

GAY MEN'S CHORUS OF WASHINGTON, DC

GMCW: A 25th Anniversary Tribute

To “honor our past and celebrate our future” in this 25th anniversary year of the Gay Men’s Chorus of Washington, these 25 dates stand as mileposts that help punctuate this story of how GMCW has “entertained through excellent musical performance, affirmed the place of Gay people in society, and educated about the Gay experience” ...

November 27, 1978

Every great song has a great prelude. And the song of GMCW could not have been written without first understanding the background and cultural context that motivated its birth. The gay choral movement began when musicians considered forming a gay men’s chorus in San Francisco in the late ‘70’s, as the gay civil rights movement grew. Auditions for this new, “out” chorus were to be held the evening of November 27, 1978. But the 100 men who responded to the audition could not have imagined that they would be formed into a chorus that evening – to perform publicly and help heal a grieving city. Earlier that day, an assassin’s bullets ended the lives of the city’s mayor and its first openly gay supervisor, Harvey Milk. And so, the San Francisco’s Gay Men’s Chorus debuted in an impromptu memorial service for the slain men on the steps of the City Hall. Its first concert was a month later, and two-and-a-half years after that, the SFGMC launched a national tour that brought it to the Kennedy Center in Washington.

June 18, 1981

With advance coverage in *The Washington Post*, the 132-voice San Francisco Gay Men’s Chorus sang George Gershwin’s “The Man I Love” and Sibelius’s “From the Silence,” a line from which seemed to encapsulate part of the group’s message: “Never more will we hide our love, no longer will our joy be silenced, manly love has its melody, lovers who have a song to sing.” While some greeted the men with signs reading, “Jesus Saves,” declaring they were “Going to Hell,” more than 2,000 people came to hear SFGMC sing in the Concert Hall that Thursday evening. A *Washington Post* critic wrote:

... no Kennedy Center audience in memory has given any musicians so extraordinary a reception as the singing men received. At least 10 times during the evening the audience rose to its feet in prolonged applause ... three encores were not enough to satisfy the audience, which remained standing in place to cheer for 15 minutes.

From that night, plans were underway for adding Washington to the growing list of cities with gay men’s choruses. The effort was led primarily by Marsha Pearson, a “straight” woman and friend of Washington’s gay community. Inspired by the courage and the music of the San Francisco chorus, Pearson distributed flyers announcing a meeting to organize a gay men’s chorus. That meeting occurred a mere ten days after the SFGMC concert—in the old Gay Community Center at 1469 Church Street in Northwest Washington.

June 28, 1981

On the 12th anniversary of the Stonewall Riots – the birth of the modern gay civil rights movement – that first meeting was held with about 18 men and Pearson, and GMCW was born. The founding members who attended that organizational meeting came to be nicknamed “the Grand Dames with Cluster.” As the only member of the group with prior experience as a conductor, Jim Richardson had the group singing before the evening ended and became the new organization’s Interim Director while the search for a permanent Music Director proceeded. As one member recalls, that first meeting was not announced as a rehearsal but as a meeting to discuss forming a chorus in Washington. Pearson organized and publicized the meeting, but made no preparations for actual singing that night. But due to great enthusiasm to vocalize, and after a quick search of the building, the fledgling chorus sang its first song—Debbie Boone’s “You Light Up My Life.” After due reflection (and music director mandate), the song was never sung again. Those first rehearsals were held at the Gay Community Center that summer before moving to First Congregational Church in downtown Washington in the fall – for three-hour sessions on Sundays.

September 23, 1981

GMCW’s debut performance occurred at a reception at the District Building, to mark the opening of the National Gay Task Force’s Washington office, (later the NGLTF.) At the invitation of D.C. Mayor Marion Barry, the chorus performed a three-song set. Also that month, GMCW established its management and institutional umbrella, incorporating the Federal City Performing Arts Association (FCPAA), as a non-profit educational organization whose goal was “to provide first-rate music in performance by and for Washington’s gay and lesbian community and the community-at-large.” The by-laws for FCPAA were adopted in October, and the first Board of Directors was elected in November.

After two community performances – a special Metropolitan Community Church service, and the D.C. Eagle’s 10th Anniversary celebration – the chorus performed its first holiday concert on December 12, 1981 at the First Congregational Church with organist Carl Barnwell, the D.C. Area Feminist Chorus, and D.C.’s Different Drummers. At that event, which was covered by *The Washington Blade*, and by *Out*, a local gay weekly entertainment guide, nearly 90 GMCW members entertained an enthusiastic, standing-room-only audience (numbering close to 1,000).

As the new year began in 1982, the chorus—still in its first season and only six months old—hired its first permanent music director, Nick Armstrong (at which point the founding director, Jim Richardson, became assistant conductor.)

With a new music director in place, GMCW spent the early weeks of the new year preparing for its first full-length solo concert. It fell to a founding member and volunteer business manager Duward Sumner, to secure a venue for the debut concert. The task was not easy. Working from a list of performance venues provided by the Cultural Alliance of Greater Washington, Sumner mostly called on churches due to budget limitations. After a dozen calls, the reactions and responses ranged from stunned silence, to promises to “call back” that weren’t

kept, to referring the request to their board, to outright “No’s.” Eventually, Sumner prevailed upon St. Mark’s Episcopal Church on Capitol Hill to serve as the venue for the debut concert. St. Mark’s had been a friend to the local gay community in the 1960s and 1970s, when it hosted meetings of the D.C. Mattachine Society (Washington’s only gay organization in the mid-1960s) as well as some of Washington’s earliest gay dances in the months following the Stonewall Riots.

March 17, 1982

The debut concert at St. Mark’s was previewed by a *Washington Post* feature article published that day. The 84 performers sang 13 selections, from widely varying genres that included the popular *Sweet Charity’s* “Rhythm of Life,” “Love Is A Many Splendored Thing”, the traditional “Shenandoah,” and “Battle Hymn of the Republic.” Six additional selections were performed by GMCW’s two smaller ensembles—the Sine Nomine Singers, a 16-member chamber group and A Few Good Men, a 20-member song-and-dance troupe that formed six weeks before the debut concert.

GMCW’s interest in broadening its outreach and helping the arts community backfired that Spring, when it held a concert at the Warner Theatre to benefit Wolf Trap Farm Park for the Performing Arts after a fire destroyed the Filene Center. With Maxene Andrews – of Andrews Sisters fame – sharing the stage, the artistic success was a financial disaster. \$10,000 in ticket sales did not cover the \$18,000 in expenses. Were it not for the business manager and four other chorus members providing personal loans, the chorus might have closed shop.

But the year ended on an up note when the chorus performed its fall concert for the first time at George Washington University’s Lisner Auditorium in November and a Kennedy Center performance in December as part of their Holiday Festival.

But arranging that first performance at the Lisner was not without its challenge. The chorus was denied its first request for the prime space as its official IRS 501(c)(3) letter had not been received before arranging the debut concert. After the IRS designation came, and completing an application to rent Lisner in the summer of 1982, GMCW’s business manager was informed the request was denied. A veto had come down from the university administration. After the chorus board and members discussed the issue, plans to file a complaint under the D.C. Human Rights Act were made. However, with the help of a GWU employee, John Perkins – who later became a GMCW executive director – chorus president Duward Sumner outlined the chorus’ plans in a meeting with an EEO official of the university with the simple message that we “just want to sing.” The official went back to the administration, the decision was reversed, and GMCW has been singing at Lisner Auditorium ever since.

The 3rd season (1983-84) began with GMCW hosting the Los Angeles and Seattle gay choruses at Lisner for “Songs from Coast to COAST.” and then performing for the Come Out and Sing Together (COAST) Festival Concert in New York – the first of a series of gay chorus festivals.

September 9, 1983

The COAST Festival not only marked the first “road trip” for the chorus outside the Washington-Baltimore area, but also provided the incredible experience of performing in a *real* concert venue – the Alice Tully Hall at the Lincoln Center. It was also the first national gay choral festival – bringing 11 groups together from around the country – a result of plans set by the Gay and Lesbian Association (GALA) Choruses. The four-day festival’s finale climaxed with 750 voices singing Ned Rorem’s “A Whitman Cantata,” incorporating text from Walt Whitman’s “Drum Taps” and *Leaves of Grass*.

Potomac Fever, a small ensemble group, debuted at the Spring Concert in 1984, replacing the Sine Nomine Singers. It also marked the beginning of Bruce Trinkley’s tenure as musical director.

October 8, 1984

Community outreach in Washington was still a rocky road to travel. When GMCW performed at the National Theatre for its “Monday Night at the National” for a mostly straight audience, their introduction brought palpable hostility, even some “boo’s.” As the chorus entered from the back and walked down the aisles to the stage, the cold reception did not deter the performers. Concluding their concert with the gospel-style “Walk Him Up the Stairs” from *Purlie*, the chorus received a standing ovation, and one of their proudest moments. Former music director Jim Holloway reflected on that evening in September 1989 when accepting the Mayor’s Arts Award on behalf of GMCW: “What was proven that night is so today ... Washington has a heart big enough for all of its people. We all have the right to sing.”

The chorus repaid Washington two months later with a gift it has been giving the city annually since 1984: its holiday concert. “Making Spirits Bright” was performed at New York Avenue Presbyterian Church and holiday concerts have been a Washington tradition since. A year later, the GMCW holiday concert performances were held at the Church of the Epiphany. Gross proceeds from the first night’s performance on December 13 – \$5,700 – were given to the Whitman-Walker Clinic in its fight against AIDS.

June 21, 1986

GMCW celebrated its 5th anniversary by returning to the place of its inspiration – the Concert Hall of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts – with guest artist contralto Maureen Forrester. D.C. First Lady Effi Barry received a roaring welcome before reading the Mayor’s proclamation of “Gay Men’s Chorus of Washington Day,” and great applause after introducing the chorus onto the stage. *The Washington Post* review described the evening as “a rich celebration of diversity, with finely blended voices paralleling a gracefully balanced program.” It noted, “the concert ended as it began, with a thunderous standing ovation.”

Two weeks later, the chorus traveled to Minneapolis for the GALA Choruses II Festival with 16 other choruses participating. Despite a bomb threat during GMCW’s July 4 technical rehearsal, the concert and festival bonded the choruses around the country with greater

fellowship and love of music.

October 25, 1987

Growing in stature and sophistication as an arts organization, GMCW was invited to sing for the Sixth International Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) Convention at the Hyatt Regency Hotel on Capitol Hill for 1,500 participants. The budget in 1987 had grown to just under \$125,000, and three Masters degree candidates in arts managements assisted GMCW with its first audience survey to address its marketing and patron development. Earlier in the year, GMCW acquired an IBM personal computer thanks to members of the Capital Club and accepted the donation of the popular LOTUS 1-2-3 spreadsheet software from Lotus Corporation to centralize its financial record-keeping and budget tracking.

July 2, 1988

GMCW sang at the funeral of Leonard Matlovich – a Vietnam veteran decorated with the Bronze Star and Purple Heart – who was discharged from the Air Force in 1975 for declaring his homosexuality. Chorus members walked behind his coffin prior to his burial with full military honors in Congressional Cemetery where his tombstone reads: “When I was in the military they gave me a medal for killing two men and a discharge for loving one.”

October 15, 1989

One of the great breakthroughs in the chorus’s struggle for acceptance occurred with the AIDS Healing Service at the Washington National Cathedral. GMCW was asked to participate in the 1988 service, only to have the invitation “rescinded because the Episcopal hierarchy deemed us too ‘political’,” according to one member. While the chorus did participate as a part of a larger chorus, it did not do so under the GMCW name. But prior to the 1989 service, chorus leadership pursued the issue, ultimately meeting with the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church – who eventually allowed GMCW to participate in the service, under its own name.

A week before the service, the chorus presented a free concert at the Sylvan Theatre on the grounds of the Washington Monument to commemorate the Names Project: AIDS Memorial Quilt being displayed. This same year, GMCW again participated in the GALA Chorus Festival III – this year in Seattle – with 44 choral groups represented, after which Jim Holloway became Music Director.

March 30, 1990

Presentation of “Homecoming Hop!” represented a turning point for chorus concerts – “A different kind of production – not just another stand-up concert, but a staged musical production featuring music of the 50’s and 60’s with a very special twist and shout as the boys of Royal High School prepare for the Homecoming Dance you really had in mind.” With the entire chorus coming off the risers and moving while singing, it brought predictable cheers from an appreciative audience. It also kicked off a biennial tradition for GMCW with singing and dancing shows planned for every other year.

The chorus kicked off its 10th Anniversary season with *Tidings of Joy* – its holiday concert at the Church of the Epiphany – followed by a performance at D.C. Mayor Sharon Pratt Kelly’s Inaugural Ball at Union Station in January 1991.

May 31, 1991

The 10th Anniversary’s “Celebration of the Decade” culminated at the Kennedy Center Concert Hall with sopranos Amy Burton and Dorothy Kingston and cabaret artist Debra Tidwell – favorite guest artists from the first decade. The concert concluded with “Stouthearted Men” with the past directors Jim Richardson and Bruce Trinkley conducting before passing off the baton to current director Jim Holloway. A finale of “Sing A Song With Me” was performed with an alumni and current chorus joined by the three guest stars and past directors conducted by Holloway.

June 19, 1993

A front page feature story in *The Washington Post’s* Style section is a trophy of tremendous public relations value in artistic, cultural and political recognition. And GMCW earned its paper ‘n’ ink version on June 19, 1993:

This is the Gay Men’s Chorus of Washington, in which the men are nicknamed Wanda or Olivia and the budget is \$250,000 a year, in which the repertoire ranges from Bach to doo-wop to high-tech contemporary oratorio and at whose concerts you’re as likely to see men howling with delight at some beribboned demimondaine with a five o’clock shadow as weeping with silent but violent grief at a stoic neo-gospel elegy ... The chorus has come a long way in 12 years... in 1981 this was the sort of seat-of-the-pants outfit in which the treasurer could, and did, confuse his own personal funds with the chorus’ and well, spend them. Now it’s got a 13-member board of directors and a \$60,000 stock portfolio and 145 dues-paying members.

1993 also saw the chorus perform in the Harmonic Convergence Festival Concerts with the Atlanta Feminist Women’s Chorus, “BETTY”, Danny Williams, Lesbian and Gay Chorus of Washington, DC, Romanovsky and Phillips, the San Francisco Gay Men’s Chorus, and Windy City Gay Chorus.

October 12, 1996

On the occasion of the AIDS Memorial Quilt display on the National Mall, GMCW presented a concert with Holly Near, “Forever, For Love and For Life,” at the Lisner Auditorium followed by a patron’s reception before the Candlelight Vigil. A special presentation was made to Founding Director Jim Richardson at this concert – the establishment of a fund in his name to support future recording projects. Richardson died of complications from AIDS the following spring.

January 19, 1997

The Smithsonian Institution's American History Museum was an historic setting for GMCW on the eve of the Bill Clinton's inauguration. They performed an 11-number set there to help celebrate the 53rd Presidential Inaugural – the first time a gay choral group was invited to participate in such a national event.

June 28, 1997

The Chorus was joined by the Indianapolis Men's Chorus at the Lisner Auditorium, on the 16th anniversary of GMCW's formation, to perform the DC premiere of "NakedMan." San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus resident composer Robert Seeley's most ambitious work caught fire among gay men's choruses after SFGMC performed it at GALA Choruses Festival V in Tampa in 1996. The text, created by Philip Littell from over sixty interviews with chorus members, captures their memories and passions with searing honesty and emotion. The review after its performance noted, "GMCW always produces a slick, highly professional staging."

May 28, 1998

GMCW launched its first overseas tour to Scandinavia, visiting Oslo, Stockholm and Copenhagen. The concert in Oslo was held in the hall at the University of Oslo where Martin Luther King, Jr. received his Nobel Peace Prize. In Stockholm, GMCW was received by Sweden's Princess Christina and thanked for their singing to support Noah's Ark, a Swedish AIDS service organization. And in Copenhagen, they became the first gay chorus to sing in the Tivoli Gardens concert hall.

Prior to the trip, the Spring 1998 all-male production of Gilbert & Sullivan's *The Pirates of Penzance* represented the pinnacle of GMCW's staged shows – their first time performing a well-known book musical. The demands of a full staged show, including costumes, set design and construction was an artistic challenge that resulted in pure stage magic.

December 24, 1999

As in many years before, and every year since, a large contingent of GMCW members gathered at the National Institutes of Health hospital in Bethesda, Maryland, where they walked the wards, singing Christmas carols and bringing holiday cheer to patients young and old and too sick to be home.

A friend of one such patient visited by the carolers wrote to the chorus after seeing her friend who was battling cancer. She wanted to "personally thank you guys for brightening a friend's day." Her friend had to spend Christmas at NIH due to a bad reaction to her chemotherapy:

"It hurts to know that someone that beautiful, let alone anyone, has to endure such an illness. I spend my time with her doing my best to make her laugh or even smile. She's pretty head strong, and her spirits are up most of the time. But that night she was at a breaking point, until she 'heard a group of men singing Christmas Carols beautifully.' She thought their voices were amazing and once again, she started to smile. That was the best gift anyone could have given her this Christmas and I really just wanted to thank

all of you for that.”

The following summer, Jeff Buhrman became the new music director for GMCW.

April 2, 2001

“*How do you get to Carnegie Hall?*” the question’s asked. If you were in the Gay Men’s Chorus of Washington in spring of 2001 – you’d know. Their 20th anniversary season saw joint concerts with the New York City Gay Men’s Chorus and the Boston Gay Men’s Chorus at both Carnegie Hall and Symphony Hall in Boston.

2001 also marked the Board of Director’s approval of making the Artistic Director a full time position. The first of many successful cabaret shows was added to the GMCW season that year, and the Capital Club Auction – held at the historic Car Barn in Georgetown – set a GMCW fund-raising record.

The 20th Anniversary Gala Concert was held at the Kennedy Center Concert Hall on June 16. The San Francisco Gay Men’s Chorus – which inspired GMCW’s birth in 1981 – was the special guest for the concert. The combined choruses joined together to sing three selections, including “Michael’s Letter to Mama” from *Tales of the City*. After a 20th Anniversary banquet, with cocktails, dinner, program, video tributes and awards the next night, the chorus performed a benefit on June 23 for the Sussex County AIDS Committee in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware. The following month – on July 6 – the chorus was allowed to participate in the funeral mass of a deceased member at the Catholic Cathedral of Saint Matthew the Apostle on Rhode Island Avenue –marking the first time the church allowed such participation.

December 8, 2002

CBS taped the 25th annual Kennedy Center Honors to air before a nationwide audience on December 26. The GMCW was invited to perform in tribute to one of the honorees, Elizabeth Taylor. The audience included the President, Vice President, Cabinet Secretaries, Congressmen and leaders in government, business and the entertainment industry. Performing with Dionne Warwick and Burt Bacharach in a chorus of “That’s What Friends are For,” and “There is Nothin’ Like a Dame” – this marked GMCW’s first nationally televised performance. 2002 also marked GMCW’s popularly acclaimed production of *The Wizard of Oz*, WAMMIE Award (Washington Area Music Award) for outstanding Classical-Choral Recording for *I Dream of a Time*, and “An Evening of Sondheim and Hammerstein” with Laura Benanti at the Kennedy Center.

April 2, 2003

GMCW’s artistic director Jeff Buhrman hosted the First Annual Educators Workshop in collaboration with the National Association of Independent Schools and the Eastern Educational Resource Collaborative. The workshop’s goal was to teach faculty and staff members of local schools ways in which schools can achieve a welcoming and trusting environment for gay and lesbian students, parents and educators. Later that year, GMCW won the WAMMIE Award for

outstanding Choral Ensemble as well as the Distinguished Service Award from the Gay & Lesbian Activists Alliance of Washington.

March 29, 2004

A *Washington Post* review of the previous weekend's production of "Bye Bye Birdie," GMCW's all-male production of the musical comedy, was another high note in the chorus' growing reputation:

The most impressive aspect about 'Bye Bye Birdie' was its sheer scale: whether the award-winning chorus was flooding the stage in an energetic reprise of 'The Telephone Hour', or simply heard belting out the Conrad Birdie theme song during the show's overture, its 100-plus members gave depth and power to [the] numbers ..."

The following month, a large contingent of singers performed for students from grades 6-12 at the Edmund Burke School in Northwest Washington. Musicalization from the children's book "Oliver Button is a Sissy" – the story of a young boy initially rejected by his classmates for embracing non-traditional male roles in school – was a powerful message and opportunity for the 275 students, and the chorus members.

The 23rd season closed with both the London Gay Men's Chorus and the Heartland Men's Chorus from Kansas City joining GMCW at Lisner for its "Changing Hearts" concert. Days later, the chorus headed for Montreal, Canada to participate in the 7th GALA Choruses Festival.

June 4, 2005

The Pride Concert – as the summer/June concerts have always been known – was a doubly proud day for GMCW. Not only did it reprise its "NakedMan" performance – with special guests, the Ft. Lauderdale Gay Men's Chorus – but also that night was awarded the "Capital Pride Director's Award for Outstanding Leadership and Commitment to the GLBT Community in Washington."

June 25, 2006

Culminating its 25th anniversary season – from "FabYULEus" to "Showboys!" – the chorus closes its season "Singing Free!" with special guest Barbara Cook at the Kennedy Center. The single performance concert weekend will include an alumni reception celebration the night before, and special chorus and guest party after the concert.

Although the falling curtain at the Kennedy Center's Concert Hall will end the 25th Anniversary season, it begins a new verse in our next 25 years – in which we hope to change more hearts, open more minds, take more bows and just sing. Just as the marketing slogan from GMCW's debut concert in March 1982 promised, "You will be hearing from us ...". We have heard from the chorus, and we look forward to hearing much more in the years ahead.

CREDITS:

Money, Money, Money

No non-profit, volunteer, arts organization can function by membership dues, ticket sales and helping hands alone. To continue its success, GMCW knew that it must grow. And from its humble beginnings, that is what it did.

When it was founded in 1981, GMCW had a herring jar in which members chipped in to cover expenses. It always had about \$65, according to a founding member, to be used for stamps, photocopies and the purchase of sheet music. Dreams of renting the Kennedy Center Concert Hall or professionally producing compact discs were difficult to imagine.

The first fundraising reception was held in August of 1981 in the home of local architect Richard Krone. That was followed by GMCW deciding to print and sell Christmas cards that first year as a development activity. "Strike the Harp and Join the Chorus" was the printed greeting. Some of the cards were produced with "Gay Men's Chorus of Washington" printed on the back, and some were not. Some members used GMCW embossed cards as a way to "come out" to family and friends, while others preferred the unmarked cards and the safety of the "closet."

The most significant step in fundraising was the formation of the Capital Club in December 1984 for individual donors to support GMCW. Fund-raising efforts have also included a number of creative ventures: "Drag Tag Sales" (selling old drag outfits and chorus costumes on the patio of JR's Bar & Grill), various cabaret performances, and the unofficial "THAT Parties," at which certain educational and men's fitness materials were re-sold among members. There was even a champagne buffet dinner with a Potomac Fever performance held at the La Cage aux Follies in Southeast Washington – netting \$1,000 in July 1987. In 2003, the Capital Club's "A Grand Night at the Kentucky Derby" auction grossed over \$50,000, with that figure doubling in only two years at the Annual Spring Affair.

GMCW Firsts

Speaking of money, the first membership dues, decided by founding members, was a monthly fee of \$6. Added to voluntary contributions to the chorus, this allowed GMCW to pay its expenses which included the cost of music and renting rehearsal space. And the first music director in that debut season was paid the handsome figure of \$100 a month, with an 18-month contract.

There were another couple of milestones that deserve mentioning to complete the 25 year review. The first baby steps in the world of "choralography" began in the 1985 holiday concert, with a semi-staged production of the Christmas party scene from Benjamin Britten's opera, *Paul Bunyan*. The entire chorus became Paul Bunyan's crew of lumberjacks, partying on the risers, while Johnny Inkslinger, Miss Tiny and Hot Biscuit Slim performed up front. 1985 also marked a year of fashion transition for GMCW. The June concert that year marked the first time the chorus performed in tuxedos – giving up on the previous dress of black Dee Cee jeans and

white, plain-collared dress shirts.

And the Award goes to ...

With the annual Capital Club fund-raising auction converting to the annual “Spring Affair” – with reception, dinner and short chorus performance – the Board of Trustees also established the Harmony Awards in 2004. The awards recognize individuals and an organization that exemplifies the GMCW mission of “affirming the place of Gay people in society.” These awards stand in addition to the Crystal Awards – initiated in 1982 by the first membership co-chairs, Randy Cooke and Rick “Crystal” Allen – to honor the memorable bloopers and humorous moments throughout the year, or to unsung heroes of the chorus. Additionally, the Circle of Excellence Awards were inaugurated in 1991 to honor individuals who have made a significant and long-lasting impact on GMCW.

Finally, the chorus has been honored on several occasions, including:

- 1989 – Mayors Art Award for Excellence in an Artistic Discipline
- 1995 – WAMMIE Award for Gospel/Inspirational Performance
- 2002 – WAMMIE Award for Best Recording – *I Dream of a Time*
- 2003 – Gay and Lesbian Activists Alliance Distinguished Service Award
- 2003 – WAMMIE Award for Best Choral Group
- 2005 – Capital Pride Directors Award for Arts
- 2005 – WAMMIE Award for Best Choral Group

GMCW Recordings:

- 1994 – Singing Free
- 1996 – Pride and Joy
- 1998 – In Our Lifetime (Potomac Fever)
- 1999 – Let It Shine
- 2000 – Sometimes I Wish (Potomac Fever)
- 2001 – And In That Moment
- 2001 – I Dream of a Time
- 2002 – They’ve Got To Be Carefully Taught - Sondheim & Hammerstein
- 2002 – Love Songs and Other Fairy Tales (Cabaret)
- 2004 – Let Me Be The Music (Cabaret)
- 2005 – Changing Hearts

In Memoriam:

Kenny Aaron
Jan Albright
Tom Avenmarg
Chuck Bailey
Bill Barry
Bob Bester

Michael G. Bohn
Craig R. Bowen
C. David Bury
Ted Butler
Jim Campillo
Bill Carwithen

Randy Cooke
Daniel Coombs
Tom Dudley
Bob Edwards
Richard Fromm
Oscar Garcia-Vera
Ciro J. Graziano
Peter Griffith
George Guarino
Barry Hahn
Roger Harlow
John B. Henderson
Scott Herring
Jim Hix
Michael Hodge
R. Andy Horsley
Joe Houle
Gary L. Janus
Jim Jochen
Gary Johnson
Dan Jones
Willis R. King
William Kranick
Steven LeBlanc
Wayne Longest
Steve Maddox
Christopher Marquis
Leonard Matlovich
W. Myron Maye
James McCann
Tim McDonough
Jim Meany
Mark Mennel
Phil Moss
Jim Moore

David Nieto
Norman Nusinov
Ron O’Leary
Len Padgett
Ron Paglia
Rex Paul
Todd Payich
Scott Pierce
Don Poe
Harlan Powell
Harry B. Powers
Terence Powers
H. Glenn Privette
Dennis Quinn
R.J. Quinn
Robb Rexroth
Ric T. Rice
Jim Richardson, Founding Director
Tom Roeder
Larry Ross
Tom Sena
Charles L. Sens
Ray Siefer
Brian Smith
B.J. Sobus
Jason Stelling
Dennis Swick
James D. Vranekovic
Phil Walsh
Benedikt Wassmuth
Dennis Watson
Marvin Weeks
Donald Wolfe
R. Terry Woll
Bob Wonneberger

Music Directors:

Jim Richardson – 1981 and 1983
Nick Armstrong – 1982
Bruce Trinkley – 1984-1989
Jim Holloway – 1989-1999
Greg Ruffer – 1999-2000
Jeff Buhrman – 2000-present

Assistant Directors:

Jim Richardshon – 1982

John Uehlein – 1983
David Sisson – 1983
Jim Richardson – 1984-1985
David Sisson – 1985-1988
Jim Holloway – 1988-1989
Jeff Buhrman – 1989-1997
Greg Ruffer – 1997-1999
Tim George – 1999-2000
Dan Meyer – 2000-2002
Thea Kano – 2004-Present

Principal Accompanists:

Jim Hix – 1981
Peter Orgain – 1982
Phil Willis – 1983
Jim Holloway – 1983-1989
Ted Guerrrant – 1983-Present

Executive Directors:

Nathan Monell – 1997
John Perkins – 1998-2001
David Bielenberg – 2001-2005
Andrew Hoffman – 2006-Present

Presidents of FCPAA/GMCW from 1981-2001*:

Everett Waldo – 1981-1982
Duward Sumner – 1982-1983
Craig Bowen – 1983-1984
Steve Maddox – 1984-1985
Ron Sabacek – 1985-1986
Steve Herman – 1986-1988
Peter Brayton – 1988-1989
Steve Herman – 1989-1991
Michael Resnick – 1991-1992
David Streit – 1992-1994
Rob Fiorito – 1994-1995
Bob Wheeler – 1995-1996
Fred Boykin – 1996-1998
Darrell Lewis – 1998-2000
Fred Boykin – 2000-2001

Chairmen of FCPAA from 2001-present

David Streit – 2001-2004
Jack Reiffer – 2004-2006

Presidents of GMCW from 2001-present

C. Michael Baker – 2001-2002
Jack Reiffer – 2002-2003

David Jansing – 2003-2004
Dan Patton – 2004-2005
Tom DiGiovanni – 2005-2006

** = The position of Chair of the Board of Trustees of Federal City Performing Arts Association became distinguished from that of GMCW President beginning in 2001, when a new governance structure separated the positions.*

*Compiled by Greg D. Kubiak, with contributions by
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And printed, authored materials from the GMCW archives*