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## **Gay Men's Chorus of Los Angeles (GMCLA) Delegation Prepares for Travel to Havana to Meet with Cuban Gay Men's Chorus**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**(LOS ANGELES) – FEB. 16, 2016** – A contingent of members from the Gay Men's Chorus of Los Angeles (GMCLA) will travel to Cuba at the end of this month for a first-time meeting with the Gay Men's Chorus of Cuba, Mano a Mano, before bringing them back to the States for a number of events in June and July.

While there, 14 members from the GMCLA, which will include its CEO Chris Verdugo, Artistic Director Joe Nadeau and West Hollywood Council Member and Board president John Duran, will meet with the Cuban ambassador, as well as with CENESEX – Cuba's National Center for Sexual Education – an institution that studies human sexuality and helps advise on policy matters surrounding sexuality education. The center is run by Mariela Castro, an activist for LGBT rights in Cuba, and daughter of Cuban President Raul Castro.

The visit to the island nation will highlight the excitement of Mano a Mano's upcoming visit to the United States, in which GMCLA will host a series of ancillary events in Los Angeles, including an art show, smaller concerts by Cuban artists, dinners, and more, that will drum up excitement for GMCLA's June performance of "Oye Mi Canto!" on Saturday, June 25<sup>th</sup> and Sunday, June 26<sup>th</sup>.

GMCLA will follow through in its mission of the past 37 years in continuing to change hearts and minds through the power of music by featuring the two-day concert, playing host to Mano A Mano as its special guest, which will be performing rich sounds of salsa, mambo and Afro-Cuban jazz in a truly historic and highly memorable performance.

Through this upcoming series of performances, GMCLA, along with its Cuban counterparts, will draw attention to the amazing culture that exists in the country that last year finally began the process of normalizing relations with the U.S., at the behest of re-established diplomatic relations by President Obama.

The concert will also highlight a commissioned collaborative piece – a poem from beloved Cuban American poet Richard Blanco set to music. Blanco was the first immigrant, Latino, openly gay and youngest inaugural poet, reading for President Obama's second presidential inauguration in 2013. He also performed a poem for the re-opening of the U.S. embassy in Cuba in 2015.

Following these performances, GMCLA will then take them to the GALA Choruses Festival 2016, the largest gathering of gay and lesbian choruses in the United States, July 2-6 in Denver, Colorado.

"This is truly a historic moment for GMCLA, Mano A Mano, and both Cuban and American cultures," said CEO Chris Verdugo. "Together we are helping to break down barriers for LGBT people in Cuba, amplifying the voice of equality and proudly showcasing the amazing talents of M2 for those here in the U.S. It's monumental!"

"Oye Mi Canto!" will be presented by Season 37 Presenting Sponsor Wells Fargo with support from Community Presenter Southwest, in Glendale's landmark venue, the Alex Theatre (216 N. Brand Blvd.).

To purchase tickets to "Oye Mi Canto!" or for more information on the Gay Men's Chorus of Los Angeles and its upcoming 2016 programming schedule, visit [www.gmcla.org](http://www.gmcla.org).

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**About Gay Men's Chorus of Los Angeles (GMCLA)**

*GMCLA has garnered international acclaim for artistic excellence while remaining deeply rooted in service to the Los Angeles community and beyond by promoting civil rights, tolerance and acceptance through music. Founded in 1979 during the emergence of the gay civil rights movement, critics have proclaimed the chorus "inspired," "expressive, innovative, and utterly moving," and hailed it for presenting "meaningful entertainment."*