

Banded together for a cause

Annual Music Issue

Local instrumentalists join forces to create first-ever season of Charlotte Pride Band

by Matt Comer :: matt@goqnotes.com



Charlotte Pride Band artistic director Mark Taylor leads the ensemble in rehearsal in the Metropolitan Community Church of Charlotte's fellowship hall.

Chit-chatting with two friends from the Gay Men's Chorus of Charlotte last summer, Mark Taylor found himself immersed in conversation, unsurprisingly, about music.

Taylor, a singer with the chorus since 2007, also had a passion for instrumental music and was looking to join a community band. Now, less than a year after its first organizational meeting, Taylor finds himself volunteering as artistic director of the Charlotte Pride Band.

Over a dozen strong, the band is a gathering of LGBT and ally music enthusiasts who hope to play for the masses, diversify the local LGBT arts scene and raise broader awareness of the LGBT community in the greater Charlotte area.

"We were really lucky that when we came up with the idea last October we started pushing for a general interest meeting to see how the community would respond," Taylor said. "We scheduled an organizational meeting for January, so that gave us three months to recruit, so to speak. When we had the organizational meeting we had a surprising turnout of 15-20 people."

Nearly all of those originally interested in the idea have stuck around, Taylor said. The group is ramping up for an ambitious 2010/2011 season.

"We already have a season announced," Taylor said. "We are going to do four primary concerts this year, two in the fall and two in the spring. The theme this year is 'Starstruck' and we are going to try to really appeal more to a general audience."

Each concert will be tied together under a common motif, showcasing music from television and entertainment. On Oct. 23, Charlotte Pride Band presents "Please Stand By," with music from popular television series and shows. In December, the Band will perform with the Gay Men's Chorus of Charlotte for a holiday concert. In March, they'll return with "Exit, Stage Left," showcasing music from Broadway's biggest hit shows. Finally, in May, they'll present "The Casting Couch" with classic music from the big screen.

Tommy Hudnall, Charlotte Pride Band's

president and marketing director, said he'd never been heavily involved in Charlotte's local LGBT arts scene until the band's creation.

"I had seen the Gay Men's Chorus perform but that was really it and even that wasn't a regular thing," he said.

As he has gotten more involved, Hudnall said he's gotten to know a vibrant and dynamic community.

The local gay arts scene, he said, is strong: "I think the gay community is really mobilizing to make more of an impact. Mark has met with a lot of leaders from all the [LGBT] arts groups and there's really a sense of fostering collaboration between one another."

That spirit of collaboration is something on which Charlotte Pride Band is looking to capitalize. In addition to their regular season, the band will perform for, partner with and give back to other community groups including the upcoming Sing for the Cure concert benefiting the Susan G. Komen Race for The Cure.

"As a non-profit it is important and we need to give back," Hudnall said.

The group, whose official IRS tax-exempt status is still pending, hopes that once they do receive the non-profit status they'll be able to grow and expand through bigger business and community support. In the end, Hudnall said Charlotte Pride Band's mission boils down to a simple yet strong goal: "We want to promote the value of the LGBT community to the greater community." ::

— Get more information about the Charlotte Pride Band, including upcoming concert dates, times and locations at charlotteprideband.org.

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