

THE HARMONY NIFIER

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Mike Rowe
of "Dirty Jobs" fame
blames his success on
Fred King

DANGER
**RESTRICTED
AREA**



MIKE ROWE PHOTO: THE DISCOVERY CHANNEL
FRED KING PHOTOS THIS PAGE: BRIAN LYNCH

Fred, this is all because

Mike Rowe was a stuttering 9th-grader when he met the most outrageous and inspirational choral teacher ever to wear fake teeth. Mike's life changed for good the day he stole an "Oriole Four" record from the teacher's office. Here is one of the best Fred King stories of them all.

When strangers would ask me how I wound up with my name in the title of a hit show, I would never tell them the whole truth. That level of disclosure would require a mention of SPEBSQSA, and I've learned that long and unpronounceable acronyms make people anxious. So for the purpose of expediency, I would usually limit my reply to a quick anecdote about Jay Leno or Dick Clark, or some other Hollywood big shot that helped me along the path of B-list celebrity.

Of course, the truth is never found in Hollywood, and though I've done well in that town and made the acquaintance of a few famous people, I can assure you that none of them are responsible for my present good fortune. I found my success in bits and pieces, along the crooked parts of an unexpected path paved with good friends and close harmony. It was a road I had never

considered or even imagined—a road that began in Baltimore nearly 30 years ago, and meandered through 50 states and six continents. It's a road I continue to travel with great satisfaction, but were it not for Fred King, it would have most certainly been a road not taken.

At Fred's funeral, I sat quietly in the balcony, and tried to imagine a world where he had never lived. I thought of friends never made and songs never sung. Like one of those townspeople in Bedford Falls, I saw myself stumbling around in some dismal, alternative universe, my "wonderful life" hopelessly altered by the



e of you

Mike Rowe has worked in the entertainment business for more than 20 years. He is best known as the creator and host of the Emmy-nominated "Dirty Jobs with Mike Rowe." In that capacity, he has appeared around the world in sewers, garbage trucks, crab boats, and dairy farms while artificially inseminating more barnyard animals than any other host in television history. Recently, he completed his 200th dirty job and launched a website called *mikeroweWORKS.com*, a PR initiative to reinvigorate the construction and technical trades.

absence of one high school music teacher.

Robert Frost wrote that "way leads on to way..." and I suppose that's true. But looking down at the crowd that filled the church, at the hundreds of people who had traveled far and braved a hurricane to pay their respects, it was clear that my old friend and mentor had been more than a director of music; He had been a director of lives, and without even trying he had changed the direction of mine. So even though you haven't asked the question, I'm going to pretend you did. And this time, my answer will include a 70-year-old acronym, a newer name that they can remember, and the part I usually leave out.

Mr. Holland? Please report to the main office

When we first met in September of 1977, Fred King and I were each beginning our first day at Overlea Sr. High School in Baltimore County, Md. I was a skinny freshman with a deep voice and a weird stutter and he was Mr. King, a new teacher assigned to an anemic music department that consisted of one bloated choir filled with students who thought they had signed up for a "free period."

There is simply no way to overstate the impact of our first encounter. Remember George C. Scott's opening speech in "Patton"? Well, Patton was a sissy. Mr. King walked into the



Mike (second from left) in 1981, at the time about 18 years old "and as skinny as my tie." Singing with him are Mike Price, Chuck Klausmeyer (by this time "in full control of his lower GI tract") and their choral teacher, barbershop mentor, chapter chorus director and inspiration Fred King.



crowded classroom and greeted us with two words. "Shut Up!" His voice was stunningly loud. In the silence, he passed out a piece of sheet music far beyond anyone's ability to sight-read. It was a six-part cappella arrangement that appeared to be in Latin.

Walking quickly to the piano, Mr. King gave us the pitch and started to conduct. I don't know what he was expecting, but when no sound emerged from our baffled windpipes he looked curiously around the room and then at his own hands, as if the problem might have originated there. Frowning, he gave us the pitch a second time, and began to conduct again.

Silence.

"This is the Overlea Senior High School Concert Choir, is it not?" When no one replied, Mr. King closed his eyes and took several deep breaths, as though he were trying to calm himself. Then, he came unhinged.

Slapping his hand on the piano with a mighty wallop, Mr. King launched into a tirade that featured expressions most often heard in pool halls and saloons. He foamed. He raved. He swore. Veins appeared in his neck and forehead. He tore the sheet music into shreds, and threw them directly into our stunned faces. He cursed our incompetence and wondered aloud what cruel twist of fate had brought him in contact with such "a pathetic group of clueless mutes." Then, he kicked the music stand across the classroom in disgust, and pointed to the open door. "If you're not ready to sing," he bellowed, "GET THE HELL OUT!"

It was a phenomenal exodus. Half of the class gath-

ered their books and never looked back. Some actually ran. When they were gone, Mr. King slammed the door behind them, stomped back to the piano, and glared at those who dared remain. For at least 10 seconds he just stood there, breathing deeply, and trying to get himself under control. Then, his face cracked in half.

Technically, one might describe the phenomena as a "smile," but if the intended consequence was mirth we'll need to settle on another term. The cruel gash that slowly opened between his nose and chin revealed a stunning rictus of rotten enamel. Baby teeth were crowded up against giant incisors. Molars sprouted from the spot normally reserved for canines. And the two front teeth, though properly placed, were the size of small thumbs and jutted desperately past his ever-widening lips, as if trying to escape the diseased gums from which they hung.

Beth Miller gasped. Cindy Schultz screamed. And the rest of us lurched backward as the magnitude of this dental disaster was slowly revealed. When he had our attention—completely and totally—he spoke.

"Ladies and gentlemen, the cowards have departed. Let's have some fun."

For the next three years, that's exactly what we did. We talked. We laughed. We learned. We beheld a treasure trove of fake teeth. And of course, we sang. With no regard for standard curriculums and not one shred of political correctness, Mr. King went about the business of challenging us like no other teacher would ever dare. Musically, there were pieces like Vaughn Williams's "Hodie," and Bach's "Mass in B-Minor," ambitious works so far beyond our ability that we didn't know any better and learned and performed them anyway.

But the personal challenges were even greater. When Mr. King found out I had never sung before, he assigned me a solo in our first concert that was several notes out of my range. When he saw the fear on my face he kept me after class for private voice lessons. When he learned that I stuttered, he suggested I audition for the school play. (By "suggested" I mean "demanded.") After stammering my way through a monologue, he stopped me.

"Mikey," he said, "This character doesn't stutter. Understand? Get into the character. You can stutter on your own time." Without questioning the glibness of his direction, I simply followed it, and read the passage again—flawlessly. A light bulb flashed. New possibilities opened before me.

There is simply no way to overstate the impact of our first encounter.
REMEMBER GEORGE C. SCOTT'S OPENING SPEECH IN "PATTON"?
 Well, Patton was a sissy.

He was a teacher who made things happen. Just a month into that first year, outraged by a lack of school spirit around the big homecoming game, Mr. King appropriated a snare drum from the orchestra department and began rapping out a cadence that might inspire a soldier to charge into battle. "Mike, walk with me. Everybody else, fall in!"

Leaping from our chairs, we followed Mr. King out of the music room and down the solemn hallways of Overlea, shattering the quiet and bursting into seventh period classes uninvited and unannounced. "Study later!" he bellowed. "A battle is at hand. Rise up and follow me!"

Teachers were dumbfounded and students were unable to resist. Like a pied piper, Mr. King marched us up and down the hallways, out the back doors and out onto the football field where the Overlea Falcons were preparing to get their butts kicked by a much better team. There, on the far end of the gridiron, he taught us the school song. (The juniors and seniors were particularly amazed, having no idea that a school song even existed.) He addressed us as an army general might, demanding our loyalty, challenging our spirit, calling the players on our team "heroes" and praising their courage for carrying our collective honor. He was a one-man pep rally and had the entire school in the palm of his hand.

After that day, singing seemed cool to a lot of kids who had never given it a second thought. Even the jocks wanted to be in Mr. King's class and he made room for them. Overnight, the concert choir swelled from 25 to 70. A boys chorus was formed. Then a mixed chorus. A madrigal group. A concert chorale.

I joined them all.

Birds of a feather

One day during my junior year, I came across an old record album in Fred's office. (By this point, I was welcome in his office and allowed to call him Fred.) It was a funny-looking album with four black and orange birds on the cover. The birds had been drawn to resemble stick figures and they appeared to be singing. One was holding a top hat. Another had a cane. I couldn't imagine the sound made by four singing birds, so I put the album on the stereo and turned up the volume.

When the opening chords of "Hi Neighbor" came crashing through the speakers, my jaw dropped. How could four men make that much sound? By the second verse of "Danny Boy," I was spellbound. "Old Folks" left me transfixed. And during the tag of "Somewhere," I very nearly crapped my pants.

My intent was not to steal the album, but that is precisely what I did. I took it home without permission and listened to it over and over and over again. I learned the bass part to every song as well as the lead. The tenor was easy enough to hear but too high to sing along with. (The baritone was a mystery.) I played the album for my best friend, a guy named Chuck Klausmeyer, who also sang in the boy's chorus. He reacted the same way, except during the tag of "Somewhere" he really did crap his pants.

We were fascinated. They were a barbershop quartet and they called themselves **The Oriole Four**. According to the back of the album, they had won some sort of gold medal. What was that about? Were they Olympians? And why were they wearing tuxedos?

By Sunday, Chuck and I had memorized most of the songs. We were singing duets from the album, lead and bass respectively. I thought we sounded pretty good together and started wondering how we might sound with two more parts. That Monday at school, I went looking for answers.

"Fred, what is S.P.E.B.S.Q.S.A.?"

"Fred, why can't I hear the baritone part?"

"Fred, look how skinny you are in this picture!"

"Fred, can you make me sound like Don Stratton?"

Fred looked at me for a moment with no expression, "Mike, don't ever take anything from my office again."

"Yes, sir."

I held his gaze for about ten sec-



The Chorus of the Chesapeake at the 1983 MAD district fall contest. Fred is bottom left, Mike is in the featured quartet, behind the singer in the cape.



THE DISCOVERY CHANNEL



THE DISCOVERY CHANNEL

Mike (third from left) in high school in his first quartet. "We called ourselves Semi-Fourmal, because we dressed in tuxedos and tennis shoes. Naturally, we misspelled 'formal' on purpose because there were four of us and we were terribly clever."



"Thank you. I won't."
"And one more thing."
"Yes, sir?"
"Nobody sounds like Don Stratton."

Pardon me, do you know what century this is?

The next night, at approximately 7:45 p.m., Chuck and I pulled through the gates of City Hospital in East Baltimore. We followed the directions to the former nurses dormitory and climbed up the stairs toward a large banner that read, "Chorus of the Chesapeake, International Champions, 1971 S.B.E.B.S.Q.S.A. Dundalk, Md." With no clear idea of what awaited us on the other side, Chuck and I walked through the glass doors, and into a time warp.

One hundred and fifty men were spread throughout a large room, most of whom we assumed had come directly from work. There were cops and postmen and firemen, all in uniform. There was a milkman and a clown tapping a keg of beer in the corner. I saw a train conductor and priest. A cowboy and an Indian. I saw baseball players wearing old-time uniforms. Several men were dressed like professional card dealers, with shiny vests and armbands. And some appeared to be hobos,

onds. Then, he wrote something on a piece of paper.

"Be at this address tomorrow at 8 p.m."

"Yes, sir."

"Bring Chuck, too."

"Yes, sir."

As I walked out, he handed me the album and said, "Here, keep it. Learn it. And don't lose it."

tattered and unshaven with soot on their faces.

It was a bizarre scene, made stranger by the fact that most of these men were clustered in groups of four, singing face to face, nose to nose. The cacophony was all around us, dozens of beehives each buzzing a different tune, oblivious to the others.

"Its called woodshedding, boys. And it's not always pretty." Fred had come out of the throng with another guy that looked vaguely familiar. This is Bob Welzenbach," he said, "a friend from the old neighborhood." I didn't recognize Bob from the album jacket because he had shaved his beard. But I did recognize Jim Grant and Don Stratton, who had come up from the other direction and taken a position next to Chuck. Before I could digest what was happening, Fred put a shiny disk to his lips and blew a pitch. A moment later, the air around me exploded.

*Yes, we're sweethearts,
Suzie and me!
Away back home in Yonkers,
All the fellas envy me cause I have got a Sweetie
known as Suzie ...*

The album I had just memorized had come alive, and the sound was almost too much to process. It seemed to come from above them and filled the entire room with overtones that crackled and hummed. Chuck and I stood there grinning like idiots. The other foursomes immediately disbanded and ran over to listen. (When the Orioles sang, everyone listened.) I won't say that I wept, but when they hit the tag—Suzie's my favorite gal ... Oh what a GAL!—the sound knocked the moisture from my eyes.

When the applause finally ended, Fred told the crowd to grab a beer and take a seat. **The Chorus of the Chesapeake** was sponsoring a "Quartet Send-off," and dozens of quartets from around the region were apparently headed off to compete against other quartets from around the country. The whole idea was overwhelming. Somehow, I had formed the impression that The Oriole Four was the only source of barbershop harmony in existence. But now I was learning that there was an entire society, with thousands of members, and hundreds of chapters and thousands of registered quartets. Some of them were right in front of me. There was **The Reign-Bows End**, **The Friends of Yesterday**, **The Preservation Quartet**, and **Fascinatin' Rhythm**. The **B&O Connection** was there, along with **The Captain's Chorders**, and half a dozen others. I sat there next to Fred listening to grown men sing about mothers and sweethearts and old friends that would never forsake you. These men—some veterans of the Second World War—sang with unapologetic joy and sentimentality. They sang about patriotism and good old-fashioned girls and home sweet home. They sang

When the opening chords came
CRASHING THROUGH THE SPEAKERS, MY JAW DROPPED.
 During the tag of "Somewhere," I very nearly crapped my pants.

songs I'd never heard but somehow recognized.

The applause and support for each quartet was long and loud, and when the last one finished Fred told The Chorus of the Chesapeake to take their positions on the risers. Because we had no positions of our own, Fred instructed Chuck and me to stand directly behind him. He then asked the various quartets to join the chorus and once again pulled out the shiny disk and blew another pitch.

The song was "That's What I Call a Pal," and if I failed to accurately capture the effect of four men singing as one, I'll have no hope of describing the sensation of 150. The sound was huge beyond comprehension, a wall of perfectly tuned testosterone controlled entirely by Fred's fingers and targeted to that small spot directly between my eyes. I could do nothing but stand and gape in stupefied wonder as tears ran down my cheeks, and Chuck once again quietly crapped his pants.

The chorus rehearsed for at least an hour, but I couldn't tell you what else they sang because I had gone temporarily deaf. When Fred dismissed them, another keg was tapped and the men of Dundalk got down to business. Chuck and I were separated, shanghaied by various foursomes, and introduced to the mysteries of woodshedding. A nice old fella named Bob Seay, who

I later learned was the founder of the chorus, taught me a few tags, and told me "Son, you got the pipes."

Out in the parking lot, long after midnight, The Oriole Four sang half a dozen songs straight into my face. It was a private concert that will never be trumped. Then, in a gesture whose significance I could not yet know, Fred asked Don Stratton to step aside and let me sing the bass part to "Old Folks." I can't say I remembered every word or nailed every note, but I got my share. More importantly, I got to say that my first complete song ever sung in a barbershop quartet was in the company of The Oriole Four.

That night, Fred King changed the trajectory of my life. I joined the Chorus of the Chesapeake the following week, and with Fred's help formed my own quartet. (Chuck sang lead and eventually got control of his lower GI tract.) We called ourselves **Semi-Formal**, because we dressed in tuxedos and tennis shoes. (Naturally, we misspelled "formal" on purpose because there were four of us and we were terribly clever.) Fred coached us after school, and in no time we were singing for anyone who'd care to listen and a few that probably didn't. From street corners to nursing homes to Carnegie Hall, I got hooked on an audience and never got over it.

I learned enough about music to fake my way into



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With his pitch pipe he was an aging king holding his scepter.
I WONDERED IF I MIGHT EVER BE LUCKY ENOUGH
to change the course of a single life as he had changed mine.

The Baltimore Opera, which somehow led to a gig at The QVC Shopping Channel, where I sold karaoke machines in the middle of the night. Barbershop harmony got me through the stage door of the entertainment industry, and eventually I wound up in New York and Hollywood hosting game shows, talk shows and travel shows. Today, I have a job that I love, friends that I cherish, and opportunities that all began with an unforgettable music teacher, a barbershop quartet and a pile of old songs that continue to play in my memory.

Just the echo of a sigh

The last time I saw Fred alive was a day or two after Christmas, 2007. I was on my way to Alaska for work and decided to stop by Baltimore for a quick visit with friends and family. I'm glad I did. Turns out The Chorus of the Chesapeake had organized a holiday "Beer Blast." (The boys at Dundalk still prefer to name their gatherings in a way that captures the event's true purpose and draws the biggest possible crowd.)

I arrived late to a banquet hall jammed with

several hundred singers but found Fred right away, comfortably situated in a corner holding court, from his wheelchair. He was surrounded by a few dozen people and teaching a tag to four kids in their early twenties. I watched him conduct with his pitch pipe—an aging king holding his scepter.

Like his old pal Jim Grant, Fred was down to one leg and fighting the diabetes every day. The most recent stroke had taken a terrible toll, and I was struck by how frail he looked—and pale. But as I watched from the edge of the crowd, I saw that he still commanded the same attention. The same magnetism. People still needed to be near him and they clung to his every word.

When I caught his eye, he smiled big, and greeted me with a predictable salutation. "Fwaciss!" he exclaimed in a surprisingly hearty baritone. (Fwaciss isn't really a word—it's how you pronounce a truly inappropriate acronym too tasteless to spell out here. He's been greeting me that way since high school.)

I walked over, knelt down, and kissed him on the forehead. "That's a hell of a way to lose weight," I said,

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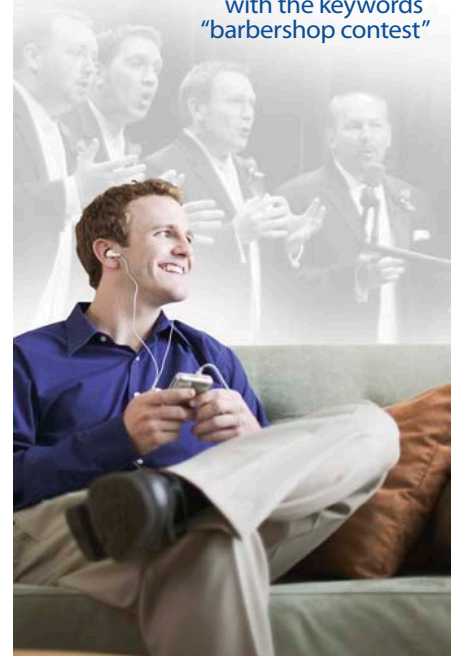
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looking at the space where his leg used to be.

“Don’t worry, Hollywood—my other one will still fit up your butt.”

We laughed and talked and caught up fast. Me, kneeling on the floor, Fred, leaning forward in his chair. It had been nearly a year since I saw him last, and I had a thousand questions but so did Fred: When Fred has questions, he goes first.

“How many of those dirty jobs have you done now?”
“200.”

“Damn! How many states have you been to?”

“All of them.”

“Holy Crap, Mikey! That’s great! Do you still love it?”

“Well,” I said, “it’s a lot like woodshedding. Fun to do but hard to watch.”

He laughed again, and asked about my latest adventure. He wanted to hear about my life and my career. He told me again that he was so proud, and I told him again that I was so grateful. As we continued to catch up, others came by to say hello and pay their respects.

“These days, when people see me they figure it might be for the last time,” he said. “So they keep saying goodbye. Makes it awkward when I keep showing up.”

At some point, the random woodshedding evolved into the inevitable “pickup” quartet competition. I can’t say the beer enhanced the singing, but it certainly improved the listening. However, after a particularly brutal rendition of “Lida Rose,” Fred turned to me and said, “Mike, I think we can take this thing.”

“Really?” I replied, “the gold?”

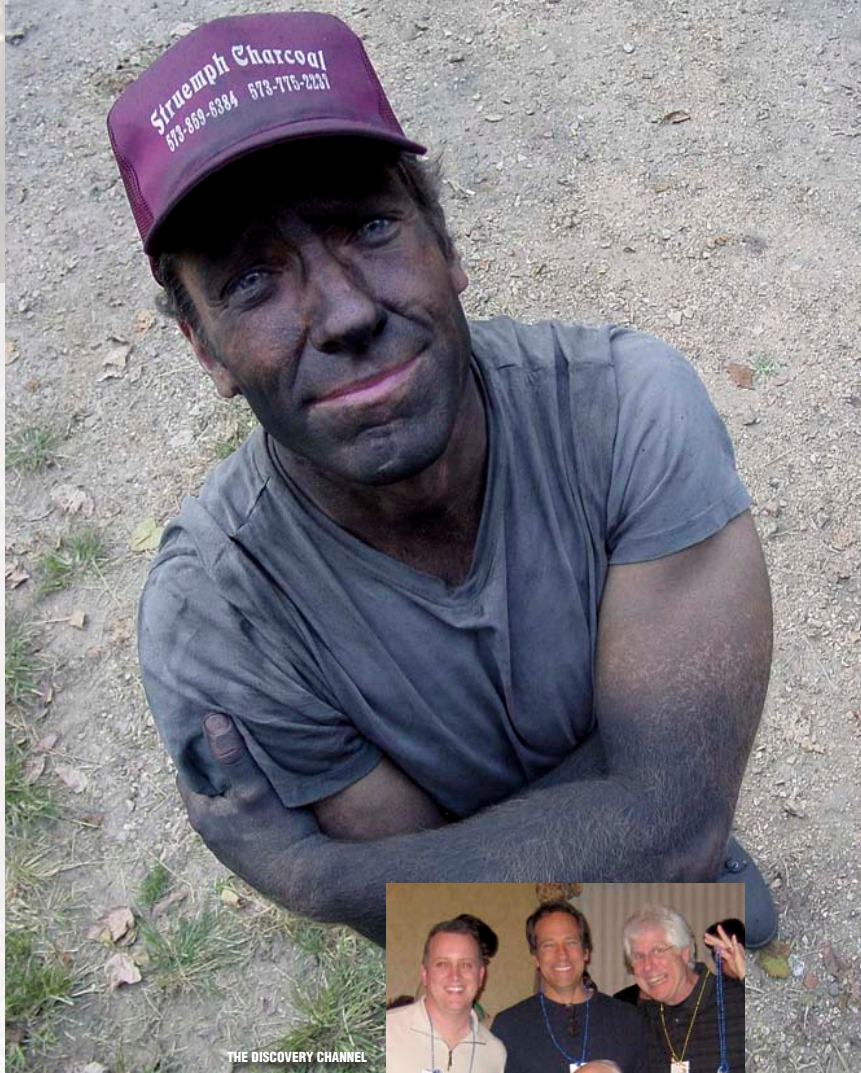
“Is there any other color?” he said. “Go grab us a tenor and a baritone.”

Ten minutes later, I was wheeling Fred to the front of the room. With me were Rick Taylor, director of the chorus, and Bob Seay, a tenor with a medal and the grandson of the guy that taught me my first tag. (When in doubt, stack the deck.) The song was “Ebb Tide,” arranged by none other than Fred King and taught to my old quartet by the man himself almost 30 years ago in the classroom where we’d first met.

*First the tide rushes in
Plants a kiss on the shore
Then rolls out to sea,
And the sea, is very still once more ...*

As we sang, I couldn’t help but think back to those early years at Overlea, and it occurred to me that Fred was the same age then as I am today. I don’t know why that struck me as relevant, but it did. I thought about the many students he had touched over the years and the many viewers who watch my show every week. And I wondered if I might ever be lucky enough to change the course of a single life as he had changed mine.

When the song ended, the crowd rose and clapped



The victorious quartet at the December 2007 “Beer Bash”: Bob Seay, Mike Rowe, Rick Taylor and Freddie King.

for what seemed like 15 minutes. I can’t say I remembered every word, or nailed every note, but I got enough of them. Not that it mattered; with Fred singing lead, we were pretty much a shoo-in.

Sure enough, when the final “scores” were tabulated, we won first prize that night, and though the “medal” wasn’t really gold, I kept it anyway. In fact, I still have it.

I suspect I always will. ■

Bonus audio at barbershop.org

In the late spring of 2008, Rick Taylor (tenor of Old School and director of The Chorus of the Chesapeake) interviewed Mike Rowe for a planned story in *The Harmonizer*. This story was to have been about Mike and his early barbershop career, so Fred King came up often in the conversations. Mike, Rick and Fred all go way back, and the interview was originally intended only for Rick’s notes. With Mike and Rick’s permission, a shortened and “bleeped” download of these two conversations is available at www.barbershop.org/Roweinterview.aspx

Going viral

Internet goes wild for Main Street's medley

Those who attended the International Convention in Pittsburgh remember Main Street's modern pop medley "These Will Be The Good Old Days Twenty Years From Now" as arguably the most talked-about performance of the week. It is now crushing on YouTube, having garnered nearly half a million views within a week of posting, as it was boosted by media outlets, social media, and blogs around the world. How did the beloved five-time medalist quartet come up with this innovative, side-splitting performance?

What's life been like for Main Street this past week?

The amount of attention and support has us both shocked and elated, not only for Main Street but for the barbershop artform. When you read the countless posts, tweets and articles written about the video, there has been nothing but positive reactions about barbershop music, and what a great thing that is! When you realize the majority of these comments are from non-Barbershoppers, it feels good to know we are being viewed favorably in the public eye.

Where did your idea of using pop songs in a medley come from?

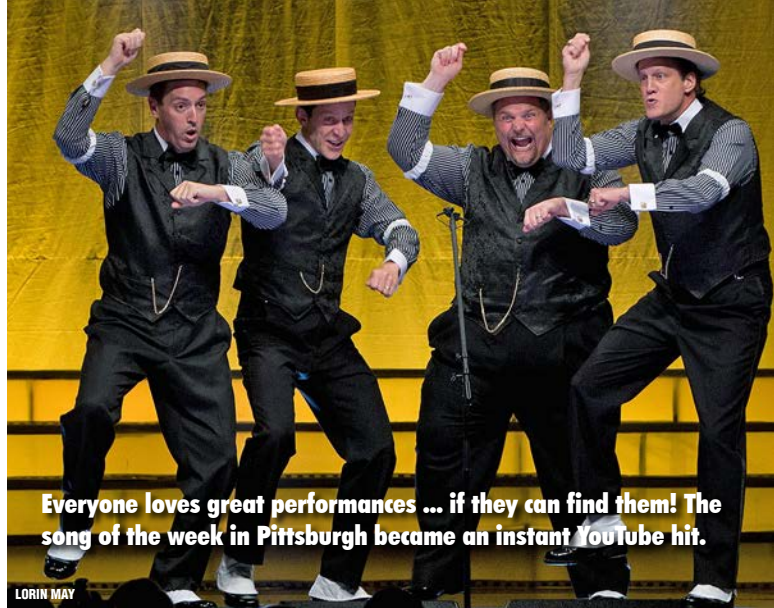
Tony De Rosa, our lead, had suggested the idea of Main Street singing pop songs in some form or another a few years ago. However we didn't really know how to make it work for Main Street, so the idea was shelved for future consideration.

It wasn't until earlier this year when Mike McGee (baritone) was watching a YouTube video of The Osmond Brothers singing a song on the Andy Williams show that sparked the idea. The quartet was singing a song called, "These Will Be The Good Old Days Twenty Years From Now," which contained a storyline that would be a great vehicle to theme a medley of popular music ranging from the 1980s to current day. The juxtaposition between pop music that is "cool and hip" against the stereotypical "square" barbershop quartet persona of Main Street was too good to pass up.

We presented the idea to arranger Clay Hine, who was instantly attracted to the concept. After lengthy research, we came up with more than 40 songs to be considered for the medley. Clay was able to whittle it down to eight tunes that he felt would lend themselves not only to the contest parameters, but also would be relevant to the demographic in the audience.



Mike McGee
Bari of 2015
International
medalist
Main Street
the5thwhl@
gmail.com



Everyone loves great performances ... if they can find them! The song of the week in Pittsburgh became an instant YouTube hit.

LORIN MAY

How long did it take you to learn the song?

The arrangement wasn't completed until June, about three weeks before the contest. We had to move fast to memorize not only the music, but the choreography, which was fairly complicated by quartet standards.

Mike had begun choreographing the medley before it was even completed to give us a head start. At one point, we were learning notes and polishing dance steps at the same time. However, we weren't concerned; Clay is a masterful arranger whose arrangements are creative but also very singable. We've also found recording video on our iPhones and instantly uploading to YouTube is a tremendous tool helping us refine our performance and critique what does and doesn't work.

Sometimes groups capture lightning in a bottle. Did you know you had a hit on your hands?

Initially we were excited about the concept; however, there may have been slight hesitance leading up to International because we weren't sure if the barbershop community would recognize the songs. Fortunately, the week before contest, we sang the medley in front of the **Toast of Tampa Show Chorus** and also at a local church concert. The audiences were very receptive at both performances, and it helped to instill confidence within the quartet. (Note: After the contest, one Music judge said, "I didn't recognize any of the songs, but the 7,000 people behind me were so loud, rolling with laughter I said to myself, 'This must be funny!'")

That same week we had a coaching session with comic genius Rick La Rosa who "plus-ed" the song with some subtle nuances, helping to focus the communication and execution of the theme to the audience. One major change that received one of the largest responses from the audience in Pittsburgh was modifying "Uptown Funk" from a boogie-groove uptune into an overly contrived barbershop ballad, bringing out our best impressions of ballad overacting in a quartet performance.

Clay Hine and Rick La Rosa are incredible artists in whose creative ideas, forward thinking and honest opinions we have the utmost trust. We are very thankful for their time and commitment to Main Street. ■



Now is the very best time to be a Barbershopper

The below comes from my 2015 End of Year Letter to chapter and district leaders. Also, catch pages 18-20 of this issue, where Crossroads discusses the new attitude music educators are developing toward barbershop!

Now is the very best time to be a Barbershopper. A bold statement? You bet. The Society is better positioned today for making a change in the world than we have been for years. Consider:

- Barbershop is getting meaningful media coverage, social media and interview views. We're no longer an undiscovered treasure; people know more about us and are curious. Are you ready to see them come in the door and *retain* them?
- People are crazy about a cappella singing right now, with smash hit TV shows (*The Sing-Off*), movies (*Pitch Perfect*), and platinum-selling albums (**Pentatonix**) bringing attention to vocal music. Awareness and interest are at an all-time high!
- Youth and educator interest is surging with increased turnout for camps, workshops, our youth quartet and chorus programs, and there are more



Chapters—especially small, isolated, or aging chapters—need more resources scaled to their capabilities.

educators than ever before at Harmony University.

- The BHS is financially stable, with strong cash reserves, an expanding professional staff, its largest expenditure in history for programming, yet member dues rates will be constant for the third straight year.

None of these successes is meaningful unless your chapter is thriving. A growing Society is only growing if your chapter is growing, thriving, experiencing the joy

every time you get together to rehearse, perform, and serve your community.

Continuing the work of the 2011 Chapter Visitation Project, we've been listening pretty intensely during 2015. While our members are telling us that the BHS is heading in the right direction as a whole, we're hearing loud and clear that chapters—especially small, isolated, or aging chapters—need more resources scaled to their capabilities. How can we help them develop musical leaders or recruit more leaders locally? How can chapters create better local awareness, get in front of audiences, find more people to become singers, fans, and fellow travellers?

2016 is a year of continued investments. We are organizing 2016 to invest in staffing and programming that address chapter needs. The Healthy Chapter Initiative, underwritten by a major grant from Harmony Foundation, will transform the ways we define and deliver

chapter leadership education. The Society and its Districts are particularly focused on improving the chapters that are ready and prepared to become healthier.

- The big picture: our strategic direction is externally aimed.** Even as we tend to our own internal needs, we are working to position our Society as a major arts organization that has a \$30 million annual impact when all of our business units are considered. When building and planning all of our activities, BHS will build upon the following strategic pillars. Through the medium of barbershop harmony, we
- Maintain & expand supportive services for a global community of artists;
 - Elevate artistic and leadership skills through education and best practices;
 - Establish lifelong singing as a core community asset;
 - Scale our impact by growing social enterprise, individual philanthropy, and institutional philanthropy.

Why bother?

Barbershoppers have always been more than just hobbyists. From the earliest days, our Code of Ethics has declared "The Society aspires to preserve for its members and for all future generations of prospective members the sacred right of men to seek haven from the burden of their daily cares through indulgence in old-fashioned vocal quartet harmony."

We do this for the joy that comes from singing. For the joy that comes from genuine friendships. For the joy that comes from joining together. For the joy that comes from making a difference in people's lives.

And all of these joys are worth preserving and encouraging for future generations.

Together, we are making the music that's making a difference. Thank you for making a difference in the lives of so many. I wish you a happy, safe, and wonderful holiday.

Yours in harmony,

mmonson@barbershop.org

What's on Marty's daytimer?

- Feb 10-13, Texas Music Educator Association, San Antonio
- March 7-10, ACDA Southwestern Division Conference "Then Sings My Soul" Kansas City



What's Marty listening to?

- Vocalosity by Vocalosity



What's Marty reading?

- Alone Together; Why we expect more from technology and less from each other, Sherry Turkle



Follow Marty's social media

bit.ly/martyfacebook
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10 BEST LEADS OF ALL TIME

Society Hall of Famer Lou Perry will be remembered for many things, including the insights of his wife, Ruth. Boston Common bass Terry Clarke recalls a conversation with Ruth about the qualities of a perfect lead. She told him there are three factors to consider: voice, heart and brain—"and them that's got all three don't need the other guys. They generally end up as soloists."

We might assume that Ruth was being a little facetious, but Clarke suggests there are few in the Society who do have all three. However, we here present an amazing list of leads who qualify. Not only a brilliant top 10 of mostly gold medalists, but another eight honorable mentions following more voting, discussion, still more voting and heated discussion and final voting by our sweat-soaked panel.

The top 10 tenors appeared in the May-June issue of *The Harmonizer*. We're now working on choosing baritones and basses for upcoming issues. The rules remain the same: panelists cannot vote for themselves, and all must eventually agree on the list before we release it to you.

This time we began with 32 lead nominees spanning the decades before trimming the list to 18 names. And if your first reaction is "how in the world could you leave out so-and-so?" we understand; some of our panelists asked the same question. The choices are presented alphabetically.

JOE CONNELLY. Everyone reached for superlatives in trying to describe the accomplishments of the Society's only four-time gold medalist. The late Gene Cokeroff: "I never knew the human voice could make that much sound, sing that high or that low with vocal quality, especially in a harmony setting." David Wright: "Not just because he won four times, but because his beautiful voice is iconic." Don Barnick: "Great delivery of a song." Joe won his first championship in 1987 with **Interstate Rivals**, followed by **Keepsake** in 1992, **PLATINUM** in 2000 and **Old School** in 2011. Aside from his genes (dad Mike is a veteran quartet medalist) and his pipes, consider the dedication to craft and performance that has kept him at the top of his game through almost four decades. And what about his influence on other quartet singers?



Jim Bagby
Bari, 1986
champ Rural
Route 4
jbagby3@
kc.rr.com



Interstate Rivals (1987)
Keepsake (1992)
Platinum (2000)
Old School (2011)



Vocal Spectrum (2006)

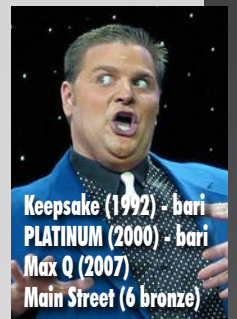
ERIC DALBEY. The youngest on our list, just turned 31, Dalbey holds the singular honor with his quartet of golds at every level but Seniors: Collegiate, Society and chorus (**Ambassadors of Harmony**). Bill Biffle says the young Missourian has a voice "of incredible flexibility and range ... wonderfully beautiful—and stable—to

hang a great quartet sound on. Never faltered in the most difficult of challenges: think 'On the Street Where You Live.'" Cokeroff: "I marvel at Eric's vocal talent and skills, especially his ability to sing harmony as well as melody." He is a standout personality in a quartet full of them, and already is giving back to the Society through the C&J program.

TONY DE ROSA. The late, great emcee Dan Henry Bowser used to kid about certain performers, "Well, he's young, handsome and talented ... I hate him."

That would fit Tony since he was about 8 years old. And he just keeps coming. Brian Beck sums up De Rosa: "Right now, he's the best overall singer in the whole outfit, in my humble opinion." Those who note that Tony has won two of his three golds on baritone might argue that Beck never had a humble opinion in his life, and that one lead gold does not qualify him for this list. Setting aside that Tony has as many (or more) lead golds as most of the men on this list, 10 international medals singing lead and his championship-level singing with **Main Street** should alone answer the "isn't he really a bari?" question. Moreover, gold medal coach Randy Loos notes that De Rosa "has added a lot of vocal tools since converting to lead ... the subtleties of his singing can easily be missed."

BOB FRANKLIN. Already a Society Hall of Fame member with his 1961 championship quartet, **Suntones**, Franklin was one of two near-unanimous choices for this list. Our panel members, of all ages, stood in line to pay him honor. "He had elastic pipes," recalled Tom Neal. "Then and now, Bob set the standard for smooth, melodic, and



Keepsake (1992) - bari
PLATINUM (2000) - bari
Max Q (2007)
Main Street (6 bronze)



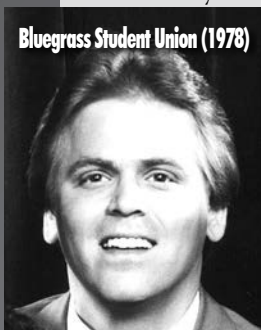
was a great interpreter.” Wright: “The charisma in this man’s voice was crucial to the wide appeal of arguably the best barbershop quartet ever.” Cokeroff (who should know): “Nobody, but nobody, can tune as well as Bob. His phrasing skills are remarkable ... a dedicated vocal musician.” Barnick: “Great lead, great at singing harmony when not on lead.”

Personally, I’ll add that you’d think celebrating the 25th anniversary of your gold on the AIC show in your hometown, would be one of the greatest thrills for a quartet. All true—but when the **Rural Route 4** got that great honor at Kansas City in 2011, the bigger thrill was sharing the stage and backstage with Bob and the Suntones—who outsang us on their 50th!

DENNY GORE. No panelist was surprised when Denny’s name worked its way into the top 10. Over the years, veteran Society members will tell you about how certain quartets should have won, or even *did* win—everyone has a favorite. Gore was a gold medal lead who was never quite at the right spot at the right time, although he did replace the late Randy Chisholm in 1995 champ **Marquis**. Vagabonds and Center Stage both collected silvers among their medals. Biffle says: “Denny had the smoothest voice I have ever heard, with the possible exception of Connelly. The Vagabonds have the reputation in barbershop lore as perhaps the greatest quartet that never won, and Denny’s commanding lead was what made it.” Beck marvels over Gore’s great body of work.



KENNY HATTON. Another singer recognized for a body of work and his quartet’s popular recordings. “Kinny Ray had lots of style and desire in his singing,” says Beck. “He has to be in the mix for longevity alone,” agrees Biffle. “As accurate a lead singer as we could want ... and the influence of Bluegrass on our style will recommend him, too, I think.” Cokeroff noted that many remarked on Hatton’s unorthodox vocal delivery. “Yet, close your eyes, listen and admire,” he advised. “BGSU left us a ton of songs they sang over the years, honing the harmony skills we love to listen to today.”



commandeered the huge, exciting sound of the fabulous 1971 champs.” Barnick was taken with a “distinctive” voice.” Justus had the personality to climb inside a ballad or sell a rhythm song, and it carried over into other facets of his barbershopping life. He became a Society president and later a Hall of Fame inductee. Cokeroff: “He could sing all night. The more he sang, the better it got.”

RICH KNAPP. Think about the BC songs. Pick any of your favorites. First, you’ll probably hear the individual voices. They are distinctive, and one reason the quartet is in the Hall of Fame. But now hear that special sound, wrapped around the mellow tone of lead Rich Knapp. Says Wright, “the fullness and freedom of this great quartet hangs on Rich’s unique combination of vocal power and easy manner.” How many other leads can do that? Barnick remembers that Tommy Spirito of the **Four Rascals**, also from the Northeastern District, sang with “tons of heart” and was a major influence on Knapp.



JOE MAZZONE. If ever there were a voice from God, this soft-spoken son of Italy performed and worshipped with it. Wright called the lead of the 1974 champs “perhaps the most melodic, refined and lyrical voice in barbershop history, beautifully adorned with a charming but controlled vibrato.” “Wonderful,” Barnick said simply of Mazzone’s gift.



After Franklin and Justus, Connelly and Mazzone were the top vote-getters among all leads. Joe was the original lead of the **Good News!** quartet with Jerry Fairchild, Dale Deiser

and Mo Rector, which for years hosted the highly popular gospel sing at the Society's international convention. The quartet later was succeeded by the **Happiness Emporium**.

MIKE SLAMKA. Another slam-dunk choice, and he keeps getting better. Let me go first: I've been a Slamka fan since I first saw Power Play perform "The Boy I Used To Be" when I was a Stage Presence (remember that?) judge. As I watched, I kept saying "this can't work ..." but it did. Mike can convey any emotion, in any style, at any range, with brilliant beauty, ease or power, as the music or lyric demands. Wright says: "Mike stepped up a notch with Crossroads to become, in my mind, the most versatile and compelling lead of recent times ... an amazing



Power Play (2003)
Crossroads (2009)

set of pipes." Barnick is just brass tacks: "great voice to listen to, and to sing with." Cokeroft: "I think he knows every song my quartet ever sang. When we occasionally have an opportunity to sing with him, it is glorious sound and so much fun. He sings vocally correct, always in tune and knows exactly what quality to use at the right time."

HONORABLE MENTION

There is no argument these gentlemen, representing our roots through our glory growth years to times not so long ago, all were brilliant leads. They just did not get as many votes as the top 10. Again, they are listed alphabetically:

- JOE DANIELS, Sidewinders (1964)**
- DAVID HARRINGTON, 2nd Edition (1989)**
- DANNY HEYBURN, Easternaires**
- DAVE LaBONTE, Confederates (1956)**
- AL SHEA, Buffalo Bills (1950)**
- TOMMY SPIRITO, Four Rascals**
- BILL THORTON, Dealer's Choice (1973)**
- LARRY WILSON, Classic Collection (1982)** ■

The illustrious, all-star voting panel



JIM BAGBY. Director emeritus of the **Heart of America Chorus**, past Society Board Member, Presentation judge, winner of the Joe Lies Lifetime Achievement award and bari of 1986 champ **Rural Route 4**.



DON BARNICK. 50-year Society member, tenor of **Grandma's Boys** (1979), bass of **Keepsake** (1992) medalist bari of **Riptide** (2005). Past chorus director, veteran coach, Harmony College faculty, Sound judge.



BRIAN BECK. The only man to reach the top 10 in all four voice parts; bari of **Dealer's Choice** (1973) and lead of **Side Street Ramblers** (1983). two-time senior quartet champ, top 10 tenor with the **Doo-Dads**. Created 500-plus barbershop, choral and jazz arrangements.



BILL BIFFLE — Past Sound and Singing judge, past Society president, lead trumpet of the Barbershop All-Star Dixieland Band 4-time district champ director, two-time district quartet champ, Master Director, Harmony University faculty member and popular coach.



TERRY CLARKE — Bass of Hall of Fame champ **Boston Common** (1983), Society member since age 14, And he figures he qualifies for this panel because he's been around long enough to recognize *original quartets versus programmed ones*.



GENE COKEROFT. Participated in voting before passing away in July, the **Suntones** tenor is a two-time member of the Society Hall of Fame, one of the top 10 tenors of all time (May/June 2015 issue). Past director, coach, youth clinician songwriter, arranger.



JOE CONNELLY. Not allowed to vote for himself, this full-time vocal performance coach had already cemented his status as an all-time great lead as the Society's only 4-time gold medalist with **Interstate Rivals** (1987), **Keepsake** (1992), **PLATINUM** (2000) and **Old School** (2011).



BOB LINDLEY. 60+ year Society member has barbershopped since high school and was and bari of 1953 champ **Vikings**, for whom he did most of the quartet's arrangements.



RANDY LOOS. AIC associate member with **Grandma's Boys** (1979 champ) and bass of medalists **Sidekicks** and **Backbeat**. Director or assistant director of seven choruses, coach of the two highest quartet champs under the current judging system. He has served on both the Society and Harmony Foundation boards.



TOM NEAL. Joined the Society in 1951 and directed his Euclid, Ohio, JAD champs to the top 11 in 1962. He sang with the popular **Village Idiots** quartet on hundreds of shows from 1960-1975. He founded the **Singing Angels** children's barbershop chorus, and started the Barbershop Pioneers organization, now known as the Barbershop Quartet Preservation Society (BQPA).



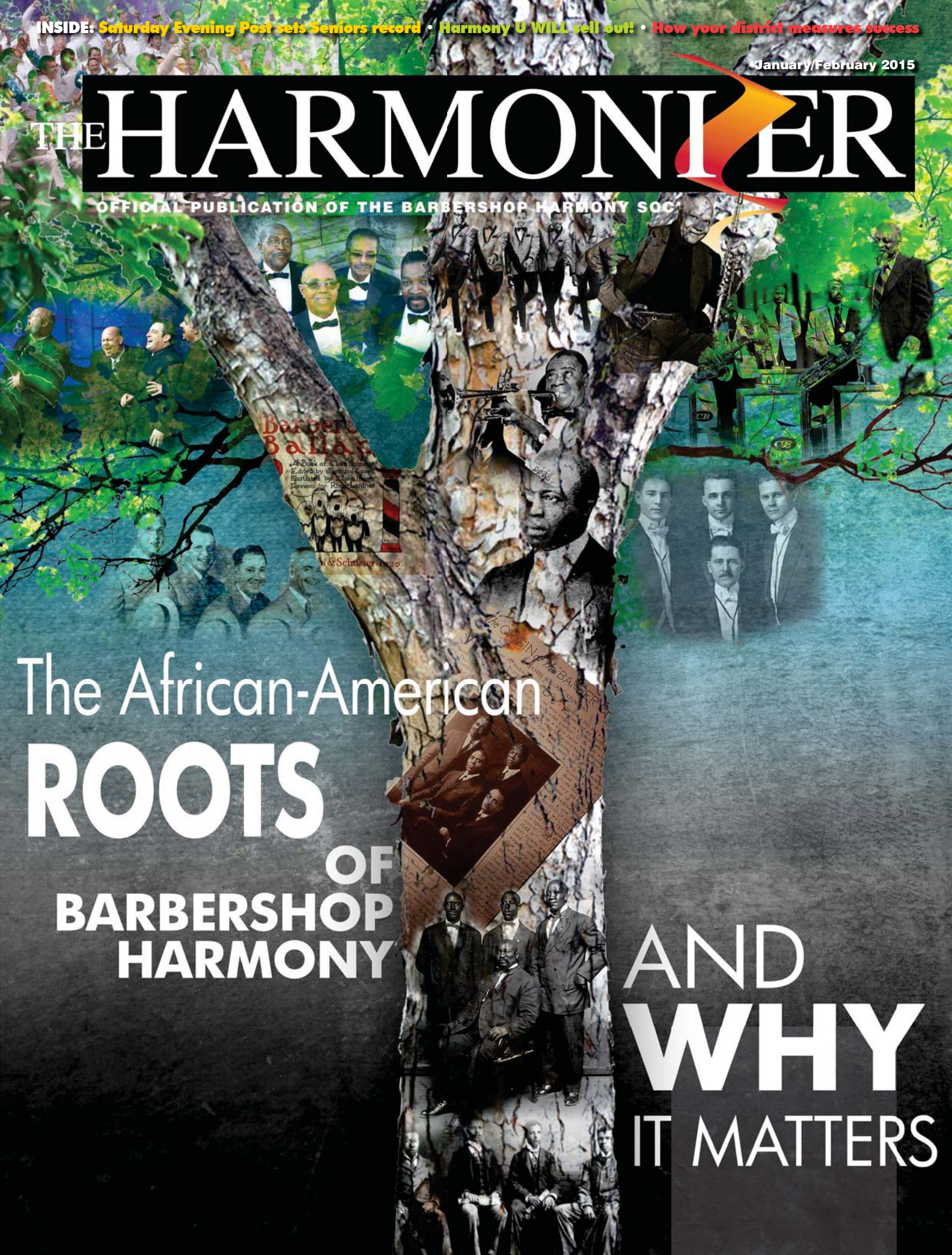
DAVID WRIGHT. This prominent mathematician, professor, arranger, composer, director, coach, judge, historian and baritone is a Society Hall of Famer and associate director of the three-time champ **Ambassadors of Harmony**. A musical consultant and arranger for numerous champion quartets and choruses, he has taught at Harmony University for 30 years. He helped design the Music Category and was its first Category Specialist.

INSIDE: Saturday Evening Post sets Seniors record • Harmony U WILL sell out! • How your district measures success

January/February 2015

THE HARMONIER

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE BARBERSHOP HARMONY SOCIETY



The African-American ROOTS OF BARBERSHOP HARMONY

AND WHY IT MATTERS



As a young man, Louis Armstrong formed a vocal quartet with his buddies, singing for tips on Rampart Street and in the Storyville section of New Orleans. Louis sang tenor. It was typical for African Americans to vocally harmonize in four parts, improvising in a style similar to what eventually became the instrumental sound of early jazz.



Ragtime legend Scott Joplin included a barbershop quartet in his life's work, a 1911 opera called *Treemonisha*, which incorporates the musical traditions of African Americans. His barbershop passage sounds just like something we would sing today.

PHOTO MONTAGE BY EDDIE HOLT

"I have witnessed ... these explorations in the field of harmony and the scenes of hilarity and backslapping when a new and rich chord was discovered. There would be demands for repetitions and cries of, 'Hold it! Hold it!' until it was firmly mastered. And well it was, for some of these chords were so new and strange that, like Sullivan's Lost Chord, they would have never been found again except for the celerity in which they were recaptured."

- James Weldon Johnson (1925),
barbershop singer, NAACP Executive Secretary

The African-American Roots of Barbershop (and why it matters)

Adapted from David Wright's Harmony University class on barbershop history, presented at the 2015 Midwinter convention in New Orleans on Jan. 10, 2015. Barbershopper and historian David Krause participated in the preparation of this class. View the class on YouTube at bit.ly/barbershophistory.

Most of us hadn't realized the extent of the presence of barbershop harmony in African-American culture until 1992, when Lynn Abbott published an article called "Play that Barbershop Chord; A case for the African-American origin of barbershop harmony" in *American Music*. (bit.ly/barbershopchordabbott) Lynn had documented so well, irrefutably, from numerous newspaper articles and books and live interviews, the extent of which our music was pervasive in the culture of African-Americans.

Until then, many of us believed that the first historical reference to barbershop harmony was the 1910 song, "Play That Barbershop Chord." The sheet music cover features a black Vaudevillian named Bert Williams. The song was also recorded by a white quartet, **The American Quartet**, which twice stops the song and then says in Afri-

can-American dialect, "That's it. That's what. That's a barbershop chord." The chord they've stopped on is what we now call our barbershop 7th. This shows that in 1910, that chord was associated with a barbershop quartet and with African-American harmonizing.

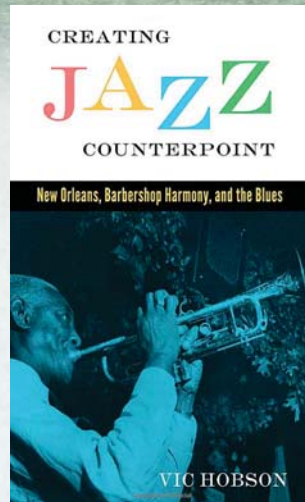
There's little evidence to support Sigmond Spaeth's belief that barbershop harmony had something to do with Elizabethan England. However, in the late 1800s, barbershop was pervasive in black culture. There were youth harmonizing on the street and pro-



David Wright
Hall of Fame arranger, historian, coach, judge, director
wrightmath@gmail.com



Lynn Abbott, a jazz archivist at Tulane University, is an expert on early African-American popular music and gospel quartets. He discovered overwhelming evidence that barbershop quartetting was pervasive in African-American culture in the late 1800s and early 1900s, including among many men who went on to become the pioneers of jazz. Abbott published his findings in a 1992 academic paper (read it at bit.ly/barbershopchordabbott) that forever changed the way Barbershoppers understand their roots. In recognition, during January's 2015 Midwinter Convention in New Orleans, Abbott was honored with a Society Honorary Lifetime Membership.



According to jazz scholar Vic Hobson, barbershop and the blues were very entwined with the beginnings of jazz, and in fact might have had a formative influence on the beginnings of jazz.



When James Weldon Johnson was leading the NAACP during the 1920s, he became concerned that barbershop music was becoming associated with white quartets. He and others remembered that the music had been a much earlier product of black culture: "Pick up four colored boys or young men anywhere and chances are 90 out of 100 that you have a quartet. Let one of them sing the melody and the others will naturally find the parts. Indeed, it may be said that all male Negro youth of the United States is divided into quartets ..."



professionals harmonizing on stage. Many, many famous African Americans harmonized in the barbershop style. Ragtime legend Scott Joplin thought enough of this that he incorporated the barbershop quartet into his life work, a 1911 opera called *Treemonisha*, which incorporates the musical traditions of African Americans. His barbershop passage is just like something we would sing today.

When the professional white quartets began recording, they were simply "male quartets." Early on, they never used the term barbershop, even though that's what it was. "Barbershop" would have been interpreted as an African-American reference.

One of the cradles of barbershop harmony is right here in New Orleans. Louis Armstrong talked about harmonizing on the street corners of New Orleans

Bringing black singers back into the barbershop fold—and why songs associated with slavery and segregation may need to be retired



Yes, the Society was exclusionary in the past, but that is not what is going on today. The Society can't change what happened in the past. Yes, some of the songs are on the edge of racism, but only if you look really hard and know the history of the Society and the songs.

The problem, in my opinion, is not with the Society, but with the black community that seems unwilling to reach out and see how beautiful the music is.

I raised a concern when "Alabama Jubilee" was announced as the contest song that we went on to win gold with in 2011. I know what a jubilee was, and that it was not in the best interest of the slaves on the plantation. I was not exactly excited about singing this song. Interestingly enough, when I told some people about my concern, they had no idea what a jubilee was and they thought they were singing just another song. That changed my perception of what was going on in my own chorus and probably a good percentage of the Society. Most people have no idea how derogatory some of the songs can be perceived to be.

I was willing to get over the idea behind the song because I love four-part harmony. I wonder how many people in my community would be willing to do that.

I think we need to get my chorus and the Society in front of minority communities as a recruiting tool and show them how great the sound is. Sure, there will be people unwilling to participate, but I am sure there are more than enough people like me who will embrace it despite the perceived issues.

— Charles Carothers, *Masters of Harmony*



At the recent Golden Globes, Tina Fey and Amy Poehler talked about the new movie *Selma*, and how it covers the dawning of the Civil Rights Movement, which led to the Voting Rights Act of 1966, "and now everything is fine." It got a big laugh—ironic, cynical—because everyone knows that racial inequality is not fine, whatever real strides we have made.

The BHS was discriminatory in the past, and many members probably do not realize they are blind to the perceptions of some outsiders. Why do fewer racial minorities sing barbershop? Quite apart from the quality of the music, imagine the feelings of a black singer in our midst. I believe song selection may be an issue at times.

For example, the glorification of the Old South; "Alabama Jubilee" was about white plantation owners celebrating while the slaves fetched and carried. The Showboat was welcomed by the rich, but not so much by the ones who had to tote the barge and lift the bale. "Floatin' Down to Cotton Town," "Mississippi Mud," "All Aboard for Dixieland," and "In The Evening By The Moonlight" are in the same genre, despite their great tunes.

A Sweet Adelines chorus recently felt the need to change a song title to "Hot-Town Strutters' Ball"—even though "Dark-Town Strutters Ball" is a 100-year-old non-racist song created by a black songwriter. If we sang "Alabama Jubilee" but called it "South Dakota Jubilee," does the racism go away? False and obvious gestures do not address real racism.

— Kirt Thiesmeyer, *past president, Masters of Harmony*



Here is a brief brainstorm of the kinds of actions I believe could make a difference:

- Most chapters may want to reach out to institutions of color within their community that have music programs, and present opportunities to sing on shows and to perform on any secular shows. Perhaps if a chorus is thinking of a gospel-type song, they invite in a local music ministry for coaching.
- For the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday, perhaps come up with song suggestions for groups to participate in local celebrations.
- Provide chapters with a Black History Month program on the African-American roots of the art form and script and song list groups can use.
- The greatest thing we can do in the short term is ban "Mammy" songs and make clear to the external community we've done it. I am for preserving the songs and arrangements much in the way folks collect "racial" imagery—not to use, but only to remember what once was.
- With headquarters in Nashville, perhaps work with groups like Fisk University to catalog some of the Southern and mammy-themed songs that just don't resonate in our enlightened age.
- The Fisk Jubilee Singers and Jubilee Hall could be a part of the 2016 convention in Nashville.
- With Belmont in the mix for Harmony University, Fisk and its music department shouldn't be left out. Music-related internships (for college credit, not pay) at the HQ might be a good way to get an interest in our organization.

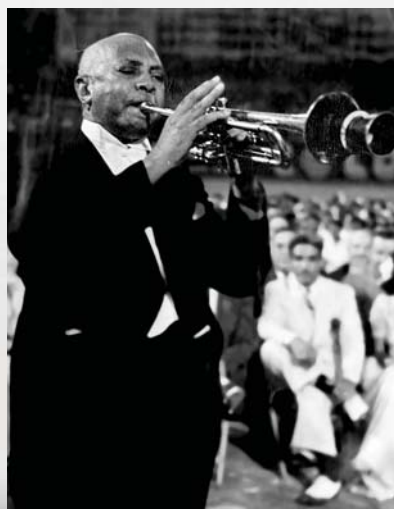
— Cecil Brown, *Big Apple Chorus; lead, Up All Night*

"A noticeable advancement along the lines of the profession is the passing of the barber shop quartette with its barber shop harmony. It doesn't take much of an effort of memory to recall when all quartettes sang their own self-made harmonies, with their oft-recurring 'minors,' diminished sevenths and other embellishments. This barber shop harmony, although pleasing to the average ear, and not altogether displeasing to the cultivated ear, is nothing more or less than a musical slang. It violates—at times ruthlessly—the exacting rules and properties of music. All forms, phrases and progressions of music go down before it. What does [sic] the barber shop exponents of harmony care for such delicacies as the forbidden progressions of perfect fifths and octaves? What do they care about chord progression in its correct form? Their chief aim is to so twist and distort a melody that it can be expressed in so-called 'minors' and diminished chords. The melody is literally made to fit their small stock of slang chords, instead of the chords being built around the melody."

– "Tom the Tattler," an African-American musical purist who held black barbershop quartets in contempt due to their continual musical experimentation; this 1900 editorial prematurely celebrated their waning influence

as a youth. This was about a mile from where we are right now, in 1910 or 1911, when he was only about 10 years old and a tenor.

New Orleans Jazz—and this really was the birthplace of jazz—was based on what singers sang when they harmonized in their quartets. That makes a lot



of sense to me. When I hear our embellishments like pickups and backtimes and swipes, those are the same things that

instrumentalists do when they play Dixieland jazz. If you notice, you'll find them doing the same thing.

An African-American musical reviewer who called himself "Tom the Tattler," wrote a review of the African-American barbershop quartets in 1900. He's trying to insult barbershop harmony, but he gives some of the best compliments our style has ever received.

This tells us a lot about our music. I think for a long time we got away from our musical roots, and I think this gets us back there. Barbershop was very free-wheeling, flamboyant, experimental. It doesn't necessarily stick with the composer's song. It's like jazz—jazz is probably entwined with barbershop and its roots more than any other single style of music.

Not all African American scholars had reservations about barbershop harmony. James Weldon Johnson, who was executive secretary of the NAACP, grew up singing barbershop harmony. He called all the African-American culture of singing "barbershop harmony," and in the 1920s was afraid that it was beginning to be associated with white people. And it was. Studio quartets out of New York City were all white, a lot of the Vaudeville quartets that people saw were white. Barbershop harmony by then had crossed racial barriers and was a fabric in society. Black people, white people, rich and poor. It really was everywhere. It was ubiquitous in the early 20th Century on a professional level and on a recreational level.

James Weldon Johnson, unlike Tom the Tattler, was very proud of barbershop harmony. He wanted to go on record that there was a very strong African-American component in its origin.

Our style of music has breadth. There was a time when we were trying to legislate away what I believe are all the African-American contributions to our music—which are the things that make our music most interesting.

Barbershop is not a purely homophonic style. The

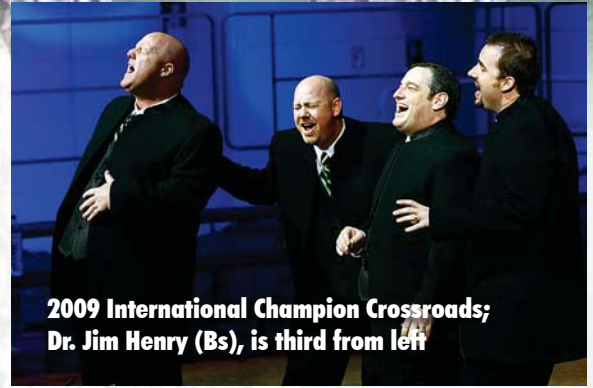


Jelly Roll Morton, the first-ever arranger of jazz music, recalls his barbershop quartet's improvisations: "The boys had some beautiful harmony they sang. And, of course, we got together and made all kinds of crazy ideas of the harmony, which made it beautiful and made it impossible for anybody to jump in and sing."

Around 1888, W.C. Handy, later to become widely known as "Father of the Blues," sang tenor in a quartet that gathered in a Florence, Alabama, barbershop "for the trying out of new swipes." Handy reported that ... "they often serenaded their sweethearts with love songs; the white bloods overheard, and took to hiring them to serenade the white girls."



Nashville's Grammy-winning gospel quartet, Fairfield Four, has been in existence for more than 90 years. They will join Crossroads quartet in a presentation at this year's ACDA National Convention.



2009 International Champion Crossroads; Dr. Jim Henry (Bs), is third from left

In the July 2001 issue of *The Harmonizer*, Barbershopper and music professor Jim Henry distilled key points from his doctoral dissertation. Building upon Lynn Abbott's research on the African-American roots of barbershop, Dr. Henry analyzed 250 transcriptions and recordings of early barbershop, tracing the musical elements themselves back to their African musical DNA. Elements traced exclusively to African music included call-and-response, rhythmic charac-

ter, and harmony, including the all-important barbershop 7th chord. Download the article at <http://bit.ly/BBshopRoots>. Dr. Henry's Crossroads quartet is scheduled to join the legendary gospel quartet Fairfield Four for a presentation at the 2015 National Convention of the American Choral Directors Association in Salt Lake City regarding the African-American roots of barbershop harmony. Look for forthcoming video/audio of the joint presentation in upcoming Society communication.



recording studio quartets at the turn of the century sang the composer's melody exactly right because they were trying to plug the sheet music. But the African-American singer on the street corner was all about the improvisational elements of our style. Things like pick-ups, swipes, and echoes probably come more from the African-American tradition.

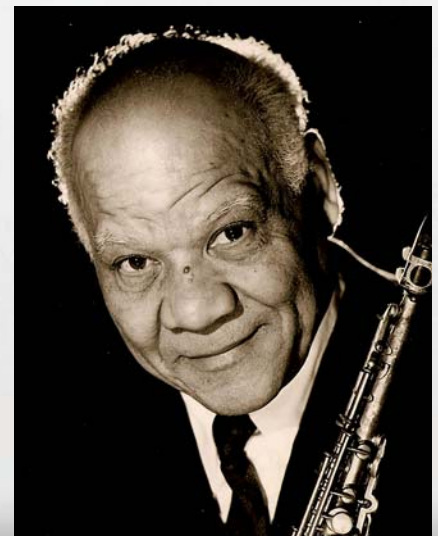
The rich harmonic content, circle of fifths, was probably European, but the African Americans blended that with the riveting rhythmic tradition of African music, and they did that both with barbershop and jazz. This influence really gives our music its interest and its character.

When you hear today's quartets doing things that aren't so homophonic, people say that's getting away from barbershop. But no, it's not. It is where we came from.

Certainly, contributors to the style were white quartets from New England, who sang in a very formal, hymn-like tradition. Usually the melody was in the

second tenor, and very barbershop-like. Our style has many roots. And African Americans were from vastly different parts of the country, so who is to say that they all sounded the same? But our style is not monolithic. It's a broad style of music. When we understand that, we'll become wiser as we face the future.

Barbershop relates to other styles. I love Vic Hobson's book because it makes it absolutely clear the intertwining of barbershop, blues, and early jazz. We shouldn't be afraid of the fact that our music resembles and has relationship with other kinds of music. For many years, you could damn something by saying, "that's just a country song" or "that's jazz." But our music is twined with other American music.



Sydney Bechet, a New Orleans musical pioneer remembered as the first important jazz soloist, had been an avid quartet harmonizer during his youth: "It was Bunk Johnson who was the first to make me acquainted with Louis Armstrong. Bunk told me about this quartet Louis was singing in. 'Sidney,' he said, 'I want you to hear a little quartet, how they sing and harmonize.' He knew I was crazy about singing harmony."

A racially-mixed family of Barbershoppers reflects on how the Society can move toward enjoying a more racially mixed barbershop family

Drew Ellis and his son, Jacob, are respectively 3rd- and 4th-generation Barbershoppers in Bowling Green, Kentucky.

We have always joked that God blessed our family with chocolate, vanilla, and swirl. Our 14-year-old son, Jacob, is black, our 11-year-old daughter is bi-racial (black/white), and their 5-year-old brother is white. Jacob recently received his 8-year membership card and is a strong bari in the *Spirit of the Commonwealth* (formerly the *Caveman Chorus*) of the *Mammoth Cave, Ken., Chapter*.

As a family that has crossed racial lines through adoption, we've worked to preserve the racial heritage of our children while encouraging them to develop their own identities. This has allowed our family to enjoy diverse relationships we may not have otherwise had, and has given us a perspective on the challenges and opportunities in spreading barbershop harmony to communities that rarely hear or perform it.



There's a huge, untapped resource of harmony lovers of various racial backgrounds. Harmony has always been a rich part of the African-American culture. This goes far beyond those who created the early barbershop sound. It can be found in worship styles, singing styles, and in the musical evolution of doo-wop, Motown, jazz, and hip-hop music. You'll often find high concentrations of quality singing and musicianship in black communities, because these activities are often tightly interwoven into the cultural fabric.

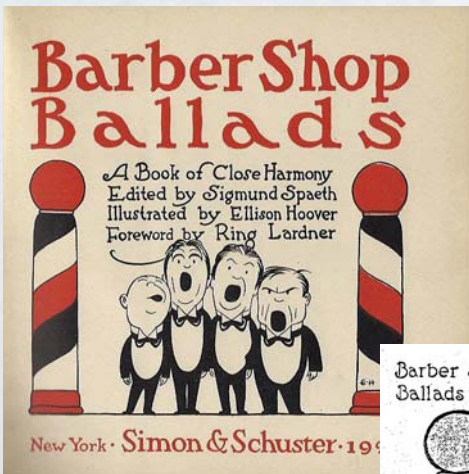
Early black Barbershoppers deserve belated recognition. I believe the Society and others would benefit from a concerted effort to visually recognize, appreciate the talents of, and even "glorify" the talents of early black quartets.

We can't change the history of social norms that barred non-white singers from Society membership until the early 1960s, but we can honor and listen to the black quartets who might have become Society idols had they been allowed to compete. The talent and skill of groups like *The Mills Brothers* and many other early black quartets like *The Morris Brown Quartet* had tuning, precision and ring that was often much better than our early champion quartets. (Enjoy several such quartets at bit.ly/MorrisBrown.)

Contemporary black harmony groups deserve recognition, too. Perhaps the Society can consider some sort of honor to the *Fairfield Four*, the *Jackson 5*, *Boyz II Men*, the *Temptations*, or other iconic harmonizing groups in gospel, Motown, R&B.

Obstacles can be overcome one man at a time. If we are serious about breaking down racial barriers, we have some notable obstacles to overcome. But it can be done one man, one boy, one quartet at a time. Younger Barbershoppers are already more diverse. Of the eight men who won an international quartet gold medal in Las Vegas, 2014, only two were white, and the *Musical Island Boys* won while 'shopping Motown hits. Members of many past collegiate champs have come from a variety of ethnic backgrounds; in most cases, they got hooked on barbershop by another Barbershopper who cared enough to reach out.

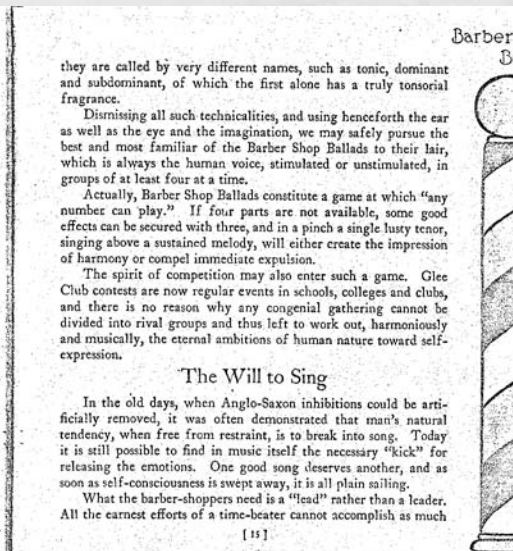
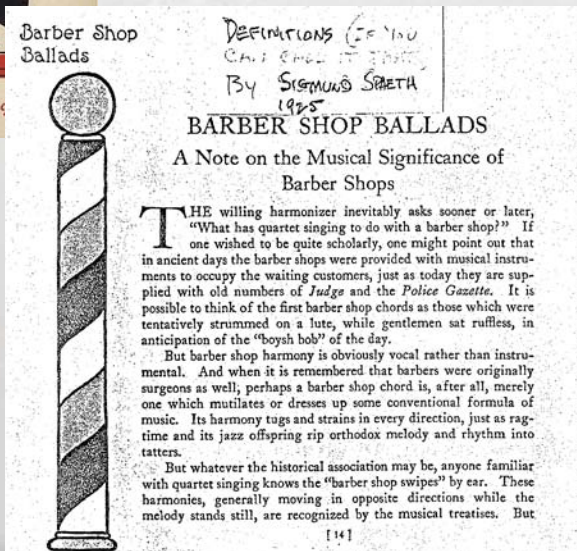
Let's work to show people what "harmony" can mean. While we have now welcomed ethnic diversity in the BHS for many years, joining with the unreached communities among us could give us an advantage in growing a global interest in the barbershop art form and culture. Ours can be a culture—both in fellowship and in competitive performance—that could metaphorically and visually demonstrate the power of "close harmony."



Society pioneer Sigmund Spaeth was also a famous musicologist. In his 1925 book *Barber Shop Ballads*, he attributed the style to European traditions. There is little evidence to support his theory, but overwhelming evidence that black quartets had developed the early sound; white quartets later added their own elements and popularized the style with the masses.

We should aggressively strive to break the race barrier and make barbershop culture more inclusive. What could be more right than to include more African Americans, whose grandfathers had such a strong role in the beginning of our music! It's not an easy thing to do. I think if we want to do it, and I believe we do, that that's the first step.

We need to find a way to share our music and this experience with a wider group of people. That's going to make our music richer, make us much more acceptable. Grant money would be much easier to get, many good things would happen, if we could make a dent in the racial barrier. And I think we are. ■



Barbershop harmon



Lorin May
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The youth barbershop movement in New Zealand is unlike any other in the world. For example, the national high school barbershop contest normally sees up to 20 prequalified quartets and choruses in each category, resulting in 80 competing groups and up to 1,000 young chorus and quartet singers. Amazingly, this only represents students who qualified for the national contest—only the top two or three quartets from six qualifying contests held throughout the nation in earlier months.

Begun in 1990, the initiative was the brainchild of Les Nation. Les, a school headmaster and avid physical education trainer, had a passion to see young people singing barbershop. He held the very first youth quartet contest in Wellington in 1990, attracting only a handful of quartets, most of which had been actively involved with Les. From there, the contest grew to involve girls' quartets, and eventually choruses.

The Young Singers in Harmony program quickly grew in popularity, and now involves high schools across the country, with administrative and mentoring support offered by local chapters.

Barbershop in New Zealand began in an organized fashion in the late 1980s, and has enjoyed periods of strong growth in both youth and adult participation. The organization (previously known as the New Zealand Association of Barbershop Singers) now affiliates more than a dozen chapters across the country, and about 30 active registered quartets. The organization's annual convention attracts most of its 300 or so members and is usually headlined by an International Champion quartet or chorus.

— Matt Gifford



My changes the lives of "boys like us"

They've collectively logged more than a million miles as singers, but barbershop harmony took the Musical Island Boys somewhere they hadn't planned: from a background of low expectations to a world of unlimited potential

More than once, I've heard the quartet talk about how youth outreach and barbershop harmony have opened up opportunities that usually aren't available to "boys like us." What did you mean by "boys like us"?

Will Hunkin (Br): Guys like us [Pacific Island ethnicities] in New Zealand are unfortunately overrepresented in jails and under-perform in education. We come from a background where that is what is expected of us. Through barbershop, what we've been able to achieve has opened up a lot of doors, not only to ourselves, but for guys like us who have fallen behind.

Our journey in barbershop has shown them that you can actually stand outside the norm—that there are people out there who are willing to help you if you have a goal, have a dream. Then, you're able to go and achieve it. It's not out of reach for guys like us. If you have a strong team and you have a dream, there may be a lot of people willing to help with your passion. Anything is possible as long as you commit to that vision and dream, regardless of what's expected of your background.

So how did get started on a path so outside the norm for young men of your background?

Marcellus ("Lusa") Washburn (L): It started with our music teacher, Charlotte Murray [see

sidebar, last page of article]. When she was in high school, [1989 champ] **Second Edition** performed and Charlotte fell in love with the barbershop style. Then when she became our teacher at Tawa College, she started up a music program just for barbershop singers. She noticed our talent and brought us all together because we all loved singing harmony. We said, "Hey, let's give this a go." In 2001, one member had to go, and in 2002, Matt [Gifford, bass] started attending our school. We've been the same quartet since 2002, when we were 15 and 16 years old. It's been quite a journey for us.

Where has that journey taken you?

Jeff Hunkin (T): We never dreamed that we'd be flying to U.S., U.K. and Japan. We'll be in Las Vegas looking at the strip or at a landmark in Philadelphia, and we'll be looking at each other and say, "Can you believe that this is happening? To us, of all people!" We still do that today. I think it's important for us to never take that for granted, because, like William was talking about, many people from our ethnic heritage do not get to experience anything like this in their lives—anything near it.

We talk about our experiences for days on end with our families. When we say we're getting on



“I’m more thankful for the setbacks that we’ve had even more so than some of the wonderful successes. We now take on our lives in a way that we believe we’re unstoppable—because we just achieved the impossible dream.”

a plane to New Orleans and cruise around the Caribbean, they just roll their eyes now. It’s become such a regular thing for us to fly away. We never want to take it for granted, and we never do. We’re just humbled.

In 2002, at one of our first rehearsals, we said, “We should write down a goal.” The most unattainable goal we could think of was to become the world champion of barbershop quartet singing. And we were only four guys from a small town in Wellington, New Zealand, on the other side of the world. We never thought in our wildest dreams that that could come true. We won the 2002 New Zealand high school contest, which let us compete in the collegiate contest in 2004, and that was the first step in an ever-snowballing set of experiences.

But the message we give, especially to the youth, is that success like this doesn’t happen overnight—even close. There have been tens of thousands of hours in the rehearsal room to get to where we are. But now we’re just elated for the experiences we get to have as a quartet.

Outside of barbershop-related experiences, how has this musical journey helped in other areas of your lives?

Matt Gifford (Bs): The quartet’s journey over the past 12 years—and the work it’s taken to get us here—helped to define our characters and our values and our ethics. Some of it we were nurtured with. We were all blessed to be raised in families with the richest non-material blessings—families who supported whatever we were passionate about. We hope our journey can inspire others to learn and believe in themselves—that really anything in life is possible.

This was a dream we never really believed was possible. All the odds were stacked against us in almost every way.

We worked really hard, we fund-raised for years and years, we worked hours and hours, we found coaches who believed in us. We had this determination that we were never going to give up.

And it was tough. For every high

Jeffrey Hunkin (T) Samoan/Nivean

The youngest of three very musical siblings (including bari William) and their sister, Henrietta, the Hunkin trio sang traditional and popular tunes to the guitar of their father, a renowned Samoan songwriter and Head of Samoan [Language] studies at Wellington’s Victoria University. Jeff is an accomplished drummer and played the lead role for the Tawa College production of Jesus Christ Superstar. Jeff is the quartet’s taskmaster, creative mind, and self-appointed rehearsal manager. He is also co-director of Vocal FX chorus. Jeff works as a communications guru for Trade Me, New Zealand’s online trading website. He is engaged to his high-school sweetheart, Jess.

there have been about 10 lows. This has taught the quartet that your character is not determined in the great times, but in the toughest of times. That’s where your true values, your character and ethics come out, where your true character is formed and shaped. I’m more thankful for the setbacks that we’ve had even more so than some of the wonderful successes. We now take on our lives in a way that we believe we’re unstoppable—nothing is undoable. Decide what you want to do, and it can be done.

When we work with young people especially, we try to teach them that story. We embark on ambitious endeavors in our lives that are probably bordering on impossible. But we just achieved the impossible dream. And we have a saying that’s “Living the Dream.” I’ll add, it’s “Living the Impossible Dream,” because that’s really what it is.

I’m pretty sure you are the champion with the longest spread between forming and winning gold—by a comfortable margin. What was your musical journey like during those 12 years?

Will: I think our first score might have been about a 45 or 50; so we’ve gone all the way to where we’re close to a 90. When we first started, we had very basic advice, such as you have to walk on stage like a champion—like you own the stage, that on stage you have to give the best of you. I think there’s a difference between knowing you have to do your best and understanding what that means to you as a performer. What does it mean to stand there and be a champion? Every performer who’s been able to figure that out, they bring a different element to their performance.

Our first proper barbershop coach was Gary Bolles, when we were 15 and 16 years old. He thought, “These kids have a little talent, but they don’t know what they’re doing.” He told us that he was used to giving groups performance tips, and the next time he saw them nothing had changed. But we just had this work ethic. When he gave us a tip, like lining up vowels, that was the only thing we’d practice for the next two weeks. He’d come back and we’d mastered it.

Our philosophy is to always be working on the next thing. One of our best presentation coaches has been Cindy Hansen-Ellis. In 2005, she helped us bring out more of the X-Factor for our performance, taking our natural enthusiasm and enhancing it. Brandon Guyton took all the musical things we were doing and kept us in the technical space. It’s just a matter of starting where you are, doing the best of what you have. Going from a 45 to a 90 won’t happen overnight. It might not take 12 years, but if you’re willing to com-





Marcellus Washburn (L) Samoan "Lusa" (Samoan for Marcellus) sang with the Salvation Army church from a young age, also playing cornet in church bands and then in the high school orchestra. He missed the quartet's first-ever rehearsal because he was playing rugby, a tradition he works hard to uphold. Raised in his parents' Samoan culture and language, Musical Island Boys CDs can often be heard playing in his father's Wellington taxi cab. Lusa and his wife, Lisa, recently moved to Melbourne, Australia (helping raise the average IQ of both countries, the quartet jokes), where he still works closely with the Salvation Army, where he helps at-risk teens and families. They recently welcomed the arrival of the first Musical Island Baby, beautiful Neriah!

mit and take it one step at a time, every singer, every day, then it's logical that in time you'll end up being better than when you started out.

Very few quartets get the chance to find out how far they can go—if life doesn't get in the way, sometimes personalities do. How have you managed to stay intact and keep improving for 12 years?

Lusa: We all came from different backgrounds, but we all had a passion to sing harmony. In high school we all liked to listen to **Boyz II Men, The Temptations**, the Motown thing. These guys are all quite likable guys, but it took two years to figure them out. We're easy to get along with, we like to have fun, but we all had a focus—where we were going to take this. If it hadn't been barbershop, we were still going to do it together because of our friendship, our passion to sing and share with others.

Jeff: We all started quite young. We knew nothing about barbershop and came in at the same level of singing. Nobody came in with an ego or wanting to be in charge. We're lucky to not have had any of those issues that come with having different levels of experience. On a personal note, we've never had any relationships falling out, we haven't had any fist fights. (They'd all lose against me anyway, so there's no point in going there.) We really just get along really well. The stars kind of aligned in the music room where we met, and it's just been a wild, awesome ride with three of the best friends you can have. Again, it's the impossible dream, and you just pinch yourself every day.

One thing you have in common with most champions is that you weren't trying to sound like everybody else. How did

you arrive at the Musical Island Boys' sound?

Matt: We've been very deliberate in our musical choices leading up to this point. One genre the four of us liked to listen to in particular was Motown and R&B—**Michael Jackson**, the Temptations, Boyz II Men, **The Stylistics**. Those were songs and stories that we related to. In barbershop, we had found an outlet for our passion for that genre of music. It's been a journey of finding out how to serve two masters—the genre that we love and the style of music that's in our element. We wanted to stay true and authentic to both.

We went through a phase—and I think most quartets do this—of finding ourselves. There were quartets that we loved and that we aspired to be like, and we tried to imitate them instead of emulate what we loved about them. You find yourself always falling short, because you'll never be someone else. The most important discovery for us was that people loved who we were authentically as performers and people. So how do we take that and carry that out on the stage?

We started choosing songs in the style of music that we loved, and we were also making a choice to belong to the Barbershop Harmony Society, to participate in the parameters of this very American musical style. That's been a tricky balancing act, and it's taken us a long time. We would have this passion and heart and kind of go crazy on stage. But it was never really grounded in the technical proficiency that was required to keep up with the quartets that were in the upper echelons of this contest. We knew then we had to have the arsenal of tools and skills in our back pockets, in that unconscious competence quadrant of the brain. But also we needed the technical proficiency to deliver a quality that would keep the audience and judges happy. I think 2014 was really where we got that balance.

It's been a long journey getting to where you are today. What's next for the Musical Island Boys?

Matt: We've had a lot of second place medals. Would we take back anything about that? I don't think we would, as hard as it was. Especially Toronto, I mean that was our third silver



William Hunkin (Br) Samoan/Nivean

Will is the middle child of the Hunkin trio and the quartet's analytical thinker. A trained classical guitarist (he plays left handed but can also play a right handed guitar upside down), he is considered a "gentle giant"—bold in stature, but gentle and caring in nature. Elected by peers to his high school's student leadership team, he was eventually named Deputy Head Boy. (Matt was not impressed, as he also went for the same role. To add insult to injury, Matt also rewrote much of William's winning speech.) The quartet jokes that Will should be blonde due to his rather "relaxed" approach to organizational matters. He is a salesman for a power company in Wellington.

The journey's beginning: by Music educator Charlotte Murray

My parents are both well-known education leaders in New Zealand. My father was the Principal of Tawa College while I was a student there and my mother was the Head of Music. They instilled in me two important ideas: (1) Everyone has an infinite worth, and our job is to help others see and realize their potential. (2) If you have a gift, you should develop it and use it to serve others. "To whom much is given, much will be expected."

My mother Shona is a great choral conductor and I learned the joy of singing at an early age. Music became the tool to help others develop who they are and a way of teaching what life can be like when we work hard and look after those around us. She started a music festival in our community 30 years ago that now involves a choir of around 600 elementary and high school students and an adult choir of 90. She is a firm believer in everyone having the opportunity to be able to sing.

Second Edition [1989 champion] was guest quartet at my choir's show when I was a 16-year-old student. I was blown away by the style. Soon after, the local men's chapter lead by Les Nation (founder of the youth movement in New Zealand) reached out and encouraged us to start quartets. Mum and the other teachers were supportive, and later that year, I sang



Jeff Hunkin (T), Charlotte Murray, Wellington, N.Z., Mayor Celia Wade-Brown, Matt Gifford (Bs) and Will Hunkin (Br). The champs were the 2014 Wellingtonians of the Year in the Youth Category.

bass in the nation's first high school quartet competition. The encouragement and kindness from the local barbershoppers was incredible. Their message that we should get others singing resonated strongly with me. From that moment, I could tell this is a style and community I feel at home with.

I studied music and taught choral studies in Japan before returning to Tawa College to work alongside my mother in 1998. I took over putting together and coaching quartets, although my knowledge of the style was limited. I soon joined Les Nation's committee and started to help run the high school workshops and competitions in Wellington.

Les always brought visiting quartets to our high school to work with our groups. I would watch coaches working with local choruses to learn more. By 2002, we had Musical Island Boys as a quartet in our high school. As they worked hard and improved, the coaching they received from others was at a higher

level and that was an incredible help to me.

In 2000, we started a high school chorus competition alongside the quartet competition, starting with three local high schools. That local high school competition now has over 500 students competing in quartets and choruses. Not bad for a city of 300,000!

This school competition got Les and I to start thinking about starting a youth chorus for young men when they leave school; at the end of 2003, we started Vocal FX. That brought me officially into the New Zealand Association of Barbershop Singers. From there I took any education opportunities available, travelled to international to compete with the chorus and supported MIB in their journey to the gold. In 2010, I became a Master Director through my attendance at Harmony University. It has been a life-changing journey and my hope for the future is to give back the time and love and knowledge that has been shared with me over the years by sharing what I have learned with others.

medal. But we came back from that stronger and better than we ever were. I think we all feel blessed for the lessons that it taught us. For every hard time, there's been a good time as well. And isn't that life?

One of our great coaches, arrangers, and mentors, David Wright, said that for some quartets the gold medal is the end of the journey. But for the great quartets that stay around and are remembered, the gold medal is the beginning of the journey. We hope in our heart of hearts that this is the beginning of something wonderful. ■

Matthew Gifford (Bs) Cook Islands/NZ Maori

Matt is the latecomer to the quartet, joining in 2002—and the other three never let him forget it. Matt and his three sisters grew up singing with his family in Maori cultural performing groups, and with one sister, Matt served as a Sunday school singing teacher. Matt is currently embarking on an ambitious project to capture the cultural history, hymns and folk songs of his father's native island of Penrhyn in the Cook Islands. The remote island is known for its historic lack of Western influences, but much of its history, language and culture have been transmitted only in songs (often 8-part harmonies), many of which are only known by its rapidly aging population. Matt's book and recordings will capture the island's heritage for a posterity that mostly lives away from Penrhyn.



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Get rhythm: Be a better music reader

Many Barbershoppers have learned to sing without learning the important skill of reading music. Such a broad topic cannot be taught in this small space, but let's touch on one musical parameter that can make you a better singer: rhythm. Let's make it less of a mystery than before. For a much easier and more thorough introduction to music, attend my Musicianship courses at Harmony University.



Note and rest symbols. In music, each duration is notated through the use of either notes (durations of sound) or rests (durations of silence). Every note value has a corresponding rest. The most common note values in barbershop music are shown below. There are larger and smaller note values, but barbershop music rarely uses them.

Note name	Symbol	Corresponding rest	Is equivalent to
Whole note			
Half note			
Quarter note			
Eighth note			
Sixteenth note			

equals the sum of both note values.

Rhythm and meter. The *beat* is the basic pulse of a musical passage; it's what we tap our foot to as we listen to music. The speed of the beat is called the *tempo*. Sometimes the composer (or arranger) may indicate the music's tempo through the use of a metronome marking such as ♩ = 72, which means that the quarter note moves at 72 beats per minute.

Meter. Beats tend to be grouped into patterns that are consistent throughout a song. This regular recurring pattern of beats is called *meter*, typically organized in groups of twos, threes, or fours. Each grouping of beats is called a measure (or bar), which is indicated by a bar line (a vertical line through the music staff). Meters with two, three, or four beats per measure are properly called duple, triple, and quadruple meters, respectively. These formal terms are rarely used in barbershop; most will call those respective meters what sounds to your ears like "two-four" or "three-four" or "four-four" to tell you the number of quarter notes in each measure. They are telling you the *time signature*, but that topic will have to wait for another day!

Division of the beat. Most music contains passages in which the note durations are smaller than the duration of the beat note. These shorter durations are called *divisions of the beat*. Beats generally divide into two equal parts, called *simple beat*, or into three equal parts, called *compound beat*.

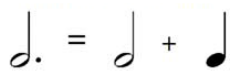
To feel the difference between these two divisions, first sing a bit of "Jingle Bells" and tap your foot. Notice that there are sometimes two words or syllables (of equal length) for each foot tap. That's *simple division*. Now sing a bit of "Seventy-Six Trombones" and again tap your foot. This time, notice how some of the beats have three equal parts ("Se-ven-ty" or "hun-dred and" or "fol-lowed by"). That is a *compound division*.

Descriptive label. The specific type of beat subdivision, simple or compound, is part of a meter's *descriptive label*. The other label is derived from the number of beats per measure. The chart at the bottom summarizes the various types of meters and their labels.

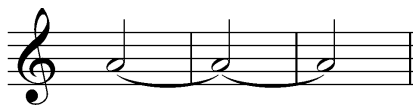
Don't be discouraged if you didn't grasp everything in one reading. I also hope that I might have whetted your appetite to learn more about how music works. If so, consider taking a Musicianship course at Harmony University this summer! ■

The actual duration of each note varies according to the tempo (speed) of the song. If you've heard a director set a tempo by counting "1-2-3" or "1-2-3-4," usually he/she is counting quarter notes. (But not always!) In the chart, each note or rest is half the duration of the note or rest above it. So in a typical barbershop song, a whole note would usually be held four counts, half notes usually held two counts, quarter notes one count, and eighth notes a half count. ("One-and two-and three-and four-and ...")

Dots and ties. A dot placed immediately after a note (or rest) increases



its duration by one-half the note's value. A



tie is a curved line that connects two notes of the same pitch. They are now a single duration that

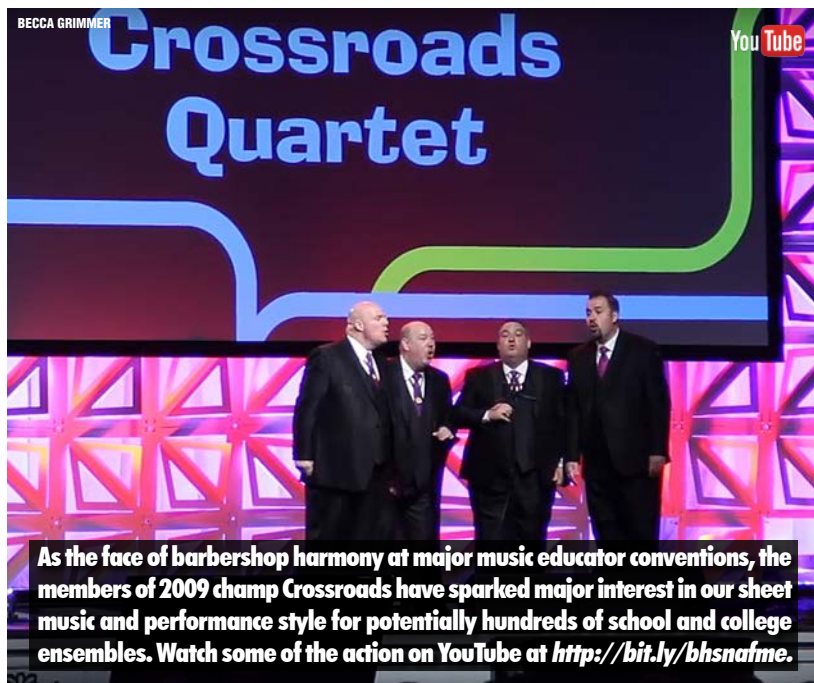


Dr. Jay Krumbholz
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faculty
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spokanefalls.edu

Beat	2 beats per bar	3 beats per measure	4 beats per measure
Simple	Simple duple	Simple triple	Simple quadruple
Compound	Compound duple	Compound triple	Compound quadruple

Watching the tide turn

Crossroads quartet is seeing music educators discover barbershop harmony's value—while many other educators are now changing long-held perceptions



You performed for 1,500 music educators in November, and I understand you got a reception you wouldn't have expected even a few years ago. Talk about that.

Mike Slamka (lead): At the national convention for NAFME (National Association for Music Educators), on opening night we sang five songs and got several standing ovations. The rest of the week, music educators were telling us, "I didn't realize that barbershop could be that."

Jim Henry (bass): The old stigma among educators about barbershop harmony is changing. We saw the same thing in February at the ACDA (American Choral Directors Association) National Convention.

Fred Farrell (tenor): I wish you could have seen the look on music educators' faces at the BHS booth when we gave away free packets of music and learning tracks. They say, "What's the catch?" There is no catch, and they light up like a kid on Christmas morning. We don't have a hidden agenda—we want people to sing.

Apparently the top brass at NAFME were more than a little impressed with you and barbershop harmony.

Jim: NAFME invited us to be their guest artist for Hill Day in Washington, D.C., in June. NAFME has two legs—one to become better teachers, and the other is music advocacy. We'll be going with music educators to congressional offices, where the educators are trying very hard to foster music education in schools. A guest artist is always sort of the face of Hill Day, and that's us this year. There will also be a concert that evening.

We had no idea we would be leaving with that kind of invitation. Ten

years ago, barbershop would not have been on the radar screen, and here we are, with barbershop being the face of music education to Congress. That's because barbershop and vocal harmony in general are really taking off.

Fred: The guest artist is important because when music educators go to the Hill, it can come off a bit self-serving because their livelihood is also at stake. They love the fact we represent purity in that message—that we represent what music education can be after students get out of school.

Brandon Guyton (bari): For ACDA, NAFME and others, their interest in barbershop goes way beyond what the style does for your ear and voice. Barbershop offers a rare opportunity to continue to sing after college, and that's something these organizations are interested in.

Jim: I'm sorry to think there was a time where the word "barbershop" would close a lot of doors. But finally, barbershop is becoming respected. People who never used to get it are finally saying, no, this is very beneficial



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to my choral program. The trend is definitely turning.

Has the perception of barbershop changed among students?

Jim: There's never been a stigma among students. You get them in a room ringing a chord, and they're hooked forever. If we had issues, it was from their teachers, who were concerned that they were going to misuse their voices singing barbershop.

So while you're helping more music educators discover barbershop, how is the younger crowd discovering it?

Jim: Well, *The Ragtime Gals* [*The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon*] have something to do with this. I know there are some Barbershoppers who think they're making fun of barbershop, but I don't think other people look at it that way.

Brandon: On Facebook and YouTube, barbershop performances get hundreds of thousands or millions of views. And these [views] are not coming from Barbershoppers, but from people outside our walls. You look at the comments, and non-Barbershoppers are saying, "I love barbershop."

Jim: There are all sorts of Barbershoppers showing up in professional groups like **Chanticleer** and **Cantus**, and in their bios, they say "I'm a Barbershopper." Vanderbilt's **Melodores** won *The Sing-Off*, and they include barbershop in their stage shows; for auditions, one of their callback requirements is getting guys to sing barbershop tags so they know they can sing harmony.

So we're seeing more music educators becoming interested in barbershop—what can you say about getting more Barbershoppers interested in helping music educators?

Jim: With money tight, the arts are being marginalized in schools. I understand the pressures the administrators are under, but I think that's short-sighted. Industry today relies as much on creativity as on other things, and that's what



Honor Choir performers organized an unofficial barbershop tagging session via social media ahead of NAFME's November convention in Nashville. After Crossroads' opening night performance rocked the house, students asked the quartet to lead the session. NAFME gave organizers a much bigger space, and up to 100 very enthused students and educators had a "mountaintop" experience with barbershop.

the arts are so good for. In the history of various cultures, they are known for their arts as much as their mathematics.

Fred: I grew up singing with my parents, never had a good music program in high school. I didn't sing anything other than barbershop. I'm not trained, don't read music. I'm a product of the Society 100%. This is an outlet for me that has been a life-changing thing, created so many relationships and opened so many doors.

Jim: The arts are no longer taught in most homes. We depend on music educators and other arts educators to be the conduit. We have to support this. Singing, singing, singing—it doesn't have to be barbershop, but hopefully they'll come to barbershop. We're part of a community of singers. We have to band together.

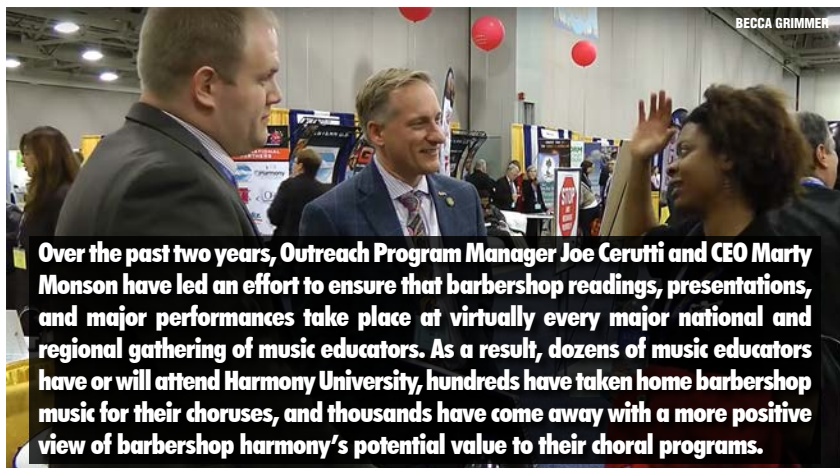
Do you have any advice on what to do—or maybe what *not* to do—to support music educators?

Brandon: A lot of Barbershoppers, their hearts are in the right place, *but they go in asking for something* of music educators. My brother, Chad, and I are Barbershoppers because Ron Weaver came to our music teacher and asked, "*What does your program need?*" She said, "A piano." He said, "If you let me into your class to talk about barbershop, I'll put together a quartet and we'll raise enough money to buy a piano."

It wasn't "I want to bring them to our chapter meeting." We were immediately hooked. We did 50-60 performances and raised enough money.

What if the educator or the students aren't currently interested in singing barbershop?

Brandon: I've seen when the kids come to the chapter and it wasn't the right fit, and the chapter shunned them. The attitude should be, how can we help you? Can we get



Over the past two years, Outreach Program Manager Joe Cerutti and CEO Marty Monson have led an effort to ensure that barbershop readings, presentations, and major performances take place at virtually every major national and regional gathering of music educators. As a result, dozens of music educators have or will attend Harmony University, hundreds have taken home barbershop music for their choruses, and thousands have come away with a more positive view of barbershop harmony's potential value to their choral programs.

you music? It doesn't have to be about your chapter.

What do music educators and students need to see when a Barbershopper or group starts working with them?

Fred: We have to be careful of what we're putting out there. Be sure our standards of musical excellence are high when we sing for non-barbershop audiences.

Jim: Music educators have a stereotype that Barbershoppers oversing. And then a quartet goes in and oversings—well, we've lost one there.

Brandon: When Chad and I heard barbershop, it was like the sky opened up. If it had been a quartet that had just thrown something together or used cheesy humor that only works for Barbershoppers, I don't know whether we would have had that mountaintop experience.

Jim: A good video recording is better than a bad live quartet.

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music is *woodshedding*, just like it used to be for barbershop. This group started in 1920s, but there is no organization preserving what they do. When they die, the music will more than likely die with them. It's given me a renewed appreciation for the preservation side of what we do as a Society.

Mike: It starts with the music, but once we were involved in barbershop, belonging to a Society affected who we ended up marrying and where we live. [Belonging to the Society] has changed my life and

Are we still fulfilling our mission even when we work among people who want to sing other music styles?

Jim: There was a day when Barbershoppers were threatened by other styles—they thought if we work with singers of other styles, their sound will infiltrate barbershop. And now I think now there's a much more healthy attitude, which is, “singing is singing.”

Mike: The more people we can get to enjoy lifelong singing, the more who will sing barbershop. It's just a numbers game.

What have you come to appreciate more about barbershop as you sing alongside performers of other musical forms?

Brandon: We've come to really love the **The Four** in our presentations. And 100 percent of their



all our lives more than the music.

Fred: In 2013, we were singing for big classic musical audiences in France—these were real musicians instead of what I do—and we were getting huge ovations wherever we went. To me, it's a testament to what barbershop can do for someone who can carry a tune. That and the fellowship and love that is out there in the barbershop community.

Jim: You don't have to be a member of the Barbershop Harmony Society to sing barbershop. Barbershop singing for its own sake is enough. But being a Barbershopper, the gift of that is all this other stuff—the friendships. The best friends any of us have are barbershop friends.

Any final words about the success of the Society's outreach efforts among music educators that we haven't covered yet?

Brandon: Nobody is asking us to say this, but the members need to understand something: this is not accidental. Marty and the team at the BHS have been intentional about this and made it a major part of the Society's mission. We would not have these opportunities if they had not invested time and money and staff resources to make this happen.

Fred: Everyone who sees this needs to feel good about what the Society is doing. There's a clear vision. We're so happy to be on the tip of the spear with this. We're starting to see it bear some fruit right now. I think it's just the beginning.

Jim: I've never seen someone with Marty Monson's foresight. For the first time in a long, long time, we're enormously proud to be Barbershoppers. There's this feeling of I can't wait to tell people about barbershop. I feel like I was just a kid. I want to thank Marty and his team for giving that back to me.

Mike: You can see the results just in the staff—the energy.

Brandon: I wish we could have had a camera set up for all the reactions, this wave of people, wave of teachers, thanking us. It was overwhelming. I wish every Barbershopper could see the vision unfolding in the way we can.

Fred: Trust us, it's happening. ■