



**CGMC QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER  
VOLUME 2 MAY 2024 NUMBER 1**

**A MESSAGE FROM  
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR  
JARED BRAYTON BOLLENBACHER**



We are so blessed to have three unique and excellent performing ensembles which make up the entity we know as CGMC.

These three groups are truly dedicated to our mission and allow our singers and audience to have a wider range of musical opportunities and experiences. The largest group, of course, is the chorus, which currently has around 130 singers. We present three full concerts annually: a holiday show in December, a winter concert in March, and a Pride performance in June.

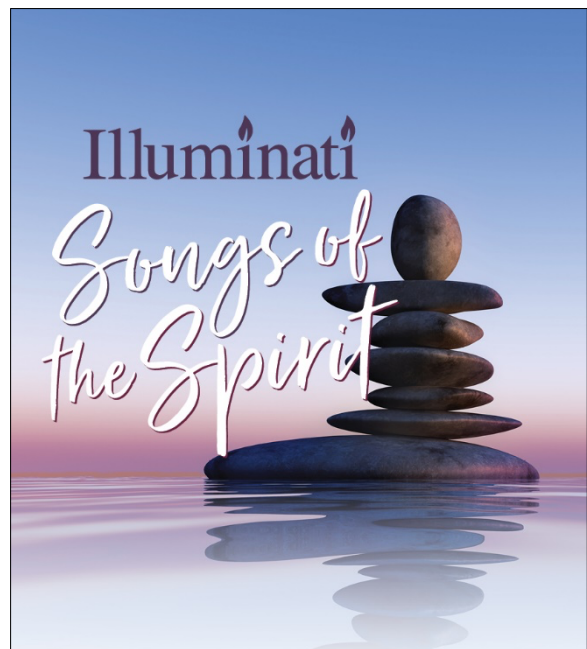
VOX is an auditioned ensemble with 18 members. They kick off our programming each year in October with a Halloween-themed show. They also have a featured number or two at each of the larger Chorus concerts. VOX is available to do a variety of

paid gigs throughout the year. The size of the group makes it easier to take on these one-of-a-kind performance opportunities.

Finally, we are delighted to have our new Assistant Artistic Director, Jordan Saul, who joined our professional staff last fall, and is the choral conductor for our special sacred music ensemble, Illuminati.

Referring to a Latin expression meaning “the enlightened,” Illuminati was created to respond to the community’s expressed desire for musical performances of a sacred or spiritual nature. Its’ mission is to extend our outreach during the year, particularly to religious organizations, while respecting our members’ individual spiritual beliefs.

Illuminati’s annual year-end concert, featuring a full program of sacred and classical music, is coming up this month – on Sunday, May 19<sup>th</sup>, at 2pm, at the Worthington United Methodist Church, located at 600 High Street, in Worthington. Get your tickets today – at our [cgmc.com](http://cgmc.com) website.



Illuminati also performs monthly at various religious institutions and events throughout central Ohio, and sometimes beyond, and is proud to be a bridge between the LGBTQIA+

and religious communities. Illuminati works to demonstrate that we all have a place in sacred spaces, and are whole, holy, and loved. Illuminati's mission is to demonstrate, through song, that ALL people have a place in the religious community.

Illuminati is a non-auditioned ensemble. Members of Illuminati are considered members of the Columbus Gay Men's Chorus, but participation in the full chorus is not required. Illuminati has the distinction of being one of the only LGBTQ+ sacred ensemble in the United States.

Illuminati performs during worship services in churches, synagogues and other places of worship once each month during the performing season September through June. Illuminati does not sing full concerts during these services, but rather sings several anthems as part of the normal worship service to complement the service. Recent and upcoming appearances include:

- Sunday, February 25, 2024  
Dublin Presbyterian Church
- Sunday, March 17, 2024  
Hilliard United Methodist Church
- Sunday, April 14, 2024  
Dayton United Methodist Church
- Friday, May 31, 2024  
Temple Israel



This year's "Songs of the Spirit" program will be presented by the singers of Illuminati on May 19, and will center around themes of courage. The text of 'Silence My Soul' was written by the Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore. The piece reflects the courage required for stillness and meditation. We also have a work by G.F. Handel called 'Arm, Arm Ye Brave' from the oratorio "Judah Maccabaeus," which is a literal call to arms. Other works, like 'I Will Be a Child of Peace'

by Elaine Hagenberg and 'By Our Love' by Christy Nockels nod to the traditions of Illuminati, and the courage it takes for LGBTQIA+ people to inhabit religious spaces that have been historically unaccepting.

"Our relationship with religion has rarely been clean," said Saul, referring to the LGBTQ+ community. "For Illuminati to identify as it does (as both LGBTQ+ and sacred-based) has a defiance about it." And yet, "no bigotry owns the spiritual space," Saul said.

At this concert, we are so excited and truly honored to feature an internationally known composer, Craig Courtney for his anthem "There Will I Be." Courtney joined us in rehearsal this season to talk about his work and his artistic process and will be there to accompany Illuminati from the piano at our concert.

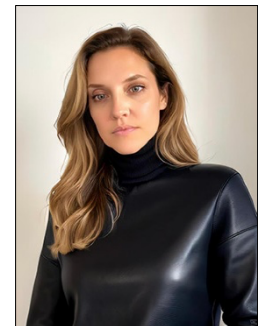


# Illuminati

The Sacred Music Ensemble of  
the Columbus Gay Men's Chorus

MEET ILLUMINATI'S CONDUCTOR  
JORDAN SAUL  
CGMC'S Assistant Artistic Director

We asked Jordan Saul to share some personal thoughts about herself: First, I really love our city, and I explore Columbus whenever I have the chance. I enjoy attending all kinds of concerts (there are so many great venues in CBUS!), museums (especially art museums and galleries), and of course chomping down pickle pizza on the patio at Slammers. If time allows, I might also be found curled up on my couch playing Tears of the



Kingdom. I have two rescue cats, Zero and Bones, who are both entirely enchanting. I love interacting with animals of all kinds and feel a special kinship with felines.

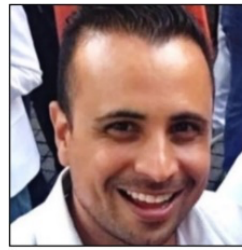
I have studied piano, percussion, and voice. I admire artists in the music world that have a vision and the skills to bring it to fruition. In the choral world, I admire Joe Miller (who is now the director of choral activities at the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music and was my graduate advisor at Westminster Choir College). In the pop world, I'm pretty obsessed with Chappell Roan and The Last Dinner Party recently.

The best part about working with CGMC is THE PEOPLE! As a queer and neurodivergent person on the podium, I often calculate how much of myself I can be in any given space. I never have to run this calculation with CGMC! I can be direct, silly, nervous, at ease, intense, loving in whatever combination I feel and I am wholly embraced by our community. It is such a gift.

This was my first season with Illuminati, and in addition to building relationships with our members, I have used this time to learn about the arc of music making that works well with this unique ensemble. I have started collecting scores for our 2024-25 season and am very excited about how our music is looking so far! We will continue exploring sacred music from cultures around the world, working with skilled instrumentalists, and rehearsing with aplomb.

Each week in Illuminati rehearsal I am reminded of the relationships that are central to the members. There are singers in the group that have known one another for 30+ years, and I feel a strong sense of responsibility to listen to their opinions, histories, and perspectives as we build future seasons and experiences. They are cultural survivors, and Illuminati brings a stalwart courage to the spaces they inhabit. I feel honored to be a part of this music and this community.

**A MESSAGE FROM  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
DONOVAN JONES**



The recent Forte Awards gala, hosted by the fabulous Nina West at the Lincoln Theater Ballroom, was a resounding success for the Columbus Gay Men's Chorus (CGMC).

This annual event, celebrated for its elegant atmosphere, stellar performances, and a competitive silent auction, is crucial for funding the diverse needs of CGMC.



This year, the event was particularly memorable as it honored Misty Linn for her significant contributions to the community. She is a valued mentor and champion of the community and has maintained space for queer art, specifically drag, while other spaces in the community were closing.



The award was presented by Shannon Hardin, Columbus City Council President and a previous Forte Award recipient himself. Handing the award from one esteemed community leader to another added a special touch to the evening, underscoring the gala's commitment to recognizing and supporting community leadership. The funds raised from the Forte Awards are vital for several aspects of CGMC's operations:

- **Operational Support:** They contribute to covering staff salaries, administrative costs, and day-to-day expenses,

ensuring that the chorus operates smoothly and effectively.

- **Venue Costs:** These funds are crucial in securing venues for both rehearsals and public performances, which are essential for the group's visibility and accessibility.
- **Music Commissioning:** A portion of the proceeds is dedicated to commissioning new music and arrangements from a diverse selection of musicians, enabling the chorus to continuously offer fresh and engaging performances that resonate with many audiences.
- **Outreach Programs:** Additionally, the event supports CGMC's various outreach initiatives, including the recently launched youth LGBTQIA+ choir. This effort is aimed at extending the chorus's impact, fostering a more inclusive community, and inspiring the next generation of performers through music education and mentorship. If you are interested in supporting this outreach, please visit our website.

The Forte Awards not only foster a sense of continuity and appreciation within the Columbus community but also propels CGMC forward in its mission of fostering artistic expression, education, and social justice through music. Through events like these, CGMC continues to enhance its role as a cultural beacon in the community, celebrating diversity and inclusion at every turn.

With Appreciation for all your support,

*DONOVAN*

**GIVE ONLINE AT:**  
[WWW.CGMC.COM/DONATE](http://WWW.CGMC.COM/DONATE)

## ILLUMINATI MEMBER PROFILE STEVE CLARY

*How long have you been a member of Illuminati and CGMC?* I joined Illuminati in

the fall of 2023. I was invited to join CGMC for the OMEA Concert in January and am sticking around to sing in the Banned concert in June – and am planning to attend GALA in July in Minneapolis!

*What was your motivation to join the group?* With the membership in my church choir steadily dwindling, I yearned to sing with a large chorus with a full TTBB sound.



*What type of music do you most enjoy singing?* I love the grand masterworks of the three "B's"... Bach, Beethoven & Brahms. Not only are these works sacred, they also give me an energy and joy I do not feel otherwise.

*What's the best part of being a member of Illuminati?* What delights me is our Director, Professor Jordan Saul, who freely shares her expertise as an educator. I am learning music theory and how to practice with the voice as an instrument. I am now utilizing a new concept for me – Solfege, the system of musical notation in which every note of a scale is given a specific syllable that is always said for that note.

Our rehearsals can be hilarious at times, with the gentle 'ribbing' that goes on between the members and Jordan, who has a quick sense of humor.

I think it's thrilling that our upcoming concert will include two glorious works by local composers of international stature: "By Our Love" by Ohio State graduate Deborah Governor, and "There Will I Be" by local composer Craig Courtney, who wrote the

piece for a Capital University fraternity, extolling the grace of 'brotherly love'. Mr. Courtney recently conducted a Master Class with our group and will be the accompanist for his work in our concert! How exciting is that? Many of our numbers will feature various instrumental accompaniments, including piano, organ, brass and strings. Our encore will shake, rattle, and roll the house down!

*What's your favorite memory from your time in CGMC?* I love it when our Ohio Theatre rehearsal hall shakes with the power of 125+ voices raised in astounding harmony.

*What other extra-curricular activities and hobbies (outside of CGMC) do you enjoy and/or participate in?* I staged a Tenebrae service this last month called The Passion of The Christ with my acting ensemble, The Maple Grove Players.

In my retirement I am focusing on my (rapidly becoming an extinct art form) of hand sketched portraits.

*What are your other artistic pursuits?* I am currently building an upper terrace of a back yard flower bed.



*Anything else about your life/career that you'd like to include?* As PR Director for The Columbus Palace Theatre, one of my responsibilities was placing a bowl of M&Ms in the performer's dressing room with all the brown ones removed because back in the day, Elvis was afraid of the color brown – so



now it is a superstition (and a homage) to have the same.

*Do you have any pets?* My eleven year-old Cocker Spaniel Burt, a rescue, keeps me healthy with our multiple daily walks. He likes falling asleep to John Rutter's 'Requiem'.

### GET YOUR TICKETS NOW FOR CGMC's PRIDE CONCERT



As we continue to see legislatures ban books, Drag performances, and Women's and Trans Rights, we invite you to join us as we sing a powerful concert, BANNED, where we'll celebrate all the banned things that make our community so vibrant. We will continue to fight for our freedoms with our music in this inspirational program.

**Saturday, June 22, 2024 | 7:30 p.m.**  
**Sunday, June 23, 2024 | 2:00 p.m.**  
**The Davidson Theatre**