

# The Harmonizer

BRINGING BARBERSHOP HARMONY TO LIFE • MARCH/APRIL 2026

## MASTER YOUR MUSICAL CRAFT

BREAK OUT OF REHEARSAL RUTS  
JENNIFER COOKE

BECOME THE MOST-IMPROVED QUARTET  
JAY DOUGHERTY

SOCIAL VIBE CHECK:  
BUILD A MAGNETIC BRAND  
DOMINICK FINETTI

MUSICALITY: "EVERYTHING IN PLACE"  
GRANT GOULDING

INCREASE MEMBER ENGAGEMENT  
BEVERLY GREENE

VOCAL EXERCISES  
TO IMPLEMENT THIS WEEK  
KATHLEEN HANSEN

MINIMALIST GESTURES FOR DIRECTORS  
"ARE YOU GUIDING OR HINDERING?"  
KORY REID

THE BEGINNING OF THE  
REHEARSAL MATTERS THE MOST  
STEVE SCOTT



### NOTEWORTHY

CELEBRATING A PAST POW CHAPTER MEMBER  
REPRESENTING BARBERSHOP FOR MUSIC EDUCATORS

### INSIDE

MEET NEW BHS DIRECTOR  
OF EDUCATION BILL STAUFFER

Endless tags, glows, parties, and new memories await



The very best in barbershop square off in our contests, with a new "sing in" tournament for the quartets



# THE BIGGEST BARBERSHOP PARTY OF THE YEAR

**HOUSING  
ALMOST  
SOLD OUT!**  
Register  
now!

**ST. LOUIS, MO  
JUNE 28 - JULY 5, 2026**



Major events held at the iconic Dome at America's Center



The Dream Chorus will be directed by Theo Hicks



Don't miss the biggest barbershop party of the year!

Mon  
June 29

Tue  
June 30

Wed  
July 1

Thu  
July 2

Fri  
July 3

Sat  
July 4

Show up the day before and get settled in before all the main events start on Tuesday. Tags and parties all night!

Quartet "Sing-In" Tournament

NextGen Varsity Quartet Championship

Afterglow

Quartet Quarterfinals Session 1

Quartet Quarterfinals Session 2

Afterglow

Gold Medal Hour: Lemon Squeezy

Gold Medal Hour: Vocal Majority

Quartet Semifinals

Afterglow

Chorus Contest Session 1

Chorus Contest Session 2

Association of International Champions Show

After Party

Chorus Contest Session 3

Quartet Finals and Finale

Chordatorium



New "sing-in" contest for quartets scoring between 78 and wild card qualifiers.



One day for Quarterfinals



Gold Medal Hours



Housing and registration for all is now open!

[barbershop.org/stl](http://barbershop.org/stl)



# New Music

Charts and tracks added regularly



Buy online.  
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Learning Tracks - (SATB) Stock No. 214718DLT <b>Better When I'm Dancin'</b> arr. Adam Scott Digital Download	Learning Tracks - Stock No. 11204DT <b>Muskrat Ramble</b> arr. Rex Reeve and Barbershop Harmony Society Digital Download	Learning Tracks - (SSAA) Stock No. 214722DT <b>I'm Gonna Rise (When The Sun Comes Down)</b> arr. Adam Scott Digital Download
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[shop.barbershop.org](http://shop.barbershop.org)

# The Harmonizer

GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE/EDITORIAL  
[harmonizer@barbershop.org](mailto:harmonizer@barbershop.org)

EDITOR  
 Lorin May

OUR VISION  
 Everyone in Harmony

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

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

To promote appreciation of barbershop harmony

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

To establish and maintain foundations that support our vision

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

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

March/April 2026  
 Volume LXXXVI Number 2  
 Complete contact info: pages 30-31

The Harmonizer (ISSN 0017-7849) (USPS 577700) is published bimonthly by the Barbershop Harmony Society, 110 7th Ave N, Nashville TN 37203-3704. Periodicals Postage Paid at Nashville TN and at additional mailing offices.

Advertising rates available upon request at [harmonizer@barbershop.org](mailto:harmonizer@barbershop.org). Publisher assumes no responsibility for return of unsolicited manuscripts or artwork.

Postmaster: Send address changes to editorial offices of The Harmonizer, 110 7th Ave N, Nashville TN 37203-3704 at least 30 days before the next publication date. (Publications Agreement No. 40886012. Return Undeliverable Canadian Addresses to: Station A, PO Box 54, Windsor ON N9A 6J5. Email: [qpreturns@wdsmail.com](mailto:qpreturns@wdsmail.com))

A portion of each member's dues is allocated to cover the magazine's subscription price. Subscription price to non-members is \$30 yearly; foreign subscriptions are \$35 yearly (U.S. funds only).

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# The importance of life-long musical learning



Many of the most accomplished musicians in the Barbershop Harmony Society have learned most of what they know from fellow Barbershoppers in BHS learning environments. Take advantage of the great resources available within the Society!

I'm a life-long learner. I love to learn. And as the older I get, the more I realize how little I know!

In my professional career, I have been teaching either at work or in school since 1988. It's something that I love doing. But all too often, people are forced into work training and they don't want to be there. Whatever the topic is, they don't see how it connects into solving the problems that they have. They aren't receptive to learning even if what is being taught could help them one day.

Barbershoppers, however, are culturally different. Never have I met more people thirsting for knowledge. This knowledge can come from chorus rehearsals, coaching sessions, district schools, or Harmony University, or other avenues. If you became a Barbershopper any time since the 1970s,

you joined a Society with a culture that values and embraces constant learning. Even if you weren't a life-long learner before, you quickly come to value education because you see the value in your weekly experience.

I went to my first Harmony College in 1980. It was transformative. Not only did I learn from barbershop legends like Dave Stevens, Joe Liles, Earl Moon, Mac Huff, and Jim Richards to be a better Barbershopper/musician, but I met Barbershoppers from all over the world that became life-long friends.

Although the faculty names have changed throughout the years, what hasn't changed is that talented people are volunteering their time to teach barbershop. If anything, even more talented people are being given the responsibility to teach at District and International schools. When I get a chance to sit in on classes, I am floored at the knowledge and insight that people bring to barbershop. I am constantly stealing ideas from people much smarter than I!

I have been honored to serve on the Harmony University faculty for over 25 years. Although there are a lot of

great moments, my favorite moments are hearing from non-Barbershopper music educators about their experience at HU. They all say the same thing: "I have learned more about music this week than in my time studying music in college."

For me, this is an enormous source of pride in our Society. Think about the magnitude of that sentiment. A few of our instructors are degreed musicians, but most aren't. Because of our thirst for knowledge and love of this style, we have become musical instructors of the highest degree. Our musical education top to bottom is really second to none.

But this culture has become a double-edged sword.

Knowledge was in short supply back in the 1950s so BHS Field Representa-

I HAVE HEARD THE THOUGHTS OF "I GET A LOT FROM MY DIRECTOR. I WON'T LEARN ANYTHING NEW BY GOING TO A WEEKEND SCHOOL." I CAN PROMISE YOU THAT YOU WILL LEARN MORE THAN YOU EVER IMAGINED!



## Get in Touch

**Kevin Keller, Society President** [bhspresident@barbershop.org](mailto:bhspresident@barbershop.org)  
Follow current issues: [barbershop.org/board-topics](http://barbershop.org/board-topics)

tives were employed to go from chapter to chapter to teach. Back in the early 1960s, newly-hired Director of Music Education Bob Johnson recognized that educational schools were required. Field representatives were helpful in sharing information, but focused weekend schools could help even more. The more people who had knowledge, the more sharing at the chorus level that could happen. Throughout the next few decades, coaching became better for quartets and choruses for all levels. The judging system evolved across the decades from a judicial to an educational focus. With the advent of the internet and advancements in online education, education is everywhere!

So where is the double-edged sword

if educational opportunities are everywhere and better than ever? Two major areas:

Many of you are getting great information from your chorus director and music team. You are learning every week from them. I am happy that you receive this experience. But I have heard the thoughts of “I get a lot from my director. I won’t learn anything new by going to a weekend school.” I can promise you that you will learn more than you ever imagined!

The transformative experiences come from in-person participation in formal schools. Barbershop is an immersive event; it is a participation sport. We learn by doing, not just listening. Some districts have in-person weekend

schools in music and/or leadership. If your district has one, are you going? Are you taking advantage of what is offered? And if your district doesn’t, are you willing to go a little farther to seek out information? Yes, in-person events carry an expense. But the experience is well worth it and the knowledge gained is a bonus.

Bottom line: GO! Put it on your calendar to attend a district school or Harmony University. Be open to the idea that you will learn far more than you bargained for, and will have more fun than you ever thought you could have while laughing and singing and learning.

Meet Me in St. Louis!

Kevin

# Barbershop and the Sound of America

Why understanding our musical roots matters

This is not going to be a history lesson. Rather, I would like to invite you—perhaps even tempt you—to explore the roots of our style and the evolution to what we today think of as barbershop.

In this education-themed issue of *The Harmonizer*, many of the articles focus on how we grow as singers, leaders, and musicians. For me, though, education in barbershop goes beyond

vocal technique or rehearsal strategies. One of the most meaningful ways I’ve deepened my own connection to this art form is by exploring where it fits in the broader story of American music.

Barbershop harmony isn’t just something we enjoy. It is part of the musical fabric that helped shape America’s sound. That history is thoughtfully explored in David Wright’s History



of Barbershop course at Harmony University, as well as in past *Harmonizer* articles and other scholarly research. Still, I’ve found that without regular reminders, it’s easy to fall back on simplified or even stereotypical ideas about where our music comes from. The more I’ve learned, the more connected I feel, not just to our organization, but to the larger story of American music itself.



## Get in Touch

Robert Rund, CEO [CEO@barbershop.org](mailto:CEO@barbershop.org)



## STARTING PITCH

A conversation with our President and CEO

### BARBERSHOP'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO OTHER MUSICAL FORMS

That story began in the late 19th century, especially within African American communities. In cities and towns across the country, young men gathered in social clubs, on street corners, and yes, often in barbershops, to sing the popular songs of the day. They experimented freely, adding harmonies, reshaping melodies, and chasing that moment when the chords would lock and ring.

What stands out to me is how natural and communal this music-making was. There were no printed arrangements, no formal rehearsals, just singers building harmony by ear. What we now call “woodshedding” was simply how music happened.

At the same time, other distinctly American styles such as ragtime,

blues, gospel, and eventually jazz, were taking shape. These traditions didn't develop in isolation. In places like New Orleans and beyond, musicians moved easily between styles, blending influences and learning from one another. Many historians point out that the improvisation and harmonic creativity we value in barbershop were also key ingredients in early jazz.

Barbershop's contribution to this musical landscape was its rich, close four-part harmony. The prevalence of the barbershop dominant seventh chord, that satisfying, ringing sound we all love, is one of the earliest harmonic colors that feels uniquely American. You can hear echoes of it in jazz, in vocal groups, and across popular music that followed.

While barbershop and jazz eventually became distinct traditions, they

still share something fundamental: listening closely, creating together, and finding joy in making music in the moment.

### UNDERSTANDING OUR PART IN THE STORY

For me, understanding this history changes the way I sing. When we stand on the risers or gather at an afterglow, we're not just performing. We are participating in a living tradition that stretches back more than a century. The chords we tune today carry the same spirit of curiosity, connection, and shared discovery that defined those early singers.

Education, then, isn't only about improving our skills. It's also about understanding the story we're part of, and appreciating just how special a place barbershop harmony holds in the evolution of American music. ■



# Take the New England Harmony Brigade Challenge!



**If you love to sing in quartets, and really enjoy learning challenging music and singing it well, then the New England Harmony Brigade is for you!**

A Harmony Brigade Rally is a fun, immersive weekend of mix-and-match quartetting for singers with strong quartetting skills—and it's unlike anything else you've experienced. It's a chance to meet other prepared singers, “try on” different quartet combinations, and form quartets organically. Any quartet that comes together during the weekend will walk away with a ready-to-sing 12-song repertoire.

There are now more than a dozen Harmony Brigades across the U.S., plus two in Europe, and each hosts an annual Rally. While every Brigade has its own personality, most share eight common songs each year. That means if you attend another Brigade in the same year, you only need to learn four additional songs.

Knowing the Brigade repertoire opens the door to actual quartetting at District events and International conventions—beyond just polecats and tags. You'll share the same arrangements with dozens of singers nationwide, making great quartetting possible wherever you go! And no matter where you live, there's a Brigade Rally near you.



**Our Guest Quartet!**

Apply today at [www.nehb.net](http://www.nehb.net)

### Where

The Boxboro Regency

Boxborough, MA 01719

### When

September 18-20th, 2026



# HARMONY UNIVERSITY

July 26 - August 2, 2026

at the University of Denver

## Calling all music educators

HU changed my teaching and it changed my life for the better. If you want your kids to sing more in tune, in synch, with more resonance and in the most healthy ways, you should go. Darin Drown, 32-year educator, Grandville HS, Aurora, CO



YOU BELONG  
HERE!

There is no other professional development conference that combines personal interaction, a mix of education and fun, and a variety of different topics related to music-making.

Dr. Theo Hicks, Choral Music Educator, Anderson University



HU is the most fun you can have doing barbershop. It makes you a better

teacher, it gives you more tools to be successful in the classroom, and it inspires you to be a better musician.

Erin Odell, Adjunct Aural Training Professor, UMSL



REGISTER TODAY!

[BARBERSHOP.ORG/HU](https://barbershop.org/hu)



## NOTEWORTHY

The latest in the world of barbershop

● 2026 INTERNATIONAL, ST. LOUIS

# St. Louis to host first-ever Sing-In contest

It ain't over until it's over—in an onsite *American Idol*-like contest, quartets that didn't quite qualify for St. Louis can still slip in through the back door

**W**e've never done a contest like *this* before! The Sing-In Contest

gives quartets who just missed the cut a chance at two slots reserved in the BHS 2026 International



Quartet Contest at St. Louis.

Exciting new format: Think modern TV singing competitions like *The Voice* and *American Idol*.

• **Score as you go:** Live display of each quartet's aggregate score during

the contest, so the audience can follow the front-runners in real time, like *Dancing With the Stars*!

- **Instant reactions:** Following their final chord, the quartets will immediately join hosts on stage for webcast-style interviews, sharing the raw emotion and thrill of their performance live with the audience!
- **GOTTA BE THERE!** You'll only see this if you're in the room where it happens. **Not offered on the Livestream.**

## JAKE UNRETIRE FOR ST. LOUIS, JOINED BY CROSSROADS AND THE GAS HOUSE GANG

The Sultans of Swing, 2001 champ **Michigan Jake**, will perform throughout their 25th Anniversary week as one of at least three champs who will come out of retirement in St. Louis. Both 2009 champ **Crossroads** and 1993 champ **The Gas House Gang** will unretire in St. Louis for the "The Roast and Toast of **Vocal Spectrum**" helping celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the 2006 champ. Held after Wednesday's Quartet Quarterfinals, every ticket will include a free digital download of **Vocal Spectrum's** new album.

## Meet new BHS Director of Music and Education Bill Stauffer



Bill Stauffer brings more than 35 years of leadership experience across the nonprofit and technology sectors, and for more than 40 years, barber-

shop harmony has shaped his friendships, his leadership, and his love for building community through song.

Bill has competed internationally in multiple quartets, arranged music performed by International Champion ensembles, and directed choruses at the highest levels of competition, including three consecutive International top 10 finishes with **Voices of Gotham**.

Throughout his career in large volunteer-based organizations, Bill has seen firsthand what can happen when passionate people unite around a common goal.

Bill completed his undergraduate studies in Music Education at Westminster Choir College. Bill and his wife, Terri—a master educator—are the proud parents of four adult children and share their home with one very special dog.

## 3 new chapters charter in February

Welcome to the three chapters that started up in February 2026: **Golden State, CA (FWD)**; **Central Coast, CA (FWD)**; **Boise Downtown, ID (EVG)**.

## Sue Melvin joins Society Board

Sue Melvin of Rochester, New York has been elected to fill out an open Society Board Director at Large term vacated by Michele Niec, who joined the BHS staff on Jan. 1. Sue joins new Board members Erin Harris and Christian Hunter, seated Jan. 1 after election last summer.



## WHEN YOUR CHAPTER MEMBER IS ALSO A WAR HERO

Talk about serving one's country: Ron Byrne was a 36-year-old U.S. Air Force pilot in 1965 when he was shot down and spent nearly *eight years* in a North Vietnamese prison camp. Ron gained his freedom in 1973 and later discovered barbershop harmony, and he's stayed active with the **Prescott, AZ Chapter** for the past 32 years. Chapter members gathered with the 97-year-old veteran in February to celebrate both his birthday and the 53rd anniversary of his release.



● MUSIC EDUCATOR OUTREACH

## HUNDREDS OF MUSIC EDUCATORS GET GREAT TASTE OF BARBERSHOP

Two prominent 2026 Midwinter groups represented barbershop harmony this winter for audiences of music educators.

After co-headlining Midwinter's Saturday Night Show, 2024 champion **Westminster Chorus** (directed by Dan Wessler) represented the Society at the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) Western conference in San Jose. Shortly after, they performed concerts in Sweden, Munich, the Netherlands, and then at the BinG! Barbershop in Germany Mixed Harmony Convention.

Long-time Midwinter favorites, Ohio's **Cleveland Heights Women's Barbershoppers** (directed by Jesse Lange), returned from Pasadena and soon after performed at the Ohio Music Educators Association's annual convention.



## Honest discussions of our past & future

The goal: an open acknowledgment of the Society's legacy of exclusion, toward efforts to learn and move forward. In February, two expert panels discussed (1) how Society decisions excluded racial minorities far longer than many realize, and (2) steps that could help bring once-excluded communities back into the fold. Watch "Toward True Harmony: Learning From A History Of Exclusion" and "Tension & Release: Moving Forward In Harmony" at [barbershop.org/2026-panel-discussions](http://barbershop.org/2026-panel-discussions).



● PEOPLE LOVE BARBERSHOP!

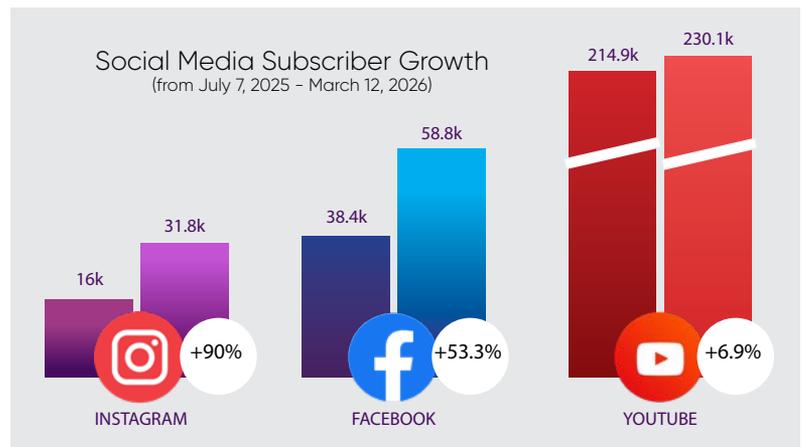
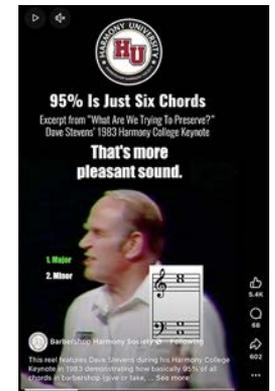
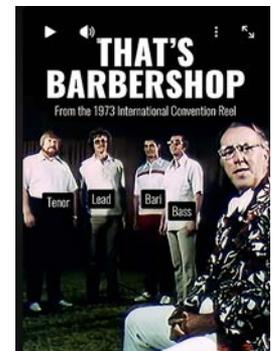
# Viral videos spur social media growth

Usually, it's great performances that go viral, but lately, it appears that the general public is saying, "More old, square barbershop demo videos please!"

A BHS Marketing Team effort to create entertaining social media posts over the past few months has attracted a lot of new barbershop fans and generated thousands of new subscriptions. One interesting aspect is an examination of the *types* of videos that have gone viral lately. With all the great recent and historical performances available online, who knew the world was looking for decades-old introductions to basic barbershop principles!

- "1973 Convention: Bob Johnson and OK 4 Demonstrating Barbershop": 2.5M YouTube views and 4,400+ new subscribers, plus 1M Facebook views and 8,100 new subscribers, plus another 1M on Instagram (as of March 16).
- Dave Stevens' famous Circle of Fifths demonstration: 800K Facebook views, 6,683 new subscribers, plus 50K YouTube views and 125 new YouTube subscribers.
- "Dave Stevens - Barbershop is these 6 chords": 200K Facebook views, 1,352 new subscribers, plus 55K YouTube views.
- Deke Sharon at Midwinter leading "Rhythm of Love": 153K Facebook views and almost 1,000 new subscribers.

Link to all at [barbershop.org/harmonizer](http://barbershop.org/harmonizer).





# NOTEWORTHY

The latest in the world of barbershop



# What's Happening



**Harmony University** ▲  
**July 26–August 2, 2026**  
The best week of barbershop!  
[barbershop.org/hu](http://barbershop.org/hu)



**2026 International St. Louis – June 28–July 5** ▲  
It's not just one of the great barbershop cities, but one of the great cities to visit, with a vibrant downtown scene surrounding an unforgettable venue! [barbershop.org/events](http://barbershop.org/events)

**2026 International St. Louis**  
June 28–July 5

**2027 Midwinter Virginia Beach**  
February 3–7

**2027 International Minneapolis**  
July 4–11

**2028 International Chicago**  
July 2–9

**2029 International San Antonio**  
July 1–8

## "Lemon Squeezy" by Michael Black ([michael@michael-black.com](mailto:michael@michael-black.com)). Answer key on page 29

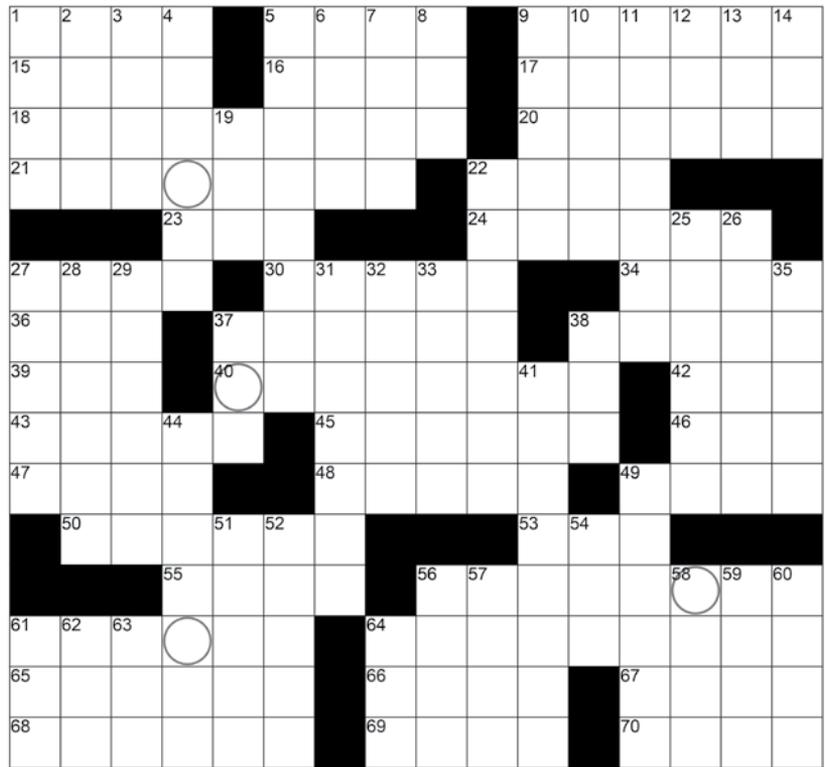
### ACROSS

- 1 Legislators pass them
- 5 Nordic BHS Alliance org. (but not SNOBS)
- 9 SCJC Chairs Armstrong and Trammack
- 15 B, H or S, for BHS
- 16 Bullfight shouts
- 17 Water park activity
- 18 Warning on presents stashed in the closet
- 20 If all else goes well
- 21 Accessory for a person under house arrest
- 22 "\_\_\_ Rhythm" (Gershwin tune)
- 23 The start of "Something Big"?
- 24 Risky situations
- 27 Quartetmate of Shawn, Sean, and Patrick
- 30 Preferred course
- 34 Quartet champs Deiser or Fetick
- 36 Suffix with meth- or eth-
- 37 Contributed money to join
- 38 Flourish on a letter
- 39 Alps or Rockies, briefly
- 40 2025 Quartet Champions, or a hint to why a quartet of squares in this puzzle are a bit crowded
- 42 Big name in nail polish
- 43 Mopes
- 45 Comic actress Tracey
- 46 Note between fa and la
- 47 Competition between two heavyweights
- 48 Walter Jackson's "\_\_\_ Uphill Climb (to the Bottom)"
- 49 Any member of the Clementones
- 50 Put to a new purpose
- 53 "\_\_\_ Got a Gal in Kalamazoo"
- 55 Many Tim Waurick YouTube videos
- 56 Grammy-nominated singer

- who made her on-screen film debut in "Moonlight"
- 61 Kindly (but ill-fated) guardian in the Lemony Snicket series
- 64 \_\_\_ Student Union (1978 Quartet Champions)
- 65 Spicy salsa, e.g.
- 66 They help you stay in tune
- 67 Do magazine work
- 68 Eight-time medalist 139th \_\_\_ Quartet
- 69 "A Visit from St. Nicholas" opener
- 70 "Yes" votes

### DOWN

- 1 "\_\_\_ Rose" (song from "The Music Man")
- 2 Unknown auth.
- 3 "A \_\_\_ And A Smile" (Sleepless in Seattle song)
- 4 Embezzled
- 5 Sources of relief for barking dogs?
- 6 Big name in pet food
- 7 Afterglow mugful
- 8 Nine-digit ID
- 9 Spot for a contest performance
- 10 Personal instructor
- 11 Fred King arrangement that ends "... I'm at peace in the web of your love"
- 12 Compete (for)
- 13 Some dash lengths
- 14 Capt.'s subordinate
- 19 'Deck the Halls' contraction
- 22 Beach in a 1964 hit song
- 25 FRED lead Rick
- 26 Like a shoe that requires no lace or buckle
- 27 Has an in-tents experience?
- 28 Going from gig to gig
- 29 Job application component



- 31 Airport security concern
- 32 All grown up
- 33 Physics Nobelist Bohr
- 35 Cyber-send to the IRS
- 37 Academy Award nominee and Kirsten Dunst spouse Jesse
- 38 Thesaurus entry, for short
- 41 Marx Brothers specialty

- 44 Everyone, in French
- 49 "West Coast" singer Lana
- 51 French composer Erik
- 52 Cleopatra's homeland
- 54 Be a couch potato
- 56 "The Hunger Games" star, familiarly
- 57 Mysterious quality

- 58 Summer refresher
- 59 Japan's continent
- 60 Ballpark figs.
- 61 Sounds of uncertainty
- 62 "Eine Kleine \_\_\_ Musik" (Gas House Gang song)
- 63 NBA position: Abbr.
- 64 Make a wager ■



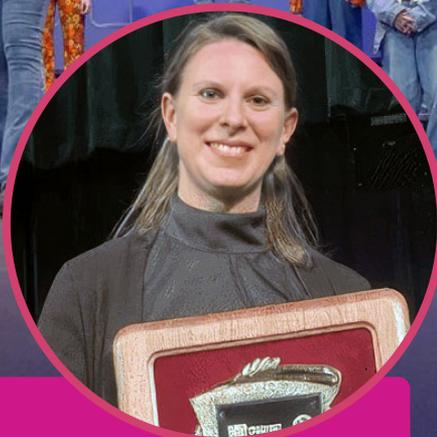
THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING BHS PROGRAMS

# “IT STARTED WITH A MUSIC EDUCATOR SCHOLARSHIP TO HARMONY UNIVERSITY IN 2019.”



**Amy Moyer**  
Wade Hampton Singers,  
Greenville, SC

**2026 NAfME/BHS Music  
Educator of the Year  
Award Recipient**



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

Amy Moyer, music educator



**2020 MIDWINTER**



**2023 MIDWINTER**



**2024 MIDWINTER**



**2025 INTERNATIONAL**  
AMY'S QUARTET EXTRA CREDIT  
(COMPOSED OF MUSIC EDUCATORS)  
COMPETED IN DENVER



**YOU BELONG  
AT HU!  
LEARN MORE:**



**ENERGIZE  
YOUNG SINGERS**

**PRESERVE  
BARBERSHOP**

**BUILD THRIVING  
SINGING COMMUNITIES**

**SUPPORT  
MUSIC EDUCATION**

**BHS  
MISSION**

# Barbershop Education: Master Your



## THE BEGINNING OF THE REHEARSAL MATTERS THE MOST

Why would a chorus spend 40 minutes a week on pre-rehearsal activities? The answer is in the unified sound

In our chapter, we utilize various music team members to craft a warm up routine that prepares and builds our singers. Our philosophy is that the beginning of rehearsal is, without question, the most important part of the evening. It is here that we establish mindset, craft our vocal product, foster camaraderie, and increase our barberknowledge. To that end, every chapter meeting contains:

**Pre-rehearsal activities.** We usually have a group of singers gather to sing tags, work on their Barberpole Cat program, and genuinely welcome chorus members and guests. Light snacks are provided. All are invited to participate. Everyone gets a name badge and no one sits alone.

**Greeting and goal setting.** To start the rehearsal, our music vice president greets the chorus and goes over the goals for the evening and draws attention to the rehearsal plan on the board.

**Physical and mental focus.** This is done by our resident yoga instructor, who takes care to offer adaptations to the motions to accommodate a wide variety of movement abilities. The level of concentration and engagement after this activity is something I've never experienced in my 35 years of barbershopping. Simply incredible.

**Vocal warm-up.** This is done by me,



Steve Scott teaches an education course at the 2024 International Convention in Cleveland. He solicited and coordinated all of the education articles that appear in this issue.

and I focus on readying the voices for rehearsal (degunking, semi-occluded vocal tract exercises) and calibrating the ensemble (vowel unity, timbre match, tuning, expression). I try to add one or two new skills each month as a focus.

**Musicality moment.** One of our music team members leads the chorus through a variety of concepts to assist in our growth, e.g. chord balance, syncopation and swing, phrase shaping, synchronization, etc. These are based on the literature the chorus is singing.

**Tag.** This is where we put it all together. Our tagmaster selects a tag appropriate to the evening's plan, and we engage in skill implementation.

**Rehearsal.** Only after all of the above does the song rehearsal portion of the evening begin. The warmup with a tag takes about 40 minutes. That is precious time and I can't think of a better way to spend it than building our singers.

**Post-rehearsal.** At the end of every rehearsal, the music team meets to discuss how the evening went, which songs need help, perhaps with a sectional, and the growth of individual members. This information is aggregated and used to inform the plan for the following rehearsal, which we try to get to the members with most of a week left to practice at home.

You probably do variations on several of these items. We have found that this specific combination in this sequence yields a highly productive rehearsal and long-term growth for our members. Happy practicing!

**Steve Scott**, Vocal Pedagogue for the Barbershop Harmony Society, is known throughout the barbershop world for coaching vocal transformations. He sings with **Music City Chorus** and **Mischief** quartet and directs the **Sal-taires**. [sscott@barbershop.org](mailto:sscott@barbershop.org)



# BECOME THE MOST-IMPROVED QUARTET

As valuable as external coaching can be, the most rapid improvement comes after your quartet learns how to master internal coaching

**N**ot every quartet will become a champion—international, district, or otherwise—and that’s okay. When I coach quartets or give feedback after contests, I often ask what their goal is. With little variation, the answer is: “We just want to improve.”

What follows is a rehearsal regimen that has proven successful time and again. These ideas are not revolutionary; many will sound familiar. The difference lies in the order in which they are applied and the rules that govern their use. Taken together, this approach produces noticeable improvement in a relatively short amount of time.

## THREE PRECONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

Before beginning, your quartet must accept three prerequisites.

**A commitment to improvement.** You must decide that your quartet is not simply a social group that occasionally sings. There is nothing wrong with that model if that is what you want. But if your goal is measurable improvement, that mindset is rarely conducive to growth.

**Thick skin and humility.** You must be willing to receive corrective suggestions without taking offense. If you regularly bristle when someone suggests doing something differently, this process will not work.

**Agreement on a bar of excellence.** Every quartet has a different definition of what is acceptable to them. Decide together what success looks like right now—whether that is a



The author coaches Longhaul quartet in the Netherlands in early 2026. Rapid improvement comes when each quartet member learns how to listen to quartet duets and trios and then give useful feedback.

score range, a sound ideal, or a standard of intonation or entertainment. The bar can always be raised or lowered later, but it must be clearly defined.

## STEP ONE: EMBRACE INNER-QUARTET COACHING

Inner-quartet coaching means allowing your own quartet members to coach one another. While many quartets will duet and trio in rehearsal, far fewer ask for meaningful feedback from those who are not singing.

Never argue, justify, or disagree with a suggestion when receiving suggestions from your quartet mates. Whether you believe the idea is right

*Inner-quartet coaching means allowing your own quartet members to coach one another. While many quartets will duet and trio in rehearsal, far fewer ask for meaningful feedback from those who are not singing.*

or wrong is beside the point. The goal is to create an environment of trust, experimentation, and shared ownership. If a member offers a suggestion you instinctively doubt, ask yourself a simple question: What does it hurt to try? Trying the idea costs nothing and reinforces a culture where everyone feels heard. Even if the feedback isn’t exactly right, they likely heard something that prompted a comment.

## STEP TWO: RARELY SING AN ENTIRE SONG ALL THE WAY THROUGH

If your goal is improvement, singing a song from beginning to end early in the rehearsal process can reinforce bad habits rather than fix them. A quartet that insists on singing through a whole song start to finish, rather than doing detailed work, is often more interested in singing than in improving. Instead, begin rehearsal with a single phrase and work that phrase with the process outlined below.

## STEP THREE: THE PROCESS

Start with the chosen phrase and have the lead sing it alone, at least

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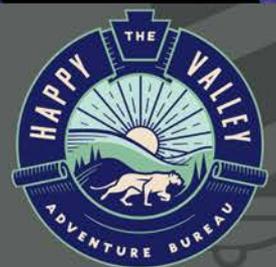


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The author with Dutch quartet **A Great Shoutfit** in early 2026. Quartet members must agree on what level of improvement they're seeking, then have the humility to accept frequent feedback from one another.

twice, while the other three listen for consistency of interpretation. As the primary storyteller, the lead must own the interpretation. While listening, the trio should silently mouth the words to establish shared timing.

Next, move on to duets, beginning with lead and bass. Duetting is already a commonly-used rehearsal technique, but the real value comes from adding inner-quartet coaching. Those who are not singing act as coaches, with one non-negotiable rule: they may not say “I don’t know” or “It sounds fine.” Each coach must offer at least one specific suggestion on every run-through of the phrase.

After feedback, the duet sings the phrase again. The tenor and baritone continue offering suggestions until the agreed-upon bar of excellence is met. Then, rotate to the next duet. Each new combination produces a new set of coaches, reveals different

issues, and generates new ideas.

After duets, move on to trios. One singer stands out as the sole coach while the other three sing. The same rules apply: the coach must offer feedback, and the trio repeats the phrase until the bar is met.

### “I DON’T KNOW WHAT TO SAY”— PROBLEM SOLVED

If you feel inexperienced with coaching and are genuinely unsure what to suggest, here is a simple mental tool to solve that problem:

Ask yourself, “Does this duet, trio, or quartet sound like [high-level quartet you admire]? The answer will, of course, be no (or you would already be wearing medals). The key is to move immediately to the second question: Why not? What sounds different?

As soon as you ask yourself what separates your favorite quartet from what you just heard, ideas should

come to mind. “When **Clever Girl** sings, it sounds so smooth and easy ...” Stop. You have just identified something the group can try. “When **Lemon Squeezy** sings, the harmony locks so quickly ...” Stop. Ask the duet or trio to run the phrase again with attention to quicker tuning. These are simply examples. Whatever difference you hear between your highest sound ideal and the group in front of you is exactly what you should suggest.

### THE PAYOFF

After all the duets and trios, with feedback from all singers that are standing out to listen, only then do you all sing the phrase together as a quartet. You will likely be surprised at the result. Celebrate the moment, and then move on to the next phrase and start the process over.

This is, of course, not the only path to success, and you are free to adapt elements of the process to your own needs and desires. However, this process was developed through more than a decade of experimentation and has helped hundreds of quartets achieve measurable improvement when implemented in this fashion.

If your goal is simply to socialize and sing occasionally, enjoy that fully—no need to do anything different from what you know and love. But if you want to hear real growth in just a few rehearsals, commit to the process, stay humble, refuse to settle for “it sounds fine” from the inner-quartet coaches, and I guarantee you’ll be happy with the quick results.

### HARMONY UNIVERSITY FOR YOUR QUARTET

Does it seem like you work and work in your quartet, week after week, month after month, year after year, and never really seem to improve? Perhaps you need the guidance of the best barbershop teachers in the world at Harmony University. Not only can you go to HU as a quartet and get coached, you can go to classes together on vocal pedagogy, learn how to utilize your practice time to be more efficient and fruitful, and discover so much more about what the judging community is truly listening and watching for, so you can focus your efforts. And, you can have a blast learning together!

Visit [barbershop.org/hu](http://barbershop.org/hu).

### Dr. Jay Dougherty

is Director of Choral Activities at Drury University in Springfield, MO. He is a clinician, conductor, coach, arranger, adjudicator, Musicality judge, past district quartet champion, past director of several BHS and SAI choruses, and a 10+ year HU instructor.



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# SOCIAL VIBE CHECK

## MASTERING THE 4:1 RULE TO BUILD A MAGNETIC BRAND

Do more than sales pitches—about 80% of your social media content needs to focus on getting real with viewers

**Y**ou’ve got a great chorus or quartet, and you need people to join or buy tickets. But if your social media is just a list of concert dates, people will quickly tune out! Change your social media energy with what I call the Vibe Check to get people interested.

### WHY YOUR POSTS AREN’T WORKING

Imagine you go to a party, and one person spends the whole time trying to push you to buy their concert tickets. You’d walk away, right? That’s what your audience does online! Your posts are too formal, too stiff, and only focused on selling.

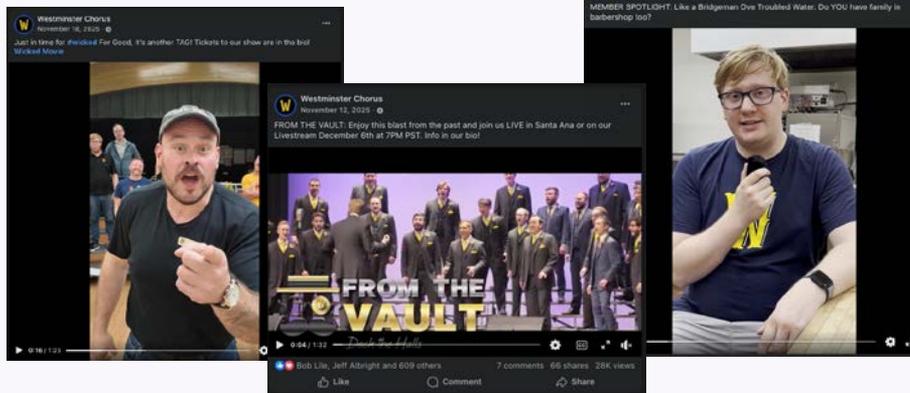
To fix this, we need to make your social media less like a billboard and more like a great conversation.

### THE BIG SECRET: THE 4:1 CONTENT RULE

This rule is the secret to getting people to pay attention. It is simple math:

For every one post where you ask your audience to do something (like buy a ticket, join a rehearsal, or do-

Imagine you go to a party, and one person spends the whole time trying to push you to buy their concert tickets. You’d walk away, right? That’s what your audience does online!



nate—we call this the sales post), you must share four posts that are just plain fun, interesting, or valuable (we call these value posts).

- **1 sales post:** “Tickets on sale now for our Spring Show on May 15th!”
- **4 value posts:** Clips of singers goofing off, photos of members with funny quotes, music facts, etc.

Value posts are your chance to show the real people behind the music. This makes your group feel welcoming and friendly—it humanizes you.

### BE REAL, GET RESULTS

The best way to make friends online is to stop trying to look perfect. People don’t trust content that looks too polished, like a TV commercial. They want authenticity: the real, unscripted stuff.

Instead of posting a formal press release, share short videos of what really happens:

**Backstage peek:** Film a short, unedited clip of your group laughing after someone misses a note in rehearsal.

**Member talk:** Ask a member, “What’s the best part of Monday practice?” and post their quick, honest answers.

**The why:** Share personal stories

Westminster Chorus provides a great example of social media pacing and content types.

about why members sing. This connects strangers to your mission, not just your sound.

### CASE STUDY: THE WESTMINSTER CHORUS

Take the amazing **Westminster Chorus**. (Check them out on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube.) They don’t just post perfect performances; they constantly post raw, high-energy clips of their rehearsals. By showing the joy and the effort behind the music, they send a powerful message: “This is a fun place to be!”

When people see a fun, real, and welcoming community online, they’re much more likely to show up for your next rehearsal in real life. Use the 4:1 rule, be real, and start growing!



**Dominick Finetti** sings with **Nocturne** quartet, with **Music City Chorus**, and with **Space City Sound**, where he serves as both VP of Marketing & PR and Music Advisor  
dom.finetti93@gmail.com

# VOCAL EXERCISES TO IMPLEMENT THIS WEEK

Whether warming up on your own or as part of an ensemble, these exercises will help you check in with your voice and will add up to more confident and reliable singing

**W**hen I was a novice singer, my teachers and conductors guided our vocal ensembles through many of the expected vocal warmups each time we met. These instructors were excellent at their craft, but they didn't commonly explain why we were doing what we were doing or how to connect the exercises with singing technique in practice. During my career as a conductor and vocal instructor, I have worked to include more information to empower singers to be their own best vocal coach! Here are some of my favorite exercises to build vocal skills.

## ALIGNMENT, BREATHING, AND RELAXATION

We know that the right balance of relaxation versus engagement can produce a freely supported, expressive singing voice. I always like to start with a pre-flight check to make



sure I'm moving all the things I know into consciousness. We often know how to breathe and become aligned, and release tension, but we need to commit to bringing all of these into consciousness, especially at the beginning of a practice session. Try the following early in your practice, as well as each time you switch activities:

Pre-flight check: from toe to head, check in with each joint and muscle group for alignment and ease. Focus on knees, hips, abdomen, chest and shoulders, neck, jaw, tongue, and

head position. Ensure the alignment of your balanced skeleton so that muscles can be recruited for other things.

Move gently to stay engaged and relaxed, feeling a gentle sensation

The ability to perform relaxed and at full vocal strength takes place over time by way of consistent exercises that center you in your best voice.

of pushing up and away from the ground if you are standing.

Take a natural, easy breath and sigh down with no tension. Bonus points if it brings in a real yawn! This will keep you relaxed and calm, with a flexible vocal mechanism.

Start with semi-occluded, mid-range exercises: glide on a vv or lip trill, moving up and down on the interval of a 3rd or 5th, then a full octave. This is a great time to sing with a straw, vocal trainer device, or a cup with a hole in it!

Play with movement and sounds. Say “yah yah yah” and focus on making relaxed noises, not words! Now try that while descending on a 5-3-1 pattern. Keep this relaxation as you continue your practice, and check in with breathing and alignment regularly.

Check out these exercises to release



Release jaw and tongue tension: [bit.ly/khrelax](https://bit.ly/khrelax)

jaw and tongue tension: [bit.ly/khrelax](https://bit.ly/khrelax)

### ENGAGEMENT AND STRENGTH

This category of exercises supports an efficient, balanced voice and adds lots of ping and resonance. I like to do these toward the beginning of warmups after relaxation and breathing are well-established, and revisit them during practice if the voice gets airy or disconnected. Don't worry too much about tone for the first exercises, but no need to make it strident on purpose!

Sing a deliberate and detached "kee" on 12321, breathing in between each note. This works on full vocal cord closure and reliable onsets.

Focusing on consistent breath, try an "ee" moving to an "ey" (/i/ to /eɪ/) sound on 123454321, switching to the /eɪ/ at the top. This can help build a consistent sound through the passaggio.

To move relaxation into engagement, try moving from a lip trill to a vowel—this is great to do on any repeated exercise, once on a lip trill, then once on your favorite vowel like "ee" or "uh" (/i/ or /ʌ/). One pattern

The right balance of relaxation versus engagement can produce a freely supported, expressive singing voice. I always like to start with a pre-flight check to make sure I'm moving all the things I know into consciousness.



I like is 13 24 35 42 1.

Here are some great exercises for building strength: [bit.ly/khwarmup](https://bit.ly/khwarmup)

### SKILL BUILDING AND FLEXIBILITY

Once singers have practiced exercises to relax, stabilize, and strengthen the voice, it's a great time to work on skill building. These exercises promote flexibility as well as clean and smooth intervals.

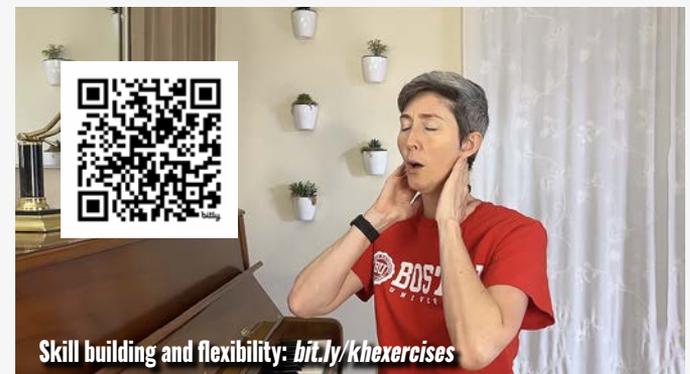
These can also help develop a naturally resonant tone.

Alternate between an ee and ah sound (/i/ and /a/) on whole steps—four notes per vowel. I like to put an h on the first one, then land on an ee. ee1212, ah1212, ee1212, ah1212, ee1...

Try singing up and down three whole steps, then a triad on a lip trill, followed by three more whole steps.

This is great for agility. 1232 1353 12321.

Arpeggios are great for vocal skill building! Try outlining your favorite chord. It's probably best to start with a major triad or full octave, but



once that feels great, try an arpeggiated barbershop 7th or something even more adventurous! These exercises will improve your vocal vocabulary, so when you come across these intervals in your music, you'll already have practiced singing them!

Check out these exercises for skill building and flexibility: [bit.ly/khexercises](https://bit.ly/khexercises).

Choose a few of these exercises, return to them regularly, and trust that small, consistent check-ins with your voice will add up to more confident and reliable singing over time.



**Kathleen Hansen** directs the San Diego Women's Chorus, is GALA 411 Artistic Advisor, and International Faculty for Sweet Adelines. She will complete her Doctorate of Musical Arts (DMA) at Boston University in May 2026. [khansenmusic@gmail.com](mailto:khansenmusic@gmail.com)

### HARMONY UNIVERSITY FOR YOUR VOICE

Have you ever wanted to understand how your voice really works when you are singing? Why do some notes seem so easy, and some seem so unstable? Why are some sections of songs so effortless, and others seem like they wear you out after one run-through? Why do some styles of songs seem easier to sing than others in your repertoire?

Come to Harmony University to get the keys to unlock your voice, and make it all feel stable, and tension-free, and malleable from style to style! You will learn from the best in the business, regardless of vocal style or teaching school!

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# MAKE MY DAY (OR, HOW TO INCREASE MEMBER ENGAGEMENT)

I regularly teach classes on effective chapter meetings, and a question I often ask is, “Who attends the rehearsals just for the singing?” Consistently, fewer than 20% raise their hands. Most want a holistic experience that touches singing, artistry, and connection with their community. So how can we engage our singers holistically?

**Mini-coaching sessions.** These off-the-risers sessions might range from tuning to rhythm challenges, from part/voice balance to visual engagement with the audience, from methods for warmups to between-song entertainment or emceeing, etc. Including those who have particular desires and/or knowledge in a specific area can greatly improve their confidence, un-

derstanding of an issue, alert them to previously unnoticed details, and result in the desire to improve and learn even more. And it will likely increase other members’ trust and confidence in them.

Not ready for coaching? Try giving the **feedback to the director** when prompted. This gives the director a second set of eyes/ears, gives the chorus different perspectives, and gives the chosen member specific learning practice and instruction, and hopefully added confidence. And your member now has a greater investment in the evening as well as the successes and improvement of the chorus.

Chapter leadership and director(s)

often have the greatest input to an evening’s meeting and rehearsal, but discovering the skills that your members would like to improve or want to contribute to the chorus’ knowledge may expand your options. The relatively small investment of time weekly at rehearsal can, over the long run, have an enormous positive impact for all.



**Beverly Greene** of Asheville, NC is a leadership instructor, BHS Ambassador, and co-author of *Compellingly Attractive Chapter Meetings*  
beverly.greene83@gmail.com

## Deep learning all week long at Harmony University

Choruses and quartets have their own coaching tracks, but ensemble members still have plenty of time to enroll in both week-long courses and shorter elective courses. All attendees can join the **HU Chorus**, and 30-and-under singers can join the **NextGen Chorus**. Check out courses and register at [barbershop.org/hu](http://barbershop.org/hu).

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Advanced Arranging *David Wright*  
Arrangements of Modern Pop Hits *Aaron Dale*  
Arranging Lab *Steve Tramack*  
Beginners’ Arranging *Melody Hine*  
Beginners’ Music Theory *Cay Outerbridge*  
Intermediate Arranging *Clay Hine*  
Songwriting for Barbershop *Neyla Pekarek*  
Writing Original Material *Melody Hine*  
The Evolution of the Barbershop Style *Dan Wessler*

### COACHING

Accommodating A Variety Of Learning Styles *Jen Cooke*  
Coaching In The Categories *Jill Rodgers-McWha, Charlotte Murray*  
Ensemble Coaching Observation *Charlotte Murray, Jill Rodgers-McWha*  
Hands-On Coaching Lab *Charlotte Murray, Jill Rodgers-McWha*  
How To Lead Incredible Sectionals *Cay Outerbridge*  
How To Teach What You Know *Philip Grant*  
Musicality Coaching Methods *Dan Wessler*  
Performance Coaching Methods *Allen Otto*  
Principles of Coaching *Jill Rodgers-McWha, Charlotte Murray*  
Quartet Rehearsal Techniques *Theo Hicks, David Zimmerman, Kohl Kitzmiller, Kyle Kitzmiller*  
Singing Coaching Methods *Philip Grant*  
Voice Coaching Under Glass *Steve Scott*

### CONDUCTING

Accommodating A Variety Of Learning Styles *Jen Cooke*  
Beginners’ Conducting Techniques *Rob Mance*  
Chorus Rehearsal Techniques *Joe Cerutti*  
Conducting Practicum *Dan Wessler, Kirk Young, Darin Drown*  
Developing Effective Warm-Ups *Debbie Cleveland*  
Hand Independence *Kirk Young*  
How To Lead Incredible Sectionals *Cay Outerbridge*  
How To Teach What You Know *Philip Grant*  
Voice Coaching Under Glass *Steve Scott*

### HU SINGING EXPERIENCES

eXtreme Quartetting Harmony Brigade *Luke Miller*  
Harmony University Chorus *Theo Hicks*  
NextGen Chorus (18-30) *Neyla Pekarek*

### LEADERSHIP

Accommodating A Variety Of Learning Styles *Jen Cooke*  
Inclusive Culture *Melody Hine*  
Chorus Culture and Leadership *Joe Cerutti*  
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District Leadership Bootcamp Elective *Steve Wyszomierski*  
How To Lead Incredible Sectionals *Cay Outerbridge*  
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Membership Recruitment & Retention *Samantha Tramack, Cay Outerbridge*  
Practicing Leadership *Steve Tramack*

### MISCELLANEOUS

Ensemble Web Design *Kyle Kitzmiller*  
History of Barbershop *David Wright*  
Music Education Implementation *Debbie Cleveland*

### MUSICALITY

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Musicality Coaching Methods *Dan Wessler*  
Rhythm for Barbershoppers *Kirk Young*  
Sight Singing *Erin Odell*  
Tune It Or Die *Steve Tramack*  
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The “POW” In Powerful Performance *George Gipp*  
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# DESIRABLE DIFFICULTIES

## HOW TO BREAK OUT OF REHEARSAL RUTS

Used thoughtfully, these tools can reinvigorate rehearsal energy while reinforcing musicianship, listening skills, and ensemble accountability

**W**hether you have been directing for years or are just starting out, it can be difficult to break out of familiar rehearsal routines. Over time, even well-designed rehearsals can begin to feel predictable both for directors and singers. One effective way to disrupt that rut is by intentionally introducing what cognitive psychologists call desirable difficulties: small, purposeful variations in routine that require increased attention and engagement, helping to get the neurons firing in new ways.

I have implemented or observed many of the following ideas in my own groups or in ensembles I have coached. Each is designed to stretch singers into greater awareness and musical responsibility, both during rehearsal and beyond it. Used thoughtfully, these tools can reinvigorate rehearsal energy while reinforcing musicianship, listening skills, and ensemble accountability.

### IN-REHEARSAL TOOLS

These rely on varying how singers physically and cognitively interact with the music. Using a range of activities within a rehearsal encourages singers to connect with the repertoire in multiple ways rather than relying on a single mode of engagement. Here are a few.

**Scatter singing** disrupts the routine. Begin by asking the basses to



spread themselves throughout the room, leaving plenty of space around each singer. Next, ask the baritone to find a bass, followed by the leads and then the tenors. Uneven numbers are fine. Once everyone is placed, sing a tag or a portion of a well-known song in groups of impromptu mini quartets. Encourage singers to listen closely to the voices around them. If any of these quartets feel brave, invite them to sing for the

*Using a range of activities within a rehearsal encourages singers to connect with the repertoire in multiple ways rather than relying on a single mode of engagement.*

The author is a strong proponent of allowing chorus singers to move off of the risers and into smaller groups, where learning can be faster and potentially more exciting.

group; offer positive, specific feedback.

**Riser swaps** disrupt habitual listening patterns. If your chorus uses a fixed riser chart, experiment by moving rows around—send the back row to the front, the middle row to the back, or allow singers to choose where they stand. You might also ask singers from the middle of the chorus to move to the outside, and vice-versa. Each variation changes what singers hear and how they perceive balance and blend.

**Section duets** narrow the focus further. Choose two sections to

These are tools for recalibrating attention, deepening engagement, and reminding singers that rehearsal is an active, participatory process. Experiment freely and draw inspiration from others.

duet while the other two step off the risers to listen. Afterward, invite the listening singers to share positive feedback or specific things they noticed. This reinforces active listening while highlighting how sections interact musically.

**Singing under glass** creates an opportunity for observation-based learning. Schedule a rehearsal segment where you work intensively with one section while the rest of the chorus observes. A variation is to do this with individual singers. The observing members gain insight into the rehearsal process, diagnostic language, and problem-solving strategies, while the featured singers receive focused attention.

**Push-out quartet work** emphasizes individual accountability within the ensemble. Ask singers to line up by section in single-file quartet formation. Have the entire group sing a song, but direct everyone's attention to the quartet at the front of the line. At your signal, that quartet moves to the back and a new quartet steps forward. This allows you to hear every combination in a variety of contexts. Variations include having the front quartet sing the words while the rest of the chorus sings on "ooh," or, at a more advanced level, having no singing from behind the quartet at all.

## COACHING TOOLS

These shift some of the cognitive load to the singers themselves, encouraging them to be proactive learners who can internalize new



The author directs Nashville's Scenic City Chorus in Sweet Adelines competition.

skills more quickly. During coaching sessions try these:

**Aha moments** are key moments or ideas the ensemble wants to remember. Each singer has the option to write their aha moments on sticky notes and then place them on poster paper. After the session, create posters using the members' own feedback and hang them in visible rehearsal spaces to reinforce learning over time.

**A riser note-taker** is a singer who—directly in the music—notates changes, adjustments, or enhancements made during coaching. Making this marked music available afterward ensures that insights are preserved accurately and consistently across the ensemble.

**Record coaching sessions** to further extend their impact. Audio or video record coaching in manageable segments of 30 to 45 minutes. Ask a member to review the recordings and note what was taught in each section. Publish the video along with these notes so that members can easily locate and review specific concepts.

## TECHNOLOGY TOOLS

These help reduce barriers for singers who cannot be physically present at rehearsal.

**Provide a Zoom link for every rehearsal, allowing members to attend remotely when needed.** This can be as simple or elaborate as your resources allow, from a laptop connected to a larger screen, to USB microphones and external speakers. Greet each Zoom participant by name, ensure their faces are

visible to the chorus when possible, and intentionally include them in interactions. This helps remote singers remain part of the ensemble's musical and social process rather than falling behind.

**Create a private Facebook group for the chorus.** This allows rehearsals to be livestreamed using a phone or tablet. Non-present members can observe in real time, and the recording remains available on the group page for a month, making it easy for singers to catch up.

**Post audio recordings of each rehearsal on the members-only section of your website.** This provides another access point for members who want to review material, reinforce learning, or stay connected when circumstances prevent attendance.

Taken together, these ideas are not about novelty for its own sake. They are tools for recalibrating attention, deepening engagement, and reminding singers that rehearsal is an active, participatory process. Experiment freely, draw inspiration from others, and adapt these approaches to your own ensemble's culture. When rehearsals remain intellectually and musically alive, singers notice—and they keep coming back.



**Jennifer Cooke** sings with top 10 ensembles Presto! quartet (SAI), Just Sayin' Quartet (HI), Song of Atlanta Chorus (SAI), and directs Scenic City Chorus (SAI) and Music City Sound (HI). She has served on the faculties of HU (BHS) and HIVE (HI) and in various SAI leadership roles [jencoocke71@gmail.com](mailto:jencoocke71@gmail.com)

# MINIMALIST GESTURES FOR DIRECTORS

## ARE YOU GUIDING OR HINDERING?



Eric Dalbey, lead of 2006 champ Vocal Spectrum, rehearses with the Honors Chorus at HU 2025.

Too many gestures can confuse you as a singer. Both singer and director benefit from a minimalist approach, where posture and eye contact lead the musical conversation

**A** director's job is to effectively communicate a song's meaning and diverse vocal colors through the hands and body. Yet, sometimes we directors are drawn to some gestures simply because we like how they look, or we like how certain hand motions feel. Other times, poor use of gestures may reflect that a director doesn't yet have the resources, clarity, and preparation needed to effectively guide and inspire singers toward our musical intent.

Ineffective gestural choices or suboptimal postures often create a disconnect with singers, leading to unwanted shifts in volume, energy, and vocal articulation. This disconnect can lead to technical inconsis-

tencies and sometimes confusion in rehearsal! At times, we feel music so intensely that it can be challenging to translate our passion clearly to those who trust us to lead them.

Throughout my career, I have seen remarkable results by adopting a minimalist conducting approach, where posture and eye contact lead the musical conversation. That said, there is still room to move around energetically or add some "jazz hands" from time to time. Ultimately, our purpose as directors is to guide singers through the emotional journey of a piece so they can sing not only with technical unity but also with vulnerability, freedom, and shared expression. The relationship between gesture and sound is something one can spend a lifetime discovering.

### SIMPLIFY YOUR APPROACH

Have you ever felt an uptune slip away from you? Tempo battles breaking out across the chorus? In

an attempt to regain control, directors often end up over-directing: conducting too quickly, dictating every word, or micromanaging each phrase. If you hear inconsistencies in unity, sometimes the best solution is to step aside. If your chorus sings more beautifully and cohesively when you are on the sidelines, that's a humbling realization! To get back in the game, try conducting only downbeats or highlighting key syllables of important words in a phrase instead of trying to catch them all like Pokémon. When you feel the urge to tighten your grip, it's often a sign to do the opposite: step back, simplify, and trust your ensemble.

### BE COGNIZANT OF YOUR CONDUCTING PLANES

Be deliberate in defining your spatial boundaries that guide hand movements. We have the ability to conduct high or low, left or right, close to the body or extended outward, and these choices should always be guided by the music and the text. I like to imagine conducting planes as invisible, square cardboard boxes of varying sizes. The dynamics help determine the size of the box; mov-

*Ineffective gestural choices or suboptimal posture often create a disconnect with singers, leading to unwanted shifts in volume, energy, and vocal articulation. This disconnect can lead to technical inconsistencies and sometimes confusion in rehearsal!*

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ing beyond its boundaries can signal a crescendo, etc. Consistency is key: your ictus and rebound should be clear, uniform, and predictable.

The placement of the box, whether higher or lower, can also influence vocal color. Gestures or patterns that are higher in the body, near the sternum or above, may encourage brighter singing, while gestures lower, closer to the waist, may suggest a richer choral sound. I love using the sagittal conducting plane (forward and backward from the body) to emphasize an arrival point in the phrase, or to highlight syllabic stress. Play in the sandbox and find out

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The author is a past assistant director for Grammy-winning ensemble **Chanticleer** and directs 2025 International medalist **Fog City Singers** (below).

what works best for you!

### POSTURE AND EYES

There's a reason mirroring is considered such a powerful tool in psychology, and we use it every day, whether we are chatting with a barista or unconsciously imitating a friend we really admire. The same principle applies to conducting: singers need a conductor who physically embodies the desired posture. I'll be the first to admit that I'm a seasoned sloucher, so I see tremendous value in always defaulting to a grounded, singer-centered posture that allows the instrument to function at its best.

We also need to visually connect with our ensembles as they sing. Utilize intentional, well-timed eye contact in moments that call for heightened in-

tensity. Explore how variations in eye focus such as widening, narrowing, or briefly altering alignment can also inform sound. I'll never forget witnessing a conductor shape a crescendo using only his eyes. It remains one of the most powerful conducting moments I have ever experienced.

### CONCLUSION

Conducting is not just a manual skill; it's a full-body form of communication. While conducting patterns (4/4, 3/4, 6/8, etc.) offer structure, it is the story and emotions of the music that should advise the hands and body. If we pair simplified gestures with focused visual energy, you will be amazed at how much more your singers can achieve when they are given the opportunity to take greater responsibility in the rehearsal process.



**Kory Reid** is a professional singer, conductor, clinician, and vocal coach. He has a masters in choral conducting from USC and sang for 12 years with **Chanticleer**, where he was assistant musical director. He

directs 2025 bronze medalist **Fog City Singers** and sings bari in **Purple Rebar** quartet. [koryjamesreid@gmail.com](mailto:koryjamesreid@gmail.com)





# Meet Our Philanthropy Team



**Joe Cerutti**  
*Director of Philanthropy*

Joe Cerutti leads the development of the philanthropy team in its new structure in collaboration with BHS leaders and Board of Directors. For the past decade, Joe has focused on transforming the mindset of barbershop chapters across North America through an innovative philanthropic lens.



**Christina Brewer**  
*Fundraising Campaign and Donor Engagement Officer*

Christina Brewer leads national efforts in fundraising and donor engagement. She is an experienced nonprofit communications and marketing professional with a strong background in philanthropy-focused organizations in the barbershop community.



**Dixie Semich**  
*Development Operations Manager*

Dixie Semich manages the operations supporting our team and supporters. Dixie is an experienced nonprofit professional with more than 25 years in philanthropy, donor relations, and organizational operations.



**Rick Taylor**  
*Legacy Gifts Officer*

Rick Taylor enhances our legacy giving program by working with donors who wish to strengthen our future in harmony through estate planning. Rick has been a devoted member of the BHS for nearly 57 years, beginning his journey as a quartet singer at age 15 and joining the Society at 16.



**Tyler Wigginton**  
*Philanthropy Officer*

Tyler Wigginton serves in a similar capacity as his recent role with HFI, working with members of our community to bring their generosity to impact. Tyler has served as the BHS's National Fundraiser for HFI for more than two years. Tyler has served as the Rocky Mountain District's VP of Marketing & PR.



**Jeremy Gover**  
*Video Content Strategist*

Jeremy Gover serves as the Video Content Strategist. Jeremy was the video production manager of the BHS from 2014 - 2023, and was the driving force in growing the Society's YouTube channel from 20,000 subscribers in 2014 to over 231,000 today.

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# “EVERYTHING IN ITS PLACE”

## FROM BARBERSHOP HOME COOKS TO BECOMING MUSICAL CHEFS

“*Mise en place*” means having everything laid out before you begin. It matters for singers as much as it does for chefs

Every culinary tradition has its sacred, nostalgic recipes—the ones that don’t tolerate variation. (You do not mess with Grandma’s marinara. She has a wooden spoon and knows how to wield it.) We Barbershoppers have our equivalent: swipe tweaks passed from quartetter to quartetter, perennial convention tags, contest songs resurfacing. Tradition defines us, even as technique advances.

And yet, hallowed recipes still depend on fundamentals. Quality ingredients, organization, a sense of timing, our passionate process, and clear intention. We can nail every written step, yet still miss the magic if we skimp on seasoning or skip the simmer.

The real work happens in preparation—what chefs call *mise en place*, “putting in place” (“meez ahn plahs”—*oui*, it’s French). It’s discipline, having everything laid out before we begin: ingredients measured, tools positioned, techniques rehearsed. For singers, this encompasses prepared notes and words, emotional intent, and embellishments—all readied before rehearsal.

### NOT TOO LITTLE, NOT TOO MUCH

Craft lives in balance. The greatest chefs design experiences, telling tales through courses, bite by bite. With songs, each phrase is what lands on the fork—melody, harmony,

rhythm, lyric, embellishments, all needing proper proportion. One can drown artistry by over-balancing or overcooking any element.

Arrangers supply the ingredients; as performers, we synthesize them into perfect bites while advancing our narrative. We serve phrase by phrase, and each phrase must know its relative place.

Where are you in the narrative? Introduction, development, tension, climax, arrival, resolution? Technique serves story; let story guide your technique.

Home cooks follow recipes and trust the outcome. As you develop into a musical chef, you learn proportion and storytelling, discerning when to let a simple note shine, when silence serves, and when chord complexity defines the moment. You begin to compose high-impact experiences, delectable morsels, not mass-producing an extended family spaghetti bucket.

### COOKING WELL WITH YOUR INGREDIENTS

Before beginning, map the phrase’s landscape, musically and narratively. Try naming the phrase’s emotion

### TRY THIS IN REHEARSAL (90 SECONDS)

1. Pick any phrase with an embellishment (swipes, bell chords, hard onsets, multi-rhythm textures).
  - Sing it once neutrally:
    - Steady, plain, no decoration.
    - Set your baseline.
  - Strip it to rhythm:
    - Speak the lyrics while tapping beats and spaces between—smallest pulses.
    - Replace words with neutral syllables (“dah,” “dee,” “loo,” etc.).
    - Reinstate lyrics but staccato, to isolate rhythmic mechanics, syncopations.
    - Sing again legato.
  - Groove still wobbly?
    - Slow down, break it down, or repeat until it locks in.
  - Now explore embellishments.
    - Sing again, considering contrasts the decorations pull from or push against.
    - Ask: Are we building tension or arriving home?
2. Notice differences? Take that clarity through the full song.
3. Try a different phrase next time.



Musical *mise en place* gives you more juice per squeeze from every rehearsal. Collaborative priming makes finer music and worthier trust. Cooks become chefs by understanding workmanship, proportion, and storytelling, moving from hope to knowledge

first (warmth, urgency, humor, etc.), then let that guide your choices. Is your communication purposeful? Are you cognizant?

Subdivision is about feeling the rhythms between the beats that are sung; a wobbly groove indicates you aren't honoring unfelt rhythms. Fidelity prioritizes consistency in notes and words—accuracy empowers expression. Prioritize consistency in notes and words with an accuracy that empowers the expression of each phrase.

Embellishments are contrast—they work best when distinct from or an extension of what surrounds them. Contrast demands context and established defaults to maximize impact. Highlighting everything effectively highlights nothing. Season playfully!

Here's what separates craftspeople from recipe-followers: mindfulness in the moment before. The *Moment Before* is where you utilize straightforward phrases, balanced dynamics, and steady tempo. *Mise en place* for embellishments: setup, journey to contrast, and mechanical groundwork to deliver on that interplay.

Preparation requires discipline—and patience with yourself.

Directors: Design experiences and rehearsals (for our ensembles and audiences) where artistry can flourish. Set visionary intent first, build fundamentals before decoration, guide storytellers (not only vocalists). Cultivate sous chefs—en-



list capable musicians to connect, contribute to, and teach your vision. Assess your rehearsal outcomes—are you forging fulfilling breakthroughs or merely getting through notes? Adjust priorities—is this your default or is it an innovation?

Most musical miscommunications arise from delayed reactions and absentmindedness. When you train the moment before—anticipation, awareness, preparation, contrast—narrative expression becomes less labored and more intrinsic ... or, at least, closer to it. We're human after all.

Most Barbershoppers aren't professionals; our rehearsal time is

### MISE EN PLACE: THE CHECKLIST

- What do we intend to achieve?
- What worked last time?
- Where are we in the story?
- Emotional territory clarified?
- Musical mechanics clean?
- Find contrast:
  - Setup
  - Payoff
  - What happens in the Moment Before™?
- What are optimized approaches to achieve our intentions?
- Assess, Adapt, Iterate!

The author (directing) serves on the music team for the Saltaires of the Wasatch Front Chapter in Salt Lake City and is director of the chapter's new all-voices chorus Mosaic.

precious. Musical *mise en place* gives you more juice per squeeze from every rehearsal. Collaborative priming makes finer music and worthier trust.

Cooks become chefs by understanding workmanship, proportion, and storytelling, moving from hope to knowledge, from spaghetti buckets to a perfect morsel—an *amuse-bouche*.

Pick one phrase this week and prioritize it with mindful anticipation; that rigor reinvigorates music-making excellence. Prepare with intention and love, then pass it on.

That's why we sing—because high-craft harmony hooks everyone. ■



**Grant Goulding** is a coach, clinician, three-time district quartet champ, musical director for **Mosaic** Chorus in Salt Lake City, and arranger in residence for Mosaic and **The Saltaires**.  
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## DIRECTORS WANTED

Need a director? First 50 words are free for BHS chapters. [marketing@barbershop.org](mailto:marketing@barbershop.org). See the most current postings at [barbershop.org/directorsearch](http://barbershop.org/directorsearch).

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contact Fred Eichner at [fredallyn@comcast.net](mailto:fredallyn@comcast.net); home 360-459-9692 or cell 360-791-2476.

### EAST VALLEY HARMONIZERS

[evbarbershop.com](http://evbarbershop.com)

Located in Mesa, AZ, we are a small but talented and long-established chorus that has a welcoming camaraderie and enjoys singing out in the community. We offer an experienced Music Team and an active board. Salary negotiable. Contact Bryan Thompson [directorsearch@evbarbershop.com](mailto:directorsearch@evbarbershop.com), or 480-615-7464.

### VENICE GONDOLIERS

[SingInVenice.com](http://SingInVenice.com)

The **Venice, FL Chapter** is looking for a Music Director to develop and improve the basic skills of each and every member, to select

the music to be rehearsed and performed, and to choose the direction of the chorus's future. Contact Lee Frayer 941-953-3752 or [directorfrayer@gmail.com](mailto:directorfrayer@gmail.com).



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## THE TAG

Tom Gentry, Tagmaster

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# A different “Time After Time”

No, this is not the tag to the 1983 Cyndi Lauper hit, nor to the 1947 standard sung by Frank Sinatra. Rather, this is a real old-timer, composed in 1921 by J. Keirn Brennan and Ernest R. Ball.

(Speaking of old-timers, wouldn't **Aging Infrastructure** be a good name for a seniors quartet? How about the **Preexisting Conditions**? Feel free to steal these.)

Brennan penned the lyrics to such songs as “Dear Little Boy of Mine,” “Let the Rest of the World Go By” and “A Little Bit of Heaven

(Sure They Call It Ireland).” Ball collaborated with him on the first two pieces and composed the music to the all-time classic “When Irish Eyes Are Smiling.”



I found this gem on a 1959 tag sheet compiled by two-time (time after time?) International Champ bass Mo Rector (left), who was featured on this page in the November/December 2025 issue. Mo titled the sheet *Woodshedder's Special—A Collection of the Gaynote's [sic] Favorite Tags, Swipes, & Intros (all stolen!)*.

Well, we don't know whom he stole this tag from, but I recall learning it many moons (not Earl) ago. As an aside, there used to be more two-octave final chords than there are now. Department of Guessing: More basso profundos sang barbershop back in the day, whereas now, our higher bass-baritones are fine singing, say, middle C.

Take your time singing this tag. This applies especially to measure 3, where the rest and first chord are written as eighths simply because the meter demands it. Just wallow in all the enjoyable chords! ■

## TIME AFTER TIME

### TTBB voicing

Arranger Unknown

af - ter time. \_\_\_\_\_

Tenor Lead

For I've told you time af - ter, I've told you time af - ter time.

Bari Bass

### SSAA voicing

Arranger Unknown

af - ter time. \_\_\_\_\_

Tenor Lead

For I've told you time af - ter, I've told you time af - ter time.

Bari Bass

### SATB voicing

Arranger Unknown

af - ter time. \_\_\_\_\_

Tenor Lead

For I've told you time af - ter, I've told you time af - ter time.

Bari Bass

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