Performing in Public: What is it Like to Perform in a Transgender Choir?

Presented by Ann Thomas
The original script – note there’s no music, only lyrics!

The director placed me right behind the lead, Coach Biste, played by Dot-Marie Jones
TCLA First Rehearsal Oct 18, 2015
Season 1 – Oct 2015 to June 2016

- TDOR
- TCLA Fundraiser
- Mike Honda Fundraiser
- PSA, Silas Howard dir.
- GMCLA Voice Awards
- First Major Concert
- Long Beach Pride
- MSNBC Mini-Doc
- Kol Tivkah Pride Shabbat

- Everybody’s Gym
- St. John’s Episcopal
- LA City Hall
- Industry Mixer
- LA Pride
- Trans Pride LA
- Interscope Records: Hands-A Song For Orlando
- Williams Institute UniTy
TDOR 2015 Rehearsal with Alexandra Billings
First Fundraiser at Jeff Olde and Alan Uphold’s house

Many VIPs like Caitlyn Jenner and Jeffrey Tambour

Other VIPs present included Alex Billings, Rhys Ernst, Zackary Drucker, and many more
Mike Honda fundraiser.

This was our first paid gig, for Mike Honda. Several VIPs are visible in this picture, including retired Mass. Senator Barney Frank.
GMCLA Voice Awards
Our formal introduction to the supporters of GMCLA
GMCLA Voice Awards Backstage with one of the hosts – Pauley Perrett

With chorus member Kathryn Davis, who is a forensic scientist, doing in real life, what Pauley’s character on NCIS does.
Interscope Records studio: Hands – A Song for Orlando
Season 2 – Sept 2016 to July 2017

- Models of Pride
- TDOR
- TrevorLIVE
- TCLA Fundraiser
- USPATH
- Superbowl Party
- Trans* Conference
- Ziggy Stardust

- Dodgers recording
- Dodgers performance
- KPFK FM
- Resist March
- Trans Pride LA
- I Rise
- Outfest
Gay Men’s Chorus and Transgender Chorus of Los Angeles perform onstage during The Trevor Project’s 2016 TrevorLIVE LA at The Beverly Hilton Hotel on December 4, 2016 in Beverly Hills, California.
This photo shows how we can unite people through song. Caitlyn Jenner is in the center of it, and the photo is taken in the house of Brian Pendleton and Chad Goldberg, who sponsored and organized the LA Resist March in June of 2017.
The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders From Mars
Ziggy Stardust guest soloists Justin Tranter and Our Lady J
Singing the National Anthem for the LA Dodgers
LA Resist March, 40,000-100,000 estimated crowd size
Margaret Cho at LA Resist March
This was just our chorus on the stage after the performance. There were something like 14 choruses and choirs from a wide variety of backgrounds totaling something like 400 performers, uniting in love.
Season 3 – Sept 2017 to current

- Ziggy Stardust encore performances
- Black AIDS Institute Gala
- Models of Pride
- TDOR
- Veteran’s Day
- World AIDS Day
- APAIT Miss Quest Pageant

- LA Music Center
- Angels of Change
- Demi Lovato
- Mystery Commercial
- Mystery Music Video
- Ugly Stepchildren Variety Show
Black AIDS Institute Gala
dancing and singing with Alfre Woodard
Veteran’s Day performance in West Hollywood
We were asked to sing along side of the Gay Men’s Chorus of Los Angeles, and Vox Femina, for two songs with Demi Lovato.
TCLA has performed with

- Gay Men’s Chorus of LA
- Vox Femina
- Alexandra Billings
- Our Lady J
- Brianna Sinclaire
- Holly Near
- Dot-Marie Jones
- Justin Tranter
- Demi Lovato
- Jennifer Leitham
Featured in hundreds of articles

- Broadway World
- MSNBC
- Yahoo News
- LA Times
- TMZ
With all this attention, wouldn’t you expect us to be celebrities?
NO
Why did I share all that?

• To encourage you that good things are happening in spite of all the negative things you might hear in the news.
• To show you that even with lots of attention, you may not get ‘famous’.
But all it takes is one person!

- What if just one person sees me that doesn’t know I’m trans?
- I could lose my housing, my job, my family!!!
Do What This Person Did!

This is me in disguise – not even the chorus members or even my roommate recognized me when I came to the performance! It was professionally done, with tape to pull my face tight, a purple wig, and a very nice makeup job.
Voice Dysphoria

• You’re singing in a group
• You’re supposed to be blending
• That means people shouldn’t be able to tell who’s singing what part, unless you do a solo
• You can mouth the words for other sections during your section’s rests
• Trans Choirs are mostly TTBB
• Bass and Alto and above are rare, and we really need those voices in their normal or trained range
Branding

• It’s a group – make it about the group, not an individual

• People come and go over the years, so always focus on the group

• Create a logo, matching Tshirts, buttons, stickers, etc – make sure the group owns the designs and artwork
Fame

• Fame does not divide, it multiplies!
• Share it!
• Be happy when someone gets positive attention!
• Support others in their work!
Public Relations

• Define your goals as a chorus
• Stay focused on your goals
• Music unifies, so be aware that people from all backgrounds can be unified behind you
• Stay neutral on issues that aren’t directly affecting trans issues
Media Relations

• The main types of stories they might run are in general called human interest. They’re not news. They’re filler.

• They might run announcements about upcoming performances.

• Be patient with them, and be kind and thankful when they do run a story.
Interviews

• Relax and be yourself
• The interviewer’s job is to help you to relax, so do the same for them – help them relax by being personable
• Stay on point
• Answer in sound bites if at all possible
Questions and Answers
Epilogue

Things to come...