



Orange Juice, Milk, and the Rise of the Gay and Lesbian Choral Movement

William Southerland

MUS706 Dr. Kailen Rubinoff

November 26, 2019

Counter-storying

- Replacing false or exaggerated stereotypes with positive images
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (“LGBTQ”) choruses:
 - Safe place to construct new identities
 - Countering negative stereotypes with positive messages

Presentation Outline

1. Anita Bryant, Harvey Milk, and Jon Sims
2. The rise of LGBTQ choruses nationally
3. Impacts and legacy of LGBTQ choruses

Mid-20th C. Queer Liberation

- Stonewall Riots (NYC, 1969)
- Local governments updated non-discrimination laws to include gay and lesbian identity
- 1975: APA removes homosexuality from the list of mental disorders

“Save Our Children”

- Anita Bryant
- Dade County referendum, June '77
- John Briggs
- CA Proposition 6, the “Briggs Amendment”



1977 San Francisco Gay Freedom Day Parade



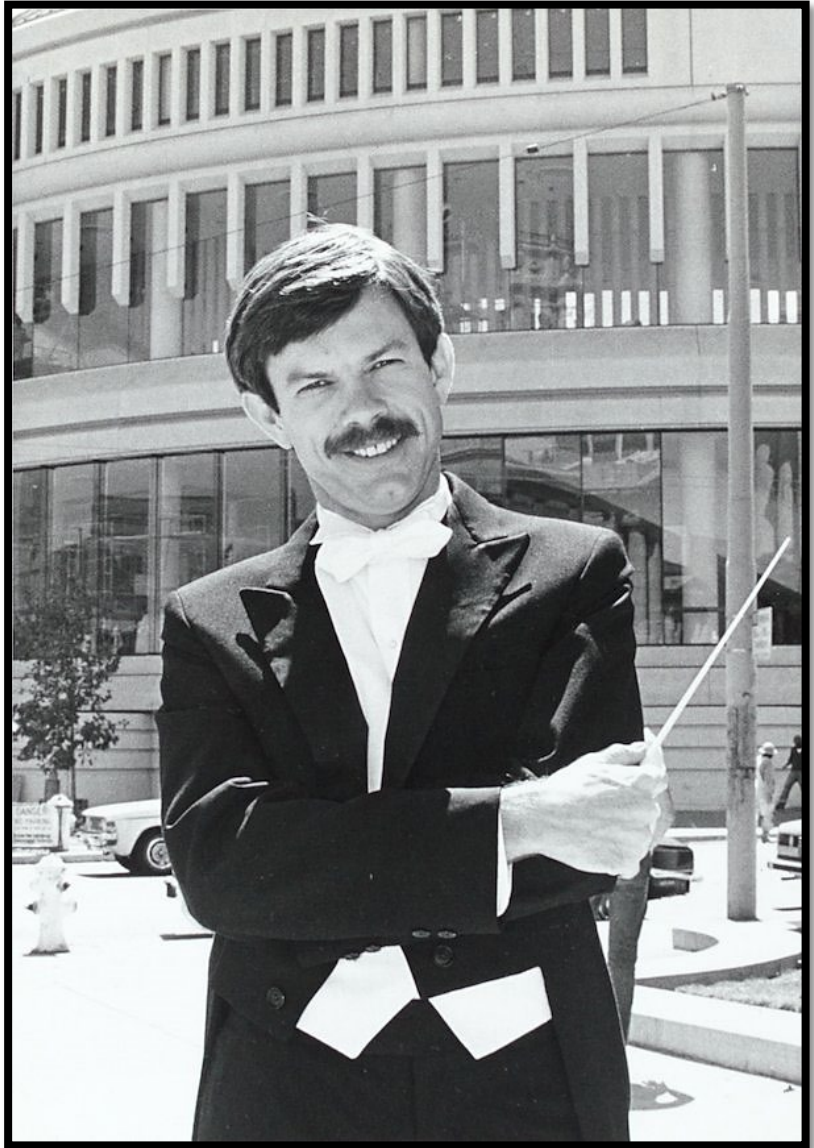
Harvey Milk

- Local small business owner in the Castro District
- “Come Out” – The “Hope” Speech
- 1977 run for San Francisco City Council



Jon Sims

- From Kansas
- BME, Wichita State
- MM Conducting, Indiana University



Harvey Milk, Gay Freedom Day, 1978



SFLGFDMB&TC, Gay Freedom Day, 1978



“Group of men on balcony,” 1979



Existing gay and lesbian choruses

- ANNA Crusis,
Philadelphia 1975
- Gotham Male Chorus,
NYC 1977 (became
Stonewall Chorale in 1980)



Catherine Roma



Milk / Moscone Vigil, 1978



Queer liberation lacked singing

- Movement culture – the articulable signs and rituals which define a movement's identity
- Music of gay culture came from solo traditions: cabaret, disco, and Broadway
- Choruses had to rely on traditional, white European-style classical choral music
- Choruses made composition and commissions a priority to establish new repertoire

Spreading the message

- SFGMC's 1981 National Tour: NYC, Boston, Washington DC, Lincoln, Detroit, Minneapolis, Dallas, and Seattle
- New choruses formed quickly:
 - 1979: LA, Seattle and Chicago
 - 1980: NYC Gay Men's Chorus
 - 1981: Washington, DC and Boston

Creating a national organization

- 1981: Directors and Managers meeting, Chicago
- Needed a national organization to coordinate chorus festivals and share resources
- “Gay and Lesbian Association of Choruses,” now rebranded as GALA Choruses

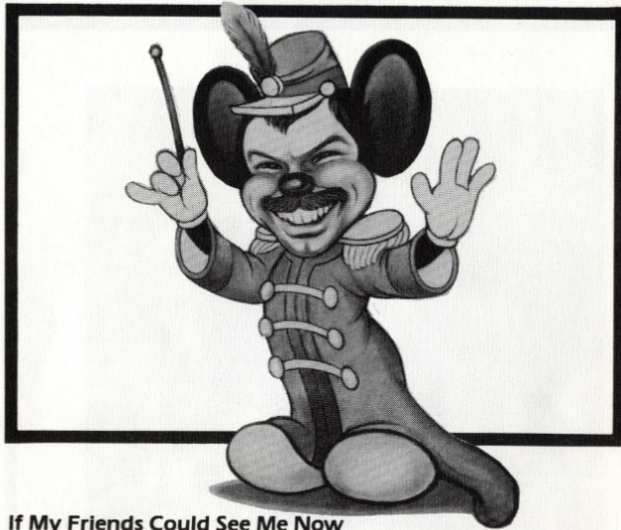
Exponential growth of GALA Choruses

- 1978: 3 Choruses
- 1983: 39 Choruses
- 1990: 70 Choruses
- 1999: 189 Choruses
- Today: Over 200 Choruses in the US, Mexico, Cuba, China and Vietnam

Other queer chorus organizations

- LEGATO: continental Europe
- SING OUT!: UK and Ireland
- Sister Singers: US Feminist Choruses

Program from Jon Sim's Memorial



If My Friends Could See Me Now

If they could see me now

That little gang of mine
I'm eating fancy chow & drinking fancy wine.
I'd like those stumble bums to see for a fact
The kind of top draw first rate chums I attract.
All I can say is wow, just look at where I'm at
Tonight I landed pow right in a pot of jam.
What a set up holy cow, they'd never believe it
If my friends could see me now.

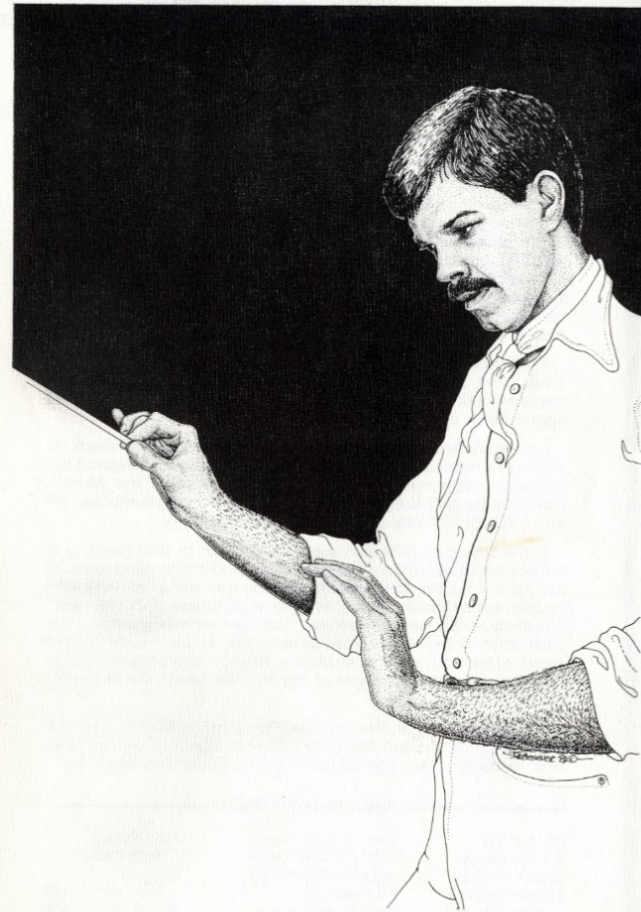
(Original Version)

If they could see me now

That little hometown clan
We're singing & we're playing with this all gay band.
I'd like for all the world to see for a fact,
That we're a source of pow'r they'll never send back.
The closet's empty now, just like it ought to be,
The time is right for us just look around and see
What a set up holy cow, they'd never believe it
If my friends could see me now.

(Revised Version)

Jon's family has asked that donations be made to the:
San Francisco Band Foundation, 540 Castro, San Francisco, CA 94114,
or Shanti Project, 890 Hayes Street, San Francisco, CA 94117.



JON REED SIMS • 6 MAY 1947 — 16 July 1984
MEMORIAL SERVICE • GRACE CATHEDRAL • 3 AUGUST 1984

GALA's Sociopolitical legacy

- Inclusion and activism for queer people
- Expression of identity in safe space
- Increasing awareness of LGBTQ community
- Presenting a positive image of LGBTQ people

San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus, 2017



Choruses and Intersectionality

- Choral musicians are highly trained, but mostly in white, European “canon” music
- Choral music is complicated and hard to write quickly -- early choruses relied on existing repertoire
- Today, GALA Choruses has made equity and access a strategic focus

Conclusion

- LGBTQ people have more legal protections than ever, but bigotry and stereotypes continue
- Successes of the LGBTQ choral movement:
 - Production of successful counter-storying
 - Safe place for movement participants
 - Provide platform for non-political participants to produce political agency

Bibliography

Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology, edited by Phillip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary C. Thomas, Second edition., 315–46. New York: Routledge, 2006.

———. “Choruses and Bands.” In *Encyclopedia of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender History in America*, edited by Mark Stein, 1:213–14. Detroit, MI: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 2004.

Balen, Julia. *A Queerly Joyful Noise: Choral Musicking for Social Justice*. New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 2017.

———. “Erotics, Agency, and Social Movement: Communities of Sexuality and Musicality in LGBT Choruses.” In *The Queer Community: Continuing the Struggle for Social Justice*, edited by Richard G. Johnson. San Diego, CA: Birkdale Publishers, 2009.

Beale, Charles. “A Different Kind of Goosebump: Notes toward and LGBTQ Choral Pedagogy.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Choral Pedagogy*, edited by Frank Abrahams and Paul Head, 363–79. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.

Beeler, Heidi. “Jon Sims Center History.” Jon Sims Center for the Arts, August 8, 2007. <https://web.archive.org/web/20070808175252/http://www.jonsimsctr.org/History.html>.

———. “The Beat Goes On: San Francisco Lesbian/Gay Freedom Band’s 40th Anniversary.” *San Francisco Bay Times*. June 6, 2018.

Castrovinci, Joe. “San Francisco Gay Men’s Chorus.” In *Wikipedia*, September 28, 2019. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Francisco_Gay_Men%27s_Chorus.

Clarke, Jay. “Gay Rights Fight Shaping Up in Miami.” *The Washington Post*, March 27, 1977, Final edition, sec. A4. <https://advance.lexis.com/document/?pdmfid=1516831>.

Davidson, Jay. Personal communication, October 9, 2019.

Doyle, J.D. “Gay & Lesbian Choruses.” Queer Music History. Accessed October 13, 2019. <http://www.queermusicheritage.com/nov2010.html>.

Fetner, Tina. “Working Anita Bryant: The Impact of Christian Anti-Gay Activism on Lesbian and Gay Movement Claims.” *Social Problems* 48, no. 3 (2001): 411–28. <https://doi.org/10.1525/sp.2001.48.3.411>.

Bibliography

Gordon, Eric A. "GALA: The Lesbian and Gay Community of Song." *The Choral Journal* 30, no. 9 (1990): 25–32.

Graves, Karen. "Presidential Address: Political Pawns in an Educational Endgame: Reflections on Bryant, Briggs, and Some Twentieth-Century School Questions." *History of Education Quarterly* 53, no. 1 (2013): 1–20.

Hayes, Casey J. "Building Bridges through Song: A Qualitative Study of Educational Outreach by the New York City Ambassador Chorus." Unpublished dissertation, New York University, 2008.

———. "Community Music and the GLBT Chorus." *International Journal of Community Music* 1, no. 1 (August 24, 2007): 63–67. https://doi.org/10.1386/ijcm.1.1.63_0.

Hilliard, Russell E. "The San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus: A Historical Perspective on the Role of a Chorus as a Social Service." *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services* 14, no. 3 (October 29, 2002): 79–94. https://doi.org/10.1300/J041v14n03_04.

Golden Gate Men's Chorus. "History." Accessed October 18, 2019. <https://www.ggmc.org/>.

Hubbs, Nadine, ed. *Rednecks, Queers, and Country Music*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2014. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt5vjztt.9>.

GALA Choruses. "Mission," October 5, 2011. <https://galachoruses.org/about/mission>.

Sanger, Kerran L. *"When the Spirit Says Sing!": The Role of Freedom Songs in the Civil Rights Movement*. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1995.

Strachan, Jill. "The Voice Empowered: Harmonic Convergence of Music and Politics in the GLBT Choral Movement." In *Chorus and Community*, edited by Karen Ahlquist. University of Illinois Press, 2006.

Valocchi, Steve. "The Class-Inflected Nature of Gay Identity." *Social Problems* 46, no. 2 (1999): 207–24.

Vermillion, Allecia, and Heidi Beeler. "About Jon Sims." Jon Sims Endowment Fund. Accessed October 7, 2019. <https://sites.google.com/site/jsef01/home/about-jon-sims>.

White, Allen. "He Spawned a World of Music." *Bay Area Reporter*. July 19, 1984, Vol 14 No 29 edition.

Thank you!

Question and Comments?