Ice Cream & Harmony... SWEET!

How sweet it is! On Saturday, July 28, 2018 Michigan’s 12th Governor, Moses Wisner, welcomed America’s 16th President, Abraham Lincoln, to his Pine Grove estate on Cesar Chaves Avenue in Pontiac. The Oakland County Pioneer Historical Society hosted the Ice Cream Social and the Big Chief Chorus provided a concert for the public who came to enjoy the sunny skies and beautiful grounds and to see the historic museums. Our Quartets, OverTime and 4GVN, with Jack Teuber and Art Carinci filling it at tenor and bass were also on hand to stroll the exhibits and sing for the families and youth groups who came for the annual event.

Sweet Ice Cream and sweet harmony makes for a very sweet midsummer afternoon. The historic artform of Barbershop music is a bonus for the history buffs who plan and who attend these historical events in Oakland County. Perfecting our craft plays a big role in raising awareness of our local history.

Summer fun continues for the Big Chiefs, who once again have shown their enthusiasm for quartet singing. This time it was on July 17, at the Grosse Pointe Chapter Picnic, where the brats and beer were plentiful and the singing went on until well after sundown.

Our harmonious brotherhood results in new quartets forming and men stepping up to fill parts for those who want to try their hand at quartetting. OverTime joined Detroit Sound Machine to form an octet, “TimeMachine,” which sang God Bless the USA. Those who sing at a high level and those who are just learning how to harmonize come together at events like the Grosse Pointe Picnic, and enjoy each other’s fellowship. At events like this, in our harmonious hobby, we are always among friends, and each singer becomes an enthusiastic fan of everyone else.

In past years the BCC would charter a bus to Grosse Pointe for the annual picnic, but due to limited funds and inconvenient work schedules the braves carpooled to the event this year, which just means that the expressway traffic was blessed by a whole series of smaller than usual a cappella ensembles.
REPORT FROM ORLANDO
By John Cowlishaw

The 2018 International Barbershop Convention was in Orlando, a mere 3 1/2 hour drive south of our home in Brunswick, GA. I arrived Thursday afternoon and roomed with Greg Humbel. On Thursday I attended the AIC show of past Gold Medalists. On Friday I saw Vocal Majority beat out Westminster; they have slightly different styles – VM is more dramatic, Westminster more precise. I also attended the Quartet Finals on Saturday evening, and there was a noticeable gasp as After Hours bested Signature, who had become the emotional favorite. But there are no complaints about After Hours as the Gold medalist. Pioneer’s Frontier won Gold in the Next Gen Varsity Quartet contest, and Great Lakes soared to 17th place (82.4%)

The Harmony University classes are a valuable addition to the convention: (1) Debra Lynn – Advanced Bel Canto – Emphasis on resonance, not projection; imagine singing out of the back of your head (oddly, that seems to help) – (2) Quartet Coaching Under Glass – I watched Steve Scott coach Midtown. He spent the whole hour on their posture, particularly neck and pelvis. These are talented guys (including Nick Gordon from Prestige, and K J McAleesejergins from BHS headquarters) singing in the 80s, yet they subtly improved. (3) I took two workshops on conducting, given my new role as director of the Unitarian church choir, and got quick feedback on posture, and on being more precise in the directing motion, e.g., too sloppy at the wrist joints. The “rebound” conveys the conductor’s intention. (4) I learned for the first time that there is a Rainbow affiliate of the BHS for LGBT, and their Afterglow room was the most high-energy that I visited Saturday night. All the top quartets came thru. (5) Finally, Tony DeRosa is the Robin Williams of BBS. My photos are available at: https://photos.app.goo.gl/xC9ft7rcJ8M1H5BdA

Congratulations Jeff Doig!

You will always find our current Barbershopper of the month working hard for our chorus. Whether it’s setting up sound equipment at the Ice Cream Social or stepping up as assistant director, or mentoring younger quartetters or planning and preparing for our annual show, Jeff always maintains a willing and joyful attitude. Thank you Jeff for your amazing contributions to the BCC.

Happy July 4th Clarkston!

As thousands of proud Americans lined the streets of Clarkston Village for the annual Independence Day Parade, OverTime Quartet was wondering how their gig would go. The weather was not in question. It was a beautiful day, though a bit on the warm side, but there was plenty of cool water to drink. The issue of concern was how to sing from a float that was being pulled by a pickup truck over bumpy streets while sitting on wabbly bar stools in a tangle of cords connected to an untested sound system all the while for various reasons we were having trouble hearing each other.

No worries at all. We knew our music and our fearless lead, who never seems to get nervous about anything said a few reassuring words and after a bit more tuning up we figured out how to make the chords ring in that unusual setting. It just took a bit longer than usual to get used to the unique situation.

Two hours later we breathed a deep sigh of relief and realized how wonderfully honored we felt to have been hired to use our wonderful hobby to help our fellow citizens celebrate our nation’s 242nd birthday.

August Birthdays

4th Jim McMain  8th Pat Hefner  26th Bill Sclesky
5th Mike Keith  24th Bill Auquier  29th Jeff Doig
7th Kevin Lange

Membership Renewals

Hanson, J. Jackson, T. Legato B. McDonald, D. Perry, C. Schroder, Z. Sclesky, B.
Director’s Challenge

By Tom Blue, BCC Director

With summer upon us, why not take the opportunity as we are sipping our favorite beverage to see how well we can read music or how fast can we learn (it is not difficult and certainly easier with a beverage). After you look through this “cheat sheet” from www.barbershop.org, then take out one of our show repertoire songs and see if you can name each note of your voice part (write them in on your music, say aloud or simply go through them in your head). If you are feeling ambitious and I hope you are, can you do the same for each show song? Good luck!

This is a step in the right direction to the mystery of reading music! When you are successful, enjoy another beverage! More to come next month...

Music Theory Basics

From “Harmony University” (edited for Smoke Signals)

Musical symbol recognition, Clefs, Note names. Music is notated using a system of 5 lines and 4 spaces referred to as a “Staff”:

Different symbols, called Clefs, are placed on the staff. The two most common clefs are the Treble: G clef and the Bass: F clef. Displayed is a typical Grand Staff which is essentially the treble and bass clefs stacked atop one another and attached at the left-hand margin with a Bracket.

Music Notes

Note names are identified by using the first seven letters of the alphabet: A, B, C, D, E, F, and G. Both the Treble and Bass clefs have different letter names assigned to their lines and spaces. Looking solely at the Treble clef, the names of the lines and the spaces are:

Ledger Lines

Some songs will go both higher and lower than the treble and bass clefs allow. Notes can be written off the staff using Ledger Lines. These notes are added to the staff by lines and are named, logically, by using the next letter in the musical alphabet. Here are four examples of ledger lines on both the upper and lower end of the clefs.

Ledger lines can go far above and below these listed. The notes would simply follow the pattern of the musical alphabet. The treble clef’s upper ledger lines, for example, would continue from C and read D, E, F, G, A, B, C; although the C two ledger lines above the clef is certainly high enough for barbershop tenor to sing!
A Blast from the Past

Here’s a little something to keep in mind while we are learning the music for our 74th annual show... We are just a link in a long unbroken chain. Hundreds of our brothers in harmony have gone before us and have set a high bar of artistry and community service. Let’s be mindful of our craft and do our very best to promote this November’s show. We have three wonderful quartets joining us and our audience will be thrilled to see them.

Let’s each make it a personal goal to be completely off the paper by the end of August so we can focus for two whole months on fine tuning our performance.

BCC Calendar

Chorus Rehearsals are every Tuesday Evening from 7:30-10:00 PM at Canterbury on the Lake, 5601 Hatchery Road. Warmups begin at 7:25. Rehearsal afterglows follow at the Overtyme Grill and Taproom, 4724 Dixie Hwy.

Chorus Events

Aug. 13, Mon. DOC picnic 5pm at Sylvan Lake Comm. Ctr.
Aug. 21, Tue. BCC Picnic 5pm at Sylvan Lake Comm. Ctr
Sept. 15, Sat. MIOCA (Ovarian Cancer Benefit), Rochester Hills Village, at 9:00 AM. Warm-up at 8:30 AM.
Nov. 3, Sat. 74th Annual Show at Mott PAC. 7 PM
Nov. 6, Tue. BCC Christmas Chorus 7:30 PM
Nov. 27, Tue. Waterford Tree Lighting, 5200 Civic Ctr. Dr. at 6:00 PM. Lockwood sing-out at 7 PM
Dec. 15, Sat. Christmas Bus Tour, bus leaves at 10:45 AM.

Technology is changing so fast that is hard to keep up!

I used to use Cassette Tapes and CD’s as the medium of choice for storing my music files. Now, I must look at digital media, such as Cruzer Memory Sticks, Smart Phones, and USB ports, to play my barbershop music and learning tracks!

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