



The Central States District of the
Barbershop Harmony Society

The Serenade

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Want to be in a Barbershop Quartet?



Chris Hallam

*Bass: 2006 International
Champion Quartet –
Vocal Spectrum*

retrospect, the definition wasn't nearly as life changing as his initial question. We didn't know at the time how life changing it would be.

We all came to Lindenwood by different avenues. I arrived there because it was close to home, but still provided the opportunity to

“Want to be in a barbershop quartet?” When people ask us how we came to be, our narrative usually takes us to this question. A young and enthusiastic Jonny Moroni asked this to both myself, and our lead, Eric Dalbey, albeit at different times. Both of us responded with a question of our own, “What is a barbershop quartet?” Jonny was quick to give us the definition, and we both said, “sure,” but in

experience college with the same freedom a school a little bit further away offered. During my freshman year, in the fall of 1998, I needed a fine arts credit, and while I had some musical proclivities, at this point in my life I hadn't pursued them much. I wasn't super thrilled about enrolling in the choir, but I was a better singer than I was an artist, so I begrudgingly signed up. At the first rehearsal, I was enthralled by the director. I had never studied under someone so passionate, charismatic, and articulate. He had the ability to communicate exactly what he wanted and the group would make it happen musically. The director was Jim Henry, and because of him, I signed up every semester from there on out.



Jonny came to Lindenwood because of Jim and his own experience with the Ambassador's of Harmony. The same can be said for Eric and by fall of 2002, Vocal Spectrum was formed with a different tenor. After some convincing by Eric and Jonny at various BHS events, Tim Waurick decided to come to Lindenwood as well. And in the fall of 2003, Tim joined VS as our full-time tenor. It became immediately clear that he was the missing piece and as they say, the rest is history.

The 2004 International Contest was held in Louisville, Kentucky and because it was the first year that the "International Collegiate Quartet Contest" allowed all members of the quartet to be BHS members, we had our eyes set on competing. At this point, all four of us were singing in Jim's premier a cappella group at Lindenwood, "Voices Only," so every rehearsal functioned like a coaching session. We would quite literally take the concepts we were learning in practice and transfer them to our quartet. Our sound became cleaner by the day. On top of that, we were able to work with Jim every day - in between classes or after classes had finished, and this allowed for a greatly expedited grasp of the craft. All of this access to amazing resources

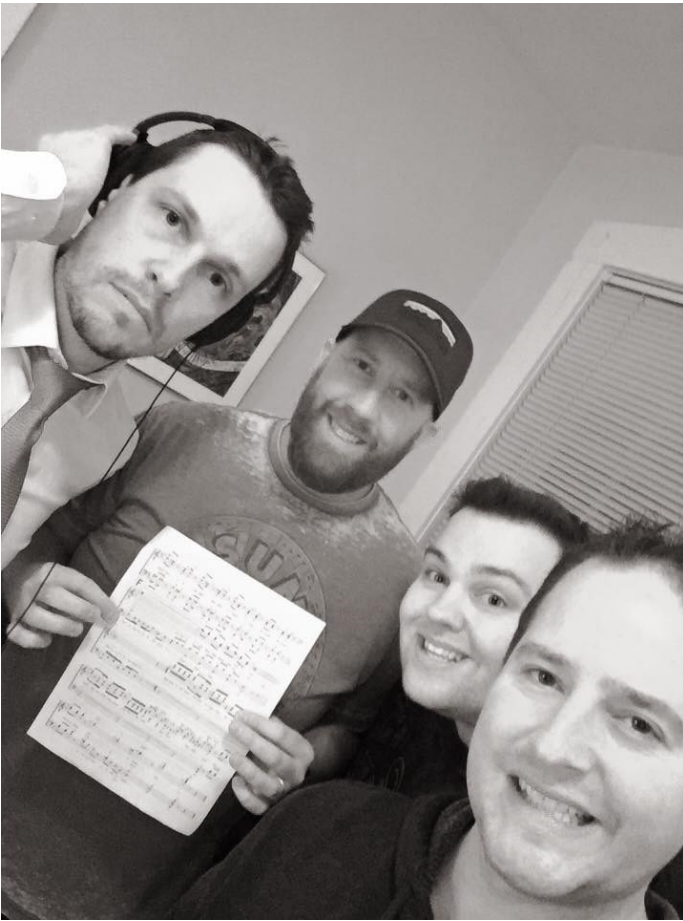


allowed us to sing well very quickly. Outside of constant rehearsing, we were singing local gigs at least 4 days/nights a week. This put us in front of a live audience frequently which helped us hone our stage persona and get comfortable singing live.

The 2004 Central States District prelims were held in Overland Park, Kansas. We were optimistic but didn't really have an idea of where we'd place or what we'd score. Up to that point, any contest that one of us had competed in (including one contest with VS with our original tenor), never brought a score higher than the 70s. In fact, Tim was the only member of VS that had ever competed in a quartet at International. We hit the stage to sing our set and it felt pretty good, but we'll never forget the reaction from the audience. It was our first taste of what a real barbershop audience gives to the performers for a job well done. It's addictive. We scored 82.3% and we were ecstatic.

In July of that same year we headed to Louisville with high hopes and for the first time, expectations. Before Prelims we didn't know what to expect, but now, we had gotten our first taste of the internal conflict that contest can bring. On the one hand, we did our absolute best to drown out the noise and just sing the plan, but we also had to deal with the expectation of where we would place. This conflict would proliferate in us through the 2005 International Convention in Salt Lake City. In 2004 however, it played in our favor and we won our first and only Collegiate Quartet Contest with a score of 84.3%. This was and continues to be the highest score





ever awarded in this particular contest. A feat which we're still proud of and every year at the International Convention before the Varsity Quartet contest results are revealed we jokingly ask ourselves, does the record fall tonight?

The year we were Collegiate Champs was a whirlwind. We went from being relatively unknown to the next upcoming thing, and we relished in it. We became super active on the show circuit, singing roughly 35-40 weekends a year over the next few years. 2004 also brought us to our Central States District Championship in Omaha, Nebraska. I was newly married, and couldn't have asked for a better partner to go through this with. Being away was tough, but it was met with such grace and encouragement from Megan. I feel truly grateful. As Lexi and Elizabeth have also joined us along the way, the same grace and encouragement still exists.

The 2004-2005 show season saw a lot of "firsts" including trips abroad to sing for our BHS affiliates and establish what has become very strong

bonds with our friends from faraway places. We have an amazing organization which creates partnerships that no ocean can stand in the way of.

The 2005 International Convention was held in Salt Lake City. As mentioned above, the expectation that we had put on ourselves for this contest, in retrospect, was probably unhealthy. We were still singing almost every day, and now with traveling and performing almost every weekend, we had extremely high hopes for what this contest would bring. It seems funny to write this now, but I believe at the time, we all viewed anything less than 5th to be a disappointment. We wanted to medal our first year. Salt Lake City taught us that hard work and preparation are vital, but at the end of the day, there's only so much you can control. For reasons I won't go into in this article (if you know, you know) we didn't medal. We came in 6th. It seems petty at this juncture to say that 6th at your first international men's contest was a disappointment, but it was. Over the years we've come to grips with why this happened and while I think the natural order of people is to make excuses as to why we didn't achieve the way we expected to achieve, but the reality is that Realtime, Max Q, Metropolis, Riptide, and OC Times all sang better than we did. These quartets were giants of the day and losing to them is not something to be ashamed of, but, in 2005, we were bummed. That said, a valuable lesson was learned and we would never again let the anticipation of a contest placement rule our psyche.

As we prepped for the 2006 Contest, things quieted down in our quartet world. We were no longer the next up and coming thing, we hadn't medaled at our first contest and we conceded the spotlight to the next in line. As we reconciled all of this in our minds we began to shift our thought process from winning, to putting the best product we could on stage, and wherever the chips fell, we'd accept that. Our work ethic hadn't changed, but some of the background noise had quieted down, so we got back to the grind.

That spring still brought a lot of shows which allowed us to connect with audiences around



the country and stay loose on stage and on the home front we were rehearsing multiple times a week. The Salt Lake City International Convention had brought us our first two custom David Wright charts, Cruella de Vil, and Small Fry. In Indianapolis, we'd continue with these but we were also hoping to add two more. We received "On the Street Where You Live" in the Spring of 2006 and we were really hoping for one more from David before the start of the convention. In addition to those songs, Jim Henry also did his first custom arrangement for us with "Cheer Up Charlie" from "Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory." Our plan was to round things out with "South Rampart Street Parade" which had become a staple for us since winning the collegiate contest. David was able to get us a second arrangement before the contest, but if memory serves me correctly, it arrived 13 days

before the start of the contest. "I Want to be Like You" from the Jungle Book would now be our sixth song. Today, if we were to get a song so late in the game I'm not sure we would've pressed on with it, but in our 20's we were fearless, so we went for it. We rehearsed every day during the last two weeks of June, with Jim coaching us for many of these sessions. Things felt good - really good. I have a distinct memory of sitting in Jim's front room at his home and him telling us, "Have you thought about what you'll do if you win this contest?" At that point, we couldn't answer that question because we hadn't even considered that. From our perspective, a jump from sixth to first was a monumental task, and with the new-found perspective we were going into Indianapolis with, the idea of winning wasn't in our vernacular. What we failed to grasp in that moment were Jim's prophetic words and I'm personally thankful for our aloofness, because it allowed for a good head space heading into convention.

Our arrival in Indy was pretty quiet. We all crammed into one hotel room a good distance from the venue and because we were singing early in the first round, we went to bed early. Our 6:00 AM alarm was preceded by a 4:00 AM fire alarm, but we paid this no mind. We had a job to do, and when the time came to hit the stage, we were ready. We sang "Small Fry" and "Cruella" in Round 1. Things went off without a hitch, and we all came off the stage thinking, "Okay, that was



pretty good." We were still able to drown out the noise. A couple of days off followed and then it was time for Round 2. "Charlie" and "Rampart" were the choices. "Cheer Up Charlie" is an amazing arrangement. Sweet and gentle. A solid reminder of what's important in life. Like a calm parent providing wisdom to their own kids. It didn't require the vocal gymnastics of our other arrangements, but if you go back and listen to the recordings, it was by far our best singing in the whole contest. "Rampart" followed, and it was fine, but you could definitely feel the vibes of, "been there done that," and as such, we knew that if we were to compete next year it would be time for something new.

At this point in the week people were starting to talk. "I have you guys at the top," and "You may pull it off this year" became the narrative after the second round. The noise started to creep back in, but we battled. Saturday night brought the final round, and quite frankly what was and still is the biggest night on the BHS calendar. We knew we had great musical vehicles in our possession. All we had to do was execute. That seemed a little less problematic on "Street" because we'd had it for a while, but "Monkey," that was a different story. 14 days prior we hadn't even seen it, and now we were going to close out our portion of the biggest night in barbershop with it. Things continued to get noisy. We intentionally don't listen to other groups backstage, because, as anyone who's ever been in a similar situation can attest, everyone

sounds great! Everyone sounds better than you! It's not worth the head game. So, we hit the stage not knowing what we were up against, but desperately trying to put the best product on stage. "Street" came first and then against all odds, we managed to pull off 'The Monkey Song.' The crowd reaction at our conclusion was infectious, but our own assessment of the round was more mixed. It was fine, but not stellar, and we wanted it to be stellar. But, we were thankful it was finished. There was nothing left to do now but wait.

The call off at any contest is a harrowing experience. We had no idea where we'd land,

and to be honest, that was okay. We felt like we had done everything we could do and it was now out of our hands. The MC's announced 5th place - Flipside, 4th place - Metropolis, 3rd place - OC Times. There was a brief pause before 2nd place to explain that the spread between 1st and 2nd was 6 points, and then Max Q's name was called as Silver Medalists. We've always tried to be humble so before they announced the 2006 Champions I remember thinking, "Oh my word, maybe we won! I don't think we came in 6th again." And then it happened, we were named that year's International Champion. It's a feeling that I can't articulate to you in words. It's simply the best feeling and we were and still are so humbled.

Once you win the International Quartet Contest, you have to go back to the drawing board and figure out ways to reinvent yourself. To lay out new goals and ensure you get to the root of why you started this to begin with. I think the biggest challenge with competing is that if your ultimate goal is just to win, it makes it really hard to keep moving forward once you've achieved that. We enjoyed a great run to the Championship, but it happened so fast, we were definitely at risk of burning out. So, we decided to just keep doing what we had always done. We kept singing on shows allowing us to connect with people and see the world. We learned and continue to learn new music, although life has made this a bit slower of a process than it used to be. We've been fortunate to record 5 albums up to this point, and are currently working on our 6th. If there's any advice or wisdom in what makes a good quartet great, I believe it would be this, keep pressing on. Figure out what you did to get good, and keep doing that. Continue to push the envelope of musicality to the next level, and try to get better every year. That's simple advice for sure, but that's all we did.

In 2023 at the convention in Louisville we had the honor of being inducted into the BHS Hall of Fame (Louisville's a good city for us!). This is given to individuals or groups that have made a significant impact on our organization. It still seems weird to write that because, if you ask us if we believe we've made a significant impact on

the BHS, I think we'd have a hard time answering that. It's true that we really enjoy making quality music, but more than that, we just enjoy being together. And that's what it's about. Working hard and striving for a strong and consistent product but also stopping to respect the journey and the people you're on it with. The impact made by Vocal Spectrum came as a result of living life together in a meaningful and positive way, and for that, I'm truly proud.

Twenty years is a long time, and as I close this out reflecting on the 20th anniversary of our Collegiate and District Championships, I'm struck

by the impact the BHS has made on our group. It's allowed us to see the world, become recording artists, sing live for thousands of people, and most importantly, make lifelong friends. We're thankful for supportive families who've assimilated into our world and cheered us on from the sidelines allowing us to reap the glory. They are truly selfless people and we're better because they're in our lives. I don't know what the future holds, but I do know that we currently have no plans of stopping. We're still recording, we love singing live, and we're still best friends, so here's to the next 20 years!

Membership is key to successful 2025



Don Fuson

Membership

and especially the leaders in whatever role you have for 2025, the opportunity to learn, discuss, share, and plan at our Leadership Academy, to be held in the Kansas City area on Saturday, January 11, 2025. Stay tuned for more information from the web site and future Serenade editions.

By now, every chapter should have elected some new, also some returning, leaders for your local chapters. MEMBERSHIP is the key to driving a successful plan into 2025 and beyond. MEMBERSHIP is NOT a static equilibrium, but is a moving target for local leadership to understand and embrace.

CSD will give any chapter member,

So what is the "most important" element for you to consider? Is there just one "most important" issue? Should not the chapter board and all of the committees expect to modify some planning as the year unfolds? Each of the elements should be on a regular review, even if only for "future" reference.

Why did that new member come, sing, and join? What happened to the listening of expectations of that former member that became disengaged, and quietly stepped away? RETENTION and DEVELOPMENT in various forms is one of the big keys for a continual growth for your community performances, and individual members.

We often find out, regrettably, a bit about a former member from an obit. What does it take to find out a little bit more about our fellow singers, other than the part they sing? Take the time to unlock some hidden talents, and unstated desires for some new singing and performing experiences. It will improve everyone's life.

Tips to Finish the Year on a High Note



Brett Randolph

*Executive Vice
President*

As the end of the year approaches, chapters often find themselves looking for ways to close out the year on a high note. This period presents a unique opportunity to reinforce their mission, engage supporters, and set the stage for future success. Here are several strategies chapters can implement to finish the year strong:

1. Reflect and Evaluate: Begin by assessing the progress made throughout the year. Review key performance indicators, evaluate the success of various programs, and identify areas for improvement. This reflection will provide valuable insights and help in setting realistic goals for the coming year.
2. Launch a Year-End Fundraising Campaign: The holiday season is a prime time for fundraising as people are often in a giving mood. Create a compelling campaign that highlights the year's achievements and outlines the impact of donations. Utilize storytelling to connect emotionally with potential donors, and consider offering matching donations or challenges to incentivize giving.
3. Engage with Stakeholders: Reach out to your supporters, volunteers, and chapter members to express gratitude for their contributions. Share success stories and

updates on how their involvement has made a difference. Personalized thank-you notes, phone calls, or video messages can strengthen relationships and encourage continued support.

4. Leverage Social Media and Digital Platforms: Increase your chapter's visibility by sharing engaging content on social media. Highlight the impact of your work, share testimonials, and post updates on ongoing projects.
5. Strengthen Partnerships: Collaborate with other chapters, businesses, or community arts groups to amplify your efforts. Joint initiatives can increase resources and reach a broader audience. Consider co-hosting events or launching collaborative campaigns to maximize impact.
6. Plan for the Future: Develop a strategic plan for the upcoming year. Set clear goals, outline actionable steps, and allocate resources effectively. Involve chapter members in the planning process to ensure diverse perspectives and buy-in.
7. Celebrate Achievements: Host an end-of-year celebration to recognize the hard work and dedication of your chapter members. Highlight significant milestones and accomplishments, and use this opportunity to motivate and inspire continued commitment to the cause.

By implementing these strategies, chapters can effectively close out the year on a positive note, reinforcing their mission and laying a solid foundation for future success. Remember, the end of the year is not just a time for reflection but also a chance to renew energy and enthusiasm for the important work that lies ahead.

CDD Report from Round Table Discussion



Larry Monson

*Chorus Director
Development*

During the Fall Convention, The CDD held a Round Table Discussion for the purpose of sharing experiences in the responsibilities of the Musical Direction of a local chapter beyond the waving of the hand! Four statements were given to each person on the panel two weeks prior to the convention for discussion at the Convention. 1. Describe your experience in

building a Musical Team and who's involved or if you have one? 2. Who selects the music to be rehearsed each week? How many tunes are ready for performance each year? How many of arrangements will be new? How many arrangements are retired? 3. Do you share performances with other Barbershop Chorus, Community Ensembles, School Ensembles, Churches, and for local charities? Musical Director Scott Spilker. From Beatrice Homestead Harmonizers, Musical Director Cliff Huot, from the Viborg Tri-Valley Chorus, Assistant Director, John Marshall from the Old Capital Chorus, and Musical Director Matt Webber from the Smorgaschorus, were on the principal panel, however Musical Director Micheal Tate, from Men of Harmony, joined us.

team members beyond the Director were responsible for directing a few tunes as well as some rehearsal warmups plus input in music repertory suggestions and auditions if needed. 2. Music selections for the year and building a performance repertory had a great discussion that included pieces for summer church performances, Themed Spring Show & Christmas concerts and Festivals, as well as competition preparations for contest. 5-6 new repertory pieces for the year; 4-5 repertory pieces being put in the retired category, (however some might return again several years later); with 12 ready pieces in the rep plus those new pieces when ready. Editors note: superb sharing. OMG 3. Outreach to the local communities was important for these chapter choruses, beyond their formal concerts/shows. Each director proudly shared aspects of their successful reputations with local schools, community, churches, and charities. From Metro Wichita, to University Town Iowa City, to midsized rural community of Beatrice, NE and small town Viborg, South Dakota, all have their own uniqueness for The Joy of Singing. Indeed, the Round Table was an amazing sharing experience from these gifted Musical Directors. Larry Monson, CDD VP

1. Music team sizes varied from the Director only to 1 - 2 others on the Musical Team. The music

Fall Contest Recap



Carter Combs

Contests and Judging

seeing that many top-quality quartets in a single district contest!

Fortino Family continues their Winning Ways: New (?) quartet **Fortino & Co.** with Matthew, Anthony, and Mark Fortino, along with "Co." Shaun Whisler on bass, took top honors in the overall District Quartet contest. And old(?) quartet **12th Street Rag** came back on the 30th anniversary of their District win to take the Seniors Quartet championship, with Micah Jeppesen, Mark & John Fortino, and Barry Moore. They will represent CSD in the Seniors Quartet International Contest this January in San Antonio.

(Breaking news – just before Serenade deadline, two more of our CSD quartets have received Wildcard invitations to the Midwinter Seniors Quartet contest as well... **Vintage Vibe**, and **JAZZ!** They are the 2 top-scoring Wildcard quartets. We may very well have 3 CSD quartets in the top 10!)

The rest of our CSD Quartet Top 5:

2nd - **Ephen Steven** – Steve Azevedo, Chaz McPeek, Dave Carlisle, and Stephen Day

3rd - **Venture** – Melissa VanHousen, Eva Vargo,

Our annual autumn gathering in Lawrence this year was one for the record books! A record-tying 36 quartets registered to compete. Although 5 ultimately had to scratch, we finished the weekend with a record-smashing 23 quartets who scored better than a 70 average! Our judging panel was astonished, and none could recall ever

Melissa Gillespie, and Janet Velazquez

4th – **Well Played** – Natalie Falkner, Hanna Pruessner, Dan Bodtke, and Kyle Kurtz

5th – **DoubleStuf** – Derek Griffe, Matt Smith, Jonathan Andrews, and Nater Imperato

To round out the quartet contests: **Scholastic** made a splash, winning both the Super Novice and Novice awards, with newcomers Adam Schmidt, Jayden Humphrey, Hared Pector, and Michael Fibelkorn.

Family quartets were also a theme this fall. In addition to **Fortino & Co.**, new quartet **Side By Side** had a plethora of Pringles: Susan, Hailey, and Chris, plus Erin Odell on baritone. And **The Full Nelsons** were completely full of Nelsons: Elizabeth, Tabby, Mike, and Kevin. Hooray for family harmony!

Chorus Contests: CSD will continue our strong chorus presence at BHS International, qualifying 4 outstanding groups to represent us at the Denver 2025 Convention!

1st – **Central Standard** – dir. Rob Mance – Plateau IV & District Champs

2nd – **Visions of Harmony** – dir. Erin Odell – Most Improved Plateau IV Chorus

3rd – **The Recruits** – dir. Keegan Eich & Eric Dalbey – Plateau II Champs

4th – **SmorgasChorus** – dir. Matt Webber

5th – **Springfield Sound** – dir. Brian Smith & Paul Olguin – Most Improved, & Plateau I Champs

Old Capital Chorus, under Chad Knipfer, took a well-deserved Most Improved Plateau II Award. Surprisingly, due to illness and other circumstances, there ended up being no Plateau III competitors.

Remember, we have moved all our District-level contests to the Fall, so plan ahead, and we hope to see you all back in Lawrence, Oct 10-11, 2025!

Member Spotlight



Matt Weber

Director

SmorgasChorus
Wichita, Kan.

Matt Weber has been a barbershopper in the Central States District for 25 years. As a young man, Matt was always fond of vocal harmony. "As early as seven years old, I loved to listen to classic rock groups like Queen, Extreme, Def Leppard and marvel at their vocal harmonies. My Father, Eddie, introduced me to the music of Marty Robbins. *The Ballad of a Gunfighter* became one of my favorite albums. This music,

too, is full of beautiful harmony." said Matt.

In high school, Matt joined the Wichita West High School choir his Junior year. Here, he was introduced to choral, jazz, theater and opera music. His senior year, Matt was given the opportunity to sing in a three-part acapella male trio during the musical *Hello Dolly!* "Singing the baritone part was a thrilling experience for me and sparked a desire in me to find more opportunities to sing." said Matt.

In college, Matt was introduced to the Butler Community College SmorgasChords quartet. This group, directed by Valerie Leopold Mack, re-auditions members every year to perform



throughout the El Dorado and Wichita area. "This was my first taste of true barbershop music; *Hello, Mary Lou, Coney Island*



Babe, PoleCats and the Classics Tags Book were all introduced to me at BCC." said Matt.

After Butler, Matt began attending Wichita State University where he joined a quartet to compete in the CSD College Quartet Contest in Lincoln, Nebraska. This was Matt's first opportunity to hear "A level" quartets like *Sibling Rivalry*, *3 Men and a Melody*, and *12th Street Rag*. After this inspiring experience Matt was on fire for Barbershop Harmony. "I started actively looking for barbershop sheet music and albums everywhere I went. The Gas House Gang, Platinum, Boston Common and the Acoustix became part of my regular listening playlist." said Matt.

As a budding music educator, Matt realized that barbershop was going to become part of his teaching curriculum as well as a fabulous tool for ear training. He joined the Wichita Air Capital Chorus, helping with their music team, warm-ups, sectional work and Youth in Harmony events. Matt became a regular at CSD conventions,



CSD/RMD Spring Convention
Omaha, NE - April 2012



chapter meetings and shows. "I would follow around any quartet that I could. I would watch how they rehearsed and performed. I would go into coaching and evaluation sessions just to see what kind of feedback they got from the judges. I started to learn so much about the craft. It was an exciting time for me!" said Matt.

During this time, Matt was introduced to Lance Heilmann. A retired presentation judge, Lance was known for his work with several International Champion quartets (Rural Route 4, Jokers Wild, Yesteryear & Marquis). Lance took Matt under his wing and taught him about performance, musicality and singing. When Lance passed away in 2010, Matt was gifted all of Lance's sheet music, performance and interpretation plans. "Lance was a huge influence on me in my formative years. He taught me how to connect with the audience and to be genuine on the stage. Receiving his sheet music was very impactful to me. Lance saw my potential and chose to nurture it." said Matt.

In 2006, Matt competed in his first CSD finalist quartet Wu (named after the Wichita State University mascot WuShock). This young foursome made an immediate impact at the convention which was being held in Wichita. A few years later, Matt joined a quartet called Prairie Fire. This cowboy themed group quickly became a mainstay on the stage at district conventions, chapter shows, and Youth in Harmony workshops. Matt's other quartets: Vox Populi, Ad Astra and current quartet Chordially Yours have

all been CSD quartet contest finalists.

In 2011, the Butler SmorgasChords alumni group got together to honor Valerie Lippoldt Mack for her years of service to the barbershop community. The group of thirty performed at the CSD Spring Convention in Wichita. "The audience absolutely loved our performance and the guys loved hanging out together. Shortly after this, we decided to become an official chapter of the Barbershop Harmony Society and the South Central Kansas SmorgasChorus was born." said Matt.

In 2012, the group competed in their first competition in Omaha, Nebraska winning the Plateau A Chorus Championship. This feat was repeated in 2013 and 2015. Soon, the group realized that they had the potential to become an international qualifier. With the help of great coaches like Rob Mance, Shawn Mondragon, and Kevin Keller, the SmorgasChorus qualified for the 2017 International Convention in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Since then, the SmorgasChorus has competed at International every year. "The SmorgasChorus mission is to enrich our world through barbershop harmony. We want to teach young people about barbershop harmony and the value of music as a lifelong art. We want to enrich our community with singing and we want to challenge all people to become their best musical selves." said Matt.

Matt has directed 18 youth in harmony festivals since 2008. He is currently a judging candidate in the musicality category. After 22 years of



teaching, Matt is proud to have directed all three of his children (Jordan 19, Natalie 16, and Lily 14) at Wichita Collegiate School. Jordan is an avid barbershopper and he is a member of the SmorgasChorus.

In conclusion, Matt said, "I love music. I feel like it is one of the most wonderful things in my life. I choose to honor and glorify God with this gift. Whether I'm directing a choir, singing in a quartet, instructing young people, or celebrating

others' achievements, barbershop has been my passion for a quarter of a century. I hope that I will continue to share this wonderful art form with all those around me."

Iowa chapters teaming up

Submitted by: Craig Patterson PI Chapter Communications

Black Hawk Metro's Proud Image Chorus has teamed up with River City Chorus from Mason City to perform the National Anthem at several venues around the state of Iowa. From events such as the Iowa Irish Fest in Waterloo, the North Iowa National Tractor Pull in Rockwell to Iowa Cubs, University of Northern Iowa Volleyball, and Black Hawk County's GOP Fund Raiser, the Choruses have showcased their passion of four-part harmony while giving tribute to our country. To cap off the year, they will be participating in the KCMR radio station Christmas show at NIACC in Mason City and present their own Benefit Christmas Concerts in both Waterloo and Clear Lake the middle of December.

High School Barbershop Festival Hosted by Central Standard

Submitted by: Duane Lawson, Central Standard Chorus

On September 24, 2024 Central Standard hosted their first High School Barbershop Harmony Festival in Kansas City. The festival had 93 students sign up from Oak Park High School, Harrisonville High School and was hosted at Winnetonka High School. The music educator from Oak Park is Chris Droegemueller from "3 Men & A Melody". Kip Mathew teaches at Harrisonville and Jason Elam teaches at Winnetonka. Kip and Jason sing in "Tornado Alley".

The teaching quartets were "Fission" from Central Standard and "Venture" from Vocal Standard. The clinician was Rob Mance and is the director of Central Standard and Vocal Standard. Time was limited to 3 hours, but the quartets were able to introduce 3 songs in total. One song for bass voices, one song for treble voices, and a SATB barbershop arrangement of "Stand by Me". The music educators and the students had a positive experience and Central Standard plans to expand the festival next year.

Blast From the Past: 3 Men & A Melody



Brian Bellof

Bass, 1998 CSD Quartet Champion, 3 Men & A Melody

3 Men & A Melody is the embodiment of harmony and friendship. The four men that were crowned district champs in 1998, were not the O.G. from CSD. It started out up at Northwest Missouri State University with a bunch of Sinfonians swooning the stairwells of all the dorms with harmonies from some old standards to the latest (of the early 90's) DooWop/Jazz Acapella. The first time we really got

organized as a competing quartet was back in 1993. Brian Bellof, Brad Stephens, Micheal Troyer, and Darren Parker entered the prelims as a collegiate quartet and qualified for that summer's international. Sooooo... they road



tripped their way up to Calgary for their first international experience. They met so many great people and sang in so many cool venues; it is easy to say they were hooked and hungry to do this every year possible. In '94 they competed again at international. This time in Pittsburgh. Brian was out of the country that summer, so another Brian (Bliss) sang in his place. He probably should have stuck around because they were honored with a silver medal that year behind The Real Deal.

1995 was tough. Darren moved onto different ventures and Micheal married and pursued a music career in Branson we needed to find some more singers if we were going to continue competing. Now enters Chris Droegemueller and Eric Derks. Chris was singing with Brad and Brian in the show choir on campus. He was an easy fit and eager to sing. Eric and his wife Jamey happened to be at one of our last gigs with Micheal. We



hung out for some time afterwards, sharing stories about NWMSU (Eric and Jamey are alumni) and the show choir (they were in that group as well) had some laughs and sang some tags. Next thing you know we are making plans for rehearsals, competitions, and possible gigs.

3 M&M had a hard time reaching the international stage as a big boy quartet competitor. They were learning new music and finding our identity but kept missing the mark for 3 years. In 1998 they reached another milestone of District Champions. There is nothing more heart wrenching, and breath snatching than waiting to NOT hear your name called when the announcer is calling off the top awards. But being district champs is one thing. Going to international is another. Try singing "Send in the Clowns" without losing it on a past champ's showcase, feeling your heartbreaking, seeing fellow district champs and friends in harmony qualify every year without you; but 3M&M didn't give up. In 2001, the elusive prize was finally reached. The international stage didn't know what it was in for, letting 3 M&M onto the stage. 3M&M qualified in the top twenty and the top



ten for over a decade. The highest accolade achieved was a top ten finalist at the 2004 international in Louisville. They have gone through a few other dimensional changes such as subbing in different tenors for a few years while Chris was taking care of business. A constant 3 M&M have always witnessed is the Barbershop Harmony Society audiences are some of the BEST in all the world! Wherever the quartet traveled, visited, and sang, the BHS crowds were always the most welcoming.



The 3M&M brotherhood have gone through so many life events; like Marriages, divorces, babies, grandbabies, family additions, family passings, and everything in between. They don't get together just to sing; they get together to share and laugh together. Harmony is the result. With 3 Men & A Melody, it is a lifelong bond between friends that doesn't keep track of time apart and space between. Who knows... You may see 3M&M sometime soon. Then, maybe you'll agree, and get that same "old friends are the BEST friends" feeling we get.

A Pathfinder Christmas



Ken VonSeggern

*VP Public Relations,
Pathfinders Chorus,
Fremont, Neb.*

PATHFINDER CHORUS CHRISTMAS CONCERT SCHEDULE - 2024 The Pathfinder Chorus of the Elkhorn Valley area from Bellevue to Fremont to Oakland Nebraska will be making four appearances this winter to help celebrate the Christmas season. We feature delightful secular music such as "The Man With The Bag", "Little Saint Nick", and "Merry Christmas, Darling", as well as some dramatic religious

numbers. One of our feature songs, "God Bless Us Everyone", arranged by our own Paul Hegstrom, is very powerful as it invites us to "come together one and all, in the giving spirit" to celebrate the

miracle of Christ's birth. "Mary Did You Know?" poses dramatic questions which ask Mary, did she know that her son was "heaven's perfect lamb". Our amazing arrangement of "What Child Is This?" brings to a whole new level our joy for the birth of "the babe, the son of God". We hope to see you at at least one of these events. 1 On Sunday, December 1st we will appear at the Midland University event, COLORS OF CHRISTMAS. This Midland event featuring many of the Midland music and dance students as well as the Pathfinder Chorus will begin at 7:30pm, December 1, 2024 at the Kimmel Theatre, 900 North Clarkson Street on the Midland Campus in Fremont, Nebraska. Our chorus has teamed with Midland at this event many times in the past and it's always one of the top appearances that we look forward to being a part of. Sunday, December 8th brings us to Oakland, Nebraska for a complete concert of Christmas music. We will be appearing at the First Evangelical Lutheran Church, 201 N Davis Avenue at 2:00pm. This hour or so concert will feature our full repertoire of secular and sacred Christmas music. The people of Oakland are some of our strongest supporters



in all that we do and we are very excited to perform in their community once again. We also have concerts scheduled for Saint Patrick's church in Fremont and Saint Wenceslaus Catholic Church in Omaha. For these concerts we are issuing a major "goose bump" warning as these churches have amazing acoustics which help lift the spirit of the season to heights your emotions may not have figured on. We are so thankful to be able to use their wonderful facilities to present our program. All of our concerts will request a free will offering in lieu of an admission charge. The wonderful people of Oakland will also offer food after the concert at the cost of a free will offering. Following is a listing of each of our concerts and the appearance at Midland University. Concert List 7:30pm Sunday

December 1st at Midland University's Kimmel Theatre, 900 North Clarkson Street, Fremont, Nebraska. No admission. 2:00pm Sunday December 8th at First Evangelical Lutheran Church, Oakland, Nebraska. Food afterward. Free will offering. 2:00pm Saturday, December 14th, 2024 in Saint Patrick's Catholic Church, 422 East Fourth Street, Fremont, Nebraska. Free will offering. 3:00pm, Sunday, December 15, 2024 at Saint Wenceslaus Catholic Church, 15353 Pacific Street, Omaha, Nebraska. Free will offering. Kenny Von Seggern Event coordinator Pathfinder Chorus



Dec 1 7:30 pm
 Kimmel Theatre at Midland University
 Midland University's Colors of Christmas
 Join With Midland Music Groups

Dec 8 2:00 pm
 First Evangelical Lutheran Church
 Oakland, Nebraska
 Full Concert

Dec 14 2:00 pm
 Saint Patrick's Catholic Church
 Fremont, Nebraska
 Full Concert

Dec 15 3:00 pm
 Cain Hall at St Wenceslaus Catholic Church
 Omaha, Nebraska
 Full Concert

Dominant Prep: Still best of friends



Matt Suellentrop

*Tenor, 2012 CSD
Quartet Champion,
Dominant Prep*

After a couple months of prep, we competed that fall in CSD and took 2nd place. Sights were then set on the 2012 college contest in Portland. We qualified that spring in Omaha and spent a lot of time

Dominant Prep officially began as a quartet in the fall of 2011. We all four were current students at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, and sang in various choral ensembles. Bryan and Matt had previously sung together in a campus quartet, while Bryan had seen one of Aaron's previous college quartets earlier that year. Nathan, well, was just a hot guy who sang well.

After a couple

rehearsing and coaching between then and July.

When the dust settled, we were thrilled with a 4th place bronze medal!

Especially Bryan, who also has 4th place college medals with Expedition and New Edition ;) Following

Portland, we

had a fantastic experience being the teaching quartet at the Mountaintown Harmony Explosion camp in Michigan. Shortly after that, Bryan had moved to Minnesota for grad school and joined a little known quartet called After Hours.



We still had a couple of shows booked and figured we might as well spend what little money we had as a quartet and have the fall contest in Altoona be the end of it. As fate would have it, we were blessed to walk away as district quartet champions. We did a few more shows during our reigning year, and officially retired after the 2013 fall convention.

We've gotten together a number of times at international conventions since then (most recently in Cleveland), mainly to

see how much of our rep we still remember. That percentage seems to get lower every time!

A lot of time has passed, and things have changed quite a bit since those college days. Bryan and Nathan have both won gold medals in After Hours and Quorum, respectively. Aaron won the college contest and made the top 20 in his last quartet, Frontier, and I've been blessed to sing with Fleet Street for the last eight years. Between the four of us, we have ten children and reside in Missouri, Michigan, Wisconsin and Georgia. While our time together was short-lived, we continue to be the best of friends and apparently much better singers than we were 12 years ago!



Make Plans for 2025 HEP School



Duane Lawson

*CSD Music &
Performance VP*

In 2025 the Central States District is going to invest in a few programs for our members. On Saturday February 22, we will hold an opportunity for coaching with quartets and choruses. We will use the same facility as last year at the Shawnee Presbyterian Church in Shawnee, KS. We have an awesome line up of Kevin Keller, Sandi Wright, David Wright, Rick Johnson

and Jon Kready. The sign up will be limited to 10 groups, so sign up early!

The CSD is trying something new at our next Spring Convention by doing a combination of our Quartet Qualifying Contest for International, some Leadership Academy Classes, and another opportunity to quartets and choruses to get coaching. After the judging panel is selected for the Spring Contest, we will invite other coaches. There will be many opportunities for coaching and education. The CSD hopes to make this an incredible convention.

And finally, we are adding a new opportunity on August 23 that will be coordinated with Larry Monson. In addition to another opportunity to receive coaching for quartets and choruses before the Fall Convention we will be having a Chorus Director Development session. The event will be held at the West Des Moines Christian Church and we will be accepting 5 directors to be coached. The directors will have a chance to direct Vox Infinitus and be coached by Darin Drown. Other top level coaches will be announced as we get closer to the event.

Nebraska Compromise: From chapter quartet to the international stage

Submitted by: Dave Pinkall, Bass, 1996 CSD Quartet Champions, Nebraska Compromise

The Nebraska Compromise was hatched at a regular Monday night rehearsal of the Pathfinder Chorus, when it was determined that a quartet was needed to sing GOD BLESS THE USA for the annual show. Bass Dave Pinkall, the only quartet veteran (1985 Missouri Valley Music Company) got together in the kitchen at break with Curt Johnson, lead; Jamey Nygren, tenor; and Ken Von Seggern, bari for a trial run through. IT WORKED! Curt was a wonderful crooner, Jamey was a young, up and coming tenor, and Ken was a seasoned baritone singer from his college days. After one or two run-throughs it was quickly decided that this was worth pursuing, so a quartet practice was scheduled for later that week, and from that point on, weekly rehearsals became standard. The Nebraska Compromise was born!

Because all four were singing with the Pathfinders, there were already many songs to sing, and Thursday nights turned into fun evenings singing familiar songs, but most importantly, working on new songs. Rehearsals always finished with a beer and more singing of favorites. The repertoire quickly grew, and singouts at various community events became commonplace.

Their repertoire list quickly grew to nearly 40 songs, NOT including all of the Pathfinder Chorus repertoire. It was pretty much four guys, discovering a new toy, and having a ball



learning songs from albums and anywhere else they could find them.

At that time the Lincoln Chapter sponsored a novice quartet contest, and since three of four were definitely novice quartets singers, why not? They won that contest and began thinking about the District Contest, being held that year, 1991, in Kansas City. The thought was they might have a shot at winning that Novice contest.

Well, they were Novice Champions for sure, and narrowly missed being CSD Champions, finishing second to The Saint City Singers. Who could ever forget that final song with Byron Myers and son Bemo singing together about singing with one's son! Was that ever an emotional one!

One might think that finishing 2nd in their first competition would bring them quickly to the championship, but not so. It took five more

years, until in 1996 they took the top prize in Springfield, MO.

In the meantime, another thrill was qualifying for and competing at International in Calgary in 1993, where they represented CSD along with the Gas House Gang, who became the 1993 International Quartet Champions! The Compromise finished somewhere in the 40s....but were able to fill time at a CSD celebration while attendees waited patiently for the arrival of the new champions, who were stuck in an overcrowded elevator. Pretty special to be a part of that!

Bass Dave was an elementary principal at that time, so it seemed natural to learn "Teach the Children to Sing" and perform it with some 300 elementary students at the Fremont All-City Music Festival. Singing for and with the children was so much fun!

Baritone Ken was a middle school teacher, so a performance highlighting Ken singing the "Elements Song" for all the children in his school in Omaha was also a natural, and fun thing to do. The kids loved it!

They spent falls and springs performing on Barbershop shows all over the CSD. One fall they did chapter shows in four or five Kansas Chapters, and the next spring did shows in four or five South Dakota chapters. Always a lot of fun, and with the size of their repertoire, the afterglows and everglows always

lasted well into the wee hours of the morning.

They sang for weddings, funerals, county fairs, and always filled a spot on the Fremont Chapter shows each spring.

Occasionally the quartet still gets together to sing a few, finish with a beer, and always close the night with "Wave Your Little Hand and Whisper So Long Deerie". Don't know why that song, except that they just like the tag and after singing it, they're pretty much done for the night!

It was a wonderful 10-year run, and a great opportunity to do what they loved to do, sing, entertain, make a lot of friends, and have a great time doing it!



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