



International Medalist
GREAT NORTHERN UNION
CHORUS



10,000 LAKES DIVISION - LAND O' LAKES DISTRICT

Volume 11 #4

GNUsNews

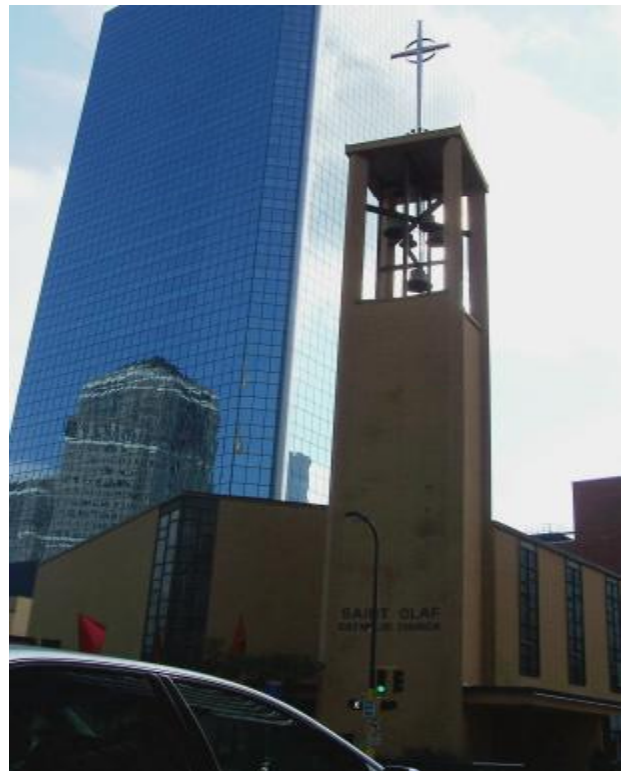
October 2006

GNU Chorus and Quartets Perform Often



Sharing the stage with **Cantus** at St Olaf Catholic Church on September 16th was the highlight of our concert season so far. The concert was the first for the St. Olaf concert series and the 9 member male classical a cappella group known as Cantus. It was also the first time that the Great Northern Union has sung with Cantus. What a thrill to hear 9 voices sing with such clarity and fullness. Cantus sang several of their own selections as well as joined the GNU on the last 2 songs, "Ave Maria" and "This Train/Saints medley".

The 2006 GNU Concert Season concludes with the season finale featuring **Vocal Spectrum**, the current International Quartet Champions (pictured at right), on **November 18**, 1PM & 7PM at Benson Great Hall, Bethel University in St. Paul



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Broadening our Audience and Membership

I continue to be thrilled with the new direction the GNU is heading. Aside from our continuous improvement in quality and broadening our repertoire, I believe our single most important accomplishment has been in

the area of collaboration concerts. I am speaking of our concerts with the Luther Norsemen, Metropolitan Boys Choir, and Cantus. In my mind, this will do more to increase our audience base, and help us appeal to potential new singers than anything else we do. My goal is not to be the best kept secret in town any longer. Do you remember the thrill of debuting Loch Lomond and ringing a few amazing tags for a brand new audience at the Cantus concert? Many of those people had never heard anything like it before. That's what it's all about, folks. Thanks to Marty and the vision of others on the board for making this happen.



What can we do to make this even more successful?

1. Continue to encourage our leaders to look for other venues in which to share our incredible music.
2. Continue to increase our repertoire even more. Push ourselves to learn more music faster and better.
3. Continually look for opportunities to recruit talented singers for the GNU. Imagine 100 singers on the risers and make it happen.

Pete Benson



On October 7th the **Great Northern Union** did a benefit concert for the Lakeville South High School choir program. Lakeville South Concert Chorale (top choir) is going on tour to Spain this spring. Chorale members sold tickets and the proceeds went to their individual Spain accounts. GNU director Pete Benson teaches music at the high school.

The newest in a line of fine GNU soloists, **Heath Walker** (right), sings the solo on one of our favorite numbers, Loch Lomond.

Pictured below is the 15 member ensemble from Lakeville South High School named **Encore**.

Big thanks to GNU quartets **Bandwagon** and **After Midnight** for adding to the performance with a set of their best songs.





Remember these guys?

It is **The Little Rascals** 25th Anniversary of being crowned LOL District Champions. In celebration of that achievement, they hope to be re-uniting to sing a few songs at the Association of District Champions show in Rochester.

Original members (pictured above clockwise from the top) were Jim Emery (bari), Greg Dolphin (tenor), Kirk Lindberg (lead), John Korby (bass). They formed in late 1980 and became 10,000 Lakes Division Champs in March 1981. They qualified for International competition in May and went on to be International quarterfinalists in July of that year. In the fall of 1981, they won the Land O' Lakes District championship.



The Little Rascals went on to compete at the International level in 1981, 1982, and 1983. In late 1983, they disbanded and reformed in 1984 as "**Celebration!**" with Roger Williams replacing Greg Dolphin on tenor. Celebration! competed at International 1985 thru 1991 and made it to the "top 20" in 1985 & 1987. Some where around 1989, John Moksnes replaced Roger Williams as tenor.

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



Gold Rush (pictured above) and **Bandwagon** (pictured below) will be joined by **Aarps a Chord** at the District competition on October 27th -28th in Rochester. This will be the first trip to the second level of barbershop competition for Gold Rush. Last year, Bandwagon finished third and Aarps a Chord secured a trip to the International Seniors competition at the Mid-Winter convention. This year the mid-winter convention will be held in Albuquerque, NM in January 2007.



GNU
Performance Schedule

October 28th...District contest in Rochester
November 18th...Season Finale at Bethel College

After Midnight **How we made our first CD**

The opportunity

Two years ago After Midnight was presented with a great opportunity. We were a new quartet, had just finished 2nd place at the LOL District contest, and we had 12 songs that we could perform in public.



Jim Emery, baritone of After Midnight, was taking classes in the Sound Arts program at Minneapolis Community and Technical College, learning all about audio recording. His next class was a big recording project to get some talent, bring them into the studio, record them, and produce a professional quality CD or video.

What better opportunity for the quartet to record a CD without having to pay for studio time? The college had a lot to offer. They had a great selection of microphones, a brand new state-of-the-art digital board/mixer, a flexibly wired studio, a Macintosh computer with Pro Tools recording software, and mic stands, cables, pop filters, and other accessories. All this was free for a semester after Jim enrolled for the class. But the total number of studio sessions was limited, so we'd have to be efficient.

The preparation

After seeking advice from several members of Excalibur, Tim Brooks of State Line Grocery, and Daryl Bornstein, who has managed the audio system at several International conventions, we came to a number of conclusions:

1. We would mic each individual singer so individual goofs could be corrected.
2. Jim would do all the sound editing at home on his own computer.
3. Singing with a headphone mix like the pros was not a good idea for amateurs like us who hadn't practiced this a lot.

We also decided to devote one entire studio session to getting ready for the real thing. There was extra studio time available over the December holidays, so we had the luxury of "wasting" a session before we began recording in earnest. This session was probably the most valuable one we had.

First we auditioned every microphone the college had. There were 13 different microphone types and we tried them all. Each of us sang into each mic while the other three listened in the control room. In the end, there were just enough of each model that each of us could use the mic that best fit our individual voice. How fortunate!

Next we experimented with mic configurations and practiced setting up the equipment in the best configuration. Each quartet member learned how to set up and tear down all the gear efficiently, saving us lots of time at future sessions.

Recording sessions

At our first real recording session we had to decide whether we would record an entire song at a time or just sing song sections and splice them later in the editing. Since less editing seemed like a good idea, we tried singing and recording the first song all the way through a couple times. After listening to the results, we could tell that we weren't likely to accept any single take of an entire song. So we decided we would record multiple takes of a song section and then move on to the next section. It took some trust that the splicing would be seamless, but this turned out to be a good decision.

We completed three songs the first night. We were very encouraged that we might actually get 12 songs done in our limited number of sessions. The audio files were dumped to five CDRs and taken home for future editing.

The first home editing was relatively straightforward, although it was time consuming. Each song was loaded into Adobe Audition and mixed down to stereo in order to select the best "take" of each song section.

Selecting the best take for each phrase was not an easy task. Synchronization, intonation, vocal quality, and a host of other factors came into play. Jim's Singing judge training was really helpful with this. Also critical was deciding which glitches could be fixed (e.g. out of sync sibilants) and which couldn't (e.g. the bari was just behind). In the end it was always a compromise, but choices had to be made.

After Midnight continues on Page 6

After Midnight continued from page 5

The quartet continued recording songs for another five recording sessions. Averaging about two songs per session, we did manage to get 12 songs "in the can" in six recording sessions. So we had enough material to make an entire CD. Hurrah!

Editing

Then began the real work: the editing, mixing, fixing, re-editing, adding effects, and final mastering. We won't share all of those details, but it took over 200 hours in front of the computer with the headphones on before we had a product worthy of sale to our audiences and fans. It's amazing how much time it can take adjusting voice EQ, stereo panning, pitch, reverberation, and the like. For any of you contemplating doing this yourself, we have hours of horror stories. But in the end, the result came out pretty darn good.

There were a couple interesting discoveries that came out of the editing. Through trial and error, we arrived at an optimal EQ setting for each individual voice. We also found habitual sync errors. Those discoveries told us a lot about how each of us was singing and what we could do individually to sound better singing live.

With 12 songs finished, the next challenge was to decide what order they should occur on the CD. It doesn't seem like this should be hard, but we wanted to have the best mix of uptunes and ballads, solos, consecutive keys, and overall flow that we could assemble. The final song order works for us on shows now, too.

The package

Now it was time to get going on the graphics design for the CD case and disc. Since none of the quartet members has particularly strong graphic design skills, it was necessary to seek outside help. Fortunately Tom has a step-sister that is breaking into this business, and she volunteered to help us.

We selected a CD title, "Volume I", and ideas for a basic look. We wanted something simple yet elegant that would fit our late night image. We also wanted to take advantage of lots of quartet photos. We always like looking at photos, and we hoped that our customers would, too.

We assembled the song list, credits, and photos, and bundled them off to Andi, the graphic designer. After only two drafts we had a design that we really liked. It's simple and strong, and it should stand out on the CD table at the Barbershopper Shop!

Making it legal

There was one more job that remained before we could send off all of our hard work to the replication house. That was mechanical licensing, the process of making everything legal. Steve spent lots of time on the Harry Fox Agency's web site, researching the copyright owners and mechanical license fees for each song. After writing checks to Harry Fox, Bug Music, and two arrangers, we were finally legal to go ahead with the replication and sale of our CD.

Finally!

We expect our CDs to arrive around the first of October. After all the work we've put in, it will be truly rewarding to get the final product and share it with our audiences and fans. We can hardly wait!



After Midnight
VOLUME I

The much anticipated release of the first recording from your 2005 LOL District Champions. Includes favorites like "Linda", "Love Me and the World is Mine" and more.

Good luck to the 2006 competitors!

Tom Matchinsky
952-270-9283
tom_bbshop@hotmail.com

Listen to sound clips and place your order on our website:
www.myspace.com/aftermidnightquartet

In closing, we learned a lot about the recording process. A few nuggets include:

1. The better you sing, the less editing you have to do.
2. The edits tell you how to improve as a quartet singer.
3. Studio discipline is something to use in every rehearsal.
4. No matter how much work you think a CD will involve, it will always involve more!

VLQ sings National Anthems at NHRA

In memory of **Jim Lutz**, (GNU member who died last March) tenors Chuck McKown & Tom Semple, leads Bruce Watson & John Kleiber, Basses Keith Fransen & Steve Labissoniere, and baris Tom Puent & Don Russell formed a Very Large Quartet (VLQ), pictured below, to sing - O Canada & Star Spangled Banner at the National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) "Lucas Oil Nationals" drag races.

The event happened on Sunday, August 13, 2006 at Brainerd International Raceway (BIR), Brainerd, MN



Jim Lutz, in his younger days, was a "funny car" drag racer at the national level. After he retired from driving, he was a "tech inspector" (think barbershop judge!) for NHRA for many years. He knew all the top professional drivers and crew chiefs as he had to inspect their cars and he would catch them trying to push the rules a bit now & then.

It may have been in 1991 (as Jim told me) when Jim was singing along to the National Anthem while standing next to one of the crew chiefs. As I remember Jim telling it, the man was Tim Richards, crew chief for Kenny Bernstein, now for Brandon Bernstein. Tim said that Jim could sing the anthem better than whomever was singing at the time so Jim took the idea and ran with it.

Jim, Ed Meehan, Ben Vickery and John Kleiber (all Minnetonka Clippers at the time) sang the Anthem at BIR for the first time in about 1992. We even got our picture in the NHRA weekly magazine! Jim organized a quartet for another year or two (I think Mike Brama sang lead in those quartet years so I don't remember who the other parts would have been), then Jim formed VLQs (very large quartet) nearly every year after. I believe I sang in every one. Jim last performed this in 2003. I think (he was already on the portable oxygen tank in 2004.

In June of this year, I got a call from Sarah Lutz, Jim's widow. The BIR manager, Rod Wolter, had been at Jim's funeral service and was most impressed with GNU.

Rod got word to Sarah, asking for a GNU contact to sing the anthem at this year's races. I worked with Rod, explaining what Jim had done in the past with VLQs.

We were scheduled to sing promptly at 11 AM but it was raining lightly. Unlike other motor sports, drag racing is so dangerous that racing is never done on a wet track. So we were told to wait. You can see the photo of the card players! The rain finally let up and the track was dried. At about 1:50 PM we finally did our thing.



When the ESPN2 TV announcer, Bob Frey, introduced us, he also said the anthem was dedicated to our good friend and NHRA Division 5 Hall of Fame member, Jim Lutz.

Before we got to the raceway, we met at Jim & Sarah's cabin, located in a campground adjacent to BIR. Sarah was most happy to see us and so very appreciative of us doing the singing.



Finally, for the left brainers (like me), the logistics of this event make a VLQ about the largest group practical. They have much tighter scheduling than the ball games we've sung for. We finish singing and the first engines are fired up literally within seconds of that! We have to get out of the way for safety, of course, but there's very little time to do so.

Cheers,
John Kleiber

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 2nd¹ in a series of information from the Barbershop Harmony Society Contest and Judging Handbook that might help you understand the barbershop style a little bit better.



MUSIC CATEGORY

DESCRIPTION OF THE MUSIC CATEGORY

I. Introduction

The Music Category

Music is defined as the song and arrangement, as performed. The Music Category judges the suitability of the material to the barbershop style and the performer's musicianship in bringing the song and arrangement to life. The Music judge is responsible for adjudicating the musical elements in the performance. He judges the extent to which the musical performance displays the hallmarks of the barbershop style, and the degree to which the musical performance demonstrates an artistic sensitivity to the music's primary theme.

The primary hallmark of barbershop music is its consonant harmony. Thus, the quality of any barbershop performance depends largely on the presence, accurate execution, and artistic delivery of the consonant harmony traditionally identified with the barbershop style.

Indirectly, the Music judge evaluates the work of the composer and arranger. A basic prerequisite for a successful barbershop performance is that the song be appropriate to the barbershop style. The song is defined by the melody, lyrics, rhythm, and implied harmony. Performers should choose songs that adapt readily to the melodic and harmonic style guidelines set forth in the Music Category Description. Beyond this, the various musical elements should work together to establish a theme.

The sensitive handling of musical elements, such as melody, harmony, and embellishments, demonstrates musicality in a performance. A strong musical performance is one in which everything provided by the composer and arranger is skillfully delivered and effectively integrated in support of the musical theme. This requires that the music be suited to the performer, and that the performer understand the music. Since songs can permit different themes, the music judge is prepared to accept any treatment that is musically plausible. The theme may also change from one part of the song to another. Often, the theme will be the song's lyrics, while at other times the theme may be one of the musical elements themselves, such as rhythm. Whatever the theme, the Music judge evaluates how the musical elements of the song and arrangement support the theme.

Relationship with other categories

The current SPEBSQSA Contest and Judging System features categories designed to overlap with each other. Each category views the entire performance from its own unique perspective, and the same performance factors often influence more than one category's scoring.

The Singing category evaluates the technical and qualitative aspects of the performer's sound. Since these factors affect consonant harmony, they will also affect the Music judge, who evaluates the level of consonance in the performance. Singing that suffers from poor synchronization, intonation or vocal quality will also negatively impact such Music areas as delivery and execution.

The Presentation Category evaluates how well the performer brings the song and arrangement to life through the interaction of both visual and vocal aspects of the presentation. In addition to assessing the performers' artistry and believability, Presentation judges adjudicate entertainment value and emotional impact, vocally and visually, within the context of the chosen entertainment theme. The factors creating these results will often affect the Music Category since there is a strong correlation between the musicianship with which music is rendered as evaluated by Music judges, and the generation of mood and believability as evaluated by Presentation judges.

Both judges are listening for a clearly defined theme or themes, and the Music judge evaluates how well the group uses its own unique musical abilities to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the arrangement in light of the musical theme(s) chosen.

**Taken from Contest and Judging Handbook Page 11
9/01**



Members: Get to know 'em

and intend to meet my Maker right there.

I married Iowan Melinda Barnes in 1984. We have two sons ages 19 and 16.

Melinda and I realized very early that Our Maker made us for making music. She is also a singer (we do lots of church duets), conductor, and Piano Performance



Major/Wartburg College. I was always a member of any school choir available and early on recognized that I have been given a fine natural Baritone voice and other advantages (like absolute pitch), which have also enabled me to become a pretty decent piano player entirely by ear. After a brief stint in a Cocktail Lounge band in the early 70's, I realized that music will always be my favorite avocation. I joined the Minnesota Chorale in 1979, and *really* learned about the mechanics of singing in the ensuing 16 years

Of late, I have taken up composition, serious Lieder singing, and now, Barbershop, which I had tended to dismiss in the past. I always liked it, but wearied quickly of its strict conventions. The GNU changed all that. The variety of repertoire overcame my reservations and the quality of the singing clinched my interest. I have since learned that Barbershop has much to teach me about ensemble singing, clarity and focus. I am eager to learn. I am also exceedingly glad for the fellowship and welcome I have felt right from the get-go.

Thank you all for your friendliness and guidance. Long may it continue.

Jared Hoke

Meet Jared Hoke

I am Jared Peabody Hoke, born Mpls 1947, I turn 59 this August (gulp!). I grew up mostly in Wayzata, and after 4 years in Connecticut and 6 in northern California (1964-74), came home to MN to stay. I have lived in Marine on St. Croix, in a log home on the MN bank of the St Croix river, since 1976,



The **Duluth Harbormasters** invited **Happiness Emporium** (pictured above) as their guest quartet for a show at St Scholastica's Mitchell Auditorium in September. **Mike Faris**, of the 1983 District Champion quartet, **Class Reunion**, lives in Duluth and had been dropping in on the Duluth Harbormasters practice. In talking with the chorus director, the idea of Class Reunion appearing on the show came from the facts that Mike lives in Duluth, **John Dixon**, former lead of Class Reunion, has 2 daughters going to college in Duluth and **Rick Anderson**, former bari of Class Reunion, sings with the Happiness Emporium. **Eric Strand**, former tenor, lives in St Louis, MO but runs in Grandma's Marathon each year, so he was no stranger to Duluth either. It was great to hear Class Reunion favorites like "Poisoning Pigeons in the Park" and "The Tennessee Bird Walk" again. Rick, Mike, John and Eric are pictured below





Scott Kvigne has been at it again! Mirror room sessions have been an ongoing tool for helping the chorus perfect its choreography. Scott (pictured here in red) is the main choreo man leading early birds and mirror sessions along with regular rehearsal choreography sessions. A big thanks to Scott for the countless hours he spends in front of the chorus.



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

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ROD JOHNSON - Lead — JIM FOY - Bass
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