



THE GENESCENE



Volume 3, Issue 2

The Chorus of the Genesee

February, 2008

ALLEN WEITZ, BARBERSHOP PRODIGY



Allen Weitz is indeed a barbershop prodigy. In 1977, when Al started hanging around Monroe County West Chapter, he was only 11. He formally joined the chapter two years later.

One wonders what attracted Al to barbershopping at such an early age. One could make a very solid argument that barbershopping was in his genes because, as we know, he sired a son, Jason, who joined CoG when he was only 11, and possesses the same ability and love of barbershopping as his dad.

After only two years at Monroe County West, Al was appointed Assistant Director and was named their *Barbershopper of the Year* in 1987, an honor that CoG bestowed upon him in 2007. (It just took us 20 years to recognize the true prodigy in our midst.)

In 1981, when only 17, Al took another step up the directing ladder when he was named Director of the Niagara Orleans Chapter. He was on his way. In his spare time, in 1980, Al became Choir Director of St. John's Lutheran Church, a position he still holds.

In 1989, Al joined CoG and, in 1995, was appointed Assistant Director and Community Chorus Director, positions he has held for the past 12 years. During those years, Al began attending society schools in an attempt to improve his directing skills. In 2002, he received his SPEBSQSA Director Certification after completing a four-year Barbershop College curriculum.

Along the way, Al has been a member of three quartets: *Finally Four*, *Easy Street*, *Notably Yours*, and recently joined *Fever Pitch*.

In May, 2007, the final culmination of 29 years of unwavering preparation for his dream job, Al was named *Director of the Chorus of the Genesee*, a position he so obviously deserved and appreciated. The members had watched this young man grow and mature as a singer and director, and we were all pulling for him as he assumed his rightful place as director.

Al works as a mechanic at Strong Memorial Hospital and is the father of two children, Jason and Nicole. Al discovered the joy and frustration of golf recently and has thrown himself into the game in the same way he took to barbershopping. Look out, he'll be winning his share of skins soon.

Al has high hopes for CoG. He talks confidently of his goal to get us back to international competition within two years. Good luck, Al.

Music Team Update

Dick Wood, Music & Performance VP

The Music Team has established the following goals for 2008:

1. Work to attain "contest level" on all repertoire songs.
2. Improve each member's vocal skills.
3. Bring *singers* into the chorus.
4. Revive the Director Training Program.
5. Support youth outreach programs to the maximum.
6. Survey members to determine their wishes.

As you are aware, we have submitted the member survey to all chorus members, and as of Jan 28 have had good response. When all responses are received we will analyze them, and attempt to address the issues therein.

We will soon be initiating some individual and small group vocal training. This will ultimately be available for all chorus members. As Mike Morgan says, "We can all sing better."

Specific duties within the music team are:

- Music Selection Chairman- Ken Bissinger.
- Vocal Coaches- Mike Morgan & Don Stothard.
- Visual Presentation Coaches- Ken Bissinger and Mike Morgan.

The *Chorus of the Genesee* meets each Tuesday evening at 7:00 p.m. at Harmony House, 58 Main Street, Webster, NY. Visitors may call the *Barbershop Hotline* at (585) 265-9540.

2008 Chapter Officers

President.....	Bill Wise
VP Chapter Dev.....	Marty Olschewske
VP Music/Perf.....	Dick Wood
Program VP.....	Jack Ernise
Secretary.....	Jack Simpson
Treasurer.....	Bob Mayeu
Publicity.....	Jack Thomas
Immediate Past President.....	Bob Campbell
Service Chairman.....	Fred Hindom
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Board of Directors:.....	Brian Moore, Bob Statt, Len Paganelli, Mike Root, Bob Wiley, Chuck Dittmar
Music Director.....	Allen Weitz

- Show Chairman- Al Weitz.
- Director Training Chairman- Jim Rawcliffe.

I believe all are receptive to any positive suggestions you may have. We are looking forward to a very productive year, and request your full effort and support.

Dick Wood

Young@Heart Chorus

If you want a "feel good" experience, go to youtube.com and type in young@heart. It will bring up several videos of a New England chorus made up of very old, but lively seniors. They range in age from 72 to 88. Don't miss *Staying Alive* and *I Wanna Be Sedated*. Sure, it's not barbershop, but pay attention to the faces of the singers and the audience. Pure joy. Made me think of what we can do when we jazz up our repertoire.

Allan

Three squaws of an Indian tribe were pregnant.

*One squaw was a member of the Bear clan.
Another squaw was a member of the Deer clan.
And the last squaw was a member of the Hippopotamus clan.*

*It was traditional for the babies to be born on the hide of the animal which represented the clan.
The first baby born was a boy, born on the hide of a bear. The second was a baby boy born on the hide of a deer. But the last squaw bore twin boys on the hide of a hippopotamus.*

Twins were expected by the tribe, because everyone knew that the sons of the squaw of the Hippopotamus were equal to the sum of the sons of the squaws of the other two hides.

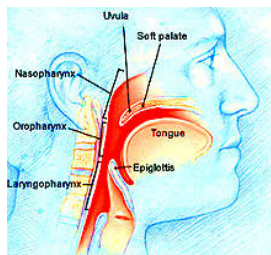
Story submitted by Ken Bissinger

Musical Minutiae

David Kester

Phonation *n:* the sound made by the vibration of vocal folds modified by the resonance of the vocal tract.

Resonance *n:* amplification of the source of speech sounds, especially of phonation, by sympathetic vibration of the air, esp. in the cavities of the mouth nose and pharynx



Assuming that we understand the basic concepts of breathing, there are two additional basic elements related to beautiful singing--resonance and space. Resonance refers to the ability to let the vocal folds vibrate with complete freedom, ringing throughout the oral cavity and in the mask. Space is associated with the lifted **soft palate** near the opening of the throat, thereby creating a dimension of warmth and maturity in the voice. Too much of one over the other can result in a myriad of problems that can range from an inability to blend to poor intonation. It's a little like finding exactly the right contact point as one does when driving with a clutch.

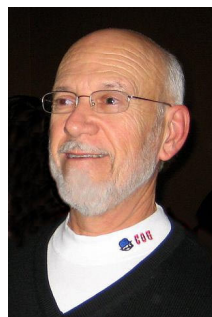
The soft palate is the fleshy part above the uvula (the hangy down thing) that separates the nasal cavity from the oral cavity. It is the abiding place of tone. We can think of it as the throne of the singer, for as long as he has control here, he has control of his voice. When he has lost control of this point he has lost his kingdom as a singer. He may lose it by simply letting go of it and taking up the throat muscles instead, when they should always be left perfectly free and passive. Many a singer mourns his voice as lost, when he has merely let go of this point of control. It does not require any pressure or contraction, but simply the feeling that you cause. Hold and support the tone from this point.

The trick is to open the back part of the mouth naturally. Think of the singer's throne at the being at the top of the pharynx then raise the soft palate and head muscles without effort and widen the whole pharynx. The very thought will do it, and bigger is better!

Raising the soft palate creates a more resonant cavity and opens up the nasopharyngeal space for air to pass over the palate which is an important aspect of singing through your full natural range with no vocal breaks.

"But Dr. Melody, I'm told to raise my soft palate by singing with a yawn. Is this correct?" No, that's too much force and it will cause the throat to close even though the oral cavity is open. Think of arching the eyebrows up, sometimes called "bright eyes." This can help activate the muscles responsible for a raised palate, which are normally not used in daily activity. Another way is to imagine you are slowly inhaling to smell something yummy and want to get as much yumminess in your nose as possible.

The shape of the lips can also raise the soft palate. One school of singing recommends an oval and vertical mouth shape. It is interesting to notice the different role of the upper lip in comparison to the lower lip. A lower lip uncovering teeth causes a depressed soft palate that is injurious to singing. Place your thumb and forefinger on opposite sides of your throat and push up gently into your jaw. Now stick out your lower lip, to the point that your lower teeth are bared. Do it over and over a few times. Do your fingers feel your throat close? This is not a good thing, as you might have guessed. In comparison, relax your lower lip and raise your upper lip and bare your upper teeth as if you were a snarling tiger. Be conscious that your tongue is forward and not down in your throat. You can also raise your eyebrows simultaneously, but they probably will rise on their own. Repeat this action and notice that your soft palate lifts when you do and your throat feels quite open. This has been called a "tiger's smile." Or "biting the apple" It allows the opening of your instrument to its largest size in a natural way. As you've often heard before, "size matters", especially in vocal production.



Dr. Melody

Santa's Visit to Hudson Valley

Bill Rohlin



Santa has returned from his stint at a mall in the Hudson Valley, he's attended a chapter meeting and is back in the traces. Why be Santa for seven grueling weeks? Because it's the best job in the world - if you truly love kids. To watch the excitement in the faces of the kids as they approach, some literally jumping for joy, is amazing. Some maintain that level of excitement right through their visit with Santa, some don't. You can watch their eyes as they go from exhilaration down through stages of doubt to fear to abject terror. I tell the parents "They're so happy they could cry," or, "They're tears of joy."

Special moments? The classes of cerebral palsy and other special needs kids (in mind, if not in body) who were thrilled that Santa paid special attention to them. The mother who came over after her child had visited Santa and told me the thing she enjoyed most was the twinkle in my eyes when I talked with the kids. High praise, in my mind. Best of all was the toddler who, when Mommy came to retrieve him from my lap, attempted to push her away and who, when put on the floor, came running, arms outstretched, back to me.

I'm glad to be back but I'm looking forward to next year at the same time.

Santa Bill Bass with *High Hopes*

The Prez Sez.....

Bill Wise



By the time you read this, I'll have received my second round of chemo and wondering "where January went!"

However, I was able to partake of the lunch get-together at the *Lamplighter* on the 25th of January. Around 20 guys got together, sang some songs, had a good lunch, and, on my part, two great manhattans. Thanks to Ed Rummler for setting this up.

I've since talked with Dick Wood and he is working on another "get-together," probably at *Cerame's*, which I believe is located on Winton Road in Henrietta/Brighton. It's pretty much in the center of Monroe County and the expressway is about 1 mile from the restaurant. It's almost equal distance from Webster, Greece, and Irondequoit. Those of us familiar with the *Harmony for Lunch Bunch* might recognize how much fun this project was and that it is time to re-invent this venue again. You know you can't get enough of a good thing.

Allan has proposed a letter to the editor column in the *Genescene*. When I read each issue, I find that the articles are written by a very few people. I believe the "Letters to the Editor" column is a good idea and, hopefully, more guys will express their ideas/opinions. If you don't ask questions you won't get answers, and we are always looking for new ideas.

My next "round" of chemo starts again in early March. I'm hoping to show up some Tuesday evening later this month. I'm also planning on being available for the February Board Meeting. Thanks again for the many phone calls, e-mails, and cards.

See you soon,

Bill

Thoughts From the Bobobservation Post

Bob Lewis



It was Thursday, January 10th. The place: The Ahepa Apartments in Webster. The reason: A Community Chorus sing-out. We had a sparse turn-out for the singing, only 16 guys. But the response from the audience was something to die for. Never in all the times I have sung with the Community Chorus (and it has been quite a few) has there been so much love and appreciation given to us from the people we were entertaining. If you want to feel that same warmth while singing, join the Community Chorus. Oh yes, the food was good too. So Jack, what can you line-up for us the next time?

Singing Valentines is our next project. Jason and his band of workers are doing a fabulous job. If everything comes to pass, we will have had more T.V. and advertised exposure than ever before. Have you signed up for your Singing Valentine?

As you may have guessed, I like Pot Luck night! January was no exception. We had about 24 attending, and yes, the food was wonderful. If you didn't like something (picky eater) there were at least 10 more delicious items to choose from. Now February's dinner happens to fall on one of the Singing Valentine nights. If you are in a quartet and want to have a great meal, bring a dish to pass and enjoy the fun and camaraderie. Freddie will go nuts at the bar, but hey, that's OK, he's one of us, right!

Shrimp! Howe says (as of the 5th of February) that there are 70 to 75 bags left. That's approx. \$1200 dollars of pure profit yet to be put into our coffers. Let's each one buy a bag and give it as a gift when you visit a friend's home for the evening.

It was announced last Tuesday, the 5th, that Mike and Don will be conducting voice evalua-

tions for all chorus members. These evaluations will be used to help individual members improve their vocal techniques and, at the same time, improve the chorus as a whole. I will probably choke up during my evaluation, but that will increase the challenge for the evaluators.

On a serious note: we have a long list of people that need our daily thoughts and prayers. The following are some that I have heard about: Sandy Schmidt, Wayne Brigman, Duke Brooks, Jerry Dunn, Glenn Hider, Phil McCabe, Jerry Weisenreder, Bill Wise, Jack Zonneville, and George Hugel. I know I have missed someone and I apologize for that.

Well, that's about all I can come up with for this time. Until we talk again, stay healthy and enjoy the winter (after all, you did stay here, didn't you!).

Annual St Patrick's Day Dinner



Smilin' Jack is now accepting reservations for the annual St. Patrick's Day Dinner planned for Saturday evening, March 15, at Harmony House. Reservations are \$8 per person. Contact Jack Ernise after rehearsal, by e-mail, or phone. Cocktails & Hors D'oeuvres begin at 6 PM followed by dinner at 7 and a short program at 8:30.

This year's entertainment will be a "Parade of Quartets." Two guest quartets have accepted our invitation to perform and I am waiting to hear from our chapter quartets. Please let me know so that I can prepare a program.

Pot Luck Dinner: If you are performing Singing Valentines and don't want to go home, why not bring a dish to pass and join us at our monthly dinner on Tuesday evening, February 12, at 6:15 PM. Everyone is welcome. Last year we had double the number of people we usually have and the food is excellent.

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor:

The definition of “personality” is the complex of characteristics that distinguishes an individual or a nation or a group. My question is: what is the musical “personality” of the CoG? I’m sure my idea and yours would not be the same. Many different types of songs have been rearranged to fit our barbershop style and we need to be open minded and conscious of the potential benefits that these songs might generate.



When you think of a song that’s currently in our repertoire or one that you might want to sing, ask yourself these questions: Does it provide multiple performance opportunities or can it only be performed in limited circumstances? Is it an up tune or easy rhythm song? Is it a novelty or comedic song that will provide variety to our repertoire? Will the song be familiar to our audiences? Remember, audiences like songs they recognize and they’ll enjoy participating in the music with the chorus. Will your fellow chorus members like the song? Is the story line of the lyric easy to understand and communicate? Is it appropriate for the chorus? And, does it fit the “personality” of our chorus?

The music selection team is hard at work searching for songs to fit these criteria keeping in mind the present musical personality of the chorus, as well as trying to define what our future personality might be. The door is always open. Let me know your thoughts.

Al Weitz

Dear Editor:

With two audio cassettes in hand containing a Valentines Day love song, *Let Me Call You Sweetheart* sung by the Chorus of the Genesee, Lira and I grabbed a plane on Wednesday, February 6, and flew to New York City to present our love song to Kelly Ripa.

During one of the commercial breaks I stood up and called Kelly’s name and when she came over to me she exclaimed how good it was to see me again. I just about fell over because I didn’t think she would remember me.



With my buddy’s sister-in-law, Mary Jo McGee as my photographer, she snapped a picture of me kissing Kelly. She smiled and

said, “My husband is going to be jealous if he ever finds out.” I laughed and told her that I loved Mark too.

Then I gave Kelly the two cassettes and told her to give one to Regis. I suggested that if they thought they could fit our song in on the 14th’s show, we would be very happy.

After the next commercial break, Regis came down to say hello to us and Mary Jo, being the ace photographer that she is, took a picture of Regis and me and I just happened to have my little tape recorder on so that he could say a few words to the CoG.

With our mission accomplished, Lira and I took Mary Jo to lunch and then caught a cab back to LaGuardia and back home to Rochester to the waiting arms of Lira’s Mommy and my wife, Barbara. I was exhausted but emotionally on a very big high for accomplishing my mission.

Joe and Lira

Dear Editor,

It was a balmy spring night, a Tuesday as I recall. I had wanted to get back into singing for a long time. I had even googled barber-shop singing a few months earlier. I remember my uncle enjoying that singing many years ago in my home town of Elmira, N.Y. He enjoyed it immensely and I admired it from a distance. My research told me that there was a chapter somewhere in Webster.

So, I was on my way home from Wegman's and thought I would look around for a Barbershop sign in the town of Webster. In my usual industrious, deliberate, and well focused manner, I came upon a big white building crowded about by a group of smiling men. I rolled down my window and asked, "Is this where the barbershop guys meet?" One of the gentlemen answered, "Yes, we're meeting right now; why don't you come in and join us?" "Uh, I have to bring these groceries home but I'll be right back", I answered.

I remember questions and thoughts filling my mind as I sped home to drop off the groceries. I'll bet he's heard the "I have to bring the groceries home" story lots of times. I really want to do this. I'm kind of excited. Hey, I never told my wife I wanted to do this! What am I going to say to her?

Well, Mr. Editor, the answer to the last question is a story for another time. It suffices to say that this serendipitous Tuesday evening was the start of more fun, sharing, singing and pure joy than I could have ever expected. As a relatively new member – a few months shy of 2 years – I would like to share with whoever will listen a little about the experience of a newbie in the Chorus of the Genesee. This group of men is as focused and determined to put out a good product as they are fun loving. And what a craft they share! I have to believe those 5ths and 7ths and the good clean fun of the melodies we

sing have to add to longevity. The close harmony we participate in reflects how we care and share especially when someone is down or in difficulty. Perhaps it is because I am new but it seems that learning about singing is an endless art. Once you are smitten by it you don't want it to end anyway!

What a force for good this organization is. My hats are off to all who participate. My thanks go out to all who made it possible for me to hang in there, set aside the excuses about time, and become a part of the movement, the motion and the melody that is Barbershop.

Sincerely,

Len Paganelli

I went to see George Hugel in the hospital yesterday. (By the time you read this, he will probably be home.) I asked him what I could tell the guys. He said forcefully, "You tell the guys not to send me any of those corny get-well cards. If they want to send money, that's fine, but no cards. Allan

The Webster Historical Society is republishing a book on the history of Webster which only covered to 1970. They are asking for stories, anecdotes, and perhaps a summary of the glory day of the Chorus of the Genesee during the 1970's to the present. Please send me information to compile. I am sure we have been a significant part of this town's history and we should represent that in a venue such as this.

Len Paganelli,
leonard_j_paganelli@glic.com