

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

Digital Commons at Buffalo State

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

Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus

Spring 2008

Crescendo!, Spring 2008

Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus

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



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

Recommended Citation

Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus, "Crescendo!, Spring 2008" (2008). *Crescendo! The Newsletter of the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus*. 21.

<https://digitalcommons.buffalostate.edu/bgmcnews/21>

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

Crescendo!

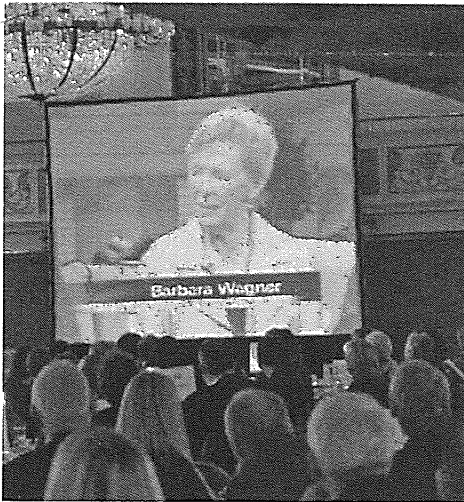
The Newsletter of
the Buffalo Gay
Men's Chorus, Inc.

Volume 6 · Issue 3
Spring 2008.

Arts Award reaffirms commitment to WNY

by Kathleen Bryce Niles

On March 14 the Arts Council in Buffalo and Erie County in conjunction with the Buffalo Niagara Partnership and M&T Bank, conferred their 2008 Outstanding Arts Award on the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus at a luncheon held at the Statler Towers Ballroom. Artistic Director Barbara Wagner accepted the award on behalf of the chorus.



This, the 22nd Annual Arts Awards, like those before, celebrated others who create, excel in and support the arts in Western New York. One of these was our good

friend and supporter, Roland E. Martin, who received the 2008 Outstanding Individual Artist Award. The BGMC commissioned Ron to write a song cycle based upon the poetry of Walt Whitman. This work, "Adamic Songs," was premiered by the chorus here in Buffalo and at the 2004 GALA Festival in Montreal.

In her acceptance, Mrs. Wagner said....

With apologies to ee cummings ----

"I thank you for this most amazing day" - congratulations to all of the award winners and to all of you who are part of the energetic,

vital arts community we are blessed to have in our town. We have a gratitude list - to our president, Spike Liska, our founders, our first board, our past presidents, our officers, our PR directors, the Unitarian Universalist Church for giving us a home, the very first group of singers who had no idea what kind of audiences we might face, our audiences and patrons who have accepted us for exactly who we are and realized that a gay men's chorus was something that our town desperately needed, to the gay community which has been with us every step of the way, to our dear friend Ron Martin, who had the talent and the courage to compose a monumental song cycle for us, the Arts Council that believes in our work, the organizations that have invited us to sing, for the stories of men and women whose lives have been changed, and validated, by the songs we sing and the lives we live. And for me, it's these brave and loving men, who have changed my life forever. They are my sons, my brothers, my teachers and my friends and I love them. Many of us have been together since our very first rehearsal six and a half years ago. We became a family quickly and now we're honored to be part of an even bigger family - A family of extraordinary artists who support one another through the good times and the challenging times. These days, when financial support is scarce, we need each other more than ever. No matter what -- We WILL prevail, for we know that civilization cannot survive without the arts.

The BGMC understands that with accolades such as this comes a renewed commitment to our community. Look forward to more major concerts and benefits designed to invigorate our mission to educate, enlighten and entertain.

BGMC welcomes the Royal Serenaders

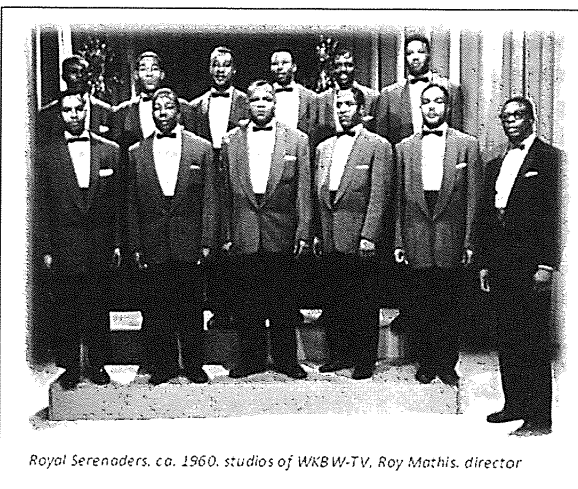
by Larry Van Heusen

The Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus is honored to have the Royal Serenaders as our guests at its spring concerts, June 20, 21, and 22.

To be able to say that you continuously conducted the same chorus in Buffalo for 62 years, you would have had to begin at age 19 and have lived to be 81. If you grew up in Chattanooga and were black, you would have had to attend a segregated high school, and your chances of even being introduced to the study of music might have been in jeopardy.

And who would have dreamed that someday you might appear as a guest

continued on page 2



Royal Serenaders, ca. 1960. studios of WKBW-TV. Roy Mathis, director

President's Column

by G. Michael Liska, BGMC President



Welcome Spring! How nice it is to go outside and feel the sun warming our winter weary bodies! While most people were comfortable staying home snuggled up under a blanket and watching their favorite shows, BGMC guys and gals have been trudging through the bad weather and storms to get to rehearsals. Our commitment to the BGMC is incredible, some traveling from as far as Jamestown, Niagara Falls, and Beamsville, Ontario each week!

The Lounge in March was a huge success with rave reviews from many of the attendees. The talents of so many of the performers were just a sample of the fun times all of the men share together on Tuesday night's rehearsals.

We are midway through rehearsals for June's concert "Connections" June 20, 21, and 22. After listening to your requests we've added a third performance. Many people have asked why we don't venture out of Buffalo. So, in addition to Friday night at the Unitarian Universalist Church and Saturday night at First Presbyterian Church, we are adding a Sunday afternoon matinee at the United Methodist Church in Williamsville.

Tickets for a special event planned for July 6 will soon be available. A knock out program featuring men's choruses from three countries has been scheduled. The

BGMC will host Schola Cantorosa from Hamburg, Germany and Forte, the Men's Chorus of Toronto. I don't think there's ever been such an international gathering of talent and entertainment in Buffalo! Details are available on the chorus website or by calling the office at 883-1277.

In addition, we will have our final fundraiser before the trip to Miami for GALA. On July 6 there will be a chicken BBQ all afternoon prior to our international concert extravaganza--Could this day get any better? Good food, great entertainment, and a once in a lifetime presentation of choral music! Proceeds will offset our expenses in Miami.

Returning home, we'll go right to work preparing for our new holiday concert entitled "Hope for the Holiday," scheduled for December 12, 13, and 14. Watch for the fall issue of Crescendo and visit the website for more details. It will be a wonderful program of holiday favorites. We'll also have a recording of this music available for sale to give as holiday gifts.

If you have any suggestions or requests that you would like to share, please feel free to contact me through the website or the chorus office. Please share your experiences of the BGMC and how we may have impacted your life.

As always, we continue to seek volunteers for a wide range of tasks. New singers are always welcome. And thank you for your generous support.

BGMC welcomes the Royal Serenaders *continued from page 1*

chorus at War Memorial Stadium for the first annual "Negro Cotillion" June 22, 1957, attended by 3,000 people? Or that you might for a time transform your chorus into the Shrine Chanters of Hadji Temple No. 61 traveling to conventions, and becoming national champions in 1981?

What were the chances of all that happening for Roy Mathis, the grandson of Mary Isabelle Matthews, an American slave?

Well, it all really happened. Roy was born in 1926, the "baby" of the family of 10 children; he was introduced to music by a dedicated teacher at his high school in Tennessee, Edmonia Simmons. When he

moved to Buffalo in 1945 he corralled his older siblings, James, Cecil, and Theodore to form the Royal Serenaders quartet, rehearsing at the piano in his sister Bertha's home. By 1947, the group expanded to six members and later to nearly 20. In its heyday in the 1960s the group was in constant demand, had its own radio show, and frequently performed multiple concerts on weekends. The archives of this illustrious chorus are currently being scanned and edited by a BGMC member for repositories at Buffalo State College and the Merriweather Public Library.

You will not want to miss the Royal Serenaders on June 20, 21, and 22.

Crescendo!

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

Volume 6 · Issue 3 · Spring 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**

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

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 develop-
ment of member choruses
through a variety of programs
and services.

For more information, visit
www.galachoruses.org

Barb's Corner

by Barbara Wagner, BGMC Artistic Director

The Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus is alive and very well. Energy, joy, determination, pride, love, success, growth, tenacity, excitement – these are all words that only just begin to describe what is going on in our award winning organization these days. Our motto this year is "Good to Great" and we're getting there faster than I ever dreamed possible.

Our January concerts were more artistically and financially successful than ever before. Shortly afterward, we received the extraordinary news that we were to be honored with one of the prestigious Arts Council Awards. We placed first again in the Art Voice 'best of' contest. Almost everyone in the chorus helped to make our very first 'Cabaret/Lounge' a huge success. We sang at *Gusto* at the Gallery on April 4.



Barb talks to the audience at *Gusto* at the Gallery.

We received the final permission for our ground breaking commission of "Yes!" (see Larry van Heusen's exciting story). The board with the approval of the men of the chorus voted to add a third performance to our upcoming June concerts and further voted to add a third concert and a third venue to each of next season's concerts. We'll be doing our very first holiday concert next season. We just passed a fine and well-balanced budget for next season.

We're working hard on our spring concert, "Connections." We'll march in the Pride Parade on June 8 and perform on the main stage. We'll be hosting Forte, the Toronto Men's Chorus, and Schola Cantorosa from Hamburg, Germany, on July 6 as we join our voices in a special GALA Send-Off Concert before we leave for Miami. Almost the entire chorus will be making the trip to join our brothers and sisters at this quadrennial event.

I must say that being part of all this energy and excitement is possibly the best thing that's ever happened to me personally and I have a feeling that many singers might say the same.

"Connections" –there are so many ways we connect with one another. In our three concerts on June 20, 21 and 22 we will be exploring many of these. We have a gorgeous arrangement of "Everything Possible," a song composed by Unitarian Universalist minister, Fred Small, to open the program on a bright note of hope and affirmation. "Yes!" the intense, magnificent setting of Harlem Renaissance poet Countee Cullen's poem "Tableau" by the renowned composer Adolphus Hailstork will be the centerpiece of the first half of the program. Surrounded

by "Make Them Hear You" and "The Storm is Passing Over," we'll take a powerful look at racism and homophobia and how we are connected and affected by it. We connect with our country with the hilarious "Color Out of Colorado." You'll need to listen carefully to this one, but it will be worth it. A more serious connection with our land comes in "Anthem" taken from the musical "Chess." It is literally about our land with its mountains and canyons and lakes.

We connect with the 80s and the terrible AIDS crises of those days with a song written by our very own heroine, Madeline Davis. Phil Sims has arranged Madeline's heart wrenching song, "Another One Down" for male voices. We will dedicate this first performance to Madeline and her legacy to all of us.

There will be much to make you laugh too – there's "Big Spender" in an arrangement written for the London Gay Men's Chorus. Imagine what the BGMC might do with "Friendship" by Cole Porter or "We Go Together" from the musical "Grease."

Then there are "Our Children." Many of our singers have children – some small and some all grown up. I've asked two of our young fathers to sing "Our Children" from "Ragtime." Whether we have biological children of our own, I bet every single one of us has been touched by a child at one time or another.

There's much more besides. So, please join us at one of our three concerts, June 20, 21, or 22, as we reflect on how we all connect, somewhere, somehow.

Barb

In the spotlight: Mike Mroczka

by Kathleen Bryce Niles



Mike and Zipper

One of the most industrious and competent gentlemen most of us will ever have the pleasure of meeting is BGMC's House Manager, Michael Mroczka. A native of North Tonawanda, he is a tried and true Western New Yorker having graduated from both Niagara Community College in accounting and Niagara University in business administration. After twenty-two years as a purchasing manager for Lawless Container, Mike's position was downsized. He let little time elapse before he leapt into a second career in real estate. For the past five years, he has been a Gold Star Award winner for Realty USA located on Niagara Falls

Boulevard in Amherst. Mike loves real estate and has plunged into this new career with the same enthusiasm as he has done throughout his entire life.

A very ambitious child, Mike started getting awards from the time he was in elementary school. He won a trip to Florida selling newspaper subscriptions. Known as both a solid worker and an excellent saver, he paid for his own class trip to Washington D.C. at age eleven. When his father told him that the family could not afford private high school, Michael told him not to worry as he planned on taking care of his own tuition. And he did.

A world traveler, Mike enjoys seeing the US as well as Europe. He enjoys getting off the well-trodden tourist routes and seeing how the people live. He especially enjoyed Cuba—a place most Americans have not seen since 1959. Mike currently travels solo save for his Norwich terrier Zipper.

Mike is a people person. He loves the camaraderie of the BGMC because he can spend time with people of similar backgrounds and interests. His conscientious manner of dealing with his clients has made it impossible to make rehearsals so he is not singing this year. However, he is not willing to abdicate his friendships and has opted to be the House Manager instead. In this role, Mike is responsible for the venues, the ushers, and the manner in which the house is filled for each BGMC performance. This is a huge responsibility as witnessed by our sold out crowds in January. It was Mike's amazing talent for dealing with individuals that allowed every person who came to the door to be seated. The audience members willingly move over to make room for just one or two more and do so because Mike has such a winning and gracious manner. He is currently at work on an usher's manual to assist others to do the same thing.

Applause all around for a top-notch fellow! The BGMC is very proud of him. Mike can be reached at mmroczka56@yahoo.com or 743-9004.



Picture used by permission

Schola Cantorosa, the gay men's chorus of Hamburg, Germany, is coming to Buffalo. They will join forces with Forte, the Toronto Men's Chorus, and the BGMC to present a GALA Send-Off Concert on July 6 preceded by a chicken barbecue. You will not want to miss this triple header at the Unitarian Universalist Church. Watch for further details.

Kudos to:

The fundraising committee: Mike Heaney, Jason Ward, Flip Taporco, and Ryan McKane for organizing the Lounge event on March 1, to Barb for accompanying, and ALL those who contributed their talent

Nathan Phillips AKA Gladys Over for organizing a fabulous "Bowl Your Balls Off" event on March 30

Paul Cassavaugh and Linda Reznick for organizing the box office for our concerts

Chorus members who sing elsewhere on Sunday mornings

The organizers of Gay Bingo for their gift to the chorus in February

Pee Lee Clark and his performers at Niagara Falls High School for their show on April 25

Paul La Duka and the cast of "Titanic" at Kenmore West High School this spring

Debi Overton and the parish choir at Calvary Episcopal Church for their performance of "Lux Aeterna" by Morten Lauridsen on May 9

Dion Johnson for heading up a group to participate in the Western New York AIDS walk on May 31

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



BGMC commissions new work for spring concerts and GALA

by Larry Van Heusen



As a part of its mission to employ the healing powers of music to bring our racially divided city together, the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus commissioned nationally recognized African-American composer, Adolphus Hailstork, to compose a musical setting to the poem, "Tableau" by Harlem Renaissance poet Countee Cullen. This choral work, re-titled "Yes!," will have its world premiere in Buffalo on June 20, 21, and 22 and at the GALA Festival in Miami on July 14.

When first contacted, Dr. Hailstork had already been commissioned to write "Rise for Freedom," an opera about the underground railroad to be produced in October 2007. Despite his busy schedule, he managed to devote the month of August to composing "Yes!" for the BGMC using the Cullen poem. BGMC has exclusive performance rights for 2008 and lifetime rights thereafter.

The BGMC is very fortunate to have been able to commission this work by one of the great composers in the United States whose operas, orchestral, and choral works have been performed in New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago for over twenty years. Artistic director, Barbara Wagner, has known "Dolph" for years. Like her, Dr. Hailstork has been a Unitarian Universalist choral director and teacher. He is currently a professor of music and Composer-in-Residence at Old Dominion University in Norfolk Virginia, where he is highly respected by Buffalo Philharmonic and Virginia Symphony Orchestra music director JoAnn Falletta.

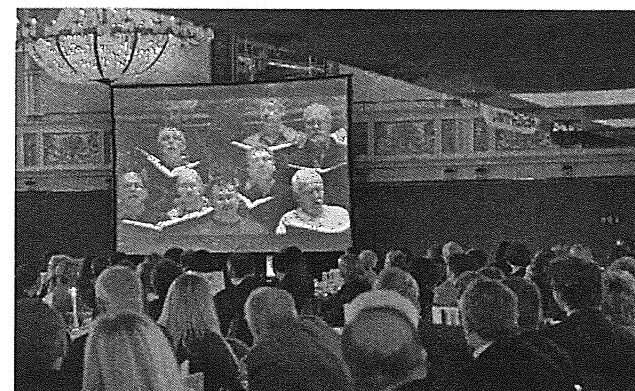
Hailstork was born in Rochester, New York, but grew up in Albany where he studied violin, piano, organ, and voice. He graduated from Howard University, received a master's degree from Manhattan School of Music, and a doctorate in music composition from Michigan State. His second and third symphonies were recorded on the Naxos label last year. Recent works have included "Earth Rise," "A Song of Healing," and "Whitman's Journey." Other premieres slated for the spring of 2008 are "Serenade" for chorus and orchestra, commissioned by Michigan State University, and "Set Me on a Rock," also for chorus and orchestra, commissioned by the Houston Choral Society.

Festival 2008

Miami is the place to be from July 12 to 19 at the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts. Over 150 choruses and ensembles are scheduled to perform during the week long Festival. Buffalo's turn comes on Monday afternoon July 14 at 4:30 p.m.



Roger Parris and Mary Kate O'Connell pose for the camera at the Arts Council Award ceremony.



The audience watches the video presentation shown during the award ceremony.



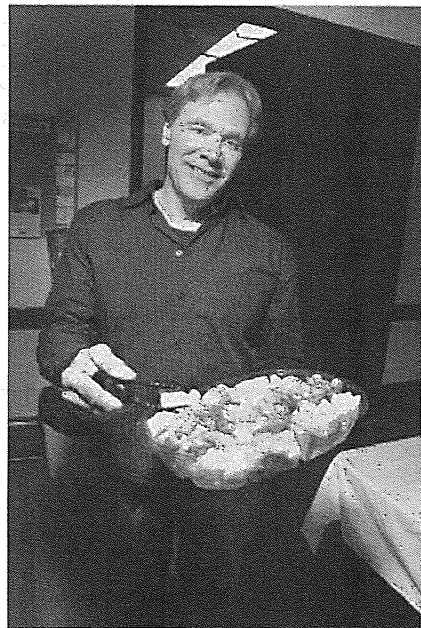
Mark Peszko and Ed Ciczek sing out at the Arts Council Award ceremony.



Pee Lee Clark shares a song at the Cabaret/Lounge fundraiser.



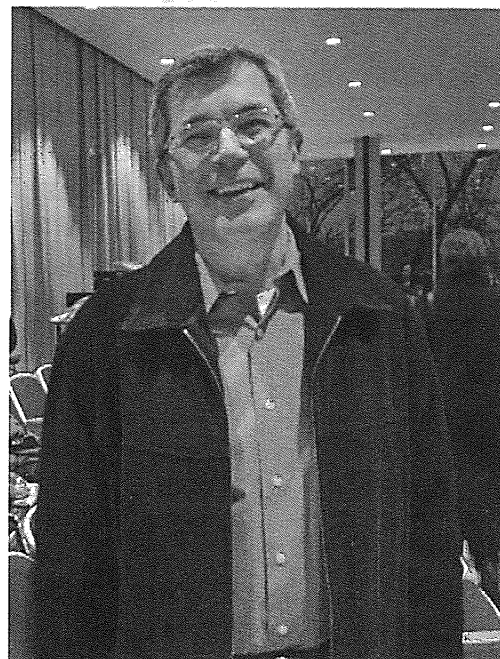
Gladys Over made a special guest appearance at the Cabaret/Lounge.



Joe Puma bringing out the goodies at the Cabaret/Lounge.



Multitalented Jason Higbee on his trumpet.



Composer and WNED personality Marty Wimmer smiles for the camera at Gusto at the Gallery.



Roland Martin and Barb Wagner share the stage at the Arts Council Awards ceremony.

All photos by Mike Longo

BGM
The Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus

presents
CONNECTIONS



Friday, June 20, 2008
Unitarian Universalist
Church of Buffalo
695 Elmwood Avenue
(at the corner of West Ferry St.)

***Saturday, June 21, 2008**
First Presbyterian Church
One Symphony Circle

***Interpreted for
hearing impaired**

3rd Concert:
Sunday, June 22, 2008
Williamsville United Methodist Church
568 I Main Street
at 4 pm

**Doors open at 7pm
Concert at 8 pm**

Special Guests:
The Royal Serenaders Male Chorus
Roy A. Mathis - Director
Joyce C. Mathis - Accompanist

**Adults \$20
Students, Seniors
& Disabled \$18**

Preferred Seating Available

Artistic Director: Barbara Wagner
Accompanist: Debi Overton

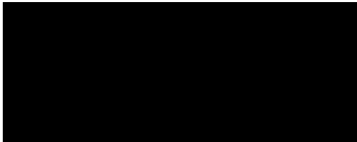
BGMC OFFICE:
695 Elmwood Avenue
Buffalo NY 14222
716.883.1277

www.buffalogaymenschorus.org

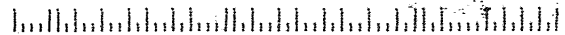
SAVE THESE DATES!

- Sunday, June 8, 2008 • **Pride Sunday Parade** • BGMC will be there • visit pride-buffalo.org for more details
- Friday, June 20, 2008 • **Concert** - "Connections" • 8:00 pm • Unitarian Universalist Church, 695 Elmwood Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14222
- Saturday, June 21, 2008 • **Concert** - "Connections" • 8:00 pm • First Presbyterian Church, One Symphony Circle, Buffalo, NY 14201
- Sunday, June 22, 2008 • **Concert** - "Connections" • 4:00 pm • United Methodist Church, 5681 Main Street, Williamsville, NY 14221
- Tuesday, June 24, 2008 • **Annual meeting and election of new board members** • BGMC members check your e-mail for venue
- Sunday, July 6, 2008 • **Chicken Barbeque and GALA Send-Off Concert** featuring the BGMC, Forte, and Schola Cantorosa • Concert at 4:00 pm
- July 12-July 19, 2008 • **GALA Festival VIII** • BGMC performs at 4:30 pm on July 14 in the Ziff Ballet Opera House, Miami, Florida
- Saturday, October 25, 2008 • **BGMC in concert at True Bethel Baptist Church**, 907 E. Ferry Street, Buffalo, NY 14211
to benefit the Men of Color Health Awareness (MOCHA) Project
- Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, December 12, 13, and 14, 2008 • **Concert** • "Hope for the Holidays" • [venues to announced]

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



1422184442 0017



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"/> 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> _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Soloist \$100 - \$199 | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Singer \$30 - \$99 | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other \$ _____ | | |

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

Name _____
Address _____
City, State, Zip +4 _____
Home telephone _____ Business Phone _____
E-Mail Address _____

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