



Hatter Chatter

Newsletter of the Danbury Chapter, Yankee Division, Northeastern District of the Barbershop Harmony Society
Meeting every Tuesday, 7:30 p.m. at Church of Christ, 90 Clapboard Ridge Road, Danbury, Connecticut

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Ice Box Edition 2015

Quartets Sing for Valentines

On February 13 and 14, quartets representing the Danbury Mad Hatter Barbershop Chorus fanned out across eastern New York and western Connecticut, continuing our tradition of delivering harmony, a rose and a card for those in love, or wish to be, or were, plus the occasional stalker.

According to chapter president, Danny Anderson, 39 Singing Valentines were delivered in 2015, short of the chorus goal. It seems the numbers of deliveries have dropped over the last couple of years. The downward trend could be based on a number of reasons: people reluctant to spend \$50 for the product, a saturated market or more interesting alternatives. But, this is a topic for future pondering. Singing Valentines is great fun for the valentines and for the singers, and tales of the quartets' adventures follow.

Loco Fedora – by Robert Golenbock

Valentine's Day, when men who spent thousands on Christmas gifts are expected to pony up one more time six weeks later. And what could be better than a gift of -- the Mad Hatters!

For Loco Fedora, the Friday before Valentine's Day was our big day. We started by singing at Danbury Hospital for the nurses, moms in labor, and the babies. We sang for the head of GYN oncology, who was in tears with gratitude. We sang at the Department of Pediatrics Business meeting, where, despite not being warmed up yet, we received a standing ovation. We sang for the staff and patients at the Pediatric Wellness Center, where we were booked for next year.

We then traveled around Danbury and New Milford to visit homes and offices. On Saturday we had the privilege of singing for Paul Mayer's mother-in-law and then having Paul join us.

On our last stop on Saturday, we rushed our client because we were worried about Joe having to get to Poughkeepsie in the snow. They weren't expecting us when I sent a text message to tell them we were going to be an hour early. The purchaser of the Valentine rushed his girlfriend into the shower and down the stairs so nobody would be unpleasantly surprised.

Despite not being able to "do her hair," the young woman was very touched. We once again achieved our goal of making our subject cry.

Other criers included one of Jim's repeat customers, who also laughed when we sang our favorite, "My Wild Czechoslovakian Rose." We had a great time doing Singing Valentines.

Traveling Men – by Art Cilley

Traveling Men had a busy weekend this year delivering more than 20 Singing Valentines on Friday and Saturday. One of our regular members (Andy Bayer) was – you guessed it – traveling, so Keith Korb graciously and successfully filled in on bass. We met at a diner at 8am Friday morning. One of the waitresses, seeing us in our tuxes and red bowties, ordered a Valentine for her friend. We made our first stop at 9am at the i95 FM studio in Brookfield where we sang to a duly embarrassed DJ (we were not on the air). Next was our first appearance of the year at an office where we delivered Valentines to Danny Anderson's wife, Linda, and a co-worker. They knew we were coming, so we had a good audience.



A couple's reaction to a Mad Hatter Singing Valentine

The rest of the day was a blur of activity. Sing, freeze, walk out to the car, drive, freeze, walk in to the next appointment, sing, repeat...

Continued on Page 3

New Program Unveiled At Meadow Ridge

By Dick Zang

Fourteen Mad Hatters along with music director, Joe Hudson, were back at our home away from home, Meadow Ridge senior living center, on Saturday, February 28. We surprised our usual audience at Meadow Ridge and our wives who travel with us with a program that included some of our new '50s and '60s repertoire. Everyone loved it.

Joe was proud of us and said, "Our singing was resonant and mostly in tune."

It's a good sign that we will be having a good show in May. We even introduced a couple of new quartet combinations - it was the debut of Traveling Fire and Real Loco Men.



People heading to Meadow Ridge to listen to the Mad Hatters.



Tips From John Ward Coaching Session

Compiled by Joseph Hudson

On Tuesday, February 24, the Mad Hatters had their second coaching session with Barbershop Harmony Society singing judge, John Ward. Following are some suggestions he

made for improving our performances of "Where is Love," and "Daydream."

"Where is Love"

- More sophisticated song than any other in the show, a lot of chordal things, minor motif, tighter tuning.
- Make sure the sound is together for EVERY note.
- This song is never heavy, no melodrama, and if the singing is heavy, it comes off as melodramatic.
- Always light on the tone.

- Do not have it sound like 10 pounds of song in a five-pound bag.
- Be light physically - light feet, light face.
- Too much breath, more focus and light.
- Phonate the "oo" for the beginning of "where."
- Tune-up, focused on "oo."
- Tune "up" to the tenors.
- Add sweetness and lightness without affecting quality.
- On "Where is she" add tempo to the song.
- You are a 10-year old wondering where your mom is, not an 18-year old wondering where his prom date is.
- Give more on someone else's swipe.
- Make something out of repeated notes.
- LEADS: "Someone who" "I can mean," "something to" – first note of each – sit on it, second note of each – higher.
- Smaller "oo" vowel on "who" and "to."
- BARITONES: "Someone who," "I can mean," "something to" – first two notes of each – important, third note – not important.
- BARITONES: important notes – taller vowel, non-important notes – smaller vowels.
- TENORS: "Someone who," "I can mean," "something to" – smaller half steps, be accurate on notes.
- TENORS: "Someone who" "I can mean," "something to" – all important notes - do not be afraid to sing them out a little.
- TENORS needs to higher in general on octaves with the basses.
- LEADS, give the melody to the BASSES when they have it.
- At bass solo, slow down into Unison/Octave on "let tomorrow be."

"Daydream"

- Keep the "lazy" feeling.
- Clean "oo", clean "ah" on background vocals.
- LEADS: when harmony parts have "oo," "ah" it is like a lead solo, but it goes back to four parts on "on my side" - so really take over the story.
- BASSES: don't be too punchy when you come back in with words.
- More of the word connectors in this song.
- Elongate "face," "some," "new mown lawn."
- LEADS: Be clean on intervals - no swooping and crooning.
- No breath for harmony parts after "on my side."
- "Woke up today" triplet is the stretch on a Saturday morning.
- Second time through - lead solos, everyone else on "oo."
- Personify the feeling of "lazy" without lazy singing.
- Third verse - bring tempo up and dynamics up a little.
- BASSES and LEADS: "And you can be sure" should all be in the same spot.
- LEADS: "right" on "Feeling right" needs to be correct.
- "Right" is pronounced r-AH-eet.
- More presence from the leads on 3rd verse.
- Lots of words in the phrase - less jaw motion, more tongue and lip motion.
- Keep your mouth in a comfortable spot - like when speaking.
- Barbershoppers want to do well - so they work hard, and that gets in the way. Don't work hard like Arnold in the gym, work hard like the fashion model.
- Singable "n" on "thousand."
- There is never an arrival in music, you always takeoff.
- Editor's note: I don't think a "new mown lawn" was the only grass John Sebastian was singing about.

Valentines

Continued from the Page 1

Temperatures were in the single digits for most of the day. Despite the cold, it was fun singing for Doris, a lady who was 103 years young. She remembered "I Don't Know Why" from when it was first released and mouthed the words with us.

At lunchtime we went to a deli in Bethel and ordered some sandwiches. A guy in line wanted us to sing to his girlfriend via cellphone, which we did. He bought us lunch and said he may show up to a rehearsal! Later that afternoon, we had a phone call from someone who went to that deli and picked up one of the business cards we had left there. She hired Traveling Men to sing for Maplewood of Stony Hill in March!

Our last stop of the day was all the way south at a restaurant called Tavern on Main in Westport at 7:00PM (right next door for Wynn Wilcox who was happy to be home shortly afterwards). Two sisters and their husbands were enjoying a night out. The surprised ladies were all dressed up in red and had the most wonderful smiles when we serenaded them with romantic favorites. We figure the gentlemen may consider it money well spent, as it seemed altogether possible that they would be rewarded for their thoughtfulness.

On Saturday we sang at Danbury Hospital for a friend of Danny's who said it was the best Valentine's Day she ever had (even though she was in the hospital recovering from an operation the previous day). We also sang for two or three of the hospital staff who were at the desk outside her room. By the time we finished "Breaking Up is Hard to Do" there must have been at least a dozen hospital workers there!

Next we went to the Ethan Allen furniture showroom and sang for a surprised and pleased staff member. Then came a residence in Danbury where Art Cilley repaid his nephew, Brian, by singing for Brian's wife and mom much to their satisfaction. After that we completed what may have been the quickest Valentine ever from order to delivery. Fernando called while we were at Ethan Allen and we sang to his significant other and family about two hours later. He may also come to a rehearsal. Que bueno!

The lesson is - never underestimate the power and fun of a Singing Valentine!



*Everyone loves receiving a Singing Valentine.
Well, almost everyone.*

Real Chemistry – By John Bradley

Friday morning started in the Staples Parking lot on Mill Plain Road in Danbury. After gathering coffee, water and singers, we drove south to Greenwich to sing for the town's deputy fire marshal, Rob Natalie. We were a little confused when we found the address, expecting a fire station, not a modern office building. According to the fire official who greeted us, Greenwich's fire headquarters is being renovated, an effort that is running a couple of years behind schedule, so administrative offices are being "temporarily" housed in the office complex. It must be nice to work for a municipality that has lots of money.

It wouldn't be Singing Valentines without a stop at a school. On the way north from Greenwich we visited Bedford Hills Elementary School where we sang for Vikki Bradley. We found her library without kids or Vikki, but tracked her to the faculty room where we serenaded a number of teachers eating lunch.

On Saturday morning we were back on the Saw Mill River Parkway on our way to Chappaqua, NY, to sing for Janine Durr. We considered delivering a surprise Singing Valentine to Bill and Hillary Clinton as we passed their street, but figured we wouldn't get passed the Secret Service agents parked outside. Arriving near our destination a little early, we drove around Pleasantville, Brother Bob and I boring Dick and Richard with a tour of our home town and tales of our youths. From there it was back on the parkway to deliver Issie Templeton her first valentine. The ten month old, Miss Taralily's granddaughter, seemed to enjoy "Love Me Tender," but found her mother's hair much more interesting during "Don't Blame Me."

Maybe if we hook them young there will be a steady stream of Singing Valentines from future romances.

Repertoire Notes



Help Me, Rhonda is a song by the American rock band, The Beach Boys, written by Brian Wilson and Mike Love. It was originally released as "Help Me, Ronda" in March 1965 on *The Beach Boys Today!*. The single peaked at number one in the United States, making it the second Beach Boys single to reach that position after "I Get Around" in 1964. The single version was later released on the *Summer Days (And Summer Nights!!)* album in June 1965. It was the first Beach Boys single to feature a lead vocal by Al Jardine.

The lyrics of "Help Me, Rhonda" tell a narrative of how a male was attracted to a girl who then found another man, and so to aid the healing process, he begs Rhonda to help him.

A slow, reflective cover appears on the 1998 album *Toxic Swamp And Other Love Songs* by Kenny Young And The Eggplants.



Emails to the Editors

Please e-mail your questions and comments to either the Hatter editor, John Bradley, at jbrad1313@earthlink.net, or the Chatter editor, Dick Zang, at jezang@charter.net. If your e-mail appears, you will receive an autographed picture of our 2008 Yankee Division Bulletin Editors Award

At a recent concert I attended, your emcee claimed that barbershop music is the only uniquely American music form. Couldn't one also make the same claim for American folk, bluegrass and blues music?
Bernie from Bethel.

Bernie, like most things we consider, "American," you can trace its roots back to someplace else. It is my understanding that American folk music has its roots in Irish folk music. Bluegrass has its origins in Irish, English, and Scottish folk music. Blues has evolved from the unaccompanied vocal music and oral traditions of slaves imported from West Africa and rural African Americans into a wide variety of styles. Jazz originated in the late 19th to early 20th from the blues.

Barbershop music actually got its origins in... barbershops! In the last half of the 19th century, quartets of African American men would harmonize while waiting their turn, vocalizing in spirituals, folk songs and popular songs. This generated a new style, consisting of the unaccompanied, four-part, close-harmony singing that we know today.

Baritone Deep Thought of the Month

**I know a guy who is addicted to brake fluid.
He says he can stop at any time.**



Coaching session with John Ward.
Picture by Peter Daubner

The President's Podium



By Danny Anderson

I am sitting in my den looking out at the snow falling once again. We have had enough snow as far as I am concerned. Fortunately, we have only missed one night of practice due to the weather.

During the board planning session we discussed a new approach for recruiting new members. From time to time we want to encourage different quartets to go to venues like restaurants, malls, etc. to sing at least one song. While singing, we want to look for individuals who might be mouthing the words of the song. These people should then be given information about the chorus and an invitation to attend a rehearsal.

Traveling Men did the above a week before Valentine's Day at a restaurant and a food store. We found that people stopped and listened and asked questions. We booked two Valentines from this and found a couple of potential new members. Jim Hopper said, "People need to hear us," because then we have the opportunity to tell them about our hobby.

All reports indicate that the quartets who were out delivering Valentines had several memorable events. Traveling Men were blessed to have Keith Korb fill in for Andy who was on a family cruise. Though Keith did not know all the songs we normally sing, we found songs that he became comfortable with.

I know that Art has prepared an article for this HATTER CHATTER edition telling of some of TM's adventures.

I received the following from a friend who was in the hospital. We had sung to Karen and walked down the hall to the nursing station where we began singing to one nurse. Before we knew it, the number of nurses listening was over 15!

"As much as I loved it, I have to admit you "gents" were a HUGE hit with the nurses. I cannot tell you how overwhelmed they were to also be serenaded. Linda came into my room gushing with accolades, saying in all the years she's been nursing, she never experienced such a treat (she was still talking about it the next day). She said one of the nurses was thinking of hiring your group to entertain her parents in a nursing home. I then said, gee, wouldn't it be nice if this establishment hired them to come in perhaps during holidays to entertain patients cooped up here. Especially for the children who have to spend Christmas in the hospital. Think how they'd all love to sing along. She agreed with me and is hoping to bring up the subject during their next nursing meeting, hoping the suggestion will go to the "top brass."

The above is one example of great opportunities that exist for the chorus.

Continued on the next page

Podium

Continued from the previous page

We are still unknown to a large portion of our community. Several people I spoke with when booking Valentines indicated they had not heard about us and asked how they might spread the news about the chorus.

The time for the annual show is quickly approaching. We have worked very hard at learning most of the music for the show. We still need to fine tune the songs, so it is very important that we not miss rehearsals and to work at home on the songs.

Andy and Peter are our show co-chairmen for this year's Annual Show. Each of us has received assignments to help with the show preparation. I encourage you to fulfill the assignments to the best of your ability. Each of us will be expected to obtain ads for the program book. Begin now lining up the businesses you want to approach.

Begin talking to friends and neighbors about the show. The show will be held on the West Side campus of Western Connecticut University in the new Performing Arts Theater. From all reports, this is a beautiful facility with great sound. It should be a great location for us to perform in and for the audience to enjoy the performance.



District Dirt

By Robert J. Bradley

History is always interesting. Much of what we think we know we don't. Most of the past that we think is true is not. Word meanings change over the years and myths become facts. George Washington never had wooded teeth, never threw a silver dollar over the Potomac, and did not stand up in the boat while crossing the Delaware.

Paul Revere fell off his horse and, he admitted, the fall was due to the strong drink(s) he imbibed to get up his courage. Not until the Civil War, when we were looking for heroes, did the myth become fact. Remember, when the myth becomes fact, print the myth.

What does this have to do with us in the Danbury Mad Hatters? HATS!!

Daniel Boone never wore a coonskin cap. You do not lose 70% of your body heat if you don't wear a hat.

Vikings never wore horned helmets. Tunic knights, Celtic warriors, late Roman armies, Samurai, Indo-Persian warriors all did, but never Vikings.

Cowboys never wore Stetsons. The original Stetson was a flat sombrero. Cowboys wore top hats, sailors caps and the most popular were bowler hats.



And for us, most important, old time hat makers used mercury salts in felt hats. There is no proof at all that anyone was driven insane by this. "Mad as a hatter" or "mad hatter" does not even apply to humans. In the 18th century, the word "mad" meant venomous. "Hatter" came from "Adder." Therefore, the term "Mad hatter" means "venomous as a viper." Kind of gives us some new ideas for logos.

February Board of Directors Meeting



Submitted by Dr. Robert Golenbock

Meeting called to order by Danny, "My Funny Valentine," Anderson at 6:08PM on February 3, 2015, at the Church of Christ in Danbury.

Secretary's Report: Minutes were sent out previously in English, Hindi, Mandarin, Hebrew and Braille. An mp3 of the secretary reading the minutes very loudly was sent to hard of hearing members. And still nobody but Andy read the minutes. The minutes were received nevertheless on a motion by Peter Daubner, seconded by Andy Bayer.

Treasurer's Report: A revised budget was handed out. The budget and revisions had been previously approved at the Yearly Planing meeting. After the cost of the tickets for the Board members' cruise was subtracted, we have a negative balance for the first month. (P.S. If you are an IRS agent or BHS big shot, that was a semi-humorous quip and not true.) Our overall funds have slowly been decreasing over the past few years. We need a plan to maintain our cash reserves. Our present budget will keep us stable. Grants and sponsorships will also help. The report was received on a motion by Robert Golenbock, seconded by Art Cilley.

Membership Report: No new members. We have not chosen a date for guest night. Before or after our annual show – no decision has been made yet.

VP Public Affairs: Art sent out Singing Valentine press releases. We should send some quartets out to sing in restaurants. Perhaps we can leave our rehearsal early and go as a group from time to time.

Music Committee: we were cancelled by the snowstorm. At the planning session we approved our coaching calendar.

Old Business: The Grant/Sponsorship Committee had its first meeting. Lee Smeriglio is approaching Xerox to learn what a corporation might require. Art Cilley is applying to the Cultural Commission for a grant. Scholarship Update – Andy Bayer is working on a letter for choral directors. He also plans to make personal contact with as many as possible to apprise them of our plans to award scholarships to the Harmony Explosion Camp.

Continued on the next page

Board Meeting

Continued from the previous page

Andy also presented his recommendation for an Annual Show budget, which was approved on a motion by Robert Golenbock, seconded by Wynn Wilcox. The show will be at the beautiful new Visual and Performing Arts Center on the WesConn Westside Campus.

Officers Present: A. Cilley, J. Hopper, P. Daubner, D. DeMarche, A. Bayer, D. Anderson, R. Golenbock, J. Bon Jovi.

Meeting adjourned at 7PM. Next meeting is scheduled for March 3, 2015.



Director's Den

By Joseph Hudson

For a while now we have been working really hard to improve our sound as a chorus. We continually stop songs after only a few notes to work on chording and go over reminders about posture, vowel matching, singing light and bright and the list goes on and on.

So, why are we doing this? Why are we beating ourselves over the head about the same things?. The answer is very simple, but also very complicated.

The simple answer is we are trying to improve the chorus sound which will entice more guys to want to join us. No one wants to join a singing group that does not sing well.

The more complicated reason goes deeper. We made it a goal of the chorus, and our mission statement, to thrill audiences through our harmonies. So, unless we can be consistent with our harmonies and our matching, the audience will not be thrilled. If our audience is not thrilled, we don't get that big applause we love, or we lose some of the audience members.

So, we stop anytime something is wrong. This way, eventually, the "new way" of singing will become second nature - a new habit.

There is a great way to make it so that we do not stop so often during rehearsals and that is to practice the "new habits" at home with the music and the learning tracks. Notice how I put those three things together: new habits, learning tracks AND sheet music. Having an understanding of what the pitches are on the sheet music while hearing the learning track is another habit that will help us become a better chorus.

So, in conclusion, we do these things (stopping, fixing, and reminding) in order to make the most of our time in front of our audiences, If it becomes second nature, and we don't need reminders, we can get truly into the emotion and feeling of a song. And that takes the performance to a whole higher level!

Chapter Planning Meeting

1/31/2015

Submitted by Dr. Robert Golenbock

Our preliminary discussion centered around our accomplishments during the last year and our level of satisfaction with these accomplishments. We noted that we broke a 68 (68.3) in the singing category at the last contest. We are singing more difficult arrangements competently. The chorus is being challenged to improve and is happier now that we are meeting this challenge. The membership has stepped up to do more work at home. In addition, we have been blessed with the arrival of some high quality new members who are committed to learning repertoire quickly and arrive at rehearsals "off-paper" very rapidly.

Our Annual Show was well organized (thanks to Andy Bayer's leadership) and well performed. Attendance at rehearsal is more consistent. Our Director brought us new techniques for warming up and performing, and we were better prepared for contest this year than any year in recent memory. Our music is more appealing to our audiences. We are financially stable, and we are doing more paid performances in venues other than our traditional assisted living facilities. For example, we sang at the inaugural Arts Festival in Newtown, where we got a standing ovation and were immediately invited back for next year. Our president, whose leadership has been exemplary, noted that we have a great Board with the unusual quality of not being contentious. We are of one mind in accomplishing our purpose.

In order to identify what the Board can do to help our chapter, we need to define our purpose and goals. Our goal was revisited and affirmed: *We are a performing chorus that competes and seeks to thrill audiences.* This does not mean that we don't appreciate the social aspects of being a Mad Hatter. While we do take our singing seriously, we do not meet just to prepare for contests. (We are serious about rehearsing and coming prepared.)

As a result, our retention rate remains positive and our singing has improved. Joe Hudson agrees, stating, "If your sing better in better venues, you attract more members."

Discussion then centered on a presentation by Paul Ellinger at the NED Leadership Academy attended by Jimmy and Andy. "Supercharging Your Chapter" presented the elements of a program that, if implemented within a chapter that is totally committed to its successful implementation, will result in sustained growth. (See the December/January 2015 issue of the *Hatter Chatter* for detailed article on the session). The different protocols of the program were discussed as was the readiness of the chapter to fully commit to the rigors of the program. Getting involved with this program, either locally or regionally, would be a huge commitment and we would require training.

Continued on the next page

Planning

Continued from the previous page

He says chapters don't grow (or continue to grow) because only a small percentage of members see it as their responsibility to recruit. How you approach other people is key. There is a special script you must follow to address a potential member's roadblocks to joining or even coming to a rehearsal.

As an example of the commitment needed, chapter members need to spend time at every rehearsal practicing the "script" to help it become a natural part of one's interaction with a potential member and to remind chapter members of their role in recruiting. You need to commit to a significant expenditure of time to realize the full benefits of sustained increased membership.

As an important aside, Mr. Ellinger believes that increasing membership will naturally improve singing. The board decided that this was not the time to commit to this program since we only have so much time and it will interfere with our goal of singing better. (Joe added that a larger chorus hides mistakes better, but a smaller chorus may be more sociable. Our chorus size may not have changed, but the quality of our singing has definitely improved.)

However, it was believed that there were specific individualized elements of the program that we could adopt that would enhance our appeal to prospective members. One tenet of the Supercharging Your Chapter program is communicating the fellowship and fun one experiences as a chapter member. Therefore, it was suggested that we could begin a rehearsal somewhat later or end a rehearsal somewhat earlier to go out and sing in street clothes "spontaneously" in restaurants or malls (making us "approachable") which would raise our exposure within the general public and then give us the opportunity to exchange details with prospective recruits.

Wynn Wilcox suggested that fun and fellowship are still a part of our membership. In addition, he suggested that we should encourage more quartet singing within our rehearsal routine. All of our members should have that experience and opportunity, he continued. It gives members a chance to realize what they need to improve upon when no one next to them is singing their part.

In addition, increased communication between the chorus director and section leaders about dynamics, phrasing and areas in need of section improvement would lead to more effective use of sectional time either in separate spaces or right on the risers.

That being said, we realize that if we're solely fixated on the quality of our singing, we will not increase membership. We want to be welcoming to our members and guests. We want to continue to improve, but the meetings cannot be just a "boot camp." Therefore, we need to emphasize the social aspects and intrinsic rewards that are also a part of membership in this chapter.

Philosophically, there must be a higher purpose to our organization – not just a more selfish need to populate our risers, enrich our sound or replenish our own treasury but to help needy others within the community. The Board decided that researching a needy individual or organization (either locally or regionally) would be an area of focus in the coming months---perhaps aligning with Hospice or the Danbury Museum, among others.

We have been asked about hosting a college quartet contest in Danbury, but Joe says that there is no interest among the young men of the local colleges. Given that feedback, the Board decided that it was not interested in diverting our time to dealing with the logistics of hosting a college quartet contest.

The new Grant/Sponsorship committee has begun researching grants and future annual show sponsorship. Among other plans, they hope to talk to Bob Bradley, who has experience in this area.

The treasurer, Dickson DeMarche, presented a draft 2015 budget which was reviewed line by line by the Board. Among many adjustments to specific line item amounts, the Board decided to increase chapter dues, which had not changed in decades, to \$20 annually on a motion by Walt Barlow, seconded by Art Cilley. We increased our Director's honorarium from \$200/month to \$250/month on a motion by Jim Hopper, seconded by Wynn Wilcox. In addition, he will receive income generated by members' dues. The music team presented a finalized coaching plan including three coaching sessions with John Ward before the annual show, a Saturday afternoon coaching retreat preferred by chorus members, and a Tuesday evening rehearsal session with Sean Devine for polishing our contest set. The increased cost of coaches is offset by not having a division contest any longer.

The music team requested a commitment from contest attendees to remain for post adjudication evaluations. The motion was made by Robert Golenbock and seconded by Jim Hopper and was passed unanimously.

We are designating the 2016 Annual Show as our 50th Anniversary Annual Show. We hope to bring back former chorus members and directors. The Music Committee will come up with an appropriate theme.

Some suggestions for the future:

- Get our goals and purpose on our website.
- Make sure the membership learns to use Groupanizer and take advantage of its features. Plan a training session.
- Get more people involved and invested in our goals by asking them to participate.
- From time to time provide refreshments.
- Keep business sessions short by handing out announcements or sending e-mails.
- Go to a restaurant like Elmers' once a month for the last half-hour of our meeting.

As we prepare for the many challenges of 2015, we are optimistic about our future achievements.

Top 10 A Cappella Mistakes

*BHS article from Acappella101.com
By Jonathan Minkoff*

Your Performance Begins the Instant You Step Out on Stage. The Rules of nearly all a cappella competitions state that the timing begins when you blow the first pitch, begin choreography or start talking. That's timing. But when does the judging really begin?

The judges are judging you from the first step you take on stage. Are you setting the mood for your first song? Are you all acting as one, giving off a unified energy? Do you all make eye contact with the audience and each other? Do your faces and body language put the audience at ease because they convey "committed deliberateness"- the sense that everything on stage – even untangling mic chords from the previous group - is precisely what it should be? Pardon the old (and now bastardized) expression, but though you needn't actually wear pants, you need to wear THE pants.

From the instant you enter, you must take the stage. In your body language, you don't ask to be liked; you tell the audience how great you are, what a good time they'll have and how you are in charge. And if you do all this before the timer even starts, the judges can't help but start their scoring with the inclination to love you and everything you do. The alternative is starting from a hole and hoping you can climb out in time for the scoring

You are Not Invisible Before and After the Song. Your group may divide the show into songs, but we are watching your whole show. The breath you take to begin the ballad. The way you walk toward the mic. The way you gracefully bow after the song has ended and the last reverberation of the final chord fades.

Whether you laugh at the joke intro to the next song or whether you are fixing your hair instead and looking concerned that you can't find your next pitch. We're always watching. And judges are always scoring.

Emote with the Lead, Not With Nonsense Syllables. Some leads are singing fluff and then the emotion is best described as "Yeah! We're all having a good time!" That's fine! You can put that on your face and in your body and all is well. Some leads are singing absolute poetry. What the lead sings, the group must respect. Back-ups that are doing their own thing, particularly when their own thing is distracting or boring are hurting the overall performance. This isn't to say that the back-ups couldn't express something different from the lead; they can. But what they express matters and they can't be in their own world of focusing on "doo doo dah shwah" or the internal monologue of "Hey, do I look fat in these white disco shorts?"

"Simple and Perfect" Crushes "Complicated and Almost." This is true for all elements of music, but rears its ugly head in Vocal Percussion with great regularity. A deliberate, precise pattern with enough time for your VP to nail each sound and

place each sound right in the pocket is infinitely more effective than a sloppy high speed assault.

If the sung parts are too hard to sing dead on then they're not the right choice for competition. We'd rather hear simple perfection. Unlike ice skating's demands of particular jumps, a cappella competitions usually score you on the goals you set for yourself. Achieve perfection in simpler music and walk away with the trophy. That's one of the reasons barbershop groups often win or place highly at contemporary competitions: they sing the hell out of the material they've chosen, even if the material they've chosen is dated or seemingly simple.

Never Sing Before You Sing. Singing the starting chord, or humming before actually starting the song is universally viewed as a weakness in the ability of singers to hear their starting pitches. Additionally, it's not a particularly compelling performance choice. And even if you're lucky enough to have judges that don't detract points for lack of professionalism or performance, you are still wasting time on something that can never earn you any points.

One Talks. One Blows. Ron Jeremy jokes aside, laws, sausages and getting the group to sing in the right key and at the right tempo are all mysterious things the people don't want to see the innards of. We just want them to come out right. Let magicians or politicians teach you the art of distraction then translate that to a cappella. One talks: "Thank you. We are the Flying Noodlebonks. We'd like to show you our spin on some classic 90s alternative music next. Of course I'm referring to the 1890s classic, 'I Miss Dear Old Lincoln'!

Kick it Noodlebonks!" While One is talking, Two blows the starting pitch and counts off so that the count off begins before "Kick it Noodlebonks!" and the group starts singing immediately following the talking. Even if you can't get it together to time all this right, at the very least don't have the person intro-ing a song also be the person who blows the pitch and counts off.

Man Cannot Live on Mezzo Forte Alone. Yes, I know that the original song you're now covering had no dynamics and they rocked. Too bad. You need dynamics and if you don't have them, judges will take off points. Songs without dynamics are boring. I've never in my life heard a song with too much dynamic range or too much phrasing.

Many groups think of dynamics as strictly a musical, rather than a performance issue. Consider though, the connection between energy and dynamics. While perfect intonation may take years to achieve, both energy and dynamics can reach exceptional levels of expressiveness after a single focused rehearsal.

Even grade school children know how to modulate their voices from incredibly soft to incredibly loud. Dynamics translate to energy and energy translates to excitement in the song and attention in the listener.

Continued on the next page

Top Ten

Continued from the previous page

Tessitura Beats Range. There may be nothing worse than hearing a tenor pressing grapes for a strained high note or a soprano warding dogs off with her high screech.

We hear the change in volume, the phrasing, and the most powerful element of music leaps from the page: motion! So stop deliberately standing still, musically burping out gravel for the low note.

Competitions are not the time for taking long shots. Choose songs that feature your strengths and hide your weaknesses. Change keys from the original. Make part of the solo into a sectional part. Do whatever you need to do to show us nothing but your good side. Judges never take points off for the high C you didn't try to hit, only for the one you bungled. Keep each voice in its best tessitura.

Talking Doesn't Win Singing Competitions. Got a funny bit you like to do in between songs? That's nice. We do like to see your personality and get to know you, but get to it and get singing. Funny one liners can get the job done just as well as skits and in a fraction of the time, leaving you time to gather points by actually singing.

Originality Counts and then Counts Again. Nearly every competition awards original arrangements and original songs. Why take yourself out of the running for these awards? Also, consider why these awards exist at all: judges and organizers are looking to see the art form move forward and evolve. You can't do that with well-known arrangements of well-known covers. And the originality awards aside, as between two groups of approximately equal performance, the judges will break the tie in favor of the more original.

Think you've heard "Insomniac" or "Africa" a few times? Wanna guess how often we judges have heard it? Do you want to take the chance that your arrangement and your performance of this classic are better than any of the thousands we've already heard? Gamblin' man, are ya? It's a long shot. By contrast, if we've never heard the arrangement or the song, then we have fewer preconceived notions of how you are supposed to sing it. You become free to express your creativity instead of your mimicry.

One of the reasons we are judges is the fact that we've heard so much a cappella. So would you rather be a breath of fresh air, turning heads and raising eyebrows or just another in a long line of sleepy Lion Sleepers and worn out Runaround Sues? Go ahead and do those songs in your live shows if you like. They're tried and true crowd-pleasers and if you are a young singer, then chances are you're not bored out of your brains from water-torture-like repetition. Just remember that competitions are a different beast, altogether, though so know enough a cappella history to take a pass on the passé.

In Conclusion. The fundamentals are the necessary building blocks on which your performance stands. If you can't tune, blend and balance, you won't win.

But that's not the whole game. Heed this article's advice and you'll have easily sidestepped some serious a cappella land mines. When it's neck and neck, you'll pull ahead. When you put commitment in your face and body, that can't help but become a part of your singing. And sometimes, really great stage presence and performance is so powerful, that judges think the musicality is at a higher level than it really is. It's a multi-pronged attack. It worked against the Britts and it works in a cappella! See you at the next competition, you champion, you!

2015
Harmony College
NORTHEAST
Aug. 7-9 • Worcester State University



HARMONY
EXPLOSION
CAMP
NORTHEAST

August 6-9, 2015

Worcester State University, Worcester, MA

Harmony Explosion Camp Northeast 2015 is a three-day music camp for male & female high school students and music educators sponsored by the Northeastern District and co-sponsored by Harmony Foundation, Inc., Harmony, Inc., and Sweet Adelines International.



Society and District Notes



New England Harmony Brigade

Reason #10 to apply to the New England Harmony Brigade for their annual Rally September 18-20th, 2015.

Hang out with some of the best quartets in the Northeast! The New England Harmony Brigade weekend Rally attracts talented, dedicated barbershoppers from around the country. Evenly matched by voice-part, every man is prepared to sing his part, perfectly, on all 12 'gold-medal' arrangements. What ensues is an unlimited mix-and-match of some pretty incredible quartets.

At the NEHB Rally, the focus is on QUARTETS. Non-stop singing with up to 30 different, solid, performers on each part. It's a chance to meet and sing with all those people that you see at District but because you're in the cycle, you haven't had a chance to hang out. Just Imagine!

Reason #9. *It's a Deal!* A great hotel, ten legal arrangements, & Meals! The cost of the New England Harmony Brigade is all inclusive: Two nights in the Marriot Courtyard hotel in Marlborough, Mass. Meals on Friday and Saturday plus fabulous learning tracks for 12 Gold Medal songs, sheet music and a few extras, too. How much? Just \$298.00. That's about what you'd expect to pay for one arrangement plus learning tracks.

Reason #8. *Add 12 'Gold-Medal' Arrangements to Your Repertoire.* You'll receive sheet music and 'A-quality' part-specific learning tracks for 12 amazing arrangements by some of the best arrangers in the Society. Songs are chosen to provide a mix of challenging material commonly recorded by BHS Champs. Come alone or bring your entire quartet (you'll spend the weekend separately, mix-and-match, contest, show) but just imagine: instant repertoire. (*Music licensed for rally performances.)

Reason #7. *Participate in a fun, Random Draw, One Song Contest!* After dinner Friday night, the random quartets will be announced. After a quick huddle to meet your lucky quartet members, you'll inform the contest administrator of your clever quartet name and receive the randomly selected song assigned for the contest. An hour later, the One Song Contest begins. Following a quartet performance by every man at the Brigade, the Top ten quartets competing on Saturday night will be announced. This may be a contest but it's not like anything you've ever attended! Rumor has it that the judges can even be bribed!

If you are not a member of NEHB, please get your application in as soon as possible. While members are entitled to automatic acceptance, first-time guests and returning member candidates are considered in the order in which their application was received. If you want to get your first preference on voice part, you must apply early.

It's easy to apply online. Just fill out the new online application and then you can either send in your deposit, or submit your deposit via Paypal. But keep in mind that your application will not be considered until such time as your deposit is received. If you do not send it, you "go to the back of the line" until we receive it.

Keep in mind that if, for some reason, you are not accepted by the membership committee to attend the brigade, your deposit is refundable.

Want more information? Go to www.nehb.net!
Yours in Harmony,

Lee Daum

2015 CALLING ANYONE INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING IN THE CBQC THIS SUMMER IN PITTSBURGH!!!

To say it has been a tumultuous start to the year is an understatement. I have been working to establish a method by which the NED can send representatives to Pittsburgh for the CBQC contest and it's come to the following actions.

If you meet the criteria and are interested please send me an email notification of that fact as soon as you can. I have other material I need to send to you and information that needs to be disseminated.

Visit the following URL:

<http://barbershop.org/youth-zone/collegiate-quartet-competition.html>

At the bottom of the page you will find the link to register. Please complete that registration.

Kirk Young, NED DRCJ
kirkjyoung@gmail.com



*They look pleased with the results.
Picture by Peter Daubner.*

Ye Olde Joke Boarde



Submitted by the Unknown Barbershopper

A famous Viking explorer returned home from a voyage and found his name missing from the town register. His wife insisted he complain to the local civic official. The official, a barbershop baritone, apologized profusely saying, "I must have taken Leif off my census."

• • •

A barbershop baritone arrived at the Pearly Gates and St. Peter asked him to relate a good deed he had done. The guy thought for a moment and said, "Hmmm, well I was driving down a road and I saw a giant group of hoodlums harassing this poor girl. I slowed down, and sure enough, there they were, about 20 of them abusing this poor woman.

"Infuriated, I got out my car, grabbed a tire iron out of my trunk, and walked up to the leader of the gang. He was a huge guy; 6 foot 4 inch, 260 pounds, with a studded leather jacket and a chain running from his nose to his ears. As I walked up to the leader, the others formed a circle around me and told me to get lost or I'd be next."

"So I ripped the leader's chain out of his face and smashed him over the head with the tire iron. Then I turned around and yelled to the rest of them, 'Leave this poor innocent girl alone! You're all a bunch of SICK, deranged animals! Go home before I really teach you a lesson in PAIN!'"

St. Peter, duly impressed, said, "Wow! When did this happen?"

"Oh, about three minutes ago."

• • •

A barbershop baritone went to a psychiatrist. "Doc," he said. "I keep having these alternating recurring dreams. First I'm a teepee, then I'm a wigwam, then I'm a teepee, then I'm a wigwam. It's driving me crazy. What's wrong with me?"

The doctor replied, "It's very simple. You're two tents."

Current Mad Hatter Repertoire

Regular Repertoire

Almost Like Being In Love
It's Only A Paper Moon
I Don't Know Why (I Just Do)
Where Is Love
Daydream
Beach Boys Medley
Happy Together)
Blue Velvet
Crazy Little Thing Called Love
Shenandoah
Bye-Bye, Love
Breaking Up Is Hard To Do
On The Sunny Side of the Street
Meet Me In the Gravel Pit, Honey, cuz
I'm a Little Boulder There

Patriotic/Inspirational

Amazing Grace
Armed Forces Salute
God Bless America
I Believe
Impossible Dream
Lord's Prayer
Star-Spangled Banner
This Land Is Your Land/
America the Beautiful Medley



Coming Soon

Blue Skies
Come Go With Me
Tonight, Tonight
The Long and Winding Road
50's Rock and Roll Medley
59th Street Bridge Song
How Deep Is The Ocean
Moonlight Brings Memories
Don't Chop Any Wood Mother, I'm
Comin' in With a Load!

Contest

Drivin' Me Crazy
May I Never Love Again

The Danbury, CT Chapter SPEBSQSA

104 Lexington Blvd.
Bethel, CT 06801
203-744-9480

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The Hatter Chatter

Serving the Mad Hatter community since last Tuesday

John Bradley, Hatter Editor	Dick Zang, Chatter Editor
39 Beekman Drive	2 Camelot Crest
Lake Carmel, NY 10512	Sandy Hook, CT 06482
Jbrad1313@earthlink.net	jezang@charter.net

Proofreader: Miss Taralily

The editors of the Hatter Chatter welcome submissions from all chapter members and friends of the Mad Hatters. E-mail, mail, paper airplane us your thoughts, observations, opinions, singing tips and whatever, and we'll turn them into Pulitzer Prize copy

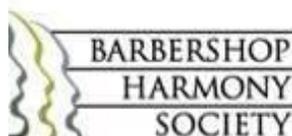
March Milestones

Birthdays

13 - Pete Huester
15 - Terry Dunkle
22 - Vera Baran
25 - Nick Godano

Wedding Anniversaries

No anniversaries in March.



Mark Your Calendars

Performance

Saturday, February 28, 2015. Warm-up at 3:30 PM, sing at 4:00 PM. Meadow Ridge Assisted Living, 100 Redding Road, Redding, CT.

Performance

Saturday, March 14, 2015. Warm-up at 3:30 PM, sing at 4:00 PM. St. Paul Episcopal Church, 802 Bantam Road, Bantam, CT.

Coaching Session with John Ward

Tuesday, March 31, 2015. Rehearsal Begins at 7:15 PM. Church of Christ, 90 Clapboard Ridge Road, Danbury, CT.

Annual Show

Saturday May 16, 2015. Arrival Time TBD, Performance starts at 7:30 PM. Western Connecticut State University Visual and Performing Arts Center, 43 Lake Ave Ext, Danbury, CT.

Coaching Session with Kirk Young

Saturday, August 15, 2015. Rehearsal Begins at 9:00 AM. Church of Christ, 90 Clapboard Ridge Road, Danbury, CT.

NED Convention

Friday, October 16 (Quartet Semi-Finals), Saturday October 17 (Chorus & Quartet Finals). Times are TO BE DETERMINED. Sheraton Burlington Hotel & Conference Center, 870 Williston Road, Burlington, VT.



More pictures from our recent coaching session with John Ward. By Peter Daubner.