

KEYNOTES

ROCHESTER GAY MEN'S CHORUS

November 2015, Volume 5 Issue 4

UNDERNEATH THE TREE

The Rochester Gay Men's Chorus presents *Underneath the Tree* on Friday, December 11 and Saturday, December 12 at 8 pm in Hochstein Performance Hall.

The chorus will be joined by the **Genesee Valley Children's Choir** and the **Flower City Pride Band**.

There is something wonderful about childhood — the willingness to ask questions instead of making assumptions, the ability to accept everybody without bias or prejudice, the capacity for hope. This holiday season we will celebrate our childhood memories of the holidays and our joy in sharing the holidays with our own children and grandchildren. We also celebrate our ability to celebrate as we want to, honoring traditions and creating our own.

Underneath the Tree will have you tapping your feet, singing along, and sharing smiles and laughter with us as we sing "The Chipmunk Song," "Suzy Snowflake," "Little Saint Nick," and many other favorites. We'll

also feature the Genesee Valley Children's Choir as they share some of their own showstoppers, and as they collaborate with us on "Ding Dong! Merrily on High" and "The Weaver" (a piece commissioned by the Heartland Men's Chorus for their concert *Modern Families*, which featured the Lawrence Children's Choir). The Flower City Pride Band returns to our stage to help get us all in the spirit by taking part in our traditional sing-along, as well as serenading you before and after the concert.

Tickets are available at www.thergmc.org or by calling (585) 423-0650. Tickets can also be purchased in person at Parkleigh, Outlandish, Equal=Grounds, Vittorio Menswear and Tuxedo, or from RGMC members. Ticket prices are \$6 for children under 12; \$14 for students and seniors in advance (\$17 at the door); and \$17 for adults in advance (\$20 at the door).

Hochstein Performance Hall is located at 50 North Plymouth Ave.

LIZ CALLAWAY AND THE RGMC ROCKED THE HOUSE!



Broadway star Liz Callaway performed with the RGMC on June 20 and brought the house down with several standing ovations.

Highlights included "I'm Gonna Wash That Man Right Out-a My Hair" (*South Pacific*), "Colors of the Wind" (*Pochoantas*), "Memory" (*Cats*), "Meadowlark" (*The Baker's Wife*), "People" (*Funny Girl*), "Downtown" and "Let the River Run" (*Working Girl*). The evening ended with Ms. Callaway singing "The Story Goes On," from the 1983 Broadway musical *Baby* with the chorus and orchestra led by Dr. Robert Strauss.

Thanks to all who came to June's performance, and to our

corporate sponsors who helped us bring Liz to Rochester:

Blackfriars Theatre, The Strathallan Hotel, Doubletree by Hilton and Pour Coffee Parlor.

Other thanks to Asbury First United Methodist Church, Amy Dodge, Julia Figueras, Casey Gray, Robert Hammond (host of WXXI's "Stage Notes"), Danny Hoskins, The LGBT Giving Circle, Cristin Monahan, Jenny Muhl, Julia Ng (Eastman School of Music Concert Office), Elena Oyer (VisitRochester), Rick Porlier, Allen Shannon (Nazareth College Theatre Department), James Welch, Julia Lynn Weston, and Jeff Wilson.

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On December 1, 2015, Rochester will come together to **ROC the Day**, and we need you to join us. The annual event marks 24 hours of unprecedented community giving. And, it's your chance to make a real difference right here in the Greater Rochester region.

Join us in supporting our community and **ROC the Day** on December 1, 2015. Find out more and commit to give at roctheday.org/rochestergaymenschorus.

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RGMC OUT ON THE TOWN

The Rochester Gay Men's Chorus is thrilled to be able to continue to realize its mission statement out in the community by performing at varied and important events in and out of Rochester.

On Friday, June 5 at Blackfriars Theatre, members of the Rochester Gay Men's Chorus joined Broadway royalty like Laura Benanti, Jeremy Jordan, Christian Borle, Jonathan Groff, and Raul Esparza when they put on their own *MISCAST*. Hosted by Artistic Director Robert Strauss (who sang his very best Glinda), several of our talented singers took on signature numbers of roles they just wouldn't play in traditional stagings of those shows.

Rob Burch-Lau, Colin Coffey, David Curran, Michael Fagan, Ray FeDora, Eric Jacobson, Dion Johnson, Tim McGuckin, Brian Meacham, Tony Rizzo, Dennis Rosenbaum, and Tim Stuff all "tread the boards" singing songs from *Aida*, *Chicago*, *A Chorus Line*, *Guys & Dolls*, *Hairspray*, *Homemade Fusion*, *The Last Five Years*, *The Mikado*, *Monty Python's Spamalot*, *Oliver!*, and *My Fair Lady*. Special thanks to assistant director Katie Keating, who helped the guys polish their performances, to stage manager Ted Smith, to lighting designer James Campbell, to guest audition panelist Don Kot (Geva) and especially to Danny Hoskins (Artistic Director) and Dawn Sargent (Board Chair) of Blackfriars Theatre for their help in making the event a great success.

Ticket proceeds went to the "Get Me to GALA" fund, as the RGMC prepares to head to Denver for the 2016 GALA Choruses Festival. To find out more about the Festival, visit www.thergmc.org.

On Friday, June 26, the LGBTQ community gathered in front of the Bachelor Forum to celebrate the historic Supreme Court decision regarding Marriage Equality. We led the group in a rendition of "America, the Beautiful" and sang "Chapel of Love." Special thanks to Anne Tischer and Rochester-Finger Lakes Chapter of Marriage Equality New York for inviting us.

On Saturday, July 18, the Rochester Gay Men's Chorus sang and marched in the Pride Parade, and then sang at the Festival at Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Park afterward. Highlights included "Dancing Queen," "Downtown," and "Let the River Run." We were thrilled to be a part of such a large Pride celebration this year!

For Asbury First United Methodist Church's second annual Tent Week, they knew they had to invite the Rochester Gay Men's

Chorus back to help them celebrate Under the Tent with the Beatles. **On Tuesday, August 4**, the RGMC closed out the event, which started with area performers presenting several of their favorite Beatles tunes. The RGMC sang highlights from their last several seasons, including "What Makes You Beautiful" and "Can't Help Fallin' in Love," as well as leading a sing-along of some of our favorite Beatles tunes.

On Friday, October 23, we returned to the campus of The College at Brockport to engage with the students of SOUL (Sexual Orientations United for Liberation) and other audience members. We performed a program of hits like "Lay All Your Love on Me," "If You Only Knew," and "No Day but Today" from *Rent*, featured solos by members from last June's *MISCAST*, and previewed a couple songs from *Underneath the Tree*.

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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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A Message from the Board Chair

In September 2013, I joined the Rochester Gay Men's Chorus after returning home to the area. I never dreamed I would be given the honor of leading the RGMC's Board of Directors as their Chair and being a part of such a wonderful organization.

The Board of Directors of the RGMC is composed of 11 community and chorus members who volunteer their time and dedication to the growth, success, and development of the chorus. As a group, the board works together on the financial

development and successful future of the RGMC. We are currently engaged in a three-year strategic planning process focused on that success and growth. As individuals, we represent the chorus in our community, with our coworkers, family and friends, and organizations we are involved with.

Most importantly, the Board of Directors serves the chorus. Any board or chorus member will tell you that one of my oft repeated sayings is, "The board is here to serve the chorus. Without a chorus, there is no need for a board." It's something I firmly believe in. I believe in the great work of the chorus in its 33rd season. I am inspired by the commitment and dedication of our members, staff, and volunteers. I am humbled by the service our board members provide to keep the Rochester Gay Men's Chorus growing and expanding.

The RGMC Board of Directors includes myself, Colin Coffey (Treasurer), Ray FeDora, Todd Gustafson, Tony Jagla, Michael Lill (Vice-Chair), Dan McCarthy (Secretary), Cristin Monahan, Larry Quinsland, Anthony Rizzo, and Bill Soudan. On their behalf, and on behalf of the chorus, thank you for your continued support of this fine singing institution.

—Ted Smith, Chairman, RGMC Board of Directors

RGMC Alumni Organization

An alumni organization for the RGMC? You asked. We listened. The board said, "Hell yes!"

Over the years, RGMC members, former members, and our audiences have been asking for the creation of an alumni organization: a way for past chorines, guest performers, and volunteers to keep connected and to help the RGMC grow and continue our mission for future generations.

The alumni committee is hard at work establishing a vibrant alumni organization. Since September 2014, we have:

- Participated in the Pride Picnic to increase visibility
- Hosted three open brunch events inviting all potential alumni to come and reconnect — including a pre-concert scoop from our Artistic Director via conference call
- Printed and distributed over 300 flyers with information about the alumni organization and events
- Advertised alumni events in *The Empty Closet*
- Set up a Facebook page for RGMC alumni
- Recruited a new RGMC board member with extensive experience in alumni organizations, as the liaison for our alumni group: Cristin Monahan
- Submitted plans for an alumni section to be added to our website as part of an online revitalization of RGMC's presence
- Received an unsolicited donation of \$100 from an out-of-state alumnus who loved the idea of an alumni organization and wants to support this idea from afar
- Laid the groundwork for a Legacy Giving Program enabling alumni, as well as audience members, to use estate planning to help continue the vital work of RGMC for future generations — headed up by our Board Director, Todd Gustafson, Esq., an attorney specializing in this area of law

Our mission, "Promoting Choral Excellence Through Social Change," continues to serve as a compass for our future.

While many legal obstacles have been overcome in recent years, Trans* people still lack basic legal rights in New York State. This needs to change. For all generations of lesbians, gay men, and bisexual and Trans* people, social stigma, family rejection, and employment and housing discrimination are still a reality. Our increasing visibility, and our affirmation and support of LGBT communities, from our immediate local communities to our global community, remain critical to saving lives. Choruses save lives.

The Board and the Alumni Group encourage you to connect and support our mission; it is as relevant today as it was when RGMC was founded in 1982. Connect with us on Facebook ("Rochester Gay Men's Chorus Alumni") and with our Alumni Liaison, Cristin Monahan, at alumni@thergmc.org.

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5TH ANNUAL HOLIDAY TOY DRIVE

The RGMC is pleased to help bring joy to children's lives this holiday season with our fifth annual Holiday Toy Drive. Once again we will be teaming up with Downtown Presbyterian Church who will be distributing the toys to deserving families in the Rochester community. If you would like to take part in this worthy cause, please bring an unwrapped toy to RGMC's Holiday Concert "Underneath The Tree" on Friday, December 11 or Saturday, December 12 at 8 pm at the Hochstein



Performance Hall. Every gift makes a difference, and we thank you for your sense of charity during this giving season!

BARNES & NOBLE BOOKFAIR

On **Monday, December 14, 2015**, RGMC will have an informational table set up in the Barnes & Noble in Pittsford Plaza to help spread the word about the chorus, with a percentage of in-store sales that day being donated to support our GALA trip to Denver.



You can support the fundraiser by shopping at *any* Barnes & Noble store (excluding college bookstores) on December 14, or online at **BN.COM/bookfairs** December 14–19! Use Bookfair ID **11729100** at checkout.

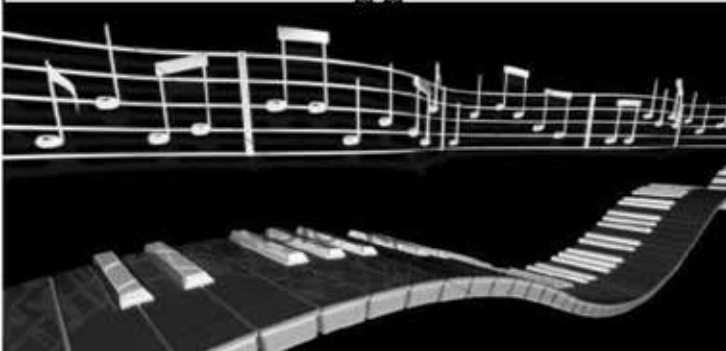
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The majority of operating funds for non-profit organizations come from individuals. Your tax-deductible contribution helps pay the cost of concert production, office management and future development. We are grateful for your previous heartfelt gifts and look forward to your continued support. The RGMC would like to recognize those individuals who have contributed financially during the past year.

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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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KEYNOTES MEMBER OF THE MONTH



Twenty-nine years ago Dennis Rosenbaum added some "letters" to his life — in June of 1986 he earned his MBA and then in September he joined RGMC.

Since his graduation, Dennis has continued to use his business skills in financial analysis positions at Xerox and other corporations in Rochester, and his musical skills in a variety of Rochester's community choruses. His current position as Arts Administrator for the Rochester Oratorio Society combines both aspects

of his education, as has his participation in RGMC, where he has served as treasurer in the past and has put his composing and arranging skills to good use.

"Rochester Gay Men's Chorus has a way of bringing men together with two commonalities, not only being gay but also the love of singing," Rosenbaum said. "I enjoy the chorus very much. We perform some interesting music, many pieces I wouldn't be singing otherwise. And that can be exciting." Dennis said he is pleased with the current direction of the chorus: "Rob has had a fresh approach and I like where he has taken us."

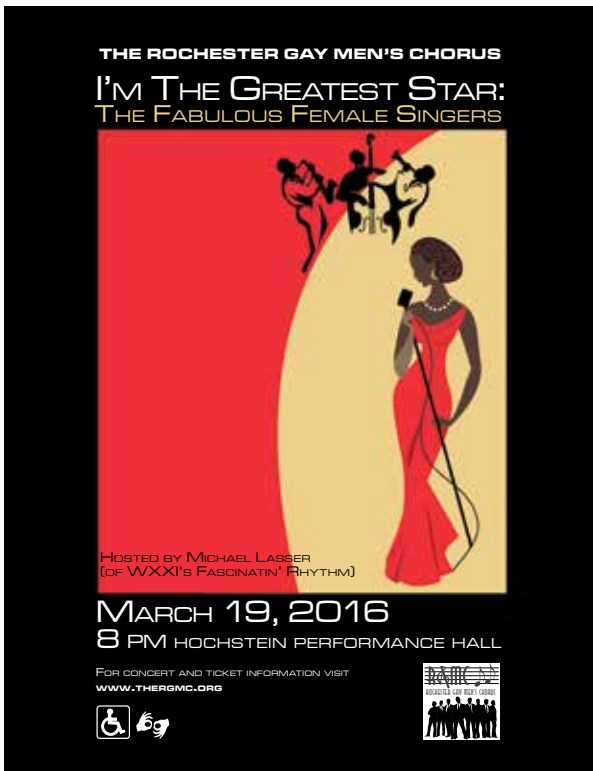
RGMC has been a big part of Dennis's world for most of his adult life. When he and his late husband, Stanley, were married in 1993, the chorus sang at their wedding. Member Peter House was one of their attendants and was also with Dennis when Stanley died on New Year's Eve 1996. Other friendships he has forged through the chorus include Steve Randell, Rob Keefe, and Ted Smith.



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In the last century, there were female singers who had the drive to break free and succeed in a society which discriminated against them. The LGBTQ community connected with these women: we longed for the same things they longed for, and they continue to be a fascination. With narration by WXXI's Michael Lasser, we'll sing songs by Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holiday, Barbra Streisand, Judy Garland, and many more.



For the final concert of our 2015-2016 season, we're going to premiere a brand new theatrical work written specifically for the Rochester Gay Men's Chorus! What will the plot be? Who will be in it? Watch this space to find out. The chorus will also include other related works as we give you a preview of what we'll be singing and sharing at the GALA Choruses Festival 2016 in Denver, Colorado.