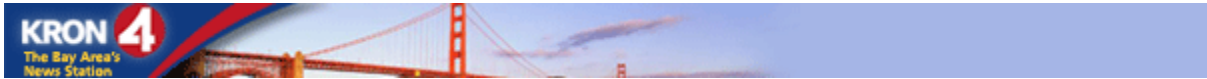


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Bay Area Youth to Perform at Presidential Inauguration

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SAN FRANCISCO (BCN) -- On Jan. 20, 86 Bay Area's best young singers will lend their voices to president-elect Barack Obama's swearing-in on the steps of the U.S. Capitol.

Members of the San Francisco Boys Chorus and the San Francisco Girls Chorus will travel to Washington, DC to perform together as part of the **inauguration** festivities.

While both groups have traveled abroad and sung for high-level audiences, Boys Chorus artistic director Ian Robertson used words like "thrilled," "delighted" and "honored" to express his enthusiasm at the invitation.

"This is clearly a high-water mark in the 60-year history of the San Francisco Boys Chorus," he said. "We can't wait to get there and sing for the president."

The two choral groups received an invitation letter in late November from U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein, D-San Francisco, who is heading the Joint Congressional Committee on Inaugural Ceremonies.

This is the first time either chorus has sung at an **inauguration**. Robertson recalled the last time the Boys Chorus performed at the White House, at a Christmas tree lighting event with president Gerald Ford.

The two choruses are separate organizations that don't traditionally perform together. Melanie Smith, executive director of the San Francisco Girls Chorus, said the groups' artistic directors are conferring on song selection and rehearsal schedules. Feinstein's office asked for patriotic songs, she said, and America the Beautiful is a likely choice.

Each chorus will send 43 performers. The Girls Chorus will send its top ensemble, Smith said, composed of singers age 12 to 16 who have graduated from the organization's top chorus program. Members of the Boys Chorus concert chorus, its top echelon, will represent the group in Washington, along with a handful of intermediate chorus members to even out the numbers.

Unfortunately parents and family members can't accompany their singing prodigy to the event, Smith said. However the young singers will have an up-close view of one of the highly anticipated event.

While lodging and ground transportation are set, Smith said the group is still seeking air travel. "We are looking for a corporate jet that isn't being used," she said.

The San Francisco Boys Chorus was founded in 1948, as a forum for training boy singers for the San Francisco Opera. Today more than 200 boys across the Bay Area train and perform with the group. The San Francisco Girls Chorus began in 1978 and has more than 300 members throughout the region.

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