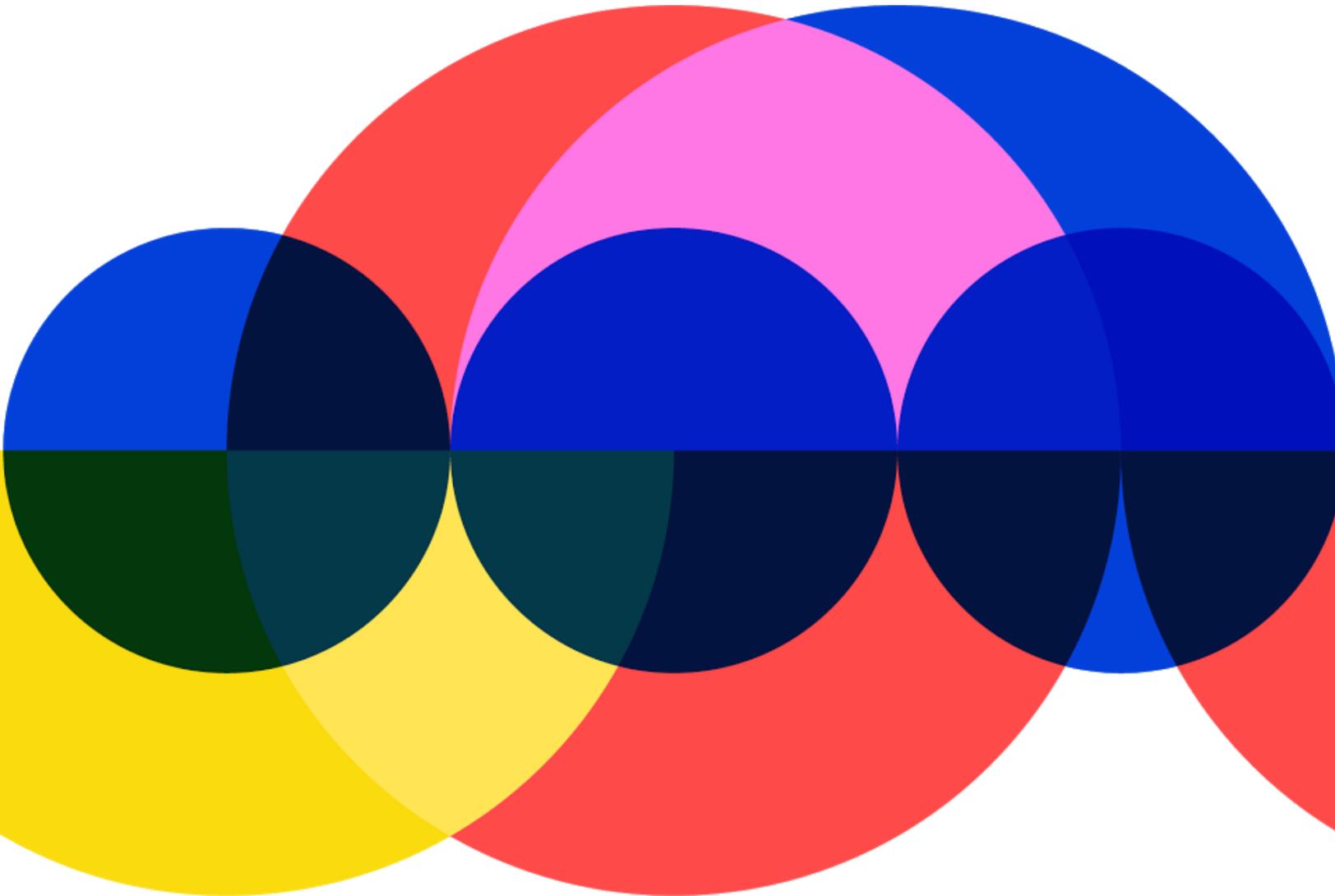




# STRATEGIC VISION

BOARD-APPROVED  
JULY 3, 2017



## HOW WE GOT HERE, WHERE WE ARE, AND WHERE WE'RE HEADED

Back in 1938, the founders of our Society stumbled onto something quite profound: The joy and transformation that comes with four voices singing together.

(In fact, this powerful kind of music had first presented itself many decades earlier when the first traces of barbershop singing took root in African-American communities and barbershops.)

O.C. Cash and Rupert Hall grew up with those early sounds, and they found in them something profound: *This mysterious alchemy of singing together changed men for the better.* Maybe it was because they were cooperating and blending with each other. Maybe it flowed from the tender emotions of the songs themselves. Perhaps it was the transcendental overtones of their well-tuned chords. Or maybe it simply came from being part of a community of support, camaraderie and fellowship with other congenial men of good character.

Cash and Hall saw the power of this thing called barbershop and wanted to preserve and propagate its growth. They brought 26 men together on a rooftop, and thus was borne S.P.E.B.S.Q.S.A.

They were onto something. So potent was four-part harmony as a force in men's lives that explosive growth followed. Finding themselves suddenly at the head of a nascent movement, our founders and early leaders took wise steps. They established a set of guiding purposes that have largely endured. They made some key decisions, appropriate for the times, about structures, processes and systems: Membership would be the point of entry into the world of barbershop. Gang singing, and eventually chorus singing would be at least as important as quartet singing, to make it accessible to the greatest possible number of people. Chapters would become the focal point for organizing and training

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singers. A district structure would emerge as the means to deliver support and service for chapters. Singing contests would take form as the way to celebrate and promote the very best of barbershop singing.

Other decisions would be made as well. We would be a male singing organization, even while being friendly and supportive to the emergence of women's barbershop organizations. We would be a white organization, a decision that would be formally reversed some time later but would live on culturally for decades to come. We would focus primarily on North America. We would be governed by working boards drawn from men who came up through the ranks of chapter and district leadership.

These were decisions that befitted the times, but they don't necessarily serve us today.

An intoxicating period of growth continued for several decades until ... it didn't. A great deal has been analyzed, theorized and written about the why of it. Suffice it to say that, starting in the late 1900s and into the early 2000s, a great disconnect took place between the original organizing assumptions of our Society and the direction that "society" as a whole was turning. We built manual infrastructure that needed to be supported. Membership stalled, so finances stalled, so programs stalled, and so on. Most importantly, we became sheepish about our old-fashioned art form in a modern day, and lost our confidence and inspiration.

In choosing a new CEO in 2012 from outside of traditional ranks, the Board made a bold statement. Even if it didn't know quite *how* we needed to change, it knew we needed *to* change.

We have spent much of the last several years fixing what could be easily fixed: We've regained energy and enthusiasm, built basic systems and processes, and re-established our financial health. We've built strong programs for youth outreach, education and music publishing, learned how to harvest the generosity of our members, and positioned ourselves nicely within the choral field. Most important of all, we've regained our pride and confidence. Having picked that low-hanging fruit, we have now turned our attention to our long-term strategic vision and plan. We've done intense research to understand both our members and the world around us. A few key realizations now drive us forward:

- Our members fully embrace and understand the mysterious alchemy of singing together, and want to share it.
- They enjoy how they currently barbershop, but have an appetite for change as well.
- Their full generosity of time, treasure and talent is still largely untapped.
- The methods and structures for organizing that brought success for our founders aren't the methods that will work best in the future.
- We're a bigger deal in the world of choral singing than we realize. The choral world looks to us as the one organization that is actually poised and capable not just of keeping people singing, but of getting the whole world singing.

Along the way, something else has dawned on us. This gift of harmony that our founders stumbled into, this gift that we have been entrusted with preserving and encouraging, this gift of the alchemy and joy of singing together, is too wonderful for us to keep to ourselves. It is a gift that we are not only compelled to share, but one that we now have the capability, resources and unity of purpose to share with everyone.

We need to share it with young and old, with people of every color and every strata, with city people and country people and everyone in between, ***because the world needs what we have.*** We live in times of strife and anger and conflict and exclusion. Barbershop is the antidote to all of that, and can do even more. Imagine its power as a balm for wounded warriors, as an intervention for at-risk youth, as an end-of-life transition, as a strategy for reducing recidivism.

Harmony compels us to blend, to cooperate, to create beauty. Indeed, to love each other. That's the key, and though they might not have been able to articulate it, that kind of impact is what our founders were onto. It's time to think of the gift of harmony not just as a treasure for our own enjoyment, but as a tool for direct social impact. And that is the focus of our strategic plan:

## Everyone in harmony.

We will use what we've learned about getting men singing together, to get everyone singing together, across all cultures and generations. For our own enjoyment, yes, but more importantly, to change the world.

## PURPOSES

While the formal purposes of the Barbershop Harmony Society remain very relevant today, we now see that we can serve these purposes in ways our founders could never have imagined:

- To perpetuate the old American institution, the Barbershop quartet, and to promote and encourage vocal harmony and good fellowship among its members throughout the world by the formation of local chapters and districts composed of members interested in [our purposes];
- To hold annual, local, district, state, national and international contests in quartet and chorus singing;
- To encourage and promote the education of its members and the public in music appreciation;
- To promote public appreciation of Barbershop quartet and chorus singing by publication and dissemination thereof;
- To initiate, promote and participate in charitable projects;
- To establish and maintain music scholarships and charitable foundations;
- To initiate and maintain a broad program of musical education, particularly in the field of vocal harmony and the allied arts.

But how do we live into these purposes today? Let us begin by outlining four foundational concepts.

## 1. PRESERVATION AND ENCOURAGEMENT THROUGH PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT

### WHAT WE'RE THINKING:

Once upon a time, the best way we knew to preserve and encourage barbershop singing was to sign men up to become members of the Society.

This model made perfect sense in a day and age when people displayed their affinity — whether for social, professional, religious, fraternal, political or hobbyist interests — by joining organizations. When our membership numbers went up, we called it success. When they went down, we were disheartened.

We no longer live in a world of joiners. Today, individuals are technologically enabled to sample, experience and take part in movements, activities or communities in ways our founders never dreamed of. With that ability comes the power and choice for individuals to partake of the things that interest them on their terms, rather than ours.

So our vision is fixed on the myriad ways that myriad people can participate and engage with barbershop singing, no matter what forms that may take.

### HOW WE'LL PUT THIS INTO ACTION:

1. We'll welcome all People Interested in Barbershop (given our love of acronyms, we'll call them "*PIBs*" for now), not just those with the time, money and inclination to become "members." Whether you are a YouTube enthusiast, a middle-school educator, a tagmeister, Joe Barbershopper, a gold medalist, or anyone in between, you will have a place in our big tent of participation and engagement.

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2. You'll have access to a set of offerings that let you customize your barbershop experience to fit your interests, needs and capacity at any given moment in your life, no matter what kind of PIB you are. Think apps, think tag zones, think online communities, and more, in addition to stronger local structures than ever.
3. We will earn our keep. We'll answer the age-old question of "what do I get for my time and money?" by offering you a clear exchange of value in every interaction. In turn, we'll offer more capability than ever for you to support barbershopping as a fan and volunteer.
4. You'll pay for the level of participation and engagement that suits you. We'll offer a variety of packages, subscriptions and plans that suit you and your barbershop interests.
5. All of this participation and engagement will be made possible by a fierce focus on the power of technology and digital marketing as a means of promoting barbershop and enabling customized barbershop experiences.

## 2. BUILDING COMMUNITIES OF ARTISTS

### WHAT WE'RE THINKING:

Barbershopping is not a hobby or art form that is usually enjoyed in solitude. By definition, it is carried out when one artist joins together with anywhere from three to hundreds of others. While quartets and gang singing predominated in our early days, for most of our history, we have viewed BHS chapters as the predominant way to bring barbershoppers together.

Consistent with the times, we created a strict set of one-size-fits-all rules for how these chapters should be designed, and then organized the chapters themselves into hierarchical district structures. Over time, both the services we provided them, and their appreciation of those services, deteriorated. With travel, technology and communications shrinking the world, the geographically-driven chapter and district structure of old may no longer serve us.

We are animated by a vision of innumerable vibrant networks of barbershoppers, everywhere, all the time, in as many configurations as the imagination can allow, using our resources to help them create compelling barbershop experiences and communities.

### HOW WE'LL PUT THIS INTO ACTION:

1. We'll build a revitalized suite of products and services that catalyze the health and vitality of quartets, choruses and chapters through artistic support, basic infrastructure, administrative tools and business services, technology, education and

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leadership development – all with an eye towards helping your chapter grow and thrive.

2. We'll promote new models for organizing communities of PIBs. The one-size-fits-all chapter structure will yield to experimental new models such as freestanding barbershop and tag clubs; local communities operating under a franchise or licensee model; regionally-clustered communities; multi-ensemble chapters/communities; intentionally-seeded/sponsored new communities of artists in high density areas; and more.
3. We will balance our efforts to build strong chapters with big investments in revitalizing quartet singing, the often-neglected building block of barbershop singing.
4. Just as we'll provide clear value to you as an individual, we'll provide a clear value proposition to your local barbershop community as well.
5. We'll unearth the hidden potential of our Districts, to better capitalize on the hugely valuable arsenal of skill and commitment represented by volunteer district leaders.

### 3. DRIVING IMPACT THROUGH PROGRAMS

#### WHAT WE'RE THINKING:

We currently operate scores of initiatives, both “legacy” programs from years past, and new ones recently launched. While we have displayed great energy and creativity for starting these endeavors, we have lacked discipline for evaluating and refining them.

We have come to believe that there six key criteria by which any program should be justified:

- Does it produce a pipeline of engagement and participation in lifelong singing?
- Does it increase our delivery of more music to singers and audiences?
- Does it improve artistic and leadership skills of barbershop singers and leaders?
- Does it celebrate and raise the profile of barbershop singing?
- Does it create positive external social impact through the power of singing?
- Does it produce substantial net revenue to fund our mission?

As stewards of trust and resources, we are driven to refine the current array of BHS program activities to a more focused and disciplined set of programs that answer our calling to use singing to create a profoundly better world.

#### HOW WE'LL PUT THIS INTO ACTION:

1. We will be rigorous and intellectually ruthless about culling our current array of programs in order to more profoundly meet these six key criteria. We will double down on programs that perform strongly, and sharpen how we deliver them so that they perform even more strongly. Other programs have outlived their useful life.

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We'll let go of them in order to free resources and capacity for the more effective ones.

2. Still other programs that could outperform the current array have not yet even been developed or conceptualized. We will develop a program development and innovation model that will produce new “killer” programs that are capable of making quantum gains towards the delivery of the program criteria.
3. We will learn how to better evaluate program impact and outcomes and make investment decisions based on data.
4. We will put particular priority on new programs that:
  - a. *Create positive external social impact through the power of singing.* For example, outreach programs in new settings that can benefit from barbershop harmony, such as prisons, military families, at-risk youth, underserved communities, hospitals, workplaces; efforts that capitalize on the power of barbershopping for character and emotional IQ, character-building; and
  - b. *Produce substantial net revenue to fund our mission.*

## 4. SUPPORTING A WHOLE WORLD OF SINGING

### WHAT WE'RE THINKING:

Somewhere along the way, we became very good at adjudicating contests, providing services for communities of singers, producing high-level events and education programs, operating effective outreach activities, developing individual philanthropy, and managing a high-functioning membership and chapter infrastructure.

In fact, we have learned from other organizations within the barbershop world and the choral ecosystem, that our skills, resources and capacities are envied and sought after.

Having built our capabilities, we now want to share them with others whose purposes are similar to ours. We see an opportunity to leverage our skills and infrastructure to serve a bigger universe of singers and singing organizations on a scale larger than perhaps we have ever imagined. We believe we can:

- Grow the impact of barbershop singing, in all of its forms, on singers, audiences, communities, and the world;
- Preserve the unique opportunity for men to sing together;
- Advance our own purposes and impact by creating a sustainable, scalable financial model.

### HOW WE'LL PUT THIS INTO ACTION:

We will expand our sights to become an organization that supports all forms of barbershop singing. We will support at least three entities, including our current men's barbershop organization, a women's barbershop organization, and a mixed barbershop organization.

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We will provide infrastructure and essential services to these three entities, and potentially many other choral organizations. This will improve the impact and effectiveness of the entities and generate earned income in support of our own original purposes (which, by the way, are not gender-based).

This new structure will be formed around the principles of local control and self-destination. We fervently believe that any man or woman should be able to choose the way they want to sing barbershop, whether that is with all men, all women, or in a mixed group. With our expanded structure, all forms of barbershop singing will thrive, and harmony will explode.

In time, it is entirely possible that we may even be able to expand our service offerings to other choral organizations beyond the barbershop and a cappella world, creating further earned income streams and elevating all choral music.

With this strategy, we'll be taking a huge step forward in adding more barbershop to a world that sorely needs it, without subtracting a thing from the experience already enjoyed by so many.

## MAKING POSSIBILITIES POSSIBLE

Our founders, and eight decades' worth of committed leaders, figured out how to preserve and encourage barbershop singing, and advance our purposes, as they understood them. We stand up on their shoulders as we now embark on an expansive vision to place the Society at the service of a better society. To do this, we must take even bigger steps to make it all possible.

So far, we have discussed four key strategies that will enable our vision:

1. **Preservation And Encouragement Through Participation And Engagement**
2. **Building Communities Of Artists**
3. **Driving Impact Through Programs**
4. **Supporting A Whole World Of Singing**

These are high-level concepts that the world at large will see and experience. But frankly, they will be impotent without a more important shift. Back in the age of big decisions, we made critical determinations not just about what the Society *would* become, but also about who barbershop *wouldn't* be for.

Today, the barbershop art form has proven its appeal and is flourishing in various phases of adoption across 30 cultures worldwide. Yet right here in North America, while the decision about race was formally reversed in 1963, the cultural implication as an overwhelmingly white male organization has lived on until today. If today we proclaim that our vision is one of EVERYONE In Harmony, one more big step must occur, and it needs to be a step of action, not words.

**First and foremost, we must unequivocally turn away from any cultural vestiges of exclusion. We must become radically inclusive and diverse, across cultural, ethnic, racial, gender, sexual orientation, social, economic and generational lines. We hereby declare our commitment to this transformation.**

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With this commitment, we can proceed with confidence on the four key strategies. And then, we simply have to back them up with a high performing organization and structure capable of delivering on their potential. Behind the scenes, we have been developing seven more strategies that form the practical backbone of our strategic vision:

5. With our **Building Revenue, Brand and Unity** strategy, we will create and fund an integrated marketing approach that is keenly focused on driving revenue opportunities at all points of participation and engagement, while building a consistent, presumptive, unified global barbershop brand.
6. With our **Modernizing Our Governance** strategy, we will redesign our governing structures, from top to bottom, to unleash the impact of legions of engaged volunteers.
7. With our **Measuring Impacts and Outcomes** strategy, we will develop an evaluation and assessment capacity and orientation that will allow us to measure the true impacts and outcomes of what we do.
8. With our **Capitalizing on Culture** strategy, we will build a culture that is committed to impact, capable of operational excellence and empowered to innovate.
9. With our **Taking a Global View** strategy, we will begin to explore a careful, diplomatic transition of our global role from a relatively passive and supportive role to a more intentional catalyst for the global barbershop movement.
10. We're working on a **Technology Platform** that can support new ways of interacting with people and communities interested in barbershop.
- 11: And finally, a **Financial Model** that can support significant investments in the vision and big changes in how we exchange and monetize value.