

Truth as Entertaining as Fiction

A review by Tim Tavcar

Is it possible for one artistic work to portray the gamut of gay experience? Can a single performance express the first stirrings of sexual self-awareness, the anxiety of coming out to family and friends, the joys and sorrows of life as an openly gay man in a country that often denies that human right to love whom we choose?

In the fall of 1998, the Connecticut Gay Men's Chorus took on that Herculean task with their 1998 recording of *Out!, The Musical*. Based on chorus members' answers to questionnaires about their own experiences, *Out!* contains tales of and feelings about self-realization, the "first time," coming out to family, and affirmations of gay life to the world at large.

But the line between art and reality isn't drawn there. When the CGMC sent similar questionnaires to the families of chorus members, they received dozens of responses. More than thirty of these form an integral and powerful part of the text of *Out!* and contribute mightily to its ultimate success.

Winston Clark is the work's triple threat; besides writing *Out!*, he conducted the chorus and provided the virtuoso accompaniment. Peter Winkler offers an engagingly eclectic score. The whole package is presented as an evening of high-energy, playful, quality musical theater, and the energy, musicianship and

honesty of this disc helps it recreate what must have been an exhilarating live performance.

The chorus negotiates a veritable smorgasbord of songs (31, not including encores) with ease, grace and excitement. Confident delivery of stylistically diverse selections such as the doo-wop close-harmonied "The Kiss," the jazz-to-disco depiction of that most basic of basic needs "Gotta," and the hard-driving gospel affirmation of freedom in "No Turnin' Back" are all testament to solid musicianship and a hell of a lot of hard work on the parts of all involved.

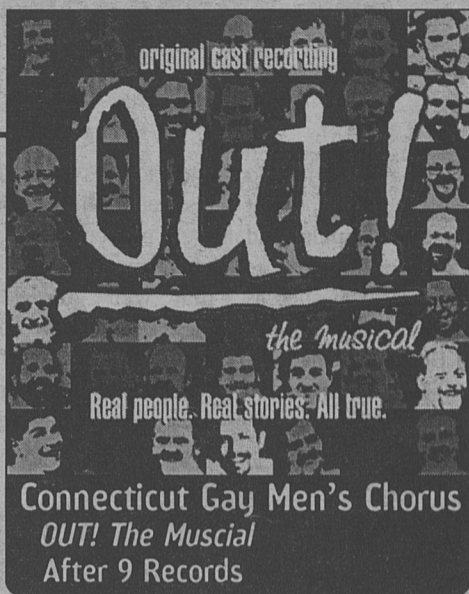
While some of the individual solos are handled with what some might term less than professional vocalism, they are never handled with anything less than total sincerity, which only validates the universality of the human experience they so eloquently express.

Is there anything I didn't like about *Out!*? Frankly, yes. But my reservations are largely textual in nature; as these songs express individual points of view, it would be churlish to quibble over those I do not share. The beauty of this ambitious work is that there is something among its songs and stories to which almost anyone can relate.

Finally, perhaps the best thing about the disc is that it exists at all, and that

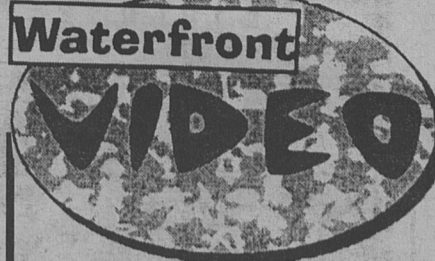
existence owes itself to the talents, loves, labors, generosity, and devotion of and for the community it so joyously celebrates. Kudos to chorus and conductor! ▼

Tim Tavcar is director of A Vocal Minority, Vermont's own gay men's chorus.



At this writing, *Out! The Musical* was not available at a store near you. However, you may order your very own copy (and more for family and friends) by contacting the following:

After 9 Records
1650 Broadway, Suite 1210
New York, NY 10019
Website: <http://www.after-9.com>
The CD's catalog ID is: TWCD-2024D



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Don't Cry for Me....



Lucy Kaplansky, Richard Shindell, and Dar Williams, three of the most compelling singer-songwriters of the '90s are Cry, Cry, Cry. They have taken breaks from their solo careers to record and perform other people's music. The sabbatical has produced an album that, according to Shindell, could be subtitled, "It's the song, stupid."

On March 6, at 8:00pm at the Unitarian Universalist church in Burlington the collaboration will happen live. The show is sponsored by the Peace and Justice Center and tickets are \$18-\$20. ▼



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