



Photo: Horace Long

COMING OUT THE MAGIC OF MUSIC

ROSE CITY GAY FREEDOM BAND
RCGFB is comprised of a symphonic wind ensemble, a sixteen-piece swing band (Rose City Swing), a marching band, and several smaller performing groups. www.rcgfb.org

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Some coming out experiences are easy. David Hastings' experience was not one of those.

At 44, Hastings was married with children. He lived in Salem and was active in his church. But he was unhappy. He was tired of pretending to be someone he wasn't. During two years of soul searching, he finally decided to come out as a gay man.

He spoke with his family first. His wife already knew and the two got a quick divorce. He then came out to friends, many of whom went to church with him. They turned their backs and shut him out, he says. One friend he had known for eight years said hanging out with him would ruin his reputation.

"Coming out was painful and tumultuous for me," Hastings says. "It was hard, but it was really healthy for me."

Hastings decided to move to Portland. He had already visited a few times and had lined up some work – an experienced producer and musical director, he teaches piano and voice lessons. Hastings, originally from California, conducted his first musical theater show, *Man of La Mancha*, when he was 19. Since then he's produced more than 120 shows.

On one of those trips, two years ago during Pride, he found the booth for the Rose City Gay Freedom Band. He left behind his contact information and was invited to become a band member a month later.

Now Hastings is the conductor of the swing band Rose City Swing, one of three bands under the Rose City Gay Freedom Band umbrella.

"The swing band was my first connection to Portland and my first connection to the gay com-