

At Buffalo

The magazine for alumni and friends of the State University of New York at Buffalo

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Setting the Tempo

At 64, choral conductor Harold Rosenbaum shows no signs of slowing down



Photo: Benjamin Niemczyk

"I love what I do. I guess I'm just driven."

Harold Rosenbaum, UB associate professor of music

By Lauren Newkirk Maynard

Harold Rosenbaum talks quickly, his voice breaking up momentarily on his cellphone as his Manhattan-bound train pulls into a station.

"I love what I do. I guess I'm just driven," Rosenbaum says of his head-spinning schedule. In addition to directing two student choirs and heading the graduate program in choral conducting as an associate professor of music at UB, he leads weekly "Sunday Seminars" in conducting at Columbia University in New York, and regularly shuttles between Buffalo, New York and Europe juggling several conducting, consulting and judging projects.

During one crazy season, he recalls, he was artistic director of 11 choirs in New York, most of which met weekly at opposite ends of the state.

Rosenbaum's passion for calling the shots began early, in college. "It was my fourth year and I was really enjoying singing in this volunteer chorus, but I started disagreeing with the conductor's interpretations," he recalls.

At 23, he left the group and started his own 12-member ensemble, the Canticum Novum Singers, which



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now has 50 singers and tours internationally. He also created the critically acclaimed New York Virtuoso Singers in 1988, building it into an all-professional choir that has premiered more than 250 new works with the world's leading orchestras. Personally, he has presented the world premieres of about 475 works, more than 60 of which he commissioned.

Among a slew of awards and credits too numerous to recount here, Rosenbaum this year was the first choral director to win Columbia University's Ditson Conductors Award. It's the country's oldest continuing conducting award and has honored, among others, James Levine, Leonard Bernstein and another gifted figure associated with UB, Lukas Foss.

This summer, Rosenbaum ticks off one more life goal: to expand his teaching activities beyond university students. Sponsored by Columbia University, the [Harold Rosenbaum Choral Conducting Institute](http://www.haroldrosenbaum.com/institute) will be held on UB's North Campus in August and later, in January, at Columbia.

All types and skill levels of professional choral directors can apply to the six-day institute to deepen their skills. Run and directed solely by Rosenbaum, the program will include one-on-one instruction, rehearsals and performances. "I hope it attracts people from the area, all over the country—even Europe," he says.

With the institute, Rosenbaum is squeezing in yet another opportunity for communal music-making. "I'm 64 and feel like I want to give back as much as I can before I'm gone," he says as the train picks up speed. "I just want to keep going."

Harold Rosenbaum conducting "Salmo 139" by Miguel Chuaqui



[\[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2iykVJhXyO4\]](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2iykVJhXyO4)

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