



**CGMC QUARTERLEY NEWSLETTER
VOLUME 1 NOVEMBER 2023 ISSUE 3**

A MESSAGE FROM OUR ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
by Brayton Bollenbacher

I am so excited to finish 2023 with a bang and head into 2024 with great performance opportunities for CGMC. First, our Holiday concert titled "Holiday!" will be a mix of your favorite sacred and secular seasonal music with some familiar hits from around the world. It will be a very energetic concert with many inspiring and meaningful moments.

When the weight of world feels so heavy on our collective shoulders, that's the best time to lighten the load by enjoying some great holiday music, performed by your favorite gay chorus. Tickets are on sale now – for performances in mid-December at the Riffe Center's Davidson Theatre. We hope to see you there! (Go to cgmc.com – for tickets.)



As we head into 2024, we will have the honor of being the first LGBTQ chorus to perform at the Ohio Music Educators Association's

annual convention, the first weekend in February at the Greater Columbus Convention Center.

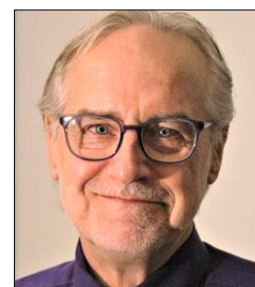


This will be a great opportunity for us to introduce LGBTQ choral arts to music educators from across the state. We hope our performance will help these teachers and administrators better understand how they can be supportive of LGBTQ students in their schools. And we hope they'll also see us as a resource for their students. We're working on a great program and are sure to "wow" them with our amazing vocals. We'll also bring our own sense of "camp" to this performance.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD PRESIDENT
"What's in a name?"

by Doug Althaus

CGMC's Board has been discussing the name of the Chorus for the past five years. Starting in 2017, we had singers joining the Chorus who were trans, or women, or straight, or not White, or who identified outside binary concepts of sexual orientation or gender. We received feedback from other community organizations as well as our own membership that the terms 'Gay' and "Men's" in our name no longer accurately reflected the look of the Chorus. But with our changes in leadership (a new Artistic Director, a new Board President), and then COVID, the discussion lingered.



In 2022, with around 25% of the Chorus's singing membership identifying as neither gay nor male, the Board decided to earnestly

resume discussion of our name and our branding. As your current board presi-



dent, and a founder of the group, I reached out to the other founders for their input. We also reached out for input from other Choruses within the national GALA umbrella who had changed their names. Early in 2023, we offered a survey to our singing members, volunteers, and audience. Over 250 people responded! Board member and singer Jason Guthrie led a team that compiled results. The Board discussed those results over a couple of meetings and at our semi-annual retreat in July.

For the most part, there was no overwhelming request to change our name, though the singing members expressed more acceptance of that than the audience members who participated in the survey. But there was a strong request by responders that the organization honor the history of the founding of the Chorus, which was gay men organizing a Tenor/Bass Chorus to demonstrate through music the integrity and dignity of the gay community.

In 1990, our foundation documents were filed with Ohio's Secretary of State, specifically stating that the purpose of the Chorus was to "foster increased recognition, understanding, and acceptance of gays and lesbians in society." The Chorus also stated it was open to "all individuals regardless of race, gender, color, religion, national origin, disability, age, or sexual orientation."

We hired a branding consultant who pointed out to us that the Chorus's name was well-recognized in Columbus and even the

nation. We had a logo, but that logo did not provide the same brand-recognition as our basic name, or our initials, "CGMC." Changing our name, even slightly, could confuse our supporters and disappoint those who have been with the Chorus since its earliest years. Additionally, there would be the administrative hassle of notifying state and federal offices, and our funders of any change. There would also be the time and cost of unveiling efforts like mailers, revamping our website, and changing our marketing and letterhead. For all these reasons, the Board opted to keep our name.

But we still wanted to acknowledge the evolution toward radical acceptance. So, we turned to our tagline, "Voices Raised, Lives Changed." We talked for several more meetings about the potential of altering that line to indicate our recent evolution and the potential for ongoing inclusion. We settled on adding three important words to our tagline. The result is that we proudly market ourselves as "Inviting All with Voices Raised, Lives Changed!" We honor our history with our name, and we acknowledge timeless and radical inclusion with our tagline. The change is subtle, but important, nonetheless.

Our membership has evolved. Our audience has grown. Our identity now reflects these realities. Change is inevitable, but in our case, CGMC has steered the evolution of the organization in a way such that our identity reflects our reality. Bob Germain, one of CGMC's founders, passed away this past September. The Chorus is now living beyond the lives of its founders. The change in our identity, even as slight as this one is, in the big picture, reflects the vitality of the organization as stronger than any one person, and any specific identity.

**We are the
Columbus Gay Men's Chorus.
INVITING ALL WITH VOICES
RAISED, LIVES CHANGED!**

**A MESSAGE FROM
THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**
*"Make an impact
with your advertising dollars!"*
by Donovan Jones

Gay Men's Choruses have a rich history in the United States. The first gay men's chorus in the U.S. was the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus, founded in 1978. It was a response to the challenges faced by the LGBTQ community, providing a safe space for expression and empowerment during a time of social and political change.

Through their performances, gay men's choruses have helped break down barriers and foster understanding between the LGBTQ community and the wider society.

In recent years, there has been a positive shift toward greater inclusivity in gay men's spaces. Many LGBTQ organizations and communities have actively worked to create environments that embrace diversity and inclusion. This inclusivity is reflected in diversity of membership, gender inclusivity and intersectionality.

As a chorus we are working on expanding our partnerships, within the gay community, and of course beyond, embracing our new mantra of "INVITING ALL WITH VOICES RAISED AND LIVES CHANGED." We would love for you to be part of that! One simple way is to consider running an ad in the program for our mainstage CGMC productions.

Advertising to an LGBTQ audience can be beneficial for several reasons:

1. MARKET SIZE: The LGBTQ community represents a significant market segment, both in terms of population and purchasing power. By targeting this audience, you can tap into a sizable consumer base.



2. LOYALTY AND SUPPORT: LGBTQ-friendly advertising fosters loyalty among LGBTQ consumers, who are more likely to support businesses that openly embrace diversity and inclusivity. Positive brand perception can lead to increased customer loyalty.

3. INCLUSIVITY AND REPRESENTATION: Inclusive advertising helps create a sense of belonging for LGBTQ individuals. When companies represent diverse sexual orientations and gender identities in their marketing, it promotes a more inclusive society and demonstrates respect for all customers.

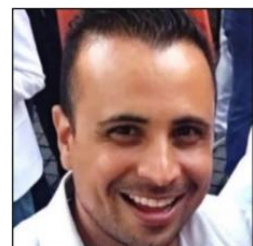


4. SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: Supporting LGBTQ causes and communities through advertising shows a company's commitment to social responsibility. It aligns the brand with progressive values and inclusivity, enhancing its reputation.

In summary, advertising to an LGBTQ audience not only makes business sense but also contributes to a more inclusive and accepting society, promoting positive social change. And, we have opportunities to advertise with us starting at just \$100.

If you are interested in partnering with us on program ads or *any other thing you'd like to discuss*, please email cgmc@cgmc.com. Some of the best collaboration ideas come from you and not us, so please reach out with your ideas.

Yours in song,
Donovan Jones
Executive Director



**A MESSAGE FROM OUR
MEMBERSHIP DIRECTOR**
*"Supporting Our Members:
The Mission of the Membership Fund"*
by Krystal Jackowiak

In any thriving organization, its members are at the heart of its success. Our organization understands this well, and that's why we've established the Membership Fund. This fund is not just a financial resource; it's a testament to our commitment to supporting our members in every way we can.

Helping Members Shine on Stage: One of the primary purposes of our Membership Fund is to help our members when they need it the most. Whether it's helping with costuming expenses, or covering unexpected costs associated with shows, the fund is there to support our members in their artistic journey.

Bringing GALA Closer to Everyone: The big GALA FESTIVAL, a grand quadrennial event scheduled for July 2024, in Minneapolis, Minnesota ~ is an exciting opportunity for our members to showcase their talents on a bigger stage. We want every member to have the chance to participate, regardless of any financial constraints they might have. Our Membership Fund steps in to help offset the registration fees for GALA, helping as many members as possible able to join us for this remarkable experience.



A Fund by Members, for Members: What makes our Membership Fund truly special is that it's member-driven and for members. We believe in the power of our community, and the fund reflects this belief. It's not just about contributing financially; it's about creating a strong support network within our organization.

Fundraising Initiatives To sustain and grow the Membership Fund: These include social events for members and friends, a Membership Raffle during each concert,

giving members a chance to win exciting prizes while contributing to the fund. Our snack table during breaks not only satisfies your cravings but also adds to the fund's resources. Plus, we've had some creative and delicious ad hoc initiatives, like Chris Robbins bringing North Country Charcuterie to the table.



CGMC's Membership Fund is a testament to how committed we are to our members.

It's a safety net, a helping hand, and a way to bring our members together in the spirit of unity and support. Together, we will continue to ensure that every member can shine on stage and make the most of opportunities like GALA. Your contribution to the fund is not just a financial investment; it's an investment in our community's future.



MEMBER PROFILES
by Jared Brown

MEAGAN CHRISTIE

I joined in April 2019; my first show was Stonewall 50. I sing Tenor 1 (upper). I had several friends in the chorus and came to every show for several years, and the more I watched, the more I wished I could be a part of it. Then Adam Burk gave a speech after the March 2019 show that urged people of any orientation to join for Stonewall... and I thought that would be my one-time chance to experience the chorus. Fortunately, it wasn't a one-time offer! (As Droo told me, "You're one of us now, you have to stay!")

My favorite concert that I've performed in was VOX's "Dreams & Nightmares." Not only because it was the most recent show, but it also included a ton of music I love, had fun

staging and prop choices, and was attended by a fantastically responsive audience. It was SO much fun to perform.

My favorite part of being in the chorus is being able to frequently see and chat with good friends, as well as meeting new people. I love being able to walk in and have wonderful people to greet and hug every time. "It's hard work but very rewarding! And there is always someone in your section who is willing to help if you need it."

An interesting fact that many people don't know about me is that I spent about 10 years studying and practicing the complex art of Temari, which is a traditional Japanese embroidery art done on geometrically marked thread-wrapped spheres. In 2013, after completing over 375 Temari, I took a break from it, but recently returned to making them... (there's one in the Raffle you could win!)

What do I like most about living in Columbus? I like the fact that the city isn't too intimidating. It's like a "city with training wheels" but it's still big and has a lot of variety to offer.

My favorite movie is French Kiss, a 1995 rom com, starring Meg Ryan and Kevin Kline. And my favorite vacation was a 3-day train trip from Chicago to San Francisco, followed by a few days in SF and then a 3-day road trip up Highway 1 along the California coast and into Oregon, ending in Portland. We met up with a bunch of my online friends and saw a lot of great sights!

RYAN LADINA

I've been part of the chorus since March of 2014. My first concert was Big Gay Sing in June 2014. I am an upper Tenor II. I joined the chorus because I wanted a musical and creative outlet that I had not done before, and I also wanted to be part of a community where I belonged. I'm so glad my husband, David Donofrio, encouraged me to join.

I have three concerts that are tied for my favorite for different reasons. One was "Finding Oz" (at GALA in 2016) because it

was a story about discovering oneself and wove together songs from the Oz musical stories to tell that story. It also became a story of remembrance because of the Pulse Nightclub shooting, which happened very close to the premiere of the show. Another was the "Joy!" concert in 2015, because it was the 25th anniversary of the founding of CGMC. My third is "Walt's Vault," because, along with a good number of my chorus peers, I grew up with those songs. The concert helped me come out of a dark place that I didn't believe I was in. It reaffirmed why CGMC is important to me.

My favorite part of CGMC is the fantastic group of people, who have so many valuable insights, skills, stories, lessons, acts of kindness and love to share. I have made so many dear friends in the chorus that I hope will be lifelong friendships.

To anyone thinking of joining CGMC, I would say, "come for the friendships and the rush of performing!" After ten years, I have no regrets about joining.

Many people don't know that I love ocean liners. I love the stories, the history, the lessons learned, and of course that one movie that maybe some people have heard of. My favorite movie changes all the time! Right now, it's *Barbie*! I was also late to the game in watching *Glass Onion*, but I just saw it and loved it as well.



I like Columbus because for me, it's been a great balance of extrovert and introvert spaces! There is so much to do when you can find it, but you also don't have to go far to be in a very quiet, reflective, and recharging space.

My favorite vacation ever? Singular experience would have been Hawaii in 2019.

