



SUBMITTED PHOTO

"The chorus is often labeled 'ambassadors for the gay community.' We had long discussed that so much of the new music that had been composed for gay choruses was more centered at gay-centric themes. There's nothing wrong with that, but we wanted to step out and develop some new music that spoke to a wider community and to concerns that were across all of society."

**-BOB MENSEL, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR,
PORTLAND GAY MEN'S CHORUS**

spoke to a wider community and to concerns that were across all of society."

Mensel says the aim of the piece was not political commentary, but to draw from the insanity of war, and those throughout history who have waged it under a banner of quite the opposite.

"It's a horrible irony, and very gruesome," says Mensel of the idea. "Almost every section of ['BraveSouls and Dreamers'] has a quotation of one of these great religious, civil or political icons that we often go to war over. They're quotations of peace."

Among the quotations are lines culled from the Koran, the Old Testament, Jesus Christ and Mahatma Gandhi. The storyline itself involves a mother who loses her son during a war, the process involved in her coming to terms with his death, and her learning to forgive those responsible for the death of her son.

PGMC, now in its 31st year, performed "BraveSouls and Dreamers" in 2007, 2008, 2009 and earlier in 2011. The chorus will present the piece during the "Fly Away" concert Wednesday, August 31 at Lincoln Hall on the Portland State University campus. The local concert—the proceeds of which will help fund PGMC's trip to NYC—features a chamber version of the chorus' usual orchestral accompaniment. During the Peace & Unity concert in New

Above: The PGMC shows us their Motown sound.

Below: Marching in the 2011 Pride Parade



MARTY DAVIS

York, PGMC is scheduled to perform a song with the New York City Gay Men's Chorus, conducted by the famed Bishop Eugene Robinson, the first openly gay bishop of the Episcopal Church.

For Mensel and the rest of the 130-member ensemble, the 10th anniversary journey provides a unique opportunity, once again, for cross-country solidarity.

"It's such a great honor to take part in the commemoration," says Mensel, who had wanted to attend the first Flight for Freedom trip, but instead tended to PGMC duties during a concert in Hillsboro. "There are a lot of choruses here and for various reasons we were the ones asked to go. That says not only something nice about the Portland Gay Men's Chorus, but it says something really wonderful about the gay community here and that we're respected and held in high esteem." JO

PGMC presents the "Fly Away" concert Wednesday, August 31 at 8 p.m. at Lincoln Hall on the PSU campus (1620 SW Park Ave.). Tickets, \$30-\$125, are available at buy.pdxgmc.org or by calling 503-226-2588. To contribute to the PGMC's Flight for Freedom effort, visit kickstarter.com/projects/1497714206/send-portland-gay-mens-chorus-to-nyc-for-9-11-perf. For more information, visit pdxgmc.org.

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