

The Harmonizer

BRINGING BARBERSHOP HARMONY TO LIFE • JULY/AUGUST 2023



TRANSFORMATIONAL

The first official manuals in 43 years are a game-changing resource for all levels of arrangers, as well as anyone who simply wants to master barbershop harmony.



NOTEWORTHY

A JOKER'S POST FALLS SHORT
LIFETIME MEMBERSHIP FOR CHAMPS

SPOTLIGHT

STEVE DELEHANTY LOOKS BACK
ON 59 YEARS IN BARBERSHOP

INSIDE

HOW MUSIC CITY CHORUS GOT
STRONGER DURING COVID



RESOURCES FOR YOUR CHAPTER

WE ASKED. YOU SHARED.

After listening sessions were held with leaders from all types of BHS singing communities, Harmony Hall staff has compiled a summary of recurring challenges that our chapters are facing. This summary provides key resources for some of the most commonly heard challenges:



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**Dues
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Thanks to the incredible generosity of our Sponsors and Donors, the Barbershop Harmony Society was able to bring over 100 young singers from across the U.S. to the Next Generation Barbershop events created by the Society at the Midwinter Convention in Daytona Beach. These young singers brought original arrangements, an eagerness to compete, and a love of ringing chords.

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Our gifts change lives. We create the future by giving to the Harmony Foundation. Please consider supporting us today and help give the gift of barbershop to the Next Generation of singers, leaders, and mentors!



Georgia Spirit from Atlanta, GA rehearses for the Chorus Festival at the Daytona Beach Midwinter Convention.



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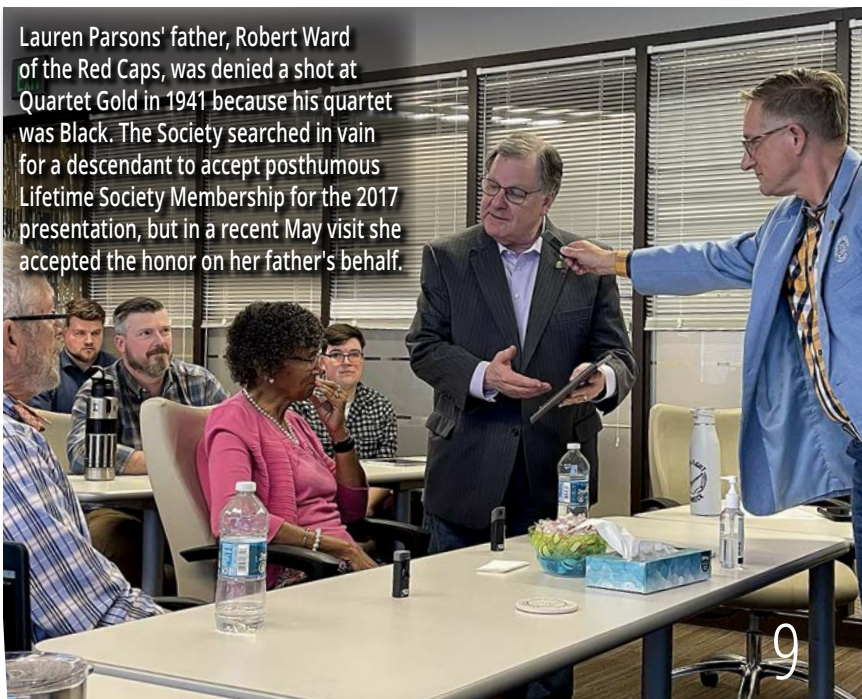
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"This is Not a Tag"

Lauren Parsons' father, Robert Ward of the Red Caps, was denied a shot at Quartet Gold in 1941 because his quartet was Black. The Society searched in vain for a descendant to accept posthumous Lifetime Society Membership for the 2017 presentation, but in a recent May visit she accepted the honor on her father's behalf.



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After the pandemic shut down the world, Music City Chorus had to decide its path forward. They agreed upon many principles—member buy-in among the top priorities—and used the time apart to increase their musical literacy and sustain their brotherhood ... and then go win a championship. The principles they followed (and still follow) can apply to any chapter.

18 Arranging Barbershop Volumes 1&2: Two Game-Changers

Editor Steve Tramack and some of the Society's best arrangers have updated the great 1980 manual with all the lessons learned from the great music that has been created over the past 43 years. Even if you never plan to arrange a barbershop song, these volumes will boost your barbershop and musical IQ, whether you're a beginner or a master.



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On the cover: Arranging Barbershop Volumes 1&2, cover by Eddie Holt

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The Harmonizer

GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE/EDITORIAL

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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
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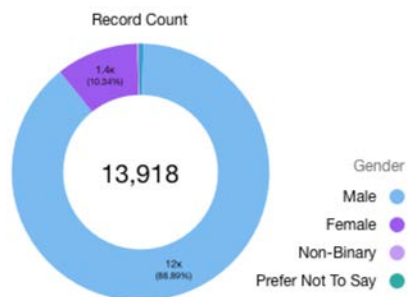
Key stats: gratitude and growth

Net Harmonic Happiness is not a measurable stat on the management dashboard... yet. But 3% growth doesn't just happen.

MARTY: For a long time — really, since I started as CEO 11 years ago—I have insisted that our obsession with membership numbers has been a little bit misplaced. Membership is a lagging indicator. It's a rearview mirror look at whether your activities have helped sustain interest and are making an impact. So to start our chat today with GOOD NEWS numbers might sound like I'm contradicting myself, but it is definitely good news, and we should celebrate because it is a success across all facets of the Society.

JOHN: The suspense is killing me even though I know the news.

MARTY: Year to year, the Barbershop



Harmony Society's count of active members has GROWN by 3%, to nearly 14,000 members.

JOHN: When's the last time we could say that?

MARTY: A long time ... the late 1990s had a few years trending up. Overall, though, we've been dropping 3% on average since the mid-1980s. Right now, **we're seeing actual membership growth.** What's really interesting is that it appears people active in choruses are really active—about 14% of our members sing in more than one chorus:

- Members: 13,908
- Society-only memberships: 1,478
- Chorus memberships: 14,410
- Multi-chorus members: 1,980 (14%)



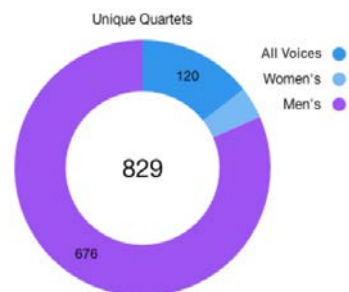
John

Marty

- Active men's choruses: 589
- Active women's choruses: 16
- Active all voices choruses: 139

It's interesting to see that about 14% of quartets are registered as all voices, and 4% registered as women's quartets, approximately that same rate of people in the organization. So definitely our newest members are active!

JOHN: I realize we dropped nearly 25% during the pandemic. We weren't



surprised by that, as the pandemic wore on, but it was a gut punch.

MARTY: The only way to correct this was to go up, but, hey, it could've kept

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Society Board of Directors societyboard@barbershop.org



going down or flat. It didn't.

JOHN: It was our chapters and districts that did it, that persevered and hung on, and did what they could. For the most part, there was that social contact holding people together to meet every two weeks, every month, a couple of times a year. And now we're seeing the regeneration that comes.

BRIAN: There are chapters that are so deeply committed that there is no way to pry them apart. If you survived the pandemic, you're going to survive everything. BHS probably got as small as we could possibly get because the people who stayed will never leave.

JOHN: "You have successfully passed through all the trials. You are indestructible. Immortals!" Even for groups that had a ho-hum pandemic experience, when they were singing again, it didn't have to feel miraculous, just great to have the same again. But buried inside here, too, we actually see it's not going to be exactly the same. It's going to have new capabilities.

MARTY: Have we recovered as fast as we all wanted? Nope. Some groups have, and we're really curious to hear more about how they're doing that. We all have the desire to recover at a faster pace. But many community choirs, and many school music programs, are saying they're expecting a full three to five years of recovery to get back to some semblance of the numbers that they had before.

The District conventions have been coming on stronger. Alan Lamson in Northeastern District told me last week that they had **42 quartets qualify for Fall Contest**. 42! They've had more choruses qualifying, more everything going on!

BRIAN: Where is that coming from? Why NED, right now?

MARTY: It's a very open district, very welcoming. They've encouraged people to give things a try, and they have

"I THINK ALL OUR LOCAL LEADERS NEED TO UNDERSTAND THAT THEY HAVE PERMISSION, EVEN AN OBLIGATION, TO REACH OUT AND SAY, 'HEY, I NEED HELP, WE NEED HELP.' THERE ARE RESOURCES AVAILABLE."

some strong clusters of people really hungry to move to the next level.

JOHN: At the same time, everyone who goes to contest feels like they have a shot at doing well, so it's self-fulfilling. Something attainable with hard work inspires hard work, which makes everything better— and more fun!

MARTY: I have so much gratitude for all the people who have stuck it out, and are part of the rebound. Gratitude! I'm never taking that for granted again. Do we have all of our volunteer positions filled? No. Will we? I'm betting yes because there is so much talent that seeks an outlet. Busy people get busier.

JOHN: Just re-establishing the good habits of participating is a step. Sometimes, the hardest part of barbershop-ping is getting in the car. Once you're on the road, learning tracks playing, building anticipation of walking in the door ... you're all good!

The groups that are rebounding are doing it by really lifting together, asking their communities for help. I think all our local leaders need to understand that they have permission, even



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John & Marty are attending

Jul 2-9, International Convention, Louisville

July 12, Strategic Planning Committee Monthly Mtg

July 15, Schmitt Brothers Stage dedication, Two Rivers, WI (Marty)

July 20-22, Category School, New Orleans

July 23-30, Harmony University, New Orleans

August 9, Strategic Planning Committee Monthly Mtg

August, Quarterly District Leadership Meetings (Marty)

John is listening to Dealer's Choice Anthology

Marty is learning Louisville International All Voices Chorus Music

Marty is reading *The Greatest Song* - Kevin Griffin

John is reading *The Aftermath: The Last Days of the Baby Boom and the Future of Power in America* by Philip Bump



STARTING PITCH

A conversation with our President and CEO

"MOST COMMUNITY CHOIR ENTITIES DON'T HAVE A SOCIETY FROM WHICH TO TAP INTO RESOURCES LIKE BHS PROVIDES. IT'S VERY POWERFUL, BUT ONLY AS POWERFUL AS YOU SEEK TO UTILIZE IT AND US RECIPROCALLY."

an obligation, to reach out and say, hey, I need help, we need help. We are all part of a larger ecosystem, a larger organization, and there are resources available.

MARTY: Here's the red phone, right? Dial for emergency help. Your district leadership and Society are here to help. That's why we have a Barbershop Harmony Society. Most community choir entities don't have a Society from which to tap into resources like BHS provides. It's unique and very powerful, but only as powerful as you seek to utilize it and us reciprocally.

JOHN: Those gifts of time and talent are everything. Money can buy a lot of things, but it will never buy a well-rung chord with your fellow singers. Only shared talent and shared time together can ignite that flame of harmony.

MARTY: Maybe it's repeating ourselves, but, wow, there are not enough ways to say thank you. Just thanks for being there, thanks for being ready to sing at 7:00 p.m. sharp, thanks for a thoughtful word to a new singer, or for sorting the music library or bringing a case of water to the retreat weekend or ... THANKS! ■

NEED HELP? USE THESE RESOURCES

District leadership – www.barbershop.org/districts
Locate programs and people nearby with resources, funds, and experience.

HU LIBRARY – members.barbershop.org/s/hu-library
Online courses from Harmony University and Best Practices from across the Society.



Reader Feedback

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

A follow-up to Music Medics

✉ Regarding the Music Medics program (January/February 2023 issue), we are coming to the point in which the various programs throughout the continent can share singers! On Wednesday, May 24, the Nashville Music Medics sang with our new friend from HarmonyTown Music Medics (Wayne, MI Chapter), Charles Malbandian.



Charles visited Music City Chorus's Tuesday Night rehearsal, where he learned that we would perform the next day. He rearranged his schedule to join us as we moved through Centennial Children's Hospital during our bi-weekly visit to sing for patients and families.

Wayne Jackson

Nashville Music Medics



Missed his own reception?

✉ Just read the article on **Let's Sing!** in the latest *Harmonizer*—many thanks! Of course I have to be a jerk and point out a couple minor errors: **Classic Collection** won the District Championship in CSD in 1975 (not FWD), and RMD in 1977.

Pam and I are not married ... yet ... so the phrase "Steve and his wife Pam recently relocated ..." is incorrect. Not a biggie, but my quartet mates are already razzing me about it. Guess I missed the reception! ■

Steve Tremper

Tenor of 2023 International Seniors Champion *Let's Sing!*



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● HONORING CHAMPIONS

Champs are now Lifetime Members

A new perk for those who win the toughest singing contest in the world—past, present, and future champions

The Barbershop Harmony Society will honor the sacrifice and hard work of its quartet champions, including past champions, with a newly created BHS Gold Medalist Lifetime Membership Benefit.

In keeping with a longstanding tradition of “Once a champ, always a champ,” Society dues will now be waived perpetually for all four quartet members who won the BHS International Quartet Championship together.

“The Barbershop Harmony Society is proud of the achievements of its champions,” said BHS President John Santora. “They continue to be role models as artists, as leaders, and as inspiration to millions of fans across the decades and around the world. The Society is glad to be able to show some of its gratitude for their service through this benefit.”

“Oh my goodness! Thank you to the BHS Board of Directors for this tremendous honor,” said DJ Hiner, bari of 1991 champion **The Ritz**. “Becoming a quartet champ was one of the crowning achievements of my life. Being able to represent the BHS throughout the years is an indescribable honor.”

REMEMBERING HONORARY LIFE MEMBER GORDON LIGHTFOOT

Musicians across the world mourned the passing of Gordon Lightfoot, the legendary Canadian folk singer, songwriter—and Barbershopper—who passed away May 1. Bob Dylan said of his fellow musician and musical mentor that Lightfoot died “having never made a bad song.”

As a youth growing up in Orillia, Ontario, Gordon counted among his musical influences BHS Hall of Famer George Shields, who remained a mentor and friend throughout his life. Gordon sang in several quartets in his teens, including the **Collegiate Four** and **The Teentimers**.

His distinctive voice and heartfelt lyrical craftsmanship brought him artistic acclaim and widespread popularity, with numerous chart hits through the 1970s, including “If You Could Read My Mind,” “Sundown” and “The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald.”

In 2006, in recognition of a long career that “celebrates the human voice as a means of artistic expression and sharing stories about the human experience,” Gordon Lightfoot was named an Honorary Life Member of the Barbershop Harmony Society.



MAYBE YOUR NEXT QUARTET GIG? PERFORMING A “PROMPOSAL”

Capital Classics quartet from the D.C. area recently did a gig that might have some of the older generation (such as Millennials) scratching their heads: a “promposal.” In a day when it’s uncommon to hear of a marriage proposal that *doesn’t* include a videographer hiding in the bushes, the camera-friendly style of popping the question has trickled down to lesser events.

“Gone are the days when all you needed was a simple question to ask someone to go to the big dance,” quipped tenor Marc Wolfson.

Adam found the quartet via the **Singing Capital Chorus** online gig request form, then planned with them how to ask Casey to their high school prom. The quartet modified the lyrics of the “Honey” Polecat to include the names of both the asker and the askee.

If you couldn’t tell from the photos, she said yes!

Capital Classics is Marc Wolfson (T), Allen Snyder (L), Robert Hirsh (Br), and Timothy Day (Bs).

● WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN?

Red Caps heir accepts dad's honor

A moving epilogue has been added to the story of the **Grand Central Red Caps**, a quartet of Black men who in 1941 were denied entry to the national contest of the then white-only SPEBSQSA.

Lauren Ward Parsons, daughter of Red Caps member Robert Ward, received a replica plaque that recognized his 2017 posthumous admission to the Society as a Life Member.

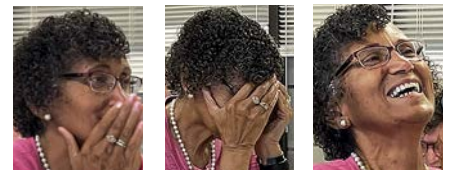
Lauren and her husband, Dr. Ken Parsons, received a tour from CEO Marty Monson and past President Skipp Kropp, met the staff, and enjoyed a historical overview by Society historian emeritus David Wright, who placed the Red Caps' experience in the context of barbershop's evolution as a musical form created by African Americans in the 19th century. Finally, a staff quartet sang "Mandy Lee," which Lauren's father had sung with his quartet.

Dr. Clifton Boyd, a music theorist and



musicologist at New York University, brought insights from his dissertation and forthcoming book discussing how the anti-blackness prevalent in the United States during the Jim Crow era shaped how American barbershop quartet singing was theorized and institutionalized. It was Dr. Boyd's research into the Red Caps lives and lineage that located Mrs. Parsons.

Mrs. Parsons spoke of her own lifelong love and involvement in music, from singing and harmonizing by ear



Lauren Parsons hadn't yet been found when the Society honored her father's quartet at the 2017 International Convention; but seeing videos from the presentation was powerfully cathartic for her.

with her parents, extended family and friends. "In the house, if you heard someone singing, you'd just join in, and you'd find a part," she chuckled.

The Parsonses were pleased to learn about the recipients of the Grand Central Red Caps scholarship to Harmony University (Dr. Boyd among them) and the \$50,000 endowment that funds it.

See videos of the Red Caps, read Matthew Beals authoritative account of the 1941 contest, and learn more about the scholarship at barbershop.org/redcaps.

● MUSICAL OUTREACH

HOME ROOM TEACHING QUARTET HAS A PROGRAM FOR CREATING LOCAL BARBERSHOP BUZZ

Home Room quartet has developed a barbershop education program that's creating buzz among students, educators, and school districts that are requesting visits. The quartet hopes to share their curriculum and marketing approach with Barbershoppers who are interested in doing the same in their communities.

Quartet member and JAD VP of Outreach Jake Bavarsky has been thrilled by the reception. "You've inspired students to see the world differently," he said, "and you may have just shown them the wonders of barbershop harmony."

With the support of the **Singing Buckeyes**, Jake and Nick Denino crafted a comprehensive introduction to the essence of barbershop, which includes arranging, the African-American origins, tag singing,



competitions, "Everyone in Harmony," and avenues to join barbershop singing communities. They recruited Brandon Zlotnik and Jamison Calland and started visiting schools in May 2023. Students have started tagging on their own, and some showed up at a local chapter meeting!

A strategic buzz-building approach includes

a custom YouTube playlist, grants from the chapter to provide BHS music assets to educators, a comprehensive social media presence, and targeted email marketing campaigns to area music leaders. At least 10 more school visits are coming in the fall. For more info about program resources, contact Jake Bavarsky at jbavarsky@gmail.com.

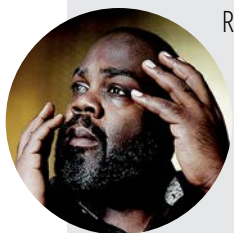


NOTEWORTHY

The latest in the world of barbershop



Long-time Barbershopper Jordan Litz, lead of FWD 2006 Champ and two-time International Competitor **Late Show**, just started a big lead role Broadway as Fiyero in *Wicked*. Jordan took over the role on May 16 after playing Fiyero in the national tour. His previous credits also include *Legally Blonde* and the *Radio City Christmas Spectacular*. Jordan got his start in barbershop singing with the **Stockton Portsmen Chorus**, singing with his dad in quartets like **Generation Blend** and **KaBlam!**



Reginald Mobley has had a great singing career since winning the 1999 College contest as tenor of **Station 59**. A renowned vocalist, London-based Reginald sang with the **Monteverdi Choir** in an official concert on the evening of the coronation of King Charles III on May 6. Reginald is a Grammy-nominated countertenor who sings from the baroque, classical, and modern repertoire. Find him on Spotify or other music streamers.

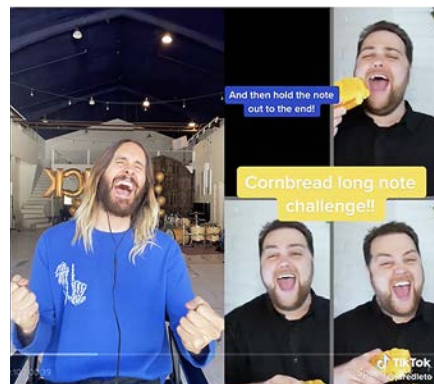
● 30 SECONDS TO COLLAPSE

“Cornbread” goes viral

Roman King's catchy tag has groups trying to one-up each other online, while the 30 Seconds to Mars lead singer realizes Tim Waurick might be an alien

There's no way four-year member Roman King could have predicted the aftermath when he posted a YouTube video of himself directing the **Saltaires** in singing his “Cornbread” tag on March 9. The 21-year-old Illinois native, now living in Utah, soon saw Barbershoppers and, not much later, other vocal groups around the world one-upping each other online with their interpretations of his exhilarating if not lyrically-complex tag. (Lyrics: “Cornbread!” Rinse. Repeat.)

And then Roman got online one day and was floored to see Oscar-winning actor/Platinum-selling rock singer Jared Leto trying to keep up with the lead post on Tim Waurick's lung-defying, Tim Waurick-length version. Leto's 900K TikTok followers watched the rangy lead singer of **30 Seconds to Mars** tap out a little more than halfway through. (Still way better than most of the



people who tried to match Tim's 35 Seconds to Mars lead post.)

Millions saw Tim's and other versions of Roman's tag on various platforms, with untold hundreds, if not thousands, recording themselves trying Tim's challenge, usually collapsing in wheezing failure within 10 seconds. If you haven't heard Roman's tag yet, don't worry—it's definitely coming soon to a hotel lobby near you! ■



What's Happening



Harmony University ▲ July 23-30, 2023 New Orleans

Back at Loyola for the second year!
barbershop.org/hu



2024 International Cleveland – June 30-July 7



▲ 2024 Midwinter New York City January 9-14

2024 International Cleveland
June 30-July 7

2025 International Denver
June 29-July 6

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HFI Mission, AIC Outreach, & Power of Harmony**

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SPOTLIGHT

Keith Harris, Director of Westchester Chordsmen and Voices of Gotham

keith@keithharris.net

● IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE

Steve Delehanty's great barbershop life

A Barbershopper since 1964, Steve has done a lot of everything as a performer, pianist, arranger, judge, and famously (yet almost anonymously) performing for millions over decades of television appearances.

Are contests important to our hobby?

Yes, choruses and quartets, regardless of level, can benefit from going to contest. It provides a goal, a chance to perform and get feedback on how to improve. Contest rules also preserve the barbershop style. Conventions are a chance to meet and sing with others just for fun and to learn what other chapters are doing. Contest should not be the sole focus of conventions.

Was it difficult as a judge adjusting to all varieties of voices?

I was nervous at first but then realized that I just needed to focus on the quality of the music. I saw my scores were in line and became more comfortable ... now that I am retiring.



Where is barbershop headed?

The music is getting more complicated and out of reach for the average singer. Top-level competitors have reached amazing levels, but the Society will not survive if it becomes a spectator sport. It will survive if there is appropriate music for the average singer. We must continue publishing music for a wide range of skill sets and an expanding variety of songs.

As you retire from judging, any comments on the Music Category?

The new young judges are really talented, so the category is in good hands. I just wish that some of the new arrangements were at a level that Joe Barbershopper can sing.

Do you wish the Note-Wits had competed seriously?

Steve has been a vocal arranger for two off-Broadway musicals; for many years, he's been pianist of the Bourbon Street Jazz Band at International and Midwinter. This spring, in Steve's final judging panel.



No, we had more fun doing shows. In 1977 we did enter a contest at Loews Regency Hotel in Manhattan, based on entertainment value. We won first prize, a trip to Monte Carlo.

What were highlights for the NoteWits in over 500 shows?

In 1979, the **Vocal Majority** featured us on their show. I think they reconsidered having outside quartets after we sang there. In 1976, we sang with the **Suntones**. We sang with almost every champ who won from 1967 to 1993.

What are some highlights in your 60 years with the Westchester Chordsmen?

Coming out of nowhere to finish second at District in 1977, and we got to mic test at International. Fred Steinkamp and director Dave Schuman chose to compete with two of my original songs. We've performed in England, Italy, China, Russia, Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, and the White House.

When did you start playing the piano?

When I was 5, my dad put me on his lap and taught me chords and the American Songbook. I started lessons at age 8, but I could play anything by ear, which was a problem because I would do that rather than practice my lessons. I also composed short pieces for piano. Even now, I compose for piano and other instruments.

My piano gig at the Clarksville Inn started when a group from work went there for dinner. The piano player was not so great and couldn't play a request for "Happy Birthday." So, I played it and the owner offered me a job. That lasted 32 years. One night, a customer said, "I am writing a musical." I asked him to play one of his songs. Then I played it back for him, which blew him away.

How did you get into barbershop arranging and composing?

I tried some barbershop arranging in college. After joining Westchester, Fred Steinkamp encouraged me to take advanced arranging at Harmony College, where I had one-on-one sessions with Lou Perry and Val Hicks. I still have my first HC arrangement with Val Hicks' handwritten comments on it.

How did the TV appearances start?

Our chapter got a call from *Late Night with David Letterman* looking for a quartet. Tom LaMotte called me to assemble a quartet of quick studies to sing the Top 10 list. The list was faxed to me, and on the subway ride in I figured out a song for each line. We met outside the theater to woodshed the songs and had it ready by the time we entered the theater. Paul Shaffer said, "Let's get the writers in and see if we can put this together." We said "We've already done it." He said "Let me hear it." He was astounded!

What other TV experiences stand out?

The View. It was their Oscar Winner Kiss Your Butt Contest. They sent us 16 lines of lyrics, which I put to music. We arrived at ABC and were sent to the basement to rehearse. When the call came for us to sing, we found that the elevator was out of service. We had to hustle up four flights of stairs to the theater. We breathlessly started down the aisle singing with no cue cards and sang the first eight lines perfectly. Then we flubbed the next few lines, but managed to sing the punchline.

For the *Mrs. Fletcher* mini-series on HBO, we did a scene in a home for senior citizens, but we were not told the storyline or in which episode we would appear. I alerted family and friends to watch. The opening scene of the first episode was an R-rated sex scene. The quartet appeared in episode 5.

What were some moving barbershop experiences?

Joe Liles called me from his hospital bed to say goodbye only a month after telling me that "Heavenly Choir" was my best composition. Ironically, I had written it for memorial services.

A gentleman came up to me after a contest to thank me. He said my song "Being With You" held special meaning for him and his wife of 47 years, and it helped him through his grief when she passed away.

Do you have favorite performances of your arrangements?

"All the Things You Are" by **Alexandria** (3rd place in 2013) and the songs Westchester sang in 1977 to finish second at District.

Do you have any advice for the next generation?

SING and have fun. Don't take it too seriously, and invite your friends. ■

About Steve Delehanty

- Married to Connie Delehanty 42 years.
- Sings with the **Westchester County Chordsmen** (60 years), former director of the **Central Connecticut Yankees** (5 years).
- Sang with the **Note-Wits** for 25 years and did over 500 shows.
- Certified judge for 36 years, Arrangement then Music.
- Judged over 100 division & district level contests and 7 internationals.
- Taught at Harmony University 17 times, Harmony College East 26 times and two dozen schools in other districts.
- Served on the BHS Music Publishing Committee for 10 years.
- Served on search committees for SPEBSQSA president and BHS Hall of Fame.
- Composes and arranges barber-shop songs, also composes music for instruments.
- Vocal music arranger for two off-Broadway musicals.
- Has played in the BHS Bourbon Street Jazz band since its inception, played at a piano bar for 32 years.
- Appeared on *The David Letterman Show* six times, also appeared on *The View*, TV Land, HBO and most recently *The Colbert Show*.
- Retired from Human Resources at a medical center.

A long-time New York City resident, Steve's arranging and performing prowess have helped him land many national TV gigs. The Note-Wits didn't take contests seriously, but were a very popular show quartet.



Emerging ev



ven stronger

To go from 7th place pre-Covid in 2019 to 1st place in the first post-Covid International Contest was the silver lining to their time apart during the pandemic. The transformation was a byproduct of practices and principles the Nashville Chapter was forced to improve upon during the Zoom-only era. Strong member buy-in was vital.

"It's great to be a Barbershopper." I see this written and hear it said multiple times a week, often after a rousing rendition of "Keep the Whole World Singing." There are hardly truer words, and I think they have a special meaning for those of us who were faced with the challenge of keeping our chapters and choruses engaged during the pandemic.

We probably all remember that feeling of having to stop rehearsals just a few months into 2020. "Don't worry! It will probably only be for a couple of weeks!" That's what we were telling ourselves in March of 2020, and what I, as the newly-elected president of our chapter, was telling our members. Oh sweet, naïve, three-years-younger me, you just had no idea, did you?

I think if you talked to any members of the **Music City Chorus (Nashville, TN Chapter)** who were active during the last few years, they would tell you that something special has been happening, particularly for those who were part of our virtual rehearsals over the course of the pandemic and the time since returning to "regular" meetings.

But this is not about a journey from seventh place to first place. I mean, it

is. That is certainly part of the Music City Chorus story now, but I'm not simply talking about what we did to become stronger competitors over the last several years. I'm talking about the principles and practices we have chosen to embrace, in large part, from lessons we learned from the pandemic. These lessons have made the Nashville Chapter a stronger community and an excellent environment for a strong chorus.

I believe most of these principles are accessible to any chapter, chorus, or ensemble whether those goals are competitive, social, or otherwise. To claim that we invented any of this would be silly. These are just some things that Music City Chorus has found to work, and you might too.

First is that you have to know who you as a community want to be, and for your members to want to walk that path. Whatever that path is, you need to get information from them. Second, find out not only what they want out of your organization, but the skills they can put into it as well, and make use of their knowledge and expertise. Finally, think outside the box and don't be afraid to lean on the knowledge of others, whether they're Barbershoppers or not. Let's dig in!

LEADER/MEMBER ALIGNMENT

None of what Music City accomplishes—probably nothing any chapter accomplishes—is possible without the buy-in and commitment of our members. I have always been proud of this aspect of our chapter, and it certainly saved us during the pandemic.

The Music City Chorus credo of "Passion, Excellence, Brotherhood," is a guiding star for everything that we do. One of the greatest goals of our board of directors is to ensure that our members are excited to be a part of our community and fulfilled by the activities that we program. Philosophically, this means ensuring that we regularly align our leadership decisions with the opinions and input of the members—not just active ones either. Surveys are what will keep leaders and members on the same page.

Surveys are your friend, and there are a lot of really easy-to-use form tools out there. (We mainly use



Rich Smith is President of the Nashville Chapter's Music City Chorus and lead of B-List quartet.
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“WE SAW THIS AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO REALLY FOCUS ON MAKING OUR CHORUS SMARTER. THAT GEARSHIFT DROVE EVERYTHING WE DID FROM THAT POINT ON.” WHEN WE CAME BACK TOGETHER IN-PERSON, WE WERE ABLE TO KEEP APPLYING WHAT WE HAD LEARNED.

Google Forms.) At the beginning of the pandemic, we were faced with the same decision as everyone: with potential months (maybe years!) of pandemic forecasted, should we take a break or find a way to keep going? Survey time! Well, they wanted to keep going, and they wanted to use some of the time learning from home about aspects of the barbershop world outside of learning notes and rhythms. This learning paid big dividends in the quality of our singing and performance.

“We saw this as an opportunity to really focus on making our chorus smarter. That gearshift drove everything we did from that point on,” said Patrick McAlexander (former VP of Music & Performance of the Nashville, TN Chapter), and he’s exactly right. When we came back together in-person, we were able to keep applying what we had learned back into the ensemble and were stronger for it. There is just no way we could have done any of what we accomplished without engaging with our members to determine what they needed during that time.

LEARNING ON EXPERTISE INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE CHAPTER

I’m not just talking here about being able to access the barbershop prowess of judges, coaches, and arrangers. If your chorus has aspirations of contest success, that’s all certainly part of it. More broadly I’m talking about making use of what each member brings to the table in non-barbershop ways.

Pandemic forced technical learning. Our rehearsals are more accessible than ever before for our members,

almost entirely because we all had to learn to be sound designers and videographers a little bit during COVID-19. Because of what we learned, we now livestream all of our chapter meetings.

During lockdown, some of our members needed to regularly speak on Zoom, and that was frequently recorded to be played back for members that couldn’t watch live. So those members learned how to use microphones and audio interfaces and webcams pretty efficiently. Once we returned to in-person rehearsals, we still had those skills, and a need to allow more distant members to tune-in. All of those skills directly transferred.

It took a modest investment in some equipment (we were able to use a lot that some members already had, but a decent setup can be had for

only a few hundred dollars) and now we can support remote members as part of our regular meetings.

Coaching. Utilizing community expertise applies to classic barbershop coaching roles as well. Having experienced directors, judges, coaches, singers, and instructors spend time with a chorus is nothing new, and our chapter is particularly fortunate that some of the barbershop world’s best of these are members of our chapter. Even with that being the case, we’ve also embraced the value of outside voices.

Because we do love to compete, a lot of our outside coaching often falls along those lines, but during the pandemic we brought in people from all over to talk on a wide variety of topics. On any given week, a guest with judging experience would walk through classic barbershop contest performances and talk through their thought process from a judging category. Another week, a guest speaker would talk about vocal technique, or home rehearsal technique or tell us about their experience as a member or leader of another chapter or teach us some music history or theory. For a good stretch of time, at least half of



Brotherhood is a core value, and community impact has become a core ambition for Music City Chorus. Clockwise from top left: the weekly afterglow; National Anthem at a Nashville Sounds game; Nashville Music Medics; lead sectional.



Rising from the ashes: how a toothless uptune became the Song of the Contest

We'd love to clear the air with a story of a deeply flawed, broken contest uptune that was rescued at the 11th hour by a fearless hero.

At our May 2022 Spring Chorus Retreat, MCC was semi-ready with a memorized uptune that had gaping holes in the storyline and moderately-funny-at-best gags that were in desperate need for some heart and cohesion. "Don't worry, David McEachern'll fix it," we convinced ourselves.

And then Dave's bag with his Canadian passport was stolen three days before the retreat. He couldn't cross the border in time. Reeling from the news, in a moment of clarity one name popped up.

Three days later, an extremely jetlagged Rick LaRosa flew in from Oregon to join Jordan Travis from Toronto. Jordan worked his usual magic with the ballad, then it was time for the uptune. We nervously launched into the routine and performed our hearts out as best as we could, hit the tag, then basked in the relatively polite yet clearly concerned applause. We later learned that Jordan had let out a worried sigh and told Rick, "... I ... don't know how to fix this." Rick stoically nodded in agreement, "Yeah, this just isn't working."

The uptune was in even worse shape than we had realized. An emergency meeting was in order.

Convening at midnight, the Music Team, Rick, and Jordan spent the next couple of hours spinning our wheels. Then sometime around 2 a.m., Rick (who had been relatively quiet the entire time) spoke up. "Guys, I got it. I got it. Go to bed, I'll have something in the morning."

Blank stares. Concerned looks. But the next morning at 8 a.m., Rick walks up to our



While director Dusty Schleier is possibly Charlotte's 2022 Chorus MVP, a win was possible only after last-minute coach Rick LaRosa pulled Music City's uptune out of the proverbial fire.

table, clearly exhausted, and plops his open laptop in front of us before shuffling his way over to grab a tray. We leaned in to see what Rick had done. There were two very palpable, distinct reactions:

Reaction 1: "What have you done, Rick? DUDE. YOU CAN'T DO THIS!" The intro was gone. Two full pages of music were scrapped and trashed, two entirely NEW pages (sans any actual music notes to sing, just lyrics) were added with space for new gags and bits. The intro ended up being dropped somewhere in the middle of the song (??), a new tag was proposed. Rick had thrown a grenade right in the middle of our uptune and he'd blown the entire thing into something almost unrecognizable.

Reaction 2: "Oh. Ohhh. Wow! Okay. Dang! This makes sense now."

Suddenly, our uptune had ... heart. It now had a cohesive story and a narrative that connected it thematically to our ballad and

made sense in the larger context of our set. Jokes, gags, and bits flowed with the overall story with good pacing and time for the audience to understand what was happening.

There were still some gaps to fill, such as the ever-so-important "WE'RE BAAAAACK" intro, which our world-class in-house arranger Rick Spencer composed in his head and scribbled out by hand in a chair next to the risers. We spent Saturday learning brand new music and new gags, all while convincing all our shell-shocked riser guys that "this is just how it is, sometimes, we adapt, we pivot. Remember the **Northern Lights** Vegetable Medley? This has happened before. We can do this!"

The guys bought in. They trusted us, and they trusted the process. And by the end of the evening we had an entirely new uptune that started to really make sense and come together. And without the groundwork laid out by Rick LaRosa on that terrifying Friday night (Saturday morning?) from 2-4 a.m., none of it would have been possible, and we cannot thank him enough for the sheer fearlessness and creativity that allowed us to build on that and make something really special for the chorus and the audience.

—Eddie Holt, eholt@barbershop.org
MCC Music Team member

what the Music City Chorus did was simply listen and learn from other Barbershoppers.

HUMILITY IS KEY TO PROGRESS

Approach whatever you are doing with humility. No chapter or chorus is

the perfect version of itself. As an example, our chapter is anxiously ready to be a bigger presence in our community outreach. We've started plans to try to make progress in this area that have just not panned out in the past, and it's something we're going

to continue to strive toward. We are therefore looking for experts who can aid us on that aspect of our growth as an organization. We're not there yet but we will be, probably with the help of some other amazing members of this incredible Society. ■

Even if you have no intention of ever creating your own barbershop arrangement, the volumes will expand your understanding of the barbershop artform, taught clearly yet thoroughly from the top arrangers and teachers of the barbershop world.

Building on the knowledge of great arrangers featured in the 1980 volume, the eventual four volumes, published by Hal Leonard, expand the knowledge base with the best of what has been learned and practiced during the last 43 years of harmony.



ARRANGING BARBERSHOP Vol. 2: The Arranging Journey

ARRANGING BARBERSHOP Vol. 1: Getting Started

A real-world review
from lifetime non-
arranger Lorin May,
Editor of
The Harmonizer
[harmonizer@
barbershop.org](mailto:harmonizer@barbershop.org)

TWO GAME CHANGERS

More than a great resource for arrangers at every level, the first official new manuals in 43 years are a must-read for anyone who wants to master the barbershop style

Helping arrangers and Barbershoppers better commission, arrange, and interpret barbershop songs

Over the past 43 years, barbershop arrangers have looked to the *Barbershop Arranging Manual* for instruction and insights, shaping generations of arrangers and their contributions to the style.

In revamping the manual for the 21st Century, the goal was to both preserve the core aspects of the style and reflect how the style has evolved in the decades that featured music of **The Gas House Gang, Michigan Jake, OC Times, Musical Island Boys, Ringmasters, Forefront**, and many others. Today's version includes:

- video and audio clips of the examples referenced throughout the manual.
- a detailed look into the arranging process, and tools (e.g. online blueprints) for planning a successful arrangement.
- case study examples geared toward different experience and skill levels.

- videos of arrangers discussing choices made based on the performer and the song.
- examples of the same song arranged by different arrangers and exploration of their choices.
- an Arrangers Roundtable featuring input from over 30 arrangers, who've all answered the same 20 questions.

With input from more than 40 arrangers, more than 1,500 pages of content, pieces of more than 200 different arrangements as examples, and more than 50 hours of video, we believe this new series will have something for everyone who is interested in arranging music in the barbershop style!



– Steve Tramack, editor, stramack@gmail.com



Great songs don't come out of nowhere. Main Street's 2015 performance of Clay Hine's "Good Old Songs Medley" went through several iterations, and Clay discusses at length the key musical and performance principles that helped the germ of an idea blossom into an all-time great performance.

I strongly recommend that every Barbershopper get a copy of these volumes, even if you are certain you will never arrange a song. Especially if you don't think you'll ever arrange a song. It was written for arrangers, but it is accessible and applicable to any singer.

Seriously, these volumes were some of the best spent time of my musical life. You'll understand concepts you never knew existed—not just the lingo, but the application. And the YouTube links alone are worth the price of admission.

As much as everyone will benefit from these volumes, they were indeed created as a resource for current or aspiring arrangers. And on that front, I predict that these *Arranging Barbershop* volumes are going to have the same effect on barbershop lovers that cooking shows have on food lovers. After seeing what goes into making these dishes, you're gonna want to make some of

that Frim-Fram Sauce in your own kitchen.

I'm never going to look at a barbershop song the same way again. However, as much as I loved the volumes in general, full disclosure: part of me had problems with some of it. (See "A lazy, cynical person's guide to everything wrong with *Arranging Barbershop Volumes 1 & 2*" on page 24.)

Not just words, but notes and actual sights and sounds

These books, written by BHS members and under the direction of editor Steve Tramack, were created in partnership with music publishing giant Hal Leonard. As great as the previous version is from 1980, a lot of great music has been created since then. Additionally, these volumes are a serious upgrade in breadth, readability,

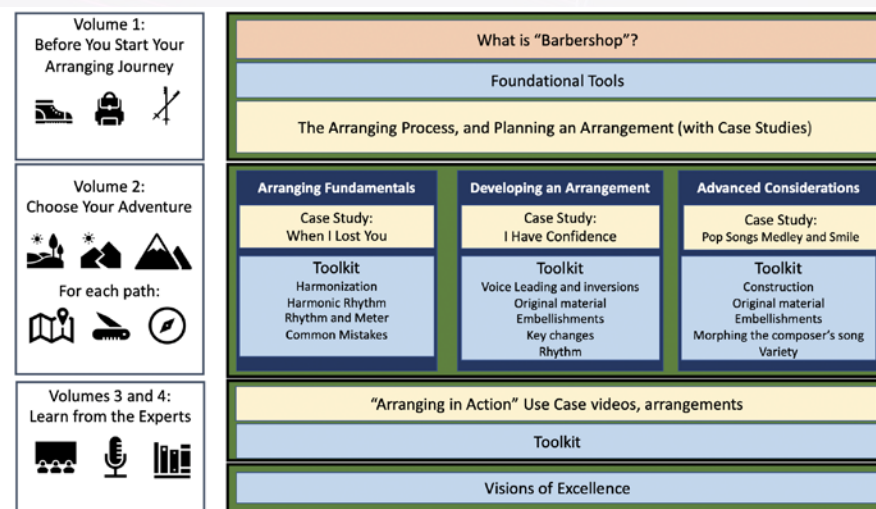
accessibility, and applicability.

Whatever your current level of ability, you'll feel like you're sitting down with a top-level coach learning all the important principles—written in plain English.

The best part of these volumes may be that they engage your eyes and your ears while engaging your brain. Theory never stays theory for long. For example, when Aaron Dale opens up his vast rhythmic tool kit and outlines what you should and should not do when adapting other people's songs, he includes extensive sections of sheet music and links to the relevant YouTube clips that bring the concepts to life. Same with David Wright's discussion of how to develop great song intros. Same with *everyone*.

Steve Tramack takes us through the entire process of creating a new ar-

"What is the 'big idea' for this song? This will highlight the climax, and perhaps provide some insight into key musical events leading up to the climactic moment."



AIC OUTREACH



With a focus on underserved communities and youth music education outreach, the AIC Outreach Program provides grants to BHS Districts and Chapters, enabling them to hire the **best barbershop quartets in the world**, not only to perform in the local communities, but to provide impactful Barbershop Outreach in surrounding area schools.



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BHS Mission, Next Generation Barbershop, Harmony University, HFI Mission, AIC Outreach, & Power of Harmony



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Contributors for Volumes 1 & 2

Steve Armstrong
Dylan Bell
Adam Bock
Aaron Dale
Mo Field
Tom Gentry
Rafi Hasib
Clay Hine
Kevin Keller
Adam Scott
Steve Scott
Deke Sharon
Steve Tramack
Andrew Wittenberg
David Wright

In 1980, when the last Arrangers Manual was published, it was unusual to hear barbershop songs with a strong backbeat or a prominent rhythmic texture. In the new manuals, rhythm master Aaron Dale goes deep into how to incorporate rhythm while respecting the original song.

rangement, applying all the principles in the book to the analysis and choices used in creating "It Had to Be You."

Clay Hine takes us through the process of creating the music and lyrics for Main Street's 2015 performance of "Pop Songs Medley," including early drafts and the process of refining it into the most viewed BHS contest performance of all time.

Rather than tell, let me show you. Here are some segments I highlighted while going through Volumes 1 and 2. Many have been edited for length.

Which songs can be 'shopped?

1. Barbershop, as a style, is often applied to existing songs with a natural, implied chord progression. To remain true to the original song, one should take care to embellish the existing chords, substituting when necessary. Certain songs and chord progressions (especially those with fifths movement) lend themselves better to the barbershop style.
2. Music theory follows practice, not the other way around. With such a detailed-oriented musical style, it is easy to fall into the trap of applying the theory to analyze every chord. Instead, it benefits to gain an understanding of the theory, and use it to influence the musical moments between chords.
3. At its core, barbershop

"If you have not mapped out the harmonic pillars associated with the harmonic rhythm of the song, you may find yourself using chords that do not fit."

harmonizing is based on ear singing, preferring intuitive chords that easily tune. Shoe-horning complex chord progressions that obscure the underlying harmony leads to arranging and performing challenges. However, the balanced and symmetric form of the music offers the arranger many opportunities to start simple and develop the song's theme and ideas, providing an emotionally satisfying and entertaining experience.

Consider the performer

It always helps to have a group in mind when creating an arrangement. This will help you create an arrangement which is singable by humans.

What's the intended use? Is this expected to be a contest song? Is this arrangement to be a featured show closer? Is this going to be used for a single event or single season as a



MATT BOSTICK



For all the guidance to benefit novice arrangers, there's plenty of meat for more advanced arrangers as well.

filler song, and thus not requiring much rehearsal time? Is there a reference performance(s) of the song that you'd like to capture?

What is the performer's vision for the song, and how does that impact your arrangement choices?

- The primary, overarching musical theme: lyrics, melody, rhythm, harmony. None of these operate in a vacuum, and the themes can change at various places in the arrangement.
- The "big idea" for this song. This will highlight the climax, and perhaps provide some insight into key musical events leading up to the climactic moment.
- The primary key, or keys as the arrangement progresses.
- Form and overall construction.

Harmonic pillars

These are the chords that are the main harmony for the measure (sometimes for half of the bar) and if you were to sing the song while accompanying yourself on the guitar, these would be the chords you would

play ... Most of the time, it feels right to change the chord each time you start a new measure.

Harmonic rhythm

The term harmonic rhythm is used to describe the frequency of harmonic changes. It is the rate of chord change in relation to time. A passage in common time with a stream of sixteenth notes and chord changes every measure has a slow harmonic rhythm and a fast surface or "musical" rhythm (16 notes per chord change), while a piece with a trickle of half notes and chord changes twice a measure has a fast harmonic rhythm and a slow surface rhythm (one note per chord change).

... If you have not mapped out the harmonic pillars associated with the harmonic rhythm of the song, you may find yourself using chords that do not fit, or stuck in a harmonic sequence that does not fit the original intent of the song.

Characteristics of a melody that will favor barbershop

- **Trust your ear.** Can you hear the barbershop progressions and harmony right away? If your ear hears it, trust your ear!
- **A simple melody.** The simpler the melody, the better the barbershop will be. This doesn't mean that the arrangement must be simple, but if the melody is simple, the application of chords will go easier.
- **Easy to sing.** Quite like the previous point about simplicity of the melody. It's not that a song can't

"Melodies that favor barbershop: can you hear the barbershop progressions and harmony right away? If your ear hears it, trust your ear!"

Featured arrangers

Steve Armstrong
Anthony Bartholemew
Brian Beck
Joni Bescos
Adam Bock
Rob Campbell
Jim Clancy
Floyd Connert
Renee Craig
Aaron Dale
Steve Delehanty
Dennis Driscoll
Phil Embury
John Fortino
Tom Gentry
Jay Giallombardo
Brent Graham
Don Gray
S.K. Grundy
Buzz Haeger
Mark Hale
David Harrington
Theo Hicks
Val Hicks
Clay Hine
Rob Hopkins
Jeremy Johnson
Kevin Keller
Kohl Kitzmiller
Mel Knight
Joe Liles
Greg Lyne
Patrick McAlexander
Bill Mitchell
Earl Moon
Mo Rector
Dave Stevens
Steve Tramack
Vicki Uhr
Ed Waesche
Dan Wessler
David Wright
Bill Wyatt
David Zimmerman



Who will be singing your arrangement? David Harrington's amazing "Georgia On My Mind" was arranged specifically for a top 10 quartet—one among a handful that could ring such a rapidly ascending and descending melody with large leaps between chords.

be arranged; but if the melody is difficult to sing, it will be harder to sing and ring chords.

- **Small intervals.** Leads will execute conjunct melodies with small intervals (half steps and whole steps) extremely well. Disjunct melodies, with larger steps/leaps/

jumps, will be difficult to sing smoothly, and that can interrupt the ringability of the song.

- **Not too rangy.** Songs that barbershop well tend to have a range of notes between an octave and an octave and a third.
- **Melody not "angular."** Melodies that frequently and quickly make disjunct leaps present challenges. "Georgia on my Mind" and "Keep Your Sunny Side Up" have melodies that ascend and descend rapidly. Certainly, these can be arranged in the barbershop style, but are harder to execute.

A lazy, cynical person's guide to everything that's wrong with *Arranging Barbershop Volumes 1 & 2*

I was a lot happier when I believed that arrangers were a different species—that they just sat down at a piano, tugged their earlobes three times to activate the Mozart Module that had been installed in their skulls at birth, and then just let the magic flow. You know, the way Ed Waesche and Renee Craig did it.

Thanks for nothing, Steve Tramack and your crew of big-shot Finale wizards. You're leaving pretty much nothing to the imagination regarding barbershop arranging, and *you're ruining the magic*. David Copperfield doesn't tell us how he does his job, so why do you? These volumes are as clear as they are insightful, and that's awful. It's as if all y'all were intentionally trying to make arranging *understandable*. For heaven's sake, you make it seem *doable* by us mortals.

You and your crew know that you're playing with fire, don't you? For example, the closest yours truly has ever come to inventing an original chord progression would be all the never-before-heard chords I've created while trying to sightread the baritone part. And now you've got me believing that I'm not as far as I thought from putting something singable on paper. You're trying to

unleash *that* on innocent singers?

Have you no conscience?

Fortunately, I suspect the lazy part of me will win out in the end. However, I have to admit that reading these volumes had me thinking at the time, "Almost, thou persuadest me to be an arranger."

Almost. Because I still need to get Agrippa the music theory sections. Your incremental, low-jargon approach made it so I was about 15 pages into some of that before it dawned on me that I was learning music theory. So then I skimmed past the rest of those parts on principle. (A lazy principle is still a principle!) Yet, even without the theory, y'all had me envisioning my quartet in the not-too-distant future sight-reading something I arranged. And in this vision, the others don't even have that barely masked cringe look on their faces,

"The closest yours truly has ever come to inventing an original chord progression would be all the never-before-heard chords I've created while trying to sightread the baritone part. You're trying to unleash *that* on innocent singers?"

like when I try to post above an F-sharp.

You're basically claiming that anybody who can woodshed a barbershop voice part can learn to arrange a whole song. You seem to be implying that the biggest difference between today's growing crop of arrangers and people like me is that they jumped in and, you know, *started arranging*. Shame on all of you for making people like me think we could join your ranks. To paraphrase Groucho Marx, I'm not sure I want to belong to any group that would accept me as a member.

A lot of us find it much easier to hear a song and say, "Somebody oughta arrange that." And now you're just throwing our words back in our faces and saying we can do it ourselves? And you'll show us how? That sounds like work. Uncle Ben always said that with great power comes great responsibility. Who wants that burden?

Finally, my biggest gripe of all: you spent two whole volumes discussing how to arrange barbershop, then expect us to wait until Volume 4 for music notation software tips? MuseScore seems okay for now, but could we at least get some hints on how to become a Finale wizard? My quartet has no idea what's about to hit them.

—Lorin May's lazy, cynical side



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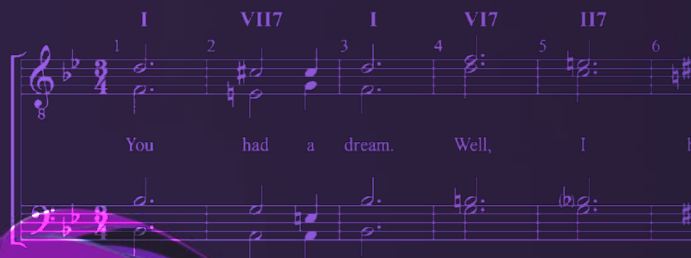
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barbershop.org/nextgen



Modern arrangers stand on the shoulders of giants, and masterpieces from arrangers like Phil Embury, S.K. Grundy, and Buzz Haeger are still some of the prime examples referenced.



"We have gained permission to use another composer's original work ... It is a process best approached with both creativity and respect."

Common mistakes of beginning arrangers

The "rule of cool." Some discerning ears have begun to expect a singular unique chord in daring arrangements. In short, if you like it, try it, but be aware of the rules before you break them.

Compelling tag. If you can find something that is compelling about the tag, simply arrange the rest of the chords so nothing competes with the hook. It's the rare tag that has more than one hook.

Rhythmic development

Rhythmic patterns and meters that sound more complex are more difficult to sing, and often more difficult to hear as a listener. As an arranger, the objective is to keep the basic barbershop sound through hallmarks that can be maintained no matter what rhythmic durations are used. Always trying to find a ringable consonant texture ... with homorhythmic balance being the guide-

line. Homophony should guide how much rhythmic complexity is used.

Similar to melody, rhythm patterns in a published piano/vocal version may differ from what is well-known on a popular recording. Make your decisions based on what feels most common, and if you're not sure, after research use your gut or go with what is published. It is your choice, and you will not please everyone.

If singing a song with a huge emotional climax, and rhythm has been one of the drivers to get that feeling, be careful to not be too complex and overstimulating with rhythm and texture all the way to the end.

When modifying and adding new rhythmic ideas to another composer's song, we should approach our choices differently than when composing our own original material. We have gained permission to use another composer's original work. We harmonize, embellish, and often modify it to be sung in the barber-shop style with four voices. It is a process best approached with both creativity and respect.

If you create and add your own rhythmic devices and embellishments to provide contrast in a well-known song, be aware that the audience might recognize "new" things you add that stick out and differ from the original ... and they'll internally judge whether it fits.

With songs under copyright, the composer already made desired choices for their music, so the rhyth-

mic changes you make should be done respectfully.

Popular music source material

Modern popular songs are typically written for prolific vocalists and are often created just to be dance music. These more difficult songs become tough to sing if you notate four parts for four singers on the same words at the same time.

Sometimes the four-part homorhythmic texture looks good on paper for pop songs, but doesn't sound as pleasing once vocalized.

Stylistic pop music can have many sections where a soloist utilizes melodic vocal skills that don't naturally transfer well to a four-part homorhythmic texture. In this case, you should consider a couple of things:

1. If you harmonize it with four parts, will it just sound funny compared to the original song? ...
2. If that is the case, could you modify or alter some of the rhythmic devices or patterns to allow four-part harmony to sound okay and still not destroy the feel of the original song for the audience?

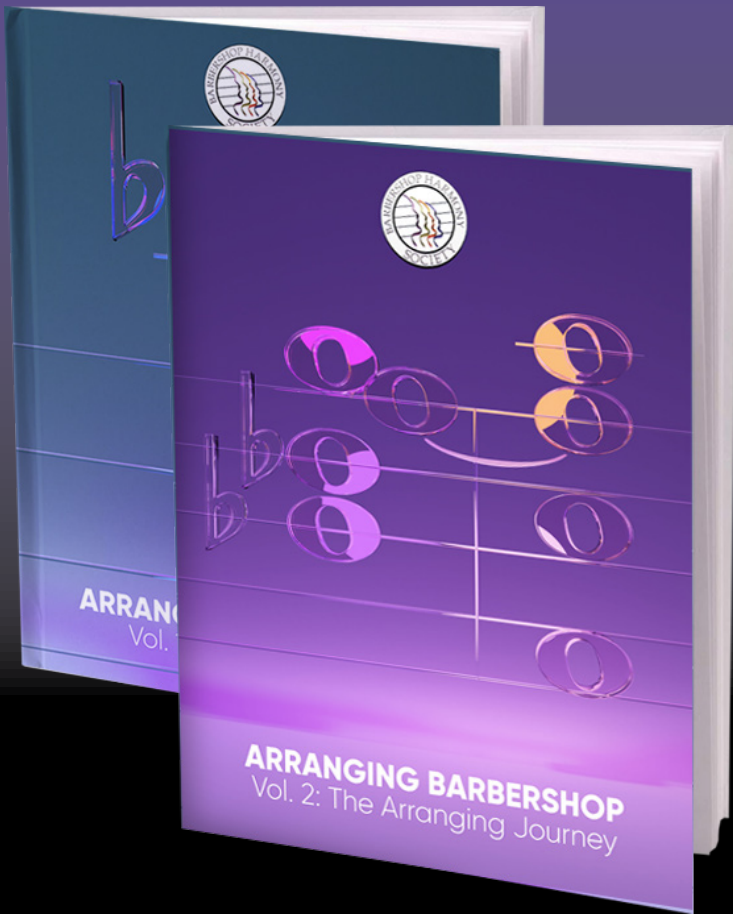
Serve the original song

It is usually best to lean toward servicing and honoring the original song and original performances. If you divert too much, you run the risk of appearing self-indulgent with your arranging choices, and possibly care less about the feeling of the original song. ■

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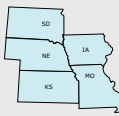








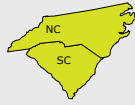


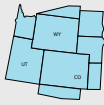





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✉ tgbari1@gmail.com

This one is less tag, more gag

Not one to suffer alone, I hereby inflict this gag (not tag) on you. You will easily note that there is only one iteration of the music, not the usual three. That is because you get to pick the key, depending on the composition of your “tag” group, including,


By the way, are you wondering why the words and melody to “Walkin’ My Baby Back Home” are not included on this page? The reason is that the song is still under copyright (1930), and the Society is not interested in paying a few thousand dollars to use it. Still, you really don’t need a lead who knows all of the words—singing some and faking others is just fine. The music is the trick here. May you have considerable fun with this musical mismatch! ■

This is Not a Tag

SATB voicing

Pick a key, any key!

Tenor
Lead



1 2 3 4

Doomm - doomm, doomm - doomm, doomm - doomm, doomm - doomm,

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