

Dear Friends:

As the cold weather sets in, we Minstrels are more welcome than ever in the homeless shelters we serve. The music warms everyone up, fortunately. Singing, dancing and sharing stories helps shake off some of the winter chills.

All of us have bad days, when we are blue, angry or not feeling well. Even those of us who are blessed with a home, a job, and plenty of food have tough days; imagine how tough it is for those who are not so fortunate. Have you ever noticed how wonderful it felt when your mood shifted from gray and gloomy to happy? How amazing it felt to smile and laugh, when moments earlier you thought nothing could or would snap you out of your dark mood? That's the experience we Minstrels bring time and again to the people we serve. One of our Minstrels took the time to reflect on one of those experiences last year, and we include it in the newsletter below. I think it reminds us all of why we reach out again and again through music to help each other feel alive and well.

This holiday season will be particularly rough for folks; 11,000 families are homeless in Massachusetts. A large portion of them live in Boston. Your participation in our mission helps alleviate the pain of many people. Your support today helps us create a little magic and joy. Happy holidays to all!

With heart,

Tim McHale

Tim McHale

Executive Director, Boston Minstrel Company

P.S. In an effort to save money on printing and postage, we've mailed this newsletter along with our annual appeal.



photo by Joy Reo

If you missed the pancake extravaganza this year, the good news is the restaurant will likely host the benefit for us next year too!

Eating for a Good Cause! "Sandwich Works" Restaurant Hosts Pancake Breakfast Fundraiser

A hearty thank you goes out to the Sandwich Works restaurant in Newton Center for hosting an all-you-can-eat pancake breakfast to benefit the BMC on Sunday, November 9th. The restaurant is closed on Sunday mornings but opens up once per month to host pancake breakfasts for local non-profit fundraising. Next time you are in their neighborhood, please stop by and support the establishment, at 827 Beacon Street. We raised over \$900 and, equally important, we met some new faces because Minstrels like you brought them to the event. We enjoy these "friendraising" events that give us a chance to meet new folks and encourage them to come sing with us at a songfest sometime soon!

Making Headlines

The BMC is proud to have been the subject of a feature article in a national magazine called *Making Music*. Check it out in the November/December issue of the magazine, also available online at http://www.makingmusicmag.com/features_dev/show-feature.php?pageid=71. While you are online, we recommend you read their fascinating blog, which offers a brief look into current music research, and science or health-related news about the world of music and its many applications: www.makingmusicmag.com/blog/.

And that's not all...

Tune into WBZ-1030AM radio at midnight on Saturday, December 13th (yeah, we know that is technically 12am on Sunday, December 14th) to hear Tim McHale interviewed live on the Jordan Rich show!



- ♪ Do you want to get instant updates on BMC events and songfests? Send Tim your email address so he can put you on his distribution list! Contact Tim McHale at 617-787-2122 or bostonminstrel@aol.com
- ♪ Do you want to join the Minstrels' online group? Go to <http://groups.yahoo.com/>, search on "Boston Minstrel Company" and sign up; it's free, and it is our way of connecting Minstrels to one another.

Minstrel Reflection: A Gift of Song

The following reflection was submitted by one of the Minstrels who attended the December, 2007 songfest at the New England Shelter for Homeless Veterans; we visit there again on December 22nd...

For many months I have been thinking about a venue for singing. I have wondered about joining a church choir or local vocal group of sorts. Nothing had felt like the right fit for me at this time in my life.

Last night, I said yes to an opportunity that was put in my path. A new friend invited me to accompany her into Boston to the Boston Veterans Homeless Shelter to sing. This shelter is across the street from Fanueil Hall, and the night was the coldest we have had this year. My friend, Marilyn, is part of a group called Boston Minstrels led by an amazing man named Tim McHale. This was no Wellesley matron's "annual concert" FOR the homeless vets; this was an inclusive experience like none I had ever had. Tim was a true channel for divine light during this sing along. His expression of

love through this music was inspiring for all who were there. The lines were blurred between the men who reside there and those of us who showed up. Everyone moved to the music.

The music ranged from "Rockin' around the Christmas Tree," to more traditional Christmas carols, some sung to reggae beats, to Elvis's "Blue Christmas." There were as many non-Christmas songs in the mix. Men and women were drumming, shaking all sorts of percussion instruments, and playing the harmonica. Instruments were passed from one to another, people were swaying and dancing, and whoever was moved to come to the microphone just did, and Tim allowed each to pick a song and sing it in solo, with others as back up. Where the magic came in was in Tim's ability, with his guitar, to involve the vets, slowly at first, but by the end, most of the minstrels were in the background, and the vets were belting out the songs at the microphones. The experience had completely changed us, reminding us all that we are all one with

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The Clipper Ship Comes In

Thank you to the Clipper Ship Foundation for donating \$2,500 to the BMC this month! The foundation supports human services to individuals in Greater Boston, and we are proud to be a recipient of their generosity.

Upcoming BMC Events

Mark your calendars for these great events!

(For directions to these events click on our Songfest Schedule page on our web site, www.BostonMinstrel.org.)

Tuesday, December 16	Boston Rescue Mission	7:45-9:15pm
Friday, December 19	Shattuck Shelter	6:30-9:00pm
Monday, December 22	Veteran's Shelter	7:00-9:00pm

Minstrel Reflection

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music, and those singing and those sung for were one and the same. It was not a "them and us" it was truly a holy experience. Yes, there were tears shed, and there was such joy in the room; the joy that can be truly felt by those who have been through or are enduring deep pain and loss.

The night ended with all of us in a swaying circle and offering prayers to those in need, and thanks for incredible blessings and each other; "Silent Night" sung as a group, still in a circle holding hands, and finally with a soprano solo of "O Holy Night."

This group meets regularly and sings at many homeless shelters all year. Upon leaving, and stepping from the embracing warmth of the hall we were in, to the cutting cold of the street, the residents who had milled out onto the sidewalks to smoke and talk, waved to us and we to them with further thanks from them and us for the experience shared. Today I am not the same person. I will sing many times with this group. Thank you, Marilyn, for introducing me to the Minstrels.

Merry Christmas!

Connie

Boston Minstrel Company
102 Litchfield Street
Brighton, MA 02135



Photo by Bob Walker

BMC Annual Retreat Sails Along!

The weather gods shined upon us once again at our annual retreat! On September 20th approximately 60 of the Minstrels gathered under sunny skies and warm temperatures, at the Community Boating docks on the River Charles, for an afternoon of sailing and barbequing, and an evening of singing. During the songfest, Tim McHale invited folks up to the microphone to share a few words about what they like about being a Boston Minstrel; the overwhelming theme was that "Minstreling" is one of the most fun and satisfying ways to help others in need. Right on!

BMC Board of Trustees

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The Boston Minstrel Company is a group of highly charged singers and facilitators who believe in the healing qualities of music. The group facilitates audience singing and dancing at shelters and prisons on a regular basis. The benefits of interaction, joy, and creative expression contribute to memorable events that foster well-being and wholeness. The Boston Minstrel Company is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization.



I wish to support the work of the BMC with a donation in the amount of:

Maestro \$5,000 Song Leader \$1,000 Soloist \$500 Friend of BMC \$100 Donor \$25 Other: \$_____

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Please send donations to:

Boston Minstrel Company
102 Litchfield Street
Brighton, MA 02135

Or you can donate online at www.bostonminstrel.org