

# Learn to Sing Better



## Information Packet



**River City Sound Barbershop Chorus**

Welcomes you to this year's

***Learn to Sing Better Program***

# The River City Sound Chorus

## Welcome!!!

We hope you enjoy your evenings with us, joining in the fun and fellowship of barbershop singing. If you can hold a tune and stay on pitch, you will find this a most rewarding and enjoyable experience. You will have an opportunity to improve your singing skills through the learning techniques offered during each weekly rehearsal.

Our two Co-Directors, Larry Hunter and Jewel Casselman will place you in a section they think will be comfortable for your voice range. You will have an opportunity to see and hear what our Chapter rehearsals are like, and to join with the Chorus by learning a couple of songs. We hope you enjoy the experience of the wonderful sounds that can be created in 4-part harmony.

## Who Are We?

Our chorus is a chapter of the Barbershop Harmony Society (BHS). It was chartered in 1948 as the first chapter of the society in Western Canada. For many years, it was an all-male chorus called the Winnipeg Golden Chordsmen. In 2019, the chapter followed the example set by the BHS "Everyone in Harmony" initiative and opened its membership to women. The chorus was renamed at that time to River City Sound.

## What is Barbershop Harmony?

The four voice parts (Sections) in Barbershop singing are:

LEAD – The section that sings most of the melody notes.

BASS – The section that sings the low notes that form the foundation for the chords.

TENOR – The section that sings the high notes of the chords and adds the "sparkle" to the 4-part chords.

BARITONE – The section that "fills in" the barbershop chords with notes sometimes lower than the Lead notes and sometimes higher than the Lead notes.

Barbershop harmony is sung "a cappella" without any background musical accompaniment. However, the chorus sings some musical arrangements that are arranged differently (e.g. with male and female voice parts) and may have musical accompaniment.

## We're here for you!

Audio, sheet music, coaching sessions and support from the directors and section leaders are provided to all participants of the program to help you learn the music.

We hope you enjoy your evening! If you have any questions, any member of the chorus will be happy to provide you with as much information as you require about our great organization.



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## **Barbershop Harmony Society - Fact Sheet**

### **Society Name**

- Legal name: Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barber Shop Quartet Singing in America, Inc. or SPEBSQSA, Inc. Note: no periods between letters of abbreviated form.
- In 2004, the Society changed their name to the Barbershop Harmony Society.

### **Size**

- 13,000 members in more than 740 choruses in the United States and Canada; world's largest singing society with both male and female members. There are about 1,400 female members.
- Approximately 850 quartets registered with The Barbershop Harmony Society; an estimated 1000 more quartets are active but not officially registered.
- Affiliated organizations in Australia, Finland, Germany, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa, Sweden, The Netherlands, and Great Britain. There are also barbershop singers in 30 countries, including Denmark, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Uganda, China, Hungary, Spain, Brazil, Argentina, Iceland, and the Russian Federation.
- Governed by an elected board of directors; administered by a professional staff at Harmony Hall in Nashville, Tennessee.

### **Motto**

- "Keep The Whole World Singing"

### **Founding**

- First meeting: April 11, 1938 at the Roof Garden of the Tulsa Club in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

### **Vision and Mission**

- "Everyone in Harmony"
- "Enriching Lives through Singing"

### **Activities of the organization**

- Education of members and the general public in music appreciation, particularly barbershop singing.
- Advocacy at all levels of the society to keep recreational and social singing an important part of our culture.
- Charitable projects on a local and national basis, including many funded through Harmony Foundation, the Society's official charity (note: Sing Canada Harmony in Canada).
- Public performances enhance community cultural life, preserve the art form, and bring cheer to all.

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- Quartets and choruses contribute more than 100,000 man-hours per year singing for more than half a million people at churches, schools, hospitals, senior centers, etc.
- Music publishing and distribution of cassettes, compact discs, DVDs and videotapes for entertainment and education. The Society has over 4500 titles in catalogue and distributes the music through [shop.barbershop.org](http://shop.barbershop.org) and Hal Leonard Corporation.
- Contests in quartet and chorus singing at local, regional, and international levels.
- International champions named in chorus, quartet, and college-quartet divisions at international convention each July; international seniors champions named at the midwinter convention each January.

## **Education programs**

- Harmony University, a week-long school held each summer, brings together more than 600 Barbershoppers from around the world with a world-class faculty of vocal coaches, arrangers, choreographers, and educators to explore all facets of the barbershop hobby. HU offers special tracks for directors, quartets, and general barbershop singing. Continuing Education Units available for music educators.
- Regional Chapters Operations Training Seminars teach members how to run local chapters, recruit members, develop musically and better serve their communities.
- Visits by staff music specialists enhance performance and education programs in local chapters.
- The Society publishes manuals and produces videos on vocal techniques, singing skills and chapter administration.

## **Youth Outreach Programs**

- The Youth in Harmony program is designed to preserve the art form by introducing it to a new generation of singers.
- Harmony Explosion camps give high school students and teachers the opportunity to explore harmony with their peers.
- The Bank of America Collegiate Barbershop Quartet Contest selects a national champion from colleges across the continent.
- Educator outreach introduces barbershop to music teachers at all levels. Society has formed partnerships with music education and choral organizations, such as American Choral Directors Association and National Association for Music Education at all levels to advocate for recreational and social singing for life.
- Many Barbershoppers are active in their communities, in parent-teacher associations, in arts advocacy groups and in education coalitions, working to preserve education in school curricula.

## **Charitable and community activities**

- Harmony Foundation, Inc., is the Society's official charity. Donations made to the Foundation fund special projects of the Barbershop Harmony Society, including Directors College scholarships, Harmony Explosion Camps, Heritage Hall Museum, and Barbershop Harmony.
- Sing Canada Harmony provides grants to promote music education and appreciation in Canada.
- Barbershoppers donate sizable amounts of money and time, and numerous performances to local charitable activities and vocal music education programs in their communities.

## **What is barbershop harmony?**

- Four-part, unaccompanied, close-harmony singing, with melody in the second voice, called the "lead."
- Tenor (counter-tenor voice) harmonizes above the lead singer, bass sings the lowest harmonizing notes, and the baritone provides in-between notes, to form consonant, pleasing chords.
- Barbershop is a "melting pot" product of African-American musical devices, European hymn-singing culture, and an American tradition of recreational music.

- Melodies in the vocal and skill range of the average singer, with lyrical emphasis on simple, heartfelt emotions; love, friendship, mother, moon & June & the person next door.



On behalf of the Land O' Lakes District, I welcome you!

Here is a brief overview of our District:

- Land O' Lakes (LOL) is one of the Barbershop Harmony Society's 17 Districts
- LOL is a very large District geographically, ~714,000 sq miles.
- The District is divided into 2 Regions - West and East. The River City Sound (Winnipeg) Chapter is part of the West Region. Nearby chapters in the West Region are Regina, Bismarck-Mandan, Western Dakota, Fargo-Moorhead, Fergus Falls and Thunder Bay.
- Our District's President is Mike Lietke and West Region's Vice President is Justin McCullough.
- LOL District has 37 chapters with ~972 members spread across Wisconsin, Minnesota, North Dakota, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and North Western Ontario (3 Canadian and 34 American chapters).
- You will be receiving the link to LOL's newsletter, The Pitch Piper. The current and past issues can be accessed on the LOL website's home page: <http://www.loldistrict.org/aboutus/pitchpiper.html>.
- LOL District will hold the 2024 Fall Convention in October 11-12 in Minneapolis MN. It includes chorus and quartet contests. The Barbershop Harmony Society has a 2024 Midwinter Convention in New York City on January 9 – 14 and an International Convention in Cleveland OH on June 30 - July 7.
- LOL's Leadership Training Academy, for chapter officers and general members, is held on January 5 and 6 in River Falls, WI. The Society holds a week long Harmony University in Denver CO from July 28 to August 4.
- Visit our District's website <http://www.loldistrict.org/> and Society's website to get better acquainted. And there is so much more!

If you have any questions about our Land O' Lakes District and/or the Barbershop Harmony Society, please feel free to contact me.

In harmony,  
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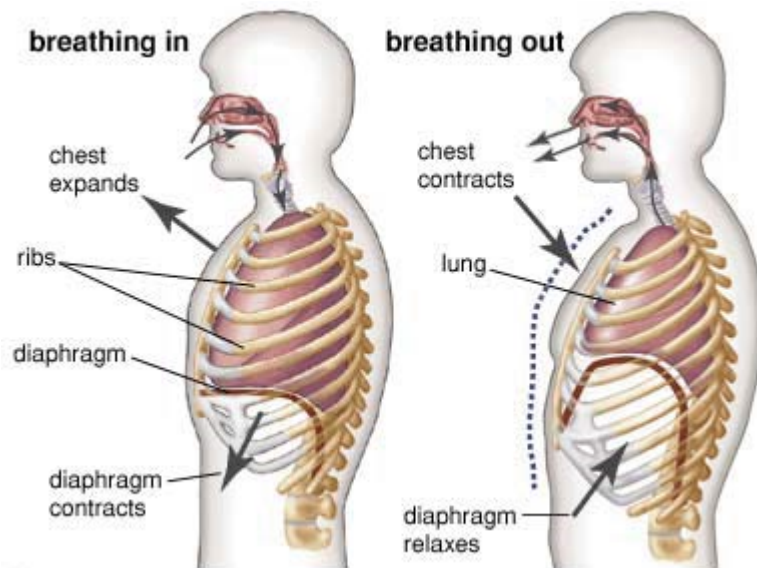
# Learn To Sing Better

## Week 1

### Breathing and Posture

#### What to Remember:

- The singer sustains their voice.
- Use the diaphragm to expel air, not the rib cage
- The diaphragm works, and the rib cage accommodates.
- Breathing should be a relaxation exercise. Refresh and revitalize!
- Breath gives life, and it is free of charge!



#### Techniques:

- Posture
  - Feet planted firmly on the ground for support.
  - Raise hands high above head to practice setting rib cage in place.
  - Spine straight, as if dangled by a puppet thread.
  - Breathe in, and the stomach expands. Breathe out, and the stomach contracts.
  - Energy in the face!
- Breathing
  - Breathe on the vowel!
  - Breathe low and deep, visualizing the diaphragm.
  - With rib cage in place, take expanding breath, and exhale through a dime space as long as you can. Feel the burn!
  - Practice this several times a day, until you subconsciously keep your rib cage in place.

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# Learn To Sing Better

## Week 2

### Resonance and the Soft Palate

#### What to Remember:

- Resonate = make louder
- Used to beautify every tone
- Not training you to be a pop singer, but a sustained excellent singer
- 4 resonance areas
  - Pharyngeal Register (Low): usually used to talk – produced by the pharynx – can easily employ mucus membrane and cause damage to throat.
  - Soft Palate (Medium): blends into others, but utilized often. Identified as the soft, smooth, dome-like portion of the roof of the mouth.
  - Hard Palate (Medium High): used for brighter, higher pitches and more forward singing. Identified by the flat, rough portion of the roof of the mouth just behind the teeth.
  - Turbine or Sinus Register (High): used only for the highest pitches within the full voice. Utilizes the hollow sinus to resonate the sound.

#### Techniques:

- Vowel sounds that activate the registers naturally. Songs can be practiced on these vowel sounds!
  - Pharyngeal – Ahh
  - Soft Palate – Gaww
  - Hard Palate – Yohh
- Vocal Exercises
  - Ming-ming-ming-Ahhhh
  - Visualize yourself in a different age group when you sing
  - Employ a different character voice
  - Visualize the transition from register to register; move forward!



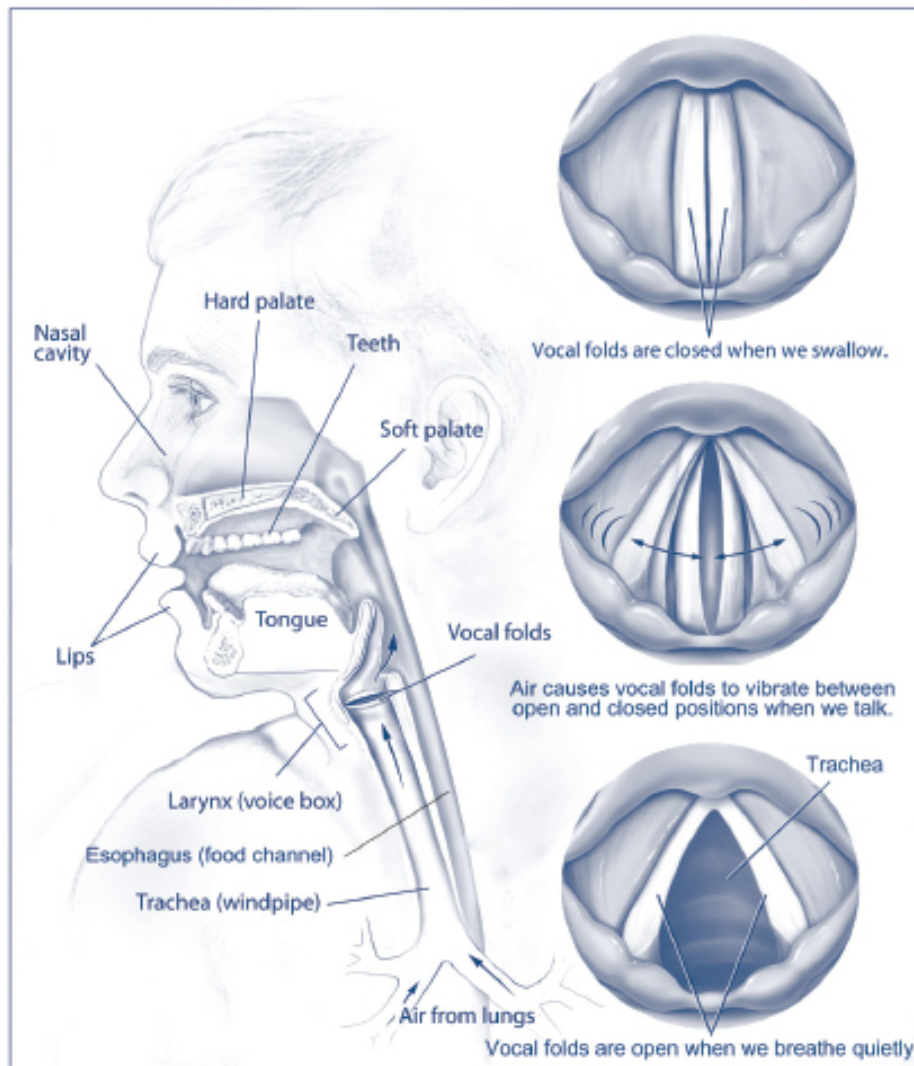
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## Week 3

### Resonance and the Soft Palate (continued)



#### What to Remember:

- Resonance is what can allow a singer to be heard in both loud and soft singing.
- A great mechanic fixes more than one type of car; they can work on any type. A great singer is the same. We want to become great singers in all styles of music, and a strong concept of register is the key!

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# Learn To Sing Better

## Week 4

### Vowels and Diphthongs

#### What to Remember:

- Production
  - Vowels are the basis of singing. When you sing we almost exclusively focus on the color of the vowel.
  - When sound is produced, your vocal folds vibrate and flip.
    - Middle C is 226 vibrations per second.
  - At the onset of the vowel, you want to avoid the “vocal plosive”. Air is produced, and then the sound can start.
  - Vocal folds vibrate faster and get tighter as you go higher. This can trigger your other upper muscles to tighten up as well, limiting your voice. Breath support is the key!
- Preparation
  - In addition to a strong breath, several elements are to be considered before the production of sound.
  - The 5 core vowel sounds are Eh, Ee, Ah, Oh, and Oo. Each of these vowel sounds is prepared the same way.
    - Breathing on the vowel (space generated in the throat)
    - Color definition (register selection)
    - Tallness of the mouth (space in the mouth)
- Diphthongs
  - The diphthong, also known as a **gliding vowel**, refers to two adjacent vowel sounds occurring within the same syllable.
    - Boy
    - Highway
    - Cow
  - Typically sung 90% on the first vowel and 10% on the second vowel.
    - However, in the barbershop style, this can vary greatly
  - Diphthongs are a cornerstone of competitive choruses, as they require a great deal of discipline to perform well.

#### Techniques:

- “May We Fal-low You” – Maintenance of the Core Sound – WATCH THE CONDUCTOR!!
- Openness of the throat, tallness of the mouth – Prepare the vowel when you sing!

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## Week 5

### Vocal Range and Dynamics

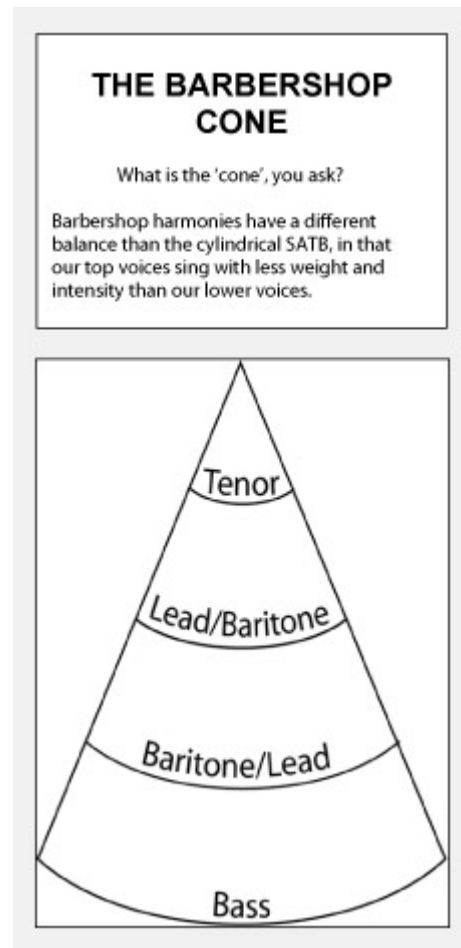
#### What to Remember:

- Most amateur singers do not utilize their full vocal range when they sing. There is usually a lot of room for expansion!
- Don't push! It won't help and may cause damage!
- As you ascend in pitch, different registers are activated. The goal is to blend them together seamlessly.
- If you can't hit a pitch you are aiming for, here are some potential solutions
  - Adjust the placement of the pitch in the register
  - Use air that is driven from the diaphragm
  - Keep your air flow consistent as you sing

Effective range expansion has EVERYTHING to do with resonance! Review weeks two and three!

#### Techniques:

- Vocal sirens and the use of the falsetto – Use of quick, clean consonants
- Visualization of louds and softs – Smooth transitions from one resonance type to the next – Paint the picture of the musical phrase
- ENERGY IN THE SOFTS!



# Learn To Sing Better

## Week 6

### The Style of Barbershop

#### What to Remember:

- Elements that define the Barbershop Style musically
  - Four Part Harmony
  - Consonant Chords
  - The Barbershop Seventh
  - Doubling of the root or the fifth in the chord
  - Song Embellishment
- Elements that define the Barbershop Style Culturally
  - Choruses and Quartets
  - Welcoming and Exciting Rehearsals
  - Contests and Conventions
  - Coaching
  - Mixing of endless original styles and types of songs
  - Chapter Shows and Afterglows
  - Community outreach and spreading the message!
  - Meaningful bonds

TAGS! TAGS! TAGS!

#### *Proud History:*

*Barbershop today is a lot like barbershop in 1938, except the singers are yonger, the music is hotter, and its reach is much broader. The things we love about barbershop – the close harmony, the friendship, the "haven from daily cares" – stretch all the way back to 1938, when O. C. Cash and Rupert Hall invited some friends in Tulsa, OK for a little songfest.*



#### Techniques:

- ♪ Tags and warm-ups performed in 4-part harmony
- ♪ Pole Cat Songs
- ♪ Listening to great quartets and choruses
- ♪ Attending district and international BHS Conventions
- ♪ Becoming the member of a BHS chorus, like ours!