

RI baritone Greg Bonin sings simplicity into the holidays

OUT WOONSOCKET SINGER RELEASES CD 'SIMPLY CHRISTMAS,' FEATURING SEASONAL CLASSICS WITH A NOSTALGIA FOR CHILDHOOD

Christmas has always held a special place in the out Greg Bonin's life.

Growing up in Woonsocket, R.I., the out Bonin remembers walking through the streets at night and hearing the church bells ringing in the distance. In his memory, there is freshly fallen snow on the unpaved streets and he is very much at peace. These are the memories he returns to when life become hectic and hurried, he said during a recent telephone interview.

"I think we'd all like to remember those nice quiet times," said Bonin who believes it is that very idea of quiet time that resonates with most people at the holidays. More often than not, the holidays are a time of rest and relaxation, of spending time with your loved ones, of singing carols around a fire.

And it is this he hopes to capture in his just-released CD "Simply Christmas," a selection of carols both sentimental and rocking.

"I tried to pick songs that not only resonated with me but that would resonate with anyone," said Bonin. "I decided on songs that I grew up with, songs I've enjoyed performing over the years, and songs that have a special meaning for me. I didn't just want to throw together the CD. It was more than two years in the making."

The CD includes such classic songs as "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen," "Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas," "O, Holy Night," and "Silver Bells."

When talking about the CD, Bonin is quick to allude to help he got along the way. He worked with Chuck Ladouceur, his studio engineer, and John Cooke, his pianist, on



Greg Bonin on his new CD "Simply Christmas": "I didn't just want to throw together the CD. It was more than two years in the making." (PHOTO: JUDITH POTTER)



the arrangements. He also asked his friend, Mark Colozzi, who frequently partners with Bonin with Ocean State Follies, to join him on the song "Peace On Earth/Little Drummer Boy."

An award-winning vocalist, in July of 2002, 48 talent judges selected Bonin as the first place winner in the adult talent competition at the Talent America Finals in New York City. In 2003, Bonin placed as a top-ten finalist out of a total of 600 male singers at an international competition. He also won special recognition as Best Legitimate Male Vocalist at the competition. In July of 2004, Greg and members of the Academy of Tap, Jazz, and Ballet, won first place in the Adult Division, Group

Performance category at the Talent America Finals held at the Roosevelt Hotel in New York City. Greg sang "To Where You Are" while the ladies performed a pointe ballet.

Along with his awards, Bonin has put together a catalogue of music including the independently produced CDs "Greg Bonin," "Just For You," and now "Simply Christmas."

Again, Bonin returns to his childhood when talking about his desire to sing. He's never known anything else, he said. The desire to perform, it's been with him as long as he can remember, just like tried-and-true Christmas carols that, each year, conjure images of Christmases long ago.

"For the longest time, I thought I couldn't make it as a singer," said Bonin. "But then I learned to believe in myself, thanks to a wonderful partner and a supportive network of friends who convinced me that all I needed to do is believe."

Once the holidays are over, he's going back to the studio. This time, he wants to record an album of original music and is excited about the prospect of writing songs as opposed to singing someone else's words.

"I've always written song lyrics, but never whole, original songs, so I'm really excited," said Bonin. Despite plans to return to the studio in early 2007, he doesn't know when he will release the CD. I'm a perfectionist when it comes to the recordings. Even with the Christmas songs, some of them I thought were good the first take, but when I went back to listen to them, I decided I didn't like something about them and I re-recorded them. I don't release a CD until I'm sure it's perfect." •

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT BONIN, OR TO PURCHASE HIS CD, CONNECT TO WWW.GREGBONIN.COM.