



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!)

May 2003

27 Members

Volume 31, Issue 5

Farmers' markets in the North Shore communities are opening this week.

Joseph Schlesinger will soon be approaching members for commitments to sing in the North Shore Four at these markets during the next six months.

We'd like to have the quartet at at least one market each week. Please set time aside now. Our member recruitment program depends on these performances.

My Big Fat Barbershop Convention

"Big" is right: 25 quartets and 12 choruses competed in this spring convention, and our hosts from Bloomington #1 Chapter did themselves and the district proud.

The Saturday night quartet finals featured the best singing overall this writer has ever heard on the Illinois contest stage. All five quartets from outside Illinois District made the cut, resulting in 15 finalists. Though the top five from Illinois—**Cheers!** (2003 points), **Aces High** (1812), **Alchemy** (1784), **Pinnacle** (1770), and **One 4 All** (1723)—all turned in impressive performances, only **Cheers!** qualified to go to international competition in Montreal.

Of the out-of-district contenders, only **Excalibur** (from Land O' Lakes District, and featuring **New Tradition Chorus** director and former North Shore member **Jay Giallombardo** on bass) qualified for international, with a total of 2010 points.

Both college quartets contained members from North-

western University. **Four-Tunes Fools**, a foursome consisting entirely of Northwestern students, won their second consecutive district collegiate championship, while past champ **Vocal Tonic** came in second.

The top five choruses were Rockford Metro **Second City Chorus** (858 points), Macomb **Macomb Prairie-land Chorus** (653), Champaign-Urbana **Illini Statesmen Chorus** (638), Elgin **Fox Valley Men of Harmony Chorus** (620), and Springfield **Land of Lincoln Chorus** (616). Our **Shoreliner Chorus'** ninth-place finish, with 565 points, was a disappointment for us, but indicates the level and direction of work we need to do to present a more artistic and entertaining performance.

Fall convention is a different kind of experience; though we won't be competing in that one, we urge our fellow members to attend. Don't forget, this fall's convention is earlier than usual.

We've Got a "Rain" Date

North Shore Chapter's Annual "Rain on the Hamburgers" Party is set for Sunday afternoon, Aug. 10. **Marty** and **Flora Steigman** will host the get-together at their home at 4322 Greenwood St., Skokie.

The party, which will start around 3 p.m. and continue "till the last tenor has dropped," will feature the usual fun singing and good food, and Marty and Flora will proudly show off their new kitchen to all comers.

All North Shore Chapter members and their guests are welcome. Since this is a pot luck dinner, guests are encouraged to bring a dish to share; hamburgers, hot dogs, beverages, and conviviality will be provided.

Reserve the date now. Plan to dress casually. Rainwear is optional.

We Need Your Music Suggestions

Got any ideas for songs you would like our chorus to learn? Give your suggestions to **Bill Remien**.

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Rag Deadline: Second Wednesday of Every Month

Board Meetings: First Sunday of each month.

The June Board meeting will be held at 7:45 p.m.

Sunday, June 1, 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:

Every Wednesday night—**Informal Guest Night—BRINGASINGA!**

Wed., 6/11 (NEW DATE!)—**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.

Sun., 8/10—**"Rain on the Hamburgers" Party**—See story on page 1.

Sat., 9/13—**Evanston Not-for-Profit Day at Farmer's Market.**

Sat., 10/11–Sun., 10/19—**Harmony Days in Evanston and Arts Week Evanston.**

Sun., 10/19—**Potential Shoreliner Chorus Performance for Arts Week Evanston.**

North Shore Chapter Web Site:

www.nsn.org/evkhome/bflat

Elsewhere:

Fri., 5/23—**Interstate Woodshed**—8 p.m.

(dinner at 6:30) at American Legion Hall, Hwy. B, Silver Lake, Wis. For information, call the hall at 262/889-8255 or **Gerry Carroll** at 847/678-0092.

Sat., 6/7—**North Shore Harmonizers**

Cabaret—7:30 p.m. at St. Margaret Mary's Activities Center, 7311 N. Claremont Ave., Chicago. Featuring: **Rendezvous, North Shore Harmonizers Chorus.** Tickets: \$20. For more information, call **Laura Mach** at 847/869-9915.

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.

April/May Guests

Frank Goode (Chicago #1 Chapter)

Arnie Levin (Schlesinger)

Gerald and Diane Symons (the Steigmans)

PLEASE NOTE:

The date of our Interchapter Bash with Arlington Heights and Chicago Metro Chapters has been changed from May 28 to **June 11**. Everything else remains the same. Location is Sokol Community Center, 4855 N. Elston Ave., Chicago. Guests are welcome. Admission is free. All quartets in attendance will be invited to sing. You won't want to miss this one!

"From the Top"

Great Googa Mooga, what happened? We went into spring contest with high expectations and came out . . . in ninth place.

I feel our score of 565 (or 47.1% of a perfect two-judge panel score of 1200 points) is a reliable indicator of what level our chorus is capable of performing at right now.

Gentlemen, we need a lot of work, and we need to consciously reinforce the application of the principles of good singing into every song we perform. The Skokie Festival of Cultures did not materialize as a performance opportunity for us, but there will be others, and we must be prepared to thrill our audiences and ourselves.

Of course, having another five or ten good singers on the risers wouldn't hurt either. Oh well, we're on track to win "most improved chorus" next spring; let's start practicing and demonstrating those techniques the judges reminded us about.

—**Joseph Schlesinger**
President

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*.

This article brings to mind the four resonators, as taught by Jim Casey and introduced to us by Dick. Remember these?

- “Mm-hmm!”
- “Holy Moley!”
- “Oh no!” (like Mister Bill)
- “Hoo hoo hoo!” (like Julia Child)

Using them all will enhance your singing.

Continually Improving Our Performance—Part Three

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

V. ENRICH YOUR SOUND

Resonating chambers vibrate to amplify the sound

The chambers, cavities, cul-de-sacs and wide places in the vocal tract allow for echoing and sound amplification. For an optimum sound, we need to adjust these resonating chambers to their maximum dimensions. Recall that the largest component of a stringed instrument (i.e., guitar, bass, piano) is the sounding chamber.

When singing, we constantly change the shape and combination of the vocal tract cavities which we employ. The configuration and total space available within the cavities used, dictates the level of amplification/resonance introduced into our vocal sounds.

These adjustments allow us a broad range of variability in the sounds that we produce. Such changes in our vocal tract can be visualized by thinking of the adjustments available on wind instruments. While these are used for pitch control, they provide a useful, visible model of adjustable cavities. Think about the effect of using the slide on a trombone or the buttons on a trumpet/tuba. In these instances, they allow us to vary the length, shape and combination of available air spaces. Each configuration has a unique effect on the sound produced (pitch in these instruments and resonance in the vocal tract).

We can use vocal cord separation and a lower rate of air flow to produce a quiet and mood-enhancing volume. For greater loudness, we instinctively bring the vocal cords closer together and move the air between them more forcefully. This causes them to vibrate in a hard (abusive) manner. Using resonance, allows you to increase your loudness in a manner that is kinder to your vocal mechanism. This louder, resonance-enhanced sound results from harmonic vibration of the air in your enlarged resonating cavities.

In your vocal tract, the most easily identified and controlled resonating chambers are the oral, pharyngeal, and nasal cavities.

Oral Cavity

An individual vowel can be produced using a range of similar tongue positions. For optimal oral resonance, vowels should be produced with your tongue tip at the base of the lower front teeth. All vowels should be produced with

the tongue placed as far forward in your mouth as possible. The farther forward your tongue is, the larger the resonating cavity produced (behind the tongue-hard palate contact point), and the richer the sound quality generated.

In other words, the air traveling up from the lungs is set into vibration by the vocal folds. This vibration is then amplified in proportion to the size and shape of the (vocal tract) air spaces through which it passes.

Optimum resonance is achieved by attaining the greatest possible resonating space between the vocal folds and the constriction established between your tongue and hard palate. This enhanced resonance is then shaped into the desired vowel/consonant by the specific tongue position used.

EXPERIMENT: Prolong an “EE” sound (or any other vowel). 1.) Slowly move your tongue back as far as you can in your mouth, while maintaining the “EE” sound. 2.) Now move your tongue as far forward in your mouth as you can, again maintaining the “EE” sound. You will be able to sustain a recognizable “EE” sound across a surprising range of tongue positions. You should also note that the farther forward your tongue placement, the more resonant (fuller) the sound becomes. To achieve this “far forward tongue placement,” imagine that you are trying to produce the vowel in front of your mouth; rather than inside your mouth.

Pharyngeal Cavity

The pharyngeal cavity (or pharynx) is the air space along the back wall of your upper airway. It extends up into the nasal cavity and down to the level of the vocal folds. It is widest at the level of your tongue, (between the back of the tongue and back wall of the throat). It is to enlarge this space, that we strive for a “far forward tongue placement.” For maximum pharyngeal space, also remember the image of a “partial yawn” or imagine a “hot potato” in the back of your mouth. One easy way to get this openness is to imitate the resonant sound quality produced by opera singers.

Nasal cavity

Many of our barbershop vocal exercises encourage us to produce one of the nasal sounds (“m,” “n,” and “ng”), followed by a vowel. The object of these exercises is to introduce some of this rich nasal resonance into our vowels (non-nasal sounds).

(continued on page 4—see CRAFT)

Craft (continued from page 3)

The small punching bag (uvula) at the back of the soft palate (velum) is part of the “trap door” (velo-pharyngeal port*) between the oral and nasal cavities. In normal speech, this port is only open on the nasalized sounds “m,” “n,” and “ng.”

* It is called the velo-pharyngeal port because it is produces closure between the velum and the posterior wall of the pharynx

Experiment:

Nasal vibration can be felt by gently touching the side of your nose, when making one of these nasal sounds (“m,” “n,” or “ng”). Feeling your nose will also demonstrate the lack of nasal resonance when making a vowel sound. Singers should learn to keep this “trap door” open a bit during vowel production. The vibrating air circulating through the nasal cavity will add resonance/richness/fullness and volume to the vowel being produced.

We already do exercises to develop this skill. Many of our vocal exercises, such as “My mom” and “hung-ah-me-me,” are designed to open the nasal cavity. This allows the subsequent vowel sound to take advantage of this valuable, large, resonating chamber. This resonating cavity is more tricky to control than either the oral or the pharyngeal cavity. It requires delicate adjustment. Practice will help you to fine-tune the size of the “trap door” opening into the nasal cavity. Aperture size directly influences the amount of nasality introduced into your voice.

Experiment:

1.) As you speak, keep the “trap door” into the nasal cavity closed, even on your nasal sounds (“m,” “n,” “ng”). This will sound like you have a cold. With a cold, your nasal cavity is frequently plugged-up, resulting in this “de-nasal” quality. Your nasal sounds will turn into explosive oral consonants “b,” “d,” and “k,” respectively.
2.) Now speak through your nose, like you have a cleft palate and cannot physically keep air from escaping through your nose. The sound quality that you want is somewhere between these two extremes.

You have just demonstrated your control over this small set of muscles. Now you need to fine-tune your control. The size of the opening must be adjusted to influence resonance and softness of the sound. There is a delicate balance between keeping consonant clarity while still introducing nasal quality (a rich, softness) into your vowels. When you are too nasal, your consonants are deprived of the air pressure required for intelligibility (as they bypass the mouth and tongue). The nose is an alternative route through which sound can exit the body. If the nasal port is wide open, vibrating air will escape without being shaped into sounds within the oral cavity.

You need only a small opening here to result in great benefit. To hear the influence of nasal resonance, listen to the singing voices of **Barbra Streisand**, **Barry Manilow**, and **Celine Dion**. You will hear a great deal of nasality, as a positive feature of their powerful voices.

Barbra Streisand recently decided against having a nose job (rhinoplasty), because she was advised that it would probably change the sound and quality of her singing voice.

Experiment:

There is another way to achieve more openness in the pharyngeal and nasal cavities. This technique produces less tension in these structures. First, inhale through your nose as if “smelling a pleasant fragrance,” such as perfume or a flower. Then, while maintaining this position of your structures (soft palate and pharyngeal wall), produce a vowel sound. With both the relaxed, open pharyngeal space and partially open nasal cavity, you should hear a remarkable difference in your vocal resonance. You might even want to tape “before and after” samples of your voice, to better hear the difference. For this taping, you may use either a sustained vowel or part of a song.

Bounce the sound off of your hard palate

To produce a bright, resonant sound that carries, you need to use head resonance. You want to set the air in your various head cavities into sympathetic vibration. Nasal resonance will start the air in neighboring chambers (sinuses) into vibration. The best way to focus your resonance in the head is to target the sound on your hard palate (just behind the upper front teeth). This produces a resonant sound and a tickling buzz on your hard palate, just behind your front, upper teeth.

Combine harmonics to produce overtones

The characteristics of the resonating chambers influence the sounds produced by the singer. The human voice is composed of a complex combination of sounds. These sounds are allowed to combine in the resonating chambers.

Resonance enriches the sound produced by an individual singer. This can be explained by a more easily observed phenomenon. Recall how much richer your voice sounds in a hall with a low ceiling and flat hard walls; where your voice can echo. When your voice bounces around (echoes), similar frequencies in your individual voice combine and are reinforced/amplified.

Barbershop music capitalizes on ringable chords; as many as 36 of these chords can be found in a single arrangement. The structure of these chords is designed to assemble four notes with overlapping constituent frequencies. Those that overlap are reinforced and hence amplified. In essence, the chorus (or quartet) is reinforcing harmonics when it rings a chord. The net result is the production of harmonically related “unsung” notes floating somewhere over our heads (overtones). Barbershop music is filled with beautiful moments (when the singers are accurately producing the notes written).

—from Boise, Ida. Chapter *Valley Vibes*

Win Kircher, **Scott Gartner**, and **Dan Morrison**, editors

Definitions of
chorus classi-
fications . . .

According to
Steve

Jamison:

- “A” level:
the chorus
has mastered
the music
- “B” level:
the chorus
controls the
music
- “C” level:
the music
controls the
chorus
- “D” level:
the chorus is
out of control

According to
Robert Lenoil
(on the
Harmonet):

A = 81%-100%
B = 61%-80%
C = 41%-60%
D = 1%-40%

(0% is re-
served for
when a judge
“forfeits his
score,” i.e.,
disqualifies a
song for
violating the
contest rules)

Here’s What the Judges Said—Spring 2003

(From notes taken by **Mindy Lazor** and edited by **Joseph Schlesinger**)

Presentation Category (Visual, Vocal, Song Choice) — Dwain Brobst:

(with additional comments by **Dennis Sorge**)

- The chorus did not generate any excitement.
- There was an absence of pleasant faces and expressions.
- There was excitement in the vocal expression, but facial expressions did not match it.
- Moves (and singing) were out of sync.
- There were some nice “vocal things” in both songs, but they did not occur consistently enough.
- There needs to be a constant buildup, then release, of tension in each song.
- “Oh! You Beautiful Doll” was missing a mood setting—in other words, facial expressions, body postures, and presence to audience were unconvincing.
- Gestures looked planned—faces did not complement moves.

Suggestions for improvement:

- Decide how to give each song to the audience as a gift; determine the entertainment value of each song and deliver it.
- Increase and sustain energy throughout each song, starting at the very beginning.
- Create a sense of anticipation in the audience; carry emotion “across the line.”
- Give the appearance of “propelling” a song, rather than of being at rest.
- Make sure looks and sounds match.
- Minimize choppy singing—eliminate it, if possible.
- Make a personal commitment to use your heart to drive your choreography—“feel your moves.”
- Involve the entire body in choreo moves.
- Tell the story as if talking to a three-year-old—in other words, use big gestures and exaggerated facial expressions.
- This can be achieved by having singers rehearse one-to-one while facing one another.

Singing Category — Mark Holdeman:

- The strength of our chorus lies with the leads and basses.
- There needs to be more air supporting the tone.
- There were problems with vocal weight (i.e., singing in chest voice instead of head voice).
- Carrying the head register from higher ranges down to lower ranges helps negotiate the vocal break.
- Baritones sounded very thin—they need a rounder, fuller sound, with increased resonance.
- The starts of both songs were out of sync.
- We need to form the initial vocal sound/shape of each song before the song starts (in other words, on the breath).

Suggestions for improvement:

- Conduct more sectional rehearsals.
- Perform exercises to match the quality of leads and basses.
- Put more buoyancy in the phrasing—it was too static—by singing with more air (bubbling exercises should help).

Music Category — Steve Jamison:

- We are a “C” level chorus (see the marginal comment to the left).
- Energy drops at the ends of phrases—we need to invert the energy curve.
- Music creates the organized sequence of tension and release—we need to build that sequence into our mastery of the music.
- Exhale and release tension when the pitch is blown—one can hear pitch only when air is coming out of one’s mouth.

Suggestions for improvement:

- Stand on the balls of the feet when singing.
- Turn the energy curve upward when singing each phrase. (Have the chorus members stretch rubber bands while singing each phrase and release them at the end of each phrase.)
- Use all the muscles in the body to build tension.
- Give every phrase a pulse, and the audience will respond.

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"The heart is
like an
instrument
whose strings
steal nobler
music from
life's many
frets."

—Gerald
Massey

Quartet News

Congratulations to **Alchemy** on their third-place finish in the Illinois District International Prelims. Especially noteworthy is the fact that their new baritone, **Mark Kever**, had been singing with them for only six weeks.

Chordmasters has also undergone a personnel change: **Jim Gieseler** has moved from lead to baritone, and **Dave King** is the new lead. **Jack Musich** occasionally fills in for Elmer on tenor. They are actively soliciting performances and have the following commitments on their calendar: Barrington Park District, May 5; a fiftieth wedding anniversary at Rob Roy Country Club in Palatine, May 16; St. Paul's Lutheran Church Auxiliary luncheon at the

Cotillion in Palatine, June 4; Rolling Meadows Senior Center, June 12.

Golden Boys performed at the Skokie Chapter of AARP's monthly luncheon in Skokie Tuesday, May 6.

Hospitality sang at a luncheon at St. Alphonsus Liguori Church in Prospect Heights Sunday afternoon, May 18 (corrected information), and for the Illinois Chapter of the Military Authors Association at the Arrowhead Golf Course in Wheaton Sunday afternoon, June 8.

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

Here Is Why Music Is So Important to Us All

(Thanx to **Bob Levi**.)

Little Noah came into the house with a new harmonica. "Grandpa, do you mind if I play this in here?"

"Of course not, Noah. I love music. In fact, when your grandma and I were young, music saved my life."

"What happened?"

"Well, it was during the famous Johnstown flood. The dam broke and when the water hit our house it knocked it right off the foundation. Grandma got on the dining room table and floated out safely."

"How about you?"

"Me? I accompanied her on the piano!"