For Steve Tramack, the silver lining of so much time away was learning what is really true and what matters most.
“VHU made it possible for me to receive quality education for a fraction of the cost of attending in person. The courses were amazing, the instructors prepared and engaging. This was such an awesome opportunity.”
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The Harmony Marketplace is your one-stop-shop for all of your Barbershop needs, featuring the largest collection of custom merchandise, and the largest catalog of Barbershop music in the world.

### Barbershop TOP SELLERS

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<td>1. The Bells of Notre Dame w/Out There</td>
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<td>4. Seven Bridges Road</td>
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<td>4. A Whole New World</td>
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<td>5. Hooked On A Feeling</td>
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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.
LEARNING TRACKS
BUY. DOWNLOAD. LEARN.

NOW FEATURING
20 NEW LEARNING TRACK ALBUMS BY SCOTT ANDERSON

AND NEW CHARTS SUCH AS
BACK IN THE SADDLE AGAIN
SWEET PEA
CALIFORNIA DREAMIN’
WHAT A WONDERFUL WORLD
BLUE SHADOWS ON THE TRAIL
(THEY LONG TO BE) CLOSE TO YOU
HAPPY TOGETHER
GOD BLESS AMERICA
SINCE I DON’T HAVE YOU

AND MANY, MANY MORE
SHOP.BARBERSHOP.ORG

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EDITOR
Lorin May

OUR VISION
Everyone in Harmony

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

OUR PURPOSES
To perpetuate the old American institution: the barbershop quartet and barbershop harmony
To promote appreciation of barbershop harmony
To initiate and maintain a broad program of musical education, contests, and appreciation in support of barbershop harmony and the allied arts
To establish and maintain foundations that support our vision
To initiate, promote and participate in charitable projects that support our vision

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

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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...
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终于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.
The Society is on the rebound: by the numbers

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.
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!

Give.Barbershop.org/StepUp

We are only *$20,000 away from our goal. Give today and help us reach the final step!* *as of 10/4/22*
NOTEWORTHY
The latest in the world of barbershop

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 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!

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.

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 Champion 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.
Virtual Harmony University
delayed viewing
View until Jan. 1, 2023
barbershop.org/vhu

Midwinter Convention 2023
Feb. 7-12
Daytona Beach, Fla.
Seniors & Youth contests, casual vibe, great shows!

2023 International Louisville
July 2-9, 2023
The party continues in a newly vibrant downtown setting with great amenities and venues.

2024 Midwinter New York City
January 9-14
2024 International Cleveland
June 30-July 7
2025 International Denver
June 29-July 6

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.

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

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 codify 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.
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 webcast, 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 year more 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.
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 shimmed 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 mutter. 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 arrangements, 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...
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 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 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 never have 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 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
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. New Year’s Eve after New Year’s Eve. The marriage of our daughter.

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

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

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

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

DON’T TAKE THINGS FOR GRANTED

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 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.

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.
NO INSTRUMENTS • NO TRACKS • NO AUTOTUNE
JUST FOUR VOICES AND A SONG
WIN $10,000

All voices welcome!
Upper, lower, mixed – all harmony in all combinations!

Level playing field
You don’t even have to win the championship! – $10,000 prize goes to the top quartet with singers NEW to barbershop

Easy video entry:
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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.

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.

There was real drama when 5th through 2nd places were called off on Saturday night. First...
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](image1)

![The Ladies](image2)

![GQ](image3)

![First Take](image4)

![Throwback](image5)
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 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*:

> 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.
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: Yeeeeeess!) While family members have sung barbershop harmony 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) baritone 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 mind that both Denmark and the winning Clementones belong to the Society of Nordic Barber 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 baritone 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 sazy. Finally, After Hours (2018) wowed with a steppy 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.)
The Harmonizer

For well over a decade (at least 29 performances
While Aaron has been the most-sung arranger
use a chart by either Aaron Dale or David Wright.
For different arrangements, and Patrick McAlexander’s two
champion in forever to not
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Keepsake
The Osmonds 2.0 in Nashville 2016. Their
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Generation and Festival arrangers were not listed
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Exhausted	Average	Low
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Country.
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
together later, 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 perform-
ances. 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 iconic title for a performance
that generated enough raw energy to charge a
dead Tesla to 100%.

Madhattan’s (MAD) performance of “Every-
body 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

Individual Call-Outs

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

The Core

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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 iconic title for a performance
that generated enough raw energy to charge a
dead Tesla to 100%.

Madhattan’s (MAD) performance of “Every-
body 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

Individual Call-Outs

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

“The Core”

“Weekend” is the occasional 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

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 Chams 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 at 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 clarinet ac-
companiment to Secret Best Friends’ “Nancy
with the Laughing Face.”
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JULY 2 - 9, 2023
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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 bar 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 barit 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 Gotcha!) 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 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.”

Gotham’s (MAD) dancing was a strong second, however. The Voices of Gotham and the Sirens of Gotham (both part of the Helis 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 group.

It’s a MAD 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 (their 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 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 am., 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!
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 “ö” 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.

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"❤❤❤"

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**Akron Derbytown Chorus** seeks a dynamic front-line director for a vibrant, fun-loving 75-year-old chorus with six registered quartets that performs regularly and hosts an annual show. We meet Tuesday evenings. Contact LeAnn Snyder at 216-272-7860 or DerbytownShow@gmail.com; www.derbytownchorus.org.

**Heart of Long Island Chorus** is looking for a director to help our small, 60-year-old all-female chorus of fun-loving, hard-working members reach our goals. Contact Sue Morano 516-761-1096 or heartoflongislandchorus@gmail.com

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**The Hall of Fame Chorus** of Canton, OH is test-oriented, and hosts three annual shows plus an annual fish fry fund raiser. We are a small but a very active chorus of 25 men looking for an experienced director. Contact Darryl Flinn at 330-494-9912 or darrylflinn@gmail.com

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  - New Bern, NC
- Raymond Orndorff
  - New Bern, NC

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  - Black Hawk Metro, IA
- James Inghram
  - St. Charles, MO
- John McNamara
  - Davenport, IA
- Charles Meyer
  - Lebanon, PA
- John Stibor
  - Fremont, NE
- Austin Stiles
  - Newmarket, ON

**DIXIE**
- William Shireman
  - Nashville, TN

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**EVERGREEN**
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  - Spokane, WA
- David Collins
  - Calgary-Foothills, AB
- Raymond Domitrovich
  - Spokane, WA
- Michael Garrity
  - Spokane, WA
- Robert Nelson
  - Spokane, WA

**FAR WESTERN**
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  - Aloha, HI
- Timothy Hasselman
  - South Bay, CA
- Shelley Herman
  - San Fernando Valley, CA
- Harry Kaylor
  - Hemet, CA

**HOMESTEAD**
- Mark Snygg
  - Rockford, IL

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**JOHNNY APPLESEED**
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  - Akron, OH
- George Lyness
  - Pittsburgh South Hills, PA
- George O’Brien
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- Robert Parker
  - Pittsburgh North Hills, PA

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- Lloyd Croatt
  - Milwaukee, WI
- John Gusmer
  - Stevens Point, WI
- Gary Jacobson
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  - Frederick, MD
- Paul Archibald
  - Richmond, VA
- Richard Engle
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  - Wayne, PA

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- Frank Thorne
  - Denver
- Philip Zara
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**SENECA LAND**
- Kenneth Gregory
  - Binghamton, NY
- Thomas Spina
  - Black River Valley, NY

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**SOUTHERN**
- Pete Tyree
  - Baritone of the Orphans, 1954 champion

---

**BLACK HAWK METRO**
- William Reneke
  - San Juan County, NM

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**BLACK HAWK SOUTH**
- Michael Draves
  - Greater Fort Smith, AR

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**CAROLINA**
- Don Lenz
  - 71-year member of the Society

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• MBHA (Mixed Barbershop Harmony Association)
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Celebrate 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'.

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