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

Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus

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Spring 2005

### Crescendo!, Spring 2005

Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus

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# Crescendo!

The Newsletter of  
the Buffalo Gay  
Men's Chorus

Volume 3 · Issue 3  
Spring 2005

## BGMC receives Pride Agenda's Community Service Award



*Music Director Barbara Wagner accepts ESPA award  
on behalf of the chorus.*

*All photos by Mike Longo*

Over 500 were in attendance at the Empire State Pride Agenda's Ninth Annual Brunch held at the Hyatt Regency Hotel on April 17 to witness the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus receive this year's Community Service Award for an organization. The Empire State Pride Agenda is New York's statewide civil rights organization committed to winning equality and justice for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered New Yorkers and their families. Accepting this prestigious award on behalf of the chorus were our music director Barbara Wagner and President Dave Gannon.

In presenting the award, Awards Committee Co-Chairpersons James Rolls and Javier Bustillos noted "...in just 3 short years, the BGMC is known as much for the excellence of their music as for their dedication to the community and has become a vital and integral part of our community, a source of unity, inspiration and pride....".

While the goal of the BGMC is not to directly lobby our elected officials, both Barbara and Dave commented in their thanks that part of the BGMC mission is to melt hearts and open minds through the power of song, while providing a safe place for our community, educating our audience and changing lives.

The other ESPA honorees were HSBC Bank for the business Community Service Award and Cecile Bilttehoff for the individual Community Service Award.

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## Appearance stirs controversy at Blessed Trinity Church

On April 24, the BGMC appeared with the Unitarian Universalist Church choir of Buffalo at Blessed Trinity Roman Catholic Church on Leroy Avenue on Buffalo's East Side. The concert was part of the "Glorious Jazz, Gospel and Sacred Music" series hosted at the church to raise money to refurbish their magnificent Lombard Romanesque structure, as well as to benefit Habitat for Humanity. Both choirs sang to a full house, each singing about half the concert and then combining forces at the end for two rousing closing numbers.

This was the first time that the BGMC has sung in a Roman Catholic Church and for this reason many people in the community were both excited and apprehensive. A handful of protesters carried placards in front of the church before and during the concert and spoke to the media. The men of the BGMC lined the steps into the church and greeted concert goers. Local television and newspapers carried stories and letters about the event for days afterwards. Despite objections to permitting the BGMC sing in a Roman Catholic Church, the Buffalo Diocese decided not to block the chorus' appearing at the event.

### What singers said about April 24

Here are what some of the singers said after the performance.

*We were singing Brahms inside while some confused individuals were yelling about abortion outside.*

*It was an emotional and historic turning point in the gay rights movement in Buffalo. It will be our Stonewall.*

*Who can forget the standing ovation that greeted Father Reger's invocation, 'Welcome to Blessed Trinity Church'?*

Everyone who was there will remember the day in their own way. It was truly a milestone in the gay history of Buffalo and in the life of the chorus.

# President's Column

by Dave Gannon, BGMC President

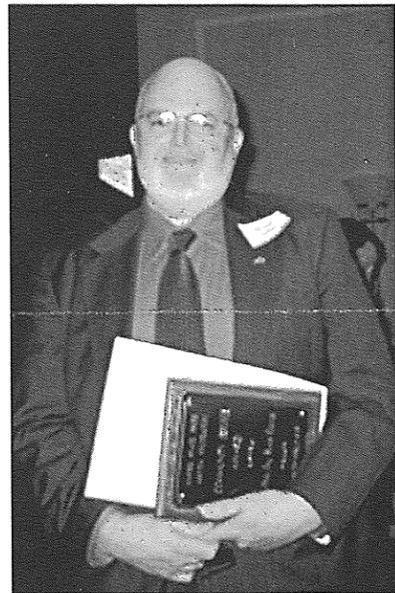
## Why We Sing

For the love of music, to share the melodies in our hearts, to celebrate our lives and to foster understanding through subtle yet firm and consequential means, these are but a few of the reasons why members of the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus sing.

When we appear and sing as a group, even in the face of adversity, we find ourselves acting as one. Those who witnessed our joint appearance with the Unitarian Universalist Church Choir on April 24, couldn't help but notice the energy that was in the air both inside and outside Blessed Trinity Roman Catholic Church. The protestors were, as most of you know, picketing in front of church. They held little sway with the determined audience of over seven hundred people in attendance. It was perhaps the best example to date of the who, the what, and the how of the BGMC. And of why we sing.

It was a gratifying experience for me, not merely as president, but as a singer as well. Gratifying be a part of group of individuals from all sorts of backgrounds, from diverse upbringings, from varied and challenging life histories, all working together, to sing to the world about who we are, to tell the world we are happy with who we are.

As I watched sanctuary fill up that afternoon, I was amazed at the depth of my own emotions. I realized we had made a giant step towards reaching our goal of enlightening through song and celebrating pride in the community and ourselves. We gratefully acknowledge the bravery of Fr. George Reger in inviting us, the persistence in Bonnie Unger Botsford in making it happen, and of course we gratefully acknowledge the seven hundred music lovers who were treated to two hours of



President Gannon proudly displays the chorus' ESPA award.

Gospel and Jazz in a Sacred Space.

Finally, the warmth and strength of our friends in the Unitarian Universalist Church Choir, who have stood with us from the start and who have served as mentors in many ways, gave everyone there, particularly our detractors, an example of how people need to accept those who do not fit into the mainstream of society. I can assure you the rafters of Blessed Trinity Church were free from dust after their set was done.

We originally gathered on September 11, 2001—that fateful day—with love of music as our common bond. Since then, we've grown together with the bonds of friendship, love and mutual support making the music in our hearts grown stronger and stronger.



## Crescendo!

The Newsletter of the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus

Volume 3 · Issue 3 · Spring 2005

Editors: **Delwyn Milander and Roger Parris**

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.

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

Public Relations Director: **Cherie Messore**

### Officers 2004-2005

President: **David Gannon**  
Vice President: **Jason Ward**  
Secretary: **Tim Mahiques**  
Treasurer: **R. Mark Meyer**  
Directors: **Bill Gardner, R. Jeffrey Proctor, Andy Steck, Dennis Stuart, Steve Young**

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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](http://www.galachoruses.org)

# Second Annual BGMC Garage Sale with a bonus

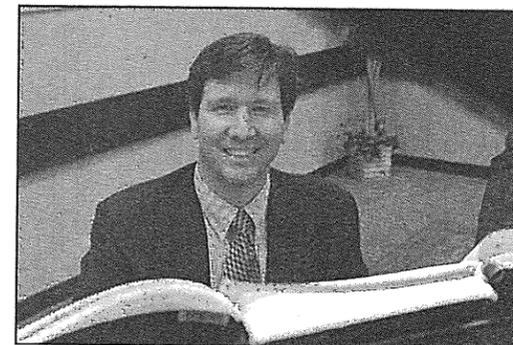
Clothing, furniture, trinkets, and treasures—all at rock bottom prices will again be available at the Second Annual BGMC Garage Sale the weekend of August 27 & 28 from 9:00 to 5:00. Last year's location at the Hamlin House Restaurant (in the American Legion Troup I Post 665 at 432 Franklin between Virginia & Allen) was so popular that arrangements have been made for a return.

This year's sale has the added bonus being on the same weekend as the Allentown Association's Garage Sale Day on Saturday, August 27. After leaving Hamlin House, happy bargain hunters will be able stroll through the Allentown area and visit all of the many homeowners displaying their wares.

With BGMC's seventy singers and volunteers donating merchandise, this year's sale promises to be bigger than ever. "We'd be most appreciative to receive any items that anyone would care to donate," report Garage Sale co-chairmen Woody Sipprell and Kevin Thompson. Simply call the chorus phone at 883-1277 and arrange for a pickup. And thank you.



Chris Babbitt, left, and Kevin Masse sing out during the chorus' benefit performance at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Amherst on April 15.



David Granville, BGMC singer alumnus, entertains during the ESPA brunch.



*YOU COME TO OUR CONCERTS*

*YOU GIVE US YOUR LOYAL SUPPORT*

*NOW TAKE US HOME WITH YOU!*

*BGMC'S LAST 2 CONCERTS—ON CD!*

*"SINGING WITH PRIDE" and "BROTHERS IN SONG"*

*GET YOUR COPIES AT OUR JUNE CONCERT*

*JUST \$15 EACH WHILE SUPPLIES LAST!*





Barb Wagner directs the chorus during the performance at Trinity United Church in Beamsville, Ontario, on May 14. "Bridging the Rainbow" was held in conjunction with Forte, The Toronto Men's Chorus, SingingOUT — the Lesbian and Gay Chorus of Toronto, and Bruce Thompson, baritone soloist.



The chorus in action at Beamsville. The concert benefited Niagara Pride Support Services.



Liz Clark, left, Barb Wagner, and Dave Batt bask in the glow of the ESPA brunch on April 17.

**Fearless**  
**Friday, June 17**  
**UNITARIAN**  
**UNIVERSALIST**  
**CHURCH**  
 Elmwood Ave. at W. Ferry St.  
 Buffalo

**Saturday,**  
**June 18**  
**ST. PAUL'S**  
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**CATHEDRAL**  
 128 Pearl St. • Buffalo

Both performances  
 begin at 8:00 pm

Call 883-1277  
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**BGM**  
 Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus

**Singing With Pride**  
**Since 2001**

*Barb's Corner*

By Barbara Wagner, BGMC Music Director

I asked a few of my beloved singers to tell me why they sing and especially why they sing with the BGMC.

One said, "I sing to say all of those things I cannot speak." From a bass who was profoundly moved by our performance of Faure's "Cantique de Jean Racine" with the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, "I have received far more healing benefit from singing with this wonderful group than I will ever be able to give back. For the first time in many years, I feel whole."

One of our fine soloists says, "Some of our music is so beautiful that it brings tears to my eyes. I don't feel alone when I'm with my chorus family." One of our youngest singers says, "This is a group like no other, a group of men who all share one passion - music. Nothing elicits more profound emotion than music."

"We sing as we fight to end injustice," says another. "I sing with the BGMC because our music is the one way I can share my love, my pride, and myself with my fellow singers and the community. Our journey warms my soul."

Our wonderful president, Dave Gannon, says, "Our songs of friendship, of love, support in the bad times and celebrations in the good times keep me coming back week after week."

It's a glorious thing. This music and the work of this chorus is indeed a miracle. I know why we sing when I see people standing with tears streaming down their faces when they hear, "We are standing on the side of love, hands joined together as hearts beat as one. Emboldened by faith, we dare to proclaim we are standing on the side of love."

I know why we sing when I see seventy pairs of eyes twinkling at me as we sing "Goin' to the Chapel" and the audience gets it! I know why we sing when I hear the power in the voices of my men when they sing "I Ain't Afraid" or "Let me fall, let me climb. There's a moment when fear and dreams collide."

I know why we sing when I see my brave singers standing regally in their brand new tuxes welcoming seven hundred people crossing a picket line to enter Blessed Trinity Roman Catholic Church for a glorious concert.



Steve Young, left, and Barb Wagner pose for the camera at the ESPA brunch.

Much of our cutting-edge music was inspired by our experience at GALA in Montreal last summer where we heard 160 choruses perform. We have an arrangement of "Danny Boy" prepared by Jameson Marvin, who has conducted the Harvard Male Glee Club for many years. It's absolutely stunning, as is James Mulholland's setting of Bobby Burns' "My Love is Like a Red, Red Rose." Then there's the bittersweet "Naked in the Leaves" -- the story of two men recalling defining moments in their long and loving relationship.

Oh yes, I know why we sing. It's that extraordinary perfect melding of words and music. It's the passion we infuse into every rehearsal and performance as we try to tell you why we sing.

Come to our concerts in June and I promise that you too will know why we sing. There's nothing else like it.

With love and gratitude,

*Barb*

**In the Spotlight: Don Behr, Chorus Librarian**



Don Behr was one of the founding second tenors of BGMC and has participated in all of the concerts, out-of-town performances, and last summer's GALA event in Montreal. Serving as librarian satisfies his need for order, neatness, and getting things get done in a timely fashion. He also sings with the Buffalo Unitarian Universalist Church choir and plays the piano recreationally.

For his day job, Don is a licensed customs broker in the Tonawanda office of FedEx where he is senior advisor to the Training and Development Department. In a previous life he served as an ordained minister of The United Church of Christ in three separate churches in Ohio and New York between 1968 and 1977.

Don and Samuel Loliger, his partner of 29 years, are homing in on having attended 450 opera productions, including four complete Wagner Ring Cycles, with plans to experience another

next year in Toronto. They both enjoy symphonic music, theatre and "museuming," photography, bicycling, reading and travel. An Alaska land travel and cruise is booked for this summer. They are members of Gay Naturists International and will attend their ninth consecutive GNI Gathering after the Alaska trip. They live and garden in Kenmore.

Don has two children, Susan and Peter. Susan is a pediatrician in Nashville where she and her husband have two sons. Peter, his wife, daughter and son are preparing to move to Louisville, KY where he will become chair of the Science Department at a private school.

Don couldn't be pinned down to summarize his philosophy of life, but it might go something like the following. "Life is made more beautiful by a Monet painting, Sibelius' Symphony #2, the male body, the magic of mountains and the wonder of water, good and dear friends, and a 'short list' of 25 to 30 favorite operas." To this he might add, "And, yes, I'll have another piece of that delicious dark chocolate."

# SAVE THESE DATES!

Sunday, June 5, 2005 • **Annual Pride Parade and Celebration** • Parade begins at 1 pm from Kleinhans Music Hall

— Visit [www.PrideBuffalo.org](http://www.PrideBuffalo.org) for more details —

Friday, June 17, 2005 • **Spring Concert, Fearless** • 8 pm • Unitarian Universalist Church • 695 Elmwood Avenue at West Ferry

Saturday, June 18, 2005 • **Spring Concert, Fearless** • 8 pm • St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral • 128 Pearl Street in downtown Buffalo

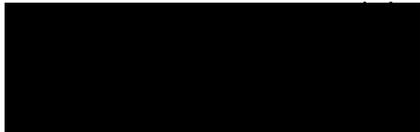
Tuesday, June 21, 2005 • **Annual Meeting and Election of Officers** • Location TBA

Saturday, August 27 & Sunday, August 28, 2005 • **Second Annual BGMC Garage Sale** • 9 - 5 each day • Hamlin House,

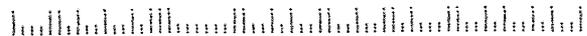
432 Franklin Street (between Virginia and Allen Streets)

Tuesday, September 6, 2005? • **First Rehearsal for 2005-2006 season** (singers check your e-mail for the exact date)

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Buffalo, NY 14222  
(716) 883-1277  
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## 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.*

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Maestro \$1,000 - \$2,499 | <i>In memory of</i> _____                           |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Virtuoso \$400 - \$999    | <input type="checkbox"/> Honorarium \$ _____        |   |
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**Friends who contribute at the \$200 "Conductor" level and above will receive two tickets to our next concert.**

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