

## On with the show!

It's show time!

Well, it's always showtime, one way or another, at the Harmonizers, isn't it? Shows are, after all, what we do. Of course, we have meetings, rehearsals, contests, outings, and other special events. But shows are the summation of it all; they are the manifestation of all that we work for, the encapsulation of our art and our camaraderie.

Just last month, we had three fall show performances and an away show, with our Holiday show right around the corner. Have you ever thought about how many shows you've done? Sobering, isn't it!

Yet how often we take shows for granted! We think mostly about our own roles and duties: "Oh, another show! A bit of make-up, the costume of the moment, check the song board to remember the set, and let it rip."

So let's stop for a moment and take a look at The Show. What goes into it? How do producers come about and do what they do? As we enter the Dojo of Show, we shall perceive:

Lessons learned by a first-time producer from grasshopper Kirk Riffer;  
Revelations about the mysteries of Tech Rehearsal from technozen master Bob Eckman;  
The ten-fold path to achieving Producerhood from inscrutable Chris Huber;  
The musical kung fu battle of the Put-Together,  
The six keys to being a successful Show Producer, from black-belt producer Ken Fess;  
And a look back on some of our wackier shows, with a director in a leotard, madras shorts with black socks, and Dick Hall in a trenchcoat!



And since variety is the spice of any production, we've also got:

Meet one of the Harmonizers who is Civil War expert;  
an explanation of the seldom-explained Entertainment Book fundraiser;  
how a shirt can make you famous;  
a rackful of hats;  
How to please scores of women in one day without spending a dime;  
a chandelier on stage (of course!);  
And, oh yes, the identity of our new musical director.

On with the show!



### All in the Family

#### A profile of Howard Nestlerode

By Roger Day

Howard was born on February 27th in an Army Hospital at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. Howard was a military brat and moved around a lot. I guess he could call South Carolina home! Or maybe he could call the world his home! Howard is not new to the area. He has moved in and out of here 4 times. The first time was in 1942 when he lived with his parents in Arlington as a young whippersnapper (there's a Tag in there somewhere)! They returned to the area in 1954 where Howard attended school from the 8th grade to the 11th grade. However, his father got reassigned to Anchorage Alaska in 1959. That's where Howard graduated from High School. From there Howard went on to Allegheny College in Meadville, PA. Where he achieved his BA in Economics. But, that was not the end to his college career. He attended USC, the UK Campus, in 1969 where he received his MA in International Relations. Howard was an Officer in the United States Air Force at the time. In 1969 he was assigned to the Defense Intelligence Agency and was in the area for the next two years.

Howard first learned about the Society in college but never pursued membership. But when he returned twelve years later to his Alma Mater to become part of the faculty, he learned that a local chapter was being reorganized. The Chapter was Yesterday's Sound. He attended their chapter show, and that's when Howard got hooked, joining the next week. The director was Gene Butterfield, Jay Butterfield's father. They had just moved from Dallas Texas where they won gold medals with the Vocal Majority.

Howard moved to Alabama in 1977 where he joined the local Barbershop chapter. He became the Membership VP and when the Dixie District had an event where they invited everyone present to stand on stage and sing Barber Polecat songs, it was the first time he ever sang Barbershop with more than 30 men. He said it was a glorious sound and an exciting feeling.

While on the faculty at Air University in Alabama, Howard met Bill Cody who was there for the Air Command and Staff College. They sang together in the local Chapter called the Chiefs of Staff. Bill arranged to have the Nova Chords perform on the chapter show. That was Howard's first association with the Harmonizers, since Bill Cody was a member. Howard got assigned to the Pentagon in 1980 and arrived the week the Harmonizers won their first Silver medal at International. That year Scott Werner retired from the Chorus and gave the Directorship to John Hohl.

Howard has held many positions in the chapter. Ranging from Truck Driver to Entertainment Book Seller to Finance Committee member to Recording secretary to Treasurer, to Membership and Chapter Development VP to At-Large board member. Howard is one of those members that have sung at just about every contest and show the Harmonizers have done since he became a member. (let all stand up and cheer)! Few Harmonizers can make that claim! Howard's license plate reads IMA LEAD.

Howard has been married to Ruth Ann (his college sweetheart) for 36 years. They have 3 daughters. The oldest is Janet then Karen and Diane. Howard has one grandchild, Janet's daughter.

Howard has been active with the Civil War Battlefield tromping group for nearly 30 years. They don't re-enact, they just visit sites to study and learn. Howard says he has been on as many Civil War Battlefields as he has been on famous stages with the Harmonizers!

Howard retired from the military in 1986 and started working in the Tyson's Corners area as a civilian. He is currently working at the Goddard Space Flight Center (by the way, that is where Jeremy Richardson is currently doing he Fellowship/Internship for his Ph.D., If you remember Jeremy was last month's Profile). Howard is the Process Manager at the Defense Threat Reduction Agency at Ft Belvoir.



### My First Show!

by Kirk Riffer

I don't think there is enough room in the "Echo" to fit the knowledge I have gained from doing my first show. I've learned from politics to pizazz. One thing that sticks out in my mind is that I have a greater sense of belonging and I am actually contributing to a hobby which "makes me want to be a better man" and it "completes me". Okay, I think I've run out of movie lines to quote....

For those that are interested in producing I would have to give them the advice that it is never too early to start working on your show and use your fellow Harmonizers as reference tools. People that have produced in the past are the best people to go to because they went through the whole "ordeal" that you are about to undergo. Rick Wagner and Chris Huber have been a tremendous help in making my first time producing as painless as possible. You also want to put your own stamp on your show so don't be afraid to try new ideas and think outside the box. Don't worry; people like Terry and Geri are there to put you back in the box if you get too far outside. They are there to help and have contributed greatly to the show that I have produced.

One last piece of advice is to not become overwhelmed in your job. Find people that can help. There are people willing to help out there you just have to ask. For example, I am not the most eloquent writer so I asked Bob Wilson to write the script, on which he did a great job. I hope by the time this is published I have thanked the countless others that have helped me. At first this task was overwhelming, but it ended up being one of the most rewarding experiences I have had in my time as a Harmonizer.

**Mercury, the home quartet that performed on our Fall show, singing at the After-glow.**



**Our fabulous and zany guest quartet, Metropolis, wowing us at the Afterglow as they did the audience at the shows.**



### Richard Lewellen to Direct Alexandria Harmonizers

by Bob Sutton

After ten months of work, the Alexandria chapter's Director Search Team has recommended, and the Board has approved, the naming of Richard Lewellen of Birmingham, Alabama, to be the eighth man to serve as Musical Director of the Alexandria Harmonizers. Richard will take over for the seventh man, Terry Reynolds, who did an outstanding job in the interim role after Scott Werner's retirement in July.

Richard is a remarkable young talent with a tremendous barbershop background and the respect of Society leaders. He is best known as the baritone of the 2001-2002 international fourth-place bronze medallist quartet *Riptide*, and serves also as the director of the chorus of the new Central Alabama chapter in Birmingham.

Although a native of Hawaii, his barbershop career is rooted in Southern California. He was a member of the Masters of Harmony chorus that won the gold medals in 1990, having been named Lead Section Leader only a few weeks prior to the contest. Richard still regards the Masters' director, Greg Lyne, as a mentor, and Greg has coached Richard's subsequent choruses to great success. Moving to Atlanta after the Masters' second gold medal in 1993, Richard joined the Big Chicken Chorus and became Clay Hine's assistant director, a spot he held through several top-five (and one third-place) chorus medals with the entertaining chorus from Marietta. Two years ago he was recruited to become the director of the Birmingham Metro chapter in Alabama, which subsequently merged with Tuscaloosa's chapter to form the Voices of the South chorus. They shocked the Dixie District by finishing second to the Big Chicken in the District Chorus Contest last month.

Richard has a wonderful quartet track record to go with his chorus leadership as well. He has the unusual track record of winning district quartet

championships on two different parts, but won his two quartet medals on a third part! He was the bass singer in *Pacifica*, the Far Western champion in 1982, but moved up to lead to sing with Jeff Baker and Rob Menaker (who would later go on to win gold medals with *Nightlife*) in a quartet called *Bachelor Party* – a familiar name indeed. When *Nightlife* formed, it set a tradition of spawning medallist alumni, including Richard, who was the lead singer before John Sasine joined and ultimately won.

Before leaving California, he sang lead with the quartet American Pastime, including Bill Myers, who won gold later with *Revival*, Scott Kidder, whose current quartet, *Finale*, made the finals in Portland, and a tenor named Greg Lyne you may have heard of. Arriving in Atlanta, he promptly joined *Atlanta Power Company* on lead, less than three months before they won Dixie District – his second and final district quartet championship, on a second different part. When Jeff Selano joined the quartet as bass, they became *Bandstand* and competed internationally. *Riptide* evolved after Richard briefly left the group for a job move, and he returned to become their baritone in 1999 and helped them to an 11<sup>th</sup>-place finish in Anaheim, followed by a 6<sup>th</sup> and their two bronze medals.

Richard is now a professional coach and voice teacher, and a sterling candidate to lead our chorus in the future. He learns as he coaches, and plans to apply his wealth of barbershop experience to the Harmonizer chorus. It's a great testimony to that fact that *from the day of his interview in September* Richard has been discussing arrangements and coaching, believing that January is too late to start the Harmonizers on the road to Montreal. We are geared up for quite a train ride, and the engineer, as they say, is on board!

Richard and Chris Spencer are planning to be married in early 2003. Chris was a welcome visitor, along with her fiancé, to the Harmonizers' fall show where they enjoyed themselves tremendously. Please take time soon to welcome our new Music Director to the Harmonizer family.



## The Director Search

The Director Search Team (“DST”) was chartered and appointed by Gary Bibens as chapter president, following the announced retirement of Scott Werner in January of this year. They began immediately to publicize the vacancy in an effort to ensure that all viable candidates were aware of the opportunity and knew how to contact us. A tiger team of the committee, called the Candidate Search Tiger Team (CSTT), was established to develop a package for those interested in applying. With their leadership and the assistance of the whole DST, they developed a questionnaire as the application, along with position information in the form of a “culture print” of the chapter and a position description for the job itself. These packages, along with a 50-year history and a CD, were sent to prospective candidates for several months, beginning in mid-April.

A large number of individuals contacted us, or were contacted by us, in an effort to identify our next leader. We were pleased also to have had recommendations made to us by a stellar array of Society leaders, appreciative of what the Harmonizers mean to the Society and, in fact, often feeling that their recommendation could actually chart a course for the Society itself. It is a pretty fair statement that, ultimately, an *exhaustive* list of potential applicants was considered; hardly a name could be mentioned today that did not cross our radar screen at some point.

After a thorough review of the applications, the CSTT recommended to the overall team three names to be invited to audition before the chorus, and those auditions were held over a two-month period around District and the Fall Show preparations. The auditions led to a flood of email to the DST, which was duly read and evaluated, email-by-email, by all the members of the team. Shortly thereafter, the DST met and,



considering the applications, the interview, the audition and its feedback, letters of recommendation and reputation, recommended that the Board begin negotiating with Richard Lewellen to be our Music Director. By unanimous vote, the Board approved the resolution on November 14<sup>th</sup>.

The members of the DST included Bob Sutton (chairman), Chris Buechler, Bill Cody, Gary Bibens, Gary Plaag, Steve White, Joe Wagovich, Kirk Riffer, Michael Calhoun, Jack Pitzer, Alan Wile and Terry Reynolds. The members of the DST want to take this opportunity to thank the members of the Alexandria Harmonizers for their outstanding cooperation during the process, for their excellent feedback on the auditions, and for their amazing patience during 2002.



### **What the heck happens at a tech rehearsal, and why?**

**by Bob Eckman**

Look at the published rehearsal schedule of a Harmonizer chapter show and you will see on Wednesday night “Tech Rehearsal”. Since only the show production crew attends this event, it is shrouded in mystery to the uninitiated Harmonizer. So what really goes on at a Harmonizer Tech rehearsal or Tech night? First, a definition. According the Houston Tidelanders, Theater Terminology web page, a technical rehearsal is:

The rehearsal or series of rehearsals in which the technical elements of the show are integrated with the work of actors. Also called Tech.

Sound more like a Harmonizer Dress Rehearsal? You could be right!

Our Tech night is not a rehearsal; it’s our only opportunity to set up our lights, sound, risers, and props for the following night’s Dress Rehearsal. While this may sound simple, it takes a lot of planning beforehand and some physical labor to put in place all the staging elements that add the magic to a Harmonizer show.

Planning begins with the show producer and music team determining the theme of the show. From this the producer (and other writers for a scripted show) creates a show script. A key part of the script is the lighting, sound, and prop requirements.

Our own Lighting Designer, Dixie Kennett, usually directs lighting for the Spring and Fall shows. Dixie works with the producer and Artistic Director Geri Geis to determine the lighting requirements of the show. Then, knowing the lighting capabilities of the Schlesinger Center, she determines what additional lighting instruments will need to be rented. These are ordered for delivery on Tech night.

Prop requirements are generally known for each song in the script, although new songs may require new props to be built or acquired. For a scripted show or some fancy production numbers, scenery may need to be constructed. Equipment for special effects, such as the mirror ball for *Miller Medley* or the bubble machines for *Kiss De Girl*, need to be rented or added to the list of materials needed from Harmonizer storage. Property Manager Bob Eckman creates a list of all equipment, props, supplies, and other items needed for the show and makes sure they are all on the HarmoTruck, ready to load into the hall.

With planning complete, all the elements arrive early in the evening of Tech night. A riser crew helps unload the truck and set the risers and endcaps. Riser skirts and rail covers are installed. Props are setup. Dixie works with the Schlesinger Center lighting crew to install lighting, assign and document circuit assignments, aim and focus lighting instruments, and install color gels to get the right look and feel for each song. Our sound man, Kirk Riffer, works with the Schlesinger Center crew to setup and test microphones, speakers and sound levels. The professional lighting and sound capabilities of the Schlesinger Center make these setups much less intensive than other show venues. By the end of Tech night, all is in place for the dress rehearsal.

A Harmonizer dress rehearsal combines elements of a technical rehearsal with a true dress rehearsal. While most Harmonizer songs have a set lighting, prop, and sound plan, the transitions between songs almost always change. Before actually running the show, the producer and directors run the transitions between songs and song sets, establishing the coordination between the stage manager, lighting, sound, actors, and the chorus. To achieve a professional-level show, these transitions must be as smooth as *Blue Velvet*. Through the efforts of the tech crew and the focus and flexibility of the chorus, the technical elements of the show are made invisible and the audience can enjoy the musical experience that is the Alexandria Harmonizers.



### Help Wanted: Singing Cupids

by Brian Eng, Singing Valentine Chairman

Are you looking for a way to simultaneously bond with fellow Harmonizers, make the loads of money for the chapter, and perform a good deed that will warm the hearts of others?

Participating in the Harmonizer Singing Valentines program this coming February is the ideal way to accomplish all of the above!

Each Valentine's Day, patrons throughout the Washington metro area hire Harmonizer quartets, armed with roses and chocolates, to sing for their loved ones. To add to the pageantry, quartets arrive at any location (e.g., workplace, restaurant, high school) spiffed up in black tails and white ties.

For many Harmonizers, Singing Valentines is their favorite activity of the year. After all, reaching out and touching the hearts of the audience is our specialty, and there is no time more appropriate for this than on Valentine's Day.

Moreover, the program increases our visibility in the community in a highly positive manner and is potentially a huge moneymaker.

So what do you need to ante up to participate in this truly fabulous and fun activity? Just your time and goodwill. If you would like to participate but are not in a quartet, we will find one for you for this activity (and, you are always welcome to form up your own quartet). If a quartet lacks transportation, we will make the necessary arrangements. We will even schedule all your gigs and provide you with roses and chocolates. The only thing we can't provide is the pair of Cupid wings!



We will need quartets to sing on Valentine's Day itself and also the two preceding days. And we could always use volunteers to help with the many tasks of organizing this program. If you would like to sing, please contact Michael Calhoun. If you would like to join our team or if you have any questions, please contact me.

Let's start off 2003, our first year with Richard Llewelyn, with a bang!



## What are Entertainment Books?

They're a fund raising effort to use someone else's money, instead of your own, to help cover Harmonizers expenses. Entertainment '03 coupon books are available now and usable until November 1, 2003. Get your friends and acquaintances to commit to you now; you don't need their money until they receive their book. In addition, this year Entertainment books can be bought on-line at 'www.entertainment.com;' read on to find out about it.

Entertainment '03 is a "half-off" or "two-for-one" coupon book. It uses the principle in many of this area's most popular restaurants of "buy one entree - get an entree of equal or lesser price free". At some restaurants, individuals may dine alone at half price with the coupon. In addition to restaurants, you can order tickets to dinner theaters, stage performances, sports, and movies. You can also purchase services at substantial discount prices. Discounts exist for nation-wide hotels, airline and cruise tickets, car rental services, and nation-wide retail and amusement activities. Any time you use the book, you will save. The more you use it, the more you can save. Anyone who purchases the book need only use it a few times to recover the total cost of the book, which contains hundreds of coupons. If you use all the coupons, you could save thousands of dollars!

We sell the books for \$35.00 (Northern Virginia/Washington, DC; Maryland (Montgomery & Prince George's Counties)/Washington, DC) and \$30.00 (Baltimore) and keep \$7.00/\$6.00 (minimum) for each book sold. We will receive a \$.25 bonus each for all books sold if our total book sales are over 100. Last year the Harmonizers raised \$1,225.75 selling Entertainment books. It's an easy fund raiser. There's no capital outlay involved; the books are available on consignment. No pressure selling is involved, the books sell themselves. We're merely making the books available to our customers. The books also are sold by many other non-profit organizations at the same price, and commercially for \$40.00/\$35.00. In addition, you

can order any edition of Entertainment '03 for any city in the country, and the Harmonizers can earn the profit. Out of town editions will be shipped to anywhere you want! Out of town edition prices vary by location and require 4-6 weeks lead time for delivery. Chuck Harner has out of town order forms.

What about electronic sales? You or your friends/customers can go to 'www.entertainment.com', enter the zip code or city & state where you'd like to buy a book. The result is a list of books available in the specified area. The customer can scan the book for included national values, restaurants, shops & services, sport & leisure, etc. coupons. If interested, you go back & "buy the book". The "Buy Screen" allows you to enter account number 126510 for the Harmonizers to gain credit for the sale.



As a Harmonizer, you can check out as many books as you'd like on consignment from Chuck Harner. We encourage all Harmonizers, their wives, and their friends to sell them. We will gladly take back by January 7, 2003, all that you don't sell. When you sell a book, have your customer make the check for \$35.00/\$30.00 (market price for out of town editions) payable to the Alexandria Harmonizers. Turn your checks or cash for sold books in to Chuck each week.

The values become obvious, and the books sell themselves. Just put them in the hands of potential customers, show them the master indices, ask them to look at the book and then either return it to you or give you a check for \$35.00/\$30.00, made out to the Harmonizers. Most likely, you'll receive a check. The trick is to show the book to your customers.

See last year's top sellers: Chuck Harner (28), Gary Mankin (19), Bede Bender (8), Al Hanenbaum (7), Hal Gaut (5), Mike Everard (5) if you still need to be convinced.



## So you want to be a Harmonizer Show Producer?

by Chris Huber

Imagine this: You're on the risers, accepting yet another standing ovation for our just completed Fall Show. What an exhilarating experience!! Yet, you wonder in the back of your mind if it could have been so much better if only "we'd done it little differently". Maybe you wished we had done different songs, maybe a rearrangement of the sets. Or, maybe that the show was too short, too long, not enough up-tunes, comedy numbers, ballads, drama, audience participation, or lack of theme? Or, if you could have worked directly with the Musical and Artistic Directors, your ideas might become reality!!

If any of these thoughts have ever crossed your mind, there is an opportunity for every single member of the Harmonizers to take an active role in making real some of those ideas and changes. I guarantee that producing a Harmonizer show will be one of the memorable highlights of your association with this great organization. You will have the chance to work with all of the wonderful people associated with producing one of our shows, and at the same time learn a whole new set of skills required to successfully take an idea for a show theme to the actual presentation onstage.

The Harmonizers typically present two major show productions each year, one each in the spring and fall. There are also several other smaller shows put on by the Harmonizers throughout each calendar year. Each of these requires a producer to ensure the shows are put together properly from concept to Showtime. In fact, it is probably a great idea, for those who are interested in producing one of the major shows, to first take on one of the smaller shows in order to gain some important experience. These "other" shows run the spectrum from the "Dog Days of August" show to the annual Christmas shows in December.

It's really easy to talk about how you would make things better without actually doing something about it. Becoming a Harmonizer Show Producer is your best opportunity to directly impact what is performed onstage in a show environment and to work directly with the musical leadership of the chapter. But, how do you actually become a Show Producer?? Well, the first thing is to tell someone you want to experience this opportunity. I am always available to help set you on the path to producing a Harmonizer Show. Others within the chapter you could talk to might include Ken Fess, Bill Cody, Geri Geis, Bob Sutton or Terry Reynolds. They may direct you to me but they can all provide the initial information you would need to get started.

What we typically attempt to do with new producers is get them started with one of our "smaller" shows in order for them to gain valuable experience without overwhelming them. These shows require a portion of the time necessary to produce our semi-annual shows. The specifics of what the Producer is responsible for are discussed throughout this issue of the Echo, but the basic responsibilities include:

### Small Shows:

- Draft Song Sets/Costumes, meet with Musical/Artistic Directors for approval and to finalize
- Work with Directors to rehearse show songs during Tuesday meetings prior to show
- Coordinate with show venue to ensure logistics support working
- Draft Show Script (may not be necessary for smaller shows like Dog Days, but necessary for shows that require lighting and sound support such as recent Great Mills show)
- Arrange for chapter quartet to perform, if required
- M.C. narration/segues
- Coordinate Riser set-up with Bob Eckman



- Stage crew, as necessary
- Sound and Lighting crews, if required
- Stage time for Front-row rehearsal, chorus sound checks and rehearsal
- SHOWTIME
- Breakdown of risers and lock-up

### Semi-Annual Shows:

The spring and fall shows are nothing more than an expanded effort required of the small shows. There are, however, several additional tasks that must be accomplished to put on a successful show. It is important to note that a large percentage of our annual revenues are generated from these two shows each year, so it is really important to make them as successful as possible. Our track record clearly shows that well-run productions make a lot of money for the chapter, which is a must considering all of the annual expenses a major chapter like the Harmonizers requires. The single-most important aspect of being a successful producer for one of these shows is to surround yourself with a production support staff that will take on all of the logistics and business requirements associated with a big venture, so that you can focus your time on the show itself. It is very important that you team up, as early as possible, with someone to be your Business Manager who is an energetic and responsible person. This individual should be able to shoulder all of the show-related logistic and business concerns. In fact, I would recommend for those interested in producing that taking on the Business Manager role first will provide you with a “wealth” of experience and knowledge you can then carry over to a future Producer’s role. Several previous major show producers, including myself, have followed this path.

There is now a check-off list and timeline for “small shows” that can be used by any producer. The current plan is to have a written Producer’s Guide for the major shows by early next year. This guide will include a

generic timeline for “what has to get done when”, a check-off preparation list, a wiring diagram that shows all of the positions that need to be filled with a definition of the responsibilities of each, and a list of Harmonizers with show production experience that can be tapped by you at any time.

So, please put some serious thought into this opportunity. The hardest part is actually “stepping up to the plate” and saying this is what I am going to do. Is it all peaches and ice cream? Of course not! I can’t think of one thing in my life that didn’t have its tough spots along the way. But, I will promise you this: Once you make the commitment and take on the role of Show Producer, the satisfaction of experiencing your “vision” become reality will always erase the memories of the tough times. I’ve been there when I produce the Fall 2001 show with Platinum, and trust me; the experience of being part of that show made all of the work more than worth the time it took to make it happen. If you have a vision for a future show, don’t go through the next couple of years wondering “What if”? Make it reality. I would venture that if you signed up to produce a future major show with a clear vision of the type of show and music you envision, you might have the opportunity to sell that idea to the Music Committee, and maybe even have a direct impact on the future songs they select for the chapter to bring into the repertoire. Think about that!

In 2002, we had four Harmonizers produce their first show sometime during the year. If you’re interested in getting involved and/or have any questions on the subject, talk with one of these outstanding gentlemen:

- Bob Blair
- Brian Eng
- Kirk Riffer
- Michael Quigley

We always need new and refreshing ideas for our music and our shows. Be a part of the action!!



## The Valuable Harmonizer Portland Shirts

Susan and Ross Johnson have always appreciated Roger Day's shirt designs, but never really understood how valuable they could be. On a Labor Day flight back from visiting grandchildren in Jacksonville, Florida, Ross got up to use the restroom. One of the flight attendants noticed Susan's fuchsia shirt with the golden rose and started complimenting her and noticed that it said "Alexandria Harmonizers." She told Susan that she was from Herndon and the rest of the attendants were all from Washington. Susan then filled the attendant in on Ross's membership in the Harmonizers and the chorus's achievements. When Ross got back to his seat, he was treated as a celebrity, and Susan and Ross were invited to complete the second leg of the trip in the "First Class" section of the plane with the usual complimentary refreshments. Susan recommends that everybody wear the valuable Portland shirt with great pride.



Special thanks to the ushers for the fall show: Marjorie Harner(head usher), Rosemary Craven, Mimi DePuy, Marilyn Gannon, Kathy Jones, Nancy Lovallo, Debbie Lowe, Ruthanne Lucey, Nancy Pickover, Charli Sowers, Evie Stern, Marge Wagovich, Carol Dangel, Cheryl Hyland, Jeremy Hyland, Kathy Kauffmann, Phyllis Schwartz, Evie Stern, Maggie Eckman, Kathleen Fuller, Laura Hall, Melissa Lowe, Phyllis Schwartz.



## Erratum

We've been caught in a mistake! The October issue of the Echo incorrectly stated that Jeremy Richardson graduated from the University of West Virginia, when in fact he graduated from West Virginia University. Nostra culpa!



We are sad to report that Bob Eckman lost his father, Charles, on October 27. Charles Eckman was 90 years old. Charles Eckman was a WW II Veteran who loved life and music in particular. He passed that love on to his son Bob, who said he knows that now his father is playing the flute in a better place.



Rumor has it that the Harmonizers will be represented by at least three quartets, Close Encounters of the Seventh Kind (Steve Plumb), City Slickers (Bob Caldwell), and Auld Lang Syne (Scott Werner), at the International Seniors Quartet Contest in January. Here's wishing them good luck!



### Show and Tell... Hats are for Barbershoppers

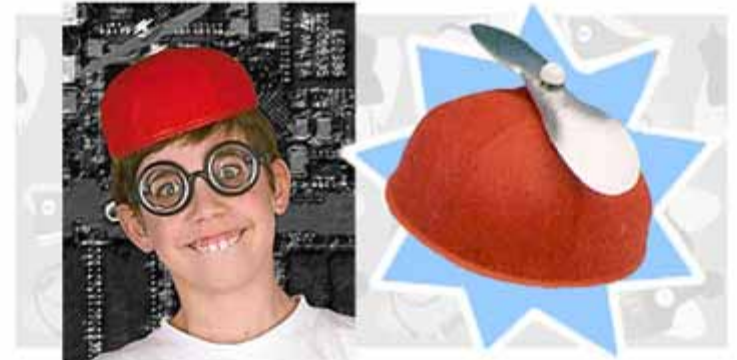
"It wouldn't be a lodge meeting without funny hats."



Sometimes a hat is required to complete an outfit.



At Harmony College, beanies make the man.



You may choose a hat... or a hat may choose you.



It takes a special man to wear a crown well.



# Wacky Show Stories!

By Jack Pitzer and Mike Organ

A few years ago Mike Organ came to the chapter from Dallas where he had made a name for himself in the other Dallas Chorus. Here are some of his fun stories in his own words...

"Reminiscence with me for a few paragraphs back to the days of Harmonizer Burlesque! Lots of slapstick, one-liners and corny entrees into our limited musical repertoire. Although nobody "took anything off", 1975 was the era of Wilbur Mills and the Tidal Basin. We sang an ode to Fanny Fox: "she was only a stripper at the Silver Slipper...but she had her ways and means!" See what I mean about corny slapstick!

"The Harmonizers were invited to perform at the Mid-Winter Convention held at the Washington Hilton in January of '76. Up to that point the Harmonizer traveling sing-out consisted of 5 or 6 songs each introduced by Scott or the bass with the deepest voice who showed up that night!

"However we arrived at the Hilton via our own "tour bus" built by Miles Reynolds and Tom Dehaven, as 35 "tourists" dressed in rain coats...loud shirts, madras Bermuda shorts, complete with black socks and garters, and lots of cameras! We took shots of the crowd, the bus, each other; there was so much flashing going on Dick Hall didn't even have to open his trench coat! The crowd laughed and applauded as "the clump" led by trenchcoat-clad, camera-toting, very round Mike Everard, Chapter President Dick Bodle, and

very tall Jack Shields shuffled across the stage. With Scott and John Hohl in charge of the music, I know we sang well, but we also smiled our way through 10 songs describing "an unconventional sightseeing tour of Washington DC."

"The convention attendees clapped so enthusiastically that the guys thought they were really good or at least they trusted me enough to lead them through the Spring Tonic called "George Washington's Revolution...or, Put the War on my tab!"

"Henry Brown starred as Ben Franklin who summed up the entire War of Independence in 10 songs, then calculated the cost of the War and put it all on George's Amex Card.

"They danced, they pranced, they sang and smiled throughout that year until we started "Just Clowning Around" (Spring Tonic 1977) when Jim Lucey portrayed an aspiring clown candidate attending the Harmonizer "Clown College." After much hazing and testing Jim the clown was of course accepted. Jim transformed himself on stage into a "white face" clown, applying his make up in an imaginary make-up mirror while the chorus sang "Me and My Shadow" and Jim and his shadow Scott danced their routine.

"Katie, bar the door! These guys were hot to trot now. They had three years of "story line performance" under their belts, great audience response and lots of

**continued on next page**



fun on stage. Everybody wanted to get in on the act....so we did! The next year we did the original version of "Toyland."

"Tom, Miles and their crew set the stage with huge oversized bookshelves full of live "stuffed animals", and an "Edith Ann rocking chair" for Raggedy Ann and Andy. The show opened with 40 toy soldiers marching in from the back of T.C. Williams singing "Toy Soldiers on Parade" The audience rose to their feet in applause and the show traced the rejection and ultimate embrace of Stinky LePue, the toy room resident skunk, through 10 great chorus songs, 8 chorus quartets, some centipedes, humpty dumpty, Tweedle Dee (Dick Bodle again) and Tweedle Dum (Mike Everard..what can I say!?) and a magical Jack n the box named Dave Wilt. His wit, ease and sense of timing made the stage, the audience and the chorus come alive for 50 minutes all centered around childhood memories induced by Scott and John's music and 85 childlike Harmonizers.

"As an aside and surprise to the chorus: the night of the show, a frustrated Assistant Director Bob Balderson who always wanted to "be a star" but couldn't because of his musical responsibilities, descended on stage from the rafters dressed only in a black leotard and a HUGE star as the chorus sang "be a star...be a star..." He stole the scene!

"The next challenge was to show the audience and prove to the chorus at large that you don't have to be young and pretty to be a "front row man!"

"Our 1979 production of Harmony House featured 20 "old farts" as Wilbur Sparks referred to them (this is not however how they were billed in the program) returning to their Fraternity House for their 50th reunion.

"The curtain opened on to a spectacular foyer of a magnificent Southern Mansion complete with spiral staircases on stage right and left and a tasteful chandelier (that actually worked...sometimes!) What a set! We even changed sets throughout the show and then back again! That was Tom and Miles; these guys were so creative. All we had to do was give them the idea, give them the story line, and get out of their way!

"The "Seniors" opened the show entering from the back of the theater, took the stage, and brought down the house with their "Barbershop Strut." The audience demanded a reprise which was good, since I was laughing and crying so hard I missed their first rendition.

"I had the honor of writing, directing, or producing Spring Tonics until 1984. My last was Hello Broadway where I got to be Michael of Chorus Line fame (I was 18 years younger and 40 pounds lighter!). During the years in-between, the chorus danced (moved) to strobe and black light. We sold Jack Pitzer's "plan" and won 4th, 2nd and ultimately 1st place in International competition, but most of all learned that, no matter what age or attitude, animation is fun and it really sells a song!

"Keep it up guys.....move on cue...have a good time and Keep American Singing! (and moving!)"



### Put-Together a Glorious Success!

by Jeremy Richardson

The First Annual Wilbur Sparks Memorial Put-Together Quartet Contest was a big success! A week before the contest, only three quartets had entered, but by the time the contest started, we had 18 entries!

Of course, this was the first time that Wilbur had not organized this event, and it was the first time I'd ever done anything like it. I set out to hold to tradition as much as possible. I held to Wilbur's tradition of drafting guys to sing in put quartets, and I even named a few that didn't name themselves. I like to think that Wilbur inspired me to come up with those names! The tradition was complete even down to Wilbur's scrap of paper where he would scribble down the names of the competitors.

The contest was held this year at our current regular meeting place, Plymouth Haven Baptist Church in Alexandria. This turned out to be a great venue for the contest. We used the stage and spotlights, and we set up chairs for the audience. As the contest began, I remember thinking, "Wait, we're not ready to start!" But, the show must go on, and we did just that. I introduced the Master of Ceremonies, Mike Everard, who assumed the role he usually does for this event. I soon found myself running around trying to make sure that the next quartet was always ready to go. Somehow they were always ready and waiting, and the contest went smoothly. Because of some shuffling, the program for the event was obsolete by the time the contest started, but isn't this the norm for a quartet contest?

Another of my goals for the contest was to get some guests to enter the contest. I was so intent on this that I drafted the first people I could find,



and put them together. The quartet was called Thor and the Singing Trojans, with Gary Plaag, Thor Young, Frank Ierna, and Steve White. After the contest, I had to disqualify the quartet I had put together, because I had forgotten my own rules! Thor and Frank, our two guests from the Tampa area, sing in a district level quartet in Florida (although Frank switched from bass to bari for the contest). I ended up with a put quartet containing three members singing the same part they sing in their registered quartets! I gave them an honorable mention since they did such a great job, winning the contest with their score. Do any of our chapter historians know if this is the first time we've ever had an honorable mention in the put-together contest?



### The judges and the audience!



The evening was filled with many laughs and a few special moments, from pies in the face, to dancing, to warm-up drills, to a tribute to Wilbur. Our judging panel consisted of five members this year, our Artistic Director Geri Geis and our guest quartet , SAGE. At the conclusion of the contest, as is tradition, our guest quartet performed for the audience. With a quartet like SAGE, the laughs continued for another four songs!

The final results of the contest are as follows:

- HM Thor and the Singing Trojans (Plaag, Young, Ierna, S. White)
- 1 Loading Dock 4 (Garling, Hoseth, Roehm, Ahmadi)
- 2 George Sings Bass (Wulf, Yates, Caldwell, Azzam)
- 3 Limited Glass Edition Looking Desperate (Azzam, Day, J. Hall, B. Jones)

### The trophy-winners!



Thanks to everyone for making this such a special event. I want to thank our judges, Geri Geis and SAGE, Jack Pitzer for his help with organization and for serving as secretary for the judging panel, Mike Everard for serving as Master of Ceremonies, Jack McKendree for his help backstage, and TJ Jones for photography. Thanks to everyone who participated—let’s see the rest of you on stage next year! Finally, thanks to Wilbur Sparks, who started this wonderful tradition 30 years ago.

On a personal note, this has been a wonderful experience for me. The Put-Together Contest is my favorite Harmonizer event of the year, and it has been my pleasure to see it continue this year. Stay tuned, because my next goal is to revive the tag singing contest!



### Quartet Profile: Mercury

Mercury, a quartet formed in August of 2001, waited only a matter of weeks before encountering their first unusual performance. It was their first district since forming and they merrily went around to the various hospitality suites to display their new sound. They stopped at one motel and started singing for a bunch of guys standing on a balcony. After several songs (and some interesting faces from the impromptu audience) they realized they were singing for the dads in town for a kids soccer event. They clearly made a favorable impression since they were later flagged down by some of the audience to sing for some of the soccer moms.



Mercury’s members are: Bob Sutton (tenor); Nick Aiuto (lead); Mike Schwartz (bari); and Arthur Louis (Bass). Already they have some impressive additions to their resume, including singing the National Anthem before some 36,000 Orioles fans in Camden Yards.

Mercury qualified for the Fall MAD quartet contest by virtue of its third-place finish at Southern Division, 20 points behind the Southern Division champions, Inferno. Their Division score, however, left them several places out of what it would take to make the final round if they held the same placement in the District. With their goal being to make the District finals (top eight), Mercury went to work on their basic ensemble singing skills in an effort to make a big improvement in the months before October.

They elected to retain the same contest set with which they had made the finals in prelims back in March — the Alexandria Miami Beach 1995 set of “I’ll Be Seeing You” and “Sweet Georgia Brown”, and to work on basic synchronization using those two very familiar vehicles — even to develop-

ing hand signals to remind themselves to soften consonant attacks. Far less work went into the second round, believing that the goal was the finals, and the second round would just have to take care of itself if they were fortunate to get to sing in it.

Although the first-round goal was simply to make the finals, and the dream would have been to be better than eighth, the quartet astonished itself by finishing the first round in fourth place, behind only the eventual top three quartets. Singing in the first position in the second round, Mercury reprised its

Division set of “May I Never Love Again” and “I Used to Call Her ‘Baby’”. The ballad scored in the same range as both of the first-round songs, and the overall package was strong enough to be sixth in the second round and sixth in the overall contest.

For four guys singing together for only a year, none of whom had ever made the finals at a District contest, it was a tremendous weekend that will not be forgotten soon.

Clearly already attracting a following, the quartet has sung on the chapter shows for the Centreville Chapter, the Bull Run Chapter, and the Lewistown, PA Chapter. They even have a holiday gig from a woman who heard them singing on the way to her car and asked for their business card.

The quartet can be reached through: Mike Schwartz, (703) 923-9668, or by writing to Mike at: 7904 Narcissus Court, Springfield, VA 22152



## The Six Keys of Successful Show Production

by Ken Fess

Producing a show for the Harmonizers is an exciting, rewarding job that I wish everyone could experience at least once. It gives you the opportunity to express your creativity in the presentation of the repertoire, and to work with all the musical leadership of the chapter – a wonderfully creative bunch!

Having served as the Package Show Producer for the Harmonizers over a two and a half year period, producing over 80 shows during that time, I have learned a few critical lessons on successful production that I would like to share with you. These are critical tenants of production which, if followed, will usually prevent any major problems with a production.

### Understand the requirement.

This may seem obvious, but it is often overlooked. The Business Manager will have contracted with the customer and obtained some basic information including information about the theater, points of contact, customer requests for songs, time of performance, and any special considerations. You obviously need all this information to get started. One of the key items of information you need to consider is the physical dimensions of the stage and the technical support and equipment that is available, as it well might limit our ability to put on some of our more elaborate production numbers.

### Develop the script early.

The script is the foundation of the show and, if properly done, will be very helpful in managing the production from beginning to end. When developing the script you need to consider a whole host of factors, including:

Pace of the show – you don't want 3 or 4 uptunes followed by 3-4 ballads, it tires out or bores the audience. Generally I like to alter-

nate uptunes, ballads, and easy tunes, sprinkling in our comedy and specialty numbers.

Number of Sets – This is largely driven by costume changes (either for the chorus and/or for the Front Row) and the availability of quartets (to give us time to change costumes). Sets will typically consist of a strong opening song (uptune), followed by a ballad, followed by a comedy or specialty number (like Old Saint Louis), followed by a closer (strong ballad or uptune).

Availability of key performers – some of our songs require that certain chapter members be present. If they can't make the show then we can't do that song.

Participation by the customer – many of our shows are for other chapters and they will often open the show with a set. They also will often have quartets that will be available to sing between sets.

Time – Most of our shows are two hour shows. We usually break the show into two halves of 45 – 50 min each and have a 10 – 15 min intermission. Within each half we generally plan on two 20 min sets with a quartet doing a 10 set in between. Sometimes we produce “short” sets for effect (like doing the contest set).

### Walk through the show, step-by-step.

This is maybe the most critical step. After you have the script developed, “walk through it” in your mind and make sure that what you want to have happen, can happen. Think about how long it takes to set the stage, introduce the song, get any special props on stage that are needed, preposition any special technical equipment (like bubble machines for Kiss The Girl), get the Front Row on and off stage for their changes, and do all this without creating any *dreaded* “white space” in the processes. White Space is where



there is nothing happening on stage that commands the attention of the audience. We have all been in an audience when this happens and it is not a comfortable feeling. A good tight script will ensure that we don't make our audiences uncomfortable.

### **Coordinate – Coordinate – Coordinate.**

In many ways this is what the chorus most needs from you. Make sure that anyone *and everyone* that has any responsibility in the show knows what you expect of them and has a chance to tell you their concerns. A short list includes:

Musical and Artistic Directors

Associate Director – who plans your rehearsals

Technical Director – sometimes this person works for the customer

Front Row Captain

Logistics Manger for sets, transportation

Announcers

Special performers (bongo players, drum players, band members, etc.)

Package Show Manager (who does the sign ups and coordinates buses)

Chorus Manager

Music and Performance Vice President

And remember that, whenever anything changes (and it always does), you have to make sure that everyone affected by the change is notified.

### **Rehearse everything.**

The Golden Rule of productions is NEVER do anything in front of an audience that you have not rehearsed. This is especially important if you have introduced a new idea on how we do a number or if we are performing a song that we don't normally use in productions (like "A Place On The Risers"). Work with the performance Directors to ensure that they know what you want and then they can develop rehearsals that will support your needs.

### **Never make the audience feel uncomfortable.**



### **Manage time.**

Use all your planning skills to manage time on the day of the performance. In your mind walk through each preparation step and figure out in what order you need to get things done and how long each step will take. Develop a time schedule that allows for all preparation and then *stick to it!* You have to be something like a circus Ringmaster and "crack the whip" to get everything done on time. With a little people skills you can do this in a nice way and still get everything done.

Well, these are my suggestions for the sixmost important elements to producing a successful show. They have stood the test of time and many productions, so I leave them to all you nascent producers out there. Try producing a show with these guidelines and you'll definitely find it a very rewarding experience.



### What are you doing New Years Eve?

by Ross Johnson

Some of you may be wondering what to do this year for New Year's Eve. Why not try what we did last year? Last year, five Harmonizer couples (a full table for 10) spent the evening at the Holiday Inn, Eisenhower Metro Center, 2460 Eisenhower Ave. Alexandria.



We checked in at 3:00 PM and went to the floor where all the Harmonizers had a nest of rooms across the hall or next door to each other. Each room had a bottle of Champagne and Chocolate-Dip Strawberries. We took our Champagne and Strawberries to Ken and Kim Fess's room and played a musical game (not chairs), where you sing and guess the name of the song and what group recorded it. The women claimed to have won the game.

We broke at 7:00 to get dressed up and went to the Cocktail and Heavy Hors D'oeuvres Hour. Everything, including unlimited drinks, food room for two, and breakfast the next morning was covered in the package price of \$229 (same price this year). During the remainder of the evening we socialized, had an elegant dinner buffet, made noise with party favors, danced to the DJ 70s, 80s, 90s music, and enjoyed the count down and each others company.

This year our group is going to be larger, with maybe two or three tables of Harmonizers, and there will definitely be time for some barbershop singing. If you are interested call the sales manager Jennifer Hodges 703-960-3400 for a FAXable sign-up sheet. Have a harmonious holiday season.

### The Train to Montreal

by Bob Sutton, Music and Performance  
Vice President Elect

With the new program for 2003 almost set, our focus turns to preparation for Montreal in July. The steps to success there are almost complete, but one of the first is our annual chorus vocal color and timbre assessment, to assist the Directors and the Presentation team in riser placing of chorus members. It is an important early step in the new program.

Although the date has not been completely set in stone, we are seeking to stage this more comprehensively than has been done in the past years, with a more involved evaluation of individual voice colors by an expert in barbershop voicing. As you are aware, riser positioning by voice color can have an extraordinary effect on the cleanliness of our singing.

Of course, the time frame is necessarily short to plan this, but it needs to be done as soon as possible. Our target time, shortly to be finalized, is likely to be Friday evening and one of either Saturday all day or Sunday afternoon, January 17 through 19, site to be determined. If you are even **thinking** of competing in Montreal, whether or not you have even stepped on the risers with the chorus in the last ten years, I strongly encourage you to set the dates aside for now until the plans are finalized, and please try to avoid making conflicting plans in the interim.

I truly encourage those who have not been active, even in recent years, to consider getting on this "train" to Montreal. We're going to sing and perform as we have only aspired to do before — and we need your voices and your faces in 2003. Our first rehearsal of the new year is January 7th, and "there will always be a place on the risers for you".