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Accompanist Ricci to conclude nearly two decades with Greater New Bedford Choral Society with concert Sunday

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Accompanist Chris Ricci shares a light moment with singers of the Greater New Bedford Choral Society. He will be concentrating on his other professional commitments, including serving as music director of the Priscilla Beach Theatre in Plymouth. MIKE VALERI/THE STANDARD-TIMES/SCMG

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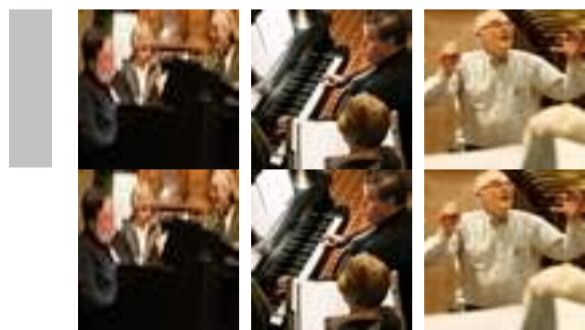
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By Keith Powers
Contributing writer

Posted May. 19, 2016 at 2:01 AM

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The box office

What: Greater New Bedford Choral Society spring concert

When: 7 p.m. May 22

Where: Grace Episcopal Church, 133 School St., New Bedford. ...

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Ricci plays his final concert with Dyck's Greater New Bedford Choral Society May 22 at Grace Episcopal Church in New Bedford. It's the end of a terrific partnership for the duo, and for the singers in the GNBCS ensemble.

"I love working with the group," Ricci says. "It's my classical music outlet. Working with Gerry has been tremendous. I started when I graduated from college — when you first graduate, you take everything that comes your way.

"But I've gotten to do everything, not just accompany on the piano. I sub for him in rehearsals, going over all the parts and the vocals. A couple times I've conducted for him. When we're in the rehearsal atmosphere, we're a team."

Ricci, a Mashpee resident who grew up in New Bedford, certainly isn't leaving the music-making world. He's been the longtime organist at St. Bonaventure Parish in Plymouth, and since 2013 he's been music director at the Priscilla Beach Theatre.

"It's a great summer stock theater with a terrific history," he says. "Mickey Rooney said it was the inspiration for 'Babes in Arms.' And the alumni are amazing: Paul Newman, Pat Carroll, the Reiner brothers — they all got their start there."

Priscilla Beach Theatre, established in 1937, remains a popular destination—"we've sold out every show since 2014," Ricci says. "And back then the building was being renovated. Now we're turning

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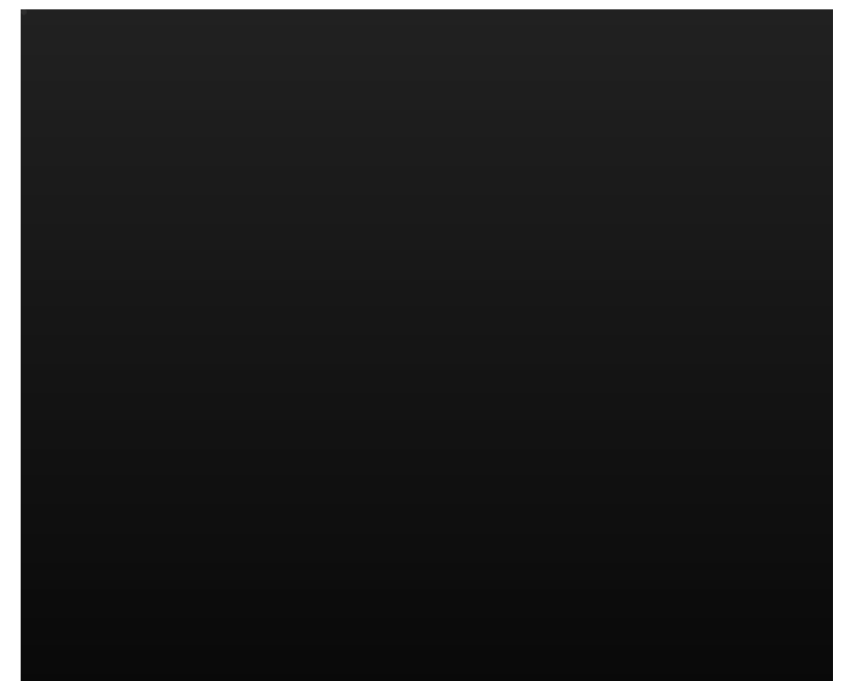
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people away."

He's currently directing "Breaking Up Is Hard to Do," a reprise from last year, which is just wrapping up. "Noises Off," "A Chorus Line," and "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum" are on tap for this summer.

"It's a creaky old building, but a great summer theater," Ricci says, "it's great to stand on the same stage as those legends."

For now, Ricci coaches the musicians and accompanies the performances, conducting from the keyboard. Being a full-time conductor somewhere might be the future, he says. "I love playing and conducting, and just conducting might be the next step."

But first, there's his final performance with the choral society on May 22. As is typical with GNBCS, they will sing compositions by Dyck, including "Lines from Tennyson's 'Ulysses'," "The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam" and "The Beatitudes of Jesus."

Soprano Elizabeth Heath and baritone Gabriel Alfieri will solo. Ricci gets a solo turn in his final performance with the ensemble, playing the Adagio attributed to Albinoni on the Grace Episcopal organ.

"Like most GNBCS concerts, it's mainly works composed by Gerry," Ricci says. "It's a great way to go out."

The Greater New Bedford Choral Society performance does not repeat. For information about next season's concerts visit www.gnbcs.org or call 508-644-2419.

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<i>Friday, May 20, 2016</i>						
	Spring Story & Craft Time 3:30 pm					
Francis J. Lawler Library						
	Red, White and Brew at the Zoo! 5:30 pm					
Buttonwood Park Zoo						
	"Making Miracles Spring Fling" 6:00 pm					
United Fishermen Club						
	Fishing for Knowledge: Cooperative Research for Sustainable Fisheries in New England. 7:00 pm					
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