AGVA MEMBERSHIP

For more info, check the AGVA website here: http://www.agvausa.com/

Like the other entertainment labor unions, AGVA was founded in the late 1930s, and like the others AGVA is a member of the AFL-CIO and is one of the "4-As". AGVA, the American Guild of Variety Artists represents performers (actors, singers and dancers) in such venues as circuses, casino shows, stand-up comedy clubs, and amusement parks (Disneyland and Universal Studios, for instance). Beetlejuice character running around Universal Studios? An AGVA member. They also represent performers at Radio City Music Hall, including the kid-heavy Christmas Spectacular, and some shows on and off Broadway.

There is some crossover between Equity and AGVA, although AGVA is by far the smaller union, and considered to be the weaker one. Generally, if a show is scripted, it should be Equity, if it is "variety" it should be AGVA.

When to Join

AGVA claims to be a closed union, meaning that only professionals may be admitted. Normally, this means getting hired on an AGVA show, but they do have an option for actors to submit their resume for review and consideration. If you choose the later, your goal is to present yourself as a person with variety skills, such as a dancer, comedian, juggler, acrobat, etc.

There is very little benefit to joining AGVA early. It is rare that a child actor will need this membership, and the benefits for children are few.

Health insurance in AGVA can be obtained after 5 years of AGVA membership, even without additional work, and they do give audition preference to members (like Equity) and the ability to join SAG after a one year period as an AGVA member (a benefit of the 4-As).

How to Join

If you book an AGVA job, you will be given a membership packet at work, along with a payment plan for paying the dues (usually taken out of your paychecks).

Cost of Membership

Initiation fee (one time): Estimated, since AGVA does not publish it on the website, and did not return calls: About $1600

Ongoing: Dues are based on earnings and range from $72/year to $795/year. It is billed three times per year, in April, August and December.