



The Captain's Log

Newsletter of the Stockton Portsman

Connecting members, supporters, and friends of the Stockton Portsman

October 2026 - Issue #86

Charting Our Course – 72 Years as the Stockton Chapter

October 18th marks a special milestone for 72 years since the Stockton Chapter of SPEBSQSA was chartered in 1954.

For those who may not recognize those initials, SPEBSQSA stands for the Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barber Shop Quartet Singing in America, the organization we know today as the Barbershop Harmony Society.

Think about what 72 years represents. Generations of people in Stockton have gathered together for one simple reason: they love to sing harmony.

The faces have changed. The songs have changed. Where we rehearse has changed. Even SPEBSQSA has changed. And our Stockton Chapter has changed along with it.

Today, we're a mixed chorus, welcoming people who love to sing and continuing a tradition that began here in 1954. We're learning new music, performing throughout our community, competing, forming quartets, making friendships, and finding new ways to introduce people to barbershop harmony.

Sometimes when we celebrate an anniversary, it's easy to focus entirely on the past. However, I think an anniversary is also an opportunity to think about the future.

Someday, what we're doing right now will be part of the Stockton Chapter's history. The people we're inviting to rehearsal today may be the people celebrating the chapter's 80th or 90th anniversary. The traditions we're creating today may be the stories someone tells years from now.

So, this October, let's celebrate 72 years of the Stockton Chapter not simply by looking back at where we've been, but by appreciating where we are and looking forward to where we're going.

Here's to everyone who helped build this chapter before us, everyone singing with us today, and all those who haven't walked through our doors yet.

We inherited a legacy of harmony. What we do with it today will inspire the voices of tomorrow.

In Harmony,

Sue Atkins
President, Stockton Portsmen

Musical Director's Message: by Bill Litz

There's a difference between **singing to an audience** and **creating an experience that invites them to listen**.

We stand up, sing the notes, pronounce the words, shape the dynamics, and hope everyone enjoys it. But there's something more we can offer. We can create moments that invite people to listen a little more closely, moments when something happens in the music that naturally draws their attention.

"Wait... listen to this."

That's the idea behind *leaning in*.

And leaning in doesn't always mean getting quieter. Sometimes it's a whisper; sometimes it's a sudden burst of energy. It might be an unexpected rhythmic detail, a beautifully shaped phrase, or a single word that suddenly means something more. What matters is that the music gives the audience a reason to want to hear what's coming next.

We don't have to demand attention. We can create moments that invite it.

Lullabye (Goodnight, My Angel)

Lullabye is a song that shouldn't overpower the audience. It needs **quiet intensity**, energy and support without pushing. The opportunity is to make a quiet phrase feel alive, intentional, and supported rather than simply soft.

A lot of that comes from what happens **before and around the sound**. A silent, prepared breath can create anticipation. Giving a phrase somewhere to go invites the listener to follow it. Singing through the important words rather than simply getting the notes right helps the audience connect with the story. And the way we release a phrase is just as important as the way we begin it.

A few things to explore as we rehearse:

- **Use a silent, prepared breath.** A noisy or rushed breath can break the spell; a quiet breath can become part of the anticipation.
- **Support the breath.** Soft doesn't mean unsupported. The air still has energy behind it.
- **Give the phrase somewhere to go.** Shape it so there's a reason to follow the musical thought.
- **Sing through the words.** Know what each word is saying and let the important ones come to life.
- **Leave room for anticipation.** Sometimes a fraction of a second before the next phrase gives the thought time to settle.
- **Shape the ends of phrases.** The release is just as expressive as the beginning.
- **Listen across the chorus.** The emotion grows when we're engaged with the people around us, not simply producing our own sound.
- **Trust the quiet.** We don't have to fill every space with sound.

The opportunity isn't simply to sing softly. It's to create a moment when the audience *wants* to hear the next word.

That's an invitation to lean in.

I've Got the World on a String

With *I've Got the World on a String*, our opportunity is a little different. We don't need to invent something clever. **The cleverness is already there.**

Our arranger has built a whole collection of tricks, surprises, rhythms, and textures into this arrangement. Every voice part gets its moment. Our opportunity is to understand those moments well enough to **deliver them as the arranger intended**.

Think of the arrangement as a conversation. Sometimes we're speaking, sometimes we're responding, and sometimes we're providing the background that makes someone else's line shine. The little rhythmic details come alive when we understand how our part fits with everyone else's.

As we continue learning and polishing the song, let's pay particular attention to:

- **Understand the rhythms.** Don't just learn the notes; discover where the rhythmic energy lives and commit to it.
- **Explore the textures.** Recognize when we're supposed to be light, full, punchy, smooth, driving, or supportive.
- **Recognize whose moment it is.** When another part has the important musical idea, our contribution may be to help that idea shine through.
- **Find the power of restraint.** More sound isn't always more exciting. When another part has the spotlight, our restraint can make that moment even more effective.
- **Let your own moments shine.** When our part takes the lead, we can step forward and deliver it with confidence.
- **Lock into the ensemble.** The arrangement comes alive when everyone understands how their part fits with everyone else's.
- **Respect the space.** Rests aren't empty. They're part of the rhythm and part of the story.
- **Embrace the contrast.** When the arrangement changes texture, let's give that change its full character. Those contrasts are some of the things that invite the audience to lean in.
- **Trust the arranger.** We don't need to add something that isn't there. We need to reveal what's already there.

Every section has something interesting to do. The fun is discovering **what that something is, and then bringing it to life together**.

If we all try to make our part the most important part, we lose the arrangement. But when each part knows when to step forward and when to make room for someone else, the audience hears something bigger than any individual voice.

We're not adding the magic. **We're revealing the magic that's already on the page.**

And as we do that, when every entrance is intentional, every rhythm has energy, every texture is clear, and every voice knows when to step forward or step back, we create opportunities for the audience to discover those little surprises that took us hours to uncover.

Those are our lean-in moments.

We don't have to manufacture them. We can prepare for them, listen for them, and give them room to happen.

Bringing the idea into the holiday season

Can we carry that same spirit into our holiday performances?

By December, we'll be singing songs our audiences have heard **hundreds of times**. *Silent Night*. *Jingle Bells*. *O Holy Night*. *White Christmas*. *We Wish You a Merry Christmas* and so many others.

We know them. Our audience knows them. And that's exactly what makes this an interesting opportunity.

When an audience already knows what's coming, **how can we invite them to hear it a little differently?**

We don't necessarily need to change the song. We can change how we tell it.

Even the most familiar Christmas song has words that mean something. We can find the story rather than simply singing the words because they're printed on the page. We can discover an unexpected moment where a change in texture, dynamic, or intensity makes a familiar phrase feel fresh. Sometimes intimacy is the answer, pulling back and singing as though we're sharing the song with one person rather than an entire room.

A few things to keep in mind:

- **Find the story.** Let's discover what we're saying rather than simply singing the words on the page.
- **Look for the unexpected moment.** Where might texture, dynamics, or intensity help a familiar phrase feel fresh?
- **Explore intimacy.** Sometimes the most powerful version of a familiar song is the one that feels as though we're singing it to one person.
- **Let the words breathe.** A little space before or after an important thought gives the audience time to receive it.

- **Trust sincerity.** Christmas music doesn't always need more volume or more drama. Sometimes a simple, honest delivery says more.
- **Give the opening a little magic.** The first few seconds can offer the audience a fresh way into a song they already know.
- **Make it ours.** We don't need to reinvent *Silent Night*. We can discover what makes *our Silent Night* worth hearing.

The audience doesn't necessarily need a song they haven't heard before.

They might simply enjoy discovering something new in a song they already love.

Listening for the moment

As we rehearse, let's listen for those opportunities.

Not just “*Did we sing the right notes?*” or “*Was the chord in tune?*” Those things matter, of course, but they're not the finish line.

A bigger question might be:

“What are we offering the audience in this moment?”

For each song, let's explore the places where we can build anticipation, change the texture, pull back, let a phrase breathe, or offer a surprise. Sometimes these will be moments we've deliberately planned. Sometimes they'll be details already built into the arrangement that we simply need to uncover and commit to. And sometimes something unexpected will emerge because we're listening, responding, and staying open to what's happening around us.

Those are the moments we can't manufacture. We can only be present enough to recognize them and let them develop.

So, as we work on our music, let's ask ourselves:

Where might our music invite the audience to lean in?

It might be a whisper, a breath, a chord, a sudden burst of energy, or simply one word that we finally deliver exactly the way it deserves to be heard.

We don't need to force a reaction or insist that a moment be special. We can prepare the music, listen to one another, and give those moments the attention they deserve.

Because the best performances don't demand attention. **They earn it.**

And when our music gives an audience a reason to lean in, even for just one phrase, we're doing more than singing a song. We're offering them something worth listening to.

Let's keep looking for those moments and give them room to happen.



October Birthday Celebrations

Renee Beers – 10/10

Kitty Harmon – 10/11

Ron Spohn – 10/15

Rosie Estrella – 10/17

And... Happy Belated Birthday to our newest member:

Amy Hunt – 9/19

Welcome to the Chorus!

Four Heaven's Sake

A Barbershop Quartet

John Hunt

Steve Lund

Dave Harmon

Willys Nitschke

UPDATE: 9-29-2026

When singing with a purpose the songs seem to mean more, the performance is less anxious, the acceptance from the “singeers” (we are the “singers,” so the audience must be the “singeers,” Right?) seems more joyful. That, after all, is 4HSQ’s purpose: to share the joy we have in living our lives with a higher purpose through the songs we are singing. As a quartet we are recalibrating our trajectory a bit toward that purpose.

We are looking at the upcoming Holiday season and intending to learn songs that are more related to the reason for the season than, say, one of our favorites: “Frosty the Snowman.” We are looking to improve our performance of the already popular “Mary Did You Know?” and to learn “I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day.”



In the meantime, we share our joy at O'Connor Woods on the last Tuesday of each month. We have a following there and have, as John indicated, garnered appreciation from a resident's family members who recognized him out and about in Lodi and thanked him Four Heaven's Sake. The picture is from our visit on 9/29/2026. Thanks to Sandy Mosely for taking it.

We also, have our second gig with the 1313 Marketplace on the 10th of October at the Waterfront in Downtown Stockton from 9 am until 2 pm. We will be wandering the venue finding “singeers” and sharing our joy from 9:30 to 11:30. We are blessed to have like-minded friends who can jump in and sing with us when one of our members is out and Bob Yater will be on bass for us.

Find your joy, see if you can give it away and Four Heaven's Sake, keep singing!

A Stroll Down

HARMONY LANE

Saturday
November 14

6:00 p.m.
(doors open at 5:30)

American Legion Hall Post 119
4561 Greenstone Road
Placerville, CA 95667

with



and multiple quartets!

TICKETS

\$15 Adults \$5 Students

president@goldrushchorus.org
or (530) 647-6513 to Venmo

*Tickets purchased in advance can be
picked up at Will Call.*



Afterglow at Denny's, Cameron Park
3446 Coach Lane



Bring Harmony to Your Next Event

Book the Stockton Portsmen or One of Our Quartets!

A mixed-voice a cappella chorus celebrating 70+ years of harmony in the Central Valley.

Looking to add warmth, charm, and polished harmony to your next event? Whether you're planning a lively celebration or a heartfelt ceremony, the Stockton Portsmen Chorus or one of our talented quartets will bring unforgettable music tailored to your occasion.

Perfect for:

- Community Concerts and Festivals
- Grand Openings and Ribbon Cuttings
- Memorial Services and Celebrations of Life
- Holiday Tree Lightings and Caroling Events
- Weddings, Anniversaries and Private Celebrations
- Corporate Gatherings and Award Ceremonies
- Patriotic and Civic Events (National Anthems, Veterans Day, Memorial Day, etc.)
- Senior Living Communities and Community Outreach Programs
- Singing Valentines and Special Deliveries (Birthdays, Anniversaries, etc.)

Flexible Performance Lengths:

Our typical sets range from 20 to 40 minutes, but we're happy to tailor the timing to suit your specific program or audience needs.

Now booking Holiday 2026 performances!

Whether you're planning a holiday party, tree lighting, community celebration, or seasonal gathering, reserve your date early while openings are still available.

Contact Us:

Email: Info@StocktonPortsmen.org

Phone: (209) 881-SING (7464)

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

**We'd love to bring harmony to your special event.
Reach out today and let's create something memorable together.**

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.

Weekly Chapter Meetings:

Curious what it's like?

Come visit a rehearsal no pressure, just great music and great people. Come experience harmony with us. Visitors are always welcome on Tuesday evenings. No audition is required, just a love of singing and community.

Location: Zion Lutheran Church, Grace Hall - 808 W. Porter Avenue, Stockton, CA

Tuesday Rehearsals:

6:00 PM – 7:30 PM Chorus Rehearsal

7:30 PM – 8:30 PM VLQ, except board meeting nights (3rd Tuesday of each month)

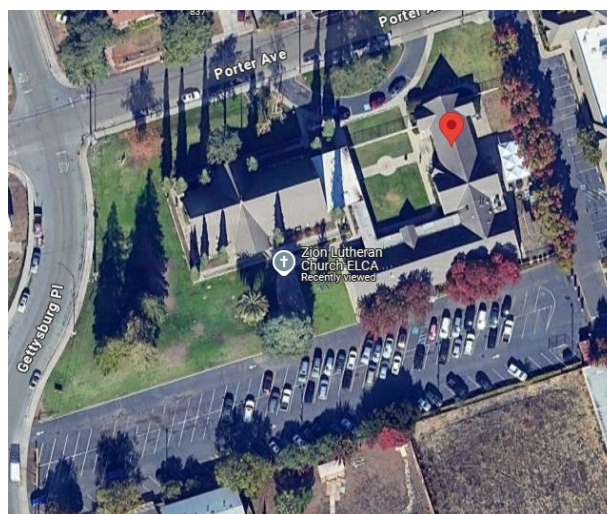
Rehearsals may occasionally be held at an alternate location, so please check the calendar for the most up-to-date information. [Click here to access the Stockton Portsmen Calendar](#)

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 Road, turn north on Gettysburg Pl then turn east into Zion Lutheran Church parking lot.



****SAVE THE DATE****

Upcoming Events

- 10/6-11 2026 Pan Pacific and FWD Fall Convention (Honolulu, Hawaii)
[Click Link for details & registration](#)
- 10/18 **Stockton Portsmen 72nd Charter Anniversary**
- 10/25 FWD House of Delegates Fall 2026 Meeting (1pm-3pm)
- 11/8 Marin Show @ 2:00 pm [Click link for details](#)
- 11/14 Gold Rush Chorus Show – A Stroll Down Harmony Lane @ 6pm
- 12/5 **Festival of Trees (Chorus) – 10am - 12pm (Micke Grove)**
- 12/6 **Festival of Trees (VLQ) – 10am - 12pm (Micke Grove)**
- 12/12 **Stockton Portsmen Holiday Show @ 2:30 pm**
- 12/15 **North Stockton Rotary Club @ 12:30 pm**
- 12/18 **Philomathean Club Performance**
- 12/20 **Friends of the Fox – Movie “White Christmas” (Stockton, CA)**
(Sing in lobby 1:00pm - 1:30pm) [Click for more details](#)
- TBD **Stockton Portsmen Holiday Roadshow & Remote Rehearsals**

Tuesday Rehearsals – Visitors always welcome!

Barbershop Links:

Barbershop Harmony Society <https://www.barbershop.org/>

Far Western District <https://www.farwesterndistrict.org/>

Mixed Barbershop Harmony Association <https://www.mixedbarbershop.org/>

Stay Tuned a Cappella Chorus Sacramento: <https://www.facebook.com/StayTunedChorus>

Voices of California (VoCal) <https://www.voicesofcalifornia.org/>

Westunes Magazine <https://www.farwesterndistrict.org/news/westunes/>