



TAG RAG AND NEWSLETTER

FOUNDED 1974

www.tvchorus.co.uk

Registered Charity number 1125742

JANUARY 2010

TVC IN MARIACKI CHURCH KRAKOW



We've recently received an invitation from our Polish friend Maciej to attend the International Krakow Choral Festival in June 2010. And guess what? Our performance in Krakow's magnificent Mariacki church is being used in the promotional material! We made the above appearance on Wednesday 7th November 2007. Go to <www.krakowchoirfestival.pl> to see the whole web site. The photo is accessible under the Concert Venues and City radio button.

Note that this photo can be seen in glorious colour on the TVC web site.

A HAPPY AND HARMONIOUS YEAR TO ALL READERS

READING BARBERSHOP HARMONY CLUB

A LOOK AHEAD TO

FEBRUARY 2010

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
FEBRUARY 2010	1	2 Rehearsal	3	4	5	6 Oxford Music Festival
7	8	9 Rehearsal TAG RAG COPY DEADLINE	10	11	12	13
14	15	16 Rehearsal TAG RAG DISTRIBUTION	17	18	19	20 AWAY WEEKEND Day 1 of 2
21 AWAY WEEKEND Day 2 of 2	22	23 Rehearsal Inc CD Track Recording Session	24	25	26	27
28	FEBRUARY 2010					

Calendars showing the remaining days of January 2010 and the month of March 2010 are at the back of TAG RAG

MORE DATES FOR YOUR DIARY * indicates an addition or update to last month's Tag Rag 2010

JAN	21	Thu	Daytimers	To sing at Beechbrook* Care Home Hare Hatch 2pm for a 3pm sing. Note that in December's issue this singout was incorrectly identified as Beechcroft.
FEB	6	Sat	Full Chorus	Oxford Music Festival
FEB	20-21	Sat-Sun	Full Chorus	Away Weekend Dance Studio South Hill Park Bracknell
MAR	6	Sat	Full Chorus	Singout in Methodist Church Wokingham
MAR	20	Sat	Small Chorus	Singout at St Anne's Manor Wokingham
APR	17	Sat	Full Chorus	Singout at Epping for Rotary Club
MAY	28-30	Fri-Sun		BABS Annual Convention Harrogate
JUN	9	Wed	Daytimers	Thamesfield House Henley 1.45pm for 2.45pm sing
*	JUL	26	Mon	PROBUS at Sonning Golf Club (Confirmed and Day corrected)
*	SEP	8	Wed	Bray Senior Citizens 1pm for 2pm sing
	DEC	1	Wed	Thamesfield House Henley 1.45pm for 2.45pm sing
	DEC	2	Thu	Wokingham Cancer Support Group

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Please update your diaries to include the list of Club commitments above.

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NEXT COPY DEADLINE:

9TH FEBRUARY FOR 16TH DISTRIBUTION



FROM THE CHAIRMAN

LOOKING BACK

Taking a view of 2009 brings to memory several excellent events. Early on we had the **Peter Dawson evening** to celebrate his life with the club. Our families and friends within and outside barbershop combined to put on a highly entertaining and successful evening.

I organised other social events during the year including a dinner with music and dancing at the **Aldermaston Mill** and a **summer barbecue** at my home. Thanks to those who contributed

particularly the stalwarts who came forward when I was desperate for help in setting up tents.

My only disappointment was caused by the weather. I had lined up an amazingly talented couple to entertain us at our Christmas social. Heather & Ken had organised food and drink. Other clubs were going to attend and it was set to thrill. Frustratingly the weather beat us. If I had not cancelled then many of those attending would have been stranded. Sean Altman, says he will be back from New York with his Diva wife and is determined not to miss it next time.

We had aimed to improve our singing marks at Convention and we achieved second highest marks in one of our songs. I do not know of any clubs who have put on 3 major shows in a year. Some have no such events because of the expense and challenge. It requires a strong chorus with a multitude of talents to make it a success once, let alone 3 times at 3 major venues.

Our show at **Sonning Mill** went down well with the audience. Rhi and the chorus enjoyed it. We were then onto an audience of 650 at our **show with Westminster chorus** which went down a storm. What I liked particularly was comment from the audience that Westminster (International Barbershop champions and now Choir of the World) were brilliant but they really enjoyed our performance because we were very entertaining.

Then off to **Riva in Italy** for an international choir festival. The visit went without a hitch and I was so relieved. It was great fun and I had many enthusiastic comments from the members. The highlight was the informal part where we made friends with a great Swiss youth choir and they loved us (and Rox).

Straight away we were into the run up to our **Christmas show at Maidenhead**. It was the usual sell out and we will be looking for a bigger venue. The members and the audience said it was a thoroughly enjoyable evening. For anyone who did not go, one of the highlights was the Caribbean section including limbo dancing. **My thanks** particularly to:-

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Rhi for conducting, Andy & Ed, for staging the event and to Colin for his comic talent. Rod for ticket sales, Lawrence for PR, Heather for costumes, the Roadents and all the many others who made the Christmas concert and all our other events such a success. While giving thanks and recognition, awards were made as reported last in Tag Rag and immense effort was put in throughout the year by the **Executive and Committee members**, CD and deputies – **Phillip and Brian**. I personally thanked many of those and presented them with bottles at the AGM.

The reality is that nothing much would happen without the invaluable help and support we get from **our partners**. In particular the ladies have been magnificent in rallying round to help organise our social and other events .

None of this would have been possible without the contributions of our CD, Rhi and so many members of the chorus in the administration. Each member and former member of the Executive has done a great job. Ken as our Club treasurer and Alex as financial director have both protected and enhanced our money. Bob is a wonderful and supportive Club Secretary.

I can now judge how well we are doing by the amount of pleasure which Rhi derives from leading us and she tells me she has had a lot of enjoyment. None of it would be possible without the efforts and considerable talents of Brian Milbank with and without his committee and of Phillip Ward in deputising for Rhi in the hand waving department.

Finally we do not forget the 12 monthly publications of Tag Rag now available in the finest colour on our web site care of Graham. Irene makes her contributions and Mike & Gabi work quietly to ensure our supporters and former members remain involved.

I thank all those who contribute to the success of the Daytimers. They not only provide valuable entertainment to those who might otherwise have none (e.g. the elderly) but also earn us money.

There are many members of the chorus whose names I have not mentioned because I have done

so in previous editions and will do so in future ones, including our **financial, carpentry, transport and web site experts**, organiser and the leaders of the Daytimers etc, but mostly I would like to thank the singing members of the chorus who make us what we are – a highly successful club.

LOOKING FORWARD

We have a competition and two shows lined up in **Wokingham and Essex** in the run up to Convention. Traditionally, this has been a lean period for us but no longer so that we should be competition fit by May.

The **competition at Oxford** next month: The Performance Team and Executive decided on taking part in the Oxford festival so as to give the members an outing and a challenge, improve competition experience particularly for the newer members, encourage team work and use it as a benchmark. Experience last year and in competition at Riva and during the year has shown that we need to improve resonance in each section of the chorus. Comment by the judges has to be taken on board. This is a milestone set by our chorus director and teaching aids have been produced to assist. We also have the away weekend (see below) for technical improvement and a recruitment drive to obtain younger voices and enthusiasm.

The **“Away Weekend”** will not be away but in Bracknell. The idea is to maximise on learning and save money. It should cost the members almost nothing and allow them to save for a trip abroad. **Jon Conway** our vocal coach will be in attendance with Rhi. Jon manages to introduce very entertaining new songs to keep us entertained and challenged as well as detailed vocal coaching which can raise our standards. We will be working particularly on making a more resonant sound as well as other details of craft.

We will be singing the two Convention songs. We will also be having a presentation session. We have produced a guide for presentation for the competition ballad. It is a new style incorporating photographs of the emotions which we hope you will be producing.

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On the Saturday night we are planning on a meal out and the members have been asked which of the options given are preferred, a hotel buffet, a pub meal or a curry evening nearby.

Recruitment Drive: James Porter is leading the team with the intention that we will have a one-day event from which we will hope to draw new members. It will be under a similar umbrella title to the last effort. We will be seeking to attract younger members and those who want to sing 4-part harmony. It will not be directed at Learn to Sing first timers. Our last efforts in this direction recruited members with real talent.

From the beginning of this year we will be working on repertoire including at the away weekend so as to produce a **new club CD**.

A tour in the autumn is proposed in the south of France. Alan Hill has been working on a plan which will shortly be presented to the chorus at a cost of £320 per head. We will be performing in a local theatre and other venues.

New Chorus Director: Rhi made her decision last Convention that the chorus should have a new director for next Convention. We have been looking for the right candidate and the club will be informed of the candidature at a meeting – once we can have one! Weather has prevented anything since Christmas.

Rhi has advised that we need someone strong and considerably stronger than would be the case with many choirs. The view has been taken that matters for discussion in the club should not be put into this published article.

Convention Songs: Last Night Was The End Of The World is a beautiful ballad with a great traditional Barbershop arrangement and tag.

The New Ashmolean Marching Society and Student's Conservatory Band is not only a foot tapping uptune but has great potential for involvement of the members in the song and comedy routines. It also has the potential to be inspiring in terms of costume.

An innovative guide to presentation has already been issued for the ballad. This incorporates photos at various points in the words so that members can see what they are supposed to be portraying in the interpretation of the words and music. This is a product of my work with **Philip Paine** and we will shortly be bringing out further material, plans and guides which will be considered in detail at the Away Weekend.

RICHARD LEATHEM
Chairman



EDITORIAL

Loads 'o' copy this month much to my relief and surprise. Why the surprise? - well I was in conversation with Bob about the executive's thinking that due to the three (and may have been four) rehearsal break it may have been appropriate to think of combining two issues (January and February). Before we concluded our conversation I had received the Chairman's copy and a long dissertation by Rhiannon reporting the happenings at the January BABS Directors' Symposium which sealed-the-deal for me. The BABS gathering was in lieu of a CDs College that's normally held at this time. It is an important part of the review of BABS educational services that is underway. Rhiannon has written a massive tome with a lot of detail and will prove a useful reference for the future. I was originally thinking I would serialize it but I think it will serve us better as a single item. Mike and Gabi have decided not to send any Associate Member this month.

Simon Laight drew my attention to an article published in the Independent newspaper about the therapeutic benefits of singing. Quite by accident I

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had seen the article myself that morning and had already bought a copy. 'The Choral Cure' makes uplifting reading. See for yourself, on page 14.

As the years fly by it is easy to forget the excellent service we receive from the Piggott School. The Tuesdays come and go with transparent ease and that comes from the attentive support of the school's Bursar, the Business Manager and the Site Manager (Caretaker) and his assistant. Our appreciation was once again expressed with 'bottles' delivered before the Christmas break.

You may also like to know that our van was used to help the Piggott School to transport some office furniture and stackable chairs from the Ryeish Green school which is closing down. They will have a new life in Wargrave. I unwittingly left a key to the only four-drawer filing cabinet that I'd locked on top of the unit only to find it 'missing' later when we arrived back! It was found four days later hiding in a chair stack so my blushes were spared!

Only last week I was contacted by Chas Owen (ex BABS Chairman and Chesham Club member) who requested the use of our risers to support their imminent Learn to Sing course. With the executive's approval I have agreed to drive the van and risers over to Chesham for the six Thursdays. They had had sixty-three responses to their advertising campaign which when added to their thirty members overfilled their eight risers. Scotty agreed to ride shotgun with me. They had a good first night with sixty potential members attending. On that first night we met up with Tony Searle and John Wiggins who are both ex RBHC members.

GRAHAM STARKIE

Editor

MESSAGES OF APPRECIATION

Hello Andy.

On behalf of Steel I wanted to say how much we enjoyed last night. Obviously we were there to do a job of entertaining the audience, but we all had a great time too... only marred by the fact that I had to abandon my car 1 mile from home in Bristol because of snow!!!

Please pass on our best wishes to the boys and to Rhiannon - we'll be doing our best at convention as we know you will too. Thanks again for a great evening.

The Steely Boys

Andy, Andy, Keef and Nooj

Dear Andy

It was an absolute pleasure to be part of your show. I was so impressed by the superb organisation and we all thought it was lovely that everyone was so friendly. Your gentlemen were great as were Steel who were brilliant.

The kids thoroughly enjoyed it and I really hope we can work together again in the future. Do let me know any time if an opportunity arises. Thank you of course for donating to Rosies Rainbow. Your support is invaluable and the money will be wisely used.

Have a wonderful Christmas and hope we meet again soon.

Carolyn (Mayling)



BARBERSHOP BABES

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO
JANUARY'S TRIO

DEREK HIRD
CHRIS SCHRIER
JOHN SHACKLEFORD

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RESONANCE 1

Rhi and the performance team are putting a milestone in place for the "Away Weekend" and as a theme for 2010. It is IMPROVING RESONANCE. Many of you will remember the CD of Westminster Chorus working with us. Pared down notes of that evening are set out below. You will also remember the efforts made by John Grant at improving resonant sound.

The need for increased resonance was the major point arising from judges comments on the performance of the TVC at Riva.

TUITION BASED ON AN EVENING WITH ROYCE FERGUSON

Royce crafted a common vocal production based on how it felt to make a sound he described as "Staying in the same cathedral". His aim was to get us to use the same voice placement irrespective of the dynamic or pitch. Great emphasis was placed on getting ready to sing and the physical involvement needed for vocal production. He likened that preparation to flying with an aerobatics team; cruising along in formation ready to perform a sequence of stunts.

Exercises:

- Fill your lungs breathing in through your nose - Remember that feeling of an expanded ribcage - Exhale against the pressure of a hiss (feel the energy needed) - Repeat.
- Ditto but turn hiss into a hum.
- Ditto but turn an "ng" into an 'i' (eye)
- Ditto with hum and use self-inflicted abdomen punches to find the best place for your resonant voice.
- Exercise - this voice placement singing a scale
- Royce emphasised the importance of making clean transitions from one note to the next. He likened the preparation to a violin player caressing the instrument into making a sound. There should be no "punchy or hard edges" in the sound and we should attempt to hear all the notes between the notes we sing.

EVERYBODY STEP COACHING SESSION

He rehearsed each part to make sure that the sound being produced had plenty of 'uh, uh, uh' (an ape like sound) in it; he asked for plenty of sad (dropped jaw) tonality.* He spoke of singing with a sonority that let you imagine you were singing all four parts.

Based upon notes prepared by Graham Starkie 9 January 2008

* Note added by RL - "sad" referred to the technique he also used of making a pathetic crying type sound to induce a mechanical effect.

RESONANCE 2

Bag of tricks to improve resonance - from a top US Bass

First you must understand where resonance comes from. This is a complex issue but basically the larger the space the better the resonance. Opening the throat takes lifting the soft palette and dropping the tongue but that is just the starting point. You actually want to relax all the muscles around the resonant spaces.

- Do a big yawn and feel your throat opening.
- Take a breath as if you are gasping with shock.
- - Imaging the feel of holding an egg or an apple in the back of your throat.
- When you do these exercises you should say ah and feel the vibration in the area of the throat. As you get better and better the feeling gets bigger and fuller. It should basically include the entire bottom half of your head and the top part of your throat. It should all feel like this single big round space vibrating. Sometimes the feeling will flip. You will feel like the resonance is vibrating you like you are sort of gently floating on it.
- Another exercise trick is to take something away and bring it back. This works with many things (primarily relaxation training) but it may work for you here also. Basically first try closing up the throat and mouth making a very closed sound. Then

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open up (drop the tongue, raise the soft pallet etc.) and feel the difference. Go back and forth and feel the difference. Learn to feel this change as if it is direction. You want to figure out how to go farther in the open direction.

- You should know that there are many resonant spaces involved. You can try exercising each separately just like a weight lifter will try to isolate muscles to exercise. I basically try to do three different resonant sounds. First I do the buzz that comes with humming. This is in the lips. Then I move it up and do the nasal buzz. It will sound weird (and nasally) and you won't like it by itself but the nasal part puts a good bite on a full resonance. In a fully blended resonance it sounds great. The last I work on is a buzz in the back of the throat. (Some people feel this as being in the back of the skull.)

After working each resonance separately I try to smoothly move the resonant buzz between all three positions covering the in between positions as well. To me it feels like moving the buzz in a circle. The right feel for a full resonance is in the centre of this circle with all the separate resonances blending into one. Basically try to make all kinds deep buzzy sounds, whatever you can think of so you can learn where they are and stretch yourself. What you are trying to do is learn to stretch muscles you can't feel directly so they will relax properly when you sing. By experimenting you will get the feel for them and learn how to control them.

- What you want to avoid in all this is a deep guttural sound at the bottom of your throat. Often this feels really cool to a singer from the inside but trust me it is quite dark and closed and ugly to the listener.
- You want to demonstrate in front of a good coach every once in a while to make sure you are not actually practicing bad habits. In between these sessions you can record yourself, i.e. be your own voice coach. The biggest thing a voice coach does is lend you his trained ears. You would be amazed at what you learn by listening to a recording of yourself singing. It is no

where as pretty as it seems to you while you do it.

- Copy the sound of a good bass. Some people are good mimics. They can adjust their sound to match someone else. If this works for you you can improve your resonance with out really knowing the details. My stretch exercise is to duet with Paul Robeson singing Old Man River. I'll never match his sound but I am a lot closer now than when I started this journey. This is a good exercise to combine with recording yourself and listening to it later.

The trick for a good bass is to have great resonance while keeping a bright forward sound. It is really easy for a bass to slip into that dark, back in the throat guttural sound. A good bright sounding bass will have overtones one and two octaves above the note he is singing. These bass overtones are an important part of the barbershop lock and ring.

All of this assumes you are already doing the basics of posture, breathing and support which I didn't cover here. You will never get a good resonant sound without having a fully supported sound which won't happen without good breathing which won't happen without good posture. Resist the temptation to skip ahead going to what seems more fun stuff.

BABS MUSIC DIRECTORS SYMPOSIUM

January 9th, 2010 in Birmingham

This was a day arranged by BABS to try and secure the opinions of Chorus Directors in order to identify their future training needs.

Initially all but 3 BABS choruses were intending to be represented, but, due to adverse weather conditions, about 20 people did not make their journeys.

After the Introduction, given by Alan Goldsmith the BABS Chairman, the day was planned into a series of Lead Speeches, with break-out discussion groups followed by Group Feedback. The grouping of the Chorus Directors within the discussion groups was mixed in so far as there were relatively new Chorus Directors with CDs

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who had been directing for a longer time. The groups themselves were Chaired by key personnel from within the BABS Executive Committee, and had identified scribes who noted the discussion points for the feedback to the re-assembled larger group immediately afterwards.

All lead sessions or speeches were 25 minutes long. The title for the first twenty-five minute speech was "The Ideal Chorus Director?" presented by Rick Spencer, the Chief Operations Officer for the Barbershop Harmony Society based in Nashville, Tennessee. Rick also took the role of noting the feedback from all the group discussion held throughout the day on a flip chart. The second session was a dual presentation by Linda Corcoran (CD of Great Western Chorus) and Mick Dargan (former CD of Bolton). The focus was "Creating a Championship Chorus. The third session was another joint presentation from John Grant and Paul Davies entitled "Maintaining and Improving Quality". Suzi Digby who is a judge from the panel of "Last Choir Standing" gave the fourth session. She's also presented the "Cardiff Singer of the World" competition. Her focus was that of "Inspiring your Chorus". The final Q & A session was chaired by Alan Goldsmith.

SESSION ONE - RICK SPENCER

Rick's session focused on creating a list of the attributes and characteristics of an ideal Chorus Director. It was a relatively lively and humorous session allowing matches to be made with personalities within BABS against the thirty-plus essentials in the list! The general consensus was that there wasn't anyone alive that could fulfill all these requirements! However, Rick did identify a very good source for further consideration called "Compellingly Attractive Chapter Meetings (CATS!)" by Chuck Green. In this "book" he identifies 13 "Attractive Value Characteristics", but really he reduced these down to 7!! They all focused on the needs of the singers in order to ensure that Chapter meetings (rehearsals) were the best that they could be for each individual. They covered the focii of "opportunities for creativity; skill/s, talent/s and knowledge application; trust; up-beat and fun; participation in leadership; appreciated and sought for their talents; high and efficient return from the diversity within each group".

Following on from this he placed a strong emphasis on team building within choruses, with a "jobs for all" principle... the question was "Who assigns the jobs?" This should lead into strategic planning that sought, developed and enhanced the skills in every individual. Maybe even finding a new way of developing ourselves into a different chorus!

So, the task was to identify what we could within our groups! I can only report my own group's findings, and, as ever, it was an opportunity for the strong-minded/willed amongst the group to wander away from the point and take out their soap box! The first instruction we were given was to name the greatest CDs (in our opinion). The names were those that I would have expected to see, all North American bar 1, a female from the UK who is no longer in barbershop! The names did not necessarily meet the "essential characteristics" identified earlier as "hard evidence" examples of negative aspects of the CDs' behaviour/demeanour were quoted. A few CDs demanded that a minimum requirement a CD should expect from all SINGERS was the notes and the words in the right order, and that BABS should train their singers to know that this was the minimum. The point was also made that surely each chorus would do this through their Recruitment/Induction programme. This did not appear to be the case in choruses represented. There were some interesting perspectives such as "leaders, whether CDs or not, should have charisma; maybe it would be better to identify those with charisma and teach them music". There also seemed to be a tension between the emphasis placed by BABS on developing choruses rather than developing CDs. There was agreement that the principles outlined in Rick's 13 Characteristics were excellent, but they needed to be "Anglisized"! Very clearly, club objectives vary considerably across the country. On returning to the whole group on time, the group that emphasised good time keeping with rehearsals was allowed to over-run by 15 minutes!

The debrief reflected the kinds of discussion that had taken place in my group.

Cont...

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SESSION TWO - LINDA CORCORAN & MICK DARGAN

Session 2, outlined the ways they had both gone about preparing their respective choruses for a Championship Gold Medal. The point that Linda made very strongly was that BABS is a singing organisation and as such, the music and singing are the most important thing. Both said it was essential the music/singing should drive the club's needs, and that Performance Teams should be in charge of all matters musical with the role of the Exec being there to serve the needs of this committee. It was important that the goals of the Performance Team were totally shared with and by the Exec. Both had chosen their Section Leaders and members of the Perf. Team. They delegated jobs to others (SLs etc). The CDs were responsible for identifying the coaches for their choruses. Linda targeted the "top 1/3rd" of the chorus through individual vocal auditions..... every single member of the chorus was re-auditioned, and re-auditioned again. If they did not reach the identified minimum threshold they were not allowed to sing. 25 men left the chorus. She also gave the guys a questionnaire to fill-in with questions like "If your singing friend didn't pass the audition, would you still stay with the chorus. What would you do?" Mick instituted the "all the words and all the notes correct, in the right order" policy. Chorus members were not allowed to sing the songs out unless they were correct (Aside: this is a similar policy to that of John Palmer who has a "purple dot" rule for all of the singers allowing them to sing on the risers; the results of this policy for every song is on the website). Mick also put a proposal forward to change venues for rehearsing away from the Conservative Club (with drinking) that had hitherto been followed. The chorus voted to move, and 20 guys who did not want to move left the chorus. They both felt that this "Raising of the Bar" for singing expectation, full commitment demanded for attendance in the run up to major competitions (don't forget they are both active in the Choir of the Year competitions) and continued expectation of full co-operation between the musical and admin side of the choruses were responsible for their winning gold.

In our group session we were asked to identify possible goals to help with chorus improvement. Generally the focus was on Recruitment,

Improving Vocal Quality (with a range of differing emphases according to each group of singers) and Key areas of improvement based on the benchmarked target of Convention results. One chorus had placed its emphasis on becoming more involved within the community and the wider musical community. There was a tendency to mix up aspirations with goals, but the Chair kept us on target. The de-brief from this session reflected that of our group.

SESSION THREE - JOHN GRANT & PAUL DAVIES

Session 3 was a little gem! Both John and Paul worked to hand written points they wanted to make. They felt that Maintaining Quality applied to very few choruses within BABS and was worthy of a seminar day in itself, so they concentrated on Improvement. The main issue was... the MUSIC and the singing of the music by the chorus! This was done through the Vision of the CD, not the Mission Statement of the chorus. The CD needed to know where the chorus had to go. They had to have a passion for their singers, the barbershop style and each and every song so that they were/are able and willing to put this across to their singers. If a CD doesn't like a song.... forget it, if a chorus doesn't like a song forget it.... even if it is within days of a contest! (Ask any member of Great Western and Windsor, they will tell you). A Music Team could suggest the songs but if a CD did not like the song it should not be sung. The CD must believe in the power of the song/material that is being sung all of the time and should be willing to go into the detail to achieve the outcome they require. The CD always has power of veto and should use it; there is no room for democracy as a CD. The music drives the Admin. The CDs artistic vision for every song must underpin any technical work that is done on it, even when rehearsing smaller section, notes/phrases. CDs should ensure that the interpretative plan comes out of the music as good songs have it "burned" into them. Emotion comes from within the song. Everything that a CD does has to have a purpose but they have to remember that for most singers "transference" from one phrase to another is not automatic and does not happen easily! There was no discussion after this session.

Cont...

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SESSION FOUR - SUZI DIGBY

The session after lunch was delivered by Suzi Digby. She focused on 5 aspects; You, Membership, Rehearsal, Repertoire and Personnel. Under "You" she emphasised the need to be well prepared: know your "score" in every way note-wise, breath-wise and interp-wise; always be willing to show how you want something to go vocally; share your vision for a song and the singing group with the singers; always be in a consistent state of learning by watching other CDs, studying with other CDs, attending 3 different singing lessons every year, attend music courses; review/reflect and analyse every rehearsal and prepare and plan for the next accordingly; survey the opinions of audience members, family members and of the group on the last performance. How do the singers feel about the last performance? Identify 3 things that were good, identify 3 things were bad; be creative with your teaching through finding different ways of learning aspects of the song/notes/music; listen, listen, listen; always know where you are going, what you want and how you will achieve it; use stick(hand)techniques and strengthen them, they are your method of developing the music; control your ego; be a good communicator and play lots of musical games with them, set a high bar. Under "Membership" she emphasised Listening and training the singers to listen so as to focus on TUNING. This would then enable the singers to appreciate, understand and experience the intricacies of the harmonies. Record everything and review within 24 hours. Always take note of the musical details and add to them. The TEXT implies the interp ie through the emotions of the words. All of the singers should learn to read music. In "Rehearsal" demonstrate vocally. Section Leaders work with your blessing, they should know their jobs, leave them to it. Communicate with your singers via email and let them know of everything you want, any changes, areas to work on and insist that they respond to you via email. Work on different colours of sound, change the Section practice rooms so as to vary the acoustic; do lots of focusing games and activities; challenge them; do Tai Chi/Alexander Technique activities; be unpredictable; use competition within the group eg who had the best vowel shape in pairs/ one side of the chorus against the other; Always do Warm-up with a set purpose; end on a

positive note; be there when you're needed; have a firm yet never unkind manner; For "Repertoire" there was a strong recommendation to invite guest conductors, from other genre, to come and work with the group. This way, it would broaden the musical experience of the singers and make them better musicians; go on tours; collaborate with other groups; do recordings; construct new programmes and learn from the past. In the final section " Personnel" she said she insists that all Section Leaders attend 2 training events; when auditioned the singers sign up to a contract in which they agree to have singing lessons yearly, commit to: 1. supporting the group through attendance, 2. supporting the group by coming prepared, 3. bringing in new audience members, 4. participating socially with the group, 5. partaking/contributing to admin in some way. In order to have recruits have a "lively" website, there are young singers trawling around to chose where they want to go and sing, make it attractive to them!

The discussion group was very lively!! The question was "What should be the future for CD training?" We were given 4 headings, Technical skills; Music Skills; Interpretative Skills and Chorus Management Skills. They didn't stick to it! The final summary for our group was:

- more time for individual 1 on 1 coaching with the subsequent feedback sessions mirroring this during Directors' College as there was not as much need for the other sessions on Saturday.
- Specific programmes for "grouped/ streamed /levelled" CDs with similar needs maybe to take place at HC.
- CD assessment at your own chorus.
- Regional CD events.
- CDs acting as a chorus with Guest CDs directing suggesting what they were doing, why they were doing it and how they were doing it.
- Where would/could CDs go for training? DC in the States so BABS would need to send everyone.
- Recording of CDs during competitions, with feedback for them on their directing.
- Bring in a coach for the CD to the chorus, so that they are coached in front of their singers.

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SELECTED WEEKLY NOTICES

CHRISTMAS SHOW FEEDBACK (5 Jan)

It seems like a long time ago now, but it was only 2 weeks. If you have any opinions on the build up, content and outcome of the Christmas show please let me know. Also, if any friends and relations have comments, please pass on their thoughts. I will amalgamate them into some anonymous list, so please give me your honest opinions.

We are thinking of moving the show to Bearwood College theatre in Dec 2010, which has a purpose-built theatre seating about 350. We have put shows on there in the past, but not for a few years. Would your guests be prepared to drive out there to see us (nearest postcode RG41 5BG)? Please let me know. If you know of any other suitable venues please let me or Andy Pearce know.

Finally, if you want to get involved in any aspect of our shows, from looking at venues to suggesting content to stage management please let me or Andy know. We need to have cover for all our major roles, and in a big club like ours it is not unreasonable to have more than one person who can do a job. What else are you doing to help TVC? Brian Milbank - Music and Performance Team Leader

THE UNITED KINGDOM IN SONG – RADIO 4 (5 Jan)

I have edited the following mainly for those TVC members without internet access after Pat Perridge and Lawrence McNulty sent those of us with internet the details of a new Radio 4 initiative.

Both Heather Mills and Pat Perridge heard on Radio 4 a track Lawrence had submitted from our Christmas Gold CD that now appears as an audio link on their new web page, "The United Kingdom in Song". They required a Christmas carol/song and our submission ('Let All Mortal Flesh Retire') was heard on their Today programme early on New Year's Day (before 7 a.m.!).

If you can access the internet via friends or family, Radio 4 is building a map of choir locations and you can view ours by zooming in on the map at http://news.bbc.co.uk/today/hi/today/newsid_8436

- Bring back the Field Officer's post as a CD coach to visit a chorus 3 or 4 time a year.
- Harmony Foundation Grants for choruses to apply for a CD coach to work with the CD/Chorus.
- Establish a Regional CD Coaching/Training Network to visit at intervals during the year.
- Circulation of feedback given to the top 10 choruses at convention so as to help lower placed choruses identify potential goals or key areas for their improvement as well.
- Ring fence the money used to bring over the "top coaches" so that they only visit the "top choruses" who would/can make best use of their skills and respond to their requirements, and have the UK based team doing the rest of the coaching.
- Have a list, similar to the "potential coaches list" already located within BABS, of potential CDs trainers that could be approached to go and coach CDs across the country.
- Re-visit the Chorus Director's Workshop Intensive either in its original format or in some way or other.

I didn't write down the other feedback but they echoed the above with a few additions.

FINAL Q&A SESSION

The final session was very slow to get under way. Rick identified the provision for CD training from BHS and then we wrapped up and finished at about 4.15pm.

This was a good day if only to be student! It was also important to hear my beliefs validated by others. I shall keep trying to fulfill my obligations as a CD. Thank you for allowing me to attend as your representative.

RHIANNON OWENS-HALL

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000/8436192.stm. Our song is the audio-icon to the right of Reading and just above Billingbear.

Lawrence has asked to be notified of any TVC "sightings that appear in the wild!"

Craig (taken from e-mails of Pat Perridge and Lawrence McNulty)

DAYTIMERS SINGOUTS (5 Jan)

Our last singout in December for Beechcroft has become a great favourite of ours. It was with the staff and patients of this carer group at the Chequers Hotel Newbury. Happening as it did on the afternoon of the 16th, it nestled between the BBC recording in Reading Minster (the previous evening) and the chorus sing for Arthritis Matters in the evening of the same day. There was an extra interest this year because we learned that Pat Perridge's parents used to run this hostelry (when Pat was in short trousers) and was able to point out how things had changed since his residency. The sing was a great success and went down extremely well with Mervyn doing his 'Turkey' monologue and the audience fully engaged themselves with the Christmas songs before settling down to a delicious hot finger buffet which they shared with us. I am pleased to record that I won two bottles of wine on that day. One in the Beechcroft raffle and also one in the evening with Arthritis Matters; almost a good enough reason to buy a lottery ticket! Graham Starkie

EVENING PROGRAMME (12 Jan)

The forecast is for more snow on Sunday. However if we can get a rehearsal together, the plan is to have a fun part of the evening and make it more like the Christmas Social that we had to cancel. Depending how many guests we get we will either learn our new conventions songs, or use it as an opportunity to sing through our repertoire in a very informal show. We also have to eat the mince pies which are in Ken and Heather's garage.

I made a plea for anyone who wanted to take part in the entertainment to get in touch. I'm sure you've had your mind on other things. So I shall repeat, if there are any solo artists, duos, quartets and more who want to show off their talents then please come prepared on Tuesday and let me know what you are preparing.

Also, have you let Andy Pearce know of your preference for the evening event on the Saturday evening of the Away Weekend (at home)? He's waiting. See his email of 6th January. Brian Milbank

RADIO BERKSHIRE – THANKS (12 Jan)

Hi guys. Just a big thank you for taking part in our Carol Service at the Minster. Your opening set and the two pieces within the service were as brilliant as ever and we love having you involved. We hope you enjoyed the results on Christmas Day.

Andrew Peach

LAST NIGHT WAS THE END OF THE WORLD – PERFORMANCE (12 Jan)

This beautiful song is to be our ballad at Convention and your Performance Team have been giving thought as to how the Chorus can optimise our performance of this song.

This song has a strong melody and the lyrics express powerful emotions. It is essential when as a chorus we perform this song that we convey total unity. This unity is two-fold. Firstly our performance needs to show unity between its vocal and visual elements. Secondly the individuals within the chorus must show a unity of performance. If we look like we are all singing the same song with similar emotions we will give the song believability.

Our facial expressions and body language throughout this song are key to successful performance. This is something that we all need to work at. Using our faces and bodies will help maintain the energy of the song. And remember, we need to put even more energy into the song in the quieter parts. Word endings, phrase endings are all critical to maintaining the energy of the performance.

To help with all of this Richard and I have prepared the attached Words and Emotional Plan. The pictures on the right-hand side convey the underlying emotional feeling and the round faces on the left-hand side show simplistically the emotions that we should be conveying in our faces. The italicised phrases in red on the RHS are directions. In the words, Lead pick-ups are in red and harmony part pick-ups are in blue.

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Please put this plan with your music and when you are practicing this song at home practice also the emotional feeling. Treat this as a working document. As our understanding of the song grows then so additional directions may be included and the dynamic plan added.

Philip Paine

THE CHORAL CURE

Reprinted from INDEPENDENT LIFE Tuesday, 12 January 2010

We know it makes us feel good. Now science is discovering how singing can treat illnesses from asthma to Parkinson's – and even prevent colds and flu. Tessa Thomas reports

When Robert Wyatt of the Sixties rock group Soft Machine had an accident that broke his back, it ended his career as a drummer. But it relaunched his life as a singer – and that, he believes, helped him to overcome the depression and drink problems he suffered in later years.

"Singing is the best free drug going," says the wheelchair-bound musician, who began 2010 by dedicating Radio 4's Today programme on 1 January to a celebration of amateur choirs and who has just recorded a disc with sax player Gilad Atzmon. "It does what exercise does, and more."

Perhaps that explains the growing appeal of community singing. There are now more choirs in the UK than fish and chip shops, and a spate of television programmes about choral singing – including Last Choir Standing and the two award-winning series by choirmaster Gareth Malone – suggest that, as Wyatt puts it, "singing together is so much more than making a noise with voices." In the future, he says, "someone will figure out how it works its magic in the brain."

Choral singing can measurably improve physical health. In a paper in the new issue of the Journal of Applied Arts & Health, specialists identify half-a-dozen ways in which it can improve our mental health, from improving cognitive function to social confidence.

But what is more surprising is that singing in a choir can have a strong impact on physical health. "Like walking, singing has always been taken for granted – it's just something people have always done," says lead author Professor Stephen Clift. "But just as walking is now prescribed, the benefits of singing for health are slowly being rediscovered by health practitioners."

Just how is apparent when one walks into a "Singing for Breathing" session at the Royal Brompton Hospital. Led by professional singing teacher Victoria Hume, a bunch of patients croon their way through a series of vocal exercises and songs. It gets your fingers clicking, but the catchiness or quality of the sound is not the point. The purpose of these sessions is to improve the patients' breathing.

John Townsend has suffered severe chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder for five years. Doctors had him categorised as a lifelong wheelchair case. "Then someone suggested I did this singing programme that was starting up. I just thought it was silly and I think a lot of the doctors did, too. But I quickly learnt it wasn't silly at all."

Within a few months of starting the twice-weekly sessions, the former smoker in his 70s was not only free of the chest infections he had suffered from for years, but was walking regularly without help and was "breathing more deeply than I could remember".

The housework now takes him a fraction of the time it used to, because breathing more deeply and slowly means he takes in more oxygen, gets rid of more carbon dioxide and therefore has increased stamina. In November, the hospital is introducing singing sessions for children with cystic fibrosis and adults with severe asthma.

Susan Walker uses her inhaler less since she started singing. Her initiation was accidental: she was accompanying her husband Brian, a Parkinson's sufferer, to his "Quivers and Quavers" class run by Hereford Primary Care Trust. "People with Parkinson's lose control of their voice, so I started taking Brian to the group. But then I joined in and now I do every session too." Although these are only fortnightly, the effects on both her

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husband's and her conditions are remarkable, she says. "He stoops and stutters less, I breathe much more easily and we both have better posture. None of the group are much good at singing, by the way!"

As Townsend carries on with his conventional pulmonary rehabilitation programme alongside the singing, so Walker attends a standard speech therapy programme. Both say that it is the singing that makes the most difference – yet the price of it bears no comparison.

"Speech therapy is much more expensive because it's all one-to-one, whereas the singing is in a group – and we're even looking at doing online sessions which will be even more cost-effective," explains Hereford nurse Caroline Evans.

Respiratory consultant Dr Nicholas Hopkinson at the Royal Brompton is a little more guarded, saying that a decreased dependency on medicine and therefore reduced costs "may well" come out in the final analysis after the pilot programme ends in November. "But what is clear is that patients are breathing more slowly and breathing from their diaphragms rather than upper chest, both of which are very beneficial in conditions like emphysema and pulmonary fibrosis."

That such overwhelmingly positive results could transpire for such different conditions doesn't particularly surprise Malone. "Singing is about little flaps of tissue vibrating but it engages so many of the body's systems – the lungs, the heart, the nervous system – that it's not really surprising it has such overall benefits. After a big choral piece you can feel like you have been on a short jog."

A recent study at the University of Stockholm showed that men and women got an oxytocin high when they sang. Oxytocin is not only the hormone of childbirth and lactation: it is also produced during sex. No wonder so many choristers describe sensations of "well-being" to curious researchers. Meanwhile, a Sidney de Haan research review highlights the way that singing is not only found to enhance energy and mood – even to create a state of "transcendence" – but to boost immunity en route. Samples of saliva taken from singers by

Frankfurt University researchers after rehearsals of Mozart's Requiem showed increased secretion of antibodies.

Professor Graham Welch, the professor of music education at the Institute of Education and spokesperson for the national singing programme for schoolchildren Sing Up, offers this as a final solo: "Singing not only improves the body's cardiovascular system, it also reduces the opportunity for bacteria to flourish in the upper respiratory tract, so can help prevent colds and flu."

So more singing on the curriculum this winter could mean more ticks in the register.



HISTORICAL NOTES

5 Years Ago January 2005

16th Full Chorus at a TVC one-day workshop at the Piggott School

27th Daytimers at Notrees, Kintbury.

10 Years Ago January 2000

No reported activities reported this month.

15 Years Ago January 1995

The quartet calling themselves 'The Middlemen' (Roger Wilkinson, Ken Smyth, Rod Adams,

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Chris Oliver) changed their name to 'Side By Side'.

20 Years Ago January 1990

20th Small Chorus at Lynwood Court, Sunninghill, Ascot.

27th Full Chorus at Winston Churchill Hall, Ruislip We appeared on the West London Ladies Barbershop Show with their chorus 'Capitol Connection'. Also appearing was non-barbershop singers and dancers.

Colin Thatcher was the show MC.

25 Years Ago January 1985

5th & 6th Rogues Gallery (Dick Coles, Nick Carter, Dave Heighway, Ian Douglas) was singing at the Synchronised Swimming Show at the Reading Swimming Pool. On the 6th during their last song "Side By Side" Dick removed his jacket and shoes and, during the final pose, Nick nudged him into the pool. Dick swam half the length of the pool wearing trousers and shirt and received tremendous applause after dragging himself out at the deep end.

30 Years Ago January 1980

17th Full Chorus at the Hexagon, Reading, at the FROTH (Friends of the Hexagon) AGM, taking part were:

- Berkshire Barbershoppers (Thames Valley Chorus)
- Reading Barberettes
- Partners In Time (Dick Coles, Pete Powell, Dave Heighway, Ian Douglas)
- Variations (a group of mixed voices mainly from RBHC & Barberettes)

26th Full Chorus at the Old School, Langley with the Barberettes in aid of the mentally handicapped.

HAYDN ADAMS



SUPPORTERS.

I was delighted to hear that Dave Colver is being assessed for the transplant list, which has prompted me to register as a donor (not for you though Dave!). I am not sure at what age our organs are still usable but I will look on the website and investigate. Syd has had his operation and is recovering well.

I thoroughly enjoyed the show at Desborough as did those around me; congratulations to all involved. Despite the bad weather and the many chest infections there was a large chorus and very few empty seats. It was a pity the Christmas Party had to be cancelled but very wise in the circumstances.

I hope you all enjoyed Christmas. We had a lovely family time even though we were roused at 5.00 am to see if Santa had been! Needless to say he had (and came down the chimney as well!).

I hope everyone survived the snow and ice without any accidents. We heard 5 minutes ago that a very close friend wrote off his car at 8.00 am this morning having driven on black ice on the A4 and landing upside down in a ditch. Thank goodness the electrics still worked and he was able get out through the window - very wet but otherwise unharmed. Phew!

Although it is a bit late - Happy New Year to everyone; would you believe we already have two holidays planned for 2010!

Luv'n'hugs as always,

IRENE

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Advertisement lineage will be accepted and printed free of charge in TAG RAG (subject to editorial discretion). Display advertising is available in exchange for a donation to club funds as agreed between the sponsor and the editor before the publication date. Please note that advertisements will be carried for two months only and then will be dropped (at the editor's discretion) unless requested otherwise.

Objectives of the RBHC - To encourage the singing and enjoyment of Barbershop Harmony in both Chorus and Quartet form. It is a non profit making organisation and shall support such worthy charitable causes as the Executive Committee think fit.

Contacts - The Club's Thames Valley Chorus rehearse on every Tuesday (with few exceptions) at the Piggott School Wargrave near Twyford Reading from 7.45pm until 10.30pm. All visitors are welcome. See website www.tvchorus.co.uk for directions.

SECURITY NOTICE The best place to park your car at the Piggott School is in the main car park at the side of the school; this area is under constant surveillance by four CCTV cameras. The camera over the front door only looks at the main entrance to record movements coming off the road.

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RBHC's

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THE REMAINING DAYS OF **JANUARY 2010**

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
17	18	19 Rehearsal TAG RAG DISTRIBUTION	20	21 Daytimers Beechbrook Hare Hatch	22	23
24	25	26 Rehearsal	27	28	29	30
31	JANUARY 2010					

February 2010 calendar is on page 2

A LOOK AHEAD TO **MARCH 2010**

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
MARCH 2010	1	2 Rehearsal	3	4	5	6 Full Chorus Singout Methodist Church Wokingham
7	8	9 Rehearsal TAG RAG COPY DEADLINE	10	11	12	13
14	15	16 Rehearsal TAG RAG DISTRIBUTION	17	18	19	20 Small Chorus Singout at St Anne's Manor
21	22	23 Rehearsal	24	25	26	27
28	29	30 Rehearsal	31	MARCH 2010		