

Keynotes

NOVEMBER 2011

THE ROCHESTER GAY MEN'S CHORUS



Christmas songs past to present.

The Rochester Gay Men's Chorus is presenting its first concert of the new season, *A Holiday Song Book*, at 8 pm on December 2 and 3, Friday and Saturday, at the historic Hochstein Performance Hall, 50 North Plymouth Avenue in beautiful downtown Rochester.

Everyone has a favorite holiday song and we'd like to share ours with you! Our Holiday Song Book features tunes to invoke fond memories from Christmas past to present. Do you remember when the words "Make the yuletide gay" found a special place in your heart? Join us for a magical evening of musical reminiscing as we help kick-off the holiday season for you and yours.

Further information is available at www.thergmc.org.

Tickets can be purchased at Parkleigh, Outlandish, The Creator's Hands, Equal=Grounds, at www.thergmc.org or by calling (585) 423-0650.

Guest performers

by Robert Strauss

The RGMC has a long history of inviting local and guests performers to share the stage with us — from other gay men's choruses, to drag performers, to narrators and guest singers. We are thrilled to be able to continue that tradition



Kathryn Cowdrick

this cycle when we will be joined by **Kathryn Cowdrick** and **Benton Hess**, both members of Eastman School of Music Voice Faculty. Cowdrick and Hess will



Benton Hess

perform together several songs, and Cowdrick will solo with the chorus on two pieces for our *A Holiday Song Book* concerts in December.

Ms. Cowdrick is one of those rare individuals who has been able to

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continue to work as both a performer and teacher. She is also a well-respected master class clinician for both performance and healthy pedagogy, frequently giving master classes to universities and apprentice artist programs on vocal health for singers, performance pedagogy and vocal health issues for music educators. As a singer, *Opera News* has described her “as an artist who brightly infuses every scene with her singing, dazzling fioratura, and her sexy, warm, comedic personality;” a remark which seems to convey the essence of this charismatic mezzo-soprano. Of a performance with Chautauqua Opera, it was said that “mezzo Kathryn Cowdrick wore the pants in more ways than one; her every gesture and utterance bespoke superior control and artistry.”

Maestro Hess, whose composition *Sonnet XXIX* was premiered by the chorus in 2009, holds the title Distinguished Professor of Voice and Musical Director of the Opera Theatre at the Eastman School of Music. In addition to his work with Mercury Opera Rochester, the International Vocal Arts Institute (Tel Aviv, Israel) and the Vianden Festival (Vianden, Luxembourg), he runs an annual Italian language program for young singers, *Si parla, si canta*. Benton Hess is one of the country’s most sought-after vocal coach/accompanists, and the list of singers with whom he has collaborated reads like a “Who’s Who” in modern opera, from Nicolai Gedda and Eleanor Steber, at the ends of their careers, to Rochester



Photos by Gelfand-Piper



native Renée Fleming, at the beginning of hers.

In addition to performing with us for our December concert, the duo has agreed to reprise a performance they have recorded for Albany Records, Lee Hoiby’s *Bon Appetit*, as a benefit for the Rochester Gay Men’s Chorus. The work, composed for Jean Stapleton (*All in the Family*), is a musical setting of an episode of Julia Child’s television show, in which Ms. Child bakes a chocolate cake. Infused with personality and aplomb Ms. Cowdrick had the great honor of performing it for Julia Child’s induction into the National Women’s Hall of Fame in 2007. Exact details about the location and date of the benefit are yet to be arranged, but the wig and the kitchen set have been secured!

We know you will enjoy hearing both Kathryn and Benton as they join us onstage this December!

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Portfolio:
www.sprousephotographic.com

CHORUS MEMBER SPOTLIGHT IS ON KENNAN BECKSTRAND



Kennan Beckstrand was born and raised in Price, Utah and graduated from Carbon High School in 1975. He served as a missionary for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in Japan for two years. Upon returning home, he attended Brigham Young University where he received four Bachelor's degrees – art, Japanese, Elementary

Education and Special Education.

Kennan met and married his wife when he was in university and began a family. He has three sons and two daughters-in-law. After teaching elementary school, he received a Fulbright Scholarship and moved his family to Japan where he lived for 12 years and taught in military base schools. There he learned massage therapy, Ikebana (Japanese flower arranging), and Bonsai.

After returning to the US, he received his Master's and his Ph.D. in brain research from San Diego State. He returned to Utah and worked in educational administration until 4 years ago when he was forced out of the closet and began living a life of integrity and honesty. He is not bitter. He is better.

Kennan moved to Rochester last February to become Dean at Bryant and Stratton College. He misses his family and friends in Utah, but is proud to be an adopted New Yorker.

Kennan is single and lives in Gates with his two rescued dogs, Gordon and Ai-chan. He speaks fluent Japanese and enjoys painting and sketching, Ikebana, Bonsai, massage, traveling, swimming and playing his bagpipes.

He attended his first RGMC concert in March and answered the call to join. The chorus has given him new friends and family in Rochester. He looks forward to Thursday rehearsals and fellowship as well as a long and happy future as a RGMC chorine.

So do we!!!

DONOR SPOTLIGHT IS ON JOHN YAVONDITTE



John Yavonditte was born and grew up in Albany, New York. His mom was a World War II war bride from Italy where his dad met her and they married. His parents moved to Albany after the war to be near to his dad's family, where both John and his sister, Connie, were born.

John attended Catholic schools from kindergarten through high school. During this time he

developed a love for music after he picked up his first \$79 guitar in 1962.

After high school John worked for 4 years and then attended Hudson Community College where he majored in math and science. After working at Albany Memorial Hospital for 2 years, he got a call from a friend who was a musician and encouraged him to pursue a musical career. He played in a local band for 15 years performing in nightclubs, parties and weddings. He spent several years traveling around the east coast from Florida to New Hampshire both singing and playing bass guitar. During this time John worked for 10 years at two alarm companies which gave him electrical experience which led to a job at Xerox as a copier repairman. A job promotion brought him to Rochester in 1994.

A chance conversation with a friend brought him to RGMC. He joined the chorus in 1999 and plays bass guitar and acoustic guitar when needed, as well as sings. John has been on the Board of Directors serving as treasurer, and organized the first RGMC website development committee.

John loves to watch old movies and is a Star Trek fan. He loves electronics and technology and is blessed with a life partner of 32 years, Thom Hutchison.

In John's words... "Having been a member of the RGMC for over 12 years now, I know the tremendous satisfaction and pleasure singing and performing has given me personally. I see every week at rehearsal the loving efforts that everyone puts in to ultimately make a polished and professional performance. I know that every dollar that is donated to the RGMC is used to make that performance even more memorable – whether it be new costumes, set designs, guest performers or musicians. Because I'm on the inside, I know what goes in to make the performance the audience sees the best it can be. For all these reasons, it is important for me continue to support the chorus financially – so that we can keep giving the gift of music for many years to come!"

John is happy and proud to be affiliated with RGMC and looks forward to his continuing relationship with the chorus for many years.

We do too!!!

Marriage Equality Rally

Summer 2011 will go down as one of the most exciting and positive moments in Rochester and New York State LGBT&A history. The RGMC was there for every minute, and had a great time too.

On the heels of a successful RGMC fundraiser, *On the Roof at One*, and our spring concert, *Walking on Sunshine*, the commencement of summer was at hand. A concerted push for equality in Albany was also at hand, and many of us were on the edge of our seats as we awaited the vote — and then the vote — and then the signature. The LGBT&A community was never on the sidelines; we were ready to celebrate.

On Friday, June 24, 2011 Governor **Andrew Cuomo** signed into law the right of gay couples to marry in NY.

By noon the next day, Washington Square Park was bustling with joy. Together with the Rochester Women's Community Chorus, the RGMC performed a few special songs. Attendees also got to hear inspiring words from local leaders. Thank you to Marriage Equality New York and Equality Rochester for planning the celebration.

Pride

"It's a Gay World After All" was the theme of Rochester Pride 2011. The RGMC was gayer than *Glee* at Rochester's 22nd annual Gay Pride Parade on Saturday, July 16. The chorus performed *Chapel of Love* and *It's a Sunshine Day* while the Rochettes danced to *Say Hey (I Love You)* as the parade made its way down Park Ave and Goodman Street before ending at the Pride Festival behind GAGV headquarters.

Crowds along the entire parade route were smiling and dancing in the street as the RGMC sang *Chapel of Love*, which seemed to have become the unofficial anthem of Pride 2011. The chorus was pleasantly surprised when they won the Community Award for their participation as a not-for-profit walking unit. Each year the award is given to the group which best exhibits community pride.

The chorus also gathered together at the Pride Picnic celebration at Genesee Valley Park on Sunday July 17. Special thanks goes to **Jeffrey Greene** and **Sharri Donofrio** for organizing the site, which ended up winning the RGMC Third Place in the Proudest Picnic Site contest, sponsored by the GAGV. Plans are already in the works to try for first place at next year's picnic.

September 11

The RGMC brought the gift of song to the ceremony held at Monroe Community College's September 11 Remembrance Walk on the tenth anniversary of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

The monument was erected and opened to the public on September 11, 2002 and is located next to the Stadium on MCC's Brighton Campus. Positioned ever so carefully, the two voids in the monolithic wall, with the skyline of New York surrounding them, allow beams of sunlight to cast their rays upon two white stones inlaid outward into the round base of the monument like a sun dial, each anniversary at precisely 8:46 a.m.

The MCC Student Government Association has organized the event to commemorate the touchstone of our nation's social fabric each year since 2002. This year, on the tenth anniversary of the attacks, the RGMC was invited to open the ceremony with *America the Beautiful*. As community leaders, students and citizens placed carnations and American flags at the base of the monument and gathered round its base, the chorus stirred the deepest of emotions with a superb rendition of *The Star Spangled Banner*.

Their participation is a reflection of the diversity and social values of the men who make up the chorus; giving back to their community by sharing music.



LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THE ROCHETTES

by Jeffrey Greene
Rochette since 2009

The Rochettes are thrilled to be back to rehearsals in preparation for the 2011-2012 concert season. Twelve of the eighteen Rochettes will be dancing in *A Holiday Song Book*. **Dr. Robert Strauss** has a wonderful choral concert planned for your enjoyment and we are excited to again be part of it. Every concert we are amazed with the wonderful choreography that **Erika Atkinson** plans for our audience. This season is no different! Just when you think the Rochettes couldn't possibly top themselves – we do! Sit back and enjoy a swing dance to *Jingle Bells* (sung by the cast of *Glee*) and our version of the classic story *Twas the Night Before Christmas* through interpretive dance and set to the music of *Wizards in Winter*.

We would also like to share exciting news of our new look on the RGMC website with pictures and helpful information! Get the latest scoop on the Rochettes and keep in touch with your favorites by finding us and “liking” us on our new Facebook page. A link to our Facebook page may be found on the RGMC website at www.thergmc.org.

Enjoy and see you in December!



First Annual Toy Drive

Prepare your heart for Christmas by donating a gift to our first annual RGMC Toy Drive. At our Christmas concert, *A Holiday Song Book*, we will be collecting new toys to donate to the **Asbury First United Methodist Church** storehouse. The storehouse reaches out to families in need during the holiday season and continues these efforts throughout the year by providing food, clothing, and toys. With poverty reaching near record levels, we at the RGMC want to make a special impact on the lives of these families. Help us reach this goal by donating an item while attending our concert.





front row: Ben Hale, Darren Plunkett, Nicholas Brown, Ross Ellingwood, Eric Williamson, Jim Costich
back row: Marcus Goodwine, John Connors, Lyndon Meyer



The RGMC has hired **Matt Ulakovic**, its recent PR intern, as the lead Advertising Director for the chorus's publications.

Matt looks forward to helping secure the RGMC's future vitality. Most importantly, he already knows a great deal about the RGMC — its mission — and plans to work toward representing those ideals to the best of his ability. He believes advertising relationships require that same passion as public relations. "Regardless of the position I hold with the chorus, I will always act as a professional representative to the public," Matt emphasizes.

Matt is delighted to continue working with the chorus. "I am very enthusiastic about the prospects that lie ahead with the Rochester Gay Men's Chorus as a vital organization to the LGBT community here in Rochester."

Internet interlude digital Keynotes and our new Web site.

by Amy Scolaro

Facebook Update: The powers that be of Facebook did it again! They did not win an Oscar, an Emmy or Wimbledon, but they have indeed caused just as much drama. They changed the newsfeed. Again. The new newsfeed has options intended to filter information to make it simpler for the user. What this means for the RGMC and other "pages" is that you may not receive our notifications unless your settings are enabled to do so. It has become more important than ever to RSVP to our events on Facebook and to "invite" your friends as well. Visit our page, click on events, and RSVP today to make sure you receive our notifications. Once you RSVP use the "invite" option to personally invite your friends and family.

We have completely revamped our website! By revamped I don't mean having anything to do with fangs, self-loathing, brooding, anything involving anyone named "Sookie", or team what's-their-names. What I mean is that **thergmc.org** has an entirely fresh new look and updated features! Visit our "Support Us" page and make an instant donation to the chorus via **Justgive.org**. Our improved ticketing system allows you to buy season tickets, individual concert tickets, and tickets to all of our fundraisers! The best part is, you can now buy and print your tickets at home! Also, visit our "History" and "Photo Gallery" sections for a trip down memory lane. Thank you to our volunteer designer **Peter Elliott** at Paladin Digital and our Graphic Designer, **Sam Nicolosi**. The face-lift looks amazing, and I don't mean anything involving Joan Rivers.

Keynotes: We have been bitten by the green bug and have decided it's time to try something new. In an effort to maintain the new extended version of *Keynotes* news, we are creating a hybrid. Part print and all digital, our goal is to reduce paper consumption while still delivering the latest and greatest RGMC news. We will still be printing highlights of our articles and delivering them to your door over the next year. However, the full version of *Keynotes* will only be available via e-mail distribution and download from our website. Digital *Keynotes* will feature color photos, tantalizing graphics, and more RGMC info than ever. If you are currently receiving *Keynotes* via snail mail and could do without it, go to **thergmc.org** and subscribe to digital *Keynotes* today to opt out. Also, if you are currently receiving both, you will automatically be transitioned to digital distribution only. This change will allow us to go green, and redirect financial resources and manpower.

See you online!

The RGMC is looking for volunteers who can help at the concerts, during retreats, in the office and with other tasks. If you are interested in more information on positions available, please call the Chorus Line at 585-423-0650



RGMC to head to Denver in July 2012

by Dennis W. Rosenbaum

While most of the chorus members and staff have been focusing on getting music ready to rehearse, and welcoming new and returning singers to RGMC for the 2011-2012 season, a small group of us has been looking farther ahead. We are the GALA 2012 committee, and we are in charge of getting RGMC to the GALA Festival in Denver next summer. I chair the committee and the other members are **Cory Cummings, Peter Elliott, Gary Keleher, Steve Randell** and **Darrell Killingsworth**.

RGMC belongs to the Gay and Lesbian Association of Choruses (GALA). GALA puts together an international choral festival every four years. The next festival will be held in Denver in July 2012. RGMC members were polled last spring and indicated a strong interest in attending the festival, so planning has begun to get the chorus to Denver for what promises to be a life changing week of wonderful music and lasting friendships.

Part of the charge of this committee is to raise funds to pay for staff members to go to Denver, as well as to provide financial assistance to those members who need it. To that end, the committee has been meeting this summer to brainstorm and develop a fundraising campaign, entitled **Get Me to GALA 2012**. We had a tag sale which was held on the weekend of October 14, 15 and



Photo by Brian Sprouse

16 at the home of board treasurer, **Dick Connett**. Once again, RGMC members, friends, and family collected items in good condition for sale to the public. Proceeds from the sale went towards the cost of getting RGMC to GALA next summer.

In addition to fundraising, the committee has also been working on the logistics of getting the chorus out to Denver to participate in this exciting festival. RGMC and the Rochettes are now registered to perform in the festival. Within the next few weeks we should be receiving word as to when we will actually be singing or dancing. In

addition, within the next few months we will be making travel and hotel reservations for our trip. We will keep you posted as new developments occur.

We appreciate your continued support as we work to get ourselves out to Denver for the GALA Festival in July 2012.

If you would like to help the RGMC "Get to Denver," visit www.thergmc.org and click on the Denver GALA button.



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Cruisin' with Cupid



All the single boys, all the single boys, put your hands up! This Valentine's Day season, the RGMC presents Cruisin' with Cupid. We've put a song in your hearts, and now it's time to put a lump in your throat while we help you look for love.

How it works: You provide us with your contact information, which will remain private and available to event organizers only. Once registered, you will be assigned a number, name tag and a score sheet to take with you. In the spirit of "Speed Dating," you will spend about seven minutes with each registered participant.

Whatever will you ask them? That's entirely up to you. However, we will provide suggestions for the shy types, liquid encouragement via a cash bar, and complimentary appetizers for the nervous eaters.

At the end of the event you will review your notes and

determine which of the men shot an arrow through your heart, which have the potential, and which of them were just utterly bat guano crazy. You can choose as many men as you like! Then just hand us your scorecard and go home. We do the rest! If the same person you scored as a match, also scored you as a match, you'll get each other's contact information.

Matches and contact information will be distributed by email the day after the event — in plenty of time for Valentine's Day.

How Sweet! Cupid has done his part, now you can do yours.

Tickets are \$20 and pre-registration is strongly encouraged. We are also trying to run two cycles for different age groups. The start time will vary based on your age group and will be disclosed when you register. Please contact Amy Scolaro at ascolaro@thergmc.org to register today! At the time of printing, the date and location for this event is TBD. Contact us for more details or follow up at www.thergmc.org.

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photo by Brian Sprouse

A heartfelt thank you to our donors

The majority of operating funds for non-profit organizations come from individuals. You are important to the future of RGMC. 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.

Maestro (\$1000 and over)

Jacqueline Archer
John Dash
Lawrence and Susan Day
Bob Foley and Mike Alvarez
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John Williams
John Owen
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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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National Coming Out Day



Held every October 11, National Coming Out Day is a chance to raise awareness about the importance of living an open and honest life, and to give those considering coming out the opportunity to find the support from their friends, family and community as they begin or continue the life-changing process.

The Rochester Gay Men's Chorus was thrilled to participate in a Coming Out Day event at Nazareth College. The event was sponsored by the college LGBT group, The Nazareth Lambda Association and included information on the history of Coming Out Day, "coming out" terminology, and the activities of Lambda on campus. Our very own RGMC sang *To Love and To Be Loved, Make Them Hear You*, and the Randall Thompson *Alleluia*, three pieces which represented different aspects of the coming out process.

The chorus, led by **Dr. Robert Strauss** with the help of principal pianist **Mark Brennan**, and our Sign Language Interpreter **Catherine "Cat" Hardesty** were very well received. Those attending were so appreciative of our presence, just as we were by the chance to serve the community in this important way.

Speakers included **Lauren Berger**, the president of the Nazareth College Lambda Association; **Briana Ramirez**, the historian of Lambda; and Lambda secretary **Benjamin Pate**. Treasurer **Luke Paddock**, and **Gaynelle Wethers**, the Director of Multicultural Affairs, played an instrumental role in organizing the event. Our own **Dr. Robert Strauss** also contributed to the discussion and as always offered both humorous and touching anecdotes.



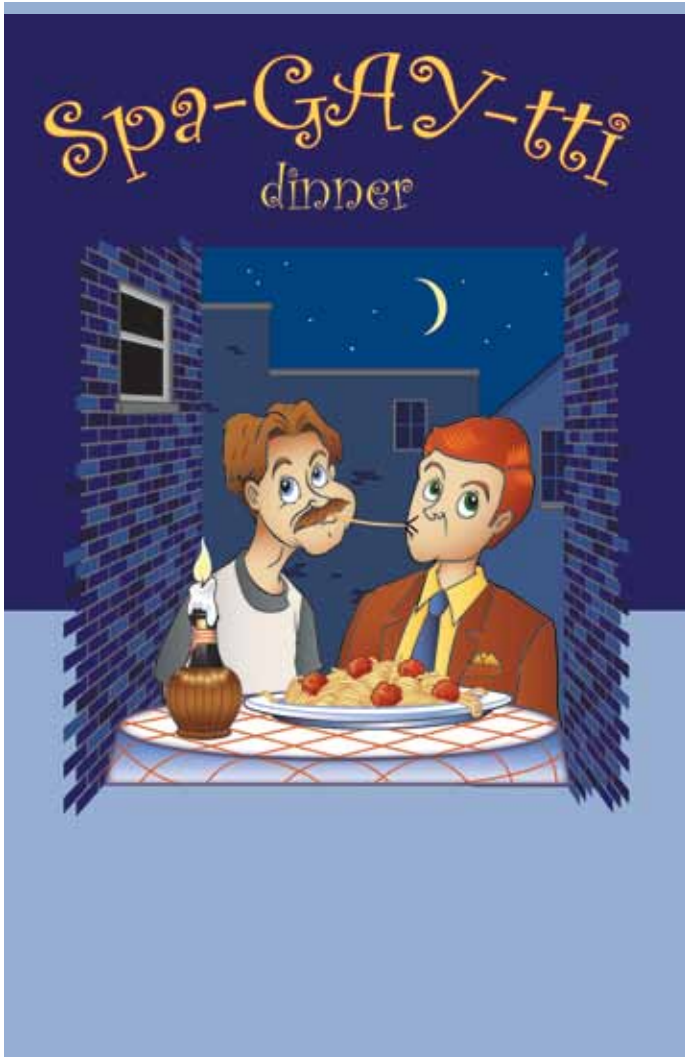
Mission Statement

The Rochester Gay Men's Chorus, by nurturing pride in and acceptance of the diversity of our communities, creates social change through excellence in the choral arts.

Vision Statement

We the members of the Rochester Gay Men's Chorus unite proudly as gay men to seek a better world for ourselves, our community, and for our nation by sowing the seeds of harmony through the universal language of music.

- We sing for ourselves to make glorious music with friends who experience the world as we do and who share our joy in standing together.
- We sing for our sisters and brothers in the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community to embody pride, family, and a sense of home.
- We sing for our friends and supporters who join with us to rebuke ignorance and prejudice.
- We sing for those unknown and unseen, awakening to who they are, in closets of oppression, or in search of community, that they may see our faces and hear our joy and know that the night is not forever, and that there are friends and brothers to light their way and to welcome them home.



The first RGMC SpaGAYtti Dinner was held at Asbury First United Methodist Church on Sunday, October 23rd, 2011. Over a hundred guests were treated to an enjoyable sit-down spaghetti dinner with all the trimmings. Chairperson Jeffrey Greene worked tirelessly to ensure a perfect event. From the wonderful illustration by Brian Robbins created specifically for the event, to the donated plants in the floral arrangements from Michael Hannen, to the cute red checkered tablecloths, everything worked to transform the space into a charming Italian bistro.

The RGMC volunteers did it all, and everything was handled expertly: from restaurant duties like kitchen prep, cooking, set-up, serving, bussing tables and cleaning-up to ticket sales, marketing our CD and providing “greatest hits” video clips. Jim Janssen and his partner Carl Norcross were amazing chefs for the event - we couldn’t have done it without them! We need to thank everyone involved: *Elizabeth Alexander, Kennan Beckstrand, Stefan Baer, James Campbell, David Clinton, Dick Connett, Jim Costich, Sharri Donofrio, Peter Elliott, Steve Farrington, Jeff Fowler, Jeffrey Greene, Frank Hanzel, Ron Herman, Jim Janssen, Jason Juliano, Darrell Killingsworth, Ann Lalik, Michael Lewis, Larry Mancine, Peter Nickles, Sam Nicolosi, Carl Norcross, Dennis Pratt, Steven Randell, Ed Schell, Amy Scolaro, Robert Strauss, James Sullivan, Raul Torres, Alan Van Camp, Steve Witzberger, John Yavonditte, and the sextons provided by Asbury First United Methodist Church, Tom Sullivan and Eugene Fisher.*

Our guests wondered if we would be doing another SpaGAYtti Dinner and the answer is YES! Not only was it a successful event, but it was a great social evening for all of us. Be sure to watch future issues of Keynotes for updates.

A great thank you to Wegmans for their gift toward food purchases and everyone at Asbury First United Methodist Church for their hospitality. We couldn’t have done it without them. As our way of saying thank you, the RGMC donated a percentage back to AFUMC’s Dining and Caring Center, along with leftover food from the event.



SEASON 2011-2012



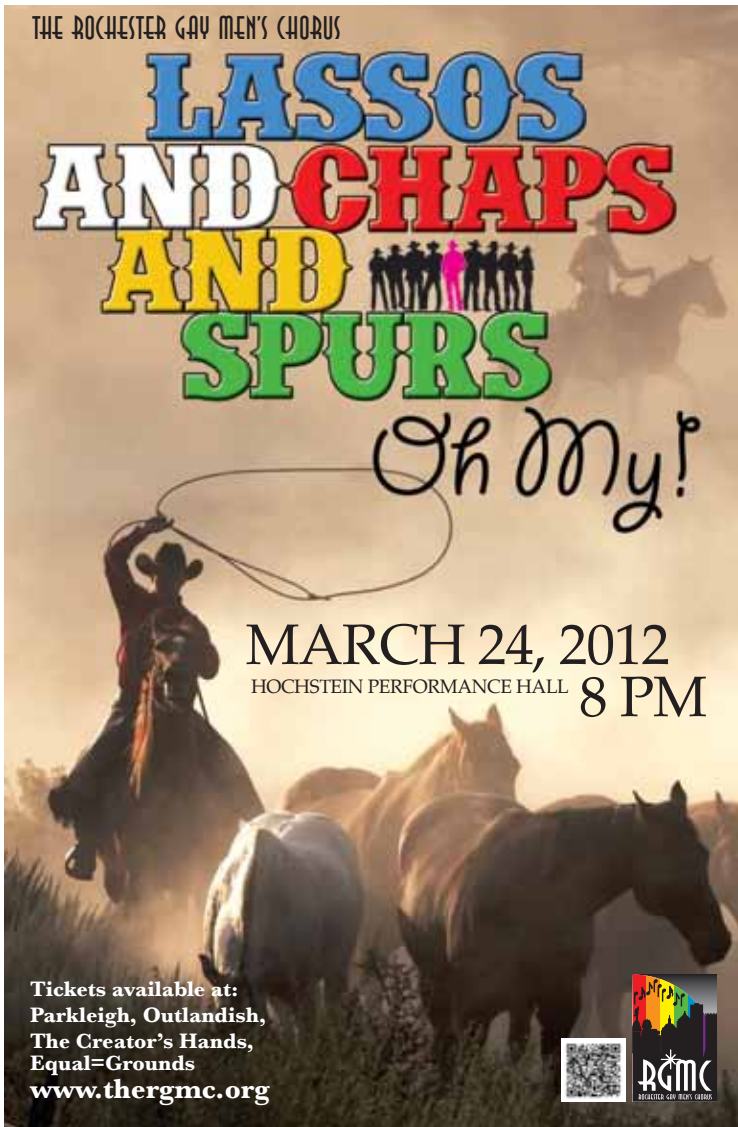
THE ROCHESTER GAY MEN'S CHORUS

LASSOS AND CHAPS AND SPURS

Oh My!

MARCH 24, 2012
HOCHSTEIN PERFORMANCE HALL 8 PM

Tickets available at:
Parkleigh, Outlandish,
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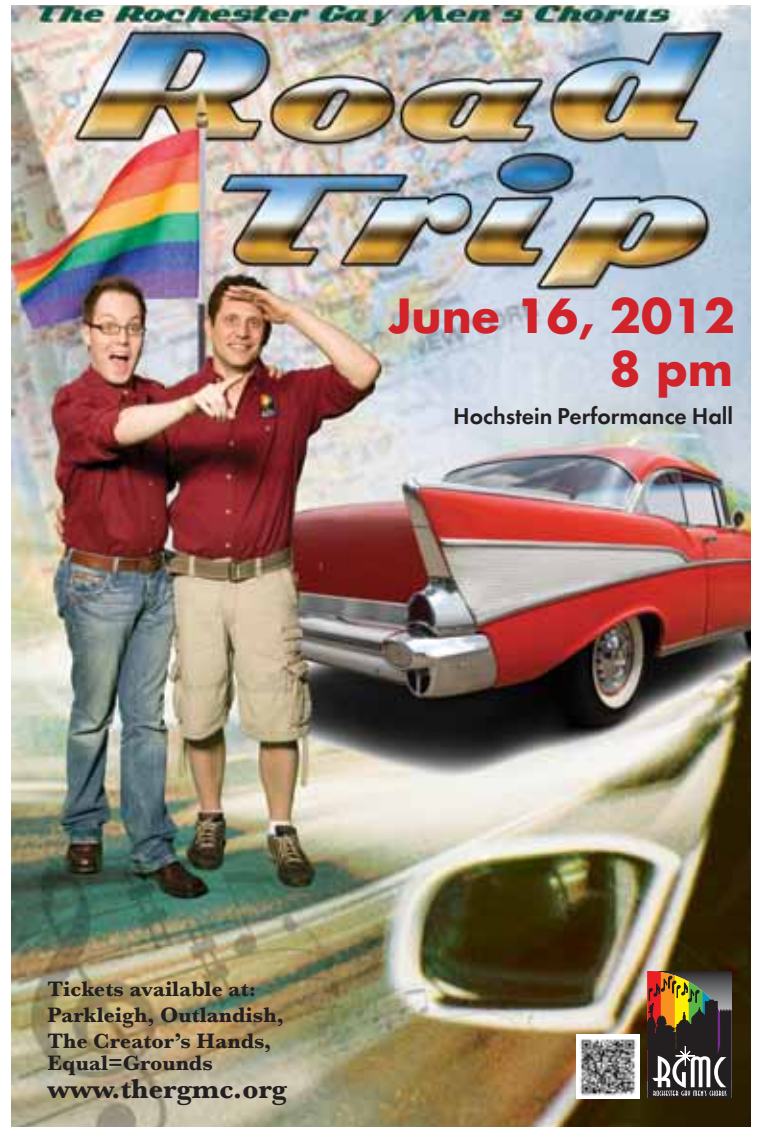


The Rochester Gay Men's Chorus

Road Trip

June 16, 2012
8 pm
Hochstein Performance Hall

Tickets available at:
Parkleigh, Outlandish,
The Creator's Hands,
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Lassos, and Chaps and Spurs, Oh my!

March 24, 2012

Yippy-Ki-Yo-Ki- GAY! Saddle up for our first revue of the most popular and kitschy Western tunes of all time. Well hello Dolly! and Reba and Patsy (and more). These cowboys are ready to swagger, swoon and tune you with our own special brand of country camp. Did you laugh so hard your sides split, or maybe you just Brokeback? This will surely be a sight to see and a memory to behold even for those not so country keen. Get along little doggies!

Road Trip

June 16, 2012

The RGM is delighted to help perpetuate your dreams about just packing up and hitting the road this summer! Where would you go? We can help you decide with this exciting repertoire of songs from all over the country. From the Big Apple to L.A. and everything in between, we will travel the roads together at a grand total of \$0.00 per gallon!