



Creating Choirs that Welcome Transgender Singers

Erik Peregrine, presenter

Music Director, Woodbury Chorus & Orchestra || Artistic Director, Ensemble Companio

Jane Ramseyer Miller, presenter

Artistic Director, One Voice Mixed Chorus || Artistic Director, GALA Choruses

Introductions

1. What age are your singers?
2. Who has worked with transgender singers?
3. Who currently has a trans singer in your chorus or studio?



What does "transgender" mean?

Broadly speaking, transgender is an umbrella term for people whose gender expression and/or gender identity differs from conventional expectations based on their assigned gender at birth.



The Transgender Umbrella



- Trans woman
- Trans man
- Non-binary
- Genderqueer
- Genderfluid
- Agender
- And many more!

Trans 101 – Words to Know

- **AFAB / AMAB**

assigned female at birth / assigned male at birth

- **Non-Binary**

outside the gender binary

- **Cisgender**

someone whose gender identity matches the gender they were assigned at birth – probably most of you in this room!



Is being transgender the same as being gay or lesbian?

Sexual orientation (GLB) is about who you are attracted to. This is different from gender identity and cannot be assumed about anyone.

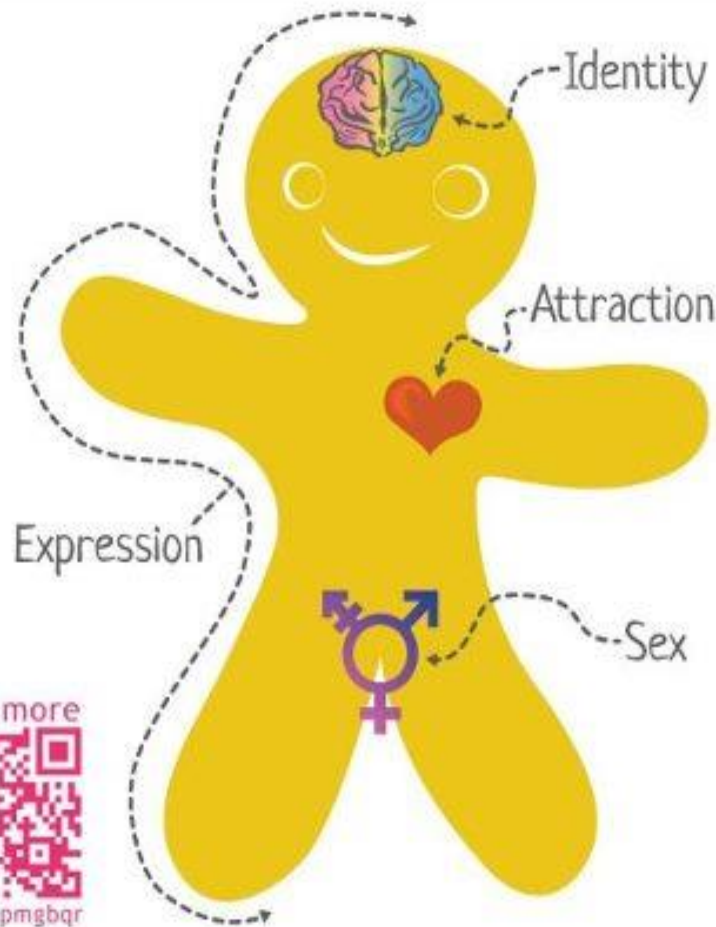
Like all other people, transgender people (T) can be gay, straight, lesbian, bisexual, a-sexual or anything in between.



The Genderbread Person v2.0

by its pronounced **METROsexual** com

Gender is one of those things everyone thinks they understand, but most people don't. Like Inception. Gender isn't binary. It's not either/or. In many cases it's both/and. A bit of this, a dash of that. This tasty little guide is meant to be an appetizer for understanding. It's okay if you're hungry for more.



read more

bit.ly/ipmgbqr

Gender Identity



"Gender Identity" is how you, on the inside, identify yourself. Do you identify as a woman, a man, both, neither, a bit of one and a lot of another, or perhaps with a third gender altogether?
 Related terms include agender, man, transgender, genderqueer, pangender, third-gender, two-spirited, woman

Gender Expression



"Gender Expression" is how you, on the outside, demonstrate gender. Do you dress, act, emulate, behave, and interact in ways that are typically considered more masculine or feminine?
 Related terms include androgynous, butch, crossdresser, drag queen or king, femme

Biological Sex



"Biological Sex" is focused on the innate, inborn qualities that are used to determine and assign sex. Sex is a combination of reproductive organs, genitalia, hormones, karyotypes, hair, body shape, and more.
 Related terms include female, intersex, male, transsexual

Attracted to



"Attraction" is another word for sexual orientation, and denotes who you are physically, romantically, and spiritually attracted to. Many people are attracted to elements beyond gender, but most experience gender-based attraction.
 Related terms include androphilic, asexual, bisexual, gay, gynophilic, lesbian, pansexual, straight, queer

Voice and Gender Identity

When you sing, you announce your existence.

-Craig Hella Johnson

Language

- Vocal sections: Sop, Alto, Tenor, Bass
- Pronouns and gender fluidity
- Educating classroom guests
- Encouraging gender inclusivity vs eliminating gender



Vocal Auditions



- When posting for singer auditions keep language about voice parts gender-neutral.
- In the audition setting ask new and returning singers about the pronouns they use.
- Solo auditions: Invite singers to audition for any solo that fits their voice range.
- Post a rainbow sticker or other visible symbol of support as an LGBT ally in your classroom or studio.



Gendered Choirs

- Chorus/ensemble names
- Is there a place for gendered choirs?



Calgary Girl's Choir

- MelloDivas
- The Earth Tones
- Valley Voices
- School mascot ideas

Transitioning Voices

Hormone replacement therapy (HRT) and hormone blockers

- Testosterone permanently causes the vocal folds to lengthen/thicken
 - Trans male voices will lower in pitch with HRT
 - Trans female voices will not raise in pitch with HRT
- Hormone blockers delay puberty – uncommonly used

Other aspects of vocal transition

- Chest binding and healthy breathing
- Learning to read bass clef – new tenors and basses
- Redeveloping muscle memory
- Desire to sing in unhealthy range

Concert Attire

- Examine requirements for gender-specific concert attire.
- Forcing singers into gender-specific clothing can be a public devaluing of identity
- Mandating attire by gender communicates indifference to the spectrum of gender identity and expression
- Besides.... it is boring!



OK, bad choice!



But variety can be great!

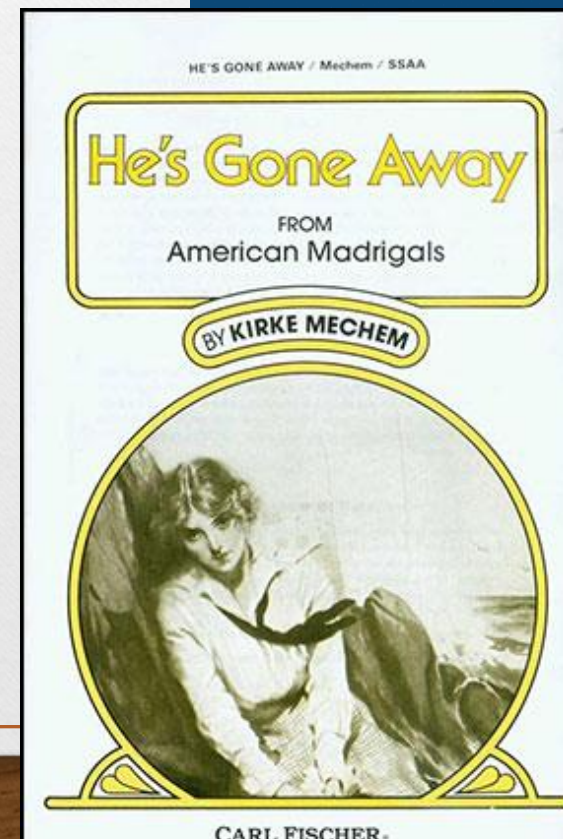
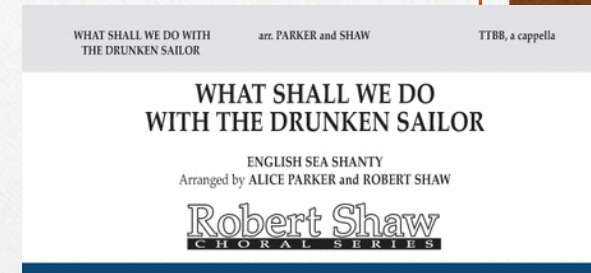


Black with an accent color



Repertoire Considerations

- Gender stereotypes
 - Flowers vs. Pirates
 - Opportunity to unpack gender roles
 - Find a balance – empower your singers
- Texts: who is singing about who?
- Diversity of composers
 - You can't be what you can't see.



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Chorus Overnight Tours

- Housing for LGBT youth: begin with youth
- Communicate with parents of students in the room.
- Check your school's policies and guidelines
- Ask other music teachers for creative ideas



Micro-Aggressions

- Know you will make mistakes
- “Ouch” and “Oops”
- Never “out” a singer



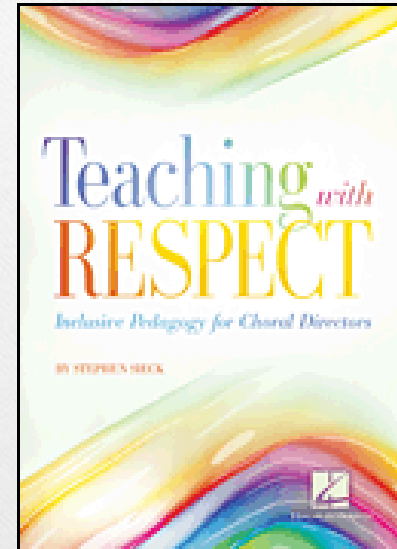
GLSEN 2015 National School Climate Survey

- 98% of LGBT students regularly hear homophobic and transphobic slurs
- 85% of LGBT students experience verbal harassment
- 75% of trans students feel unsafe at school because of their gender expression
- 64% of LGBT students who reported harassment said that school staff did nothing in response or told the student to ignore it.



Resources

- MN Toolkit for Ensuring Safe and Supportive Schools for Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students
- GenderSpectrum.org
- Teaching Respect: An inclusive pedagogy for Choral directors



Resources from GLSEN



- ▼ Resource Center
 - ▶ GALA 411
 - ▶ Services
 - ▶ Board Members
 - ▶ Artistic Directors
 - ▶ Chorus Managers
 - ▼ Singers
 - ▶ Chorus Rehearsal
 - ▶ Singer Voice
 - ▶ Transgender Voices
 - ▶ Aging Voice
 - ▶ Diction
 - ▶ Youth
 - ▶ GALA Blog

Home » Resource Center » Singers

Transgender Voices

Many GALA choruses include individuals who identify as transgender, cross-gender or spanning both male and female genders. The resources on this page offer information about gender experience, voice transition and gender language.

Need a quick resource for your chorus? Download [Creating Choirs that Welcome Trans* Singers - PDF](#)

Want to make your rehearsal and concert restrooms inclusive and safe for all individuals? Click [here](#) for inclusive restroom signage from [My Door Sign](#).

Transgender GALA

GALA offers a discussion group for transgender individuals and allies interested in conversations regarding trans experience, gender language and helping to create a trans-friendly community within GALA choruses. Send a [request](#) to subscribe.

- ▶ Transgender 101
- ▶ Tools for Teachers
- ▶ Voice Range Transition
- ▶ Transgender Voice Training
- ▶ Gender Inclusive Language - Conductors & Choruses
- ▶ Gender-Neutral Guidelines



GALA Gender-Inclusive Language Statement

GALA Choruses strives for gender inclusivity in recognition of the many genders represented within our member choruses, singing sections and the LGBT community. When working and communicating with singers and choruses within the GALA community please keep the following guidelines in mind.

- Please refer to sections by voice part rather than gender, ie; tenors and basses rather



Transgender Voices Video



Transgender Voices Festival

NEW Video Resources on Web



Building community and creating social change by raising our voices in song.

Tips for Allies of Transgender People



- Come out as an ally
- Post symbols of safe space in your classroom and school.
- Don't make assumptions about anyone's gender or sexual orientation
- Understanding identity can happen at any age



Tips for Allies of Transgender People

- Understand there is no "right" or "wrong" way to transition - it is different for every person.
- Don't ask a transgender person what their "real name" is.
- Don't ask about a person's genitals, surgical status, or sex life.
- Challenge anti-transgender remarks or jokes in public spaces
- Support gender neutral public restrooms.
- Know your own limits as an ally. Don't be afraid to admit when you don't know something.



Most importantly:

Build a trusting relationship with your trans singer(s).

Questions and Conversation





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