



the north shore harmony rag



Joseph Schlesinger, Third Assistant
Temporary Editor and Royal Keeper
of the Minor Typos

North Shore Chapter,
Society for the
Preservation and
Encouragement of
Barber Shop Quartet
Singing in America, Inc.

Meetings:
7:45 p.m. Wednesdays,
Presbyterian Home,
3131 Simpson St.
(Golf Rd.), Evanston, IL
(Guests are welcome!)

April 2003

27 Members

Volume 31, Issue 4

When is our chorus due to go onstage at spring contest? Good question!

We don't know the answer yet, but we can tell you that North Shore is third in order of appearance, and the chorus contest is scheduled to begin at 1 p.m.

As soon as we receive a more detailed timetable, we will relay the information to you.

Countdown to Contest

One and a half weeks and counting . . . 12 days . . . do you feel the excitement building?

This is the time when we should be approaching our contest bid with confidence, fine-tuning the set we know will impress judges and audience alike. To do this we need to internalize the lessons Dick and our coaches have taught us.

Ask yourself this: "Am I REALLY ready?" It's too late in the game for us to spend chorus time correcting notes and words—we should be polishing and building our confidence week to week. Tonight we'll add a little simple choreography, but remember, our faces need to tell the story of the songs.

See the box below for important information.

Saturday morning rehearsal on April 26 in Peoria will be at 10:30 in a location to be announced.

Please plan to be on the risers no later than 10:00, warmed up and ready to sing.

Not-for-Profit Day: Sept. 13

Remember the fun we had at Not-for-Profit Day at Evanston Farmer's Market last year?

The City of Evanston will repeat the event this year on Saturday, Sept. 13, and we have submitted our application for North Shore Chapter to be one of the exhibitors.

Booth rental is free, and with our display of chapter photos and literature, and our chorus' singing for passersby, the occasion will be an excellent recruiting opportunity.

Please reserve Sept. 13, 8 a.m. to 12 noon, to participate in this important event.

Evanston Harmony Days Need Your Support

The Evanston Harmony Days (EHD) committee was formed with the objective of increasing the visibility and awareness of the North Shore Chapter in Evanston and the surrounding communities. Potential benefits include: free media coverage, increased membership, and performance opportunities.

The committee recommends that EHD coincide

with Arts Week Evanston to utilize City of Evanston promotional resources. Evanston Arts Week includes two weekends, beginning on Saturday, Oct. 11 and ending Sunday, Oct. 19.

Rick Prieto was invited by **Harmon Greenblatt**, Director Cultural Arts Division, to participate as a member of the Arts Week Evanston planning committee and

attended the initial meeting held on March 25. Rick presented a brief overview of EHD concepts and was invited to develop and present detailed plans at the next meeting tentatively scheduled for April 22.

The EHD committee met and created the following list of potential events:

continued on page 5—
see HARMONY

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Rag Deadline: Second Wednesday of Every Month

Board Meetings: First Sunday of each month.
The May Board meeting will be held at 7:45 p.m.
Sunday, May 4, at **Phil Schwimmer's** home, 3432
Salem Walk E., #AG, Northbrook. All chapter
members are welcome.

Chapter Web site: www.nsn.org/evkhome/bflat
(Current Rag issue is also on the Web site!)

COMING EVENTS

North Shore Chapter:
Fri., 4/25-Sun., 4/27—**Illinois District Spring Convention**—Peoria.
Wed., 5/7—**Guest Night/Open House.**
Sat., 5/17—**Potential Shoreliner Chorus Performance at 13th Annual Skokie Festival of Cultures**—some time in the afternoon at Oakton Park, Skokie.
Wed., 5/28—**Interchapter Bash (with Arlington Heights and Chicago Metro Chapters)**—7:45 p.m. at Sokol Community Center, 4855 N. Elston Ave. (one block north of Lawrence Ave.), Chicago. Guests are invited—in fact they're encouraged.
Sun., 6/29-Sun., 7/6—**65th International Convention**—Montreal, P.Q.
Sat., 7/19 or Sun., 7/20—**Potential Shoreliner Chorus Performance at Evanston Ethnic Arts Festival**—some time during the weekend at Dawes Park, Evanston.
Sun., 7/27-Sun., 8/3—**Harmony College/Directors College**—St. Joseph, Mo.
Sat., 9/13—**Evanston Not-for-Profit Day at Farmer's Market**—See story on page 1.
Sat., 10/11-Sun., 10/19—**Harmony Days in Evanston and Arts Week Evanston**—See story on page 1.
Sun., 10/19—**Potential Shoreliner Chorus Performance for Arts Week Evanston.**

North Shore Chapter Web Site:
www.nsn.org/evkhome/bflat

Elsewhere:
Fri., 4/18—**Interstate Woodshed**—8 p.m. (dinner at 6:30) at American Legion Hall, Hwy. B, Silver Lake, Wis. All Barber-shoppers invited; \$5 donation requested to defray expenses. For information, call the hall at 262/889-8255 or **Gerry Carroll** at 847/678-0092.
Fri., 5/2 and Sat., 5/3—**Northbrook Chapter Show**—2:30 (Sat.) and 8 p.m. (Fri. and Sat.) at Glenbrook North H.S., 2300 Shermer Rd., Northbrook. Featuring: **Four Voices** (current International Champs), **New Tradition Chorus** (2001 International Champion Chorus). Tickets: \$23 (VIP, evening), \$18 (rest of main floor, evening), \$15 (balcony, evening), \$14 (main floor, matinee), \$12 (upper level, evening; balcony, matinee; students and senior citizens main floor, matinee), \$10 (students and senior citizens balcony, matinee); all seats reserved. For more information, call 800/SHOWCHORUS (746-9246) or e-mail info@newtradition.org. Or see **Joseph Schlesinger**, **Dick Yanow**, or **Mindy Lazor**.

Barbershop Harmony Chicagoland Web site:
www.bbs.singer.as

OUR MISSION STATEMENT:
North Shore Chapter of SPEBSQSA is a group of men of all ages who enjoy gathering in fellowship to sing in the four-part, a cappella, close harmony style known as barbershop. As we participate in our varied social and musical activities, including both choral and quartet singing, our members can develop their vocal skills and their appreciation of the rich heritage of American song, which we share with our community through performances in a variety of settings.

March/April Guests

Ted Briggs (Leaveck)
Frank Goode (Chicago #1 Chapter)
Ron Rank (Greendale, Wis. and Frank Thorne Chapters—guest coach)

Chapter Charity Report

Here's the result of Heartspring labels for the first quarter of 2003.

In ascending order:

15 — combination of yours truly and my friend, **Lois Karlin**

24 — **Pete Brandt**

32 — my friend, **Stan Sclove**

Grand total: 71 labels

Keep them coming—to me!

—**Phil Schwimmer**
Charity Chairman

~~~~~  
**BRING A GUEST TO GUEST NIGHT  
HECK—BRING TWO!**  
~~~~~

The craft article on pages 3 and 4 was given to us by Dr. Chris Wethered of Boise, Ida. Chapter, with his permission to reprint the entire series in the *Rag*. Because there is insufficient room for section five: "Enrich Your Sound," that section will run in the May *Rag*. There's a lot of good advice in it, and too little room in this issue. So pay attention to the principles introduced in sections one through four, and we'll give you the rest next month.

Continually Improving Our Performance—Part Two

—Dr. Chris Weathered (Boise, Ida. Chapter)

III. CONTROL YOUR SOUND

You and your vocal folds (vocal cords)

The vocal folds are a set of parallel muscular bands that close off the vocal tract. They perform the same basic biological function in all air-breathing creatures. They are designed to keep food, drink and foreign objects from falling into the lungs. Once such foreign substances are arrested, the vocal folds allow you to "blow" them out of your airway. This is done by holding the vocal folds tightly together and building the sub-glottic air pressure (sub-glottic is the technical term for the airspace below the vocal cords). Then, like a "pop" gun, you open the folds and the air pressure "explodes" the offending item from your throat with a cough.

Pressurized pulmonary air for exertion and sound production

The vocal folds also allow you to trap pressurized air in your lungs. This establishes a stable skeletal structure to support lifting, pushing and pulling. You may have noticed a vocal sound (grunt) when exerting yourself when lifting, pushing or pulling. This sound results when the positive air pressure developed in the lungs (to stabilize the skeleton) overcomes the closing force of the vocal folds. The escaping air vibrates the vocal folds, producing the grunt sound. In these activities, with the vocal folds closed, the air in the lungs is compressed by tensing the abdominal muscles, pushing up the guts to further elevating the diaphragm. At the same time the elevated ribs are pulled down to further pressurize the air trapped in the lungs.

Lifting Experiment:

Using both hands, attempt lifting a heavy or immovable object.

1. With your hands on your stomach, feel how your abdominal muscles tense to pressurize the air in your lungs (stabilizing your skeletal structure).
2. Note that your vocal folds are closed. You will feel muscular tension and air pressure in your neck.

The main differences between lifting and singing/speech are that the abdominal action is less intense and the vocal folds are not locked shut.

The process of vocal fold vibration, as used in singing/speech, is the same as that employed at the lips in making the "raspberry" sound or in "bubbling." When air passes through a constriction composed of two mobile tissue masses (lips or vocal folds), they are set into vibration. The frequency of their vibration is the pitch of the sound produced. This frequency of vibration is influenced by the rate of airflow, in conjunction with the tension, thickness, length, and weight of the vibrating tissue (lips or vocal folds).

In the lifting experiment above, the abdominal action was easily felt, as it was applied against the resistance of pressurized air (enclosed by the closed vocal folds). The same abdominal muscles are used when singing, however, with less resistance, it is less noticeable. The following experiment should help you to become more aware of this muscular action as used during singing.

Singing Experiment:

In singing, the action of the abdominal muscles is most easily felt by placing your hand on your stomach while you bubble or sing a sustained "Z-Z-Z-Z" sound. You will feel the strongest muscular action, as you are "squeezing" out the last of your usable air.

Vocal fold vibration results when the air pressure below the closed vocal folds overpowers the muscular tension holding the folds together. A burst of air escapes between the vocal folds, reducing the air pressure below the vocal folds. The muscular tension is then more powerful than this "sub-glottic air pressure" and so the folds return to their closed position, and the air pressure increases again. This is one cycle. The process continues as long as the sub-glottic air pressure is elevated and the vocal folds are closed with a medium pressure. On average, a man's voice consists of approximately 135 of these cycles per second (CPS); this frequency is also referred to as Hertz (Hz) or pitch.

Volume and Vibrato

Using a consistent air pressure, it is variation in vocal fold characteristics which produces changes in pitch and breathiness. The key to controlled singing (i.e., vibrato and volume) is this balance between the sub-glottic air pressure and the muscular tension holding the vocal folds together. Volume is easy; you just

(continued on page 4—see CRAFT)

Craft (continued from page 3)

force a greater amount of pressurized air between your vocal folds.

Vibrato (wavering pitch) is a bit more tricky. It is an interesting quality for individual performances. However, it does not allow for the close harmony required to make and keep chords ringing.

Vibrato is an imbalance between the sub-glottic air pressure and vocal fold tension. Generally, the balance is so close that it produces a surging quality. Recall how your car lurches when you do not press down hard enough on the gas pedal. Usually, the imbalance is due to insufficient sub-glottic air pressure or fluctuating muscular tension at the diaphragm or vocal folds.

The solution is to slightly increase and maintain sub-glottic air pressure at a consistent level when driving the vocal folds for singing. If this does not work, the individual should “tinker” with the balance until they get a clear, consistent pitch. The secret to producing varied sounds (i.e., pitch, brightness, and breathiness) with the vocal mechanism is adjusting vocal fold proximity, tension, length, and mass. These are all things that you control on a daily basis; they are under automatic control of the brain. All you have to do is think of the desired sound, or “feel” the mood of the song. Your vocal folds will automatically make the adjustments required to create that sound. As a chorus, we need to consistently produce the agreed sound at every point in a song. By doing this we can enhance our ability to ring cords and further convey the message.

In the barbershop style of singing, it is important to produce a “unit sound.” We must all produce the same qualities and sounds at the specified pitches. The better we do this, the better we can ring cords. To further enhance this ringing, it is essential that we are all pronouncing the lyrics, in the same manner. The chorus must agree on the vowels used, when diphthongs are turned and how, potentially difficult, consonant combinations will be pronounced.

IV. CONVEY THE MESSAGE OF THE SONG

In barbershop singing, everything that you do should support the message of the song. For starters, this includes the:

- volume
- tempo
- moves
- resonance
- brightness/breathiness
- stressed words
- body position
- register
- focal point of eyes
- costume

The limited scope of this paper dictates that only the first two of these features will be addressed.

I have heard it said that the two defining characteristics of barbershop music (especially at alcohol-fueled sing-outs) are:

- it is loud and
- if a chord rings, we hold it as long as our breath and director will permit

Neither is generally suitable to the music. All features of our performance should be dictated by the artistic interpretation of the song. They should all sell the same message. This message should be sent by all members of the chorus, changing with the mood of the song.

Volume

I have also heard coaches say that we should never sing louder than beautiful. Volume is such an easily controlled feature of singing it should be the first thing over which a chorus gains control.

Bright/Breathy

The chorus should use a variety of volumes to sell the song, being quiet or loud, breathy* or bright as indicated by the mood of the song. For instance, “Heart of My Heart” can be performed as a quiet, breathy song or as a brighter, more intense number, depending on the interpretation and the intended message.

A group’s ability to “sell” a particular interpretation will be enhanced by its ability, as a unit, to increase or decrease volume/breathiness and other vocal characteristics.

When the vocal folds are held tightly together, they produce a crisp, bright sound. The further apart the folds are, the more breathy and they produce a quieter sound. Some of the breathy sound quality is produced by escaping air, rushing past the partially open vocal folds. You must be aware that this inefficient use of air (leakage) will also result in a need for more breaths.

You and your body come to barbershop singing with years of emotional experience. Many of the “techniques” employed in barbershop come naturally when you understand the interpretation and “feel” what the author intended.

As an experiment, sing “Heart of My Heart” with the following messages and associated techniques:

- 1.) A teenager emphatically proclaiming his feelings to a new love (a la *Romeo and Juliet*): *Bright, volume (6-7), face (excited, anticipation, proud), posture (upright, alert, big resets)*
- 2.) After 60 years of marriage, restating feelings to a sleeping spouse on her death bed: *Breathy, volume (1-3), face (nostalgic, reflective, sad), posture (shoulders forward, slightly slumped)*

**breathy* = This is a controllable vocal characteristic, which enhances the message. It is a good skill for developing vocal control and use in performance. It is, however, not currently encouraged for use in competition.

—from Boise, Ida. Chapter *Valley Vibes*
Win Kircher, Scott Gartner, and Dan Morrison, editors

"I do believe this: people who love to sing in four-part harmony are the sort of people you could call up when you're in deep distress.

If you're dying, they'll comfort you.

If you're lonely, they'll talk to you.

If you're hungry, they'll give you tuna salad!"

—Garrison Keillor

Harmony

(continued from page 1)

- Conduct a chapter open house on Wednesday, Oct. 15.
- Advertise in the Arts Week Evanston program.
- Participate in an Arts Week Evanston concert scheduled for Sunday, Oct. 19, at the Music Institute of Chicago.
- Conduct Shoreliner quartet and VLQ (very large quartet) performances at Evanston schools, nursing homes, and hospitals during Arts Week Evanston.
- Organize a vocal workshop open to singers in the Evanston community. (This would require collaboration with other organizations to secure instructors, music, and venue.)
- Organize and participate in a community music program, which would include performances by the Shoreliners and other local vocal groups (preferably a cappella) and an audience sing-along. (This would require collaboration with other organizations to secure performers and venue.)

Shoreliners lead very busy lives with full schedules. The above events require

increasing levels of Shoreliner participation, effort, and commitment. Please consider your availability in the fall of 2003. A committee member will contact you during the next week to determine whether you are willing to participate in any of the above events. If you can't wait, you can call any committee member with your comments.

—Evanston Harmony Days Committee
 Noble LeHew
 Phil Martin
 Ed Price
 Rick Prieto (chairman)
 Joseph Schlesinger
 Phil Schwimmer

Interchapter Bash with Arlington Heights and Chicago Metro Chapters

* * * 7:45 p.m., Wednesday, May 28 * * *

Sokol Community Center, 4855 N. Elston Ave. (one block north of Lawrence Ave.), Chicago
 Guests are welcome! Free admission. Quartets in attendance will be invited to sing.

"From the Top"

Saw the following story on the Harmonet. Thought you could use it when you're recruiting guests for our Open House May 7.

Sitting on Your Talent

—by **Steve Goodier**, author of "Joy Along the Way"

If you are like me, there are some things you may feel you do pretty well, and others that you would not admit to having done even at gunpoint! I do play guitar adequately and I can make a memorable enchilada dish. I also enjoy working with people and I seem to have made it a life-long project to learn how to become a better listener.

I never thought of myself as one who has any great talent, but like each of us, I have certain skills and abilities. Let me tell you a story, however, passed down through jazz

circles. It's a story about a man who had real talent.

This particular man played piano in a bar. He was a good piano player. People came out just to hear him and his trio play. But one night, a patron wanted them to sing a particular song. The trio declined. But the customer was persistent.

He told the bartender, "I'm tired of listening to the piano. I want that guy to sing!"

The bartender shouted across the room to the piano player, "Hey buddy! If you want to get paid, sing the song. The patrons are asking you to sing!"

So he did. He sang a song. A jazz piano player who had not sung much in public, sang a song that changed his career. For nobody had ever heard "Sweet Lorraine"

sung the way it was sung that night by **Nat "King" Cole!**

He had talent he was sitting on! He may have lived the rest of his life playing in a jazz trio in clubs and bars, but because he had to sing, he went on to become one of the best-known entertainers in America.

You, too, have skills and abilities. You may not feel as if your "talent" is particularly great, but it may be better than you think! And with persistence, most skills can be improved. Besides, you may as well have no ability at all if you sit on whatever talent you possess!

Some people ask, "What ability do I have that is useful?"

Others ask, "How will I use the ability that I have?"

—**Joseph Schlesinger**
 President

P. O. Box 741
Evanston, IL 60204

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Remember
this **RULE**
FOR **HAPPY**
HARMONIZING:

Sing . . .

- the same
thing
- the same
time
- the same
way
- in tune
- in balance

A Gem from the Harmonet

From: "Borts, Mike"
<Mike.Borts@hq.gte.com>
Subject: Polecat Haiku

Here's some Polecat Haiku
that Sister Jade laid on me.
I hope you dig it as much as
I did:

Hey, hey, Uncle Dud!
Sweet to beat your feet
on the
Mississippi mud.

True greatness!

Peace!

Beatnik Mike

Chapter Records Are Accessible

All North Shore Chapter
members have the right to
see their chapter's records.
Minutes for the most recent
Board meeting are usually
posted on the bulletin board
at chapter meetings, but if
you wish to see a copy of
any of our Board meeting
minutes, ask Secretary **Phil
Schwimmer**. Chapter fi-
nancial reports are available
from Treasurer **Ed Price**.

Blessed are the
Chord Ringers,
For theirs is the
Kingdom of Harmony.

Quartet News

Alchemy is mixing up some
harmony for a private party
at White Eagle Country
Club in Naperville Friday
evening, April 18. One
month later (May 18), they
will headline the Oak Lawn
Chapter show. They sang
on the Champaign-Urbana
Chapter Show on April 4.

Hospitality will perform at a
family event at St. Alphonse's
Church in Mount Prospect
Sunday afternoon, May 18.

North Shore Four
(Mimura-Remien-
Schwimmer-Schlesinger)
will make an appearance at
The Admiral retirement
home in Chicago Saturday
evening, June 14.