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Media Contact:

Peter Zimmerman | San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus  
(415) 865-3650 ext. 352 | [peter.zimmerman@sfgmc.org](mailto:peter.zimmerman@sfgmc.org)



## **Observing Upsurge in Anti-LGBTQ Rhetoric Following Election Result, San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus Announces Lavender Pen Freedom Tour 2017**

SAN FRANCISCO (November 15, 2016) – Recognizing a rapidly shifting climate in the United States marked by an increase in dangerous and divisive rhetoric against vulnerable minority populations, such as the LGBTQ community, the **San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus** has announced the launch of its 2017 “Lavender Pen Freedom Tour.” In an effort to reaffirm its ever-present message of equality and inclusiveness, and the value in treating all individuals – irrespective of differences – with dignity, the Chorus will take their message across several southern states.

Now more than ever, SFGMC is taking this opportunity to marshal its mosaic of powerful, positive voices not only to empower its fellow LGBTQ Americans potentially struggling with unease and fear of further marginalization, but equally in a hopeful attempt to offer an outstretched hand and honest dialogue with fellow Americans.

Under the direction of SFGMC's **Dr. Timothy Seelig, Artistic Director** and **Chris Verdugo, Executive Director**, the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus will be launching its whistle stop tour in the fall of 2017, crisscrossing significant areas of the United States in which there has been an observable spike in anti-LGBTQ rhetoric, including Alabama, Mississippi, North Carolina, Florida and Tennessee.

“Over the last few days, the 300-plus members of the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus have, along with the entire LGBTQ community, been navigating our collective way through feelings of shock and despair,” says Seelig. “We hope our presence and our music will encourage our brothers and sisters, educate others and challenge those communities to think differently.”

“We, as a country, have a long road to travel,” adds Verdugo. “Our LGBT youth fear what their future might look like. We have a duty and obligation to protect them and the

freedoms we have rigorously fought for over the last eight years. We believe this tour is a step in the right direction that will build bridges of understanding, compassion and empathy.”

The 2017 Outreach Tour will be the cap to the Chorus’ monumental 40<sup>th</sup> Season (2017-2018). To launch the tour, the Chorus also released a [live video](https://youtu.be/IVuwIBvu-N0) (<https://youtu.be/IVuwIBvu-N0>) of the group performing “Light” from *Next to Normal*, recorded live this summer in Denver, CO.

Since its inception in 1978, the San Francisco Gay Men’s Chorus has consistently changed the world through music, serving as an international standard-bearer for a powerful mix of extraordinary musical excellence and mission-driven activism. Central to that mission has been a long history of social justice work, including commissioning and premiering new choral works that speak to issues of anti-bullying (“Tyler’s Suite,” “Testimony”), LGBTQ+ history (*I Am Harvey Milk*, *NakedMan*) and the human spirit (“New Year’s Carol,” *#twitterlieder*). The first public performance by the San Francisco Gay Men’s Chorus was at the candlelight vigil following the assassination of Supervisor Harvey Milk and Mayor George Moscone in November 1978, and ever since then the Chorus has continued to bring its message of tolerance and compassion to the world through thousands of performances across the globe.

### **About San Francisco Gay Men’s Chorus**

For nearly 40 years, the San Francisco Gay Men’s Chorus has courageously served as the international standard bearer for a powerful and accomplished mix of high-caliber performance, human rights, community activism, empowerment and inclusiveness, establishing it as an icon among LGBT organizations. Founded in 1978, it was the first organization of its kind and is credited with starting the LGBT choral movement, galvanizing and changing the course of LGBT history. It continues to rally and inspire other arts-based community organizations around the world. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Dr. Timothy Seelig, SFGMC has in recent seasons established a heightened level of performance standards receiving audience and choral acclaim, increased its touring and recording profile and broadened its impact and reputation in the community while maintaining its signature blend of humor, personality and high-voltage performances. For more information, visit [www.sfgmc.org](http://www.sfgmc.org) and @sfgmc (Facebook/Twitter/Instagram).

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