

HISTORY OF BARBERSHOP

compiled by David Wright

Lesson 8: GUARDIANSHIP

Judging reform. The next decade would see a change of judging systems that would slow the evolution of the style, so that change in the this era would be far less profound than in the previous. At the same time, the barbershop sound continued to undergo refinement.

A disqualification at International. At the Los Angeles contest a quartet called the Potomachords was disqualified on Arrangement for the song "This Is All I Ask." The implied harmonic content of this song was not considered to be in the barbershop style. Such disqualifications were rare at the time, and the situation was not handled well. The announcement was made from the stage, following their performance: "The Potomachords have been disqualified for a flagrant violation of the barbershop style." Later Arrangement Category Specialist Sam Stahl apologized for this in the Harmonizer. I do not know of any other disqualification at an International Contest. The Executive Committee subsequently recommended to the C & J Committee that henceforth disqualifications should not be announced from stage, but rather, simply be noted on the score sheet. This became the practice, and remains in place today. (In 1993 the term "forfeiture" replaced "disqualification".)

Grundy writes "Each Time I Fall In Love". At one time, Lyle Pilcher, who was a good friend of S. K. Grundy's, had told the Sundowners to write to Grundy for music. This was at about the time Grundy was moving to California to work for Lawrence Welk, and he never answered. In 1967 at the Los Angeles Convention, Lyle encountered Grundy and jokingly reminded him that he had never responded to the Sundowners' request. Grundy apologized, and said he would write them a song. Before the contest week was over, Grundy had written the song "Each Time I Fall In Love" for the Sundowners. That week, he invited them for a tour of Lawrence Welk's studio. After introducing them to Welk, Grundy took them to his work place and gave them the new song he had written for them. This song and arrangement show the striking creativity of S. K. Grundy.

The Sundowners medaled six times (1966-1971). Baritone Greg Wright won the gold medal with the Chicago News in 1981. Lead Larry Wright became the lead of the 139th Street Quartet in the late 70s.

1968 Convention, Cincinnati. The Chorus winner was our first three time gold medalist, the Pekin, Illinois chorus. It was their last. They subsequently lost their director, Jim Moses, and soon this remarkable little chapter would wither and die.

Quartet winners were the Western Continentals, from Phoenix, Arizona. Their arrangement "Are You From Dixie", arranged by Lloyd Steinkamp, has become a classic. It incorporates a notable interpolation from Stephen Foster's "Old Folks At Home." Such interpolations are considered to be a most stylistic arranging device, when used appropriately.

HEP Schools. The July-August HEP Schools were now four in number. They featured a course on the Judging Categories and courses in Physics of Barbershop Sound (Jim Richards) and Quartet Singing (Fred King).

Stevens and Huff join the staff. In 1969 the International music staff acquired two valuable additions. One was Dave Stevens, who had directed the Berkeley Californians to the International Chorus Championship in 1957. He was a great arranger and did more than anyone else to develop our society's music publications program. The other addition was Mac Huff, who specialized in singing craft.

1969 Convention, St. Louis. The second St. Louis convention was to give us our first quartet double gold medalist. He was Mo Rector, bass of the new champs, the Mark IV, from San Antonio, Texas. In their rendition of the classic "I'd Give A Million Tomorrows", arranged by Rector, one hears a beautiful use of the bVI⁷ chord and bass voice leading on "tomorrows".

The chorus contest gave us our second three time chorus winners — the Louisville Thoroughbreds.

1970 Convention, Atlantic City. Quartet winners were the Oriole Four. Baritone was the popular and talented Fred King, arranger, director, educator, quartet man, and comedian. The quartet sang "Danny Boy", arranged by Renee Craig. The song would come under disfavor under the Arrangement Category, accused of insufficient harmonic variety. Under today's Music Category it has been revived.

Chorus winner was the chorus from Livingston, New Jersey, for the second time.

The first Harmony College. The first week long HEP school was held in the summer of 1970 at Dominican College in Racine, Wisconsin. It was headed by Bob Johnson and called "Harmony College." This has become a hallowed institution, conducted every summer since that time.

1971 Convention, New Orleans. The Quartet Champion was one of the most exciting quartets ever, the Gentlemen's Agreement. In 1971 the exciting blends and rhythms of this illustrious quartet provided a needed boost to our Society, which seemed to be in need of a shot in the arm. They were from Dearborn, Wayne, and Monroe, Michigan (PIO), and were coached by the famous Lyle Pilcher. Some of their show material approached the level of pizzazz that characterized the Suntones. Rehkop and Van Tassell had sung with the 1966 Champs, the Auto-Towners. They thus became the second and third "double gold" medalist quartet men (The first was Mo Rector). Van Tassell eventually dropped out of the quartet and was replaced by Greg Backwell, who had sung tenor in the famous Night Hawks. Greg was an accomplished arranger, who arranged completely by ear. He had difficulty writing notes on paper.

Chorus Champion was Dundalk, Maryland, for the second time. The previous time they had been directed by Bob Johnson. This time it was Freddie King.

Judging Category reforms. Many in the judging system were beginning to rethink certain aspects of the system that had been in place for twenty years. As coaches began to realize that balance is integral to tuning, there was confusion about the territory covered by the Harmony Accuracy and Balance and Blend Categories. The Song Arrangement Category had been claiming to be largely (although not completely) a non-performance category. It was endowed with a range of 100 points, but was routinely using only a small portion of it. There were widespread concerns that the barbershop style was not being adequately protected, diluted with songs some believed to be out of the mainstream of the style, like "Danny Boy" and "Brother Can You Spare A Dime," and untraditional harmonies like the major sixth and minor seventh chords. An overhaul in the system was about to transpire.

Arrangement Category revised. Immediately after the 1971 International Contest an overhauled Arrangement Category took effect. Reappraisal of this category had begun in 1967. The aim was to make the category the "guardian of the style", leaving to the other categories the task of evaluating how well the music is performed. Previously the category scored on the basis of 100 points like the other categories, and concerned itself with performance matters, like "mood". Under this revision the responsibilities of the Arrangement judge were:

- (1) To determine if the SONG is acceptable (lyrics melody, implied harmony, rhythmic structure, form).
- (2) To determine if the ARRANGEMENT is in the barbershop style (chords in the barbershop chord vocabulary & respecting the implied harmony of the song)
- (3) To award bonus points for outstanding material (song or arrangement) up to 20 points.
- (4) To impose penalty points for infractions of the style (song or arrangement).
- (5) To score the song by the difference between bonus points and penalty points.
- (6) To disqualify any song or arrangement which does not measure up to the barbershop standard. (modern, religious, patriotic, poor taste, unstylistic arrangement) by virtue of 20 or more penalty points.

These revisions were made under the leadership of then Arrangement Category Specialist Burt Szabo, who wrote the new

category description. Over the years Burt has been a prominent arranger and judge, and in recent years an advocate for a return to the stylistic regulations of the 1970's.

The First Arrangement Category Training School was held in August of 1970, which introduced rigorous program of training and testing, including harmonic dictation. This category revision remains essentially intact today, with only minor changes. One important side effect of the scoring change was that the relative weights of each of the other four categories (including Stage Presence) was increased from 1/5 to nearly 1/4 .

Interpretation replaces Voice Expression. Concurrent with the above change, the Interpretation Category was created to replace the Voice Expression Category and to assume the aspects of presentation previously adjudicated by Arrangement. Attacks and releases, formerly handled by Voice Expression, were shifted to the Balance and Blend Category.

1972 Convention, Atlanta. In Atlanta, the Golden Staters, from Arcadia, California (FWD), were the Quartet Champs. They were the first International Champs to be judged under the revised Arrangement and Interpretation Categories.

Chorus Champion was Phoenix. It was decided by the International Board at this convention that a certified judge can be de-certified, upon recommendation of the International C&J Committee. Appeal could be made within 60 days to the Board, whose decision is final.

1972 Sweet Adelines Champions, 4th Edition. Coached by Lyle Pilcher, this quartet, from Racine, Wisconsin, was viewed as one of the most progressive quartets of the 70s, and was certainly one of the most emulated. Their recorded songs were copied and sung by scores of other barbershoppers, male and female. They were a terrific show quartet, remembered for their rendition of "Miss Otis Regrets" in which tenor Connie Noble ended up lying on the floor, playing the role of the assassinated lover. Two of their repertoire songs, "Goody Goodbye" and "It Was Just One of Those Things" remain popular even today. The latter tune, by Cole Porter, was arranged by Joni Bescos.

1973 Convention, Portland. Chorus Champion that year was Cincinnati Western Hills, Ohio. The Quartet Champs were the Dealer's Choice, from Dallas, Texas.

Dealer's Choice. This was the first quartet since the forties to win International in their first attempt. This landmark quartet sang with technical perfection previously unheard — to a fault, some might say. Their coach was Don Clause, who came to be identified with the "technique-oriented" approach to barbershop singing. The Dealer's choice was the first in a long series of "Clause" International Championship quartets. In the sixties, Lyle Pilcher was the dominating coach, but this marked a temporary end to this era, and Clause became the super-coach of the day. The quartet's stirring version of "Goodbye Old Dixie, Goodbye" included the famous "die" swipe that elongated the swipe sung by the Buffalo Bills 32 years earlier.

Baritone Brian Beck is well known as an arranger, coach, and expert on vocal technique and vowel matching. He has a remarkable range. Brian would later become the fifth double gold medalist, singing lead with the Side Street Ramblers in 1983. Eventually Brian Beck dropped out and was replaced by Greg Lyne. The quartet retired in the late seventies, but was revived for a time in the late eighties with Brian Beck again as baritone and Greg Clancy (son of Jim Clancy, director of the Vocal Majority) singing tenor.

First International Sweet Adelines Chorus Competition. In 1973 Sweet Adelines had their first International Chorus Contest. Regional chorus contests had been taking place for several years before. The first winner was the Racine Chorus, from Racine, Wisconsin, under the direction of Jarmela Speta. Jarmela Speta was already a quartet double gold medalist, having won crowns with the Nota-Belles in 1955 and the Rarities in 1970. She has been a prominent judge and coach, often working as a team with Lyle Pilcher.

BABS is formed. Back in 1965 a harmony club had been formed in Crawley, England, by a man named Harry Danser who had heard a barbershop quartet singing at one of the world's fairs in the America. He also started a quartet called the Barbershop Four. Interest in barbershop harmony spread around the British Isles, so that by 1971 other clubs had formed. Late in 1973 five charter chapters formed the British Association of Barbershoppers (BABS). It now claims 1500 members in 48 chapters. In 1986, BABS and the Swedish society SNOBS were represented for the first time at our International Quartet

Contest.

Sound Category is created. At the mid-winter meeting of 1974 the write-up for a new judging category, Sound, was adopted. This category would replace the existing Harmony Accuracy and Balance and Blend Categories Test judging and the creation of training materials was to be completed by October, 1974, a school on the new category was to take place in 1975, and the system was to be ready to roll after the 1975 International. Don Clause was dynamic in getting this change instituted. He became the first Category Specialist for the new category. The term "expanded sound" began to be heard. In a 1975 Harmonizer article, Clause listed the basic factors to be judged as:

- (1) Accuracy of intonation;
- (2) Uniformity of word sounds in good quality;
- (3) Proper volume relationships; and
- (4) Precision in executing sound.

This resolved what was considered by many to be a long-standing ambiguity between the roles of the two former categories. However, this produced a controversial side effect: the weight of the Stage Presence Category now became nearly 1/3. Many asked: Is that too much for Stage Presence?

Melody changes. In the March-April, 1974 Harmonizer, Lloyd Steinkamp wrote an article explaining to contestants the Arrangement Category's position on melody alterations, which is that it shouldn't be changed - even if the melody note is a sixth or a major seventh. If too many of these occur, one should find another song. He illustrates with "Dear Old Girl". The altered version had been sung by the Nighthawks, though the article does not say this.

Show: First page of Lloyd's article on opaque projector, and sing "Dear Old Girl" examples.

The Arrangement Category became quite strict on the issue of melody alteration, a position that was largely abandoned by today's Music Category.

Musical Form. In the May-June, 1974 issue of the Harmonizer, Val Hicks discusses form in barbershop songs. He relates the importance of unity and contrast, exemplified by the typical AABA form, as in "Five Foot Two, Eyes Of Blue" (1925). This is another area where the Arrangement Category took a strict position, insisting that all songs have some standard form such as AABA or ABCA. Also discussed is the matter of form errors caused in performance, for example, when singers fail to sustain notes for their duration. This is one area where performance actually affected the Arrangement score.

1974 Convention, Kansas City. The Regents from Wilmington, Delaware; Westchester & Delco, Pennsylvania; and Cherry Hill, New Jersey were the Quartet Champs. They were coached by Don Clause. Notable was the lyrical quality of Joe Mazzone's lead voice. Their arrangement of "You Can Have Every Light On Broadway" was written by a budding arranger named Ed Waesche.

Chorus Championship went to the Louisville Thoroughbreds — now four time winners. One of their songs was a medley that included "Sweet Roses Of Morn".

Don Clause. He and Lyle Pilcher were the first, and perhaps greatest to this day, of the "super-coaches". Clause coached the Regents, the Dealers Choice, the Happiness Emporium, and the Bluegrass Student Union to international championships. He was the guiding force behind the creation of the Sound Category in 1975, and directed the Big Apple Chorus in the early 1980s.

1975 Convention, Indianapolis. Coached by Don Clause, the Quartet Champs were the Happiness Emporium, from St. Paul and Minneapolis. Their tenor was the famous Bob Dowma, an imposing figure because of his height. Dowma, who later became an Arrangement judge, arranged "My Lady Loves To Dance", which swept barbershoppers off their feet. The Happiness Emporium is still singing today, having twice changed baritones.

The Chorus Champions that year would set a new standard of excellence in barbershop choral singing. They were the Dallas Vocal Majority, who would go on to win nine more International Contests. The "Liar Medley", sung by the Vocal Majority and arranged by Renee Craig, became popular with both men's and women's choruses.

Dallas Vocal Majority. The name is obviously a play on President Richard M. Nixon's term "silent majority", by which he referred to his conservative supporters during the turbulent late sixties and early seventies. The Vocal Majority began as a non-Society singing group, and only later chartered as an SPEBSQSA chapter. It began in 1971 when about a dozen singers got together to form a singing organization whose foremost goal would be quality in singing and performance. Rigid adherence to musical excellence has been its trademark from the very beginning. Membership requirements are stringent; prospective members are carefully tested for voice quality and (even leads!) ability to harmonize. The quality of this organization has served as a prototype for other fledgling choruses who start with the goal of high quality singing.

Harmony College moves to Missouri. In 1975 the Society found a new location for Harmony College: Missouri Western College in St. Joseph Missouri. HC was held there every year except 2005 until 2014, when it moved to Belmont University in Nashville, Tennessee. This campus was to become the scene of fond memories for two generations of barbershoppers, who largely took over the campus for a week in August.

Jim Clancy. The Vocal Majority's charismatic director, Jim Clancy, is certainly a candidate for the greatest chorus director in the history of the Society, and one of the greatest motivators. A studio singer by profession, Jim is largely credited for the Vocal Majority's superior singing quality. In 2005 Clancy was inducted into the Society's Hall of Fame.

Joe Liles joins Bob Johnson's staff. In 1975 Joe Liles joined the International Staff. He had directed the San Antonio Chorus to fourth place in 1971 and 1972, and was a certified Arrangement judge.

1976 Convention, San Francisco. (This was my first convention, attended before I became a member of the Society. Those of us who were there will never forget the spectacle of 10,000 people being bussed back and forth from downtown San Francisco to the Cow Palace, sometimes in the rain.) The Quartet winners were the Innsiders, from Houston, Texas. Their rendition of "Redhead" was an updated version of one of the Confederates' old favorites. The arrangement was by Ed Waesche, with the downward key change supplied by Dennis Driscoll.

They were coached by Don Clause. The silver medalists, the Vagabonds, of Lansing Michigan, also put on a strong performance. The Vagabonds were coached by Lyle Pilcher, who was not present at this convention. Clause was on the judging panel, and some controversy arose when the Innsiders recognized Clause from stage after winning. The possible conflict of interest decision led the Board to institute the "60 day rule", which forbids a judge from coaching a quartet within 60 days of judging them at the International Contest, or within 30 days of a district contest. This rule remains intact today.

The Chorus Championship was taken by the exciting Phoenicians of Phoenix, Arizona. They were directed by Lou Laurel, who had directed the El Paso chapter to the International Championship in 1964. To this day, only he, Jim Miller, and Greg Lyne have attained this honor with two different choruses. Lou is influential in the Interpretation Category, and is a past Category Specialist. He also served as our Society's President in 1963, making him the only past president who has directed a chorus to the International Championship.

1976 Sweet Adelines Champions, High Society. This quartet was another very popular and highly influential Sweet Adelines Queens of Harmony. Lead singer Kim Hulbert would distinguish herself as the first Sweet Adelines triple gold medalist (Savvy, 1988; Acappella Gold, 2001). She is also a prominent coach, a judge, and an International Championship director (San Diego Chorus, 2002).

1977 Convention, Philadelphia. This was the first Philadelphia convention since the Suntones' big victory. It gave us a couple of firsts. Our first Canadian International Winner, the Dukes of Harmony, from Scarborough, Ontario, (who won again in 1980) were the Chorus Champions.

Quartet winners were the Most Happy Fellas, from Tacoma, Washington, the first Evergreen District champion. A memorable moment in the quartet finals was a voicing in the song "Don't Leave Me, Dear Old Mammy" on the word "mammy," ending in a Chinese seventh. The Most Happy Fellas continued to sing well into the 1980's. Perhaps they are most remembered for their (non-contest) Wizard Of Oz routine, featuring elaborate costumes of the four movie's four main characters (Dorothy and her three friends) and music from the movie, arranged by Lloyd Steinkamp.

1978 Convention, Cincinnati. Nearby Louisville made a clean sweep in Cincinnati. In a monumental confrontation between Louisville and Dallas, the Thoroughbreds took their fifth Chorus Championship, and a young quartet called the Bluegrass Student Union from Louisville won the Quartet Contest.

Bluegrass Student Union. The quartet was coached by Don Clause. They are a landmark quartet, taking the mantle of the most popular Society quartet from the Suntones and maintaining it through the 1980s. Their rendition of "I Found My Sweet heart Sally", arranged by Ed Waesche, gave a power ballad template to the next generation. The Bluegrass Student Union had a long career, mastering difficult material and showcasing the creative arranging of Waesche and that old genius, Walter Latzko. An example of Waesche's work is the popular "Jukebox Saturday Night" medley.

Ed Waesche. He was perhaps our most prolific and creative arranger, the source of such striking contest arrangements as "Three Girls Medley," "I Found My Sweetheart Sally," "Mardi Gras Medley," and the controversial "Jeannie With The Light Brown Hair." Waesche established his credentials in the seventies, became a leader in the eighties, and today is perhaps our finest and most respected arranger and musician. He was a master at skillfully voiced lines, as can be heard in his chart "Paper Doll", sung by the Bluegrass Student Union.

His leadership went beyond the judging system, where he served as Arrangement Category Specialist and International Contest and Judging Chairman in the early 80's, to a dynamic role as chairman of the Future II Committee, a long range planning committee organized in 1988. He then chaired of the World Harmony Council, and became the Society's President. Waesche served on the faculty of Harmony University for many years and continued to play an influential role in the Society until his death in 2006 at the age of 74.

1979 Convention, Minneapolis. (This was the second Minneapolis convention.) Quartet Champs were Grandmas Boy's, from North Shore and Arlington Heights, Illinois. Their baritone, Jay Giallombardo, is a distinguished arranger and coach. He is the composer of "I'll Sing A Song For Mary", a contest favorite. This quartet did not have a big sound, but did have lots of finesse, and had been a favorite of many for several years. Their contest performance was characterized by elaborate staging and costuming, especially in their now famous "toy soldiers" routine. The song "When the Toy Soldiers March on Parade" was composed for Grandma's Boys by Giallombardo.

Chorus Winner this year was the Dallas Vocal Majority, who sang the famous "Liar Medley," arranged by Renee Craig with some alterations by director Jim Clancy. It was their second gold medal.

1980 Convention, Salt Lake City. Scarborough, Ontario's Dukes of Harmony won their second Chorus Championship. And finally, after winning seven previous medals, the popular Boston Common won the Quartet Contest.

Boston Common. They had earned a medal every year since 1972, except for 1976, when they didn't compete. This quartet's sound reminded many old timers (like Glenn Howard) of the great early-Society quartets. Tenor Kent Martin sang a full voice tenor; bass Terry Clarke had incredible resonance; lead Rich Knapp and baritone Larry Tully both had full sounding voices. The quartet's sound was remarkably big. It was an unusual kind of sound that had not been heard for years. Bass Clark had conducted a running argument with the judging system over its emphasis on technique. The Boston Common's victory seemed to signal an end of the era of Don Clause's dominance. They rang the rafters with their stirring renditions of songs arranged by Lou Perry. Some of their songs were written by Bob Godfrey, brother of the famous Arthur Godfrey. Songs like "We Kinda Miss the Good Old Songs", "What Ever Happened to the Old Song", "That Old Quartet of Mine", and, in fact, nearly all the Boston Common's songs became popular quartet numbers, even until today.

Further influence of Lou Perry. Arranger Lou Perry was a special friend and mentor to the Boston Common. Another piece of work by the Perry-Godfrey combination brought tears to many eyes. It was "That Old Quartet Of Mine," which the Boston Common popularized. Perry, a jazz musician in the 1930's who discovered barbershop in the 1950's, was a highly respected barbershop philosopher and judge in the Arrangement Category. He was ever an advocate for tasteful simplicity in arranging, arguing that the arrangement should merely frame the composer's song.

Concluding remarks. The barbershop style was now in an era of stability, but not much change. The four-category system of judging was firmly in place, serving as an instrument to preserve the style as it had evolved in the 1970s.

