

President's report

Interpolating a line of Dickens seems to be the best way to start; it was the best of years, it was the worst of years. The 2022/2023 season was a roller coaster ride for all of us, marked by hills of achievement only to plunge into valleys of distress. Fortunately, I believe that the high points came a lot more often than the valleys.

This was the first full, “regular,” season that we have been able to produce since before the pandemic started. I believe we can all agree that from an artistic standpoint, this season was very successful, and reached an ever-expanding audience. We were very fortunate in having our interim conductor, Stephanie Smith, guiding us, working to develop us both artistically as well as organizationally. We tried new venues to perform in, we developed a new collaboration with Theatre Harrisburg, and the numbers of our singers grew by almost 1/3. But then came the valleys. I prefer to believe these gave us the space for recollection and redirection that we needed which is often glossed over in the busy atmosphere of arts administration and concert production. The ambitious schedule that was developed for our spring semester came to a crashing halt with our widespread COVID outbreak, but it also gave us the time and space to evaluate our safety protocols and to develop a new set of procedures that we are setting into motion with the upcoming season. Our reliance on the talents and abilities of Tracy as an assistant artistic director and accompanist had to be suspended when faced with ongoing medical issues that require an extended sabbatical. But this also brought to our attention new and very talented keyboard musicians who now form a core of potential backup talent. The forward momentum of developing the next Season and program was slowed by the imminent departure of our interim artistic director while we searched for a new person to guide the group. That search, while slowing our preparations, gave us the time to analyze what the real needs of this Chorus are in a Conductor and rewarded us with the prospect of a new, vital, engaging director whose talent and excitement has allowed us to shift from planning into excited operations. The excitement and animation that the group brought to the first day of rehearsal after the Anti -Valentine Cabaret quickly changed to stunned disbelief with the sudden death of our brother singer, Bob Nease. One of the worst moments of the past year became our chance to stop and focus on one another, the people that we come together with every week in our pursuit of making music and celebrating Queer community. Sometimes we forget how intimate and how familial our bonds of affection are within the chorus.

All season long each achievement, each adversity, each expectation has been carried by every member of this organization. One of the most impressive parts of this past season has been to see how each member has stepped up, pitched in, and made a truly foundational commitment to the work and achievements of the chorus. While its customary to acknowledge individuals in

this year-end report, when faced with doing that I found that I would be doing a roll call of the membership because everyone, at one point or another during the year, was working above and beyond. That dedication has been the driving engine that took the chorus to those peaks while also pulling us through the valleys and back up towards further achievements. I cannot single out individuals, I have to thank everyone for their engagement, their concern, their support in keeping the chorus on its, sometimes wobbly, track.

The season ahead has all the potential to be one of our most exciting, growth filled years. It gives me so much hope for us. We are in the hands of a wonderfully creative, enormously energetic, new artistic director who can teach us so much in the art of inclusive music making. There's been decided interest in new people becoming members of this organization who don't fit or who will explode the "old, white guy," image that dogs ours as well as so many of the male choruses of GALA. We have shown a willingness to expand our outreach further and further in the central Pennsylvania region with additional performances and new destinations. We have expressed the biggest commitment ever to attend the quadrennial GALA conference and to perform there. All of this and each one of you is what gives me the hope that this will become the year that HGMC stops being the best kept secret in Central Pennsylvania.

Submitted with gratitude and respect,

Paul R. Foltz
President