

My mother and my siblings are all devout in their faith, and I did not fit in. Neither did my father. He never made a big deal about my being gay, so he was the bridge that kept the peace between my mother's faith and my lack of one. When he died, it left a gaping bridge of communication and understanding. I got into intense fights with my sisters and my mother; we spent months not talking.

Over time our wounds healed, and we tried to try to operate as a family again. So when I got a solo in *Big Gay Sing 7* (March 2015), I saw this as a chance to break down some of the prejudices my family has around being gay. It was a perfect concert for them: The material was pure fun, movie songs that everyone can sing along to... and I had my first solo! It took a lot more convincing than I expected. My mother was steadfast in her decision not to attend a performance of a group supporting the "gay lifestyle". We got into a huge screaming & crying fight, and I threatened to cut her out of my life forever if she did not attend. It was a huge gamble. I know my mother loves me, but she loves her faith even more. But it paid off. She put aside her beliefs for one night to come to support her gay son.

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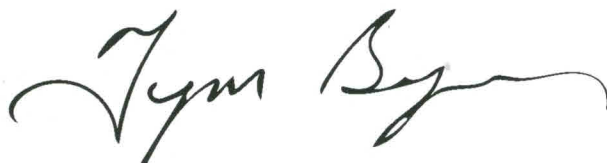
I was so nervous having my mother out in the audience that my mind went completely blank about 30 seconds before I had to enter for my solo. Yet, I went out there and performed for my mother and my brother with NYCGMC.

I assumed after the show she'd wait quietly in the corner of the lobby, tell me she'd had a good time, and scurry back to New Jersey. Oh NO! Before I even

made it to the lobby, chorus members, drag queens, friends were telling me "I just met your mom. She's so sweet and so proud of you." I started to tear up because she was happy to proclaim to this group that she was the proud mother of that gay son up there singing and dancing. She loved the show, and she loved me. That's all that mattered.

We still debate about religion, but we're much more loving and respectful. The chorus helped break down a huge wall of prejudice that stood in the way of me communicating with my mom. And that's when I finally understood how powerful we are. It's not always easy to see when you're singing a medley from *Grease*. But in that performance, I saw how amazing NYCGMC can be, and I'm so honored to be a part of its legacy.

Your support this season ensures that we continue to raise our voices against discrimination. I hope you'll help.



New York City Gay Men's Chorus in Big Gay Sing 6, Tym is in front, second from the left.