

The Boston Gay Men's Chorus

Even those of us who love the winter holidays usually hate thinking about them before we have to. There's just something enervating about seeing Santa Claus decorations in stores in September.

But for Reuben Reynolds, music director of the Boston Gay Men's Chorus, looking (far) ahead simply goes with the territory.

"I'm already planning our holiday program for 2018!" says Reynolds. For once, we totally get it. After all, we look forward to the Chorus's winter concerts every year too. For many, it's an annual tradition to file into Jordan Hall to see those rows of 200-plus dapper, tuxedoed performers singing yuletide favorites and seasonal surprises—punctuated, of course, by some festively attired dancers to stuff a little extra gay glitter in our sonic stocking.

We'll have our chance again soon. Reynolds may be planning for the far future, but the BGMC will more immediately

hit the stage in December for its winter show, titled "Believe." 2017 was the BGMC's 35th anniversary year, and this holiday spectacular will add another notch to its broadening, Saint Nick-sized belt of successful seasons.

"Believe" will interpret traditional holiday songs in new ways and offer caroling-style context to modern tunes. Expect a reimagining of Schubert's 1825-composed "Ave Maria" to coexist with Sinead O'Connor's 1997 release "This Is to Mother You." The BGMC concert will also include a number of songs from the film "The Polar Express," says Reynolds, including the Josh Groban tune "Believe" that inspired the concert's name.

Reynolds says the message of that song summed up the spirit of the show.

"It's a wonderful sentiment," says Reynolds. "That you already have everything you need inside of you, if you listen to your heart. During the special time

of the holidays, we see so much good going around us."

He knows that for many LGBT people, that uplifting message feels especially welcome at the end of a particularly turbulent year.

"We try very hard to not be specifically political," says Reynolds. "But we try to remind people that ours is a welcoming and inclusive community, where they can come together and celebrate both their differences and likenesses—a place where the marginalized can come and feel the warm embrace of community."

Even if the concert isn't overly political, the BGMC certainly has a tradition of using music to open hearts and minds in important, impactful ways. This is the same group that delivered CDs of the song "Marry Us" to Beacon Hill lawmakers back when they were debating equal marriage in Massachusetts. It's the same group that became the first LGBT chorus to tour the Middle East two years ago. And next year the chorus will travel to

South Africa, where their concerts will raise money for an organization that helps relocate persecuted LGBT people from other African countries.

Back at home, the BGMC continues to make its mark just by singing out, singing loud and singing proud—with plenty of signature festive fierceness.

"We always try to include new holiday music that talks about our lives and experiences," says Reynolds. This year, for instance, they'll perform a song called "Merry Christmas, I Win," by artist Ernie Lijoi.

"It's told from the viewpoint of a bitchy queen talking to her friends, saying 'I got a mink, you got a rabbit, I got diamonds, you got Zirconium,'" he laughs. It's merry—and very, very gay.

"You've got to own it!" says Reynolds. Sing it, sister.

The BGMC presents "Believe" at Jordan Hall in Boston from December 10-17. For tickets, visit bgmc.org.



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