

# LESBIAN AND GAY CHORUS OF WASHINGTON, D.C.

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**2008-2009 Handbook**

*“While making music together, there arises a certain social situation where every individual contributes to the common performance, everyone doing their best while at the same time listening to each other, in order to produce a good result. This has much in common with team sports, but here, ‘victory’ does not mean ‘defeat’ for anyone. Victory is gained only by giving joy to everyone, both players and listeners.”*

Kaers Lie, a Danish Musician

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## **Section 1: Welcome**

Welcome to the Lesbian & Gay Chorus of Washington, D.C. (LGCW). We are so pleased that you have decided to join us. This handbook describes what we do, how we do it, and what we expect of each other as LGCW members. Please read this handbook and keep it as a reference.

Just as the Chorus is an evolving organization, this handbook is an evolving document. Our mission, vision, and values were re-evaluated and rewritten as part of our long-range planning process (2000-2001). We continue to work on certain sections, so please ask questions and give us your opinion.

We count on you to help the LGCW be a successful community and arts organization. Our strength comes from our members and their activism.

### **1.1 Our Mission**

Every voice matters.

### **1.2 Our Vision**

A world that listens.

### **1.3 Our Values**

The Lesbian and Gay Chorus of Washington, D.C., honors the following values:

- Our legacy as a proud and outstanding non-auditioned musical and educational chorus
- Effective, consensus-based decision-making
- Community
- Our financially healthy, not-for-profit arts organization
- Our LGCW identities
- Artistic integrity
- Gender cooperation and gender equality
- Having fun
- Diversity
- Our commitment to developing talent
- The LGBT choral movement

## 1.4 Our History

After 24 years of fun, anecdotes, and singing, it is hard to summarize our history in a few short paragraphs, particularly when many of us could talk for hours! There are still some original singers around who can tell you a story or two.

### 1.4.1 Our Humble Beginnings

Our first performance in our own right was in a member's dining room. We made \$100, thanks to one person who left \$20 in the jar by the door. Our first big gig was a December 1983 performance with the DC Area Feminist Chorus (now called Bread & Roses) and DC's Different Drummers. There were 12 performers, and some of the men had to sing soprano. Since then, we've grown in every way.

### 1.4.2 People Who Have Helped Us to Evolve

#### 1.4.2.1 Our Music Directors

- Tess Garcia, 1983 to 1984
- Mark Bowman, 1986 to 1992
- Regina Carlow, 1992 to 1996
- Ray Killian, 1996 to 2002
- C. Paul Heins, April 2003 to the present

#### 1.4.2.2 Our Accompanists

- Alex Tang through July 1996
- David Howard Boyer, 1996 to 2000
- C. Paul Heins, 2000 to 2002
- Richard Galla, Fall 2003 to May 2004
- Ben Hansen, Fall 2004 to July 2005
- Nevin Bender, Fall 2006 to July 2007
- Barbara Schelstrate, Fall 2007 to present

### 1.4.3 Highlights of Our History

We released our first CD *We Shall Not Give Up The Fight!* during our 10th Anniversary Season. In 1989 (Seattle), 1992 (Denver), 1996 (Tampa), and 2000 (San Jose), we participated in the GALA Choruses' Festivals. We have also traveled to Baltimore, New York City, Richmond, Williamsburg, and San Francisco to perform.

In 1996, we were invited to kick off the first Washington Country Pride Day in Hagerstown, Maryland, which we proudly performed and then marched in the streets afterwards. In June 1998, 1999, and 2000, continuing in our outreach efforts, we performed at the State Department (yes, you read that right) for the Gay and Lesbian Pride Celebration there. In the summer of 2000, we also performed for the Smithsonian Folklife Festival, representing the extensive choral tradition of DC and performing as the only out GLBT group. We were completely thrilled!

Just before Regina Carlow left us, we cut a second CD, *Celebrating Our Lives: Songs of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere*.

Some highlights of Ray Killian's tenure as Music Director include a lavender version of Sondheim's *Company*, our first major masterwork; Gian Carlo Menotti's *The Unicorn, The Gorgon, and The Manticore*, a fabulous experience that taught us all something about meter; and performances of *Celebrations* by Vincent Persichetti (based on Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*) with DC's Different Drummers Concert Band and the Choir of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington.

We've hosted Chicago's gay and lesbian chorus, UNISON, and DC's Different Drummers (DCDD), Bread & Roses Feminist Singers, Other Voices Richmond, Gay Men's Chorus of Washington, and others. Through *pro bono* appearances, the LGCW has raised more than \$25,000 for community groups, including Among Friends, The NAMES Project, Whitman-Walker Clinic, PETS-DC, Hine Junior High School, The Mautner Project for Lesbians with Cancer, Sexual Minority Youth Assistance League, and others.

We offer more than 300 complimentary tickets annually through our complimentary ticket program to service agencies working with people who are living with HIV/AIDS, the deaf, lesbians with cancer, sexual minority youth, and others who cannot easily access the arts.

In October 1998, we co-produced "Health Train" with the Max Robinson Center of the Whitman-Walker Clinic. This day of music and wellness featured performances and information for the Anacostia community and was funded by a grant from the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities. Members of Lavender Light, a gospel choir from New York City, joined us in performance and workshop.

In September 1999, we released our 3rd CD, *LGCW LIVE!* during the GALA Choruses Leadership Conference and Singers' Weekend, which LGCW hosted. Many LGCW members worked on the planning for the Conference, which drew more than 500 singers from the U.S., Canada, and England to the Capitol Hilton at 16th and K Streets, NW. The Weekend was a big event in LGCW history and served to build organizational structures and relationships.

Our 1999-2000 concert season featured two major concerts, "Voices Unheard," and "Songs of Children." In the first concert, we sang about people whose voices are marginalized by society. Our second concert featured Robert Convery's *Songs of Children*, a cantata for violin, viola, cello, piano, and choir which is based on the writings of children from the Holocaust. Singing Convery's work was a unique experience for all of us and we were so honored that Convery attended both June performances and the Festival 2000 performance in San Jose. Along the way, we produced the One and Only Suede in a terrific concert on the night of the GLBT Millennium March on Washington. Suede continues to appear at our annual fundraiser/auction, "Shop With Suede."

In our 17<sup>th</sup> year, we performed for PFLAG, Mayor Williams' town meeting for the GLBT community, the Arts Corner of the Capital Pride Festival, and the World March for Women, sponsored by the National Organization for Women. We also celebrated the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of DCDD and took a lead role in the DC premiere of *Where I Live*, an oratorio written for women's voices by Diane Benjamin on the theme of living with breast cancer. Our two concerts, "Notes on Love ..." and "For the Love of Music ..." drew enthusiastic response from our audience and a great review in *MW*. The LGCW also received its first matching grant from the DC

Commission on the Arts and Humanities/National Endowment for the Arts based on artistic merit.

In our 18<sup>th</sup> year, we offered two concerts: “Of Places and Faces” and “Thus Am I.” We capped off the year with appearances during June (Pride Month) at the Department of Justice (yes, we performed in front of the famous blue curtains) and Capital Pride. LGCW ensembles performed at the University of Maryland’s Lavender Graduation, the Department of State, and the EPA. They also performed at a fundraiser for Senator Max Cleland. In July, we traveled to Salem, Ohio and offered a concert at the First Presbyterian Church, the home church of then-accompanist Paul Heins. The performance raised almost \$500 for the work of the Ohio AIDS Coalition.

In 2002-03, the LGCW helped put together “I, too, sing, America,” a collaboration with The Heritage Signature Chorale, the Washington Men’s Camerata, and the Washington Women’s Chorus to celebrate Langston Hughes’ centenary. A major part of the collaboration was the DC-area premiere of Dr. Ysaye Maria Barnwell’s *Suite Death*, based on four of Hughes’ poems and featuring the amazing baritone soloist Stephen Salters. Dr. Barnwell directed the LGCW set and the LGCW sang back up for Salters. C. Paul Heins served as our Interim Music Director and he guided us through a year of incredible singing experiences. We worked with Frank Albinder, who was our guest conductor for “Do Not Separate Yourself” (February 2003), and with Ysaye Barnwell, with whom we presented a Community Sing in April 2003. We had the exhilarating experience of singing for full representation of the District in Freedom Square on Tax Day 2003, singing for the Remembrance of Martin Luther King, Jr., and at Capital Pride. We ended the year with Paul—who is now our Music Director—conducting “Our Children: Our Legacy,” a concert and spaghetti dinner that featured music about children. The concert featured a performance of Jeffery Watson’s *Where Every Voice Is Heard*.

The LGCW also joined with other choristers to sing at the fall concert of DC’s Different Drummers (DCDD). We also exchanged guest spots with DCDD in our February 2003 concert and in DCDD’s April concert.

In 2004-05, the LGCW and many different art organizations performed at the University of Maryland’s World AIDS Day commemoration at the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center. Highlights from this concert included “Dirait-On,” words by Rainer Maria Rilke, music by Morten Lauridsen; and “I Remember You,” words and music by Johnny Mercer/Victor Schertzinger, arr. by Tom Anderson. The January 2005 concert, “Wade in the Water,” offered a broad spectrum of choral music highlighting the physical and metaphorical characteristics of water. Several songs from this concert included “Across the Bridge,” words and music by John Schrag, arr. by David Maddux; “Bridge Over Troubled Water,” words and music by Paul Simon, arr. by Clyde Sechler; and “O Waly, Waly,” setting by Joseph Flummerfelt. We continued our tradition of performing at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Remembrance, sponsored by the GLBT Arts Consortium. For the June 2005 concert, titled “Everything Possible,” the LGCW performed works by John Rutter, Robert Convery, Gwyneth Walker, Billy Joel, Ysaye Barnwell, and others. This concert spoke to experiences of children and featured a concert production of John Rutter’s *The Reluctant Dragon*, a musical fairytale depicting a dragon who prefers writing poetry to waging war.

In 2006-07, The LGCW traveled to distant lands, to times long past, and to places within our own histories in the January 2006 concert titled “Celebrate the Journey!” This program included

works in Hebrew, Polish, Russian, and Spanish, ancient folk songs, and songs that touched our hearts and made us laugh. Featured composers included Elizabeth Alexander and Alexandre Gretchaninoff. Also in January, the Chorus at the GLBT Arts Consortium's annual Remembrance of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The March 2006 "Shop with Suede" event was a huge success! In April 2006, the LGCW performed the "Festival of Extravagant Welcome" at the Little River United Church of Christ in Annandale, VA. For the June 2006 concert, the LGCW performed a concert titled "Everything I Need to Know I Learned in Musical Theatre!" This concert was very well-received and included musical selections from the shows *Wicked*, *Rent*, *Into the Woods*, *West Side Story*, and many others.

In December 2006, the LGCW was proud to be part of the performance of Kazem Davoudian's *Nava*, with the Iranian String Ensemble at the Kennedy Center Terrace Theatre. The performance was conducted by the composer. *Nava* is a stunning setting of Iranian poetry celebrating humanity's diversity. In January 2007, the LGCW welcomed guest artists Suede and the Enchanted Strings Ensemble for our "Peace By Piece" concert, a musical affirmation of our power build a lasting peace for the world. "Peace by Piece" was a diverse program of choral works dedicated to the theme of "waging peace" in the world. In March 2007, the LGCW continued our annual tradition of singing at All Souls Unitarian. The LGCW and the All Souls Jubilee Singers performed together to contribute meaningfully to that morning's service. Later, the Chorus presented a benefit concert in support of the Rockville Unitarian Universalist Church's Rainbow Youth Alliance. In April 2007, the LGCW had a fundraiser dance titled "Chapel of Love," performed at St. James Episcopal Church. In May 2007, the LGCW had a very successful "Shop with Suede" concert/fundraiser, featuring The Diva, Suede. The LGCW June 2007 concert titled "Stories and Songs" featured songs that tell stories: folk songs, love songs, songs of history, and songs that are just plain fun! Some of the pieces performed included "American Folk Rhapsody," "Everything Possible," "Russian Picnic," "Baby Bear's Lament" (from *Not About Cheese*), and more.

In September 2007, the LGCW performed at the Out and Equal Workplace Summit, held at the Washington Hilton. In October 2007, the Chorus performed at the Ganymede Arts Festival. The festival was a 10-day celebration of the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender artists of Washington, D.C. On October 20, 2007, Alvin Mayes (acclaimed choreographer and LGCW tenor) presented "Days of Stars, Moon, and Dreams" at the Jewish Community Center of Greater Washington's Kreeger Auditorium. The evening of dance and music featured performances by LGCW affiliated ensemble Not What You Think, former LGCW alto Janet Chance and LGCW music director C. Paul Heins (on flute). The Chorus was honored to host singer-guitarist Elise Witt for a choral workshop during rehearsal on Tuesday, October 9. In addition to performing and recording, Elise has created a reputation as a masterful singing teacher, both for adults and children, encouraging even the shyest singers to revel in their voices and join with others to create joyful choruses.

The winter concert in January 2008, titled "It's All About You!" celebrated the people and history of Washington, D.C. The concert included pieces by Stephen Sondheim, Duke Ellington, Aaron Copland, as well as by D.C. composers Ysaye Barnwell and Jeffery Watson. Our annual concert/fundraiser, "Shop with Suede," was successful in June 2008, highlighted by Suede's performance of many songs from her newest CD *Dangerous Mood*, which was released at a special event (produced by the LGCW) the previous night at Church of the Epiphany. The spring concert in June 2008, titled "If We Only Have Love," was an inspiring and fun afternoon of

music that covered the many dimensions of love: love between people, love among families, love of place, and others. Repertoire included works by Samuel Barber, Joni Mitchell, Jacques Brel, Elvis Presley, Hoagy Carmichael, and DC's own Ysaye Barnwell.

#### **1.4.4 Gay and Lesbian Choral Movement**

Beginning in the mid-80s, the LGCW became very involved in the gay and lesbian choral movement, participating in the choral festivals presented by the Gay and Lesbian Association (GALA) of Choruses in Seattle (1989), Denver (1992), Tampa (1996), and San Jose (2000). In addition, LGCW members ran and were elected to the Board of Directors of GALA Choruses – serving a combined 12 years. Jill Strachan served 1993-1999 as Secretary, Vice President, and President. Regina Carlow served from 1994-96 and Jane Hoffman served from 1999-2002, also serving as Vice President. The LGCW was a very active and enthusiastic participant in the Association, hosting the Leadership Conference (1999) and the first Small Ensemble Festival (1994). LGCW members offered workshops, served on committees, authored publications, sang in festival choirs, and were employed by GALA Choruses. LGCW's embrace of GALA Choruses reflected a belief that the Association was an important force in the gay and lesbian choral movement and offered a viable vehicle for creating change as articulated in its vision statement: Our Voices Win Freedom.

Following the Festival in San Jose, when the closing ceremonies revealed some startling flaws in the organization's implementation of its mission and vision, LGCW began increasingly to question its purpose and role in the Association. The LGCW did not attend the regional festival in Cincinnati in 2002, to honor the boycott of the city by African-Americans. The LGCW decided not to attend the Festival in Montreal (2004), because it decided to focus on retiring debt that the LGCW had accumulated, partly from its trip to San Jose. Ties Optional, an ensemble of the LGCW, attended the 2004 GALA Choruses Festival in Montreal. In early 2005, LGCW members declined to renew the chorus' membership in GALA Choruses. The LGCW remains active in the gay and lesbian choral movement through its connections to other choruses both here in DC and elsewhere.

## Section 2: LGCW Membership Requirements

The LGCW has no specific membership requirements, nor do we require singers to audition. We ask that you join with us as we develop both our ensemble sound and our knowledge of the art of choral singing. We encourage you to assess whether you want to belong to the LGCW. We welcome both singers and non-singing volunteers who want to help with stage setup and other tasks.

Before each concert season, we sponsor an Open House to attract new singers. These events are generally held after a major concert performance and before a new season (e.g., mid-February, late August or early September).

After joining at the beginning of a new concert season, new singers can elect to meet with the Music Director for a voice check. This optional voice check helps to determine your vocal range, assures that you are comfortable with singing your part, and provides an opportunity for you to ask questions. Returning singers may also elect to have a voice check.

If the size of the Chorus increases to 70 or more singers, we have developed a wait list policy with leaves of absences. We would implement this policy at a Business Meeting if necessary. Currently, the policy is not in use.

Membership in the Chorus is a serious commitment requiring active member participation. Although the Co-Facilitators and Music Director handle many of our general operations, members help us carry out many tasks and responsibilities. As a member, you personally contribute to the LGCW's mission and vision. Remember: *Every voice matters!*

### 2.1 Members Under Age 18

The LGCW welcomes people of all ages to its ranks. If a member is under the age of 18, s/he must be an emancipated youth or have written permission from a parent or legal guardian to participate. Singers under the age of 18 must provide the LGCW with a telephone number (preferably a cell phone) of a responsible adult who can be contacted at any time. All LGCW members are expected to act as role models.

### 2.2 Attending Rehearsals

You are expected to attend all rehearsals. Please check your personal calendar and the LGCW published calendar to ensure that you can attend scheduled rehearsals.

Unless you have an emergency or have informed your section leader or the Music Director of unusual circumstances, you are expected to be present for the entire rehearsal. If an emergency prevents you from being present for an entire rehearsal or forces you to miss a rehearsal, please call the Chorus Hot Line at 202-546-1549, or send an e-mail to your section leader or the Music Director.

If you think that you will miss more than three rehearsals per concert season (*i.e.*, September-February, February-June), please discuss any anticipated absences with the Music Director and suggest ways that you can make up missed rehearsals and prepare for the concert.

During rehearsals, please observe common courtesy and do not talk or socialize. Rehearsal time is precious for all of us.

## 2.3 Improving Musical Skills

All LGCW members are expected to work at improving their individual musical skills. While we encourage you to follow your own path to improvement, we also ask that you participate in Chorus-sponsored learning opportunities. For example, we sometimes offer events such as a vocal workshop with a professional vocal coach. We encourage you to attend such events. Having all members present for these learning opportunities can only benefit our overall choral sound.

## 2.4 Investing in the Chorus by Paying Dues (Membership Investments)

All LGCW members are responsible for helping us meet our operating costs by paying dues which we call making a membership investment.

- *Returning members* pay \$120 per concert season, due at the third rehearsal of each concert season.
- *New members* can elect to pay \$120 per concert season or \$24 per month, payable at the first rehearsal of each month.

In all cases, investments are assessed on a 12-month basis. If you cannot pay the full amount, please discuss your circumstances with the Treasurer or General Manager to work out a payment amount and plan. Be sure to submit a written alternative payment plan on the back of the Membership Application Form.

As the LGCW By-Laws state, "Any Member who is more than two (2) months in arrears in the payment of membership dues shall be dropped from the Membership roster by the Secretary unless alternative provisions are made between that Member and the Treasurer of the Corporation."

Remember: *Our goal is to have 100% participation from our members in contributing toward our operating costs.*

## 2.5 Helping with Day-to-Day Operations

Each LGCW member is expected to participate in at least one major operational task per year. Major tasks include, but are not limited to, attending committee meetings, teaching classes, producing concerts, supporting a fundraising event, providing transportation for other Chorus members, handling travel logistics, and planning a post-concert party.

The Co-Facilitators and Committee Chairs will call for volunteers for specific events or projects. You can help us accomplish these tasks by answering the call.

## 2.6 Selling Concert Tickets

We ask each LGCW member to help us sell tickets to our concerts and fundraisers. These events are important revenue generators for the Chorus. Over the years, we have discovered that individual LGCW members are the best promoters of the Chorus. They are always responsible for a large portion of ticket sales.

## **2.7 Caring for Chorus Sheet Music**

The sheet music we provide belongs to the LGCW—not to our members. Since other singers may eventually use the copies that you are using, please be considerate in your care and use of our sheet music.

- Use only pencils for annotating copies. We provide pencils on the rehearsal table.
- Please return your music at the end of each season. There is a \$20 charge for unreturned music.

The LGCW has an extensive music library, maintained at the LGCW office. If you are interested in accessing the library, please see the Co-Facilitators. The LGCW often loans its music to "friends" and to other newly emerging choruses.

## **Section 3: LGCW Personnel and Volunteers**

The LGCW contracts with individuals who fulfill the roles of Music Director, Accompanist, Database Manager, Grant Writer, and Accountant.

All other positions in the LGCW, including Co-Facilitators, Section Leaders, and Committee Chairs, are volunteer positions. Generally, these positions are filled annually.

If you are interested in volunteering, contact the Chair of the Personnel Committee.

### **3.1 Section Leaders**

Section Leaders assist the Music Director and Co-Facilitators in communicating with the Chorus. Section Leaders track section attendance, follow up with absent members, communicate necessary information between rehearsals, organize sectional rehearsals, and serve on Committees as section representatives. You should direct most of your questions to your Section Leader.

### **3.2 Other Support Staff**

You do not have to be a singer to become part of our support staff. As a member of the support staff you can help with concert production, usher, design graphics, and create content for the LGCW website. The list goes on. It depends on how you would like to assist, and your creative talents!

## Section 4: Rehearsals

The LGCW rehearses from September through June. Regular rehearsals are held on Tuesday evenings from 7:30 to 9:45 p.m. at the Parish of St. Monica and St. James, 222 8th Street, NE, in DC. This parish has been a wonderful, welcoming home to us for many years now. Two weeks prior to a major concert, we hold additional rehearsals. These rehearsals are announced at the beginning of each concert season. In addition, sectionals, longer rehearsals, and/or makeup rehearsals are sometimes scheduled at the discretion of the Music Director. Please refer to the appropriate season calendar.

### 4.1 Keeping Track of the Schedule

#### 4.1.1 Rehearsal Calendar

You will receive a rehearsal calendar at the beginning of each concert season. Since the Meeting for Business occasionally accepts additional performance invitations during the course of a season, the calendar is subject to change. You will be notified of such changes through rehearsal announcements and through the *Rehearsal Rag*. Please put the regular rehearsal and additional dates on your own personal calendar as soon as you are notified. You can also read the *Rehearsal Rag* on the LGCW web page at [www.lgcw.org](http://www.lgcw.org).

#### 4.1.2 Rehearsal Rag

Because our time together is limited, we try to limit the number of announcements at each rehearsal. If you want to include an item in the announcements, please submit it in writing to the Co-Facilitators before rehearsal. We try to reserve announcements for key information points related to LGCW operations or business and discourage spontaneous announcements from members.

We strongly encourage you to read and rely on the *Rehearsal Rag* as a primary source of information. Feel free to contribute your own material to the *Rehearsal Rag*, following the editor's published deadlines. Inclusion of material is at the discretion of the editor.

#### 4.1.3 E-mail Messages

The LGCW Web Committee Chair person maintains the master list of e-mail addresses supplied by LGCW members. Use of members' e-mail addresses in a "broadcast" message is limited to LGCW business. *A broadcast message is not a substitute for consensus.*

The Music Director and Co-Facilitators use the entire e-mail list at their discretion or with direction from the Meeting of Business. LGCW members are encouraged to use e-mail addresses **only** as a medium for communicating with other individual members or with their sections.

The LGCW e-mail policy was written to respond to the consensus of members that LGCW e-mail messages be sent solely for formal communications from the LGCW.

#### 4.1.4 Notification of Cancellations

**Rehearsals are not cancelled due to inclement weather.** The Music Director and Co-Facilitators decide whether to cancel rehearsals. If you want to verify whether a rehearsal will be held, call the Chorus Hot Line at 202-546-1549. If a rehearsal has been canceled, or if there are

any changes in the scheduled rehearsal, a general message will be available on this line by 4 p.m. on the day of the rehearsal in question. In addition, an e-mail will be sent to those members who have provided e-mail addresses for the LGCW roster.

#### **4.1.5 LGCW Web Site**

Check out our web site at [www.lgcw.org](http://www.lgcw.org). In the Members-Only area, you will find the latest *Rehearsal Rag*. The Members-Only area also contains the current chorus roster, which you can access using a confidential member ID and password. Please ask the Music Director or one of the Co-Facilitators for the ID and password.

## **4.2 Rehearsal Retreats**

The Chorus holds a retreat annually, scheduled before the January concert. The purpose of our fall retreat is to dive into our music and to get to know each other better—all of which helps our ensemble sound. We also do some serious work on another part of chorus life: we have fun! For many years, the retreat was held outside the DC area, but in 2008 it was held in town.

We require member-paid fees to cover some of our retreat costs. We do try and keep these fees as reasonable as possible, and we also offer scholarship assistance.

We also sometimes schedule a local spring retreat in the city. We charge a modest fee to cover costs.

More information about our retreats will be published in the *Rehearsal Rag*. Fall retreat dates are determined and announced during the spring preceding the retreat. Friends and significant others of Chorus members are also welcome.

## Section 5: Performances

### 5.1 General Performance Information

As concert dates and gigs approach, you will receive more complete information about when and where dress rehearsals and performances will be scheduled. One performance of each major concert is sign language interpreted. The Chorus attempts to schedule performances in fully accessible spaces that are located close to the Metro.

The Chorus is a member of BMI and ASCAP and pays appropriate royalties for performances.

### 5.2 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Performances

Following are performance highlights for the LGCW's 2008-2009 concert season:

#### 5.2.1 New Choral Commission

For the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the LGCW, the chorus has commissioned from composer Robert Convery a new choral work, *Under the Greenwood Tree*. This nine-movement cantata for choir and piano features text celebrating being human from the poetry of Langston Hughes, Amy Lowell, Walt Whitman, Christina Rossetti, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Robert Louis Stevenson, Elinor Wylie, and William Shakespeare. *Under the Greenwood Tree* will be premiered at two performances of the LGCW 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Concert, scheduled for January 24 and January 25, 2009.

Since 2000, when LGCW first performed Convery's cantata, *Songs of Children*, LGCW members have developed a strong connection to Bob and to his music. In 2005, we were privileged to perform (pre-publication) his suite, *Not About Cheese*. Bob is very generous with his time and we've had several special experiences working with him on his music.

Bob says, "LGCW holds a warm place in my heart. ... It is a family which embraces new family each time it makes music. This inches its way along to make the world an ever-improving and pleasant place to be. ... Hearing my music sung by LGCW restoreth always my soul."

About *Under the Greenwood Tree*, Bob says,

"One of the cornerstones of LGCW's creed (*Every Voice Matters*) is the daily celebration of being human. The sanctity of intimacy, human warmth, of being human without agenda, is intrinsic to this creed. Eleven poems and nine poets weave together in an odyssey about the gleam of being alive, about the unassailable choices made while searching to understand that which is intrinsic to being alive and human (trust, togetherness, being, giving and promising), as a way of celebrating LGCW's 25-year commitment to this same search."

The LGCW has previously commissioned Mark Adamo for its 10th Anniversary (1994) and with D.C.'s Different Drummers co-commissioned Robert Maggio for a 40-minute work for band and chorus about the AIDS Quilt (2003).

In August 2008, the LGCW successfully completed raising \$24,000 to cover the cost of *Under the Greenwood Tree*. We are deeply grateful to the many individuals who gave generously to

support the creation of this new choral work that will be performed and enjoyed by many for years to come.

### **5.3 Performance Repertoire**

The Music and Program Committee (MPC) and Music Director choose each year's repertoire in a collaboration of resources and ideas. The Music Director then suggests programs for upcoming concerts. All LGCW members are encouraged to attend the MPC meetings and, if interested, to suggest music for inclusion. The meetings are also a great way to learn more about choral music in general and to learn the reasoning behind the selection of music as well as the development of LGCW's overall musicianship as an ensemble. If you have an idea or question about repertoire, please contact the MPC Chair, the Music Director, or a Co-Facilitator. We strive to fulfill our mission and vision through our selection of music as well as our performances.

### **5.4 Performance Attire**

There is probably no other "Chorus issue" that galvanizes discussion as much as what we wear on stage. A Committee is formed as needed under the direction of the Meeting for Business to consider and make recommendations about performance attire. Individual members are encouraged to attend the meeting. Individual singers may be asked to shoulder some costs for the recommendation. If the cost creates a hardship, please speak with the Treasurer.

#### **5.4.1 Selecting Attire**

When selecting attire, we consider the following:

1. Creativity: We encourage creativity in choice of dress as long as the clothes contribute to the cohesiveness of the ensemble;
2. Cost: Buy what you can afford; and
3. Black Below, which refers to the following standard items:
  - (a) black dress slacks or skirt
  - (b) black socks, and
  - (c) black closed-toe shoes.

#### **5.4.2 Guidelines for Performance Dress**

- To help us maintain a professional appearance during performances, please iron your clothes.
- Unless otherwise specified, black means black—not dark gray; white means white—not off-white. These subtleties make a BIG difference under stage lights.
- Please do not wear perfume or cologne during performances. Many people are allergic to these scents.
- Bathe before and wear deodorant during performances, but please don't use scented soaps or deodorants.
- Don't wear flashy jewelry on stage.
- Don't drink alcoholic beverages before performing or rehearsing.
- Very occasionally, we may ask singers to wear stage makeup.

## Section 6: Soloists and Ensembles

Consistent with our Mission Statement, the Lesbian and Gay Chorus of Washington, DC (LGCW) seeks to promote and develop talent within the lesbian and gay community. We provide opportunities for full choral, solo, and small ensemble singing. This range of singing experiences offers enhanced musical understanding and leadership opportunities for our singers.

### 6.1 Opportunities for Soloists

Auditions for solo parts within works by the full chorus are open to all LGCW members. The Music Director announces the auditions and makes the final decision on soloists and their understudies.

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**NOTE:** To represent our dedication to choral singing, the LGCW prefers to have smaller ensembles, rather than soloists, substitute in events where the full chorus cannot perform. Exceptions are cabaret performances.

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### 6.2 Opportunities for Ensembles

Ensembles that typically perform in LGCW concerts are either *ad hoc* or *standing* ensembles.

**Ad hoc ensembles** are formed for a specific chorus concert and do not perform on an ongoing basis. Ad hoc ensembles are formed under the direction of the Music Director or other designee.

**Standing ensembles** are self-formed, self-funded, and self-directed groups. The LGCW Music Director does not direct these groups, but the Director may suggest musical selections and help the ensemble prepare for a concert. Standing ensembles perform both in LGCW concerts and as substitutes and community representatives of the chorus. They perform a broad range of material and maintain their own concert schedule. They are responsible for the costs of purchased and specially arranged music. The current active standing ensemble is **Nuance**.

If you are interested in forming an ensemble, start by reading the policy in Section 6.2.1 below.

#### 6.2.1 The LGCW Ensemble Policy

We have developed the following policy to facilitate the formation of small ensembles and to clarify their relationship to the LGCW.

#### 6.2.2 Ensembles as Representatives of the LGCW

When the full chorus cannot perform, ensembles may perform as representatives of the full ensemble. All ensembles who represent the LGCW are subject to the review and approval of the Music Director. The Director, in consultation with the ensembles, accepts performance opportunities for ensembles and determines which ensembles are best suited to the event, based on criteria listed in Section 6.2.3 below.

Ad hoc ensembles that want to perform as a substitute for the chorus should express their interest to the Music Director. If the ensemble is approved, the Director or designee will provide rehearsal direction and will arrange for accompaniment and other needs.

### **6.2.3 The LGCW's Expectations of Ensembles**

All members of standing ensembles are expected to be full members of the chorus, including making a membership investment by paying dues according to one's ability. Further, standing ensembles that represent the LGCW are expected to meet the following requirements:

- Be committed to the vision and mission statements of the LGCW
- Perform repertoire that is representative of the LGCW
- Rehearse regularly
- Achieve the same musical standards of the chorus, including vocal balance, proper vocal techniques, and quality of sound
- Be available to represent the LGCW when the LGCW cannot perform or is not appropriate for the occasion
- Be self-forming and self-directed
- Pay for musical arrangements written especially for them
- Pay for music purchased especially for them
- Provide the chorus library with at least one copy of any music performed for archive purposes
- Return any music borrowed from the chorus library in a timely manner
- Pay and arrange for any accompaniment or special equipment, and arrange for any accompanist or other support personnel.

### **6.2.4 Benefits to Ensembles Representing the LGCW**

As representatives of the LGCW, ensembles benefit in the following ways:

- Receive priority booking referrals at the discretion of the Director
- Receive feedback from the Music Director
- Can use the LGCW name in their performances
- Can advertise in LGCW literature
- Gain local exposure and opportunities to perform at concerts and special events
- Have access to the LGCW music library and may borrow music from this library
- Royalties for music performed as representatives of or at a concert of the LGCW will be covered under the chorus's ASCAP/BMI licenses
- Can participate in any chorus-arranged vocal coaching and attend the chorus retreat

### **6.2.5 The Music Director's Selection Criteria for Ensembles**

- The group's repertoire
- The required preparation time for an event
- The group's composition
- The nature of the event
- The number of people attending the event

- The musical standards of the ensemble
- The ensemble's availability

### **6.2.6 The LGCW's Policy for Costs Associated with Ensemble Performances**

- The LGCW should not pay festival/special event entrance fees for ensembles, unless the LGCW specifically asks the ensemble to represent the LGCW.
- When representing the LGCW, an ensemble may request a percentage of any proceeds earned to offset out-of-pocket expenses.
- When **not** performing under the auspices of the LGCW, ensembles must pay any royalties arising from their performance.

### **6.3 Not What You Think – An Affiliated Ensemble**

Not What You Think (NWYT) was created by 8 LGCW members in 1991 and became the first LGCW standing ensemble. Four of the ensemble's founding members were also LGCW members from its very earliest days. Since then, NWYT has continued singing a repertoire of songs of social justice and humor, often "borrowing" pieces from the LGCW itself. The ensemble has increased in size to 11 members, and non-LGCW members have joined. In 2005, the ensemble changed its status to that of an affiliated LGCW ensemble, to recognize its growing independence and also its long-term relationship to its mother ship, the LGCW.

## Section 7: LGCW Business Oversight

### 7.1 Our Organizational Structure

The LGCW is formally organized as a tax-exempt, not-for-profit corporation. All contributions and donations are tax-deductible to the fullest extent permitted by Federal law less any goods received. Dues are not tax-deductible.

The LGCW also participates in the Combined Federal Campaign. The LGCW CFC # is 30249.

### 7.2 Our By-Laws

In June 2000, the LGCW adopted a new set of By-Laws to implement its consensus operating principles. For more details regarding our consensus processes, see Section 7.7, *Consensus: The Heart of Our Business-Making Process*.

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**NOTE:** A copy of the By-Laws is available to all.

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For purposes of efficiency and administration, the By-Laws identify the two types of members described in Sections 7.2.1 and 7.2.2.

#### 7.2.1 Members-at-Large

*Members-at-Large* include singers, contractors, employees, advisors, and support persons who are compliant with the LGCW's mission and membership investment payment schedule.

The essential change affected by the By-Laws was to make all LGCW members-at-large directors of the corporation—a legal change that has affirmed the actual practice of the organization for the last 16 years. A Director carries fiduciary (financial) responsibility for the LGCW.

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**NOTE:** If you do not want to be identified as a Director in our grant applications or elsewhere, please communicate your feelings to the Secretary and Co-Facilitators.

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Under the laws of the District of Columbia for non-profit organizations, an organization must have no less than three Directors; however, there is no limit on how many Directors an organization can have.

#### 7.2.2 Attenders

An *Attender* is any member who attends a meeting. All LGCW members can attend and participate in any LGCW Meeting. As outlined in the By-Laws and continually practiced by the LGCW, "decisions made by Attenders appearing in person shall be the act of the Membership-at-Large."

## 7.3 Meetings for Business

LGCW decision-making takes place largely in the Meeting for Business (announced in the rehearsal calendar and the *Rehearsal Rag*). **These meetings are open to all LGCW members, contractors, employees, advisors, and support persons**, as specified in the LGCW Bylaws. All matters affecting the Chorus as a whole are addressed during these meetings.

The Co-Facilitators facilitate Meetings for Business. (Note: the Chorus selects the Co-Facilitators during our Annual Meeting.) Meetings for Business usually last about 2.5 hours. In the LGCW Bylaws, members who attend these meetings are called *Attendees*. Decisions made by Attendees appearing in person are therefore considered to be the act of the Membership-at-Large. (For a complete description of attendees, see Section 7.2.2.)

The Meeting for Business agenda promotes our grounding in our mission and vision statements, as well as our long-range plan. During the meetings, various committees may sometimes report on their activities, but the main purpose of each meeting is to discuss related to our purpose. This makes for a lively and informative discussion that often has an important effect on what the LGCW seeks to accomplish. It also gives each participant a sense of making a strong investment in our decision-making process.

### 7.3.1 Obtaining a Meeting Agenda

You can obtain an agenda for each meeting on the Tuesday before that meeting is scheduled. Please contact one of the Co-Facilitators if you (1) have a question about, or proposed item for, the agenda or (2) have input on an agenda item but cannot attend the meeting. The Co-Facilitator will present your point of view when the subject is discussed during the meeting.

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**NOTE:** Remember that Co-Facilitators cannot represent your point of view for you! If you want to express your opinion and give suggestions that can become a part of our decision-making process, we highly encourage you to attend the Meeting for Business. Every member's ideas and concerns are important, and we encourage you to express them. During the meetings, facilitators may suggest some general rules of interaction and time limitations for the group.

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The LGCW Secretary compiles minutes for the Meetings for Business and the Annual Meeting. These minutes are made available at rehearsals and at other Meetings.

### 7.3.2 Guidelines for Participation in Meetings for Business

- Enter with an open mind
- Listen for understanding
- Make personal statements (I, me) when talking
- Take risks: say or do something that may make others or you feel uncomfortable
- Pay attention to assumptions
- Take responsibility for yourself
- Consider the result of what you are saying
- Be conscious of time
- Care for yourself
- Celebrate

## 7.4 LGCW Committees and Committee Meetings

Committees accomplish much of the LGCW's work. LGCW members are welcome to attend any committee meeting. Committee work is a good place to start getting involved with the operations of the Chorus. Committee meetings are announced in the *Rehearsal Rag*.

Committees present recommendations on action items during the Meeting for Business, and they perform specific tasks as needed. The chair or facilitator of each committee communicates with the Co-Facilitators, Music Director, and General Manager on an "as needed" basis.

### LGCW Standing Committees:

Committee Area	Description
Music and Program	Working closely with the Music Director, chooses the theme and music for each concert and benefit
Fundraising	Working closely with the Treasurer, plans the fundraising calendar for the year and solicits participation from Chorus members to help meet fundraising goals.
Finance	Chaired by the Treasurer, develops and tracks the annual budget.
Membership Development	Working closely with the Membership Coordinator, plans the LGCW Open House events, and creates flyers and advertisements.
Production	Working with the Music Director arranges performance technical details for run-outs and concerts; communicates logistical information to Chorus members.
Personnel	Creates written contracts for contractors and facilitates periodic review of their work; solicits volunteers and candidates for specific positions and tasks.
Web Site	Works closely with the Music Director, Co-Facilitators, and Committee chairs. Designs, updates, and posts the LGCW web site

Additional committees are formed as the need arises and disbanded when their work is done. Following are examples of these *ad hoc* committees:

- The Structure Committee studied the organization and workings of the Chorus and developed job descriptions for all the Chorus' paid and volunteer positions.
- Historically, a separate Search Committee has been created each time the LGCW has had to find a Music Director.

Remember: **All LGCW members are welcome to attend any committee meeting.** When you're ready, we encourage you to get involved in this aspect of the LGCW.

## 7.5 Our Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the corporation (i.e., LGCW) is held each June. At this meeting of all LGCW members, the Chorus-at-Large selects its co-facilitators and committee chairs for the coming year. Also, any business requiring consensus by the full Chorus may be presented at the Annual Meeting.

## 7.6 Our Finances

Early on, the LGCW ran its operations from a checkbook maintained by the Treasurer. As the Chorus has become more successful, things have certainly changed!

Our monthly expenses are now about \$3,500, with our annual budget in the range of \$65,000. Membership investments cover about 10% of these expenses. The rest of the income is generated by special events, contributions (45%), grants, corporate support, sale of merchandise.

The LGCW must pay the following expenses each year:

- honoraria for contractors
- space rental fees
- purchase of music
- musician fees
- production costs
- advertising costs
- copying costs
- insurance costs.

## 7.7 Consensus: The Heart of Our Business-Making Process

From its first meeting, the LGCW has used a decision-making process that is broadly based on *consensus* models. Consensus means that the Chorus takes a certain action only if all group members who are present at the decision-making meeting agree on the proposed action. We arrive at this action point through *discussion, rather than voting*.

In Chorus meetings, including Meetings for Business, Committee meetings, and Annual meetings, a facilitator (usually one of the Co-Facilitators) helps the group focus its discussion, identifies areas of agreement, and tries to find ways to modify suggestions to satisfy the concerns of all members who are present or who have expressed concerns about an issue. The issue is discussed until all who are present either agree to take action or agree that that consensus cannot be reached at that time. The goal of the discussion is to find the best solution for the Chorus as a whole.

Every member's ideas and concerns are important, and you are free to express them responsibly. Facilitators may suggest some general rules of interaction and time limitations for the group.

### 7.7.1 Unity vs. Unanimity

Bear in mind that consensus-based decisions are based on *unity*, rather than *unanimity*. For example, the Chorus may decide to take action (unity) when not all members agree to the action (unanimity). With consensus, each person's point of view is important and sought after, but no one person's point of view prevails. More often, a decision reflects the collective wisdom of all people present during the decision-making process, which is what makes unity of action possible.

### **7.7.2 Why We Chose the Consensus-Based Model**

The LGCW selected a consensus operating model because its early members believed that this model offered the most egalitarian and just approach to issues that the Chorus might face. The LGCW believes that learning to use the individual voice in its full power is a goal of consensus and choral music.

### **7.7.3 How We Have Used Consensus in the Past**

Occasionally, a major decision is brought to the whole Chorus for consideration through special meetings. If possible, these special meetings are announced well in advance. Examples of such decisions from our history include (1) deciding whether to participate in international festivals in Seattle, Denver, Tampa, and San Jose; and (2) selecting our third, fourth, and fifth Music Directors. All of the guidelines outlined in this Handbook are the result of consensus-based decisions made at various LGCW meetings.

### **7.7.4 How You Can Be a Part of the Consensus Process**

As a Chorus member, you are responsible for staying informed about issues facing the Chorus. You are also responsible for presenting your ideas and suggestions in a non-confrontational, constructive way, and for working with other members to find the winning solution for the Chorus as a whole. In this way, we have found that there are no losers—only winners. When a decision is made and action results, each member has invested in the outcome.

The Chorus recognizes that consensus is best learned by doing. Sometimes in the passion of a moment, learning to listen and learning to trust can be difficult. To help us all develop these qualities, members will have opportunities to learn more about the LGCW consensus process through workshops and orientation. We urge you to participate. Consensus is fundamental to the LGCW fiber, and its success is dependent on each member's understanding of its foundation and principles.

## **Section 8: LGCW Professional Affiliations**

### **8.1 GLBT Arts Consortium and Other Affiliations**

The LGCW is a founding member of the GLBT Arts Consortium. It also is a member of Chorus America, the Cultural Alliance of Greater Washington, the Washington Area Music Association (WAMA), the Capitol Hill Association of Merchants & Professionals (CHAMPS), and CultureCapital.Com.

## Section 9: The LGCW's Long-Range Plan

In 1998, the Cultural Alliance of Greater Washington Business Volunteers for the Arts Program named the LGCW "Organization of the Year" for our work on long range planning.

In the fall of 2000, at the end of the 1998 plan, the LGCW started another long-range planning process, capturing data from members, audience members, and others. Some common themes emerged early on:

1. a desire for greater visibility, wider audiences and recognition as a quality group,
2. the importance of the LGCW's role in the GLBT and arts communities,
3. a desire for further increasing diversity in membership and repertoire, and
4. a strong interest in securing the financial future of the LGCW.

We will also link our financing to our priorities. The plan, "Building Our Tree," as adopted in April 2002 is detailed in the following section.

### 9.1 Building Our Tree

#### 9.1.1 The Process

A group of LGCW members organized a wish list that had been generated by LGCW members during a long-range planning process in 2001. We organized the goals as trunks and branches of the LGCW tree.

At the heart of the LGCW tree are the dynamics of our political, musical, and social perspectives. Our energy derives from all three, but at times, one force might be more prominent than others.

Our trunks represent major goals and objectives, while the branches and twigs more often represent tools and emphasis. In some cases, the branches of one trunk reach out to the branches of another, intertwining and combining. Time commitments have been suggested. Specific committees and/or the Meeting for Business will organize appropriate trunks with assistance from the Music Director, General Manager, Co-Facilitators, and Treasurer.

*Every voice matters ... A world that listens.*

The tree structure is detailed starting on the next page.

**9.1.2 The Tree Structure**

Trunk	Branches
Achieve financial security <i>(within 3 years)</i>	Financial Planning: (a) increase awareness of fundraising (b) fund special projects (c) increase endowment
Address diversity <i>(ongoing with new initiatives developed and undertaken within 1 year)</i>	Internal Branch: (a) training on communication and consensus (b) membership development (1) accessible rehearsal space (c) anti-racism/anti-oppression training (1) more defined feminist perspective External Branch: (a) community outreach (b) audience development
Examine our personnel structure <i>(within one year)</i>	(a) examine personnel contractor structure and needs (b) examine structure of honoraria and salaries (c) examine current staffing infrastructure

The remaining trunks and branches are all related to music. We found that we had many of these.

Trunk	Branches
General	(a) record CD (b) develop ensembles
Expand our repertoire	(a) explore music from other traditions (b) have more works commissioned for us
Improve our technique	(a) further musicianship training (b) improve musicianship using voice lessons and sectionals
Expand our performance opportunities	(a) perform with other choruses (b) perform in schools (c) find other performance venues (d) travel (e) collaborate with other artists and disciplines

## **Section 10: Some Final Words**

### **WELCOME, AGAIN!**

We certainly hope that you decide to join the Lesbian & Gay Chorus of Washington, D.C. We think it's a fun and unique place for singers and lovers of singing, and we welcome you to our family.

If you have questions and concerns, be sure to talk them over with a Co-Facilitator. We want you to feel at home and we want you to help us grow as a music and community organization.

Thanks for joining us!

## Section 11:LGCW Position Papers

The following section states the LGCW positions concerning Copyright, Music with Sacred Texts, and Considering Performance Invitations. These positions are intended to provide the reader with historical understandings and to guide the chorus when making decisions. They reflect our understandings at a particular moment in the chorus' evolution, and are subject to revision as we continue to grow.

### 11.1 LGCW Position Paper – Copyright

*Compiled by Jean Godwin*

The LGCW generally performs music that is the work product of others, and with this relationship comes a responsibility to copyright regulations. Copyright is the means by which creators such as composers and songwriters make a living from their work. The law gives copyright owners a number of exclusive rights to control how and when their work is used, and to negotiate payment for this use. The copyright owner owns the publishing rights to music—we must abide by copyright laws in performing it.

Copyrights eventually expire, after which the owner has no exclusive rights. Some composers renounce their copyright and give their music or lyrics to the public, either during their lifetime or at their death. All compositions that are not protected under copyright law are said to be in the “public domain.”

The LGCW must purchase published copies of music not in the public domain, and pay for performance and recording rights. We must purchase enough copies for every performer. Copyright laws generally prohibit photocopying of music that is available for purchase. There are fair use exceptions in certain circumstances that would result in no revenue loss to the owner (such as making an emergency copy of a piece of music while awaiting delivery of a purchased replacement copy). When a work is permanently out of print (“POP”), we may request permission from the copyright owner to make photocopies, usually for a per-copy fee. (The LGCW has requested and received numerous permissions for photocopying POP music.)

To arrange or adapt a copyrighted musical work, we must first obtain permission from the copyright owner. Fair use exceptions permit the editing or simplification of purchased printed copies if the fundamental character of the work is not distorted or if the lyrics are not altered (or if lyrics are not added if none exist).

After music procurement, the issue of text substitution is the most common copyright issue we face in the LGCW. Sometimes, we encounter text that is emotionally charged (*e.g.*, “Jesus”) or exclusive (*e.g.*, “mankind”) or not reflective of our experiences as GLBT people (*e.g.*, references to straight relationships). In other instances, we desire to substitute text in order to fit a concert theme. The strictest interpretation of copyright regulations indicates that text substitutions without permission from the copyright holder constitute infringement of copyright laws. However, there are gray areas:

“In general, any parody lyric or the revision of a lyric that changes the integrity of the work requires authorization from the copyright owner. Altering just a few words in a

text is another matter. Suppose you want to change just the last text line in a song to personalize it for your group. As a practical matter, and assuming that you've bought a sufficient number of copies for your group, I'd say go ahead and do it...To be extra safe, ask for permission, and chances are that you'll get it." (From Copyright: The Complete Guide for Music Educators, by Jay Alehouse, pg. 93)

Since its founding, the LGCW has interacted with copyright regulations in an increasingly sophisticated, professional manner. In the early days of the chorus, our "public performances" were presented at the home of a member or supporter. At that time, our responsibilities to copyright regulations regarding text substitutions were probably few. It was the desire of LGCW's founders to create an organization that reflected our experiences and understandings as LGBT people. The newness of this concept – *i.e.*, that we could build a chorus that sang songs about *our* lives – was at once electrifying and startling. We felt we could no longer leave our inclusion to be an assumed understanding by society's institutions; hence, we examined text very carefully with the goal of presenting programs that were inclusive of all experiences. If a word or phrase did not strike us as being inclusive, we changed it to something that did.

As we grew out of living rooms and dining rooms and began performing outside our own community, we became more sophisticated in our understandings of copyright regulations, and text substitutions were increasingly negotiated in a manner respectful of copyright regulations, *i.e.*, we obtained legal permissions to substitute texts before performing them. A notable example is our creation and performance of a "lavenderized" version of Stephen Sondheim's musical *Company* for our winter concerts in 1997. The chorus member who re-wrote the script contacted Samuel French, the company that licenses the show on behalf of Stephen Sondheim. The correspondence to Samuel French included a copy of the proposed script (including lyric changes) and a request for permission to perform the revised version. Samuel French forwarded the request to Stephen Sondheim, who personally granted permission to the LGCW (limited to the two 1997 winter concert performances and with a specific statement banning any recording and/or videotaping of the performances).

In some cases, our research of context and history has allowed us to sing emotionally charged or exclusive text with a greater degree of comfort. For our winter 2004 performances of "War," from Ysaye Barnwell's *Truth Pressed to Earth Shall Rise*, we proposed substituting "mankind" to "humankind" or "we all." We received permission from the composer, but in her correspondence, Dr. Barnwell reminded us that the text was a direct quotation of Martin Luther King, Jr. and that "mankind" was the common word choice of Dr. King's time. Ultimately, we decided to perform the work with the original text "mankind," understanding that the text reflected the speech of the time.

Dr. Barnwell was also helpful in developing our understandings about singing words like "Jesus" in spirituals. We were inclined to substitute such emotionally charged text with universally accepted words like "freedom" and "justice." However, we learned that such text substitutions alter the quality of singing in a coded language, essential to the genre, and following meaningful, *informed* discussions, we determined that in general, we will perform spirituals with their original texts.

In the LGCW, we have had successful experiences arranging works for our ensemble. A notable example is our March 2005 Shop With Suede performance of an arrangement of the Carpenters' song "I Won't Last a Day Without You." Our music director arranged the work for soloist (Suede), chorus, piano, and bass and sent a copy of the proposed arrangement and a request to perform the revised version to the publisher, Warner Brothers. Warner Bros. charged a licensing fee and granted

permission for the work to be performed under the criteria outlined in our proposal. (The performance was an amazing experience.)

It is our goal to interact with copyright regulations in a manner that is professional and respectful of every voice in the process of creating and presenting music.

## 11.2 LGCW Position Paper – Music with Sacred Texts

*Compiled by C. Paul Heins*

The singers in LGCW reflect every degree of connection to the sacred, interacting with religion, faith, and spirituality with widely differing intensities and outcomes. Our members have included former and current clergy, lifelong followers of various faiths (among our early members were persons who identified themselves as Jews, radical Methodists, Pagans, and Quakers), non-practicing believers in various faiths, non-believers, agnostics, and atheists. They have been people whose religious experiences have built them up, people whose experiences have left them broken, and people representing the full range within that spectrum.

For many, membership in the LGCW affords the first opportunity to use one's voice – literally and figuratively – as an LGBT person. Finding this voice and using it in a way that promotes the shared mission and vision of our group is surprisingly and exceedingly difficult for everyone involved. Historically, new members (especially those whose experiences with the sacred have not been positive) have “tried their wings” on the issue of singing music with sacred texts; regrettably, these interactions have been without understandings of the processes involved in selecting and presenting music or of the LGCW's historical background, and the resulting negative feelings (on all sides of the issue) have proven difficult to dispel. Outlined elsewhere in the LGCW Handbook are the processes for selecting music, with some elaboration with regards to music with sacred texts provided below. In this document, we hope to primarily assist new (and veteran) members in understanding the LGCW's historical background regarding music with sacred texts.

Since its founding, the LGCW has striven to program diverse repertoire and creative programs that challenge our singers and our audiences to connect to music, people, history, ideas, and places outside of our individual comfort zones or realms of experience. Our programs have historically included music with sacred texts. (Note that we do not refer to “religious music,” which has the connotation of spiritual investment in the meanings.) Music with sacred texts that the LGCW has performed has included spirituals, hymns, settings of sacred texts, and settings of sayings from spiritual leaders. In each case that a piece with sacred text was presented, the goal was not indoctrination (of singers or of our audience) or worship; rather, the goal was *to present literary and musical ideas that connect to the theme or setting of the performance*. This goal remains today.

In addition to creating a coherent, meaningful, and enjoyable theme for each program, the LGCW strives to consider our whole body of work and our guiding principles (outlined in our mission/vision statements and our values statements) at the same time we consider individual pieces. The repertoire of our programs reflect on our histories as LGBT people and as the

LGCW, they comment on past and current world and community events, and they reinforce values such as gender cooperation and gender equality, diversity, and having fun.

Historically, the LGCW has sought to make some music with sacred texts (especially pieces with Christian references) more “singer friendly” by substituting emotionally charged words like “Jesus” to universally accepted words like “freedom” and “justice.” However, as the chorus has become increasingly sophisticated in its corporate approaches to music selection and understandings of repertoire, we are less inclined to substitute texts. The reasons for this change are threefold:

1. In most cases, a text substitution without the permission of the author is disrespectful to the author and constitutes a violation of copyright laws. (The LGCW prides itself on operating at the highest levels of professionalism, and this professionalism extends to strict observance of copyright laws.)
2. In some cases, a text substitution alters the quality of the composition. (In the case of spirituals, substituting "freedom" for "Jesus" removes the quality of singing in a coded language, essential to the genre.)
3. We believe we are strong enough as singers (and we believe our audience members are strong enough as listeners) to present ideas as part of a theme without subscribing to the meaning of the texts.

Elaborating on text substitution, local composer and long-time friend of the chorus, Dr. Ysaye Maria Barnwell, writes:

I feel that people who change words without understanding why they were written in a particular way are disrespecting the culture, depriving themselves of the opportunity to broaden their knowledge, and changing something (from someone else’s culture) for their own personal convenience, [which] is very disrespectful.

When the Spirituals were conceived, they were conceived by a group of people who used music in a very functional way. This is still very much a part of African American culture. People who conceive of music as ART did not and perhaps still do not have function in their world view and so very often miss the points being made in the music. So one has to look at the lyrics very carefully to reveal or discover the “meanings” that are intended. Spirituals, work songs, and even children’s game songs typically have multiple of meanings.

[In the piece “Steal Away (to Jesus),”] “Jesus” could have meant [the] literal Jesus, a slave ship named The Good Ship Jesus, or freedom, at least. If you look at the lyrics in the verses you will find specific directions on when to escape, etc. The verses clearly support the meaning of Jesus as freedom.

Founding member Jill Strachan recalls LGCW’s discussions on the texts of spirituals, programmed to sing at a performance at the Patricia Roberts Harris Educational Center in the late 1990s. Harris Elementary is located “East of the River,” referring to Southeast Washington,

DC beyond the Anacostia River. The population East of the River is largely African-American. The performance was a collaboration with the Whitman-Walker Clinic, Max Robinson Center.

LGCW members had a lengthy, at times painful, somewhat uninformed (people equated spirituals with gospel music), but ultimately productive discussion about singing a spiritual program for our East of the River program. We wanted to present a program of music that would mean something to the potential audience and which we could sing with integrity. As we came to the understanding that spirituals contained many hidden messages for slaves seeking freedom, we saw a correlation to the early signals that gay and lesbian people used to identify each other ... as in "Are you a friend of Dorothy?" As part of our presentation of the spirituals, we also had a display about the hidden language of the early gay and lesbian pride movement. In addition, we decided to invite Lavender Light (an LGBT gospel choir) from NYC to join us. Thus, we were able to construct a program that stretched us in our understanding [and which] hopefully educated our audience, in addition to being appropriate for the venue.

Meaningful, *informed* discussions such as the one referenced above have been integral to our growth as an ensemble, especially with regard to programming music with sacred texts. We have become more willing to discuss texts and messages that are outside of our comfort zone, and we have developed tools for doing so in a way that puts everyone on equal footing: our discussions regularly include research into the *history* and *context* of the discussion topic, and in some instances, our process has included bringing in an outside expert's opinion. Additionally, meaningful discussions have allowed us to develop innovative approaches to music selection and presentation which have made us better musicians and – we believe – more sensitive people.

For the most part, discussions on music programming occur at meetings of the Music & Programming Committee (MPC). As with all committees in the LGCW, all choristers are invited to participate. At meetings of the MPC, choristers may offer reflections on previously programmed music, recommend repertoire for future performances, and comment on proposed repertoire for future performances. Because all members are invited to participate, and because it is our tradition not to "undo" the work of committees, the programming decisions of the MPC are largely accepted.

There are instances, however, in which certain perspectives not available at the time of an MPC meeting come to light after a programming decision has been made. An example is "I Ain't Afraid," by Holly Near, which was approved by an MPC meeting for performance at the winter 2003 concert, and purchased with that performance in mind. The opening text is as follows:

*I ain't afraid...*  
*I ain't afraid of your Yahweh,*  
*I ain't afraid of your Allah,*  
*I ain't afraid of your Jesus,*  
*I'm afraid of what you do in the name of your God.*  
*I ain't afraid of your churches,*  
*I ain't afraid of your temple,*

*I ain't afraid of your prayin',  
I'm afraid of what you do in the name of your God.  
Rise up to your higher power.  
Free up from fear, it will devour you.  
Watch out for the ego of the hour.  
The ones who say they know it are the ones who will impose it on you.*

When this piece was selected in summer 2002, the MPC participants strongly endorsed the piece's main messages of inter-religious tolerance and anti-fanaticism. However, when the full chorus began learning the work that Fall, it became clear that the chorus *at that time* was not comfortable with the vigorousness of the text. A chorus discussion on that piece led to the omission of "I Ain't Afraid" from the winter 2003 concert program. (It should also be noted that there were musical challenges in this piece that were extremely difficult to meet by the chorus at that time.) In 2006, the MPC returned to this piece for inclusion in the LGCW's winter 2007 peace-themed program. With the passage of time and with an evolution in our membership's ability to learn and present controversial works, the text of "I Ain't Afraid" at that later time seemed to convey a message that the chorus could embrace in consensus.

Long-time member Amy Moore continues on the issue of dropping a piece of music, either in the MPC selection process or after it has been programmed:

Perhaps sometimes things do need to be patently rejected for a particular reason. Maybe sometimes an individual's negative feelings are enough to warrant serious concern about the language or history or context of a piece. It is this non-dominant discourse that doesn't typically get explored [in other organizations]. People get so busy defending the other, that the less popular or obvious voice is lost or at best, not fully explored.

The LGCW's practice of consensus governance speaks to *unanimity* rather than *unity* of opinion. Hence, the LGCW might decide to sing a song (as has happened) without everyone agreeing on its various merits. The practice of consensus creates an atmosphere of understanding others' points of view and creating a decision that does not come *at the cost of* anyone's opinion. The LGCW cannot be held hostage by one person's opinion and it cannot be swayed by one person's opinion; rather, we create a decision that reflects and respects the discussion.

In the LGCW, we have found that our best performances have risen from conversations that have involved as many voices as possible at all steps in the process, from proposals of pieces to the development of a program to the learning of the music (including in-depth explorations of the theme and associated meanings) to the presentation of the concert (including educating our audience about music programmed and our process in selecting and learning it). We recognize that it is incredibly challenging to invest every chorister in every step of the process every time, but nurturing that investment has been and remains our goal. When every voice is heard and included, our music and our message both benefit exponentially.

Among all musicians, singers possess a unique tool with which to connect to their audiences: text. In addition to melody, harmony, rhythm, and texture, we use words to create a bond

between ourselves and our community. These words can delight, inspire, and educate, and they can also cause to question, intimidate, and provoke. In the LGCW, we are committed to selecting and presenting choral works whose texts initiate a variety of emotional responses, music that respects and gives voice to a variety of perspectives and understandings. Since our founding, we have determined to program music with sacred texts among our diverse repertoire. We believe that sacred texts are included in the “voices” of our combined mission/vision statements: *Every voice matters... in a world that listens.*

References – Music with sacred texts that the LGCW has recently performed has included:

- “Balm in Gilead” (spiritual arr. by William L. Dawson)
- “Erev Shel Shoshanim,” (Hebrew song with Biblically-inspired text by Jack Klebanow)
- “God is Seen,” “I Got Shoes,” “Same Train,” and “Wondrous Love” (spirituals arr. by Alice Parker)
- “The Gospel: Wings to Fly,” from urban scenes / creole dreams (by Ysaye M. Barnwell)
- “Peace Like a River” (spiritual arr. by Gwyneth Walker)
- “Siyahamba” (South African song ed. by Doreen Rao)
- “Steal Away (to Jesus)” (spiritual arr. by Ysaye M. Barnwell)
- “Wade in the Water” (spiritual arr. by Norman Luboff)
- “We Are One” (song with Biblically-inspired text by Brian Tate)
- “When Our Lives Know Sudden Shadow” (hymn by Shirley Erena Murray and Carlton R. Young)

### **11.3 LGCW Position Paper - Considering Performance Invitations**

*Compiled by TC Duong*

Accepting performance invitations is one of the most concrete expressions of our mission and vision: “Every Voice Matters in a World that Listens.” Accepting a performance added to the regular calendar of concerts is an important investment in time, preparation, and energy for the chorus members and personnel. In the 2005-2006 season, the chorus-at-large discussed performance invitations at monthly meetings for business to build consensus about what performance invitations to accept or decline. Through these meetings, several themes and criteria arose about what invitations fit with our work and our mission and vision.

The goal of this position paper is to empower and give guidance to the music director and co-facilitators to make recommendations on performance invitations. The discussion from the 2005-2006 season on performance invitations provides a firm foundation for personnel to make recommendations on accepting performance invitations. The music director should ask chorus members for their availability for a particular performance opportunity but we trust the discretion of the music director and co-facilitators to determine if an invitation would be musically, socially, and organizationally appropriate for the LGCW. If chorus members have concerns regarding a particular invitation, they should speak directly to the music director and co-facilitators who can decide to bring the decision to the chorus for discussion. In the past, in a type of precedent, we have also empowered our small ensembles to represent the chorus when there is a lack of availability among chorus members.

### 11.3.1 Criteria for Accepting Performance Invitations

#### Values

As our mission and vision are core to who we are as a chorus, we would be unable to accept a performance invitation from an organization that works against the full participation and access to public institutions for all people. For example, invitations from organizations that do not support gender equality would not be considered. Furthermore, we seek invitations from organizations whose values and mission support a world where every voice matters and performance opportunities where LGCW can support voices that have been historically unheard. As part of our values, we seek out performances where our voices would build dialogue about challenging issues and help promote social justice.

#### Music

Musical considerations are a key consideration in accepting a performance invitation. In this respect, we rely on the experience of the music director to make recommendations on accepting an invitation. Some considerations the music director will take into account are: (1) the chorus' ability to prepare effectively for the performance, (2) the accessibility of the venue itself and whether the venue will be conducive to a performance of artistic integrity, and (3) whether the music we will sing supports the chorus' musical growth.

#### Partnerships and Collaborations

Our performance opportunities are often important avenues to build lasting and healthy partnerships and collaborations.

- By “partnership,” we refer to working *equally with* another ensemble or organization in presenting a public performance. In a partnership, the expectation is for both ensembles and organizations to have equal decision-making authority about repertoire, presentation, and venue. Since 2002, we have built a healthy partnership with the Jubilee Singers of All Souls Unitarian Church, singing with them at the premiere of *Quilt Panels*, as guests at their Sunday services, and at several World AIDS Day remembrance concerts. In each performance, we worked together *on equal footing* about repertoire, rehearsal and performance locations and dates, and the concert venue. (It should be noted, however, that several variables – such as dates and venues available – were pre-determined by factors not related to the partnership.) These partnership performances have expanded our repertoire and our audience base for our winter and spring concerts.
- By “collaboration,” we refer to working *for* another ensemble or organization in presenting a public performance. In a collaboration, the expectation is that one of the ensembles or organizations has greater decision-making authority about repertoire, presentation, and venue. However, in a collaboration, there are also expectations that no decisions will be made unilaterally and that no decisions will adversely affect either ensemble or organization. For example, the LGCW's performance of *Nava* in April 2005 and December 2006 were collaborations with the Iranian String Ensemble. In these performances, the Iranian String Ensemble holds the greater decision-making authority on repertoire, presentation, and venue. The LGCW was assigned specific repertoire to learn, the Iranian String Ensemble produced the presentations, and the Iranian String Ensemble selected the venues. However, in the spirit of collaboration, the Iranian String Ensemble is receptive and responsive to ideas on

musical interpretation and has been responsive (and in many cases, proactive) with regards to the LGCW's needs and requests (e.g., tutoring in the pronunciations of the Farsi texts).

It is important for the LGCW to understand the nature of the working relationship – partnership or collaboration – in order to set reasonable expectations for the experience.

The possibilities of partnership or collaboration are key criteria for accepting a performance invitation. As we look at invitations, it is important for the LGCW to consider WHOM we want to work with as well as WHAT we want to do.

- Because the LGCW values artistic integrity, we seek partnerships or collaborations with ensembles or organizations that appreciate and are committed to artistic integrity.
- Because the LGCW is committed to promoting social justice, we seek partnerships or collaborations with ensembles or organizations that are committed to social justice.
- Because the LGCW values direct communication and clearly defined needs and expectations, we seek partnerships or collaborations with ensembles or organizations that are committed to communicating directly and to defining needs and expectations clearly.  
Because the LGCW values the spirit of partnership and collaboration, we seek partnerships or collaborations with ensembles or organizations that demonstrate a desire to work with the LGCW throughout the partnership or collaboration.
- Because the LGCW values the connections we have made with communities outside of the LGBT movement/community, we seek partnerships or collaborations with ensembles or organizations that can help the LGCW reach out to these groups.
- Because the LGCW values the connections we have made with ensembles, organizations, and individuals throughout our history, we seek partnerships or collaborations with ensembles or organizations that have some connection to the LGCW or have a willingness to build such a connection.
- Because the LGCW values community, we seek partnerships or collaborations with ensembles or organizations that are committed to community.
- Because the LGCW understands the power and responsibilities of partnering or collaborating, we seek partnerships or collaborations with ensembles or organizations that also understand the power and responsibilities of partnering or collaborating.
- Because the LGCW understands the need for a unified interpretation of a musical piece in performance, we seek partnerships or collaborations with ensembles or organizations that are committed to the partnership or collaboration throughout the preparations for the performance or event, but that understand the need to defer to one director for the ultimate interpretation of the music.
- Because the LGCW values our healthy financial management and our organizational stability, we seek partnerships or collaborations with ensembles or organizations that are also financially healthy and organizationally stable.

The above criteria were developed in response to the LGCW's collaboration with D.C.'s Different Drummers in the commissioning and presentation of *Quilt Panels* in December 2001.

### Chorister Investment

When we make a consensus decision, every chorister is challenged to go beyond a decision that translates into “consensus that someone else will do the work.” When we commit to a consensus decision, we individually commit to implementing the decision. That means committing to particular tasks that must be accomplished, a mind-set that must be adopted, and a schedule that must be accommodated. In the case of performance invitations, choristers who can participate in the special performance must keep up-to-date on repertoire for the regularly scheduled performance(s) in addition to preparing repertoire for the special performance. Choristers who are not available to sing in the special performance are still expected to work with the chorus in making it a success, proactively assisting with the musical and administrative details that must be addressed.

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