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

Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus

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Winter 2008

### Crescendo!, Winter 2008

Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus

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# Crescendo!

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

Volume 6 · Issue 2  
Winter 2008



*Used with permission*

## Vocalis to be our guests in January concerts

One of the premier musical groups in Western New York will be guests of the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus on January 25 and 26. Vocalis Chamber Choir began in September 2002 with the mission of encouraging the singing of great a cappella choral music from the Middle Ages to the present. Along with the BGMC, Vocalis is one of the contributors to the long choral tradition of Western New York.

Currently in its sixth season, the choir has performed at many venues around Buffalo, including St. Paul's Cathedral, Christ the King Seminary Chapel, St. Joseph's University Church, Blessed Sacrament Church, and Holy Trinity Lutheran Church. Consisting of 16 voices, membership consists of music educators, church musicians, and other talented professionals. Vocalis strives to achieve a uniquely intimate and moving choral experience.

The choir rehearses weekly and presents six to eight concerts a year. "New Day," their first CD, has been praised by the Buffalo News and regularly featured on WNEB-FM. The choir's 2007-2008 season includes performances throughout Western New York with music celebrating faith, love, folk and popular song, and the prose of William Shakespeare. In addition to their regular concert schedule and being our guests in January, the choir will travel to Pittsburgh in April for a concert at First Presbyterian Church.

Visit their website [www.vocalischamberchoir.org](http://www.vocalischamberchoir.org) for more information, but don't miss your chance to hear them in Buffalo on January 25 and 26.

## BGMC helps raise \$2,500 to benefit Darwin Martin House

*by Hanford Searl, Jr.*

What happens when the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus, Amherst's Ethan Allen Design Center, and Frank Lloyd Wright's Martin House Restoration Corporation join forces? Music, high-end design products, and a dedicated non-profit group come together to benefit the world's most famous architect's premier Prairie-style complex, the Darwin Martin House in North Buffalo.

About one hundred invited guests raised \$2,500 at the three-hour event on November 14. "The Martin House was Wright's Prairie-style 'Opus,'" said Mary Roberts, Restoration Corporation's executive director. "That's a great musical metaphor for this collaboration with the BGMC tonight and Ethan Allen."

About fifty-five of the BGMC's seventy voice chorus performed atop modular cubes in the conference area. Artistic director Barbara Wagner led the ten selection thirty minute program, which included songs from the chorus' repertoire and newer material from "The Proud and the Passionate" concerts to be performed January 25 and 26.

"It was a well-planned event, one of the more fun benefits we've done," said Ms. Wagner. "This is always one of the more rewarding aspects of the chorus, to help worthy causes in our community and the region."

A question and answer segment followed Ms. Roberts' twenty minute presentation on the current status of the Darwin Martin House located near the Buffalo Zoo.

According to Roberts, the initial \$7 million project has increased to \$50 million for the five structure project at 125 Jewett Parkway. So far, \$19.5 million in public funds and \$17.5 million has been invested in the restoration. A gift shop is now open and a visitor's center is planned.

The Frank Lloyd Wright complex includes the Martin House, George F. Barton House, the Martin pergola, conservatory, carriage house and Gardner's cottage. Wright's iconic "Tree of Life" art glass window is among almost four hundred others and original furniture featured. Surrounding gardens also are being restored.

*continued on page 5*

# President's Column

by G. Michael Liska, BGMC President



The year 2007 was an amazing year for the members of BGMC and its board of directors. Entering our seventh season on September 11, 2007, we took time to reflect as we planned for the year ahead. We are so thankful that the founders of the BGMC had the stamina to withstand the many challenges they faced in the early days. They launched this incredible group of talented and dedicated singers.

Many important events are planned for the upcoming season. With this in mind, our board of directors has made changes in its operational philosophy. For many years, we were strictly a working board. We have come to realize the importance of sharing the responsibilities for day-to-day operations. Our members have been invited to become more actively involved and to take on more of the challenges we face as a nine member board. By taking part in committee meetings and presenting their recommendations at our monthly board meetings, we will be more in tune with membership and board concerns.

We have a critical need for volunteers from the Western New York community to assist with the tasks involved in producing our programs, preparing mailings, arranging vendor participation to display our posters and flyers, and preparing and serving our preconcert meals for our singers and staff. Any time donated to serve the organization is greatly appreciated. If interested, please call the office phone # 716-883-1277 and speak with a representative to become more active in our group.

We have exciting news regarding ticket sales and our website. Our new extremely user friendly "buffalogaymenschorus.org" website is up and running. It offers many different options for purchasing CDs, donating funds, or buying tickets for upcoming events. New this season will be the opportunity to purchase preferred seating tickets and be assured of having a wonderful place in the front of the house. We answered the need of many of our concert goers to have the option to purchase

tickets at a premium price of \$50.00, arrive a bit later, while securing a very good view. All major credit cards are welcome in making your purchases through the ease and safety of our secured website.

Final preparations are underway for the January productions of "The Proud and the Passionate" to be performed on January 25 and 26. As usual, we will attempt to chase away your winter blues with this wonderful presentation of fine choral music.

March 1 will be the 2008 version of "Supper and a Song" with a Cabaret Night at the Unitarian Universalist Church, corner of W. Ferry and Elmwood. Last year's event was a huge success raising \$7,000.00 for the operations of the chorus. Watch the Gusto or check the website for all upcoming events.

On April 4 we will again perform at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery for Gusto at the Gallery. We look forward to this event each time we are invited.

We have just learned of a major award to be presented to the BGMC. The Buffalo Arts Council will honor the chorus with one of their most prestigious awards this coming spring. We are thrilled to be so honored.

On June 20 and 21, we will present our spring concert entitled "Connections." New and exciting music skillfully performed under the direction of Barbara Wagner will once again delight audiences.

One of the most prominent engagements we have for 2008 will be the chorus' trip to Miami, Florida, to perform at the new Carnival Center for the Performing Arts during GALA Festival VIII. We will depart Buffalo early on July 12 and arrive back in Buffalo on July 19. During this week we will experience the wonders and talents of many fine groups such as the New York City Gay Men's Chorus, Dallas' Turtle Creek Chorale, the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus, and many others from all over the world. What a fantastic opportunity for BGMC to see, sing, and be recognized by other fine choral groups which have been in existence for as long as twenty-five years! This year marks the twenty-fifth anniversary

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## Crescendo!

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

Volume 6 · Issue 2 · Winter 2008

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: **Christopher Babbitt**  
Secretary: **Jason Higbee**  
Treasurer: **William H. Gardner**  
Directors: **Dave Batt, Norm Duttweiler, Jr., Lorne E. Gretsinger, Ryan McKane, Linda Reznick**

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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)

## Barb's Corner

by Barbara Wagner, BGMC Artistic Director

Almost every morning, before I begin my day, I spend a few minutes thinking about the many things I'm grateful for - the things I'm proud and passionate about, if you will. Inevitably, my beloved BGMC singers are very near the top of the list and some days right at the top. The love, the dedication, the loyalty and the exuberant singing are amazing things to behold. Our own joys and sorrows bubble over at breaks in rehearsals, in phone calls, e-mails, even at Pano's and we're there to exult with the joyful and comfort the sorrowful among us. This young organization is most worthy of the passion and pride many of us feel.

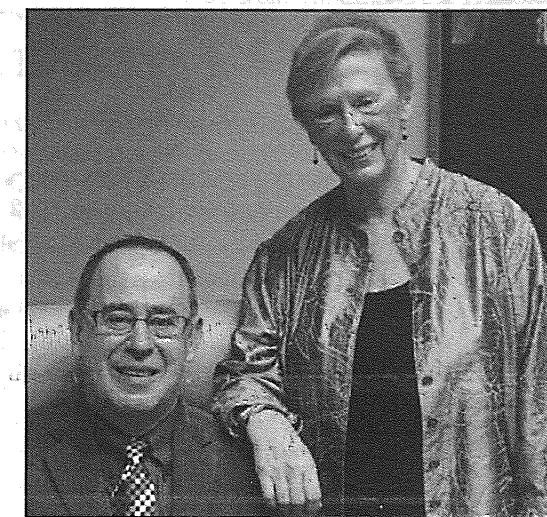
We'll be singing the music that magnifies these powerful feelings at our January concerts, "The Proud and the Passionate" on January 25 and 26. (For those of you who plan far in advance, the Spring Concerts will be held on June 20 and 21 this coming year.) The "Ave Maria" by Franz Biebl and the rapturous "Amor de mi Alma" by Z. Randall Stroope are two of the most breathtakingly beautiful songs we've ever sung. They're about two of the powerful emotions that tend to touch our lives the most deeply - our profound faith, whether it be religious or an abiding faith in humanity, and a love so deep and passionate that it transcends life. We feel privileged to be able to perform these masterpieces for you.

Johannes Brahms composed a stunning piece for mezzo soprano and men's chorus. I'm absolutely delighted to tell you that we now have a fine countertenor, Rob Szustak, singing with us. Rob will be singing the mezzo soprano solos. As you might suspect, mezzo sopranos are usually not too fond of countertenors! At my behest, Rob will be singing this gorgeous solo along with the chorus, in lieu of any of the fine female mezzos in Buffalo.

We'll also be singing the well known "Barcarolle" from "Tales of Hoffmann." Think about handsome Venetian gondoliers with fabulous voices. There is a cry for peace section, where we'll sing Stephen Stills' (of Crosby, Stills and Nash) "Find the Cost of Freedom" as well as local composer Marty Wimmer's award winning "Peace." On the lighter side, you'll hear a very silly song about alley cat love and a funky song called "Good Old A Cappella." It's time to get serious again with Rogers and Hammerstein's "We Kiss in a Shadow" from "The King and I," Billy Joel's "For the Longest Time" and the big Queen Latifah number from "Hairspray," "I Know Where I've Been."

Vocalis, the finest chamber chorale in the area, will perform on this concert with us as well. We are very proud that they and their fine conductor, Jamie Burritt, have agreed to join us.

We've been busy these past few months both organizationally and individually. The BGMC board has been working at a record pace. Russ Link has had an exhibit of his spectacular photos



Barb & Ken Slomovitz at Ethan Allen Gallery.

from the Korean War at the Karpeles Museum this past fall. Matt Mooney had one of the leads in "Italian Serenade" at the Alleyway theater, Rob Szustak appeared in Leonard Bernstein's "Mass" at St. Joseph's University Church, where our accompanist, Debi Overton, conducted the performances.

Nathan Phillips, one of our fine new tenors, received the Red Ribbon Award from the AIDS Network of Western New York for his outstanding contributions in the field of HIV and AIDS Education. A BGMC Christmas caroling group greeted people as they arrived at The Mansion on Delaware Avenue all through the month of December.

There was the Murder Mystery Night in October. It was great fun - the food, entertainment, prizes and general hilarity were well received. Many thanks to Michael Heaney and Chris Babbitt who chaired the event, with lots of help from the generous men of BGMC.

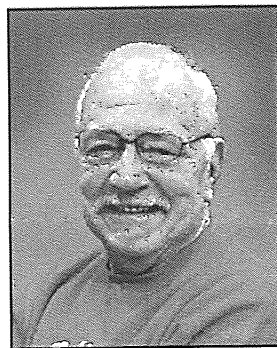
In November, the chorus sang a benefit concert for the Darwin Martin House at the Ethan Allen Furniture store on Sheridan Drive. It was a wonderful evening with at least 150 people present. It certainly was a new experience to sing among so much beautiful furniture. The folks at Ethan Allen are very civic minded as well as being very open minded. It was a delight to work with them. We were invited to have a guided tour of the Darwin Martin House by their executive director, Mary Roberts.

And so, as the New Year gets underway and we think of "families" and their importance in our lives, we thank you, our generous BGMC friends, for your support and especially your faith in our work. We wish you a happy and healthy New Year.

Barb

## In the spotlight: Russ Link

interview by Delwyn Milander and photo by Roger Parris



Born in the borough of Queens, in the great city of New York in 1932, Russ Link's life was rich and colorful even before he ever became a part of the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus. He was in the Air Force between 1950-1954 serving one year in Korea. His photos of that time have been on display at the Karpeles Museum on Porter Avenue, Michael Gillis' Elmwood Framing, and the Butler Library on the campus of Buffalo State

College. Russ taught English and theater in the Buffalo Public School system for thirty years before his retirement. A cancer survivor since 1992, Russ lives in Arlington Park with John Jubulis, his partner of 28 years. Their beautiful house is home to several feline companions: Luigie, Cali, and Frizzy.

Bill Smith, a friend of Jim Estep, invited Russ to host what might have been the first fundraiser for the BGMC. That event earned over \$1000 but it was just the beginning. Next came Russ' service on the first board of directors. He joined the chorus as a singer during the second season and never looked back. Russ has sung in every concert since and made the trip to GALA in Montreal in 2004.

"I never dreamed there would be a gay men's chorus in Buffalo," he says, "nor that I would have such a part in getting it started." Russ places great emphasis upon the leadership of Barbara Wagner. "She's the greatest, superb," are just a few of the praises Russ heaps upon our esteemed artistic director.

What is Russ' favorite piece of music? I was not surprised by his answer. "I Ain't Afraid" by Holly Near. That choice fits perfectly along side Russ' adamant position that, at its formation, the chorus should be named the Buffalo GAY Men's Chorus. He also has a fondness for "Non Nobis Domine" and the "Rhythm of Life."

Russ' devotion to the chorus shows itself in the long, long hours he spends selling ads for the concert programs and working with Robin Johnson at Vilardo Printing in seeing the final product completed. But as important as the regular concerts are, Russ believes that the pro bono work of the chorus is even more vital. The recent fundraiser for the Darwin Martin Complex at the Ethan Allen Gallery is just one example. And who will ever forget when we "raised the roof" at Blessed Trinity Roman Catholic Church on Leroy Avenue.

Now in cyberspace, Russ is even a radio personality with his own program on internet radio [www.ThinkTwiceRadio.com](http://www.ThinkTwiceRadio.com). Click on his program "Sunglasses at Midnight" where you can listen to his interview with Barbara Wagner from last December as well as his programs on gays in the military, gay marriage, and gays in politics.

Looking back over his life, Russ counts his 28 year relationship with his partner John, being a part of the chorus' beginning, and singing under Barbara's leadership as the things he cherishes most. He was deeply touched by the generous donations for the Friends of the BGMC at his 75th birthday celebration.

We of the BGMC cherish Russ' contributions to our common life as well as the joy of his friendship.

## \$1,800 raised at Murder Mystery Dinner

It was an evening to die for! Eighteen hundred dollars disappeared from various and sundry wallets, purses, and pockets last October 28 and mysteriously appeared into the coffers of the BGMC as a result of our first ever Murder Mystery Dinner.

This financial support for the chorus was a big boost for the trip to GALA in Miami this coming summer. Many, many thanks to Chris Babbitt and Michael Heaney, the event's co-chairs, who were supported by an army of volunteers working in the kitchen, serving the meal, and the seven fine actors in the murder mystery play. Thanks also to the many sponsors who donated items for the raffle.

Attention now turns to the new and improved Supper and Song II with a revised time table being planned for Saturday, March 1. It will be better than ever.

## Kudos to:

**Russ Link** - for his display of photos from the Korean War at the Karpeles Museum

**Matt Mooney** - for his lead role in "Italian Serenade" at the Alleyway Theater

**Debi Overton** - for conducting Leonard Bernstein's "Mass" at St. Joseph University Church

**Rob Szustak** - a member of the choir at the Bernstein "Mass"  
**Nathan Phillips** - receiver of the Red Ribbon award from AIDS Network of Western New York

**All the singers** who caroled at the Mansion in December  
**Michael Heaney, Chris Babbitt**, co-chairs, and all the volunteers who participated in the Murder Mystery Fundraiser

**Norm Duttweiler** - winner of one of the McCormick Awards given by Episcopal Community Services

**Barbara Wagner**, conductor, and BGMC singers **Don Behr, Dave Batt, Bill Gardner**, and **Jaime Goldfuss** who sang in the UU Choir's presentation of Bach's Kantate 131. **Shaun Doyle** is also a member of Barbara's church choir.

**John Rex** - for his part in the Artists Among Us Exhibition at the Burchfield-Penney Art Center

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

## Darwin Martin House continued from page 1

During the slide presentation, Roberts showed shots of different reconstruction phases including major repairs to the foundation, exterior and interior. Gutters alone cost \$2 million. More than 100,000 visitors are expected to visit every year.

Graycliff, the summer estate of the Darwin Martin family, also was designed by Wright. Found in Derby, NY south of Buffalo, the house is situated on several wooded acres high above the shore of Lake Erie and is also open for summer, holiday, and winter tours.

Mike Liska, president of the BGMC board of directors, shared a brief history of the chorus and its mission statement. He followed Ken Slomovitz, a managing partner of the Ethan Allen Design Center, located at 3875 Sheridan Drive near Harlem Road and the I-290. Slomovitz welcomed BGMC and invited guests.

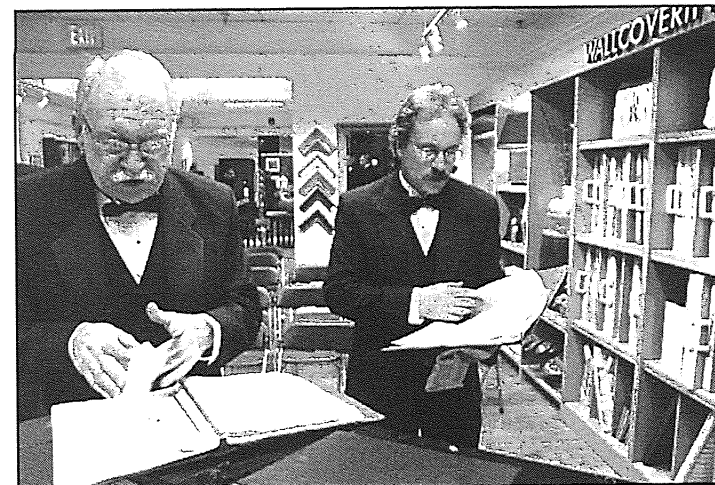
Michael Osika, an Ethan Allen partner and Martin House docent, spoke briefly after Ms. Roberts' presentation. A BGMC supporter, he originally made the 'Opus' connection between Wright's Prairie-style complex and the chorus.

"We've done many events here for groups as Buffalo Hospice, Womens and Children's Hospital as well as Kevin Guest House, the first such non-profit home in the nation for families of those in hospitals," added Osika. "This was a great tie-in for the BGMC, the Martin House, and Ethan Allen."

The BGMC has performed at many, diverse benefits in Buffalo, Western New York, and Northern Pennsylvania. These have included the Buffalo Animal Shelter, World AIDS Day Memorial Service, restoration of Blessed Trinity Roman Catholic Church, and AIDS Support Group in Erie, PA.

Food and beverages were served afterwards as BGMC singers mingled with invited guests and Ethan Allen staffers. People enjoyed walking through the design center's many separate showrooms, containing stylish furniture, and decorative pieces.

For details about tours and more information on the Darwin Martin House, visit their web site [www.darwinmartinhouse.org](http://www.darwinmartinhouse.org). or call 856-3858. For Ethan Allen Amherst, call 876-9981 or visit [www.ethanallen.com](http://www.ethanallen.com).



Andy Newbert and Vince Kuntz prepare their music before the concert.

## BGMC sings at GALA on July 14

The BGMC is off to uphold our international reputation at the largest GLBT performing arts festival in the world. Sixty-two choristers and supporters are currently registered to attend. The brand new Carnival Center for the Performing Arts just opened its doors this past fall. This state-of-the-art facility will be the home for the concert blocks for GALA Festival VIII, July 12-19, in Miami, Florida.

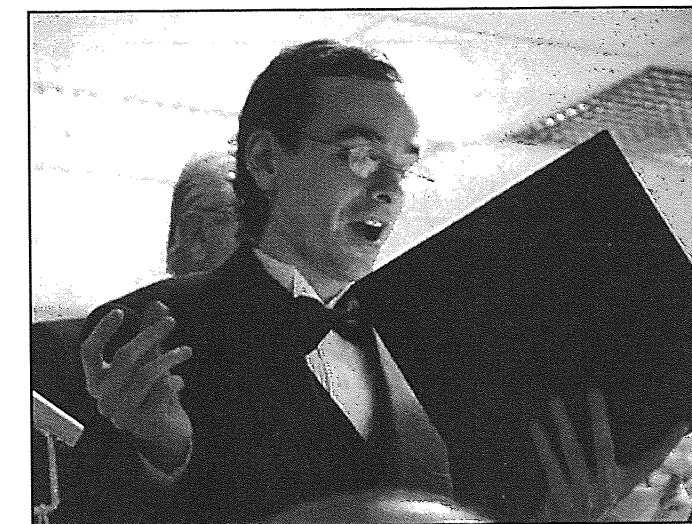
The BGMC performs its 30-minute concert block on July 14. A partial list of those who are also scheduled for July 14 are: the Boston Gay Men's Chorus (the "other BGMC"), the Heartland Men's Chorus of Kansas City, the New York City Gay Men's Chorus, and the Turtle Creek Chorale of Dallas, Texas. We'll be in some pretty impressive company.

Imagine close to one hundred fifty choruses from around the world, five thousand voices raised in song in the course of a week! Those who attended our first appearance at the GALA festival in Montreal in July 2004 know what an experience it can be. First time attendees going to Miami will bring home memories that will inspire for years to come.

A venture of this magnitude takes great financial support. Coming up:

Supper and Song II at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Buffalo on Saturday, March 1.

Information will be available on the chorus website [www.buffalogaymenschorus.org](http://www.buffalogaymenschorus.org). In addition, please visit the GALA website [www.galachoruses.org](http://www.galachoruses.org).



New singer, Cliff Moore, at his first BGMC concert.

### President's Column continued

of GALA International. Along with thousands of GLBT women and men from all over the globe, we will sing our hearts out and represent Buffalo as only the BGMC can.

Here is more exciting news for future holidays. There have been many requests for a holiday concert and a CD of beautiful seasonal music. We will answer this request in the upcoming year as we plan and work through the logistics to present these exciting events and CDs for purchase in the future.

As all can see, 2008 will be challenging and one of the most exciting, busy seasons for us. We look forward to visiting with you and we appreciate your support so we may continue our extremely important work.

Your comments and suggestions are always welcome. Please let us hear from you by calling the BGMC office. We are proud to be Buffalo's gay men's chorus and we love presenting our programs for your enjoyment.

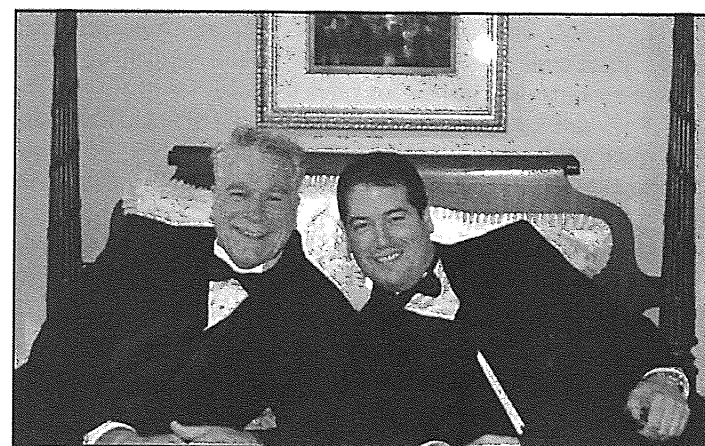
Yours in harmony, Mike Liska

## Ryan McKane joins BGMC board

Voting members of the chorus elected Ryan McKane at a special election held in December to fill the unexpired term of Tim Mahiques who resigned because of work commitments.

Tim's connection with the chorus began as a singer in the first concert February 2002. He joined the board of directors as secretary in the fall of 2004. Since then Tim put in more long hours than anyone can count promoting the sale of CDs and ads for the programs. The board selected him as vice president in the fall of 2007.

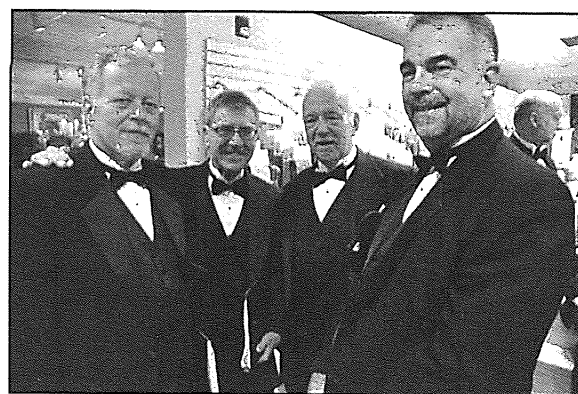
Welcome Ryan and good luck to Tim.



Mike Liska and Tim Mahiques on a bed at the Ethan Allen Gallery.



From the left, Ken Slomovitz representing Ethan Allen Galleries, Barb, Mike Liska and Mary Roberts, executive director of the Darwin Martin Restoration Corporation.



Woody Sipprell, Roger Parris, Russ Link and Bob Rose looking handsome at the Gallery.



The whole group at Ethan Allen Gallery.

All photos by Mike Longo



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)  
\*Interpreted for the hearing impaired  
adults \$18 • students, seniors & disabled \$16

Special Appearance by:



BGMC office:  
695 elmwood avenue  
buffalo, ny 14222  
716-883-1277



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

# SAVE THESE DATES!

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, Buffalo, NY 14209, between Summer and Barker

Saturday, March 1, 2008 • Supper and Song II • Unitarian Universalist Church, 695 Elmwood Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14222, corner of West Ferry

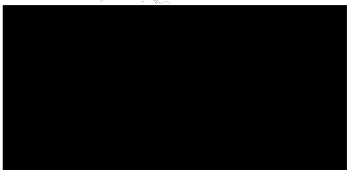
Friday, April 4, 2008 • Gusto at the Gallery • 8:00 pm • Albright-Knox Art Gallery • 1285 Elmwood Avenue, Buffalo, across from Buffalo State College

Friday, June 20, 2008 • Concert - "Connections" • 8:00 pm • Unitarian Universalist Church, 695 Elmwood Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14222, corner of West Ferry

Saturday, June 21, 2008 • Concert - "Connections" • 8:00 pm • First Presbyterian Church, One Symphony Circle, Buffalo, NY 14201, across from Kleinhans Music Hall

July 12-July 19, 2008 • GALA Festival VIII • Miami, Florida

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



14215+2002 C035

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

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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.