

Kansas City

# HEART OF AMERICA CHORUS harmonotes supplement

February 2012

by Vince Perry, President

## In Just One HOA Week!

Usually the HOA barbershop-ping new year doesn't really get started until after the Installation/Awards Banquet. Oh yeah, we might have one or two meeting before that but they are usually poorly attended. Something about the Banquet that signals "we can start afresh now." But not this year! 2012 started a long time ago, way back in early December if not earlier... After checking some back emails, I've found that it really started when the Music Committee met on September 11th! They laid out an



aggressive plan of new music for the spring show and the international contest this summer. By the October 30th Music Team meeting, gears were really in motion getting more new arrangements (they called them charts now!) and then scrutinizing them to the nth degree. Decisions were made; arrangements (they call them charts now!) were settled upon and purchased and learning media was ordered. This all took

place while everyone involved was learning **Kevin Keller's** forty-six page chart (used to be called arrangement!) of the *Rudolf Montage!* Unbelievable was the number of emails that flew back and forth setting the stage for 2012! This truly was a collaborative effort and included all members of the Music Team somewhere in the process: **Mark Fortino** (Head MT honcho), **David Krause**, Director, Section leaders: **Darrell McCune, Jonathan Andrews, Carter Combs, David Stockard**, and veterans **Keith Schweer** and **Bruce Wenner**. Pretty sure **Kevin Keller** was an advisor during the process. Awesome work guys! When the last chord was sung at the Holiday Harmony Show, HOA was off and running learning the chart of "Smile". *Off-the-paper-on-Smile-by-January-3rd* was the mantra!

**Tuesday, January 3rd, 2012 - HOA's first Coaching Session of the year! NO WAY!... Way!**

**Tuesday, January 3rd, 2012 - HOA's first Guest Night of the year! NO WAY!... Way!**

And so it began, 1/3/12 at 7PM The now infamous (and sometimes hated by many Holiday Harmony Spectacular singers) **Kevin Keller** and a host of guests & inactive members gathered together for a fun evening of singing, learning, and more singing!

**Kevin** made it simple and gave the chorus only a few things to work on: Singing through Goal Posts (not a football field!), vertical placement with the upper teeth showing at all times. Simple stuff that made the difference between "ring" and "ping" in the HOA ensemble sound! And lest I forget, we became aware of the term "default level". It's been called lots of things through the years (not arrangement nor chart!) like "come warmed up ready to sing" or "bring the whole singer when you walk in the door." or "sing every note the best you can every time." **Kevin's** concept was really just a wake up call for all of us. When you begin to sing at each rehearsal, you have just set your default level. How high the default level is up to each singer. Of course the higher the default level the more progress the



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group can make at creating an artistic and emotional experience that evening. And isn't that what we all want? Yeah, it's a mental thing. If you want it you will remember it. Reminders of default level by our directors helps but it's really up to each one of us singers. Check out the *Ten Rules For Better Singing* in **David's** article I found in a old issue of the Harmonotes. And then apply them when you sing your first note of the evening. Bet your default will be an A-level! (I'll attach his article to the end of this one.)

### Tuesday, Jan. 3rd, 2012 - HOA's first Cookout! NO WAY!... WAY, kind of!

We had twenty pizzas brought in at about nine-thirty and needless to say everyone knew it even though the pizzas were delivered to the kitchen! They were stored in warm ovens while HOA went till ten-ten! Then the pizza and the best finish to the best start in HOA history! Many thanks to Membership V. P. **Jeff Wolff** and **Carl Turlin** for organizing the food and drinks! Also special thanks to **David Krause** for hosting **Kevin** during his stay in Kansas City. Word has it that HOA is already planning more guest nights and more pizza and more **Kevin Keller!** WAY!

### Saturday, January 7th, 2012 - HOA's first Official Sit-Down Banquet in ten years! NO WAY!... WAY

Yep, thanks to Program VP **Jerry Meier** HOA had a plated meal (fancy name for not a buffet). It was wonderful to be waited upon. **Jerry** had made name cards for everyone showing their dinner choices to place on their table where they were seated. Worked slick as a whistle! Master Emcee **Don Young** started the evening off exactly on time by telling a few bad jokes. I was still sitting at the check-in table in the lobby and I still got to groan though one of them was pretty good. The meal was served and before you knew it **Don** was announcing "if you want to go to restroom, now is the time because we are going to start on time." I took another bite of those long crunchy green beans, looked at my waiting dessert, thought about my need to visit the restroom about a block away down the hall, then took another sip of my martini to help get me through the tough decision facing me all because of **Don's** announcement. I went for the dessert, overflowed the coffee cup, and sat there eating cheesecake while the *Heartbeats* took the stage. (there was really no stage). Between bites I remember outgoing *Heartbeat* President **Jana Henderson** --one of my favorite people (hope **Melladee** and **Don** have given up reading this long article by now!)-- introduce the new *Heartbeat* officers for 2012. After being proclaimed duly installed, the new *Heartbeat* President **Marci Brown-Turlin** (psst, another favorite!) took the mic. If I recall correctly she announced that all *Heartbeats* who worked so hard throughout the year hosting two conventions were declared *Heartbeats of the Year!* All women then received a rose!

Next, **Don** introduced the entertainment of the evening and in came CSD's new 3rd Place Medalist quartet, BCQ with **Rob Mathieu, Brian Marston, Matt Moore, and Tom Wenner**. They ripped one, wow was it good, one of my favorites. The tag was high and tight and took me to a new height of happiness not experienced since I my last bite of cheesecake. BCQ was awesome and everyone enjoyed all three of their charts. (I think I've got it!) Next up was the Installation of Officers so it was now time to straighten the old necktie, check my notes, and remember to stand up straight and smile.

Past District President and Current International Board Member **Don Fuson** (lots of Dons in the article, it's almost con**Fuson!** - Sorry, I just couldn't pass up the opportunity to demonstrate the caliber of the other **Don's** jokes!) did the honors of installing the officers and board members. He brought those to be installed up in three groups; each group was named with each letter from the acronym TLC. He explained how each job fit the categories of (I hope I'm



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at least close on these) **Teamwork**, **Leadership**, and **Commitment**. It was pretty cool and all made sense. So with TLC **Don** installed the entire group. Many thanks to **Don** for being our Installing Officer on very short notice and for bringing his lovely wife **Linda** (I won't say it but you know what I'm thinking!)

Okay, my turn to speak! I spoke a few words about 2011 and then on behalf of the whole chapter, praised the combined efforts of **Mike Mathieu** and **Bob Burdick** for co-chairing three major events in one year: the *International Convention*, the *Central States District Convention*, and the *Caroling Caravan for the Salvation Army*. I bet no other person in the whole Society has done that! Congratulations guys, and thank you for jobs well done!

Next, Music V.P. **Mark Fortino** came up and told everyone about the great musical plan for 2012. Remember the plan started back in September so **Mark** was able to lay out basically the whole musical plan for the entire year. I liked **Mark's** energy and enthusiasm when he talked about HOA and 2012. With everything on **Mark's** plate including singing with the new *CSD District Champs Voices Unlimited* and attending his kids' school functions, performances, games, shows, being a loving husband & provider, you name it, plus going to work each day, it was really a big decision for him to sign on for another year as the man running the chapter's music and performance activities! All I can say is I sure am glad he did! Many thanks, **Mark!**

I finished up by giving special thanks to our Treasurer **Jim Porter** and our Secretary **Rich Huyck**. These jobs are so vital to the operation of a successful chapter and many times are taken for granted. Thanks guys. Finally I thanked my confidants and mentors **Kent Miller** and **John Erwine**.

With their help I managed to make it through a trying year and still keep my sanity. Many thanks guys! It has been a privilege being the HOA Chapter President in 2011 and am deeply honored to give it another go in 2012. As long as I have **Mel-ladee** to run every little nit-pick'n barber-shop thing by every day and my son **Vince** to sing with each Tuesday night, it will be another year filled with love and many blessings!

Last of all, I challenged the chorus members with the same challenge I did last year: **be a smart singer**. Remember what you are taught. Don't make the directors and sectional leaders have to re-teach the fundamentals over and over again. By being smart singers, we will sing better and hence form a smart singing machine! And if we build it, more good singers will come! And we will, under **David's** leadership and inspiration, have an artistic and emotional experience every time we sing! And again I ask, isn't that what we all really want? The awards portion of the program, chaired by former HOA everything **Bruce Wenner** followed. You may read about the awards in other articles found in the February 2012 Edition of the *Harmonotes*.

**And all this all happened in less than one HOA week!**

Let's Keep The Whole World Singing together, striving for excellence throughout the remaining fifty-one weeks of HOA 2012! ❤️





## Goals to Shoot For Along the Way by David Krause, Director

(Edited by Vince Perry from June 2008 Harmonotes, Volume 08, Issue 6)

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[Note from President **Vince Perry**: I found this wonderful article written about four months after **David** took the directing reins over again from Director Emeritus **Jim Bagby**. I couldn't believe it. If you are in the active chorus you will be amazed, like me how insightful **David** was. You will read things that just two weeks ago were like revolutionary ideas from **Kevin Keller**. Of course **David** always says one coach is always stealing good ideas from other coaches. Basically that's what happens in the article. But seriously, the plan **David** laid out in 2008 is still the plan we need to follow in 2012. I will edit slightly because it's really long but just about every word is relevant to *HOA* today!

I challenge you to read every word thinking about how you can make a difference in *HOA* having an artistic and emotional experience every Tuesday night. Here goes, for clarity I've enclosed **David's** commentary in ( )'s]

(This message pertains to our prep for contest, and beyond. My goals are evolving from my initial comments to many of you. I said I thought we should strive to score in the mid 80's. I'm no longer in that mind-set. Because, it's not really about points or placement. It's simply about striving to learn and be the best we can be as a chorus. If we all INDIVIDUALLY dedicate ourselves to doing the best we can to improve in the next several weeks, mid-eighties will be easily attained and left behind. Of course, that sentence started with **if**.

Does it matter what your director does in the next few weeks? Of course. I probably have the most improvement needed of all of us. I promise to really work on it. The director is the most important performer on stage in a chorus performance. Therefore, guys like **Greg Lyne** can develop great choruses seemingly at will. I have lots to do.

But that doesn't let you off the hook. In fact, I mentioned **Greg** for a reason. As I was doing some of my homework about directing recently I came across 10 steps to a better singing and performing chorus from a master class he presented in 1997. It's in our most recent manual to improve directors but, it all focuses on you. It's all about the individual chorus member improving. I want to share it all and hope you will take it to heart. If each of us works on all of this individually the results will be phenomenal.

I'll begin with his last four of the 10 steps as I feel they are the most important. They're not the technical things.)

#### **Bring the whole singer.**

Bring all that you have to offer to every experience in life, including the rehearsal. Be in the moment, be attentive, be alert, be energetic, contribute to the whole. "Be all that you can be."

#### **Expect to grow.**

Expect every rehearsal to bring personal and corporate growth. Come with the expectation of learning. Come expecting musical leadership to have something to teach you. Treat time spent not gaining knowledge as time wasted. Mean to improve.

#### **"I'm talking to you!"**

Not to the man behind you, not to the man on either side, not to the man in front, but to you. Every comment is meant for you. Be prepared to change instantly when the musical leader asks for a change. Don't think he means someone else. He means you! Do it now! Only you can change the way the chorus performs!

#### **Look, act, be successful!**

When you're a little down, your back or feet hurt, or you wish you were somewhere else, try acting the way you'd like to feel. Stand up straight, smile, elevate your chest, look someone in the eye. If you look successful and act successful, success will



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follow. Take charge of your experience and make it something wonderful! (Obviously, developing this habit pays off everywhere, not just at our events. Now, once we've mastered these attitudinal things, the rest will happen easily.

I know that even though this is long, you now want to know the first six things you need to do. They are the technical things you guys already do fairly well. But, just like the four steps above, they are the keys to growth and we can always improve. That's what makes this so much fun.)

#### **Singer's Posture**

Always sing with one foot slightly in front of the other, weight comfortably forward, chest comfortably up in a proud position, shoulders resting comfortably down and a little back, head in line with the body. Stand tall. Controlled relaxation is the goal, an attitude of readiness for anything. Everything in perfect equipoise! (There's a word you don't see every day!)

#### **Active Face**

Always sing with an involved face! (Wow, some of us need to read this many times and actually spend our individual time away from the chorus working on this. It will not happen for some of us with attention only on Tuesday. Or even with lots of extra rehearsals. It's an individual responsibility to the team. This is currently one of our weakest areas. I sincerely believe it is an individual responsibility which some of our gold-medal quartet singers don't even take seriously enough. Oops, didn't mean to interrupt Greg for so long!) Lift the cheek muscles a little, raise and lift the upper lip a little, energize the eyes a lot, get involved facially. No tortured looks, just energize the facial muscles.

#### **Vowels that Look Right**

Make an "oh" vowel look like an "oh" and "oo" like an "oo," etc. Keep all the vowels vertical, not horizontal. (Goal posts!) Notice that a slight animation of the upper lip

(a "lift" off the teeth) can contribute to increased resonance.

#### **In-line Singing**

Make all the vowels sound similar to each other. That is, no single vowel should "pop" out at the listener. They should all have a similar character. While an "ah" is certainly distinct from an "oh" or an "ee," it should not be vastly different in the way it's placed, vocally, or in its inherent resonant characteristics. This is achieved by consistent vocal production, consistent placement, and a consistent approach to the musical line. At its best, there should be a continual, uninterrupted resonance (ring) throughout the entire vocal line, through the full range of word sounds and pitches.

#### **Focused Singing**

The sound is simply focused into a resonant point, about where the point of the unicorn's horn would be. Start with the chorus with their hands held wide, shoulder high, and have them sing a unison pitch while slowly bringing the palms together in front of them. Have them listen to the "focusing" of the sound. This is related to No. 4, above. They will feel the tone placed behind the eyes or a little higher. The tongue position is critical. The tongue should be relaxed with the tip touching the lower gum ridge. This should be carefully taught and carefully monitored. Tongue tension is counter-productive.

#### **Know the characteristics of your part.**

There are many ways to relate the different roles of each part to the unified whole. I like the car analogy: The chorus is a finely tuned, extremely expensive racing machine (say, a Lamborghini). The basses are the engine: smooth, velvet, powerful, unrelenting in its supply of EFFORTLESS, masculine power. The baris are the transmission: shifting from gear to gear in a smooth, EFFORTLESS motion. The leads are, of course, the EFFORTLESS (I added the word that time) drivers. They are in



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Red Lion on the  
(Columbia) River  
is HOA's hotel in  
Portland!

control of both the speed and direction of this well-constructed machine. And the tenors are, well, how about the paint job? Brilliant yellow, fire engine red? (If they are really good, we'll let them add wax!)

(Of course, any descriptive approach to part characteristics (foundation from the basses, dignity from the baris, personality from the leads, shimmer or sparkle from the tenors works very well. Now, if you think that took a while to read, you should have typed all of this adding emphasis, etc. I'm really hoping some guys didn't quit reading this several paragraphs ago. If so, that tells us all something, and I sure wish I had a way of knowing.

Well, maybe not. But, we should all reference this always. What if a director or clinician could just say one of the headings, like in-line singing, and the chorus immediately focused and did all of the things described in that paragraph! I'm betting you'd agree that **Greg** is the master director. Some of you have been lucky enough to work with him. I have been in his classes several times and consider him a good friend with the best hands in our business. Easily.

Individual attention to all of the information in this article will replace many extra rehearsals. Individual commitment to improvement is crucial. You have to work a bit, even just thinking about the stuff away from the team. Do you know the two contest songs pitch and word perfect yet? That means you'd be able to start almost anywhere in the song upon request and not screw up the next lyrics, notes, etc. My guess is the answer is no. The answer must be yes as soon as possible. Again, your responsibility, not the music team and not the director. Speaking of that, we'll have a new really tough song soon for all of us to start learning. May be the toughest song you've ever tried to learn as a chorus. But I think we need the challenge and you'll rise to it. [Prez note: true today!]

**Next individual challenge.**

What if we ended each Tuesday night after a couple of hours of singing and hard fun (not work!) and every guy was in perfect vocal health? Is that possible? Might not be. If you are not

used to singing a lot in an effortless fashion and don't often vocalize except on Tuesdays, then I would say it's not possible. But why not try? Vocalize a bit each of the next few days concentrating on the relaxed easy, effortless, on air singing we often talk about. No muscle in the sound. Don't let yourself sing any other way. Of all of my many quartet experiences over the years I only achieved this type of singing one time for just a couple of months. We could rehearse for five or six hours and not be vocally tired at all. We were easily singing at a top 10 level. But, a contest didn't happen in those two months and it went downhill from that peak quickly. Doesn't take much to weaken a team effort. And if you're not improving you're getting worse. What if guys actually warmed up on the way to rehearsal so that when we sang "The Old Songs" it stayed in key, we sang all of the word sounds, etc. without having to work on it for 15-20 minutes? Think it's possible? I'd sure like to try. Then we'll start calling warm-ups "tune-ups," [we do in 2012!] and they'll last about 10 minutes!

One last thing I've meant to say to you guys for weeks and haven't found the time. Some guys think I talk too much at rehearsal anyway, and that's probably correct. So I've been meaning to explain why I think it's so important for us to get to more guys in our group. It's not mainly to help us score better, etc. It's simply because as a barbershop chorus with our tradition and dedication we should have a lot members in a city this size. I know there are other chapters in town guys can join, but we should easily be the best. We should attract all guys of all ages who enjoy singing [well] and help teach them and learn from them and involve them in this great hobby to the extent they choose. We shouldn't require them to attend but inspire them to attend. And if they want to simply sing with us once a year that's OK. If they want to sing with us every Tuesday, even better. If they can't make it to our next contest, that's OK. We should encourage and accept whatever degree of involvement they wish. As always, feel free to let me know what you think. And check with other guys to see if they read this. If not then encourage them to do so.) ❤️