

State University of New York College at Buffalo - Buffalo State University

Digital Commons at Buffalo State

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

Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus

Fall 2007

Crescendo!, Fall 2007

Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.buffalostate.edu/bgmcnews>



Part of the [Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Commons](#), [History Commons](#), and the [Museum Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus, "Crescendo!, Fall 2007" (2007). *Crescendo! The Newsletter of the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus*. 14.

<https://digitalcommons.buffalostate.edu/bgmcnews/14>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus at Digital Commons at Buffalo State. It has been accepted for inclusion in Crescendo! The Newsletter of the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons at Buffalo State. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@buffalostate.edu.

Crescendo!

The Newsletter of
the Buffalo Gay
Men's Chorus, Inc.

Volume 6 · Issue 1
Fall 2007

Bringing Buffalo Together

by Larry Van Heusen

A rare opportunity has unfolded to employ our healing powers to bring our divided city closer together in the midst of racism and homophobia.

The BGMC Board of Directors has received gifts of \$20,000 in honor of Pilgrim-St. Luke's United Church of Christ, and has allocated the funds to an outreach committee consisting of Barbara Wagner, Mike Liska, Dennis Stuart, Rev. John Rex, and Dr. Lawrence Van Heusen, chair. The objectives of the committee are:

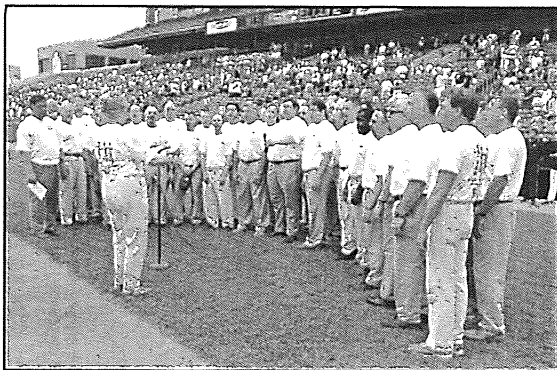
- to stand up and show support for same-gender-loving African-Americans who endure the triple stresses of homophobia, racism, and social classism.
- to stimulate BGMC into becoming more culturally sensitive to and collaborative with the African-American community and its organizations in Buffalo.
- to achieve these ends by finding a presence in venues accessible to African-Americans.

At a time when white gay and lesbian citizens of Buffalo appear to be receiving some growing acceptance and support, those who are African-American are experiencing a backlash in their own community. In *The Challenger*, some black church ministers are speaking out against same-gender-loving folk. The outreach committee has spoken with several key church-going African-Americans and learned that at one church, the pastor announced that gays would no longer be tolerated in the congregation; the next Sunday, the organist did not show up. Nationally, black congregational support for the civil rights of same-gender-loving members of their congregations has declined from 65% ten years ago to 40% today, according to author Horace Griffin.

The BGMC has an opportunity to break the silence in the midst of homophobic and racist behaviors. Three actions are underway.

- The committee has already underwritten the costs of the February 2007 performance at the Langston Hughes Center, as well supplying the handmade African stoles used in our June concert. Our artistic director, Barbara Wagner continues to seek out African and African-American music to increase our repertoire in this area.
- The committee is commissioning Adolphus Hailstork, a renowned national composer who is African-American, to put to music a poem by Countee Cullen, a Harlem Renaissance poet. The 1925 poem, "Tableau," sings of a white boy and a black boy locked arm-in-arm, how others may see them, and how positively and powerfully they see themselves. The piece will be presented by BGMC to the world's gay choruses in Miami next summer. We hope that this work will be a tool for building bridges in our own city as well.
- The committee is having conversations with Men Of Color Health Awareness (MOCHA) executive director Shawn Montgomery and Group Ministries program director Michele Boyd to see if we can perform a fundraiser for them in a concert possibly including the Royal Serenaders. Our hope would be to perform in an African-American church.

If you desire further information or have ideas for the outreach committee, please contact Dr. Van Heusen at 875-3771 or visit him at cityimpact@aol.com.



At the old ball game: the chorus sang the national anthem at Dunn Tire Park on Pride Sunday, June 3.



Barb conducts the chorus during the June concert at First Presbyterian Church.

President's Column

by G. Michael Liska, BGMC President

Pride, Promise, and Opportunity



On September 11, 2007, we celebrated the sixth anniversary of the formation of the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus. With **pride, promise,** and endless **opportunity** we began rehearsing for the 2007-2008

season. On such a momentous occasion, we stopped to remember the first evening the group met. September 11, 2001, a day filled with tragic events affecting the world, could have been reason enough to cancel the very first rehearsal. However, the importance of being together became quite evident because of the sorrow and great loss so many people were experiencing. Our own group of pioneers could not know that evening how much we would grow to depend on each other as we formed a new organization and became a family known as the BGMC.

We have developed into a group of dedicated professionals, so fortunate to be lead by our awesome artistic director, Barbara Wagner. Through Barb's leadership, we have presented a wide repertoire of music which delights our diverse audiences. The number of our supporters has grown consistently as we celebrate six magical years of beautiful music. Our presentations touch so many hearts in so many different ways.

We are extremely **proud** to be part of the Buffalo Arts Community. Our performances have had huge area impact whether it be fundraising events for people living with HIV/AIDS or an appearance to help raise money for police officer Patti Parete injured in the line of duty. Last fall we were honored to sing with the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by JoAnn Falletta and our own Barbara Wagner. We helped raise money for the Philharmonic and the Olmstead Parks Conservancy which suffered tremendous tree devastation during the October 2006 "surprise storm."

In a broader outreach, we took part in a concert to assist the victims of the Hurricane Katrina which devastated the Gulf Coast of our nation. We traveled to Erie, Pennsylvania, to help raise money to restore

a church serving our Erie brothers and sisters and their congregation. The church was in desperate need of major repairs, and we were quick to provide our musical program to help raise some of the money needed for their project as well as AIDS Community Services projects in Erie.

We **promise** to continue our effort to change minds, hearts, and lives through our music while campaigning for equal rights for all individuals. Unless we do, society will not change and equality will remain only a dream.

As a community, we share in the **opportunity and responsibility** to achieve these goals. The BGMC will continue to do its part. We ask for your continued generosity and support so necessary to sustain our nonprofit organization.

The 2007-2008 season has an exciting year planned. On October 28, a **Murder Mystery** event at the Unitarian Universalist Church will kick off this year's fundraising activities. This will certainly be an event you will not want to miss. For much needed relief from the winter blues, we will present our January concerts, "**The Proud and the Passionate**," on January 25 and 26. March 1 is our second annual "**Supper and a Song**." On April 4 we will perform again at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery for **Gusto at the Gallery**. June 13 and 14 we have our two spring concerts, entitled "**Connections**" which will launch the summer season as we head for the grand finale: **Miami!**

July 12-19, 2008, the BGMC will travel to Miami, Florida, to take part in GALA Festival VIII. We will perform in front of thousands of listeners and over a hundred other choruses from all over the world. What a glorious **opportunity** for the men and women of the BGMC!

In each of our six years, the BGMC has grown stronger, achieving admirable levels of discipline and professionalism in our productions. We are excited and ready to face this exceptionally challenging **opportunity**, head on with the **promise** that the people of WNY will remain **proud** of the BGMC.

Crescendo!

The Newsletter of the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus, Inc.

Volume 6 · Issue 1 · Fall 2007

Editor: **Delwyn Milander**
Designer: **Vilardo Printing**

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

Artistic Director: **Barbara Wagner**
Accompanist: **Debi Overton**

News & Information Director:
Kathleen Niles

Officers 2007-2008
President: **G. Michael Liska**
Vice President: **Timothy H. Mahiques**
Secretary: **Christopher S. Babbitt**
Treasurer: **William H. Gardner**
Directors: **Dave Batt,**
Norm Duttweiler, Jr., Jason Higbee,
Lorne E. Gretsinger, Linda Reznick

Crescendo! is published three times a year (Fall, Winter, and Spring) by the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus. Periodicals paid at Buffalo, NY. Postmaster: Send address changes to Crescendo, 695 Elmwood Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14222.



Barb's Corner by Barbara Wagner, BGMC Artistic Director

For those who do not love music drives away hate.
Music gives peace to the restless and comforts the sorrowful.
They who no longer know where to turn find new ways,
And those who have despaired gain new confidence and love.
Pablo Casals

Casals was one of the most brilliant cellists who ever lived. He began each day by playing Bach for an hour or two. In music he was able to find peace, confidence, love, and much more. The men of the BGMC and I found all of that on the night of September 11, 2001 and again on the night of September 11, 2007, as we quietly recalled the grim events of that day six years ago. We spoke of our terrible fears just as we had in 2001. We spoke of the singing and how it helped us to become a family almost immediately. As we began to sing "How Can We Keep From Singing" we stood and took hands and let the music burrow into our hearts and souls as it had that Tuesday six years ago.

The new board and I have had a busy summer and early fall preparing for our new season with its evolving transparency and opportunities for our gifted men. We hope to have lots more people involved in our standing committees and we want to continue to enjoy the all important camaraderie and respect that we always strive for. I'm very excited to tell you that this is a very capable, energetic and creative board - actually an artistic director's dream!

In early August, I went to an amazing choral workshop in Oregon. There were 85 fine musicians - singers, conductors and composers - all gathered in one huge room in a school in Cannon Beach, a beautiful town right on the Pacific Coast. We were all experienced musicians and we came to sit at the feet of Rodney Eichenberger, one of the finest conductors and teachers in the United States. We all had come to learn more about our craft. We had one beautiful, sunny day after another and possibly the best music making I've ever taken part in.

When we arrived we were handed a stack of 183 songs that we would sight read during the week we had together. Eighteen of us (including yours truly) were lucky enough to be chosen to conduct every single day and then to conduct our colleagues during the concert at the end of the week. We had to choose one of the 183 songs in our packets. I decided to do a piece that included a lot of chant-like sounds, since I hadn't done much of that. It was gorgeous.



Barb and Buster Bison at Dunn Tire Park on June 3.

Every day we worked with the chorus (our colleagues and new friends) for ten minutes. Rod gently and kindly worked with each one of us until he was satisfied that we were ready to conduct in front of the audience on the last night. I learned so much from both Rod and my talented new friends. In all of these years of attending choral conferences, I've never been to one where the divas weren't running wild. This one was diva-less and ego-less. What a relief. We were all there to learn from the master and from each other and we weren't afraid to ask for help or offer help to a friend. There was applause when one of us would master a new concept and there were warm hugs when we did something really well. There was help when we really needed it too. I could hardly wait to get home to try out the new techniques.

I brought back so much - the boys will tell you about the crazy new warm-ups, the smaller gestures, the exciting new music and I will tell you that my boys are singing better than ever. Studying the music for our winter concert, "The Proud and the Passionate" is a grand new experience for all of us.

Welcome to our brand new season and thank you for your loyalty to us.

Love,
Barb

Kudos to:

All those who helped staff the booth at the Elmwood Festival of the Arts, August 24 & 25.

Jason Ward for putting together the appearance at HSBC on August 29.

Dan Folwell for being the leader in getting a BGMC team to participate in the AIDS Walk on September 15.

(Inadvertent omissions are inevitable. If you have suggestions for the next Kudos list, please pass them along to the editor.)

But once a year. .

...no, we're not talking about the holidays and that chubby guy with the red suit and grey beard who comes down your chimney in late December. We're talking about the annual appeal letter asking you to join - or renew your membership - in the Friends of the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus with a gift of your dollars. We only ask you once a year and we'll be doing that with a letter to your mailbox in just a couple of weeks. Please know that all fundraising efforts are put together and carried out by BGMC volunteers. Your dollars all go to support the mission and programs of the chorus. And because the BGMC is a non-profit 501 (c)(3) organization, they're tax deductible too. Thank you!

In the spotlight: Robin Johnson

interview by Kathleen Niles and photo by Roger Parris



Robin Johnson is no stranger to hard work. As the owner-operator of a small business and a community activist who has successfully turned around an entire neighborhood, Robin epitomizes all that is exceptional about Buffalo, particularly if one is willing to work seventy hours a week!

In 1979, Robin began working with Larry Vilardo at Vilardo Printing on Connecticut Street on the West Side. It was there that she learned virtually every aspect of the trade from camera work to dark room, stripping negatives for prepress while doing typesetting, layout, and graphic design. After Larry retired, Robin expanded the business into the digital age and took over a sign shop as well. In 2001, she purchased the building against the best advice of family and friends in a neighborhood teetering on the edge of despair.

An astute businesswoman and an individual who loves the community, Robin became an activist by creating the Connecticut Street Association consisting of residents and businesses on that street. Since its inception, the CSA has witnessed a renaissance. Connecticut Street has gone from 80% vacancy to 90% occupancy. Three new community gardens have been created, new street lighting has been installed all of which has given D'Youville College the impetus to build eleven million dollar's worth of townhouses at 222 Connecticut Street. Mineo & Sapio invested thousands of dollars into major improvements for their business while the Greater Buffalo Savings Bank built the first financial institution on the street since 1923. Friends and family now think that Robin Johnson knows business!

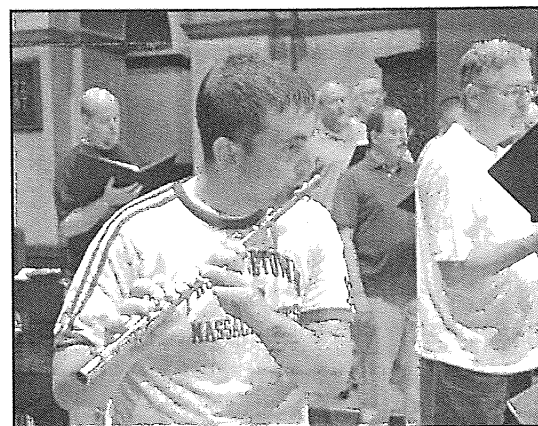
Vilardo's is what Robin describes as "a community-minded" print shop, willing to do short runs and pitch in to get a job done in a timely fashion. Still active in the West Side Neighborhood Housing Services that she twice served as chair, she is close to the community and loves interacting with the neighborhood people. The BGMC's Russ Link introduced Robin to Barb and the chorus. She began by doing the program for concerts. On several occasions, Robin extended herself to make absolutely certain that the work done for the BGMC reflected both its standards of excellence as well as her own.

Her current complement of twelve rescued cats keep her company during the long hours in the shop. Dozens more have found homes through Robin's kindness and grace. Husband Bruce works for the YMCA. Son Carl currently works in the shop awaiting appointment to the Buffalo Police Department. Stepson Rob goes to D'Youville in anticipation of becoming a physician's assistant.

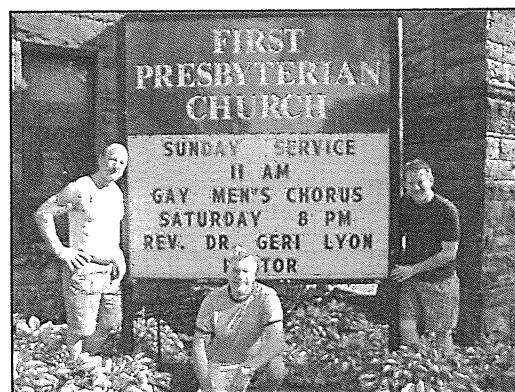
All in all, Robin's is a very full and very successful life. The BGMC is most proud to count her as one of its strongest supporters and best friends.



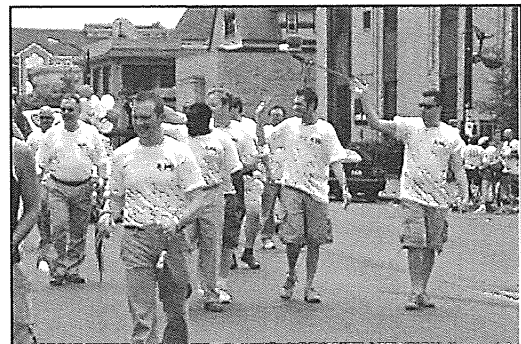
Shaun Doyle sings one of the solos in "Circle of Life" at the spring concert.



Michael Heaney plays the flute in the "Circle of Life."



From the left, Dave Batt, Mike Liska, and Rob Donner call attention to the welcome extend by First Presbyterian Church on Saturday night, June 16.



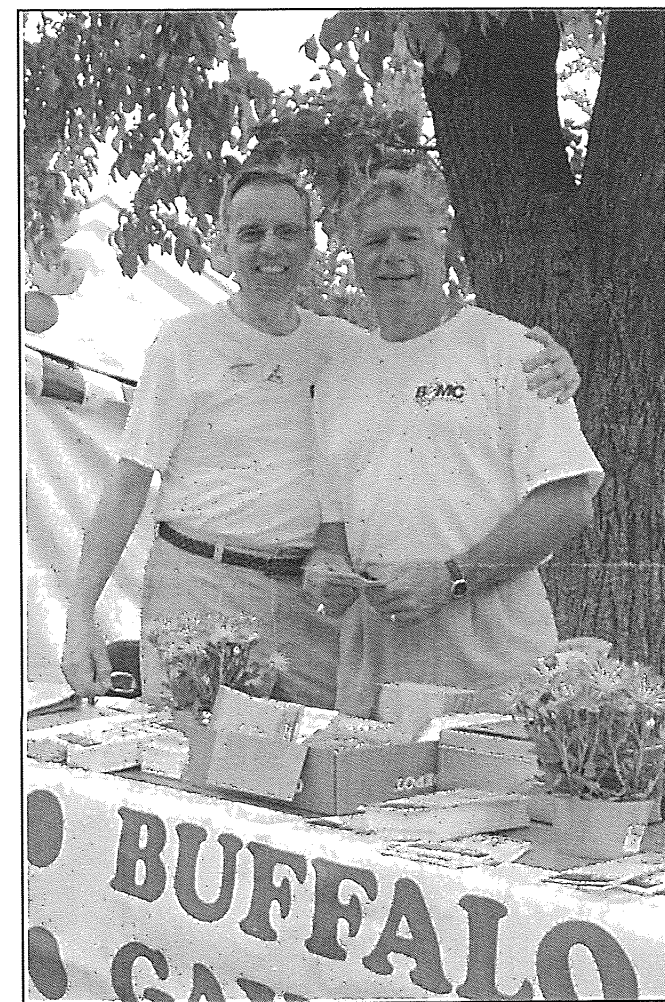
Pride on parade: BGMC singers and supporters on Elmwood Avenue during the annual Pride Parade on June 3.

Mike Liska heads Memorial, goodwill, and diversity celebration

Following the annual election in June, the BGMC board chose Mike Liska its president for the 2007-2008 term. Tim Mahiques was elected vice president followed by Chris Babbitt as secretary and Bill Gardner, treasurer.

Rounding out the board are Dave Batt, Norm Duttweiler, Jr., Jason Higbee, Lorne Gretsinger, and Linda Reznick.

With the GALA trip to Miami coming up in July of 2008, it will be a busy year for board members, singers, and nonsinging volunteers. Crescendo will keep its readers in the know as the year moves along.



Past and present: former President Denise Stuart and current President Mike Liska at BGMC's table following the Pride Parade on June 3.

Photos by Mike Longo

Memorial, goodwill, and diversity celebration

While the chorus got a break from regular Tuesday night rehearsals, the summer of 2007 included three events that kept members active.

On a warm summer's evening, members of the chorus sang at the July 30 memorial service for Joseph A. Schuster at the First Unitarian Universalist Church in Niagara Falls. Audiences will remember Joe as the partner of singer Brian Bussard. Matt Mooney and Shaun Doyle performed "For Good," joined later in the service by chorus members in "Standing on the Side of Love." Debi Overton was accompanist.

It is always important to make our presence known during the Elmwood Festival of the Arts on August 25 and 26 even if the chorus doesn't sing. Volunteers sold lots of CDs, handed out publicity, took and names and addresses of those interested in the chorus, and generally spread goodwill amongst festival attendees.

HSBC invited the chorus to perform August 29 at the conclusion of a month long celebration of diversity for staff and employees of the bank. Singers presented an entire a cappella concert under Barb's direction to an appreciative audience in the auditorium of the HSBC Center at the base of Main Street in downtown Buffalo.

Fundraiser

Please join the chorus for it's first "Murder Mystery Dinner Fundraiser" to be held on Sunday, October 28. Doors open at 5:30pm, and a dinner will be served at 6:00pm, tickets will be \$20.00.

Festivities include:

- A Dinner to Die for; Prepared by your own BGMC members
- Gift Basket Raffle Extraordinaire
- Murder Mystery; Played out by members of BGMC

Come join the fun and help the BGMC raise funds for GALA 2008 in Miami.

BGMC performs for AIDS community services event

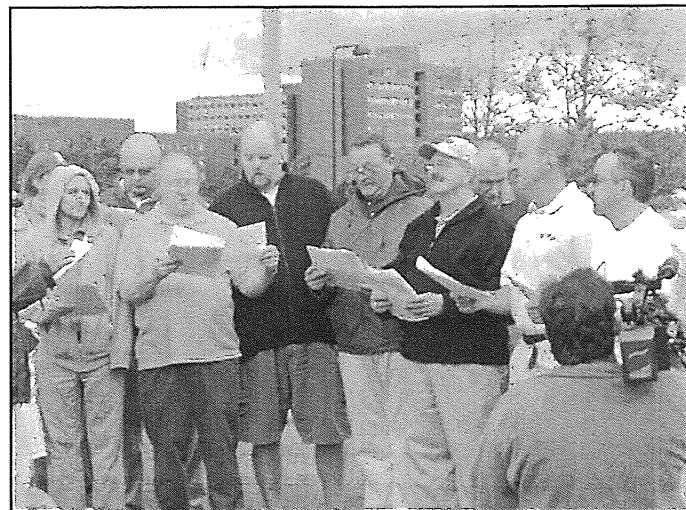
by Kathleen Niles, News & Information Director

On a damp and cloudy day, the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus participated in the annual Kellie McCarthy Memorial AIDS Walk September 15. However, many noticed that the warmth permeating the event made it seem sunny and balmy to all. Chorister Dan Folwell headed up the chorus' participation in a walk that saw 500 individuals volunteer to march for this great event. Christopher Voltz, Marketing Director for AIDS Community Services, noted that the support of the BGMC is very important to the agency, the staff, volunteers and, in particular, the clients and patients. With the move from Delaware Park to the Amherst Pepsi Center, ACS was no longer able to do the memorial flower launch to honor the memories of those passed. However, it was decided that a tribute offered by the BGMC would be "most appropriate and the performance was moving and greatly appreciated." The piece aptly selected by Artistic Director Barbara Wagner was "Stand By Me."

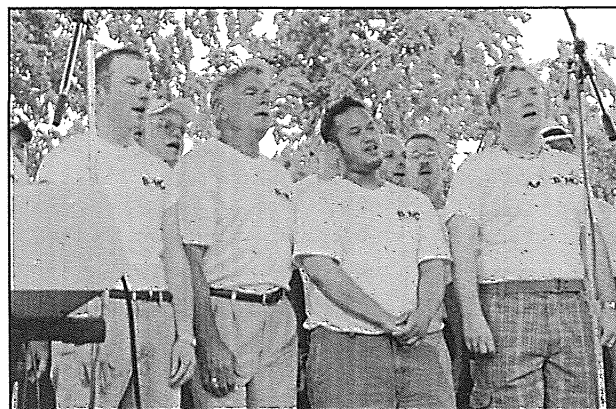
Mr. Voltz stated that the "Walk" is not only a very important fundraiser (this year should total approximately \$50,000), but also is the most visible community event. He noted that "the community visibility is critical as many folks feel that this may not be a crisis in the community any longer. The reality is that People Living with HIV/AIDS do not, thankfully, always 'look sick' as many did in the 80s and 90s. The downside is that many in the community take this as a sign that the HIV/AIDS is really not out there any longer. Even many young folks in the gay community don't 'see' it. And unfortunately, we are seeing significant increases in HIV infection in the young gay community. Having the BGMC perform at an event like this highlights the community's recognition of the event and the disease."

In the past fifteen years, in excess of \$750,000 has been raised by these events. These monies are the only unrestricted funds available to assist individuals and families living with this illness. It is there for unforeseen emergencies and special considerations not necessarily covered under the restrictive grant monies. For example, the Nutrition Program is considered the most comprehensive and sophisticated in the state. Sadly, the state grant monies are insufficient for the needs of the WNY people. Therefore, the fundraising events are so vital.

If you were not able to walk or to sponsor a walker, please consider contacting the foundation office at 716-847-0340 or going to the website at www.aidscommunityservices.com in order to offer your personal or corporate support. The BGMC is proud to have been able to be a part of this outstanding event.



BGMC starts the AIDS walk by singing "Stand By Me."



The chorus sings from the stage on Pride Day at Bidwell Parkway.

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

For more information, visit www.galachoruses.org

the buffalo gay men's chorus
presents

& Proud the Passionate

Friday, January 25, 2008
Unitarian Universalist Church of Buffalo
695 Elmwood Avenue
(at the corner of West Ferry Street)
 doors open at 7 • concert at 8

Saturday, January 26, 2008
Temple Beth Zion, 805 Delaware Avenue
(between Summer & North Streets)
 Saturday's Performance: Interpreted for the hearing impaired
 adults \$18 • students, seniors & disabled \$16

artistic director
barbara wagner
accompanist
debi overton

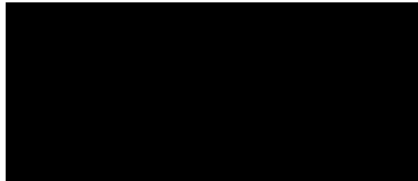
The Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus

716-883-1277
695 elmwood ave
buffalo, ny 14222
www.buffalogaymenschorus.org

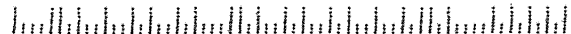
SAVE THESE DATES!

- Sunday, October 28, 2007 • **Murder Mystery Fundraiser** • Unitarian Universalist Church • [see promo in this newsletter]
- Wednesday, November 14, 2007 • **Benefit for the Darwin Martin House** • Ethan Allen Galleries • 3875 Sheridan Drive, Williamsville • [watch for more publicity]
- Friday, January 25, 2008 • **Concert - "The Proud and the Passionate"** • 8:00 pm • Unitarian Universalist Church, 695 Elmwood Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14222, corner of West Ferry
- Saturday, January 26, 2008 • **Concert - "The Proud and the Passionate"** • 8:00 pm • Temple Beth Zion, 805 Delaware Avenue, between Summer and Barker
- Saturday, March 1, 2008 • **Supper and Song II** • [watch details in the winter Crescendo]
- Friday, April 4, 2008 • **Gusto at the Gallery** • 8:00 pm • Albright-Knox Art Gallery, 1285 Elmwood Avenue, across from Buffalo State
- Friday, June 13, 2008 • **Concert - "Connections"** • 8:00 pm • Unitarian Universalist Church, 695 Elmwood Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14222, corner of West Ferry
- Saturday, June 14, 2008 • **Concert - "Connections"** • 8:00 pm • [venue to be announced]
- July 12-July 20, 2008 • **GALA Festival VIII** • Miami, Florida

BGMC 695 Elmwood Ave.
Buffalo, NY 14222
(716) 883-1277
RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



142221+4442 C017



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> _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Virtuoso \$400 – \$999 | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conductor \$200 – \$399 | <input type="checkbox"/> Honorarium \$ _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Soloist \$100 – \$199 | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Singer \$30 – \$99 | <i>In honor of</i> _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Check here if you do NOT want your name to appear in our program. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other \$ _____ | | |

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

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip +4 _____

Home telephone _____ Business Phone _____

E-Mail Address _____

- Please add me to the BGMC mailing list.
- I have time or services that may help the BGMC. Please contact me.