The Glee Gab

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The Official Newsletter of the Rutgers University Glee Club

THE NEW ROOKIE CLASS

STEVE ROCHA, RC '09
TREASURER 2008–2009

Every summer, our Vice President of Student Organizational Affairs (VPSOA for short) begins his search to replenish the ranks of one of the nation’s best Glee Clubs. This serves as no small task, and this year’s VP SOA, Mark DiGiovanni, has done a great job of fulfilling his duties. Following finalization of a list totaling 29 new members, DiGiovanni declared that, “This year’s rookie class easily has the potential to improve both the musical talent and social nature of our organization.” Additionally, Business Manager Rich Wells says, “The rookie class has the drive and enthusiasm that is necessary for new members to make an immediate impact on the club.” In short, it appears the future is bright.

As we move forward, both of these Executive Council members’ comments appear to ring true. Enthusiasm and interest in all of Glee Club’s activities is evident, and much talent is to be found amongst our newest members. Additionally, enthusiasm has also been displayed at unofficial Rookie Rehearsals, where the newest members take some time outside of Glee Club to learn their Rutgers songs. The first few Stuff Yer Face trips have also been well attended, as the social aspect of our organization remains strongly intact. Also important, mostly to a lot of Bags, is the Rookie class’s collective interest in Soup Bowl. Nearly a dozen members of the new class have taken their shot at participating in one of Glee Club’s most storied and important traditions. Our confidence in blending our veteran talent with rookie passion remains steadfast; our hope of “Pride in Musical Excellence Since 1872”

MOUNT HOLYOKE VISITS THE BANKS

JEFF SMITH MGSA ’09
TECHNOLOGY COORDINATOR 2008–2009

On Saturday, November 15th, the Glee Club hosted the women of the Mount Holyoke Glee Club in a joint concert at Kirkpatrick Chapel. The weekend began as the women of Mount Holyoke arrived in New Brunswick on Friday evening. After some settling in and a brief evening rehearsal, the men of the RUGC led the women to a reception on the lawn of McKinney Hall, where several members had installed a fire pit. Members of both groups toasted marshmallows, drank apple cider, and ate pumpkin pie while getting to know each other. Saturday morning allowed for some much needed rest before an afternoon of rehearsals. Later that night the choirs presented a joint concert including a set from each group. The concert concluded with both choirs singing Mozart’s Regina Coeli and Gabriel Fauré’s Cantique de Jean Racine.

The exchange concert marked the second time the RUGC has performed with the Mount Holyoke women in just two semesters. The current RUGC membership was introduced to the MHGC for the first time during a weekend exchange at Mount Holyoke College this past spring. It was now the Rutgers University Glee Club’s opportunity to return their kind hospitality. This meant, of course, that they would have to...
Rookies
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bringing home a trophy this year is ever-present.

The new rookies have also expressed pleasure
in having joined the oldest student organization at
Rutgers University. Rookie Colin Millet, one of our
many new tenors, states, “I have never felt so wel-
comed in any organization throughout my life, from
sports, to musicals, or even to other choirs.” Dan
Williams, a new member of the esteemed Baritone
section has already declared Glee Club as the “best
time of his life.” How fitting that these young men
should so quickly latch onto the brotherhood and
commitment to excellence that the Glee Club strives
to achieve—their excitement and dedication easily
deserves much praise. Hopefully, their desire to be a
part of the Glee Club will only increase as the years
progress.

Holyoke
Continued from Page 1

provide the women with somewhere to sleep. RUGC
members and our friends from other choirs were
able to accommodate our visitors in their various
dorms, apartments, and houses. “We sort of waited
till the last minute, but we got our house ready,”
said Mark DiGiovanni (RC ’09). “It’s the cleanest it’s
looked in months.”

After a weekend of song, Sunday morning was
filled with long goodbyes as the women of Mount
Holyoke prepared for their departure. “It’s awesome
to watch Professor Dunn conduct the women of
Mount Holyoke. She has a great sense of the music
and how to convey it,” remarked Eric Drylewicz
(MGSA ’09). “It was great to work with her when
we visited [Mount Holyoke], and this weekend was
another great musical exchange.”

A FEW WORDS
WITH STEVE
BARTON

MATTHEW PREPIS, RC ’11
HISTORIAN 2008–2009

Over 137 years, the Rutgers University Glee Club
has had several different directors. Each direc-
tor brought his own talents to the group, and has
left behind something special. This article, however,
focuses on Stephen H. Barton, who conducted the
Glee Club from 1988–1991. Stephen began his di-
recting career while studying to receive his doctorate
from SUNY-Stony Brook. He received a memorable
phone call, and as he remembers it, “[a member of
the music faculty and I] arranged for an interview
at McKinney Hall with the entire Rutgers University
Glee Club. I conducted the group and the interview
was held on the spot. They hired me, and away we
went!” During his time with the Glee Club, he took
two international tours (one to Mexico and one to
Hungary) and participated in two Soup Bowl victo-
ries as the starting quarterback.

His first task, and one of his fondest memories,
was conducting the National Anthem at Giants
Stadium just two weeks after he began. Coinciden-
tially, he stated, “When I have conducted other men’s
choruses, I have always used Soup’s arrangement.”
The current Glee Club sings the National Anthem at
two football games each year—at Homecoming, and
once more at another game. Of course, we continue
the tradition of singing F. Austin Soup Walter’s
rendition. While both of his international tours
were special to him, Stephen recalls one particular
memory as a cut above the rest:

“I remember the tour to Hungary in 1989. We
were performing a concert in a hotel in Hungary
that had a circular staircase and an open balcony
that spiraled all the way to the top floor of the build-

Professor Kim Dunn conducting the Mount Holyoke
Glee Club in Kirkpatrick Chapel

Steve Barton playing the piano during his time as
Director of the Glee Club
ing. When we sang, I was actually standing on the hotel lobby floor and the guys were scattered along the spiral balcony going up four or five floors. The sound was quite amazing."

Other great memories included singing at a “rathskeller” in Hungary with all of his students, in order to wind down after a concert. A “rathskeller” is a local tavern that is below street level. This became something of a tradition while Steve was at Rutgers too, when the Glee Club frequented Patti’s—the eighties and nineties precursor to Stuff Yer Face.

Being a student himself at the time, he knew exactly what these members were going through with work and course loads. “It just seemed that I was a student trying to finish my doctorate just like they were students trying to deal with school. We had so much in common.” He had great respect for everyone in the group. “Almost everyone in the group was singing for the pure love of singing, rather than as a requirement of some kind. This was special for me … suffice it to say that the group was a deeply satisfying experience for many of us, student and teacher alike. We were a bunch of guys who loved to sing.” Of Stephen’s particular admiration were the traditional Rutgers songs. He commented that it was, “a gift to teach at a school with such a rich heritage of men’s chorus literature.” When the Glee Club first began in 1872, the men sang mostly traditional Rutgers songs; Stephen is proud to be a part of a tradition that current singers and directors still uphold today.

Eventually, Stephen Barton’s time with the Rutgers University Glee Club ended in 1991. Memories of his last concert, which took place in Kirkpatrick Chapel, still ring proudly. At the concert’s end, F. Austin Soup Walter took the stage and conducted the Alma Mater. Over 200 singers, both members at the time and alumni of the club, came up and joined in the singing of the Alma Mater after Soup Walter thanked Stephen for his service to Glee Club. Reflecting on his time as director of the Rutgers University Glee Club, Stephen stated, “In a long and fairly distinguished career as a conductor, I have never been as pleased, humbled and proud.” Stephen E. Barton will forever remain an integral part of the great history of the Rutgers University Glee Club. As parting advice, Stephen reminds us to “never, never, never forget what a great privilege it is to to be a member of the Rutgers University Glee Club. It is a history, a body of literature, and a group of musicians and friends that is without parallel. Never stop singing. It is as great a joy as a person can know in this life.”

The Glee Gab

AT LONG LAST

JOHN CIFELLI, CC ’09

The evening shadows soft were falling; the twilight gloomed from out the west. The band’s final push was stalling; the suffering of loss was laid to rest. As the last few moments of Soup Bowl XXXVII ticked off the clock, an almost surreal feeling thumped in the collective hearts of the Glee Club: victory. After five long years, the title of Soup Bowl Champion once again resides on the mantle of the RUGC. The final score showed a 21-12 successful 2008 campaign against the Band, but no score or statistic can reveal what was proven on the enemy’s home field on November 1. With tremendous fervor and unyielding determination, the Glee Club willed themselves past an opponent deemed bigger, faster, and stronger, with a winning streak spanning half a decade to boot. Glee Club was led by very strong play by some of its veterans. Quarterback Dave Valla (RC ’10) had an almost perfect game, ending with two touchdown tosses and a brilliantly designed pooch punt from the shotgun that pinned the Band on their own goal line late in the third quarter. Yours truly hauled in those two beautifully thrown touchdowns, but the play I am most proud of has to be a defended pass during a Band two-point conversion attempt early in the 4th quarter. Senior Eric Drylewicz (MGSA ’09) ended his Soup Bowl career with his second lifetime blocked punt, and it sure seems like Dennis Chu (SAS ’09) must’ve reached 100 all-purpose yards.

The most encouraging aspect of Club’s victory has to be the play of our rookie class. Surely, our youngest brothers have laid a strong foundation, as their dedication and commitment served as a model and inspiration to even the oldest veteran on the team. “Canned lightning” Colin Millet (MGSA ’12) slashed through the Band defense, with the help up front of young hog Pete Fabian (SAS ’12), who laid more blocks then the entire band during their entire annual Tetris tournament. Millet stepped in at safety for one
This year’s holiday season saw yet another presentation of *Christmas in Carol and Song* grace the Banks of the Old Raritan. The Christmas series, held on the nights of December the 6th and the 7th, went off without a hitch, and the audience responded with enthusiastic ovations. The Glee Club and Kirkpatrick Choir performed repertoires that were both gorgeous and challenging.

The Glee Club performed several pieces that you might have heard at our concert with the Mount Holyoke Glee Club, including *Sub Tuum Presidium*, *Hodie Christus Natus Est*, and *Jõulud Tulevad*. There were some additional pieces as well, such as *Al La Nanita Nana*, a beautiful South American piece that featured a solo by Dr. Gardner’s son Tynan. The concert also included classic Glee Club Christmas songs such as *Lo, How A Rose E’er Blooming*, *Silent Night*, and *God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen*.

Kirkpatrick Choir displayed their choral prowess as well, singing thoughtful renditions of *Nöel Nouvellet*, *Myn Lyking*, and *El Cielo Canta*. The men and women of Kirkpatrick Choir also filled the chapel with the sounds of such pieces as *The Sky of Bethlehem*, *Hymn to the Virgin*, *A Spotless Rose*, *Maria Walks Amid the Thorn*, and *Glory, Glory, Glory to the Newborn King*. The Glee Club and Kirkpatrick Choir performed wonderfully together, and the concert was a great experience for the new members of each choir, many of whom had never been to the Christmas series. Aaron Ploshnick (SAS ’12), a first year Rutgers student and member of the Glee Club, was thrilled with the experience. He noted: “it was exciting to see so many people at the chapel enjoying the holiday spirit. Some of the older guys started pointing out all the alumni that were at the shows, which I found really cool. I know that after I graduate, I will definitely be coming back every December.”

Roberto Rodriguez (RC ’08), a new alumnus of the Glee Club, began that tradition for himself this year, and remarked: “it was hard not to just sneak back up into the balcony of the Chapel to sing along, especially during *King David* and *God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen*.”

This year also saw an increased role for Reverend Bruce Freeman during the Christmas series. Rev. Freeman attended all four shows this year, presenting the readings and giving the benedictions at each of them. Rev. Freeman, a long time supporter of the Christmas series, has recently set up a fund specifically for the benefit and enrichment of the Christmas series called the *Christmas in Carol and Song Fund*. Rev. Freeman, who has been giving to the university for over 25 years, decided to set up this fund out of his love for the Christmas series. “This is one of the Rutgers programs I am most enthusiastic about and involved in,” said Rev. Freeman, “Both choirs do a wonderful job, as does Dr. Gardner.” The Glee Club has been very fortunate to have the support and assistance of Rev. Freeman over the past ten years.
play, and rewarded the team with an interception late in the game, which all but sealed it.

The success on the field was only realized by the strongest effort by the largest coaching staff in recent memory. Head Coach Steve Markowski (MGSA ’10) championed the cause, and he selected Steve Rocha (RC ’10), Dan Comito (SAS ’11), and seniors Dennis Chu and myself to help lead the team to victory. The sharing of accolades cannot end there, as senior Sean Plante and alumni Dan Smith and Roberto Rodriguez helped organize the team and run the play calling, respectively. When Steve was hoisted to the shoulders of the squad post-game, he was quick to spread the praise to those amongst him. “The dedication and heart of this team made my job as a coach a lot easier, and I am proud to have worked with them throughout the year.”

So the Glee Club Steamroller presses on. Says Markowski, “I’m ready to keep this winning thing going.” With some standout players returning from injury, and many more young teammates ready to leave their mark on the wonderful tradition of Soup Bowl, the Glee Club seems indeed to be ready to make a habit of proving victorious on the gridiron. As the hundreds of fans at the game know, Dr. Gardner reminds us, “for those of us who were there, we saw a great game and a wonderful achievement by the 2008–2009 Soup Bowl team.” Indeed, the collective will of this team proved what is best about Glee Club, depending on the man to your left, and your right to make you stronger. For this fine group of men, I can’t imagine and sentiment more fitting. Victory is sweet, and (for now) it is ours.

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**Upcoming Events**

- **Mason Gross Choral Extravaganza**
  - Saturday, March 7, 2009
  - 8:00 PM
  - Nicholas Music Center

- **137th Annual Spring Concert**
  - Saturday, May 2, 2009
  - 8:00 PM
  - Nicholas Music Center
ALUMNI CORNER
RICH KUNZ, SAS ’2011

At the Alumni Barbecue in August of this year, I had a chance to interact with alumni from many different eras in our organization’s history. Everyone had many great stories and experiences to share and reflect on with their fellow brothers in song, many of which have remained a part of the Glee Club’s history and lore. However, the history of the Glee Club in the time of several of the attendees has not been as well documented or passed on to the current membership as others. After meeting several Alums from the early 1990’s and hearing about some of their experiences as members of our storied organization, I decided their story would be perfect for this edition of the Alumni Corner. Erik Contzius (’91) and Michael Walters (’93) were both kind enough to agree to be interviewed about their time in Glee Club, and here are some of their responses.

Erik Contzius graduated from Rutgers University in 1991, with a degree in Psychology. He went on to receive his Masters of Sacred Music from Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, School of Sacred Music in 1995. He currently works as a Cantor at Temple Israel of New Rochelle. Erik is married to his wife, Monica Flaherty, and has a 7 1/2 year old son, Jacob. He was a baritone during his time in Glee Club, and continues to perform.

Michael “Ernie” Walters was born in Queens, NY, and moved to Rockaway, NJ when he was four. An alumus of Morris Hills High School, he originally went to Rutgers because it was close to home, though he admits his visits home were infrequent once he became active in Glee Club. After attaining a B.A. in Spanish from RU and a minor in statistics in 1993, Mike got a master’s in journalism from NYU in 1998, worked as a reporter and high school math teacher, and later a Composition Instructor. Now he teaches journalism part-time at the College of Staten Island, and math part-time at Passaic County Community College. Michael co-wrote a book, called Starting and Finishing the Paper, a handbook on how to write compositions on a college level. He also operates a growing part-time business, www.studentscomefirst.com. Reading is one of Michael's passions, and he is pursuing a D. Litt from Drew University. Michael married Andrea Smith, formerly of Brooklyn, NY in 2001; they currently live in Jersey City, NJ. He plays hearts on the internet (under the nickname rugc), swims, and enjoys basketball. He was a second tenor during his time in Club.

Q: How were you attracted to Glee Club?
Erik: In high school, I had just started learning about a cappella music, by listening to “The Bobs” and “The Nylons.” Then, on freshmen orientation day, I remember being on College Avenue going into the student center for a meeting and about 25 or so members of the Glee Club in their red polo shirts were singing Rutgers songs with great zeal. I flipped out in my mind and said to myself, “I MUST be a part of this!”

Michael: I found out at the Activities Fair near Milledoler Hall. I sang throughout high school, and really felt out of place when I first got to gigantic Rutgers. I’d like to say I sounded great in my audition, conducted by then-president Larry Freed, but I’m sure I didn’t. I got in, and only missed two rehearsals in four years—because I was announcing basketball games those nights for WRSU.

Q: Who were your best friends in Glee Club?
Erik: For me, I really saw the Glee Club as a family of brothers who were social when we were together—which was quite a bit considering rehearsal, tours, Patti’s, football games, etc. I hung out with people like Allen Seiden, Kernul Dave Hartkern, Glen Haley, Jordan Franzel (Jordan wasn’t in the club for too long, but we’re great friends from Kindergarten!), Eric Komar, Craig Fennell, Kevin Pirelli, and John Fesenko, among others. My senior year, seven of us made an a cappella group called Excess Baggage, which was a hoot!

Michael: The late Rob Rauch and I became close when we roomed together on the Mexico tour; I got to know Alan Seiden very well through visiting him in Brett Hall my freshman year. I remember Jason Rosenfeld, who sat beside me in my first rehearsal. My junior year, I invited future club president Eric “Del” Chrol over for quite a few parties. Later, when he got his master’s he invited me to his family’s party in Maryland. Chuck Stebbins, a former RU football player who joined Glee Club, used to stay over at my apartment when he was finishing his Bio degree on Busch Campus my junior year.

Q: Thoughts on the Directors when you sang?
Erik: I started with Robert Kapilow, who was amazing! He was only with the club for one year, but he wrote some great original music for the club (Now is the Tyme for Christmas and The Pasture). His conducting and musicianship were phenomenal. I still remember his conducting Under the Wide and Starry Sky at the Spring Concert and just loving what he did with it.

Michael: The Pasture is one of my favorite songs because it was sung on the Mexico tour. Under the Wide and Starry Sky is another favorite, because I remember that we learned the song in Mexico. The chorus leader was Steve Barton, who was a great influence on me.

Q: What is your favorite memory of the Glee Club?
Erik: I’m sure I didn’t. I got in, and only missed two rehearsals in four years—because I was announcing basketball games those nights for WRSU.

Michael: I think my favorite memory of the Glee Club was the time when we got that imagery, we sang it better. My best memory of him during a rehearsal was rehearsing the Beethoven Mass in C and as we were singing, “Crucifixus etiam pro nobis,” he yells, “Nail him in, boys!!” I mean, yes, it might have been in bad taste, but that’s basically how Beethoven wrote it and when we got that imagery, we sang it better.
Michael: To a great extent, Steve Barton kept me in school. However, there were always Wednesday night and Friday afternoon, which inspired me and gave me a reason to stay in school my freshman year. Steve kept me motivated in Club, which motivated me in other classes as well.

Q: Your most memorable performances?
Erik: Probably the most significant performance for me was singing in Budapest right before the Iron Curtain fell. We performed Randall Thompson’s Testament of Freedom to a huge audience of Hungarians who were trying to abandon communism. The applause at the end of that performance still rings in my ears.

Michael: I remember singing Old Queens Bell in a circle at Steve’s last rehearsal. I remember singing in the oldest church in the Western Hemisphere in Taxco, Mexico. I remember singing at a middle school in Mexico, with young Mexican girls asking for our autographs, and screaming “El Guapo” at Brian Beck. (It means “the handsome one.”) I remember conducting Old Queens Bell at my senior banquet in New Orleans. I remember our Alumni Banquet in 1992—singing until I couldn’t.

Q: What were your favorite songs and pieces?
Erik: I love so many Rutgers songs, but I’d have to say Down the Field, since I remember when Soup wrote that; Nobody Ever Died is another classic. And of course, The Bells Must Ring. Geoff Zoeller was always great on that one with the “FOOM-bah’s”. I have a couple of favorite performance pieces: Randall Thompson’s Tarantella; Britten’s Ballad of Little Musgrave and Lady Barnard; Villa-Lobos’ Mass for three voices (we only did two movements, but what great movements!); and just for fun, The Mulligan Musketeers!

Michael: My answers to both questions are the same: Old Queens Bell.

Q: What was your favorite Glee Club memory?
Erik: I always played the line…sideline, that is. I went to a few and I remember them being very muddy. But for some reason, I remember us always kicking the Marching Band’s can! (A cheer: “They’ve got…Q-Tip…heads!”)

Michael: We were 2-2; we won when Steve Barton was our quarterback, once on a last-minute comeback, in which he handed off to Ron Weller, who threw the game-winning conversion to Steve. It was a true John Elway moment. I played special teams positions for the synagogue. I got to record it with the Amor Artis Chamber Choir of Manhattan under the direction of Johannes Somary. As an added bonus, I will be one of two featured soloists on a musical tour of Bulgaria and Israel this coming November called Songs of Life. I will be performing the Bloch Sacred Service as the cantor in two of the performances. Wish me luck!

Michael: Only at RUGC events, like alumni concerts and picnics.

Q: What was your favorite Glee Club tradition?
Erik: I have so many good memories of the Glee Club, but I loved participating in some of the more colorful traditions, like being a ghoul on Halloween in the Kirkpatrick Chapel while David Drinkwater played the organ during the showing of Phantom of the Opera. Since I was only 125 pounds at the time (ah, to be young!), my job was to do “pew runs” by getting on the floor and crawling up to the front of the chapel while grabbing onto the ankles of the unsuspecting audience. Priceless! I also loved singing in the Valentine’s Day quartets. Delivering a rose and singing a love song to a young maid—the reactions we got were fantastic!

Michael: My first senior banquet—a few days previous to it Chuck Stebbins and I (along with many other bags) had gone canoeing, and I mistakenly took my wallet with me in the canoe, even though I had never done it before. I lost nearly all my ID, everything. With nothing to say who I was, a few days later I want to a banquet—at Roger Locandro’s farm—that showed me who I would be forever.

Q: What did you take away from Glee Club?
Erik: If it weren’t for the Glee Club, I probably would not have gone down the career path I chose. The musicality, the spirit… it has always stayed with me, and I’m forever grateful for the experience.

Michael: Family.
Rutgers University Glee Club CD Order Form

Name: ______________________________ 
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____ copies of The Bells Must Ring! @ $15.00 each = ___________ 
and ____ copies of Let Thy Good Spirit @ $15.00 each = ___________ 
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