

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE GFMAMMC

=====

*The Greater Falmouth Mostly All-Male Men's Chorus was founded in 1990 by Tom Goux and Tom Aldrich, highly respected local musicians, to provide an opportunity for singers interested in performing choral music in an informal yet challenging community setting.*

*The original motto of the GFMAMMC was "Sing from the Heart - Sing Till We Part". Chorus members were expected to do two things: take the music seriously and have fun while doing so.*

*Some but certainly not all of the original chorus members had experience with part singing. Very few were sight readers. There were no auditions. Under Mr. Goux's careful guidance, however, the GFMAMMC developed into a capable unit in which those members with greater musical skills were expected to assist those with lesser skills, resulting in a balanced sound that could be applied to a range of musical genres.*

*In the early days of the GFMAMMC, membership of around 100 was the norm. While there were only six women in the first concert group, the balance today is only slightly in favor of the male voices (basses and baritones).*

*Over the GFMAMMC's history, skill as a performer - while certainly highly valued - has been of less importance than a willingness to work hard at the tasks at hand. The chorus, in the early days as now, practiced for two hours every Thursday night between January and the May concert, with additional practices being undertaken closer to concert time. The practices were intense, occasionally nerve-racking, but always enjoyable as particular difficulties were overcome and various musical goals achieved.*

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE GFMAMMC

=====

*Practices were held first at the Morse Pond School and then at Falmouth Academy, and it is a tribute to the dedication of the chorus membership over the years to note that the practices were (and continue to be) always well-attended.*

*The early GFMAMMC was unafraid to tackle any musical composition placed before it, and concerts routinely featured items like Russian church chants ("Glasom Moim"), sea shanties ("The Mermaid"), Caribbean ditties ("Sloop John B.") or novelty items ("Birdie with the Big Bass Voice"), interspersed among pieces from the classical, Broadway, light opera, spiritual, and glee club repertoire.*

*The hard work expended by chorus members was focused on the annual Spring Concert, held in mid-May at the Lawrence School. There were actually two performances, one on Saturday evening and the second on Sunday afternoon, and both were usually well-attended (although mid-May heat waves, not unknown on the Cape, could make performing or listening a real ordeal in the un-air conditioned Lawrence auditorium!)*

*Perhaps the most memorable of many such concerts was the XXXX show that featured the GFMAMMC performing Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" in tropical garb accompanied by a steel band. That example of outrageous silliness was to become the GFMAMMC's trademark for years afterwards.*

*Over the years, favorite pieces have remained close to the hearts of the chorus members, and the chances are excellent that "Navy Hymn" and "America the Beautiful" (to name but two) will be part of any GFMAMMC concert performance in future years.*

*During the course of its musical career the GFMAMMC was often joined at its spring concerts by other musical organizations, local and not so local, whose talents when combined with those of the*

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE GFMAMMC

=====

*host chorus made for some memorable musical performances. The John Salerno Orchestra, pianist George Engels, the Atlantic Clarion Band, Hyannis Sound, Celtic Tide and the Maureen Haley School of Irish Dance, Eddie and Donna Scheer, Notescape.cod, groups of kids from the local schools ... all these and more have helped make GFMAMMC performances pleasurable experiences for young and old.*

*Although the GFMAMMC was founded as a community group, the chorus has over the years embarked on some adventures outside the Falmouth area. These include performances in other Cape locations (Hyannis, Yarmouth, Sandwich), off-Cape New England (Sharon, Mystic, Boston, New Bedford, Marlboro), Washington DC, and perhaps the most memorable of all, a European trip in 1996 that allowed the chorus to perform with the Schelde River Pilots' Chorus in Vlissingen, Holland. The opportunity to perform in the glorious St. Jacob Cathedral in Vlissingen was one never to be forgotten by those chorus members fortunate enough to be present.*

*Closer to home, the GFMAMMC has since its founding been present at the Memorial Day ceremonies held each year at the Falmouth Veteran's Memorial in front of the town library, and for the past two years has also performed at Veterans' Day ceremonies in the same location. Although not officially "concerts", the May and November performances always consist of twenty or more chorus members willing to turn out to honor the nation's bravest. The current town veteran's affairs agent has referred to the GFMAMMC as "the heart and soul of the ceremony", and the chorus is justifiably proud of being so considered.*

*Tom Goux "retired" as GFMAMMC director at the end of the 2003 season in order to pursue other musical and professional interests. He was succeeded by Nalora Steele, a member of the Berklee School of Music faculty with experience in conducting community choruses, and under Lo's leadership the chorus continued its policy*

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE GFMAMMC

=====

*of combining items from its past repertoire with newer, more ambitious pieces (for example, Randall Thompson's magnificent "Alleluia").*

*A move off-Cape brought Lo Steele's brief tenure as chorus director to a close, and Sean Landers was invited to assume the role for the 2006 season. Sean is a member of the Barnstable High School faculty with a depth of musical experience in choral conducting. His youth and energy have been welcomed by the chorus members, and it is to be hoped that he will remain with the GFMAMMC for many years to come.*

*The present membership of the GFMAMMC is approximately 40, a reduction over the years reflecting not only the demographics of the area - i.e., an aging population, many of whom travel to warmer climes for all or part of the winter and are therefore reluctant to become involved in a rigorous practice schedule - but also competition from other groups for diminishing numbers of people interested in choral singing.*

*Recruitment efforts will continue, however, and it is to be hoped that the presence of a young and dynamic director like Sean Landers will help attract some talented younger people into the GFMAMMC fold, thus enabling the chorus to continue well into the future its mission of bringing joy through music to its members and audiences alike.*

- o O o -