

RHYTHM SCRIPT: [SCHOOL NAME]

Grades 6-8 | 1:25PM - 2:15PM

Wednesday, March 13, 2024

1:15PM **STUDENTS ARRIVE AT THEATER**

1:25PM **GSA STUDENTS or TEACHER:**

Good afternoon everyone! My name is _____ and my pronouns are _____. I am excited to welcome the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus today for their performance of RHYTHM: Reaching Youth Through Music. SFGMC creates extraordinary music and experiences that build community, inspires activism, and fosters compassion at home and around the world.

SFGMC is here today as part of Young Audiences of Northern California's arts program initiative: "I AM / WE ARE". The Chorus is working to bring socially-relevant performances to middle and high schools throughout the Bay Area. We want to thank Young Audiences and the California Arts Council for giving us the opportunity to have the Chorus share their stories with us!

Some of the stories and songs you will hear today may surprise you and may make you think about our school community and peers differently. You may also be able to relate to some of the stories shared. If there is time, the Chorus will take questions at the end of the show, so start thinking about questions you may want answered. Please sit silently and give your respect and attention to the stage. And now, I'm excited to present the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus!

1:26PM **"RIPPLE" FROM *SPIRITED* arr. by DAVID MADDUX**

1:30PM **MITCH:**

Good afternoon! My name is Mitch, my pronouns are he/him and I'm on the Artistic team of the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus.

The Chorus was formed in 1978 and is the first chorus to ever publicly put their sexual orientation in their name. Our first performance was on the steps of City Hall in San Francisco the night that Supervisor Harvey Milk and Mayor George Moscone were assassinated, just a few weeks after our first rehearsal. Ever since this first performance, we have done more than just sing, we have used our voices and music as a form of activism to educate our audiences and bring communities together. We are currently in our 45th season.

There are around 250 singers in the Chorus at any given time. The singers are all volunteers and have full time jobs outside of singing with SFGMC. We recently changed our bylaws, so we now accept singers of ALL genders as long as they can sing in the Tenor, Baritone, Bass range. Many of us are married and some

even have children. Our singers are from all over Northern California, not just San Francisco and we are excited to share our stories and experiences with you today. Throughout the performance you are going to hear stories and songs that may surprise you and may make you think about your school community and peers differently. You may also be able to relate to some of the stories shared.

Now, I'd love for you to meet some of our singers! First we have our Tenors. In a TTBB chorus (Tenor 1, Tenor 2, Baritone, and Bass), the Tenors are the highest voices. Let's meet some of our tenors!

1:32PM

TENORS:

Hi, I'm [**first name only**], my pronouns are [**pronouns**], I've been in the chorus for [**number of years**], I am from [**country/state where you were born/raised**], and I am a [**occupation (and company/organization if it is well-known - i.e. Google)**].

Singer introductions:

- **SINGER #1**
- **SINGER #2**
- **SINGER #3**
- **SINGER #4**
- **SINGER #5**

1:34PM

SPEAKER #1:

Hi, my name is _(first name only)_ and my pronouns are _____. We believe that a person's sexual orientation is not a choice. And we know that when young people are bullied or harassed for being gay, transgender, or any other part of the queer community, that they are more likely to feel depressed, lonely, and isolated, and even consider hurting themselves. We also know that harassment can happen in person or through cyberbullying. That's why it's so important for all of us to practice empathy, which means putting ourselves in another person's shoes and treating others with respect and dignity.

1:35PM

SPEAKER #2:

Hi, my name is _(first name only)_ and my pronouns are _____. I'm going to share a little more information with you to make sure we all have a common understanding on some LGBTQ+ terminology. If you hear a person referred to as **AFAB** (*pronounced A-Fab*) that means they were assigned female at birth. This does not mean that the person still identifies as a female or uses she/her pronouns. If you hear a person referred to as **AMAB** (*pronounced A-Mab*) that means they were assigned male at birth. This does not mean that the person still identifies as a male or uses he/him pronouns.

If a person does not identify as the same gender that they were assigned at birth, then they are trans. For instance, if the doctor holds up a baby and says "it's a

girl”, but that person grows up to be a boy or non-binary, then they are transgender or trans.

If a person still identifies with the gender they were assigned at birth, then they are cisgender or cis.

1:36PM “IF YOU WERE GAY” FROM AVENUE Q *arr. by ALEX RYBECK*

1:38PM **MITCH:**

We *love* to dance. Who here loves to dance?? Oh, I know there are more of you than that...I’ve seen all the tiktok videos! The song we just sang was from the musical *Avenue Q*. As silly as the song may be, the message could not be more true for all of us here on stage. Speaking for the singers, we are proud of who we are, whether that be gay, bisexual, non-binary, drag queens, Lady Gaga fans...you get the point. It was not always easy to embrace our identity, but being surrounded by a community that genuinely accepts us and respects who we are makes it SO much easier. I challenge all of you to make your community a space where everyone feels safe and empowered to be whoever they are.

Q&A: I’d now like to answer a few questions. If anyone has a question, please raise your hand silently and wait to be called on. I will try to get to as many of you as possible throughout the show, so we would ask that everyone keeps their voices at a level zero and give our attention to the people asking questions.

[Take a few questions from students]

Those were great questions! Keep thinking about more questions that you can ask us. While you are thinking I’d like to introduce our Baritone section. In a TTBB chorus, the baritones are the second-lowest voices.

1:40PM **BARITONES:**

Hi, I’m [**first name only**], my pronouns are [**pronouns**], I’ve been in the chorus for [**number of years**], I am from [**country/state where you were born/raised**], and I am a [**occupation (and company/organization if it is well-known - i.e. Google)**].

Singer introductions:

- **SINGER #6**
- **SINGER #7**
- **SINGER #8**
- **SINGER #9**
- **SINGER #10**

1:42PM

VINNEY STORY (Vietnamese American, Cisgender Gay Man):

Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Vinney and I've been singing with the chorus for nine years now. Tonight, I was asked to share my story with you, and as I began to think about it, I realized that my story is that I wanted a different story. I wanted to rewrite my story — because I was ashamed of who I was, because I couldn't reconcile who I was in the past with who I am now. For the longest time, I wanted to rewrite my story, rewrite the past.

I come from a family of re-writers. When my parents immigrated here as refugees of the Vietnam War, they decided to re-write their names. Back in Vietnam, my mom was called Nguyen Thanh Tram and my dad was Le Xuan Vang. When they came to the United States, you'll never guess what names they chose for themselves: Elvis and Teresa, as in Elvis Presley and Mother Teresa. From what I understand, it was a simple thing for them to do; they just wrote their new names on their immigration forms and turned them in, no questions asked.

Re-writing didn't come as easy for me and my sibling.

My parents named us after Catholic saints, Vincent and Victor. Eventually, we got nicknames. I became Vinney and Victor became Vi. Growing up, we were like any other pair of siblings. We had petty fights about everything, but we were also really close even though both of us had our secrets. Mine was that I was gay, but I didn't really understand my sexuality yet. Vi's secret, however, was so big that Vi couldn't keep it in.

“Đi ra khỏi nhà của tôi!” (Get out of my house!)

Mom's shrieking yanked me from my bed. I jumped to my bedroom door just in time to see Vi being thrown outside. It was clear Vi said the words that would rewrite our story forever.

“Tôi là người chuyển giới.” (I am transgender.)

My parents had no idea what that meant, that a person could not identify with the gender they were assigned at birth. They had no idea what being transgender was, but they knew it was different and, because it was different, it was wrong.

So, they kicked Vi out of our house. She was only 13 years old.

She had to live with friends for a while until my parents let her back in. I thought she was incredibly brave, but I was deeply traumatized by my parents' reaction to her coming out that I started distancing myself from Vi. I practically stopped talking to her. When she was most vulnerable, when she really needed a brother, I completely ignored her. I was scared that if I acted too much like her, my parents would know that I was gay and reject me, too. There were years when my parents and my sister rarely spoke to each other, and my parents just pretended she didn't exist. I didn't want to be erased like that, so I stayed silent. But Vi didn't let us hold her back. She continued to live her life and ended up choosing a new name for herself, just as my parents did when they started their new lives. She simply added the letter “Y” to her name, and Victor became

Victory. That name is so perfect for her because she fought to become who she is, fought for every piece of her identity. Her life is a victory.

Years later, when I was ready to come out, Victory was there for me in the way I should have been there for her. Her strength and bravery made me feel safe enough to come out. She has always cleared a very wide path for me in everything I do, so when I was ready to come out, I only needed to say, “Hi, I’m just a plain ol’ gay.”

There are so many parts of my past that I wish I could rewrite, like that time when I pushed my sister away, but the best I can do is learn from the past, forgive myself, and love myself. Today, I am so blessed to have a close relationship with my big sister. I can’t believe I used to feel embarrassed by her, afraid even. Now I know that she is as much a part of my story — my own victory — as I am.

Begin underscoring “TRULY BRAVE”

Who I was before is part of who I am now and will be part of who I will become. And I wouldn’t write it any other way.

1:47PM **“TRULY BRAVE” arr. by MAC HUFF**

1:51PM **MITCH:**

We hope that everyone in this room has the bravery to be whoever you feel you are inside and MORE IMPORTANTLY the love to accept and celebrate everyone for who they are on the inside. We know that middle school and high school can be some of the toughest years in our lives because there are so many changes happening in our bodies. It’s important to remember that even in the hardest moments that you have so many friends. They may not be right in front of you, many of which you have not even met yet, but they are out there and waiting to meet you and give you all of their love. You all have such incredibly bright futures, just remember that you do belong here and have so much to offer.

I’d now like to welcome [**Speaker #3**] and [**Speaker #4**] to share the results of the survey many of you recently completed.

1:52PM **SPEAKER #3:**

Hello! My name is _(first name only)_, and my pronouns are _____.

SPEAKER #4:

Hi, my name is _(first name only)_, and my pronouns are _____.

SPEAKER #3:

Today we are going to share some of the results from the survey that the whole school recently completed. Our hope is that these findings help you gain a deeper understanding and appreciation for your community here at [SCHOOL NAME].

SPEAKER #4:

Based on the students that completed the survey, **5%** are **neither girls or boys** and **1%** of students are **unsure** of their **gender identity**.

SPEAKER #3:

Based on the students that completed the survey, **13%** of students identify as part of the **LGBTQ+** community. **8%** of students are still **unsure** about their **sexual orientation**, and **7%** identify as either **asexual or aromantic**. All of these are **perfectly normal**.

SPEAKER #4:

2% said that their **peers** and **teachers** do **NOT** call them by their **correct pronouns** and **2%** **neither agreed or disagreed** that they are gendered correctly.

SPEAKER #3:

62% agreed or strongly agreed that they have **at least one adult at school** that they can go to for **support**.

SPEAKER #4:

70% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they **feel connected to their peers**.

SPEAKER #3:

16% of students said that they **do NOT understand** the **challenges** of their **LGBTQ+ peers**.

SPEAKER #4:

82% said that they have knowingly **met** someone who identifies as **LGBTQ+**. Well now **100%** of you can say you've met someone queer (**all singers wave at audience**).

SPEAKER #3:

12% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they have **been bullied** at school. **13%** have been **cyber bullied**.

SPEAKER #4:

3% of students agreed that they have acted like a bully in school.

SPEAKER #3:

And finally, based on the students that completed the survey, **46%** of students said if they saw **someone being bullied** that they would say something to **make them stop. 46%!**

1:54PM **“HUDDLED MASSES” arr. by DAVE VOLPE**

1:58PM **MITCH:**

Some of those statistics may be a little surprising, but you have the power and ability to make school and home safer spaces!

Give me a “woop woop” if you’ve heard of the term **bystander**? A bystander is someone who sees something wrong happening and doesn’t speak up. Now, give me a “woop woop” if you’ve heard of the term **upstander**? An upstander is someone who stands up and speaks up for either an individual or a cause. I challenge everyone in this room to be an upstander starting today.

I encourage us all to reflect for a moment on how we treat people both at school and outside of school. It is a CHOICE how you treat people, you have the ability to choose what you say, whether that be kind or unkind. Sometimes we may not even be aware that we are bullying someone. You can quickly check in with yourself by asking “am I treating them the way that I want to be treated?” If not, apologize and then start to be kind!

1:59PM **SPEAKER #5:**

Hi, my name is _(first name only)_ and my pronouns are _____. A question that we get a lot is ‘*When is the right time to come out?*’ The answer is that there is no right or wrong time to say it. It is going to look different for all of us. A person should never be forced to have to share who they are attracted to and it’s important for all of us to make a kind and loving space if someone does choose to reveal they are queer.

2:00PM **SPEAKER #6:**

Hi, my name is _(first name only)_ and my pronouns are _____. If anyone is struggling with coming out or is straight and struggling with feeling accepted for who they are, it’s important to find a trusted adult to talk to – like a teacher, parent, or counselor. Another resource that we know about is the The Trevor Project, which provides crisis prevention and suicide intervention for LGBTQ+ youth and their allies. For more information about The Trevor Project, please visit TheTrevorProject.org or talk to Mitch after this show.

2:01PM **MITCH:**

Q&A: This will be your last opportunity in this assembly to ask your questions. If anyone has a question, please raise your hand silently and wait to be called on.

We will try to get to as many of you as possible throughout the show, so we would ask that everyone keeps their voices at a level zero and give our attention to the people asking questions.

[Take a few questions from students]

TAKE FINAL QUESTION FROM THE AUDIENCE

It is now time to meet our final section of the chorus... our basses. The basses are the *lowest* voices.

2:03PM

BASSES:

Hi, I'm [**first name only**], my pronouns are [**pronouns**], I've been in the chorus for [**number of years**], I am from [**country/state where you were born/raised**], and I am a [**occupation (and company/organization if it is well-known - i.e. Google)**].

Singer introductions:

- **SINGER #11**
- **SINGER #12**
- **SINGER #13**
- **SINGER #14**
- **SINGER #15**

2:04PM

NICK'S STORY (African American, Cisgender Gay Man):

Hi, my name is Nick, pronouns He/Him.

I was born in St. Petersburg, a mid-sized, beach town in central Florida.

My entry into the world was a bit rough as my mother at the time struggled with addiction and my father was nowhere to be found.-Thankfully I had grandparents who took me in immediately and raised me as their own. They were my grandparents when they took me in, but I call them my parents.

My parents were good people but they were old school. The “respect your elders”, “be seen but not heard”, “don't say ‘yeah’ say ‘yes’” kind of parents. I was a good son who followed my parent's example. But I was also different. Inside I was different. Because I was everything my parents wanted, but I was also gay.

I didn't have a word for it as a child. I just knew that the queasy feeling you get when you like someone, was always to other boys, not girls. Then one day in middle school I learned what ‘being gay’ was. It was from church, during a sermon. And it was not good. I was told that being gay was evil, an abomination even. But I was gay. I spent time trying to convince myself that I wasn't, and that what I feel is incorrect and if I ignored it, and pray, it'll go away. It obviously didn't

and in high school, I made the decision that if I had to be gay, if I had to be the disappointment, then I would be a secret. No crushes, no relationships, no boyfriends. I'll play the part.

I continued playing that part into college. As you can imagine, hiding a part of you, not only to others but yourself, can be exhausting. That exhaustion turned into anger. That anger turned into rebellion. And soon I became very depressed; I would always be an outsider and those feelings I had were wrong. So that meant that I was wrong.

After 2 years I had to drop out. I dreaded telling my parents, and when I did, they told me, just come back home. I told them I couldn't. I couldn't face the shame of returning home without finishing school. Going back to St Petersburg meant going further back into the closet.

Leaving college meant needing to take on odd jobs to support myself. There were hard days. But hitting rock bottom meant working on me. Distracting myself with surviving put my life into perspective. I got myself together financially, moved into my own place, and after 6 years I learned to love myself and I went back to school to finish my degree. Once back in school.... I met someone.

His name was Simon. A transfer student from China who I met while working at the University. He was also a product of pressure and expectation with his sexuality back at home. In public, we never held hands or kissed. But in private he made me feel loved. Over time, we grew close and healed each other's trauma.

A year and a half later, I asked Simon to marry me. He said yes and we had a courthouse wedding. We made plans to leave Florida for San Francisco, CA. But before I could leave, I told Simon, I have to tell my parents. I needed them to know about me.

I was scared. Even though I had Simon, and I loved myself more, the creeping feeling of losing my family was still there. But I owed it to myself to try.

The next few weeks I tried to muster the courage to go back home and tell them in person. But ultimately, I realized I wasn't ready for that. The worry and fear was too much for me. So instead, I wrote a letter and sent it home a day before we left for California. So at least if I did lose them I wouldn't need to say goodbye in person. In this letter I told them about growing up and knowing I was gay. The fear, anger, worry, and resentment I felt. But I also told them of the love I found for myself, the love I felt for Simon. I told them that what I am was not a choice, not a curse, not a phase, not an escape, not a whim, but a truth, my truth. I told them I'm gay, I told them I'm married, and I told them I was happy. Because for the first time in my life I really was. And I wanted them to know that.

A month later, I finally received a text from my parents. They told me they read the letter and that they loved me. That if I was happy then that was all that mattered. I still keep a copy of the letter in my phone. A reminder of the hurdles I crossed to get to this point in my life. My new life.

For Thanksgiving that year I brought Simon home for the first time and it was awkward. I knew they needed time to adjust. That was Year 1 of our marriage. We are now in Year 6 and Simon is a regular back home with me for holidays. He's the favorite of my 4 year old niece, a shopping partner with my mom, and a referee during our family's White Elephant Gift Exchange. Before my Dad died, he took Simon's hands and said "Take care of my son."

DANNY begins underscoring "LOVE CAN BUILD A BRIDGE"

What I learned in my journey is that who you are is no mistake. Who you love is no accident. And to fall in love with yourself, is the first step to your happiness. Thank you.

2:09PM

MITCH:

The theme of our final song today is *hope*, and boy do we need hope right now. For this song, I'd love to invite some special guests up onto the stage. Please welcome back to the stage **[STUDENT NAMES]!**

During this final song you will hear the hopes of some of the LGBTQ+ students here at [SCHOOL NAME]. These hopes were collected anonymously through the survey everyone completed and are being lifted and voiced by your classmates. These are the hopes for your school, the hopes for your community, the hopes for us all.

2:10PM

"LOVE CAN BUILD A BRIDGE" arr. by KIRBY SHAW

	Speaker	I hope...
1.1	#1	I hope for the people I love to be safe.
1.2	#2	I hope I can be kinder to other people.
1.3	#3	I hope one day we don't have to protest anymore.
1.4	#1	I hope people will stop using "gay" as an insult and also stop saying the f-slur.
1.5	#2	I hope that I can live.
1.6	#3	I hope people at our school feel comfortable to be whoever they are.
2.1	#1	I hope that I can figure out my identity and I hope that the world's going to be okay.
2.2	#2	I hope for my pronouns to be remembered.
2.3	#3	I hope that my friends don't hurt themselves.

2.4	#1	I hope the bathrooms reopen in school and they are always stocked with pads and tampons.
2.5	#2	I hope that whatever I am going through right now gets better and I hope that one day I won't be an easy target.
2.6	#3	I hope to have more confidence in who I am.
3.1	#1	I hope for my school to no longer have students who act like bullies or make racist comments and then say it's just a "joke".
3.2	#2	I hope for people to be open to expressing their opinions, but recognize when they cross the line it starts to hurt someone; knowing the difference between sharing and bullying.
3.3	#3	I hope to play with my cats.
3.4	#1	I hope my parents will like my partner if they are a girl.
3.5	#2	I hope we can be more loving and gentle with each other, because kids here at school tend to joke meanly, be rude, etc.
3.6	#3	I hope that everyone is treated equally no matter their gender or race.

2:14PM**MITCH:**

We at the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus know that when you are kind to others and show them love, you *will* make the world a better place. Thank you so much for having us here today. We are so excited and honored to be here! I challenge you to leave this performance remembering to always be kind to each other, celebrate each other's differences, and rise up to whatever challenges come your way for it will only make you stronger.

2:15PM**SHOW ENDS /****GSA and/or SCHOOL CHOIR JOIN SFGMC SINGERS FOR LUNCH**