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

Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus

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Winter 2006

### Crescendo!, Winter 2006

Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus

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# Crescendo!

The Newsletter of  
the Buffalo Gay  
Men's Chorus

Volume 4 · Issue 2  
Winter 2006



## Mozart still lives at 250

The Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus will be among of the first cultural organizations in the area to help celebrate the birthday of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, born on January 27, 1756.

In 1791, the last year of his life, Mozart composed a little cantata to celebrate his Masonic Lodge's new facility, dedicated to the ideals of brotherhood. He completed the work on November 15 and conducted the first performance three days later. Sadly, it was to be his last work. Mozart died just two weeks later on December 4. He was only 35 years old.

As with other compositions for Masonic ritual, Mozart wrote a fairly straight forward part for men's chorus. Many of the melodic phrases contain a frequent Masonic symbol, two notes, usually eights, slurred together as a suggestion of the bond between two friends.

For the January concerts, audiences will hear the opening chorus, tenor/bass recitative, a duet for tenor and bass, and a final chorus.

There has been some unsubstantiated talk among musicologists that Mozart may have composed this piece as a way of apologizing to his brother Masons for giving away so many Masonic secrets in his opera "The Magic Flute." On January 20 or 21, 2006 BGMC audiences will have a chance to decide for themselves.



The Clara String Quartet, founded in 2002 by four Buffalo Philharmonic musicians and friends, has a strong commitment to sharing the string quartet repertoire with audiences throughout Western New York. Named after the famed composer and pianist, Clara Schumann, the quartet has appeared as soloists with the Buffalo Philharmonic at many venues throughout Buffalo. The BGMC is proud to present the Clara Quartet to our audiences as well. Enjoy their excellence at "A Winter's Tale" in January.

## A Conversation with Kathleen Bryce-Niles

by Mark Meyer

Having started as the News & Information Director in August, Kathleen Bryce-Niles is already making her mark on the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus. Her infectious enthusiasm and imaginative strategies are helping us realize an exciting concert season where the city, county, state and, heck, the whole country will be watching for and listening to us. Her current project is lining up corporate sponsors.

Kathleen has such a way with words! Her missives to the guys and the board always brim over with such witticisms and verbal hugs that we are always happy to open up her emails, as well as welcome her to rehearsals. Recently, I spoke with Kathleen about what she is like when not on the job. Here's what she said:

**M: What would you like to do if you could have another go-round with life?**

K: I would like to work in musical comedy. I did a stand up gig for Last Comic Standing Buffalo and that was very challenging and delightful. The audience was comprised of twenty-somethings, the rest of the comics were semi-pros or pros and all were "blue" while I was grandma doing my church shtick. They were very kind to me.

**M: Tell me something that somebody said to you that really stuck in your brain for all your life?**

K: My dad was my font of wisdom: "You make enough mistakes in your right mind, imagine what you would do if you drink." "Big Shot is very expensive." "If it isn't yours, don't take it." "If you ever think you are better than the next guy, you won't be." The list goes on.

**M: Describe what music means to you.**

K: Music is intrinsic to my well-being. While I cannot play an instrument or even read music, I write music constantly. Most is lost to the wind but since I learned that Paul McCartney is in a similarly challenged situation, I have been inspired to begin to get it written by those who can transcribe from a hum or whistle. It is very cool after having lost thousands of songs to hear one played at long last.

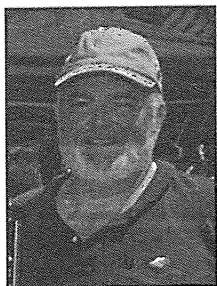
**M: Do you have a favorite poem?**

K: As the Editor Emerita of The Comstock Review, I cannot afford to have found my favorite yet. Each year, we award thousands in prizes to fine poets from all over the English-speaking world.

(continued on page 3...Interview)

# President's Column

by Dave Gannon, BGMC President



When I had the privilege of being elected president, to complete Jim Estep's term, I was a rookie board member. I had only several month's experience in the operation of the BGMC and the role played by the board of directors. I quickly learned that it was not going to be easy to lead the BGMC and still maintain my sanity.

We function quite well as an organization, but when you put together as much talent as is present in the chorus, the energy levels know no bounds. Differences arise as to what songs we should sing in a given concert. Should there be solos or not? Should we always wear tuxedos? There are as many different opinions as there are singers. What shines through each time is everyone's willingness to work together even though not one of us gets his way 100% of the time. In the end, it is that art of compromise that brings to our audience what we hope is a concert they find as invigorating and enjoyable as our inaugural concert was

four years ago.

I'm not sure I could ever count the number of times I've heard the phrase "you guys were great." It is something I never tire of hearing. I find it extremely gratifying to play my small part in achieving this response. On and off the stage, we work hard to achieve the voice that is the BGMC. Invitations to sing as part of worthy fundraisers arrive nearly every week. We must turn down most of them down simply because of time constraints. The ones we accept are part of our mission to enlighten and entertain. I am confident we are making some small contribution to making our little corner of the world a better place, not only for ourselves, but for future generations of the GLBT community.

We enjoy the support of our family and friends. This makes the task of being president much less daunting. I can't think of any attempt to say "thank you" that wouldn't fall short of its mark.

The president's sanity lives on.

Dave Gannon  
President, BGMC

(After perusing about thirty questionnaires filled out by the members of BGMC, our News & Information Director wrote the following capsule about us)

## This is what I know

The BGMC is comprised of gentlemen who are in their 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s and 70s. While we may have been born in Indiana, Florida, California, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, we all live in and around Buffalo, New York today.

We are very well-educated - from good solid high schools to doctorates in theology, teaching and the law. While many of us are currently single, some of us are in partnerships with men or women. And, if you wish to converse with us, we can do so in English, French, Italian, German, Latin, Cambodian and Polish.

We can fix your computers, teach your children, run your stores, write your will, manage your finances and homes, sell your house or help you to buy a new one, thrill you musically, massage your aches and pains, guide your soul back to God, handle large groups of workers, sell you darn near anything, drive your trains, keep your parks and recreation areas in tact, get you grants, make things, fix things, create virtually anything and sing so well you will cry with joy.

Kathleen Niles  
The Bryce Focus Group

# Crescendo!

The Newsletter of the  
Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus

Volume 4 • Issue 2 • Winter 2006

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 2005-2006**  
President: **David Gannon**  
Vice President: **Dennis Stuart**  
Secretary: **Timothy H. Mahiques**  
Treasurer: **R. Mark Meyer**  
Directors: **Christopher S. Babbitt,**  
**Bill Gardner, Edward N. Giannino,**  
**Michael P. Gillis, Steve Young**

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We welcome your comments.

**BGMC**  
The Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus

# Interview continued from page 1

M: *What kinds of hobbies do you have?*

K: I love art. So, I have determined that one cannot love as much as I do and not have some talent somewhere. After some failed experimentation, I have discovered Altered Books which combines words and artwork. It is great fun and I am currently working on a book of pages from the NY Times which I have retitled, "Changing History One Page at a Time."

M: *What are you most proud of in your life's accomplishments?*

K: I am most proud of my work with thousands of students as teacher and administrator in an urban district for 31 years. My last position was as the Principal of the only school in the United States (at that time) which was an alternative to expulsion for weapons possession.

M: *In addition to Debi Overton's (your partner's) incredible piano skills which initially brought you to the BGMC, what part of the BGMC do you admire the most?*

K: It is the stellar manner in which the gentlemen of the chorus have moved from a bunch of amateurs who like to sing to a cohesive, professional chorus that can stand against any in the country that keeps me coming back. As a woman, I am very impressed that the BGMC has chosen an amazingly gifted conductor in Barbara Wagner and one the country's finest accompanists in Debi Overton to guide them into excellence. It takes great men to recognize great women and to share the stage with them. BGMC is to be commended for such character.

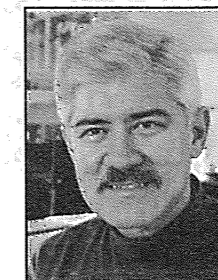
M: *Do you have any final words of wisdom about the chorus and your part in it?*

K: I enjoy torturing the guys by telling them that my job is a volunteer job with carfare. I have never worked so hard for so little in my career. This is what is called respect. We need corporate sponsors and donors willing to sacrifice for the growth of this magnificent group. The BGMC is both an entertainment and a teaching entity. To grow and to do all that it is capable of doing for the WNY community, funding is imperative.

Please do not hesitate to support BGMC. We need to continue to do these concerts as well as the myriad benefit concerts to help scores of organizations that assist hundreds in our community. Please do not hesitate to put your money where your heart is, the soul of Buffalo choral music.

# In the Spotlight: Ramón Melendez

Interview and photo by Roger Parris



"I don't think anyone should go without a birthday cake. It's the way I was raised."

His sensitivity and generosity of spirit makes Ramón Melendez one of the best-loved singers in the BGMC. He keeps track of everyone's birthday and each month he donates a huge birthday cake for celebration at rehearsal snack time.

Ramón started his volunteer work with the chorus from the very beginning of his involvement as part of the BGMC's original membership committee. He took attendance, maintained the membership records, and was the group's original archivist. He made certain that vital communications were distributed quickly. "I think it's a very important part of the organization to keep everybody abreast of what's going on," he notes.

A native of Puerto Rico, Ramón came to Buffalo in 1976. He's worn many professional hats and is now a counselor for the New York State Smokers' Quitline based at Roswell Park Cancer Institute.

Ramón has had a great time singing the entire BGMC repertoire for the past five years. "I enjoyed performing 'The Rhythm of Life' because it's so upbeat and funky. I enjoy performing 'Non Nobis Domine' because of its majesty. I'm not a very religious person but it just moves me in a spiritual way."

*What if there was no BGMC?*

"There would be a tremendous void in my life. I have many strong friendships that I wouldn't have it if weren't for the chorus. We see each other every week and when on the outside we greet each other, it's like running in to a member of the family. We belong to a group that's more than just a social outlet. We have a bond. I feel like I belong to a group that's on the same page as I am within the gay community."

The men and women in the BGMC organization are happier because of Ramón's dedication, and we owe him our deepest thanks.

## Call for Volunteers

While we could easily use several full-time staff, as a non-profit organization we thrive on the volunteers who assist us whenever they are able to do so. We always need volunteers to help out in many different support roles that enable the singers to do what they are supposed to do--sing! If you are interested in a volunteer position with the BGMC, please contact our office and an application to serve will be sent to you. You will need to tell us your skills, aptitudes, interests and time-availability. If you are going to work for nothing, we definitely have something for you!

# BGMC performs at Nichols School

The gentlemen of the Buffalo Gay Mens' Chorus were invited to perform on November 3, 2005 for the staff and students at the Nichols School in Buffalo. The occasion was the 2nd Annual Diversity Week. Donning their tuxedos and warming up their vocal chords, the singers arrived bright and early on a chilly Friday morning. From the first song to the last, the audience was enthralled. Applause could not have been more sincere nor attention more perfect. From the opening processional, "Antya Laba," an African gathering song, the warmth and generous spirit of the chorus and the students filled the auditorium.

Heather Jenkins, Diversity Coordinator at Nichols, wrote to the BGMC after the concert and noted: "As issues of sexual identity, in particular misconceptions about sexual identity are common among teenagers, your song selections and physical demeanor certainly helped to dispel myths and open eyes."

Our Barbara Wagner spent the majority of her teaching career at Nichols. It was thrilling for her to return as the Artistic Director of the BGMC and to receive such a rousing welcome from her colleagues, as well as the students, who remembered her with great affection. Perhaps you can go home again.

Ms. Jenkins commended those members of the BGMC who agreed to stay for a conversation with the students... "what I believe to be one of the most powerful dialogue sessions in our school's

history. The students were engaged, enlightened, and genuinely moved by the unwavering honesty and compassion of those who trusted us enough to share their personal thoughts and journeys. The students took the experience to heart and shared it with their peers; many have expressed interest in our upcoming Gay/Straight Alliance, as they are committed to awareness, action, and empowerment."

A major component of the BGMC mission is to educate as well as to entertain. It was our pleasure to share time with these outstanding Western New York youth.

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)



Photo courtesy of Kim Kimberly

# Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus

presents

## A Winter's Tale



**Friday, January 20, 2006 at 8 pm**

Unitarian Universalist Church

695 Elmwood Avenue at West Ferry Street

**Saturday, January 21, 2006 at 8 pm**

Temple Beth Zion

805 Delaware Avenue

Interpreted for the hearing impaired

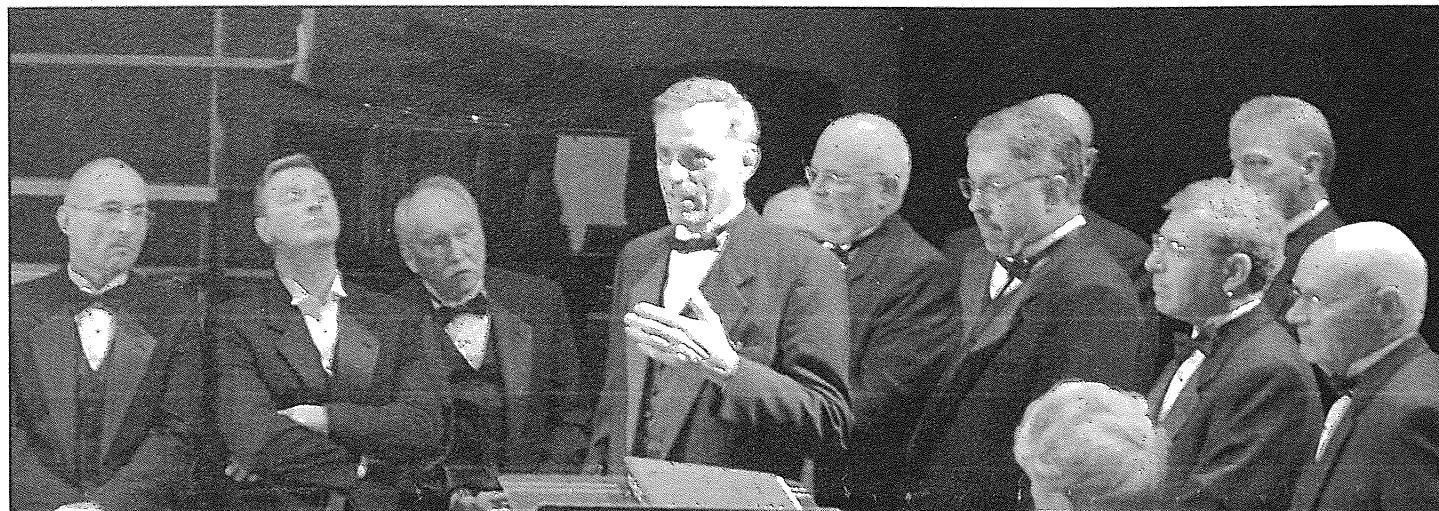
Tickets \$18 adults \$16 seniors/students/disabled

Doors open at 7 p.m.

BGMC 695 Elmwood Ave., Buffalo New York 14222

[www.buffalogaymenschorus.com](http://www.buffalogaymenschorus.com)

716-883-1277



Dennis Stuart addresses Nichols students following the concert

## Corporate Sponsors Welcome

When you become a partner with the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus, you share in a vision for our arts community. In a very short time, this chorus has gone from amateur to professional status; from a few members to nearly one hundred members and associates; from singers to educators; and, from members of the smaller gay community to ambassadors to all of Western New York.

When you sponsor the BGMC, your corporation joins in a partnership of excellence. Your "brand name" becomes visible to scores of music lovers in our advertising and promotional activities. You participate in educating people in myriad ways. Literally thousands of people enjoy the BGMC in concert and in benefit performances each year. They have already achieved renown in the media having received outstanding reviews, appeared on television and radio. They have helped to raise thousands of dollars for organizations that serve the indigent, the ill, the aged and others in need of a helping hand. None of this comes without cost.

Dozens of fine singers in tuxedos performing for thousands of thrilled listeners carries not only a weighty responsibility, but also a hefty price tag. It is our intent to continue our growth and service and to make ours a major presence in this great city. In order to do so, we need your help. We cannot hope to understand your corporate structure in terms of advertising and community gifts. Therefore, we offer the following guidelines for corporate giving in the hope that you will find a place for the BGMC.

### The Maestro Society

Members of the Maestro Society make an annual gift to the BGMC of at least \$1000.

**Baton Level:** \$1000-2499 Receive a half page ad in all programs; 5 concert tickets; invitation to sponsor party; CD of all performances

**Soloist Level:** \$2500-4999 Receive three quarter page ad in all programs; 10 concert tickets; invitation to sponsor party; CD of all performances

**Accompanist Level:** \$5000-9999 Receive full page ad in all programs; 10 concert tickets; 5 CDs of all performances; private performance at a corporation party

**Maestro Level:** \$10,000+ Receive two full page ads in all programs; 10 concert tickets, 10 CDs; private performance at a corporation party; ensemble performance at a corporation meeting.

## Out and About: BGMC benefit concerts serve the total WNY community

While we cannot stretch much beyond what we are currently doing without additional funding, the mission to both educate and entertain is being solidly met. In the last few weeks, the BGMC's commitment to serve the WNY community was highlighted by three amazing concerts. They appeared as a main event at Cause for Celebration at the Statler Hotel Ballroom on November 4, 2005 to benefit AIDS Community Services of Western New York. The chorus returned First Presbyterian Church on November 27, 2005 to perform for the benefit of AIDS Family Services for World AIDS Day. We are careful to balance our time and to offer our services to both the gay and straight communities without reservation.

### Barb's Corner by Barbara Wagner, BGMC Artistic Director

How can we keep from singing? That is a question that we can answer with joy and excitement. We don't!

Our fifth season began on Sunday afternoon, August 28, 2005 when we joined forces with our good friends in the Unitarian Universalist Church Choir to sing for some of the crowd that was enjoying the Elmwood Festival of the Arts. We were delighted with the large audience that cheered us on. I even did some early Christmas shopping that day. It was all great fun and a most heartening way to begin a new season.

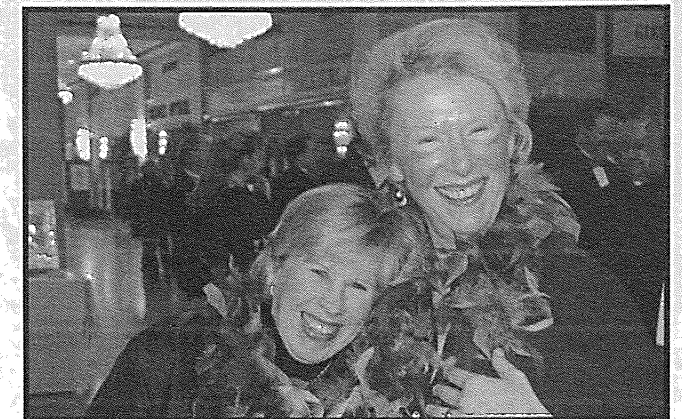
On October 23, 2005 we joined a number of the choral groups in the city to do a Benefit Concert for Katrina and Gulf Coast relief. Again, we joined our UU pals and Cantor David Goldstein and received the only standing ovation of the afternoon.

On we went, the first weekend in November, possibly the busiest and most productive in our short history. Very early in the morning of November 4, 2005 we sang for a packed auditorium of students and faculty at the Nichols School (see the article "BGMC performs at Nichols School" in this issue). That very same evening found us at Fredonia State College singing for the second time in as many years at their Diversity/Multicultural Celebration. The next evening, we mingled with the throngs in the Statler Towers Golden Ballroom (talk about memories) as we joined with our beloved community at Cause for Celebration and sang a few of our tried and true standards.

November 27, 2005 we did a lively benefit concert for AIDS Family Services at First Presbyterian Church with David Bond, host organist.

My goodness - we're just a little tired, but not too tired to launch into intense rehearsals for our lovely winter concert, "A Winter's Tale." I love rehearsals - the humor, the intensity, the strength and connectedness of our family and the sounds I hear that are often so beautiful they make me breathless. Sometimes we can even get a glimpse of that soft, powdery, glistening snow that falls in Western New York through the windows of our rehearsal room. One evening we were learning Edward Elgar's sublime song "The Snow." I asked the singers to look outside at the diamond glints in the snow that was falling, oh so silently. It was sparkling like tiny diamonds. The music and words were transformed. When you hear that song, accompanied by two violins and piano at our concert, I hope you'll remember that beauty and gentleness can also be part of winter in our town.

You're going to hear a very short cantata that Mozart composed



Barb and Debi at Cause for Celebration

shortly before he died (see article "Mozart still lives at 250" elsewhere in this issue). It was his last completed choral work and celebrates brotherhood and friendship. In fact, he wrote it for the dedication of a Masonic Hall in Vienna. We offer this to you as our tribute to the prodigious Mozart on the occasion of the 250th anniversary of his birth.

The brilliant Clara String Quartet, comprised of Amy Glidden, Betsy Holzemer, Jackie Galluzzo, and Amelee Fradette (all BPO players) will be playing with us as well. You'll hear a beautiful Hebrew Chant, arranged by Cantor David Goldstein, that cries out for peace in our fractured world. And of course, we can't let the season and the theme go by without doing a few saucy songs like "Sleigh Ride," complete with bells and whips and whinnies, "Baby, It's Cold Outside," and the wonderful Cole Porter tune, "It's too Dam Hot/Cold."

I hope you've all seen "Rent." What a glorious movie. I'm pleased to tell you that there will be three songs from "Rent" on this concert as well. The rest will be a surprise!

And so the fine men of the BGMC and I wish you the happiest and healthiest of New Years. Thank you for being there for all of us as we continue to fulfill the promise of our mission. The poet Elinor Wylie invites us to "walk in the white snow in a soundless space---at a tranquil pace." I pray that we can all find some time to do just that this winter.

With much love.

*Barb*

## Balancing the benefits

The BGMC receives scores of requests to do benefit concerts throughout WNY and Ontario. Each request is weighed against all the others, the need for assistance, the time factor, the distance ratio, the ability to provide sufficient singers to meet the need and myriad other considerations. Please understand that the majority of our gentlemen are employed in both the public and private sectors. They have a finite amount of time and energy to offer to their work, their families, the community and the chorus. Continue to send your requests but do understand our limitations in being able to accept each generous offer to perform. A request form is supplied by simply contacting our office.

## SPRING SEMESTER AUDITIONS

Voice placement auditions for the second semester will be held at the Unitarian Universalist Church on West Ferry on the February 14, 2006 at 6 pm. Prospective singers are welcome to attend rehearsal on February 7, 2006 at 7 pm. Ask Barb for specifics

# SAVE THESE DATES!

Friday January 20 2006 • Concert — “A Winter’s Tale” • 8pm • Unitarian Universalist Church, Elmwood Avenue at West Ferry Street

Saturday January 21 2006 • Concert — “A Winter’s Tale” • 8pm • Temple Beth Zion, 805 Delaware Avenue

Friday April 28 2006 • Concert • 8pm • Unitarian Universalist Church of Amherst, 6320 Main Street, Williamsville

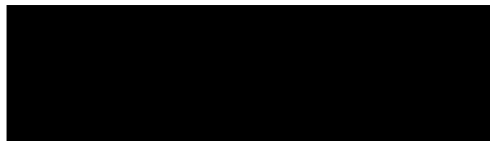
Saturday June 17 2006 • Joint Concert with the Rochester Gay Men’s Chorus • Rochester, New York

Friday June 23 2006 • Concert — “Let Us Entertain You” • 8pm • Performing Arts Center, Rockwell Hall, Buffalo State College, 1300 Elmwood Avenue

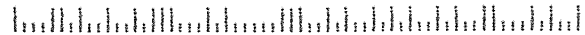
Saturday June 24 2006 • Concert — “Let Us Entertain You” • 8pm • Performing Arts Center, Rockwell Hall, Buffalo State College, 1300 Elmwood Avenue

July 12-July 20 2008 • GALA Festival VIII • Miami, Florida

**BGMC** 695 Elmwood Ave.  
Buffalo, NY 14222  
(716) 883-1277  
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Cut along dotted line and mail bottom portion with your donation 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.*

- |  |   |   |
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| <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.