



*Boston, MA*

## **It's Carnegie Hall For These Women: Women's Rainbow Chorus performs this Saturday, January 21, in Jamaica Plain (Boston) before playing the Big Apple's top venue next month**

BY William Henderson  
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With two major performances planned in the next month, the Boston Women's Rainbow Chorus (BOSWRC) - a chorus comprised of lesbian and bisexual women and their allies - is set to bring local and national attention to itself and, hopefully, add more singers to its ranks.

Founded in 1997, the BOSWRC sings a broad spectrum of music - world, classical, folk - focusing primarily on music composed by women, non-western European composers, and by members of the GLBT community. They are women with a wide-range of musical training and life experience committed to giving voice to the diverse experience of women, creating moments of beauty and inspiration, and celebrating the community.

Led by Rachel Hassinger, who trained in piano performance at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, the chorus will perform "Still I Rise! A Tribute to African-American Music" this weekend and will be joined by special guest, the New England Gospel Ensemble.

"We're a community of women seeking to use music to further the mission of diversity, and this concert really emphasizes that," Hassinger said during a recent telephone interview. "The concert features all African American music composed by African Americans and celebrates the diversity within the community."

This will be the first collaboration with the New England Gospel Ensemble, and Hassinger said the experience has been better than expected, giving the chorus a chance to work with a group already famous in its own right.

The almost two-hour concert will feature African chants, spirituals, gospel music, and conclude with a collection of freedom songs from the Civil Rights movements as well as more current songs.

Because some of the songs included in the concert come from something of an oral tradition, the group has learned them the same way, eschewing sheet music for a more organic oral way of learning the music, Hassinger said.

And, on Feb. 19, the BOSWRC will join 22 other gay and lesbian choruses on stage at Carnegie Hall in New York to perform "Sing for the Cure," "One Voice," (the final selection from "Sing for the Cure") and "When We No Longer Touch." Each of these works, commissioned by the Dallas-based Turtle Creek Chorale, has been used to raise awareness in the fight against AIDS and breast cancer, but have never before been performed together.

In 1998, the founder of the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, Nancy Brinker, asked The Turtle Creek Chorale to spearhead a piece similar to "When We No Longer Touch" but based on the stories of breast cancer survivors and the friends and families of those who did not survive. The finished work debuted in June, 2000 and featured Maya Angelou as the narrator.

"When We No Longer Touch" was produced with The Turtle Creek Chorale in an Emmy-winning PBS documentary, and this upcoming performance will mark the 15th Anniversary of its composition.

"We invited a select list of gay and lesbian choirs from around the world to be a part of this special performance at Carnegie Hall," said Iris Derke, director of special projects for MidAmerica Productions, Inc., the organizer of the Carnegie Hall concert. "The response was overwhelming, and we currently have 23 choirs represented in this concert, including [those] from South Africa and France."

From Hassinger's point of view, the chance to participate in the event comes with added exposure and a chance to show the rest of the world just what this small Boston-based chorus can do when given the chance.

"It's really exciting to be part of this," Hassinger said. "This will be the largest chorus we've been part of. It's a pretty large-scale event."

But that specific show is still a month away. Right now, the chorus is focusing on this weekend's concert.

"I think some people will recognize some of the pieces, but some of the stuff might be new to them," Hassinger said. "And there is an audience participation portion that we're finding is a lot of fun, so we're really excited about the show."



Boston Women's Rainbow Chorus