GMCW

GAY MEN'S CHORUS OF WASHINGTON, D.C.

NICK ARMSTRONG, Director

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Gay Men's Chorus of Washington D.C.

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Peter Orgain
Principal Accompanist

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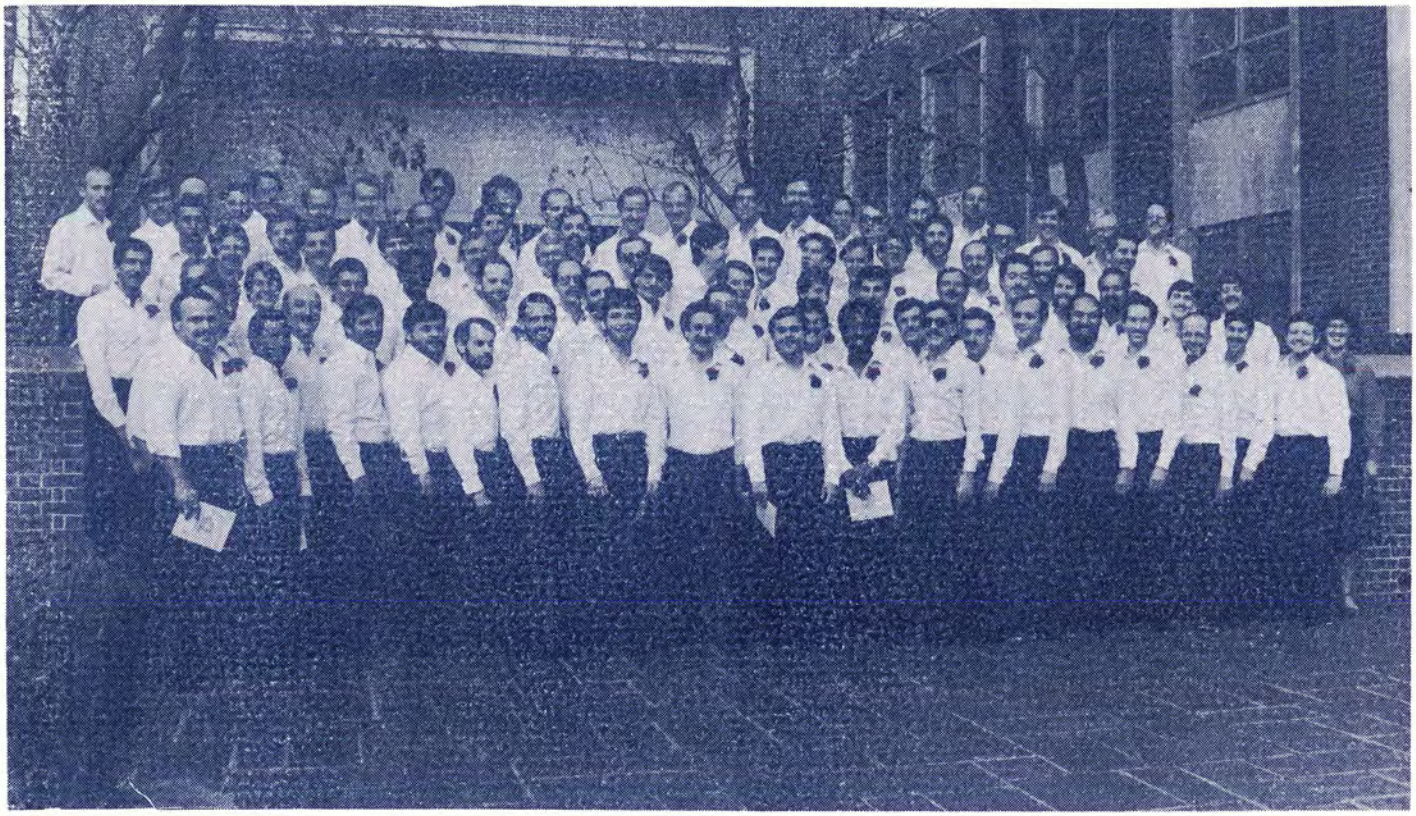


Gay Men's Chorus of Washington, D.C.

"Rhythm of Life"
words by Dorothy Fields
music by Cy Coleman
arranged by Richard Barnes

Shenandoah
Traditional Chantey
arranged by Marshall Bartholomew

"Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child"
Traditional Black American
arranged by Fenno Heath

Two Songs
True Love ("Laska Opravdiva")
The Soldier's Lot ("Ach, Vojna, Vojna")
Traditional Czech verse
music by Leos Janacek
edited by Antonin Tucapsky
English by Karel Brusak

Sine Nomine Singers

"Come again, sweet love"
by John Dowland

"Shoot, false love, I care not"
by Thomas Morley

"Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening"
Brien Smith, accompanist
poem by Robert Frost
music by Randall Thompson

"Grandfather's Clock"
Traditional
arranged by Robert Shaw

Gay Men's Chorus

Cantate Domino
by Hans Leo von Hassler
arranged by Archibald T. Davison

"Salvation Belongeth to Our God"
by Pavel Grigorevich Tchesnokov
arranged by Archibald T. Davison

Alleluia
by Randall Thompson

INTERMISSION

A Few Good Men

"You're Never Fully Dressed Without a Smile"
words by Martin Charnin
music by Charles Strouse

"Standing on the Corner"
by Frank Loesser

Gay Men's Chorus

"Silent Strings"
words by Helen Taylor
music by Granville Bantock

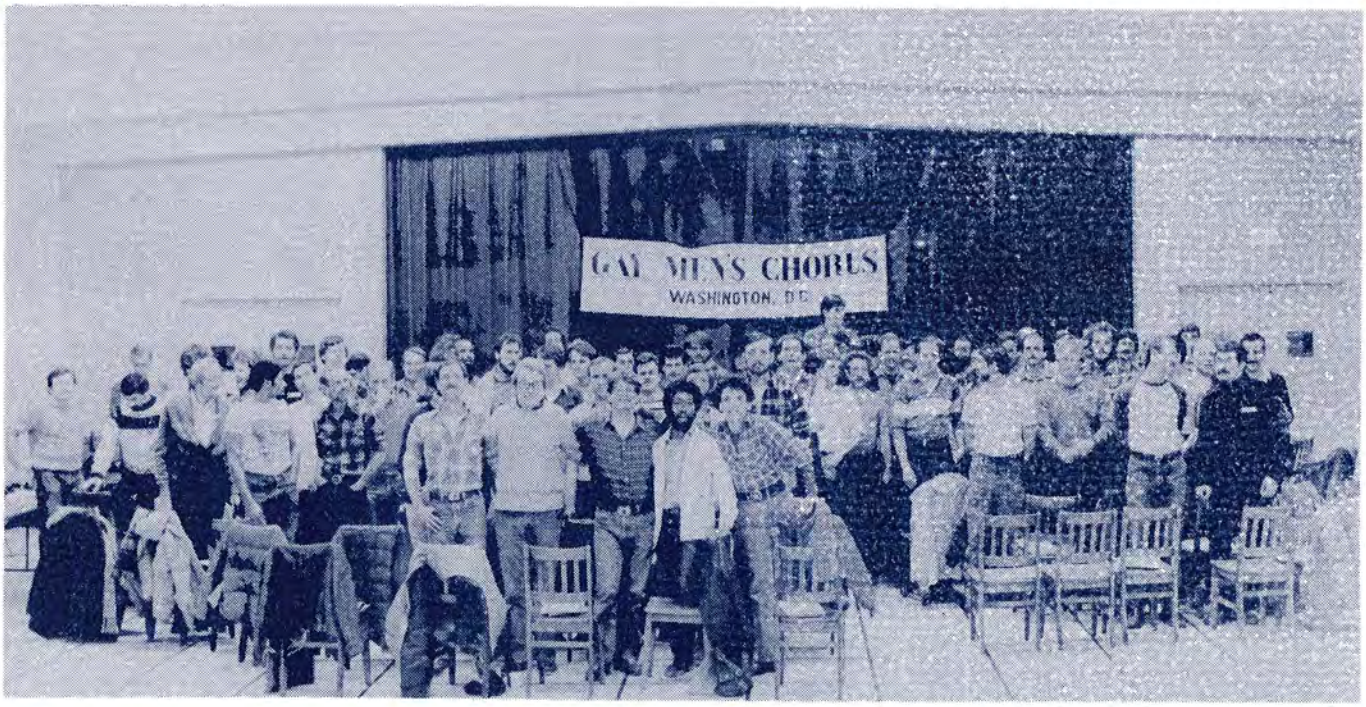
Three Shakespearean Love Songs
No. 1: "O mistress mine"
No. 2: "Come away, death"
No. 3: "Sigh no more, ladies"
John Campbell, french horn, guest artist
music by Robert Washburn
text by William Shakespeare

"Love Is A Many Splendored Thing"
words by Paul Frances Webster
music by Sammy Fain
arranged by Frank Metis

"Dry Bones"
Traditional Black American
arranged by Livingston Gearhart
adapted from Delta Rhythm Boys

Smiles 1900-1920: A Choral Montage
American Popular
arranged by Hawley Ades

Battle Hymn of the Republic
poem by Julia Ward Howe
music by William Steffe
arrangement by Roy Ringwald



So happy together: Washington, D.C.'s Gay Men's Chorus stands shoulder to shoulder—and bolder and bolder; stretching exercises brace baritones for the evening's rehearsal and allow them to ponder careers, torn between the Royal Opera and the Royal Ballet.

Practice

Listen babycakes, show business isn't all glamor and glitter. It's giving up Saturday afternoons for special rehearsals, selling tickets, finding an Arrow Kent II Finesse shirt in the correct size (neck *and* sleeve length), committee meetings, sectional rehearsals, ensemble rehearsals, special rehearsals, committee meetings, potlucks, dress rehearsals, committee meetings... and occasionally coming in a half-tone flatter than *everybody* else.

And finding out that Sister Annunciata taught you a rather creative way of pronouncing Latin vowels—completely different from every other first tenor. And discovering tap-step-kick-steptap-step is different from tap-kick-step-kick-tap-kick. . . rather abruptly.

And getting your fingers pinched in a riser. And finding that your white shirt looks like the dog's breakfast and you have fifteen minutes to wash and dry it before Gary or Tom picks you up for a 7:00 call. And dropping your music in the bath tub while practicing Randall Thompson's *Alleluia* ("It's the best I've ever sounded").

So despite this, you just might be ready to become one of the few, the proud, the chorines?

Accomplished musicians take note of fine points and make a pitch for their own insights as Director Nick Armstrong sees that everyone knows the score.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

•*April 2, 9:30 p.m.*

Gay Men's Chorus of Washington and the Gay People's Alliance of George Washington University hold GPA's Annual April Fool's Dance on Friday, April 2, 1982 from 9:30 p.m. to 1:30 a.m. Tickets are $4.50 in advance, $5.50 at the door, and include beer, wine punch, soft drinks, and munchies. Advance tickets available from GPA and GMCW members.

•*April 24, 9:00 a.m.*

Just in time for spring finery, a community-wide Rummage Sale hosted by GMCW at All Souls Unitarian Church, 16th and Harvard Streets NW from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Spend a sunny Saturday on splendid sales, select a suit, swap samovars, spy spangles, surrender splash, spay spaniels, spurn suitors. . . all at one convenient price. Hurry, this offer won't be repeated repeated repeated. . .

•*May 20, 8:00 p.m.*

GMCW hosts a theatre party at Studio Theatre's production of *The Hostage* **at 1401 Church Street NW—let this Thursday evening affair kickoff a pleasant spring weekend.**

•*June 18, Friday evening*

Our next concert—this time at the Departmental Auditorium, 13th Street and Constitution Avenue NW—location still tentative at time of this publication.

•*June 20—Gay Pride Day*

How could we miss it! Exact plans are still being tossed around, but your Stout-hearted men will be on hand, either marching, singing, selling wares—or maybe all three! Sunday will never be the same.

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Debut '82 – GMCW Strikes

Welcome to St. Mark's Episcopal Church and to our very first "solo" public appearance, as we of the Gay Men's Chorus light the fires of song to warm you up for spring.

We start the evening with the rousing chorus "Rhythm of Life" from Cy Coleman's and Dorothy Fields' 1965 musical *Sweet Charity*. Then having brought you to the very edge of your seat, we will lull you back to sweet repose with two traditional numbers, the moving chantey *Shenandoah* and the soulful spiritual "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child."

Czech Marks

We next turn to eastern Europe for two folk song settings by Czech composer Leos Janacek: the very short "True Love" and the impassioned outcry of "The Soldier's Lot" are both typical of the harmonic richness and rhythmic vitality of the Slavic choral tradition.

Dare Not Speak Its Name

The four selections being performed by the *Sine Nomine Singers* span more than 350 years, and reflect the tastes of three totally different periods in the development of vocal music in English.

"Come again, sweet love" by John Dowland and "Shoot, false love, I care not" by Thomas Morley were published in London in 1597 and 1595 respectively. Dowland states in his note "to the courteous Reader"

> *How hard an enterprise it is in this skillful and curious age to commit our private labours to the publicke view. . . and were it not for that love I beare to the true lovers of musicke, I had concealde these my first fruits, which how they will thrive with your taste I know not. . .*

Morley, best known for his songs to Shakespeare's plays and Dowland, for his dances and lute songs, still seem to thrive, be it in the dolorous mood of "Come again" or the cavalier attitude of "Shoot, false love." These two composers are still performed—indeed, are standards—whereas the nobility and gentry from whom they humbly begged acceptance are long forgotten.

Number 1 on Your Hit Parade. . .

Leaping one ocean and almost three centuries leads us to the American Centennial and one of the hit tunes of 1876, Henry Clay Work's "Grandfather's Clock." This novelty selection, described in the first edition as a "quaint, comic-pathetic effusion," rapidly became a "parlor gem" here and an overnight Music Hall favorite in the British Isles, and was Work's first big success since his notoriety as a Civil War (Union) composer.

Frostiana, by Randall Thompson, subtitled "A sequence of seven choruses for men's women's, and mixed voices," gives us "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening." Not so much a picture as a mood of New England, it brings together the talents of one of America's finest poets with one of her most eminent composers. The original composition was dedicated to the people of Amherst, Massachusetts.

First Chords In Rhythm of Life

Three Sacred Settings. . .

Our last group of pieces in our first set consists of three sacred settings: the first is Hassler's *Cantate Domino*, one of many sacred peices which led to his being hailed as one of the fathers of German music. Born in Nuremberg the same year as Shakespeare, 1564, he studied under Andrea Gabrielli in Venice before returning to Nuremberg as court organist and Kapellmeister.

Returning to music of our own twentieth century, "Salvation Belongeth to Our God," by the Russian Pavel Grigorevich Tchesnokov, is a beautiful example of Romantic Russian vocal music. Finally in this set we perform Randall Thompson's *Alleluia*, commissioned by Serge Koussevitsky for the opening ceremonies of the Berkshire Festival at Tanglewood in July 1940.

. . . Twenty Hoofers. . .

After intermission, we begin by presenting our own song-and-dance troupe, *A Few Good Men*, hotfoot from thier final polishing at the Arthur Murray Dace Studio! This dazzling troupe, a mere six weeks old, brings you "You're Never Fully Dressed Without a Smile" from the musical *Annie*, and "Standing on the Corner" from *Most Happy Fella*—both under the expert direction of Gary Johnson and Kevin Nixon.

We could hardly balance our program without singing of love, so please enjoy "Silent Strings" by British composer Granville Bantock (1868-1946).

. . . And Three Shakespearean Songs

This powerful song is followed by Robert Washburn's *Three Shakespearean Love Songs*. These are settings of lyrics from the Bard's works; the first two, "O, mistress mine" and "Come away death," are from *Twelfth Night* (II. iii and II. iv); the last, "Sigh no more, ladies," comes from *Much Ado About Nothing* (II. iii). This set of love songs ends with Sammy Fain's classic "Love Is a Many Splendored Thing."

No introduction is needed for the rest of our program—if you have never heard "Dry Bones," we can only assume that you have some family skeleton in your closet! "Smiles" is grandly subtitled by its arranger "a choral montage of songs 1900-1920." If you know the words (if!!!) please feel free to join in.

And for our finale—and to prove that patriotism is not the unique preserve of the New Right Rowdies—we present the stirring *Battle Hymn of the Republic*. Julia Ward Howe wrote these words here in Washington, in a room at the historic Willard Hotel; we sing a splendid arrangement written by Roy Ringwald for Fred Waring and his Pennsylvanians.

I thank you for coming to our musical party this evening. We hope that you have been *pleasantly* stimulated by the sight and sound of these Stouthearted Men—as the song says, "Hearts can inspire other hearts with their fire"; we hope to have touched you with our fire this evening. Yours chorally,

Nick Armstrong
Music Director
Gay Men's Chorus
of Washington, D.C.

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Turn a Dream to a Fact

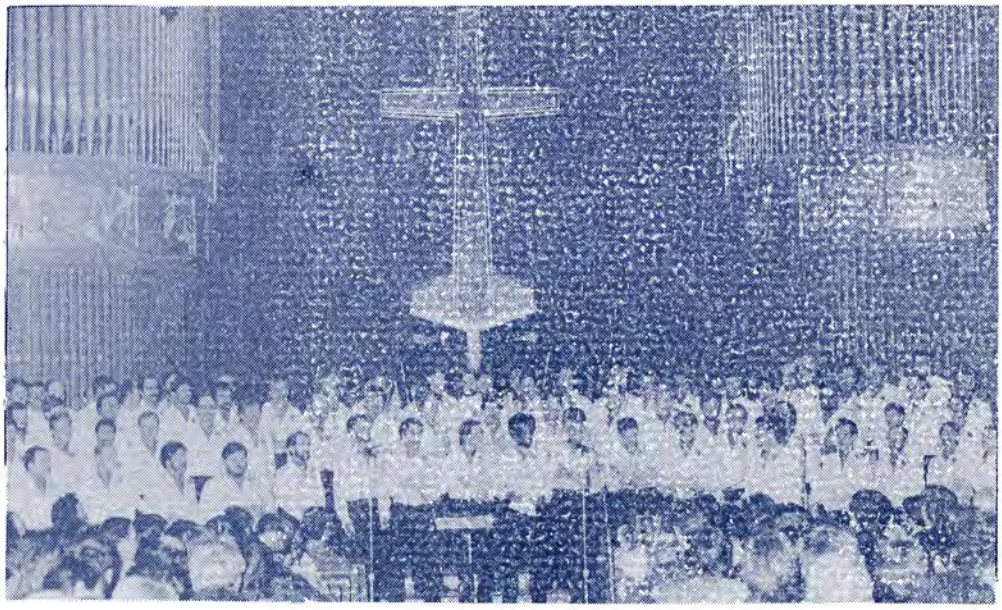
Less than nine months ago, the Gay Men's Chorus of Washington, D.C. was but a dream in several musical minds. Then came June 1981, and the national tour of the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus catalyzed a number of communities across the country—from Seattle to the Windy City to Turtle Creek and places in between. . .

During Gay Pride Week the San Francisco chorus presented an electrifyingly inspirational concert, and in its aftermath Marsha Pearson—a friend and supporter of Washington's gay community—became the resident catalyst and called a meeting for people who might be interested in forming a gay men's chorus. About 20 people attended that first meeting—June 28, 1981 at the Gay Community Center—and GMCW was born.

Membership grew rapidly during the summer, and now numbers over 100 performing and supporting members. Performing membership is by audition with the music director; supporting membership is open to non-singers who provide service work to GMCW on a regular basis.

Two additional small ensembles have formed: the *Sine Nomine Singers*, comprised of 16 voices to present a general repertoire suited for a chamber-style group; and *A Few Good Men*, a song-and-dance troupe of 20 who perform Broadway-and-show music with choreography.

The chorus management and institutional umbrella is a non-profit educational organization



At First Congregational Church, GMCW proves to D.C.'s Metropolitan Community Church that "This Train Is Bound For Glory." Hallelujah, hallelujah, this train.

A Debut at St. Mark's

St. Mark's could pass very well for a neighborhood church, bridging the gap between grand and Gothic and cozy and comfortable—buit it just happens that "the neighborhood" includes the United States Capitol and two houses of Congress.

Serving the people who live and work on Capitol Hill, St. Mark's has stood as a local landmark since 1889 when worship began in the building designed by T. Buckler Ghequier of Baltimore—the tower, spire, and chancel date to 1894.

Because of its location and tradition, St. Mark's has served the community-at-large in many ways. Its pews were removed so that the sanctuary could be used for a number of community and social needs—and with that change came an active schedule of liturgical dance.

But in the middle 1960s the church was the site for the monthly meetings of Washington's then only gay organization: the D.C. Mattachine Society.

The Mattachine Society met in a basement room of the church. These were still rather early days for any gay group, and legend (and recollection) says that some church fathers didn't quite know what to make of the group and discreetly kept tabs on Mattachine's activities. After several months one church father allegedly commented: "I'm not sure what they're doing—but they *are* arguing about bylaws."

During those same years President Lyndon B. Johnson attended St. Mark's—from time to time. In fact, he worshipped here the Sunday after he became President. Later he contributed to the church's air-conditioning fund.

And as the 60s became the 70s, St. Mark's was the site of some of Washington's earliest gay dances in those months after Stonewall.

Since 1966 the Reverend James R. Adams has served as Rector of St. Mark's, continuing the church's search for worship and outreach appropriate to both its tradition and the changing world around it.

The Gay Men's Chorus of Washington, D.C. is exceptionally proud to make its concert debut at a church that has served her neighbors, both great and humble, for over a century—a church that found room in the mid-60s for the founding parents of Washington's gay community—today a new voice rings on Jenkins Hill.

And Baltimore, too

Washington's Gay Men's Chorus takes its debut concert program to D.C.'s Sister City, Baltimore, on March 20, 1982; through the invitation of Baltimore's Gay Community Center, GMCW appears at the beautiful and historic First and Franklin Street Presbyterian Church.

The impressive steeple of Baltimore's lancet gothic church soars 273 feet—the tallest in the city. And inside: a rich black walnut woodworking contrasts with New Brunswick limestone sworls and arches and a deep rose brownstone brick.

The work of Nathan Gibson Starkweather, the church sanctuary is lifted by a massive, spectacular, triple-vaulted ceiling with ornate, hanging pendants—considered by some architectural historians as one of the most splendid Victorian plaster interiors in North America.

Although the building dates from the late 1850s, the congregation dates to Baltimore's oldest Presbyterian assembly, founded in 1761; their first minister: the Reverend Dr. Patrick Allison, a Revolutionary patriot, chaplain, champion of religious freedom, and friend of George Washington.

Beset by the challenges offered an urban ministry in a downtown undergoing rapid change and shifting neighborhoods, First and Franklin Street Presbyterian Church—derived from a merger of two downtown congregations in 1973—expressed its faith in its future by a major renovation project which closed the church from May 1979 to November 1981.

Just two blocks away is Baltimore's Gay Community Center, a four-story building now undergoing renovation to include meeting space, offices, a health clinic, a newspaper office, and other facilities to serve Baltimore's notably successful, hard-working gay and lesbian community.

Washington's Gay Men's Chorus is proud to take its first concert program on the road to Baltimore, and to work with two organizations with such faith in the future and the communities and people they serve.

incorporated as the Federal City Performing Arts Association; its goal is to provide first-rate music in performance by and for Washington's gay and lesbian community and the community-at-large, and to provide the music arts community of the Washington metropolitan area with a first-class men's chorus and other quality music ensembles and concert performances. The Federal City Performing Arts Association is a member of the Cultural Alliance of Greater Washington and of the Gay and Lesbian Association of Performing Arts Groups (GALA).

The Gay Men's Chorus of Washington, D.C. sings a broad-based repertoire including classical choral works for men's voices, Broadway and show music, traditional pieces, and music arranged or written specifically for GMCW and its associated ensembles.

From last summer until December, Jim Richardson served as the first music director of the chorus, holding initial auditions and developing the *esprit de corps* that the chorus became rapidly known for; the demands of his profession prevented him from considering long-term appointment as director.

Jim's capable leadership allowed a director search committee the time it needed to recruit, screen, interview, and audition a number of candidates for the music directorship of GMCW: the result—the selection of Nick Armstrong for an 18-month contract beginning in January 1981.

Stairway to Paradise: Gay Men's Chorus gets fa-la'd at the D.C. Eagle's Tenth Anniversary Birthday Gala.

The fledgling chorus first performed in September 1981 at a special reception held by D.C. Mayor Marion Barry at the District Building to honor two Washingtonians appointed to work in civil rights advocacy and national lesbian organization with the National Gay Task Force—Mel Boozer (Washington activist and alternate delegate to the 1980 Democratic National Convention) and Charlotte Bunch (feminist writer and founder of Diana Press).

In November GMCW sang at a special service at the Metropolitan Community Church which coincided with a visit to Washington by the Reverend Elder Freda Smith, the second-highest clerical leader of the world-wide denomination; and on Thanksgiving weekend the men's chorus was on hand as the featured entertainment at the close of four days of celebration marking the tenth anniversary of the D.C. Eagle, community activist Don Bruce's highly successful 7th Street bar-and-restaurant.

And just-about-six-months after Gay Pride Day, the Gay Men's Chorus of Washington, D.C. performed with the D.C. Area Feminist Chorus and D.C. Different Drummers at a P-Street Festival-sponsored winter concert at the First Congregational Church before an enthusiastic standing-room-only house.

GMCW takes tonight's concert to Baltimore on Saturday, March 20, in a benefit arranged by the Baltimore Gay Community Center at the historic First and Franklin Street Presbyterian Church. A second major concert is being planned for Gay Pride week this June in a major D.C. performance hall.

The Music Man

It was indeed good fortune that brought together a young, newly-awarded master of music and a member of the newly-formed Gay Men's Chorus of Washington last fall.

Nick Armstrong, just out of Virginia Commonwealth University, had come to Washington to track down some leads to break into the D.C. music scene and garner some advice from *Washington Post* dean-of-American-music-critics Paul Hume.

And during his wanderings he happened into GMCW bass Greg Vogel at Lambda Rising bookstore. Vogel sang his usual raptures about the fledgling chorus; Armstrong asked, "Do you need a conductor"—and the rest of the story is obvious.

A grueling interview and audition process brought about Armstrong's appointment as the first permanent director of Washington's Gay Men's Chorus, a term from January 1982 to June 1983—and now, just 13 weeks into that term, an ambitious first concert.

Armstrong brings a solid background conducting opera, playing violin and viola (including a stint as concertmaster of the VCU Symphony Orchestra), coaching and accompanying vocal students, serving as a repetiteur at the opera in Venice, and composing choral and orchestral works for his bachelors degree in composition.

Among his works conducted and performed: quartets by Kodaly, Debussy, Ives, and Mozart; Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*, Stravinsky's *L'Histoire du Soldat*, Britten's *Death in Venice*, Verdi's *Falstaff*, Puccini's *La Boheme*, Mozart's *Cosi Fan Tutte* and *Marriage of Figaro*, and Handel's *Messiah*.

As for non-musical activities, Nick lists "an informed interest in theatre, politics, and international cuisines," enjoys board games (such as chess and go), confesses to being "an enthusiastic but uncoordinated squash player," and likes "the pursuit of intelligent conversation."

And in his private life: Nick will soon reach the four-year mark with a rising young architect he met one day in Venice, *la bella Venezia*, in an art gallery. Who needs to revisit Brideshead?

"I'd like to have a salon, you know—like the Bloomsbury group," Nick wishes. But it's difficult to hold salon in the Northwest English basement he now lives in—for which he's in the market for a small, good second-hand (or more) baby grand piano. He knows a fine way, to treat a Steinway... or a high-tone baby grand.

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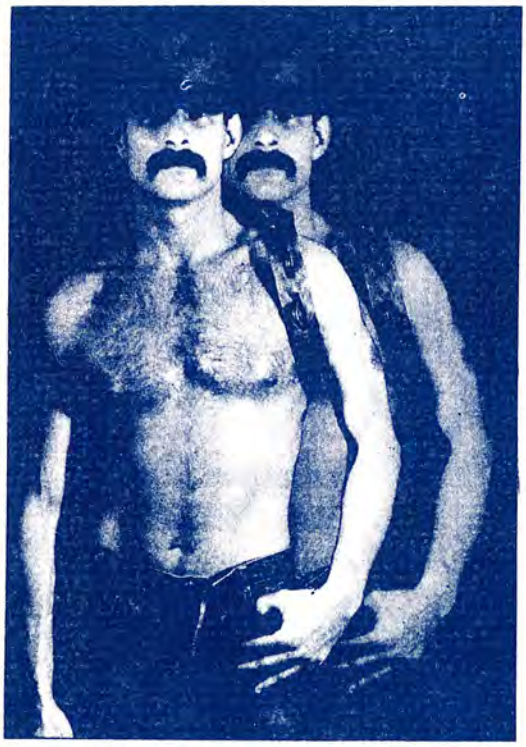

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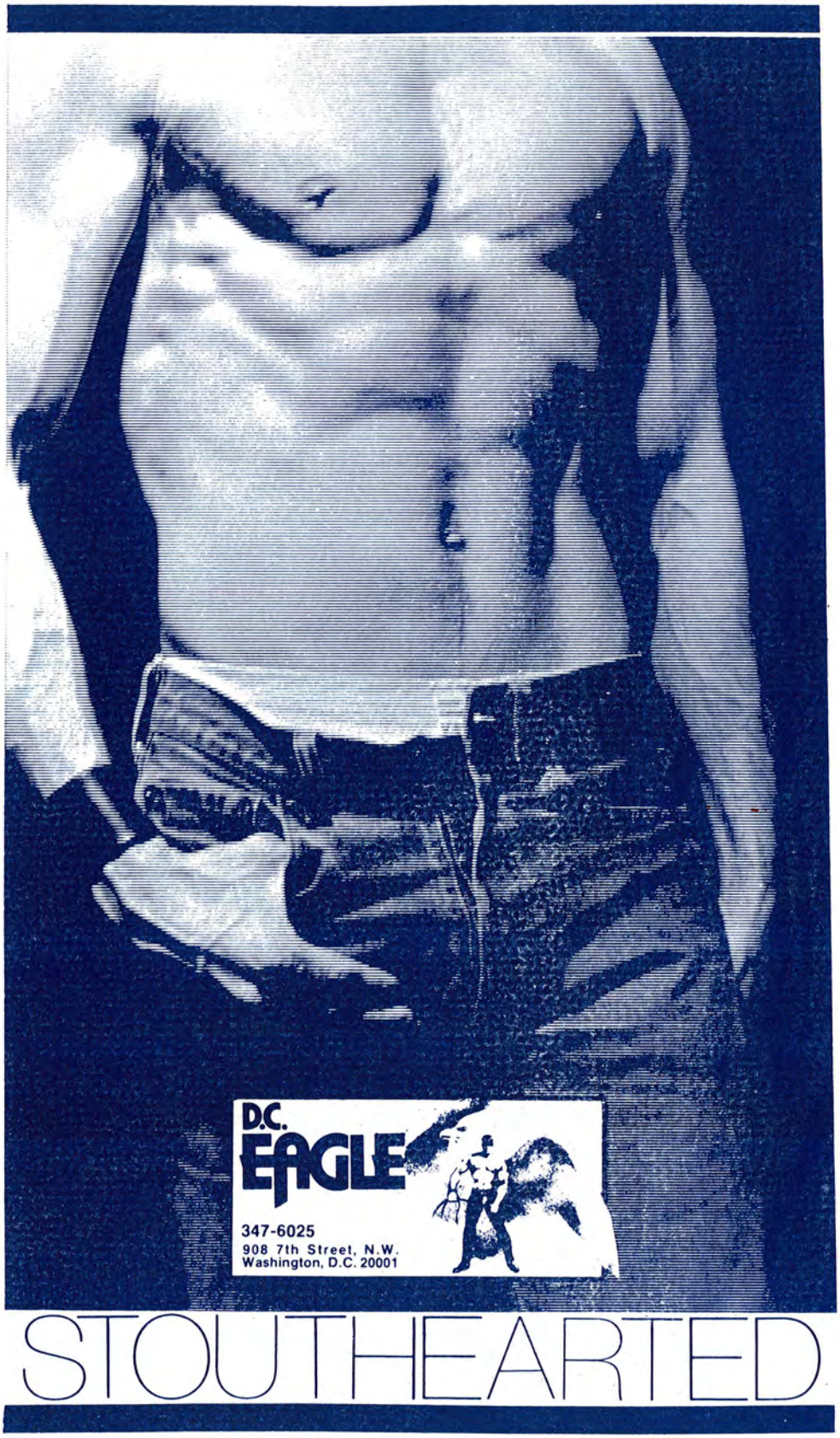

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