

2011-  
2012

Membership Handbook



## **Hello, and Welcome to The Out Loud Chorus!**

If you are reading this Membership Handbook it likely means that you are either planning on, or strongly considering, joining us for the 2011-2012 choir year. So, welcome aboard! We have lots of great things planned for this year and look forward to sharing it with members who are committed to working hard, having fun, and creating some GREAT musical experiences for our audiences! Let's get everyone started on the right foot by sharing a bit of information about the chorus (**some of the membership expectations are a bit different than in years past, so returning members are encouraged to read through this handbook as well!**). After reviewing the handbook, please read and sign the Member Commitment Statement that is in this packet, making public your commitment to having a great season with Out Loud!

### **Who We Are....**

The Out Loud Chorus was founded in October 1995 as a mixed chorus for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender community of Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, and surrounding areas, yet open to all. Out Loud Chorus is Washtenaw County's premier arts organization for the entire LGBTQA community, and is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization.

### **Mission Statement:**

Out Loud is a mixed chorus for the Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, Transgender community, yet open to all. Out Loud provides continuing musical education and performance experience as well as a social outlet for persons interested in choral music and its production. Out Loud is fun and flexible, open to many levels of ability, and committed to embodying the diversity of our community. In addition, the chorus seeks to educate the general public about choral music and, through performances, to reduce bigotry and discrimination against our community.

### **Diversity Statement:**

In keeping with our mission, the Out Loud Chorus seeks to perform a wide variety of choral music. We recognize that music from other eras may not reflect society's current acceptance of diversity. Because of this, some audience members may occasionally disagree with ideas described by lyrics we perform. The Out Loud Chorus as a whole neither advocates nor denigrates any particular belief or tradition. Rather, by the diversity of our music, we seek to

celebrate and be sensitive to the broad diversity of our culture and our community. We invite our audiences to help us create a community where all participants feel welcome.

### **Membership expectations:**

#### **Dues:**

As a non-profit organization, The Out Loud Chorus depends on a number of different sources for funds to meet its expenses. One of the biggest sources is membership dues, which are \$100/season or \$200/year. Dues may be paid by concert season or yearly and will be collected by the treasurer. If you need to set up a different payment schedule for your dues, please talk with the treasurer to set that up. Also, if payment of dues presents a financial hardship, alternative arrangements can be made, usually in the form of donating time and energy to the various needs of the chorus.

#### **Attendance:**

As a performing group, we place a high value on regular attendance, as this is one way to ensure that we deliver a quality performance for our audience. Not only is it important that individually you know your notes, rhythms and words for the songs, but as a group, we must also have a blended sound and have consistent dynamics to produce the best musical experience possible. We need everyone at rehearsals to make this happen! So...anyone who attends regularly will have the opportunity to sing with Out Loud in any of our public performances throughout the season. Attendance will be taken at each rehearsal; as a courtesy, please try and let a board member know ahead of time if you are going to be absent from a rehearsal. **Members who have three or more absences in a concert season (fall or spring) must have the director's approval to participate in our performances for that season.** This approval process will include a performance audition for the director two weeks prior to the performance to verify that you have your music learned and memorized.

#### **Committee participation:**

Out Loud is a community chorus with a small group of volunteers that serve as the Board of Directors. There is much work that goes into running the chorus and putting on our shows, and there is no way that the board members

can possibly do all the work that needs to be done on their own. Therefore, a requirement of your membership in Out Loud is that you serve on a committee to help the choir continue to function efficiently and successfully. Committee work does not need to be viewed as a chore – rather, look at it as an opportunity to join your fellow chorus members for some fun and socializing outside of the rehearsal times! The available committees include: Putting on a Show (which encompasses music selection, all aspects of show production, publicity for our concerts, and managing the music library), Running the Choir (responsible for fundraising, recruiting and retaining members, planning social events, and maintaining the chorus website), and Governance (the committee that works on choir structure and bylaw changes). You will be asked at the first rehearsal to select the committee that you are most interested in contributing to throughout the season. If you prefer to contribute money rather than time to the chorus, you have the option of “buying out” of committee work for an additional \$300 per year.

### **Email Etiquette:**

The chorus has an email group and address that is used by members to communicate with one another about chorus issues. All members of Out Loud are expected to participate in this email group, and are welcome to use the email address to communicate with the membership at large about issues relevant to the chorus. The email address for communicating with the whole chorus is: [outloudchorus@googlegroups.com](mailto:outloudchorus@googlegroups.com). However, since some people have limited time to devote to email, we request that you do not use the email group to promote agendas other than those that are specifically choir related. Also, it is very important to think about who you want your response to an email to go out to ... before hitting “send” on your email, make sure to check the address that shows up in the “To” line of your email header. If [outloudchorus@googlegroups.com](mailto:outloudchorus@googlegroups.com) appears on that line, then everyone in the chorus will receive the email containing the content you are about to send. Please change the “to” line to an individual name if your intent is really to just respond to that individual!

### **Non-singing Members:**

You don't have to sing to join the Out Loud family! Non-singing members can help the chorus by participating on committees, receive chorus email, have access to the “members only” section of the chorus website, and are invited to join us for various social events throughout the year. Dues for non-singing members are \$6 per month.

## **Leadership:**

### **Artistic Director:**

Our current director is Dan Gerics.



**Dan** has an MA in Theater from Eastern Michigan University, BA in Music w/ minor in Theatre, University of Michigan-Flint. Currently an Adjunct Professor in Theatre at Mott Community College in Flint, Dan began his artistic career in the Flint area theatre and music scenes, playing in bands, teaching private lessons as well as directing and conducting musicals for various theatre groups. He spent a few years in New York acting, directing and playing music. He found his way back home to Michigan for graduate school and continued working as a director, musical director, actor as well as teaching workshops in various aspects of theatrical performance. His Masters Thesis culminated in the creation of Flint City Theatre, which he has helmed for a little over a decade. Gerics also has a passion for the art of stage combat, having studied with Joe Daly in New York. He currently lives in Flint with his wife and daughter.

### **A Message from Dan:**

*Hi everyone. I'm very excited to get started directing this exciting and passionate choir. I love the energy and camaraderie I experienced at the "Divas" concert and I look forward to being a part of it, sharing some musical ideas/techniques and learning some from you all. See you soon! —Dan*

### **Board of Directors:**

The Out Loud Chorus is governed by a Board of Directors that operates under the structure, limits and guidance of the Bylaws of the organization. Bylaws may be accessed through the "member's only" section of the website. The Board holds monthly meetings that are open to all, and minutes of the meetings can be requested from the secretary.

The Board of Directors consists of the following positions:

President  
Vice President  
Treasurer  
Secretary  
Co-Chairs : Running A Choir (2 positions)  
Co-Chairs: Putting on a Show (2 positions)

Additionally, our hope is to have 3-4 section leaders who are non-voting members of the Board and who serve as liaisons between the membership and the Board. The Artistic Director also attends Board meetings to provide input, but is not a voting member of the Board.

### **The Current Board of Directors:**

Joy Sampson, President  
Jennifer Smith, Vice President  
Matthew Rindfleisch, Secretary  
Marvin Wilson, Treasurer  
Tim Hamann, Putting On A Show Committee  
Lorrel Sullivan, Putting On A Show Committee  
Kelley McGuinness, Running A Choir Committee  
Holly Richardson, Running A Choir Committee

### **Communication:**

The Board of Directors has recently recommitted to making good communication a top priority for Out Loud. We want to make sure chorus members are aware of what's going on within the organization, and want to make sure that there is a way for the wants and needs of the membership to be known to the Board as well. If there is an issue within the group that needs to be addressed, it is best to do so respectfully and openly rather than to gripe behind the scenes and create unrest for the group at large. Please remember; the Board is made up of good people who are there because they want to see the choir grow, thrive as a positive force within the LGBT community, and achieve musical excellence. As a group of humans who are volunteering (and sometimes tasked with the responsibility to make something happen that they didn't even know they had the skills to do!), the Board will make mistakes. If you want to give feedback regarding a blunder you have noticed or if you even just want to share your thoughts about a direction you would like the choir to possibly head, please voice your concerns or questions to your section leader or to any Board Member. The following form is the suggested way for sharing your ideas, and it's important that you sign the form so that we can accurately follow up and address the problem. Additional copies of this form are available from any board member.

## Out Loud Chorus Productivity Tool

Your input to the operations of the chorus is WELCOMED, ENCOURAGED, NEEDED, VALUED, and APPRECIATED! We devised this form to facilitate the flow of suggestions and direct them to the appropriate persons with as little delay as possible. You need to fill out only one form [make a copy of this page and keep it for future suggestions]. Copies will be distributed to the appropriate persons. Leave your completed and signed form with the director or one of our board members. Please list the names of people who support your suggestion.

1) In order to make productive and constructive suggestions, I would like to make the following observation regarding:										
<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; border: none;"><input type="checkbox"/> Board</td> <td style="width: 50%; border: none;"><input type="checkbox"/> Running a Choir committee</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border: none;"><input type="checkbox"/> Membership</td> <td style="border: none;"><input type="checkbox"/> Putting on the Show committee</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border: none;"><input type="checkbox"/> Administrative &amp; accounting</td> <td style="border: none;"><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) _____</td> </tr> </table>			<input type="checkbox"/> Board	<input type="checkbox"/> Running a Choir committee	<input type="checkbox"/> Membership	<input type="checkbox"/> Putting on the Show committee	<input type="checkbox"/> Administrative & accounting	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) _____		
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<input type="checkbox"/> Membership	<input type="checkbox"/> Putting on the Show committee									
<input type="checkbox"/> Administrative & accounting	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) _____									
2) My view of what needs to be improved (use the back of the form as needed; please be concise):										
3) Practical solution(s) I would like to offer (required):										
4) Others who support my suggestion (not required, but if you list others, they must initial below):										
5) If this situation remains unchanged, I plan to:										
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<b>Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Concurrence of others (initials)</b>								
Board Response: Corrective action/process improvement determined by board:										
<b>Date discussed w/chorister</b>	<b>Concurrence of Receipt of Response (initials)</b>									

## The Out Loud Chorus Member Commitment Statement

- 1) I have read the Membership Handbook and share in the goals of working hard, having fun, and creating a great musical experience for our audiences while, as part of the chorus, we seek to educate the general public about choral music and to reduce bigotry and discrimination against our community.
- 2) I understand my membership responsibilities, including the obligation of paying dues and of serving on a committee. I pledge either do these things or, if I am unable to, will contact the appropriate board member and make alternative arrangements regarding how I can contribute my share to the group.
- 3) I am committed to doing my best to attend all regular weekly rehearsals and doing my part to work on my music outside of the Monday rehearsal times so that rehearsals can be spent on issues of musicality rather than on chasing notes.
- 4) I intend to participate in both major and minor performances with the group throughout the year, and understand that missing more than three rehearsals may result in not being able to do so.
- 5) I value keeping the choir atmosphere a supportive and positive one. Therefore, I agree to address any concerns I have in an open and straightforward manner, using the Productivity Tool provided in this packet, and will strive to help in creating a workable solution, rather than simply complaining to fellow chorus members.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(Parent or Guardian Signature required if under 18)

Please take adequate time to think about these commitments before signing the form. Return the signed form to one of the "Running a Choir" Co-chairs by next rehearsal.

## The Out Loud Chorus Member Information Sheet

Please print. Any information you give will be for the exclusive use of the Out Loud Chorus and will NOT be given to any other sources.

New Member       Returning Member

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Birthday (month and day) \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

May we put the address on the member roster?  yes     no

Phone numbers:

Include on roster?

Home: \_\_\_\_\_

yes     no

Cell: \_\_\_\_\_

yes     no

Work: \_\_\_\_\_

yes     no

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

yes     no

Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

Partner/Spouse's Name (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

yes     no

Are you interested in being a "buddy" to a new member?

yes     no

How did you hear about the Out Loud Chorus? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What other skills/talents/hobbies do you have that may be of interest to the chorus? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What committee are you interested in joining?  Putting on a Show     Running a Choir

Governance