



The New MexiChords Barbershop Chorus

The
SERENADER

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

E-Newsletter

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LEARNING A SONG

by Jay Giallombardo

While there are many ways to learn music, some methods are more effective than others. When it comes to part singing, how you go about learning an arrangement will certainly affect the quality of your performance.

In a cappella singing, barbershop specifically, tuning, that is the locking and ringing of chords, is a hallmark of the style. How you go about learning a piece will have a considerable impact on how well you stay in key and how well you tune chords.

There are three things that affect tuning: 1) Pitch 2) Volume/Balance 3) Color. Of course, learning pitches is actually the easy part. Fine tuning the pitch in a chord requires proper balance (volume relationships between parts) and lastly, color matching. In the past we called color matching, vowel matching. Vowel matching gets you in the “ballpark”, but true intonation in chord-singing comes from the matching of resonance and vocal color. It is possible to lock and ring chords while actually singing different vowels, if the resonance and color of such vowels are “complimentary”, that is, work together to help the ear “tune”.

The method I have developed and teach has 3 simple steps: 1) Pitches 2) Word-Sounds 3) Integration.

If you learn the pitches of your part on “Loo” or “Doo”, you will accomplish some very important things that you would not accomplish if you had just plunged ahead the old way, attempting to learn notes and words at the same time.

Our brain is actually a big tape recorder. If you learn pitches first on “Doo”, some very interesting things begin to happen. First, there is nothing else for the brain to focus on other than the pitches and pitch patterns. There are no words, no changes from vowel to vowel, no changes in color or resonance, no consonants. Because we use the same sound over and over “doo”, we can sort of forget about it and focus on the pitches and pitch patterns. It is all those “other things” which complicate the learning process and which invariably cause us to go out of tune in very short order if they are attempted in the early learning stages, or not applied with considerable skill.

If given a chance to focus on a single task, the brain will actually record the pitches and they will remain in memory in the subconscious. A few times through the song, listening to a part tape that has no words, just the pitch sung with “Doo” is the simplest and easiest way for the subconscious to “record” the pitches of the song. If there are a few tricky places, just spend a little more time listening and “doo”-ing those places.

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After a few times through on “doo”, the pitches are recorded in the subconscious. How do we know this? At first you have to trust, because it is difficult to accept the presence of things that we are not aware of. But that fact will soon be made clear enough. The next step is 2) word-sounds. To begin to master the flow of word sounds, we use a method called “silent audiation”. That is the process of “mouthing” the word sounds, the vowels, the consonants, the “m’s and n’s” as if you were performing the song. BUT....you make no singing sound. It is more than just saying the words silently, it is actually singing without making sound. You breathe, articulate consonants, form vowels shapes, keep the throat open, lift the palate, arch the tongue forward, place in the mask, i.e., all the things you would do when you sing, but you make no sound. So steps 1 and 2 are “doo”-ing pitches and “silent audiation”. You can do these steps, separately over and over, until you are ready to move to the last step. By doing so, you will laying excellent ground work for the final step...integration.

Before talking about integration, a word on “silent audiation” is in order. The purpose of this activity is actually to train the vocal muscles to memorize the flow and positions of the word sounds, while actually hearing the pitch in your head. What makes one song different from another is the combination of pitches and how the phonetics flow. The elements of the performance are always the same. The same 12 pitches are used, maybe in a different key; words are comprised of the same vowels and consonants. What is different is the order. That is what makes each song unique. So learning the order of events is 90% of the learning process. “Silent audiation” allows one to focus exclusively on the order of “events”, from shape to shape, so that the muscles learn the vocal movements and learn to anticipate these movements as the pitches and word-sounds flow along.

By doing this silently, it gives your brain a chance to associate the subconscious pitch with the muscle movement. That is very important, so I will say it again: By doing this silently, it gives your brain a chance to associate the subconscious pitch with the muscle movement.

Every vowel and its duration of sound is therefore associated with a pitch. If we hear it or can imagine it, the vocal mechanism will go through the process of preparing to sing. When we actually engage the mind and say, “Sing”, the shape, if practiced, will be there and the pitch, if previously reviewed (with doo), will associate itself with the shape (i.e the vowel).

Lanny Bansham, Olympic Sharp-Shooter, the first to score a perfect 400 (all bulls-eyes) and to win the Olympic gold medal was unable to go to the practice range to shoot 6 weeks before the Olympics. So to keep in shape, he practiced the motions of shooting “bulls-eyes” without firing a shot. He steadied himself, cleared his mind, aimed, squeezed the trigger, and imagined the perfect shot, every time. In that 6 week period he never even fired a rifle. At the Olympics, he just repeated what he had practiced “silently” before. Such is the nature of the mind, use of imagery, and training the muscle-memory.

At first, you can practice word-sound flow listening to the pitches from our learning CD, but eventually you will want to do “silent audiation” and attempt to hear the sounds of the pitches in your head. That’s the “audiation” part...hearing in your head. As you practice, you will discover it is not that difficult. You have to use your imagination and memory, but the “doo” activity will provide a very strong experience from which to draw. The integration part will actually be quite simple now. The pitches have been recorded in the subconscious. The muscle memory has been trained to shape and flow through the word sounds. As you now start to sing, you shouldn’t be surprised to find the notes come booming forth from your subconscious as they are associated with the space and shapes of the vowels that you have already practiced.

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I have watched many a singer struggle with poor learning habits; they often say “I may be slow, but this is the way I learn.” Too often they discover they learned many places incorrectly or sing many notes out of tune. The fact is that learning a song is not so much about learning notes and words, as it is giving the pitches a “place to be heard”. This method does just that.

It is my experience that singers using this method learn faster and more accurately. They maintain tonal center and sing more chords in tune. Please take advantage of our learning CDs that use computer-accurate tone generation on a “Doo Voice” sound that works in concert with this learning method. And, please let us know if this method has been helpful to you with a testimonial.

Harmony Singers....a special tip for you.

Spend as much time at first listening to the lead part as well as your own. It’s right there on your learning CD as well. Ultimately, your harmony part is tuned to the “anticipated” melody line. So, you need to know where the lead is going. (Of course, it helps if the lead actually “gets there”).

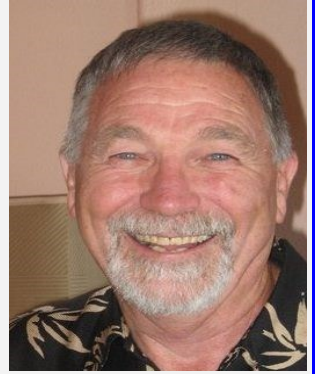
Don’t learn your part as melody from note to note. A harmony part sung “independently” from the melody will tend to sound out of tune. “Doo” the pitches so that you learn the note patterns. And practice “silent audiation” to get the muscle-memory activated. But then the integration process for you is one of listening to the melody as you sing your harmony part and allowing your ear to make the fine-tuning adjustments. On the Learning CD, when you are ready, flip the balance to the right speaker all the way, so that you can’t hear your part in the left speaker. Then listen and sing along with the other three and you’ll get some good experience in tuning.

Have Fun Singing...Have More Fun Singing in Tune!



FROM OUR DIRECTOR:

“BIFFLEISMS”



Hello, fellow harmonizers! As always, I hope this finds you well.

Due to popular demand, we've added another good song to the May shows, Lionel Bart's wonderful upbeat song of welcome, Consider Yourself, from Oliver, on Broadway in 1960 and in film in 1968. The theme, and title, of this year's show is "Hi, Neighbor" and this song will fit in perfectly. For the record, here are the songs on the show:

Hi, Neighbor
Consider Yourself
The Gang That Sang Heart of my Heart
Georgia On My Mind
Kentucky Babe
Chattanooga Choo Choo
Softly, as I Leave You
Bye, Neighbor

This is not the exact order, more thought needs to go into that, but they're all good songs that we'll love to sing, and our audience will love to hear.

We have booked a great guest quartet from Southern California, 2024 Far Western District Champs, Moving Parts, for the show. I'll have some more info about them in my April column.

All of the songs, including Bye Neighbor, are on Choir Genius (CG), (formerly known as Groupanizer). Go here: <https://newmexichords.groupanizer.com/user/login> (the link is also in the Que Pasa? every week). Enter your username and password. On the left side of the first page, click on My Music. The first things listed on the next page are the show songs – mostly with PDFs of the music and all with learning tracks. (If you need hardcopies of any of the songs, Ron will have those for you at each rehearsal.)

As I said in an email this week, it's time to get serious about the show – well, as serious as we ever get – and spend as much time with the music and LTs as you need to get really comfortable on the songs, attend every possible rehearsal, and bring your best you to the party!

It's still a good time to be on the lookout for potential guests. Invite people to see who we are and what magic we create together. Imagine the joy you can bring into their lives by inviting them to join us some Tuesday. Biggest favor you can do for them. Don't you wish you had started this hobby earlier? I know I do!

And fire up your ad sales engine, too. This is the single most important revenue source we have. Everyone should sell at least one ad. It's easy. All you gotta do is ask!

For the record, the show is the weekend of May 8 and 9. Mark your calendars now, and don't plan a wedding or vacation or some such on that weekend.

Thanks for reading. See you Tuesday, Champs.

Bill

The New MexiChords Proudly Presents



New MexiChords
Chorus



Moving Parts
Quartet

Friday May 8, 2026 7 PM

Saturday May 9, 2026 2 PM

**Consider advertising in
our show program.**

Email

advertise@groupanizer.newmexichords.com

Or call 505-363-6046

The New MexiChords Lineup

As of 1 March 2026

DIRECTOR

Bill Biffle

BARITONE

Koury, Ruth
Randall, Ron
Strohl, Bill
Vertrees, Joe

BASS

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

TENORS

Baker, Charlene
Berardinelli, Bev
Browning, Jo
Green, Debbie
Meyer, Cam
Ratcliff, Hal
Yates, Janet

LEAD

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



THE MUSIC THEORY SONG

C^{MAJ7}
D^{MIN7}
E^{MIN7}
F^{MAJ7}
C^{MAJ7}
G^{MIN7}
C⁷
F
E⁷

Oc - tave mov - ing to the me - di - ant. Ma - jor 6th step - ping down to do.

A^{MIN7}
F^{MIN6}
C
F^{#MIN7}
B⁷
E^{MAJ7}
F^{MIN7}
B^{b7}
E^{bMAJ7}
D^{MIN7}
G⁷

Ma - jor sec - onds be - ing sung by a choir, Chro - ma - tic al - ter - a - tions of the scale Di - a - ton - ic

C^{MAJ7}
D^{MIN7}
E^{MIN7}
F^{MAJ7}
C^{MAJ7}
G^{MIN7}
C⁷
F
E⁷

scale de - scend - ing scale to min - or third Ma - jor 6th ii V - 7 of IV

A^{MIN7}
F^{MIN6}
C
F^{#MIN7}
B⁷
E^{MIN7}
A⁷
D^{MIN7}
G⁷
C^{MAJ7}

Ma - jor sec - onds with their ears o - pen wide will hear a pret - ty tri - tone to - night. There's mi - nor

G^{MIN7}
C⁷
G^{MIN7}
C⁷
G^{MIN7}
C⁷
F^{MAJ9}

sev - enth in the bridge. There's al - so lots of mi - nor sec - onds in the bridge. And ev - ry

F^{MIN7}
B^{b7}
E^{bMAJ9}
A^{MIN7}
D⁷
D^{MIN7}/G
G⁷

mi - nor 6th is gon - na try to hear the su - per - ton - ic ov - er V of V A

C^{MAJ7}
D^{MIN7}
E^{MIN7}
F^{MAJ7}
C^{MAJ7}
G^{MIN7}
C⁷
F
E⁷

mo - tif used to build this sim - ple phrase Ma - jor 6th five walks down to one. Al -

A^{MIN7}
B^{b9}
C
F^{#MIN7}
G⁷
E^{MIN7}
E^{b9}
D^{MIN7}

though this phrase ris - es to a high lead - ing tone, Drop a per - fect fifth, Meet the

E^{MIN7}
E^{b9}
D^{MIN7}
E^{MIN7}
E^{b9}
D^{MIN7}
G⁷
C^{MAJ7}

Flint - stones, Sing a per - fect fourth, two one.

**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 March!

Jo Browning 13 Mar

**Some people think voice lessons are like taking your car to a
mechanic. You come with problems, they're fixed, and you're on
your way.**

**I think voice lessons are more like going to the gym with a trainer.
They show you the best way to use the equipment, but it's on you
to do the work!**

The New MexiChords Calendar

Upcoming Chorus Events

2026

8 May - Spring Show, 7pm, St John's Methodist Church, 2626 Arizona St, ABQ

9 May - Spring 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

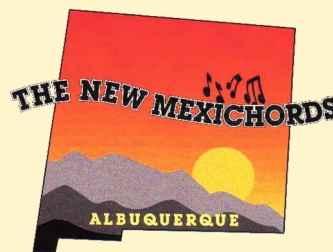
Colorado

Most of *Utah*

eastern *Idaho*

southern *Montana*

northern New
western por-
*Dakota, Ne-
Kansas*



*Mexico
tions of South
braska, and*

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 March

What do you call an illegally parked frog? Toad...

What is always a pessimist's blood type? B-negative.

What happened when the semicolon broke grammar laws? It was given two consecutive sentences.

What do dentists call their x-rays? Tooth pics!

Have you heard about the blind Cyclops brothers? Neither have EYE...

Always trust a glue salesman. They're very good at sticking to their word.

I took a picture of a field of wheat, but it turned out grainy...

Some guy just called me fat, stabbed me in the arm, and took all my money!! I HATE going to the doctor!!

Why don't spiders leave the house? They can do everything on the web.

Where do cows go on a first date? To the mooovies.

What do you call a lazy kangaroo? A pouch potato.

What sound does a chicken's phone make? Wing! Wing!

Why can't you sell shoes to a bear? They prefer to walk with bear feet.

What kind of landscape gives the best compliments? Plateaus, they're good at flattery.

Why don't trains ever choke? They chew chew...

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

How do you get dragon milk? From a cow with no legs...

I submitted 10 puns to a joke-writing competition to see if any of them made the finals. Sadly, no pun in 10 did.



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