

Your Story Your Way

Craig Coogan & Susan Ryan-Vollmar - Presenters
Boston Gay Men's Chorus
Middle East Tour 2015



November 2, 2016
Sheraton Framingham Hotel & Conference Center



We are storytellers

We tell our stories through music. That's seen through our mission. **We create musical experiences to inspire change, build community and celebrate difference.**

To be effective storytellers our mission shows up in all of our communications (directly or indirectly).

When we're not singing we're still telling our stories - we just use different tools.



A difficult inheritance

- In 2012 BGMC was struggling as there wasn't anything to “fight against”
- Most LGBT issues had been fought and legislated. The organization was at crossroads.
- Even with legislative victories, hearts and minds still need changing.
- Strategic Planning to identify goals



An idea was hatched

- The board, community members, audience, donors, singers, former singers, other arts organizations, etc. all contributed to the question: what's next.
- Then an aspirational goal was needed. It was identified: touring.
- It was time to share the past stories of success and share the goal and generate excitement and interest among many constituencies.



A plan was formed

- We needed to let the various constituencies know the tour was happening
 - Launch party/event held
 - Communicated with different styles and tools using
 - eNewsletters
 - Press Releases
 - Membership / in person
 - Social Media
 - Government leaders



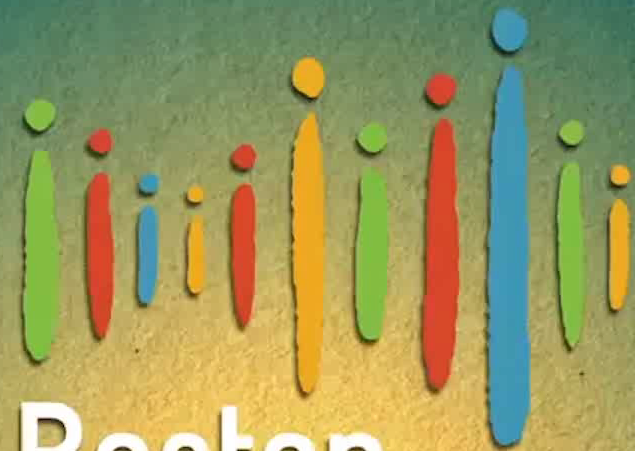
Clarity of message

- Many angles and many stories to tell. We narrowed and prioritized.
 - Historic. 1st Gay Chorus to do this.
 - Music makes a difference
- Core messaging
 - Aspirational & inspirational for mass consumption
 - Strengthen support among base (members, donors, etc.)



Raising money

- The “Making History” video became the introduction that we used for corporations, foundations and individual donors to support the project.
- Crowd sourcing by members raised nearly 1/3rd of the funds – individual stories of why this was important.



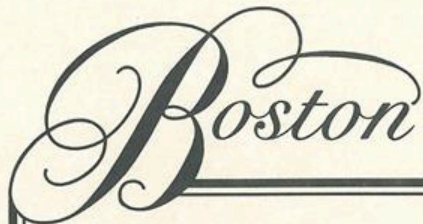
Boston
Gay Men's
Chorus





Building excitement

- Generate buzz
- Social media **#BGMCTour**
- Media stories
- Proclamations
- Videos



PROCLAMATION

Whereas: *The Boston Gay Men's Chorus has served the City of Boston since 1982 with moving performances that change hearts and minds, and has earned many artistic distinctions, awards, and accolades; and*

Whereas: *The Boston Gay Men's Chorus inspires change as role models through its outreach performances in schools, houses of worship, and community centers with its affirming message of love and acceptance of the LGBT community in and around the City of Boston; and*

Whereas: *The City of Boston is a local and national leader in LGBT issues, and celebrates and prioritizes the value of arts and culture; and*

Whereas: *By performing in Israel and Turkey this coming June, the Boston Gay Men's Chorus will become the first gay chorus to travel and perform in the Middle East; now*

Therefore, *I, Martin J. Walsh, Mayor of the City of Boston, heartily support and endorse the tour of the Middle East by the Boston Gay Men's Chorus and hereby proclaim that from June 18, 2015 to June 28, 2015,*

The Boston Gay Men's Chorus is a Cultural Ambassador

for the City of Boston. I urge all of my fellow Bostonians to join me in celebrating the arts and supporting the LGBT community.




MAYOR



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts



Boston Gay Men's Chorus

ON BEHALF OF THE CITIZENS OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS,
I AM PLEASED TO CONFER UPON YOU THIS GOVERNOR'S CITATION IN CELEBRATION OF YOUR
PERFORMING TOUR OF THE MIDDLE EAST IN JUNE, 2015 AND IN RECOGNITION OF BEING THE FIRST GAY
CHORUS TO TRAVEL AND PERFORM IN ISRAEL AND TURKEY. SINCE 1982 THE BOSTON GAY MEN'S
CHORUS HAS SERVED THE COMMONWEALTH WITH MOVING PERFORMANCES AND DESERVEDLY EARNED
MANY AWARDS. I TRUST YOU WILL CARRY THAT SPIRIT WITH YOU AS CULTURAL AMBASSADORS FOR THE
COMMONWEALTH.

THIS FIRST DAY OF JUNE IN THE YEAR 2015

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Charles Baker".

CHARLES D. BAKER
Governor

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Karyn E. Polito".

KARYN E. POLITO
Lieutenant Governor

The Boston Globe

SATURDAY, JUNE 6, 2015



BARRY CHIN/GLOBE STAFF

The Boston group will make history as the first gay chorus to tour the Middle East, with stops in Israel and Turkey.

A voice to be heard in the Mideast Boston Gay Men's Chorus braces for a hostile reception

By James Reed
GLOBE STAFF

Protesters hissing antigay slurs and death threats through bullhorns. Armed police officers as escorts to the performance hall. Headlines in publications around the world.

The Boston Gay Men's Chorus was stunned when that was the reception it received in

Wroclaw, Poland, in 2005 as part of its maiden European tour. And it could very well face a similarly hostile situation later this month when it makes history as the first gay chorus to tour the Middle East.

More than 100 members of the Boston Gay Men's Chorus will perform five concerts in four cities from June 18-29,

with stops in Israel (Tel Aviv, Ein Gedi, and Jerusalem) and Turkey (Istanbul). The group is already causing a stir in Istanbul, where the original venue canceled its concert amid a public outcry particularly upset that an openly gay ensemble would be performing during the Muslim holy month of

CHORUS, Page A7



Excitement & Concern

- Successful in telling the story thru the media.
- Members, families, extended families were worried about well being.
- Communications plan then had to include multiple ways of telling the stories as they happened in real time - to address the artistic impact, the social change effect and the day-to-day concerns.

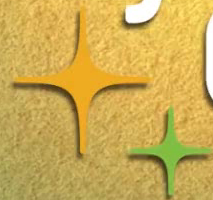


On the ground

- Communicated through
 - Blogs
 - Social Media
 - Video
- Core message was reinforced on each type of messaging.



Boston
Gay Men's
Chorus





Social Media results

- 8 videos produced in 10 days
- Nearly 40,000 views of videos during tour - more after
- **#BGMCTour** had more than 1 million engagements during 10 day trip
- Over 50 major media articles



Message continued after

- Newspaper follow-up stories
- Television interviews
- Opinion pieces by many voices -
Executive Director, Communications,
Music Director
- Music repertoire for 2015-16
reinforced overall message

THE HUFFINGTON POST

INFORM • INSPIRE • ENTERTAIN • EMPOWER



Reuben M. Reynolds III

Artist and musician

[Become a fan](#)

Music Will Set Us Free

Posted: 07/06/2015 12:25 pm EDT | Updated: 23 minutes ago

What is it about art that is so threatening to those who seek to restrict human rights for LGBT people?

The Boston Gay Men's Chorus recently concluded a history-making tour of Israel and Turkey during which we became the first gay choral group to perform in the Middle East. Our [performance in Istanbul](#) was nearly derailed by homophobia. We were originally scheduled to sing at the Zorlu Performance Center -- a newly-built hall that is an acoustic marvel. But shortly after ticket sales were made available to the public (about two months before the date of the performance), [fundamentalist extremists protested the concert and it was abruptly cancelled](#). We [found a new space thanks to the LGBTI student group at Boğaziçi University](#), which worked with school officials to make outdoor space on the South Campus available to us. We performed on June 27 before a crowd of 3,000 people, including Charles Hunter, the US Consulate General of Istanbul, Turkey, who joined us on stage for our last number, Katy Perry's "Firework."

The experience reminded me of something that took place 30 years earlier when I was the director of the Heartland Men's Chorus in Kansas City, Missouri. We were asked to perform at the opening of the first hospice care unit for AIDS patients. This was in the early days of the epidemic when a diagnosis of AIDS almost always resulted in death, and AIDS stigma and discrimination was much higher than it is today.



Message to donors

We created a custom post-card, hand addressed and hand wrote notes of appreciation to all 500 donors. In Jerusalem bought postage and mailed it.





Messaging success

- Consistently told our story
- Used a variety of techniques - from traditional media to video to social media to hand written notes
- Raised organization profile
- Raised funding ability
- Allows for our next story to be told...





Thank you!

Questions?

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