

# The Newyorker Times

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



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Poughkeepsie, New York

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*From the President*  
*By Steve Miller*

## NED DISTRICT CONTEST

The following is a personal experience. Feel free to move on to the next article if you prefer purposeful reading.

On Friday, October 24, I attended the Northeast District Quartet Semifinals in Lowell. This was the first time that I was present to hear all the quartets on a Friday night at a contest. Needless to say I was very impressed with the quality of the performances given by the contestants.

My usual experience with quartet contests, or at least the ones and portions of those that I see, is that there is a varying degree of quality in the performances. I have to admit that most of my quartet listening experience is taken from the division level contests, but I have heard numerous quartets at the district level. There is usually a mixture of good-quality singing quartets and less than perfect quartets (often referred to as "duds" or "stinkers" by one closely related Newyorker). I took this variation in entertainment quality as just another example of the inherent differences in human abilities and have accepted the bad with the good.

Until about the middle of the contest the quartets were very good. I was surprised by the fact that there were, in my humble opinion, no "duds". Then, a quartet came on stage that I was aware of, but I have never had the opportunity to hear perform. This quartet was Our Town. I knew that Terry Clark and Larry Tully of the Boston Common were the bass and baritone. Scott Brannon, the lead, had coached the Newyorkers in the past. The tenor was not familiar to me, but I guess you have to have one.

I first became a member of the Newyorkers in 1983, shortly after the Boston Common became international champions. I was a member of the performing chorus until about 1992 or so. I consider this period my "first time." Between 1992 and 2003 I was not a singing member of the chorus. I returned to the chorus in 2003, and have been active since.

After returning to the chorus I found myself more receptive to the quartet experience than the "first time." I overheard a few chorus members referring to quartet CDs

they had listened to and decided to break down and buy one of my own. At the next division contest I bought a copy of the Boston Common's Collective Works. I will admit I picked this one over the multitude of other quartet music for the simple reason that it was the only name that was familiar.

I listened to that CD over the next few months. I was continuously amazed by the sound and intensity of what I heard. Until that point I had never had an overwhelming desire to sing in a quartet. I considered it just something to fill the time when the chorus wasn't performing. I now realized that I had gained more respect for quartet singing than I had in the past. I now found myself wanting to sing in a quartet. I attribute this epiphany in large part to the Boston Common. I couldn't imagine any other quartet being able to out-perform them. Their musical ability was effortless. As a result, I became a part of a few quartets and chose a few of the songs the Boston Common sang in the hopes I could experience personally what I was hearing on that CD. The Boston Common, I realized, had become a mentor.

When I learned that Our Town would be competing and was composed of half of the Boston Common, I couldn't wait to hear them. I was curious what Terry and Larry looked like now, as I only had an almost 30-year-old picture of them from the CD cover. But, while I knew Our Town would provide a respectable performance, I didn't hold any expectation that a quartet with a couple of 60-plus year old guys could out-sing some of the other quartets I'd heard up to that point.

Here's the point where I am pleased to say I was sorely mistaken. As Our Town progressed through their first song, I noticed that there was little effort involved in the production of their sound, in their strong physical presence, or in their ability to draw me in.

As they proceeded through the second song, one I was familiar with as being a Boston Common arrangement, I was overwhelmed by the dynamics of their sound. There was little in the way of physical moves to distract from the singing, but there was a definite presence of the quartet as a unit, not merely as 4 individuals.

As Our Town finished their second song, they were greeted with a standing ovation and hunderous applause. One of the reasons for the enthu- (See "President" on Page 2)

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 Chorus Director ..... Renée Silverstein  
 Assistant Directors .... John Hadigan, Jr., Steve Hagerdon  
 Chorus Manager ..... Scott Salladin

**Meetings**  
**Wednesdays, 7:30 p.m.**  
**Reformed Church of Poughkeepsie**  
**70 Hooker Avenue**  
**Poughkeepsie, New York**  
**ALL SINGING MEN WELCOME**  
 Website address ..... [www.newyorkerschorus.org](http://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



14 Dec Harmony for Hospice performance, Poughkeepsie Galleria—arrive 6:30 p.m. for 7:30 p.m. performance; winter uniform.

**DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE**  
**26 NOVEMBER**

Happy Birthdays in November:

Carol Ostmark	6
Marie Miller	8
Elinor Haverkamp	12
Aline Dickstein	16
Steve Miller	22
Dick schaffer	25
Macy Sherow	25

Happy Anniversaries in November:

Bill and Jeannie Florie (20th)	19
Bob and Diane Chieffo	26

*Directions*  
*By Renée Silverstein*

LOWELL 2008

Was that ever a good time! The previous sentence is not a question but a statement of fact. There was very much talent on that stage this past weekend, and that definitely includes us. The past six weeks we spent on working those two contest songs paid off. Our point increase was the result of that; 114 points is something to be proud of. I know our mind set going into the contest was different this time. We truly enjoyed the music we chose to perform and boy, did that ever show! There were no surprise problems during those 6 minutes, as the confidence level we have in our singing was high. It is my feeling that we ALL are beginning to adjust our approach to “contests” as a tool to improve in this hobby rather than to “beat” another chorus. I didn’t hear one remark stating anyone was glad this was over. I have heard those words in the past. The remarks from the judges were positive for the most part and can only help us polish what we already have going for us. They didn’t tell us anything other than what we know we have to do to improve.

Thanks, gentlemen.

**President** (From Page 1)

siastic response was certainly the great performance they had just finished. But another reason, I’m sure, was the fact that Terry and Larry had returned to the contest stage after so long and had not lost their ability to entertain the audience with the effortless quality they (Continued on Page 3)

**President** (From Page 2)

mastered so many years ago and which that interval of time has done little to blunt.

As everyone now knows, Our Town went on to win the quartet championship on Saturday night. I'm sorry to say I was not able to attend the finals on Saturday. But that Friday night performance was enough to re-instill in me the desire to make every opportunity to sing barbershop harmony, whether it is in the chorus or in a quartet, the best I can make it. We should all feel that way. Always.

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## More News from Bix Doughty

Forwarded by Bob Chieffo

I did the Wildwoods trip. We put 30 men on the stage singing Heart and The Old Piano Roll Blues with much more choreography than we have used previously. The result: we did sloppy vocal work and wound up next to last (of 23). Alexandria won by a large margin, 1530 points to 1419 for second-place Dundalk. Big Apple was third with 1414. Winning quartet was Old School which won by a huge margin (don't have the figures). My quartet is taking a break; our bass has taken on directing a new chorus at Culpeper, VA, an hour and a half from Reston.

Harmony Heritage sings at the Navy Memorial in D.C. tomorrow. I'll be doing Old Bones as well as singing substitute tenor in a quartet. After that the Fairfax club is having quartets perform in Fairfax.

I noted that not many New Yorkers came out for the ball game. We do the SSB for the Potomac Nationals and for the George Mason men's and women's basketball teams with about 16 to 20 men.

Your list of songs is much like ours; we did Georgia at the spring contest a few years ago (my suggestion). We're still using Wink and a Smile and just started Mary Lou. I wish we'd pick up I'm Alone Because I Love You.

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## A Barbershop ACE

Copied with slight modifications from "Touchstone," a document from Tom Hankins, Sarasota Chorus of the Keys  
Forwarded by Bob Hitchcock

The goal of each person in any chapter is to be the best he can be. One way to summarize this is to strive to be an ACE:

**ATTITUDE,  
COMMITMENT,  
EXCELLENCE IN SINGING'**

### ATTITUDE

We will work together, in harmony. We will support each other and our leadership team. We will accept the guidance given by our Coaches and Directors. We will allow the leadership team to challenge us and we will respond through our second principle:

### COMMITMENT

We will come to each rehearsal prepared, following the

instructions of our Coaches and Directors. We will make every effort to be at each rehearsal and coaching session. "Riser time" will be for executing the plan of the day. If we have questions, we will work through our section leaders and will keep our rehearsal time disruption free. Our Coaches and Directors will be available for questions and comments at break time and sectionals.

### EXCELLENCE IN SINGING

This does not mean everyone must be note perfect, but it does mean we must be mistake free. If we do not know a note is correct, we will not sing it. It does mean we will be word perfect. As our director has said many times, if you know the words, you can perform with us. If you know the notes, you can sing with us.

Take these three principles and ingrain them in every preparation. Respect one another, support one another, enjoy one another, and the results will allow all of us to become ACEs. Each member must take the steps to become an ACE. It is going to take time and patience and long hours and hard work and dedication for us to become the best we can be.

Every man in this chapter knows whether he has the attitude, commitment, and excellence of singing (that translates as "mistake free") and the willingness to reach for these goals. For those who feel they can't make the commitment at the level required, I ask each of you to offer your skill and abilities to help those who do and work with us to make our chapter a chapter that every Barbershopper would want to join. Take pride in all we do together, each giving what we can, to reach our goal.

I believe that taking these bold steps, our chapter will grow and prosper. With dedication, enthusiasm and, yes, younger members, our hobby will thrive. Barbershop music and the brotherhood that is ours today will keep the whole world singing.

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## For Your Information

From the Society's Newsletter *Live/Wire*,  
10 October

We are thrilled to announce that both the Masters of Harmony and VoCA, a mixed harmony octet made up mostly of quartet champions from the BHS and SAI, will be appearing in one of the shows during the 2009 MidWinter Convention in Pasadena. It is likely that they will also be on the Saturday night show, but that is not a definite yet. Stay tuned!

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## Make Your Voice Matter!

Seen in *The Heartbeat*, Elbert Ford, Editor  
Seen on the Internet and adapted to his chapter  
From Mt. Rushmore Chapter's  
*The Voice of Rushmore*, John Elving, Editor

As we work together to build our own Shrine of Democracy sound—our unique voice—we have the opportunity to explore together several elements of (See "Voice" on Page 4)

**Voice** (From Page 3)

what is called “ensemble sound.” The definition of “ensemble” is a group producing a single effect or concerted music of two or more parts. Clearly this indicates that we need to be “one voice” made up of four parts, made up of many voices. The characteristic of good ensemble music is unity and clarity of sound. The result is pleasing, moving music. The most basic fundamental building block is—something you all know—your voice! Your voice! Yours and those of every man on the risers, but the important one for this discussion is YOUR VOICE. When you sing sweetly, or fluidly, or loudly, or raucously, the overall sound of the chorus is affected. If your tone is pleasing, or flaccid, or bell-like, or without support, the sound of the chorus is affected. You have to sing the right pitches and the correct words. You have to start and stop at the right time. You have to form your vowels correctly and you have to sing with good vocal skills. If YOU don’t do your part, your voice stands out and the ensemble sound drops down one notch.

The more pleasing your tone, the more resonant your singing, the sweeter and more moving the chorus sound. We often believe that our voice gets lost in the din of the other 35 guys singing. We say, “The guy behind me is louder than me, no one can hear my voice. How I alone sing is not important to the chorus.” YOU need to know this simply is not true! Dr. Jim Richards teaches a class called “The Phys-

ics of Sound” at Harmony University. He shows you how one voice will ruin a championship performance. YOUR VOICE—its quality and its blend to the ensemble—ABSOLUTELY contributes to (or detracts from) the ensemble sound of a great chorus.

So: what are YOU doing to make YOUR VOICE contribute better—to help the chorus? Do you take voice lessons? Do you vocalize at home? There are great “improve your singing” tools available from Harmony Market Place. Do you practice your part till it is quartet perfect? Do you insist that the other members of your section do the same? Everyone’s voice is vitally important, but YOURS is the one we need to live up to when we adopt our own personal mission statement, “To be all I can be.”

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