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

Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus

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Winter 2007

### Crescendo!, Winter 2007

Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus

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# Crescendo!

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

Volume 5 • Issue 2  
Winter 2007

## Five years is just the beginning

by Kathleen Bryce Niles

In the world of not-for-profit arts organizations, most are gone before a fifth anniversary celebration is ever held. There are issues of finance, personnel, volunteers, interest, and fan base among others. While the BGMC has experienced most of the growing pains that come from birthing and nurturing a hopeful "major player" in an already burgeoning arts community from inception to concert ready, we have been very fortunate to have leadership committed to providing a sound foundation for longevity. With the support of many contributors, healthy ticket sales, modest corporate assistance, steady advertisers, and the loyalty of scores of singers and thousands of audience members, we are proud to note that this is just the beginning. We have successfully logged our first half decade!

Our well worded mission statement declares, *The Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus is dedicated to producing vocal music of high quality in the rich tradition of men's choral singing. We seek, through song, not only to entertain, but also to enlighten. We sing to create harmony as we celebrate pride in the community and in ourselves.*

We spend all year in rehearsals in order to present the two major concerts to Western New York that sustain our organization and make it viable in the arts community. And just as importantly, throughout the year we do the one thing that we feel keeps us grounded and in harmony with all of the people in both our larger

community of family, friends, neighbors and fellow human beings as well as keeping the trust placed in us by our smaller community of gays, lesbians, bisexual and transgendered people: we perform benefit concerts for those in need. We sing our hearts and souls out to all people and, in return, are rewarded with loyalty, respect and grace from audiences and other organizations that thank us and applaud our dedication and hard work.

There will always be a coterie of detractors, those who vociferously complain that we put "gay" in our name just to be controversial and "in your face." They could not be further from the truth. We put "gay" in our name because we feel that the proper place for gays and lesbians is out in the open air, living an honest and truthful life, not a dishonest, truncated, fearful life of hiding in a closet. We want all generations to understand that we are not ashamed of who we are and neither should any of their progeny be ashamed of who they are.

We sing beautifully because God gave us these voices to blend as one. We sing truthfully because we are Americans who are granted freedom of expression. We sing honestly because we know of no other way. We sing because we can. Please continue to "sing" with us by adding your voice to ours through your support and encouragement.



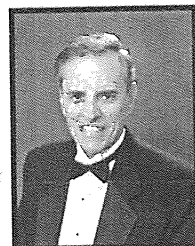
*Attention! All eyes and ears are on Barbara as she gives last minute instructions in the rehearsal room at Kleinhans.*

# President's Column

by Dennis C. Stuart, BGMC President

Do some roofing & landscaping .....

..... get 'paid' with cookies ..... join the BGMC!



That's quite a headline, isn't it? In truth, it is reality. When I meet new people and they learn that I am involved with the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus, they invariably say, "Oh - you're the guys who do those fabulous concerts." Although that is true—thanks Barb! thanks Debi!—it is only a part of the BGMC story.

Sure, we're the guys who sing and, while our auditions don't include the testing of roof repair skills and tree planting ability, we've done all that work and more. We've successfully accomplished these jobs through endless rehearsal, sacrifice, and volunteer hours spent in providing concerts to benefit other organizations in need of our gifts.

One of Buffalo's most talked about roofing jobs was the one that we did in April 2004. We filled Blessed Trinity Catholic Church on Buffalo's East Side with concert-goers and raised much needed funds to help them meet their roofing expenses. And, we helped to build houses that day, too. Part of the money raised was given to Habitat for Humanity's house building efforts.

We recently helped plant trees when we sang at Kleinhans Music Hall on November 19 at a benefit concert for the Olmsted Parks Conservancy. Additionally, we helped our community to continue to hear the beautiful music of the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra as part of the funds aided that group as well.

The BGMC was part of Buffalo's welcoming committee when we were invited to perform in honor of the visit of the Amistad Freedom Schooner at the Erie Basin Marina. We have performed in Niagara Falls to help with Community Missions and Mark's House in that community. We have assisted the University of Buffalo Dental School CARES program to provide services to those in need. Moreover, we have helped organizations

that provide services for those affected by HIV/AIDS. Our benefit concerts over these past five years make for a very long list—far too long for this space.

How do we manage to help others? Basically, all of our efforts are on the backs of our singers and volunteers. Collectively, the time of our eighty singers and non-singing volunteers over one year comes to at least 10,000 hours. And, understand this: our singers pay for the privilege of volunteering! Each member has yearly dues of \$100.

We have "sung for our supper" many times and, if the truth be known, most of the time we also sang for the cookies and cake which our hosts so generously provided at our now famous postconcert receptions. Incidentally, rumor has it that if the cause is good and the need great, the BGMC guys will go almost anywhere and sing almost anything if given gooey, sugary desserts afterward.

As the BGMC celebrates its fifth anniversary, I am proud to serve as president of this magnificent group of men and prouder still to serve an organization that "sings" with good works, generosity, and charity that benefits not just ourselves, but also our entire Western New York community as well.

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

## Crescendo!

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

Volume 5 • Issue 2 • Winter 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 2006-2007**  
President: **Dennis C. Stuart**  
Vice President: **Mike "Spike" Liska**  
Secretary: **Dave Batt**  
Treasurer: **Todd Ruth**  
Directors: **Christopher S. Babbitt,**  
**Edward N. Giannino,**  
**Michael P. Gillis, Steve Young,**  
**Tim Mahiques**

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

## Barb's Corner

by Barbara Wagner, BGMC Artistic Director

This extraordinary time of "Celebration" has brought with it countless poignant BGMC memories from the past 5+ years. I remember the interviews with the board when they were considering me for the position of artistic director. The openness and understanding on both sides was a blessing. When I asked why in the world they would want to hire a "straight old broad" like me, there was uproarious laughter. I think the miracle began for me when I truly understood why two men singing "We Kiss in a Shadow" would be unbelievably touching.

Our first concert was on February 9, 2002, as we sang to a standing room only crowd in the sanctuary of the Unitarian Universalist Church where we had rehearsed all fall and winter. Following are a few of the words I spoke to the audience that cold winter night and they still hold true, perhaps even more so than they did then.

"As most of you know, we came together for our very first rehearsal on the evening of September 11, 2001. We were stunned with shock and grief at the horror of the day's events. We touched one another, we held each other, we cried, we sang, we even laughed a little and I saw and felt the miracle of this chorus begin to unfold. We needed each other that night. (We still do.) The talent, the courage, the unbridled joyousness, the generosity and the love that is the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus has spilled over into my life like nothing else ever could. These men have stolen my heart and I know that we cannot ever keep from singing."

And so we celebrate with music on January 19 at the Unitarian Universalist Church and again on January 20 at Westminster Presbyterian Church. I love to program our concerts and this one has been no exception. We wanted to give our singers an opportunity to choose some of their all time favorite songs from the past five years, but also continue our tradition of offering you some of the greatest works from the male choral repertoire.

The first half of the program represents in song many of the values we can all honor. It's really a brand new "mini" BGMC concert filled with songs that celebrate brotherhood/sisterhood,



Barbara Wagner and JoAnn Falletta at the reception in the Mary Seaton Room at Kleinhans.

music, faith, with a powerful chant from the Russian Orthodox tradition. We celebrate love and creativity in a new piece entitled "To a Stranger" composed by our friend Marty Wimmer. Wait until you hear a gorgeous setting of "Shenandoah" and finally "You Can't Stop the Beat" from "Hairspray." The choreography is great fun!

After intermission, the trip down memory lane begins, as we sing at least one favorite from each concert, beginning with the very first concert in February 2002. These are all chorus favorites and I suspect audience favorites, too—"Non Nobis Domine," "Rhythm of Life," "Nessun Dorma," "Dirait-on," "Seasons of Love," "Our Love is Soaring Across the Land" and much more.

We celebrate ALL who have chosen to travel and continue to travel this glorious journey with us as we spread the good news of the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus and the tolerance, understanding, acceptance, and love it represents.

With much love and gratitude,

*Barb*

## Supper and a song

Save the date, Saturday, April 28, 2007

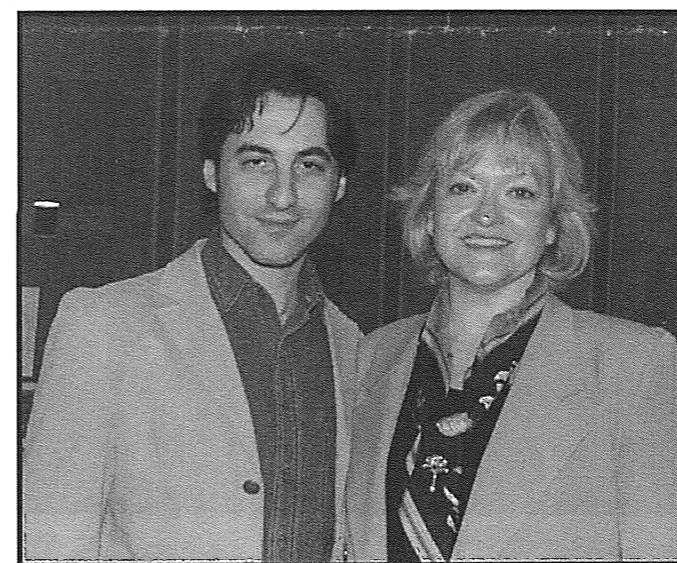
Mike Liska, vice president and chairperson of the spring 2007 BGMC fundraiser, announces a major event to both delight and entertain the WNY community.

Many BGMC members will invite guests into their homes for a special dinner filled with friends, family, and fun. A minimum tax deductible donation will benefit the operations of the chorus.

After dinner, members and their guests will gather at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 695 Elmwood Avenue at West Ferry Street, for a special event. Come, see, and hear the inner workings of the chorus by witnessing a virtual rehearsal under the direction Barbara Wagner.

This program will be the first of its kind available to the general public and promises to be the premier gala to propel us into our June concerts and beyond. A reception of fabulous desserts will follow in the Parish Hall.

Call the chorus phone at 883-1277 or visit us at [www.buffalogaymenschorus.org](http://www.buffalogaymenschorus.org) for more information.



Philippe Quint and Karen Arrison after his fabulous performance with the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra on November 19, 2006.



# In the spotlight: Mike Styn Music in the heart

interview by Kathleen Niles and photo by Roger Parris



Mike Styn, tenor II, has spent his life with music and the BGMC now reaps the rewards of such tremendous experience. Currently, Mike oversees the production of our CDs. Those who have one or more of them can appreciate the expertise that is needed to bring each one of them home to you.

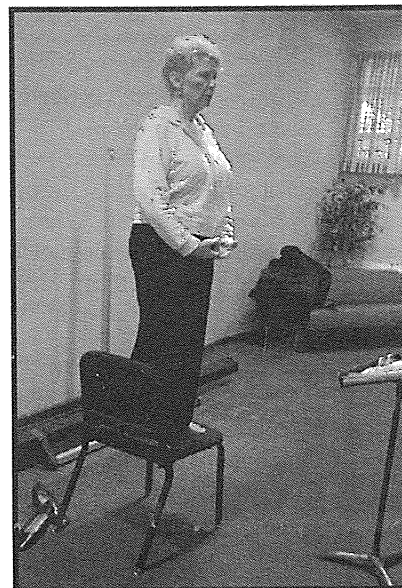
Mike was recorded at age two singing "Cruising Down the River," thus beginning his passion for collecting records for his new phonograph and setting the stage for his life work. Years of private organ lessons afforded him the confidence to play hymns in church. As a schoolboy, Mike sang in several groups at St. Leo's Elementary, St. Anne's Church, and with the Buffalo Choral Arts Society. As a youth he joined the Teen DJ program at WYSL and subsequently had shows on WNIA, WBLK, and WBEN-FM.

As Mike tells it, "I developed my recording skills when my friend Ben Freedman and I built a studio in his attic. We hired four singers and produced jingles and commercials for radio stations. There, I became proficient at mixing, processing, and overdubbing their voices to produce a rich, full sound."

Mike was hired to do a show on WECK. In time, he became the music director. Later, he developed and maintained music programming at stations in Cincinnati and Oklahoma City. His programming included: popular standards, soft rock, classic rock, and oldies formats. Additionally, he coproduced singing jingles for most of those stations.

In 1998, a desire to resume choral singing led Mike to join St. John's-Grace Episcopal Church choir where his fine tenor voice still can be heard each week. When he read the Gaywatch ad in the spring of 2001, he joyfully leapt at the opportunity to sing in a gay chorus. Thus, Mike joined the BGMC and has appeared in all ten of our concerts.

The skills, the commitment, and the heart that Mike brings to the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus makes him a very important commodity—a good friend, a competent craftsman, and a dedicated member of a very important part of the Western New York arts community. We salute Mike for all his gifts to us.



Barbara shows us how to breathe.



Barbara conducts the chorus at First Presbyterian Church.



Getting the tie just right: Michael Heaney and Bob Rose prepare for the World AIDS Day service at First Presbyterian Church.

# Violins and voices

by Lawrence Van Heusen, bass II

Most of us go to an orchestral concert and end up seeing the backside of the conductor for the duration. Fortunately, there is plenty else of visual interest: the sweeping motions of the strings, the brassy glare of the trumpets, and the mastered coordination of the percussionist who can do more instrument changes in an evening than Vicky Vogue does costume changes in a month. And then there's the music.

On November 19 the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus experienced the face of JoAnn Falletta as she conducted us and the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra. Each musical phrase transmitted through her gentle smiles, graceful arms, and omnipresent eyes the sheer emotional meaning of the music. It was something that only we, on stage at Kleinhans Music Hall, could see. It was as though we had centered on her face, been-hypnotized into our cues and our crescendos, leaving the printed pages of our music behind to soar with her through the vaulted space.

Nowhere was this more evident than in our encore piece, "Nessun Dorma." My partner, Bob Scharf, who was in the audience, said to me later, "Now, that's the way its supposed to be performed with an orchestra and full brass, just like in the opera house." Since we won't be singing at La Scala anytime soon, this may be closest we come to Puccini's intentions.

Singing with the orchestra was a delight in other ways as well. At the end of Randall Thompson's "Stopping By Woods," the final drone of the orchestral bass matched the fearful beauty of the deep woods. "Ching-A-Ring Chaw" really came fully alive for the first time for me when the racing orchestra set the pace and Aaron Copland's orchestration was fully realized. In a departure from normal maestro protocol, Ms. Falletta stepped aside to let our own Barbara Wagner conduct us, two violins and piano in Edward Elgar's lush and romantic "The Snow."

To Michael Gillis this concert must have seemed like the planets had aligned with the sun. In an amazing tour de force, the board of the Olmstead Parks Conservancy on which he serves had deftly collaborated and engaged the diverse resources needed to make this event possible. That afternoon, the chorus, the orchestra, and solo violinist Phillippe Quint, playing on an authentic Stradivarius, brought the audience to its feet and sent us those telltale goose bumps and tears of joy which signal ambient beauty. The proceeds of the concert and the art auction which followed totaled over \$40,000. These funds will be used to support the BPO and restore the park's ravaged trees and do as much as humankind can to preserve the source of all beauty: nature herself.



Michael Gillis, Karen Arrison, Olmstead Parks Conservancy trustee, and Dennis Stuart pose for the camera after the Kleinhans concert.



Scott Glaser accompanies the chorus during the World AIDS Day service at First Presbyterian Church.

# On pitch and on the go

"Busy" will have to be redefined to keep up with the chorus' ambitious fall 2006 schedule.

Erie, PA was the first gig on October 22, benefiting the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Erie and NW Pennsylvania Rural AIDS Alliance. November 4 found us at Fredonia State, helping celebrate Diversity Day. Scott Glaser, one of our new first basses, made his violin sing for us and the audience at both events as we shared old favorites, including Gabriel Faure's "Cantique de Jean Racine." Then it was off to the Adam's Mark Hotel, November 25, when we sang around their outdoor holiday tree, our voices sparkling in the chilly late autumn air. Finally, the enormous walls of First Presbyterian Church echoed with our voices on December 2 for World AIDS Day.

Busy? You better believe it! But the BGMC is always eager to entertain and enlighten audiences far and wide.





Volunteers Joe Vuich, Bryan Day and Pete Carroll sell BGMC merchandise.



Barbara visits with Father Bob Perelli before the World AIDS Day concert.



Barbara at the piano.



Suzanne Colligan, Chuck Alaimo, Ed Giannino and Mark Meyer at the reception in the Mary Seaton Room at Kleinhans.



The chorus in concert at First Presbyterian Church.

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

*Celebrate!*  
*Singing with pride*  
*since 2001*

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

buffalogaymenschorus.com

Friday January 19, 2007  
Unitarian Universalist  
Church of Buffalo  
695 Elmwood Ave.  
at West Ferry Street

Saturday January 20, 2007\*  
Westminster Presbyterian Church  
724 Delaware Ave.  
between Summer & North Streets  
\*interpreted for the hearing impaired

Artistic Director  
Barbara Wagner

Accompanist  
Debi Overton

BGMC Office  
695 Elmwood Ave.  
Buffalo, NY 14222  
716.883.1277

doors open 7pm • concert 8pm  
adults \$18 • students, seniors & disabled \$16

Tickets available from any BGMC member or by calling the BGMC Office

*Come celebrate our 5th year anniversary*



# SAVE THESE DATES!

Friday, January 5, 2007 • **Gusto at the Gallery** • 8:00 pm • Albright-Knox Art Gallery

Friday, January 19, 2007 • **Concert - "Celebrate"** • 8:00 pm • Unitarian Universalist Church,  
695 Elmwood Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14222, corner of West Ferry

Saturday, January 20, 2007 • **Concert - "Celebrate"** • 8:00 pm • Westminster Presbyterian Church,  
724 Delaware Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14209, between Summer and North Street

Saturday, March 24, 2007 • **Road Trip to Jamestown** • A benefit concert for AIDS Community Services • Jamestown Community College

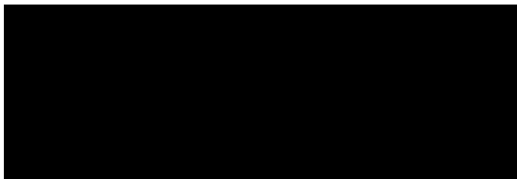
Saturday, April 28, 2007 • **The BGMC guys put "fun" back into fund-raising** [see teaser in this issue]

Friday, June 15, 2007 • **Concert - "Colors of our Lives"** • 8:00 pm • Unitarian Universalist Church,  
695 Elmwood Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14222, corner of West Ferry

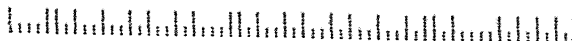
Saturday, June 16, 2007 • **Concert - "Colors of our Lives"** • 8:00 pm • First Presbyterian Church,  
One Symphony Circle, Buffalo, NY 14201, across from Kleinhans Music Hall

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

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



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Cut along dotted line and mail bottom portion with your donation.

**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"/> Virtuoso \$400 - \$999    | <input type="checkbox"/> Honorarium \$ _____        | <input type="checkbox"/> Check here if you do NOT want your name to appear in our program.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conductor \$200 - \$399   | <i>In honor of</i> _____                            |   |
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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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Please add me to the BGMC mailing list.

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