

Grand River Rainbow Historical Project

www.grandriver-rainbowhistory.ca/

celebrating the lives and times of rainbow folk in Grand River country

Rainbow Chorus Events (1995-)

Publishing History: Documents issued at irregular intervals by the **Rainbow Chorus** for its concerts, fundraisers, and other events.

Copyright Permission: Copies of these documents have been reproduced with the kind permission of its copyright holder, the **Rainbow Chorus**. This permission is part of a broad agreement to grant the **Grand River Rainbow Historical Society** copyright permission to reproduce publications of **Rainbow Chorus** back to its inception in 1994.

Digitized Files: After the PDF file has displayed, we suggest that you **set your viewing window to a fairly large size** and then **adjust the PDF magnification** so that the text can be read comfortably.

Telephone Numbers & Email Addresses: These documents were published many years ago. Please do **NOT** use them as a source for telephone numbers or email addresses for local businesses or agencies. Reliable sources for that kind of information include <http://www.canada411.ca/> and other search engines on the Internet.

Redaction: Certain parts of the digitized text have been **blacked out** in accordance with our [Redaction Policy](#). The **Grand River Rainbow Historical Society** maintains a separate collection of unmarked (unredacted) copies of these documents for consultation as necessary.

1: Tribute to Queen

Welcome and Happy Pride! We, the Rainbow Chorus of Waterloo-Wellington have spent another season making music together, and we are proud to share it with you tonight in "Concert Q"! The "Q" in our title stands for "Queer", a word that was once used to hurt and sting our community, now reclaimed and transformed, it signifies our strength and unity in diversity. Our program tonight features music composed or made popular by queer musicians and our allies. The songs reflect the rainbow of challenges and joys we experience in our queer communities, acknowledging our losses and grief, as well as celebrating our victories and love.

For many of us [motion to choir] the Rainbow Chorus has functioned as family during the most difficult and the most joyous of life's occasions. Our next piece, "My family, my chorus, my rhyme", composed for Edmonton's queer choir, the Edmonton Vocal Minority, recognizes the family-like atmosphere that can be created among members of a queer community. The chorus has celebrated the births and adoptions of babies, like so many doting aunts and uncles. We have shed tears of joy witnessing the first legal marriages that took place among us. Chorus members have provided care for their own during periods of sickness, and there has been a shoulder to cry on, or a smiling, laughing face, to brighten the day of those who have been dealing with difficulties in their lives. One member has said, "In my journey...the chorus is a safe place to laugh, cry, face my fears, share and honour myself and my choral colleagues. The Rainbow chorus truly is my chorus, my family, my rhyme; a place for just being me and having a voice through song."

2: My Family, My Chorus, My Rhyme

3: Fairies

4: Your Song

Creating spaces of acceptance and diversity, such as the chorus, are important for countering the homophobia and resulting discrimination many of us face whether it be from our families, work places, cultural or religious communities, neighbourhoods and society. The pressures of not being accepted or supported can take their toll, as some queer folks, even some of our composers tonight, have struggled with mental health issues or addictions: Queer youth are two to three times more likely to attempt suicide than straight youth. Elton John, the composer of our last piece, has admitted his past struggles with drugs, as has a composer from the second half of tonight's program, Rufus Wainwright. Struggles with addiction and isolation were the motivation behind the composition of our next song, Angel, by Sarah MacLaughlin. The piece that follows Angel, titled "Courage," written and conducted by chorus member, Terrilyn Coward, "is inspired by and dedicated to those who daily seek courage to challenge discrimination, intolerance and fear in their lives. Our journeys are not always easy but through it all we must find the courage and strength to live and love fully! This piece encourages us to take heart [and] seek peace and understanding."

5: Angel

6: Courage

TERRILYN

Cyndi Lauper has long been a supporter of the queer community, and our next song, "True

Colours," has become one the queer community's anthems of hope and survival, with Lauper donated proceeds from the single to AIDS research. Connected to the queer community through her lesbian sister, Lauper has performed often as part of Pride festivities and has several songs that speak to and about queer communities.

The "True Colours Tour" began in 2007 by Lauper and continues this year with a stop in Toronto on June 4th—that's a Wednesday night, Bob, so don't bother to have a rehearsal—we're all busy! Cyndi conceived the tour to increase visibility of queer issues and to give back to the queer community for all the love and support she's received throughout her career, and Egale Canada is just one of the many queer organizations that will benefit from funds raised through ticket sales.

The Rainbow Chorus is pleased and honoured to assist in kicking off Guelph Pride 2008 with tonight's concert. At this time, I would like to call up Vicki Beard, City of Guelph Councillor for Ward 2. *To Vicki* As the official representative of Mayor Karen Farbridge and the Council for the City of Guelph, welcome, and thank-you for being with us tonight. We are all members of the diverse family that is Guelph. We are a family that strives to create a safe, inclusive, welcoming city, free from oppression. We are passing this rainbow flag to you as a symbol of the care of our community that is in part entrusted to the work of the council and the city. The rainbow flag is a strong symbol for our community that speaks to the pride, courage and unity of our diverse queer communities, hard won through the blood, sweat, tears, and joys of previous and current generations.

Vicki speaks.

Thank-you for coming here tonight to receive this symbol of our community. This rainbow flag will be raised at City Hall on Monday and will fly there for this entire Pride Week in the city of Guelph. It is our "True Colours."

7: True Colours

Intermission

8: I Ain't Afraid

With songs such as "I Ain't Afraid", musician Holly Near uses music to advocate for social change. As one of the first "out" lesbian performers, she was pivotal in bringing lesbian music to a larger audience. This peace activist once stated "I believe, in the name of all the loved ones...who have lost their lives all over the world as a result of war, poverty, abuse, and genocide, we can find a higher ground... I believe that we can move towards being a world community, a world family, that we can resist 'them and us' thinking."

Creating a world community begins at home. Many members of the queer community have had negative experiences with organized religion and have had to struggle to reconcile their spiritual beliefs and their sexual orientation. We are so fortunate to have found a home at Harcourt, one of the United Church's Affirming congregations. Here at Harcourt, we experience community and when we're here "we ain't afraid"!

Our next piece "All the Rivers" is based on an excerpt from a verse in the Bible chapter, Ecclesiastes. Though very different in style and tone, this coming piece was composed by the very same Charles Baker, who wrote "A Report On My Interviews With Fairies" from earlier in the

program. Add in Poetic something something or little joke about the difference between the two styles?

9: All the Rivers

10: Dream

As society's attitude toward being queer has changed and evolved so has the experience of the composers on our program as they negotiate the challenge of being a queer musician. In the early 20th century, Cole Porter typified the "open secret;" maintaining a heterosexual façade while living as a gay man behind closed doors. Leonard Bernstein only became more openly gay later in life, after the death of his wife during the 1970's. Samuel Barber, who was more out of the limelight, was by contrast able to live a fairly out life from the 1940's onward. Queen's frontman Freddie Mercury denied for years that he was living with AIDS, and it was only days before his death in 1991 that he publicly acknowledged his struggle. Elton John came out mid career, which at first negatively affected his career. Conversely, for kd Lang, who's version of Leonard Cohen's "Hallelujah" has become one of her signature pieces, coming out during her career in 1992 increased her popularity and musical success. Contrast all of these stories to that of songwriter Rufus Wainwright, composer of our next piece "Pretty Things" who, thanks to these other musicians paving the way, has been out as a teenager and who could not and would not I'm sure, ever hide his queerness! Chorus member Van Waffle, who gifted us with the arrangement of "pretty things", understands it to be about beauty and desire. Our contemporary culture falls under the influence of a cult of beauty. But beauty passes away, and life is short. Wainwright pleads with the object of his desire to break through the lonely distance that separates people; "Be a star and fall down somewhere next to me."

* 11: Pretty Things Acknowledge VAN *

12: Hallelujah

(From Heaven's Coast by Mark Doty, a memoir of his final days with his dying life-partner, Wally.

"Will there be a moment when you will die to me?"

Of course you will cease to breathe, sometime; probably you will cease to breathe before I do, though there's no way to know this, really. But your being, your being-in-me, will last as long as I do, won't it? There's a poem of Tess Gallagher's about the aftermath of her husband's death, one called "Now That I Am Never Alone." Of course.

Is my future, then, remembering you? Inscribing the name, carrying the memory? Remembering is the work of the living, and the collective project of memory is enormous; it involves the weight of all our dead, the ones we have known ourselves and the ones we know only from stories. It is necessary to recall not just names but also faces, anecdotes, incidents, gestures, tics, nuances, those particular human attributes that distinguish us as individuals. A name, after all, stripped of contexts, is only a name. Lists of them, like the ones read at ceremonies around the Quilt, remind us of the enormity, scale, the legions of the dead. Details, stories, remind us of the particular loved body..."

→ 13: I Will Remember TERRILYNN

14: Sure on this Shining Night

Sometimes children know instinctively what we as adults try to avoid. Listen to the words of nine year old Samuel Barber (who later composed the choral setting of Sure on this Shining Night) as he reveals his great secret in a letter to his Mother.

“Dear Mother: I have written to tell you my worrying secret. Now don’t cry when you read it because it is neither yours nor my fault. I suppose I will have to tell it now, without any nonsense. To begin with I was not meant to be an athlete. I was meant to be a composer, and will be I’m sure. I’ll ask you one more thing .—Don’t ask me to try to forget this unpleasant thing and go play football.—Please—Sometimes I’ve been worrying about this so much that it makes me mad (not very).”

Out of the mouths of babes, indeed! Was he paving the way for an even bigger revelation later in his life?

Our final piece tonight, “Seasons of Love,” is from the Tony award-winning Broadway musical *Rent*, which has become a mainstream, commercially successful hit. That’s significant, considering the play deals with issues like poverty, AIDS, drug-abuse, sexual orientation, and corporate America versus the struggling artist, and includes among its leading characters a bisexual woman, a lesbian, a gay man, and a transgendered person. This is just one example of how queer visibility in the musical world has changed so much in recent years. Past generations of queer composers and musicians, some who spent their entire lives either partially or totally closeted, have paved the way for today’s young queer community to openly express themselves through their music. The same can be said for our chorus. As one of the younger members of the Rainbow Chorus, I know I speak for many when I express my gratitude and respect for our more “experienced” fellow-singers, some of whom were involved with the chorus at its inception 13 (?) years ago, and who have paved the way for us to share the joys of singing with you tonight.

16: Seasons of Love

17 (Encore): Ev’ry time We Say Goodbye