

The Harmonizer

BRINGING BARBERSHOP HARMONY TO LIFE • MAY/JUNE 2024



HARMONY IN NEW YORK

Fun, great contests, and a deep district talent pool all showed up at Midwinter



INSIDE
FOSTERING A CULTURE
OF MUTUAL RESPECT

NOTEWORTHY
SOUTHEASTERN HARMONY DISTRICT RETIRES DIXIE NAME
SINGING VALENTINES RAISE \$35,000 FOR HOSPITAL

INSIDE
MIDTOWN: THE
AMAZING SPIDER-MEN!



Cleveland

2024 INTERNATIONAL
CONVENTION

JUNE 30-JULY 7, 2024

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Tue
July 2

Wed
July 3

Thu
July 4

Fri
July 5

Sat
July 6



Education in Cleveland

Quartet Quarterfinals Session 1

Quartet Quarterfinals Session 2

Opening Night Party



Education in Cleveland

Quartet Quarterfinals Session 3

NextGen Varsity Quartet Contest

Comedy Quartet Festival



Education in Cleveland

Gold Medal Hour: Midtown

Chorus Festival

Gold Medal Hour: Ambassadors of Harmony

Quartet Semifinals

World Harmony Showcase (ticketed separately)

Chorus Contest Session 1

Chorus Contest Session 2

Association of International Champions Show (ticketed separately)

Chorus Contest Session 3

Quartet Finals and Finale

Chorditorium



NEW! Comedy Quartet Contest



Chorus Festival

BARBERSHOP.ORG/INTERNATIONAL
JUNE 30-JULY 7, 2024



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Every chapter may have a distinct barbershop culture that's steeped in the area's culture. When our diverse cultures meet at our gatherings, we all benefit when we focus on the music that unites us, as well as give the respect we owe to those with different cultural expectations, says BHS Interim CEO Steve Denino.

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In the entertainment hub of America, folks from all over gathered in a new place but with an energy and numbers that felt like old times.

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Midtown was seemingly a victim of its own early online success. Audience expectations were too high, and they'd acquired an ill-fitting "too cool for school" image. Years later, the never-ending ovations following "Spider-Farm" showed that Midtown had shed the unwanted image while exceeding all expectations! Get the scoop from long-time coach Tim Waurick.

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On the cover: Midwinter's MegaSing at Times Square in New York City (photo by Lorin May)

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CALIFORNIA DREAMIN'

WHAT A WONDERFUL WORLD

BLUE SHADOWS ON THE TRAIL
(THEY LONG TO BE) CLOSE TO YOU

HAPPY TOGETHER

GOD BLESS AMERICA

SINCE I DON'T HAVE YOU

AND MANY, MANY MORE
SHOP.BARBERSHOP.ORG



The Harmonizer

GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE/EDITORIAL
harmonizer@barbershop.org

EDITOR
Lorin May

OUR VISION
Everyone in Harmony

OUR MISSION
To bring people together in harmony and fellowship to enrich lives through singing.

OUR PURPOSES
To perpetuate the old American institution: the barbershop quartet and barbershop harmony
To promote appreciation of barbershop harmony

To initiate and maintain a broad program of musical education, contests, and appreciation in support of barbershop harmony and the allied arts

To establish and maintain foundations that support our vision

To initiate, promote and participate in charitable projects that support our vision

The Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barber Shop Quartet Singing in America, Inc. (DBA Barbershop Harmony Society) is a non-profit organization operating in the United States and Canada.

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Building the future in our broader creative space

The Society Board, District Presidents, and BHS staff have been working through a process of making broad business goals into operational plans and projects.

IN THE PREVIOUS ISSUE (barbershop.org/harmonizer), Steve and John talked about how the Everyone in Harmony Vision reflected the actual life of the barbershop singing experience. As a long-term vision, the aim is to scale up every aspect of the Barbershop Harmony Society to make the joy of singing accessible to millions. The four major work streams were explained.

BRIAN: Last month, you mentioned that we're in a position to start dreaming again. What does that mean?

JOHN: Not to overstate things and act as if the challenges of the past five years didn't happen, but for the most part, the financial impacts are receding behind us. Now that the Society is not constantly catching up for losses and difficulties, it has breathing room to get back into a creative space that reimagines the BHS of the future.



John

Steve

STEVE: Our business units and programs saw growth year over year from 2022 to 2023. Membership continues to grow in 2024. After experiencing steady membership declines starting in 1990 and continuing with the steep COVID-related decline experienced in 2021, BHS member numbers have steadily grown since 2022 with current membership numbers exceeding the levels needed to meet the 2024 budget.

JOHN: Any future sale proceeds of the headquarters building would

create an opportunity for endowment-like investment and growth. It's important to note that any sale proceeds are not intended for operations, but instead investment earnings will be available to sustainably support BHS programs and growth. The current-year budget does not

“NOW THAT THE SOCIETY IS NOT CONSTANTLY CATCHING UP FOR LOSSES AND DIFFICULTIES, IT HAS BREATHING ROOM TO GET BACK INTO A CREATIVE SPACE THAT REIMAGINES THE BHS OF THE FUTURE.”

Get in Touch

John Santora, Society President jsantora@mac.com

Steve Denino, Interim CEO/Executive Director CEO@barbershop.org

Society Board of Directors societyboard@barbershop.org



SCALE PARTICIPATION & ENGAGEMENT

SCALE IMPACT

SCALE ASSETS

SCALE INCLUSION

depend on proceeds of a building sale to be positive. So, operationally, we're in the right place to move from "business as usual" toward making the fundamental shifts in our business that enable long-term growth.

STEVE: That work has been underway for several years, among the Board, staff and District Presidents. In the briefest form, we walked through a process that defined all the programs of the Barbershop Harmony Society along seven strategic areas (see chart.) These provide a framework to prioritize time, energy and resources.

JOHN: Since we can't do all of everything all at once, we need to apply appropriate resources in appropriate areas. Of course, just because they're prioritized doesn't mean we're completely ignoring the lower-ranked priority items. And some lower-ranked priorities also have lower required resources, so we can still serve them.

STEVE: It's meaningful to note that for the most part, the order of priorities emerged by consensus with an occasional swapping of back-to-back items. There were very few gaps of more than a few slots, and many were effectively tied, but something needed to be listed first.

JOHN: I think that really demonstrates strong alignment among these leaders.

BRIAN: Why is optimizing our business model number one on the list?

STEVE: We need to make sure that the singing communities are healthy and are getting the support that they need through the services and the models that are important for the organization. That's priority num-

ber one. Then more people singing barbershop, which is priority number 2, arises when we put singing communities at the center, not solely members at the center.

JOHN: That's because the singing communities can have an impact that goes beyond the members. This can put us in a stable financial environment. It's not to the detriment of anything else; it's actually for enablement of everything else to have a stable business model.

STEVE: Those are both tightly linked to one another, that it may only be a matter of which chair you're sitting in that makes you think about which one's more important, or which one you have to solve first.

BRIAN: Realizing culture and bolstering our brand are probably fairly closely related in a similar way. If culture is the product of our actions, attitudes and behaviors, then *brand* is how we communicate our *culture* to ourselves and the world.

JOHN: We should have a commonality of culture across the entire organization that's broad enough to allow us to celebrate our differences; for example, competition versus social, large, small, urban, suburban, all of those distinct aspects of our singing communities, but all tied together by the commonality of the joy of singing and the joy of singing barbershop.

STEVE: We would hope that our behaviors of inclusivity allow us to open the door for more people singing barbershop. Somebody should be able to look at the Barbershop Harmony Society and say, "You've said you're an inclusive organization, and I can see it."

Some people still struggle with the

"WE NEED TO MAKE SURE THAT THE SINGING COMMUNITIES ARE HEALTHY AND ARE GETTING THE SUPPORT THAT THEY NEED. THAT'S PRIORITY NUMBER ONE."





STARTING PITCH

A conversation with our President and CEO

“INCLUSIVENESS COVERS A LOT OF TERRITORY, NOT JUST GENDER, OR AGE. IT’S SKILL LEVEL, ACHIEVEMENT AIMS, TIME COMMITMENT ... EVERYTHING.”

concept that the organization can be radically inclusive, while the individual singing communities can still make a decision on how they wish to barbershop. You might define your goal as being an all-male ensemble, which does not make it anti-inclusive.

BRIAN: Inclusivity does not mean everybody is exactly the same. It means that we’re all part of the same mosaic. If my little bits of blue glass are filling in this portion of the lake of this landscape in all blue, and unlike you I’m not filling in the green mountainside, that doesn’t mean we’re not both part of the mosaic.

JOHN: That big mosaic is varied and beautiful in the whole, and in its individual parts.

STEVE: And that covers a lot of territory, not just gender, or age. It’s skill level, achievement aims, time commitment ... everything.

BRIAN: “Poor singers” have a place. So do professional-caliber singers. Is everyone having fun? Fulfilled socially and musically? Then they’re all included!

STEVE: So operationally, we need to keep that culture in front of us as a way of delivering experiences and services to the world... and communicate and celebrate those as the Barbershop Harmony Society brand.

JOHN: Which takes us about halfway through the priorities—

STEVE:—which we’ll pick up next issue! ■



Brian Lynch is Public Relations Manager for the Barbershop Harmony Society
blynch@barbershop.org



Reader Feedback

Let us know what’s on your mind: Harmonizer@barbershop.org

Feedback on Harmony U Take-over Issue



What a fantastic March/April 24 Harmonizer issue. The breadth of subjects covered and the manner and style in which they were written was really well executed! Thanks for always managing to keep the content fresh, inspirational, and informative.



Doug Brown

Cranford, NJ



It seems that there are plenty of lessons for leaders or coordinators, but few for teaching a singer to be a better singer—more for a group rather than the individual—more for barbershop than the singer. First comes the singer, *then* the quartet, chorus ensemble, or barbershop. I’d like to be a better singer for my barbershop group. And I am talking about your articles, not a referral to a vocal teacher nearby.

Daryl Lassen

Paulden, AZ

Daryl, thanks for your feedback! More content geared toward individual singers would have been great. We received proposals for a variety of articles, but fewer were for singers than in past years. We will work to fix that moving forward. Every March/April issue since 2016 has been an HU Takeover issue. Download them at barbershop.org/harmonizer.

Crikey! BHS Music Medics Head Down Under With BHA!



An update regarding the Music Medics program (January/February 2023 issue). We now have 48 named programs in North America, and recently established a partnership with Barbershop Harmony Australia!

The BHS Music Medics program brings joy to sick children and adults. BHA is super excited to be bringing the Nashville-based Music Medics program to Australia, and we hope that heaps of our ens join in and spread some joy. If you’re interested in starting a BHS Music Medics program in your area, visit nashvillemusicmedics.org

Wayne Jackson

BHS Music Medics Coordinator, gwjacks@tds.net. ■



110 7th Ave N.
Nashville, TN, 37203



Harmonizer@barbershop.org

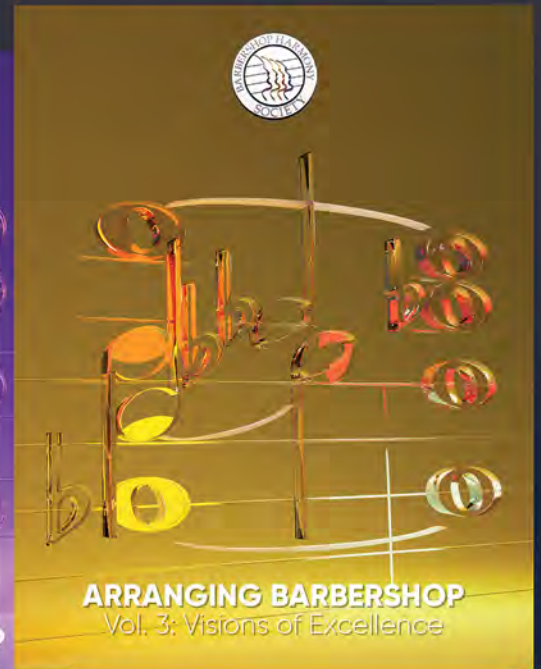
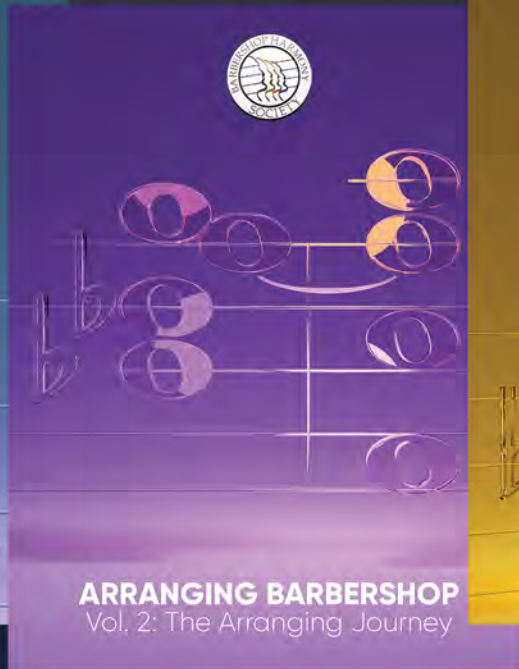
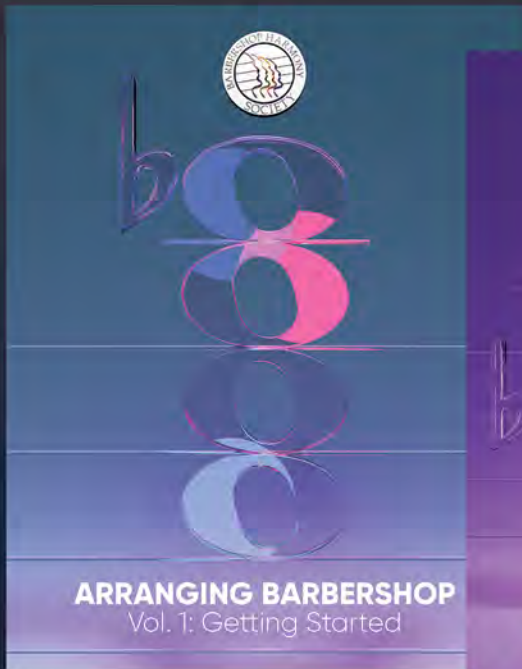


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● 2024 CONVENTION

Cleveland Rocks! Prepare for a lot more of everything

The biggest party we've had in years will feature all the fun and events you've always loved, plus some great new twists

Advance registrations suggest we'll be seeing the best-attended International Convention in years, and the party will take place with incredible venues and a downtown vibe to match. Most of our hotels are within three blocks of the main contest venue, the Cleveland Public Auditorium.

QUARTET CONTEST

At publication time, more than half the qualifying contests are still ahead; yet, we're already looking at another historically strong field. Last year's fourth-place finisher **Three and a Half Men** has the highest qualifying score so far—a huge 93.5%—heading into Cleveland, with **Lemon Squeezy** and **First Take** expected to reach similar heights. (The three quartets finished within less than half a percentage point apart in 2023.) Also with a coveted 90+% qualifying score are **The Ladies**, who finished 6th in 2022, months before becoming the 2023 Sweet Adelines Harmony Queens. **The Newfangled Four**, **Gimme Four**, and **Full Effect** can expect to contend for medals as well.

CHORUS CONTEST

Dream Chorus Experience. Any member not already competing in the chorus contest may register to rehearse online and onsite with either Justin Miller or Greg Clancy and then sing for



View from the stage



Cleveland Public Auditorium

score on the International stage.

Westminster Chorus is back for the first time since setting scoring records in 2019, newly under the baton of Dr. Dan Wessler, bass of 2018 champion **After Hours**. As before, they are arriving with a qualifying score that tops all fellow contenders, which includes **Parkside Harmony**, **Heralds of Harmony**, **Alexandria Harmonizers**, **Gotham**, and a couple of dozen more!

VARSITY QUARTET CONTEST

A large percentage of today's big

Tuesday, July 2

Quarterfinals Sessions 1 & 2
Opening Night Party

Wednesday, July 3

Quarterfinals 3
NextGen Varsity Quartet Contest
Comedy Quartet Festival

Thursday, July 4

Gold Medal hours
Chorus Festival
Quartet Semifinals
World Harmony Showcase

Friday, July 5

Chorus Contest Sessions 1 & 2
AIC Show

Saturday, July 6

Chorus Contest Session 3
Quartet Finals & Finale
Chordatorium

quartetters first made their names on this stage. But we're doing no justice to call 2023 Silver Medalist **Tofu Concern** "up-and-comers" for 2024, as their 82.6% qualifying score would reach the Semifinals in the open contest field. A lot of great talent is also in clear medal contention, including **Suite Life**, **Radiant**, **Heist**, and **Talk of the Town**.

DON'T MISS THESE!

Chorus Festival and **Comedy Quartet Festival**. Spots are still open for these festivals that welcome all comers, members or not. Sign up to perform and/or prepare to be entertained!

AIC Show. A big slate of past champions will dominate Friday evenings. Get tickets on AICGold.com.



REGISTER ONLINE Get your registration, hotels, and up-to-date information about the contests and other events at barbershop.org/cleveland.

Seniors: get \$100 toward your BHS dues

U.S. Society members age 65+ with a qualifying health plan can now cover a portion of their membership dues through Grouper, a radically beneficial new form of healthcare. If you have a qualifying Medicare Advantage or Medicare Supplement plan, Grouper will send you a check for \$100 to help cover your dues. Apply at www.hellogrouper.com/BHS. Eligible members will receive a \$100 check regardless of when they last paid dues. Get more details from Grouper's member engagement team at 833-519-1050.

Celebrate 50 years of BABS

Livestream the British Association of Barbershop Singers (BABS) as they celebrate 50 years of Harmony during their Sing2024 event, taking place in Harrogate, North Yorkshire. From May 23-26, BABS will celebrate with contests, education, and an exhibition of its rich history. Guests will include **Instant Classic** (2015 BHS Quartet champ), **One Foot in the Stave** (2022 BHS Seniors champ), the **Music City Chorus** (2022 BHS Chorus champ), and many more talented acts. Details at www.singbarbershop.com.

KJ launches *The 7th Hour* podcast

The first full-length, live studio video barbershop podcast is now being hosted by KJ McAleesejergins, bari of 2023 Champion **Midtown**. *The 7th Hour* is a light-hearted spin on relevant and engaging discussions that make full use of video, including reactions to current and never-before-seen barbershop videos, as well as live performances from guest quartets. Subscribe to *The 7th Hour* Podcast YouTube channel and follow on all social media.

REBRANDING

SOUTHEASTERN HARMONY DISTRICT RETIRES DIXIE NAME

In October of 2023, Clay Hine was appointed head of a Dixie District task force to address declining district membership, declining participation in district events, as well as a potential district name change and rebranding.

On March 3, 2024, the District House of Delegates voted unanimously to pass the task force's multi-faceted proposal, focused on supporting district members, chapters, and quartets; the most prominent element was to change the district name to Southeastern Harmony District.

The change affects district identity and branding in the present and future while ensuring that the positive

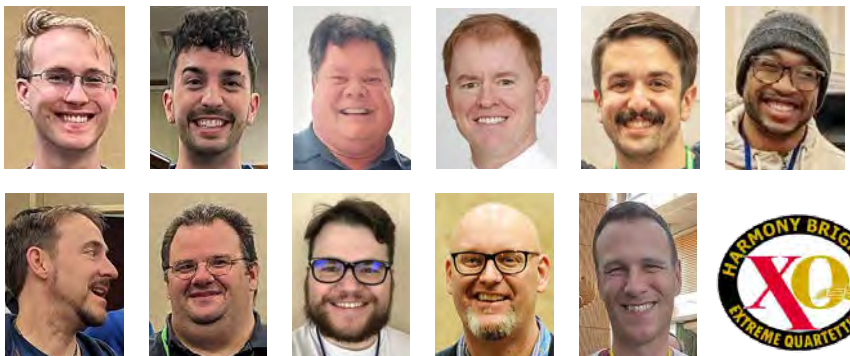
legacy and history of the Dixie District are preserved and perpetuated. For example, there will be Southeastern Harmony District quartet and chorus champions moving forward,

but the name change is not retroactive; past winners will retain their titles as Dixie District champions.

The newly named Southeastern Harmony District formed in 1948 with boundaries that have since spawned the Sunshine and Carolinas Districts, and with Louisiana and Arkansas later helping form the Southwestern District. Internationally, the district has had two chorus champions, three quartet champions, and at least four Varsity champions.



EXTREME QUARTETTING



BRIGADES CELEBRATE AMBASSADOR AWARD WINNERS

Harmony Brigades throughout the Society and beyond feature a thrilling weekend in which singers enjoy casual quartetting and contest events among singers that arrive having already mastered that year's championship-level repertoire of 10-12 songs. Each Harmony Brigade grants an *Ambassador Award*, selected by the singers in attendance, to recognize the person that was most prepared and most enjoyable to sing with. Current winners (either 2023 or

2024) from L-R starting at the top:

- **Atlantic:** Will Searight
- **Great Lakes:** Joey Pace
- **High Sierra:** Brian Dowd
- **Indiana:** Doug Hutson
- **Lone Star:** Carson Greene
- **Mixed New England:** Reidyn Wingate
- **New England:** Marcel D'Anjou, Joe Hudson
- **North Carolina:** Nate Lueders
- **Northern Pines:** Heath Mueller
- **UK:** Tom Griffin



● COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Bringing area musicians together

Taps and Tags brings Des Moines musicians of every stripe together monthly to sing a few tags together and build a better local singing community

Vox Infinitus of the Des Moines Metro, IA Chapter is working to build a broader Des Moines singing community by way of tagging. Their monthly tagging events are made to draw friends, fellow singers and musicians, as well as Barbershoppers from other chapters, and particularly those who have never tagged at all.

“Both the existing and developing music communities in Des Moines seemed to be void of an opportunity where people who love



music could casually come together and simply experience music either as a listener or a participant,” said

co-founder and secretary Weston Hennings. “It was this void that Taps & Tags was created to fill.”

Friends and strangers of all abilities alike are invited to gather, socialize, and join together monthly in music making independent of the Vox Infinitus experience. “More than anything, we want to reach people who have never heard a tag before and provide them that experience,” Weston

continued. Indeed, the event occasionally yields quartets of non-barbershop strangers singing tags by themselves.



ABOUT YOUR NEW MEMBERSHIP CARDS

Starting with your next renewal, you'll be carrying a useful recruiting tool in your pocket. While chatting with folks after a gig, invite them to use a smartphone to scan the code on your membership card. This opens www.barbershop.org/card, where they'll find:

- must-see barbershop videos.
- a few tags you can sing with them right away.
- info on joining the Society.

You'll also find info and links for you as a BHS Member, including:

- Code of Ethics and Statements of Affirmation.
- membership renewal links.
- Keep The Whole World Singing sheet music.

Quartet cards have also been upgraded, providing you with quick links to the Quartet Guidebook, vocal health resources, and contest entry info.

● COMMUNITY OUTREACH

THANKS TO SINGING VALENTINES, \$35,000 DONATED TO HEARING & SPEECH CENTER

For 35 years, the **Gentlemen of Harmony** from Moncton, NB (Canada) have hosted an annual Singing Valentines Campaign, and have so far raised over \$35K for their local hospital's hearing and speech clinic. This year, two quartets per day over two days completed nearly 60 singouts. The chapter has numerous local sponsors, including promotions from the local radio station.





What's Happening



Harmony University ▲ July 28–Aug 4, 2024 University of Denver

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2024 International Cleveland – June 30–July 7

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barbershop.org/international

◀ **2024 International Cleveland**
June 30–July 7

2025 Midwinter San Antonio
January 28–February 2

2025 International Denver
June 29–July 6

2026 Midwinter Pasadena
January 13–18

2026 International St. Louis
June 28–July 5

2027 International Minneapolis
July 4–11

2028 International Chicago
July 2–9

2029 International San Antonio
July 1–8

● CHANTICLEER MEMBERS COMPETE

NO JOKE: “SO, FOUR PROFESSIONAL SINGERS WEARING MATCHING PURPLE SHIRTS WALK INTO A BARBERSHOP CONTEST ...”

Many a Barbershopper has pondered this question: If professional singers from another genre entered a BHS contest, how well would they do? We may now have the answer! Sort of. (Spoiler: They were *technically* novices and they were fantastic!)

Three current and one recent member of the Grammy-winning 12-voice classical men’s ensemble **Chanticleer** recently competed at the 2024 FWD Spring Preliminaries as **Purple Rebar**. They didn’t sing in the Finals round because they had only prepared two songs, but the 83.0% average for their Friday night set would have tied for 16th if they’d done it at last year’s International Quarterfinals.

When’s the last time you saw a novice quartet put on a vocal clinic using the only two songs they’d ever learned?

As you’d expect from members of the world-class ensemble, the singing was impressively pingy and pristine.

The barbershoppy elements were also strong, thanks in no small part to the left side of the quartet, which has a combined seven-ish years of prior BHS experience.

About 15 years ago, bari Kory Reid started a short stint singing with **Westminster Chorus** before embarking on an 11-year journey as a singer and assistant director for Chanticleer. He recently retired from the group and became director of BHS’s **Fog City Singers**. Bass Jared Graveley enjoyed a short stint with **Voices of Gotham** and competed at International in 2022 with **The Brooklynaires** before Chanticleer drew him to San Francisco. The two were joined by Andy Van Allsburg (L) and Tim Keeler (T), new BHS members in



their first contest; for their part, they helped make Purple Rebar perhaps the least novice-sounding novice quartet in BHS contest history.

Kory and Jared are only two of several singers who over the years have leveraged their barbershop skills into a prestigious role with Chanticleer. We can now confirm that the skill transfer works in the other direction as well!

Search for “Purple Rebar” on YouTube to watch their set. ■

Fostering a culture of mutual respect

AS MEMBERS OF A MOSAIC OF BARBERSHOP CULTURES, MAY WE FOCUS ON HARMONY AT OUR GATHERINGS: BEING RESPECTFUL TO AUDIENCES OF EVERY AGE AND CULTURE, AND NOT TAKING OFFENSE WHERE NONE WAS INTENDED

The Barbershop Harmony Society represents a mosaic of cultures that are defined within the singing communities to which we belong. That mosaic, a work of art unto itself, represents all barbershoppers and consists of a multitude of little pieces that contribute to the overall impact. To experience the full effect requires that we step back and look at the whole picture.

Much of the beauty of the barbershop experience is the ability and desire for four people to stand together and ring a chord. It makes no difference their background, their profession, what part of the world they live in, or even which barbershop organizations they join. What matters in the “moment of barbershop” is that four people can experience the thrill of harmony at the same time. Equally important is that people listening can also receive the same gift. The excitement of that ringing sound affects performers and audience alike.

And while the “moment of barbershop” focuses on the combined thrill, the truth remains that we are all individuals, undeniably different from one another, wonderfully unique in world perspectives, life experi-

ences, family histories, affections, fears, and hopes. As the Barbershop Harmony Society becomes more connected, we see that different barbershop cultures exist and the opportunity is presented for each of us to take a step back, look at the mosaic, and still see ourselves and our preferred version of barbershop within the larger picture that the rest of the world sees.

When Everyone in Harmony started, it had four equally important intents: preserve and encourage barbershop singing, expand the impact of barbershop singing, put our assets to work on behalf of the whole world of barbershop and be inclusive and welcoming to all. The topic of inclusion quickly gathered its own momentum; hence the focus of this article.

The January/February issue of *The Harmonizer* focused largely on an introspection of our Society’s “Everyone in Harmony” initiative which was announced in 2018. And while there are multiple components to the vision of Everyone in Harmony, that issue addressed the singular component of gender within choruses. The stories of nine different ensembles who dared to discuss among themselves what they wanted to change—or not—regarding gender are highlighted in the issue. They are



Steve Denino is interim CEO of the Barbershop Harmony Society and bass of 2023 International Finalist **The Core**.
SDenino@barbershop.org

MATT BOSTICK

individual stories for a BHS time capsule that saw the birth, in many instances, of new and different thinking for both sustainability and desire. And yes, there is mention of those individuals who made the decision to opt out of the direction the group was taking, forsaking their love of singing in that group for something in which they strongly believed. While this message is for all to hear, it is of particular attention to those Barbershoppers who possess a strong belief in their own preferences and sometimes struggle in their thoughts when confronted with something “different.”

As the Society matures into its Everyone In Harmony Vision, we realize each day that there is no one single culture of the Barbershop Harmony Society—but what is common across the BHS is the desire to harmonize.

In today’s world, there is a growing tendency to treat “cultures” as large, indistinct groups that think or perceive as a single entity. When a conflict arises from the interaction of people with different cultural values, that creates a “culture clash.” An unfortunate consequence is to lose sight of individuals as distinct, valid, lovable people—who they *are*—and instead see only preconceived group identity.

Inclusion is important. It is a part of our BHS culture. The essence of culture starts with our observable behaviors. Where culture meets behavior requires that we recognize that there is no single culture of the Barbershop Harmony Society. We are a collection of individual cultures that begin with each member and how we choose to interact with the singing communities in which we belong. Our barbershop experience, then, starts with our small groups, like chapters or quartets. How we sing and be-

Be mindful that the culture that you have built in your local singing community may not be the predominant culture you see at a BHS convention. When you bring a large group of Barbershoppers together, there are inevitably differences of behavioral expectations.

grows in every demographic dimension—by age, gender (sex, identity and expression), heritage and more, these bright line perceptions sometimes challenge the comfort of uniformity. “Culture” really is about how we behave—what we really do, not just what we say we do. Do we welcome all people to be themselves? Or only within the boundaries of our personal cultural preferences?

Our behaviors are a choice. We can choose to focus our attention and sometimes frustration and angst on our differences—or on what we can learn.

My friends, here is my caution. If we’re not careful, our actions might be received as disrespectful to others who have different values based on their economic background, religious and social values, race, gender, age, and any number of other factors. I am not saying we must all embrace all other cultures. This is not about blind acceptance. It all comes down to being mindful that the culture that you have built in your local singing community may not be the predominant culture you see at a BHS

have with each other matters.

Each singing community then uses this as a basis for making everyone feel welcome and included within their own local culture. These singing communities form a mosaic—thousands of pieces of all shapes and colors—which is one picture, one Barbershop Harmony Society. That one picture affects how we see each other *and* how the world sees us.

As the Society

convention. And though I contend your acquired culture will be in attendance when you bring a large group of Barbershoppers together, there are inevitably differences of behavioral expectations.

I would hope for all of us to have the curiosity and then the empathy to seek to understand other people. Barbershop music can be that bridge. By sharing ourselves in our music—new, unfamiliar, even challenging music—we can better understand all of our hearts and lives. More love begets more love and a better world.

I invite each of you to think about your behavioral preferences. Further I challenge each of you to remember to focus on what is common—singing barbershop—while being respectful of everyone else and the possibility that their expectations of behavior may not match your own. The Barbershop Harmony Society does not intend to make every group the same. Rather, being inclusive and welcoming to all means we must be respectful while centering on what brings us together.

If recent history has taught us anything, it is that Barbershoppers need to gather. We all learned that lesson when we couldn’t assemble. How we treat our gathering spaces and this opportunity sets the example for everyone. We need to be aware of who is around us and conscious of the notion that what is culturally aligned for one person might not be the same

for another. We must treat everyone with respect through that lens of our common culture: singing barbershop. Perhaps paying closer attention to the words of our BHS theme song, “Keep the Whole World Singing” might help us remember what we all share in common. “Keep a melody ringing and ringing in your heart” is for everyone. ■

The Barbershop Harmony Society does not intend to make every group the same. Rather, being inclusive and welcoming to all means we must be respectful while centering on what brings us together.



THANK YOU TO ALL THE DONORS WHO SUPPORT BHS PROGRAMS THROUGH GIVING TO HARMONY FOUNDATION



"It started with a music educator scholarship to Harmony University in 2019."

Amy Moyer

Wade Hampton Singers,
Greenville, SC

2024

NextGen Youth Chorus
"Audience Favorite"



"About 120 of my students have come to the BHS NextGen Junior Chorus Festival in the three Midwinter Conventions I've been blessed to attend.

"Ours was one of the few music programs in my area that did not experience a significant enrollment loss in the wake

of the pandemic. **I truly believe the spark ignited in my students at the 2020 Midwinter Convention kept them involved and hopeful for the future of singing.**

"That one HU scholarship made a huge impact."



SUPPORT THE BHS NEXTGEN PROGRAM AND MUSIC EDUCATORS

Support the BHS NextGen program or send a music educator to HU by donating at HarmonyFoundation.org/barbershop-harmony-society

**ENERGIZE
YOUNG SINGERS**

**PRESERVE
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**BUILD THRIVING
SINGING COMMUNITIES**

**SUPPORT
MUSIC EDUCATION**

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President's Council Anniversary Gift:

An Interview with Roger & Sue Lewis

This year, with great joy and gratitude, we are celebrating the 20th anniversary of our leadership giving program, President's Council. President's Council was launched by Harmony Foundation International in 2004 to help fund programs that touch thousands of lives every year and enrich them through the gift of singing. We want to take time to recognize the very first donors to President's Council, Roger and Sue Lewis. The Lewises are longtime supporters of barbershop, and in celebration of the 20th Anniversary, they have generously donated \$20,000. Roger Lewis first got involved with barbershop in 1954 while singing in a barbershop quartet in high school. Then in 1961, Roger joined the Barbershop Harmony Society where he has been a member for 64 years.



Roger and Sue want to see a lifetime of barbershop for anyone who wants to sing it. They also recognize that it takes money to help these programs continue to grow and thrive. While they have been involved in numerous leadership roles throughout the years, one pivotal role was in the formation of President's Council. Roger described meeting Clarke Caldwell in a quiet corner of a restaurant in southwest Michigan 20 years ago. "Clarke unfolded his plans for a President's Council, an interesting idea, but totally foreign to us. Then, he asked us to co-chair the startup. We weren't even sure it would work, but we never have been very good at saying no, so we agreed – and away we went!"

To their delight, many responded and the President's Council was officially off and running. At the subsequent conventions, they would gather the President's Council members to talk about the programs and then ask those donors to invite their friends, too. Roger said, "We were pleased and surprised when it went well because we'd never heard of such a thing. We hadn't been involved in foundations before that." He explained that early on, most of the donors were friends, but as time went on and the foundation grew, they had to meet a lot of new friends.

Roger shared how the President's Council has become a kind of a family in many ways. "Camaraderie is a huge thing in barbershop," he explained. "They say you join for the music but you stay for the camaraderie." When we asked Roger why he thought giving was so important he said, "In 1954, when I went to my very first barbershop meeting, they sang songs like: "Son of the Sea", "Down Our Way" and "My Wild Irish Rose". You can walk into chapters today and hear those very same songs. You will hear the very same arrangements. I hope 50 years from now that will still be true."



If you would like to join Roger and Sue, and the many other generous President's Council members, and help celebrate 20 years of support to great barbershop singing programs, you may do so by visiting our website at www.harmonyfoundation.org or by calling us at 615-571-2776. All new, reinstated, and increased Ambassador of Song and President's Council gifts will be counted toward the Lumbard Family Challenge. This extraordinary

endeavor has the potential to raise over \$300,000 in new support of life-changing programs! We hope you'll join us in celebrating two decades of President's Council! Thank you for your support!



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NEW YORK CITY 2024 MIDWINTER



PHOTOS THIS SPREAD: LORIN MAY



A return to the “old normal” in Midtown Manhattan

Originally scheduled for New York City in 2021, Midwinter 2024 felt like old times again, where we finally got to tag into the night among pre-pandemic numbers of attendees. A crowd of nearly 1,500 (including 455 youth performers) enjoyed everything under one hotel roof that was nestled between Broadway and Carnegie Hall. In a city renowned for world-class entertainment, we enjoyed contests and festivals by day and three evenings of some of the greatest shows we’ve ever staged.



Peak-level Midwinter Shows

You should have been there. You could have skipped all the contests and never blown a pitch pipe all week, and you still would have called this one of the best barbershop weekends ever. It didn't hurt to have the event in the heart of the biggest BHS District, the Mid-Atlantic—always bursting with talent—and it seemed like every MAD performer showed up for the party. And that's before all the other International medalists showed up.

No, really—you *should have been there*. You could have traveled across the continent just for the shows!



Lady A Cappella



Parkside Harmony



Quorum

Thursday: East Coast Sound, Midnight Society, Manhattan, Secret Best Friends, Metro Voices, The Alexandria, VA Chapter Treble Chorus, Alexandria Harmonizers, Alexandria Combined Chorus, Pratt Street Power, Gimme Four, Parkside Melody, Parkside Harmony, Parkside Combined Chorus

Friday: YTBN, Association of International Seniors Quartet Champions (AISQC) Chorus, Hearsay, Let's Sing!, 2024 MAD Seniors Chorus, Quin-Tones, Smoke Ring, Sirens of Gotham, Voices of Gotham, Gotham Combined Chorus

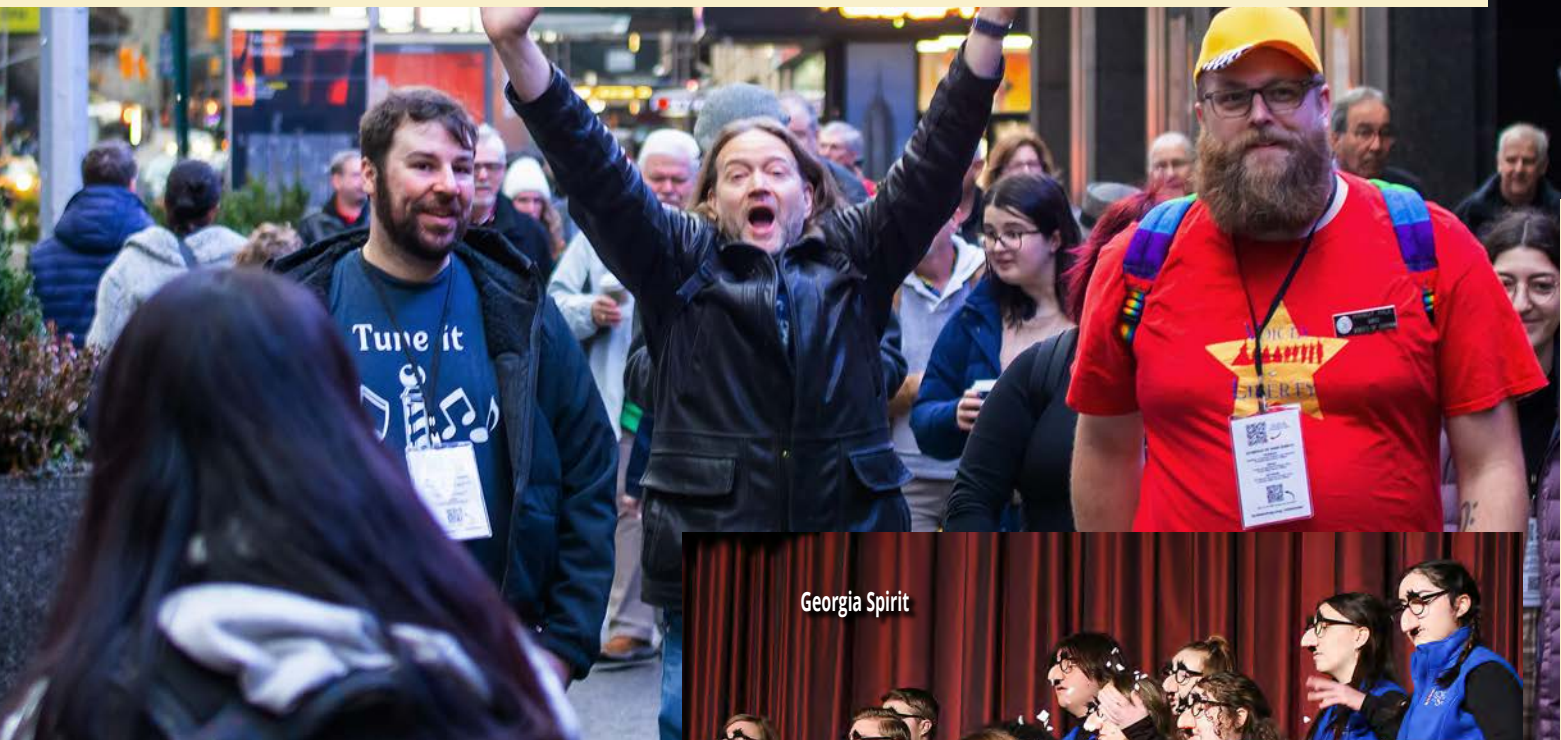
Saturday: Raise the Roof, Brouhaha, Fierce (Harmony, Inc. champ), Three and a Half Men, Combined Youth Chorus, Lady A Cappella (SAI Champ), First Take, Midtown



Three and a Half Men



Secret Best Friends



Hundreds of youth learning to harmonize

Generous donors came through for the 455 singers who showed up to the BHS Next Generation Junior Barbershop Chorus Festival. You would have thought the show had peaked at the beginning after **Georgia Spirit** (right) channeled 1999 champion comedy legends **FRED**, but it was a Festival and an entire weekend full of peaks for the youth and audiences alike!



Georgia Spirit



Cleveland Heights Men's and Cleveland Heights Women's Barbershoppers



Most Seniors groups wisely follow this sage advice: choose songs *you* can sing well, not songs that only the champs can sing well. So, then, what possessed the not-easily-mistaken-for-NextGen men of **Raise the Roof** to finish out their set with “Once Upon A Time”? (Yes, the **Keepsake** version that every tagger thinks they can sing well but they’re wrong!) Well, clearly Raise the Roof thought they could sing it well, but instead they sang it *very* well! Not the typical Seniors’ choice, but then they’re not the typical Seniors Champ. You just have to hear it to believe it!



Mid-Atlantic District Seniors Chorus is first contest champion

After several years of experimentation following festival formats, the first Seniors Chorus Championship—ages 55+ and following regular BHS scoring—took place at NYC on the same stage as the Next Generation Junior Chorus Festival. While most districts didn’t host a chorus this year, both the Mid-Atlantic winners and the Seniors Dream Chorus showcased impressive sets.



First Take does five takes

2023 bronze medalist **First Take** had extra takes during their Saturday Night Show set—five total takes at bari. Drew Wheaton stayed home, so rather than get a single replacement for its set, the quartet got some close friends and family to sing a song each.



2024 Int'l Seniors Quartet Contest



1. Raise the Roof



2. Vintage Blend



3. cityScape



4. Sophisticated Gentlemen



5. Up All Night

Raise the Roof

2024 Seniors Quartet Champion

In 2018, Tom Rouse was singing as a replacement lead in the post-competition 'Roaring 20s' quartet with replacement bass Nat Comisar (and contest-era medalists Mike Connelly and Bob Moorehead) when they discussed forming a Seniors quartet in 2018 with Marco Crager. Like Tom, Marco had quartetted for over 40 years, including four trips to the Finals at International. Mike declined to compete, so Nat, Tom, and Marco invited Steve Shiveley to sing with them, but the group went on indefinite hold after one rehearsal. Tom and Marco instead helped form **Time Bandits** before Tom joined **Hearsay** to earn Seniors gold in 2020. Steve later joined Marco with Time Bandits and then **Wow! Time Flies**.

Later, at Tom's 70th birthday party, Steve, Marco, Nat, and Tom rang a few chords once again, decided we weren't getting any younger, and restarted our journey in August of 2022. We immediately enlisted famous coaching duo Jean and Brian Barford, who began molding us into a cohesive unit, along with great input from Joe Hunter and David Calland. Finishing 4th overall in 2023, after being together for only six rehearsals, only whetted our appetite for more. Nothing compares to the realization of a dream when you hear your quartet's name announced as "Your new Senior Quartet Champions"

Steve Shiveley (T) is by far the youngest member of the quartet, and was one of the youngest members ever to sing in a barbershop show after joining the Society at age three! He sang with **Madison Avenue**, **BX Connection**, **Cruise Control**, **Off the Charts**, **E-Ticket**, **Weekend Edition**, **Wow! Time Flies**, and **Raise the Roof**. Steve spends his waking hours as a postman, and neither sleet, nor rain, nor snow, nor hail will keep him from his appointed quartet rehearsal.

Marco Crager (L) is a 50+ year Society member who sang with **Bustin' Loose**, **Rumors**, **Time Bandits**, **Wow! Time Flies**, and now **Raise the Roof**. He spent his formative years with AT&T climbing telephone poles, fighting hornet's nests and belligerent squirrels, and



occasionally falling off ladders. Now retired, Marco fancies himself an Indianapolis 500 race driver. Blessed with a beautiful voice and cursed with limited common sense, the quartet is honored to sing with him but won't ride in his car.

Tom Rouse (Br) has been lucky to tie his apron strings to many great singers in the Cincinnati area. A new 50-year member and second-generation Barbershopper, in the 1960s he was more interested in the **Beatles** and **Rolling Stones** than his dad's quartets. Then dad brought two young guys to the house (one was Dale Fetick of later **Marquis** fame) to ring chords with Tom at bari. Tom was hooked for life, and has since been blessed to win the Seniors contest three times with **Rusty Pipes**, **Hearsay**, and now **Raise the Roof**.

Nat Comisar (Bs) was the original bass for **The Cincinnati Kids** in the early '80s. During eight years away from barbershop, he sang with many non-barbershop groups, including on a nationally-syndicated radio program. **Raise the Roof** is his first competing quartet. A past manager of high-end restaurants in NYC, Chicago, and LA, he regales his quartet mates (yawn) with stories about his encounters with A-list sports and entertainment celebrities. Nat is Executive Vice President of Sibcy Cline Realtors.

Our unbelievably supportive wives (Mary with Marco, Bridget with Nat, Dawn with Steve, and Jennie with Tom) are all talented performers whose input, understanding, insight, wardrobe enhancements, and willingness to listen has been essential to quartet success. This quartet, having nearly 200 years of BHS membership, is honored to represent the Society as your 2024 International Senior Quartet Champions.

— Tom Rouse, bari

2024 International Seniors Competitors

Photos pages 21-24 by Lorin May

All singers listed as tenor, lead, bari, bass regardless of standing order



1. Raise the Roof (JAD) 79.2

Steve Shiveley, Marco Crager, Tom Rouse, Nat Comisar



2. Vintage Blend (PIO) 79.0

Mark Wilson, Jamie Carey, Kirk Wood, James Masalskis



3. cityScape (CAR) 76.9

Big Al Reynolds, Howard McAdory, Paul Gilman, Jay Hawkins



4. Sophisticated Gentlemen (RMD) 76.4

Tony Sparks, Shawn Mondragon, Doug Kastman, Farris Collins



5. Up All Night (JAD) 75.7

John Ward, Cecil Brown, Joe Hunter, Dan Rowland



6. JAZZ! (CSD) 73.6

Pam Mallard, Diane Durham, Tawny Brown, Diana Schweitzer



7. Wayfarers (SWD) 73.3

Norm Running, Brent Hairston, Doug Peterson, Mike Wilson



8. Right on Q (SUN) 73.1

Paul Carter, Tim Perenich, David Mills, Bryan Hevel



9. Emeritus (JAD) 72.9

Gary Ellerhorst, Scott Brannon, Kent Vanderkolk, Mike Bell



10. Aspire (NSC) 72.6

Ted Leinbach, Wally Miles, Rob Hopkins, Tom Parker



11. ReRouted (JAD) 72.2

Keith Shuck, Don Pullins, Doug Smeltz, Tim Kalb



12. Quadrphonics (DIX*) 71.0

Jim Olson, Maury Morris, Jimmy Tompkins, Ray Taylor



13. Checkmate (LOL) 70.2

Dave Baxter, Brad Charles, Harry Hanson, Jim Franklin



14. Port City Sound (NED) 69.3

Fred Moore, Walt Dowling, Jim Curtis, Jim Simpson



15. Sum of Each (MAD) 68.4

Daphne Witmer, Jennifer Seymour, Paul Stober, Don McElroy



16. Deep Water (DIX*) 67.7

Dan Bullock, Jim Frank, Chuck Wilson, Paul Blazek

* In March 2024, the Dixie District became the Southeastern Harmony District. (See p. 9 this issue) Quadrphonics and Deep Water are the final two ensembles to compete under the now-retired name.



CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE: *PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL ANNIVERSARY*

With great joy and gratitude, we commemorate a remarkable milestone – the upcoming 20th anniversary of our leadership giving program, President's Council, launched by Harmony Foundation in 2004.

*Join us in celebrating two
decades of President's Council!*



HARMONYFOUNDATION.ORG



17. Fossilized (SWD) 67.6

Lon Badgett, Steve Black, Paul Santino, David Morris



18. Sangamon Valley Chord Company (ILL) 67.6

Larry Drake, Brad Breneman, Pat Claussen, Dean Olsen



19. Hindsight (ONT) 67.2

Doug Morrison, Chris Starkey, Sandy Todd, Ted Church



20. Luck of the Draw (MAD) 65.5

Greg Utermahlen, Bobby Crist III, David Kelly, Scott Zumbrum



21. Silver Alert (MAD) 64.9

Kris Zinkievich, Kevin McKenzie, Mike Edison, Steve Murane



22. Six Feet Off Bass (FWD) 64.7

Eric Emmons, Lenny Jensen, Mark Travis, Willie Daw



23. Three Handsome Gentlemen (CAR) 64.5

Steve Warner, Marc Hagn, Rick Jackson, Ron Bailey



24. Joyride (NED) 64.2

Jake White, Maureen Cohen, Barbara Moores, Will Johnson

2024 BHS NextGen Junior Chorus Festival



We saw 14 Next Generation Junior choruses consisting of 455 singers cross the Festival stage. For most of the participants, this was their first time singing barbershop harmony. For the first time, we saw not one but two choruses from Ireland. Sharing the stage with the Seniors Chorus contest, each of the Junior choruses performed two barbershop songs and one from any style. This contest is adjudicated using standards and rankings familiar to high school musicians.



bit.ly/2024-mw-chorus



Wade Hampton Singers



Georgia Spirit

Symrna, GA
Kim Watters
Plateau AA
EXCELLENT

BG Select
East Syracuse, NY
Danielle Walker
Plateau AA
EXCELLENT



Seneca Valley Singers

Germantown, MD
Tessa Walker
Plateau AA
OUTSTANDING

Vocal Motion
Burlington, WI
Penny Yanke
Plateau AA
OUTSTANDING



Wade Hampton Singers

Greenville, SC
Amy Moyer
Plateau AA
OUTSTANDING
Audience Favorite

Cleveland Heights Women's Barbershoppers

Akron, OH
Jesse Lange
Plateau AA
OUTSTANDING



Danu Young Women's Choir

Letterkenny, Ireland
Doug Carnes
Plateau AAA
SUPERIOR



The Adelettes

Syosset, NY
Kristen Howell
Plateau AA
OUTSTANDING



Cleveland Heights Men's Barbershoppers

Akron, OH
Jesse Lange
Plateau A
OUTSTANDING



Here Comes Treble

Burlington, WI
Penny Yanke
Plateau AA
EXCELLENT



The ABC's, the St. Aloysius Barbershop Chorus

Co Cork, Ireland
Lorena Gillard
Plateau AA
OUTSTANDING



\$100,000 BHS NextGen GIVING CHALLENGE

The BHS NextGen Barbershop program continues to provide a space for more and more **young singers** to fall in love with barbershop harmony. Through the chorus and quartet festivals and contests, these young singers are able to express themselves through this life-changing art form, connecting with the 'world's best audiences.' With your support, their energy creates **joy** and **hope** for the future of barbershop. **Please help us give the gift of barbershop to the Next Generation of singers, leaders, and mentors!**



"It was something that gave me hope, knowing that I can go far in life, and I can do great things. It's really just a great experience. You never know what can happen."

- Member of YTBN, 2023 Junior Quartet Champions



As of 3/1/24, we have received \$32,000 in donations for BHS NextGen! Give today so we can reach our goal!



<https://www.harmonyfoundation.org/donate>



[HARMONYFOUNDATION.ORG](https://www.harmonyfoundation.org)

2024 BHS NextGen Junior Chorus Festival

The Maryland State Boy Choir

Baltimore, MD
Stephen Holmes
Plateau A
EXCELLENT



Liverpool High School Concert Chorale

Liverpool, NY
Sky Harris
Plateau AAA
OUTSTANDING



Alexandria Select Choir

Alexandria Bay, NY
Katie Taylor
Plateau A
OUTSTANDING



2024 Seniors Chorus Contest



MAD Seniors Chorus (74.5) • Keith Harris & Rick Taylor CHAMPION



Seniors Dream Chorus (72.9) • Jordan Travis

FIRST LOOK

The new BHS YouTube subscription will feature early access to new contest releases, plus the first peek at classic performances from the vaults.

JOIN TODAY!



Now you can be sure to see all the best in barbershop as soon as it's released! **For just \$7.99 per month, you can unlock First Look**, a YouTube subscription option from the Barbershop Harmony Society.

First Look subscribers will enjoy premieres of **more than two hours of videos every month**—usually much more— at least **a month before it's released in public channels.**

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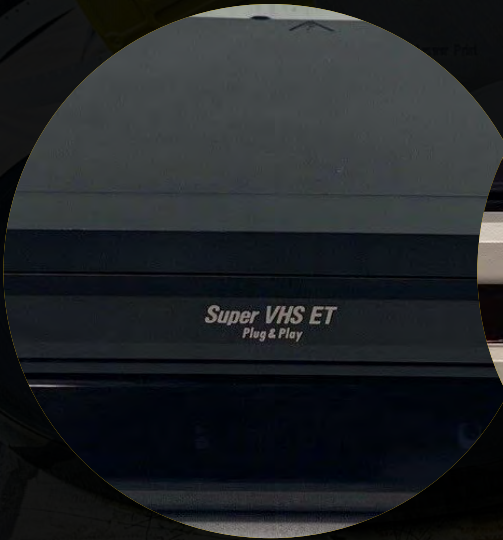
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ATTENTION: BARBERSHOP HISTORY NERDS

WE NEED YOUR HELP

DO YOU OWN ANY OF THESE ITEMS THAT YOU'RE WILLING TO DONATE?



**Super VHS (S-VHS)
Tape Player**
(note: not regular VHS)



**Betacam SP
Tape Player**



**U-Matic Video
Cassette Player**

The BHS Archives could use your help! We are sending this word out to inquire if any of our barbershop history enthusiasts might have any old equipment suitable for playing and digitizing outdated tape formats. Specifically, we are in need of an S-VHS tape player, a Betacam tape player, and a U-Matic cassette player. We have a large number of tapes in these formats that contain invaluable historical content that we are working hard to preserve. Your assistance in providing such equipment would greatly contribute to our endeavor to safeguard and share this important barbershop history.

If you have any equipment that you would be willing to donate, **please reach out to us before sending us any of your equipment so we can ensure your equipment is right for the archive's needs and in working condition!** Rest assured that any contributions will be handled with the utmost care and respect, and we are committed to acknowledging your generosity appropriately. Thank you for considering our request, and we look forward to the possibility of working together to ensure the preservation of our rich heritage.

If you're in possession of working equipment described above and are willing and able to donate it to The Society, please reach out to us! We'd love to follow up with you to confirm your equipment meets our needs and is in working order.

marketing@barbershop.org

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**SUPPORT
MUSIC EDUCATION**

**BHS
MISSION**

2024 Next Generation Junior Quartet Contest

Photos pages 31-32 by Lorin May

All singers listed as tenor, lead, bari, bass regardless of standing order



1. highkey! • Wichita Northwest High School in Wichita, KS
Maggie Vogt, Ayah Gharbi, Cam Roberts, Lea'cher Kennedy



2. Boysen Blue • Portage Northern High School, Portage, MI; Pioneer District
Ethan Steele, Charlie Gross, Muamen Alsheakh, Josh Cavalli



3. Sector • Mile High Chapter; Grandview High School, Centennial, CO
Chloe Lindgren, Ella Barrett, Seamus Clark, Tyler Richards



4. XLT (extra-large trio) • Mile High Chapter; Grandview High School, Centennial, CO
Jane Linder, Lily Svenneby, Isabelle Howard, Sarah Tidd



5. Ceoltóirí Canóla • Irish Association of Barbershop Singers
Alice OConnor, Sadbh Breathnach, Katie Coyle, Sine O hAodha



6. Spicy • Syosset High School, Syosset, NY
Samantha Coscia, Maria DiBello, Sally Jamieson, Raia Honig



7. Trebletones • Bucks County, PA
Annabel Bower, Addison Rogers, Nora Kushnier, Jane File



8. Sirena • *Land O' Lakes District*
 Ella Moskal, Seneca Santo, Brynn Cole, Jasmyn Georget



9. Off the Cuff • *Syosset High School, Syosset, NY*
 Sam Gerson, Alan Huang, Blesson Ren, Luca Alexandru



10. Quint-Essentials • *Quinton Township School in Quinton, NJ*
 Macy Clow, Avery Newkirk, Camila Pelech, Ector Garcia



11. Shades of Blue • *Gordon Central High School, Calhoun, GA*
 Sadie Holmes, Samantha Ruiz, Aliyah Mills, Anna Caroline Parker



12. Blue 4 U • *Gordon Central High School, Calhoun, GA*
 Seth Kolterman, Bobby Hicks, Yessen Zamora, Asher Lee



13. Triple AAAs • *Burlington High School, Burlington, WI*
 Alyse Zimmerman, Ava Dennert, Aubrey Dill, Sydnee Stevens



14. MMSquared • *Liverpool High School in Liverpool, NY*
 Molly Jaquin, Mia Humphrey, Mia Cabrey, Madison Humphrey



15. The Baby Barbers • *St Aloysius College, Carrigtwohill, Co Cork; Ireland, IABS*
 Eimear Carey, Thia O Gorman, Olivia Szurek, Dorinda Roberts

Meet new champ highkey!

2024 Next Generation Junior Quartet Champion

How long have you been singing barbershop?

Ayah: We all have been singing barbershop for three years, except our baritone, Cam, who has been singing in the style for a year and a half.

How long have you been singing together?

Cam: We have been together as a quartet since late September of 2023.

Michael Mays (director): This group was auditioned/selected from our larger (15-20) SSAA group called **Cleftomaniacs!**

How did you prepare your song?

Lea'cher: We had at least one rehearsal a week, sometimes two, either just the four of us or with our director, Michael Mays. Sometimes we'd even do two rehearsals a week! We worked until we could perform it in our sleep.

Michael: They worked with several coaches, including myself, Matthew Webber, and the entire quartet of **Tofu Concern!**

What were your reactions to winning?

Maggie: It was genuinely an honor to win when singing alongside other amazing youth quartets. I remember being extremely joyful, and



Cam Roberts (Br), Lea'cher Kennedy (Bs), Ayah Gharbi (L), Maggie Vogt (T)

honestly, a little shocked. I even cried! Quartets are no doubt a group effort, so I felt very proud and connected to my quartet members from this amazing achievement.

Michael: It was amazing to see the students glow with excitement. They worked extremely hard and they were thrilled to be taking home the gold! ■

– Michael Mays, Choir Director at Northwest High School (Wichita, KS)



Velvet Hills Chorus

DIRECTOR SEARCH

Velvet Hills Chorus in Colorado Springs, CO is looking for a dynamic, experienced director committed to excellence, to begin in January 2025. This Region 8 Sweet Adelines Chorus has regularly placed 1st or 2nd at Regional Contest and has placed in the top 10 Internationally 5 times. We are excited to be competing in the 2024 International Competition with scores rated in the top 10.

Qualifications:

- Established vocal and choral musical knowledge, background and abilities
- Demonstrated ability to take a leadership role in instructing and directing a chorus in rehearsals, performances, shows and competitions
- Ideal candidates will have three years experience as a Barbershop Harmony Chorus Director or five to seven years experience as a Chorus Assistant Director (consideration will be given to a candidate with extensive chorus music leadership experience)

Apply By
June 30,
2024



Application information: www.velvethills.org





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or ...

BEHIND Singing men!

Before setting foot on any stage, they had already set the bar high—too high! Here’s Midtown’s journey from a “cool” group that impressed to a relatable quartet that is loved.

As the Louisville arena roared in appreciation of the record-breaking performance of “Spider-Farm,” I was moved with gratitude for what by then was **Midtown’s** incredible five-year journey. Most people would imagine that these four tremendous singers with professional experience had an easy journey to the top of the barbershop world. Not exactly.

Contrast “Spider-Farm” to Midtown’s International debut in 2019. Sure, they finished with a medal in Salt Lake City—how could that not have been great? It was better than the quartet expected. But for the International audience, who had heard Midtown’s recordings and seen their music videos, expectations had been sky high. Too high.

Midtown formed in March 2018 with big plans, but “we all pledged that contest would never be our primary focus or goal,” said bari KJ McAleesejergins. “The mission was to take barbershop to newer and larger audiences by using media and professional quality music videos to inspire a new generation of Barbershoppers to try new things, and to reach audiences outside of the barbershop community.”

They quickly branded themselves and posted professional-sounding recordings and industry standard music videos. They rocketed into popularity before they ever stepped on a stage! Barbershoppers on social media were already hailing Midtown as pioneers for the artform when the quartet first contacted me in September of 2018 for an all-day coaching session a week before the MAD Fall Contest. They hoped we’d be a good fit because of how I’d clicked with recently-crowned 2018 champ **After Hours**, and because I’d recently moved to within only two hours of KJ’s New York studio.



Tim Waurick is tenor of 2006 International Champion **Vocal Spectrum**, a learning track producer, content creator, coach, Singing Judge and a two-time inductee in the BHS Hall of Fame
www.TimTracks.com

I'd enjoyed their recorded sound online, but had no idea what I was in for until I heard their live sound. It was electric! Anthony's voice was incredibly special, and all four of them could solo at a professional level. I soon learned how coachable they were. When I'd ask for something, they would immediately do it. Their work ethic was like nothing I'd seen before. That day, they rehearsed from 10 a.m. until 10 p.m. with quick breaks for lunch and dinner. I needed more breaks than they did! Much like with After Hours, we immediately clicked. Thus began our five-year journey!

Setting expectations too high?

It seemed that everyone assumed it would be easy for four accomplished musicians to gel as an ensemble and win the hearts of the barbershop world, but that task was more daunting than we anticipated. You see, Midtown had style, swag, and looked like the coolest kids on the block. But does anyone actually "like" the

MIDTOWN HAD STYLE, SWAG, AND LOOKED LIKE THE COOLEST KIDS ON THE BLOCK. BUT DOES ANYONE ACTUALLY "LIKE" THE COOLEST KIDS ON THE BLOCK?

coolest kids on the block?

"We didn't set out to be this cool quartet," said tenor Nick Gordon. "The goal was to do songs that connected with us and to be our true, authentic selves—not just please the judges. That was much more fun and fulfilling than just 'playing the game.'"

Yet, contest expectations only grew after Midtown released its ground-breaking "Spider-Man" music video two weeks before the 2019 International Contest. But being on stage is far different from standing in a studio and recording multiple takes

until you're happy. Midtown felt the pressure to live up to the hype, even if online fans didn't seem to appreciate that KJ's non-comedy turn was just one of many new adventures for quartet members. Nick had medaled at bari but was now singing tenor, this was Anthony Fortino's first time singing lead, and it was bass Christian Diaz's first time on the International stage.

"Everything is going to be just fine!"

Word quickly spread among Salt Lake City competitors that both the audience and quartets were struggling with the acoustics in the Quarterfinals venue, the historic Tabernacle on Temple Square. As Midtown prepared to take the stage with this news, my job changed from coach to therapist as I tried to calm everyone's nerves.

Their performance was very good—top 20!—but below their own expectations. Worse, you could tell that the audience really enjoyed it but didn't love it. As the day went



The downside of successful buzz-building

Midtown seemed to burst onto the barbershop scene fully formed in 2018 when they dropped their professional-grade "Come Back to Me" video. High-end branding and social media buzz built for a year, and then barbershop fans swooned when their "Spider-Man" comic book video dropped two weeks before the 2019 International Contest. Midtown arrived at the Quarterfinals with gold medal voices, a slick look, and ... one prior International medal among the four members. After an opening round set that the audience seemed to like but not love, the quartet spent the next two days believing they had let down their many fans.





Nick Gordon (T) grew up in Toledo, OH, where his high school choral director was now-three-time BHS champion Gary Lewis. Nick earned a music degree at Bowling Green State University and sang with the 2011 collegiate champion **Prestige** before attending NYU to pursue a master's degree in vocal performance and vocal pedagogy. He sang with Gary, Puck Ross, and Chris Vaughan for four years with **Quorum**, stepping away shortly before a guy in a black and yellow bowling shirt approached him with a new quartet opportunity. Nick is based in Jersey City, NJ as an actor and vocalist, where he lives with his wife, Gabriella, and children Isaiah and Maya.

Anthony Fortino (L) is a Kansas City native and proud graduate of Texas Christian University (TCU), where he earned degrees in Accounting and Theatre. Post-college, Anthony worked in New York City for six years as an accountant and an actor. He was seen in productions like *Jersey Boys*, *Newsies*, *Mamma Mia*, and *South Pacific*. He moved back to his hometown in Kansas in 2021 with his wife, Katie, and now works in finance by day and sings with Midtown by weekend. Anthony is proud father of 2.5-year-old Frankie, and newborn Gianna.



on, Midtown became aware of some negative online comments. Despite reassurances from both me and their families that they'd done well, their perception of a "bad hit" began to consume them. They were in a spiral.

The next day, as we prepared for the Semifinals, the guys were so deep inside their own heads that I stopped the rehearsal. We walked outside of the Airbnb and I told them to breathe in the fresh summer air. "Look around, it's a beautiful day and we are singing. It's a gift!" I said. "Everything is great, and everything is going to be just fine!" We returned inside with renewed energy to work on the song that would help Midtown rise in popularity: "Spider-Man."

I begged lead Anthony Fortino to smile and not play Mr. Cool. "We, the audience, need to see that you're one of us," I kept saying. "To see that you aren't the coolest guy in the room." As they began goofing off and having fun with the song, you could feel a shift. And after that performance

in the second round, you could feel a shift in the audience reaction, as if they were saying, "Ah, yes. There they are!" Later that week, Midtown received its first medal and the Dealer's Choice Award. They were officially on track toward greatness!

Shedding an ill-fitting "cool kid" image

At the beginning of 2020, Midtown already had 23 shows on the schedule, including trips to England, Ireland, and Sweden. After a big showing at Midwinter, the quartet was flying high. The coming worldwide pandemic was on nobody's

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radar. "We were realizing our dream. We had only one child in the quartet family, I lived in New York but wasn't married yet. It looked like everything was ahead of us," said Anthony. "Covid brought all our momentum to a halt. And then there were marriages, kids, and cross-country moves. We slowed down, we stopped coaching. I moved to Kansas City, Christian moved to Colorado, and we barely saw each other in 2021. So 2022 was really a cold reset."

As families expanded and perspectives changed, they began expanding their repertoire to more impactful messages, with songs like "Children Will Listen." They worked hard to become a better ensemble and also to endear themselves to every barbershop audience. At every show and convention, anyone who had assumed that Midtown was maybe too cool to talk to quickly learned that they are Barbershoppers' Barbershoppers. They've each grown up in this hobby and love every aspect

No stage? Making the most of a shutdown

Now a cross-country quartet, Midtown spent the shutdown becoming more connected with the barbershop community. They created the “Gitdown with Midtown Challenge” and produced a Halloween album with barbershop personalities from all over the world. Most important, they inspired the barbershop community to start to join them in creating videos. Suddenly, everyone was doing it! Midtown also participated in a massive 2020 Facebook voting promotion that reached tens of millions of people. Midtown has also grown in size—with weddings, engagements and babies!



THEY’VE EACH GROWN UP IN THIS HOBBY AND ARE KIND, APPROACHABLE PEOPLE WHO ARE ALWAYS THE LAST ONES STANDING AT AN AFTERGLOW, HAVING SPENT THE NIGHT SINGING WITH ANYONE AND EVERYONE!

couple of them slipped and fell with a crash as they ran off stage.

“I accidentally fell, and then Nick tried to catch me and he fell too,” Anthony said. So KJ decided to turn it into a bit and fell down as well!” A true gold medal moment if I ever saw one!

They have worked hard on their singing with Brandon Guyton, their arrangements with Aaron Dale, and their performance with David McEachern. I was their resident therapist and fixer of all that Brandon taught wrong. (Kidding!)

of it. They are kind, approachable people who love hanging out, talking, and singing tags with anyone and everyone. They’re always the last ones standing at an afterglow, having sung with everyone! They’ve performed all over the world and gained countless fans and friends.

In 2022, only their second International Contest, they placed second! Their improvement was evident despite the two-year contest hiatus. Their following had grown and they had finally shed their “too cool for school” image. This was evident after the finals in Charlotte, when a

KJ McAleesejergins (Br) is a professional vocalist, instrumentalist, and studio engineer based out of West Point, NY. KJ recently retired from the United States Army after 20 years as a paratrooper with the 82nd Airborne Division and Vocalist for the Army National Guard.



He coaches quartets and vocal ensembles all over the world, and is the creator and host of the first-ever long-form video podcast for barbershop, *The 7th Hour Podcast*. He lives with his wife, Emily, and their two daughters, Stella and Rosalie.



Jayden and Christian, with his fellow Miami-raised friends from 2019 champion Signature

Christian Diaz (Bs) grew up in Miami sitting in on his uncle’s musical theatre rehearsals and his dad’s band jamming. After a few years on saxophone, Christian gravitated toward singing, attending New World School of the Arts for voice, where he discovered barbershop harmony and later earned three BHS college medals. He was a choral conducting scholar and completed a bachelor’s in jazz studies at Western Michigan University. Christian sang with the *Voices of Liberty* and *Dapper Dans at Disney World*. He lives in Denver with his fiancée, Jady, and runs a large private music studio that he hopes to expand into a performing arts school.



Farming perfection in Louisville

Midtown was the scoring favorite heading into Louisville, its fan base was huge, and they had fully come into their own as an ensemble that was connecting with audiences at the highest level. They were also now having a lot of fun.

“Early on in Midtown’s journey, I used to walk off stage feeling so upset because my own performance wasn’t perfect,” Christian said. “It took the fun out of it. Once I embraced my imperfections, it became much more fun and I felt such exponential growth as a performer and singer. That made Louisville so much fun for all of us!”

Several groups had gold medal-level qualifying scores for Louisville, so Midtown knew they needed a breakaway performance. They had been kicking around doing a callback to KJ’s days in **Lunch Break** by combining “Old McDonald’s Deformed Farm” with “Spider-Man.” With Lunch Break’s blessing, Midtown worked with Darin Drown and Jim Clark of 2010 champ **Storm Front** to craft the idea into a reality. “Spider-Farm” was born! Darin and Jim are geniuses (or insane?) and insisted that KJ play the “straight man” and the other three play buffoons. It was a daunting task, but Midtown pulled off the performance flawlessly!



We wouldn’t have seen the perfection of “Spider-Man” without the comedy genius of 2010 champ **Storm Front**’s Jim Clark and Darin Drown (trivia: Darin is uncle to Christian Diaz’s fiancée, Jady), or without arranger Aaron Dale, performance coach David McEachern, and coaches Tim Waurick and Brandon Guyton (above, to the left and right of Midtown, respectively). (Bottom left) Tenor Nick Gordon credits his choir teacher Gary Lewis (bass of 2022 champ **Quorum**) for bringing him into the barbershop fold as a high school freshman.

Midtown went from a quartet that impressed to a quartet that was loved and adored. An incredible standing ovation, the highest scoring song of all time, and the first-ever perfect 100 from all five Performance judges had etched Midtown into the history

books among the greatest quartets in contest history. They were now International Champions!

Midtown continues to create, sing, travel, and work toward their goal of innovating and bringing barbershop music to a larger audience. The Midtown family continues to grow, and will continue to evolve and bless our community with their presence.

I am so grateful for the opportunity to work with them, but more honored to call all four of them my friends. Never take for granted the hard work, dedication and sacrifice it takes to create something as special as Midtown. May we enjoy their amazing music for years and years to come. ■

DARIN DROWN AND JIM CLARK ARE GENIUSES (OR INSANE?) AND INSISTED THAT KJ PLAY THE “STRAIGHT MAN” AND THE OTHER THREE PLAY BUFFOONS.

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The Canton Hall of Fame Chorus in Canton Ohio is a

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Steve Denino
Interim CEO / Executive Director
Robyn Chancey
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library@barbershop.org
Janice Bane
Senior Manager, Copyright

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customerservice@barbershop.org
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events@barbershop.org
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Steve Scott
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THE TAG

Tom Gentry, Tagmaster

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“This Key’s Fine”

For some reason, I decided to write a tag for this issue. Here were the ground rules: It had to be short enough to teach from memory, have a key change, and keep the lead on one note. More on this in a minute, but first, a marginally-related tale.

Back in 1988, the quartet from Harmony Hall, traditionally named the **Staff Infection**—hey, it was a different era—spent three weeks in Australia to help boost the men’s barbershop scene Down Under. The personnel were Jim DeBusman (L), Bill Myers (Bs), Mel

Knight (Br), and I sang tenor.

A session with one of the choruses was delayed for several minutes while someone was dispatched to fetch a key to the rehearsal hall. To help pass the time, our quartet sang Burt Szabo’s “My Wild Irish Rose,” which features, by actual count, 14 key changes. We were later told that after we finished, the wife of one of the local fellows was heard to remark, “They aren’t very good, are they?”

By the way, that arrangement is included in the vintage songbook

Barbershop Potpourri, available from the BHS for a mere \$6 U.S.

Okay, about this tag. Weirdly enough, the final chord briefly strikes me as though we have not, in fact, changed key at all. Rather—if you are allergic to music theory, go now and pour yourself a sarsaparilla—it sounds like a tonic 7/9 with a suspended fourth. Honest! Then the new key, down a whole step, kicks in. Whew ...

Whatever you might call the last chord (maybe Irving?), you are invited to enjoy its tight crunchiness! ■

TTBB voicing

Tom Gentry (2024)

Musical score for TTBB voicing. The Tenor Lead part is on a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature. The lyrics are: "This key's fine, but now let's change!". The score shows four measures with chord changes indicated by numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4. The Bari Bass part is on a bass clef staff with a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a common time signature. The lyrics are: "This key's fine, but now let's change!". The score shows four measures with chord changes indicated by numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4.

SSAA voicing

Tom Gentry (2024)

Musical score for SSAA voicing. The Tenor Lead part is on a treble clef staff with a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a common time signature. The lyrics are: "This key's fine, but now let's change!". The score shows four measures with chord changes indicated by numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4. The Bari Bass part is on a bass clef staff with a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a common time signature. The lyrics are: "This key's fine, but now let's change!". The score shows four measures with chord changes indicated by numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4.

SATB voicing

Tom Gentry (2024)

Musical score for SATB voicing. The Tenor Lead part is on a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature. The lyrics are: "This key's fine, but now let's change!". The score shows four measures with chord changes indicated by numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4. The Bari Bass part is on a bass clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature. The lyrics are: "This key's fine, but now let's change!". The score shows four measures with chord changes indicated by numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4.



JULY 28 - AUGUST 4, 2024

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