

PIPE DREAMS

Hundreds of choral directors and singers come together for a valuable leadership conference by Richard Bray



PHOTO BY LINDA KLEWER

The Portland Gay Men's Chorus will learn how to strengthen the organization during Labor Day weekend

Portland will play host to more than 550 choral directors and singers during the 16th Gay and Lesbian Association of Choruses Leadership Conference and Singers Weekend from Aug. 31 to Sept. 3 at the Portland Hilton. The theme of the gathering, appropriately, is "Why I Sing!"

As a "working" conference, more than 65 clinics, workshops and roundtables will be held on a wide variety of subjects. Attendees will fine-tune their skills on fund raising, board development, leadership, conducting and diversity.

Composed of more than 190 members with a total of 10,000 singers, GALA is the umbrella organization for gay and lesbian choruses from Australia to South America. It produces music festivals and training conferences such as this one being held in Portland and serves as a resource center for information.

Actively promoting social change, the association's vision is "Our voices win freedom." To that end, Portland was chosen as the location for this year's conference in part because Oregon continually is targeted by anti-gay groups.

"Music has always played an important role in social change movements," says Kenneth Cole, GALA executive director. "Those of us convening in Portland will do so because we recognize that, through our music, we can create a world that accepts and values its lesbian and gay citizens."

Organizers stress that this conference is definitely an open event. Arts leaders and members of the gay and lesbian community are invited as well.

Bob Mensel, Portland Gay Men's Chorus artistic director, believes, "Those of us in Portland can learn much from the many successes

enjoyed by the lesbian and gay choral movement, and lesbian and gay choruses can benefit from exposure to the superb people and resources here in Portland."

Other conference highlights include choral concerts 8 p.m. Aug. 31 and Sept. 2 at the Newmark Theatre featuring PGMC, the Portland Lesbian Choir, Bridges Vocal Ensemble and three festival choirs composed of singers from around the world.

According to Mensel, the Friday concert will be "upbeat,

very positive and a great night out for the opening of Labor Day weekend." He says it will have a "Best of Portland" or "Best of Our Gay Community" theme.

Confirmed guest artists include Diane Syrcle of Portland Opera; Ann Tedards, University of Oregon Graduate School of Music dean; and Bao Nguyen, a local chef who will sing an aria from a Vietnamese opera. Also appearing will be Brian Haliski, who will perform the monologue from *Torch Song Trilogy*, and Mary McCarty, a professional flute player.

Mensel particularly is excited about this concert. "It's been many years since all four gay and lesbian musical organizations from Portland have come together on one evening."

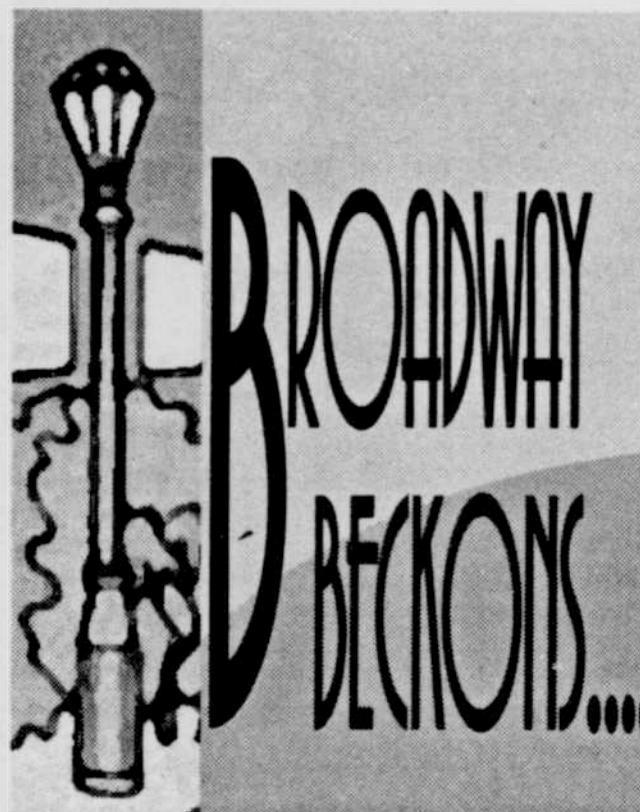
Immediately after the concert, a swing dance will be held in the lobby. Music will be provided by the Rose City Swing Band.

Sunday evening's concert will feature three Willamette Valley choruses: Jubilate! from Corvallis, Soromundi from Eugene and Confluence from Salem. Also performing will be the Festival Chorus from the conference.

A banquet and a silent auction are planned for Sept. 1 at the Portland Hilton. **IN**

Registration information for the 2001 LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE AND SINGERS WEEKEND is available online at www.galachoruses.org or by calling 202-467-5830. Concert tickets will be available at the door, through Ticketmaster or by contacting the Portland Gay Men's Chorus at 503-226-2588.

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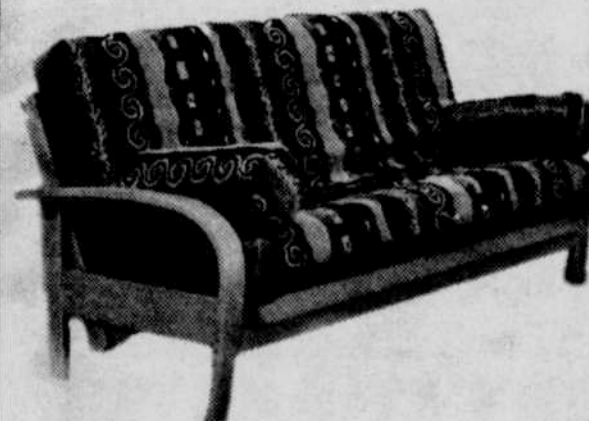
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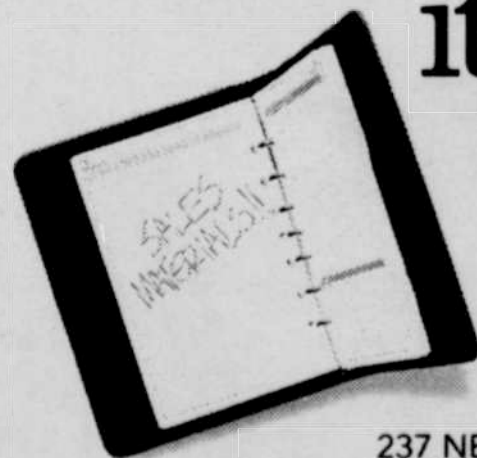


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