The New MexiChords Barbershop Chorus

The SERENADER

E-Newsletter

Celebrating 73 Years of Barbershop Harmony in Albuquerque
Chartered September 14, 1952 - Incorporated October 2, 1953

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ARE YOU PERFORMING?

by Brian Sellnow
from The Las Vegas Silver Statesmen Barbershop Chorus

There's an old saying that "practice makes perfect". Most of us have learned that is not the case; what really happens is that "practice makes permanent". Repeating something often enough establishes habits, good or bad, that don't require a lot of conscious thought to follow. That can be an advantage, in the case of good habits, or a disadvantage if you develop bad ones. So what are we practicing?

There are distinct stages when it comes to performing a piece of music for our audience. The first stage comes when we hand out the music for the first time and ask people to look at it. Learning notes and words is tedious. It's not musical. And it's not much fun, to be honest. Some people are educated and talented enough to look at a piece of music and say "I see how that goes". They can see the chord progressions and tricky spots and opportunities for artistic expression and they can sing through it right away. Most of us aren't that good. Learning the music takes time and effort. So have you developed the habit of learning the music on your own, and being ready to move to the next stage at our chapter meetings? Or do you "practice" waiting until Thursday night, then depend on your neighbor to know the notes and words, and expect the director to fix the parts you don't know? As I said, learning the notes and words is tedious, non-musical and not fun. We don't want our chapter meetings to be like that. Sadly, many chapters stay at this stage right up until performance time.

Step two is learning to sing the music. Not just following along with the learning track, but being responsible for your own contribution to the ensemble. Learning to sing means agreeing on the vowel sounds, tempo, unit sound, interpretation, everything that makes us a chorus rather than a collection of soloists. Following the director is paramount
at this point, and you can't follow the director if you're still looking at a sheet of paper. We may still need to fix a couple of things that weren't learned correctly, but at this stage we have to be off the spots. This can be enjoyable, like when a chord locks and rings for the first time, or when the director introduces the interpretation of a passage that
brings the song to life. The song may not sound too impressive at this point, but now we've established a goal that we can all work towards together. Many choruses get to this phase, and at showtime they sing and afterwards people make comments like "Well, that sounded okay." Well, mediocrity is the enemy of excellence. Once we've practiced singing the song as the director wants it done, we can move on to the next stage, learning to perform the song.

What's the difference between "singing" a song and "performing" a song? I would say that we sing for the director, but we perform for our audience. We all know good singing and bad singing when we hear it, but how many times have we heard something, thought "they sang that well" and then promptly forgotten about it? Singing is the mechanical side of it. Performance is where we bring artistry into the picture. We practice singing – we rehearse a performance. When we sing, we get the notes and words right, get soft or loud, fast or slow, whatever the director has decided. Now that we have that down, we can use the song to tell a story to our audience. We don't have to worry about what the words to the next line are, because we've practiced it enough that it's muscle memory, like tying your shoelaces. Performing a song can include choreography, but just "adding the moves" to a song does not turn a mediocre rendition into an artistic masterpiece. We can use our faces to express the story, instead of having a "deer in the headlights" look. Although singing a song really well is fun, using that song to bring a director's vision to life is truly rewarding.

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And that leads us to our final phase, rehearsing the performance. There are acts in Las Vegas which have been on stage for years. They've got their performances so ingrained that they could perform blindfolded. They're good enough and they've practiced enough that they make it look easy, even though they're doing things most of us aren't capable of. They aren't trying to think about what comes next, or hoping that the other performers remember their part. Instead, they use all their energy to connect with the audience. We don't have the luxury of constant shows. Typically, we perform a show once or twice, then move on to different material. But we can practice performing, every night. It takes time and hard work and dedication, but the payoff – that moment when we connect with our audience and take their energy and send it right back and then hear their applause – is worth every minute and every drop of sweat.

What do you want to practice?

Now That's Funny

There's a great probability that we've all heard and read a whole load of funny comments about barbershop over the years. Here's a sampling:

There's no such thing as being a little flat.

90% of the members of any given Barbershop chorus will consider themselves to be in the top 50% of that group's talent pool.

Wear white pants to all chorus rehearsals. No one will ever ask you to help with the risers.

Our society consists of two groups: the 80 guys in the top 20 quartets, and the 29,920 other guys that critique them.

The two best places to hide in a chapter are, in order, the nominating committee and the bass section.

Yes, Barbershoppers have contests. But the true soul of Barbershopping does not rest in how well you sing it, but rather, in how great it makes you feel while you're singing it.

No matter what happens at contest time, there is always one member of the chorus that knew it would.

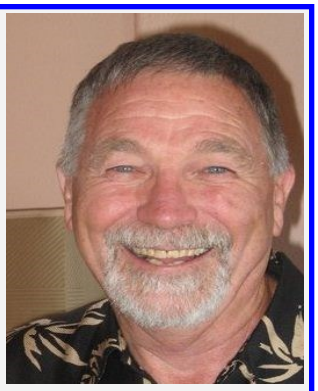
If you think you're good enough to sing in a quartet, or if you think you're not good enough to sing in a quartet, you're right.

You'll find that the best advice for going into a contest on the label of a mayonnaise jar - keep cool, but don't freeze.

There's nothing wrong with being seen by the chorus director while looking at your watch. Try to avoid his seeing you shaking it.

On the risers: when you feel terrific, tell your face.

Ask any Barbershopper how many times he flats and how many of the chorus repertoire songs he knows cold-turkey. To arrive at the truth, multiply the former by two and divide the latter by three.



FROM OUR DIRECTOR:

"BIFFLEISMS"

Hello, brothers and sisters in song! As always, I hope this finds you well.

Well, folks, we knocked it out of the park last month on our annual spring shows. Thanks to you all for working so hard to learn the music and for being endlessly willing to try new things! I told Farris Collins after the second show that I've never had a chorus more willing to try things and more able to retain things week to week. It's a joy, a pleasure, and a privilege to stand in front of you every week. Thanks to Fred for his suggestion of a guest quartet. They were rockstars! And a special thanks to Jerry, Ruth, and all of you helped to make the show - and the afterglow - such a success! I won't try to list the names cuz I'd leave someone out, but you and I know who they are.

Moving on, we'll shoot for a somewhat more relaxed atmosphere during the hazy, crazy, lazy days of summer. Tags and more tags, polecats, repertoire maintenance, looking back over some tunes from the past to see if we'd like to reinstate them, maybe some group woodshedding, and a continuing program of vocal production tips. I think we'll all enjoy this and hope that you'll attend as often as you can and bring a guest or three, too. Let's share the joy we find in making this special kind of a cappella music together. The people you turn on to this will remember you gratefully forever!

One other thing. I had fun at the afterglow and I hope you did, too. So, I'm delighted to learn that our newest, and youngest foursome has taken on the task of planning and executing a PICNIC in the mountains this summer. We'll have, I'm sure, some good picnicky kind of food, drinks, games, etc. And I KNOW we'll have SINGING! So watch for an announcement soon about time and place. Bring the whole family – and that neighbor/co-worker you've been trying to entice to a meeting. When h/she sees what a family we have, how much fun we have together, and how much joy this kind of singing engenders in the singer, s/he will surely (I know, I know) want to be a part of it!

So, here's to summer! Let the fun and music continue!

See you in the house this summer!

Thanks for reading. See you Tuesday, Champs.

Bill

Our weekly meetings are on Tuesdays, 6:30pm, at **St John's United Methodist Church, 2626 Arizona St NE, Albuquerque, NM 87110**

The church is located one block North of Menaul & one block East of San Pedro.

You can see an online location map here:

https://goo.gl/maps/9nGS8mcvRKQYFgBE8

The New MexiChords Lineup

DIRECTOR

Bill Biffle

BARITONE

Koury, Ruth
Randall, Ron
Strohl, Bill

BASS

Grady, Richard
Green, Fred
Lobaton, Jay
Maxwell, Nick
Porter, Doug
Quintana, Jerry
Ring, Dave
Taylor, John

TENORS

Baker, Charlene
Berardinelli, Bev
Ratcliff, Hal
Yates, Janet

LEAD

Andrews, Tina
Cardillo, Joe
Cole, Tom
Courtney, Bob
Green, Eric
Kahn, Meryl
Leverett, Juliette
Miracle, John
Nelson, Arlo
Parsons, Walt
Preston, Judy
Stavert, Xannie
Taylor, Lynn
Vertrees, Joe

I started singing barbershop when I lived in Monterey, California. It's a very cosmopolitan city, hosts the Institute of International Studies as well as the Defense Language Institute. A big international cultural event was planned, with a Count from Austria as the guest of honor, and our director wanted us to sing. The music he picked was translated from German, almost ten pages long. He decided we could hold the music while we sang, and we got it into decent shape.

Most of us showed up early to attend the other events. They were being held in three ballrooms, and the Count went from one to the other. Unfortunately, the culinary staff had decided to go on strike, and the electricians went on strike as well. Some of our guys knew how to do the sound and lights, so they volunteered to help. The rest of us filled in for the kitchen staff, while the basses took over bartending. It was an open bar, and of course they helped themselves, maybe a bit too much.

Then it was our turn to sing. We got on the risers and began the song as the Count tried to talk the striking staff into going back to work. But the electricians were mad at us so they sabotaged the overhead fans, making them turn at top speed. It got so windy that most of the director's sheet music blew away. He quickly whipped off his bolo tie and lashed the remaining pages to the stand, then yelled "Coda!" So we skipped over the sixth, seventh and eighth pages and ended up at the bottom of the ninth with the score tied, the basses loaded, the Count at three balls and two strikes and the fans going wild.

Do you love to sing? Tired of entertaining only yourself in your car or the shower? C'mon out and see how much fun it can be to sing with a group of others!

See us at:

www.NMChords.com

Our chorus and quartets love to sing for our audiences and to share our love of barbershop. You are invited to join with us to enjoy an evening of camaraderie and great barbershop harmony. Don't miss out on the fun. Come and see what it's all about!

What? Weekly Chapter Meeting & Rehearsal
When? Tuesdays, 6:30 p.m.
Where? St John's United Methodist Church, 2626 Arizona St NE, ABQ 87110

Here's a barbershop shout-out to our members with birthdays in June!

Tina Andrews 7 Jun

Jerry Quintana 21 Jun

Eric Green 29 Jun

Pre-Spring Show Rehearsal
5 May 2026

The New MexiChords Calendar

Upcoming Chorus Events

2026

17 Jun - The Neighborhood, 7pm, 900 Loma Colorado Blvd NE, Rio Rancho
23 Jun - National Anthem at Isotopes Ball Park, 6:30pm, 1601 Avenida Cesar Chavez SE
4 Jul - Naturalization Ceremony, 9am, Expo in the Fairgrounds, 300 San Pedro Dr NE
11 Dec - Naturalization Ceremony, 9am, Expo in the Fairgrounds, 300 San Pedro Dr NE
18 Dec - Holiday Show, 7pm, St John's Methodist Church, 2626 Arizona St, ABQ
19 Dec - Holiday Show, 2pm, St John's Methodist Church, 2626 Arizona St, ABQ

Stay up-to-date with us by visiting our "Shows & Events" page on the website at:

www.NMChords.com

We are a local chapter of the Barbershop Harmony Society (BHS) and a member of the Rocky Mountain District (RMD), which includes parts of the following States/Areas:
Wyoming
Colorado
Most of *Utah*
eastern *Idaho*
southern *Montana*
northern *New Mexico*
western portions of *South Dakota*, *Nebraska*, and *Kansas*

The Serenader is ***your*** newsletter and vehicle for sharing information, stories, and news about the chapter, chorus, quartets, and the people in them. To make it interesting and a fun read, I would encourage all of you to provide articles for publication, photos of quartets in action, our members, chorus on the risers….. Anything that you find interesting and would like to see in the newsletter to share with others. — The Editor

Your Chuckles for June

What do you call a cow with no legs? Ground beef.

How do you get Dragon milk? Find a cow with short legs.

Why is a computer so smart? Because it listens to its motherboard.

What is the biggest room in the world? Room for improvement.

What did the Buddhist say to the hot dog vendor? Make me One with Everything.

How do you know a snail is lying? When he says he isn't home.

Why did the dinosaur stand by the side of the road? It was waiting to evolve into a chicken.

How do you make an ice-skating rink safe from infectious diseases? You Steril-Ice it.

If we all started driving pink cars, America could become a pink carnation.

Until further notice, the days of the week are now called: Thisday, Thatday, Otherday, Someday, Yesterday, Today, and Nextday.

I'm reading a book about Anti-Gravity. It's impossible to put down.

Why did the kids cross the playground? To get to the other slide.

What did one flag say to the other flag? Nothing. It just waved.

How does the Moon cut his hair? Eclipse it.

How can NASA send astronauts to the sun safely? Go at night!

I gave all my dead batteries away today…… free of charge.

Our Mission:

The members of the Albuquerque Chapter of the Barbershop Harmony Society dedicate themselves to:

- **Continually seek the joy to be found in singing well in the barbershop style**
- **Promote the benefits of our hobby at every available opportunity**
- **Provide our community with high quality musical entertainment, and**
- **Foster continual musical growth and fellowship among the members**

To be added to our fan list, send your name and email address to subscribe@newmexichords.groupanizer.com
To be removed, send your email address to unsubscribe@newmexichords.groupanizer.com