Los Angeles Women's Community Chorus records, 1977-1990

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Title: Los Angeles Women's Community Chorus records
Collection number: 2171
Contributing Institution: UCLA Library Special Collections
Language of Material: English
Physical Description: 2.8 linear ft.(2 document boxes, 3 flat boxes, 1 record carton)
Date (inclusive): 1977-1990
Abstract: The Los Angeles Women’s Community Chorus is a Los Angeles based non-profit chorus of and for women. Established in 1976, the chorus intended to raise feminist and political consciousness by presenting choral music of all genres (historical, contemporary, classical, folk, popular, and ethnic) for women, by women and about women. This collection contains administrative and documentary material recording the functioning and public presentations of the Los Angeles Women’s Community Chorus. Administrative papers covering 20 years of the collective’s functioning, photographs and audio/video material provide a view of the LAWCC’s core values as part of the gay and feminist activism of Los Angeles in the 70s and 80s.
Language of Materials: Materials are in English
Physical Location: Stored off-site at SRLF. Advance notice is required for access to the collection. Please contact the UCLA Library Special Collections Reference Desk for paging information.
Creator: Los Angeles Women's Community Chorus.
Restrictions on Access
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Provenance unknown, 2013.
This collection is part of an outreach and collection-building partnership between the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives, the UCLA Center for the Study of Women (CSW), and the UCLA Library.
Processing Information
Processed by Pallavi Sriram in 2013 in the Center for Primary Research and Training (CFPRT), with assistance from Jillian Cuellar.
The processing of this collection was generously supported by Arcadia.
Biography/History
The Los Angeles Women’s Community Chorus is a Los Angeles based non-profit chorus of and for women. Established in 1976, the chorus intended to raise feminist and political consciousness by presenting choral music of all genres (historical, contemporary, classical, folk, popular, and ethnic) for women, by women and about women. Over the next decade and half, the collective sought to foster an environment of openness and positivity while encouraging excellence in musicianship. Its members were committed to combating discrimination based not only on gender, but on sexuality, race, age and disability. Starting from a small group of founding members – Carol Petracca, Joelyn Grippo, Lynn Wilson, Anna Rubin, Silvia Kohan, Faye Haines and Sue Fink – the Chorus soon grew to between 60 to 100 members. Beginning in its first year, the Chorus presented a fully produced concert annually in May or June and generally held a benefit dance in February to raise funds. The LAWCC was also funded, in part, by grants from the City of Los Angeles. In addition to the annual concerts, the Chorus performed with a significant number of other organizations at events throughout its season. This included the Southern California Women for Understanding, The National Organization for Women (NOW), Women against Violence against Women (WAVAW), Gay Atheists League of America (GALA), Connexxus Women's Center/Centro de Mujeres, the Gay and Lesbian Center (GLCSC), Christopher Street West and others. The LAWCC’s network of collaboration also included other
choir organizations like the American Choral Directory Association, the Choral Directing Guild and the Gay Men’s Chorus, as well as a number of lesbian and feminist publications and organizations like Hotwire, Lesbian News, Lesbian Central, and Handyzcom Collective.

In the spirit of open community, the Chorus held a period of open rehearsals every season and included music composed and arranged by its members. A feedback system was set up that would allow for a safe space for productive critical feedback. Music was included from outside the classical western canon and printed materials in programs and song books included Spanish and Braille translations. Childcare was regularly provided at rehearsals and performances. As evidenced in meeting minutes and other materials in this collection, the values of the Chorus were constantly negotiated as it grew in size and organizational complexity over its years of existence. Discussions about how to keep open rehearsals but also put on a professional-level fully produced annual show that required a regular time commitment from its members continued into the Chorus’s later years. There was a constant negotiation of political ideologies and musical professionalism with the aim of not sacrificing either.

The Chorus’s 10th anniversary year, in 1986, was marked not only by a major recording project for a 10th anniversary album despite significant financial and logistical hurdles, but also by the transition from one conductor to another. Sue Fink, conductor and general leader of the Chorus for its first 10 years left the collective after the anniversary concert in order to pursue her own music career and was replaced by Kay Erdwin. Despite such changes in leadership, committee members and overall participation, there was always a core group of women who kept the LAWCC running from its inception in 1976 to the end of available record in 1990. A 20th anniversary reunion event in 1997 brought many of its former members back to Los Angeles for a celebration of the LAWCC’s work and its history of feminist consciousness-raising and community building in Los Angeles through music.

Scope and Content
This collection contains administrative and documentary material recording the functioning and public presentations of the Los Angeles Women’s Community Chorus. The administrative records, including meeting minutes, committee papers, programs, song books and tickets from the Chorus’s annual shows, and publicity and fundraising materials, cover a twenty year span from the LAWCC’s inception in 1977 to its 20th anniversary reunion in 1997. These materials provide a view into the daily functioning of the collective and its organizational structure. They also illustrate the organization’s core feminist values and objectives and provide evidence of how these values translated into decision-making and policies. They provide a view into the networks that LAWCC was a part of, both in the lesbian and feminist communities and the choir communities in Los Angeles and California more broadly.

The collection also contains photographs and audio/video material of LAWCC events. The Chorus’s 10th anniversary concert, 13th anniversary concert, and other social gatherings are represented in the photographs and photo albums. The collection also includes copies of an album produced by LAWCC in 1986 in celebration of their 10th anniversary.

Organization and Arrangement
This collection has been arranged in the following series:
- Series 2: Photographs, 1982-1989

Series are arranged alphabetically.

Physical Characteristics and Technical Requirements
Collection includes 11 video cassettes in the following formats:
- U-Matic KCA-60BRK cassettes (6)
- U-Matic S KCS-20BRK cassettes (2)
- U-Matic S KCS-10BRK cassette (1)
- U-Matic S KCS-20XBR (2)

Collection includes the following audio material:
- Compact Discs (9)
- June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives at UCLA
- June L. Mazer Lesbian Archive

Scope and Content
This series is comprised of several sets of the administrative records of the LAWCC. It includes minutes from the collective’s regular meetings (1977-1989), programs and song books from the annual shows produced by LAWCC (1977-1990). It also includes publicity and fundraising materials from the later years of the LAWCC’s functioning (1986-1989) and all sub-committee materials specifically for the 1985-1986 season. Taken together, these materials give detailed insight into the Chorus’s finances and social and artistic aspects. The meeting minutes cover almost the entire span of LAWCC’s existence and give a long-term view of how the Chorus’s values evolved over time and were translated into action, particularly as the group expanded and productions became larger. The minutes detail decisions about performance acceptances, song selections, attendance policies, financial policies (both expenditure and income), organizational structure, the format of critical feedback, and the Chorus’ public stance and presence. The material from the 1985-1986 season, organized by committee, is of particular interest as it gives a more detailed record of finances, fundraising, production, and design. Advertising in programs and song books give a comprehensive view of the networks that LAWCC were a part of, and translations of songs into Spanish and Braille provide evidence of the organization’s commitment to inclusivity.

Box 1, Folder 1  Collective Meeting Minutes. 1977-1980.
Box 1, Folder 2  Collective Meeting Minutes. 1980-1982.
Box 1, Folder 3  Collective Meeting Minutes. 1982-1984.
Box 1, Folder 4  Collective Meeting Minutes. 1984-1986.
Box 1, Folder 5  Collective Meeting Minutes. 1986-1989.
Box 1, Folder 6  Committee Papers (1 of 2). 1985-1986.
Box 1, Folder 7  Committee Papers (2 of 2). 1985-1986.
Box 2, Folder 1  Death of LAWCC Member, Elizabeth Marek. 1988-1989.
Box 2, Folder 3  Programs and Song Books (Annual Shows). 1984-1990.
Box 2, Folder 5  Fundraising and 10th Anniversary Album. 1986-1990.
Box 2, Folder 6  20th Anniversary Reunion. 1997.


Scope and Content
This series consists of two photo albums as well as sets of photograph contact sheets which document various parts of LAWCC’s history. One of the albums documents the LAWCC’s 10th anniversary benefit concert, containing images of the show, chorus members, volunteers and behind-the-scenes photos of the concert held on May 17, 1986. There is also separate documentation of the 13th annual show (June 1986) in the form of photographs and contact sheets. The other album includes photographs of informal gatherings and social events of the LAWCC members. Neither album includes captions for photographs.

Box 4  Archive Photos. undated.
Box 5  10th Anniversary Benefit Concert Photo Album. 1986.
Box 2, Folder 7  14th Annual Concert Photographs and Contact Sheets. 1989.

Scope and Content

This series contains audio and video of the LAWCC’s 10th anniversary album. As evidenced in meeting minutes and fundraising materials in Series 1, this album was recorded as a celebration of the LAWCC’s 10 years in 1986. The program list was intentionally chosen by women, for women. The album was primarily recorded live, in the sanctuary of a local Los Angeles church, with the choir, a piano and a single drum set; the rest of the instrumentals were recorded separately in a studio. It was conducted by LAWCC co-founder and conductor of 10 years Sue Fink who left shortly after to pursue her own music career. The album was funded by a grant from the City of Los Angeles, as well as individual contributions of LAWCC members and a number of fundraising efforts. Recorded in 1986, the album selection was finalized and production finished by mid 1987 when it was released for distribution for sale.

The video material is in the form of U-Matic cassettes and includes the Composite Masters, Program Out tapes, ISO Camera tapes, Titles and Credits, as well as a couple others. There are also disks, presumably audio CD copies, of the same material.

Box 6