



November 2016, Volume 34 Issue 1

Comfort and Joy — what a wonderful goal! On Friday, December 9, and Saturday, December 10, 7:30 pm at Hochstein Performance Hall, that's what we plan to bring to you. The songs range from serene to silly, from classical to contemporary, from harmonious to hysterical, and our goal is to put a smile on your face and a song in your heart.

The concert features such familiar favorites as "The Christmas Song," "Dance of the Sugar-Plum Fairy," "Winter Wonderland," and "What Child Is This?" We will also sing some chestnuts by Mozart, Handel, and Bach, and some brand new treasures, including "Recycle the Fruitcake."

The Rochettes will dance, the instruments will play, and the singers will fill the hall with their rich, sonorous voices.

Tickets are available at www.thergmc.org or by calling (585) 423-0650. Tickets can also be purchased in person at Parkleigh, Equal=Grounds, Vittorio Menswear and Tuxedo, or from RGMC members. Tickets are \$20, \$17 for seniors and students, and \$8 for children 12 and under. (Please note new pricing this year.) Season tickets are still \$45, or \$40 for seniors and students. Hochstein Performance Hall is located at 50 North Plymouth Ave.

Our 2016-17 concert season continues with diverse selections that offer something for everyone:

A NARROW BRIDGE

MARCH 18, 2017

We are honored to present this concert featuring the Rochester premiere of *Tyler's Suite*, with songs by Stephen Schwartz, Jake Heggie, and Ann Hampton Callaway, as well as a range of beloved, moving classics such as "Bridge Over Troubled Water," "The Sound of Silence," and "What a Wonderful World." Together, they speak to the need for social change, inclusion, respect, and creating a culture of kindness.

Please note that some language during this show may be inappropriate for children.

JUNE 17, 2017

They were pioneers in music and beyond, a cultural phenomenon, brilliantly excessive and seemingly fearless. They commanded the world's attention from stages and television screens with their singular sound, traversing genres to blend opera, gospel, disco, and anthem rock. Our season-finale concert will exclusively feature the music of Freddie Mercury and Queen.

Though the price of individual concert tickets has increased a bit this year to help offset our own increased costs, season tickets have remained at the same great price of \$45 (\$40 for seniors and students) — now an even better deal than ever! Secure your seats for all three concerts today at www.thergmc.org.

ADDITIONAL EVENTS

MORE THAN US 4: OUR ANNUAL FABULOUS DINNER SHOW

APRIL 29, 2017

Join us at the Historic German House for dinner, drinks, raffles, and entertainment not only from the RGMC, but from our friends across the Greater Rochester Area. Tickets for this special evening are \$55 each or \$100 for two, available at www.thergmc.org or by calling (585) 423-0650.

MISCAST

JUNE 2 AND 3, 2017

These fun, one-of-a-kind performances at Blackfriars Theatre allow RGMC members to take on roles for which they would not traditionally be cast. For tickets and more information, visit www.thergmc.org or call (585) 423-0650.

Please note: concerts begin at 7:30



6TH ANNUAL HOLIDAY TOY DRIVE

For the sixth year in a row, during our holiday concerts on December 9 and 10, we will be collecting donations of toys for the Rochester Area Interfaith Hospitality Network (RAIHN). RAIHN is a nonprofit, interfaith organization that assists homeless families to achieve sustainable independence by supporting them with tailored services, including shelter, food, personalized case management services, and a diverse network of caring volunteers. Please consider bringing a new, unwrapped toy to the concert to brighten the holidays for a local family in need.



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RGMC OUT ON THE TOWN



The Rochester Gay Men's Chorus is thrilled to continue to realize its mission statement out in the community by participating in varied and important events throughout the Greater Rochester Area.

ROCHESTER PRIDE

On Friday, July 15, we sang at the flag-raising for the opening ceremonies of ROC Pride 2016 at Cobbs Hill Park, performing "Names" and reading aloud the names of the victims of the tragedy at Pulse. We featured Pride organizer Sam Brett in our performance.

On Saturday, July 16, we marched in the Pride Parade, singing "Everybody Rejoice" from *The Wiz*. We also sang at the festival that day, singing "Everybody Rejoice," "Brave," "Make Them Hear You" from *Ragtime*, and "Seize the Day" from *Newsies*.

PUERTO RICAN FESTIVAL

On Wednesday, August 3, we were honored to participate in the Puerto Rican Festival's Peace, Prayer, and Unity event. This was another opportunity for us to perform "Names" in memory of the Orlando victims, with Sam Brett joining us again to read the names aloud.

BROCKPORT

On Saturday, October 15, we were pleased to continue our partnership with The College at Brockport, State University of New York, visiting the campus to perform "Heatwave," "Rise Like a Phoenix," "I Close My Eyes," "A-Tisket, A-Tasket," and many others.



NEW MEMBERS

A warm welcome to the newest members of the chorus! Pictured from left to right are Josh Montanaro, Bob Caruso, Jeff Elsenheimer Jr., Christopher Delgado-Charette, and Marc McCabe.



The RGMC is offering the opportunity for you to sponsor a song during any performance.

For a tax-deductible donation of \$250, sponsorship will allow you to select a song from our upcoming show and include a personalized message to be featured next to the song in the program.

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THANK YOU FOR GETTING US TO GALA

Twenty-one members of the Rochester Gay Men's Chorus traveled to Denver, Colorado, July 2-6 to give Rochester strong representation at the tenth quadrennial Gay and Lesbian Association of Choruses (GALA Choruses) Festival. In addition to performing at the festival, the group had the opportunity to network with gay and lesbian choruses from around the country — large and small, new and seasoned — swapping stories and best practices to help each other grow. It was a week of community building and deeply rooted support, much appreciated by all those in attendance.



RGMC singer Tony Jagla was moved by the feeling of “being surrounded by 6,000 people who all had the same goal — to sing and enjoy each other’s company, free from anything or anyone who tried to keep us down.”

It was a mutual sentiment. At a group dinner on the last night of the festival, RGMC Artistic Director Rob Strauss asked each member to write down three things they liked about the trip. The most common answer on those pieces of paper? Camaraderie.

Others included:

- the variety of choral sounds and music styles
- amazing performances
- exquisite venues
- seeing so many new RGMC members attend and be excited about our performance
- our partnership with transgender folks to deliver a powerful message
- the friendships made
- the humor and campiness that choruses delivered
- the variety of the workshops
- finding ideas to bring back
- feeling inspired to grow myself and our chorus
- how loving and supportive the audiences were
- cheering on other choruses
- realizing our voices and singing DO make a difference



The excitement started on day one, when the group discovered banners displayed throughout downtown Denver welcoming each chorus by name — and, of course, raced to track down the RGMC’s!

During their festival performance, the chorus was thrilled to collaborate with Lindsey Deaton, the artistic director of the Trans* Chorus of Los Angeles, who read the names of transgender people whose lives were taken by violence over the last twelve months, while the chorus sang “Names” by Rochester composer Mark Alan DeWaters. Lindsey, a trans woman herself, described the group as “the definition of true allies” to the transgender community for using their voices to give voice to her community.

The RGMC came back with a strong sense of purpose from all the performances they saw, the workshops they attended, and the friends they made from across the country and beyond. This trip reminded our chorus members and their fellow attendees of the shared power of music — to transform, to heal, to reaffirm, to unite.

Thank you to all who donated and supported our fundraisers to help make this trip a reality. We are already looking forward to GALA 2020 in Minneapolis!

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SPAGAYTTI DINNER SERVES UP SMILES

Thank you to all who joined us for dinner on Sunday, October 23. We served up around 80 plates of spaghetti, meatballs, salad, and bread. Many guests raved that the dessert table alone was worth the ticket price. The chorus's own David Curran outdid himself, presenting a creative selection of 10 delectable cakes, ranging from Get the Sensation (dark chocolate and peppermint) to Sicilian Garden (layers of lemon and basil cake, "for the adventuresome palate").

In addition to David for his time and talent, we are grateful to Barilla for donating all of the pasta and sauce, and to Wegmans for donating a gift card that was used to buy additional food and supplies.



Amazing cakes made by the RGMC's own David Curran



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FINAL WORLD AIDS DAY CONCERT

Doing the [Positive] Thing presents Rochester's 16th World AIDS Day Concert, titled "Finale." For 15 years, this concert has raised HIV/AIDS awareness in the Rochester community by bringing together community performers for a concert on World AIDS Day, December 1. The concert has raised funds for local organizations like Trillium Health, and for organizations across the world, such as an orphanage in South Africa. This is the concert's last year, and there is no admission cost.

This final concert celebrating 16 years will be held Thursday, December 1, at 7 pm, at Third Presbyterian Church, 4 Meigs Street in Rochester.



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RGMC HONORED WITH LGBT GIVING CIRCLE GRANT

Thanks to the work of RGMC Grant Writer Kristen Kessler, we have received a generous \$2,000 grant from the LGBT Giving Circle through the Rochester Area Community Foundation, to support our production and performance of *Tyler's Suite* during our March 18 concert. Artistic Director Rob Strauss and Board Chairman Ted Smith will attend the Grant Presentation Program on November 17 to formally accept the grant award.

The Giving Circle's motto, "Cultivating a better community for all," is a perfect fit with the message of *Tyler's Suite* and our March concert as a whole, as we seek to inspire social change, inclusion, respect, and a culture of kindness. We are deeply grateful for this support.

SUPPORT THE RGMC WHILE YOU SHOP

Did you know you can support the chorus by shopping on amazon.com? The Amazon Smile program allows you to select a nonprofit organization that will receive a percentage of sales. Just go to smile.amazon.com, designate Rochester Gay Men's Chorus Inc. as your organization of choice, and then shop as you normally would!

Whenever you shop through Amazon, be sure to start your browsing at smile.amazon.com in order for your purchase to benefit the chorus. As always, we thank you for your support!



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KEYNOTES is the official newsletter of the Rochester Gay Men's Chorus and is published three times a year. The RGMC is solely responsible for its editorial content.

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MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: NEKA ZIMMERMAN



Neka Zimmerman wouldn't say it was a given that he was going to join a chorus. In fact, he might not sound, at first, like the chorus-seeking type: "I'm not one who seeks out music in my life all that often, and I don't get a lot of inherent enjoyment from it," he says. "I always tell people it's because there's just music playing in my

head all the time, so why would I listen to anything else?"

With that said, Neka has long been active in the queer and trans community in Rochester and was familiar with the RGMC. He attended the holiday concert in December 2014 and decided to take a leap and join a little while later, in January 2016. He has enjoyed bringing some "active creation of music" into his life, rather than just keeping songs in his head.

In addition to the music making, he finds the RGMC to be a great social outlet, providing inspiring bonds he hadn't often found before. "I really enjoy getting to know people in the chorus, people who I probably wouldn't have interacted with otherwise. Especially having the opportunity to meet and interact with queer and gay men from older generations," says Neka. "I didn't have the opportunity to meet or interact with anybody queer as a child or have older queer role models. It's super awesome to be able to

interact with other queer men who have experienced a lot more than me."

That camaraderie and sage guidance are of particular benefit to Neka, who has an important story of his own to share — one that hasn't always been met with acceptance: "I am transgender and a trans man. I think it's really important to share that in the context of being in the gay men's chorus. Historically single-gender spaces can sometimes be harrowing for trans people. After visiting with my parents, who, sadly, aren't particularly interested in embracing me as their son, it's always good to come back here and come back to chorus. Being a member of the chorus has deepened my sense of feeling at home in Rochester."

Neka has found other niches in Rochester as well: he performs as an aerial artist, which he's found to be a great athletic outlet for someone never interested in team sports. And he is working on becoming a certified teaching assistant, currently working as a teacher's aide for students with developmental disabilities. He's found the RGMC has helped him feel more at home along this career path, too, with many other male teachers in the group.

For someone who doesn't typically seek out music, it sure seems fortuitous that Neka found his way to the RGMC, to new connections and acceptance of all that he has to offer.



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