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Crescendo! The Newsletter of the Buffalo Gay
Men's Chorus

Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus

Fall 2004

Crescendo!, Fall 2004

Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus

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Crescendo!

The Newsletter of
the Buffalo Gay
Men's Chorus

Volume 3 · Issue 1
Fall 2004



Photo by Mike Longo

Relaxing outside Place des Arts

Music that matters

by Sam Loliger, chorus widow

When more than 6,000 delegates, friends, and allies raised their voices at the 7th International GALA Choruses Festival in Montreal this past July, there were many types of lyrics heard ranging from liturgical anthems to Broadway show tunes to the praises of coffee and the Esperanto language. Many pieces of music performed were serious and directed to the homoerotic, while others winked humorously and with occasional innuendo. All were special. But for many gay, lesbian, and bi-sexual persons, lyrics written originally for a heterosexual society cause problems. One common fix is to merely switch pronouns, bringing into synch hormonal related emotions with the words being heard. Times have changed.

The Buffalo's Gay Men's Chorus was part of this gigantic musical extravaganza, and I was lucky to be part of its cheering section as a "chorus widow," a tee-shirt designation spotted a number of times during the event. Under Barbara Wagner's baton, "our" chorus performed nearly flawlessly to a standing ovation before 3,000 in the Place des Arts. You were great, guys and gal!

It was a celebration of truly international proportions, with groups participating from England, France, Germany, Ireland, and Australia along with those from Canada and the United States. The words sung by over 164 gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender choruses, including GALA's first straight-gay alliance chorus, ranging in size from 8 to nearly 200 depicted love and disappointment, struggle and freedom, personal journeys and the joys of collective action. Poignant and powerful, many tears were shed but just as many shouts of joy reverberated in the two civic venues where the concerts were held nearly every afternoon and evening.

Comediennes Kate Clinton and Lily Tomlin provided topical stand-up comedy entertainment spiced with a restrained amount of anti-President Bush bashing. They reminded me that the real world existed outside the music halls as did a couple of other events. We were sobered to learn that a young man from one of the Seattle choruses was beaten on a Montreal street one night. He did perform with his group later in the week, and local police were at work investigating the incident. And even as we celebrated the wisdom

of Canadian lawmakers and courts to recognize same-sex marriages, we came to realize that the laws aren't fully equal because divorce law is not yet extended to same-sex couples. The struggle continues.

Many selections were paeans to music itself. The BGMC's signature piece, "How Can I Keep from Singing," attests to that. How glorious! And whenever an announcement was made from the stage indicating it was someone's birthday or a couple's anniversary, the sounds of "Happy Birthday/Anniversary" filled the auditorium with celebrative gusto.

It was then that I found myself wishing that the planners of the festival had scheduled a concluding massive sing-along of anthems befitting our movement of liberation. As it was, all the music of the week confirmed what everyone knew beforehand, that "we are a gentle, angry people" and "we do believe, deep in our hearts, that we shall overcome, someday."

This just in

Ron Martin, our own "personal" composer and pianist, called me with the very exciting news that some or maybe all of the *Adamic Songs* will be performed in New York City at Town Hall on February 12, 2005. This is a huge honor for Ron and a glowing tribute to him as a composer. I would like to think that the BGMC got the whole thing started with our commission, along with our performances of these marvelous songs.

Thank you my beautiful singers and players and take a "bow" yourselves.

— Barb

President's Column

by Dave Gannon, BGMC President

When I sat down to write this edition's message, I thought I would be in for a difficult time. We have spoken so much about going to Montreal for the GALA festival in past newsletters, that I feared there wouldn't be anything to write about. I was wrong. The only thing wrong about the Montreal trip was the absence of our members and friends who could not be with us.

It was great talking with other chorus folk to see how they tackled the problems of a growing chorus. The practical hints they offered will be a great advantage to us. The number one suggestion was to make sure we consistently thank our supporters and our audience. So, I thank you.

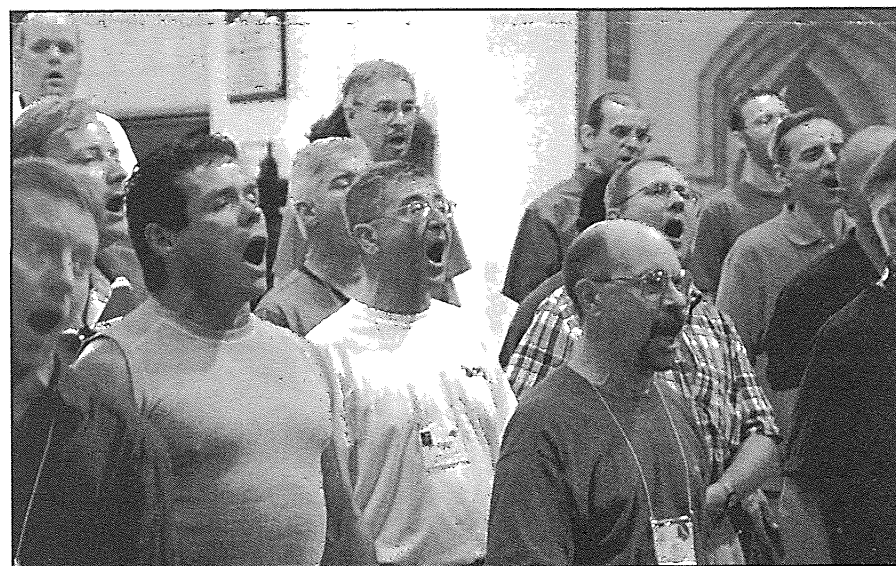
When we returned to Buffalo we took a shorter than usual summer break. I worried that the anticipation of Montreal that kept us focused on our music would be missing. I was wrong again. You should have seen the first rehearsal on September 7. Starting a new semester of rehearsals and welcoming new members was phenomenal.

I can now relax in the knowledge that as we prepare for the January concerts all is well with the BGMC. It's a good idea get your tickets early. They make great holiday gifts.

One last thing. Mayor Tony Masiello proclaimed June 22, 2004, as BGMC Founders Day at the Annual Members Meeting earlier this summer. Recognizing those who worked so hard to establish the chorus and get it off to a great start were Mike Bardo, Jim Estep, Bill Fay, Tim Fox, Bill Gardner, John Herbert, Doug Levy, Russ Link, Mike Longo, Cherie Messoro, Roger Parris, Woody Sipprell, and Jeff Wilson. I neglected to include Bob Rose's name when I submitted the list to the mayor's office. I was advised of the omission by several of the members on the founder's list and would like at this time to acknowledge Bob's contribution to our founding, along with my apology for the omission.

The Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus, Inc. is a member of the **Gay and Lesbian Association of Chorus, Inc.** (GALA Chorus). GALA Chorus fosters the artistic and organizational development of member choruses through a variety of programs and services.

For more information, visit www.galachoruses.org



Rehearsing at Christ Church Cathedral, Montreal

Crescendo!

The Newsletter of the
Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus

Volume 3 · Issue 1 · Fall 2004

Editor: **Delwyn Milander**
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Buffalo Gay's Men's Chorus, Inc.
Incorporated 2001 as a 501 (c)(3)
not-for-profit corporation in the
State of New York.

Music Director: **Barbara Wagner**

Public Relations Director:
Cherie Messoro

Officers 2004-2005

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BGMC
The Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus

I was a Groupie with the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus

by Cynthia Van Ness

On Saturday, July 17, forty-two men and three women boarded a tour bus from the parking lot of Buddies on Elmwood Avenue. Friends and family members bid farewell to the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus (BGMC) as it embarked upon a week in Montreal at the international festival of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered choruses known as GALA. Along with conductor Barbara Wagner and her sister, my husband and I rode that bus.

After a few concerts, my husband, growing increasingly enchanted by the sound of all-male voices, gave in to repeated urging from his friends in the chorus to audition. Thus it is that the BGMC, which does not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation, includes a pro-gay but non-gay married guy in the baritone section.

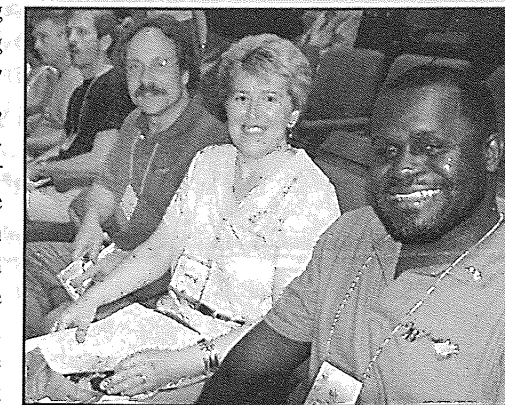
His timing was perfect. The BGMC had just decided to perform at the GALA festival. Gay and gay-friendly choruses from around the world gather every four years to sing for each other and show off their chops. The relatively young BGMC would be in the company of large, well-established groups, including the pioneering San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus and the Turtle Creek Chorale of Dallas, a little like going up against Lance Armstrong with only your tricycle.

The festival drew almost 6000 delegates representing over 160 choruses from Canada, the US, Ireland, England, France, Australia, and Germany. Our orientation packets included a government-sponsored map of Montreal's gay attractions and a festival guide with over 100 pages listing groups and their set lists. Every day featured dozens of performances ranging from 4-voice doo-wop ensembles to passionate gospel choirs to monster choruses of almost 200 voices. Some groups, like Buffalo, were single sex. Some groups were mixed sex, some were mixed-orientation (gay and straight together) and many were ethnically diverse. Some had disabled singers and many supplied sign language interpreters. The audience was predominantly gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered, but we heard that an opposite-sex couple flew in from Atlanta just to hear a week of good music.

Every ensemble got a half hour on stage. One chorus had the audience in stitches, singing "I'm so over the rainbow" to the tune of the Judy Garland classic, a complaint about now-ubiquitous rainbow merchandise intended to signify gay pride. The first-ever youth chorus at GALA, a gay-straight student alliance from Seattle, made everyone cheer with their rendition of "Going to the Chapel (But We Can't Get Married)." They ended by waving miniature Canadian flags and marching across the stage, figuratively entering the nation that now honors everyone's aspirations for a legally recognized, committed relationship.

Washington, DC, boasting a colossal men's chorus, moved me so much I could barely speak. They sang about contemporary gay life, including the woes of dating and about the hurt and longing of a military dad and his gay son who feel rejected by each other. What got me was the love song from a gay husband to his wife, knowing that their marriage must change or end. It is hard enough to reach into pain that others have caused you, and some groups

did this, singing about being rejected by families, friends, and churches. But it is another thing to delve into the pain you have caused others. Like the festival itself, this song spoke volumes about the maturation of the gay community.



Cynthia Van Ness, center, is flanked by Vince Kuntz, left, and Ray Neil, right

The musical themes were broader than you might imagine. One New York group sang about the plight of the families of the undocumented workers in the World Trade Center who lost their lives on 9/11. Songs touched on longing for peace, presidential elections, coffee mania, spiritual hunger, loved ones lost to HIV, women's body images, and, of course, marriage.

Taking our cue from enthusiastic supporters of other choruses, we Buffalo non-singers found shiny mylar bicycle streamers, two for a dollar (or US \$.72) at the Dollar Store. Five Canadian dollars later, we had something like pompoms to wave. After recruiting friendly strangers in our row to root for Buffalo, we were ready for the GALA debut of the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus. Finally, their turn on stage arrived. The announcer read the text prepared by founder Roger Parris about how the BGMC was scheduled to hold its first rehearsal on Sept. 11, 2001, and decided on that dreadful day to meet anyway. Then came bragging about BGMC appearances on television and with the Buffalo Philharmonic. The audience was captivated.

A parenthetical note: New York City, with a population of 8 million, has 150 members in their gay men's chorus. Buffalo's chorus has 68 members and all but 14 of them got to Montreal, an impressive number. After the chorus filled the stage, our neighbors teased us, saying that they didn't know Buffalo even had that many gay men!

Barbara opened with their signature piece, the Quaker hymn "How Can I Keep from Singing." It was the first song that the chorus sang at their 9/11 rehearsal. Next they debuted their most challenging piece, "The Adamic Songs," a work that the chorus commissioned from composer and UB professor Roland Martin, using poetry by Walt Whitman. This got the chorus's first standing ovation. In honor of our Canadian hosts, the chorus then sang "The Stars Are With the Voyager" by Canadian composer Eleanor Daley. They ended with a new hymn intended for the revised Unitarian-Universalist hymnal.

(continued on page 4)

Treasurer's Report

by R. Mark Meyer

A very eventful and exciting year for the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus is in the record books, and in our hearts and diaries, and even in some of our rolodexes. As can be seen in the breakdown of income and expenses, our organization paid a pretty penny for the trip to GALA in Montreal, but it was worth every cent!

As the figures tell, our net outgo was \$11,389, though we expected that and budgeted for it. Though our expenses went up this year, every category of income, except grants, went up as well.

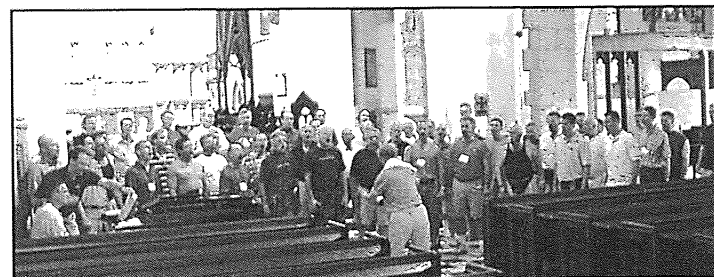
All of these numbers look rather lifeless on the static page, but behind each of them is a story of commitment and hard work. Dennis Stuart did so much to pull in the \$9,185 from our Friends of the BGMC, and also to ensure Montreal's success. Russ Link was tireless in selling ads in our programs, resulting in over \$10,000 in advertising revenue. And the many men and women of the chorus sold tickets -- lots of tickets -- which brought in \$23,600. Yay! We have such a wonderful bunch of energetic people in our midst.

As we look forward to the coming year, full of possibilities and potentialities, we can relax in the knowledge that the BGMC has stable leadership and solid finances. Barbara's inspired musical direction and concert planning ensure that our success continues, both artistically and organizationally. Let's all pull together and support her, and each other, and make year number four one of the best yet, just like the festival's motto we saw everywhere in Montreal, imprinted on baseball caps and tee-shirts: *Vive la musique! Vive l'égalité!* Long live music! Long live equality!

Income and expenses for the fiscal year ending July 31, 2004:

Income

Dues	8,450.00
FOBGMC	9,185.00
Grants	1,500.00
Ticket Sales	23,597.49
Advertising	10,410.00
Fundraising	1,927.00
Paid Performances	1,225.00
Singers' Montreal contributions	17,235.00
Other income	3,272.21
TOTAL INCOME	76,801.70



Sweating it out at Christ Church Cathedral

I was a Groupie with the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus (continued from page 3)

"Standing on the Side of Love" was written in Boston this spring during the marriage hearings. It got the chorus a second, cheering, standing ovation. Ten boisterous fans in the third row, stage left, waved sparkly streamers and screamed their heads off.

The audience, some of them active in the gay choral movement for over 20 years, genuinely appreciated Buffalo's achievement. Few choruses grow from zero to 70 voices in only three years and arrive at their first GALA with serious, commissioned works.

Having impressed a jury of its peers, our city once again showed the world what treasures we have. If you have not yet been to a BGMC concert, you owe it to yourself to experience the newest jewel in the cultural crown of Buffalo.



Our banner in the Complexe Desjardin

Expenses

Music Director	7,850.00
Music	3,236.52
Other musicians	2,475.00
Insurance/Legal/Bank	570.18
Concert expenses	23,961.89
Office supplies & equipment	3,569.93
Outside personnel	2,435.00
Montreal expenses	37,922.83
housing	24,457.83
registration	10,775.00
transportation	2,690.00
Office rent/telephone	4,567.95
Advertising	3,314.30
Other expenses*	1,601.57
TOTAL EXPENSES	88,190.87
NET OUTGO	11,389.17

* Other expenses include: copying, special events, website hosting fees, post office box rental, memberships, member care, permits, promotional supplies and miscellaneous.

Barb's Corner

By Barbara Wagner, BGMC Music Director

The Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus is three years old. Happy Birthday to us and especially to the visionaries who made their dream of a gay men's chorus come true.

As I write, I'm thinking of our first rehearsal, September 11, 2001, the day when unspeakable terror gripped our nation. About 30 of us gathered at the Unitarian Universalist Church frozen with the horror of the day's events, but looking and hoping for comfort from each other and the music.

We still face unspeakable challenges, both public and personal, but now we know for sure that we can find hope and courage from one another and the music. I find it nothing short of miraculous.

Participating in the Seventh International GALA Chorus Festival in Montreal this summer was a transforming experience for many of us. Being around almost 6,000 singers, listening to them sing in groups as large as 250 and as small as 15, sharing musical experiences with one another, being the lovingly welcomed new kids on the block, and being warmly received as we sang our program in front of 3,000 people - and oh, so much more was indeed life changing.

Every morning at breakfast, we would talk about the concerts we'd heard the day before - which songs we wanted for our own chorus. The energy among the BGMC members was electric - it was there on the bus ride home and it's been there all summer as we've met and planned our upcoming season. I know this energy and camaraderie will spill over into everything we do as we begin our fourth year together.

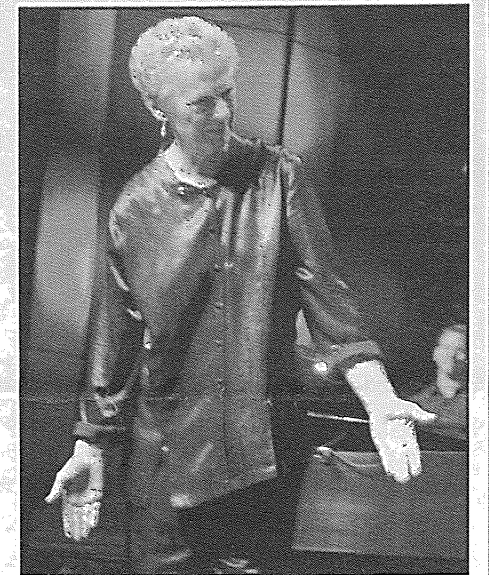
The 2003-2004 season never really ended - we had just one week off after the spring concerts before rehearsals for the GALA trip began. All of our music for the Montreal program was memorized. There were many of us who thought that something like this would never happen, but it did. That was a major triumph in itself. There's much to be said for memorization of music. I don't believe I've ever worked with a group that was totally "off book." The focus and the concentration were astounding as were the choral results. I hope we can do more of that.

A week after returning from Montreal, we sang for the "Hot Luck" series at the Botanical Gardens. There was the first annual Gay-rage Sale and our table at the Elmwood Festival of the Arts both the weekend of August 28-29. We all took a collective deep breath and in the next two weeks planned our major concerts for the 2004-2005 season. Inspired by the music we heard in Montreal, the themes will be "Brothers in Song" and "Fearless." Much more about both of these in the next Crescendo, but I'm sure your imaginations will carry you until then.

On October 3, the chorus will be performing at the Unitarian Universalist Church with the choir of that church and Drew Cantrill,

choirmaster at St. Paul's Cathedral, organist, in a concert to benefit the University of Buffalo Dental School and their neediest patients. It's a wonderful cause.

Many of you are familiar with the "Viva Vivaldi" series, now entering its 26th year. Conductor Marylouise Nanna and her talented Ars Nova Musicians have performed four



concerts during the month of November, for the past 25 years, featuring the music of Antonio Vivaldi and other composers of the same period, who Marylouise calls the "Vicarious Visionaries," always to packedhouses. I'm proud to tell you that the BGMC has been honored with an invitation to perform in one of these concerts this season. We'll be singing "Jubilate Deo" by Heinrich Schutz and the opening chorus of the famous Vivaldi "Gloria" with Marylouise and her orchestra on November 7 at First Presbyterian Church, Symphony Circle in Buffalo.

We'll be participating in the annual AIDS Memorial Service, hosted by St. Paul's Cathedral on November 13.

We're received yet another prestigious invitation, this one to perform at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery on December 3 in their new series "52 Fridays." We were thrilled to accept that invitation.

Finally, there will be two performances of "Brothers in Song," Friday, January 21, at the Unitarian Universalist Church and Saturday, January 22, at Temple Beth Zion, 805 Delaware Avenue.

The BGMC is a busy, much sought after chorus and it feels good to know that we are indeed making a difference in this community. We are proudly fulfilling the mission that was so optimistically drafted by our founders.

We are continually grateful to you, the Friends of BGMC, for your love and support in all of our endeavors.

See you at the concerts and about town.

Love, *Barb*

But once a year

The Friends of the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus annual appeal letter will arrive in your mailbox soon. Last season your generous contributions helped us defray our expenses when our 70 voices sang in September as part of the celebration to honor the visit of the Amistad Freedom Schooner; in October on behalf of Domestic Violence Awareness Month, and in December in honor World AIDS Day. Thank you! This season, in addition to regular concerts, we'll sing to help the less fortunate in our community obtain services at the UB Dental Clinic, and to help children and families devastated by AIDS. Please help us to raise our voices to help others. We only ask you once a year!

SAVE THESE DATES!

Sunday October 3, 2004 • **Benefit Concert for the Neediest Patients of the UB Dental School** • 5 pm
Unitarian Universalist Church • 695 Elmwood Avenue

Sunday November 7, 2004 • **Viva Vivaldi** • 6:30 pm • First Presbyterian Church • Symphony Circle

Saturday November 13, 2004 • **AIDS Awareness Benefit Service** • 5 pm • St. Paul's Cathedral • 128 Pearl Street

Friday December 3, 2004 • **Art Gallery Series Concert** • 8 pm • Albright-Knox Art Gallery • 1285 Elmwood Avenue

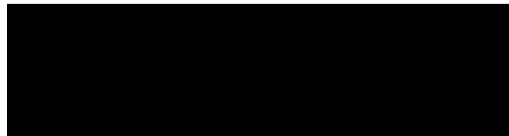
Friday January 21, 2005 • **Brothers in Song** • 8 pm • Unitarian Universalist Church • 695 Elmwood Avenue

Saturday January 22, 2005 • **Brothers in Song** • 8 pm • Temple Beth Zion • 805 Delaware Avenue

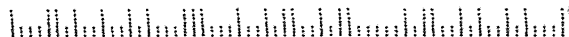


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Cut along dotted line and mail bottom portion with your contribution today to: **BGMC, 695 Elmwood Ave., Buffalo, NY 14222**

Yes, I'll join the Friends of the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus!

Thank you for helping the growth & success of BGMC. Your contribution is tax deductible.

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Composer \$2,500 + | <input type="checkbox"/> Memorial Donation \$ _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Would you like your name to appear in our next program? (Please PRINT exactly how you would like your name to appear.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Maestro \$1,000 - \$2,499 | <i>In memory of</i> _____ | |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Conductor \$200 - \$399 | <i>In honor of</i> _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Check here if you do NOT want your name to appear in our program. |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Associate \$25 - \$79 | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other \$ _____ | | |

Friends who contribute at the \$200 "Conductor" level and above will receive two tickets to our next concert.

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Please add me to the BGMC mailing list.

I have time or services that may help the BGMC. Please contact me.