

# VISIONARY

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THE JOURNAL OF GAY SPIRIT VISIONS

Summer 2003

# Music

SPIRIT WORKS THROUGH MUSIC TO LIFT OUR VOICES,  
MOVE OUR FEET AND OPEN OUR HEARTS.  
SEVERAL GSV BROTHERS DESCRIBE THEIR LOVE FOR  
MUSIC AND ITS SPIRITUAL GIFTS.

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**Gay Spirit Visions**

**Mailing Address:**

P.O. Box 339, Decatur, GA 30031-0339

**Voice mail:** 404/658-0221

**E-mail:** info@gayspiritvisions.org

**Website:**

www.gayspiritvisions.org

**Council of Trusted Elders**

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*Presiding Elder*

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**Advisors:** Martin "TreeWalker" Isganitis, Andrew Ramer, John Stowe

**Journal Committee:**

Jennings Fort, *Editor*

Mike Goettee, *Design & Production*

**Submission Queries:**

jenman@mindspring.com  
Please put "GSV *Visionary*"  
in the subject line.

**Address changes & advertising queries:**

info@gayspiritvisions.org

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ELDER'S  
PERCH

Dear brothers:

In this country at this time, we're immersed in a culture that comes to us through our heads, eyes, ears, taste and touch. We live in a time and place that is so not safe, bombarded with images and messages that go directly to our conscious and subconscious minds and ask: Are you rich enough, skinny enough, young enough to be happy? Are you driving the right car and wearing the right shoes? Is your ego/head having its/your way? Our mistake is in this living, believing acceptance of what our ego/head, the world, is as the truth! In our ego our thoughts, actions manifest and keep us separate and blind to reality. So you get your new S.U.V., you wear Gucci loafers, you lose weight and your cards are maxed out. I've been there. Still, there's that feeling of "is that all there is?" that lurks below.

I had the good fortune to travel to Spain recently. Living and working in that country was a most beautiful experience. I became friends with 11

Spaniards. We worked, played and lived together for 25 days. I quickly became aware that my new friends felt like children. They are, in fact, all adults, professional and accomplished. Yet the warmth and genuine connection I had with them, was profound almost immediately. I found this first to be confusing. I then realized, unhappily, that I am tainted and jaded, lost in the spin of life in the U.S.A. My Spanish friends aren't. Their values, choices and culture are about living now - this moment - always from their open child-like hearts. Spain is so much safer. Caring about material possessions, hidden agendas, getting to the top is so obviously American. For them every moment can be an opportunity to laugh, touch, talk and be in the hearts and spirits of the ones they are with. It's the difference between living life in the quest to be "alive" or living life in the quest for the best toys.

I will continue to hold our GSV community in my heart and know that we can be together, safe and real, remembering what is the truth and learning over and over what is not. Please join me in the quest to live in my heart and my struggle to see through the rest.

In love,  
Craigalee

*Craig Cook is a long-time Atlanta resident and can be reached at Craigalee2@aol.com.*





## SPIRIT IN MUSIC

When I was 31 I still lived in my North Carolina hometown, working in a dead-end job and desperately needing to meet more gay people. So I decided to take a chance. I drove over to Charlotte to a meeting of One Voice, the gay chorus. My only experience performing had been playing clarinet and trombone in my junior high school band. But there was no chorus audition and I joined. I loved the weekly rehearsals and tried to sing every note perfectly. At the December concert, I was nervous and excited to walk into the Unitarian church and sing with other gay men and women, trying to create something beautiful for ourselves and the world.

BY JENNINGS FORT



After a couple years, a guy named Mark, who also lived in Gastonia, came up to me after rehearsal and asked if I wanted to car pool. Driving back and forth from Gastonia each week, we became good friends. We stood with the chorus and sang in churches, auditoriums, hotels and parks. Our love of music brought us together and we kept us sane in our little North Carolina town as we drove to rehearsals gossiping, laughing and loving each other's company.

Every four years the 100+ gay choruses worldwide gather for a festival. My first was in Denver in 1992. Each chorus performed during a week-long series of concerts of the funniest, most well-performed, moving music I've ever heard. I've never laughed and cried so much in a week's time. We all felt supported and lifted by

each other. Each chorus, no matter how skilled, received a standing ovation. This was as meaningful for me as our GSV Fall Conference.

With each choral season, my limited knowledge of choral music grew. One piece of music always touched me deeply: a Maurice Durufle motet, *Ubi Caritas*. The first line translates: "Where there is charity and love, there also is God." Another that moved me was *Gabriel's Oboe* by Ennio Morricone. Even though I didn't really realize it then, I believe these pieces connected me directly to Spirit. How else did this music break through my hard shell and open my heart so quickly? Sometimes even the opening notes connect with something deep inside and my tears overflow.

Joining the gay chorus was one of the best things I'd ever done for myself. My best friend, Mark, introduced me to GSV, and, at a Fall Conference, I met my partner, John. This was about following my bliss and taking a chance. I think Spirit guided me the whole way – through music.

Many of us have stories about music. In this issue of *Visionary*, several of our GSV brothers describe how music has had special meaning in their lives and led them in spiritual directions.

For me, when I least expect it, listening to a Bach CD on my way home from work or even replaying something in my head, music can quietly open my heart again. It's like for a few moments, when I allow myself, I can feel Spirit's love and grace. It sure doesn't happen when my heart is closed with anger or fatigue or frustration. It takes intention and a little effort and I hope I can learn to let music in more often as another way to experience Spirit. ▼

Jennings Fort lives in Atlanta and can be reached at [Jenman@mindspring.com](mailto:Jenman@mindspring.com).

**GSV potlucks** in Atlanta, are held the fourth Saturday of the month at 7:30 p.m., unless otherwise noted.

**GSV yoga** in Atlanta. For more information, contact Jim Braden 404-627-2438 or [buffalonimbus@yahoo.com](mailto:buffalonimbus@yahoo.com).

**GSV Heart Circles** in Atlanta are held the second Sunday of every month, hosted by Ben Linton at 7:30 p.m. For location contact Ben Linton at 404-373-9869, [benlinton4@aol.com](mailto:benlinton4@aol.com).

**July 26 – GSV Potluck: No one offered to host.** Watch for e-mail if situation changes.

**August 23 – GSV Pool Party and Potluck with a special performance by Atlanta's "Adode Muse, A Gay Negro Ensemble"** who will also introduce their new CD. Hosted by Vic Jackson and Vern Lewis, 1090 Hampton Way, Atlanta. 404-636-3311 Duncan Teague will emcee a poolside talent show. 4-9:30 p.m. Suggested \$5 donation per person to cover expenses. [jacksonlewis@mindspring.com](mailto:jacksonlewis@mindspring.com).

**September 27th – GSV Potluck** Hosted by Russ Singleary and Jim Hackney, 493 Robinson Avenue SE (Grant Park) Atlanta, GA 404-635-0915, [rpsingl@yahoo.com](mailto:rpsingl@yahoo.com)

**October 25 - GSV Potluck** Hosted by Patrick Mitchell, 2781 McClave Drive, Doraville, GA, 770-451-6158, [thegardenretreat@mindspring.com](mailto:thegardenretreat@mindspring.com).

**November 28 - GSV Potluck** Hosted by Doug Caulkins and Mikel Wilson, 535 Watergate Ct., Roswell, GA 770-993-9959, [snakeowl@yahoo.com](mailto:snakeowl@yahoo.com)

**December 27 – GSV Potluck** Hosted by Wendell Johnson, 1608 Asheforde Drive, Marietta, GA, 770-552-4744, [Louis8@hotmail.com](mailto:Louis8@hotmail.com)

If you live in the Atlanta area and are interested in hosting a GSV potluck, please contact [moonxdragon@earthlink.net](mailto:moonxdragon@earthlink.net).



## Gay Spirit Visions

### A Mission Statement for Our Second Decade and A New Millennium

We are committed to creating safe, sacred space that is open to all spiritual paths, wherein loving gay men may explore and strengthen spiritual identity.

We are committed to creating a spiritual community with the intent to heal, nurture our gifts and potential, and live with integrity in the world.

We are committed to supporting others in their spiritual growth by sharing experiences and insights.

To fulfill these goals we facilitate annual retreats and conferences, sponsor social events, publish a newsletter, and maintain web-based communications for men who love men.

# REFLECTIONS ON MY FIRST MOUNTAIN EXPERIENCE

BY KEN STOFFT

**O**n a rainy morning in April I drove my gray Hyundai up the mountain, surrounded by fog and with an intense expectation that this weekend was going to be revealing. This weekend was my birthday present to myself. I was to be deeply surprised, humbled, energized, confused and gifted.

I had never participated in a GSV event before. I had talked with my partner about attending an event and came on my own. Around 1998 we had talked about getting to an event while we were still on the east coast, but didn't. We moved to Portland, OR, and continued our joint and disjointed discoveries with and about each other. After three years, we returned to the east coast and separated. What a painful and freeing surprise that was, like bouncing with both feet into a mound of fresh cow manure. It was a death and re-birth.

So, my five-hour drive up to Highlands, NC, contained many ruminations about the past, what the hell I was going to be doing in the future and what this gay men's retreat held in store for me. What I did want most was to connect with other

gay men. I wanted to be held, caressed, cuddled and coddled like a little boy who had just lost his playmate. Ugh.

The rain came down and the fog became denser. I was greeted by George Miller with his broad smile and open arms, who introduced me to Craig and the weekend opened with a warm, sunny, and most generous welcome. I had no frame of reference for what was about to happen. Touch was either punitive or else sexual for me, outside my immediate family. I knew my father's massive hands only as discipline, like iron fists. My need to touch and be touched was usually in the context of quick sex.

Needless to say, I tripped myself silly over the weekend in more ways than one. I'm grateful for the gentle and kind regard I was given during those embarrassing moments. However, even with those mistaken opportunities, each hour brought healing energy, accepting embraces and humbling realizations about attachment, incompleteness, living in the moment. The opening massage session, the Tai Chi with self-pleasure, the dancing and movement all touched the inner core of my spirit and

flesh and was a healing experience. The week before I pledged these things to myself: I would make dance a regular part of my meditation practice, I would make a commitment to help others move beyond trauma and I put out to the universe my need to connect with others of kindred spirit. There are no accidents, are there?

Simply put, my first experience with GSV members was on The Mountain and it was bright and sunny in the mist. The tiger has been awakened and roars with deep satisfaction and gratitude. Thank you to all of you who were there— past, present, and to come. Till the autumn, peace and namaste from one of your brothers. ▼

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*Ken's private practice, "Transition Coaching: Moving Beyond Addictions and Trauma to Spiritual Self-Empowerment," uses hypnotherapy to serve lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender folks and men moving beyond institutional priesthood and the ministry. He is also a Reiki master/teacher. Contact him in Savannah, GA, at 912-844-6189 or Ken\_Stofft@yahoo.com.*

## COUNSELING AND PSYCHOTHERAPY

Individual, couples and group psychotherapy with a focus on:

- Intimacy and relationships
- Sexuality
- Spirituality and spiritual direction
- Coming out and other gay-related issues
- Depression and anxiety

Visit my web site for links to health and spirituality-related resources, articles I've written, workshops and other events I facilitate and a sign-up for my free email newsletter.

I'm a member of the American Counseling Association, The Association for Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Issues in Counseling, the Licensed Professional Counselor's Association of Georgia and the Society for the Scientific Study of Sexuality.

**John R. Ballew, M.S.**

Licensed Professional Counselor

(404) 874-8536

[jballew@mindspring.com](mailto:jballew@mindspring.com)

[www.bodymindsoul.org](http://www.bodymindsoul.org)



# Music

## Finding his voice

**A**s a little boy I had a recurring dream: People on a city street going about their everyday activities are suddenly moved simultaneously to join as an exalted choir of voices. All sing their individual songs, yet the interplay is perfect harmony. When the moment passes, they return to their daily lives but are completely transformed by the experience. I looked for this to happen.

To me, music is irresistible but has an unpredictable effect. Brahms' "Lullaby" touched me so directly as a child that I would beg my mother not to sing it lest I weep. My favorite part of church was the music, especially hearing the choir and joining in the congregational singing. I sang in several choirs at church and in school; often, I was given a solo. When I was 10, I attended a concert by the Columbus Boychoir and was amazed to learn that boys could spend their whole lives singing. They even performed a short Mozart opera for the second half — in costume! At the close of the performance, my elementary school music teacher took me for an impromptu audition with the director. I was accepted into the choir and school but I was too young to leave home and move to New Jersey, of course.

I sang in high school and got a bachelor's degree in music education from Florida State. My voice teacher had been a Mozart and Strauss specialist at the



BY TEDDY JONES

New York City Opera and was beautiful. I adored her. I decided then and there that I would work someday at the New York City Opera. An admirer of Beverly Sills, I also wanted to be onstage with her. Both of these dreams came true in time, but at a cost. And my childhood dream was still a dream.

I moved to New York in 1973 to study acting at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts, but music and the opera remained my first love. The Ansonia Hotel where I lived was home to a number of singers at the City Opera. Through them I got hired as a "character mime" (a.k.a. "spear-carrier"), and my opera career was launched.

I understood much later that all this would have been wonderful, except for the truth behind the matter. As a young "gay" man (it was a new term then), I was not prepared either to come out to my family or to face them while keeping the secret. So, I escaped the problem by removing myself to a big city. Sound familiar, anyone? The unanticipated cost in not speaking the truth was that I literally gave up my voice. On the day I left, I physically could not speak a word to my family. Now, I was in the opera, but I could no longer sing. In fact, despite years of study, I left New York unable to sing at all because the emotional pain and tension in my throat were so great.

After 11 years of self-imposed exile, it was time to go home. I knew the only way I could do it was to "face the music" and come out to my family. I did, and my voice returned. Since then, I've performed a variety of roles in plays and

musicals (mostly Sondheim) for community and regional theatres. But my childhood dream awaited fulfillment.

When I heard of GSV at a Body Electric workshop in November 2001, I knew immediately I wanted to come to The Mountain. I brought a small harp to that first winter retreat which I played on a whim for those gathered on the Lodge deck between meditations. As simple as it was, that chance occurrence changed my life. I now see it was my childhood dream finally come true, but updated with a transcendental twist: My hometown folks were now spirit-conscious gay men, and our singing was not physical but harmonized in spirit. I left the retreat transformed, sensing that spirit is my true voice and knowing that voice can never be lost and sings without ceasing. ▼

*Teddy Jones is an associate professor of communications and theatre at Austin Peay State University, Clarksville, TN, when he's not playing one of his four harps.*

"Music that speaks to me most directly and powerfully includes the opening movement of the Symphony No. 8 of Gustav Mahler for its invocation to the Creator Spirit; the "Four Last Songs" of Richard Strauss for their vision of transition; and from Dot's appearance through the end of the second act of Sondheim's "Sunday in the Park with George" to remind us, when we've forgotten, of our own creator spirit."

—Teddy Jones

# WHERE EVERYTHING IS MUSIC

Don't worry about saving these songs!  
And if one of our instruments breaks,  
it doesn't matter.

We have fallen into the place  
where everything is music.

— Rumi

I started piano lessons when I was 8, on a huge, old upright. My parents never needed to push. From my earliest awareness, I knew I wanted to make music and to do so on a piano.



By BOB STRAIN

That was 45 years ago and I still am playing. Still taking lessons, too. At times, other activities have dominated my life, but my love affair with music has never disappeared. Music has given me many rich experiences and memories and brought wonderful people into my world. My life partner met me through music, and I still can feel his closeness whenever I hear one of 'our songs.' I have been very blessed.

As an effeminate gay kid *and* a piano player, I suffered the tortures all sissies encountered in 1950s-60s West Texas. Music became my sanctuary and I spent as much time as possible in that safe space. The need for a personal spiritual path became clear to me in conjunction with my awakening sexuality, which led me beyond the unaccepting church of my childhood. Music became the vehicle for that new path. Playing the piano is worship for me. Dancing is, too; so is singing. These acts of love and pleasure are the basic rituals of my spiritual practice.

My main perspective on music is that of a performer. As such, I believe my sexuality cannot be separated from what I do. Everything is music. As Charlie Parker put it, "If you don't live it, it won't come out of your horn." To tell my gay-man's truth in music, I rely a lot on the "walks-between" archetype Andrew Ramer teaches about at GSV. I look for ways to reconcile perceived dualities – strength and sensitivity, assertion and subtlety – and express their essential

unity. I try to go beyond the closet of surface considerations – virtuosity and technical brilliance – and to the heart and meaning of the music.

I especially enjoy music composed by our gay brothers – Tchaikovsky, Scriabin, Strayhorn, Britten, Gershwin, Porter, Bernstein, Copland, Sondheim and Barber. To my ears, their music is fascinating both for its artistic value and for its expressive range. They are part of our ancestry (or, in Sondheim's case, of our living family).

Ultimately, I try to play what I hear in my heart. I believe all music exists in an unending circle: It begins in spirit, and channels through composer through performer through listener back to spirit. Every point in this circle is necessary and each point can add a little more beauty and joy to the world than existed before the music entered. It is a wonderful dance.

Finally, I recognize that music has its power to move us because it reminds us of our mortality, "tending, as all music does, toward silence," in Mary Oliver's words. It vanishes as soon as it appears, echoing our own transience on earth. This is one reason we relate so emotionally to music, I think. We remember previous times in our lives, we engage with the present as the music plays and we glimpse the future – our death, the silence – even as the dance continues. Because it remains unchanging in memory, music also whispers to us of eternity. But while it is playing, nothing is more fully alive.

One practice that I find helpful is not to look at music as a way to fill empty psychic space. Music is a special, sacred thing that can open doors to spirit and it needs attention. It works well as an aspect of meditation, bodywork and multimedia environments because of its healing and artistic qualities. But when I'm busy around the house with chores and can't really listen, I leave the stereo off. For me, playing music in such situations encourages a distracted "not-listening" that diminishes both the music and my ability to listen. To really absorb music requires time and attention,

whether the full-body-attention of dancing or the still attention of mindful engagement in listening. Take the time; you'll be rewarded greatly. ▼

Stop the words now.

Open the window in the center of your chest,  
and let the spirits fly in and out.

— Rumi

*Bob Strain is a working musician in a jazz quartet and several swing bands. He also plays solo piano and teaches jazz at a conservatory in Virginia, where he is working on a doctor of musical arts degree in piano performance. He is 53, single, HIV+ for over 14 years and lives in a small West Virginia town. For 12 of the past 13 GSV conferences, he has been seen lurking behind the piano during parts of the Saturday night show.*

## My favorite music at the moment (this was tough):

"Lotus Blossom" by Billy Strayhorn, played by Fred Hersch on the album "Passion Flower."

"Dream of the Return" by Pat Metheny, sung by Pedro Aznar on the Pat Metheny Group album "Letter from Home."

Concerto No. 2 in f minor, by Frederic Chopin, played by Guiomar Novaes, with Otto Klemperer conducting the Vienna Symphony Orchestra.

I must add one more that is always on the list because it was 'our song' (Dexter and me): George Harrison's song "Something" from The Beatles' "Abbey Road" album.

Meditative music - I love anything by Arvo Pärt, the Henri Gorecki Third Symphony and the Brian Eno-Harold Budd collaborations, especially "The Pearl."

Also - the Bach partitas, and the Schumann quintet and Karyn Allison's "In Blue."

— Bob Strain

# IF MUSIC BE THE FOOD OF LOVE,

# Play On

BY GLENN FOX



and youth. It's challenging and rewarding. I recently returned to my grammar school where my grade school music teacher came to our community concert. We rehearsed in the same room where I spent my second grade year. I have often said I would never perform in my hometown. But I did.

I've traveled often and attended concerts of my favorite performers. I've followed Luciano Pavoratti for several years and always felt so inspired by his beautiful tenor

voice. While visiting a school in Charleston, SC, some friends there told me about a Pavoratti concert they would attend that week, long sold out. I checked the ticket office every day but had no luck. On the concert day, I dejectedly walked around the auditorium about 4 p.m. and noticed the back door open. I thought I would walk in and see the stage where Pavoratti would perform. Inside, someone greeted me saying, "Oh, you're here to tune the piano?" And I, having never tuned a piano before, said, "Yes!" Now what, I thought. I sat down at the beautiful 9-foot grand Steinway and doodled, like a piano tuner. It seemed funny to me then, but I felt God was leading me somewhere, I just didn't know where. After a while, I noticed caterers arranging a table with white tablecloths, candelabras, flowers, food, ice sculptures — the works. I saw them roll in their carts, then disappear. During one of these intervals, God spoke to me: "Crawl under the table with the long tablecloth." Who am I to question God? So I did. I looked at my watch. It was 4:30. I knew the concert began at 8 p.m. I decided to stay there. I

napped, meditated and was fine. I awoke to hear the auditorium filling with people. Then I heard Pavoratti speaking.

If I moved to my far right and lifted the tablecloth slightly, I could see him backstage. I watched him prepare. It was the most incredible experience of my life — to see a true professional put on his cloak and persona, then walk in front of the curtain. When I moved toward the audience and lifted the tablecloth, I would see him almost the same way the audience did. It was a great concert! I suppose no one in the audience ever saw me. I was careful to lift the tablecloth slowly, only a millimeter. After all, it could be disruptive to find something wild under the table during your concert.

After this beautiful and inspiring event, there was a reception on stage. I watched everyone's feet and saw my friends' feet. I'd had a crush on my friend for years and he was with his date in her pretty high heels with painted toenails. I had the impulse to grab her ankle, but, with great restraint, I refrained. I considered crawling out then, but they were all in formal gowns and tuxedos and I was in my running suit. So I just stayed there. Finally it was all over and everyone left. When the caterers returned, I simply parted the tablecloth and tiptoed out the front door. No one knows my secret. Please help me keep it quiet. I know you will. ▼

*Glenn Fox is a professional musician and also assists in tantra workshops with Rudolph Ballentine, author of the best seller, Radical Healing. Contact Glenn at [foxportctr@highstream.net](mailto:foxportctr@highstream.net).*



All my life, my most enduring interest, passion, and love has been music in its many forms. This includes piano, voice, dance and all manner of improvisation, beginning at an early age. My sister and I invented a game called "cha-cha tag." The rules were strict: staying in the "one-two-cha-cha-cha" step, you chased other players. But if you got out of step, ran, rushed the rhythm or otherwise cheated, you were disqualified. It was fun and difficult — tagging others and running away, accompanied by music with a cha-cha rhythm.

As a child I had a vivid, recurring dream of a large house. In each room I found a beautiful Steinway grand piano, each more beautiful than the next. I played each one, then moved on. Even now, when I'm separated too long from a piano, I feel piano withdrawal. This dream is comforting and is my primary meditation. I can recreate it any time and often do.

I studied piano, voice, and dance from age 5 through college and later conservatory. Now part of my work life involves a traveling five-piece ensemble that specializes in concerts mostly for children

# SEEDED IN THE STARS

"Seeded in the Stars" was the name of the commissioned song that the Denver Gay Men's Chorus took to GALA (Gay And Lesbian Association of Choruses) V in Tampa, FL, July 2000. Seeded in the stars is how my partner, Mark, and I came to see our beginning, our love and our lives together.

We met on the first day of the festival. This festival is a gathering of choruses: gay, lesbian, mixed, etc., every four years. On the first day, anticipating the wonderful music I would be experiencing over the next several days, I eagerly strode to the concert hall with my best friend, Dan. I looked ahead and saw the brightest blue eyes in the world. They were looking directly at me. This is how we first became aware of each other.

Over the course of the festival, we were thrown together time and again by Spirit, made to meet and get to know each other. Each step we took was with a

BY ROGER "BLUE" FREEBY



background of the glorious choral music presented by our tribe. We drew together listening to the music and, as one would lay his head on the other's chest, the pulsing of our hearts. We grew closer and closer as the music entered our souls, bonding us in ways that only music could have done.

The final day of the conference featured works by festival choruses, a combination of members of different groups that presents music written for this event. The one piece that brought us closest was one performed by the women's festival chorus. It was a vocalese of the "New World Symphony" written to honor a group of female musicians in a concentration camp during World War II.

They had no instruments and reproduced the music they knew so well using their voices. We held each other, tears streaming down our faces, becoming a couple blessed by this event, this music.

By the end of the week, we knew there would be more than just this experience. I asked Mark (we had not chosen our faerie names yet) to consider moving to Denver to continue our symphony. Thus began a three-month courtship that culminated in our lives together as partners bound in love and born in music. ▼

*Roger "Blue" Freeby lives with his partner Mark "Dogwood" Clinard in Denver, CO. He has been involved with GSV since Dogwood introduced him to it in 1996. Music has always been an important part of his life. He has sung with the Denver Gay Men's Chorus since 1985.*

## Windsong

BY MIKE GOETTEE



I've fallen in love with a musician. He constantly plays for me and makes my heart swell every time I hear the music performed with the instruments I've given him over the years. It's the wind, and he strums the chimes I've collected for him while on vacations. While at the Spring Retreat at The Mountain, I enjoyed some of the most exquisitely tuned chimes I've ever heard. They were hung by Chase Robinson from the observation tower for the weekend.

Several years ago while sitting atop a high rocky cliff on the island of Santorini, I was brought to tears by the sound of the wind there, a chorus singing in rising and falling chords. I could understand how the Four Winds came to be a part of

Greek mythology. But that wasn't the first time I knew I loved the wind.

I was on another vacation in St. Simons Island, GA, one summer and was entertained by the sound of a small wind chime on the porch of our beach house. Every time I heard it my joy bumped up a notch. I found the same chime for sale in town and bought it to remind me of my visit. It seems that when I'm away from the fuss and bother of the work week and domestic duties, when I'm on some pleasant getaway, I'm more inclined to notice such beauty as the sound of the wind. When he doesn't find his voice as in Santorini, he will play whatever instruments are available to let me know he's there.

I have several of the beautiful cast bronze and ceramic bells from architect Paolo Soleri's experimental city in Arizona—Arcosanti. Sale of the bells supports the work there as well as various charities. I found a high-pitched chime in Blue Ridge, GA. Now I can sit on my patio and wait for the slightest breeze to strum the smallest chime that sounds like a fairy just flew by. When the wind picks up, I hear a full symphony. Western desert, Eastern coast, Georgia mountains, Greek Islands. My vacations sing to me through the wind. ▼

*Mike Goettee has been involved with GSV since 1995 and is the designer of both Visionary and our Fall Conference brochures. maxglitz@mindspring.com*



## TONING IN

It's Sunday night around 6 at the metaphysical store *Inner Space* for the monthly gathering of the Atlanta Toning Circle, in an old Steak and Ale. The structure still has the wood beams and stucco plaster. It seems that there would be heavy wooden tables and chairs already prepared for an 8 oz.-steak and beer. Candace is there, preparing the space. A cloth laid out on the floor. Four candles, one at each corner. She removes the bubble wrap from each of three large crystal bowls. Each bowl is carefully placed on a rubber ring in the center.

It's 6:15. Most everyone has arrived. It's a smaller gathering than usual, nine men and women. There are several regulars. They share a few hugs and re-connect. There are also a few new faces who say "hello." They look forward to tonight's journey.

6:25. Time to start. Everyone is now seated in a circle and Candace welcomes them. As they settle into the large wood chairs, Candace outlines the evening. "We will begin by toning our names." They start with Rose. She says her name and, in unison, the circle "tones" the name back to her. As the sound "roooo ssssss" is sounded, she looks around the room and makes eye contact with each person. Around the circle, each person looks into the eyes of the other and says a silent "thank-you" as they tone each



name. There is a sense of connection, each person for the other.

"Take a slow, deep breath and get comfortable in your chair," Candace says, ending this exercise and moving onto the next. Time seems to disappear and each person relaxes more and more, each connected to a higher being.

The evening ends with centering the chakras. Candace gives us the instructions:

**Root:** sound the sacred vowel, UH, visualize the color red

**Sacral:** OOO, visualize orange

**Solar Plexis:** OH, yellow

**Heart:** AH, green

**Throat:** AYE, blue

**Third Eye:** EEE, violet

**Crown:** EEE, white

"UHHHHH." Each person releases a deep sound from the throat as the meditation begins. The group continues this for several minutes as Candace moves a baton around the rim of the crystal bowl, emitting a frequency that is heard and felt.

"UHHHOOOO" as the group moves up to the next Chakra.

With each sound and each Chakra it's

harder to focus and stay in the moment.

Finally the group arrives at the Crown Chakra: "EEEEEE" as they reach for the highest pitch they can maintain. "Don't strain" says Candace. "Use your head falsetto tone. The women aren't straining," she says with a wink.

As the sounds trail and the vibration of the crystal bowl fades, the group begins to return to their bodies. There is a sense of joy and peacefulness.

"Bring your consciousness back to your breathing," Candace says, and lets the group come back to the room. "Would anyone like to share their experience?" One lady raises her hand and Candace nods to her. It's Rose. "I'm almost back....let's see. I feel like I was floating, I wasn't in this body or on this planet, I'm not sure where I was, but I was at peace."

A few more share their stories. Everyone has helped create the sounds, part of the journey and healing process of each person.

It's 7:45 and the Toning Circle is over. Only been an hour and half. The group feels relaxed and energized, all at the same time. ▼

Peace.

*Brian Bayman lives in Marietta, GA, and Kevin Thompson lives in Tucker, GA. They both are involved in GSV, sing in the Atlanta Gay Men's Chorus and attend the Atlanta Church of Religious Science.*

This music of yours. A manifestation of the highest energy—not at all abstract, but without an object, energy in a void, in pure ether—where else in the universe does such a thing appear? ...I call your attention to the fact that is almost the definition of God. Imitatio Dei—I am surprised it is not forbidden.

—Thomas Mann,  
Doktor Faustus

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**SUBMISSION OF WORKSHOP IDEAS  
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Brothers, if you feel so moved to present a workshop at the Fall Conference, we welcome you and ask that you send us your ideas.

Please write a brief description of your workshop idea (200 words or less) as it relates to our theme of Right Relationship:

Balance Through Service. Describe your workshop and what you hope it to accomplish. Workshops should last about one hour.

Send your proposals with your name, address, phone number and email address to:

*Fall Conference 2003 Workshops*  
GSV P.O. Box 339 Decatur, GA 30031-0339

You may also e-mail the information to: [workshops@gayspiritvisions.org](mailto:workshops@gayspiritvisions.org) with "workshops" in the subject line.

Our deadline for workshop submissions: Aug. 1, 2003.

The GSV Planning Committee will contact you after August 15 about your ideas.



# *Spring* RETREAT 2003



...Ah, from a little child,  
Thou knowest, Soul, how to me all sounds became music;  
My mother's voice, in lullaby or hymn...  
The rain, the growing corn, the breeze among the long-leav'd corn,  
The measur'd sea-surf, beating on the sand,  
The twittering bird, the hawk's sharp scream,  
The wild-fowl's notes at night, as flying low, migrating north or south,  
The fiddler in the tavern—the glee, the long-strung sailor-song,  
The lowing cattle, bleating sheep—the crowing cock at dawn...

— Walt Whitman  
From *Proud Music of the Storm*



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