



MILE HIGH MONTHLY

# SOUNDINGS



## FROM THE SOUND OF THE ROCKIES

Mile High Chapter of the Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barber Shop Quartet Singing in America  
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### CHRISTMAS SEASON SUCCESS

December 2002 was a successful and busy effort for the **Sound of the Rockies Chorus**. The Christmas show was presented at Teikyo Loretto Heights Theater on December 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> to festive audiences for all three performances. Although the shows were not sellouts, we had significant walk-in ticket sales to bolster what had been low advance sales, and total sales have more than covered expenses. As an example of how interested our audiences were, the annual performance of the “elves” for the “Twelve Days of Christmas” led to quite a contest over who in the audience could add the most enthusiasm on their part. On Friday evening, the “five golden rings” section, frequent stars of the song, were “blown out” by the “twelve drummers drumming” in the balcony.

The show featured the perils of three travelers – played by Bege Martin, Tom Graesser, and Dave Orr - stranded in a Chicago airport by a snowstorm on Christmas Eve. **SOR** sang Christmas songs with several quartets and a number of soloists. The quartets included **Sound Assembly**(Adam Nafziger, Fred Mason, Bob Hartwig, Terry Dodd), **Inside Story** (Pete Donohue III, Curtis Terry, Gray Jackson, Dale Vaughn), **Backstage Pass** (Mark Palmer, Herb Phelps, Chris Pomasl, Brent Page), and **Storm Front** (Dave Ellis, Jim Clark, Darin Drown, Sid Libsack). Soloists included Woody Woods, Mark Zenk, Steve Branson, Curtis Terry, and our 13-year old star, Nathan Zenk. The show

also featured the singing of the Campus Middle School Choir.

Director Darin Drown also acknowledged that the Christmas show was one of our finest performances, especially considering the relatively short period of time to rehearse the three new arrangements, “Jingle Bells/Sleigh Ride” medley, “The Holly And The Ivy,” and “This Christmas Day.” With all the tickets that were sold during the show weekend, **SOR** is acquiring quite a glowing reputation in the community.

### NATIONAL ANTHEM

During the same weekend of the Christmas shows, **SOR** performed the national anthem for the Denver Broncos home game against the Kansas City Chiefs at Invesco Field. Although we were only on the field for a very short period of time, we have had many compliments for our performance there. In payment for our performance, the Broncos entered us into their fan fitness program – free tickets for the highest seats in the stadium, which required a long climb up the seats in the fifth level. The Broncos made it a perfect afternoon by winning the game.

**SOR** is becoming well known world wide for our singing of the national anthem. Paul and Jane Magee, who are living in Virginia temporarily, sent an e-mail to tell **SOR** that the national anthem on our CD will be played at a large gymnastic tournament in Gatlinburg, Tennessee.

On December 19<sup>th</sup>, **SOR** performed the national anthem and the armed forces medley for a videotape made by Circuit City. This program began last year when Circuit City offered to make videotape

**OFFICERS AND MUSIC TEAM 2002  
MILE HIGH CHAPTER**

President	Mike Wadsley
Immediate Past President	Bob Hartwig
Musical Director	Darin Drown
Assistant Director/Choreography	Jim Clark
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Section Leaders	
Tenors	Dave Ellis
Leads	Chris Vaughn
Baritones	Jim Weaver
Bass Co-Leaders	Mark Zenk
	Chris Richards
Music Committee Advisor	George Davidson
Quartet Development	Dennis Cook
Music Librarian	Jerry O'Halloran
Learning Tapes	George Smith
Learning CDs	Dave Ellis
Uniforms	Dave Orr, Jim Weaver
Show Producer	George Davidson
Roster Manager/WebMaster	Chris Pomasl

***SOUNDINGS***

John Manion, Editor

Website Edition: [www.soundoftherockies.com](http://www.soundoftherockies.com)

**National Anthem (cont.)**

messages to send to our armed forces overseas during the holidays. **SOR** decided to do a holiday salute to our troops and made the videotape during the rehearsal that evening. Circuit City sent it on to the Armed Forces Network, where it was shown during the holidays. Joy Charity O'Halloran, daughter of our own Jerry O'Halloran, who was

primarily responsible for setting up this taping, saw the performance somewhere in the Pacific, where she is serving as a Navy Chaplain ministering to marines. She e-mailed Jerry to tell him that she saw the videotape and recognized him. **SOR** is becoming known well beyond Denver and outside of barbershop circles.

**SINGING VALENTINES  
COMING SOON**

Our next event is less than six weeks away, when we perform singing valentines for love-struck couples in the Denver area. In 2001, 17 quartets performed 219 paid gigs – and more than a few unpaid performances – during Valentine's Day. Steve Kientz is coordinating quartets and has 15 so far with a few other individuals for placement. Steve would like to organize a few more quartets to ensure we can make our goal of 300 singing valentines this year. Steve Dickin and Jerry Smith are co-chairmen of this event. Dan Clark has set up a link from the **SOR** website to a poster advertising this campaign. For \$50, a quartet will sing "Heart Of My Heart" and "Let Me Call You Sweetheart" and present a rose and card. A slightly higher fee will be required if the valentine is to be sung at a precise time on Valentine's Day. For those who have not sung in a valentine quartet yet, this is quite an experience which really shows off barbershop to the public. It also can be a very emotional experience for the sweetheart to whom the valentine is presented.

**"IN THE MOOD"  
FOR SPRING SHOW**

**SOR** is now working on songs for the Spring Show to be presented on April 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> at the Teikyo Loretto Heights Theater. The theme of the show will be World War II and will feature many of the popular songs of that era. Our guest quartet will be the **Gas House Gang** – 1993 International Champions from St. Louis – on which we will have much more information later. The show will also showcase **SOR's** contest songs which we are now preparing for the International in Montreal next

July. Adding a little bit of nostalgia to **SOR's** singing performance should make a great show!

## **THE CHALLENGE AHEAD**

**Darin Drown, Director**

The path we are on is extremely challenging, but I do believe we are beginning to reap the benefits of our next step in the journey already.

For example, the Christmas show had some moments of absolute magic. Some of the musical phrasing I was able to shape in the ballads such as "Silent Night" and "Ave Maria" was very musical and really at a new level for the chorus. It is not that we didn't have that musicality in us all along, but rather the fact that our singing skills are to the point that you as a chorus allowed me to shape phrases without losing the integrity of the tone and pitch. And speaking of tone, you really latched on to this new way of making tone very quickly. It was present in parts of almost all of our songs on Saturday night.

Secondly, songs such as "Jingle Bells/Sleigh Ride" and "This Christmas Day" required a new level of ability in the learning process. Those two songs are as challenging as any in our repertoire (including our new up-tune), and you certainly rose to the occasion, as both were sung remarkably well, considering the short time span in which you learned them.

As for the future, I have heard some complaints about the recent pacing of the music learning and about the difficulty of the arrangements. Let me respond to that.

As I mentioned to many of you, I believe a chorus which is not challenged is a chorus which is not growing. If you recall the two up-tunes of the **Masters of Harmony** and **Toronto Northern Lights** at Portland, "Toot, Toot, Tootsie" is not quite in that level of difficulty, but we are approaching it. You must trust the fact that I would not give you a piece of music that I did not think you could conquer.

It is also important for us now to become known for doing our own music, not music previously performed by other great choruses. As a result, we form our own identity, and before you know it, people will be singing our songs.

I am extremely excited about the new tone we are working into our sound. It is mature, warm, and focused. It has character. As we work on all of our new show repertoire as well as reviewing old repertoire, it is paramount that we use this new sound at all times, so whenever you practice, sing in the new sound.

In addition, because we have the potential to sing so musically, this is what we should be working on in rehearsals, not learning notes. You are now better than that. Our rehearsal time can be used much more wisely, if individuals in the chorus will work on their music on their own. Therefore, one helpful hint for you all is regarding how you practice on your own. With all the groups for which I learn music – **SOR, Storm Front, Denver A Cappella Project**, five high school choirs – I have to find some time daily (30-45 minutes) to work on and memorize music. I find that the more quiet and alone that time is, the more successful I am. I would recommend finding some time daily, at least 15 minutes, to listen to your tape with music in your hand while you're working on new music. You would be amazed at how much more quickly you will learn your songs.

As always, it is an absolute treat to be in front of you gentlemen on a weekly basis, and I cherish the time we have together. I wish you all a joyous 2003!

## **HARMONY EDUCATION IN ESTES PARK**

Our next opportunity to work on our singing skills will be at the Rocky Mountain District Harmony Education Program on February 7<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> in Estes Park. The workshop will be at the Wind River

Lodge just outside of Estes Park. Registration costs \$60 or \$75 at the event. This includes the workshops and the Saturday evening show. Extra tickets for the show cost \$10. Two-night lodging and six meals for the weekend cost \$170 for single occupancy or \$125 for double occupancy. Quartets who wish coaching must pre-register and pay \$75 per quartet in addition to the registration. 16 quartets will be able to sign up for coaching on a first-come, first-served basis. The teaching quartets will be **Saturday Evening Post** from RMD and **Happiness Emporium**, 1975 International Champions from St. Paul-Minneapolis.

More information is available from George Franklin by mail at 5609 Irving Blvd., NW, Albuquerque, NM 87114, by telephone at (505) 836-1126 or e-mail at [geolead@aol.com](mailto:geolead@aol.com). Quartets who want to be coached should contact George by e-mail to ensure a spot is available for them. A registration form should be available online very shortly.

## NEW MEMBERS

With the many activities during 2002 and the large number of new members, I have not been able to keep this area up to date but will try to overcome that problem from this point on. These are new members who have joined the Denver Mile High Chapter during 2002.

**Dave Higginson** – Dave is not a new barbershopper as he has sung with the **Grand Chorale Chorus** in Granby since 1998. He also sang with the **Fireside Four** quartet in Winter Park. A native Coloradoan who graduated from Englewood High School and Red Rocks Community College, he is married with two grown daughters and three grandkids. He and his wife Carolyn moved from Grand Lake to Parker last year to help care for a blind granddaughter, and Dave joined **SOR** early this year. He is keeping his ties with the Grand Lake area and is looking forward to helping the **Grand Chorale** with their annual show in 2003.

**Brad Ayers** – A member since June, Brad was coached in college by members of the Long Beach

Chapter of SPEBSQSA, while attending California State University at Long Beach. His career moved Brad from southern California to Chicago and then to Denver in 1976. Brad and Arla have four children, two in California, one in Washington, and one still here in Denver. He learned about the chorus through Don Rosenkrans and came to a rehearsal intending to sit and listen. Don handed him a guest book and told him to get on the risers and sing. Brad says that if he knew how many difficult arrangements he would need to learn this year, he would probably thought it impossible and not joined. He loves barbershop and is amazed at all he has learned this year.

**Wes Short** – One of Darin's many students at Overland High School, Wes was born in Idaho and lived in Arizona before coming to the Denver area in 1992, planning to attend college in Denver. When he started at Overland, his sister signed him up for men's choir, telling him that he would be really cool with the girls if he sang. Wes says she was right, and he has really enjoyed singing so much.

**Mike Davidson** – Mike, son of George Davidson, was raised on barbershop and fell asleep at night to the sounds of **Classic Collection**. He first joined Mile High Chapter at age seven and performed on the front row for a couple of years. He joined **SOR** at age 13 and sang in Cherry Creek High School choirs. He then went to the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley and sang with two vocal jazz groups there. He graduated in May and returned to Denver, rejoining Mile High and **SOR**. His goals in barbershop are quite simple – to win gold medals in chorus and quartet by age 30. Guess how he learned to sing baritone.

**Randy Johnson** – a fourth-generation Coloradoan, Randy grew up in Littleton, graduating from Littleton High School and Colorado University. In November 2001, he and his wife Carol learned about the **SOR** concert in Littleton and put a clipping on their refrigerator door about the event. That afternoon, Carol called him at work and reminded him of the concert. They went to the concert, sat in the first row, and were "blown away"

by the music. He attended the reception afterwards and talked with several members. He has been really impressed with the enthusiasm and energy of the chorus as well as the sound of **SOR**. He has also been instrumental in working on our website.

**Curtis Terry** – a second generation barbershopper, Curtis grew up in St. George, Utah, where his father sang in the **Sunland Vocal Band** quartet. He moved to Denver five years ago and is a student at Metro State College. Curtis and his wife Carie have one daughter. He sang with the Denver Mountainaires for a couple of months and was then invited to check out **SOR** by Ron Kientz early this year. Curtis loves singing in the chorus but is most interested in quartet singing, as he performs with **Inside Story**, which placed sixth in the RMD contest in September. Curtis is serious about barbershopping and hopes to medal in the future.

**James Taylor** – James joined **SOR** in August as a transfer from the **Saltaires** in Wasatch Front, Utah, where he had sung for three years. He has about 15 years of singing experience in college and church choirs and vocal jazz groups. A native of Missouri, James came to Colorado in 1982. He attended CU in Boulder for three years and then completed his education at the University of Utah. James has also sung in quartet competition with **Sound Logik**, a Wasatch Front foursome. He feels that the rivalry between **SOR** and the **Saltaires** is friendly and results in better competition for both choruses.

**Geoffrey Quelch** – our transplant from the United Kingdom, Geoff is invaluable in helping pronounce “Berkeley Square” with a British accent. Born in Cookham on the Thames River about 30 miles west of London, Geoff came across the Atlantic in 1988 after finishing a Ph.D. at Manchester. He then worked at the University of Georgia in Athens, where he met his wife Sandra. Geoff then moved to Wake Forest in North Carolina and on to Norman as a temporary Sooner at Oklahoma. They moved to Denver in 1999. His previous experience was an unfortunate experience in high school attempting to sound like a barbershop quartet and then singing with the Athens Choral Society in Georgia. Geoff

saw an article in the *Denver Post* about barbershop and found our website.

**Matthew Davis** – Matt is another student from Overland High School who is new to barbershop, but his grandfather has sung with the Palm Harbor **Crystal-aires** in Florida. Darin brought him to the chorus from his experience in the mixed choir, and Matt has been selected for the All-State Chorus. A native of Aurora, Matt is looking forward to going to Montreal, and he is also just starting his quartet experience.

**Sean Dale** – another native of Aurora who was brought in by Darin from his Overland High School experience, Sean has been active in church and school singing. He has also been picked for the All-State Chorus and sung in **Elevation**, the high-school quartet that placed 13<sup>th</sup> at the RMD contest in Greeley in September. Sean wants to act and hopes that his singing will help him reach that goal.

**Bryan Plummer** – another Overland High School student from Aurora, Bryan also has many talents including singing, piano, and acting. He reached the All-State Chorus and also competed in **Elevation** at the RMD contest in September. Bryan has very high aspirations, as he is aiming for a career on Broadway. Darin has certainly helped **SOR** by bringing in all these talented young men.

## THE SUMMIT CLUB

### Director's Circle

Marilyn Swanson

### Supporter

Budd Flinn

April Prohaska

Barbara Day (memorial)

The **SOR's Summit Club** was formed earlier this year as a fund-raising effort for our patrons to support our commitments throughout Colorado and on to Montreal in 2003. **SOR** has won the RMD championship and is now preparing to represent the district in Montreal this July. We will have many

expenses in this journey, not the least of which will be a number of coaches to help raise our level of performance to that of the top choruses in the Society. This effort will also assist many of our younger members who may not have the funds to travel to contests and coaching. Our 2002 goal has been to raise \$20,000 towards these expenses. As **SOR** is a non-profit organization, **Summit Club** contributions may be partially tax-deductible. Six levels of membership are offered:

**Member** (\$50-\$99) includes a subscription to the *Soundings* newsletter and listings in the *Soundings* and our concert programs.

**Supporter** (\$100-\$199) includes all of the above and a chorus CD.

**Partner** (\$200-\$399) includes all of the above and a beautiful gift bearing the **Summit Club** logo.

**Director's Circle** (\$400-\$1,499) includes all of the above and an invitation for two to a special donor event.

**Benefactor** (\$1,500-\$2,999) includes all of the above and an invitation to a special dinner with Musical Director Darin Drown.

**Guarantor** (\$3,000 and above) includes all of the above and shared interest in a **Sound of the Rockies** project commensurate with gift level.

More information is available on the chorus website at [www.soundoftherockies.com](http://www.soundoftherockies.com) including a form for interested patrons to use to make a donation and join the **Summit Club**.

## BARBERSHOP HISTORY

Following up the past two issues of the *Soundings*, I am continuing this series on the history of barbershop music as presented by David Wright at Harmony College. In the last issue, we had talked about some of the popular quartets of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the recording industry by Thomas Edison, featuring the Edison Male Quartet, Peerless Quartet, and Premier Quartet. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the music publishing industry formed in New York City along

West 28<sup>th</sup> Street between Fifth and Broadway. In 1909, a reporter named Monroe Rosenfeld wrote a series on the industry called "Tin Pan Alley," so named by him because as he walked through this area, the sounds of pianists banging out tunes reminded him of the clatter of pots and pans.

The concept of four-part harmony sung by male quartets was quite popular during this period, but the term "barbershop" was not universally used. The first published use of "barber shop harmony" was a derogatory article in 1900 written by Tom the Tattler, a columnist and critic. The first published song to use the term was "Play That Barber Shop Chord," written in 1910 by William Tracey and Lewis Muir. However, the term "barbershop" used to describe impromptu quartets singing spontaneous harmony had been popular for some time, as it was natural that barber shops would become the gathering place for groups of men and singing a natural way to pass the waiting time.

Many talented singers joined professional quartets to be recorded by Edison, Victor, or Columbia studios. Quartet recording became big business, and quartets would sing 30 or more songs per day. A master would have a round of six songs, or "takes." The record company would pay a dollar per round to each singer, and top singers would get a dollar per song. Most arrangements were woodshedded by the quartet, and the best singers were capable of all four parts to replace someone who might not show up. Beginning in the 1890s, recorded advertisements appeared for companies such as Quaker Oats, which featured a song and brief message about the product being sold. Billy Murray of the American Quartet recorded "The Little Ford Rambled Right Along," and Henry Burr's "Soothing Serenade" of 1918 mentions the Victrola. Many of these recordings were of older melodies, but the prolific music industry produced many new songs to be recorded.

A major change at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the popular introduction of "ragtime." Once again, the inspiration was African-American music, and ragtime featured a full range of harmonies with a unique rhythm created by off-beat syncopations. It was controversial, with established musicians and

ministers denouncing it as corruptive music of the devil, but it became extremely popular with songs such as Scott Joplin's "Maple Leaf Rag" (1899) and Eubie Blake's "Charleston Rag" (1910).

In 1893 a young Jewish immigrant named Israel Baline arrived in New York City from Russia. He had a natural talent for music and although never trained, could sing and compose songs naturally. He took the stage name of Irving Berlin and began composing in about 1906. In 1911, he wrote a song which popularized ragtime music and swept the nation – "Alexander's Ragtime Band." While the song is not ragtime rhythm, it became a standard for ragtime – and barbershop. Berlin also wrote many popular songs, over 800 in his career, including "When I Lost You" (1912), "When The Midnight Choo-Choo Leaves For Alabam'" (1912), "Somebody's Coming To My House" (1913), "When It's Night Time In Dixie Land (1914), "Mandy" (1919), "Easter Parade" (1933), "God Bless America" (1939), and "White Christmas" (1942).

Another venue for quartet singing during this period was the Chautauqua, a week-long tent show featuring lecturists, humorists, and entertainers, including quartets such as the Whitney Brothers and the Temple Quartet, begun in 1904. However, commercial radio and talking motion pictures in the 1920s began to become more popular than vaudeville and quartet recordings, leading to a decline in professional quartets by the end of the 1930s. Americans, who had been participants in many musical venues, especially due to family singing traditions, became spectators, and popular entertainment became a form of escape from stressful times. It was on a rainy night in this sad environment that two men from Tulsa, Oklahoma, met in a hotel in Kansas City in 1938.

January 11 – Denver Mile High Installation and Awards Dinner, Radisson Hotel Denver Southeast, 6:00 pm cocktail hour, 7:00 pm dinner.

January 19-26 – SPEBSQSA Midwinter Convention, Albuquerque, NM

February 7-9 – RMD Harmony Education Program, Wind River Lodge, Estes Park, CO

February 14-15 – Singing Valentine Campaign

April 10 – Technical rehearsal for spring show, Teikyo Loretto Heights Theater

April 11-12 – "In The Mood," Annual Spring Show, Teikyo Loretto Heights Theater

April 25-27 – RMD Preliminary Contest, Omni Hotel, Interlochen Resort, CO

June 29 – July 6 – SPEBSQSA International Convention and Contests, Montreal, Quebec, Canada

July 18-20 – Silverton Barbershop Festival, Silverton, CO

July 27 – August 3 – Harmony/Directors College, Missouri Western State College, St. Joseph, MO

October 10-12 – RMD Fall Convention and Contests, Salt Lake City, UT

January 25-February 1, 2004 – SPEBSQSA Midwinter Convention, Biloxi, MS

July 2-8, 2007 – SPEBSQSA International Convention and Contests, Denver, CO