

With Pride and Joy!

A 40th Anniversary History of San Diego's Finest City Freedom Band and Hillcrest Wind Ensemble

by Keith Schooler
2025



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From the Artistic Director

On the occasion of our 40th Anniversary Spectacular held on December 13, 2025

Welcome to our 40th Anniversary concert, *With Pride and Joy*! I hope you are as excited as I am to celebrate the founding of our community band in 1985. Whether this is your first concert with us, or you are a regular member of our musical family, we are happy to share this evening of music-making with you. In keeping with our mission, we strive to perform innovative and more advanced music in order to educate and entertain, reflecting the ideal of diversity within our ranks as well as promoting quality music to all of San Diego.

Tonight's program brings our history to life, as we perform many of the works that were performed the first year of our existence. We also commissioned a new work to commemorate this anniversary, by composer Robert Sheldon. I asked him to write a work that would encapsulate the history of our wind ensemble. I mentioned to him how the band members in the early years, at the height of the AIDS crisis, nevertheless performed with pride and joy, even among the staggering losses of friends in the LGBT community. With the turn of the century, as the community continued to diversify, so did our ensemble, and today we hold the joy of coming to rehearsal each week as a musical community and sharing that music with you.

This concert is also bittersweet for me, as it will be my retirement as Artistic Director of Hillcrest Wind Ensemble. I have been with Hillcrest Wind Ensemble since 2010, first in the trumpet section, then being named Associate Artistic Director in 2019, and Artistic Director in 2021. Though I am sad to depart, I am proud of our musical growth these past four years, and I know the ensemble will be in good hands moving forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve the community, I will always hold my time in Hillcrest Wind Ensemble dear to my heart.

All the best,

Christian Tordahl
Artistic Director

About Us

About Hillcrest Wind Ensemble

The Hillcrest Wind Ensemble, one of Southern California's finest adult musical organizations, celebrates 40 years of providing quality musical programs for the greater San Diego community. Originally called San Diego's Finest City Freedom Band, the group was formed in 1985 to bring music to the LGBT community as a marching band that also played concerts. With the turn of the new century, the band has evolved into an elite wind ensemble, playing more advanced music with a new mission to entertain the ideal of diversity within our ranks as well as promoting quality music to all of San Diego.

The Hillcrest Wind Ensemble is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization. We exist on income from concert ticket sales and donations from patrons and sponsors.

Mission Statement and Vision

The purpose of this Band shall be to promote general harmony through music performance.

The Hillcrest Wind Ensemble is one of Southern California's finest adult musical organizations. We provide quality musical programs for the greater San Diego community. We strive to perform innovative and more advanced music in order to educate and entertain, reflecting the ideal of diversity within our ranks as well as promoting quality music to all of San Diego.

This organization, in all facets, shall oppose discrimination and brutality through peaceful means and shall be co-sexual and non-sexist in its goals, membership, objectives and organization, and shall always foster pride in its unity and achievements.

In order to achieve and maintain a high level of musical integrity, the Band shall adhere to the guidelines of a contemporary wind ensemble. The contemporary wind ensemble is structured to allow one musician per part (with the exception of two or three musicians to a part for flutes and clarinets or other parts as needed at the Artistic Director's discretion). This instrumentation encourages each player to raise their standards of musicianship and confidence as individuals, and as an ensemble. The simplistic nature of the wind ensemble requires each musician to excel in their skill, demanding a performance of precision and accuracy. It is our hope to set an example as an elite wind ensemble and thereby inspire future musical organizations to continue in true wind ensemble tradition.

Board of Directors 2025-2026

- **President:** Janine Donston
- **Vice-President:** Gary Poirier
- **Secretary:** Keith Schooler
- **Treasurer:** Miranda Osguthorpe
- **Member-at-Large:** Lori Calabrese

History

The Hillcrest Wind Ensemble, one of Southern California's finest adult musical organizations, evolved over the course of 40 years from a startup LGBT community concert and marching band, as well as a corps of flags and twirlers. Founded as San Diego's Finest City Freedom Band (SDFCFB) in 1985 during a renaissance of LGBT cultural and social organizations being established in the city, it began as a small group of musicians, many of whom "hadn't played in years." The first rehearsals were held around the counter of a diner using a box for the bass drum.

The group grew quickly, marching in Pride parades in cities across California. Concerts were given two to three times a year at various churches and community buildings. The band often played at events that were held as benefits for AIDS-related organizations. In 1997 the concert band transitioned into a wind ensemble (typically characterized by having one to two people on each part), playing more advanced music. At that time the Hillcrest Wind Ensemble was considered a subgroup of SDFCFB, keeping that original name for the marching band through 2000.

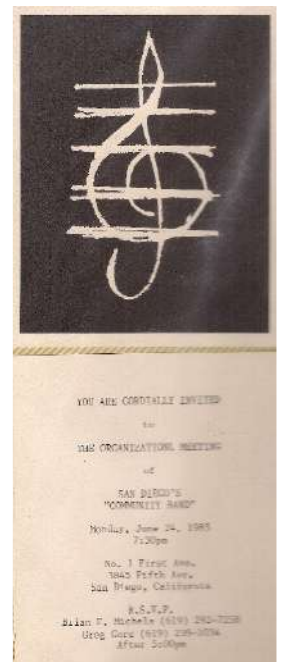
In the 2000s, the wind ensemble attracted more membership and audience outside the LGBT community. However, it maintained its roots and heritage as an LGBT organization, having in 1998 become a program of The Center (formerly the Lesbian and Gay Men's Community Center), remaining so until 2019 when it again became an independent non-profit organization.

The Hillcrest Wind Ensemble's mission statement says, "The purpose of this Band shall be to promote general harmony and the band's legacy through musical performance." Going forward, the ensemble wishes to entertain the ideal of diversity within our ranks as well as promoting quality music to all of San Diego. As in making instrumental music, the goal is to blend different individual voices to produce a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts.

1985



San Diego's Finest City Freedom Band, the first LGBT band in San Diego, was formed on Monday, June 24, 1985. The organizational meeting of San Diego's "Community Band" was held at 7:30 PM that day on the back patio at No. 1 Fifth Avenue, a gay bar at 3845 Fifth Avenue. It was coordinated by Brian Michels and Greg Gore, who also served on the Board of Directors for San Diego Lambda Pride, which organized the Pride parade and events. Brian was one of three San Diegans who played with the Great American Yankee (GAY) Freedom Band from Los Angeles for two years before moving to San Diego. The 80-member Los Angeles band led the San Diego Pride parade on Saturday, June 8, 1985, having first participated in the parade in 1981. That evening the L.A. band gave a free concert at the Spreckels Organ Pavilion in Balboa Park. During the Pride rally in Balboa Park at Juniper Street immediately following the parade, Ron Rayder, the drum major of the Los Angeles Band, challenged the LGBT community of San Diego to form a band. Brian chose to accept the challenge. Brian stated in a newspaper article, "Of the many things that I missed about the band, the love, the warmth, the friendship and the 'extended family' were what I first felt when I returned. I knew what I wanted to do in San Diego. Form a band." Most of the people approached about joining a band said, "I haven't played for years."



Organizational Meeting Notice – June 24, 1985

Original Logo

The first lesbian and gay bands in the United States started in 1978 in the cities of San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Houston. The Lesbian and Gay Bands of America (LGBA, currently the Pride Bands Alliance), was founded October 1-3, 1982. The original member bands were from Chicago, Dallas, Houston, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, New York City, San Francisco, and Washington, DC. LGBA assisted in the San Diego band's organization, in part by providing a "how-to guideline" for setting up a local band. The San Diego band began in 1985 as a concert band, expanding its focus to marching in the following year. In addition to brass, woodwind, and percussion players, a corps was formed which consisted of tall flags and baton and rifle twirlers, as well as a color and honor guard.

Twenty-two people responded to newspaper ads to attend the organizational meeting, not all of whom owned instruments. Many had been musically inactive since their high school or college band days. Certain instruments, such as percussion and sousaphones, were traditionally owned by the band rather than the individual musician. The new group had to find ways to obtain instruments as well as music and other necessities. The L.A. band donated some of their older drums and helped to locate some used instruments at a low price. The first rehearsal was set for 7:30 PM, Monday, July 8, even though a rehearsal space had not yet been procured, according to an article in the *San Diego Update*, one of San Diego's gay newspapers at the time. James F. Sewell was chosen to be the band's first artistic director. According to a charter member of the band, his last name was actually Soule, but he taught school band, so he likely used the name Sewell as an alias for job protection, which was necessary at the time. His successor, James Hageter, was always introduced as Jim (no last name) in the concerts for the same reason.

At that time the group was in the process of incorporation and applying for non-profit status. Lisa Strongin, a charter member, was an attorney who helped the group through these legal obligations. While waiting for this process to complete, the group worked with San Diego Lambda Pride to set up a temporary trusteeship so that donors could be given tax deductions. Ken Shortall, the treasurer of Lambda Pride, served as the first interim band treasurer. The purpose of intent was stated to be "to enjoy the production of music and to enhance and educate each member's skills as a performer; second is to provide community service and education by adding color and music to festive occasions; and finally, to engender a feeling of respect and pride among band members and mutual respect between Gay and non-Gay communities."

The owners of The Flame, a gay bar at 3780 Park Boulevard, hosted a fundraiser. The proceeds were used to help in the band's incorporation as a non-profit organization and to purchase needed music and instruments. The first rehearsal was held around the corner of the Big Kitchen (3003 Grape Street) in Golden Hill. The first rehearsal area was next door at the Grass Roots Cultural Center (1947 30th Street). Rehearsals were held on Mondays at 6:30 PM for both the band and the drill corps. After rehearsing at the cultural center, the band rehearsed at "a big barn of an old dance hall" at 3946 5th Ave between University and Washington. Shortly after, that space became the Corvette Diner, and the band moved rehearsals to the North Park Recreation Center at Howard and Idaho streets.

The band's first performance was an informal benefit concert, directed by James F. Sewell and performed by 25 members, given for the Grass Roots Cultural Center on Monday evening, September 16, with a donation of \$3 requested. The musical program included marches such as *National Emblem*, *Washington Post March*, band classics such as Gustav Holst's *Second Suite in F*, and even a band arrangement of *The Tide Is High*.

PROGRAM

National Emblem March E. E. Bagley
Overture Jubiloso Frank Erickson
Washington Post March John P. Sousa
Second Suite in F Gustav Holst

- INTERMISSION -

Hodie Christus Est Palestrina
Ray Look Me Over Cy Coleman
The Tide Is High John Holt
Olympic Fanfare John Williams
Cordoba Jay Bocook

PERSONNEL

CONDUCTOR

James F. Sewall

FLUTE

Doug Gentile
Jeff Eddleman

SAX

*Tim Rhoades
Marcia Forman
David McGhee
Dan Davey

CLARINET

Ken Rantson
Ian Bernhard
Kevin Jordan-Costas
Linda Strongin
Mark E. Wagner
*Ted Wilkison

TRUMPET

Richard Jouppi
Eric Kalen
Carolyn Sites

BASSOON

Linda Eberhart

TROMBONE

Nathan Fry
Ray Little

TUBA

John Oltmann

BARITONE

James L. Gee Hyun

F HORN

*Brian Michels
Gwen Snider

PERCUSSION

Carol Dex
Judy Forman
Tim Kahler
Missy Kulmann
L. Michael Johns
Rosa Sanchez


CORPS

Roger Denshey
*Ralph Martinez
Ernesto Sanchez

BANDIES (BAND ASSISTANTS)

*R. C. Ray

First concert program - September 16, 1985



VETERANS
S ★ D ★ V ★ A


**A TRIBUTE TO
GAY and LESBIAN
VETERANS
WORLD WAR II**

Presented by
A DOCUMENTARY BY ALLAN BRIDGE

Music by
SAN DIEGO'S FIRST GAY PRIDE BAND

Saturday, November 9, 1985
7:00 PM

First Unitarian Church
1700 Front Street
San Diego, California



A TRIBUTE TO GAY AND LESBIAN
WORLD WAR II VETERANS

PERFORMERS

MUSICAL SELECTIONS NAME
Washington Post March - Sousa
The Liberty - Sousa
Columbia - Sousa
The Stars and Stripes - Sousa
The Stars and Stripes - Sousa
The Stars and Stripes - Sousa
The Stars and Stripes - Sousa

WELCOME TIM WOODWARD
"SEARCHING TO A DIFFERENT PRISON"
Part One

ALLAN BRIDGE

PERMISSION


MUSICAL SELECTIONS NAME
Columbia - Sousa
American Legion March - Parker

PERMISSION ALLAN BRIDGE
Certificates of Honor

MUSICAL SELECTIONS NAME
The Stars and Stripes - Sousa
The Stars and Stripes - Sousa
The Stars and Stripes - Sousa

"SEARCHING TO A DIFFERENT PRISON"
Part Two

ALLAN BRIDGE



San Diego Veterans Association program



Band members participating in the fundraiser "Fortune"

The band was invited to participate with LGBA in the Texas Freedom Parade on September 21, 1985, in Dallas. Representatives from San Diego attended LGBA's national conference, "Notes Across The Nation", in Denver on October 18-21. A fundraiser performance called *Fortune*, given by band members to support participation in these events, was held at Mr. Dillon's (1051 University Avenue) on August 31. A "Big Spaghetti Feed" fundraiser was held November 16, 1985, at The Big Kitchen. The basic donation was \$5. The newly formed band provided music for a program honoring LGBT World War II veterans, held at the First Unitarian Church (4190 Front Street) on November 9. This program was sponsored by the San Diego Veterans Association and featured Allan Berube's documentary/slide lecture, *Marching to a Different Drummer*. The contents of this lecture served as the seed for Berube's 1990 landmark book *Coming Out Under Fire*.



"Saled anyone?" Bandmember PAM helped serve at the SAN DIEGO FINEST CITY FREEDOM BAND Spaghetti Feed at the BIG KITCHEN Saturday night.



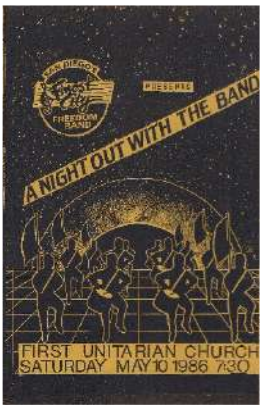
MICHAEL JOHNS stirred the sauce at the SAN DIEGO FINEST CITY FREEDOM BAND's Spaghetti Feed at the BIG KITCHEN last Saturday night.

The band's first holiday performance on December 8, by which time the ensemble had grown to 40 members, was a joint concert with the Los Angeles GAY Freedom Band, which was directed by Scott Brahm. Held at Balboa Park's Casa del Rey Moro Grand Ballroom, the concert saw about 125 performers on the stage, featuring Santa Claus and sparkling snow. Admission was \$6, with special reserved seating offered for \$25, which included a champagne reception with members of both bands an hour before the concert. Cocktails were served prior to the concert and during intermission. The musical program offered sacred and secular music. In addition to Christmas favorites such as *Sleigh Ride*, *Do You Hear What I Hear?*, and *Russian Christmas Music*, there were pop pieces such as *Selections from La Cage aux Folles* and a wrap-up sing-along. The show also featured dancing and singing entertainers, as well as a flag corps performance featuring twirlers from each band. The *San Diego Gayzette* newspaper said the event was "an exciting success for members of the blossoming San Diego gay music scene." The concert was nominated for one of the 12th annual Nicky Awards (an awards program for the LGBT community) in the category of Outstanding Major Event on January 7, 1986. The band was also nominated in the category of Outstanding Entertainment.



It is important to note the cultural context in which San Diego's Finest City Freedom Band was formed and nurtured. The 1980s was a time of both progress and struggle for the LGBT community. The AIDS crisis devastated the community and created stigma and discrimination. Lesbian and gay bands in many cities lost a majority of their members due to the epidemic. Many states passed discriminatory laws against gay and lesbian people, and there was a notable political backlash against the community. 1985 was the first year that the city of San Diego and the police department did not deny a permit for the Pride parade (although in previous years permits were eventually approved after legal challenges). However, the decade also saw the emergence of a global gay culture in which the San Diego band played a vital role. LGBT people became more visible and accepted in mainstream society. Many band members saw their participation in the group as a means of gay rights activism by performing in an openly gay organization. The San Francisco Gay Freedom Day Marching Band and Twirling Corps (now called the San Francisco Pride Band) was founded by Jon Reed Sims in response to Anita Bryant's anti-gay campaign in the late 1970s. He encouraged the formation of the Los Angeles band, who in turn challenged San Diego to start a lesbian and gay band.

1986



The first spring concert, *A Night Out with the Band*, was performed on May 10, 1986, at the First Unitarian Church. It was directed by James Hageter. The program consisted of a mix of classical and patriotic pieces, marches, and Broadway musical medleys. There were 26 musical performers and 6 corps members. With the beginning of 1986 had come a focus on the band as a marching as well as a musical unit. With only six months to prepare, the band was determined to create a marching band that would impress, entertain, and instill pride in the community. The marching band's first performance was at the Long Beach Pride parade. The band was chosen to lead the 1986 Lambda Pride Parade in San Diego on June 7, considered the high point of the band's season. In addition to the marching band were twirling and flag routines. A joint concert was given with the Los Angeles and San Francisco bands at the festival that evening. A trip to the Los Angeles

Pride Parade followed. After the marching season was over, the group worked on organizational details, such as passing by-laws, electing a new executive board of directors, and setting a tentative performance schedule for the following year.

After taking a break over the month of August, the second season commenced with rehearsals on September 8 at the North Park Recreation Center at Howard and Idaho streets on Monday nights from 6:00 to 9:00 PM, organized by Carolyn Sites. The rehearsal space was offered free of charge. A newspaper article stated, "The corps will also be expanding its routines to include some exciting new Broadway hits." A performance was planned for October 19, 1986, at the North Park Recreation Center with "open" admission. The band performed at numerous charity events that fall, with beneficiaries including "No On 64", AIDS Assistance Fund, and Gay Veterans. The second holiday concert was on December 19 at the Roosevelt Junior High School auditorium.



1987

The band marked the first of several annual events in 1987. The first mountain retreat to Jamul was held in April to prepare for the spring concert *On a Positive Note* (which was a benefit for the local AIDS Assistance Fund and earned \$1,250 for the fund). At these retreats members would relax, play games, swim, as well as undergoing training exercises to help with marching. In August the first band banquet was held. At that time these were award banquets where members were recognized for their contributions to the group. This event has, with some gap years, continued in various formats to the present day. Though not an annual event, members of the group participated with other LGBA bands in the October March on Washington and played in a concert at

DAR Constitution Hall in Washington, DC on October 10. In addition to marching in the southern California Pride parades, the band marched for the first time in the North Park Toyland Parade on November 28, an event that began in 1936.

The band had previously not had traditional uniforms. Instead, they made do with long-sleeved knit pullover shirts and pants. The band decided to purchase uniforms to give the group a classier and more professional appearance. The uniform consisted of a light blue jacket with dark blue and gold trim, accompanied by dark blue pants with light blue and gold trim, designed and produced by the Stanbury Uniform Company of St. Louis, Missouri. A prototype was premiered in September 1987 at a lip sync contest at West Coast Production Company (WCPC, an LGBT club at 1845 Hancock Street). To pay for the uniforms (which cost \$210 each, equivalent to \$571 in 2025 currency), the band held fundraisers with a goal of \$6,000 to be raised by January. This was the amount needed to meet a 50% down payment on 50 uniforms to be ordered. The order had to be placed in January for the uniforms to be delivered in time for the 1988 Pride season. A benefit was held at the Brass Rail (3796 Fifth Avenue), which was sponsored by Jennifer, Miss Gay San Diego '87. They also held yard sales, car washes, and a kegger at WCPC. One fundraiser was the “Win-A-Band” raffle, for which tickets were



Uniform rendering



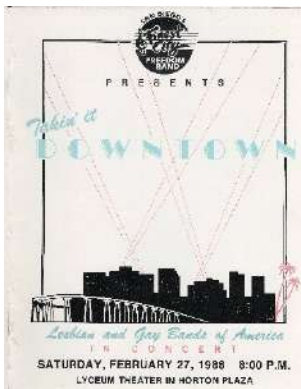
sold for \$1 or six for \$5. The winner was entitled to a 15-minute performance by the band at any location in San Diego. Under the Uniform Sponsor Program, any individual, business, or organization who donated the price of one uniform would have the name of the donor printed on a label sewn inside the uniform. Some of the organizations, businesses, and individuals which joined the program were the 16th Imperial Charity Court, the Spare Me bowling league, Aztec Bowling Center, Mr./Miss Gay San Diego/Ms. Gay Pride. Several band members also pledged to purchase a uniform. San Diego's state assembly member, Peter Chacon, agreed to serve as honorary chair of the “Steppin’ Out in Style – Campaign ’88” fundraising drive. Other prominent community members such as Jeri Dilno, Rev. Donna Eubanks, Neil Good, Gloria Johnson, Nicole Murray, and Dr. A. Brad Truax joined Chacon to serve as honorary co-chairs.

As of fall 1987, the band officials were as follows:

- James Hageter, Artistic Director
- David Scott, Marching Director
- Jane Ballinger, President
- David Scott, Vice-President
- Blake Henry, Secretary
- Lisa B. Strongin, Treasurer
- Carolyn Sites, Manager
- Janyce Rowell, Assistant Manager

1988

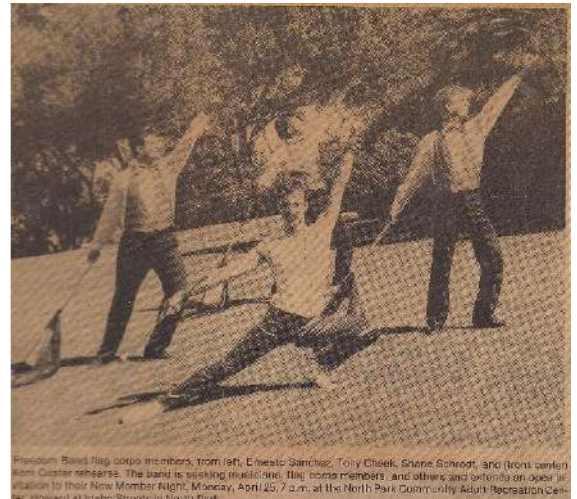
San Diego was chosen by LGBA to host their 1988 national conference on February 26–28. On February 27, a joint LGBA concert *Takin’ It Downtown* was performed at the Lyceum Theater in Horton Plaza. The concert was a benefit for The Lesbian and Gay Men’s Community Center. It was directed by James Hageter and



produced by Jane Ballinger, Janyce Rowell, Carolyn Sites, and Lisa Strongin, with emcees Judy Foreman and Albert Bell. There were over 150 musicians, twirlers, and flag corps from 13 LGBT bands across the country. The concert program concluded with the debut of *Homophonics – Overture for Band*, a piece commissioned for this concert and composed by Wayne Love of the San Francisco band. It was an arrangement of “many familiar ‘tag-tunes’ of gay life and times.” The opening fanfare saluted five of the cities that had LGBA bands. The concert won the 1988 Nicky Award for “Outstanding Major Event”. The band also won the 1988 Nicky Award for “Outstanding Entertainment Group”.

For the 1988 Pride parades, the third year of parades for the marching band, the members voted to march in the San Francisco parade rather than in Los Angeles, both parades being held the same day. Some band members felt that they should march in Los Angeles due to the GAY Freedom Band there inspiring and nurturing San Diego’s new LGBT band. However, the majority chose to accept the invitation from San Francisco.

The band was especially excited to march that year because they debuted their new uniforms. Marching director and drum major David Scott stated in a newspaper interview, “The hat and striped pants will not be displayed as part of the uniform this season, because the complete uniform was too expensive to get all at once, but we’ll have a progressively more impressive appearance each time you see us.” Later pictures indicate that while the uniform later included the hats, the pants were never purchased, but rather the uniform was worn with black tuxedo pants.

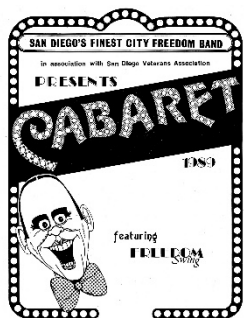


To increase their numbers, the band hosted a new member night on Monday, April 25, called “Come Join The Freedom Band Night.” Similar events were held a couple of times a year. A solo and ensemble recital was held in April.

Also in April of that year, the band ran an article in the LGBT newspapers that they had an opening for an artistic director to succeed James Hageter. The duties consisted of selecting music to be performed, rehearsing the band once a week, and directing scheduled concerts. An honorarium was offered. The notice specifically said that applicants “should be sensitive to the needs of a lesbian and gay community band.” Ben Moore was eventually retained for the position.

New additions to the band during this year included a saxophone quartet called Sax-O-Maniacs and a seven-piece Dixieland band.

1989



The spring concert in March saw the debut of Freedom Swing, a subgroup of San Diego’s Finest City Freedom Band. Their repertoire consisted of swing, big band, and jazz music. Led by Geoff Winstead and managed by Jeff Hibbs, in its first year the 14-piece dance band entertained twice at San Diego’s Pride Festival, at the North Park Recreation Center, many of San



Freedom Swing Band 1989

Diego's LGBT bars, numerous fundraisers, and was featured on the Channel 8 news program *Saturday Morning*.

1992

Freedom Swing had to disband due to lack of musicians. A number of the people in this subgroup moved away from San Diego, citing the high cost of living in the city as their primary reason to leave.

About this time the rehearsals were moved to the Park Boulevard United Methodist Church.

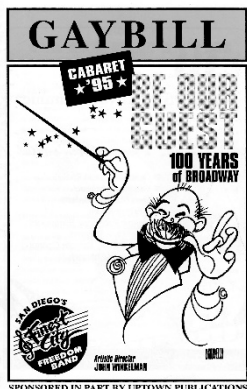
The band was nominated for the "Outstanding Achievement in the Arts" Nicky award.



San Diego Pride Parade, July 20, 1991

was held at the Park Boulevard United Methodist Church on April 9. The 1994 spring concert was dedicated to his memory.

1995



The second act of the Cabaret concert on July 29 was "a mixture of 'performance art', otherwise known as 'drag', some campy, some not." Under the direction of Joseph Gaxiola as concert producer, the act featured drag numbers performed by Joseph, Robert Sokolowski, Skip Lovett (Roxy), Cris Rosales, Jan Simmons, and Lenny Clarkson. The act also featured a newly formed woodwind quintet. The act's finale was a rendition of "Three Little Maids" from *The Mikado*, performed by Joseph, Robert, and Skip.

Dixie Freedom and the Boys, a seven-piece Dixieland/jazz band, was formed. It was created to replace the Freedom Swing big band, which had disbanded in 1992. They debuted in March at Millenium Coffee House. Their first performance with the band was at the Palm Springs concert in November, a Palm Spring Pride event. The original members were Randy Wentworth, Judith DeBerry, Joseph Gaxiola, John Winkelman, John Oltmann, and Geoff Winstead. They played at rallies, fundraisers, coffee houses, and at the Pride Festival.

Brian Michels, who founded the band in 1985, passed away on November 10, 1995, the day before the performance by the band in Palm Springs. The 1995 holiday concert was dedicated to his memory.

The December holiday concert, *A Nutcracker in Oz*, saw the first of four Nutcracker-themed holiday shows.

1996

On May 1 Blake Henry, 36, passed away due to complications from AIDS. He had been a past president and founding member of the band, and performed with the marching unit, Dixieland swing band, and concert band.

1997

In the spring a new subgroup was formed, a woodwind quintet named “Fünf Bläser” (German for “Five Wind Players”) consisting of flute, oboe, clarinet, French horn, and bassoon. Their first public performance was on August 9 in Balboa Park.

The holiday concert on December 21 was the first where the band was billed as the Hillcrest Wind Ensemble, the concert division of San Diego’s Finest City Freedom Band (which now was the name of the marching band). A wind ensemble consists of primarily one player to a part, except for two players to a part in the flute and clarinet sections. This gives the wind band an opaque quality in which individual timbres are not covered up by excessive doubling.



1998

At this time the band was rehearsing at the Lesbian and Gay Men’s Community Center Annex (3916 Normal Street).

In the notes from the president in the spring program regarding becoming a member of the Financial Family, board president Geoff Winstead stated that “recently, we have been told that much of our financial support from some community organizations will be cut or reduced because they feel that funding various AIDS charities and food banks is more important than helping arts groups.”

In November 1998, San Diego’s Finest City Freedom Band submitted a proposal to become a program of The Center (formerly The Lesbian and Gay Men’s Community Center). In December this proposal was approved and accepted by the Board of Directors of The Center, where Karen Marshall was the Executive Director. The band’s governance was provided by a steering committee (later called the leadership committee) rather than its own board of directors.

1999

On May 14, 1999, members of the band performed in the first of a series of drag benefit shows, each called “Jagi Goes To ...” The first was “Jagi Goes To Band Camp”. Organized by Joseph Gaxiola, whose drag name was Jagi, these were performed at The Hole, an LGBT bar with an outdoor stage at 2820 Lytton Street in Point Loma. The shows were quite popular and lucrative.

The San Francisco Bay Area Gay & Lesbian Band came to march with the group at the San Diego parade on July 24, after which a party and barbecue was held for both bands in Keith Schooler’s back yard.



Palm Spring Pride, November 1999

In November 1999, the band was invited to march in the Palm Spring parade. The Palm Springs Pride organization paid for the band's lodging.

2000

The San Diego Pride parade in July and the Palm Springs Pride parade in November were the last marching performances of the band.

2002

Since by this time the band was no longer marching, the name "San Diego's Finest City Freedom Band" was generally dropped, although it was still sometimes included on concert posters.

2008

On November 15 the band started a new tradition by adding a fourth regular concert to the yearly schedule, the fall concert *No Strings Attached!* This concert was meant to present original music that was written specifically for wind ensembles or concert bands, excluding transcriptions of orchestral pieces. The intention was also to break up the long rehearsal period from the summer break until the holiday concert.



*Holiday concert, Mississippi Room, Lafayette Hotel
December 16, 2006*

2009

On October 18 at the fall concert, the band performed the winning pieces of the newly inaugurated annual international composition contest. Intended to spark creativity for new wind ensemble compositions, as well as to serve as a fundraiser for the group based on entry fees, the contest ran for fourteen years. Cash prizes were given for the first and second place winners, with a third honorable mention piece being performed in years where a third piece was deemed worthy.

2013

The second half of the holiday concert on December 14 consisted of a mini-musical show entitled *Rockin' Around the Water Cooler*. This was a holiday story about a 1950s office party woven around existing music which complemented the narrative's plot points. The show was produced and directed by Paul Terrell using an original script by Keith Schooler, featuring a cast of 12 people. Performed at the San Diego Woman's Club, the performance was sold out and well received.

2016

On February 28 the band was invited for the first time to perform in the First United Methodist Church of Chula Vista Music Series. In a Sunday afternoon free-will offering concert, the group performed selections from their upcoming spring concert. This became an on-going annual event.

2017

In June a new group of people joined the Leadership Committee. While many administrative functions were performed by The Center, the new committee looked to revitalize the band and give more direction to the group.



*Band banquet, Keith Schooler and Oscar Green's house
September 10, 2016*

2018

On November 17, 2018, the Hillcrest Dance Orchestra (HDO) was formed. This was an 8-piece group playing songs from the early 1900s up to the present, including ragtime, Dixieland, big band, 50s hits, and the eighties. It was intended to raise money for the Hillcrest Wind Ensemble. They performed on the back patio at The Ould Sod (3373 Adams Avenue) on this date and again on May 11 and August 31, 2019.

2019

In June The Center terminated the band's status as a program and cut ties. The group reestablished itself as a separate 501(c)3 non-profit organization and incorporated as "Hillcrest Wind Ensemble." Articles of Incorporation were filed on August 28 with the state of California.

2020 – 2021

On March 19, 2020, Governor Gavin Newsom issued a Stay Home Order that directed all California residents to stay home or at their place of residence until further notice. The COVID global pandemic shutdown continued so that the band was unable to perform for two years. The last concert was on December 14, 2019. During the pandemic, the group published two videos on their website based on music from past concerts. The first, published on Christmas Eve 2020, was a medley of holiday favorites recorded live from past concerts. In May 2021, a second medley was published entitled *Excerpts from Blast to the Past*, featuring highlights from the 2016 cabaret concert. The band started rehearsals again in the fall of 2021, under a strict vaccination requirement for all participating band members, in preparation for a holiday concert, "Holiday's Return", on December 18, 2021.



*HWE, First United Methodist Church of Chula Vista
April 3, 2022*

2025



The band celebrated its 40th anniversary in grand style with a concert on December 13 at the Courtyard by Marriott – Liberty Station (2592 Laning Road). The concert featured a commissioned piece entitled *With Pride and Joy!* by composer Robert Sheldon, as well as many of the pieces that were played in the band's first year of concerts. The day was proclaimed by the City of San Diego as "Hillcrest Wind Ensemble Day." The concert was attended by San Diego City Councilmember Stephen Whitburn.



*Hillcrest Wind Ensemble
Cabaret concert, Courtyard by Marriott - Liberty Station
June 18, 2022*

Conductor History

- June – November 1985 – **James F. Sewell (Soule)**
- November 1985 to February 1988 - **James Hageter**
- July 1988 to July 1989 – **Benjamin Moore** (interim)
- December 1989 – January 1989 - **Judy Heisel** (interim)
- February 1990 to December 1993 - **Gary Hoover**
- January 1994 – December 1994 - **John Winkelman** (interim)
- February 1995 to December 1999 - **John Winkelman**
- January 2000 – June 2000 – **Sharon Parker** (interim)
- July 2000 to 2002 - **James Miles**
- 2003 to June 2021 - **John Winkelman**
- July 2021 to December 2025 - **Christian Tordahl**
- January 2026 to Present – **Avi Mehta**

In Memoriam

Joseph Atkins
Norman Berman
Gary Chong
John Clark
“Queen” Eddie Conlon
Carl Cox
John Donarum
David Firenze
Brad Grandon
James Hageter
Blake Henry
Neil Holmes
Rob Howarth
Chuck Hukari
Kevin Jordan-Coates
Stefaan Kiebooms
Herb King
Michael Lego
Sherman “Rick” Levesque
Martha Mason
Brian Michels
“Doc” Moffett
Benjamin E. Moore
Mark Murphy
David Neuschuler
David O’Reilly
Patti Plaster
Kathy Rotzinger
Janyce Rowell
Jim Soule
Steven Strokas
Edward L. Tiedeman
Dennis Torza
Skip Wilson

Jagi Shows

On May 14, 1999, members of the band performed in the first of a series of drag benefit shows, each called “Jagi Goes To ...” The first was “Jagi Goes To Band Camp”. Organized by Joseph Gaxiola, whose drag name was Jagi, these were performed at The Hole, an LGBT bar with an outdoor stage at 2820 Lytton Street in Point Loma. The shows were quite popular and lucrative.



Jagi Goes To Band Camp – May 14, 1999

The following is a list of those shows.

- May 14, 1999 – Jagi Goes To Band Camp
- January 21, 2000 – Jagi Goes To Church
- November 10, 2000
- January 19, 2001 – Jagi Goes Around The World
- June 16, 2001
- August 2, 2002 – Jagi Goes Bowling
- March 1, 2003
- May 17, 2003
- August 22, 2003
- November 8, 2003
- March 6, 2004
- May 15, 2004
- August 28, 2004 – Jagi Goes To The 70s
- May 14, 2005 (Patti's Bar)
- May 13, 2006
- May 24, 2008 (Brass Rail)
- October 18, 2008 (The Flame)
- August 23, 2009 (The Flame)

Milestones and Performance History

1985

June 1985

- First organizational meeting June 24

September 16, 1985

- Fundraiser concert for Grass Roots Cultural Center

November 9, 1985

- ***A Tribute to Gay and Lesbian World War II Veterans***
 - Featuring a documentary/slide lecture, *Marching to a Different Drummer*, by Allan Berube (the contents of which served as the seed for his 1990 book *Coming Out Under Fire*)
 - Produced with the San Diego Veterans Association
 - First Unitarian Church

December 8, 1985

- First Christmas Concert
 - Directed by: Michael St. Johns
 - Nominated for a Nicky Award in the category of Outstanding Major Event
 - Cafe Del Rey Moro Grand Ballroom, Balboa Park

1986

March 15, 1986

- St. Patrick's Day Parade

March 29, 1986

- Performed with the San Diego Men's Chorus at the opening day of America's Finest City Softball League, San Diego's gay softball league.

May 10, 1986

- ***A Night Out with the Band***
 - First spring concert
 - Directed by: James Hageter
 - First Unitarian Church

June 1986

- Pride parades
 - Long Beach
 - San Diego
 - Los Angeles

August 1986

- Gay Games II
 - San Francisco
 - Davies Symphony Hall

Fall 1986

- Fundraisers
 - "No On 64"
 - AIDS Assistance Fund
 - Gay Veterans

October 19, 1986

- Fall Concert
 - “Open” admission
 - North Park Recreation Center, 4044 Idaho Street

December 1986

- Second Annual Christmas Concert
 - Production Manager: Carolyn Sites
 - Marketing: Robert Coady, Blake Henry, Carolyn Sites
 - Roosevelt Junior High School

1987

April 1987

- First Musical Retreat
 - Jamul
- Spring Concert - ***On a Positive Note***
 - Benefit for the local AIDS Assistance Fund

June 1987

- Pride parades
 - Long Beach
 - Los Angeles
 - San Diego

August 1987

- First Band Banquet

October 12-13, 1987

- March on Washington
 - Washington, DC
 - DAR Constitution Hall
- Participated in LGBA's 5th annual conference in Washington, DC

November 28, 1987

- First time marching in North Park Toyland Parade

1988

February 27, 1988

- ***Takin' It Downtown***
 - An LGBA concert to coincide with their annual convention held in San Diego that year.
 - Benefit for The Lesbian and Gay Men's Community Center
 - Won a Nicky Award in the category of Outstanding Major Event
 - Artistic Director: James Hageter
 - Emcees: Judy Foreman & Albert Bell
 - Produced by: Jane Ballinger, Janyce Rowell, Carolyn Sites, Lisa Strongin
 - Transportation: Gary Poirier
 - Debut of *Homophonics – Overture for Band*, a piece commissioned for this concert and composed by Wayne Love of the San Francisco band. It was an arrangement of “many familiar ‘tag-tunes’ of gay life and times.”
 - Lyceum Theater, Horton Plaza

April 1988

- Band Retreat
 - Jamul

May/June 1988

- Pride Parades
 - *Debut of New Uniforms*
 - Marching Director and Drum Major: David Scott

- Corps Director: Ernesto Sanchez
- Long Beach
- San Francisco - *Cable Car Award*
- San Diego - *Grand Marshall Award*

July 29, 1988

- ***Summertime Cabaret***
 - *First Cabaret Concert*
 - Presented by the San Diego Veterans Association
 - Emcees: Judy Forman & Roger Dennehey
 - Featured Soloists: Fernando Herrera, Chris Raitzyk
 - Featuring: The Renegades (country-western dance group of the San Diego Veterans Association) and Sax-O-Maniacs (saxophone quartet)
 - Directed by: Ben Moore
 - Corps Director: Ernesto Sanchez
 - Produced by: Janyce Rowell
 - Veterans War Memorial Building, 3325 Zoo Drive, Balboa Park

1989

March 17, 1989

- ***A Touch of Class***
 - Featured Soloist: Jim Lombardi
 - Directed by: Ben Moore
 - Guest Conductor: Ken Caton
 - FREEDOM SWING (Debut Performance)
 - Directed by: Judy Heisel
 - Produced by: Jane Ballinger, Ben Moore
 - Metropolitan Community Church, 4333 30th Street

May – June, 1989

- **Pride parades**
 - Marching Director: Gary Hoover
 - Drum Major: David Scott
 - Long Beach
 - San Francisco - *Cable Car Award*
 - San Diego

July 28, 1989

- ***Cabaret***
 - Presented by the San Diego Veterans Association
 - Dedicated to the Memory of Dennis Torza, April 14, 1956 - July 9, 1989
 - Directed by: Ben Moore
 - Emcee: Robert Sokolowski
 - Corps Director: Kent Custer
 - Freedom Swing
 - Directed by: Judy Heisel
 - Produced by: Neil Holmes
 - Veterans War Memorial Building, 3325 Zoo Drive, Balboa Park

December 9, 1989

- ***Christmas in Paradise***
 - Triangle Concert: San Diego's Finest City Freedom Band, Great American Yankee Freedom Band of Los Angeles, Phoenix Desert Overture band
 - Directed by: Judith Heisel
 - Guest Conductors: Chris Holdcraft (Phoenix), Jim Berg (Los Angeles)
 - Peter and the Wolf Narrator: Herb King
 - Emcee: Robert Sokolowski
 - Corps Director: Kent Custer
 - Produced by: Gary Chong
 - Organ Pavilion, Balboa Park

1990

May 4, 1990

- ***A Touch of Classical***
 - Benefit for the San Diego Gay and Lesbian Archives
 - Directed by: Gary Hoover
 - Produced By: Lisa Strongin
 - Metropolitan Community Church, 4333 30th Street

May 13, 1990

Freedom Swing and the Imperial Court
Fundraiser for the Food Bank
B J's

May – June, 1990

- Pride parades
 - Long Beach
 - Los Angeles - *Musical Marching Unit Award*
 - San Diego

June 26, 1990

- Twilight in the Park Concert
 - Concert Band & Freedom Swing
 - Directed by: Gary Hoover
 - Emcee: Robert Sokolowski
 - Balboa Park

July 28, 1990

- ***Cabaret '90***
 - Dedicated to the Memory of David O'Reilly
 - Directed by: Gary Hoover
 - Emcee: Joe Huntley
 - Freedom Swing
 - Directed by: Geoff Winstead
 - Corps Director: Kent Custer
 - Produced by: Neil Holmes
 - Balboa Park Recital Hall

August 8, 1990

- ***Beyond the Rainbow***
 - LGBA Concert
 - Gay Games III
 - Orpheum Theater
 - Vancouver

December 1, 1990

- ***In a Holiday***
 - Directed by: Gary Hoover
 - Emcee: Queen Eddie
 - First Unitarian Church

1991

April 12, 1991

- ***A Touch of Classical***
 - Directed by: Gary Hoover
 - Assistant Director: Fran Martin
 - Emcee: Michael A. Nauert
 - Featured Soloist: John Winkelman

- Produced by: Ann Crossland
- Metropolitan Community Church

May- June 1991

- Pride parades
 - Long Beach
 - Los Angeles
 - San Diego

July 27, 1991

- ***Cabaret 91***
 - Directed by: Gary Hoover
 - Assistant Director: Fran Martin
 - Emcee: Queen Eddie
 - Featuring: Rudy De La Mor
 - Corps Director: Kent Custer
 - Freedom Swing
 - Directed by: Geoff Winstead
 - Produced by: Ann Crossland
 - City College Auditorium

December 14, 1991

- ***In A Holiday***
 - Benefit for Rainbow House & Names Project
 - Directed by: Gary Hoover
 - Assistant Director: Fran Martin
 - Featured Duet: Fernando Herrera and Doug Gentile
 - Emcees: Chris Kehoe & Barbara Crusberg
 - Produced by: Neil Holmes
 - First Unitarian Church

1992

April 10, 1992

- ***Strength In Numbers***
 - Combined Concert with the San Diego Men's Chorus (directed by Gary Holt) and San Diego Women's Chorus (directed by Cynthia Lawrence-Wallace)
 - Our portion directed by Gary Hoover
 - Spreckels Theater

April 24, 1992

- ***A Touch of Classical***
 - Directed by: Gary Hoover
 - Assistant Director: Fran Martin
 - Featured Soloist: Mike Mahoney
 - Produced by: Gary Chong
 - Metropolitan Community Church

May - July 1992

- Pride parades
 - Long Beach
 - San Francisco - *Cable Car Award*
 - San Diego - *Best Musical Entry*

August 1992

- ***Cabaret 92***
 - Directed by: Gary Hoover
 - Assistant Director: Fran Martin
 - Emcee: Queen Eddie
 - Special Guest: Danny Williams
 - Corps Director: Kent Custer

- Produced by: Neil Holmes
- City College Auditorium

October 10-11, 1992

- KidzArtz Festival, Spreckels Organ Pavilion, Balboa Park

December 13, 1992

- ***Our Home for the Holidays***
 - Benefit for the Lesbian and Gay Men's Community Center
 - Directed by: Gary Hoover
 - Produced by: Blake Henry
 - The Lesbian & Gay Men's Community Center outdoor courtyard

1993

April 3, 1993

- ***Winds of Change***
 - Dedicated to the memory of Kevin Jordan-Coates and Edward Tiedeman
 - Directed by: Gary Hoover
 - Featured: Instrumentalist John Mula
 - Produced by: Gary Chong
 - First Unitarian Church

April 23, 1993

- LGBA Concert
 - Warner Theater
 - Washington, DC

May - July 1993

- Pride Parades
 - Long Beach
 - Los Angeles
 - San Diego

August 1, 1993

- ***Bustin' Loose: A Country Cabaret***
 - Directed by: Gary Hoover
 - Featuring: Chris Hassett, The Finest City Squares, David Jacobs, Wendy Bartel and the Gay Men's Chorus of San Diego
 - Corps Director: Randy Arnayro
 - Produced by: Finest City Productions (Gary Holt)
 - Cafe Del Rey Moro Ballroom, Balboa Park

August 7, 1993

- Fern Street Circus Parade

December 13, 1993

- ***A Concert of Winter Music***
 - Dedicated to the Memory of John Donarum
 - Directed by: Gary Hoover
 - Assistant Director: John Winkelman
 - Peter and the Wolf Narrator: Herb King
 - Produced by: Joseph Gaxiola
 - Park Boulevard Methodist Church

1994

April 23, 1994

- ***A Salute to American Composers***
 - Dedicated to the Memory of James Hageter and Mark Murphy

- Directed by: John Winkelman (Interim Director)
- First Unitarian Church

May - July 1994

- Pride parades
 - Long Beach - *Pride Award*
 - Los Angeles - *John Phillip Sousa Award*
 - San Diego

July 30, 1994

- ***Club Cabaret: Le Jazz Hot!***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman (Interim Director)
 - Emcee: Harriett J Whitman
 - Featured Soloist: Wendy Bartel
 - Featuring: Veronica Edwards
 - Corps Director: Skip Lovett
 - Produced by: Joseph Gaxiola
 - Park Boulevard Methodist Church

August 1994

- Fern Street Circus Parade

December 3, 1994

- ***The Winter Concert***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman and Rick Levesque (co-artistic directors)
 - Produced by: Joseph Gaxiola
 - Park Boulevard Methodist Church

December 10, 1994

- Vermont Street Bridge Opening Ceremonies
 - Directed by: Rick Levesque

1995

April 29, 1995

- ***Composers from Around the World***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman (Artistic Director) and Rick Levesque (Co-Director)
 - Emcee: Frank Buttino
 - Featured Soloist: Fernando Herrera
 - Produced by: Mike Mahoney
 - Park Boulevard Methodist Church

May - July 1995

- Pride parades
 - Long Beach
 - Los Angeles
 - Palm Springs – *Stonewall Award*
 - San Diego

July 29, 1995

- ***Cabaret 95: 100 Years of Broadway***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Emcees: Robert Sokolowski and Skip Lovett (Martini; billed as Roxy on this concert)
 - Featuring: Brad Grandon, drag performers Joseph Gaxiola, Robert Sokolowski, Skip Lovett (Martini; billed as Roxy on this concert), Cris Rosales, Jan Simmons, and Lenny Clarkson
 - Woodwind Quintet and the Diva Corps
 - Produced by: Joseph Gaxiola
 - San Diego Woman's Club, 2557 Third Avenue

November 11, 1995

- ***Takin' it to Palm Springs***

- Directed by: John Winkelman
- Featured Soloist: Mick Geronimo
- Special Guests: Dixie Freedom and the Boys
- Produced by: Mike Kirshberger, Kent Custer
- Portion of concert proceeds were donated to the Desert AIDS Project
- Springs Theater - Palm Springs Convention Center
- After concert party: Streetbar, 224 E. Arenas Road, Palm Springs

December 16, 1995

- ***A Nutcracker in Oz***
 - Dedicated to the Memory of Brian Michels
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Emcee: Judy Forman
 - Featured Soloist: Mick Geronimo
 - Featuring: Fern Street Circus acrobats, jugglers, contortionists, Kickers Cloggers, Diva Corps
 - Choreographer: Kent Custer
 - Produced by: Geoff Winstead
 - Park Boulevard Methodist Church Community Center

1996

April 20, 1996

- ***A Touch of Classical***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Featured Soloists: Mark Donnelley and Jason Ford
 - Produced by: Mike Mahoney
 - First Unitarian Church

May-July 1996

- **Pride Parades**
 - Long Beach
 - San Diego

August 4, 1996

- ***Cartoons & Comics***
 - Dedicated to the Memory of Blake Henry
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Guest Conductor: Mick Geronimo
 - Host: Irene Soderberg
 - Featured vocalists: Irene Soderberg, Brad Grandon, Mackie Washburn, Shawn Conway, Carl Klein
 - Produced by: Mark Donnelly
 - San Diego Woman's Club, 2557 Third Avenue
 - After concert party at the Brass Rail

December 21, 1996

- ***A Nutcracker in Oz 2***
 - Dedicated to the Memory of David Firenze (March 9, 1949 – February 2, 1994)
 - Won a Nicky Award in the category of Outstanding Local Event
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Emcee: Judy Forman
 - Show choreographed, directed, and staged by: Paul Terrell
 - Produced by: Geoff Winstead
 - Featuring: Kickers Cloggers, Fern Street Circus, Skip Lovett (Diva Martini), David Morrocco, Robert Sokolowski, Sean Minogue, members of the Imperial Court de San Diego, Torri Cable, Carol Miles, Judy Forman, Ashley Dawn Smith, Numan Stotz, Sean Minogue, Carol Smith, Ophelia
 - Silver Gate Masonic Lodge, 3795 Utah Street
 - After concert party at the Brass Rail

1997

April 3, 1997

- University Heights Sign Lighting
- Directed by: John Winkelman

February 16, 1997

- ***North County Concert***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Pilgrim United Church of Christ, Carlsbad

May 3, 1997

- ***Pops Favorites***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Featured soloists: Geoff Winstead, Sidney Shiroma, John Guidarelli
 - Produced by: Geoff Winstead and John Winkelman
 - Roosevelt Junior High School Auditorium, Park Boulevard and Zoo Drive

May-July 1997

- Pride Parades
 - Long Beach – *Pride Award*
 - Fresno
 - Los Angeles
 - San Diego

August 2, 1997

- ***USO Show: 1949 Big Band Dance Fantasy***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Announcer: Paul Jennings
 - Hat check girl: Samantha Doyle
 - Dance contest in the second half
 - Featuring: Ms. Tiffany Daniels (Lee Rodger), Mark Para, Kevin Taylor, Jason Bailey
 - Produced by: Geoff Winstead
 - Mississippi Ballroom, Ramada Inn, 2223 El Cajon Boulevard

December 21, 1997

- ***A Nutcracker in Wonderland***
 - First performance by the Hillcrest Wind Ensemble, a subgroup of San Diego's Finest City Freedom Band
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Stage production by: Neil Holmes & Kent Custer
 - Narrator: Jerry Rude
 - Featuring: Jeff Graham, Jacquelin Erwin, Jan Hanson, Corinne Giddings, Jerry Rudd, Kickers Cloggers, Judy Forman, introducing Alisia Contreras as Alice
 - Produced by: Mike Mahoney
 - San Diego Woman's Club, 2557 Third Avenue

1998

March 21, 1998

- ***Prelude in the Park***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Assistant Conductor: Mike Mahoney
 - Featuring: James Soe Nyun, pianist
 - Produced by: Joseph Gaxiola
 - Recital Hall, Balboa Park

May 30, 1998

- ***Just For The Fun Of It***
 - A Musical Benefit for The Center (The Lesbian & Gay Men's Community Center)
 - Directed by: John Winkelman

- Produced by: Patti Plaster
- The Lesbian & Gay Men's Community Center, 3916 Normal Street

July 18, 1998

- ***Broadway: The Early Years***
 - Part of Gay Arts Awareness Week, celebrated the week before San Diego Pride.
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Assistant Director: Mike Mahoney
 - Featuring: Rob Howarth, Lee Rodger, Robert Sokolowski - singers
 - Produced by: John Winkelman & Geoff Winstead
 - Vasa Hall, 3094 El Cajon Boulevard

July 24-25, 1998

- San Diego Pride Rally & Parade

December 13, 1998

- ***A Classical Christmas***
 - First concert as a program of The Center
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Featuring: Vocalists Karen Avossa, Rob Howarth, Kristin Igaki, Annie McGough, Carol Reagan, Cathy Rockdashil, Laynie Schultz, Robert Sokolowski
 - Craftsmen Hall, 3909 Centre Street, new home of The Center

1999

May 8, 1999

- ***Diet Classics***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Featuring: Fünf Bläser woodwind quintet
 - Craftsmen Hall/The Center
 - After concert party at SRO Lounge, 1807 Fifth Avenue

June 11-12, 1999

- ***American Cancer Society Benefit***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - San Diego Velodrome, Morley Field, Balboa Park

July 17, 1999

- ***Cabaret***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman

July 22, 1999

- ***Twilight in the Park***
 - Spreckels Organ Pavilion, Balboa Park

July 23-24, 1999

- San Diego Pride Rally (Dixie Freedom and the Boys) & Parade
- San Francisco Pride Band marched in the San Diego parade and a party for the two bands was held that night at Keith Schooler's house

October 30, 1999

- ***Halloween Children's Concert, Nightmare on Normal Street***
 - The Center (outside)

November 6-7, 1999

- Palm Springs Pride Festival & Parade

December 11, 1999

- The Ghost of Nutcracker's Past
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Last concert of John Winkelman's first term as artistic director

- Guest conductor: Sharon Parker
- Stage direction by: Paul Terrell
- Featuring: Tiffany Daniels (Lee Rodger), Fern Street Circus, Nutcracker Cloggers
- Produced by: Joseph Gaxiola
- The Center
- After concert party at SRO Lounge, 1807 Fifth Avenue

2000

March 18, 2000

- ***The Hillcrest Wind Ensemble Goes Classical***
 - Co-directed by: Sharon Parker & John Winkelman
 - Featuring: Instrumentalists Robert Sanders, Patti Plaster, Mark Donnelly, Mike Hall
 - The Center
 - After concert party at SRO Lounge, 1807 Fifth Avenue

May 7, 2000

- ***A May Medley***
 - Directed by: Sharon Parker
 - Guest conductors: Mike Mahoney & John Winkelman
 - The Center

July 15, 2000

- ***Welcome to the Theatre***
 - Directed by: James Miles
 - Featuring: Vocalists Lee Rodger, Mark Para, Andrew Daniel Drake; instrumentalist Fernando Herrera; pianist James Soe Nyun
 - Producer: Bryon Wirth
 - The Center
 - After concert party at SRO Lounge, 1807 Fifth Avenue

July 22, 2000

- San Diego Pride Parade

August 15, 2000

- ***Twilight in the Park***
 - Spreckels Organ Pavilion, Balboa Park

November 4-5, 2000

- Palm Springs Pride Festival & Parade
 - ~Last marching parade (double-check 2001)

December 16, 2000

- ***A Joyous Celebration***
 - Directed by: James Miles
 - Featuring: Fünf Bläser woodwind quintet
 - Produced by: Michael Birch & Patti Plaster
 - The Center
 - After concert party at SRO Lounge, 1807 Fifth Avenue

2001

February 17, 2001

- ***Concert at Disneyland, Carnation Plaza***

April 21, 2001

- ***Music For The Queen***
 - Directed by: James Miles
 - The Center

July 21, 2001

- ***Music From The Movies***
 - Directed by: James Miles
 - The Center

December 15, 2001

- ***An American Holiday Tribute***
 - Dedicated to the Memory of Herb King
 - Benefit for San Diego Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual Veterans of America
 - 1944 USO camp show
 - Directed by: James Miles
 - Emcee: Dan Ervin
 - Featuring: American Patrol Swing Dancers and The Low Down Brass
 - Produced by: Michael Birch & Patti Plaster
 - The Center
 - After concert party at SRO Lounge, 1807 Fifth Avenue

2002

Saturday, May 11, 2002

- ***Tapestries***
 - Directed by: James Miles
 - Featuring: La Mesa First United Methodist Church Choir, MCC Celebration Singers
 - Special performance: John Rutter's "Gloria"
 - The Center

August 10, 2002

- ***The Return of Cartoons & Comics***
 - Directed by: James Miles
 - Narrator: Jim Winker
 - Featuring: Vocalists Ria Carey, Bill Hart, Robert Sanders, Mackie Washburn; keyboard Christopher Allen; theremin Scott Paulson; instrumentalists Antwane Green, Jason Ford
 - Produced by: Mark Donnelly
 - The Center
 - After concert party at SRO Lounge, 1807 Fifth Avenue

Holiday Concert – no information

- Directed by: James Miles

2003

May 4, 2003

- ***Some Enchanted Evening: A Richard Rodgers Celebration***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Produced by: Michael Birch
 - Hosted by: Peggy L. Lanning
 - The Center

August 9, 2003

- ***Anthem: Songs of American Composers***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - The Center
 - After concert party at SRO Lounge, 1807 Fifth Avenue

December 13, 2003

- ***Holiday Ornaments***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Emcee: Dan Ervin
 - Produced by: Eddie Blough
 - The Center

- After concert party at SRO Lounge, 1807 Fifth Avenue

2004

Spring Concert – no information

- Directed by: John Winkelman

August 21, 2004

- ***A Night at the Oscars***
 - Dedicated to the Memory of Rob Howarth
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Produced by: Joseph Gaxiola
 - The Center

December 11, 2004

- ***A Holiday Potpourri***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - The Center

2005

April 23, 2005

- ***A Night at the Opera***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Produced by: Fernando Herrera
 - Emcee: Dan Ervin
 - Featuring: Vocalist Robert Sokolowski
 - First Unitarian Universalist Church, 4190 Front Street

August 27, 2005

- ***Our 20th “Emerald” Anniversary Cabaret***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Produced by: Leadership Committee
 - The Center

December 10, 2005

- ***Segue to Spring (Holiday Concert)***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Emcee: Pat Browning
 - Featuring: Narrator and Vocalist Robert Sokolowski; instrumentalist Jason Ford
 - First Unitarian Universalist Church, 4190 Front Street

2006

April 29, 2006

- ***Spring Classics***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Featuring: Instrumentalists Amin Rahimi, Patrick McMahon; Vocalists Sarah Duey, Robert Sokolowski
 - The Center, 3909 Centre Street

July 22, 2006

- ***Music of the West: The Streets of La-Re-Do***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Emcee: Holly Berman
 - Produced by: Leadership Committee
 - First Unitarian Universalist Church, 4190 Front Street
 - After concert party at Redwing Bar & Grill, 4012 30th Street

December 16, 2006

- ***A Swingin' Holiday***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Emcee: Bill Grimm
 - Featuring: Heliotrope Ragtime Orchestra; Vocalists Janine Donston, Robert Sokolowski
 - Mississippi Ballroom, Lafayette Inn Suites, 2223 El Cajon Boulevard

2007

March 17, 2007

- ***Songs of the British Isles***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Emcee: Bill Grimm
 - Featuring: Vocalist Robert Sokolowski
 - The Center, 3909 Centre Street

June 16, 2007

- ***Myths, Legends, and Fantasies***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Emcees: Eddie Blough, Janine Donston
 - Featuring: Vocalist Sarah Kaiser
 - Mississippi Ballroom, Lafayette Hotel & Suites, 2223 El Cajon Boulevard

December 15, 2007

- ***A Torrey Pines Holiday***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Emcee & Narrator: Patrick McMahon
 - The Neurosciences Institute Auditorium, 10640 John Jay Hopkins Drive

2008

March 29, 2008

- ***Rhapsody in Blue***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Produced by: Janine Donston, Eddie Blough, Jason Ford
 - Featuring: Pianist William Fried
 - Veterans War Memorial Building, 3325 Zoo Drive, Balboa Park

July 26, 2008

- ***A Night on the Town***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Emcee: Scott Tule
 - Produced by: Janine Donston, John Winkelman
 - Featuring: Janine Donston
 - Mississippi Ballroom, Lafayette Hotel & Suites, 2223 El Cajon Boulevard

November 15, 2008

- ***No Strings Attached!***
 - First fall concert
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Emcees: Eddie Blough, Janine Donston, Patrick McMahon
 - The Neurosciences Institute Auditorium, 10640 John Jay Hopkins Drive

December 20, 2008

- ***A Holiday in the Park***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Emcee: Bruce Vermazen
 - Recital Hall, Balboa Park

2009

May 2, 2009

- ***A Night at the Opera***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Featuring: Vocalists Sylvia Hartman & Robert Sokolowski
 - Recital Hall, Balboa Park

July 25, 2009

- ***Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed, Something Blues***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Emcee: Mike Mahoney
 - Featuring: Vocalist Janine Donston
 - Linder Hall, First United Methodist Church of San Diego, 2111 Camino del Rio South

October 18, 2009

- ***Music for Winds and Percussion***
 - First concert to perform world premiers of winners of the 2009 HWE Composition Contest
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Emcee: Dan Ervin
 - Joan B. Kroc Theater, The Salvation Army Kroc Center, 6611 University Avenue

December 12, 2009

- ***A Holiday Revue***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Emcees: Sarah Banks, Robert Sokolowski
 - Featuring: Vocalists Janine Donston, Sarah Banks, Robert Sokolowski
 - Mississippi Ballroom, Lafayette Hotel & Suites, 2223 El Cajon Boulevard

2010

April 10, 2010

- ***Spring Classics***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Emcee: Patrick McMahon
 - Featuring: Instrumentalists Jason Ford, Elizabeth Cooper, Mark Donnelly
 - St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral, 2728 Sixth Avenue

May 2, 2010

- ***Poway Band Festival***
 - Old Poway Park, Poway

July 10, 2010

- ***POPS Concert***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Emcee/Narrator: Patrick McMahon
 - Linder Hall, First United Methodist Church of San Diego, 2111 Camino del Rio South

July 14, 2010

- ***Twilight in the Park***
 - Spreckels Organ Pavilion, Balboa Park

November 6, 2010

- ***Fall Classics***
 - An after Halloween concert featuring an evening of hauntingly beautiful music!!
 - Performed two winners of the 2010 HWE Composition Contest
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Emcee: Gary Mollenkopf
 - First Unitarian Universalist Church, 4190 Front Street

December 18, 2010

- ***Magical Holidays***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Emcee: Patrick McMahon
 - Featuring: Celebration Handbell Choir, Joanne Hammond, Director; Holiday Horn Ensemble playing music arranged by John Lorge
 - Joan B. Kroc Theater, The Salvation Army Kroc Center, 6611 University Avenue

2011

April 19, 2011

- ***Spring Classics***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Emcee: Fernando Herrera
 - St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral, 2728 Sixth Avenue

May 15, 2011

- ***Poway Band Festival***
 - Old Poway Park, Poway

July 20, 2011

- ***Twilight in the Park***
 - Spreckels Organ Pavilion, Balboa Park

July 30, 2011

- ***Summer Pops Concert***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Emcees: Janine Donston & Robert Sokolowski
 - Featuring: Vocalists Janine Donston, Robert Sokolowski
 - Mississippi Ballroom, Lafayette Hotel & Suites, 2223 El Cajon Boulevard

October 22, 2011

- ***Russian Winds***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Emcee: Patrick McMahon
 - First Unitarian Universalist Church, 4190 Front Street

December 17, 2011

- ***Classical Holidays***
 - Benefit for the Challenge Center, providing post-acute rehabilitation programs and services to the San Diego region's children, adults, and seniors living with severe disabilities
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Emcee: Patrick McMahon
 - Featuring: Vocalist Andrea Sperling
 - Joan B. Kroc Theater, The Salvation Army Kroc Center, 6611 University Avenue

2012

April 14, 2012

- ***Music for Winds and Percussion***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Performed three winners of the 2011 HWE Composition Contest
 - Emcee: Eric Swanson
 - St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral, 2728 Sixth Avenue

May 20, 2012

- ***Poway Band Festival***
 - Old Poway Park, Poway

July 18, 2012

- ***Twilight in the Park***
 - Spreckels Organ Pavilion, Balboa Park

July 21, 2012

- ***Cabaret Pride Concert***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - *The Sound of Music* sing-along with costume contest led by Robert Sokolowski
 - Emcee: Eric Swanson
 - Featuring: Vocalist Andrea Sperling; instrumentalist Christian Tordahl
 - Mississippi Ballroom, Lafayette Hotel & Suites, 2223 El Cajon Boulevard

October 19, 2012

- ***Peter and the Wolf***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Emcee: Eric Swanson
 - Narrator: Patrick McMahon
 - Featuring: Southwestern College Choir, directed by Dr. Terry Russell
 - Joan B. Kroc Theater, The Salvation Army Kroc Center, 6611 University Avenue

December 14, 2012

- ***The Nutcracker***
 - Benefit for the Challenge Center, providing post-acute rehabilitation programs and services to the San Diego region's children, adults, and seniors living with severe disabilities
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Emcee: Eric Swanson
 - Featuring: San Diego Civic Dance Arts Program and the Wheel Chair Dancers Organization; vocalists Andrea Sperling and Enrique Toral
 - Joan B. Kroc Theater, The Salvation Army Kroc Center, 6611 University Avenue

2013

April 13, 2013

- ***Touring the Continent: Music of Europe***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Performed three winners of the 2012 HWE Composition Contest
 - Emcee: Eric Swanson
 - Featuring: Vocalist Maria Paz Castillo
 - First Unitarian Universalist Church, 4190 Front Street

July 27, 2013

- ***Cabaret Concert***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Emcee: Eric Swanson
 - Featuring: Vocalist Andrea Sperling
 - Mississippi Ballroom, Lafayette Hotel & Suites, 2223 El Cajon Boulevard

July 30, 2013

- ***Twilight in the Park***
 - Spreckels Organ Pavilion, Balboa Park

October 18, 2013

- ***The Hillcrest Wind Ensemble and the AmadeusEnsemblelet***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - AmadeusEnsemblelet directed by: Klaus Tönshoff
 - Featuring: AmadeusEnsemblelet, a 16-member wind ensemble from Copenhagen, Denmark
 - First Unitarian Universalist Church, 4190 Front Street

December 14, 2013

- ***Rockin' Around the Water Cooler (Holiday Concert & Show)***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman

- Show produced and directed by: Paul Terrell
- Original script by: Keith Schooler
- Emcee: Eric Swanson
- Featuring: Instrumentalist Josh Mills; cast Melissa Magana, Kyle Smith, Torri Cable, Steve Spencer, Gary Ellsworth, Nancy Hupp, Penny Tilton, Steve Harrison, Peter Stewart, Coco Dolenz, Michael Tabler, Jesse Smith
- San Diego Woman's Club, 2557 Third Avenue

2014

April 12, 2014

- ***A Royal Concert: Last Night of the Proms***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Performed three winners of the 2013 HWE Composition Contest
 - Emcee: Eric Swanson
 - Featuring: Vocalist Robert Sokoloski
 - First Unitarian Universalist Church, 4190 Front Street

June 27, 2014

- ***Red, White and Blues: Songs of America***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Emcee: Eric Swanson
 - Featuring: Vocalists Melissa Magana, Nicole DeLia, Nancy Hupp, Denny Howe, Robert Sokolowski
 - Mississippi Ballroom, Lafayette Hotel & Suites, 2223 El Cajon Boulevard

August 26, 2014

- ***Twilight in the Park***
 - Spreckels Organ Pavilion, Balboa Park

October 11, 2014

- ***Friends: Original Music and Arrangements from Members and Friends of HWE***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Emcee: Eric Swanson
 - Featuring: Instrumentalist Patrick McMahon
 - First Unitarian Universalist Church, 4190 Front Street

December 13, 2014

- ***Holiday Concert***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Emcee: Eric Swanson
 - First Unitarian Universalist Church, 4190 Front Street

2015

April 25, 2015

- ***Centennial Concert Panama-California Exposition***
 - An official event of the Balboa Park Panama-California Exposition Centennial
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Emcee: Eric Swanson
 - Featuring: Vocalist Bruce Vermazen
 - San Diego Woman's Club, 2557 Third Avenue

June 18, 2015

- ***Twilight in the Park (Centennial Concert Panama-California Exposition)***
 - Spreckels Organ Pavilion, Balboa Park

June 26, 2015

- ***Hollywood Hits***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Emcee: Eric Swanson
 - Featuring: Vocalists Janine Donston, Nancy Hupp, Tiffany Westrick; violinist Marcia Yee

- Mississippi Ballroom, Lafayette Hotel & Suites, 2223 El Cajon Boulevard

October 10, 2015

- ***A Night at the Opera***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Emcee: Robert Sokoloski
 - Featuring: Instrumentalist Fernando Herrera; Opera Exposed! The University Partners Program with voice students (Lisa Parente, Amanda Olea, Kiana Bell, Radames Gil, Nicholas Newton) from San Diego State University, University of San Diego, and Point Loma Nazarene University, in conjunction with the Education and Community Engagement Program of San Diego Opera
 - First Unitarian Universalist Church, 4190 Front Street

December 12, 2015

- ***Winterscape: A Holiday Potpourri***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Emcee: John Gerard
 - Featuring: Instrumentalist Christian Tordahl; vocalists Melissa Magana, Janine Donston, Nancy Hupp, Denny Howe, Robert Sokoloski; dancers Patrick McMahon, Keith Schooler
 - First Unitarian Universalist Church, 4190 Front Street

2016

February 28, 2016

- ***FUMCCV Music Series***
 - First United Methodist Church – Chula Vista, 1200 East H Street

April 9, 2016

- ***Spring Fling for Winds & Percussion***
 - 30th anniversary concert
 - A joint fundraiser for St. Mark's Lutheran Church and the Hillcrest Wind Ensemble
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Emcee & Narrator: Eric Swanson
 - Featuring: Instrumentalists Eric Hybertsen, Joe Cabral, Jim Lewis
 - St. Mark's Lutheran Church, 580 Hilltop Drive, Chula Vista

June 24, 2016

- ***Blast to the Past***
 - Directed by: Christian Tordahl
 - Emcee: Robert Sokolowski
 - Featuring: Vocalists Blue Velvet (retro lounge revue) with Kevin Cavanaugh, Maggie Taylor, Alina Nuno, and Deborah Stokes
 - Mississippi Ballroom, Lafayette Hotel & Suites, 2223 El Cajon Boulevard

June 29, 2016

- ***Twilight in the Park***
 - Spreckels Organ Pavilion, Balboa Park

October 8, 2016

- ***Fall Classics***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Performed three winners of the 2016 HWE Composition Contest
 - Emcee: Eric Swanson
 - Featuring: Instrumentalists Elizabeth Cooper, Jason Ford, Ben Negrete, Eric Hybertsen, Josh Mills, Gary Poirier
 - First Unitarian Universalist Church, 4190 Front Street

December 17, 2016

- ***Holiday Rhapsody***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Emcee: Eric Swanson
 - Featuring: Vocalists Norma Kellogg, Nancy Hupp, Denny Howe, Robert Sokolowski
 - San Diego Woman's Club, 2557 Third Avenue

2017

March 26, 2017

- ***Bernstein, Copland, Gershwin***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Guest Conductors: Christian Tordahl, Joshua Mills
 - Emcee: Eric Swanson
 - Featuring: Organist Russ Peck
 - First United Methodist Church – Chula Vista, 1200 East H Street

May 20, 2017

- ***Poway Band Festival***
 - Old Poway Park, Poway

June 28, 2017

- ***Twilight in the Park***
 - Spreckels Organ Pavilion, Balboa Park

June 23, 2017

- ***Blast to the Past***
 - Directed by: Christian Tordahl
 - Emcee: Ria Carey, Robert Sokolowski
 - Featuring: Vocalist Ria Carey
 - Mississippi Ballroom, Lafayette Hotel & Suites, 2223 El Cajon Boulevard

October 14, 2017

- ***Fall Classics: A Change of Pace***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Guest Conductor: Christian Tordahl
 - Emcee: Gary Mollenkopf
 - Featuring: Instrumentalists Patrick McMahon, Julie Lees
 - First Unitarian Universalist Church, 4190 Front Street

December 16, 2017

- ***Holiday Revue***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Guest Conductor: Christian Tordahl
 - Emcee: Eric Swanson
 - Featuring: Instrumentalists Julie Lees, Frank Palumbo, Christian Tordahl, Patrick McMahon; vocalists Janine Donston, Vivienne Jarvis, Nancy Hupp, Robert Sokolowski, Denny Howe
 - Parq West (formerly San Diego Woman's Club), 2557 Third Avenue

2018

March 31, 2018

- ***The Art of Music***
 - Performed three winners of the 2017 HWE Composition Contest
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Guest Conductors: Christian Tordahl, Frank Palumbo, John Lorge
 - Emcee & Narrator: Eric Swanson
 - CPMA (Creative, Performing and Media Arts Theatre), 5050 Conrad Avenue

April 15, 2018

- ***FUMCCV Music Series***
 - First United Methodist Church – Chula Vista, 1200 East H Street

June 30, 2018

- ***Moulin Rouge***

- Directed by: John Winkelman
- Script by: Eddie Blough
- Emcee: Eric Swanson
- Featuring: Instrumentalist Corey Wickline, Jason Ford, Julie Lees, Lucy Palmer, Christian Tordahl; vocalists Melissa Magaña, Leviticus, Robert Sokolowski
- San Diego Marriott Mission Valley, 8757 Rio San Diego Drive

June 27, 2018

- ***Twilight in the Park***
 - Spreckels Organ Pavilion, Balboa Park

October 6, 2018

- ***Americans All! 100th Anniversary of the end of World War I***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Guest Conductor: Christian Tordahl
 - Emcee: Eric Swanson
 - Featuring: Vocalist Paul Thomas May
 - CPMA (Creative, Performing and Media Arts Theatre), 5050 Conrad Avenue

December 15, 2018

- ***'Twas the Night Before...***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Guest Conductor: Christian Tordahl
 - Emcee: Eric Swanson
 - Narrators: Circe Dodd, Robert Sokolowski, Eric Swanson
 - Featuring: Vocalist Leviticus
 - Courtyard by Marriott – Liberty Station, 2592 Laning Road

2019

March 23, 2019

- ***Fantastic Music and Where To Find It***
 - Performed two winners of the 2018 HWE Composition Contest
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Associate Director: Christian Tordahl
 - Emcee: Eric Swanson
 - Featuring: Vocalist Leviticus
 - St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral, 2728 Sixth Avenue

March 31, 2019

- ***FUMCCV Music Series***
 - First United Methodist Church – Chula Vista, 1200 East H Street

June 15, 2019

- ***The Black Hole: Music and the Mouse***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Associate Director: Christian Tordahl
 - Emcee: Eric Swanson
 - Featuring: Vocalists Julie Meram, Frank Paiano, Robert Sokolowski
 - Mississippi Ballroom, Lafayette Hotel & Suites, 2223 El Cajon Boulevard

September 28, 2019

- ***Rule Britannia: Last Night of the Proms***
 - Directed by: John Winkelman
 - Associate Director: Christian Tordahl
 - Emcee: Eric Swanson
 - Featuring: Vocalist Robert Sokolowski
 - Joan B. Kroc Theater, The Salvation Army Kroc Center, 6611 University Avenue

December 14, 2019

- ***Home for the Holidays***

- Directed by: John Winkelman
- Associate Director: Christian Tordahl
- Emcee: Eric Swanson
- Featuring: Vocalist Leviticus; cowbells Ricki Pedersen, Nancy Hupp, Janine Donston
- Courtyard by Marriott – Liberty Station, 2592 Laning Road

2020

COVID Pandemic Quarantine

2021

COVID Pandemic Quarantine

December 18, 2021

- ***Home for the Holidays***
 - Directed by: Christian Tordahl
 - Featuring: Vocalist Leviticus
 - Courtyard by Marriott – Liberty Station, 2592 Laning Road

2022

April 3, 2022

- ***FUMCCV Music Series***
 - First United Methodist Church – Chula Vista, 1200 East H Street

April 9, 2022

- ***Beyond the Horizon***
 - Directed by: Christian Tordahl
 - Performed two winners of the 2019 HWE Composition Contest and two winners of the 2020 HWE Composition Contest
 - Bankers Hill Club, 3030 Front Street

June 18, 2022

- ***That's Entertainment!***
 - Directed by: Christian Tordahl
 - Guest Conductor: Alisa van Ginkel
 - Performed two winners of the 2021 HWE Composition Contest
 - Featuring: Vocalist Leviticus
 - Courtyard by Marriott – Liberty Station, 2592 Laning Road

July 20, 2022

- ***Twilight in the Park***
 - Spreckels Organ Pavilion, Balboa Park

October 29, 2022

- ***Places We Love***
 - Directed by: Christian Tordahl
 - Bankers Hill Club, 3030 Front Street

December 17, 2022

- ***A Joyous Celebration***
 - Directed by: Christian Tordahl
 - Linder Hall, First United Methodist Church of San Diego, 2111 Camino del Rio South

2023

March 19, 2023

- ***FUMCCV Music Series***
 - First United Methodist Church – Chula Vista, 1200 East H Street

March 25, 2023

- ***Music Old and New***
 - Directed by: Christian Tordahl
 - Performed two winners of the 2022 HWE Composition Contest
 - Linder Hall, First United Methodist Church of San Diego, 2111 Camino del Rio South

June 17, 2023

- ***Twentieth Century Rewind***
 - Directed by: Christian Tordahl
 - Featuring: Vocalists Leviticus, Enrique Toral
 - Bankers Hill Club, 3030 Front Street

June 21, 2023

- ***Twilight in the Park***
 - Spreckels Organ Pavilion, Balboa Park

October 21, 2023

- ***Autumn Leaves***
 - Directed by: Christian Tordahl
 - Linder Hall, First United Methodist Church of San Diego, 2111 Camino del Rio South

December 16, 2023

- ***Winter Winds***
 - Directed by: Christian Tordahl
 - Guest Conductor: Jason Blackwell
 - Featuring: Vocalist Lola Watson
 - Linder Hall, First United Methodist Church of San Diego, 2111 Camino del Rio South

2024

April 7, 2024

- ***FUMCCV Music Series***
 - First United Methodist Church – Chula Vista, 1200 East H Street

April 13, 2024

- ***Spring Sunshine***
 - Directed by: Christian Tordahl
 - Guest Conductors: Jason Blackwell, Cindy Au
 - Linder Hall, First United Methodist Church of San Diego, 2111 Camino del Rio South

June 19, 2024

- ***Twilight in the Park***
 - Spreckels Organ Pavilion, Balboa Park

June 29, 2024

- ***Cabaret: Summertime***
 - Directed by: Christian Tordahl
 - Guest Conductors: Jason Blackwell, Cindy Au
 - Featuring: Vocalist Leviticus
 - Linder Hall, First United Methodist Church of San Diego, 2111 Camino del Rio South

December 14, 2024

- ***Holly and Harmony***
 - Directed by: Christian Tordahl
 - Guest Conductor: Jason Blackwell
 - Linder Hall, First United Methodist Church of San Diego, 2111 Camino del Rio South

2025

March 30, 2025

- ***FUMCCV Music Series***
 - First United Methodist Church – Chula Vista, 1200 East H Street

April 5, 2025

- ***Legends***
 - Directed by: Christian Tordahl
 - Linder Hall, First United Methodist Church of San Diego, 2111 Camino del Rio South

June 18, 2025

- ***Twilight in the Park***
 - Spreckels Organ Pavilion, Balboa Park

June 28, 2025

- ***Cabaret: Summer Fun***
 - Directed by: Christian Tordahl
 - Guest Conductor: Jason Blackwell
 - Linder Hall, First United Methodist Church of San Diego, 2111 Camino del Rio South

December 13, 2025

- ***40th Anniversary Winter Spectacular: With Pride and Joy!***
 - Directed by: Christian Tordahl
 - Artistic Director Elect: Avi Mehta
 - Guest Conductors: Jason Blackwell, Nicholas De La Riva
 - Courtyard by Marriott – Liberty Station, 2592 Laning Road

West Coast Cavalier Unity Band (1981)

In 1981 members of the San Diego community attempted to establish an LGBT band. Unfortunately, the organization failed to get off the ground, and organizational efforts were only active from July through November. The information that we have is based on a file folder found in the Hillcrest Wind Ensemble archives.



Similar to San Diego's Finest City Freedom Band, the impetus to start a gay band resulted from the June 13, 1981, San Diego Pride parade. The Los Angeles Great American Yankee Freedom Band marched in the parade and performed a concert at Mr. Dillon's (an LGBT bar at 1051 University Avenue) that evening, inspiring San Diegans to start their own band.

On July 10, 1981, *Update* (an LGBT newspaper) carried an item that said, "A 'Gay Cavalier Marching Band and Twirling Corps' is now in the process of forming. Organizers are looking for musicians and twirlers of batons, flags, and rifles. If interested, attend a formative meeting at Metropolitan Community Church of San Diego [then at 4333 30th Street] on Saturday, July 25 at 1pm." An item on August 7 said, "San Diego's first gay marching band is on the move!"

A membership meeting was held on August 9. Throughout the history of this effort, there was contention about the name of the band. It was decided at this initial meeting to "drop the word 'gay' from the name" (presumably because of the stigma still associated with the word at the time), calling the group "The Cavalier Unity Band of San Diego". A bylaws committee was formed and membership fees were set at \$1 per month. The following officers were elected:

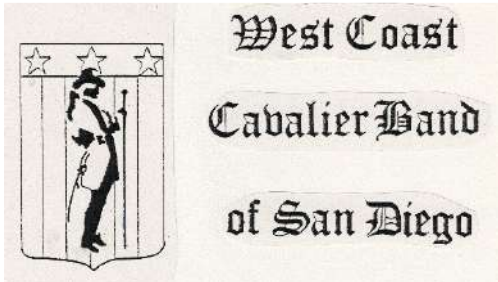
- President: Michael St. John
- Vice-President: Randy Vandervort
- Secretary: Dave Hansen
- Treasurer: Randy Moon
- Member-at-Large: Tom Gilligan

The board of trustees met on August 19. They made changes to the bylaws, followed by a discussion of uniforms. The uniform that was decided upon consisted of white canvas deck shoes, white socks, black jeans, red tunic, and a gold sash, with an optional plumed hat. The board also discussed having T-shirts and buttons made as a fundraising effort.

During the September 2 meeting of the board of trustees it was decided to change the name of the band to "West Coast Cavalier Band of San Diego. They determined to write introductory letters to send to "all gay businesses" to identify the band and hopefully be able later to call them for support. They chose to use "keggers" for fundraising, with events set for Lamda [sic] Inn (September 17), Park Place (3811 Park Boulevard, September 28), and Club San Francisco (3463 University Avenue, October 8), each having a \$2 donation. It was decided to advertise in the college newspapers. There are clippings in the file showing advertisements in the San Diego State University Daily Aztec on September 23 and the University of California San Diego Guardian on September 24.

At a September 11 general membership meeting at The Flame (3780 Park Boulevard), the idea of a color guard or drill team was discussed. They scheduled the first rehearsal for this team for September 24 at 6:30 PM at the Spreckels Organ Pavilion in Balboa Park. The intent was to eventually use the team as a fundraising tool for the band.

The minutes for the September 19 board of trustees meeting state that prior to the start of the meeting, a



candidate for Music Director, Paul Anderson, was interviewed by the board. They voted unanimously to instate him in this role. Another topic of discussion was the formation of a “Validation Committee”, tasked with writing a marching handbook, file the required forms to obtain tax-exempt status, write the Articles of Incorporation, and file forms necessary to incorporate. With no other explanation, the minutes also state, “By unanimous vote, David Scott was removed from all boards.” He had previously been a member of the theme development committee and chair of the fundraising committee. In this same

meeting, David Hansen was designated as chair of the fundraising committee. This meeting lasted for three hours.

The October 22, 1981, issue of *Heartland News* of Spring Valley, showed that a “Fictitious Business Name Statement” had been filed for “West Coast Cavalier Band of San Diego and/or West Coast Cavalier Unity Band, San Diego, CA” on October 14. The bylaws or Articles of Incorporation show the trustees to be:

- Chairman: Randy Vandervot
- Vice-Chairman: Patricia Baldwin
- Secretary: David Hansen
- Treasurer: Randy Moon
- Member-At-Large: Thomas Gilligan

An editorial in the October issue of *Accord*, another LGBT newspaper, written by publisher Duane Pierce, encouraged businesses to financially support the startup band. He bemoaned the fact that in his 14 years of experience, there had been “a lot of talk and little action” in efforts to start a (presumably LGBT) San Diego band and chorus.

The first music rehearsal, which included a membership meeting, was held on October 28 at the Lesbian and Gay Center (1447 30th Street). The meeting agenda included the need for obtaining instruments, fundraisers, uniforms, membership dues of \$25 per year, and an auxiliary support group called the “Cubby Club”. Rehearsals were set to occur twice a week (Wednesday and Saturday) to prepare for a benefit concert at “The Club” (2501 Kettner Boulevard) on Sunday, November 29. Marching rehearsals were also scheduled for twice a week (Sunday and Thursday) at the Spreckels Organ Pavilion at Balboa Park to prepare for an “introductory party” on November 23. Roger Dennehy had joined as the marching director. For those participating in either group, attendance at least once a week was mandatory.



The October 30 issue of *Update* carried an article which stated the band’s intention to have their first concert on November 29 at 4:00 PM. The band had 20 musicians and 10 others “signed up.” Randy Moon, the band’s treasurer, is quoted as saying that the goal was to eventually have 75 playing members. The article said that the band had already been invited to march in Oceanside’s April Welcome Home to Vietnam Veterans’ Day parade and in New York City’s Gay Pride Parade and Marching Band Competition in June.

Duane Pierce wrote another editorial in the November issue of *Accord* where he took the San Diego LGBT community to task for their lack of support of the new band. He said, “There are times when it seems like everyone is working together and yet there are other times when it seems like some go out of their way to oppose and damage the work and efforts of others. In some isolated cases it appears like we are dead set on destroying ourselves and those around us.” Citing a fundraiser held at Club San Francisco on October 1, he said that although the bar was “packed”, when people ordered a \$2 pitcher at the bar and the bartender informed

them of the fundraiser on the patio where for a \$2 donation they could drink as much beer as they wanted until the “kegger ran out,” people declined and bought their beer at the bar.

A fundraiser was held on Tuesday, November 17, at 9:00 PM at A Different Drum (3175 India Street). It was entitled “Hot Stuff: A Fashion Show & Auction”. The flyer said, “Bare the models by buying the clothes right off of their bodies!” A band press release (which it is unclear if it was ever published) stated that members and friends of the band modeled clothing donated by various community businesses (International Male, The Crypt, Bull-Tique, and That Man) and the patrons of A Different Drum bid on the clothing with the top bidder going on stage to remove the article from the model. “The show was handled with class and style by everyone participating, even to the removal of G-strings worn by some of the sexy models.”

The aggressive schedule that the band tried to pursue took its toll. Paul Anderson submitted a letter to the board of directors dated November 21, 1981 (one week before the first scheduled concert). In this letter he resigned from his position as the band’s musical director, stating that “my decision came easily after a certain chain of events Saturday night [a rehearsal night].” He said he had previously been involved with “groups that were professional, ... however, I disapprove of the way the music is being temporarily handled and the ‘scrambling’ that is necessary for dates that can barely be professionally met.” He also said that another person seemed to be more interested in being musical director and “has taken on the responsibilities of that position.” There is nothing in the file to indicate who this person might have been. He goes on to say, “As Music Director I feel I should have some say in what happens musically, but certain things are already being taken care of without any responsibility from me.”

There is a poster for the West Coast Cavalier Unity Band “Command Performance” at The Club on November 29. It was a benefit show featuring music, color guard, and baton exhibitions, with donations benefiting the band. The event was to include a rummage sale, raffle, and hot dogs. There is no indication of who the music director was at this point, nor are there any newspaper articles to confirm if the event actually took place.

Board member Tom Gilligan submitted a letter of resignation from the board of directors, effective December 18, 1981. In it he says that he finds no one on the board to be at fault and that he is leaving “on the best of terms. If at times you’ve found me less than fully cooperative or lacking enthusiasm, you have good cause. Serving on the board requires responsibility and dedication I am not willing nor able to take at this time.” The rest of the letter is poignant, indicating the challenges LGBT groups faced at the time, and is worth quoting in full. “As my last contribution to the Board I wish to leave with you the following thoughts. Considering the people of San Diego and the accompanying conservatism it is perhaps not the time for a gay marching band. Yet. Earlier on in our organizational stages we jokingly talked of forming a chamber ensemble if the turnout were less than that required for a full marching band. I’m suggesting there’s more potential than humor in this notion. The last performance of the Stonewall Singers was at the most recent GSDBA meeting. [They] were in full force – all 5 of them. Our own organizational efforts have been admirable, but are we asking too much of San Diego?”

The last item in the file is a flyer for a BYOB band Christmas party to be held Monday evening, December 21, at a home at 4121 36th Street. This seems to have been the final curtain on the West Coast Cavalier Unity Band.