



For Immediate Release

NEWS

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Editor/Reporter Note: This week-long event is filled with performances and performers which have national and regional significance and feature news value. Registered and credentialed members of the media are encouraged to pre-register with the Festival in order to receive a free "all access" media pass for all Festival 2008 events. Additionally, each morning GALA Choruses will host a media breakfast at 10 a.m. in Miami, on site at the LOGO Lounge location. These informative sessions will feature guest performers and newsmakers.

Celebrities, 5,000 Delegates and 120 Choirs Convene in Miami for World's Largest Gay and Lesbian Performing Arts Event

GALA Choruses Celebrates 25th Anniversary at Festival 2008 Performances Dedicated to 'Changing the World through Song'

PITTSBURGH, June 12, 2008 – More than 5,000 delegates and 120 choirs from 40 states and six countries will gather in Miami, Florida, from July 12 through 19, 2008, to help GALA Choruses celebrate its 25th anniversary at Festival 2008. GALA Choruses Festival 2008 is the largest GLBT performing arts event in the world. It will be highlighted by performances from the following celebrities who have actively lent their support to the silver anniversary festivities:

- **Alec Mapa**, actor, comedian, playwright and journalist
- **Ann Hampton Callaway**, actress, singer and songwriter
- **Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon**, singer and civil rights activist
- **Toshi Reagon**, singer, songwriter and activist
- **Ari Gold**, independent recording artist

GALA Choruses is an internationally recognized advocacy organization for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) choruses. The group's weeklong gathering of singers, choirs and clinicians boasts a full schedule of performances, commissioned works, workshops and social events. The event will be held at Miami's Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts, formerly known as the Carnival Center.

Festival 2008 is being generously underwritten by LOGO™, Comcast, Coors Brewing Company, Kimpton Hotels, American Airlines, Macy's, AT&T Foundation, ARAMARK Parks & Hotels, Orbitz, Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau, Barefoot Wine, Aquafina and ACFEA Tour Consultants.

(more)

“We are exceptionally pleased to have the support of our visiting celebrities, our sponsors, and of course, the 5,000 delegates that will make Festival 2008 an event for the record books,” commented Sonelius Kendrick-Smith, President of the GALA Choruses Board of Directors. “It is incredibly affirming to have a gathering of so many talented individuals standing behind and supporting the mission and objectives of GALA Choruses. For the past 25 years, we have endeavored to change the world through song. This event confirms that the arts – and particularly the choral arts – are truly a medium that supports change and fosters understanding in nearly every corner of society,” added Kendrick-Smith.

Dr. Timothy Seelig, Artistic Director in Residence for GALA Choruses and Director Emeritus of the Turtle Creek Chorale in Dallas, Texas, reinforces the notion that choral singing is indeed a change medium. “Festival is a life-changing experience for choral singers. If you attend, you will cry. You will laugh. You will get chill bump on top of chill bump. You will stand and applaud your brothers and sisters for sharing their very souls so proudly. Most importantly, you will go home a different person,” said Dr. Seelig.

Festival Events & Highlights

Festival 2008 will kick off with an Opening Ceremony on July 12, 2008, at 8:15 p.m., featuring Anne Hampton Callaway. The star of Broadway’s “Swing!” and composer and singer of the theme to the internationally recognized sitcom, “The Nanny,” she will captivate the audience with selections from the great American songbook.

GALA Choruses 25th Anniversary Celebration event will be held on Wednesday, July 16 at 3:30 p.m. Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon – an original member of the Freedom Singers and founder of Sweet Honey in the Rock – and Toshi Reagon – an internationally celebrated artist who is featured on the Righteous Babe Records label, will both provide riveting performances.

The special 25th anniversary celebration of GALA Choruses will honor and recall the accomplishments that have brought the group from its infancy to Festival 2008. It will also highlight outstanding examples of change that were made possible through the power of music. A multimedia presentation comprised of special video footage and commentary from exceptional speakers will mark the occasion. The celebration will also provide an opportunity for all 5,000 Festival 2008 participants to raise their voices in song.

The celebration will be followed by an evening of comedy and fun at Jungle Island, hosted by Alec Mapa, a frequent guest performer on “Desperate Housewives” and “Ugly Betty,” and current host of LOGO’s “Transamerican Love Story.”

On Friday, July 18, attendees and guests will be treated to a “Night At South Beach.” The event will be held at Club Nikki, and will feature Ari Gold, who will perform selections from his new album, “Transport Systems,” and the #1 Sirius Satellite Radio hit, “Where the Music Takes You.”

Festival 2008 will conclude with a Legacy Awards Reception and Closing Ceremony on Saturday, July 19. The award recognizes individuals who have provided outstanding leadership to the GLBT choral movement and whose careers have exemplified the values of GALA Choruses, in particular artistry, musical excellence, support of diversity, strength of character, and the ability to inspire members.

The Legacy Awards began with the Tampa Festival in 1996, where the winners were Gary Miller and Holly Near. In San Jose in 2000, the winners were Dennis Coleman and Cathy Roma. In Montreal in 2004, the winners were Sue Coffee, Eve Campbell and Willi Zwozdesky.

Throughout the weeklong event, there will be numerous special events and workshops for attendees during the morning hours. During the afternoons and evenings, GALA Choruses member choruses will be performing in one-half hour increments. A limited number of tickets are available to member chorus performances. Call (412)322-4260 for more information. Tickets to individual concerts are available through the Arsht Center for the Performing Arts box office at <http://www.carnivalcenter.org/perform/calendar.aspx>

GALA Choruses Background & History

GALA Choruses' membership includes more than 7,500 individuals drawn from every major metropolitan area in the United States, as well as several major cities in Canada, Australia and Europe. The organization's 150 member choruses reach in excess of one million people annually through concerts, community appearances, Internet, radio and television appearances, and through recorded music.

The GLBT choral movement has been gaining considerable momentum for more than 30 years. The Anna Crusis Women's Choir, formed in the fall of 1975, is the longest running feminist choir in the United States. The San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus (SGFMC), founded in 1978, debuted after forming informally to sing a memorial hymn on the steps of the San Francisco City Hall on the evening Mayor George Moscone and Supervisor Harvey Milk were assassinated.

SFGMC's national tour in the spring of 1981 served as the catalyst for the formation of many of the gay and lesbian choruses that exist today. GALA Choruses was incorporated in 1983, and by 1988, the movement had advanced to the point where the first Festival gathering was possible.

Held in New York City and themed “Come Out and Sing Together,” Festival I featured 11 choruses in performance. Seven Festivals later, GALA Choruses will arrive in Miami with over 5,000 singers. For a complete timeline of GALA Choruses milestones, visit www.galachoruses.org/about/history.html.

GALA Choruses, Inc. is a 501 (c)(3), not-for-profit organization serving the GLBT choral movement. The mission of GALA Choruses is to support GLBT choruses as we change our world through song. GALA Choruses is open to all GLBT and GLBT-allied choruses. Through workshops, festivals and ongoing networking and administrative support services, GALA Choruses fosters the continued artistic and organizational growth of its member choruses. For more information, please visit www.galachoruses.org

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