

## OUR HISTORY AND COMPOSITION

The Lesbian/Gay Chorus of San Francisco began singing in January, 1980. We are by now the oldest mixed gay chorus in the country. Each year we have produced numerous concerts, always including annual spring and fall performances. We have performed with other community groups in the annual Gay Pride Concerts and Parade, the Castro Street Fair and the Cable Car Awards. The holiday concerts produced jointly with the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus won the Cable Car "Outstanding Concert" Award for three consecutive years.

The chorus currently has 32 members; we aim to increase our ranks to around 50 within the next year. Chorus hopefuls must undergo an audition process to determine voice quality, musical ability and skill levels, but no one is barred from the group on any demographic or economic basis. Members represent many ethnic backgrounds: Hispanic, Native American (Indian), Asian, and Caucasion. Past membership has included Black and heterosexual members. Current membership does not include the categories; we hope to rectify that in our next personnel drive through more targeted advertising. Chorus members range in age from early 20's to 50's. Our current rehearsal space and all concert halls are barrier-free. One member is physically handicapped. At all concerts we provide sign language interpretation for the hearing impaired. Men and women are represented in about equal numbers and are drawn from numerous communities in the Bay Area. Roughly three-fourths of the singers live in San Francisco; the other communities represented include Oakland, Berkeley, Hayward, Martinez and Redwood City. All choristers are gay/lesbian, though anyone interested in sharing our goals is welcome to join.

The chorus operates under the fiscal sponsorship of the Capp Street Foundation. Its day to day operations are handled by an administrative staff, while specific projects are handled by committees drawn from the membership. The staff is headed by a Business Manager responsible for all administrative functions and the Musical Director. Other staff members are their secretaries, a treasurer, and all committee chairpersons. Ongoing committees are Production, Finance, Media Development, Grant Research and Community Development.

The chief responsibility of the Community Development Committee is the establishment of a board of advisors drawn from the business, political and artistic segments of the gay community. Our goal is to establish as broad a demographic and socio-economic base as possible within the chorus, our advisory board, and our audience. We are well on our way to establishing a membership which is a representational cross-section of that audience.



## OUR GOALS AND OUR WORK

Our goal is to educate targeted markets and expose them to the positive contributions of lesbians and gay men through the universal language of music. These markets include the gay community, society at large, especially people with AIDS, and the membership itself. Working under the motto "Together in Harmony," we reach out to the community in affordable concerts, alone and with other groups, and in singing for community organizations and public events.

In trying to reach as broad an audience as possible, our concerts are publicized throughout the city in gay and heterosexual media. As openly gay performers we stand as a positive role model to other gay men and lesbians, but our concerts are equally effective in banishing the stereotypes and myths through which some heterosexuals still see us. Through musical excellence and by performing works by contemporary gay/lesbian composers, we offer a positive image of gay people. We hope through this to help achieve a more accepting and non-phobic society, by demonstrating in a non-threatening way the positive humanity of lesbians and gay men.

This outreach crosses all barriers of sex, race, sexual preference, and physical disability, just as AIDS does. In recent time AIDS has ravaged the emotions of many people; fear, despair and grief have become tangible elements in our community. The women and men of the chorus overcome these emotions by sharing joy, hope and strength with our audiences. We regularly schedule works which emphasize the love and courage through which we will overcome this crisis.

We support our membership by nurturing their musical development and encouraging strong community relations, both individually and collectively. The working spirit of the chorus is that of a family: caring and supportive. Members continuously reaffirm the succor and renewal they share within the group. To ensure the chorus' ability to maintain this, the staff is currently establishing a solid financial base through a community advisory board, a direct mail campaign, a brochure, fundraisers and individual donations.

We realize the importance of a strong administrative structure, and hold weekly staff meetings to ensure the direction and realization of our objectives listed above.



## OUR PLACE IN THE COMMUNITY

There are many gay organizations in the Bay area, including several bands and choruses. The Lesbian/Gay Chorus frequently performs with these groups at large-scale community events. Groups we work with include the SF Gay Freedom Day Marching Band, Vocal Minority, the SF Lesbian Chorus, the SF Gay Men's Chorus, and the Society of Lesbian and Gay Composers.

The chorus is a member of GALA, the Gay and Lesbian Association of Choruses, and will be represented at their national conference in July 1986. We are also a member of BALGAD, Bay Area Lesbian/Gay Arts Development, a consortium of local lesbian and gay artists. Recently the chorus provided refreshments and enthusiasm to participants in the AIDS Bike-A-Thon sponsored by Different Spokes, a gay bicycling club. We also performed at a supper for GLOE: Gay/Lesbian Outreach to the Elderly.

The chorus is serious in its attempt to work with other organizations in the community to foster positive images of gay people, and to bring hope to a community terrorized by AIDS. Our recent efforts to this end include performing at fundraisers for Gay Games II, working with the Games' organizing committee, athletic teams, and event sponsors. We have also participated in fundraisers for the SF General Hospital AIDS Ward, Operation Concern, Pacific Center and the SF AIDS Foundation. In summer of 1986 we will perform with other groups in two concerts to celebrate Gay Pride Week, the Gay Freedom Day parade, and a week of concerts which will be the cultural component of Gay Games II. We have donated a percentage of concert profits to the Stop AIDS Project and have performed free to the patients at the SF General Hospital AIDS Ward. The chorus donated a portion of our spring concert proceeds ("This Is Our Country") to the Statue of Liberty Restoration Project in the name of the gay/lesbian communities of San Francisco. The Restoration Project has acknowledged our contribution, and "The Gay and Lesbian Communities of San Francisco" will be listed as a contributor on a plaque at the statue.



## SELF-EVALUATION

The San Francisco Lesbian/Gay Chorus is a visible statement of gay men and women working together in harmony. Throughout the six years of our existence we have demonstrated an ability to work well with other groups in the community. We have always been self-sustaining and financially solvent.

"Togehter in Harmony" is not just the chorus' motto, it is our attitude. We support one another and our audiences through love and our music. By this sharing, we come to appreciate even more the richness and diversity of our "family." More specifically, the Lesbian/Gay Chorus of San Francisco helps people believe in themselves. As examples: Karen had just moved to the Bay Area, knew few people, and was looking for a place to belong. She joined the chorus and quickly became at home with the men and women who give as much love to one another as to their music. John had just lost his fifth friend to AIDS and was feeling dejected. Friends talked him into going to a chorus concert. The energy, warmth and talent that flowed from the performance revitalized John's belief in himself and the need to go forward with life.

This support of our members, outreach to the community, working with other groups, and trying to eliminate fear in society at large are our goals. Achieving them is our strength.

Striving to achieve musical excellence is our common bond. We are not content so sing only traditional, popular music. We also perform music from contemporary lesbian and gay composers, giving our voices to songs that might otherwise go unsung.

The chorus lacks a solid financial base. Although we have always operated "in the black," we have not had sufficient funds to reach our potential excellence. Through development of an Advisory Board, which will have the sole function of providing community financial support, we are planning to tackle our prime weakness. With the dedication of chorus members and community support, we will overcome this obstacle.