

BARBERSHOP POINTERS

Stevens Point, Wisconsin chapter of Barbershop Harmony Society, Inc.

Meeting every Monday 7:30 P.M.

Harmony House – 3500 Harmony Lane

P.O. Box 482 – 715-344-9052

Packerland Division – Land O Lakes District

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The Northern Gateway Chorus gave Valentines Day a double dose of singing valentines in 2009. With Valentines Day falling on a Saturday, the decision was made to deliver our selections for both the Friday before and to make availability an option for the 14th as well.

This years presentation was met with moderate success and several quartets helped with our efforts. Yesterdays News, Ragtime, Musical Links, and Regal Blend.

It was hoped that digital cameras would have followed all of the quartets, but such was not the case. We do have a record of Ragtime (et al) singing for Kindergarten teacher Kathy Jones at McDill School in Whiting.



I hope they got more than pencils when they passed this around.

A special thanks to Pat Edgerton for handling all the bookings. On Thursday we were represented on the local radio station by Dave Peplinski, Russ Zimmerman, Jim Kruziki and Jack Edgerton. The same crew sang for the County home on Thursday night only Gene Moss covered the bass part at that event. Our wheel men this year were George Pesenka, Pete Leahy and Ron Odejewski.

Our Saturday appearances were covered by Dan Coble, Dave Quick, Joe Larson, Pat Rydberg Mike and Nate Peplinski and Jack Edgerton.

Regal Blend once again held to tradition by holding down the Wisconsin Rapids area. In addition to several singing valentines, some extra stops were made as long as they were in town. One of them was to visit our old friend Dave Kauffman. They sang a couple of tunes for him and had him chime in just to keep him in shape.



Prior to visiting Dave, the quartet had two earlier appointments. One with Mrs. McConnell's choral class at Lincoln High School.



The quartet did a small selection from their current repertoire and then taught the group a tag. Volunteers were asked to come forward, one student representing each voice part, to sing the tag back to the group.

Notice the blonde girl who happens to stand as tall as lead, Joe Larson.



She was an exchange student from Sweden and a pretty good sport for getting up front with them.

The really early morning stop was for Mrs. Wiesenbeck's group at Assumption High School. This was 8:30 in the morning it isn't known who of the group was really awake at that time, but a good time was had by all.



Musical Expressions



Submitted by Vince Heig

I am now in my mid-seventies, having experienced many musical moments during my lifetime. They include hearing my father playing his fiddle when I was a child, listening to records in the one-room school house in southwest Minnesota during indoor recess due to stormy weather, then high school band and chorus followed by doing international folk dancing during college days and early family life, and now barbershop singing as a senior. Many times I have felt the intense influence music has had on my life. I almost always feel my body moving with the music. Of course in dancing that can actually be happening!

A recent article called BLUE NOTES brought this wonderment of music to a better appreciation. Moira Farr entitled her article: The life-giving link between mood and musical expression. I would like to include quotes from her article. (Sometimes she quotes other sources so there should be double quotations marks in this report.)

[Reprinted from the Walrus (May 2008), a Canadian general-interest magazine with an international outlook.]

"I've never met Garnet Rogers. For all I know, he's a very nice man. But 10 years ago, Garnet nearly killed me at the Canadian Tulip Festival in Ottawa, and I've wondered ever since whether certain musicians shouldn't issue statements at the beginning of their concerts. **Warning: This performance contains vocals, lyrics, keys and chords that may induce debilitating sorrow in some listeners. Listener discretion is advised.**

I don't remember the actual song, only the abject melancholy that flooded through me

upon hearing Rogers' spare guitar and soulful baritone. No one else seemed particularly bothered by the dissonance between song and scene, but all I wanted to do was escape and weep.

It wasn't the first, nor last, time a piece of randomly encountered music would ambush me and amplify my sadness, almost unbearably. I soon became hypervigilant (when listening to music on the radio) at recognizing that first down spiral of mood and became adept at the quick lunge for the off button. Music, once a comfort and a source of pleasure, had become a minefield.

Sensitivity to sad music for me was just one troublesome symptom of what was eventually diagnosed as clinical depression. It was only after many months of taking citalopram, an antidepressant known as a selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor, that I realized the sad-music thing wasn't happening to me anymore.

I was still able to feel sadness, but I was not so overwhelmed by the emotion. And I became curious; exactly what was going on in my brain to make me so vulnerable to music in the first place—and why was a pill able to change all that?

Antidepressants affect the activity of neurotransmitters such as serotonin, dopamine, and norepinephrine, and hormones such as oxytocin, all of which are involved in the experience of pleasure. These are the hormones that become seriously impaired when a person is depressed. But what is the specific link—if any—between mood and musical expression?

Searching for answers, I turned first to the neuroscience of music, a thriving field of research that has spawned two current best sellers—Oliver Sacks' *Musicophilia: Tales of Music and the Brain*, a collection of strange tales about the human relationship to music, and Daniel Levitin's *This Is Your Brain on Music: The Science of a Human Obsession*, which details recent neurological findings. Among them: what's happening in the brain when music uplifts us; why bits of music can lodge in the brain; and theories of how and why music—in all its pitches, tempos, keys, and

rhythms—has played an integral role in the evolution of the human species.

Levitin is a psychology professor: “What we think of as sad music tends to be quieter, lower, and slower, with longer duration in tones and a darker timbre than “happy” music. But why one person listening to such music would recognize, but not necessarily feel, the emotion of sadness, while another is consumed by it remains a difficult question to answer.”

“The relationship between art, creativity, and mental illness is not easily reduced to brain parts,” Levitin says. “There’s a messiness to emotions, [and] I’m not sure I’m willing to say that it’s a disorder—that someone who is deeply moved by music needs to take a pill.”

Levitin says artists offer consolation: “It’s like you’ve been cut off from your emotions, and suddenly there’s another person feeling what you want to feel. They’re on the cliff edge with you, and, more than that, they’ve taken their despair and turned it into a beautiful piece of art. It’s inspiring.”

In *Musicophilia*, neurologist Sacks praises music’s ability to restore pleasure and feeling to those numbed by grief. He reports on research undertaken at the International Laboratory for Brain, Music, and Sound Research in Montreal by neuropsychologist Robert Zatorre and his associate Anne Blood. In 2000, they performed positron emission tomography (PET) scans on 10 McGill students trained in music as they listened to pieces they had chosen, and to which they had previously had “an intensely pleasant emotional response,” including the all-important “chills.” Blood and Zatorre found that the greater the chills, the greater the changes in heart rate and respiration, and the more blood flowed into brain regions believed to be involved in reward and motivation, emotion and arousal—the same pleasure centers stimulated by food, sex, and addictive drugs. “Music, although it is abstract, still seems to activate the same neural pathways,” Zatorre says.

The question is why. For Zatorre and many other neuroscientists, what goes on in the brain’s substrates is linked to the very essence of human evolution. “An

animal needs something to tell it how to survive, and the way the brain reacts to music seems to be akin to the way it reacts to all the things that are important to survival,” Zatorre says.

Musicologist David Huron, head of the Cognitive and Systematic Musicology Laboratory at Ohio State University and author of *Sweet Anticipation: Music and the Psychology of Expectation* is exuberant as he describes his research, which included an experiment he conducted as a professor at the University of Waterloo.

He was studying the effect sad or happy music might have on perception in a group of students who had been told that the experiment had a different goal entirely: to study changes in their heart rates. Half the students listened to “happy music”—a selection of bluegrass tunes. For the sad-music group, researchers selected tracks from Brian Eno’s *Apollo: Atmospheres & Soundtracks*. Each group listened to the music for 15 minutes. Then a researcher interviewed the students, asking them, among other things, to estimate how well they would do on their final grades.

Huron and his colleagues were gratified to find significant differences between the groups’ assessments of their likely academic performance. Those who had listened to the happy banjo music tended to overestimate their marks, while the Eno listeners were much more realistic. “It’s almost as though when people listen to sad music, it’s a way of grounding themselves,” Huron concludes. “Whatever effect music may have on us, it is a form of “drugs without the drugs.”

Huron also sees a possible evolutionary link in his findings. When we respond to music with chills down the spine, for instance, we may be experiencing something similar to what a mother would feel hearing the cry of a lost child: We become hyperalert and focused, with adrenaline at the ready, prepared to do whatever it takes to find and protect the child.

When music makes us cry, Huron points out, our tears are filled with the hormone prolactin, which is integral to the essential human bonding experience of breast feeding and which women produce in

greater quantities than men. This, along with the release of hormones such as dopamine and oxytocin, mimics the well-being we feel in the most intense moments of connection with others—nursing an infant, having sex, being praised.

"It's biology wrapping its arms around you and saying, 'There, there,'" he says. Of course, this paradoxical dynamic—seeking out a 'sad' song in order to feel "happy" in the end—doesn't work for the depressive. The tears may flow, the heart rate might change, but there's no "There, there" there.

Most of us have had the experience of being profoundly moved by a piece of music when we hear a particular sequence of notes, played in a particular way, at a particular time in our lives. In the normally functioning brain (as opposed to the depressed brain), sad music may actually perform the function of restoring our happiness—or at least our emotional equilibrium. Sad music, as Huron suggests, may ground us.

As a listener of music, I'm grateful to have that—the strange human capacity to enjoy feeling sad—restored."

COTS 2009

Everyone knows – well, maybe not. What do you know about COTS? Do you know it stands for Chapter Officers Training Seminar? And that it's held around January 9-10 every year at UW-Stout in Menomonie, Wisconsin? And that it's a good place to learn what a chapter officer should be doing? And that the meals are included in the tuition? And the hotel is covered by the chapter for officers?

All that is true. And, of course, it's a good place to meet up with other barbershoppers from around the Land O Lakes district for socializing and singing. And UW-Stout does a really good job on the food and hospitality.

But if you haven't been there lately, it's changed. Gone are the interminable days-long boring meetings with presenters droning on about -- what was it again we were talking about? Well, maybe not totally gone. There are intensive half day sessions dedicated to the various chapter officer duties, and if you're not that officer you might have some "nap" issues. But the sessions I attended were run by excited, engaged men and women who enjoyed their work and shared their passion with us. The sessions started Friday evening and wrapped up Saturday night with an afterglow featuring a parade of quartets from the District Top Gun quartet school that was going on that same weekend at UW-Stout.

There are also a good variety of shorter sessions. Some were scheduled more than once, but still some of us had problems picking which ones to attend and which ones we had to miss. Dare I say it? I had fun. Wait, if I admit it was fun do I get to go back again? Well, the truth is out there now anyhow. Might as well keep going.

As Program VP, I found the session on "How to Breath Life Back Into Your Chapter Meetings" very interesting. There might be a new twist to our business meeting coming up one of these weeks.

I also really liked the session on "Creating Websites For Chapters and Quartets," and my half day intensive session was on how to be an Assistant Director. There were also sessions on "Chapter Legal, IRS, and Copyright," "Taking the Stage/Performance Plan," "So You Want to Sing in a Quartet," "Sing a Bunch of Tags," "Grants," and a lot more, including Bruce Odell's "Joe Barbershop" workshop, which he was doing for the last time again.

In the Grants session I learned that we could be getting money from organizations with some paperwork and attention from us. The grants are out there, but generally have to be used for specific purposes, and you have to report back later how the money was used. One of the attendees reported that they got a grant for their chapter to cover the expense of attending COTS.

But the session I got the most out of was "How to Create Chorus Learning Tapes." Not just because I got volunteered for the example recording quartet along with Doug Miller. Harry Hanson from Greendale took us through the whole process, starting with the quartet singing into a four-headed microphone arrangement, all the way to the finished and polished part-predominant and pitch-corrected set of learning tracks. This is similar to how James Estes makes his learning tracks for us. I don't have all the equipment Harry had, but I have some of it, and I have some of the music software. I ran home and made some quartet learning tracks for Regal Blend that didn't turn out half bad.

So if you remember COTS as a painful bore, give it another chance. They're trying to improve it every time out and I think they're getting there.



Submitted by Joe Larson

The Old Songs

Submitted by Dan Schobert

It may be fair enough to say that barbershop singers sometimes get tired of singing the 'old songs.' That is, tired of singing again and again the songs they've song many times, perhaps in many shows and outside

performances. "Let's sing something new," they might say.

While it is true enough to say we can always enjoy the challenge of a new song, we must also remember that most of the audiences for which we sing *do* enjoy the old songs and look forward to hearing them again and again. It is at this point that we need to remind ourselves that while most of us have joined the Society for the fun of singing, when we're on stage we are entertainers. We are not there for only our enjoyment but for the pleasures of those people who have spent a few bucks and/or their time to allow us the opportunity to sing for them. We entertain; they enjoy.

These means that those old songs we continue to have in a Chapter repertory are to be kept fresh, ready to go, even when we've done them hundreds of times. How many of us have bought tickets to some concert and have expected to hear, yes..again..pieces we have long loved. We go again and again to hear a great orchestra play Beethoven's 5th Symphony or to watch a grand ballet or caught a well known soloist, like Frank Sinatra woo with some of his popular tunes. We enjoy new stuff but continue to love the old too.

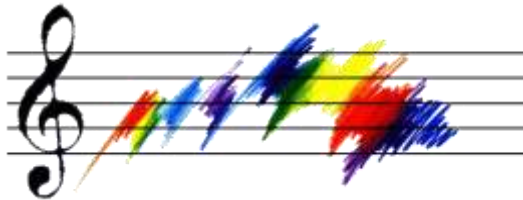
We might sing some of the old songs every week and get tired of them. This is the price of being an entertainer. There is the expectation on the part of the audience that the barbershop chorus or quartet will bring delight, love, humor and melody to their souls. We mustn't disappoint by not giving them what they want. How many times we've sung "My Wild Irish Rose?" Thousands? Perhaps...but so what! People out there still enjoy it and we have a responsibility to provide the goods. It is not difficult to imagine that the dancers, singers and performers on Broadway, get tired from time to time of doing the same

routine over and over. The same dance routines, the same tired lines, the same songs and jokes, sometimes for several years..and each performance as fresh as the next.

This is where we are. We may not sing as often as someone on the legitimate stage but every time that curtain opens and the MC announces..."here they are.." we are in the spotlight even when the songs have been sung many, many times. We owe our audiences the best and sometimes the best is simply singing again and again those old songs that folks have loved for many years. Even though our chorus has repeatedly sung "I'll Fly Away," "Proud to be an American," "Baby Face," and others,...the audiences keep coming back; they love us and they love our songs. Let's give 'em the best we have to offer.

FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES

February 12 John and Wanda Lay
 February 14 John and Stephanie White



FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

February 2 Dan Schobert
 February 4 John White
 February 7 Meta Krause
 February 9 Kira Morrissey
 February 13 Judy Kauffman
 February 18 Janice Moe
 February 20 Nate Peplinski
 February 22 Pat Edgerton
 February 25 Anna Kochanowski
 February 25 Mike Porrey



Northern Gateway Chapter Officers 2009

- President**
Pete Leahy
- Secretary**
George Pesanka
- Treasurer**
Bill Jenkins
- VP Membership**
Jack Edgerton
- VP Program**
Joe Larson
- VP Music**
Nate Peplinski
- VP House**
Boleslaw Kochanowski
- VP Marketing and PR**
Dale Thompson
- At Large**
Marshall Lysne
David Peplinski
- Past President**
David Quick
- Director**
Kevin Morrissey



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

PLAN FOR FUTURE EVENTS



**May 1-3, 2009
LOL Spring
Convention and
International
Prelims**

**Packerland
Division Contest**

**@
Stevens Point**

**May 9, 2009
(Saturday)
Package Show –
Tack Center in
Spencer, WI**

**May 11, 2009 Chorus Coaching
Session – Let's all be there!**

**June 28 – July 5, 2009
International Convention
Anaheim, CA**

**July 3-4-5 Riverfront Rendezvous
– Pizza Sales**



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