

The Players Theatre

• 115 MacDougal Street • New York City • 10012 • Office (212) 475-1449 •

Supporting letter for Bob “Chicky” Gross to the The Cadets Hall Of Fame

I met Chicky in 1982 when I joined the Garfield Cadets front ensemble. I knew barely enough to pass the audition, but Chicky was an amazing teacher with great patience. His music was challenging even for the most experienced keyboard players. Little did I know at the time the front ensemble innovations that were taking place that summer to the drum corps activity because of him.

Garfield was the very first drum corps to use stationary concert keyboard percussion instruments. Instruments with a much bigger range than the traditional marching instruments. A very bold step at the time. What made this change spur a profound and permanent change across DCI was Chicky. Any drum corps could have brought concert instruments and put them on the field but nobody could have written for them like Chicky. His arrangements took advantage of this extra range of sound.

The colors added to the percussion section were massive. Picture having a box of crayons with 16 colors and then suddenly that box being taken away and replaced with a box of 64 colors. Chicky knew how to use all these colors.

Change is difficult and often met with resistance. Using concert instruments on a drum corps field was not universally accepted. But it was Chicky’s talent as an arranger which made this work. Once other drum corps heard the full sound they quickly followed. When you look at the modern front ensembles of today and the sound they add to a full show it was Chicky at that critical pivotal time during the season of 1982 which gave birth to this.

This has had a profound impact on my own life. Since that summer almost 40 years ago I’ve been fortunate to have had a very rewarding career as a musician and composer. Three years after that summer I was accepted to Juilliard. After graduating I had the privilege to work with some incredible orchestras and ensembles including American Symphony, Philharmonia Virtuosi and the Ethos Percussion Group. In addition, I played in the Broadway orchestras of Miss Saigon, Sunset Blvd and Phantom Of The Opera. Chicky the teacher set all of this in motion in my life. As a composer, I have twelve Off Broadway musicals to my credit and have had a show running every year Off Broadway since 2008. Chicky set this in motion for me as well. *To this day, he’s the voice I hear in my head when I set pen to paper.*

Bob “Chicky” Gross is one of the most talented and diverse musicians I’ve ever known. He changed many lives as a teacher. He changed the world of drum corps as an arranger. He changed my life in every way possible. I can think of no other individual more deserving of enshrinement in the Cadets Hall Of Fame.

Sincerely,
Michael Sgouros

