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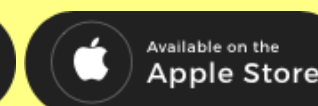
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We aspire to become one of the best musical organizations in the barbershop tradition. We embody and share the joy of quality singing, entertaining, performing and community service. We strive to increase the awareness and appreciation of our art form locally and worldwide. We achieve this through a commitment to musical growth, mutual support, fellowship and fun!

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SIXTH ANNUAL A CAPPELLA FESTIVAL – JOHN FOTIA

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for bringing joy to people around the world
with your *a cappella* performances!



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FROM THE PRESIDENT

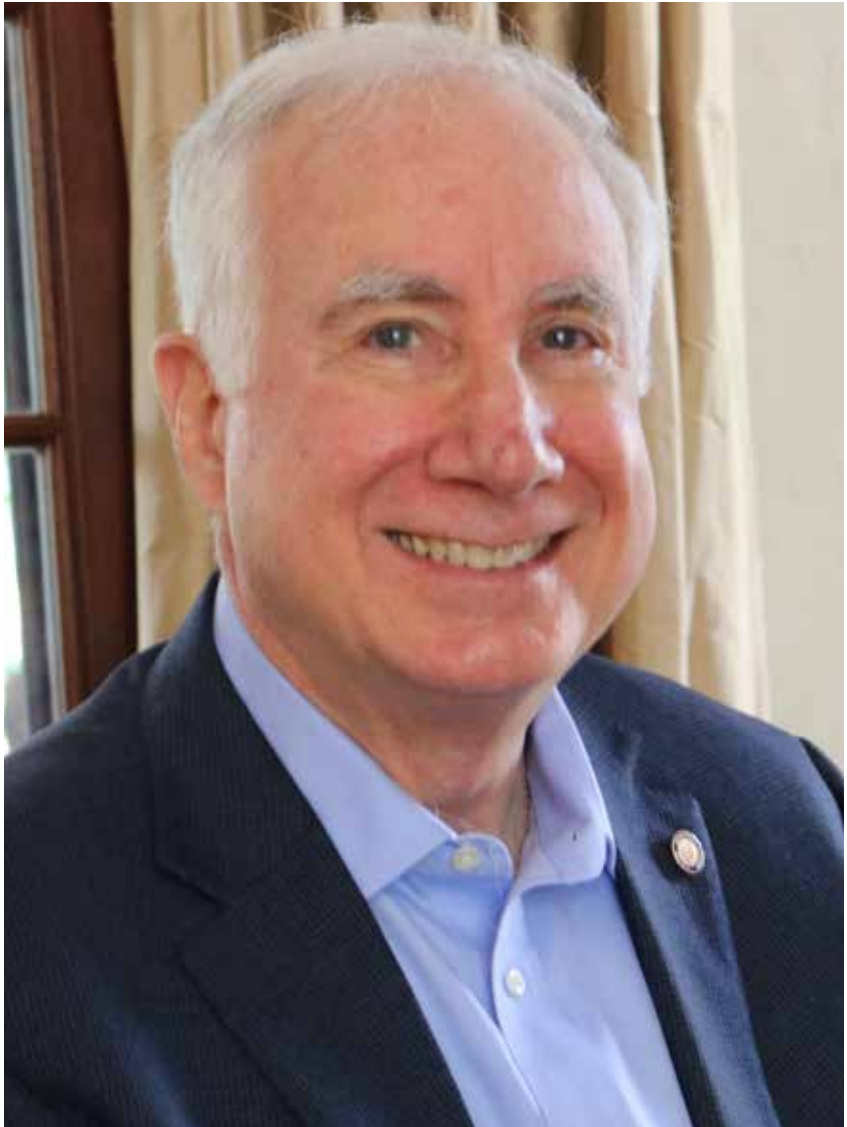
STEVE BANKER

WELCOME TO OUR SIXTH EDITION OF OVERTONES MAGAZINE! With every year of singing with The Westchester Chordsmen (this is my sixth), I'm still amazed at the breadth of our annual programming. Last year started with a show at the Emelin Theater, closely followed by our Singing Valentine program and the seventh running of Ready, Set, Sing (our six-week program of free singing lessons, welcoming men of all ages). Our Spring Show in White Plains, a tribute to New York, was followed by another session of Ready, Set, Sing, our sixth annual free Youth A Cappella Festival in Mamaroneck in November, our annual holiday sing-outs at senior and rehab facilities throughout Westchester, a December holiday show in Ossining and our annual breakfast performance at the Sugar Bowl in Darien. Last year we also returned to competition in the Barbershop Harmony Society, with our qualifying performance in Pennsylvania in May, and the finals in October. We're currently in the planning stages for a trip to sing in England in 2022.

We take seriously our obligation to share the joy of singing and community outreach. All the hard work by our music director and all of our members, starting with our weekly rehearsals, makes this possible, yet it's a labor of love. We happily welcome new members to share this joy, so please let us know if you're interested.

While we can't meet in person during the pandemic restrictions, we remain active with weekly virtual meetings and the production of viral content, including our Annual Holiday Show.

I want to express our appreciation to all of our many supporters: the advertisers in this and earlier editions of Over-



tones, the lucky recipients of Singing Valentines, those who have purchased tickets to our shows and, of course, our spouses who support all of our activities.

Yours in Harmony,
Steve Banker

A journey into Barbershop Harmony

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OCTOBER 2021

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FROM THE EDITOR

JOHN FOTIA

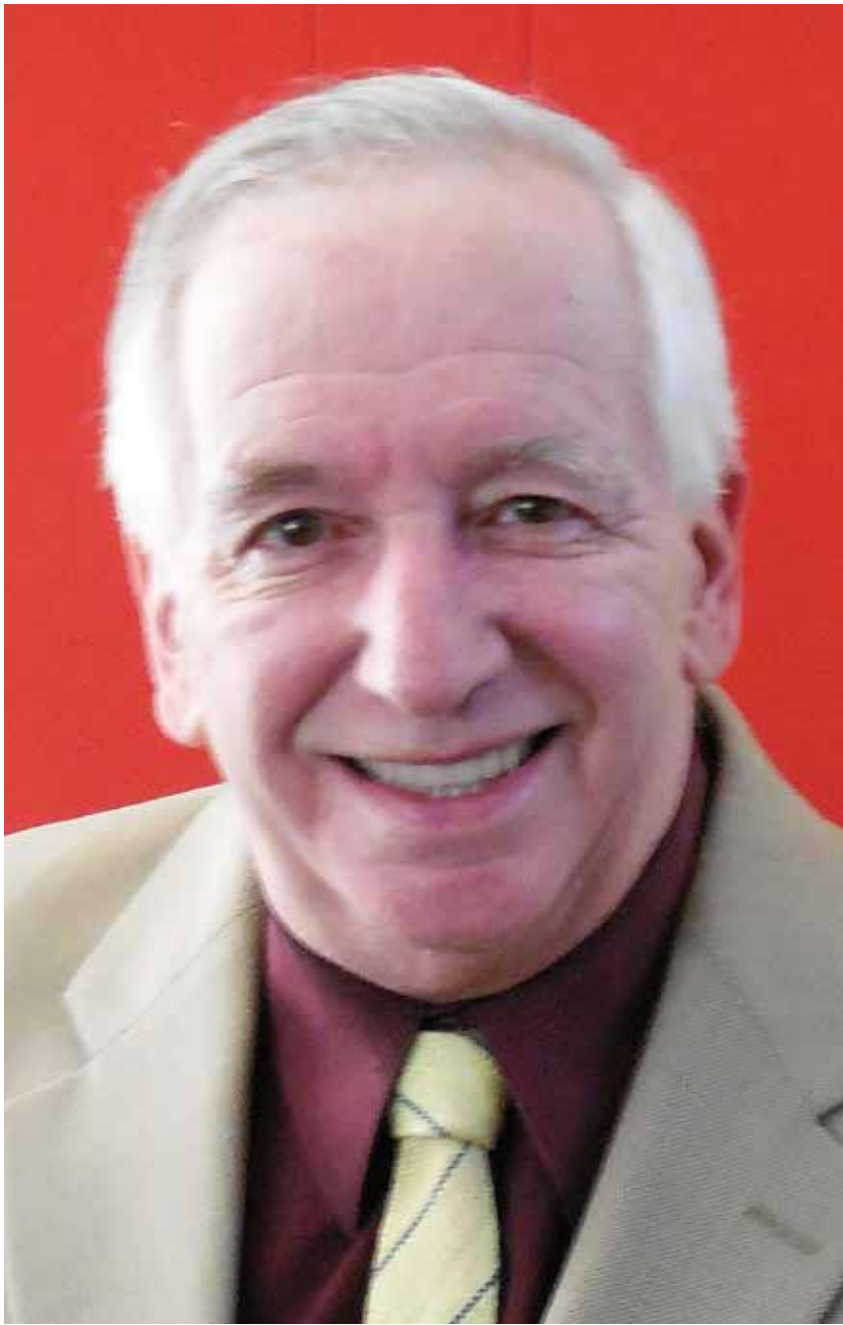
“The greatest respect an artist can give to music is to give it life.”

JOHN FOTIA – Pablo Casals said that. For sixty-seven remarkable years, the Westchester Chordsmen have been giving life to some really great music. From the halls of the White House to the walls of China. Along the avenues of Vatican City and through the winding roads of Plymouth, England, echoes of four-part harmony could be heard wherever the Chordsmen gathered.

In past issues of Overtones we focused on our shows, our participation in contests, our quartets, and our community outreach programs. The success of the a cappella youth festivals and Ready, Set, Sing programs inspires our members to continue working toward a special goal. It was one envisioned by the original founders of the Barbershop Harmony Society.

Keep the Whole World Singing. Actually, it was originally “Keep ‘America’ Singing,” but as the world grew smaller the net grew larger. Please check out this issue’s photo spread featuring the participants in our sixth annual Youth Festival. The idea of sponsoring such a festival had been kicked around for a long time. I was determined to see it happen during my second term as president and with the help of Keith Harris, Al Fennel, Stephen Bartell, Joel Willett, Dina Madden and the men of the chapter, it happened and continues to happen and grow each year.

For almost seven decades, the Westchester Chordsmen have shared their love for singing with the world. For seven decades they kept singing. The way this chapter is going they will be doing it for another seven. Several wise folks pointed out that singing brings people together. Couldn’t hurt.



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CLAIRVIEW

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– Constantinos Yiannoudes, Founder and Director, Kyrenia Opera

“Jeffrey Duban wears his profound knowledge of the ancient world and its languages less as erudition, more as immediate breathing presence of deeply rooted instinct and resonant cultural descent. Whether as translator of Sappho, Horace, and others, or as poet in his own right, his work lyrically and evocatively fulfills the urgent need of our souls for affirmation of whence we come.”
– Christopher Lyndon-Gee, Composer, Conductor, and Author, New York & Vilnius

“Rich and gracefully written, *The Lesbian Lyre* is by turns insightful, provocative, and grumpy...”
– Thomas L. Cooksey, Library Journal

a great deal to say; much of it is immensely valuable.”
– Sandra Kotta, Quillette

“Jeffrey Duban tries valiantly to revive the [classical] tradition in his ambitious, pugnacious, eccentric, sprawling new book *The Lesbian Lyre*.... Duban has

FROM THE MUSICAL DIRECTOR

KEITH HARRIS - THE WESTCHESTER CHORDSMEN: LIVING IN HARMONY



THE MEMBERS OF THE WESTCHESTER CHORDSMEN TAKE GREAT PRIDE IN REPRESENTING A HISTORY THAT SPANS OVER 65 YEARS OF MUSICAL EXCELLENCE. Staying active in the community and keeping your organization thriving is no small task. The members of the Chordsmen come from so many walks of life that we could quite literally build and govern a city. What brings us together is a love of harmony. Music is the great equalizer. It doesn't matter your financial situation or educational background, once the music starts we are all equal teammates working towards a very fulfilling and common goal. It has taken quite

literally hundreds of men over our 65 plus years to keep the Chordsmen active and singing... in harmony.

In recent years we've made a massive new commitment to our community through this publication, our Youth Harmony Festival, and our Ready, Set, Sing Program, designed to offer free singing lessons to men of all ages. I am especially proud of this program because men often struggle to find their place in music. We often lose singers when their voices change and many never find the courage to try singing again. What's the safest place for men to learn to sing? A room full of men.

Since we started this program we have had over 100 men come through our program and it's exciting to be helping Westchester County live... in harmony.

The Chordsmen share a clear vision of becoming the center of a cappella music in Westchester County. Music is good for the soul and singing is a very powerful and personal experience. But when we sing in harmony there is an "X" factor, a new element that cannot be explained but everyone can feel. I keep repeating myself but the Chordsmen are truly a living example that singing in harmony will help you live in harmony.

THE WESTCHESTER CHORDSMEN CHORUS 66TH ANNIVERSARY 2019



*We Salute the
WESTCHESTER CHORDSMEN
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**Congratulations to the
Westchester Chordsmen
on the sixth edition of
OVERTONES Magazine**

***"The toughest part goes
to the toughest guys!"***

**The Chordsmen
Baritones**

MEMBER PROFILE

JIM MICIK (AKA DR. HARMONY)

IN 1980, WHILE SHOPPING WITH HIS GIRLFRIEND IN THE NEW GALLERIA MALL IN WHITE PLAINS, JIM MICIK HEARD A BEAUTIFUL SOUND COMING FROM THE ATRIUM. He thought it was the Yale Glee Club that was in town, but to his surprise, he saw 80+ men of The Golden Chordsmen singing holiday songs. After the performance, MVP (Membership Vice President) John Schmucker asked the audience if anyone would be interested in joining the chorus. Jim's girlfriend knew that he sang in his church choir and she talked him into attending a meeting which was held in the organ room at SUNY Purchase.

Within a few months, Jim was on stage where he opened his first show playing a paperboy. The show was set in the 1920s and Jim was set on becoming immersed in a brand new hobby—Barbershop Singing. Jim has been Program VP twice and organized convention arrangements, special events, sing-outs and picnics. He also ran weekly programs that involved special nights, mystery bus rides, skits, tips on singing and guest quartets.

Jim was a front row guy for 25 years and competed in 50 contests. He has shared his unique acting talents in over one hundred shows! Among his most memorable roles are the subhuman assistant in "The Time Machine" and Frito Lay in "The Chord of the Rings." He is often called upon to serve as master of ceremonies for shows including the recent "Tour de Farce," and such classics as "A Salute to the USO: Like the Ones We Used to Know," where he got to play Bob Hope and chat with then Miss USO Lynelle Johnson.

Jim has sung in several quartets including The Detectives, The Zorons, Sterling Prospects and Microphonies. His quartets performed in shows, at weddings and benefits, and competed in Division Contests. Jim is known to



many as the "Rocket Man" for bringing model rocketry to our picnics. His most famous rocket was the "Schuman" which reached the lower troposphere.

Jim's best memories as a barbershopper are meeting the Boston Common on stage in "The Time Machine," singing at the NY Giants halftime show at the Meadowlands, and singing at Carnegie Hall. His most memorable moment was when his son, William (the youngest member of the Chordsmen) appeared at the end of the famous "Bird Package" as a baby chick at the District Contest in Ocean City in 1994.



MEMBER PROFILE

IRV FLAMER

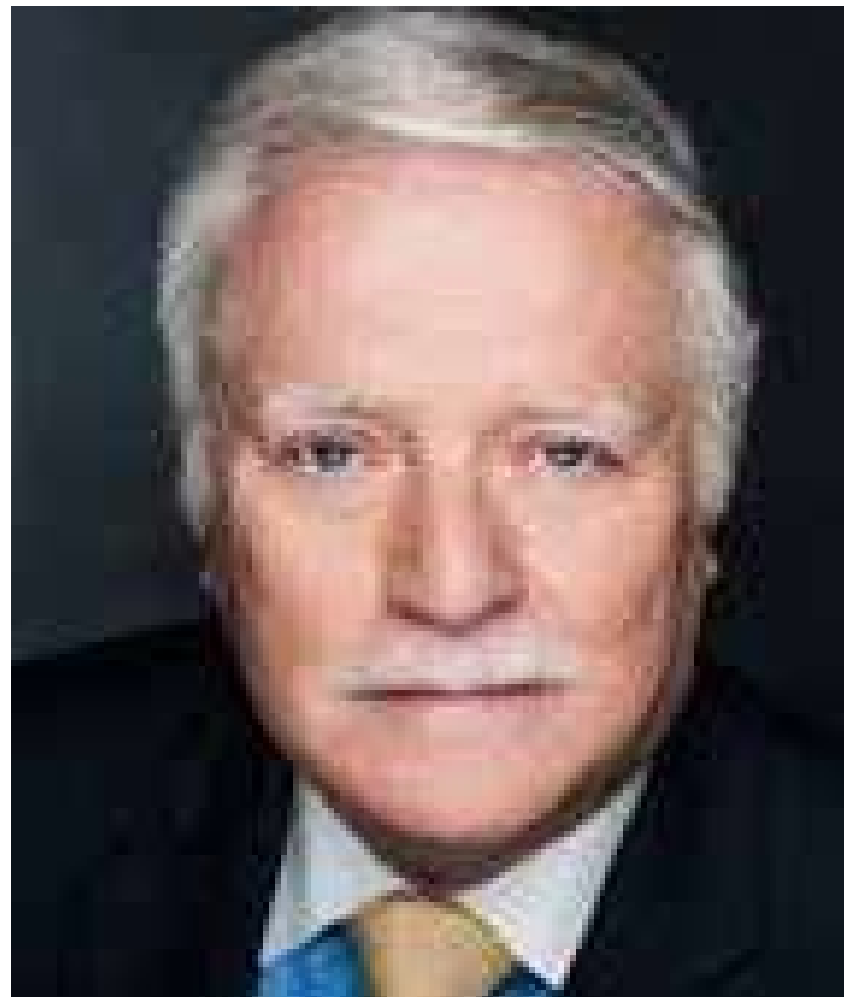
MEMORIES OF A LIFE WELL LIVED

IRV FLAMER—Wow! It's hard to believe it's been 50 years since beginning my involvement with The Golden Chordsmen, now known as The Westchester Chordsmen. I must admit that Barbershopping has probably saved my life and maintained my sanity. I must thank Mike Calhoun with whom I worked as a professional fundraiser at The United Way of Greater New York for my introduction to this wonderful "hobby."

I have been singing and performing all of my life. I grew up on the lower east side of Manhattan and went to parochial school (Yeshivah). I sang with the school choruses for the holidays and other events. I had the privilege of performing with the Yiddish Theatre on Second Avenue with the likes of the infamous Molly Picon, Menashe Skulnick, Fyvush Finkel and many more luminaries in their time. My time with Shlomo Carlebach, the well-known folk song performer, was truly memorable.

While in high school, I had the distinction of being a member of The All City High School Chorus under the direction of Peter J. Wilhousky. We sang at many venues but most notably at Carnegie Hall, the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade and the Saint Patrick's Day Parade. Awesome experiences!

While in the chorus, I teamed up with a fellow singer to perform at the Apollo Theater and The Brooklyn Fox Theater. During the summers, while washing dishes and waiting tables in the Catskill mountains, I spent my evenings singing at Brown's Hotel (Jerry Lewis' hotel) and other venues. What a Blast! I taught Ballroom dancing at The Arthur Mur-



ray Studios in the Bronx while going to Hunter City College in New York and graduated from Penn State University where I majored in Psychology and minored in theatre. I performed in dozens of plays at the infamous Schwab Auditorium and University Theatre.

Musical Theatre was and is my love and I have performed in legitimate and "illegitimate" shows including Of Thee

I Sing, Oklahoma, Carousel, Oliver, The Music Man, Camelot, Lil Abner and many more. My first show with The Golden Chordsmen as Sonny Perkins (and his Pals) with Ursula LaMotte as my leading lady is truly a highlight of my Chordsmen experience. I have had the good fortune to work with outstanding talent among the Chordsmen—John Fotia, Jim Micik, Howard Sponseller and



Are you man enough to sing with us?

The Westchester Chordsmen Chorus invites men who like to sing to audition for us! We meet every Monday evening from 7-10 PM. You may bring a prepared audition song, but it is not required. Music will be provided. Prior vocal experience or music reading ability may be helpful but not essential for chorus membership. An experienced mentor will be assigned to each new member.

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many more. Our productions have been outstanding and truly rewarding.

I was privileged to follow in the footsteps of the late, great Walter Peek, who emceed all of our shows and performances. This is a role and an honor I have not taken lightly. Introducing the chorus for our performance at Carnegie Hall was beyond belief.

Friends and companionship is what the chorus is all about. My quartet involvement is probably one of the major highlights of my experiences. My first registered quartet was The Sol G. Ferndock Memorial Quartet with Freddy Steinkamp, Al Garfield, and Nick Hodnett. We sang in all of the chapter shows. Some of our most memorable gigs included performances at Lincoln Center, a week at the 92nd Street Y in New York City and at the Concord Hotel in the Catskill Mountains (The Borscht Belt). It was a very sad time. Freddy died at a performance and the awesomely talented Steve Delehanty stepped in to complete a most heart rendering performance. We were blessed to have Brian Horwath (of "Four Under Par" fame) join us as our baritone for our newly named quartet Our Favorite Pastime. We competed well and performed for all the chorus shows including as the featured quartet during the chorus' trips to England, Italy and China.

Yes. The Chordsmen have provided a lifeline of happiness. I miss the many dear friends who are no longer with us: Angie Sticca, Al Garfield, Walter Peek, John Gouveia, Jerry Blum, Jimmy Schram to name a few. I feel truly blessed to have had the tutelage and direction of Bob Craig, Dave Schuman, Renee Craig,



The Sol G. Ferndock Quartet. (From left to right) Fred Steinkamp, Nick Hodnett, Irv Flamer, and Al Garfield surround Song Writing Hall of Famer, Sammy Cahn.



Sharon and Irv join Connie and Steve Delehanty at the 2019 International convention.

Al Fennel, and now Keith Harris. What a wealth of talent!

I have been able to integrate my family, including my wife and children, into my hobby. Their support and involvement have been extremely meaningful.

I look back on many, many memories. And now I look forward, God willing, to making many more with the new Chordsmen on the risers. Yes, half a century of harmony, great fellowship, and memories. Memories of a life well lived.

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MEMBER PROFILE

DAN RENDICH

DAN RENDICH'S BARBERSHOP ROOTS

GO DEEP. Back in the 1950s, his father, Mike, sang baritone with the Golden Chordsmen, and his mother sang lead with the Sweet Adelines. He grew up listening to his father's old records and began singing and harmonizing as a youngster. As the chapter's historian for many years, Dan shared a treasure chest of photographs, clippings and programs that his father had saved. This was extremely useful when it came time to chronicle the early days of the chapter. When he isn't ringing chords, Dan spends time with his family in Sleepy Hollow and teaches middle-school social studies at Edgemont.

My mom and dad never missed a Chordsmen show, and they started bringing me along with them in the 80s. We'd always go to Sam's of Gedney Way beforehand, where many of the Chordsmen and their families would eat. I thought it was so cool to hear tables of guys just break out into song! I looked forward to the annual show each year.

I was always a fan of the chorus, but never thought I'd actually join. Then about 10 years ago, on a cold winter's night, I heard through my living room window the unmistakable sound of a barbershop chorus. I went across the street to investigate, and I happened upon the Westchester Chordsmen's annual holiday party. I talked with a few of the members, took a business card, and about a month later I worked up the courage to attend an open rehearsal-I laugh now at how nervous I was. The guys greeted me with open arms and warm smiles. I went in hoping to be a baritone like my dad, but I'm glad



now that they called me a tenor! I stood on the risers next to Steve Delehanty that first night and I never looked back.

A few weeks after that first visit, I formed a quartet called "29 Seconds" with three talented guys who are now among my best friends. Rob Scholl (lead), Scott Kruse (Bari), Erik Contzius (bass), and I have competed and performed steadily ever since. My home is filled with barbershop memorabilia, and my car is adorned with barber-shop bumper stickers, a BHS license frame, and a vanity plate. I even have a "TENOR" tattoo, and I'm not done yet!



29 Seconds (Dan Rendich, Rob Scholl, Erik Contzius and Scott Kruse).

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Because you are not singing as a soloist but in a quartet or chorus and there is no accompaniment, listening to the other parts is critical. If you love a cappella music, barbershop might be for you. I have spent most of my singing career in musical theater and choral singing. What's the same? Different?

Choral Singing Barbershop is choral singing with a larger emphasis on production values – not unlike swing choir – in addition to great a cappella singing. One of the biggest differences between Barbershop and choral singing is that the Barbershopper is a visual performer as well as a singer. More attention is paid to facial expressions, movement (dance), and telling a story.

Musical Theater- Because of the nature of the harmonies in Barbershop, singing the songs of Stephen Sondheim has been a good training ground. Sondheim writes songs that are not always traditionally melodic, and often contrast with other singers or the accompaniment. Learning to hear and sing your part despite all that is going on around you helps you stay true when you are singing barbershop.

Jazz –Rhythm is the driving force in all styles of music and barbershop enjoys the influence of jazz; push beats,



off beat patterns, the options are endless! If it is fun to sing, it'll likely work in barbershop.

Singing as a soloist –Many wonder how their vocal training will assist in performing barbershop music. The truth is that the free voice creates the

most blended sound. Which means all voices and personality types are welcome. What is required is being a team player. A cappella music will challenge your ears.

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SIXTH ANNUAL YOUTH
A CAPPELLA FESTIVAL



In Treble Mamaroneck High School – All photos courtesy of Connie Delehanty.



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A packed house.



Midtown entertains the group.



THE WESTCHESTER CHORDSMEN: A HISTORY

JOHN FOTIA

THE FOLLOWING EXCERPT IS FROM THE CHAPTER CALLED 'THE EIGHTIES: ON THE MOVE' IN THE WESTCHESTER CHORDSMEN: A HISTORY. Copies of the book may be obtained at the author's website, johnfotia.org. A portion of the proceeds goes to the Westchester Chordsmen.

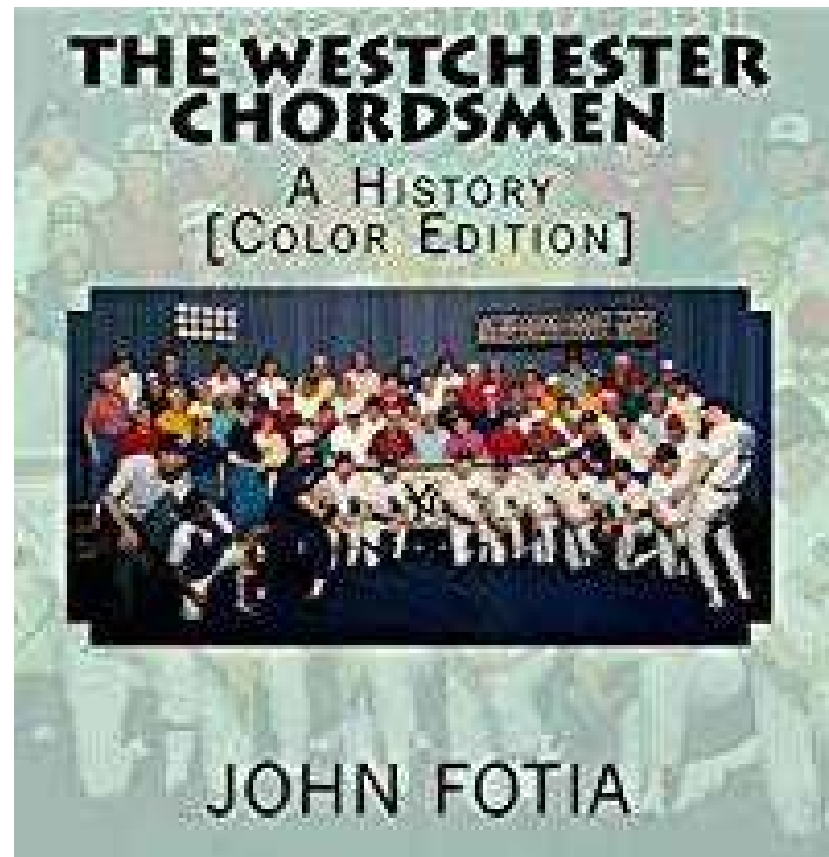
During the 1980s, music videos became a thing. Television, unlike radio, was able to explore ways that images could enhance the entertainment value of recording artists' current hits. Michael Jackson revolutionized pop culture with Thriller, Billie Jean, and Beat It, prompting Fred Astaire to call Jackson the best dancer of all time.

During the decade, choruses and quartets were also playing with more intricate presentation routines. One of the most distinguishing factors between barbershop choruses and other choral groups has always been the importance placed on visual presentation. Applying appropriate importance to both the musical and visual aspects of the song, barbershop choruses seek to provide the audience with an emotionally satisfying and entertaining experience.

Westchester created some of the best visual packages in its history during the decade including "The Baseball Package" and the "Dummy Package." More about them later. By the way, a "package" is the term used to designate a two-song combination used in competition. Usually, but not always, the package will include an up-tune and a ballad.

The 1980s began with Mike Calhoun as president. Roger Payne followed in 1981 and Walter Peek took over in 1982. Al Garfield (1983), Frank Hendricks (1984), Bill Kruse (1985), Phil Richards (1986), Karl Heidbrink (1987), Steve Delehanty (1988) and Tony Romeo (1989) served during the remaining years of the decade.

The 1980 annual spring show was



called The Roaring Twenties and featured, appropriately enough, The Roaring 20s, (Don Gray, Gerry Kelly, Mike Connelly, and Jim Gentil), the fourth place international medalists. The quartet hailed from Cincinnati, Ohio and the members sang with the Southern Gateway Chorus, international medalists and the 1973 International Champion Chorus. Roger Payne was the show chairman and John Finkbiner was the stage manager. Sound amplification was in the hands of Sound Applications which handled the job for many Chordsmen shows throughout the years. Show time was listed as 8:12 pm. That's right, 8:12.

Starting the shows at odd times became an idiosyncrasy of the chapter. It may have been initiated because 8:00 pm shows always had to hold for the audiences and it was thought that by posting the odd starting time the shows would actually start at the designated time—audiences would take the hint and show up on time. It didn't work. We still had to wait for late comers.

Four Under Par (Roger Payne, Joe Hunter, Brian Horwath, and Frank Hendricks), The Racquet Squad, Cap'n Billy's Whizbang, The Rumble Seat Ramblers (Doug Chapman, Don Dennerlein, Pete

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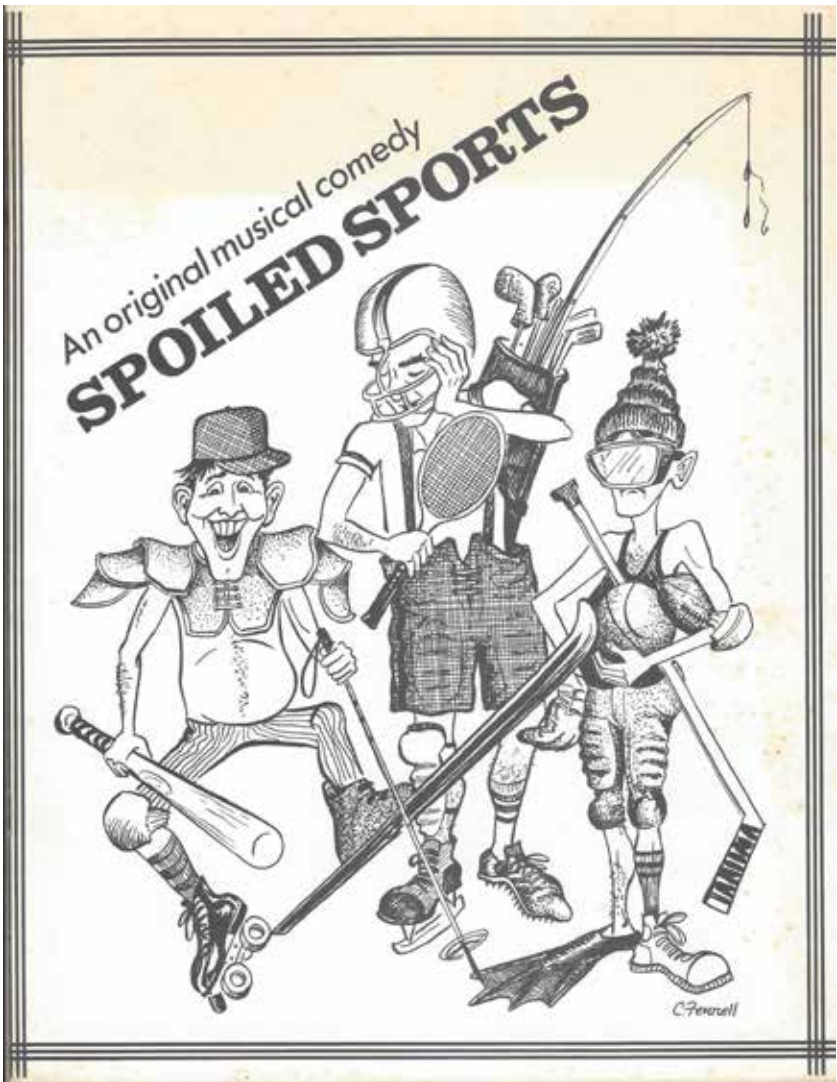
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Quartet, Small Chorus or Full Chorus



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24 A HISTORY »

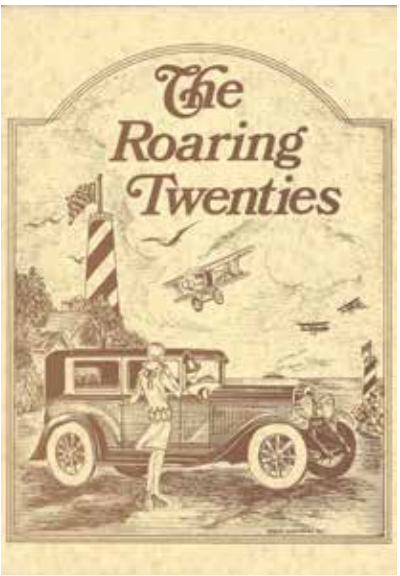
Turner, and Dave Reynolds), and Sunburst Express (Bob Kelly, Ed Tyler, Cliff Steinkamp, and Dan Rowland) also performed. Musical directors were Dave Schuman, Pete Turner, and Dan Rowland.

It was a time when the chapter continued to develop original material for competition with the understanding that its greatest strength was in putting together original comedy packages written and arranged by Steve Delehanty. The scores and the numerous standing ovations tended to substantiate that

understanding.

The Boston Common took home the gold medals in the 1980 international quartet competition held in Salt Lake City. The Dukes of Harmony from Scarborough, Ontario, won the chorus contest. In Baltimore, Vaudeville won the Mid-Atlantic quartet contest, and the district chorus champions were The Pine Barons from Cherry Hill, N.J. The following year in Detroit, it was Chicago News at the international quartet contest, while the Thoroughbreds from Louisville took home the first place honors in the chorus contest.

The district contest that year was held



in Washington, D.C., and The Alexandria Harmonizers won the championship title. The Harmonizers, under the direction of Scott Werner, had earned their first international medal in 1978 (they came in fourth). The Golden Chordsmen came in sixth at district. Given the quality of the competition, it was considered a respectable showing.

The chorus scores were high, with highest scores in the stage presence and arrangement categories. The singing scores were good but continued to be lower than expected. The district champion quartet was The New Yorkers, with Al Fennell singing bass. Four Under Par placed third. The chapter took great pride in its representation at the convention that year in both the chorus and quartet contests. There were 90 men on stage for that competition.

In 1981, the show was called Spoiled Sports, and was presented on March 20 and 21 at the State University of New York at Purchase. The show was scheduled to begin promptly at 8:13 pm. Jim Callery was the show chairman with able assistance from Al Garfield. Stage directors were Steve Delehanty and Fred Steinkamp. The cast included Bill Rowell as Senator Fernbottom, Hank

Pivarnik as the security director, Karen O'Connell as the secretary, and Daisy Ramirez as the lady wrestler.

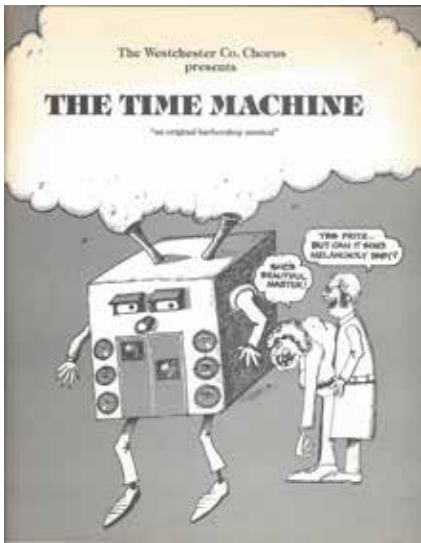
Quartets included Four Under Par, The New Yorkers, The Racquet Squad, the note-wits, The Sol G. Ferndock Memorial Quartet, The Rumble Seat Ramblers and a pick up quartet called The Lords of Baseball (Dave O'Dwyer, Bob Van Wart, Ray Maulsby, and Al Ouzoonian). Musical directors were Dave Schuman, Dan Rowland, and Pete Turner.

The Port Chester High School Stage Band, under the direction of Ken Kraut, brought their jazz stylings to the show. The band was a terrific addition to the program having appeared at the Toronto International Music Festival and having earned first place awards at a festival in Ridgewood, N.J.

The chapter show in 1982 was called The Time Machine. Joe Hunter was the show chairman, script writer, and direc-

tor with help from Doug Chapman, Mark Goodney, and Fred Steinkamp. The cast included Fred as Professor Fernkenstein, Jim Micik as Fritz, his subhuman assistant, Mark Goodney as Ferdinand, Diane C. Hunter as Isabella, Irv Flamer as Casanova, Bill Rowell as A. Herald, Glen Allen as the ship's captain, and a host of others. The Time Machine was operated by Cliff Steinkamp.

The Boston Common headlined the show along with The Crackerjacks (Frank Przybylinski, Andy Bain, Tom Magarro, and Dan Rowland), the 1978 M.A.D. quartet champs. The show was presented on March 18, 19 and 20 with a starting time of 8:13 pm and featured regulars, Racquet Squad, Four Under Par, Sol G Ferndock, Rumble Street Ramblers, Sunburst Express and Songsations (Bob Sanchez, Karl Heidbrink, John Schmucker, and Bob Stevenson). Delehanty originals included "Time Machine" and "Bon Voyage Titanic."



**Best Wishes
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From
A Life-Long
Barbershopper!!**

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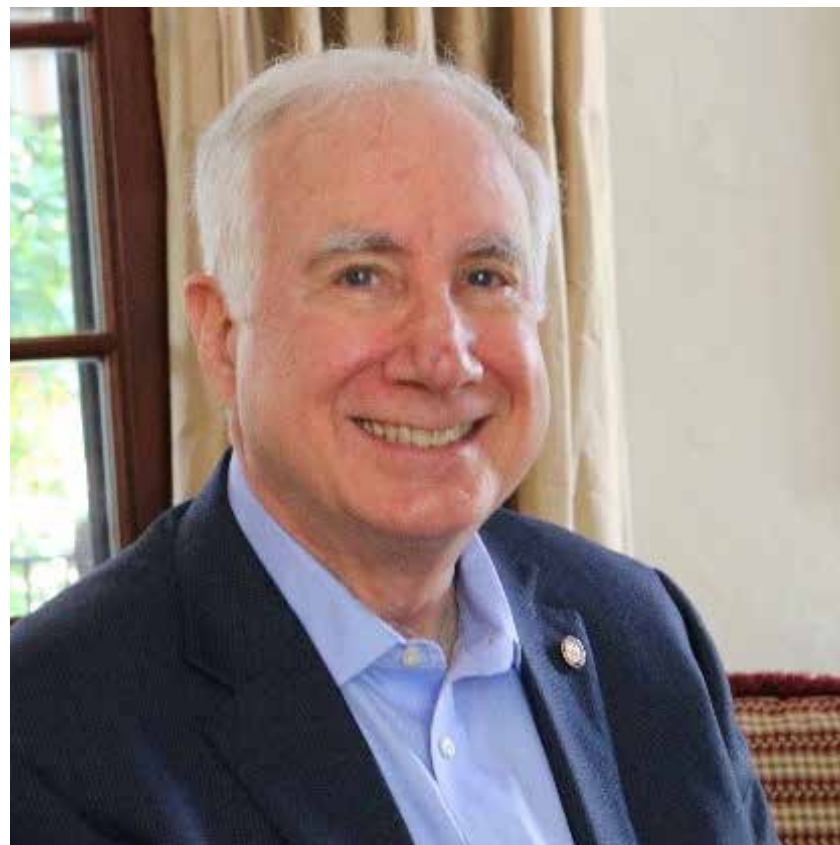
STEPHEN BANKER

A FREQUENT REFRAIN IN OUR CHORUS IS "IT'S GREAT TO BE A CHORDSMAN." IN THINKING ABOUT THIS DECLARATION, THERE'S REALLY A LOT OF DEPTH TO IT.

Singing is fun. I first saw the Chordsmen perform during its first Youth A Cappella Festival; my son was singing with his high school a cappella group. When the Chordsmen took the stage, I was impressed with their beautiful four-part harmonies, but what really hooked me was the huge and genuine smiles as they sang, and the movement that flowed naturally from the music. These guys were having fun. I wanted a piece of that, and have never been disappointed. (And yes, my son also joined the Chordsmen!)

Music is a tonic. Music has a direct route to opening up our emotions; intellectual intervention is not needed. Happy songs make us happy, sad songs make us sad, inspirational songs are inspiring. This is true of all forms of music, from a simple ocarina or a solo song, to a full orchestra or a fully produced opera. Releasing these emotions is a real blessing, even more so since we are the ones causing these emotive responses in others.

Singing is rewarding. Everyone who can talk can sing; it's merely extended phonation. (Think "ice cream" from The Music Man.) But singing together requires some effort: memorizing the words and notes, hitting the right notes, maintaining the right tempo, singing at the proper volume and subtle variations in the production of sound. BUT, when it clicks, there's no feeling like it. The chords ring, and the smiles come easily. When we sing well, we know it and the audience knows it, and we all feel rewarded by the result. Think again about those four guys from The Music Man; whenever they



were together, they couldn't help but sing (and smile)!

The camaraderie is incomparable. I often tell people that I gained 60 new friends when I joined the Chordsmen. How is that possible? Easy: imagine 60 guys with a strong common interest, working together toward a common end. Since the end result is the sum of its parts, we all help each other to succeed. Personal differences disappear into the background. We don't care about race, ethnicity, career, social status, financial differences or politics. In fact, we have a rule against talking politics, and we seldom discuss any other matters which may differentiate us. Yet we are all interested in supporting each other when health or familial

issues arise. I will always remember that one of our members told me that the chorus saved his life after his wife passed away. That's a strong endorsement for participation.

Success begets success. I feel very fortunate to be a part of this particular chorus. Due to the extraordinary efforts of so many members, the skills of our music director and our many outreach programs, we are a thriving chapter of the Barbershop Harmony Society, one of only a few which are growing. We must be doing something right.

If you'd like more information about The Westchester Chordsmen, check out our website: chordsmen.org, or talk to any of our members.

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A TALE OF A 78-YEAR-OLD ROOKIE SINGER

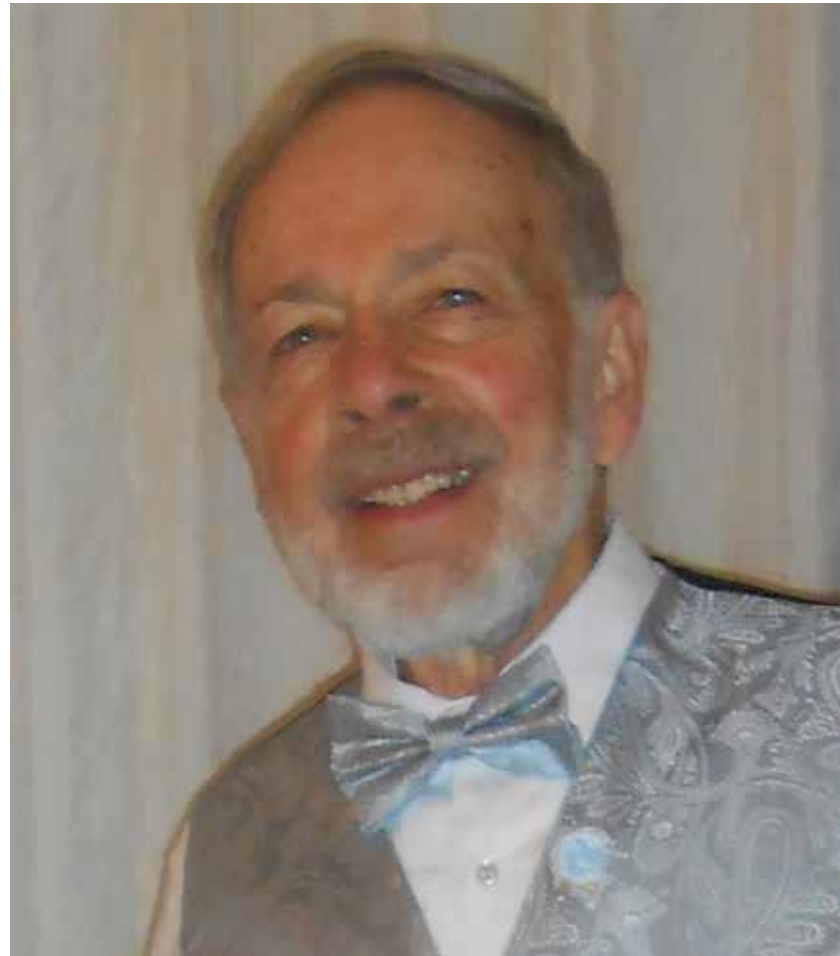
AL SCHWARTZ

ALTHOUGH I ONLY BECAME A WESTCHESTER CHORDSMEN A YEAR AGO, MY WIFE AND I HAVE BEEN ENJOYING CHORDSMEN CONCERTS FOR OVER THIRTY YEARS. But never in my wildest imagination did I ever think I'd become a member—because I didn't consider myself a singer. For example, I never sang in any school choir, religious choir or adult choir.

When we attended the Chordsmen's spring concert in May 2018—the one that featured the British Kingsmen—my wife noticed a flyer about their new Ready, Set, Sing (RSS) voice lessons for men, which are given twice a year. At first I thought this isn't for me; but after the idea rolled around in my brain for a few days, I thought why not! Six singing lessons at no cost or obligation, taught by a professional voice teacher. At the very least I'd sing better in the shower.

At the beginning of the first lesson Keith Harris, our teacher who has also directed the Chordsmen for the last eleven years, told us that by learning the fundamentals of singing (e.g., diaphragm breathing, relaxing our vocal chords, and having proper body alignment) we would get the most beautiful sound possible from our voice. I didn't really believe that and thought: Yeah right! But Keith knew what he was talking about.

After going through the RSS program, I can tell you it was a life changing experience. And like about half the students who complete the course, I found the experience so rewarding that I wound up joining the Chordsmen. Singing now fills a gap in my life, which I never even realized I had. I'm very grateful for the RSS Program. I really enjoyed the lessons, and they gave me the skills and confidence



I needed to successfully audition with the Chordsmen.

As a non-singer I used to think that only a small percentage of the population were naturally good singers, and the rest would never be able to sing well, but now I know that for many, good singing is a learned skill, and people who learn the fundamentals of singing can often sing far better than they ever thought possible.

One problem that some men may have had that keeps them from being involved in singing is that it's not

unusual for a boy to have his first opportunity to audition for a choir when his voice is changing, something some boys are sensitive about. As a result he may have been too embarrassed to audition, and wound up thinking of himself as a non-singer the rest of his life. The RSS program gives men who fall into this category a second chance to get involved in singing.

I think of my singing as a gift from heaven, and I'm looking forward to singing with my brothers in song for years to come.



Westchester magazine raises the bar for addressing your audience

POSTED ON JUNE 20, 2017 BY BRIAN LYNCH*

PROFESSIONAL LAYOUT AND DESIGN, "INSIDER" FEATURE CONTENT, AND LOADS OF ADVERTISING COMBINE TO MAKE THE WESTCHESTER CHORDSMEN'S OVERTONES MAGAZINE A MODEL TO EMULATE.

The full-size magazine format allows plenty of space for a clean, airy presentation, and showcases the numerous advertisers to best advantage. Evergreen content covers the chapter's active performance schedule, outreach activities, and even history stories. The magazine can be used as both a standalone publication and a show program.

Hats off to John Fotia and Stephen Bartell and their team for a first-class channel for reaching their audience. Be sure to look at the chapter's attractive web site, too.

See more: *The Westchester Chordsmen*

**The above endorsement was published by Brian Lynch, the publication and brand manager of the Barbershop Harmony Society on his internet blog.*



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SIXTH ANNUAL YOUTH A CAPPELLA FESTIVAL

JOHN FOTIA



MIDTOWN performs at the Sixth Annual Youth A Cappella Festival. Photo courtesy of Connie Delehanty.

THE SIXTH ANNUAL YOUTH A CAPPELLA FESTIVAL WAS HELD ON NOVEMBER 17TH AT MAMARONECK HIGH SCHOOL. The festival has been co-sponsored by the Westchester Chordsmen and Mamaroneck High School for the past five years. Designed to spotlight a cappella groups within the county schools, the festival is free to the public. It is not a competition. Schools are encouraged to cheer each other on and at the end they all assemble for a grand finale.

Midtown (Nick Gordon, Anthony Fortino, K.J. McAleesejergins and Christian Diaz), the 2019 Mid-Atlantic District Quartet Champions and Fifth Place International Medalists were special guests this year.

The Chordsmen were directed by the chorus' musical director, Keith Harris. Masters of Ceremonies were show VP Thom Rosati and Mamaroneck High School alumnus, Tony Weiner.

PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

Mamaroneck (Dina Madden, director: In Treble, M.A.C. and Swing Choir); Edgemont (Kelley Morse, director: The Edgemont Vocal Jazz Ensemble); Valhalla (Matt Morris, director: The Valhalla High School Vocal Ensemble); Pleasantville (Kathleen Warren, director: Razor's Edge and Camerata); Peekskill (Kevin Larson, director: The City Singers).

Our Youth in Harmony coordinator, Al Fennell, has served as liaison between the chapter and the schools since the festival's inception.

FESTIVAL FEEDBACK

I think the Youth Festival might be my favorite event of the year! What an inspiring performance by Midtown!

– Keith Harris

It was such a joy to watch the young men and women react to both the chorus and Midtown. It was like a rock concert without the ear damaging sound level. The High School groups were great and showed that a cappella sing-

ing is still in style. Bravo to the Music Teachers. This festival is a highlight of my year and I'm sure all the members of the chorus share that feeling.

– Steve Delehanty

Congrats to all for another successful Youth Festival. And thanks to the many who pitched in to make everything go smoothly – a real testament to our collective dedication and enthusiasm.

– Steve Banker

The enthusiasm from the students was amazing, both for us and especially, Midtown

– Dennis Cuddy

I was taken by how many of the Chordsmen commented to me on what a delight it was to share the risers with the students. We were so pleasantly pleased to sing, to smile and to share the stage with them. After the show overwhelmingly their comments were "It made me happy to be up there with the Kids."

– Carlos Cruz