



The Captain's Log

Newsletter of the Stockton Portsmen

May 2022 - Issue #34

President's Message:

By Al Wolter



THE VIEW FROM THE HELM

BARBERSHOP TRAINING? – ISSUE 5

How many of you watch the singing competitions on TV, like American Idol? Do you critique the singers against what you have heard/learned about singing Barbershop music? I find it so interesting that the ones that make it through I find unskilled and many of those that don't make it that have the skills I admire. Some of that is the difference in Pop music and what we do, and some is the fact that words are less important these days (just ask a Sound Mixer).

Last month I talked about the fact that now we are back into the Blue Waters, it is time to get back to training. I am sure more than one of you wondered what that meant. One of the main things I equate to training in our realm is developing the confidence to sing on your own. We don't sing solos per se, but do you carry your part (you know like the song says each time we get ready to go home on Tuesdays).

One of the easiest and most interesting training tools we have in our BHS repertoire is tagging quartetting (or tag-out). The idea is each part forms a line behind each other in the part. A song starts with the foursome at the front of each line singing. Either the leader of the exercise (Director) makes a motion and all four parts stop singing and move back to the end of their respective lines or the person behind touches a shoulder and the touched singer moves back. The person behind moves forward and takes over the singing of the song. We have not employed this training exercise in quite a while, partly because it highlights those that do not know their part well enough and thus embarrasses themselves. But this is a powerful tool to help folks be confident in what they do and realize that they must be able to "stand on their own vocals." A recent Idol hopeful learned that lesson. She didn't make it to the Top 24, but she learned that she could with more 'work.' more importantly, she found that she could believe in herself.

As you all know, Tune Struck Quartet is restructuring, which means there is a lot of 'work' going on – more than many would think necessary. But each time a new member becomes a part of an ensemble, there is work required to find the songs, tones, balances, and energy to make it work right. Though two or three of you may have a song down cold, you are essentially starting from scratch.

This is why I personally encourage all new foursomes to start with PoleCats and Chorus songs (preferably done as the Chorus does it), it gives you such a head start on all the other stuff, plus it helps the Chorus as you sing more confidently.

In just a few days from when I expect this to be published, we should be singing for the Spring Prelims here at McNair High School. No matter the outcome, I hope that those that join us on stage feel as if they are willing and able to confidently sing their part as if they were the only one singing (while being totally cognizant of the others in the Section).

Lastly, there are other 'Ports of Call' on the horizon that, like Contest, give us an opportunity to display our "operational readiness."

As we move further into the summer, it is my hope and desire that we can engage in more training opportunities, such as PoleCat Qualifications and other Quartet encouragements. We operate better when more are able to the "jobs" of others.

Musical Director's Message: **By Bill Litz**

First thing for this month's message is to congratulate you all on a great showing at the *FWD Spring Festival*. Working on our **performance has moved our scores into the mid B level** with a 67.8 average. I was **proud of every member** we had on stage and had no concern that each of you was equally part of our success. In that vein, it was also exciting to hear the same effort and care being employed as we went through the patriotic music on Tuesday preparing for Memorial Day.

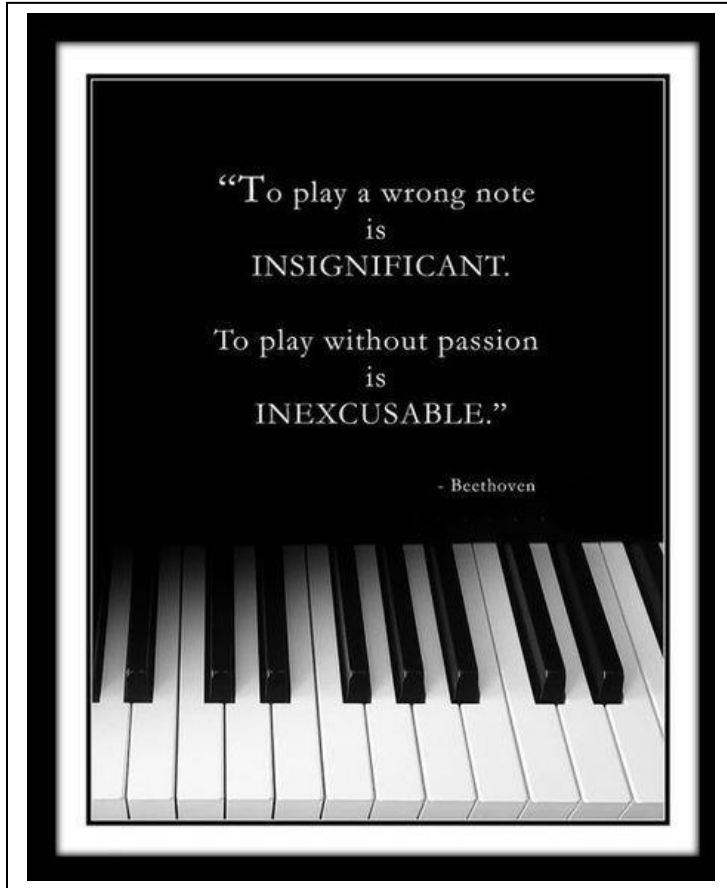
From now on, let's *ALWAYS* have a desire to perform to at least that level. I hope the **Portsmen Chorus** is a fun place to sing, and that you enjoy the way we approach singing together. I try to allow us to sing a lot of music with the goal of performing in our community, as opposed to working on just a few songs to do in contest for other barbershoppers.

Being scored in contest does give us a chance to look at the quality of our musical product. Even **when we sing for local events**, or even just in our rehearsals for our own fun and enjoyment, **we should approach that as if we are singing for judges**.

Contest and Judging Handbook The B level

- a. B-level scores (61 to 80) are for performances that frequently demonstrate a good mastery of the musical elements. The music is generally well suited to the performers. The theme of the song is well communicated, but there may be moments where technique becomes apparent.
- b. In a performance in the mid-range of B (around 70 points), the harmony is generally consonant, with chords clearly distinguishable, and the embellishments tastefully support the song. The performance generally reflects understanding of, and sensitivity to, the music, with high musicality in its best moments. The musical elements are generally executed accurately.

Even though it's not generated by a barbershopper, [Singing Competitions: A Judge's Tips on How to Succeed as a Performer](#) outlines things we should always be considering:



- Stage Presence/Audience Communication
- Diction
- Intonation
- Vocal Quality
- Rhythmic Interpretation
- Dynamics
- Song Choice/Song Prep

We DO work on these items – **but my biggest take away from the weekend was that we have about 20 seconds for the judges (or our audience) to categorize our level of performance.** First Impression is everything:

- Do we look sharp as the curtain opens?
or as we take the stage at a venue?
- Is every performer engaged?
Is your expression appropriate?
Are we focused as a group?
- Is our opening appealing?
Are we in tune?
Are we in sync?
- Are we entertaining, with no distractions?

Don't wait for someone to encourage you to get into a performance mode. Don't make "performing" be something you turn on and off. We can rehearse notes and words and other musical elements, but our biggest opportunity to be good performers is to always perform. I look forward to us ALWAYS being expressive and finding synergy and joy together.

TUNE STRUCK QUARTET

Version Two's stop in **Lodi** for the **Women's Club** Luncheon was a wonderful experience. The ability to receive immediate appreciation for what we do was sorely missed and being able to see friends in the audience was great fun.



Version Three drove up to **Davis** for a two-hour coaching session with **Keith Harris**, who had flown in from New York State. This was extremely positive and very helpful for all four of us.

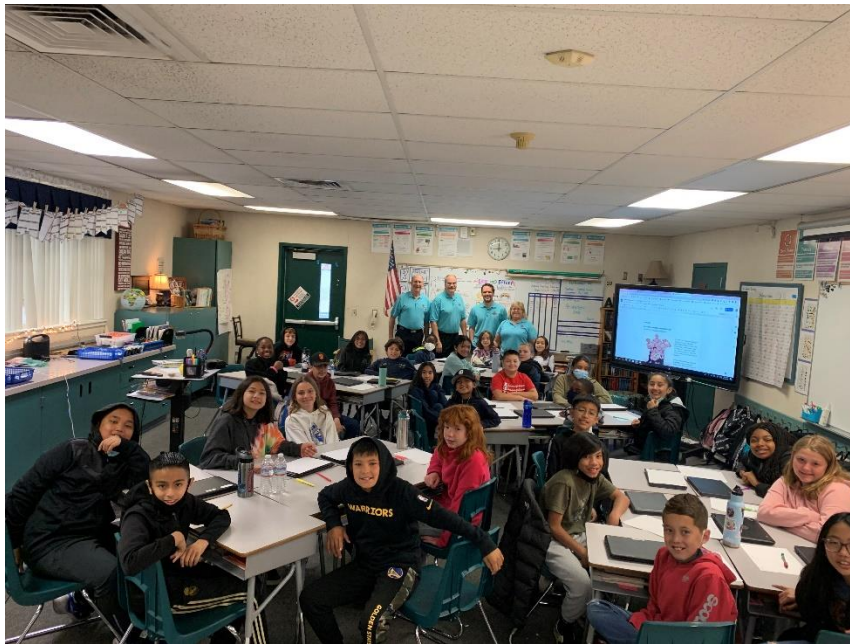
The last item of interest is that *Version Two* attended **Wicked**, starring Bill's son **Jordan Litz** as **Fiyero**. Besides seeing a wonderful production and supporting Jordan (whose performance was flawless), we sang for some of the cast and all those gathered to enjoy food and time with Jordan.



While we had hoped to be a little busier, things were quiet for the rest of the Month, but May is looking up, with the **San Joaquin Hospice's Derby Fundraiser** and the **Prelim Contest**.

OTHER QUARTET NEWS

Nancy Hennefer had a friend that still teaches at **Julia Morgan Elementary** asked if a quartet could stop by to help review the National Barbershop Quartet Day with her Fifth-Grade class. As the request was fairly short-notice and both versions of **Tune Struck Quartet** had conflicts, a version of the Four Portsman (**Al W., Bill L., Brad N. and Nancy**) picked up the opportunity to show what Barbershop Harmony is about. After singing a couple of songs and describing what we do, we walked over to the **Music Classroom** and sang a couple there too.



Now you might recognize this as the Valentine's Day Quartet, but there have been some movement into developing more foursomes, with both Brad and Alex working with Bill, Sue and Al when the regular Tune Struck rehearsal night is open. The singing for songs after Chapter Meetings by pick-up foursomes is a good thing too.



The future of Stockton Quartets is still looking good.

Weekly Chapter Meetings:

Location: Zion Lutheran Church – 808 W. Porter Avenue – Stockton – CA

Tuesdays: 6:00 PM – 7:30 PM

(Please verify for location of rehearsal as it may change)

See calendar for up-to-date information:

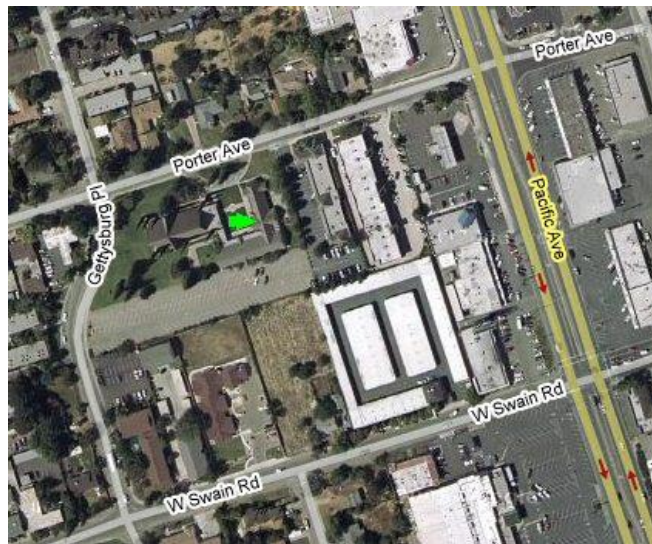
[Click here to access the Stockton Portsmen Calendar](#)

Website:

<http://www.stocktonportsmen.org/>

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/194542747456>



Directions:

- From Pacific Avenue go west on Porter Way turn south on Gettysburg Pl then turn east into the Zion Lutheran Church parking lot.
- From Pershing Avenue go east on W. Swain Rd turn north on Gettysburg Pl then turn east into Zion Lutheran Church parking lot.

Mission Statement:

Provide the greater Stockton area with quality Barbershop chorus and quartet music and wholesome family entertainment, while encouraging every individual of good character who loves to sing the opportunity to find their place with us.

Hire Us:

Book us for your next event:

- Community Concerts
- Fairs
- Festivals
- Grand Openings
- Holiday Tree Lightings
- Memorial Services
- National Anthem
- Singing Valentines
- Summer Concerts

Performance times usually range from 20 to 40 minutes but can be adjusted up or down to fit your specific program. Contact us by email or phone below for a proposal:

- Info@StocktonPortsmen.org
- Phone (209) 881-SING (7464)

****SAVE THE DATE****

- 5/13 – 5/14 FWD Spring Prelims, Chorus & Quartet Festival
- 5/30 Veterans Memorial Day Service at Cherokee Memorial Park
- 7/3 Celebrate America Hutchins Street Square (Lodi, CA) (5:00 PM – 7:00 PM)
- 7/3 – 7/10 International Convention (Charlotte, NC) [Link to see jam-packed schedule](#)
- 10/12 FWD Fall Convention (Fresno, CA)

Barbershop Links

- Barbershop Harmony Society <http://www.barbershop.org/>
- Far Western District <https://www.farwesterndistrict.org/>
- Mixed Barbershop Harmony Association <https://www.mixedbarbershop.org/>
- VoCal Voices of California <http://voicesofcalifornia.org/>