaching is helping students learn how to tolerate ambiguity, consider possibilities, and ask questions that are unanswerable."

- Sara Lawrence Lightfoot

