



# SPOTLIGHT

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Union Local No. One  
IATSE, AFL-CIO, CLC  
Organized 1886

Summer 2006

## BROTHER JOE VOLPE RETIRING AS GENERAL MANAGER OF THE METROPOLITAN OPERA HOUSE

Inside this issue:  
News, People of Interest, Pictures and  
Hints you might like to know

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***The strongest bond  
of human sympathy  
outside the family  
should be one  
uniting working  
people of all nations  
and tongues and  
kindreds.***

*-- Abraham Lincoln*

Brother Joseph Volpe has spent 42 years at the Metropolitan Opera and has lead it for the last sixteen, fourteen as General Manager. On May 20, 2006 The Metropolitan Opera said farewell to Brother Volpe with a five hour celebratory concert, closing the 2005-2006 season, featuring great singers from all over the world. At this busy time Brother Volpe was generous

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## FROM THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Local One members have been extremely busy since the New Year. Payrolls are up as well as the utilization of Local One card members. I am pleased to offer my thanks to our department heads for answering the call of the Union. Our new employment list continues to grow as we have seen its effectiveness especially with the busy schedule of the recent TV Up fronts all around the jurisdiction. I am pleased to report that Replacement Committee Chairman Paul Dean, Sr. has noted that the Department Heads have been calling for cardholders in record numbers since our special benefits meetings.

The Local One office will continue to monitor Stewards Reports. Thanks to our heads for their understanding and support as we continue to be vigilant in defending our health care benefits amidst the lack of leadership this national crisis requires. I urge the stewards to file regularly which helps us monitor that benefit payments are being properly paid on your behalf.

With the membership resolution requiring attendance of four regular meetings per year, we have experienced record attendance at our monthly meetings, ranging from 450 to 650 members recently. Even those who are not pleased with the requirement must admit that this tremendous attendance promotes first hand knowledge, fewer inaccurate rumors, solidarity and a greater participation in the direction of “your” Union.

A heartfelt congratulation to Brother Joseph Volpe who is retiring from the Metropolitan Opera House after forty-two years of unprecedented service. I, along with Theatre B.A.’s, Secretary Score and the stage crew, presented the 13th honorary gold card in Local One’s history to Mr. Volpe during the Opera House Gala recognizing his legendary rise from Local One apprentice to General Manager. The Local is proud to call him one of our own and we will miss him.

Looking ahead, upcoming negotiations include Manhattan Theatre Club’s Biltmore Theater, City Center, WNET Channel 13, Rainbow Media Studio, Radio City Music Hall and ABC-TV. And we all need to keep in mind our much anticipated confrontation with the League of American Theatres and Producers is little more than a year from now.

This summer Business Managers Edward McMahon, Michael Wekselblatt, Financial Secretary Robert McDonough and I will be attending the International Alliance’s General Executive Board Meeting in Calgary, Alberta, Canada in July to represent the Local.

I am pleased and proud to report once again that the Union continues to spend less than what we take in over months at a time. The entire Executive Board and the other officers and their staffs deserve much credit in the frugal spending of our members’ money with appropriate accountability. The accounting system long practiced by our local has sufficient and robust safeguards enabling us to drop the needless six month General Fund audit as the members acknowledged by unanimously passing such an amendment to our Constitution at the May monthly meeting.

One of my favorite days of the year is our annual 50 Years Member Luncheon which was once again held at The Tavern on the Green with over 300 in attendance to thank and congratulate this year’s honorees.

Another monumental day was this past April 26th when we recognized the Local’s establishment 120 years ago. Our 3,000 members should be proud and thankful for our past, our traditions and our achievements. United, we will protect what we have and together we will continue to make our lives better for our brothers and sisters and for our loved ones. Happy Birthday to our union and Long Live Local One.

Respectfully,

James J. Claffey, Jr.



# JOE VOLPE RECEIVES LOCAL ONE GOLD CARD



Photo by John Diaz

President James J. Claffey, Jr. presenting member #0938 a gold card "for distinguished service" during Joe's May 27th Gala Tribute

enough to sit down with the Spotlight and have an open and frank discussion of his career, how he started, his time as GM, his successes, his vision of the Met's future, both problems and opportunities, and his own future endeavors.

Joe Volpe had the highest score on the first apprentice test ever given by Local One. Joe tells us that there were two stories of his coming to the Met. Herman Krawitz, a long time executive at the opera, always claimed that he was looking for the most talented young person available to be the first apprentice and chose Joe. His friend, the late Brother Ed Lapidus, suggested that the Metropolitan Opera Carpenter Shop would be a great fit for his interests and talents and pushed Joe into the Met. The Spotlight asked Brother Volpe what might have happened if he had wound up in the CBS special effects shop or the ABC carpenter shop. Joe had never even considered it.

Joe began his apprenticeship in the old Met on 39<sup>th</sup> street under the tutelage of Brother and Former President Lou Edson. Two days after the move to the new Met in Lincoln Center, Brother Edson discovered the new house was not for him and decided to leave. Mr. Krawitz suggested to Sir

Rudolf Bing, the General Manager, that Joe Volpe be named the new head carpenter. They agreed, and at age 26, Joe became the youngest head carpenter of what is arguably the greatest theatre in the world.

Joe knew that in taking this job he would have to deal with people who were senior to him both in Local One and at the Met. When he was made the head in 1966 he had to exercise great sensitivity to the needs and feelings of the fellow members that he had risen over. He also knew that some thought that they should have the job and not him. Several key people immediately quit and Joe had to scramble to put his new crew together. With hard work and an intimate knowledge of the production plans garnered from two weeks of hard study during his "vacation" with his family, Joe was able to master the head carpenter's job.

In 1978, Met Artistic Director John Dexter, approached Joe to leave the carpenter shop and become a part of the management of the Met. Joe calls this the most difficult and important decision he has ever made in his career. He understood he would be losing a job that could have been his for the rest of his career. Local One offered him security and benefits that he would have to fight for personally from then on. The flip side of the coin was the wide-open challenge represented by helping



The 2005-06 Met Night Gang on the legendary stage. Crew Chief John M. Diaz seated center.



The Carpenter Shop Crew of the Metropolitan Opera

Photos by John Diaz

run this great theatre.

There were several General Managers over the next 12 years. In 1990 the Met board finally decided to take a chance with Joe. They were not sure about their decision, so they withheld the title that appropriately accompanies the responsibilities he had already been handling. Joe proved himself and two years later the Met board finally rewarded him with the title of General Manager.

The Spotlight was curious how being a Local One member had helped Brother Volpe in running this great organization. Joe said his experiences as a member gave him an intimate knowledge of the inner workings of the Met. During his twelve years as head carpenter, he had worked with and grown to respect the personnel in every department at the Met. He was on the stage when Luciano Pavarotti debuted and the same for Placido Domingo. He knew them, there was a comfort level. During the next twelve years he was able to apply his knowledge of people and technology to solve many problems. That along with his personal drive drove Joe to be the first stagehand who had ever worked his way up to the General Manager position in a major opera house.

The Met is unlike any other major opera house in the world. The Met is not an organ of the American government. It is an independent not-for-profit entity with a \$220 million annual budget. In Europe, La Scala's head is a political appointee who has to answer to whatever political party is in power. In Vienna, the Minister of Culture has control over what is done

and how. Here, the Met makes the General Manager the nexus for all of the crucial operations that go into the survival and flourishing of such a high-minded enterprise.

In looking back on his tenure Brother Volpe returned repeatedly to the people he worked with, both those he hired and those he came in contact with. Joe pointed with evident pride to the more than 20 years of labor peace at the Met. That is not to say that negotiations weren't at times acrimonious, but there were no work stoppages. The work load of the Met is staggering in scope and complexity, which could be the reason Brother Volpe considers one of his greatest successes to be the hiring of good people to make the place work.

The Spotlight noted the sensitivity Joe has shown in dealing with the artistic talent of the Met. In a recent radio interview on National Public Radio, Joe was asked about one of the more infamous conflicts that arose with a young and talented singer. Although, Brother Volpe felt constrained to terminate the singer's contract, he spoke of the singer's situation gently. He was gracious and couched his remarks in terms of the personal tribulations the singer was moving through. Joe's experience has taught him that the only time a singer is temperamental is when they are insecure. It could be about the role, the voice, some physical problem, or even a mental problem. "My job is to support them and to support everyone so that they can perform at their best and that is in every position whether its management, whether its singers, that's my role. My role is to provide the environment that everybody performs the best that

***“My role is to provide the environment that everybody performs the best that they can.”***

they can.” The clear kindness of his expression was startling to people who had heard him raise his voice on a stage to get some piece of balky machinery moving.

Joe was asked about his perceived tendency to raise his voice. “One of the things in the theatre is that if you say in a very soft voice, ‘would you mind doing this,’ people just ignore you... because everybody knows better than you, so, there are times when you have to be a little more demanding.” What Joe said the focus must always be on is, “getting the job done.” After a pause Joe added, “even facing Local One across the negotiating table.” Joe talked about how the Local One members understood that the opening of the negotiations was a lot of loud talk, but it was mostly for show. With less experienced negotiators Joe has to lead them to that understanding.

The Spotlight asked if that posturing was learned or innate. Joe seemed to really look at the question on a deeper level and used it to consider for a moment the question of “what is leadership?” Brother Volpe carefully limited his answer to the theatre, but he clearly believes that it is a universal answer. Referring back to the “posturing,” he said that “it is done to get things done... is leadership learned or is it innate, I think it is a combination of both.”

The Electric arm crew of the Metropolitan Opera House

Photos by John Diaz



Joe cited the famous management writer, Peter Drucker as having said that “the most difficult job in the world is running an opera house.” Joe expanded on that, “You have singers, musicians, backstage employees, you have a Board, patrons, and ticket buyers, and you have so many constituencies to deal with. And, of course, you can’t really demand very much of them because if they don’t want to do it they are not going to do it. People are not going to give money if they don’t want to. They’re not going to buy tickets. Singers, Domingo and Stratas were singing the same night. Their agent said, ‘You know, Placido and Teresa should do whatever opera, you decide.’ So I went in to see Placido and I suggested maybe we should do this opera. Placido said, ‘No, I don’t want to do that.’ So I came out of the dressing room and I said to the agent, ‘I decided, we’re not going to do it!’ [Laughing] The ‘power’ I had. It was simple. So, you have to be able to deal with all of those things.”

Joe is now off to Giuliani Associates for his next career. Some projects he mentions is building an opera house in Dubai or a performing arts center at an unnamed location. Whatever he does we cannot imagine it being more exciting or stressful than the Met. Joe, we wish you the very best in your new career.

The Service Crew at “C” level ready to support the stage crew.



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**SPOTLITE**

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Information

Upcoming Monthly Membership  
Meeting dates are:  
June 25, 2006  
September 17, October 22

**COME TO YOUR UNION  
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IT'S INFORMATIVE AND  
PART OF YOUR DUTY AS  
A MEMBER**

Organized in 1886, Local Number One has served the entertainment community in theatre, television, and other entertainment venues proudly and professionally. With over three thousand members covering an expanding jurisdiction throughout the greater New York metropolitan area, our experience and knowledge covers the range of expertise required for any application. From fabrication to installation to safe operation, we can do it.

OFFICERS

PRESIDENT JAMES J. CLAFFEY, JR.; VICE PRESIDENT WILLIE WALTERS; TREASURER DONALD B. KLEINSCHMIDT; SECRETARY ROBERT SCORE; CHAIRMAN, BOARD OF TRUSTEES JOHN M. DIAZ, SR.; THEATRICAL BUSINESS MANAGERS MICHAEL WEKSELBLATT AND KEVIN MCGARTY; TELEVISION BUSINESS MANAGERS ROBERT NIMMO AND EDWARD McMAHON III; TRUSTEES WILLIAM NGAI AND DANIEL THORN; REPLACEMENT ROOM OFFICER PAUL DEAN, SR.; ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY EDMOND SUPPLE, SR.; AND FINANCIAL SECRETARY ROBERT (TOBY) McDONOUGH

*The Union continues to  
encourage Department Heads  
to hire in the interest of  
protecting our vital health care  
benefits. Those members who  
need help in qualifying for  
benefits should contact your  
Business Managers or use the  
Employment List.*

*Save the Date:  
Join Us on August 21st for  
the Second Annual PAC  
Golf Event (see pg.9)*

Have a safe and productive Summer

## THE 2006 50 YEAR MEMBERS LUNCHEON AT TAVERN ON THE GREEN



Photo by Scott Wynn

May 2006 Honorees are (left to right) bottom row: Harold Hingos, John McDonough, Lorraine Bender (widow of Gary), Jerry Gort, John F. Lynch, James D. Casey, Jr. Top row: Kenneth J. Ceplo, Donald J. Zingaro, Benjamin F. Honor, Leonard S. Weber, Jerome Chalew, Joseph J. Maher, Marvin Silver. Not Pictured: John Trautwein, Natale Mongioi, Thomas M. Coughlin, Norman Feignbaum, Donald I. Fox, Fred Rosen, and Edwin C. Stahl, Jr.



Photo by Scott Wynn



Photo by Scott Wynn

Above: Honoree Joe Maher and family with Gold Card member Joseph Volpe. Adjacent photo is honoree and former Business Manager Vince Jacobi addressing the crowd upon receiving the first Local One 70 year ring presented to an active member. More photos of this luncheon will be available on our website.



## A NOTE FROM CHAIRMAN JOHN DIAZ

On March 23, 1970, I worked my first night at the Metropolitan Opera -- I was 18 years old. For the next five years, I worked on and off on the night crew. During the 1974-1975 season, I began working a steady four nights a week, which is why the Metropolitan Opera says I have only been in their employ for 30 years. At that time, the head carpenter was a man named Joe Volpe. Mr. Volpe had started as an apprentice in the carpenter shop and then became the head carpenter (or mechanic as it was called back then).

For most of my adult life (35 years), I have worked under Mr. Volpe in one way or another. Mr. Volpe became the Shop Head in 1977 and then the Technical Director in 1978. In 1981, Mr. Volpe moved into the management ranks as Assistant Manager (for all you *Star Wars* fans, I guess you would say this was his move to the "dark side"). In 1990, he became General Manager/General Director of the Metropolitan Opera Association.

I have had the pleasure of negotiating against Mr. Volpe on the Metropolitan Opera contract when he joined the management side of the table. Sometimes we won and sometimes we lost. Most of the time Mr. Volpe knew everything that was going on inside the Metropolitan Opera. However, there were times when he was not up to speed at which time he would say "We will get back to you" and close the book. Everyone knew we would never get back to it because Mr. Volpe knew we were right and that it would cost the Metropolitan Opera. As a result, we would get something else that did not cost as much. This, I am sorry to say, is what is called negotiations.

Mr. Volpe would talk about many different items. If he knew you were right, sometimes things would change. Other times, nothing would change. Even if you knew you were right, and Mr. Volpe knew you were right, the changes just would not happen. This is what is called bargaining. Negotiating and bargaining is a lot of wheeling and dealing to get something but never getting the whole ball of wax.

In 2005, Mr. Volpe joined our retired ranks and is enjoying his well-earned pension from Local One. I will certainly miss him at the 2010 negotiations. I will miss hearing "Where is my night crew boss?" or "Where is my Chairman of Trustees?" depending on what issue was being addressed at that time. I will also miss hearing about the night crew's pizza parties.

Some people feel that Mr. Volpe was the worst thing that ever happened to this Local, while others feel he was the best. I think the truth lies somewhere in the middle. Mr. Volpe did both what was right for the Metropolitan Opera and what was right for himself and this Local because he is a brother and a member in good standing.

I wish Mr. Volpe and his family all the best and I hope that he enjoys the fruits of his labor for many years. If Mr. Volpe ever wishes to go out and get some pizza, I would be more than happy to join him.



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## COME AND PLAY WITH US AT THE SECOND ANNUAL LOCAL ONE PAC GOLF OUTING

*For: To support the political efforts on your behalf that help achieve better contracts and working conditions for our community.*

*When: Monday, August 21<sup>st</sup>, 2006*

*Where: Black Bear Golf Club, part of Crystal Springs Golf and Spa Resort in Franklin, New Jersey 07416 (about 1 hour from midtown)*

*What: A round of golf or practice range or spa facility is available. Breakfast and Dinner are part of the package.*

*With: A 50/50 drawing plus raffle gifts galore specially provided for this event.*

*How: Contact Don, the PAC Treasurer, for foursome and Sponsorship opportunities at 212.333.2500 ext>111*



A Vari\*Lite® seminar in automated lighting was held mid May organized by the Technology Committee (with particular thanks to Brother Frank Lynn) certifying for two years factory authorized technicians. Holding the class in Manhattan saved time and money otherwise lost by attending Dallas seminars. Our thanks to PRG Lighting for donating most of the equipment used during the instruction. The class pictured above is (standing, left to right): Tay MacLaren, Dorion Fuchs, Instructor Todd Kessler, Chuck Fields, Manny Becker, Pete Donovan, Tom Galinski, Charles Gigantiello, Joe Pearson, Matt Schechtman, Frank Linn, Jr. Kneeling: Dave Brickman, and John Kelly

## ANNUAL REPORT

### By Trustee Chairman John M. Diaz, Sr.

Well Brothers and Sisters, it is June once again and, as I said, I would report to you once a year on what the Local has done and plans on doing. Our most significant accomplishment was the re-publishing of our Constitution and By-Laws, which has not been done in over 20 years. The Constitution Committee compiled the changes from past meetings along with minor adjustments to the Constitution and By-Laws. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Constitution Committee for all its hard work. In addition, special recognition is due to Trustee William Ngai whose computer skills and expertise allowed us to complete this task in record time and helped us to keep the cost of this project down.

The next big item was the work done on the Budget by the Budget Committee with assistance from the Treasurer's Office. This work will give Local One the footing it needs to remain stable for the next 20 years or longer, as long as we keep working on it. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the Secretary's Office for all its hard work in keeping the cost of business down. By doing so, our Budget management will regulate growth so that we will be able to continue to assist our members and their loved ones, which is our primary goal.

In October, as per the Constitution, the Trustees, along with the Treasurer's and Secretary's Offices, will review the funds with the rest of the Executive Board to find out if any changes can be made and if we can continue to offer these funds to our members and their families. With the skills of Brothers Kleinschmidt and Score, as well as their love for our members, my job as Chairman is so much easier. These two brothers always provide expert advice in their fields from which the Trustees make prudent choices under both government laws and the Local's Constitution. I know that some of these choices are difficult to make, but they need to be done. This is why you vote in these Brothers as Officers – so that they can act on your behalf by making the best choices both for you and your Local.

The Education and Technology Committees have done an excellent job with up-to-date training. Four members of our Local have obtained their welding licenses from the City of New York as a result of our welding classes. In addition, a Donovan Rigging Class was held and a dozen members have or will be taking their rigging certification exam from The Entertainment Services and Technology Association (ESTA). This certification test was put together with input from our members. The test is fair, but not an easy one to pass. I would like to thank all the Brothers who gave up their own time and offered their skills and expertise in order to help ESTA with both the rigging and coming electrical certifications. I cannot express enough thanks to all our members who help make it easy for me to offer assistance to ESTA. When ESTA calls and asks for a list of members skilled in a particular area, I have a list of 50 or so members they can choose from. I am happy to say that ESTA chooses a lot of Local One members as a result of their skills and abilities. Our members are the "Cream of the Crop." They help ESTA write the test and then check the ability to pass it. If any revisions need to be made, then they are willing to offer their assistance and help re-write it. While working on this, these Brothers are entrusted by ESTA to keep the test a complete secret from both our Board and members. This is a requirement of ESTA and I would not have it any other way.

The Local held several lighting classes in April thanks the hard work of the Technology Committee members. In addition, the Local has held two forklift classes – one at the Met and one at the Broadhurst. All our members' classes are paid for by the Local.

As per the Constitution, all new members have to take a set of four classes, as well as CPR training. The Board decides what classes the new members must take. The suggested classes are as follows:

- Sapsis Basic Rigging (Full Day) taught by Bill Sapsis.
- Rights of Union Members (Half Day) taught by Federal Mediators Service.

- Union Benefits (Half Day) taught by Brother Supple.
- History of Local One (Half Day) taught by Chairman Diaz.
- Basic Electric (Half Day) taught by Brother Kramer
- SET — Strategic Education Training by Chairman Diaz or another member of the Arts and Entertainment Committee of the AFL-CIO

The initiation fee paid by the new member covers the costs of these classes.

The Safety Committee has done a lot of work behind the scenes in addressing and fixing safety issues. The work of the Safety Committee is never done, as we will always push the issue of safety for our members. The companies must follow safety standards, which is the hard part for the Local. We are constantly reminding them that they will be held liable if any of our members get hurt. They usually turn around and tell us that our members do not follow the safety rules resulting in us going round and round with them. Brother Walters and I co-chair the Safety Committee and Brother Thorn assists with the Metropolitan Opera Safety Committee. I would like to thank all the brothers and sisters who work with the Safety Committee by bringing issues to our attention and by helping us come up with ideas or suggestions on ways to resolve them.

The Stewards Committee has met several times. However, attendance at these meetings has dropped to the lowest it has been since I became an Officer. The Local has Stewards reporting in 82% of the places of employment, which is down from last year's high of 95%.

The Benefits Committee has worked hard and has held several meetings with the members of the Local in order to explain the reason for the benefit changes. The Local has four members on the trusts, which is the same number that the employers have had for the last three years. The Trust Officers are the President, Secretary, Treasurer and now the Financial Secretary serves as the alternate. Healthcare in the United States has gone crazy. If there are no changes in the near future, we will all go broke. Brother Dunsky has been

calling for these changes for the past 20 years. I now have to join him and demand changes in the healthcare system.

The Arts and Entertainment Committee of the AFL-CIO Central Labor Council is alive and well. In addition, Coalition of Broadway Unions and Guilds (COBUG) is alive and well, as well as a half a dozen or so different committees that other officers serve on in your name. The Committees I have listed here are the ones, which I am personally affiliated with, as well as New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health (NYCOSH) and their fight for better workers compensation for the State of New York, which currently is the lowest paid in all of the 50 states.

The four Business Agents work on various contracts. President Claffey has appointed a committee to come up with suggestions on ways to get more for our members. This new committee has a long road ahead of it. This is why some of the Officers of this Local are taking labor classes at Cornell – in order to get ideas to help with our fight. Like the rest of the United States, labor is at a crossroad and we all have to be careful. Unions can fall and then the game against these corporations will truly be one-sided.

These are just some of the things being done for you by the committees.

I hope this helps you to understand the work your Officers have done and are doing for you. The work of these committees is reported on in the Monthly Minutes but I feel that some members may be missing out on hearing about what is being done for them. We need to be Brothers and Sisters. This is not a club, it is a union. We must take care of each other or we will pay the price. We need to join together and not fight against each other. Management is and always will be waiting for us to self destruct so they can have it their way. We as Americans have a right to disagree with our leaders. I sincerely believe this but we must also stand together when we have a fight on our hands. Remember, it is us against management and their greed.

**SPOTLITE**  
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