



Members' Handbook  
2012/2013 – Version 2.0  
(08.01.12)

San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus / 1800 Market Street, PMB 100, San Francisco, CA 94102.  
(415) 865-3650 / [info@sfgmc.org](mailto:info@sfgmc.org) // [www.sfgmc.org](http://www.sfgmc.org)

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### 1. ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK

### 2. ABOUT SFGMC

Background  
Mission Statement  
Vision  
Values  
Statement on Diversity and Partisan  
Involvement  
Statement Regarding Member's and Staff's  
Healthcare and SFGMC History  
Chorus Management  
Board of Directors  
Leadership Team  
Executive Staff – Artistic Director and  
Executive Director  
Artistic Staff  
Administrative Staff  
Volunteers

### 3. ENROLLMENT

Registration  
Membership Roster  
Chorus Numbers  
Membership Status

### 4. INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

### 5. EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Duty to Promote Positive Public Image  
Interacting With the Media  
Social Networking & Third Party Websites  
Marketing

### 6. ARTISTIC POLICIES

Attendance  
Annual Auditions  
Concert Preparedness Audition  
Repertoire  
Music  
Preparedness  
Rehearsals  
Soliciting for Third Party Causes & Other  
Activities  
Technical Rehearsals / Dress Rehearsals  
Performance Protocol  
Solo Auditions

Attire  
Special Attire  
Retreats

### 7. FINANCE

Expenses  
Financial Assistance Network (FAN)  
Donations, Fundraising & Subscriptions

### 8. MEMBER SERVICES

Spirit Team  
Social Events  
Member Ombudsman  
Big Brother

### 9. BEHAVIOR & DECORUM

Standards of Behavior  
Standards of Decorum  
Confidentiality  
Substance Abuse  
Conflict Resolution  
Harassment

### 10. DISCIPLINE

### 11. AWARDS & RECOGNITION

John B. McLeod Leadership Award  
Bill Lewandowski Award  
Jon Sims Award for Outstanding Artistic  
Contribution to SFGMC  
Certificates & Trophies  
Ambassador All-Stars  
Annual Volley Awards

### 12. OUTREACH

Ambassadors  
California Freedom Tour

### 13. ENSEMBLES

The Lollipop Guild (TLG)  
Vocal Minority (VM)  
Membership  
Attendance  
Leave of Absence

### 14. CONCLUSION

# 1. ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK

This member handbook is in addition to the member agreement document that is reviewed and acknowledged through Musetta, SFGMC's contact database and primary internal communications channel. To set up your Musetta account, send an email to [info@sfgmc.org](mailto:info@sfgmc.org) and request a copy of the "New Members Guide to Musetta." After reading this handbook, if anything remains unclear then please speak to your Big Brother, Section Coordinator or email [leadershipteam@sfgmc.org](mailto:leadershipteam@sfgmc.org).

This handbook will be updated as needed and the current version will reside in the files area of Musetta.

## 2. ABOUT SFGMC

### **Background**

Founded in the fall of 1978 by gay cultural pioneer Jon Reed Sims, San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus is the world's first chorus to have the word "gay" in its name. The first rehearsal of the Chorus was held on October 30, 1978. The chorus made its first public appearance on November 27, 1978 on the steps of San Francisco City Hall the night Mayor George Moscone and Supervisor Harvey Milk were assassinated. The first official concert was held on December 20, 1978 at Everett Middle School in San Francisco, CA. Rising to critical acclaim, the chorus embarked upon an inspirational national tour in 1981, which led to the formation of many national and international gay choruses. The Chorus has raised over half-a-million dollars for charities. The full chorus is over 300 members strong and presents a home season of three productions annually. In addition, the SFGMC Ambassadors, The Lollipop Guild, and Vocal Minority, support communities around the Bay Area by performing at dozens of outreach events each year.

SFGMC is a founding member of the Gay and Lesbian Association of Choruses (GALA).

San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus is the principal activity of Golden Gate Performing Arts, Inc., (GGPA) a California non-profit corporation with charitable status under section 501(c)3 of the Federal Tax Code. Donations to GGPA are deductible to the fullest extent allowable by law.

### **Mission Statement**

The Mission of the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus is to inspire its audience, members and the world through high-quality choral experiences.

### **Vision**

SFGMC strives to help create a world in which:

- All people are given the chance to develop a greater compassion for each other and where difference is celebrated.
- All people, regardless (particularly) of sexual orientation or gender identity, have equal access to the arts and the freedom to express their diverse cultural identities.
- Choral music is appreciated and embraced as being vital to cultural and spiritual health.

To achieve this, SFGMC strives to maintain an organization that:

- Excels as an artistic organization, renowned for its leadership, high standards and innovation.
- Builds bridges with communities to create an increased understanding of and affection for choral music and LGBT communities.

- Nurtures and affirms LGBT cultures and communities, raising awareness and funds for fledgling arts groups and allied causes.
- Provides a caring and safe environment for its members, volunteers and staff.
- Provides the best possible experience for its audience to enhance their experience.
- Is transparent and honorable in all its dealings.
- Has administrative integrity and is respected as a model for best practices.

### **Values**

- Family
- Compassion
- Integrity
- Our History
- Artistry
- Philanthropy
- Leadership
- Social Justice
- Diversity
- Humor

### **Statement on Diversity and Partisan Involvement**

SFGMC maintains an environment that is inclusive, welcoming and supportive of people from all backgrounds and different life experiences. SFGMC refrains from partisan or sectarian political involvement except for that which, by virtue of our name and repertoire as a gay chorus, furthers our mission, supports our vision and is consistent with our values. Our commitment to one another is based upon goodwill, trust, and respect.

### **Statement Regarding Member's and Staff's HealthCare and SFGMC History**

From the earliest days of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, SFGMC has served and continues to serve the community, both within and outside our organization, demonstrating our presence in support, nurture, and compassion. The impact of HIV/AIDS disease on both the history and culture of SFGMC warrants special mention in this handbook.

SFGMC strives to be accessible to all members and staff who struggle with healthcare challenges and/or disability issues. Reasonable accommodations are made for people who are hearing-impaired, sight-impaired, mobility-challenged, physically challenged, living with HIV/AIDS, and/or healthcare concerns in order to make participation accessible.

- The Chorus supports members and staff with healthcare challenges to continue to perform and participate for as long as they wish and are able.
- The Chorus makes reasonable accommodations for members and staff with healthcare challenges
- The Chorus expects its members and staff to foster an environment that is inclusive, welcoming and supportive of those faced with healthcare challenges.

If you experience any challenges in this regard email [info@sfgmc.org](mailto:info@sfgmc.org) or call the Chorus office.

### **Chorus Management**

SFGMC depends on compensated employees, contractors, and volunteers to ensure its smooth operation. In addition to singing members, non-singing volunteers assist with a wide-variety of activities.

### **Board of Directors**

The Board of Directors is the governing body of SFGMC. While SFGMC could not function without the active leadership of the Artistic Director (AD), Executive Director (ED), and the Leadership Team, the Board of Directors is ultimately responsible for ensuring the long-term viability of the organization. The Board of Directors is comprised of fifteen voting members who each serve a three year term. Seven Directors are active singing members of the Chorus, seven Directors are community board members appointed by the Board, and one Director is a singing member of the Chorus appointed by the Board. The Board meeting occurs once a month and is open to the public.

The Board of Directors sets the overarching policies and goals for the organization, which are then implemented by the AD and the ED. Working with the AD and ED, the Board of Directors approves an annual budget, and oversees the necessary fundraising to meet that budget. The Board of Directors hires, and evaluates the performance of, the executive staff, which consists of the AD and ED who report directly to the Board of Directors.

The Board of Directors oversees various committees that assist with the governance of SFGMC, including: Development, Marketing, Finance, Investment, Executive Personnel, Policies and Procedures, Board Development, Strategic Planning, and the Executive Committee

### **Leadership Team**

The purpose of the Leadership Team is to bring the different elements of our complex activities and organization into a relationship that will create harmony.

The Leadership Team consists of a President and a group of functional area coordinators. These positions reflect the function of the Chorus and will help both singing members and non-singing volunteers better utilize the human resources of the Chorus. All volunteers in the organization will report to one of the members of the Leadership Team. The members of the Leadership Team, in turn, report to the Leadership Team President as well as the appropriate staff member.

The Leadership Team meets monthly as convened by the Leadership Team President or more often when necessary.

The term of service for the Leadership Team will be one full concert season (September 1 through August 31). No Leadership Team member may serve in the same position for more than three (3) consecutive terms.

The Leadership Team President will be nominated by and voted in by the chorus membership and functional area coordinators will be appointed by the Leadership Team President with approval by the Artistic Director and Executive Director before the end of the preceding concert season. The President will utilize their knowledge of the membership and volunteers available for service on the Leadership Team. Only those who have been members of the chorus for at least three years are eligible for nomination for the President of the Chorus Leadership Team and only members in good standing are eligible to serve on the Leadership Team.

The Leadership Team is currently composed of:

- President, Leadership Team
- Artistic Coordinator
- Communications Coordinator
- Marketing Coordinator
- Administrative Coordinator
- Social Coordinator
- Outreach Coordinator
- Fundraising Coordinator

For more information about the Leadership Team, including the composition and roles and responsibilities, go to the FAQ section of Musetta.

### **Executive Staff – Artistic Director and Executive Director**

The executive staff consists of the AD and the ED who, between them, are responsible for all SFGMC operations. They implement the policies established by the Board of Directors and are hired and evaluated by them. The AD and ED make monthly reports at the Board meetings. Broadly speaking, the AD has the primary responsibility for musical/artistic matters and the ED for administrative/business ones. Both are recognized as leaders in their fields and represent the Chorus in a variety of situations and in many communities up to and including the international level.

### **Artistic Staff**

Led by the AD, the Artistic Staff prepares the Chorus for performance, and conceptualizes and implements all elements of performance.

- **Artistic Director and Conductor (AD):** Manages the artistic staff and budgets, selects performance repertoire, and conducts the chorus in its rehearsals and concerts.
- **Assistant Conductor(s):** Assists the AD with conducting responsibilities -- such as warm-ups and sectional rehearsals -- and may substitute for the AD in his/her absence.
- **Associate Artistic Director:** Assists the AD and may substitute for the AD at rehearsals and performances in the AD's absence.
- **Artistic Assistant:** Manages the ASCAP and BMI relationships and maintains print and recorded audio files on Musetta.
- **Artistic Operations Manager:** Manages performance/rehearsal equipment and logistics, including venue load in and load out, sound and lighting, reserving rehearsal space and rehearsal retreat coordination and planning.
- **Choreographer:** Designs dance movements for the Chorus to use in performance, and teaches those movements to the Chorus in rehearsals.
- **Music Director(s) (MD):** Conducts rehearsals and performances of SFGMC's ensembles.
- **Pianists:** Provides piano accompaniment for rehearsals and performances.
- **Production Associates and Assistants:** Assist with the overall design and implementation of concert productions.
- **Section Leaders:** Each voice section has two Section Leaders responsible for running sectional rehearsals, keeping track of musical notes and changes, and assisting singing members with the music.
- **Stage Manager:** Supervises the Chorus in performance, overseeing such activities as stage entrances and exits, liaising with theatre managers and technical crew, and other important theater safety and performance protocols.
- **Wardrobe Coordinator:** Responsible for ensuring that all singing members of the Chorus are correctly attired.

### **Administrative Staff**

Led by the ED, the Administrative Staff manages the business and administrative affairs of the Chorus.

- **Executive Director (ED):** Manages the Administrative Staff and is responsible for marketing, fundraising, financial management & taxation, public relations, contracts & legal, community outreach, government relations, strategic planning and human resources.
- **Administration & Programs Manager:** Manages the day-to-day office operations of the Chorus, member services, and volunteer coordination. S/he is the person most likely to know who, within SFGMC, is your “go to” person.
- **Alumni Coordinator and Archivist:** Tracks SFGMC alumni, arranges alumni events, and engages alumni in current SFGMC activities and programs. Catalogs, stores and displays SFGMC historical artifacts.
- **Auditions & New Member Coordinator(s):** Manages people flow, assists with new member orientation, and matches new members with “big brothers”.
- **Box Office & Merchandise Manager:** Manages ticket sales and distribution, merchandise sales (CDs, T-shirts etc) and provides administrative support.
- **Office Intern:** Assists with general administrative tasks, clerical duties and specific projects (e.g., audience survey data input and analysis).
- **Section Coordinators:** Assist with the taking of attendance at rehearsals, and contact absent Chorus members during the week after their absence.
- **Social Media Manager:** Manages SFGMC’s social media presence.
- **Spirit Team Chair(s):** Coordinate the Spirit Team response for members who are experiencing joys and sorrows.
- **Street Fair Coordinator(s):** Facilitates the tactical execution of SFGMC volunteer deployment at certain SF’s street fairs such as Pride, Folsom and Castro.
- **Street Team Coordinator:** Manages the distribution of concert promotional materials such as posters and club cards.

### **Volunteers**

After serving as a volunteer for one year, non-singing members may become voting members of the Chorus. Non-singing volunteers are not required to pay dues, but otherwise the same rules as affect singing members apply to non-singing members.

## **3. ENROLLMENT**

### **Registration**

All members of SFGMC must fill out a personal information page on Musetta, our database, *and complete an annual registration form*. Registration is required every year, whether you intend to remain active or go on a leave of absence.

Members must provide a street address, telephone number and email address where they can be contacted.

### **Membership Roster [<https://sfgmc.musetta.org/rosters>]**

The Membership Roster is for internal use only, is regarded as confidential, and may only be used for official SFGMC business. Harvesting information from the roster (e.g., email addresses) for purposes other than official Chorus business is strictly forbidden.

You may (and should) update your own personal information on Musetta.

### **Chorus Numbers**

Upon your initial registration, chorus members will be assigned a unique three-figure Chorus Number. Even numbers are assigned to upper voice parts and odd numbers to lower voice parts.

100-199: First Tenors
200-299: Second Tenors
300-399: Baritones
400-499: Basses

There are also non-singing member numbers.

000-099: Compensated Staff
500-599: Volunteer Staff
700-799: Community Board Members

In 100s – 400s, even numbers (e.g., “302”) are assigned to upper voices and odd numbers (e.g., “201”) to lower voices.

### **Membership Status**

Your membership status can be either Active or Leave of Absence (LOA). Dues or volunteer obligations are paid during LOA. Members must be Active for a full year before being eligible for LOA. Exceptions must be approved in writing by the AD. After one full year of membership, members may take LOA for one concert by notifying the AD, their section coordinator, and the Chorus administrator. (One email to all of them will do it.)

Our year is divided into three terms: Fall (09.01 – 12.31), Spring (01.01 – the date of the Spring Concert) and Summer (date immediately following the Spring Concert to 08.31).

Members who do not attend any of the first four rehearsals in a term will be placed on LOA. Members who attend no rehearsals for two terms and do not contact the office to explain their circumstances will be constructively resigned.

- **Active Status (Active):** This means that as a singing member you regularly attend rehearsals and performances or that as a non-singing volunteer member you are actively engaged in volunteer activities.
- **Leave of Absence (LOA):** This means that as a singing member you are not attending rehearsals or performing with the Chorus or that as a non-singing member you are not volunteering during any given term. Any singing member returning to Active status may be required to re-audition at the discretion of the AD. If you choose to go on leave in the fall of any given year and your section reaches capacity as determined by the AD, you will have to wait for an opening in your section to return to ‘Active’ status. The Chorus staff will keep members on LOA informed as to when return from leave opportunities may occur in a concert season. Members who wish to be on LOA for more than one concert must have approval from the AD in writing.
- **Good Standing:** Only members in “good standing” may vote as a member of GGPA. To be a member in good standing your dues AND any volunteer/FAN hours or any other outstanding obligations you might owe must be up to date. Check with the office if you are in any doubt. This also applies to members on LOA.
- **Constructive Resignation:** A member shall be deemed to have resigned if at the end of two consecutive terms on LOA s/he shall not, within 30 days of the ensuing term, have returned to Active status.



## 4. INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

It is the responsibility of the SFGMC members to keep themselves informed and current with developments within the Chorus. It is therefore the responsibility of the leadership of the Chorus to ensure that communication is disseminated in a consistent and thorough manner.

Important information is provided via official email communications to members throughout each week. Members are responsible for reading official email communications. One formal communication, the Weekly Update, is sent every on Friday.

Weekly Update is the Chorus' official weekly communication. It will contain important dates for rehearsals, concerts, outreach, and other official chorus events.

Musetta also contains a calendar of events for the Chorus. This calendar can be downloaded to any electronic calendar service (icalendar, Yahoo, Google etc.). The leadership of the Chorus maintains the Musetta calendar, and is therefore the official Chorus calendar of events. Birthdays and special anniversaries are also recorded in the calendar. If you notice any discrepancies in the calendar, email [leadershipteam@sfgmc.org](mailto:leadershipteam@sfgmc.org).

Because of the size of the chorus, it is necessary for the Chorus leadership to understand how many members are able to attend each official and other planned events. When an event is announced, a Poll may be posted on the main page of Musetta, to which each member is required to respond.

Unofficial communications between members is conducted via the Musetta discussion feature. This feature, although within Musetta, is considered an unofficial communication platform, and is for informal chat and discussion. While there is not an official policy dictated by the chorus, the owner of the Musetta Discussion Group reserves the sole discretionary right to moderate any discussions that they believe may be inappropriate.

## 5. EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

### **Duty to Promote Positive Public Image**

Members have a duty to help promote a positive public image of the Chorus. This image depends upon members behaving in a manner consistent with SFGMC's mission, vision, and values and upholding our commitment to others. Each member of SFGMC is an ambassador for the Chorus and the people you are interacting with may base their perception of the Chorus on how you behave towards them.

### **Interacting With The Media**

Good public relations depend upon consistent messaging. For this reason, SFGMC has designated the Board President, ED and AD as the official media spokespersons. They may delegate this function on a case-by-case basis. You should refrain from commenting to the media in any way that identifies you with the Chorus. If approached by the media you should refer them to an official media spokesperson.

### **Social Networking & Other Third Party Websites**

The SFGMC Marketing Committee maintains an official Facebook fan page which members are encouraged to "like". Members are reminded that this is a public page and not an internal network, so it is necessary to adhere to the above media guidelines and confidential information.

In addition, SFGMC has issued comprehensive guidelines concerning what is and what might not be appropriate for SFGMC members to post on the Internet when it comes to Chorus-related matters and in relation to one another. Remember, you may love the retreat photo you just posted on flickr, but the employer of the SFGMC member you just tagged in it might have a different perspective. The full guidelines can be found in the files area of Musetta.

There is also an SFGMC Social Media Card available summarizing the guidelines.

### **Marketing**

SFGMC markets its activities and concerts via a variety of channels directed, managed and led by the combined efforts of the Marketing Director, ED, AD, Marketing Committee and Marketing Coordinator of the Leadership Team. Furthermore, research has consistently shown that over 70% of our audience buys tickets to our shows because someone in the Chorus has asked them. Therefore, members are expected to help with the distribution of posters, club cards, invite friends via social networking sites, and send invitations via email.

## **6. ARTISTIC POLICIES**

The following policies apply to all singing members of the Chorus. Additional policies apply to members of small ensembles below.

### **Attendance**

Regular attendance at rehearsals and performances is necessary to maintain the artistic quality of the Chorus. Members are required to:

- Attend regular Chorus rehearsals.
- At the beginning of each concert session, the Artistic Team sets a maximum number of rehearsals a singer may miss.
- Attend mandatory technical and dress rehearsals.
- Perform in all season subscription concerts.

In addition, members are strongly encouraged to:

- Attend sectional rehearsals.
- Attend retreats – in and out of town.
- Attend additional performances for which a personal commitment has been made.

Attendance records are kept by the Section Coordinators.

Members are expected to arrive on time and stay for the full duration of each rehearsal. Leaving at breaks will result in the member's attendance being recorded as "absent" for that rehearsal.

It is your responsibility to inform your Section Coordinator of an absence from a mandatory dress rehearsal or concert.

If you are absent from more than the permitted number of regular rehearsals, your Section Coordinator will notify you that you are required to sing a Concert Preparedness Audition (CPA).

### **Annual Auditions**

A balanced TTBB chorus of no more than 300 singers who will sing all three-season subscription concerts in a performance year would be the ideal, with 60 to 85 singers per section being optimal.

The Chorus may hold group voice checks annually occurring in the fall. The structure will be small TTBB mixed groups and will be kept light and fun. The AD and Section Leaders will be present to assess all groups. Participation in the voice check is mandatory for members who plan to perform the subsequent three-season subscription concerts.

Members who show development needs will be offered a Voice Boot Camp in the Fall at no cost to further develop their skills. Also with an emphasis on fun, this will include voice training from the AD as well as other musical skills taught by the Artistic Staff. If those with development needs attend the Boot Camp, they continue in the Chorus. If for any reason, an individual decides they are not able to attend Boot Camp, they will not be able to continue as an active member until such time as they complete the course at a later date.

### **Concert Preparedness Audition**

Members who have missed more than the permitted number of rehearsals, must sing a CPA. If a member is required to attend and has not made arrangements with the AD, he will forfeit the opportunity to perform at the concert. If a member is deemed unprepared to perform or needing remedial work before he is ready to perform, he will be informed by their Section Leader.

### **Repertoire**

All music performed by SFGMC is selected by the AD, with the assistance of the Music Input Committee (MIC) and Creative Team. All Section Leaders are members of the MIC. Only approved repertoire may be performed at any SFGMC appearance.

### **Music**

Your music should be in a 3-ring binder along with other Chorus materials or on an iPad. All Chorus music is available on the Virtual Music Library (VML) [<https://sfgmc.musetta.org/folders/2>]. It is illegal for you to share music with anyone outside SFGMC. If you do not have Internet access and/or printing facilities, hard copies are available for a minimal cost.

### **Preparedness**

It is your personal responsibility to be prepared for rehearsals and performances. Music and choreography preparation begins at home. Prior to rehearsal, review the music and any choreography. Memorize it according to the memorization schedule given by the Artistic Director. If there are particular parts of the music or choreography that you are having difficulty with, ask one of your Section Leaders or the Choreographer for assistance.

### **Rehearsals**

Regular rehearsals are held on Monday night at 7:00 p.m., with the exception of certain holidays and other special days. SFGMC makes every effort to ensure that rehearsals do not end later than 10:00 p.m. Prior to the 7:00 p.m. start time, please:

- Check in with the attendance manager,
- Pick up music or other materials,
- Pay dues, as required.

If, during rehearsal, you are experiencing difficulty with or have questions about the music please fill out and submit the Musical Mishap Form on Musetta.

### **Soliciting For Third Party Causes & Other Activities**

Being part of the SFGMC family is a social experience. Rehearsal, however, is for SFGMC business. All other outside business can be put on the Musetta discussion list.

### **Technical Rehearsals / Dress Rehearsals**

Attendance by Chorus members at technical (tech) and Dress rehearsals is required before concerts. During tech rehearsals, the Chorus may not actually rehearse entire music selections; frequent and irregular periods on and off the stage may occur. Your cooperation is appreciated as tech rehearsals help to ensure that concerts run smoothly.

Unless otherwise announced, performance attire is not required for either tech or dress rehearsal; street clothes may be worn.

### **Performance Protocol**

The following protocol is designed to facilitate a enjoyable and professional performance experience for you, your chorus brothers and the audience:

- Be ready to perform at the announced call time.
- Find time to warm-up your voice before call time. Turn off all cell phones and pagers – not silent, not vibrate – but turned off while performing.
- Personal valuables are not secure. Leave them at home if at all possible, or carry your wallet on your person.
- Prior to a performance and at all times while dressed in concert attire, smoking is prohibited.
- The use of alcohol or other drugs not taken as prescribed or directed is strictly forbidden and will result in the Chorus member being asked to leave the premises. Repeated offenses may result in further disciplinary action.
- In the performance space, the Stage Manager is the person in charge. It is imperative for your safety and for the smooth running of the event that you immediately do whatever he/she asks of you.
- Respect the privacy of all guest artists.
- For reasons of security and respect, your guests may not enter the backstage area before, during or after the concert.
- Be ready to go on stage no less than ten minutes prior to each of your stage entrances.
- Be silent at all times in the wings and stage areas of the performance hall.
- You will be standing close together on stage so avoid strong odors such as aftershave, perfume, scented deodorant, cigarettes, alcohol (see above), hairspray, garlic breath, etc.
- Entering the stage: Walk directly to your assigned position and face the audience. Do not talk on stage. Ever.
- Do not "pull focus" by moving around, rubbing your nose, scratching, picking, etc.
- Gum, food, and drink (including water bottles) are not allowed on stage at rehearsals or performances.
- If you feel ill or dizzy, sit down or exit the stage quickly and quietly.
- Do not leave the backstage area during intermission.
- Do not applaud guest artists or soloists while on stage unless directed to do so by the Conductor.
- Exiting the stage: Leave the backstage area before talking.
- After each concert, avoid entering the auditorium from the stage (you should exit through the stage door/s and walk around to the lobby to meet your friends). If you are wearing a special costume and/or make-up, change your costume and remove make-up before exiting the backstage area.

Performances are a hectic time. Following these guidelines helps tremendously!!! Anyone who does not follow these protocols, or acts in a disruptive or unprofessional manner – onstage or offstage – may be asked to leave the concert venue by the Artistic Director/Conductor, Executive Director or President and may face disciplinary action, depending on the nature of the behavior.

### **Solo Auditions**

Solo Auditions will be announced by the AD well in advance. These may be done by the AD or outside experts. Solo selection is subjective. If you are not selected, try again next time around.

### **Attire**

Our formal attire consists of black tails coat, black tuxedo pants, white tuxedo shirt, white vest, white satin bow tie, white satin pocket square, white shirt stud buttons and cuff links, red (beaded) ribbon (worn on left lapel of tails coat), black dress shoes, black socks and service pins (worn on the left pocket, starting from the lapel, with the pin representing the most years positioned first). The cost of the full tuxedo is approximately \$350. Financial assistance is available to those in need.

Follow instructions on concert attire exactly; do not accessorize your apparel. Neither conspicuous jewelry nor audible accessories/paraphernalia should be used. Service pins for tuxes can be obtained from the Service Pin Coordinator.

General questions about attire should be made to the Wardrobe Coordinator.

Chorus Members without the proper attire will not perform with the Chorus.

### **Special Attire**

For certain concerts, informal occasions, tours, and parades, the attire might be black SFGMC long-sleeved t-shirts, special t-shirts, or other wardrobe as announced. These are usually purchased at the expense of individual members.

### **Retreats**

Retreats are special events in the life of the Chorus. Some retreats are one-day rehearsals held in town. Two retreats per season are held out-of-town at Camp Newman (closest town: Calistoga) from Friday evening until Sunday noon. Weekend retreats are equal amounts of intensive rehearsals and socialization. While SFGMC encourages you to have fun and enjoy yourself in the slightly more informal setting of retreat, the same polices and standards of behavior are required as at a regular rehearsal.

Weekend retreats are priced at approximately \$165 (early registration rate) and financial assistance is available to those in need. The fee covers the cost of lodging, food, party supplies and beverages, equipment and facilities. Chorus members bring their own bedding. A Retreat Handbook is made available with fact sheets, itinerary, driving directions, a list of items to bring, and other pertinent information.

## **7. FINANCE**

No one should leave the Chorus because they cannot afford dues, a tuxedo or other chorus-related expenses. If you are unable to pay for something, then please let the office know as soon as possible. Your situation will be kept confidential within the chorus management, staff and leadership team and financial assistance is available to help you.

### **Expenses**

- **Dues**  
Dues are \$290 per year and may be accounted for in a variety of ways. You may pay upfront (with a discount), or monthly (no discount). You may elect, without demonstrating need, to account for up to 100% of your dues by volunteering for specific non-singing duties.

SFGMC recognizes that sometimes those on limited incomes (such as students, caregivers and non-working parents) may also have restrictions on the time available for volunteer work. If you are unable to pay for something and unavailable to volunteer, there is a waiver program available. Please email [info@sfgmc.org](mailto:info@sfgmc.org) for details.

- **Attire**

Subject to an approved request for financial assistance, payment in full is required from you prior to an order for attire being placed.

- **Chorus Retreats**

Subject to an approved request for financial assistance, payment in full is required from you prior to retreat.

- **Touring**

**General, Non-GALA**

Periodically, the Chorus will travel out of town to participate in outreach concerts, joint concerts with other choruses, or to participate in choral festivals. Expenses vary depending upon location and can include transport, accommodations and (in some cases) registration fees. Again, subject to an approved request for financial assistance, payment in full is required from you prior to these expenses being incurred by SFGMC.

**GALA**

The Gay & Lesbian Association of Choruses organizes a five day choral festival every four years. Usually held during the month of July, GLBT Choruses from around the world gather in unity and friendship to share the gift of song. Member choruses perform for one another, network, socialize, learn, inspire, and return home transformed. The cost of participation is approximately \$1,500 if you choose a hotel option of single occupancy. Hotel rooms can be shared between 2, 3 or four people. All members are encouraged to participate and SFGMC suggests that you budget for this expense or start volunteering so that you begin to accrue hours of service in lieu of an application for financial assistance.

**Financial Assistance Network (FAN)**

The Financial Assistance Network is there for members who need help with the expenses associated with Chorus participation.

Members of the Chorus known as the “FAN Club,” plan, organize, and run a variety of events to raise funds for this purpose. While all Chorus members are encouraged to participate in FAN Club activities, members receiving assistance, in particular, should participate if at all possible.

Subject to funds being available and evidence of “need” being established via an application form, financial assistance in the form of grants is available to members to defray all or part of the expenses specified above. When assistance is given, volunteer service (subject to waiver being requested and granted) is required. The amount of volunteer service required is 1 hour per \$15 of financial assistance received, subject to a ceiling for special situations (see above).

When and if the financial circumstances of members who have been beneficiaries of the FAN Club improve, those members are encouraged to make a tax-deductible donation to the FAN Club Fund so that financial assistance is available to the next generation of chorus members.

### **Donations, Fundraising & Subscriptions**

Among the many sacrifices that members make is to become a donor of the Chorus. This is not a requirement. Every dollar is put to good use making our work possible. SFGMC has two annual fund-drives (one at the end of the year – the other in the Spring) and an annual gala, Crescendo. Throughout the year there are many other events and many ways to contribute, either with a donation or by volunteering to help us staff a fundraising activity. Gifts of all shapes and sizes are welcome. Donors who give \$100 or more are listed in our concert programs.

From time to time, members are contacted about specific donation opportunities – e.g., underwriting songs or portions of a production and CD tracks.

Members are encouraged to recruit their friends and family as season subscribers – a way for them to support the chorus and see you in performance.

The Chorus has an endowment managed by the Horizons Foundation and donations to that, whether by will, living trust or gift of stock, ensure SFGMC's long-term future.

## **8. MEMBER SERVICES**

Membership in SFGMC can be a social, affirming, and joyous experience. SFGMC is as much about singing as it is about family and community. Like all families we have our moments for celebration as well as moments of sadness and conflict. To help build the bonds of family and to support one another, SFGMC offers a range of social and supportive member services.

### **Spirit Team**

**Mission Statement:** The Spirit Team is a group of chorus members who offer spiritual and emotional support to those within the chorus experiencing both joy and sorrow.

**Policy Statement:** The Spirit Team exists to honor and celebrate achievements and other events worthy of celebration. We are there as friends and comrades in times of loss, stress or emotional turmoil. The Spirit Team offers compassionate listening, non-therapeutic counsel, transportation support for medical and other appointments, hospital visits, assistance with chores and provides other forms of non-financial support for our brothers who are in need.

### **Social Events**

Under the auspice of SFGMC's Social Coordinator, chorus members and their guests are provided with regularly scheduled and individually planned social opportunities designed to enhance brotherhood and social interaction. Regular events include a monthly movie night, lunches for professional development that take place throughout San Francisco. Annual events include the SFGMC Thanksgiving Dinner (taking place on the Sunday prior to Thanksgiving), an annual volunteer appreciation party, and a welcome-back-to-SFGMC event that takes place following the 'newbie' brunch in September. Stand-alone events include inter-sectional parties, sporting events (baseball/football games, bowling, tennis dates), movie premieres and theatre tickets, often provided on a first come first served basis by our arts partners. Individual members are encouraged to present event ideas – along with plans to execute those events - to the social coordinator.

### **Member Ombudsman**

The Ombudsman is an elected, neutral member of the chorus who provides confidential and informal assistance to help resolve SFGMC-related conflict between members. While there are formal dispute resolution policies in the Member Handbook, the role of Ombudsman is to provide a neutral forum in which SFGMC members may attempt to resolve their differences without engaging in a formal process. The Member Ombudsman occupies a unique position in the Chorus and their goal is to create harmony within SFGMC; explaining how the culture of SFGMC operates and, in that process, help everyone reach a better understanding.

To be eligible for the Ombudsman position, an individual must: be a member of SFGMC in good standing, have been a member of SFGMC for at least four years, currently hold no other position within SFGMC, and have not been a member of the Board for at least three years. Additional desirable qualifications include excellent interpersonal skills, the ability to remain impartial, and experience with conflict resolution.

### **Big Brother**

For each incoming class of new members (or “newbies”), SFGMC assigns each newbie a Big Brother. A Big Brother is chosen to be the best fit possible for the newbie. His role is one of mentor, friend, confidante and guide and serves to help a newbie navigate through his first season in SFGMC. All newbie questions should be directed to his Big Brother who can either answer or help find the answer for his Little Brother. Big Brothers are a position of honor and it is not uncommon to find families of brotherhood in SFGMC as Little Brothers take on Little Brothers of their own. Among other agreements, Big Brothers are required to attend an orientation and commit to an entire trimester of engagement with their Little Brother and the chorus.

## **9. BEHAVIOR & DECORUM**

In keeping with SFGMCs mission, vision, values, beliefs and guiding principles, members are encouraged to seek to Create Harmony within the Chorus and to project that harmony on stage.

### **Standards of Behavior**

Members are expected to be courteous, polite and respectful in their dealings with one another, staff, third parties and audience members. Chorus life should be a joyous and affirming experience and your behavior as an individual affects the experience and morale of those around you. Singing with one voice requires sacrifice and an understanding and forgiving attitude towards others for their very human imperfections. Treat others with respect and dignity.

### **Standards of Decorum**

Members are expected to conduct themselves in a dignified and orderly manner. Untidiness, inattention during rehearsal, excessive talking and generally behaving in an inconsiderate and antisocial manner adversely affects both morale and the quality of artistic output. This includes texting and emailing during rehearsal time.

### **Confidentiality**

In the course of your membership you may become privy to information that SFGMC and/or your Chorus brothers regard as confidential. Good judgment and diplomacy are expected. A full copy of SFGMC’s Confidentiality Policy may be found in the files area of Musetta.



### **Substance Abuse**

Alcohol and drug abuse is a serious health issue for which many resources available to those who seek help. SFGMC's Spirit Team maintains a list of such resources and members who are interested may request this from the Spirit Team Coordinators on a confidential basis.

Substance abuse impairs cognitive function and judgment. Apart from the attendant risks and dangers, vocal quality is also adversely affected. Under no circumstances may a member be under the influence of non-prescribed medications during rehearsals and performances. Additionally, if a member is on a prescribed medication that impairs their ability to participate at rehearsals or performances, they may be asked to leave.

The use of alcohol or other drugs not taken as prescribed or directed is strictly forbidden and will result in the member being asked to leave the premises by the Board Chairman, Leadership Team President, AD, ED or their designee. Repeated offenses may result in further disciplinary action up to and including expulsion from the chorus.

### **Conflict Resolution**

There will be times when we disagree. Respectful discussion, informed decision making, and acceptance when a decision is made, are the hallmarks of a healthy organization.

Occasionally, differences of opinion or circumstances can lead to conflict between individuals. Baggage of this nature is to be checked at the door before entering the Chorus environment. SFGMC does not mediate personal disputes that have no chorus substance.

If you have a genuine grievance against someone within the Chorus who has behaved towards you in a manner that falls short of the standards articulated within this handbook, you should first attempt to resolve this conflict with the person concerned, amicably and privately. If this fails, then you should approach the Member Ombudsman who will furnish you with a copy of SFGMC's Grievance Policy. By the time a grievance reaches this level, it will be a serious matter with potentially serious consequences for the parties involved.

### **Harassment**

If at any time a chorus member ever feels threatened, harassed (sexually or otherwise), or intimidated by another chorus member and feels that he or she is unable to work out the situation privately, that person is urged to immediately contact the Member Ombudsman to set up a meeting with him to review the situation.

If no immediate resolution can be found, the member should complete an Incident Report Form (attached to this handbook) and submit it to the ED who will then set up a mediation session, with both parties present, to try to resolve the incident.

If the mediation is not successful, the member can request a formal hearing pursuant to the Grievance Policy. That policy, which is available from the Member Ombudsman or the ED, provides for a Board of Inquiry to gather evidence and consider witness statements in resolving a grievance or alleged incident of harassment. The Board of Inquiry may decide on a remedy ranging from a verbal warning up through, and including, permanent expulsion from the Chorus as outlined in the Grievance Policy.

## 10. DISCIPLINE

Members are expected at all times to behave in a manner befitting the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus and adhere to the standards and policies in this Handbook. The purpose of discipline is to encourage adherence, not to punish. That said, even one infraction can start a disciplinary action and, if serious enough, can result in expulsion.

- Disciplinary action is initiated by a joint decision of the ED, Board Chairman, Leadership Team President and Board Secretary (the panel) by majority vote if necessary, pursuant to the grievance process. The member who is the subject of a disciplinary action will have the opportunity to meet with the panel to account for their behavior and present any mitigating circumstances. Following this meeting, the panel will determine which action, if any, will be taken. Examples of panel actions are verbal warnings, written warnings, probation, suspension and/or expulsion. Depending on the severity of the offense, this may not be an incremental process.

The member in question may appeal the decision of the panel, within 30 calendar days of action or decision being issued. Any appeal must be in writing to the full GGPA Board of Directors and must include:

- Reason(s)/grounds for appeal,
- Where you disagree with the interpretation of the outlined policy in the Membership Handbook, and,
- Include any new or additional information regarding the circumstances noted as grounds for the decision.

Upon receipt, the Board Secretary will forward the appeal to the Executive Committee of the Board for review in advance of a Board meeting.

## 11. AWARDS & RECOGNITION

SFGMC greatly values the incredible sacrifice given on a daily basis by the legion of volunteers who labor for our cause. Awards and certificates are our way of acknowledging their commitment and celebrating the spirit of service that invigorates our organization.

### **John B. McLeod Leadership Award**

John Burton McLeod served the LGBT choral movement as a singer and leader for 21 years (including as SFGMC Board President and GALA Choruses President). He died from AIDS on October 19, 2001 at the age of 52. The award, which was created while John was still alive, is bestowed annually for exceptional volunteer leadership within SFGMC. Current members of the Board of Directors, the President of the Leadership Team along with the ED and AD, select the annual recipient.

### **Bill Lewandowski Award**

Awarded to non-singing volunteers and/or staff for 20 years of service, this award is named after its first recipient, Bill Lewandowski, who served SFGMC in a variety of capacities during his service tenure.

### **Jon Reed Sims Award for Outstanding Artistic Contributions to SFGMC**

Jon Reed Sims was the founder of SFGMC and the SFLGBT Freedom Band: the first gay identified performing arts groups in the world. He died from AIDS on July 16, 1984 at the age of 37. SFGMC honors his memory and vision by bestowing this award, created in 2009, at special times when a worthy recipient emerges from the ranks of the organization Sims founded.

### **Certificates and Trophies**

Throughout the year, SFGMC leadership presents Certificates of Recognition, acknowledging the contributions of deserving Members.

### **Ambassador All-Stars**

A list of Ambassador All-Stars is published in concert programs recognizing their commitment to SFGMC's Outreach Program.

### **Annual Volley Awards**

Held toward the end of a season or at the beginning of a new season each year, this event honors, both seriously and with humor, the esprit de corps at the heart of our Chorus family. It is an opportunity to relax, laugh at ourselves and reflect upon the enormous commitment and countless sacrifices made each year by the members of SFGMC.

## **12. OUTREACH**

SFGMC receives many requests to appear at a wide variety of special events. Appearing at these events can generate income as well as being a way for us to further our mission.

For corporate and private sector events, the Chorus usually receives a performance fee. The Chorus also performs at numerous community events, festivals, benefits, and memorials for a nominal amount. Additionally, the Chorus presents several preview concerts each year to help raise funds for other charitable organizations, such as AIDS service organizations. All Outreach performance requests must be made via the SFGMC office. Outreach engagements are usually filled by SFGMC Ambassadors or one of SFGMC's ensembles. Occasionally, the full chorus will appear at a community event.

### **Ambassadors**

Prior to committing the Chorus to any particular event, members of the Chorus are polled to determine if a sufficient number of singers can commit to the performance. It is extremely important that Chorus members consider carefully whether they can commit to these extra performances and that, if so, they honor their commitment to perform. "No shows" can mean that a performance risks falling short of a sufficient artistic standard, with the consequent damage to SFGMC's reputation.

All members should respond to polls for each event and those who plan on singing should pay special attention to any announcements relative to the event for updates to venues, call times, repertoire, or performance attire.

### **California Freedom Tour**

Inaugurated in 2010, the California Freedom Tour was conceived as a response to the passage of Proposition 8 in 2009. Traveling to cities in parts of the state where support for Prop 8 was strongest, the Chorus partners with local LGBT/Health/Social Justice organizations and presents a concert of inspiring music, raising funds for local charities and the Chorus. Between 3-5 run-outs occur annually and participation is elective.

## 13. ENSEMBLES

The Chorus currently has two ensembles with between 16 and 24 members each that are featured as needed in concerts with the full Chorus and SFGMC Outreach engagements. Each ensemble is led by a Music Director (MD). The ensemble experience offers artistic rewards and challenges beyond those found in the full Chorus. Members rehearse on an additional night of the week and are subject to the additional polices listed below in this section.

### **The Lollipop Guild (TLG)**

Founded in 1979, TLG is the oldest LGBT small ensemble in the GALA movement and performs repertoire ranging from classical to jazz. TLG has represented SFGMC in many local, national, and international events, including the Various Voices Choral Festival in London, UK, in 2009.

### **Vocal Minority (VM)**

Founded in 2003, VM specializes in pop and jazz music. VM represents SFGMC at many Outreach events across the state and country.

### **Membership**

Vacancies within ensembles arise on an irregular basis. Announcements are made about auditions in chorus communications. Members of small ensembles receive no added rights or privileges above their SFGMC membership save that there are no additional dues payable to join an ensemble. Members of ensembles must sing with the full Chorus.

### **Attendance**

Being a small group, regular attendance by ensemble members is extremely important. Members are expected to make every effort to attend all rehearsals. The MD of each group will set attendance policies. Failure to meet the attendance requirements outlined by the MD will result in suspension or dismissal at the discretion of the MD. If deemed necessary, the MD may make arrangements to backfill the part and/or hold a Performance Readiness Session for those members who have not met the attendance requirements.

### **Leave of Absence**

Members on LOA from SFGMC may continue to participate in an ensemble for no more than one concert session and with the permission of the MD. Members may take an LOA from an ensemble at the discretion of the MD.

## 14. CONCLUSION

SFGMC hopes that you have found this handbook useful and trusts that your SFGMC experience will be a happy and rewarding one.