



## BASICS OF BARBERSHOPPING EXPLAINED

### What is Barbershop?

The basics of barbershopping are explained in this article. Barbershop groups can be characterized by harmonies with four voice parts, those exclusively being Tenor, Lead (carrying the melody), Baritone and Bass. The first thing to know is that there are styles of music that include multiple voices. Those parts may include countertenor, tenor, baritone, and bass. Next, the terms soprano, mezzo-soprano, and contralto typically apply to the female voice. Men have been known to be capable of also singing those higher voice parts. Lastly, barbershop music is sung or performed a cappella or unaccompanied.

### Barbershop Techniques

Techniques in barbershop music include:

- Being on pitch or in the tonal center
- Different time signatures/key changes during a piece
- Syncopation
- Synchronization of word sounds
- Volume and/or tempo changes

Major chords, minor chords and especially those considered “barbershop chords”.

### Barbershop Origins

The origins of barbershop music and style of singing date back likely to as early as the mid to late 1800’s. The history of barbershop singing includes jazz, ragtime, and spiritual music. The biggest emphasis in barbershop style arrangements is placed on chords and octaves.

### Barbershop Popularity

As a style, barbershop music is not as popular as it has been in the past. That being said, there are still many people young and old who enjoy it. The barbershop style continues to be a form of music popularized by movies, TV shows, and popular figures like politicians and actors. Read on to find out more of the music theory and devices used in the a cappella singing of Barbershop music. Naturally, we also use a wide range of music theory and devices besides the techniques listed here.

### Chords

The basics of barbershopping should always include a discussion and explanation of chords. In the simplest of terms, barbershop chords are notes that create a harmonic effect. This happens because the singers blend and combine the frequencies of the notes sung. When specific notes are combined, they can create an amplification where listeners hear specific overtones. Not all musical instruments can create this effect, but the human voice can and does.

... Continued from previous page

## Major Chords

These are the chords that are the most common and most popular within the barbershop singing community. To sing a chord, the singers need a root, a third, and a fifth (which of course are only 3 notes, not 4). Usually the fourth singer doubles up and sings the root or the fifth note.

*Barbershop harmony is the most exact type of music because the three voices that accompany the lead in a Grade A quartet vary the tone level to give the right pitch on each tone. Believe it or not, those accompanying voices MUST vary the pitch of various tones depending upon their voice position in the chord. This may seem confusing to those who consider that a piano in perfect tune is an exact instrument. Actually four voices can produce much closer and more perfect harmony than four notes on a piano.*

~ M.E. Reagan, 1947

## Minor Chords

Like the major chord, the minor includes the same notes. The difference is in the third which is sung as a minor third or approximately a half step down.

## Barbershop Sevenths

This is the most common chord in Barbershop. It includes the three same notes from the major chord plus a fourth note, the seventh in a linear row of notes.

## Major Sevenths

This chord is characterized by a close harmony of notes with one semi note between them.

*The basics of barbershopping also include an introduction into the four parts or voices in the barbershop style of a cappella music: tenor, lead, baritone, and bass.*

## Tenors

The tenor part is the highest part in barbershop music. Male tenors spend much of their time singing in falsetto.

## Leads

A lead is a singer mostly responsible for singing the melody. In barbershop, other parts may interchange with the leads and take the melody for usually brief periods of time.

## Baritones

A baritone sings mostly between the bass line and the tenors. Baritones sing a wide range of high and low notes.

## Bass

A bass singer takes care of the low notes and provides the bass line and backbeat of the music.

## Pick Ups

An impromptu quartet where the singers don't necessarily know each other.

## Swipes

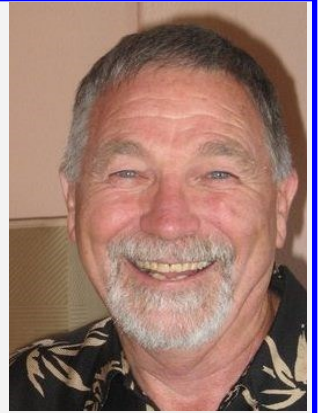
When one or more parts change pitch while the other parts hold their pitch.

## Snakes

When the lead holds the note while the other parts scoop or swipe to the next note and then slide to the next note again.

There are many more terms that you will hear and learn when you sing and hang out with barbershoppers. It's a wonderful world of harmonizing and "ringing chords" that can open your eyes (and ears) to a whole new way of listening to music.

## FROM OUR DIRECTOR: "BIFFLEISMS"



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

Well, summer is officially over and the holiday shows beckon. We're reprising all favorites from years past, and the level of learning for those who have sung these songs before allows us time to polish and perfect these holiday favorites. So, please look over all the songs – list below – and secure those spots that you may be a bit uncertain of. The better all the singers know the songs, the better – of course – the final product will be.

I'm very pleased that the wonderful Enchanted Mesa Show Chorus of Sweet Adelines, International, will join us on the show this year. They will add a special depth and sparkle to the productions. These ladies really know how to entertain – and they sing beautifully, too!

If your quartet wants to sing on these shows, let me know your intention and the song you'd like to sing as soon as possible. And you'll need to audition for a member of the music team by Tuesday, December 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Next, now is the time to invite your friends, neighbors, relatives, the clerk at the store, the cop on the beat, etc., to sing with us on the holiday shows. They still have time to learn the songs and, who knows, maybe they'll want to stick around for the new year. So, don't be shy. Share your joy of music-making with someone. You'll feel great about yourself for having done so.

For the record, here are the songs on the shows:

Oh, Come, All Ye Faithful (Clancy arrangement)

Oh Come, Oh Come, Emmanuel

Carol of the Bells

I'll Be Home For Christmas

White Christmas (New Mexico words)

We Wish You a Merry Christmas – two versions: four part and eight part

Deck The Halls

Silent Night

Jingle Bells

Maybe another singalong carol from YuleTide Favorites

As for upcoming events, check your calendar for:

Naturalization Ceremony                      Dec 5, 10 AM

Alegria performance                              Dec 6, 7 PM

Tech rehearsal for shows                        Dec 11, 6:30 PM

Show I    Dec 12, 7 PM

Show II    Dec 13, 2 PM (Afterglow to follow set Bill's)

The Neighborhood Performance                Dec 15, 7PM

Cottonwood Mall performance                  Dec 26, 2:30 PM

Please note: These are NOT call times, they are start times for the events. As always, consult Groupanizer Events Calendar or any issue of the Que Pasa for details of all performances.

Uh badee uh badee, uh badee, That's all, folks!

See you Tuesday, Champs.

Bill

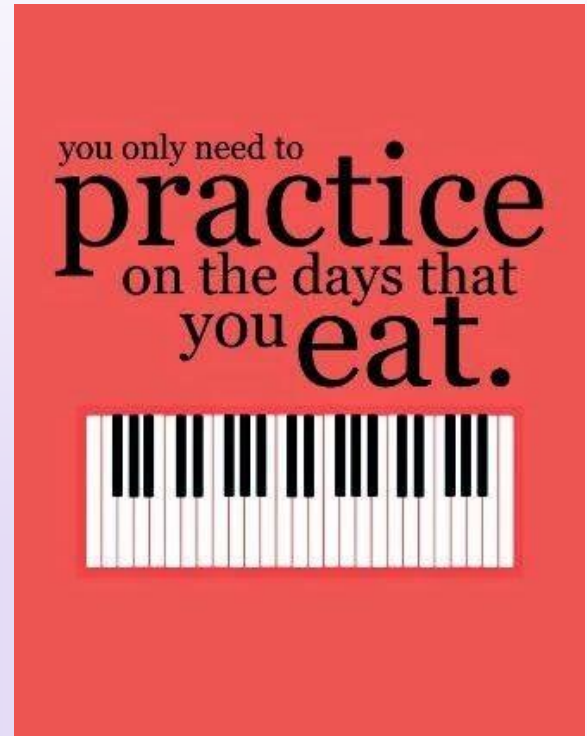
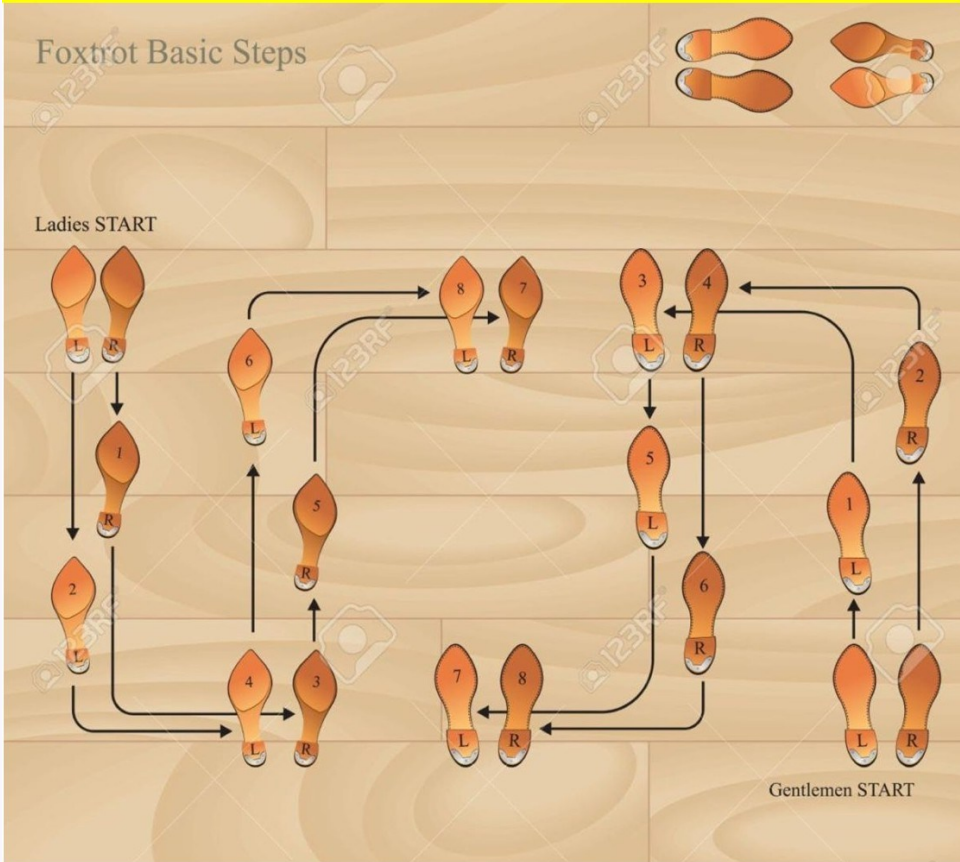


**Bill and his  
Trumpeting  
Trumpeters!!**



**Walt Parsons' granddaughter,  
Willa, in trumpet lessons with  
her instructor - Oct 2025**

To bring a little "Glitz & Glamor" into our performances, we're going to start adding choreography to all our shows. Please study the diagram below for our next concert and try to have the steps learned before next Tuesday's rehearsal. We know you can do it!!



this is what happens when we drain pumpkins of their spice, think twice before u order that latte



## ***How Does Your Chorus Sing All Those Songs without Using the Music***

I recently received this question from an old high school friend. My reply is rather lengthy, but that's how I roll these days.... lol...

Don: "I got to thinking....your group is mostly seniors. How many times do they forget their verses?"

My reply: Hi Don,

You might be surprised how many people ask similar questions or shy away from checking us out when they see that we don't hold our music when performing. When my wife joined our chorus last year, this was one of her concerns. She is a retired music teacher and part time "perfectionist" and spent hours learning the repertoire for an upcoming show of about 12 songs.

I've been singing bbshop for over 21 years and I can tell you that my experience is the same as everyone else who participates in this hobby. When we get a new song or one that we haven't sung in a few years, we have not only the sheet music, but "learning tracks" for each voice part (tenor, lead, baritone, bass). With our weekly rehearsals and by repetitively listening to the tracks and singing along, I can learn a new song in 1-2 weeks (even if that's not an everyday activity for me.... ha!).

I have an active repertoire of almost 200 songs in my old brain that if I can hear the first few words or line, along with the key, then I'm right back into singing the song. I don't really know how that works, but everyone who has been doing this for a few years or is on the younger side, seems to have the ability to store those words and tunes in our memory cells. My barbershop musical archives from both the Las Vegas chorus and now the Albuquerque chorus have a total of over 600 songs. I've sung all of them at some point over the past 20 years but would have to freshen up my memory to be able to sing many of them again....

Now that's not to say that MY singing ability includes singing a solo, which is a rare occurrence in the bbshop style. Our forte is a *cappella* close harmonies (without the benefit of using instrumental backup). Getting older certainly plays a part in the overall sound of the chorus, but we work hard to get better for as long as we can and continue to blend and harmonize our voices together.

We now have 40 members in the chorus (26 men and 14 women). Our oldest member is now 90 and our youngest is 23. There are presently two married couples in the chorus, one father/son pair, and one grandmother/granddaughter pair that sing in the chorus. I am half of one of the "married couples" and also the father/son pair. So, it can be a real family-generational hobby which is pretty cool.

Keep on Singing, Brother!

Fred Green, Editor

**The old adage of "Practice Makes Perfect" is not exactly true. Rather "Practice Makes Permanent" in the memory. It would be better to think "Perfect Practice Makes Perfect" (and perfect repetition) apropos of what you are trying to store in your short and long term memory. So practicing with wrong notes will result in a better memory of what you practiced, whether correct or not. ~ Joe Cardillo**

## The New MexiChords "Lineup" as of 1 October 2025

### DIRECTOR

Bill Biffle

### BARITONE

Hudson, Hal  
Koury, Ruth  
Randall, Ron  
Strohl, Bill

### BASS

Butler, Larry  
Grady, Richard  
Green, Fred  
Lobaton, Jay  
Maxwell, Nick  
Montgomery, Clint  
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  
Iwinski, Joe  
Lash, Mike  
Leverett, Juliette  
Miracle, John  
Nelson, Arlo  
Parsons, Walt  
Preston, Judy  
Stavert, Xannie  
Taylor, Lynn  
Turner, Mary  
Vertrees, Joe



### *More Contest Results!*

*We received the following report from Jay Lobaton, New MexiChords bass, after his return from the SWD convention and competition last weekend. BIG Congrats, Jay. Those are impressive results!!*

Hi everybody!

Just wanted to let you all know what happened this past Southwestern District (SWD) fall convention. My other chorus, *Prism*, won the SWD Overall and Mixed Chorus Championships, with a score of 84.0 average. This is the Town North Plano (Plano, Texas) Chapter's first ever district chorus championship since the Society's founding.

*Prism*, along with *Space City Sound* (Houston, Texas), will represent the SWD in the chorus contest at the International Convention in St. Louis, MO, next July 2026.

My quartet, *50 Proof*, a pick-up quartet composed of members of *Proof of Concept* and *Buck 50* quartets, placed 10th in the quartet contest. Not too shabby for a one-off quartet for the fun of it.

Anyway, I made sure to wear my New MexiChords name badge in SWD and represented Albuquerque with pride.

See you all soon!!

Jay

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](http://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

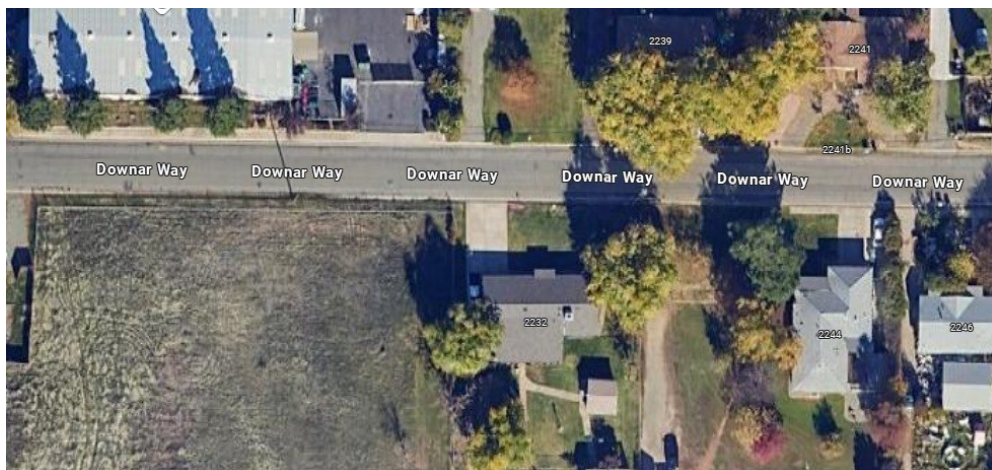
**When?** Tuesdays, 6:30 p.m.

**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 November!

|              |        |
|--------------|--------|
| Doug Porter  | 2 Nov  |
| Fred Green   | 8 Nov  |
| Hal Ratcliff | 19 Nov |



**When Barbershoppers Name Streets**

# The New MexiChords Calendar

## Upcoming Chorus Events

### 2025

- 5 Dec - Naturalization Ceremony, 10am, ABQ Convention Center, 401 2nd St NW
- 6 Dec - Alegria Performance, 7pm, 901 Cottonwood Cir, Bernalillo
- 11 Dec - Tech Rehearsal (chorus only), 6:30pm, SJMC, 2626 Arizona St NE
- 12 Dec - Holiday Show, 7pm, St John's Methodist Church, 2626 Arizona St NE
- 13 Dec - Holiday Show, 2pm, St John's Methodist Church, 2626 Arizona St NE
- 15 Dec - The Neighborhood Performance, 7pm, 900 Loma Colorado Blvd NE, Rio Rancho
- 26 Dec - Giving Machine Performance, 2:30pm, Cottonwood Mall, 10000 Coors Bypass NW

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

[www.NMChords.com](http://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*

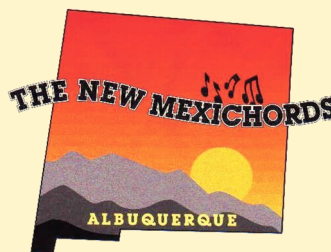
*Colorado*

*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 November

What sound does a sleeping T-Rex make? A dino-snore.

The past, the present, and the future walk into a bar ... it was tense.

What do you call a laughing motorcycle? A Yamahahaha.

Did you hear about the guy who got hit in the head with a can of soda? He was lucky it was a soft drink.

I put all my spare cash into an origami business. It folded.

Who was Socrates' worst student? Mediocrities. Who was his busiest student? The one with a lot on his Plato.

Acupuncture is a jab well done.

When she saw her first strands of gray, she thought she'd dye.

The thing I don't like about shopping centers ... When you see one, you've seen a mall.

Why do French people eat snails? Because they won't touch fast food.

Why do hospitals have rooms for admissions but not for denials?

They say a joke becomes a dad joke when it becomes apparent. We would say it's when it's all groan.

I read that by law you must turn on your headlights when it's raining in Sweden, but how am I supposed to know when it's raining in Sweden?



### **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](mailto:subscribe@newmexichords.groupanizer.com)  
To be removed, send your email address to [unsubscribe@newmexichords.groupanizer.com](mailto:unsubscribe@newmexichords.groupanizer.com)