

The Newyorker Times

The newsletter of Poughkeepsie, New York, Chapter of the Barbershop Harmony Society



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Comments from Bix Doughty

Among the “Oldyorkers” to whom we send the Newyorker Times is Bix Doughty. When he received the April issue, he responded with the following comments:

“ . . . I’m pleased to hear of the quartet and chorus success. Also that the club has added Castle Point to its customers. I hope you get an appreciative crowd. So many of the venues get out a small crowd, it’s a bit discouraging. We sang at the Veteran’s Hosp in D.C. (just closed) once, and there were more staff around than patients; the next year we went to a ward of wheel-chair guys.”

A Chieffo Makes the Papers Again

By George Trigg

Once again, the Chieffo clan has shown its propensity for getting into the news. This time it was Bob’s ten-year-old grandson Nick. In March, the Arlington High School Parent Teacher Student Association sponsored a Math, Science and Technology Expo at the high school, featuring projects made by district students from all grade levels. The Expo was written up in the 26 March issue of the Poughkeepsie Journal, with the write-up appearing on the front page of the Mid-Hudson section. Nick’s project was a



Photo by Kathy McLaughlin/Poughkeepsie Journal

parabolic sound collecting device made out of a wok and a microphone, an idea he got from a book about science fair projects. He is quoted as saying that he “thought it was a

satellite dish at first,” and he recognized that the two devices work on the same principle. The accompanying picture shows Nick (partly hidden) standing by as a second-grader tries out the device.

“Sound Celebration” Update

By Show Chair, Bob Chieffo

May 20th is fast approaching—just a couple of weeks away. Soon we’ll be standing behind the curtain fidgeting, taking some deep breaths, licking our lips, listening for MC Gene Mayer’s words, “Ladies and gentlemen, the Poughkeepsie Newyorkers.” The applause starts, our hearts are pounding, the curtain opens, we’re grinning from ear to ear—and our 45th Anniversary Year Annual Show “SOUND CELEBRATION” opens!

This is the culmination of all our work for the chorus and quartets. This is our annual public showcase. This is WHY we learn and sing barbershop! And to top it off, our audience is paying to hear us. Will we entertain and give them their money’s worth? You bet we will!

I am looking forward to a wonderful evening of harmony and fun. It’ll be great to share the stage with the Riverside Rascals and Swing Shift once again. And for you folks who don’t know Gene Mayer, he’s a terrific guy. Gene was the 1983 Newyorker of the Year and Chapter President 1979, 1983-84, 1992, 1996-97. So he’s been there, done that!

So sing your hearts out, then come and relax with some good food and more singing at the Afterglow at Coppola’s right in the middle of Hyde Park.

Thanks to all! Enjoy yourselves and “break a leg.”

Happy Birthday To Us

By Executive Director Ed Watson

Permit me a moment of your day to celebrate the 68th birthday of The Society for the Preservation and Propagation of Barber Shop Quartet Singing in America, as it was originally known. I sometimes wonder how hard it was to change that to Encouragement! (See “Birthday” on Page 2)

The New Yorker Times

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Meetings

Wednesdays, 7:30 p.m.
First Reformed Church
70 Hooker Avenue
Poughkeepsie, New York
ALL SINGING MEN WELCOME

Website address www.newyorkerschorus.org

**Poughkeepsie Chapter
Mission Statement**

The mission of the Poughkeepsie Chapter shall be:
To perpetuate the art of Barbershop Harmony, and
To promote and provide opportunities for vocal harmony activities for its members and potential members such as, but not limited to,
 Quartetting,
 Vocal crafts and techniques,
 Coaching,
 Chorus singing, and
 Competitive preparation and participation,
and
To provide public appreciation of barbershop harmony through public and charitable performances, and
To promote good fellowship and camaraderie among its Membership, and
To foster and enhance the ideals and principles of the Barbershop Harmony Society



- 16 May Interchapter with Danbury and other CT chapters, 7:30 p.m. Meet at Holiday Inn Fishkill, 6:30 p.m., for carpooling
- 18 May **Annual Show, F. D. Roosevelt High School, Hyde Park**
- 2-9 Jul **International Convention and Contests, Conseco Fieldhouse, Indianapolis, IN**
- 9 Jul Picnic, Wappingers Falls—time TBA, but afternoon
- 12 Jul Performance, Bartlett Park (across from church)—Arrive 7 p.m., perform 7:30 p.m.
- 13 Jul Rain date for Bartlett Park performance
- 26 Jul Performance, Meisner Park, Wappingers Falls—arrive 6 p.m., perform 7 p.m.
- 23 Aug National Anthem for Renegades, Dutchess Stadium—arrive 6:00 p.m., perform 7 p.m.
- 21 Oct Performance at Castle Point VA Medical Center—arrive 9:30 a.m., perform 10:30 a.m.
- 27,28 Oct **NE District Convention, Providence, RI**

**DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE
31 MAY**

Happy Birthdays in May:

Dan Griffin	7
Steve Ross	7
June Pierson	31

Happy Anniversaries in May:

None

Birthday (From Page 2)

As the Barbershop Harmony Society staff partakes of birthday cake in the break room (sorry, fellas, you'll have to get your own) I think it appropriate to laud and enjoy all the achievements and progress the Society has enjoyed over those many years. Yes, we can always improve and we're all working hard to do that, but we must not let that enthusiasm for change cloud an appreciation of what we enjoy today

Congratulations to all the members, the quartets, and the choruses that have chosen to sing, to enrich lives through singing. They have enjoyed, and continue to enjoy, a hobby that stretches from the Bartlesville Barflies to Realtime; that includes OC Cash, Rupert Hall, Sean Divine, Charlie Metzger, and Joe (Continued on Page 3)

Birthday (From Page 2)

Barbershopper; that involves Dick Van Dyke and Norman Rockwell, Jim Henry and Tom Neal; that requires countless hours of dedication and volunteer work; that brings smiles to faces and joy to hearts; that engages the best aspects of humanity; that increases in complexity the more it is studied; and that will continue as long as people enjoy singing.

Feedback From (Quartet) Competition

By Bob Hitchcock

This brief report tries to document what I remember from the feedback to our quartet (Paradox). Unfortunately we forgot to bring a recorder and the feedback started at 12:30am, so I am sure I have missed some points.

We did some things right and some things not so right, and the judges gave us feedback to try to help us improve the things that were the most egregious. They each spent 20 minutes with us, but a full coaching session would have needed to be 3 times as long or more—hence the emphasis on the tip of the iceberg.

I am documenting the exercises that were suggested to help to fix problems so that all the quartets the Newyorkers have can see if they could use them. They seem to be good exercises regardless of whether there currently is a problem or not.

Presentation

1. Have a plan for the song.
2. Get involved with the plan for the song.
3. Raise the eyebrows—you don't need to send Morse code with them, but when you raise them it tends to improve the overall look of your face and is a clue that you are involved (see 2)

Singing

“On the Stick—plus.” The most important thing this year (I say this because it was also emphasized in the chorus critique) seems to be to slow things down to get each chord to be perfect. Then go on to the next note, and do this for a 3–4-bar section at a time. Once the chords have been fixed you go through it again, but slightly faster. Then continue to repeat this speeding it up in each subsequent pass. When the passage has reached the speed you want to perform it you repeat it a few times to be sure you have it and then move on. Because this process can be very tiresome, he suggested doing not more than one or two sections in any rehearsal.

Music

The judge here suggested the same solution mentioned in the Singing category: Slow everything down until we can ring each chord. Then speed up slowly. In our case this was to fix the tuning of the short chords that start “I Love a Jolson Song”—especially important because they are the first impression we make on the audience (for that song).

“Listen to each other” (another thing that was suggested to us and to the chorus). One exercise given to us to improve this was to stand in a circle facing outwards and sing the song. This forced us to listen to each other in order to be able to sing the song at all. According to the judge, that fixed a number of problems he was trying to address without having to get into the specifics.

Summary

Note that the common thread between the singing and music judges this year seemed to be getting each chord to ring perfectly—this was the emphasis in the quartet reviews and was (as I recall) one of the major things the judges mentioned in the chorus review. Perhaps this was the hot button in the seminars the judges went to since the last competition.

Truth Hurts

A revelation of sorts

By Clare McCreary, Editor,
St. Petersburg's *Scoops & Swipes*,
from which this comes by way of
Worcester's *Key Notes*, Roy Hayward, Editor

The quartet that I sing in, *Double Duty*, has concentrated on learning songs that are not in the chorus repertoire, so that if asked, we could contribute to any chorus performance. At my last quartet rehearsal, the quartet decided that we needed to include a couple of chorus songs to add length to our repertoire. We decided to include “Wee Small Hours” and “America the Beautiful.”

When we tried to sing them we got a surprise, shock, awakening, epiphany (pick one, or use all). We soon found that we were not prepared to sing those songs in public as a quartet! So what does this tell us? Four of the hardest working members of the chorus, who think they know the parts cold, section leaders, flub the song as a quartet. Oh, we can sing both songs, but they are far from a polished product, not fit for public consumption. It won't take long to get the songs polished well enough to sing in public. But—the question: Does singing in a chorus lead to sloppy singing because you can get away with it in a large group? (You can't get away with sloppy singing in a quartet, if you have a conscience.) This leads to the speculation that the chorus would be really great if all the men could sing a specific song, and do it well, with three other guys. What a novel idea! (That idea has only been around for about fifty years.)

When we gather after the meeting, have coffee, etc., and sing in quartets, we tend to shy away from singing repertoire songs for some reason. Tired of them, maybe. Or maybe we don't want anyone to know that we don't know them as well as we should. So let's change that. The absolute best way to make our chorus sound better in a hurry is to teach all the members the ability to sing the repertoire songs in a quartet, and (Continued in Page 4)

Truth Hurts (From Page 3)

do them well. So after the meeting, let's get quartets together and polish those songs in a quartet. *Maybe make a quartet activity out of it.* What if our chorus sounded like one big quartet? Wouldn't that be a kick?

A Rule of Singing Etiquette

By Don Campbell,
Music Director, St. Louis Suburban Chapter,
from St. Louis Suburban's *Suburban By-Lines*,
John Conrad, Editor,
by way of Worcester's *Key Notes*,
Roy Hayward, Editor

Webster's Dictionary definition for the word *etiquette* is "Rules of conduct, action or practiced, binding on members of a profession, especially in their relations with one another."

I'm sure you have had the same "Sing Along" urge that I have had many times in the 50-plus years I have been singing barbershop. How many times have you heard a quartet singing a song, and experienced this almost uncontrollable urge to join in and sing along?

If the singers are in a foursome, and you have not been invited to join in, it is poor singing etiquette to stand beside, along with, or behind the quartet and sing along. If you are having trouble suppressing the urge to join in, I have an idea that might help.

Stand behind the part of the foursome you are trying to hear and SILENT SING your part, but DON'T UTTER A SOUND. You will be able to hear the part you are standing behind since it will be predominant to your hearing, and you won't interfere with what the quartet is trying to accomplish.

If there are *more than four people* singing, join the group

with a big smile, a pitch pipe, and upon receiving a nod or smile of approval, feel free to join the "gang sing."

This Isn't a Hobby If You Do It Right

A Harmonet contribution from S. N. Martin
From Greater Montréal's *Mini-Pitch*,
Murray Phillips, Editor

[Editor Phillips's note: This speaks to commitment, and made me glad that we seem to have the commitment required to improve on a consistent basis.]

I have been a member since 1961 and I strongly disagree with those that refer to Barbershopping as a "hobby." Stamp collecting is a hobby—if you do it well or badly doesn't matter to the outside world.

But as barbershoppers we perform before the public—you do it badly and it reflects upon all of us. I have been inactive for 5+ years now because all of the chapters within driving distance think this is a hobby. Unfortunately, in the area I live, there is no commitment.

Soon, I will be relocating to the Sunshine state and I'm praying that I will be able to find a chapter whose membership strives for improvement. We can't all be champions, and that's not what it's about anyway. It's about singing to the best of your ability with the tools God gave you. Every audience deserves to hear everyone singing the same words, and the correct music. A smile once in awhile won't hurt, either.

Showing up at rehearsal when you feel like it won't feed the bulldog. It also won't make anyone in the audience want to join a group that's an embarrassment to watch.

Singing better is the key to both recruiting and retention, in my opinion.

Website for Poughkeepsie Newyorkers: <<http://www.newyorkerschorus.org>>

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