

GALA

CHORUSES

2025 Annual Report



Our Vision

A world where all voices are free.

Our Mission

Supporting · Guiding · Inspiring

**LGBTQIA+ choruses and their allies to leverage
the liberating power of singing to create
harmony and equity for all.**





A Letter from the Executive Director

As I look back on 2025, I see a year defined by renewal, connection, and a renewed focus on what it means to be a membership organization.

Having previously served as Chair of the London Gay Men's Chorus, Executive Director of the New York City Gay Men's Chorus, and as a member of the GALA Choruses Board, I stepped into the role of Executive Director of GALA Choruses with a deep appreciation for the power of community, connection, and social justice through our choruses. My mission in 2025 was to reinforce something that has always been fundamental to our mission: GALA Choruses is not only our celebratory quadrennial festival. Indeed, it is an active, vibrant, living network that exists between festivals to carry our work forward. Our singers, our choirs, our volunteers, our artistic and administrative staff have always been the backbone of the GALA community and, now, more than ever are the very essence of our organization.

Another of my primary goals in 2025 was to strengthen that connection by visiting as many member choruses as possible, both locally and internationally. In every instance, I saw firsthand the remarkable consistency of purpose across our movement. While musical styles, languages, and traditions vary widely, the core experience remains the same. We create safe spaces, build community, and use joy and music as a form of resistance.

These visits also underscored the importance of adapting our organization to meet the needs of our members. GALA Choruses continues to evolve in how we communicate, how we digitally engage, and how we support emerging generations of singers, leaders, and administrators. Over the past year, we have taken intentional steps to strengthen our staff, refine our operations, and present a clearer, more consistent public presence that reflects who we are today but, more importantly, who we intend to be in the future.

At the same time, we have expanded our educational and programmatic offerings. We have re-imagined our Symposium, increased workshops and webinars, will be launching a new request-for-proposal process for Symposium, and begun preparing for future festivals with greater transparency and intention. We have also deepened relationships with international partners (Legato Choirs, Out and Loud, Proud Voices Asia, Unison Choruses) and sibling organizations (ACDA, Chorus America), reinforcing GALA Choruses' role within a global choral movement.

This annual report is intended to provide particular highlights of our work and how it positions us for the years ahead. Inside, you will learn more about our work throughout the year, meet a few of the special choruses that make up the incredible family that is GALA Choruses, and discover how we strive to serve as a leader in artistic, administrative, and organizational excellence for LGBTQIA+ choirs.

Thank you to our members, partners, volunteers, and supporters who make this work possible. Every rehearsal, every fundraiser, and every performance contributes to something larger than any one chorus. Together, we are building a resilient, connected, and forward-looking community; with my colleagues on the GALA Choruses Board of Directors, our GALA Choruses staff, and all of our leaders across the country, I am honored to be part of this work.

John D. Carrion
Executive Director
GALA Choruses

A Message from the President Emerita

I have now ended a 3-year term as President of The Board of Directors of GALA Choruses. This caps an 8-year stint on the board. It was my second time serving (I was first elected to the board in 1996) so, it really marks 16 years of board service—my love and commitment to this amazing organization runs deep.



In 2024, our Quadrennial Festival drew 7,600 GALA members to Minneapolis, making it the largest choral conference in the world.

This past year has also been one of significant accomplishments. From the hiring of our new Executive Director John D. Carrion, whose work has and will continue to keep us on a steady path, to supporting groundbreaking artistic work, including the Pauli Murray commission—a powerful new piece honoring the legacy of a visionary civil rights leader.

We strengthened our commitment to chorus sustainability through the 411 Program, offering hands-on guidance to choruses seeking support in governance, finances, transitions, and long-term planning, both administratively and artistically.

The work of the New Harmony Taskforce extended to in-person facilitation for choruses as they looked at issues of equity, access, and belonging within their organizations, through a social justice lens, and worked on ways to strengthen their choruses and create change for a more sustainable future.

And for our Youth Choruses, who remain some of the most courageous and hopeful parts of our movement, GALA continued its investment in youth-centered resources, leadership training, and community building to ensure these choruses thrive.

It was a very good year.

In 2026, I will serve as President Emerita. I am very much looking forward to continuing my board work – especially as we embark on a Strategic Planning process that is sure to make the association stronger for the long-term.

And, I will keep singing with Lavender Light Gospel Choir - as I have done for the last 35-years. Like many of you, being a member of a chorus that is part of the GALA network has transformed my life.

I remain profoundly moved by the impact our GALA Choruses community is making in a time when visibility, courage, and collective voice are essential.

It has been an honor to serve you. Thank you!

As we move into this new year, I wish you the gift of unexpected encounters with inspiration, joy, uplift, resistance, & healing as we show the world what justice and love can sound like.

With profound respect and gratitude.

Maria-Elena Grant

GALA Choruses President Emerita, 2026

GALA Choruses President, 2023-2025



A Word from the Board President

For those I haven't had the pleasure of meeting yet, my GALA Choruses journey began the way it does for many of us. I walked into a rehearsal room in Chicago looking for community. I quickly learned that GALA is more than a trade association; it is a lifeline.

After being in and working for numerous choruses throughout my early life, I found my true calling in Chicago when I became General Manager for Windy City Performing Arts. Choral music has always spoken to me, but when I experienced it being utilized to underscore powerful ideals like love, empathy, social justice, and identity expression, I finally understood my role in the world. I had never experienced such a high

level of queer joy, and I knew I had found my niche.

A few years later, I was appointed Executive Director for the Gay Men's Chorus of Washington, DC, a role I've now held for ten years. I feel so fortunate to get to work with such an incredible family every day. GMCW helped to found GALA Choruses back in the 1980s, and to have the privilege of serving an organization with such a deep history, vital present, and bright future leaves me awe-struck.

Along the way, I was asked to join the GALA Board of Directors. I've had the honor and delight to serve for several years, most recently as Vice-President, learning and leading alongside my dear friend, the talented and dedicated Maria-Elena Grant.

If 2024 was the year of the "big show" in Minneapolis, 2025 was the year of deep roots and new beginnings. Our most significant success has been the seamless integration of our Executive Director, John Carrion, into his first full year of leadership. Under his guidance, GALA hasn't just maintained the post-Festival momentum; we've channeled it into sustainable growth. We also advanced the New Harmony strategic initiative, continuing to move from theoretical frameworks to actionable Access, Equity, and Belonging tools that member choruses are now using in their daily operations.

As I step into the role of Board President, I am looking forward to 2026 as a year of 'intentional connection.' We are now at the halfway mark to Festival 2028, which gives us a unique window to focus on infrastructure without the immediate pressure of Festival production.

I am eager to delve into the strategic planning process, where we will analyze and evaluate the mission, vision, and values of GALA Choruses to ensure we are serving – and seeing – ALL of our member choruses effectively and genuinely. We will examine and expand our offerings, such as the 411 Advisors Program to ensure new choruses have a clearer path to success and more established choruses can bring our indispensable movement to the next level.

Together, let's build a future where every chorus finds not just its rhythm, but its limitless potential to change the world.

Justin Fyala
Board President

About GALA Choruses

GALA Choruses exists to empower LGBTQIA+ choruses as we change our world through song. Our vision is simple yet profound. A world where all voices are free.

The roots of our movement stretch back to 1975, when Catherine Roma founded the Anna Crusis Women's Choir in Philadelphia, the first feminist women's choir in the United States. In rapid succession came the Stonewall Chorale, the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus, and choruses in cities across the country. In an era when being openly queer was dangerous, these pioneers chose visibility and solidarity through song. On December 8, 1981, the New York City Gay Men's Chorus made history as the first gay musical group to perform at Carnegie Hall, demonstrating the power of this growing movement. GALA Choruses was formally incorporated on July 26, 1983.

What began as a handful of courageous ensembles has grown into a thriving network of more than 170 member choruses and 15,000 singers across the Americas. Today, GALA serves our members through educational programming including the Leadership Symposium and 411 Consultant Program, resources for equity and belonging through our New Harmony initiative, and the quadrennial GALA Festival, the world's largest LGBTQIA+ choral event. As a founding member of the Global Alliance of Queer Choirs, we collaborate with sibling organizations in Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Asia, and Canada.

For over four decades, GALA Choruses has provided the support, connection, and resources that allow our member choruses to thrive, carrying forward the legacy of those who first raised their voices in courage and pride.



Year in Review: 2025





56 Choruses, One Community

Executive Director John D. Carrion's

2025 Listening Tour

In 2025, Executive Director John D. Carrion made an ambitious commitment. He would meet members where the work actually happens. “This year has really been about rebirth and renewal,” John explains. “I wanted to visit as many members as possible, understanding what the choruses are doing on the ground, and how we work as a network.” Across rehearsal rooms, performance spaces, and community gatherings, John connected in person with an astounding 56 choruses in total, spanning the United States as well as abroad in Canada, Mexico, the United Kingdom, Ireland, South Korea, Singapore, and Estonia.

The purpose of this travel went beyond visibility. For many members, the primary touchpoint with GALA Choruses has historically been the festival, and in some cases, the festival itself has been conflated with the organization. “Singers sometimes don’t differentiate between the festival itself and GALA as an organization,” John explains. “I really wanted to change that narrative and show that actually, there’s a lot we do in between festivals.”

John often describes festivals as the culmination of long preparation, a performance built on years of work. “The festival, while it’s our flagship event, is a sort of celebration of the work that’s happening in the middle,” he says. Chorus visits bring that same idea to life in real time. They highlight the months of rehearsal and planning, the volunteer energy, and the day-to-day leadership that make LGBTQIA+ choral life possible in every region.

One of the most powerful outcomes of these visits was how consistently the mission translated across geography. Even as repertoire and languages changed, John found the rehearsal experience itself remarkably familiar from city to city and country to country. While cultural expression may have been different, the rhythm, shared focus, and sense of belonging remained consistent.

The visits were also a listening tour. John used them to better understand what choruses are experiencing on the ground, what members need, what challenges they are navigating, and how GALA Choruses can adapt. “Understanding how the organization needs to adapt to the changing environment, to the incoming generation” was a central focus of the year, he notes.

John was struck by how meaningful the visits were to members, not because they were about one person’s visit, but because they represented recognition and connection from the wider movement. “I was welcomed into their safe spaces, not just as the Executive Director of GALA Choruses, but as a friend and a fellow singer,” John recalls. “They would offer me music or sing a song to me as a welcome, invite me to share a meal. It was very meaningful. I am always so moved by the generosity of the queer choral community.”

The travel also revealed the growing strength of regional collaboration. John observed multi-chorus partnerships forming at the state and regional level. “In Oregon, they did an all-Oregon concert. There was an all-Michigan concert, an all-Ohio concert. Next year we’re looking at a California concert and then the year after, a Texas concert.” These models increase visibility, share resources, and reinforce the idea that each chorus is part of something larger than itself.

These 56 visits mark the beginning of a continuing effort. While John has not yet reached every member chorus, he intends to keep building this practice over time. More than a series of trips, the listening tour represents an evolution in how GALA Choruses can connect with member choruses, and represents GALA’s commitment to listening and sharing. Every rehearsal, every fundraiser, and every performance supports something larger. “The creation and maintenance of community is an essential part of what we do,” John says. “You could say it’s the most important part. The music is the conduit through which we do that.”

The Road to Festivals 2028 & 2032

Planning a Festival Is a Multi-Year Performance

GALA Choruses festivals are often experienced as one extraordinary week. Over five days, nearly 200 concerts unfold as more than 7,600 singers from over 120 choruses gather to share music, build community, and celebrate the breadth of LGBTQIA+ choral life. An entire city is transformed into a gathering place for LGBTQIA+ choral music. But the festival itself is only the visible peak of a much longer process. Like a concert that culminates months of rehearsal, a festival represents years of coordination, creative planning, partnership-building, and member engagement. The festival is, in many ways, the organization's performance.

In 2025, GALA Choruses advanced that multi-year work on two parallel tracks: strengthening the path to Festival 2028 while beginning the longer-horizon planning that will shape Festival 2032.



Festival 2028: Refining the Blueprint in Minneapolis

Festival 2028 will return to Minneapolis, the same host city as Festival 2024. The decision to repeat the location was shaped by practical continuity. Minneapolis was originally the planned site for 2020 before the pandemic halted the festival cycle, and returning there in 2024 allowed the organization to preserve the existing bid structure and partnerships. Keeping the same host city for 2028 also supports operational stability as a newer staff team continues to build institutional knowledge and sharpen the festival's production blueprint.

For members, the setting may be familiar, but the focus remains forward-looking. The work underway is not about repeating 2024, it is

about building on what worked, tightening what can be improved, and expanding what the festival can offer across artistic, logistical, and community-building dimensions.

In 2025, planning for Festival 2028 centered on early artistic development and long-range scheduling. The commissioning process has begun, including the Dr. Catherine Roma Women Composers Commissioning Project, which funds new collaborations between GALA member choruses and women composers, resulting in works that celebrate diversity, promote social justice, and stir the human spirit. In early 2026, GALA Choruses will outline the core artistic endeavors and the schedule structure, with registration planned to open in early 2027. The festival will take place July 12–16, 2028.

These milestones are important for all participants. For choruses, early clarity supports everything from repertoire selection and rehearsal pacing to budgeting, fundraising, and travel planning. For the broader network, transparent timelines allow GALA to align everyone's preparation, ensuring the festival is ultimately a celebration of all the work leading up to it by everyone involved.

Festival 2032: A Wider Lens and a Longer Timeline

While Festival 2028 planning continues, 2025 also marked the formal start of the Festival 2032 host-city selection process. GALA Choruses initiated a broad request-for-proposals outreach, contacting 28 potential host cities as part of a deliberate effort to identify the best long-term fit for the scale and complexity of the festival.

The Festival 2032 process is designed to be staged and methodical. After proposals are gathered, 2026 will focus on reviewing submissions and beginning site visits to candidate cities. In 2027, leadership will move toward a recommendation, which will ultimately be decided by the board in early 2028, setting the stage for the official announcement at Festival 2028.

Selecting a host city is about finding the right fit for an event of this scale and significance, one where the venues, the welcome, and the local community all contribute to an unforgettable experience. Beyond the logistics, what each Festival offers is irreplaceable. It is a chance for singers to step outside their own rehearsal halls and increase the scope of a worldwide movement, to share stages with choruses from different countries and different traditions, and to return home knowing they are part of something much larger than themselves. The roads to 2028 and 2032 are well underway and we look forward to raising our voices together soon.



A New Way to Hear the Movement

In 2025, GALA Choruses launched Queer Voices: The Official Podcast of GALA Choruses to bring members closer to the stories, people, and ideas that shape the network between festivals. With new episodes released biweekly on Wednesdays, the podcast offers a consistent, accessible way to stay connected, whether you're a singer, board member, artistic leader, or supporter following the work from afar.

Hosted by Executive Director John D. Carrion, Queer Voices centers on conversations with chorus leaders, artists, board members, and international collaborators. The series launched by giving some historical context on GALA by featuring former GALA Choruses Executive Director Robin Godfrey and former Artistic Director Jane Ramseyer Miller in the first two episodes.

The podcast builds on other social media outreach by creating space for more in-depth conversation. A groundbreaking program or exciting new initiative might be happening in one city but remain largely invisible outside that local community. Through Queer Voices, GALA Choruses amplifies those stories and initiatives, offering something more detailed, more in-depth, and more personalized. One early episode, for example, spotlighted Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus and their creation of a new SSA chorus, the Nickel City Treblemakers.

Queer Voices is also part of a broader effort to reach audiences, particularly younger demographics, in the formats they already use. By publishing on major podcast platforms including Apple Podcasts and Spotify, the organization is expanding how it communicates and engaging listeners who may not seek out information on a website or in longer written updates. Episodes are available anywhere people find their podcasts, or by searching "GALA Choruses podcast" or "Queer Voices."

Member choruses and leaders interested in appearing on the podcast are welcome to reach out via info@galachoruses.org. As the series continues into 2026, Queer Voices will keep amplifying the breadth of the network, one conversation at a time.

2026: What's Ahead

In 2026, GALA Choruses will focus on transforming recent momentum into durable infrastructure, strengthening the organization's tools, expanding member support, and planning intentionally for the next festival cycles. At the center of the year is strategic planning, which will involve a close review of the systems and resources that power the network, including the mission, vision, our Integra Planner management system, the website, social media presence, operations, staffing, and funding sources.

Member connection remains a priority. Chorus visits will continue throughout 2026 to stay grounded in what ensembles are experiencing and to strengthen relationships across the membership.

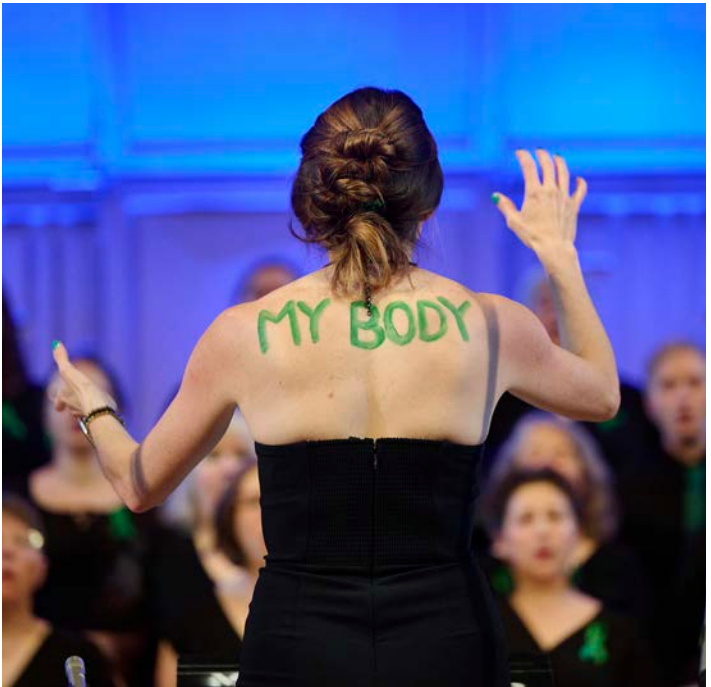
Programmatically, GALA Choruses will refresh key supports designed to help choruses thrive between major events. Plans include updating the 411 consultant program, which provides expert guidance across artistic, fundraising, administrative, governance, and youth development areas. The refresh will expand accessibility and ensure the service continues to meet evolving needs across the network. The organization will also work to revive and modernize its Best Practices program, bringing renewed attention to certification and shared standards that can strengthen day-to-day operations for member choruses.

We will also deepen our engagement beyond the membership through intentional partnerships with major choral organizations. We will continue our collaboration with the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) and Chorus America to support greater visibility and position LGBTQIA+ choral singing within the broader choral ecosystem.

Internationally, GALA Choruses will increase representation and participation across its sister networks. Planned involvement includes the Gay Games in Valencia, Spain (June 27 - July 4, 2026), where a choral festival component will take place at the Palau de les Arts. Continued connection with Legato Choirs and their Various Voices festival in Brussels will further strengthen transatlantic ties. Engagement with Out and Loud in Perth, Australia (November 2026), Unison in Canada, and Sister Singers Network in the United States will round out a year of meaningful global engagement.

Finally, 2026 will include renewed attention to the future of LGBTQIA+ choral singing through youth engagement, including a youth conference planned in Portland that will bring together the next generation of singers and leaders from youth choruses across the network.

Voices from Our Membership





The ANNA Crusis Feminist Choir

A Magnificent Milestone and Enduring Legacy

In 2025, The ANNA Crusis Feminist Choir reached an impressive milestone, marking fifty years of singing, organizing, and building community through feminist values. Founded in 1975 in Philadelphia by composer and activist Cathy Roma, ANNA Crusis emerged at a moment when women's voices (and music about women's lives) were largely absent from the choral landscape. As Artistic Director and GALA Choruses Board Member Miriam Davidson explains, there was then “no place where choruses could celebrate women's voices—music about women's lives written by women, for women to sing.”

From its earliest days, ANNA Crusis became more than a musical ensemble. It quickly grew into a refuge for singers seeking both artistic rigor and a space where they could be fully themselves. Initially serving as a safe haven for lesbians and allies, the choir established a culture of trust and openness that has endured for decades.

Today, ANNA Crusis is a 94-member, multicultural, multi-generational ensemble whose members represent a wide spectrum of identities and lived experiences. Singers come from different backgrounds, orientations, and gender identities, united less by sameness than by shared values and purpose. One of the defining aspects of the choir is the way it brings together people who might not otherwise cross paths, creating connection through collective song and shared commitment.

That evolution was made visible in a significant change undertaken in recent years: the decision to shift the choir's name from a women's choir to a feminist choir. Miriam describes the shift as an effort to “walk the walk,” expanding the choir's identity in a way that fully embodies its feminist values.

The fiftieth anniversary season itself was designed to honor both legacy and relevance. The choir presented two anniversary concerts, “Generations

Unbroken” in June and “Generations Forward: The Future Is Feminist” closing the year in January, featuring repertoire that had shaped ANNA Crusis across five decades. The programming drew from music performed throughout the choir’s history, alongside newly commissioned work, including “This Time Now,” a commissioned piece by composer Moira Smiley. Created in close collaboration with the singers, the work was informed by conversations about what it has meant, and continues to mean, to belong to the choir.

Community for ANNA Crusis has always extended beyond its own membership. The choir is an active part of a vibrant regional choral ecosystem that includes four GALA member choruses in Philadelphia alone, with additional ensembles in Delaware and Baltimore. As a founding member of GALA Choruses, ANNA has found connection, support, and opportunities for growth through this network, situating its work within a movement of LGBTQIA+ ensembles committed to similar values. These relationships have fostered collaboration, including an annual free concert called “Together” that unites Philadelphia-area GALA choruses for individual and collective performances.

The anniversary year also looked outward. In 2025, ANNA Crusis planned new collaborations, including work with Lavender Light Gospel Choir from New York, and began exploring ways to participate in Philadelphia’s upcoming 250th anniversary by uplifting voices historically left out of civic celebration.

The year was not without challenge. Like many arts organizations, the choir navigated the strain of an intense social and political climate, which left many singers feeling depleted before rehearsals even began. Yet time and again, members found that coming together to sing offered renewal, participation in something larger than themselves that restored energy, hope, and purpose.

That persistence is embodied in the choir’s living history. Three founding members continue to sing with ANNA Crusis today, offering a powerful reminder of what it means to sustain community across generations and through adversity.

After fifty years, ANNA Crusis remains what it set out to be. It is a place where voices come together not only to make music, but to affirm dignity, resilience, and collective strength. For Miriam, supporting the choir and the wider GALA network is ultimately about sustaining a legacy of safe space, solidarity, and song in service of justice. “Continuing to hold that space sacred,” she says, “for people to come together in community, in song, to sing for justice and solidarity, is one of the most important things we can be doing right now.”



Portland Sage Singers

Creating Community at Any Age

The best time to start is now! Portland Sage Singers took that truth to heart in 2025, launching an LGBTQIA+ elder chorus that quickly found its place in the city. “It has become a community,” says Artistic Director Tim Seelig of the group, which had 70 members join for the inaugural season. “We don’t sit around and talk about our aches and pains. It’s a place where people get to come and be lifted out of that.” Board Chair Michael McDonald remembers the moment their inaugural performance shifted from hopeful to affirming for the new chorus. “We wound up selling out four weeks before our first show.”

That June concert was a bold debut for the chorus. As a brand-new organization, they stepped onto a professional stage with a full-scale production at The Reser, a 550-seat venue. For Michael, the sold-out show wasn’t only a marketing win. It was a validation of the chorus’s purpose. The response, he says, felt like the public answering their question in real time. “Yes, we support this.”

That momentum carried into December when their holiday concert sold out six weeks in advance, making it clear their June success wasn’t a one-off curiosity but the start of a real relationship with their audience. Behind the scenes, however, Portland Sage Singers’ first-year success was no accident.

A disciplined organizational launch made it possible. Michael describes an approach that treated the chorus not as a casual gathering that might eventually formalize, but as an institution from day one. “By the time

we had our first rehearsal, we had our 501(c)(3), we had done all the incorporation... before we ever had a rehearsal,” he says.

That groundwork helped the group move quickly, establishing governance, budgeting, and systems early so the artistic mission could take center stage once singers arrived.

Tim traces the chorus’s origins to a simple realization. Older LGBTQIA+ adults often carry deep musical lives, but can still find themselves isolated, particularly in spaces that skew younger. Michael experienced that feeling firsthand in other ensembles. In a chorus dominated by younger singers, he says, “it made me feel less like I belonged there.” Portland Sage Singers offers a community where queer identity and allyship are shared, as well as a shared stage of life.

In rehearsal, that belonging is not sentimental. It’s structural. Tim sees the chorus as an antidote to loneliness, especially for people whose networks have narrowed with age, health shifts, bereavement, or retirement. “It’s a real lifeline,” he says. Members of the chorus bring friends, build habits around being together, and keep showing up for reasons that go beyond singing and performing alone.

Portland Sage Singers has also treated “community” as an active practice, not a slogan. One outreach moment sharpened the group’s identity early on. Forty-five singers performed at an ICE detention facility in Portland, offering music in a setting defined by uncertainty and displacement. It was, Tim says, “incredible.” The kind of experience that reminds a chorus why it exists beyond any single concert night.

Financially, 2025 became another proof point. The organization began the year with no budget and ended with a solid fundraising base, including a successful year-end appeal where donors met a board match in full. That early foundation matters because many singers live on fixed incomes, a reality that shapes everything from participation costs to concert production choices. Therefore, the successful fundraising ensures anyone who wants to join the chorus will be able to.

Being part of GALA Choruses matters to Portland Sage Singers for reasons that go both ways. “We bring something to GALA,” Michael says, “and that is a vision for what is possible for people as they age.” The chorus hopes to inspire other communities to launch their own elder ensembles, meeting a need that exists far beyond Portland. At the same time, GALA membership gives the group a platform and a larger family. Tim points out that with youth choruses, adult choruses, and now elder choruses, GALA can support singers across an entire lifetime.



Major Minors

Building Belonging for Youth Through Song

In 2025, Major Minors, a youth chorus of Nashville in Harmony, continued to serve as a vital creative and emotional refuge for a group of 30 LGBTQIA+ youth in Tennessee. At a time when many queer and trans young people face increasing hostility in their schools and communities, Major Minors offered something both simple and powerful: a place to sing, to be seen, and to belong.

Founded in 2017, Major Minors brings together teens ages 12 to 18 from across the region, many of whom do not have access to affirming spaces elsewhere in their lives. For some singers, Major Minors is their first experience in a choir. For others, it is the only space where they can speak freely about who they are.

“Major Minors is a safe space for queer youth to come together,” says Lex Buglio, Program Manager for Major Minors. “Even if they don’t sing at school, even if this is their first time in a choir, this is a place where they can be around kids who are like themselves. That’s the priority.”

Throughout 2025, the choir balanced artistic growth with community connection, performing in settings ranging from intimate local gatherings to high-profile stages like the Ryman Auditorium. Their repertoire blended emotionally resonant anthems with accessible pop and contemporary selections reflecting the identities of the singers themselves. One piece in particular, “You Will Be Found” from Dear Evan Hansen, has become a defining work for the ensemble. “It hits so

many heartstrings,” Lex says. “Not just for the kids, but for audiences too. People always ask for it.”

The choir also engaged with the broader LGBTQIA+ community through partnerships with local Pride organizations, PFLAG chapters, and advocacy groups. Their presence at community events, especially in smaller towns like Franklin, has become something people genuinely look forward to. “We had families tell us, ‘We don’t want to show up if the kids aren’t there,’” Lex recalls. “For a lot of older folks, seeing these kids have something they never had growing up is incredibly healing.”

A major highlight of 2025 was Major Minors’ continued connection to LGBTQIA+ choruses nationwide through the GALA Choruses network. Last summer, the choir traveled to World Pride in Washington, D.C., with Lex working to ensure every family could participate regardless of financial circumstances. These relationships have created pathways for travel, collaboration, and long-term support.

Former members who have aged out remain connected as alumni, sometimes rejoining summer trips or finding new choral homes when they move away for college. In one instance, a Major Minors alum relocating to New York connected directly with a GALA-affiliated chorus there, helping them find community and even housing before they arrived. “That kind of continuity matters,” Lex says. “It means these kids aren’t starting from scratch every time they enter a new chapter of their lives.”

Like many LGBTQIA+ organizations serving youth, Major Minors faced challenges in 2025. In one instance, pride-themed ornaments created by the singers were removed from a public library display after complaints from community members. While disappointing, the experience reinforced the choir’s sense of purpose. “They were hurt,” Lex says. “But they still showed up. They kept creating music. They kept finding ways to be visible.”

That resilience is at the heart of Major Minors’ impact. In a political and cultural climate that often feels hostile, the choir stands as a living reminder that queer youth deserve joy, safety, and the chance to raise their voices.

411 advisor helped them prioritize what they needed to do legally as a board and what policies and procedures needed to be in place year after year. The advisor also got to know the group personally and helped them figure out how to delegate responsibilities within their leadership.

“The 411 Program is so beneficial because the advisors are experts and have experience in the problems or opportunities a choir has,” Beau adds. “Our advisor was super flexible and friendly and met our needs perfectly.”

Because 411 is a member benefit, its impact reaches beyond any single engagement. Each project strengthens a chorus’s internal capacity, helping organizations improve fundraising systems, refine administrative operations, strengthen board governance, expand youth programming, or elevate artistic planning. Over time, these improvements make the entire network more resilient, better led, and better equipped to serve singers and communities.

In the year ahead, GALA Choruses will continue refining 411 to make it even more accessible and responsive to evolving member needs. The program reflects a broader commitment to reinvesting in the membership between festivals, support that often depends on sustained philanthropic and community backing. Put simply, 411 is free to member choruses because supporters help make it possible.

If your chorus has a challenge to solve or an opportunity you want to pursue, the 411 Program is here to help. Member leaders are encouraged to connect with GALA Choruses to explore how the program can support your next step.

More information is available at:

<https://galachoruses.org/resource/expert-advice-gala-411-program/>



Leadership



2025 Executive Committee

- Maria-Elena Grant — President, Co-Chair, New Harmony Taskforce
- Justin Fyala — Vice President, Chair, Resource Development Committee
- Michael McDonald — Secretary
- Jeff Smith — Treasurer, Chair, Finance Committee
- Carol Paskulin — Member-at-Large, Co-Chair, Festival Committee

Board Members

- Tim Blanchard-Modisette, Chair, Governance Committee
- Miriam Davidson, Chair, Communications Committee
- Eric Dickerson
- Abdullah “Abby” Rasheen Hall, Co-Chair, New Harmony Taskforce
- Will Jones
- Karen Lane
- Steve Milloy
- Cliff Schiappa
- Oscar Urtusástegui, Co-Chair, External Relations Committee

2026 Executive Committee

- Justin Fyala — President
- Abdullah “Abby” Rasheen Hall — Vice President
- Carol Paskulin — Secretary, Co-Chair, Festival Committee
- Jeff Smith — Treasurer, Chair, Finance Committee
- Miriam Davidson — Member-at-Large
- Maria-Elena Grant — President Emerita, Chair, New Harmony Taskforce

Board Members

- Tim Blanchard-Modisette, Chair, Governance Committee
- Eric Dickerson
- Jason Frazier, Chair, Resource Development Committee
- Jessica Gallagher-Steuver, Chair, Communications Committee
- Liz Graves
- Will Jones
- Andrea Laguni
- Karen Lane
- Steve Milloy
- Cliff Schiappa
- Joseph Shapiro, Co-Chair, Membership and Education Committee
- Oscar Urtusástegui, Chair, External Relations Committee

2026 Staff

- John D. Carrion, Executive Director
- Reese Schmid, Membership & Communications Manager
- Gabe Salazar, Artistic Advisor in Residence
- Brayton Bollenbacher, Operations Manager
- Dr. D. Chipper Dean, Production Manager

GALA Choruses Financial Update

GALA Choruses Financial Update The Board of Directors authorized Grossman Yanak & Ford, Certified Public Accountants, to perform an audit of GALA Choruses financial statements for the calendar year ended December 31, 2025. Summarized financial information from that financial statement is shown here.

A complete copy of the reviewed financial statements and/or the related Form 990 filing with the Internal Revenue Service are available by request to info@galachoruses.org.

Statement of Financial Position as of December 31, 2025

The following report was approved by the GALA Choruses Finance Committee and the GALA Choruses Board of Directors. These numbers are awaiting final independent audit from Grossman, Yanak, and Ford LLP.

	Assets		Liabilities and Net Assets
Cash	\$964,188.80	Accounts Payable	\$10,172.66
Accounts Receivable	\$28,568.75	Current liabilities	\$64,269.38
Other Current Assets	\$9,416.78	Board Designated Funds	\$101,100.00
Fixed Assets	\$42,430.56	Other Equity	\$826,432.47
		Net Assets with Donor Restrictions	\$52,803.04
Total Assets	\$1,044,604.89	Total Liabilities & Equity	\$1,044,604.89

The quadrennial festival creates a cycle for GALA's finances where net assets increase in the year of festival and are drawn down over the following three years. Targets are established for the balance in cash at the end of each year between festivals to ensure financial stability.

With Gratitude to Our Donors and Supporters

Thank you to everyone who supported GALA Choruses throughout 2025. Your generosity strengthens our membership association and sustains the vital work happening between festivals. Because of you, we are able to expand programs like the 411 Consultant Program, deepen community-building and ambassadorship efforts, increase our presence on a global scale, and support the development of LGBTQ+ choral spaces for singers of all ages.

We are also grateful to our corporate partners and sponsors whose commitment to this mission helps advance the movement.





Contact

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