

Music and Memory: First Steps Towards Documenting LGBTQ+ Choirs in Community Archives

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Abstract

Despite the profound impact that LGBTQ+ choruses have had on singers and audiences for the past 50 years, their stories have remained largely absent from archival institutions. In this article, I explored the ways in which LGBTQ+ choirs could address this gap in the historical record by establishing their own archival collections. Beginning with the establishment of the Gay and Lesbian Association of Choruses (GALA), I briefly outlined the modern history of LGBTQ+ choirs in the United States. I then outlined the archival theory and structure of community archives using LGBTQ+ examples. I presented the results of research into two LGBTQ+ choirs in Arizona: Phoenix Women's Chorus and Desert Voices. This research included brief histories of each chorus and the results of a survey sent to both choirs about the experiences, memories, and materials they would want represented in a potential chorus archive. Finally, I suggested topics for future research and made recommendations for establishing LGBTQ+ chorus archives.

Keywords

LGBTQ+ choirs, archives, history

Introduction

The act of singing in a chorus is a deeply communal experience. It requires singers to breathe together, to move together, and to share their voices in the pursuit of creating something more meaningful than what can be created alone. It is a practice of acknowledging shared humanity, for both singers and audiences. This practice has been especially significant for LGBTQ+ singers seeking a safe community to express their identities. For decades, LGBTQ+ choirs have created beautiful music that celebrates and validates the lives of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer community. In addition to empowering singers, LGBTQ+ choruses have had a profound impact on their audiences. These choirs have used music "to make more tangible for their audiences the loves and pains and joys and sufferings of queers, thereby humanizing identities that are still systematically denied full humanity" (Balén, 2017, p. 35).

Despite the profound impact that LGBTQ+ choruses have had on singers and audiences over the last 50 years, their stories have remained largely absent from archival institutions. In "Queer Lives in Archives: Intelligibility and Forms of Memory" (2018), Gina Watts discussed the way this type of absence can contribute to the erasure of community memory and identity:

Archives represent material history: the idea that a person can find their families, or those whose lives mirrored theirs, in an acid-free box, and in doing so, find themselves, be recognized by the historical record, and claim their right to take up space in the world.... By contrast, not existing in the archive can seem like not existing at all (p. 104).

When LGBTQ+ records have appeared in archival institutions, they have often been government records produced by those policing communities rather than participating in them (Watts, 2018, p. 105). LGBTQ+ choruses have had an empowering effect on singers and communities, and they have been a vital chapter in queer history. For this reason, it is imperative to preserve the stories of LGBTQ+ choruses in archives.

In this article, I investigated the ways that archives for LGBTQ+ choruses could be established through research into two choruses in Arizona: Phoenix Women's Chorus and Desert Voices. These choruses had been active in Arizona for nearly 40 years yet did not appear in any archive in the state. Beginning with the establishment of the Gay and Lesbian Association of Choruses (GALA), I briefly discussed the history of LGBTQ+ choruses in the United States. I then outlined the archival theory, structure, and purpose of community archives using LGBTQ+ examples. I also presented the research into the history of Phoenix Women's Chorus and Desert Voices, as well as the results of a survey sent to both choirs that asked singers about the experiences, memories, and material they wanted represented in a chorus archive. Finally, I made suggestions for future research, including recommendations for creating archival collections for LGBTQ+ choruses. The goal of this research was to take the first steps towards establishing an archival collection for these two Arizona choirs. In doing so, I also hoped to create a roadmap for other LGBTQ+ choirs who wish to preserve their histories in the archival record.

Literature Review

A Brief History of LGBTQ+ Choruses

Jill Strachan (2006) outlined the history of modern LGBTQ+ choirs beginning in the early 1970s. This history reflected the separation between lesbian, gay, and transgender groups of the time, as the modern LGBTQ+ coalition was just beginning to form in the United States. Many lesbian choirs grew out of "women's music," a style of feminist music that developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s to uplift women's voices and criticize patriarchal structures in society (Strachan, 2006). Founded in 1975, the ANNA Crusis Feminist Choir was an early example, and they performed feminist music that represented the experiences of women, both lesbian and heterosexual (ANNA Crusis, 2019).

The development of gay men's choirs in the U.S. followed a separate path, illustrated by the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus. Inspired by the growing gay rights movement and the election of Harvey Milk to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors as the first openly gay politician in public office, Jon Sims founded the San Francisco Freedom Day Marching Band and Twirling Corps in 1977. The group was the first openly gay performing arts organization in the country, and the next year Sims founded the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus to complement the band (Hilliard, 2002). Just weeks after the choir's first rehearsal, San Francisco Mayor George Moscone and Supervisor Harvey Milk were assassinated on November 27th, 1978. Instead of rehearsing that evening, singers gathered to sing a hymn at City Hall in mourning (Hilliard, 2002). This first public performance of the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus inspired singers around the country, and when the chorus went on tour in 1981 many LGBTQ+ choruses appeared in its wake (Strachan, 2006). The Stonewall Chorale became the first lesbian and gay chorus in the United States in 1979 (Stonewall Chorale, 2017). It began as the Gotham Male Chorus before expanding to include lesbian singers, mirroring the increasing collaboration between gay and lesbian activists at the time (Stonewall Chorale, 2017). The 1982 Gay Games invited fourteen lesbian, gay, and mixed choruses to perform together in San Francisco, and soon after these singers formed the Gay and Lesbian Association of Choruses (GALA). Many of these choirs were gay men's choruses, though founding members do include the ANNA Crusis Women's Choir and the Lesbian/Gay Chorus of San Francisco (GALA Choruses, 2025). Since its founding, GALA has grown to support more than 190 choruses across North America.

Community Archives

In "Whose Memories, Whose Archives? Independent Community Archives, Autonomy and the Mainstream" (2009), authors Flinn, Stevens, and Shepherd provided general characteristics of community archives. These archives often "derive their commitment, passion and enthusiasm from a desire to document and record their own history and that of their communities; histories which are often absent from mainstream archives and other heritage institutions" (p. 73). Community archives represent "collections of materials gathered primarily by members of a given community and over whose use community members exercise some level of control" (p. 73).

Because these materials are gathered from the community, they do not always conform to traditional documents. Community archives might include “created as well accumulated materials and frequently comprise museum objects, books, ephemera, clothes as well as more traditional documents, photographs and audio-visual materials” (Flinn et al, 2009, p. 73).

There are many examples of LGBTQ+ community archives that can provide guidance for future LGBTQ+ choir archives. Some of these archives, such as the Sexual Minorities Archives and the Lesbian Herstory Archives, are independent organizations that eschew institutional support and are instead entirely supported by their communities. Others, such as the Arizona Queer Archives and the Oregon State Queer Archives, are community-focused institutions that maintain partnerships with university archives. While these archives maintain various levels of community control, they also have common characteristics that can guide the formation of a chorus archive.

Many of these LGBTQ+ archives started as informal collections within their community. These “apartment archives” include the Lesbian Herstory Archives, which grew out of Joan Nestle’s New York apartment in 1974 (Lesbian Herstory Archives, n.d.). A few years later the Sexual Minorities Archive, then called the New Alexandria Lesbian Library, began operating out of a Chicago apartment (Rawson, 2015). Even LGBTQ+ archives with institutional support often began this way. The ONE Archives at USC Libraries began as the Western Gay Archives in Jim Kepner’s Hollywood apartment (ONE Archives, 2018, “History”), and the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives started as the Gay Liberation Archives in founder Ron Daymen’s basement (Barriault, 2009).

While community archives have their roots outside archival institutions and employ broad collecting policies, this positionality does not mean that they lack any archival principles in their structure. As Bettine and Mattock (2019) detailed, the community focus does not preclude any knowledge of archival practice, as community members may have a wide variety of professional knowledge that can support the archives. As the authors discussed, “community identity should not erase the other identities that community members embody, including their professional identities” (p. 695). Furthermore, community archives often make plans to share these technical skills with other members. Both the Lesbian Herstory Archives and the Sexual Minorities Archives cemented this value in their missions, stating that “archival skills shall be taught, one generation...to another, breaking the elitism of traditional archives” (Lesbian Herstory Archives, n.d; Sexual Minorities Archives, 2015).

The community-focused nature of LGBTQ+ choruses would make them particularly well suited to a community archives format. A community archives structure would also grant the chorus power over its records and materials, allowing the choir “to exercise some control over its representation and the construction of its collective and public memory” (Flinn et al, 2009, p. 83). This kind of community control would also insulate the archival collection from hostile political climates. As LGBTQ+ history and archives have become increasingly challenged, the risk that existing stories could be hidden, edited, or erased entirely has also grown. The creation of new historical records could also become precarious, as the loss of federal funding and legal protections for the LGBTQ+ community can discourage both individuals and organizations from participating in archival work. In this context, a community archives framework would be particularly appropriate for an LGBTQ+ chorus archive, as it could help protect the collection from external threats.

Research Design

Personal Connections

My research into LGBTQ+ choirs and community archives grew out of my desire to see my community’s history preserved. I joined my first GALA choir in 2018, and it had a profound impact on my life. I spent a year singing with Phoenix Women’s Chorus, and I currently sing with Desert Voices and serve on their Board of Directors.

I have found a home in both communities, and my membership in these choruses informed the way I approached this research. Much of what I know about these choirs I learned through my own experiences singing with them, and I collected most of the information in this article through personal relationships with my fellow singers. As a result, the information in this study included a mix of my personal experiences, memories shared by chorus members, and oral histories shared at chorus events. This blending of community with formal research created limitations in the types of information I could collect and introduced bias, but it also opened new avenues for discussion and exchange based on personal relationships and trust. In this way, my personal approach to the research echoed the tradition of community archivists who are often members of the communities whose records they preserve. The goal of my research was to take the first steps towards establishing an archival collection for my two choirs. In doing so, I also hoped to create a roadmap for other LGBTQ+ choirs who wish to preserve their histories in the archival record.

Path of Research

Because of my personal connection to Phoenix Women's Chorus and Desert Voices, I decided that I should begin my research into establishing LGBTQ+ choir archives by studying these two groups. This narrow focus allowed me to closely examine two specific LGBTQ+ choirs while still gathering information that could be useful to a broader audience of choruses. By researching these two choirs, I was also able to draw on my personal experiences and close relationships with each group. Unfortunately, this approach excluded the two gay men's choirs in Arizona, Phoenix Men's Chorus and Reveille, and I hope to include them in any future research and work on LGBTQ+ chorus archives.

I began my research by compiling a general history for both Phoenix Women's Chorus and Desert Voices. This process included gathering what I had learned from years singing with the choirs as well as reviewing the information posted on their websites. Unfortunately, neither choir had much history publicly available, once again underlining the value of establishing an archive documenting their histories.

To discover what choruses would like to see in an archive of their chorus, I then created a survey to interview singers about the key activities, stories, and materials they would want to include. The goal of the survey was to introduce singers to the idea of an archive and learn more about how this unique community would want to be represented. This survey started as a list of interview questions, as I originally intended to visit rehearsals and discuss the project in person. Both choruses often presented ideas and updates during rehearsal, allowing for discussions, questions, and collaboration when the whole choir was present. I had planned to follow this format for my research, as it would allow the choir to reminisce together, exchange ideas, and offer feedback as a group. However, because my research began in the spring of 2020, the coronavirus pandemic prevented rehearsals from occurring and thus forced me to change the format.

To continue the project, I adapted the discussion questions into an online survey with a mix of multiple choice and open-ended prompts. In addition to this online survey, I also interviewed five members of Desert Voices in a group video chat, allowing for some exchange and discussion with a small subset of the choir. Between these two experiences, I received feedback from 40 singers from the two choruses, 35 through the anonymous online survey and 5 through the video chat. The online survey is included in Appendix A, and all the material collected in the survey and interview is detailed in Appendix B. Because of the small group of respondents, I chose to group the results by question, rather than separating responses out by chorus or individual participant. Since the interview asked the same questions as the survey, I also grouped those responses by question along with the survey results. While this grouping does not allow for comparison between the choirs or participants, it does allow for common themes to appear within each question.

The sudden change in format caused by the coronavirus pandemic had an impact on the research. Questions I originally wrote for discussions with the whole chorus were answered by individuals through an online survey. Online surveys are far less accessible than in-person conversations, and they do not allow for collaboration and exchange between singers. Because I sent the survey to both choirs with no additional selection criteria, the responses came only from singers who checked their emails and were willing to complete online surveys. Furthermore, by providing multiple choice options for certain questions, I embedded my own perspective as an archivist in the results collected. Finally, the constraints of the coronavirus pandemic limited my ability to collect additional information, as the choirs soon cancelled rehearsals and group events. Despite these obstacles, I was still able to gather valuable preliminary information that can help guide future research. While this information is informal and limited in scope, it still has value as a starting point for further discussions within LGBTQ+ choirs.

Results

History of the Choirs

The Phoenix Women's Chorus was born out of the Lesbian Resource Project in 1993. While I was singing with the chorus in 2018, they documented their history in a photo series on their website titled "Herstory," a portmanteau of "her history." I learned about the choir herstory in my first rehearsal, as founding members still singing in the group introduced themselves and discussed how the chorus came to be. The choir started as a "small but mighty group of women" with only half of their singers publicly participating (Phoenix Women's Chorus, 2025). Early photos of the chorus include "Hidden Singers" who stood behind a wall "to protect their jobs and families" (Phoenix Women's Chorus, 2025). In these photos, half the singers hid their faces and only showed their hands. This is a common history among GALA choruses, and most choirs have stories of members using pseudonyms, avoiding photography, and not publicly associating with the chorus (Balén, 2017, p. 13).

As with many lesbian choirs, Phoenix Women's Chorus has strong roots in the culture of women's music. Their mission, "Empowering all women through music," has reflected this culture throughout its history (Phoenix Women's Chorus, 2025). Since its founding, the choir has been an active member of the queer community in Phoenix, performing at Pride events, singing at the State Capitol during the AIDS Quilt Display in 1995, and collaborating with other LGBTQ+ choirs like the Phoenix Gay Men's Chorus. This community focus endured throughout the choir's history, and recent performances included singing the national anthem at Phoenix Mercury Pride Night, performing at the Arizona Gay Rodeo, and collaborating with the other GALA choruses in Arizona. The choir placed inclusivity and community at its core, and current members included lesbian women, transwomen, non-binary singers, and straight allies. These values of history, community, and inclusivity were all reflected in the chorus's mission statement: "Cherishing our Lesbian heritage, Phoenix Women's Chorus is a nurturing sisterhood, providing diverse choral programs, empowering all women, embracing inclusivity, and educating our communities through the universal language of music" (Phoenix Women's Chorus, 2025).

Desert Voices expressed similar values in its more succinct mission of "Fostering Community Through Song" (Desert Voices, 2019). Founded in 1988, Desert Voices has always been a mixed choir and described itself as "Tucson's premier gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and ally chorus" (Desert Voices, 2019). The choir welcomed all singers, with only a voice check to determine the appropriate vocal part. The result was a truly mixed choir, where the parts of soprano, alto, tenor, bass are divided by vocal range rather than by gender. Unlike the Phoenix Women's Chorus, Desert Voices did not have much information about its history available on its website. Instead, the history of the choir lived in the memory of current singers, who occasionally told stories of early days at choir events. In some of my first rehearsals with Desert Voices, I spoke with women who remembered finding the chorus in the 1980s and finally feeling safe enough to come out of the closet. I learned

more history while singing at the Tucson AIDS Walk, my first performance with the choir. The event included a display of the AIDS Quilt, and some choir members reflected on early experiences between speakers. As with many GALA choruses, Desert Voices had its roots in the HIV/AIDS crisis, and the choir formed in part to show solidarity with and provide comfort to the LGBTQ+ community. As community members unfolded and displayed the AIDS Quilt, my fellow singers recalled days singing at the bedsides and funerals of friends and community members. These community memories carried the history of the chorus, and they were reminders that while LGBTQ+ choruses are often joyful expressions of pride, many formed as a response to tragedy.

The music of GALA choruses has often served the larger purpose of building community for LGBTQ+ singers, an approach that was illustrated in the mission statements of both Phoenix Women's Chorus ("Empowering all women through music") and Desert Voices ("Fostering community through song"). Both choirs supported a diverse group of singers, from professional singers to people who have never sung in public. While both choirs strove to make beautiful music, that goal never surpassed the desire to cultivate a warm and welcoming community, regardless of the musical ability, age, race, gender, or sexuality of any of their members.

Survey and Interview Results

The first four questions of the survey focused on how much the singers knew about their choir history and how they learned this information. Singers tended to fall into one of three groups. New singers usually knew very little about the early history of the choir. Members who had been with the choir for a few years knew the general story but usually lacked knowledge of specific events. Finally, long-time singers who had belonged to the choir for many years often experienced the history of the choir themselves and told detailed stories. This breakdown reflected an oral tradition, with experienced singers passing the history on to new members when they joined.

In the first group, most singers, 25 out of 40, had been with their choir for five years or less, and they tend to know relatively little about their choir history. As one singer wrote, "I know that Desert Voices, like most other GALA choruses, came into being largely in response to the HIV/AIDS crisis as a show of solidarity and to increase the visibility of the gay rights movement, which had been damaged because of stigma resultant from the pandemic. As to the specifics of who early members and directors were, sadly, I know very little." This was a common theme among new singers; many admitted that they knew almost nothing about their choir history, while others could only speak to the general themes. When asked how they knew this history, a few mentioned learning about their choir online, but the majority said they learned through conversations with choir members.

The second group of singers, 8 out of 40, had been part of their choir for more than ten years, and 4 of these individuals for more than twenty years. These long-time singers knew much more about the early history of their choir from personal experience, and one wrote about how they knew "some of the founding mothers, participated in shaping the chorus to what it is today, lived through some early struggles and challenges, sang in early concerts, [and] participated in various grassroots fundraising efforts."

The third and smallest group fell between the first two groups: experienced singers who have been with their choir for between 5 and 10 years and know about their history through a combination of personal experience and conversations with choir members. These results were consistent with my own experiences in each of these choirs. When I first joined, I knew very little about the history and founding of either Phoenix Women's Chorus or Desert Voices. I learned this history through conversations with my fellow choir members, especially by speaking with singers who have been with the group for many years. In this oral tradition, memories and stories of the choir are passed from singer to singer.

Many choir members mentioned a desire to capture this oral tradition in a choir archive. The second section of the survey asked singers about the types of stories, experiences, and activities they believed were most essential to their choir. Concerts and rehearsals ranked highest, with 36 out of 40 people saying they were central to the choir. One person described rehearsals with Phoenix Women's Chorus as "womanchurch – church whittled down to the best parts – the music and the community." When writing about Desert Voices rehearsals, another person responded, "It is a rich experience to go through the processing of building a repertoire with such diverse, accepting, and loving people." Outreach events were also important to choir members, and 30 people answered that they were central chorus activities. Singers wrote about their experiences working with Habitat for Humanity, the Tucson AIDS Walk, and collaborations with other GALA choirs.

In addition to performances, rehearsals, and outreach events, singers also wanted to preserve the founding story of the chorus. Thirty-eight participants expressed a desire to document the early days of the choir and how it has grown over time. Another 27 said they would be interested in member profiles, especially for founding members and directors. Some members mentioned a desire for singers to write a "testimonial about how being in the choir has affected their life." Others mentioned audience experiences; Phoenix Women's Chorus collects audience comments from each concert, and these comments, positive or negative, are documented and saved after each performance.

The final section of the survey asked about the materials, physical or digital, that singers would want to see in an archive. The singers unanimously said that any archive must include recordings of concerts. As one singer said, "Recordings in some capacity must be a part of the archive. Nothing can really capture the feeling of being on stage, the Sunday matinee buzz. But we are here because of the sound we create together." All 40 singers also wanted photos to be part of the archive, and one singer clarified, "Especially backstage pictures, because they capture the joy that everyone has, all dressed up." Concert ephemera also ranked very high, with 34 people listing concert programs and 27 listing posters. A few singers even mentioned t-shirts, stage props, and concert tickets. Many singers also listed oral histories and video interviews as important parts of an archive.

From Community Memory to Community Archives

LGBTQ+ choirs unite people "to challenge social injustices, creating a sense of community and strengthening their shared vision for a better world" (Balén, 2017, p. 33). In this way, community has often been the primary focus for LGBTQ+ choirs. Because of this community focus, an LGBTQ+ chorus archive would fit comfortably within the framework of community archives. A community archives structure would also grant the chorus power over its records and materials, allowing the choir "to exercise some control over its representation and the construction of its collective and public memory" (Flinn et al, 2009, p. 83).

Any materials for the archives would be created, collected, and described by singers in the chorus. Many chorus members, myself included, have professional backgrounds in information science, history, community organizing, or other related areas. These professional skills would complement our roles in the community and benefit any archives the choirs may build (Bettine and Mattock, 2019, p. 695). As I discussed the possibility for archival collection with the chorus, I found that every singer marked their time in the chorus in a different way. Some singers collected posters and programs from every concert in which they participated. Other members faithfully recorded each concert for themselves and took pictures at performances and rehearsals. One of my fellow choir members had every piece of merchandise the choir has ever produced, including t-shirts, hats, and pins. Others have been singing with the choir for 25 years and personally experienced the early history of the choir. As a result, the chorus archives already existed in some form, scattered throughout chorus members' garages, closets, and memories. This community collection reflected the tradition of "apartment archives" within

the large community archives practice, as seen with the Lesbian Herstory Archives and the Sexual Minority Archives.

My historical research, survey, and interview began the work of identifying the key activities, stories, and materials that singers wanted represented in an archival collection. By analyzing these responses and grouping related answers, an image of an LGBTQ+ chorus archive began to appear. Singers wanted concerts to feature prominently in the archive, and most suggested materials related to performances. Suggestions included recordings of both rehearsals and concerts, ephemera such as programs and posters, and photographs of singers both on- and back-stage. Some singers suggested saving props and costumes from different performances. This feedback from singers outlined some possible series for a chorus archive, including Audio/Visual Materials, Concert Programs, Posters, Photographs, and Stage Objects. Singers also indicated a desire to preserve their choruses' founding stories in an archive, which could create series devoted to Oral Histories, Member Profiles, and Community Impact.

This survey began investigating the possibility of creating a chorus archive, but as a research project it was limited in its scope. First, the digital survey restricted the information I could collect, as not all singers participated. Second, this research only included two of the four choruses in Arizona. Third, this project did not include any gay men's choruses, though they made up the majority of LGBTQ+ choruses at the time. To address these limitations, I hope to expand my future research to include in-person conversations with all four GALA choruses in Arizona. Not only will this expansion include more singers and choirs in the study, but it will also allow singers to collaborate and exchange ideas amongst themselves. These conversations will produce more in-depth results which will enable the design of a collection policy that addresses the needs of all four choruses.

My future research will also evaluate the possibility of partnership with the Arizona Queer Archives (AQA), an LGBTQ+ community archive located in Tucson, Arizona. While Phoenix Women's Chorus, Desert Voices, and the AQA have all expressed interest in this partnership, many questions need to be answered before an LGBTQ+ chorus archive can be established. For example, how will materials be transferred from the choruses to the archives? What materials, if any, will remain within the chorus? Will materials be digitized to be accessible online? How will this collection remain accessible to the chorus members? While many questions remain, this research explored the first steps towards establishing LGBTQ+ chorus archives. I hope it also created a model for other choirs who wish to preserve community memories by creating community archives.

Conclusion

When discussing the culture of LGBTQ+ choruses, Strachan wrote, "In the choral setting, each voice matters. The presence or absence of a single voice changes the overall ensemble sound" (2006, p. 259). LGBTQ+ choruses have had a profound impact on singers and audiences for over 50 years, yet their voices have remained largely absent from archival institutions. I hoped to address this silence by investigating ways to establish an archive for two GALA choruses in Arizona. In this article, I reviewed the history of GALA choruses, discussed examples of LGBTQ+ community archives, and identified some of the key stories, activities, and materials choruses would want represented in an archive. As a result, this study began the first steps towards ensuring that the voices of GALA choruses are preserved in the archival record.

As this work progresses in my choruses, I encourage other GALA choirs to consider forming their own archives, whether hosted within the chorus or in partnership with LGBTQ+ community archives. The attached survey can be used to start discussions with your singers as you begin to imagine how your history could be recorded and shared. Because each GALA choir has unique characteristics, choirs can easily adapt the survey to suit their needs. Beginning this discussion with Desert Voices has been transformational. As we considered possibilities for

a Desert Voices collection with the Arizona Queer Archives, we started a new practice of collecting and sharing oral histories about the chorus. In both rehearsals and concerts, we invited singers to share their stories, speak about LGBTQ+ history, and discuss queer music. It celebrated the stories of older singers, taught new singers and audiences our history, and allowed us to collect that history to eventually share with the Arizona Queer Archives. This oral history practice quickly became a beloved tradition, and it has been a source of deeper connections and community building.

Today's political climate has offered new sources of urgency to preserve and protect LGBTQ+ history. Look to the way that the U.S. Park Service has removed all references to trans people from the Stonewall Inn, a site whose significance was inextricably tied to transwomen like Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera (National Park Service, 2025). Restricting federal funding, punishing organizations with DEIA missions, and eliminating legal protections for the LGBTQ+ community have all had a chilling effect that can discourage both individuals and organizations from collecting, preserving, and sharing queer histories. These threats demand immediate resistance. They must be answered by the emphatic refusal to be silent, to forget, and to fade from memory. The LGBTQ+ community must loudly and joyfully take up space in the historical record, and LGBTQ+ choirs should raise their voices to answer this call.

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