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A Vocal Minority (from l. to r. Royce Thompson, Bill Pelton, Noel Benoit, Yves Morrissette, Robert Larabe. Not pictured: Tim Tavcar, Brooke Pearson, Tim Menk, Rob Levy, George Spontak, Paul Audy, Raymond Bowen, Rick Wold) serenades Peter Wingeron and Steve Laine of Pennsylvania during their commitment ceremony at the St. Johnsbury Unitarian Universalist Church. Brendan Hadash presided over the ceremony.



photo Max Stroud

A VOCAL MINORITY

The Secret is Out

BY TIM EVANS

A little more than a year ago, there was a wonderful secret lurking in the northeast corner and central hills of Vermont. Not many had heard about plans to start a gay men's chorus in Vermont, or about the efforts of those involved.

Things have changed. Since the summer of 1998, the members of A Vocal Minority, The Vermont Gay Men's Chorus have been busy. The group has gathered a dedicated and talented core of about a dozen members, created a board of directors and elected a director, registered as a 501c3 non-profit with the Attorney General, registered the trade name 'A Vocal Minority,' and found and used practice space at the Unitarian Church in Montpelier.

What may be most surprising is that in the midst of all this growth, the chorus has actually found the time to work on — you know — singing. But

they have.

While sharpening and polishing their individual vocal skills, the group members have worked hard on a collective repertoire of classic and new choral music. Past performances have included such diverse works as Aaron Copland's "Simple Gifts," Leonard Bernstein's "Psalm 23," "The Impossible Dream" from *Man of La Mancha*, Handel's "O Lord in Thee We Put Our Trust" and "Love Don't Need a Reason" by Peter Allen.

"The idea is to build up a solid repertoire from which we can fashion several different programs to suit different venues and occasions," said chorus director Tim Tavcar.

Some of the venues and occasions the chorus has tackled in the past include caroling on the steps of Burlington's City Hall, a holiday concert at the Unitarian Church in Montpelier, and entertaining the post-parade crowds at Pride Vermont '99. Now the group is ready for more.

"We are looking for a suitable Burlington venue for a concert that will comprise a variety of musical styles. Our Board and I are pursuing fundraising to enable us to tour to other areas of the state who have indicated interest in the chorus performing for their communities," said Tavcar.

The chorus is also hoping to expand its membership to other areas of the state. Although the current group is almost evenly split between the Northeast Kingdom and the Montpelier area, they consciously chose to base rehearsals centrally in Montpelier so they could attract members from around the state.

Balancing geographic demands hasn't been the only challenge. A chorus of gay men must sometimes find a balance between politics and social concerns and being a polished singing outfit.

"One of the goals of our group is increased visibility for the gay community in Vermont," says Tim Menk, a founding member. "We wish to make people aware that, as the saying goes, we are everywhere. In addition, it is our hope