



1978

40

2018

YEARS OF HOUSTON PRIDE BAND
OUR HISTORY

The Montrose Symphonic Band

houston pride band

1999 Houston Pride Band

1978

The 1970's: A Groundbreaking Start

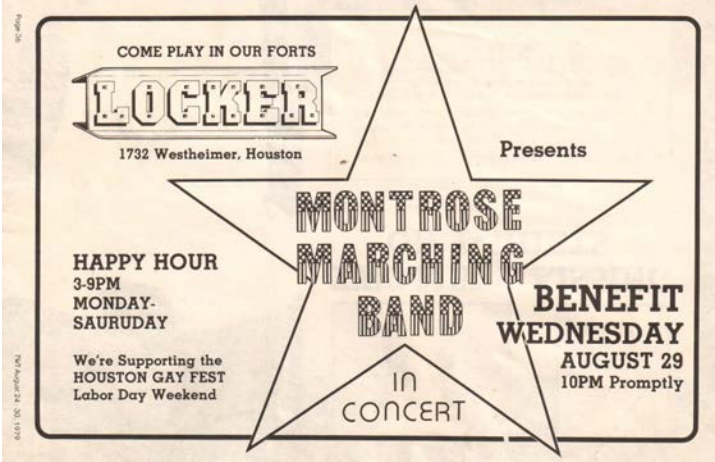
1978 was an historic year for the gay and lesbian community in the United States and especially in Houston. As we approached the tenth anniversary of the Stonewall Riots, the gay community was finding its political and economic strength. The first formal Gay Pride Week was held, including Town Meeting I at the AstroArena on June 25, which brought together 3,500 people. One of the outcomes of that cornerstone event in our community was the formation of the Montrose Activity Center.

This new spirit of a unified LGBT community in Houston led a group of musicians to start meeting and making music together. They met at the Montrose Activity Center (Holman @ La Branch) periodically throughout 1978 as the Montrose Activity Center Band. As they grew in membership, the band became further organized under the leadership of Clint Moncrief, Rue Starr, and Rufus Cheney and the Montrose Marching Band was formed. In April of 1979 the group began rehearsals in the service building in Cherryhurst Park.

For a young band, it proved to be a busy year. The band first provided a pep band for a Police vs Gays softball game in June. On July 1st, the Montrose Marching Band made its first parade appearance at the first gay organized pride parade held in Houston. Clad in red tennis shoes, blue jeans, white shirts, bandanas, and hard hats, the Montrose Marching Band was a hit with the crowds. On August 24, 1979, the group received their Certificate of Incorporation and were officially official.

The band's first concert performance was held at The Locker Bar on August 29th (location of today's Empire Café). On October 14th 1979, the first Gay and Lesbian March on Washington took place. At the march, the Texas contingent led the way with 40 members of the Montrose Marching Band up front. The year and the decade ended with another first for the band. The Montrose Marching Band, Twirlers, and Drill Team presented its first fully-staged concert, The Joys of Christmas, at Bering Memorial Methodist Church on December 14th.

1979



1980

The 1980's: Growth and Loss

The new decade saw the Montrose Marching Band continue performing inside and outside the community. In March of 1980, the Montrose Marching Band was invited to perform at Houston's City Hall for the Houston Festival. Also, the Montrose All Stars took on the Houston Fire and Police Departments in a second softball game with the Montrose Marching Band as entertainment. As the group continued to grow in size and skill, it was decided that they should widen the scope from being a marching band.

Andy Mills became the new artistic director in 1981, and the Montrose Symphonic Band and the Montrose Singers were born. During Pride Week that year, Montrose Symphonic Band played host to the Great American Yankee Freedom Band of Los Angeles and the newly formed Oak Lawn Band of Dallas for the Fred Paez Memorial Concert and Fireworks Display at Spotts Park. With the help of supporters such as Jim "Fanny" Farmer and Mary's Bar, the band was able to purchase instruments and equipment. They began to rehearse at Bering United Methodist Church.

In September 1981 & May and September 1982, the Montrose Symphonic Band held three famous concerts at the Tower Theater on Westheimer (now El Real Restaurant). The band embraced a spirit of bridging the gap between communities by making such classics as America the Beautiful and Crossley March a standard part of the programming, but never losing a gay sensibility. The May concert featured The Bone Sisters, a trombone quartet belting out such tunes as Blow the Man Down, while in drag. Mr. Mills also conducted Star Wars wearing a full Chewbacca mask.

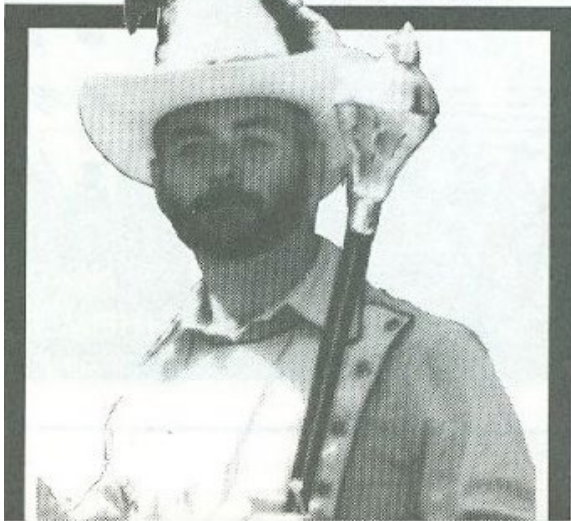
Unfortunately, the band was struck by one of the first widely-known cases in the AIDS epidemic when band founder and director Clint Moncrief died at age 33 from pneumonia complications in March 1982. Throughout the 1980s, the band would continue to lose member to the AIDS epidemic.

The Montrose Symphonic Band was not the only lesbian and gay band in the US. Starting in Los Angeles, the movement began to spread quickly across the country. In 1982, the Lesbian and Gay Bands of America, their original name, (LGBA) was founded, with the Montrose Symphonic Band as a charter member.



1982

CLINT MONCRIEF — The owner of Spec's of Houston eye-wear business, who had been critically ill with Kaposi's Sarcoma, a form of cancer which had spread to his lungs, died at Memorial Hospital last Tuesday afternoon, March 9, around 2:30pm. With no health insurance at his disposal, his \$1000-plus per day hospital bills quickly mounted. The Montrose Symphonic Band will present a memorial benefit concert for Clint this Sunday at 4:00pm at Mary's. Clint had been hailed as a staunch supporter of the gay community and an enthusiastic participant in its music. Spec's customers have been referred to Wendall at Greenway Optical, (713) 661-2506, the family said. Photo by graham. ➤



TWT 03/12/82



1983

- The founding members of the Lesbian and Gay Bands of America were:
- *San Francisco Gay Freedom Day Marching Band and Twirling Corps*
- *Great American Yankee Freedom Band of Los Angeles*
- *Montrose Symphonic Band*
- *The Big Apple Corps (New York City)*
- *D.C.'s Different Drummers*
- *Oak Lawn Symphonic Band of Dallas*
- *Minnesota Freedom Band*
- *Chicago Gay/Lesbian Community Band*

In March of 1984, Andy Mills stepped down and the board of directors led by Elroy Forbes was left to handle the many tasks of running a community band. David Christianson stepped in as Artistic Director. The band continued to perform at community events such as Gay Pride Week, the Houston and Dallas Pride Parades, the Gay Softball World Series, the Diana Foundation Awards, the Montrose Christmas Tree Lighting at Mary's, and a Texas Gay Rodeo Association event in Simonton, Texas. The big event of that year was the first Lesbian and Gay Bands of America massed band concert at the Hollywood Bowl in California. It was a magical evening for the performers as well as the audience. The special guest for the evening was Rita Moreno.

At the end of 1984, R. Vernon "Bob" Morgan took over the conducting duties for the annual Christmas concert. He continued to lead the band through some great concerts in 1985 including a Gay Pride Week concert featuring City Councilman George Greanias narrating Aaron Copland's *Lincoln Portrait*, and a concert at the Miller Outdoor Theater featuring local television personality Marijane Vandiver.

By the late 1980's the AIDS epidemic began to take its toll on the band. The group which had as many as 75 performers was down to around 30, many musicians playing as long as they could until their health would not allow it anymore. Montrose Symphonic Band members found themselves performing in more and more benefits for AIDS organizations, including a special one in 1986 featuring Andy Mills in a return to the podium in memory of the band members they had lost. The concert featured singers Marsha Carlton and Teresa Mauney.

Several conductors helped get the band through the end of the decade, including Jerry Bach, Ralph Gutierrez, and Roy Cisneros. In 1987, the band officially changed its name to the Lone Star Symphonic Band. During Pride Week of 1989, the Lone Star Symphonic Band presented a special concert event *Stonewall Memories: An Evening of Pride* to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Stonewall riots. The concert featured members of the Oak Lawn and of Dallas and the Montrose Singers.

1989

The 1990's: Excitement & Tough Times

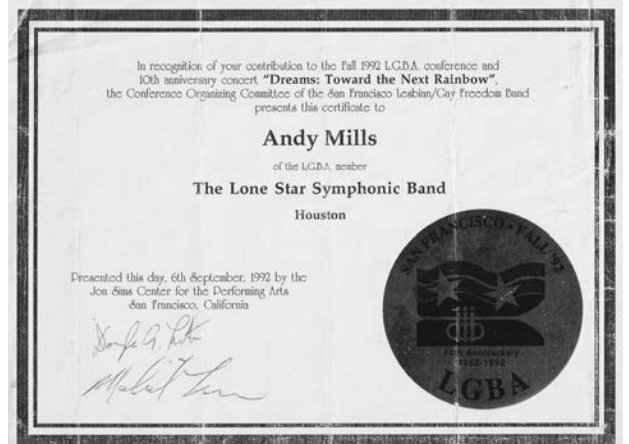
The summer of 1990 brought the band's first opportunity to travel internationally. The third Gay Games was being held in Vancouver, British Columbia, and the Lone Star Symphonic Band wanted to be part of it. Through much fundraising and the organizational efforts of Trudy Allen, they were able to send all 25 members of the band to participate. Members marched in the opening and closing ceremonies as well as a sold-out performance in Vancouver's historic Orpheum Theater.

After traveling all the way to Canada, the LGBA world came to Houston the following year, as the Lone Star Symphonic Band hosted the annual conference in 1991. It was an exciting, western-themed weekend that culminated in a concert at Jones Hall, featuring a band with over one hundred musicians from across the country. Roy Cisneros led the evening. Guest conductors included former conductor Andy Mills, Tom Graff of Vancouver's Lesbian and Gay Rainbow Band; Nanisi Barrett, the Lone Star Symphonic Band's swing band conductor; and Susan Wood, Associate Conductor of the Minnesota Freedom Band.

Another historic opportunity occurred in 1993 with the election of Bill Clinton as President of the United States. LGBA was invited to perform at the Inaugural Parade, marking the first time a GLBT group marched in an inaugural event. Six members of the Lone Star Symphonic Band were in attendance. The band played along the parade route on the freezing January afternoon. In a memorable moment, the band played "America the Beautiful" as the President walked by. When he saw the LGBA banner, he smiled and gave a "thumbs up" to the band. A tremendously moving moment for all involved.

In 1994, the Gay Games were held in New York City, and the Lone Star Symphonic Band would play an even bigger role. The concert was at the Paramount Theater at Madison Square Garden. Houston's own Connie Moore produced the event, a major feat in the era before email, and Nanisi Barrett served as the Artistic Director. The concert was well attended, especially considering the competition: Barbara Streisand was playing on the main stage, next door.

In 1994 Roy Cisneros stepped down after what was the longest tenure of any of the band's conductors to that point. The band's membership had dwindled to single digits and Connie Moore, Debbie Hunt, and Russell Williams, refused to let the band collapse. Buoyed by the emotional support from other LGBA bands, they renamed themselves the Houston Pride Band and plotted a comeback filled with renewed hope, changed attitudes, and a new sense of direction.



1995



- In February 1995, current and past musicians met with some newly-recruited
- new members to determine a course of action and find a new rehearsal space.
- Dignity Houston came to the rescue. On April 21, 1995, with coordinating
- efforts of C. Patrick McIlvain, the Rice University Gay & Lesbian Alumni,
- and Pride-Rice Gay & Lesbian Student Group, the band made its first public
- appearance as the Houston Pride Band, in a performance benefiting the Annise
- Parker for City Council Campaign Fund.

- In the spring of 1996, the Houston Pride Band and Dallas' Oak Lawn Band,
- under the artistic direction of Beau Cain, joined forces to bring LGBA to San
- Antonio for a performance in front of the Alamo. In October of that year,
- the Houston Pride Band was formally granted 501(c)3 status as a tax-exempt
- charitable organization.

- Membership in the band was growing steadily in the mid-90s, but one thing was
- still missing: a full-time Artistic Director. The band had not had a permanent
- conductor since its rebirth as the Houston Pride Band. Members of the group
- took turns at the conductor's podium, but the lack of a primary conductor was
- making it increasingly difficult to learn new music to present to the gay and
- lesbian community. Finally late in 1996, Lynne Weynand joined the group
- as Artistic Director. Within weeks, the band put on a series of Christmas
- performances at Dickens on the Strand in Galveston, and at the Briar Patch,
- E.J.'s, Rascal's, and Gentry bars in Houston. Members of the board of directors
- for the Tom Moore Community Music Foundation were on hand at the Gentry's
- performance and made a surprise announcement: the band had been chosen
- as the primary recipient of a grant from the foundation. With the grant, the
- band had a huge advantage over years past. The group was able to purchase new
- instruments, repair old ones, and restock the music library.

- In January of 1997, LGBA was again invited to perform at President Clinton's
- second inaugural parade. This time Lynne Weynand was chosen as one of the
- conductors for the event. The event kicked off the year in a grand style and the
- band kept it going with over seventeen performances throughout the year.

- In June of 1997 the Houston Pride Committee moved the annual pride parade to
- the evening. The Houston Pride Band took advantage of the change and created
- uniforms of black pants and shirts under shimmering gold lamé vests and
- capes, topped off with glow-in-the-dark accessories. The twenty-two member
- band was joined by twenty more musicians from Dallas' Oak Lawn Band for a
- memorable march down Westheimer.

- In 1998, the band celebrated its 20th anniversary with a gala concert event at
- the Hollyfield Center featuring a guest performance by the Gay Men's Chorus of
- Houston and with some friends from the Oak Lawn Band of Dallas. The concert
- program featured an all-time member list and the program included a reunion
- of former Lone Star Symphonic Band and Houston Pride Band conductors.

1999

The 2000's: A Resurgence

The turn of the century found the Houston Pride Band again without an artistic director. A few staunch members rehearsed every week. Arthur Dickey, David Christenson, and Pierre Tejada took turns on the podium at different times to keep the band going. Still supporting the community, the band played at events such as AIDS Walk, the Bering United Methodist Church's Spring Fling, Galveston's Dickens on the Strand, and of course the annual Houston Pride Parade. Members of the Houston Pride Band also participated with LGBA in performances in Melbourne and Sydney, Australia during Gay Games VI in 2002. After these performances, LGBA decided to rename itself the Lesbian and Gay Band Association to be inclusive of member bands outside of the United States.

As the 25th Anniversary of the Houston Pride Band approached, the Board of Directors decided that a return to the concert stage was in order, and the first self-produced concert in several years was planned for October of 2003. Band member Scott Ashcraft stepped forward to conduct. The small group of performers that night hoped that the concert would help the band turn a corner, and they were right. This concert event marks the beginning of the current era of the Houston Pride Band.

Houston Pride Band continued putting together concerts and performing throughout the community. In the fall of 2004 Scott Ashcraft stepped down as the Artistic Director. A friend of the band, Les Wood, stepped right in to help pull off the holiday concert for the year. He then led the band in their most musically challenging concert, Out West. Special guest Emcee was Gene Mikulenko, the first openly gay rodeo champion.

Slowly but surely the band began to grow, and the audience began to grow as well. Following the departure of Wood as artistic director, bassoonist Jason Stephens stepped to the podium on a full-time basis and spent the next six years building the band musically and slowly, but surely, the band membership began to grow as well.

The band's 30th Anniversary season had a wonderful climax with the gala concert at Zilkha Hall in the Hobby Center for the Performing Arts. There were many former members, including two of the founding members, Andy Mills conducting his signature piece, and lobby presentation of the history of the Houston Pride Band.

With the election of Barack Obama in 2008, LGBA was once again invited to march in the Inaugural Parade and a mass band braved the cold to march down Pennsylvania Avenue.





2010

- The 2010's: Now that's a Band

- In the second decade of the twenty-first century, the Houston Pride Band continued to grow in size, skill, and spirit. In 2010, 20 musicians from around the country joined with the Houston Pride Band in a regional LGBA event for a concert titled No Strings Attached at Zilkha Hall. The afternoon concert also featured a guest appearance by the Gay Men's Chorus of Houston. The following year, in the summer of 2011, Jason Stephens stepped down after six years at the helm and turned the baton over to Skip Martin, who had been the Associate Conductor.

- With a music education background, Skip Martin was recognized for his talents in improving the musical performance of the Houston Pride Band. He was named one of the Artistic Directors when the Oak Lawn Band of Dallas hosted the 2012 LGBA Conference. The Houston Pride Band had almost 20 members attending the conference including several who provided support to our sister band by serving on the planning committee for the event.

- When President Barack Obama was reelected in 2012, the LGBA was asked to march in the Inaugural Parade for the fourth time. The Houston Pride Band had a strong showing, sending 11 members to Washington to perform with a truly massive band.

- In the spring of 2014, the course of the Houston Pride Band took another unexpected turn with the untimely death of our leader, Skip Martin. Jason Stephens once again took up the baton to carry the Houston Pride Band into our next chapter as we searched for a new permanent artistic director. Despite such an emotional season, the band came together to grow in both numbers and musicianship. At the Under the Rainbow concert in June 2015, Michael Roberts was introduced as the band's new Artistic Director and Deborah Hirsh joined the band as the Assistant Director.

- The 2015-16 season saw many exciting developments for the Houston Pride Band. In June 2015, the Houston Pride Festival and Parade moved to downtown Houston. Thanks to the organizational efforts of band member Chris Foster, the Houston Pride Band joined forces with friends from the Oak Lawn Band, the Pride of San Antonio Showband, and the Redemption Winter Guard to create a marching contingent exceeding 100 members for the first time. Just

2015

2016

two months later in August, the Houston Pride Band successfully bid to host the 2017 LGBA Annual Conference. Also in 2015-16, the band's membership grew to over 50 active members, prompting a change in both rehearsal and concert venues. After a long and fruitful relationship with Bethel Church UCC, the band moved their rehearsals to the High School for the Performing and Visual Arts in Montrose beginning in March 2016. In March, the band began its current performance relationship with the Midtown Arts and Theatre Complex-Houston (MATCH).

After the 2015-16 season, Michael Roberts stepped down as Artistic Director. Deborah Hirsch stepped forward as the Artistic Director during this period of transition and through the planned LGBA Conference in 2017. The 2016-17 season was highlight by the Houston Pride Band performing the national anthem before a Houston Astros game, a first, a performance at the Gay Softball World Series in Austin, and was invited to be the marching band of the Deck the Halls holiday parade in the Westbury area of southwest Houston.

In August of 2017, Hurricane Harvey ruined the planned LGBA Annual Conference and Concert at the Wortham Center. Despite this heartbreak for the band members, the band persevered and had a wonderful 39th season with even more membership growth. After another search, the band named David Lea and Deborah Hirsch as artistic directors in July 2018 in time to prepare for the band's Ruby Anniversary Concert in October.

The Houston Pride Band's history is one of many ups and downs, but some things have remained constant throughout: our dedication to our music, our community, and to each other. Thank you for celebrating with us at 40...and still fabulous!

40 YEARS OF HOUSTON PRIDE BAND



2018

PRESIDENTS

1978

Ted Boya 1979-1980

1980

President(s) unknown 1980-1983

Debbie Holmes 1983-1984

Elroy Forbes 1984-1985

Kelly Martino 1985-1986

Debbie Holmes 1986-1987

Kenny Joe Spivey 1987-1988

Tom Moore 1988-1989

1990

Thaddeus Coverdale 1989-1993

Kirsten Johnson 1991-1992

Connie Moore 1992-1993

Brian Howrey 1993-1994

Russell Ben Williams 1993-1996

Connie Moore 1995-1997

Russell Ben Williams 1997-1998

Debbie Hunt 1998-1999

Russell Ben Williams 1999-2000

2000

Debbie Hunt 2000-2001

Connie Moore 2001-2003

Kevin Taylor 2003-2004

Kyler Landry 2004-2005

Debbie Hunt 2004-2006

Kyler Landry 2006-2007

Kevin Taylor 2007-2008

Joseph Wiese 2008-2009

Kiyona Corpening 2009-2010

2010

Ron Louvier 2010-2011

Kevin Taylor 2011-2012

Rudy Martinez 2012-2014

Joe Dombrowski 2014-2016

Chris Foster 2016-2018

Christopher Wells 2018-2019

Jason Svatek 2019-pres.

2020

MONTROSE MARCHING BAND



MONTROSE SYMPHONIC BAND I

Exact dates unknown



houston*pride*band

CONDUCTORS

1978

Clint Moncrief 1978-1981

1980

Andy Mills 1981-1984

David Christianson 1984

Bob Morgan 1984-1985

Jerry Bach 1985-1986

Ralph Gutierrez 1986-1988

Nanisi Barrett* 1990-1991

*Swing Band

1990

Roy Cisneros 1988-1994

Ralph Gutierrez 1994-1995

Beau Cain 1995-1996

Lynne Weynand 1996-1998

Irvin Decker 1998

Virginia Prudence 1999

2000

Arthur Dickey 1998-2003

Pierre Tejada 1998-2003

Scott Ashcraft 2003-2004

Les Wood 2004-2005

Jason Stephens 2005-2011

2010

Skip Martin 2011-2014

Jason Stephens 2014-2015

Michael Roberts 2015-2016

Deborah Hirsch 2016-pres.

David Lea 2018-pres.

2020

CONCERTS

COMPLETE FROM 2004 TO PRESENT

Sugar Plum Fantasy

MATCH • December 13, 2019

Game of Crowns

MATCH • October 4, 2019

The American Journey

MATCH • June 15, 2019

On the Red Carpet

MATCH • March 2, 2019

Merry and Bright

MATCH • December 8, 2018

40 Years of Houston Pride Band

Hobby Center • October 13, 2018

Bon Voyage

MATCH • June 9, 2018

Sail the Seven Seas

MATCH • March 10, 2018

Under the Mistletoe

MATCH • December 16, 2017

LGBA Annual Conference Concert: The Stars at Night

Wortham Center • September 6, 2017 • Cancelled

Tapas

MATCH • May 20, 2017

Picture It 2

MATCH • March 18, 2017

Yuletide Ride

MATCH • December 3, 2016

Dances with the Stars

Merfish Teen Center • October 15, 2016

True Colors

Resurrection MCC • May 22, 2016

Picture It

MATCH • March 5, 2016

Think Small (Chamber Music)

Bering United Methodist • January 23, 2016

Stocking Stuffers

December 12, 2015 • Resurrection MCC

#LoveIsLove: Houston's Fabulous Gay Wedding

Resurrection MCC • October 17, 2015

Under the Rainbow

Resurrection MCC • May 30, 2015

Storytellers

Resurrection MCC • February 21, 2015

Houston Pride Band Bares All

Resurrection MCC • October 25, 2014

Houston Pride Band Reads a Book

Resurrection MCC • June 7, 2014

It's a Woman's World

Resurrection MCC • March 1, 2014

Heroes

Resurrection MCC • October 5, 2013

The Great Outdoors

Resurrection MCC • June 1, 2013

War & Peace

Resurrection MCC • February 23, 2013

Bittersweet

Resurrection MCC • October 13, 2012

Until the Fat Lady Sings

Hobby Center • June 9, 2012

In with the New

Resurrection MCC • March 31, 2012

Guilty Pleasures

Hobby Center • November 2, 2011

Americana

Hobby Center • June 11, 2011

For the Kid in You

Resurrection MCC • February 26, 2011

Houston Holiday Hoedown (with Bayou City Chorale)

Hobby Center • December 20, 2010

Across the Pond

Resurrection MCC • November 13, 2010

No Strings Attached

Hobby Center • May 30, 2010

Flights of Fancy

Resurrection MCC • February 27, 2010

pOpera

Resurrection MCC • October 24, 2009

Music Without Borders

Resurrection MCC • June 19, 2009

The Best of All Possible Worlds

Resurrection MCC • March 7, 2009

Godzilla Eats the Houston Pride Band

Resurrection MCC • November 14, 2008

Celebrate! Thirty Years of Music, Visibility & Pride

Hobby Center • June 27, 2008

Celebrating Relationships

Resurrection MCC • February 9, 2008

Celebrating Diversity

Resurrection MCC • September 29, 2007

Our Favorite Things

Resurrection MCC • May 10, 2007

Carnival!

Resurrection MCC • January 25, 2007

Spooked on Classics

Resurrection MCC • October 19, 2006

Music & Laughter: The University Languages

Resurrection MCC • April 1, 2006

Holiday Vacation Spots

Resurrection MCC • December 15, 2005

This Global Village

Resurrection MCC • October 22, 2005

Out West: Themes from the Wild West

Resurrection MCC • April 23, 2005

Christmas on 'da Bayou

Resurrection MCC • December 16, 2004

Cinema Magic

Resurrection MCC • October 2, 2004

Winds of Change

Resurrection MCC • May 8, 2004

20th Anniversary Celebration

Hollyfield Center • November 14, 1998

Christmas Concert

December 16, 1989

Fall Concert Anniversary & Reunion

October 28, 1989

Stonewall Memorites: An Evening of Pride

Metropolitan Multi-Service Center • June 25, 1989



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