

# YALE GALA

YALE'S LGBT ALUMNI/AE NETWORK NEWSLETTER

## GALA's Ralph Hexter: Making History, Achieving Prestige

This past August, the Hampshire College Board of Trustees named Ralph Hexter, MPhil '79, PhD '82, president of Hampshire College, thus assigning the first openly gay person to the position of college president. In his inaugural address in October, Ralph affirmed his commitment to his chosen mantra of "non satis scire" ("it is not enough to know"), defining Hampshire College's goal of educating the student body to "understand different ways of defining and analyzing information as distinct ways of knowing."

The GALA newsletter contacted Ralph to hear more about this impressive man's career and also about the time his years in New Haven. Here's what Ralph had to say:

### What is your background?

I grew up in Shaker Heights, Ohio. I was at Harvard 1970–74 (A.B. in English Literature), then Corpus Christi College, Oxford, 1974–77 (B.A./M.A. in Classics and Modern Languages—Greek, Latin and German). I entered Yale as a graduate student in Comparative Literature in fall, 1977. I headed off to Munich, Germany, in fall, 1979, to do doctoral research and returned to begin teaching at Yale in fall, 1981, my dissertation completed by spring, 1982. Officially an Associate Professor of Classics. I taught in Classics, DS and the Humanities Major (the latter at the moment of its inception). I remained on the faculty through

spring, 1991. In 1990–91, I also served as Acting Associate Dean of the Graduate School. I moved to Amherst and the Hampshire presidency on August 1, 2005.

### Were you "out" at Yale?

I had been out really since my sophomore year in college (1971–72), and had already developed the philosophy that has always guided me on that, namely, that those who choose not to be open truly experience the discrimination that some folks in our society would like to see visited on gay people, only by inflicting it on themselves, they are guaranteeing that they experience it all the time and in much fuller measure. By being out I can at least be sure that any homophobia I run into is real and not imaginary. I don't want that sound to flip—I know I was extremely lucky in my family, and one surely needs to take care when one might be at risk for physical violence—but for me it's almost an issue of efficiency: I have neither the time nor the patience to be in the closet.

That very first semester at Yale, the lecture Humanities majors took was taught by John Boswell, the seminar by me. Our close friendship dated from 1973–74, when I was a senior and he a graduate student at Harvard. So John and his partner and friends were my



**Ralph Hexter, MPhil '79, PhD '82, new, openly gay president of Hampshire College**

social anchors in New Haven, and new friends I made, if they were close friends, got integrated into that group. When I returned in 1981, I was already partnered with Manfred Kollmeier, whom I met in December, 1979—last year we celebrated our twenty-fifth anniversary with a bang-up dinner party in Munich. From spring, 1982, we lived together in New Haven. Following in John's footsteps, I was

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to certify their heterosexuality. It played no role in the selection process, and when finalists were brought to campus, the committee wanted Manfred to come and participate as I understand the spouses of other finalists did. We have been welcomed as a couple; invitations to events at the President's house come from us both; and when, following tradition, it was time for the President to serve the 2 a.m. breakfast that closes Hampshire's famous Halloween Party, Manfred joined me. Though the Hampshire students didn't know, they were following a Yale tradition, since at one costume party one of my students came as me and his (female, as it happened) friend came as Manfred—quite amusing, since Manfred at the time sported a mustache.

equally out as a gay faculty member, and Manfred had to suffer Classics Department cocktail parties and Trumbull College Fellows' gatherings.

Through all the years, and across several institutional moves, I've set as my goal introducing Manfred, or the fact that my life partner and I share a gender, as casually and indirectly as it seems to me heterosexuals introduce their differently gendered partners or use pronouns

### What do you think of Massachusetts' recent ruling on same sex marriage?

We are delighted to be in a state—the state—that allows actual marriage. The Pioneer Valley is an especially open place, really in all regards. We may very well get married, but I first have to figure out if any complexities will arise from the fact that Manfred and I are registered domestic partners in California, where we also maintain a residence.

A silly problem, but it's one of the complexities that follow on the fact that same-sex marriages (or domestic partnerships) are not routinely recognized by other states (not to mention the federal government) the way heterosexual marriages are. ▼

Please contact [lgs@yale.edu](mailto:lgs@yale.edu) for further information.



## Gay Giving at Yale

is always in search of support. Many giving opportunities exist. Funds can be earmarked for the Larry Kramer Initiative for Lesbian and Gay Studies (LKI); the Sarah Pettit Fund (supporting Lesbian Studies); or the Fund for Lesbian and Gay Studies—FLAGS (supporting faculty and student research).

Contributions can be sent to Development Office, PO Box 2038, Yale University, New Haven CT 06521-2038: Direct your contribution in either a notation on the check or through an accompanying letter. Gifts may receive Yale fundraising credit toward class or reunion goals. Those with questions about giving also may call the Office of Development and Alumni affairs. ▼

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To join our e-mail list and to receive notification of upcoming GALA events, please send your contact information to: [yalegala96@aol.com](mailto:yalegala96@aol.com)

Yale GALA page (Alumni) on Yale's Larry Kramer Initiative Web Site—  
<http://www.yale.edu/lesbiangay/homepage.html>

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## GALA Grapevine

Bob Cruz '79 DC

Hello everyone! Yours truly is writing you from Bozeman, Montana, where I recently began a three-year program to acquire a Masters in Science and Natural History Filmmaking at Montana State University. Wow! What an experience—all that wildlife: beefy farm boys, manly hunters and BEARS (you know what kind I mean . . . ).

One might assume that Montana would be the last place to find another gay Yalie, but, lo and behold, another student in my co-hort is **Elliot Kennerson '96 JE!** Prior to arriving in Bozeman, Elliott lived in New York, working for the *New York Times* and hosting a website for Court TV (in his spare time hanging with noted author Edmund White). For more on mine and Elliott's adventures out in Montana, see page 4.

And further south along the Rocky Mountain front, in Boulder, Colorado, **Patrick Greaney '93 BR** is at the University of Colorado, where he is an Assistant Professor in the Germanic & Slavic languages department.

Back in the Big Apple, GALA member **Joe Barna MFA Drama '81**, along with other Drama School alums, started the "Unofficial New York Yale Cabaret" at the Bannigan's restaurant at Eighth Avenue and 47th Street. The group's first production — as noted in the *New York Times* 10/2/



Several Yale GALA friends are pictured here at the lavish reception at Montreal's Place des Arts following the Opéra de Montréal Gala Benefit Concert December 4. Their host, GALA President Mickey Dobbs, TC '92, right, raised funds for the event. From the left are: Robert Leuze, SY '58; Harold Levine, BR '78; Montreal activist Matthew Gore; and Larry Kramer Institute Executive Director Jonathan Katz.

2005, is "Most Happy," a historical drama about Anne Boleyn. We wish Joe and his fellow Drama grads all our best (Oops! Wait! The tradition with theater people is to wish bad luck — so — to Joe et alia, "break a leg").

Well, that's all I've got time for this go-round. 'Till next time. . . ▼



## LKI "Welcome Back" Event a Huge Success

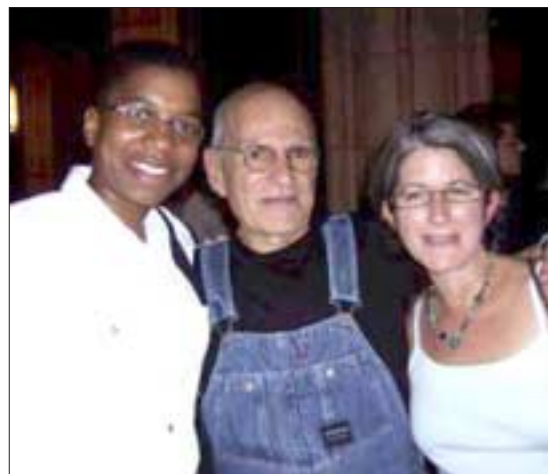
On September 8th, the Larry Kramer Initiative (LKI) held its annual "Welcome Back" event at Dwight Hall. Over 200 graduates, undergraduates, faculty and staff attended, along with Larry Kramer himself.

Addressing the assembly, Larry declared that Yale University was "the most important place for gay and lesbian studies in the world," and cited the hiring of Joanne Meyerowitz, an openly gay professor who will be teaching gay and lesbian history. (Touched by the high turnout and warm reception he received, Larry later remarked "Kids kept coming up to me and thanking me, and telling me how much LKI had meant to them and added to their Yale experience.")

Also on hand at the gathering were student leaders from over ten gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender groups on campus, along with Graham Boettcher PC '95, Phd '05 who spoke on behalf of GALA.

A good time was had by all, its success due in no small way to the hard work of Rachel Pepper, LKI's ever-resourceful Administrative Associate. ▼

Larry with Ainissa Ramirez (l), Assistant Professor, Mechanical Engineering and Elisabeth Kennedy (r), Office of International Students and Scholars





## Annual GALA Student-Alum Dinner

On the evening of Saturday, November 12th, the Yale GALA Student-Alum dinner was held in the Varsity Room of the Athletics Department's Ray Tompkins House. Among the sixty people attending were 40 students and Larry Kramer, along with other board members and recent alums. It was also a farewell dinner of sorts for Jonathan Katz, currently Executive Administrator of LKI, who will be departing from the University in January.



GALA Co-President Emily Wills TC '04, with board members Graham Boettcher PC '95, Phd '05 and Jesús Chapa-Malacara MC '04.



"Couples R Us."



The blossoming of yet another future GALA member...

## Yalies in the Rocky Mountains



Elliott Kennerson JE '96 on the receiving end of a fellow film student's hand at Montana State University.



Bob Cruz DC '79 with other Montana State film students.



LGBT Co-op Co-Coordinator Arianna Davalos TC '07 and date.