

The Harmonizer

BRINGING BARBERSHOP HARMONY TO LIFE • NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2022



TOP TEN LESSONS I LEARNED DURING THE PANDEMIC

For Steve Tramack, the silver lining of so much time away was learning what is really true and what matters most



NOTEWORTHY

GET READY FOR DAYTONA BEACH
THE LADIES & ST. CROIX CROSSING

TIP SHEET

HOW TO TEACH A TAG THAT
PEOPLE WANT TO SING

INSIDE

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION:
EVERY LAST DETAIL



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SSAA	ARRANGER
1 I'm Into Something Good/Happy Together	A. Dale
2 Come Fly With Me	Keller
3 Deed I Do	A. Dale
4 Seven Bridges Road	Johnson
5 Somebody To Love	A. Dale

SATB	ARRANGER
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4 A Whole New World	Hicks
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In This Issue

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For every tag we heard on the International stage in Charlotte, there were dozens of tags that took place off stage. Manoj Padki covers the techniques, expectations and “budget” behind teaching a tag.



Features

12 Top 10 lessons I learned during the pandemic

In his 2022 Harmony University Keynote Address, Steve Tramack explored some of the only possible upsides of the Covid-19 pandemic: the lessons we learned, the values we reexamined, and the people we hold dear. The value of the barbershop community that he already cherished came into greater focus. He invites all to better appreciate and contribute to the community we all share.

18 Together once again, part 2

We shared competitor shots in the September/October issue, but there was a lot more about to say regarding our first International Convention in three years. Harmonizer Editor Lorin May takes a closer look at some of the groups and individuals that made a lasting impact in Charlotte.

On the cover: Steve Tramack delivers his 2022 Harmony University Keynote Address at Loyola University in New Orleans. *Photo by Eddie Holt*

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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

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● STARTING PITCH PART 1

My swan song love letter to the Society

In my youth, my barbershop family filled a lot of needs that my regular family could not. In this second, harmonious family I learned how to share, how to lead, and other lessons when I needed them most.



A lifetime ago, I was just a chubby teenager standing on the risers of the local barbershop chorus in my hometown in Wisconsin, dreaming dreams that only a kid could dream. It was all so silly. Despite the fact that my voice was untrained and unremarkable, despite the fact that I was clumsy and awkward, and despite the fact that I could barely hold my part in a quartet, I dreamed that someday I would be a barbershop champion.

I pictured myself standing on the International Stage, in a bright spotlight, holding the quartet trophy as an audience of thousands cheered. Back then, I didn't even know what

the Landino trophy was called or looked like, but I could still picture it clearly in my imagination. The weathered wood, the shiny brass, and the engraved words seemed to glow. In the dream, the trophy was heavier than I expected, and I held onto it tightly, not wanting the moment to end. As I said, silly, right?

SOMETHING LARGER THAN OURSELVES

As I've shared before, my childhood was rarely a dream. Like a lot of kids, I grew up in a less-than-ideal circumstance with a family that struggled with alcoholism, drug abuse, too many jobs, and too little hope. As a kid, I tended to hide from the world. I

struggled to find friends. I struggled with schoolwork. I struggled to see my future life as anything but cloudy. But then, something amazing happened. My mom took me to a guest night of the local barbershop chorus, and it changed the course of my life.

The chorus itself was small. Rarely were there more than 20 singers on any given night, and we certainly weren't going to win any awards; but there was something therapeutic about the experience. In a time of my life when most of the voices around me were shouting, these voices

"AS THE TROPHY WAS PASSED, IT WAS ALL JUST AS HE HAD DREAMED—EXCEPT FOR THE FACT THAT INSTEAD OF GETTING THE AWARD, HE WAS GIVING IT."

Get in Touch

John Donehower, Society President johndonehower@gmail.com

Marty Monson, CEO/Executive Director CEO@barbershop.org

Society Board of Directors societyboard@barbershop.org



were singing. The overtones seemed almost spiritual. Being in the chorus was all about being in tune both in a literal and metaphorical sense. Through this experience, for the first time in my life, I felt that I was a part of something larger than myself. And I began to seek that feeling in all aspects of my life.

LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM BARBERSHOP

During my 37-year corporate career, I treated my sales team the same way a musical director would treat a chorus. I worked hard to help each unique voice on our staff make a difference in what we did. I helped our team stay in tune. I helped our salespeople understand that it's not about what they want to sell, it's about what our audience—the customers—want to buy. Through it all, I reminded our staff that unless everyone knows their part and knows how they fit in the chord, our music will never come together. It'll just be noise.

I could have approached leadership with rigid authoritarianism, but instead elected to take a lesson from barbershop and instead lead with musical artistry. My harmonious approach to teambuilding worked well. I don't know if I could have lasted all those years or made the difference I wanted to make in the company if it hadn't been for all those years standing on the risers. Learning to listen, learning to align, and learning to value the voices around you aren't just lessons on Harmony Night, they are lessons for life.

Why am I telling you all this? Well, this is going to be the last time I get to speak for you all in *The Harmonizer* as Society President, and I wanted the last thing I wrote to you to be a love letter. I want you to know how much this hobby, and all of you, have meant to me in my lifetime. My life would not have been the same if I hadn't found you when I needed you the most.

"I WANT YOU TO KNOW HOW MUCH THIS HOBBY, AND ALL OF YOU, HAVE MEANT TO ME. MY LIFE WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN THE SAME IF I HADN'T FOUND YOU WHEN I NEEDED YOU THE MOST."

THE DREAM FINALLY CAME TRUE

A lifetime ago, despite the fact that I could barely hold my part, despite the fact that I was clumsy on stage, and despite the fact that I didn't always know how to interact with people, I was accepted. And that acceptance gave me the confidence to live an extraordinary life and gave me the courage to make my dreams come true. Because dreams really do come true—but not always as you pictured them.

This past Summer in Charlotte, North Carolina, that long-ago chubby teenager from a long-extinct chorus in Wisconsin, now a chubby adult singing with a local chorus in Illinois, actually did stand on the International stage during the Barbershop Harmony Society Quartet Finals. He did hold the quartet trophy in his hands and the trophy was, just as he had imagined, weathered, shiny and glowing. He did stand in the spotlight and hear the cheers of thousands as the trophy was passed to the new champions. It was all just as he had dreamed, except for the fact that instead of getting the award, he was giving it.

And lest you think that this was a disappointment, let me put your worries to rest. It was one of the best moments of my life.

Thank you, Barbershop Harmony Society. It's been an honor. I love you all. ■



John & Marty are attending

Oct 20-22, NED Convention (Marty)

Nov 2, Strategic Planning Committee monthly meeting (virtual)

Nov 6-12, Virtual Harmony U

Nov 9 - Nashville Music Medics & Alive Hospice (Marty)

Nov 13 - BHS Board meeting

Nov 19-20 - Louisville Chorus Familiarity trip (Marty)

Dec 7, Strategic Planning Committee monthly meeting (virtual)

Dec 10- Sound of Illinois Holiday Concert (John)

Dec 14- Home Free Christmas Show, Davenport, IA (John)

Marty is reading

The RE Generation, Jack Uldrich & Camille Kolles

John is listening to

The Jim Clancy Collection featuring The Vocal Majority



● STARTING PITCH PART 2

The Society is on the rebound: by the numbers



Marty

During the pandemic, in-person participation ground to a halt for a long time. A lot wondered how chapters and districts could weather such a storm. Well, after reaching the statistical low point in May of 2021, the stats have shown a big rebound in barbershop participation.

As I write this, Fall District Conventions are wrapping up, and across the Society attendance and participation are up-up-up! Some districts report as much as a **30% increase in attendance**, some nearly to pre-pandemic levels. Most district contests are putting more people on stage, in more groups, and more kinds of groups ... and some have added festivals and/or ways to perform without competing.

Of course, convention attendance isn't the only measure of the health of our singing communities. But it is a **trailing indicator**, the outcome of other positive activity. Chapters, quartets, and individuals that have rekindled their musical programs are excited to share their activity with their barbershop friends on stage once more. What better way to share your barbershop joy with hundreds of others like you?

These trailing indicators are everywhere. As CEO, I am keenly interested in our **participation rate**, which shows how many people are engaged in various activities. Of course membership

counts are important, and we have seen a surge to over 13,500 members, which is well above the lowest point in May 2021.

But even better, we're seeing more than **15,700 people on rosters for choruses**—many of them new choruses—an indication that many people are involved in more than one group. From a momentum standpoint, this reflects individuals are becoming more and more engaged with their barbershop lives. That's a growth dynamo that keeps spinning faster and faster, pouring more energy into the barbershop world!

Same with quartets—we've bounced up **near 800 registered quartets (~3,200 singers—how many are in your quartet?)**, a number that had fallen during the pandemic as groups quietly went dormant. Our Community Care team has been busier than ever supporting new quartets through the contest season, and as we all know, nothing fires up barbershop energy like getting into a new quartet! Did you know you could

register your quartet for free?

A renewed emphasis on chapter health and growth has brought us to realign some staff roles, with Dan Rohovit joining the team as Singing Community Impact Manager. One of the first activities has been a Society-wide assessment of chapter health, and our initial studies suggest that **42% of our chapters are excelling or on a rising trajectory**, and another 39% in a position of responding well to intervention and assistance. Forthcoming initiatives in the Member Center like a prospecting tool that makes it easier to reach out to dormant and dropped members will provide direct tech resources to support growth of our communities. ■

"INDIVIDUALS ARE BECOMING MORE AND MORE ENGAGED WITH THEIR BARBERSHOP LIVES, A GROWTH DYNAMO THAT KEEPS SPINNING FASTER AND FASTER!"



GET ALL THE NUMBERS The reach of our combined impact is broader than ever, and you can see it in charts, graphs, and smiles in the **2021 Impact Report**, online at barbershop.org/2021.



Join the **Step Up Campaign** with a matching gift for *more Harmony!*

The Step Up Campaign is the Barbershop Harmony Society's campaign to increase funding for BHS's impactful programs.

Whether you enjoy watching a BHS YouTube video or buying new sheet music for your chorus, you can provide a donation of ANY size that will be doubled by the generosity of a committed group of BHS donors who have stepped up with a new matching gift challenge.

The **committed donors** who have **stepped up their donation** to provide the **matching gift challenge** are:

- Peggy Leon & Richard Knight
- Society Board of Directors
- Jim Kline
- Robert & Lynne Pollack
- Janet & Harvey Kiser
- Anonymous
- BHS Staff '22
- Rafi Hasib
- Dick and Lee Kingdon
- Skipp & Nancy Kropp
- Charles Leavitt & Anne O'Brien
- Larry & Lavonne Monson
- Ben Porter

With your help, we can "step up" and provide new levels of financial support for the impactful BHS programs you love.
Double your donation and impact now!

**We are only
*\$20,000 away
from our goal.
Give today and
help us reach
the final step!**

*as of 10/4/22

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**PRESERVE
BARBERSHOP**

**BUILD THRIVING
SINGING COMMUNITIES**

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**BHS
MISSION**



● MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Midwinter 2023 in Daytona Beach

Tagging, friends, sunshine, the Junior and Seniors Chorus Festivals, Seniors Quartet Contest, Next Gen Junior Quartet—and the world's best shows! Join us on the beach, and maybe even make a side trip to Orlando.

This upcoming February, there's no place you'll rather be than Midwinter 2022 in Daytona Beach. It will be the perfect combination of great friends, variety, great contests and festivals, and world-class shows. The friendly, more casual Midwinter vibe will take place in a Florida city that's built around the same feel! Join us from February 7-12, 2023.

Thursday: Keynote address (Erin Cook); Next Generation Junior Quartet Contest; Thursday Night Show featuring **Let's Hang On!**, America's #1 Frankie Valli tribute show. Afterglow.

Friday: Next Generation Jr. Chorus Festival / International Seniors Chorus Festival; Friday Night Show: Association of Seniors Quartet Champions Show, First Take, **The Ladies**, **Throwback**, and more, followed by an afterglow.

Saturday: Seniors International Quartet Championship; Saturday Night Show, featuring **GQ**, 2006 champion **Vocal Spectrum**, the new Seniors champ, and more, followed by an afterglow.

Harmony University Friday and Saturday: A reimagined personal learning



Either land minutes away via Daytona Beach International Airport or add fun in Orlando (an hour away) to your itinerary. Above: (1) The main performance venue, the Peabody Auditorium; (2) the Headquarters Hotel, Hilton Daytona Beach Oceanfront Resort; (3) the oceanfront.

experience featuring master classes, small-group coaching, and up-close seminars with popular faculty.

Casual singing opportunities everywhere: Tag Zones with experienced teachers, Harmony Platoon, and informal tagging at all hours.

It all takes place near the beach in the classiest, most walkable part of town at the beautiful Hilton Daytona Beach Oceanfront Resort and the nearby 2,000-seat Peabody Auditorium. A large variety of restaurants, shopping, and attractions are all within walking distance. We can't wait to sing a tag with you there!



A study in persistence: after 10 years and six silvers, St. Croix Crossing is LOL Champ

Are we really going to give an accomplished group like **St. Croix Crossing** the "underdog" treatment? On the surface, the 2018 International Seniors Champ and two-time International competitor (including Charlotte 2022) seems to be an overachiever, especially for four guys with an average age of 72. But none of the quartet's accolades have come easily. The LOL District Championship eluded the four singers for more than 10 years before they finally won this past October—after winning silver six times in prior contests! They also earned every color of International Seniors medals, including two silvers, before their 2018 victory. The win makes them the first-ever District Champion quartet to have first won the International Seniors Quartet Championship. "We're like the dog that caught the car," said bass Jared Hoke. "NOW what?"



Virtual HU up until Jan. 1, 2023

If you attended the live, interactive version in November, revisit it! If not, you can still catch the full video of every course. Go to barbershop.org/vhu.



REGISTER ONLINE Register for Daytona Beach, make hotel reservations, and keep up to date on new activities and options at barbershop.org/midwinter.



What's Happening

Virtual Harmony University delayed viewing

View until Jan. 1, 2023
barbershop.org/vhu



2023 International Louisville July 2-9, 2023

The party continues in a newly vibrant downtown setting with great amenities and venues.

Midwinter Convention 2023

Feb. 7-12

Daytona Beach, Fla.

Seniors & Youth contests, casual
vibe, great shows!



2024 Midwinter New York City

January 9-14

2024 International Cleveland

June 30-July 7

2025 International Denver

June 29-July 6



Congratulation to **The Ladies** quartet, who in September were honored as the 2023 Sweet Adelines International Harmony Queens. Two months earlier, (L-R) Kim Newcomb (Br), Caroline Hunt (L), Ashley Rohovit (Bs), and Quincie Snook (T) finished a strong sixth place in the BHS International Quartet Contest. Then in October, the quartet became the Overall Champion for the BHS Southwestern District.



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

CHARLOTTE CHAPTER HOSTS COMMUNITY CHORUS FESTIVAL

"The **Charlotte, NC Chapter's Gold Standard Chorus** has been working on ways to get to know other singers in our community as part of our outreach efforts in 2022," writes George Simolin, VP-Chapter Support for the Carolinas District. "Like many Barbershoppers, we sometimes felt as if we were the best-kept secret in our city, and could understand how other groups might feel the same way about their chorus."

Thus was born the inaugural Charlotte Choral Festival, a non-competitive event emphasizing fellowship and mutual support. The range of ensembles was refreshing—gospel, mixed, women's, a cappella, accompanied—and reflected their community. Free admission, door prizes, and an enthusiastic audience made for a great event, with plans for return engagements to come.



WORLD RECORD?

BARBERSHOPPER LOGS

5,000 NATIONAL ANTHEMS

Barbershopper Alan St. Louis, a 39-year member from the Northeastern District, makes sure he mentions his barbershop affiliation every time he sings "The Star-Spangled Banner." And for Alan, that's 5,000 times and counting, from Fenway Park to high school basketball games. This fall, the governor of Massachusetts issued a proclamation commending "his patriotism and commitment to honoring our great nation with his performances." ■



TIP SHEET

Manoj Padki, "The Prince of Tags"
✉ padki@yahoo.com

● SKILL BUILDING

So, you want to teach a tag?

Knowing the notes and knowing how to teach them is only half the battle—you also need to understand your learners and calculate your "tag budget."



Tags are all about fun. I used to think of "fun" as a small word. But as I became a student of positive psychology, I saw a TED Talk that changed my mind. In "Why Having Fun Is the Secret to a Healthier Life," Catherine Price describes the best kind of fun as where playfulness, flow, and connection with other human beings happen.

That is precisely what tag singing is about. Keep this goal in mind as you teach a tag.

THE "TAG BUDGET"

No matter how formal or informal the setting, the potential fun of your tag session is limited by what I call your "tag budget." You will be limited by:

- **Time available.** Some tags take a long time to learn and tune. Perhaps not everyone you're teaching has that much time.
- **Skill and experience.** If you expect a tag to come easily to your singers but it does not, the experience will

be frustrating instead of fun.

- **Attention spans.** They vary greatly, and someone who is frustrated or otherwise not having fun will zone out quickly.
- **Anxiety.** Some may feel they were coerced to try a tag, or their negative self-talk is at a fever pitch. This limits their cognitive bandwidth. You may need to pick the easiest tag and have them experience a win before they will open up for anything more challenging.
- **Background noise.** Some tags are too challenging to teach in louder environments.

ADJUST YOUR TAG TO THE BUDGET

Your challenge is to assess your budget and tailor your tag session for maximum fun. Are you in a great resonant

stairwell with Don Barnick and other tag masters after a great show, with plenty of time? Bring out your difficult and challenging tags! At the other extreme, are you trying to rope a novice into barbershop? You may soon realize that they can't match or hold pitch. Your tag budget just got blown! (Ideally, you could find somebody to support them until they could finish the tag.)

Don't be surprised or frustrated when even veteran Barbershoppers sometimes struggle to learn a tag. Have you tried teaching the "I Will Go Sailing No More" tag to a tenor who just can't get the last "no more" interval? I have, and it is evidently not as easy as I thought. As Brian O'Dell (bass of 2016 champ **Forefront**) delicately puts it, "If a taught tag doesn't work in the first 3-4 attempts, call TOD [Time of Death] and move on."

THERE'S NOT "ONE TRUE WAY" TO TEACH A TAG

Ear singing is a great skill to learn, but many singers learn faster and have more fun tagging if they can see the sheet music first. If the tag you are teaching is published on a tagging app, mention that to your group. [NOTE: Many tags have multiple versions.] Jake Bartlett: "I personally prefer to have the tag on GoodTags or any other app. I get easily distracted in loud environments, and can't really hear or understand what the teacher

"IF A TAUGHT TAG DOESN'T WORK IN THE FIRST 3-4 ATTEMPTS, CALL TOD (TIME OF DEATH) AND MOVE ON."



LEARN MORE ONLINE The article quotes and many of the concepts originated in a discussion launched by Stacy Hugman on Aug. 5, 2022 on the Facebook group "Let's talk (barber)shop." Download favorite tags and link to tagging apps at barbershop.org/tags.

"BEING CLEAR IS BEING KIND. ERR ON THE SIDE OF OVERCOMMUNICATING AND ESTABLISHING BOUNDARIES."

says sometimes." You can later ask your singers to put their phones away.

TEACHING THE TAG

- **Learn a few tags cold** (in at least two modalities: scale numbers, singing each part, solfège)—tags you can teach "in your sleep."
- **Build up your own go-to list of tags.** Take Dane Chevassus's words to heart! "Please for the love of all things good and chaste, have a couple of go-to EASY and SHORT tags that you can pull out at a moment's notice. I'm talking the four-measure, all-start-unison, teachable-in-less-than-60-seconds tags."
- **Tags that feature each part:** tenor, bass, lead. Even baritones (Classic Tags 13, 31, 40, 108)!
- **A good mix of loud tags vs. soft/pretty tags.**
- **Teach words first:** "The words to this tag are ..."
- **Decide on the tonal center next.** "Here is 'Do,' lead starts on ..." Ideally you will have somebody else blow the pitch and keep refreshing the pitch.
- **Feel free to experiment with the key.** The original key was chosen for a specific ensemble. Another key might work better for your ensemble.
- **Start the session with simple tags** that help you gauge the level of your group of singers.

LEARN (AND KINDLY COMMUNICATE) TAG ETIQUETTE

Tagging is a team sport, and problems arise when we do not have a shared cultural understanding of the rules. It might be tempting to try to cod-

ify the rules of tag etiquette, but as Lincoln Parrott notes, "A formalized set of rules might discourage new or shy singers from participating." Tag etiquette is pretty close to everyday social etiquette. Don't interrupt people, be polite, request consent. The Golden Rule applies: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

There is only one point of consensus: No 5th wheeling! If you see a foursome learning a tag, do not impose yourself on them. Wait politely, enjoy their process, make eye contact to indicate whether you are interested in singing with them. Sing only when invited.

When someone appears to want to join in, "it is the tag teacher's responsibility to communicate their preferred etiquette," says Chaz Chesser. And as my friend Mike Klein puts it, "Being clear is being kind." Err on the side of over communicating and establishing boundaries.

ENCOURAGE THOSE WHO ARE NEW TO TAG SINGING

Every experienced singer should be aware of any novice taggers among them and be especially kind and inviting to them. "Many times, you can have an experienced tagger 'spot' the newer learner and gently sing some parts with them," Rik Johnson advises. "This can help build confidence and make it more supportive. Be encouraging when spotting."

"Jumping in to teach, add 9ths, or sing other parts makes it much more difficult to learn," warns Amy Rose. "And it is rude to the person teaching."

PEOPLE MATTER MORE THAN THE MUSIC

Paraphrasing Louie Armstrong: "I see friends singing tags / Saying, 'Which part are you?' / They're really saying, 'I love you!'"

Remember, tag singing is all about love and human connection. May your tag teaching be successful and may you add to the sum total of human happiness. Heaven knows we need it! ■

ADVANCED TAG IDEAS

If everyone appears to be having fun and having success, here are a few more ideas to dig deeper.

1. PERFECTION ONLY SOMETIMES

Aim for polishing and perfection only when you have highly experienced tag singers.

2. MAKE QUARTETS OR OCTETS

After learning all parts, invite people to sing in quartets or octets. As John Phillips puts it, "Once the tag is taught and sung to the satisfaction of the original 4 [or group], it's perfectly acceptable for a listener to 'tag out' someone by saying 'I want in,' OR BETTER YET, for one of the participants or the teacher to ask others, 'Anybody want in before we move along?' Share the fun. Get others involved."

3. PLAY WITH INTERPRETATIONS

I taught one of my favorite tags, "All By Myself Alone" (Classic Tags #49) at a Tag Zone at HU 2022. The words suggest a sad tone. After the first successful run-through I said, "Now let's sing it from an introvert's point of view: 'Finally I am all by myself. Alone! Rejoice!'" Much hilarity ensued. Have fun switching up the tone of any tag (introverted, extroverted, happy, sad, excited, etc.).

4. SAVOR THE MUSIC

At HU 2022, I got the opportunity to tag with Drew Kirkman (tenor of 2001 champion *Michigan Jake*). Drew pointed out that every tag has that ONE chord that makes the tag special. Talk about that chord, and sing the tag again while highlighting it.



Watch the full keynote at
bit.ly/TramackKeynote

TOP TEN

LESSONS I LEARNED DURING THE PANDMIC

Steve Tramack, Harmony University 2022 Keynote

Barbershop is back! Charlotte was an amazing celebration of the return of barbershop and featured so many firsts. For more than two years, I'd been looking forward to having, literally, a front row seat to history.

Little did I know that Covid would have other ideas, because I tested positive Wednesday afternoon after judging the Quartet Quarterfinals. The pandemic has affected all of us in some way over the past two and a half years. I was fortunate to be largely asymptomatic, but it meant that my wife, Renee, and I watched the rest of the contest on the web-cast, isolated in our hotel room.

The lesson that came rushing to front of mind was, "take nothing for granted." Since I wasn't judging or singing tags or visiting with friends, I had a lot of time to eat room service hamburgers, drink wine, and reflect on what we've learned over the past couple of years.

I talked with some friends and

found they had similar reflections and lessons learned. This seemed like a good topic for tonight's keynote. There have been some silver linings, and, as Joe Cerutti told me, "Only when everything else is taken away will we finally find what is most important to us." Tonight, we'll talk about some of those things.

Barbershop does run in my blood. My great grandfather started a chapter in 1946 in Ridgway, PA. Grandfather was a barber who sang in big bands and in his father-in-law's chorus. My dad didn't sing barbershop growing up, but barbershop found him by way of *The Boston Globe*—and the guy who delivered papers to me for my junior high paper route.

In 1981, my freshman year of high school, my dad invited me to the **Granite Statesmen** show. Mind you, in 1981 in Nashua, NH, barbershop was not cool in my high school. The quartet was the 1979 champion

Grandma's Boys. Grandma's Boys?! I didn't go. The next year, my dad said, "You're going to the show this year. The quartet is **The Harrington Brothers**. They're your age." I couldn't say no. And I loved the show. After that, I sang in a high school quartet, joined the Granite Statesmen, and became active in quartets. While singing in one of those quartets, I met my beautiful, talented wife, Renee, at an afterglow. Renee is a second-generation Barbershopper who always reminds me that she's been doing this for one more year than I have. Our kids are fifth-generation Barbershoppers on my side, and third on her side. I directed the Statesmen to ten International appearances and got a chance to share some amazing experiences with my dad. I stepped down when I became a Music judge. I still feel like I got back more than I put in.

So, now that you know a bit more about me, in no particular order, here are ten or so lessons I learned, and reflections during the pandemic.

EDDIE HOLT



ENCOURAGEMENT MEANS MORE THAN YOU CAN EVER IMAGINE

In judging the first full season of contests this past spring, we've been reminded how important encouragement is. Everyone faced challenges. Recognizing the successes and sharing in the celebration led to more than one emotional moment.

I think back to my first high school quartet, singing on a 1983 Granite Statesmen show. We were awful. We knew it, the audience knew it, our mothers knew it, and the Granite Statesmen certainly knew it. But they gave us a spot to sing on their show.

I was feeling pretty down based on how poorly we sang. Tony O'Malley (the chapter president), Don Page (my bari section leader), and members of the big chapter quartets all came up to each of us and told us good things that we did—specific things. They told us how great it was that we were singing barbershop and encouraged us to keep going.

That same encouragement was oh-so-necessary in my first division contest, which just happened to be held at my high school. We had new tuxes, and I neglected to try the pants on until the day of contest. They came up to my hips. I shim-mied and stretched, and somehow got them on and buttoned. My face turned red from a lack of oxygen.

I was in the front row, and we had a five-step move before dropping to one knee. We tried in rehearsal and all I could do is genuflect. I figured I'd power through on the contest stage. What could go wrong? We got to the tag of the second song—"Baby, You're the One!" My pants ripped from the top of my belt buckle to the belt loop

in the back. I kid you not, there were four nuns in the front row. The expression on their faces told me everything I needed to know!

The curtain couldn't close soon enough, and, of course, I was embarrassed beyond belief. And, of course, the chorus was so supportive until they knew it was okay to kid me about it. Those small words of encouragement helped me get over the complete embarrassment that might have otherwise spelled the beginning and end of my barbershop life.

That brings up another key lesson from the pandemic: 1.5 Pants are not always required.



FIND WHAT INSPIRES YOU AND ACT

Over the past two and a half years, it's been difficult at times to find inspiration and passion. So many times, it would have been easy to skip chorus Zoom rehearsals because we couldn't sing. But finding things we're passionate about helped to make the time in quarantine feel less confining. Joe Cerutti said, "When we can't do the things we've always done, try doing the things we've never had the time to do before!" Maybe, for some of you, that might involve exploring new areas, like arranging.

I did very little arranging until I applied to the Music category in 2007. I had to turn in two arrange-

"Those small words of encouragement helped me get over the complete embarrassment that might have otherwise spelled the beginning and end of my barbershop life."

ments, and my charts were awful. I'm surprised they let me in.

But Jim Kahlke's first words were, "You have a ... flair for embellishment." I'm not sure that was a compliment, but I took it that way. I found that I truly enjoyed arranging. I loved the artistic outlet when bringing music to life.

In *The Talent Code*, it says it can take 10,000 hours to become an expert at something. Early on, I figured it might take that long until someone even wanted to sing what I wrote. I figured, at roughly 20 hours per arrangement, that's 500 arrangements. So I started arranging—a lot. Pre-pandemic, I was doing about 40-50 arrangements per year. It meant a lot of late nights and interrupted dinners (and a very understanding family) when the music was flowing. My goal is to suck a little less each time (which I hope I do) and learn new lessons—which I definitely do.

There's very little more thrilling as an arranger than hearing Tim Wau-

rick sing your chart. Or the first time you hear your arrangement sung live on the International Stage, such as when **First Take** sang two of my charts in Charlotte. But, perhaps the best reward was being able to take a song written by my mother's grandfather, who was a composer and poet in

the early 1900s. I arranged it for my mom, and Tim recorded it for her for Mother's Day.

I have no formal training in music theory. Everything I learned about



"Our friends have celebrated the highest of highs ... and they were there at our lowest of lows, holding us up when we couldn't do so ourselves."

music theory and barbershop is from Harmony University and from reading. All I did have was passion and inspiration and to act upon it. I encourage you to act as well.



SMALL DECISIONS CAN HAVE A LASTING IMPACT IN YOUR LIFE

There's a great quote from the movie *Deadpool*: "Four or five moments—that's all it takes to be a hero. Everyone thinks it's a full-time job. Not true. Over a lifetime, there are four or five moments that really matter. Moments where you're offered a choice, to make a sacrifice, conquer a flaw, save a friend ... spare an enemy. In these moments, everything else falls away." I'll bet each of us can point to those key moments that had a major influence on the course of our journeys through life.

Back to that Harrington Brothers show ... It wasn't just the Harrington

was not just "my Dad's chorus" after all. I didn't know them all that well, but I decided to overcome my introverted nature and talk with one of them at school the following Monday. He invited me back to his house after school later that week. Little did I know his dad was the District President, a Top 20 quartet guy, and massive collector of barbershop albums. At Roger Menard's house, I was introduced to Ronnie and Linda (his parents) ... and the **Suntones, Bluegrass Student Union, Dealer's Choice, Happiness Emporium, and ... Boston Common**. Praise the chord!

Roger and I didn't really know each other. Without me being so compelled to reach out to Roger, and without Roger being so compelled to invite me to his house, I may never have joined the chorus. I may have never gone to the chapter cookout where Ken Kopka asked me to sing in a quartet. I may never have sung in an International competitive quartet that got invited to sing on a show in Barre, VT. And without that, I may have never met Renee, the really cute tenor who crushed A-flats and who became the love of my life. And without that, we may never have

Brothers or the music that excited me. The thing that really tipped the scales was seeing high school classmates on stage singing in the chorus. So, it

been blessed with the most wonderful family one could imagine. Small, seemingly insignificant decisions are still shaping my life today.

Barbershop not only allowed me to find my family, I found my home. I found where I belonged. I had no idea at the time that these small decisions would have such lasting impacts. I encourage you to find your four or five moments.



CONTACT IS IMPORTANT, EVEN WHEN WE CAN'T BE IN CONTACT

Isn't it amazing that, when forced into quarantine and faced with isolation, many of us found ways to stay in contact, perhaps even more frequently than ever before? Our world became much smaller. I had days where I shared laughter and music with friends and choruses in England, the Midwest U.S., and the Pacific Northwest—all while wearing sweatpants.

How many of you kept in contact with friends over Zoom over the pandemic? How many of you participated in chorus Zoom rehearsals? David Wright said, "When we, at my chorus, **Ambassadors of Harmony**, were faced with the prospect of not being able to sing, there was almost a panic, like one of those experiences when they can't breathe. With no hesitation, we immediately began communicating with each other, clinging to each other virtually, setting up virtual lives. In some ways this brought us closer together."

Some choruses not only connected over Zoom, they got bigger. And better. **Parkside Melody** will go down in the history of our Society as the first treble chorus to compete in the International contest. While they formed as part of the great **Hershey Chapter** pre-pandemic, their



The Tramacks: Samantha, Steve, Christina, Joshua, Renee



16 members grew to 29 during the pandemic, many of them joining without being able to sing in-person. And yet they became a family, and a great chorus. A couple of weeks ago, they finished 10th, and with their leadership, their drive, their love for the music and each other, this is just the beginning.



WE GET BY WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM OUR FRIENDS

Jim Henry said in his 2007 HU Keynote, “People come for the music and stay for the friends.” Most of my friends are people that I’ve met through barbershop. Many of them are here. I’m certain I’ll make new friends this week. I’m confident you also will meet people this week that will make your life better for the rest of your life.

Our friends were there for our wedding. In fact, after the reception, we had an afterglow; I’m guessing that’s not all that uncommon for barbershop weddings. Our friends have celebrated the highest of highs during my life—the birth of our children. New Year’s Eve after New Year’s Eve. The marriage of our daughter. When Renee and I lost a son at 20 months, they were there at our lowest of lows, holding us up when we couldn’t do so ourselves. They helped us get through and still do.

In 2020, after the Jacksonville Midwinter Convention Saturday Night Show, Renee and I were enjoying a late dinner with some friends,

including Steve Armstrong and Joe Cerutti. After a couple of beers, I started sneezing, again and again, unlike anything I’ve ever experienced. After about 15 or 20 times, my bottom lip started swelling. Within minutes, it was the size of a lemon. And then my throat started swelling.

I didn’t understand the severity of the situation until I was in the ER, being prepped for a tracheostomy. I was intubated and admitted to the ICU, where I stayed for a few days. Steve and Joe dropped everything. They were there all night with Renee in the waiting room. Joe not only canceled his plans, he rebooked our flights, dealt with the hotel, and stayed with us until I was cleared to go home. These are not friends, they’re brothers. I’ll bet each of you has friends in this community that would do the same, and vice versa.



BEING TOGETHER, AND SINGING TOGETHER, SOLVES A LOT OF PROBLEMS

Clay Hine shared the following thought with me: “Barbershoppers are amazing, and Barbershoppers’ desire and passion to still find any way to get together and share music was one of the most inspirational things I’ve ever seen in my entire barbershop life (which spans my entire life). When we see any angst or strife in our barbershop lives, we should all remember that—and remember why barbershop is so important in our lives and in the lives of people who have yet to find it.”

Clay also wrote and arranged a terrific song that I’m guessing many of us have sung over the past two years. I had the chance to teach and direct it during Midwinter in Pasadena and thought it would be won-

derful to sing it tonight. [Clay Hine directs the audience in the song.]



BE COURAGEOUS, AND DON’T LOSE FAITH

I’m guessing there were moments over the past 2 ½ years where many of us wondered if we’d ever be back together again. Would we ever have another contest, or would Steve Armstrong continue to cancel them all? Would we ever have an in-person HU? Getting through this time has required a bit of courage and faith.

When I think about courage and faith, I immediately think about Dave deBronkart. Dave joined the Granite Statesmen in the mid-2000s. He was your average chorus bari-tone. But nothing was average about Dave as a human being. His love and his passion were boundless.

After a rehearsal prior to our 2006 Christmas Cabaret, Dave told the chorus that he’d been diagnosed with stage IV kidney cancer, and his doctor had said the average expectancy for this stage of cancer was 24 weeks. When discussing with his doctor how to handle his dwindling energy supply, Dave said he was considering leaving the chorus. His



Dave deBronkart (epatientdave.com)

doctor said, “You do not want to start dropping life activities that you love. It sends the wrong signal. Plus, the oxygen exchange will do you good for what lies ahead.”

After some aggressive treatments, Dave started using a cane or a scooter. But he still came to rehearsal. On his first night back, after we welcomed him, I noticed he was singing along from his seat. I stopped the chorus, turned around and said, “Dave, can you sing?” He said, “Yes.” I said, “Then get up here!” and grabbed a chair and put it in the front row. The chorus rallied around him, and Dave sang with joy and abandon. At the end of the night, we sang “You’ll Never Walk Alone,” with the whole chorus connected with Dave. Then we cried a lot. Then Dave joked and we laughed. And we did that every time he came to rehearsals.

Then Dave became a leading advocate for patient rights, and participated in some experimental treatment that saved his life. He became known as “e-Patient Dave” throughout the medical world, has spoken at countless conferences (including delivering a TedTalk), and has helped new legislation get passed about patient rights. Dave is still alive today, still singing. When I asked him about telling his story, he said:

“Most of all, for me personally, I will never forget the guys singing ‘You’ll Never Walk Alone’ when I was dying. Nobody can calculate the impact of any one moment in such a crisis. But I can say, without doubt, that I went to bed those nights with a clear sense that there were men who cared about me. I’d never had that feeling before.”

When I think about Dave and his courage and faith, I think that we

can overcome just about anything this pandemic has thrown at our community.

8

IT’S A PROVEN FACT: THE PANDEMIC CAUSED CLOTHES TO SHRINK



9

IF YOU DON’T THINK EVERYONE IN HARMONY IS AWESOME, YOU HAVEN’T WATCHED YOUR KIDS SING ON THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE IN A QUARTET.

This spring, there was such a buzz about not only being back, but having everyone participating completely. It was at all of our contests and conventions. Everyone had a place. And when mixed or treble-voiced groups sang alongside traditional ensembles, it was all about the music and the performance. Any “concerns” seemed to disappear.

As for **Sweet & Sour**, we didn’t try to force barbershop on the kids, but we really didn’t have to. Samantha remembers the kids begging us to come to rehearsals as soon as they were old enough. I remember so many contests and conventions where they



The all-Tramack Sweet & Sour: Merton, Samantha, Joshua, Christina

were sitting in the audience, watching my quartet, and then singing tags until the wee hours and just crushing them. They were always equals in every respect except that they couldn’t sing on the contest stage. I never thought I’d see the day when they’d walk across the International stage for real.

10

DON’T TAKE THINGS FOR GRANTED

So, now we find ourselves where we started. This is perhaps the most important lesson I’ve taken away from this whole ordeal. Don’t take things for granted.

So, this week, sing an extra tag. Eat some ice cream with a friend. Soak up all the knowledge—even the 8:00 a.m. knowledge. Cheer loudly. Make new friends—I bet you’ll find ones that will invite you to their house to play Suntones albums, and maybe they will be there by your side in the ICU when you’re recovering from an anaphylactic shock incident because you’re allergic to beer. Make sure you tell the people you love that you love them. And savor the moments, because we only go around once. ■





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Music City Chorus

The Clementones

TOGETHER ONCE AGAIN

part 2

Charlotte was a long-overdue reminder of just how powerfully music brings friends and family together. Many of us finally met in person those we had interacted with online for the past two years, and got to have three-dimensional time with far-flung friends who share this passion for four-part harmony. With old friends we spent evening after evening creating memories and forging new friendships that could potentially last a lifetime.

The time apart made the experience just that much sweeter. While the legacy of Covid restrictions meant that fewer groups crossed borders to get to Charlotte (all choruses were U.S.-based!), the singing level, attendance numbers, contest scores, and enthusiasm were on par with if not better than recent International Conventions.

State of the Art

Historically, what happens at International contests drives much of the arranging, performance innovations, and music that quickly trickles down to all parts of the barbershop world. It's a big accomplishment to reach these stages, and there wasn't a competitor all week you wouldn't

be proud to see headline your chapter show.

Of the 48 quartets that competed in Charlotte's open contest, 21 had also competed in 2019. By contrast, only 15 quartets that competed in 2019 had also competed in 2016. Many veteran groups significantly improved during the break, with the scores and placements to prove it. Of the 27 first-time 2022 quartet competitors, three reached the Quartet Finals (including two medalists), four more reached the Semifinals, and the other 20 finished as Quarterfinalists.

Charlotte saw 11 first-time International competitor choruses, all of which were relatively new ensembles. Five were men's choruses: **East Coast Sound** (MAD), **City Lights** (PIO), **A Cappella Syndicate** (FWD), **Voices of Harmony** (JAD), and **Bridge Town Sound** (EVG). Three all-voice

choruses—**Gotham** (MAD), **The Recruits** (CSD), and **Heart of Carolina A Cappella** (NSC)—belong to chapters that also host men's and women's choruses. Mixed chorus **The Timberliners** (RMD) comes from a chapter that includes a men's chorus, as does **Parkside Melody** (MAD), Charlotte's only competing treble chorus. (**Sirens of Gotham** (MAD) appeared on the Festival stage.) **PDX Voices** (EVG), like mic tester **Voices United** (NED), has been an all-voice chapter since its inception. **Space City Sound** (SWD) had previously competed as a men's chorus before opening membership to all.

Quartet Contest

There was real drama when 5th through 2nd places were called off on Saturday night. First

This is the text that could have appeared in the September/October issue had we known that we kinda had the time. (That issue was rushed to the printer on August 24, but for reasons out of our control it got printed and mailed ... considerably later.) We've tried to fit in as many photos as we could in this issue's limited space, but all others are in the Sept/Oct issue. Enjoy!

— Text and photos by Lorin May, Editor of *The Harmonizer* (harmonizer@barbershop.org)

place? Maybe not so much. We saw strong *future* champion vibes from others, but **Quorum's** (JAD) exquisitely interpreted songs, perfect lock and ring, and six massive ovations left little doubt about 2022's winner. Opening the Quarterfinals with their highest scoring song from Salt Lake City, "As Long As You're Mine," the subtle message may have been "We're just picking up where we left off." **PLATINUM**, Gary Lewis's first gold medal quartet, opened the 2000 Quarterfinals the same way. Winning all three rounds in Charlotte, Quorum notched five out of the week's six highest-scoring performances, with many destined to become classics.

First, as tenor of **PLATINUM** (2000) and then as bari of **Max Q** (2007), in Charlotte Quorum bass Gary Lewis became the first champion on three voice parts. No word on whether he intends to try again at lead, but he's got the pipes. Lead Chris Vaughn earned his second gold after winning as lead of **Gotcha!** in 2004. Bari Nathan Johnston's wife, Michaela, is tenor of 2019 SAI Queen **Class Ring**. Her father and Nathan's father-in-law, Mike Slamka, is champion lead of **Power Play** (2003) and **Crossroads** (2009). Tenor Puck Ross is Gary's brother-in-law and a past medalist with **The Allies** (JAD).

Midtown (MAD) lead Anthony Fortino's strong musical theater background was on full display in the quartet's Broadway-heavy sets. "Carefully Taught/Children Will Listen" was a strong contender for song of the contest. Two quartet members famously fell down hard while running off the Finals stage, slipping on who knows what. A third member came back out and took a pratfall in the same spot, leading to an unexpected seventh big ovation of the week. Firing on all cylinders and making big leaps in

only its second International, Midtown is gunning hard for a more prestigious kind of seventh bow in Louisville.

"I Want You to Want Me" is the Cheap Trick rock anthem that nobody but **Throwback** (SUN) and Aaron Dale knew would be the week's most sonically and visually electric performance. If you know someone who always plays air drums on the steering wheel, make this song their intro to barbershop. Everyone was humming it on the way out of the Quarterfinals, and it earned the highest score of any song from a quartet not named Quorum. A thrilling reminder, among others from the quartet in Charlotte, that peak Throwback belongs in the conversation of peak barbershop.

Was it gentle ribbing or jabs with sharp elbows? That depends on who you ask. In any case, **GQ** (MAD) had firmly established itself as an audience favorite by the time the quartet threw all caution to the wind in its final song, "Where Do (We) Belong?" In it, they laid out why the Society seems to be a more comfortable fit for their music and their personalities ... and then referenced some who seemed less thrilled that the quartet had joined the club. Some insinuations were less veiled than others. The crowd rewarded the song

with some of the week's biggest hoots and cheers, roaring even louder when GQ was announced as a bronze medalist.

Read the following in a Jeff Foxworthy drawl: "If your tenor posts are so powerful that you can get Drew Wheaton to switch to bari ... you might be Alex Corson. If your last note makes everyone forget eight minutes of Tony Colosimo singing lead ... you might be Alex Corson." YouTube watchers will be rewinding **First Take** (MAD) tags a lot, but please remember to enjoy the beginnings and middles, too. "Santa Fe" should get a lot of plays. All four singers were outstanding, although the three lower parts might happily credit all those "did he really just do that?" full-voice hangers with nudging the applause meter from "great debut" to "International Medalist."

The Ladies (SWD) made the quartet's BHS International debut with a set that many would consider risky—covering iconic songs of champion quartets. Their "Basin Street Blues" and "Cuddle Up" were so strong that the champion



Midtown



Throwback



GQ



Quorum



First Take



The Ladies

comparisons worked in The Ladies' favor. Barely missing the medals, nobody could have been surprised when a couple of months later they became the 2023 Sweet Adelines Harmony Queens.

Gimme Four (SWD) was already the BHS contest's best rhythm quartet by a mile before Charlotte, and somehow they still showed up with a massive upgrade in sound and musicality. Who knew they could bring an audience to its



Gimme Four

Videos of all the contest and Festival performances are online! Search "Barbershop Harmony Society" on YouTube to see the playlists.

feet with "soft" as well? They barely missed the fifth highest Finals score, and their prior two sets,

which somehow scored considerably lower, were arguably even stronger.

The inaugural International Chorus and Quartet Festival

Charlotte launched the International Chorus and Quartet Festival as part of a growing effort to increase convention-goers' opportunities to participate and/or perform, no qualifying required. The expansion of non-contest offerings isn't exactly a new idea. A gentleman from Tulsa known as O.C. Cash envisioned a similar idea back in the September 1948 issue of *The Harmonizer*:

I read in a district bulletin the other day, where a Chorus Contest had been put on. Some ten or fifteen choruses participated, prizes were given and an entirely new kind of Society activity initiated. I am very much interested in this. Sometime ago I mentioned in this Column that the time was coming when it would be necessary to have a "Barber Shop Harmony Festival Week", instead of our usual two days' Convention and Contests. With interest in choruses continuing to develop, we should make provision for more activity of this kind at our annual Conventions. So, begin thinking of an annual meeting of 6 or 7 days' duration to provide outlet for all phases of harmony singing. It will not be long coming. With a full week of harmony of various kinds, the devotee of any variety could come and go as he pleased. Of course, most of us would have to take in the whole "shootin' match".

Either because the music or the performers couldn't qualify, some of barbershop's best performances over the decades have not taken place on the International stage. Contest scoring is no longer a barrier. Eight quartets and four choruses entertained the inaugural Festival audience. While no scores were posted, all

participants received post-Festival evaluations and coaching from certified BHS judges, and the overall winner, quartet **Midnight Society** (MAD), was invited to perform after intermission during the Quartet Semifinals. The Festival was high on entertainment, including some of the week's best quartet comedy sets.

All the members of this year's participating choruses appeared on the international Chorus Stage later in the week. **Heralds of Harmony** showed off a contest-worthy set different from their contest set. The **Hell's Kitchen, NY Chapter** sibling choruses **Sirens of Gotham** (SSAA) and **Voices of Gotham** (TTBB) each performed a set and combined as **Gotham** the next day. **Voices United**, which barely missed qualifying for the

International contest via score, still performed for an International audience and judging panel, and the next morning served as the Chorus Contest's mic tester chorus.

The Festival was a win for participants and the audience alike. Expect Festival offerings and the higher-participation ethic to only get stronger in coming years.



The Associates



B-List



Vintage Four



Voices United



Heralds of Harmony

Singing as Families

The Quarterfinals mic test by **Better Together** (MAD) quartet (two husband and wife pairs) opened the singing on the International stage for the first time in three years. Before the judges began scoring, the quartet had resoundingly answered (for any lingering doubters) the question, “Do high-level men’s and women’s voices mix in barbershop?” (Short answer: Yes. Longer answer: Yeeeeees!) While family members have sung barbershop harmony



Pastor Hannes Kör



Jefferson Plaid Tie

for generations without regard to gender, it has become much more common over the past few years. Charlotte was the first time such groups could compete together on the International stage.

The Öhmans and Meyers of **Pastor Hannes Kör** (SNOBS) became the first husband and wife pairs to compete for an International score. Fellow Quarterfinalist **Windfall** (RMD) featured spouses Ashley and Tyler Wigginton. The 2022 contests’ biggest family surname was the all-Tramack **Sweet & Sour** (NED) quartet (a brother, two sisters, and a sister’s husband who took the Tramack name). Close behind was “Fortino” represented in **Harmonium** (CSD) lead Mark (father), in **Midtown** (MAD) lead Anthony (son), and in **Tapestry** (CSD) bari and arranger Joseph (nephew and cousin).

Next Generation Varsity Quartet

The first quartet out of the gate, **On the Wire** (SUN), looked and sounded like a champion. Featuring big names and a big sound, the quartet somehow ended up placing fourth. That’s the kind of contest it was, with eight quartets eventually posting open contest-level scores.

If you’re wondering where a quartet from Denmark honed such high-level skills, keep in



Quin-Tones

mind that both Denmark and the winning **Clementones** belong to the Society of Nordic Barbershop Singers (SNOBS), making the Clementones the fifth SNOBS quartet to win this contest since 2008. The energetic crowd-pleasers finished on top after winning the tie-breaker with a higher Singing score.

Jefferson Plaid Tie (MAD) also deserves its due after coming within a tie-breaker of being this year’s Next Gen Varsity Quartet Champion. Francesco Logozzo ranks among the best leads heard all week, his performance brilliantly pairing with both the voice and arranging genius of bass Cay Outerbridge. **Brothers in Arms** (MAD) impressed in their last hurrah on this stage since all four have now aged out of the contest. (They only competed because the age limit was temporarily increased due to Covid.) Bronze medalist **Soundtrack** (NSC) deserves big props for its highly original funny/scary vibe in “It’s a Jungle Out There.”

The AIC Show was too much for words—literally

This author’s AIC Show audio notes were nearly inaudible due to being drowned out by deafening, never-ending applause. (The nerve of some people!) I could only make out a couple of group names and a dozen or so uses of “awesome,” a lazy superlative I’ve got to stop using. Even when it’s accurate.

So, I’ve consulted a thesaurus to find some synonyms and will draw them from a hat whenever I have the urge to write “awesome.” I’ve added some “hip” synonyms suggested by some young adult friends who may or may not be my kids. They have assured me that even someone as terminally uncool as me can’t go wrong with their suggested superlatives. I’m pretty sure they’re just trolling me, but here we go. Hopefully the end result will be at least be somewhat awesome. (Dang it!)

What a show! We said a too-early goodbye to **Crossroads** (2009), one of the all-time *outstanding* quartets taking their final bows while still in peak form. Bass Jim Henry said it was because their suits had filed “cease and desist” orders. But at least we finally got to cheer for **Signature** (2019), enjoying their too-*phenomenal*-to believe renditions of some of their best contest songs led by one of our all-time *gnarly* leads, Daniel Cochran. We shed tears with **Nightlife** (1996) at the passing of beloved bari Jeff Baker and mourned the still-painful loss of **Marquis** (1995) super-lead Randy Chisholm. We hooted at a *trippy* performance of **Max Q’s** “Here’s to the Losers,” the first since



their *magnificent* winning performance in 2007. Finally, after a long absence we once again got to be enthralled by the *totally tubular* artistry of **Forefront** (2016).

Interstate Rivals (1987) showed off the *slammin’* staying power of classic songs, while the *non-heinous* overtones of **Vocal Spectrum** (2006) in their rendition on “Bye-Bye Blues” were simply *sassy*. Finally, **After Hours** (2018) wowed with a *steezy* medley from *Les Mis* that earned *bodacious* applause.

After three years away, to bask again in the sights and sounds of the best-ever practitioners of our art form made for an evening of emotions that filled our hearts. It was an event so magical that the entire spectacle could be summed up with only one possible word: *scrumdiddlyumptious*.

If you don’t agree, blame *Merriam-Webster’s Thesaurus*. (And my kids.)





Clutch



Half and Half



Yonge Guns

The **Quin-Tones** (MAD) are no longer the high schoolers who won the 2018 Next Gen Junior Quartet Championship, and they're definitely not the little kids who carried themselves like the Osmonds 2.0 in Nashville 2016. Their sound has matured while they've been together. They barely missed a Varsity medal while posting open contest-level scores.

In Charlotte, Joseph De Rosa won his first International-level medal at age 18 while singing baritone with **On the Wire** (SUN). Thirty-one years earlier, Tony De Rosa (Joseph's dad) sang some of the best baritone in contest history, earning his first medal at age 18 in the silver-medal debut of **Keepsake**, which won the following year. Different contests, but it's still an interesting parallel.

Arrangers

In 2019, we noted that 61 different arrangers appeared on score sheets for the open and chorus contests. Unfortunately, in Charlotte that number precipitously fell to ... 60. (Next Generation and Festival arrangers were not listed on the score sheets.) **Quorum** (JAD) used six different arrangers, and Patrick McAlexander's two arrangements for **Music City Chorus** (DIX) made them the first chorus champion in forever to not use a chart by either Aaron Dale or David Wright. While Aaron has been the most-sung arranger for well over a decade (at least 29 performances

in Charlotte), Patrick tied David with at least 19. Arrangers Theo Hicks (15), Clay Hine (13), and Kevin Keller (11) also saw double-digit performances. The other 54+ arrangers, most still living and many singing their own arrangements on stage, had consistently high quality and some of the biggest hits of the contest.

More arrangers means more fresh content and fewer repeated songs. Even the handful of repeats—three performances of John Brockman's "Mr. Success" and four total of "They Just Keep Moving the Line" (between the Kohl Kitzmiller and Steve Tramack versions)—were newer charts.

Songs We Can't Get Out Of Our Heads

"Let's Be Bad," **Half and Half's** (JAD) first song was anything but; an ironic title for a performance that generated enough raw energy to charge a dead Tesla to 100%.

Madhattan's (MAD) performance of "Everybody Loves My Baby (But My Baby Don't Love Nobody But Me)" included a rapid-fire passage that makes "The Auctioneer" sound tame by comparison. A great arrangement by Madhattan tenor Max Mellman.

"Mean to Me" from **Fleet Street** (CSD), although we could have chosen any of their other songs. Did lead Aaron Zart sell his soul to sing like that? Good trade.

"Satan's Little Lamb" was a jaw-dropper by **Clutch** (SWD), but "If You're Happy and You Know It" is the performance more will remember. It appeared as if the quartet realized that they might be Finals mic testers for a third time in a row, so this year they had a fully-rehearsed crowd-pleaser ready to go. Instead, on their third consecutive Saturday night they finally got to sing for score.

This wasn't the first time we've seen **Yonge**



Artistic License



The Core

Guns (ONT) bust out all the moves in "My Lady Loves to Dance," but three years was way too long to wait. It's never been more fun.

Boomtown's (CSD) "Heaven" medley had some of the most heavenly vocal runs, and they somehow sounded effortless.

InVoice's (EVG) "Heaven" medl—oh wait. **InVoice's** (EVG) "Seeing For the Very First Time," a great new(?) David Wright chart.

"Mr. Tanner" by **The Core** (JAD). Their strongest performance in Salt Lake, it's the rare song that needed a second view to really appreciate. They pulled it off again in Charlotte.

"Baby I'm-a Want You," **Signature's** (2019 champion) last song on the Festival stage, was a tribute to their mentor (and the song's arranger) Gene Cokcroft of the 1961 champ **Suntones**.

"Unusual Way" by **Artistic License** (FWD) was a great new chart, and lead Rich Brunner sold it as if he were ... Rich Brunner.

Harmonic Thunder's (JAD) "Over the Rainbow," a perfect rendition of a fantastic Jay Giallombardo chart.

Individual Call-Outs

James Masalskis of **Five Star** (PIO) for his solo on "Evermore." Get this bass an audition with the Metropolitan Opera.



"What is Eddie Holt doing in my backstage area?"

—Stage Manager Dave Duncan to Secret Best Friends quartet as they and Eddie prepared to go onstage for the Semifinals mic test

Over the years, Dave has seen a lot of chaos erupt shortly after Eddie hits the stage. Were thousands of Lucky Charms soon to be scattered? Any wookies or giraffes about to burst onto the stage? Maybe all of the Quarterfinalists were about to enter through the wings and break the sound system a la the 2010 Finals mic test? Notwithstanding Eddie's role in scripting chaos with **Music City Chorus** and **Lunch Break**, this time he was only prepping for a Carnegie Hall-ready darinet accompaniment to Secret Best Friends' "Nancy with the Laughing Face."





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Ian Kelly, lead of **Momma's Boys** (EVG), for making his vocal heavy-lifting sound effortless as the cornerstone to their brotherly blend. Katie Gillis and Ali Hauger of **GQ** (MAD) for being two Tony De Rosas in a single quartet, singing brilliant bari before swapping to lights-out lead (or vice versa)—and doing it every round instead of every couple of decades.



Bearbershop's (FWD) David Schneidinger, winner of the annual "Cory Hunt/Jayson Van Hook Award" for the guy you didn't think was the bass when he first walked out and then he opens his mouth and kills it.

Kim Newcomb, baritone of **The Ladies** (SWD) and tenor of **Half and Half** (JAD). Even when standing next to A-list leads Caroline Hunt and Jenni Sheets, Kim still stood out.



Kevin Stinson, bass of **InVoice**, for singing like Kevin Stinson.

Quorum (JAD) tenor Puck Ross and bari Nathan Johnston for vocally keeping up with a Chris Vaughn lead line and not collapsing before the end of each song. Those two and Alan Gordon (bari to Chris's 2004 gold with **Gotchal!**) have probably shared a few war stories.



"Curly," the near-constant companion of lead Kevin Hughes of **Forefront** (2016 champ), for joining the quartet on stage as a stormtrooper in the **Music City Chorus** set, becoming the first four-legged performer to win a gold medal.

Choruses

The **Masters of Harmony** (FWD) drew the 10 a.m. Friday morning contest slot, which to their jet-lagged bodies was 7 a.m. in Los Angeles. The energy, visuals, musicality, and blend were vintage Masters, and they easily cracked the 90% barrier. But the early hour couldn't have helped anybody's vocals. Four of the first five choruses that drew Friday morning came from the Pacific Time Zone. If a runner's 4:06-minute mile in Denver corrects to a 4-minute mile at sea level, would the mid-morning groups have scored differently if there were "Morning Time Zone Adjustments"?

The **Alexandria Harmonizers** (MAD) have



Masters of Harmony



Ambassadors of Harmony



Sound of Illinois



A Cappella Syndicate

been the Society's best dancers since at least the Reagan administration, and kept the streak going when they enlisted a local tap troupe in a show-stopping performance of "42nd Street." The vocals were so good that the Harmonizers still would have won a strong third place even with the lights turned off.

Gotham's (MAD) dancing was a strong second, however. The **Voices of Gotham** and the **Sirens of Gotham** (both part of the **Hells Kitchen, NY Chapter**) combined as all-voice chorus Gotham in big band-style "Swinging' With Gotham." The high-energy couple dance pairings and moves were unlike anything we've seen before on the International stage.

Was "I'm Alright" from *Caddyshack* on your "songs that barbershop" Bingo card? (Diagonal from "I Want You to Want Me.") How about "(Sittin' On) The Dock of the Bay"? The Kenny Loggins and Otis Redding classics were great vehicles for **Parkside Harmony** (MAD), and all three were part of an at-least 17-year collaboration

between arranger Aaron Dale and Sean Devine of **OC Times** (2008 champ), **Throwback** (SUN), and now **Parkside Harmony**, where Sean is artistic director. Combined with inventive staging and director-less performance, the chorus once again flexed its experimental artistry muscles en route to a bronze medal.

Speaking of innovators, Arizona's small-but-mighty **A Cappella Syndicate** (FWD) went almost literally outside the box in its debut. They effectively used "Hey Jude," "Sweet Caroline," and other songs in probably the first-ever audience sing-along in the Chorus Contest.

With apologies to both choruses, **East Coast Sound** (MAD) looks and sounds like you took a 2005-ish up-and-coming version of **Westminster Chorus** and relocated it from SoCal to New Jersey. Auspicious debut.

Speaking of great debuts, **City Lights** (PIO) gave the contest a big shot of energy with their newer, mostly younger chorus that looks and sounds like a slightly older and larger up-and-coming



Alexandria Harmonizers

It's a MAD MAD MAD MAD World. Mid-Atlantic District (MAD) groups pretty much dominated the top spots in Charlotte, with 5 of the top 10 quartets (including three medalists), 2 out of 5 Next Gen Varsity Quartet medalists, and 4 of the top 10 choruses (including two medalists).

Midwest version of, um, East Coast Sound.

Parkside Melody (MAD) helped make 3X history in Charlotte. First, they entertained with stunning sound and artistry (especially with “It’s a Fine, Fine Line”) as the International stage’s first treble chorus. Second, they belong to the first chapter (Hershey, PA) to feature two choruses (theirs and **Parkside Harmony**) on the International stage in the same year. Third, both chapter choruses finished in the top 10.

A good nickname for the uber-artistic **Fog City Singers** (FWD) might be the San Francisco Giants, assuming that name isn’t already taken. But they showed off a giant range, and their beautiful final notes on “Cry Me a River” were as soft as a home-plate whisper heard from the center field wall. Two home runs in Charlotte.

Speaking of great artistry, **Central Standard** (CSD) continues to make the Music judges swoon to the golden hands of director Rob Mance and this great ensemble. Another clinic in singing and musical interpretation.

Brandon and Chad Guyton have gotten **Sound of Tennessee** (DIX), the no-longer-little chorus from little Cleveland, TN sounding huge!

When **Music City Chorus** (DIX) asked for the **Ambassadors of Harmony’s** (CSD) blessing before parodying their Charlotte set, nobody knew that the 2019 seventh-place MCC would go on to top their four-time champion idols. But Ambassadors co-director Jim Henry publicly congratulated the winners for beating his chorus at its A-game. Indeed, the Ambassadors’ 95.4% score would have won some other contests, but the group has now seen several of its ground-breaking, gold-medal-worthy sets get outscored. Yet somehow, a silver medal on an Ambassadors uniform



Parkside Melody



Parkside Harmony



City Lights



East Coast Sound

always ends up looking as brilliant as gold.

Speaking of A-games, **Southern Gateway Chorus** certainly weathered the pandemic well. Fantastic set.

Thanks to **Sound of Illinois** (ILL) and the **Singing Buckeyes** (JAD) for going the extra mile with great performances that included full-themed costumes and sets. Sound of Illinois also ran yet another clinic in storytelling and in using actors effectively.

“Heralds North” and “Heralds South” competed once again as the **Tampa Heralds of Harmony**, an ongoing collaboration between directors and old friends Clay Hine and Tony De Rosa. The north side is known most of the year as **Atlanta Vocal Project**, but for two contests the choruses have learned the sets separately before meeting in the middle a few times to rehearse as a single chorus.

Music City Chorus (DIX) had hoped that during their May retreat, comedy master Dave

McEachern would fix what they considered a weak medley. Dave got stuck in Toronto due to a stolen passport, so comedy legend Rick LaRosa flew in at the last minute. The medley was even more broken than feared—hardly a gag landed for Rick or coach Jordan Travis. A frantic two-hour Music Team brainstorm followed, and, at 2 a.m., Rick told the others, “Go to bed, I got it. I’ll write up some ideas and see you in the morning.”

At breakfast, an exhausted Rick, the lead of 1999 champion **FRED** who often created fresh gags hours before performances, showed them his “tweaks.” Large swaths were deleted or moved and new gags and pages of lyrics were added. It was a breathtaking rewrite—and all genius! Suddenly the medley was much funnier and had “heart.” Rick’s redo was what we saw in Charlotte. Music City now has a full year to produce a rule-free swan song set for Louisville. Can’t wait!



Gotham



Central Standard



Sound of Tennessee



The Recruits



Fog City Singers



'Round Midnight



GQ is announced as a medalist

Make 'Em Laugh

Kudos to those who made us laugh in Charlotte—from emcees Vince Sandroni and Anthony Bartholomew to champion **Music City Chorus** (DIX) and 2007 champ **Max Q** (SWD); from television theme song yucksters **Up All Night** (MAD) to SNOBS barbershop revivalist

preachers **Pastor Hannes Kör**, which roughly translates to “Pastor John’s Choir.” (Or if spelled with an “o” instead of an “ö,” as they were irked to see in the convention program, it’s “Pastor John’s Cow.”) “Praise the chord!”

Meanwhile, **Half and Half** (JAD) quartet, **Yonge Guns** (ONT), **Clutch** (SWD), and **GQ** (MAD) threw us several funny bones, and Next Gen Varsity Quartet **Notable** (FWD) showed us some of the funniest facial expressions since **Metropolis**. However, the loudest and most frequent yuks per minute arguably came at the Chorus and Quartet Festival. While other Festival groups also let their hair down, particular shout-outs go to **Vintage Four** (NSC), **The Associates** (FWD), and especially **B-List** (DIX) and their slightly disturbing ode to bacon. All proved it doesn’t take a 76% qualifying score to be great entertainers.

Overall, it seemed that fewer groups attempted humor. That’s understandable. Getting voices back into contest shape was work enough, and comedy requires a lot of talent, time, and risk. But what rewards! The most viral quartet contest

videos on YouTube are heavily tilted toward groups like **The Newfangled Four** (FWD), **Main Street** (2017 champ), **Lunch Break** (DIX), and ... **Dad Wagon?** (DIX)

There’s a lesson in that last quartet. The barbershop world has long known Wayne Grimmer as the limitless lead and influential arranger of **‘Round Midnight** (MAD), a consistent Saturday Night-level group that formed in 2003 and has competed at International most years since 2009. Like almost all quartets, even most champions, its reach outside the barbershop world is limited. Meanwhile, more than 700,000 YouTube viewers know Wayne as the low voice among four friends who performed two funny songs at the 2016 Quarterfinals and were never seen again!

If that doesn’t sound fair, watch “One of These Things is Not Like the Other.” Your only question should be why it hasn’t already passed a million views. After that, give a close listen to the lyrics of “Make ‘Em Laugh.” It’s not just a good show opener, it’s a winning template.

See you in Louisville! ■



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Executive Assistant to the CEO

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Janice Bane
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customerservice@barbershop.org
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development@barbershop.org
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CEO/Executive Director
Katie Macdonald
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EVENTS & CONVENTIONS

events@barbershop.org
Dusty Schleier
Director of Meetings & Conventions
Chad Bennett
Show Production Manager

HARMONY MARKETPLACE

customerservice@barbershop.org
Justin Gray
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FINANCE

finance@barbershop.org
Erik Dove
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marketing@barbershop.org
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education@barbershop.org
Steve Scott
Director of Harmony University & Education Services
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support@barbershop.org
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impact@barbershop.org
Erin Harris
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- Association of International Champions • *AICGold.com*
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- The Woodshedders • *ahsow.org*
- Southern Harmony Brigade • *southernharmonybrigade.com*
- Harmony Brigade • *harmonybrigade.org*
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- Harmony Foundation International*
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- Sing Canada Harmony
SingCanadaHarmony.ca
- American Choral Directors Association
acdaonline.org
- Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia
sinfonia.org
- World Harmony Council
worldbarbershop.org
- National Museum for African-American Music
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- Sweet Adelines International
sweetadelines.com
- Harmony, Incorporated
harmonyinc.org
- Barbershop Quartet Preservation Association
bqpa.com
- National Association for Music Education
nafme.org
- Chorus America
chorusamerica.org
- Nashville Songwriters Association International
nashvillesongwriters.com

* The Society considers Harmony Foundation to be a Society Subsidiary, but due to current litigation, the Harmony Foundation will be listed as a Friend in Harmony until litigation is complete. For more information, please visit barbershop.org/news/key-issues.

The Harmonizer

GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE

harmonizer@barbershop.org

EDITORIAL

Lorin May (Editor)
Brian Lynch (Associate Editor)

EDITORIAL BOARD

Devin Anna Bradford, Eddie Holt, Jeremy Gover,
Brian Lynch, Lorin May

Copy editing: Stan Peppenhorst,
Ann McAlexander



THE TAG

Tom Gentry, Tagmaster

tgbari1@gmail.com

Ringling in “Auld Lang Syne”

Celebrants all over the globe honor New Year’s Eve with this age-old song. The text was written by Scottish poet Robert Burns in 1788 and set to a traditional tune in 1799. The title literally means “old long since” but might be better rendered as “for old times’ sake.”

Speaking of the wide world, many countries have unique ways of welcoming in the new year. Spaniards eat exactly 12 grapes for good luck. In Brazil, it is customary to light candles and throw white flowers into the ocean to seek the blessing of Yemoja, the Queen of the Ocean. Italians wear red underwear, that color

being associated with fertility. (Note to self: No red undies.)

A Russian writes down wishes on a piece of paper, burns it and drinks the ashes in a glass of champagne. An unmarried Irish woman might sleep with a sprig of mistletoe under her pillow to help her find a future mate. Buddhist temples in Japan ring their bells 108 times both to dispel the 108 evil desires in each of us and to cleanse the previous year of past sins. (I’m going with the ashes.)

No one in my posse of helpers knows who wrote this tag, but it is a fine one, a real fooler at the start. Assuming you are teaching the tag

rather than having everyone read it, folks will hear the lead part and think, “Of course.” Then when you introduce the tenor part, veteran taggers may feel, “This sounds a bit dull.” But when you get to the bass, all bets are off! And the baris will know that they have a challenge in store as well. Come to think of it, the major seventh chords in measure 2 could create an impression that the old year won’t exactly be missed. Just sayin’.

So as you toast the coming, more wonderful year with adult beverages—Maalox, Metamucil, Ensure, and such—sing this cool tag and, well, be glad you have made it this far! ■

TTBB voicing Arranger Unknown

Musical score for TTBB voicing. The Tenor part (Lead) starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The Bass part (Bari/Bass) starts with a bass clef and a key signature of one flat (Bb). The lyrics are: For ___ auld ___ lang ___ .syne. ___

SSAA voicing Arranger Unknown

Musical score for SSAA voicing. The Tenor part (Lead) starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The Bass part (Bari/Bass) starts with a bass clef and a key signature of one flat (Bb). The lyrics are: For ___ auld ___ lang ___ .syne. ___

SATB voicing Arranger Unknown

Musical score for SATB voicing. The Tenor part (Lead) starts with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats (Bb, Eb). The Bass part (Bari/Bass) starts with a bass clef and a key signature of two flats (Bb, Eb). The lyrics are: For ___ auld ___ lang ___ .syne. ___



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