As we were preparing for the Glee Club tour of Italy this past spring, two very different thoughts were running through my mind as a T.A. and assistant conductor. First of all, how excited and privileged we were to sing our program in so many beautiful and historic cities in Italy; and secondly, wondering how on earth we were going to keep 70 undergraduate men focused, healthy, and out of trouble on what for many of them was their first trip abroad. It was made clear to me within hours of our arrival, though, that this group of young gentlemen was prepared in every way to make their tour professional, exciting, fulfilling, and just as musically abundant as any I had heard or experienced before.

One of the unique features of the Rutgers University Glee club is the amazing diversity in culture, background, field of study, and musical experience amongst our singers. Within our ranks there are future doctors, lawyers, physicists, professors, jazz musicians, conductors, athletic trainers, paramedics, accountants, engineers, military officers, and much more. This is an experience that you do not get from ensembles at a conservatory of music. I know this well, as my "A Once in a Lifetime" continued on Page 4

Although charcoal barbeque grills might not extend back as far as our songs, it has become increasingly clear from the year's fantastic Log Cabin barbeque that our organization has stood the test of time through fraternity and a passion for musical excellence. This year's barbeque celebrated our 140 years of this excellence, and it was just as fantastic a celebration as you would assume for such an occasion.

In between the flipping of burgers, historian slide show, and football tosses, stories of old and new were passed around continuously. Historian Jeff Shaw could be seen from time to time running back to the log cabin bringing photo albums and posters that stirred stories of past tours throughout Germany, Italy, Czechoslovakia, and many other places. Alumnus J. Michael Horak, class of '73, shared with me: "On the day of the BBQ … it is the 40th anniversary of the day the Glee Club's concert in Bratislava was called off because local authorities feared a demonstration on that third anniversary of the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia."

Other alumni, such as Eric Contzius, told me about how the Glee Club instilled a love for singing that continues strong today. Constantly "Alumni BBQ" continued on Page 6

A Walk Through Italy with a Glee Club Alumnus …Page 7
participating in the barbershop world along with other alumni, he is hoping to get more alumni in the New Jersey area involved! If you’re interested, e-mail me at mhans@eden.rutgers.edu and I’ll put you in touch with him.

One of the other highlights for me was meeting with past officers of the Glee Club, such as Mark Sharp, who had found his way back as the new administrative advisor from the university for the Glee Club. “When the previous advisor was getting very busy with her other accounts, she needed to unload and I jumped at the idea of overseeing the Glee Club,” he shared with me in between cracking jokes with his former classmates. “The funniest part is that I was actually the Treasurer of the Glee Club back then.”

Between eating, drinking, laughing—and of course singing—times could not have been smoother. Thank you, Council, for help making this happen, thank you Glee Club members for coming out during your summer to mingle, and thank you alumni for taking the time out of your busy schedules to stay in touch. It was a joy to see the children running around the alumni table drawing on the whiteboard when someone donated and, of course, it was fantastic to meet families who put up with the weather when you could have opted out! Judging by the smiles on many of your faces, I don’t think it could have been a more pleasant time.

I hope to see you all at our upcoming concerts, especially our alumni concert, and of course a year from now when we have a new graduating class to catch up with over burgers and song!

It wouldn’t be an alumni BBQ without a burst of barbershop across generations
2009. The musicality of the Spratlan family knows no bounds, with her husband Lewis Spratlan, a world renowned composer, and her son Daniel Spratlan, a doctoral student of music under Dr. Gardner. Melinda not only loves male glee clubs but is even more excited about her son being part of the Glee Club. “Almost every year until I retired, when a male glee club joined the MHC Glee Club for the big spring concert, I was soprano soloist if one was needed. I loved singing with the glee clubs,” Melinda said. “The energy from the students was fantastic, and it was one of the delights of my time at MHC. So I am particularly pleased that Dan is now able to share some of that excitement when the Rutgers University Glee Club joins a women’s chorus for a big work.”

Melinda Spratlan’s husband, Lewis Spratlan, Pulitzer Prize winner for his opera, has written several pieces for the MHC Glee Club over the years. “The last piece my husband wrote was Four Songs for Soprano and Women’s Chorus. He wrote this especially for my last Faculty Recital in 2009, which was also marked the end of my performing career,” Melinda said. “I was 70 years old, so I figured it was time.”

Lewis Spratlan has recently written a new piece for the Rutgers University Glee Club, to be performed during the 140th spring concert. “It’s called Travels (in Australia, New Jersey and Paris), and I hope you all enjoy it,” Melinda said. “The first piece is lots of kangaroo-bouncy fun, the second is about a boy named Otto, and the third is a gorgeous description of a rainbow in Paris.”

Be sure to visit gleeclub.rutgers.edu for upcoming events, updating your contact information, and for keeping in touch through social networks!

**THE NEW ALUMNI CORNER**

NEIL RAMCHANDANI, SOE ’11

Hello, everyone! This is Neil Ramchandani, writing, now an alumnus of the School of Engineering, but more importantly, an alumnus of the Rutgers University Glee Club. I am writing to you to let you know about one of the ways we are getting alumni more involved and connected.

While we are improving our website, yearly social events, and ways to help out, one new project of ours is the New Alumni Corner! Through our website, you can submit big events going on in your life to be printed in future Glee Gabs! Whether it be getting married, touring with a revival band, or making a huge break in your career, we’ll hope to have it be included in each issue.

We will also start a LinkedIn group as well, so be sure to connect professionally as well as socially! I look forward to hearing about your accomplishments and keeping in touch with you all. Take care, and I’m sure I’ll talk to you all soon.

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<td>6:00 / 9:00 PM, 5:00 / 7:30 PM</td>
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Once in a Lifetime
with the RUGC
Continued from Page 1

graduate degree is from a school with 400 total graduate and undergraduate students, all majoring in musical performance or education. Not that a conservatory setting is inferior, but you simply cannot find the kind of cross-section of individuals represented by the Glee Club coming together to make music, without a community like Rutgers University. This type of diversity can bring our group closer together as we share conversations on long bus and plane rides, always learning something new from each other and sharing different perspectives on our experiences as we travelled along. With this group there is an endless supply of knowledge and humor, and an honest concern for and interest in one another that came out 10-fold during our tour. These traits within a choir will take care of so many other problems that one may face on an international tour; these young men were always looking out for each other during our daytime excursions or while out at night, they always had a knack for keeping the mood light if a stressful situation arose, and because everyone had such a clear sense of purpose about our tour, instilled by our director and one another, there were only a handful of instances over two weeks where any type of discipline or a “gentle reminder of tour etiquette” was needed.

A few of my most potent memories from our tour include the enveloping sound as we sang under the dome at St. Mark’s in Venice, the majestic splendor surrounding us as we sang at St. Peter’s in Vatican City, seeing Michelangelo’s David in Florence, the massive gothic Duomo in Milan, walking along the canals of Venice perusing endless local crafts, and the marathon performance of a dozen choirs during an international choral festival in Salerno in which we participated.

In Pompei, Dr. Gardner conducts the Glee Club to experience the Roman amphitheatre’s acoustics

Just as prominent in my mind, though, are the performances that were not on the itinerary. During our daily guided tours we would often stop to sing a piece or two in the most spectacular churches, just for the pleasure of hearing our music in a new space and sharing the moment with one another and anyone else who might be in the church. After our first concert in San Dona’ del Piave, the Italian men’s chorus that had performed with us, Coro Monte Peralba, prepared a dinner for both choirs. After copious amounts of food and perhaps a smidge of local wine, the evening culminated in the two groups singing for one another. Though our language barrier was significant, the spirit in the room was overpowering, and I believe that set the bar for our level of artistic communication and respect for what our Italian hosts provided for us. On our next-to-last night of the tour, I found myself with seven or eight other members singing at a café near our hotel in Rome a half hour after the doors had closed. The employees were gathered around the bar, and we were singing everything from renaissance motets to our fight song (of course, we did not have a concert the next day!). Earlier that night, after our final concert at the Basilica di Sant’ Agostino, the Glee Club had sprawled onto the church steps and courtyard in our tuxedos to perform a number of Rutgers songs in full celebratory fashion. The joy, brotherhood and love of the music being sung was apparent to everyone who walked by then stopped to listen, and by those leaning out nearby windows with cameras and video recorders. These instances are a testament to the kind of open, generous, and intensely musical group this is. These also are the kind of experiences that one can only get on a tour, and this is why they are so important to ensembles in the growth of their singers as musicians and as people.

Graduate students Steven Caldwell and Daniel Spratlin overlooking the city of Florence and its Duomo
Our director, Patrick Gardener, no doubt played the most important role in tying the Glee Club together and helping us to find the essential balance of fun, musicality, and professionalism. He had spoken many times before our tour about the approach that we would need to be successful musically and as ambassadors for Rutgers University, though it was ultimately up to the members of the Glee Club to make it happen, and they rose to the occasion. It is my sense that every member embraced the moment while they were in Italy, and everyone allowed themselves to appreciate completely the significance of the places they were and the uniqueness of what they were able to share. My hat goes off to the men of the Rutgers University Glee Club, truly and eternally Brothers in Song.

Seventy men in grey blazers run onto the field ready to sing the National Anthem at the Homecoming football game. The electric buzz of men screaming the “RU! RAH! RAH!” welcomes future Rutgers University students to the campus, right when they schedule their first semester of classes. A random friend from back home fondly reminisces about his trip singing in the world’s most prestigious musical venues, such as Basilica di San Marco, Notre Dame de Paris, and the Vatican.

Since 1872, every member of the Rutgers University Glee Club has their own unique story about how they discovered the oldest student organization on campus. The Glee Club is no ordinary men’s choir, with its own flair

During the very first week of classes in the Fall semester, hundreds of students vie for entry into the Glee Club, along with Kirkpatrick Choir, University Choir, and the Voorhees Choir. Students fill out information regarding their schedules, musical experience, and their reasons for joining the best choirs in New Jersey. They then go into a music room on the first level of the Marryott Music Building on Douglass Campus and sing their scales for Professors Gardner, Retzko, and Chase. They are also asked to sing *Happy Birthday*. After their audition, the singers wait until they hear the news from a rowdy group of college students.

Recent graduate and former Glee Clubber, Adam Vidal, has a different story about how he was launched into the Glee Club. Vidal said that his future brother-in-law, Vinny Caravano, introduced Glee Club to him during his senior year of high school. He said that he also tried to get out of his audition but Caravano would not let him. After his audition, Vidal thought the audition process was quite casual for such a prestigious ensemble.

“It was a good thing Vinny did not let me quit, because I loved it so much that I wanted to give back to the club,” Vidal said. “I went from being a guy who didn’t want to be in the Glee Club to being the grillmaster of the university’s most prestigious organization.”

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Every single member—past, present, and future—has his own distinctive story that personalizes how he started his own Rutgers University Glee Club experience. Whatever the tale, they all end the same way: they are now, and forever will be, members of the Rutgers University Glee Club.
To me, several elements contributed to putting this event high in my memory bank. First and foremost, the great performances of the Glee Club and its incredibly talented and hard working leader, Dr. Patrick Gardner. The high quality of the performances was not missed by the Italian audiences, which became evident by their loud and long applause. I’m sure that those hearing our singers will never forget what they heard and saw.

On our tour (Family & Friends and Glee Club alumni, of which there were three), the second most appreciated part was the inimitable tour leader, Allessandra Conti, who delightfully did her best with the English language while doing an excellent job of telling us more than we may have wanted to know about Italy. She was entertaining, well organized, and never lost a tourist—quite a feat, especially with a mob of 42 Americans (most of whom can’t speak Italian). At the end of our trip, she threatened to come to the Rutgers campus with her utensils and cook for us! Each of us has other additional highlights. To Mary and me, it was not so much looking at huge and magnificent churches, even though their value was enhanced when the voices of the Glee Club reverberated throughout the great halls.

Rather it was, for example, the tour guide Luciano, who lead us around the quaint old town of Ravenna pumping her bicycle with her right foot, forcing the tourists to keep up with her. We will never forget Ravenna and its history because of her. Ah, then there was Lucca, birthplace of the great romantic composer, Puccini. In this local tour, we passed by the Luigi Boccherini Music School. With time off after the tour, we went back, and walked into what we thought was a church next to the school, only to find that some students were giving recitals. It was here that we discovered a 16 year old violin virtuoso, who according to his professor plays the piano equally well. Hopefully, he will be discovered and have a successful career. Arezzo was incredible with its high defensive walls surrounding the city. Nothing could have made it more impenetrable except maybe to plant poison ivy on the outside of the wall. Padua was high on our list of great old cities. A college town, a bit older than Rutgers, is to me remembered by the usual good things but especially its mud and cream-colored buildings. Padua was the setting for Shakespeare’s *Taming of the Shrew*.

The food. Ah, yes, the food. Forget regular coffee. I drink cappuccino now and stay away from pasta and tiramisu. They are big on pork meat and antipasto in sunny (it never even hinted of rain) Italy. I think that we are stereotyped into expecting certain foods, but they did not disappoint. For first time siteseers, there can be no doubt that Milan, Venice, Florence and of course, Rome are each a must-see worth losing sleep over when we visit again. While on the subject of losing sleep, it was again worth it on the occasions where we enjoyed dinner provided by local parishioners after the Glee Club concerts. I have to admit that it was challenging for this member of the class of 1950 and very proud member of the great Rutgers University Glee Club, but thank you to all of you on the tour who helped me with the steps.
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