



International Medalist
GREAT NORTHERN UNION
CHORUS

HILLTOP CHAPTER • SPEBSQSA

10,000 LAKES DIVISION - LAND O' LAKES DISTRICT



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GNUsNews

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Great Northern Union takes 8th in Indy!



The **Great Northern Union** came back from International without a medal this July taking 8th place in the chorus contest. On the bright side, it is the 20th consecutive appearance for the GNU in the competition, something no other chorus has done in the history of the Barbershop Harmony Society, and the GNU has always placed in the top 10 internationally. The contest was won by the **Vocal Majority** from Dallas, Texas who won their 10th gold medal. Other notable performances included the **Westminster Chorus** from California who placed second just 17 points behind Dallas and our other Land O' Lakes district chorus, Greendale's **Midwest Vocal Express**, got back in the medals taking 5th place with a very creative "fish" set. Pictures of the MVE are on page 3 of this issue. All international performance pictures courtesy of Lorin May, official contest photographer.

Reflections of Indy



Life is full of ups and downs and last week I know many of you felt one of the downs. We certainly did not place as high as we were hoping or even expecting to place and that was disappointing. This chorus has had 20 years of a roller coaster ride in and out of the medals but has

consistently been in the top ten (a worlds record by the way). Nevertheless, it is always hard to fall backwards in the ranking.



We can try to guess all day long about the reasons we didn't get in the medals this year. Perhaps all of these had something to do with it.

1. We were missing some of our great singers.
2. GBD is a tough song and requires a larger chorus to pull off successfully.
3. As individual chorus members we didn't do our best when it came to the actual performance or we weren't as personally prepared as we needed to be. Did you each sing a 90?
4. We lost steam in the uptune and individual voices were sticking out.
5. We were not prepared enough with the dynamic plan.
6. We sing 90's in isolated passages but need to get more consistent.
7. The package didn't have enough "wow" factor.
8. The choruses that beat us were very, very good!
9. Judges seem to like fish. (I digress)

Whatever the reason, we need to remember a few important things. The Great Northern Union is an AWESOME chorus. We make better music than most other choruses (most of the time). We are constantly improving. We have a blast doing it. We are a great brotherhood of friends. And we are among the top 10 in the world. Don't ever discount any of that because of one minor setback. We know who we are and what we have the potential to become. Right? Now, am I satisfied with 8th place? NO! I am determined to be #1. I am determined to figure out how to get there. (Preferably sooner than later) I am not defeated. I am only more riled up. Thanks for your hard work leading up to and in Indy. Thanks for hangin' with me!

Your proud and determined director,

Pete Benson

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The **Great Northern Union** (pictured top and middle right) placed 8th in Indianapolis singing a new uptune titled Good Bye Dixie, Good Bye and the very emotional ballad, Young and Foolish. The **Dallas Vocal Majority** (pictured middle left) took home their 10th gold medal under the direction of father/son team Jim and Greg Clancy. Below, **Midwest Vocal Express** captured a 5th place medal and a standing ovation from the audience with their “fishy” costumes. The Great Northern Union is looking forward to competing against MVE again this fall at the District contest in October.





Two LOL quartets qualified for International competition in Indianapolis. They were 1st timers **Voices Only** (pictured top left) from Greendale and 2nd time semifinalists **Quest** (pictured top right) from Hilltop. Voices Only finished 39th and Quest finished one place higher than last year at 19th. Another quartet that GNU can claim as having a member is **Storm Front** (pictured at left) who placed 10th this year. Although they hail from Denver, Colorado, Sid Libsack, the bass of Storm Front, still calls GNU home.

Pictured below are **OC Times** (left) and **Vocal Spectrum** (right). Vocal Spectrum is the new International Quartet Champions and will be on our show in November at Benson Hall at Bethel University. OC Times took 3rd this year and will be on our show in 2007.



"What a great time it was judging the **International Collegiate Quartet Contest** on Saturday morning.

The crowd was large and vocal. Because it was general admission instead of reserved seating, most of the quartet groupies had shown up early and were seated right behind where I was sitting in the judging area. **Ebbets Field**, one of the pre-contest favorites, had all of their girlfriends right in the front row screaming like crazy! On the other side of the aisle, the family members of **New Release**, another of the favorites, was doing the same. It was almost impossible not to get excited.

Then the contest began. Quartet after quartet continued to surprise me, with poise and energy not seen by some of the quartets in the regular contest. And what energy! They certainly took advantage of their youth.



"LOL's **4th Floor** led off the contest singing very well. Five quartets later LOL's **Beyond Cadence**

(who sang on our On To Fame Show) also did a very good job. Eleven of the 21 quartets sang before intermission, ending with the pre-contest favorites Ebbets Field (remember the screaming girls?!). This was the quickest I can ever remember judging eleven quartets. It's because they were all really good.

Then the intermission was over and ten more quartets strutted their stuff. And, if anything, these ten were even better than the first eleven. As it turned out, four of the top five quartets sang after intermission.

Just when I thought I was almost done, the next-to-last quartet came out, a group called **Musical Island Boys**. These guys didn't look like the rest of the quartets, and they weren't. They were all of Maori descent and had traveled all the way from New Zealand for the contest. My first thought was that they'd be fun but probably not that good. Boy, was I wrong. From their first steps onto the stage until they finished and departed again, these four guys just oozed personality. They owned the stage in a way I have seen only very rarely. Each was getting the most out of his individual personality and the four just meshed into an amazing performance. When they were done, it was pretty clear to me that we had our winners.

"But, of course, you never know until the announcements are made. So while the Contest Administrators were tallying up the scores, last year's

college champs, **Men In Black**, came out to perform. They had just come in 17th in the regular quartet semifinals the previous evening and sang very well.

"So then it was time for the announcements. 5th place bronze medalists - **Chameleon** (yep, they were really good); 4th place bronze medalists - **Afternoon Delight** (yep, they were, too); 3rd place bronze medalists - **Ebbets Field** (oo! the girls in the front row were not happy); 2nd place silver medalists - **New Release** (yep, I had them 1st in Singing); 1st place gold medalists - **Musical Island Boys!** The crowd really went wild. It felt like everyone in the hall was rooting for them. There couldn't have been a more popular choice. The quartet ran up on stage to a thunderous standing ovation. Everybody hugged everybody. The celebration went on for minutes. What a thrill! Finally, we judges left the arena, and with lots of people smiling at us. What a great way to end a contest!"

Jim Emery
Singing Judge
Hilltop, MN
Great Northern Union chorus
After Midnight quartet



GNU Concert Season continues.....

Classic A Cappella featuring **Cantus**
September 16, 7:30PM at St. Olaf Catholic Church in Mpls
\$20 at the door, \$16 in advance

Season Finale featuring **Vocal Spectrum**
November 18, 1PM & 7PM at Bethel Great Hall, Bethel University in St. Paul
Reserved Seating (\$10 - \$30,... 20% discount for advance purchase)

The **Good News! Gospel Sing** was held at St John Catholic Church, right across the street from the Convention Center Thursday morning, July 6, from 9:00 to 11:00 AM. The **Happiness Emporium** (pictured at right) opened the Sing by doing "Ain't-a That Good News!" followed by **Jim Henry** of Gas House Gang fame (pictured below) directing "Tell Me the Story of Jesus".



Next was the guest chorus, **The Heart of Texas chorus** (pictured below) who was also competing in the chorus contest. They sang four numbers, which were "There's a Meetin' Here Tonight", "Operator", "Battle Hymn" and "All Rise", doing a splendid job on all four!



Joe Liles then directed "Leaning on the Everlasting Arms" followed by his announcement of the 2006 Good News! Memorial Scholarship Award. The Happiness Emporium then sang "Gonna Build a Mountain", "How Long Has It Been" and "Step Into the Water", the last 2 numbers being from their latest recording called Golden Gospel, which features track accompaniment.



Don Slamka, tenor of Power Play then directed "In the Garden", with Jim Henry doing a wrap up and closing prayer. A big thank you to Don Russell for the pictures of the gospel sing!

Bob Dowma
Tenor – Happiness Emporium

Barbershop by Satellite

If you happen to have xm radio, tune into channel 4 (music from the 1940's) on Sunday evenings at 7 pm. Last week I was flipping through the channels and discovered they have an hour, dedicated to nothing but barbershop music. I only caught the last 20 minutes of it last week, but it was a special treat to hear our very own **Happiness**



Emporium singing a few songs, as well as the quartet **Jokers Wild**, a ladies quartet and another chorus. (both of which I don't recall their names)



Update! If you didn't get a chance to hear the all barbershop show last Sunday evening at 7pm on Channel 4, you missed the GNU chorus singing the spot out of "My Foolish Heart", along with many

other wonderful groups. Jack Brady is the host. The name of the program is Harmony Square. I also discovered that (at least last week) they replay the weeks broadcast later that night from 11:00-12:00pm.

Albin Peterson



COMO PERFORMANCE PACKED AGAIN

Once again this July, the St Paul North Star Chorus invited all of the area barbershop chapters to the lakeside pavilion at Como Park. This was at least the 20th year the North Star Chorus has arranged this event. The chapters participating this year included the St Paul North Star Chorus, the Minnetonka Clippers, the Faribault Lakelanders, the St Croix Valley Chordsmen, the Bloomington Good Times Chorus, the Minneapolis Commodores and the Great Northern Union. Pictured above is the Great Northern Union in their brightly colored casual uniform. Below is the combined mass chorus overflowing the risers and into the wings who sang three patriotic songs to finish up the free concert. Thanks to John Bergren for the photos!



Do you ever wonder what make Barbershop music Barbershop? And what are the judges looking for when listening to a quartet or chorus? Here is the 1st in a series of information from the Contest and Judging Handbook that might help you understand the barbershop style a little bit better.



Definition of the Barbershop Style

Barbershop harmony is a style of unaccompanied vocal music characterized by consonant four-part chords for every melody note in a predominantly homophonic texture. The melody is consistently sung by the lead, with the tenor harmonizing above the melody, the bass singing the lowest harmonizing notes, and the baritone completing the chord. The melody is not sung by the tenor except for an infrequent note or two to avoid awkward voice leading, in tags or codas, or when some appropriate embellishing effect can be created. Occasional brief passages may be sung by fewer than four voice parts.

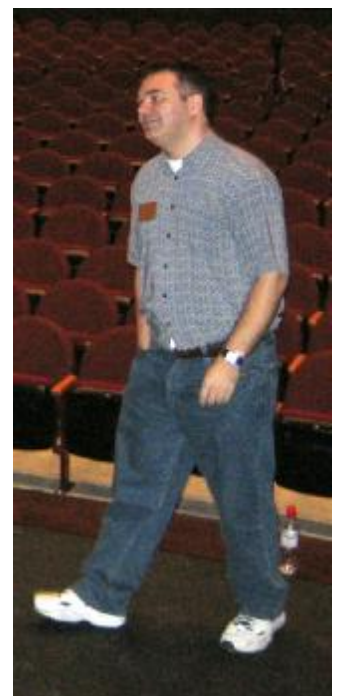
Barbershop music features songs with understandable lyrics and easily singable melodies, whose tones clearly define a tonal center and imply major and minor chords and barbershop (dominant and secondary dominant)seventh chords that resolve primarily around the circle of fifths, while making frequent use of other resolutions. Barbershop music also features a balanced and symmetrical form, and a standard meter. The basic song and its harmonization are embellished by the arranger to provide appropriate support of the song's theme and to close the song effectively.

Barbershop singers adjust pitches to achieve perfectly tuned chords in just intonation while remaining true to the established tonal center. Artistic singing in the barbershop style exhibits a fullness or expansion of sound, precise intonation, a high degree of vocal skill, and a high level of unity and consistency within the ensemble. Ideally, these elements are natural, unmanufactured, and free from apparent effort.

The presentation of barbershop music uses appropriate musical and visual methods to convey the theme of the

song and provide the audience with an emotionally satisfying and entertaining experience. The musical and visual delivery is from the heart, believable, and sensitive to the song and its arrangement throughout. The most stylistic presentation artistically melds together the musical and visual aspects to create and sustain the illusions suggested by the music.

Speaking of judges, the GNU asked music judge candidate, **Brent Graham** (in purple) and singing judge **Mark Hale** to come and coach us as we prepared for international competition.





Members: Get to know "em

Bob Dowma, a "tenor, and part-time bass", has been a barbershopper for 41 years: twenty of those years with **North Star Chorus** in St. Paul (seven of them as their director), and the rest of the time, with **GNU**. Having sung tenor with the very famous **"Happiness Emporium"** (International Champion Quartet of 1975) he had grown accustomed to a good sound, and was delighted to have the opportunity to join Great Northern Union. "There is little I enjoy better than good clean sound, full pronunciation, and perfect balance." One of his most memorable events with GNU was when the 5th place medal was won in San Francisco in 1990. (This is but one of many awards he has earned through the years!)

Bob has a very strong background in music. At Marshall, Minnesota High school, he had 7 years of lessons of each piano and trumpet, and played in the concert band as well as marching band. He also sang in high school; one highlight was when, as a senior, his director made him a tenor in his first barbershop quartet. He loved it! And they won an "A" at the Minnesota State High School Ensemble Contest in 1960! Then, at Macalester College (majoring in Business Administration, minoring in Math), he taught himself 4-string banjo, and was in a folk ensemble called **"The Dewey Decimals and the Librarian"**. (For good measure, he did play basketball, golf, and baseball.)



Bob and Naomi live in Little Canada. He was a controller at three different companies for his career, and has just retired. He and Naomi raised a daughter Cynthia, also in Little Canada, as well as a son (Dan) who lives in Overland Park, Kansas, with his wife, Noelle. They also have a grandson Evan, in Blaine. As for musical talent of this fine family Bob says, "I can put the musical ability of all of them into a sandwich baggie, and keep the sandwich in there too"... except that we have discovered that Evan can sing."

Within our society, Bob has arranged much of the music for all three of the quartets with whom he has sung: **"Happiness Emporium"**, from 1972 to present, with Bob Spong, Jim Foy, Richard Treptow, and Rick Anderson; **"Night Howls"**, 1965-72, with Doug

Chapman, Don Challman, Dale Teorey, and, at one time, Steve Shannon. They won 2nd place at District on two occasions. He also sang with another fine bunch: **River City School Board**, with John Chouinard, Jim Foy, and Doug Chapman.

But wait, that's not all. Bob sings with the choir at Christ the King in New Brighton, which has produced many religious musicals, directed for some of those years by Bob Spong.

An early and big, big infamous incident which Bob has trouble living down to this day went like this. The **"Night Howls"** sang at Bob & Naomi's wedding with Doug Chapman substituting for Bob during the ceremony. Bob did sing at the reception and without thinking through the implications, they spontaneously did a song medley which was new to their group: **"I Used to Love You But It's All Over"**, and **"Please Don't Talk About Me When I'm Gone"**. That created a lot of shocked faces in the audience. (And to think Naomi stood by him all these years...! I guess he redeemed himself somehow!)

Currently, Bob is serving as our treasurer. He has also served as a judge for the International Society; as well as chorus section leader, and all around step-in-at-a-moment's-notice to lead a sectional or direct a song. Few men have come to our "table" better prepared to serve and function so well in so many roles! We all consider ourselves lucky to know that tall guy in the back row with the big smile, always noticed and appreciated by our audiences.



I had the pleasure of participating in "Sing with the Champs" this year in Indianapolis. I was a bit nervous but the Happiness Emporium gave me a few stage presence hints before we took the stage. The performance went by so fast, I am glad they gave me a video and snapshot of the experience. Many other quartets participated including the Suntones, Acoustix, Gotcha and Realtime. If you have never been to this event, you are missing a great time even if you just watch regular "joes" like me "Sing with the Champs". Steve Anderson



**COME ONE
COME ALL!**

**GNU
Performance
Schedule**

August 4th....National Anthem at MN Lynx
September 16...Classic A Capella w/Cantus
October 7th.....Performance at Lakeville HS
October 28th...District contest in Rochester

Cantus to join GNU in concert

The following was taken from the Cantus website:
www.cantusonline.org

Cantus (pictured below) is a nine member male classical acapella group based in Minneapolis, MN, USA. The group was founded at St. Olaf College in 1995, and gives 60-80 concerts annually. Gaining recognition as one of America's finest professional male vocal ensembles, Cantus enjoys a vigorous schedule of national tours, subscription concerts in the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul, several innovative residencies and outreach

programs, and recording.

Cantus' repertoire spans many periods and genres, including Gregorian chant, Renaissance motets, contemporary works, art songs, folk music, spirituals, and pop., In addition, much of Cantus' music is composed and arranged by its members.

Cantus' coast-to-coast tours have included performances throughout the United States. In the summer of 2003 Cantus made its European debut at France's Polyfolia Festival. Cantus made its debut with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra in December 2001 in a program titled "Cantus and Carols," and now appears annually in what has now become a holiday tradition for both Cantus and the SPCO. The ensemble has performed at the American Choral Directors' Association's national and regional conventions and numerous choral festivals. In the summer of 2002 the ensemble sang to great acclaim at the Oregon Bach Festival and at the Sixth World Symposium on Choral Music in Minneapolis.

In accordance with its founding mission statement, Cantus is an active proponent of music education, encouraging people of all ages - especially young men - to sing. Its members are frequent clinicians at festivals, schools and universities throughout the country. Presently, Cantus is the resident artist at St. John's University in Collegeville, MN

Cantus is doing a joint concert with the Great Northern Union on September 16th at St Olaf Catholic Church in Minneapolis. For more information on this and other GNU concerts, see our website at www.GNUNION.com



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Come along for the ride!
 Phone: 507-288-3021 Email: jibbass@juno.com

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Ellis Jones, Tenor
 Bruce Gray, Lead

MAGIC
 Barbershop Harmony & Sleight of Hand

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Don Miller, Baritone
 Bill Lydecker, Bass

Gary Jacobson - Lead
 Mark Conlon - Tenor
 Bob Griffith - Baritone
 Lance Johnson - Bass

Aarps-A-Chord

Contact:
 Bob Griffith
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 Bloomington, MN 55437
 952-891-5473



— ROD JOHNSON - Lead — JIM FOY - Bass —
 — RICK ANDERSON - Bari — BOB DOWNUM - Tenor —

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One last shot from Indianapolis.....



The **Great Northern Union Chorus** meets every Thursday from 7:00pm to 10:00pm, at the United Methodist Church of Peace, 6345 Xerxes Ave S, Richfield MN 55423

“Early-Bird” rehearsals are held at 6:00pm for practicing choreography. Members are urged to call the **GNU Hotline** at 763-476-7383 weekly for the latest word on rehearsals, performances, and other pertinent information. Also find us on the web at www.gnunion.com