A New Harmony
Creating Choirs that Welcome LGBTQ+ Singers

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OVERVIEW

- Relevance, Language, and Concepts
- Chorus Culture
  - Language, Ensemble Identity, Attire, Repertoire, etc.
  - Transitioning Voices
- Administrative
  - Staff & Workplace Considerations, Documents, etc.
- Tips & Resources
- Q&A
INTRODUCTIONS

1. Teachers, community chorus, faith community, administration?
2. Who has singers who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or queer?
3. Who has worked with transgender or nonbinary singers?
According to the FBI, Anti-LGBTQ hate crimes rose by 3% in 2017.

GLSEN: 85% of LGBT students experience verbal harassment.

64% of LGBT students who reported harassment said that school staff did nothing in response or told the student to ignore it.

Trans people make up 1.5% of the world’s population but are 400 times more likely to be assaulted or murdered.

75% of trans students feel unsafe at school because of their gender expression.
IS BEING TRANSGENDER THE SAME AS BEING GAY OR LESBIAN?

Sexual orientation (GLB) is about who you are attracted to. This is different from gender identity and cannot be assumed about anyone.

Like all other people, transgender people (T) can be gay, straight, lesbian, bisexual, or anything in between.
WHAT DOES "TRANSGENDER" MEAN?

Broadly speaking, transgender is an umbrella term for people whose gender expression and/or gender identity differs from conventional expectations based on their assigned gender at birth.
The Gender Unicorn

Gender Identity
- Female/Woman/Girl
- Male/Man/Boy
- Other Gender(s)

Gender Expression
- Feminine
- Masculine
- Other

Sex Assigned at Birth
- Female
- Male
- Other/Intersex

Physically Attracted to
- Women
- Men
- Other Gender(s)

Emotionally Attracted to
- Women
- Men
- Other Gender(s)

To learn more, go to: www.transstudent.org/gender

Design by Landyn Pan and Anna Moore
AFAB / AMAB
- Assigned female at birth / assigned male at birth

Nonbinary (also spelled non-binary)
- Umbrella of identities outside of/broader than the gender binary

Cisgender
- Someone whose gender identity matches the gender they were assigned at birth – probably most of you in this room!

Gender-Expansive
- People or practices that broaden culturally defined behaviors/expressions typically ascribed to certain genders
QUESTIONS?
RELEVANCE, LANGUAGE, AND CONCEPTS
When we sing,
we announce our existence.

- Bernice Johnson Reagon (Sweet Honey in the Rock)
Vocal sections: Sop, Alto, Tenor, Bass

Pronouns and gender fluidity (nametags, applications, forms, etc)

Remove gendered language from scores: ie “women’s voices”

Refer to musical ideas with gender-neutral language vs “manly”

Educating classroom guests

Encouraging gender inclusivity vs eliminating gender
VOCAL AUDITIONS

- When posting for singer auditions keep language about voice parts gender-neutral.
- In the audition setting ask new and returning singers about the pronouns they use.
- Solo auditions: Invite singers to audition for any solo that fits their voice range.
- Post a rainbow sticker or other visible symbol of support as an LGBT ally in your rehearsal space.
Hormone replacement therapy (HRT) and hormone blockers

Testosterone permanently causes the vocal folds to lengthen/thicken
- Trans male voices will lower in pitch with HRT
- Trans female voices will not raise in pitch with HRT

Hormone blockers delay puberty – uncommonly used

Other aspects of vocal transition
- Chest binding and healthy breathing
- Learning to read bass clef – new tenors and basses
- Redeveloping muscle memory
- Desire to sing in unhealthy ranges
GENDERED CHOIRS

Ensemble Identity

- Voicing-based (SSAA, TTBB) vs. gender identity-based – different
- Be clear about who your ensemble is for, and be prepared to welcome everyone who opts in!
- Make voicing-based ensemble names gender-neutral (Treble, tenor/bass)

Voicing Suggestions

- Octave displacement
- Create a hybrid part from existing lines
- Create a new part
CONCERT ATTIRE

- Forcing singers into gender-specific clothing can be a public devaluing of identity
- Mandating attire by gender communicates indifference to the spectrum of gender identity and expression
- Concert attire also communicates who is and who is not welcome in a space
- Avoid requiring gendered accessories (ties, bows, etc.)
- Many options for gender-inclusive concert attire!
VARIETY CAN BE GREAT!
BLACK WITH AN ACCENT COLOR
COLOR PALETTE
REPERTOIRE & GENDER

- Gender stereotypes
  - Flowers vs. Sailors
  - Opportunity to unpack gender roles
  - Find a balance – empower your singers

- Texts: who is singing about who?

- Diversity of composers
  - You can't be what you can't see
  - Talk about who the composer is, their gender, sexual orientation
REPERTOIRE – A FEW GUIDING QUESTIONS

- How does this work challenge or align with stereotypes?
- Whose voices/experiences are consistently present in the music I select? Why?
- Whose voices/experiences are consistently absent from the music I select? Why?
- Does my programming reflect the diversity of my ensemble, my local community, my country, my world? How?
- Does my programming reflect my values? My organization's values? How? Where is there opportunity for better alignment?
Repertoire

The internet is packed with resources for finding great repertoire and it is often possible to find recordings of music easily on YouTube or by purchasing an mp3 download. In addition to the resources on this page be sure to peruse lists of music commissioned by our GALA member choruses.

- GLBT
- Free Music
- Databases
- International
- Music Lending and Rental Libraries

Choral Music Library Software

Many GALA choruses have designed their own music library software using a standard spreadsheet or custom designed database. Here are two commercial music library systems to consider.
QUESTIONS?

CHORUS CULTURE: LANGUAGE, IDENTITY, ATTIRE, REPERTOIRE...
Cisgender people sharing their pronouns helps to normalize the practice and reduce stress/stigma for transgender people, who often must share pronouns in order to be gendered correctly.

Sharing pronouns:
- Challenges the idea that someone's gender can be assumed
- Demonstrates your organization's awareness of gender issues
- Shows solidarity with the trans community

Include your pronouns on name tags, email signatures, and bios!
Staff and Workplace – Culture

- Staff participate in ongoing diversity, equity, and inclusion-related education.
- Staff recognize and challenge homophobic and transphobic remarks/behaviors.
- Guests are educated on organization’s culture, use of gender-neutral language, etc.
  - Coaches, guest conductors, visitors, artistic partners, etc.
- Chorus office/workspace offers gender-neutral restroom options
- Health insurance plans cover transition-related care
- Advertise jobs in places where LGBTQ+ people are searching
  - Local LGBTQ+ magazines, newspapers, radio stations; LGBTQ+ inclusive Facebook groups;
  - GALA Choruses job bank. GalaChoruses.org
REGISTRATION FORMS & DATABASES

- Do not require a singer’s legal name
- Include a space for preferred name/nickname
- Specify where singer’s name(s) will appear (i.e. nametag, roster, database, etc.)
  - Name (for nametag):
  - Name for chorus records, if different than above:
- Include pronoun selection, including the ability to choose more than one set of pronouns, no pronouns, and a fill-in-the-blank option
- Singers can change their name/pronouns in the chorus roster/database, ideally by themselves!
Always give people agency over how they are represented.

Make sure that:

- Singers can specify what name they'd like listed in any public materials - this may be different than the name on their nametag
- Singers have the opportunity to check how their name appears and make changes before materials are printed
Contracts and related documents use neutral pronouns instead of gendered pronouns

− “Their” instead of “his/her”, “they” instead of “he/she”, etc.

Job postings include a welcoming/antidiscrimination statement that specifically addresses sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression

Job postings/descriptions use gender-neutral language, including neutral pronouns instead of gendered pronouns

− “Their” instead of “his/her”, “they” instead of “he/she”, etc.
Chorus handbook includes a welcoming and/or antidiscrimination statement that specifically addresses sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

Singers, staff, and guests sign a conduct agreement expressing their commitment to creating affirming spaces, using gender-neutral language, etc.
QUESTIONS?

ADMINISTRATIVE: STAFF & WORKPLACE, DOCUMENTS...
RESOURCES

GALA Choruses: www.galachoruses.org
- Equity, transgender voices, repertoire, and more

Queering Choir  http://www.queeringchoir.com/  Josh Palkki
- A space for discussion and resources surrounding LGBTQA issues in choral music.

Trans Student Educational Resources: www.transstudent.org
- Resources, infographics, glossary, and more
- Created by trans people for educational use

GLSEN  (pronounced "glisten"): www.glsen.org
- Educator toolkits, statistics, policy resources, and more
RESOURCES

Liz Jackson Hearns & Brian Kremer
- First comprehensive resource on training transgender and nonbinary singers
Mission: Empowering LGBTQ Choruses as we change our world through song.

200 LGBTQ choruses: US, Canada, Mexico
Music Educators, Voice Teachers & Conductors – Supporting LGBT Singers

Music educators and voice teachers are asking for resources to support gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and gender nonbinary students in the classroom and voice studio, so these resources are for you!

Singing can be a vulnerable experience for youth, and especially for queer youth. You as a teacher or conductor can play a huge role in supporting singers and creating an inclusive, safe space in your chorus.

Need a quick resource for your chorus? Download Creating Inclusive Choirs - PDF

- Transgender 101
- Tools for Teachers
- Inclusive Choral Repertoire
- Gender Inclusive Language - Conductors & Choruses
- Gender-Neutral Guidelines

Explore transgender voices in depth under the Singer section of the GALA Resource Center. Or, peruse presenter materials from the Transgender Voices Festival.

Video Central Workshops

Creating Choirs that Welcome Transgender Singers (46 min + Q&A)
Erik Peregrine, Jane Ramseyer Miller

www.GalaChoruses.org/teachers
Transgender Voices

Many choruses include individuals who identify as transgender, cross-gender or gender nonbinary. The resources on this page offer information about trans and nonbinary gender experience and voice transition. If you are a trans or nonbinary singer, this page is for you!

Hoping to make your own chorus a more inclusive space? Download Creating Inclusive Choirs to share with your chorus director and encourage them to explore the Teacher section of this Resource Center.

- Voice Range Transition
- Transgender Voice Training
- Resources

Video Central - Workshops
Heights and Depths of Vocal Liberation (59 min)
Wendy Vastine

Raising All Voices (67 min)
Creating and Facilitating Gender Inclusive Spaces – Alex Iantaffi

Nurturing the Voice (87 min)
Techniques and Exercises for a Healthy Transition – Lisa Butcher, Anita Kozan

Expanding Definitions of 'Woman' (65 min)
Singing Authentically (coaching session) – Mari Esabel Valverde

Video Central - Shorts
Harmonies Inside (2:37 min)
Original music video with songwriter Osprey Huffsmith, featuring Transgender Voices Festival singers.

Joselyn's Story (7:58 min)
Singer, composer, and parent – meet Joselyn!

Exploring Trans Voice (4:06 min)
Trans and nonbinary singers on the topic of voice.

www.GalaChoruses.org/trans
A New Harmony: Equity, Access, Belonging

GALA choruses have a unique opportunity to explore issues of equity, access and belonging because our choruses offer more than just a place to sing: they are also communities of belonging.

GALA Choruses has designed a new workbook to help explore these conversations. Early drafts focused on a model called DEI: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. But the more GALA’s Open Table Committee explored the vision of A New Harmony we realized we could create a new way to frame this conversation without using the word “diversity”, which is overused today, or “inclusion” which innately infers that some people are in and others are out.

It is the belief of GALA Choruses that these topics are valuable for every member chorus. We hope that these conversations will inspire and launch your chorus on a journey toward equity, access and belonging.

The following tabs contain additional resources for further conversation.

- Mobility and Ability
- Race and Ethnic Identity
- Gender Identity
- Sexual Orientation
- Socio-Economic Status

www.GalaChoruses.org/NewHarmony
• 200 concerts in 4.5 days!
• 40+ new commissions
• Themed Blockbuster concerts
• Morning workshops
• Youth Chorus track
• Live Broadcast
YOU'RE GOING TO MAKE MISTAKES, AND THAT'S OKAY!

Know your own limits as an ally.

Don't be afraid to admit when you don't know something.
Most importantly:

Build trusting relationships with your LGBTQ+ singers.
QUESTIONS AND CONVERSATION

[Image of a group of people and an individual with a rainbow-colored wig and glasses.]
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