



International Medalist
GREAT NORTHERN UNION
CHORUS



10,000 LAKES DIVISION - LAND O' LAKES DISTRICT

Volume 11 #5

GNUsNews

December 2006

GNU WOWS the Audience in Rochester



The **Great Northern Union** went to the LOL District contest in Rochester, MN with the attitude "**Fear no Fish**" referring to the **Greendale Midwest Vocal Express** "fish" set performed at the International contest in July. Greendale medaled with that performance and the GNU figured it would be a challenge to overcome the imaginative and entertaining MVE. Although the "fish" and "turtles" pictured at right, prevailed for a second time, the Great Northern Union performed well receiving a standing ovation from the crowd and scoring only 31 points behind the MVE.



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“Best Show Ever!”

That's what they're saying about our season finale, but of course they say that every year. *I think they're right.* It does get better every year. I believe that our singing was better and more consistent this year than ever before. Couldn't you feel it?



Marty reviews our amazing year in terms of performances later in this issue. Let's take a look at repertoire. We added a ton of new songs to our show rep this year.

New Songs since last years Season Finale:

- q After Today
- q Happy Together
- q Loch Lomond
- q Beautiful Savior
- q Kalamazoo
- q Goodbye Dixie
- q Pure Imagination
- q Ave Maria



Can you believe these are all new since January? It's only going to get better. One of the focuses of the 3-year plan is to increase our active repertoire. Right now our current active repertoire is around 14 songs. By the end of 2007 it should be closer to 25. That means learning more music faster while maintaining current repertoire at the GNU high level.

As you know, the other huge piece of the 3-year plan is going to be membership growth. The recruitment team is going to be busy making plans and drafting ideas, but growth will ultimately depend on each GNU member. It will be everyone's responsibility to seek out and invite good singers and to make our rehearsal atmosphere a great place to be. More details to come.

With the "new plan" 2007 will be much different than 2006, but certainly no less busy. A new concert series, mini tour, more new music, higher standards, and accommodating lots of new singers will keep us mighty busy. Change is needed and big change will bring forth big results. I, for one, am excited.

Pete Benson
 Director

Wow...what a weekend.

I was extremely happy with our performances and the performances of our guests Encore, Excalibur and Vocal Spectrum on the season finale. Why can't they come every year? When you think about the impact these groups have had or will have on the GNU and the Barbershop Harmony Society, we are definitely on the right track when it comes to driving our short and long term goals. Saturday was a long day, but the feedback from the audience was well worth it. I can't tell you how many comment like, "this was a better show than last year" I received. Kudos goes to our esteemed Production Team of Jeff Aldrich and Alan Machinsky producing the Finale. The visual enhancements they make to our performance leaves the audience wanting more and more.



Darryl Morteck...we missed you on stage with us, but your presence was there through ALL of your video work. When I first heard Excalibur walking on stage singing Gonna Build a Mountain...it sent chills up and down my spine...that was cool!! The video montage of GNU's first 20 years and Loch Lomond montage left many with smiles and tears...what a great touch!

As we look back at 2006, what will be the impact of our 2006 Guests Artists? Here's a snap shot of our guests: Luther College Norsemen, Metropolitan Boys Choir, Breakaway, Undeclared, Twins Fest – 29 different BHS chapters, Happiness Emporium, Quest, Voices Only, Beyond Cadence, City of Lakes, Aarps A Chord, Chord Company, ICE!, Espresso, Valley de Croix, Cantus, After Midnight, Bandwagon, Gold Rush and all our Thursday night "special" performances...WOW!

Here's our performance review:

March – Collegiate Concert & Minnesota Timberwolves National Anthem

June – On To Fame Concert & Minnesota Twins Fest – National Anthem

July – International & Como Park

August – Minnesota Lynx National Anthem

September – Classic A Cappella Concert

October – Lakeville South High School Benefit Concert & District Contest

November – Season Finale

Estimated total Concert Audience: 4300

Estimated Audience Exposure: 44,750

Now on to next year! Do you remember coming back January 5th, ready with anticipation regarding the new year? I'm already getting that same feeling inside about our first rehearsal January 4th...only 43 days left!! We got busy right away with new music and preparation of our first Concert/Performance Season. I can't wait! The performance bar has been raised significantly and our audience base will only accept equal or greater performances from us in 2007. Come ready to perform every Thursday night! You never know who might show up!

Finally, we can't do any of this without the support of our families and friends. The best part of this organization is the tremendous support we receive from friends and family. Your understanding of our love of barbershop and great friendships is greatly appreciated.

Side note: If any family member or friend of GNU would like to formalize a Friends of GNU organization that could help us with certain administrative needs such as concert ushers, ticket booth, Thursday night guest registration, CD booth sales, afterglow arrangements, external marketing, etc., we could use some assistance with that portion of our administration. It takes a lot to keep this group running especially when we have big aspirations ahead of us. If you are interested please contact me directly.

Again thanks for a WONDERFUL 2006!

Marty Monson

GNU President



GNU to sit out of the next International contest.

Pete Benson mentioned in his article about the "3-year plan". For those of you who might not have heard about this as yet, it revolves around sitting out of the contest cycle for 2 years. Our next contest will be division in May of 2008. Here are the details.

3-Year Plan

November 9, 2006

The plan is highlighted through our organization's **five Ms** including:

- 1) Grow active **Membership** to 100+ on the risers
- 2) Establishing the Concert Season (collaborations with other male choruses, including a continued relationship with Cantus) as our own backyard **Marketing** tool for improved community awareness and membership recruitment
- 3) More **Music** (and more challenging music) to learn
- 4) Financial (**Money**) growth and stability
- 5) Continued development of the GNU sound and identity (**Mystique**). It is the intention of the chorus to reach these and other goals set forth in the presentation.

A power point presentation was made at rehearsal by Marty Monson (President) and Peter Benson (Director). The following Question and Answer sheet was prepared by the Board and Leadership team to help explain the decision to pass on this years invitation to the International contest.

Q&A

Q: Was our decision to get "focused" based upon our 2nd place ranking at District?

A: No. Pete called Marty the Friday after our Classic A Cappella tech rehearsal (Sept 15th) and discussed this option. Marty had already discussed a similar plan with Erik Dove (Performance VP) two days earlier. The plan would have been presented no matter what ranking GNU finished at the District level.

Q: Why does it seem like this plan is a response to Midwest Vocal Express winning District? Why not tell us sooner?

A: MVE has outscored us at District before - we've already shown we can come back from that situation and get back on top. Nothing new there. It simply took this

long to develop the plan to the level it's currently at, and make sure that all our ducks were in a row.

Q: But I thought Pete was all about contest?

A: Pete's all about excellence. But how do you really know you have excellence? Contest is one of the best ways. If he knew we were never going to compete again, he'd be hard pressed to stay, but since this is a plan for growing the organization, and contest is still one of the points of interest on our new road map, he's very excited to embrace this new challenge.

Q: What are we doing instead of going to international?

A: We are going on a mini-tour (Madison show) this coming spring (April 20-22, 2007) and have ideas for other great projects that will increase our exposure and membership. Ideas like a college quartet contest in the area sponsored by the GNU, HS outreach programs to encourage participation of young men (and their fathers, uncles etc.), and continued joint concerts with an ever increasing variety of men's choral organizations.

Q: Will our not going to International, mean we are singing less?

A: Emphatically NO! Our next two concert seasons are more ambitious than they have been in the past. We intend to expand our repertoire significantly. In addition, we will be exploring other venues at which to perform and groups with which to collaborate.

Q: Will our not going to International for two years mean less emphasis on being at our regular rehearsals?

A: Not so fast there, slacker. More music to learn, concerts to sing and CDs to produce will mean a greater importance to not only make every rehearsal that you can, but work and prepare diligently at home.

Q: Who are some of these collaborations going to be with?

A: Contact has already been made with such organizations as St Olaf Viking Chorus (confirmed 2008), Purdue University (pending) and Harvard Glee Club (pending). Additional contacts with area colleges and high school music programs have also been initiated.

Q: Is every detail of this plan decided and set in stone?

A: Absolutely not. A plan is what you use to better handle the unexpected. If you have a plan to work from, you have a position of strength and can effectively adapt over time. No plan means you are adapting all the time without ever "really" making an honest effort towards any goal other than killing time.

Q & A continued from page 4

Q: Why now?

A: Because we look back over the past 20 contest cycles and although we have always been in the top 10 in International competition, medaling 5 times, we see that we have developed a fairly predictable pattern. The feeling among the leadership of the chorus is that we need more members (100+) on the risers to improve upon our contest performances. We can do the exact same thing for the next 20 years or we can start making changes now in an effort to chart a new course.

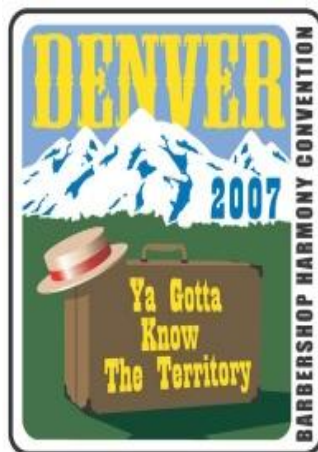
Q: What makes "this" change the right one?

A: No guarantee that it is. We will do this, build our base, entertain our patrons, enjoy ourselves, and evaluate our progress regularly. If this idea doesn't provide the results we want, we will determine if we need to do something completely different or do something similar just better.

Q: Are you nuts?

A: That's what you'd have reason to believe, looking back over the past 20 years, if we "didn't" make a change. The point is to build a stronger base, with finances, with membership, with increased patronage, and by making ourselves known right here at home in the middle of this very competitive choral and arts metro and region.

One wonderful consequence of the Great Northern Union not going to Denver is that it opens up a spot for the next chorus in line. With the **Minneapolis Commodore's** great performance at district, they were the chorus "on the bubble" and now are headed to the International stage in our place.



GNU Quartets do well at District

The Great Northern Union had several quartets in the competition in Rochester back in October. **Bandwagon** improved upon their 3rd place finish from last year to finish 2nd among a very strong field of competitors. **Gold Rush**, in its 1st district contest, was quite pleased with their 5th place finish. The always entertaining **AARPs a Chord**, GNU's only Seniors competitor, didn't fair as well as last year placing 18th this year.



Bandwagon
Keith Olson (tenor), Sam Sather (lead)
Jim Barloon (bass), Jim Larson (bari)



Gold Rush
Steve Anderson (bass), Cleon Wahlin (lead)
Steve Hardy (bari), Steve Nolte (tenor)



Aarps-A-Chord
Dick Plaisted (tenor), Lance Johnson (bass)
Gary Jacobson (lead) Bob Griffith (bari)

District Thoughts from Audience and Chorus Members

I loved the GNU, Bandwagon, Gold Rush, and all. I was strongly moved by the After Midnight version of "Keep the Whole World Singing" (during their swan song Saturday evening) As I told the quartet, it was the best combination of set up, presentation, music choice, and arrangement that After Midnight has done in my presence. Thank you. Kudos to Jim Emery for that special and surprise arrangement.



Thanks, too, to After Midnight for the recollections of their fathers (I now understand how Jim's dad felt, a little) and for the birthday wish. And thanks to both sons, Jeff and David, and our friend/director Alan Matchinsky, for their singing, for bringing me back to the singing that is so important to me, and for performing at a consistent high level and with such commitment as to make me the proudest GNU dad and Good Times singer. Keep the Whole World Singing, indeed!

Steve Aldrich



After Midnight
Tom Matchinsky (tenor), David Bailey-Aldrich (lead), Steve McDonald (bass), Jim Emery (bari)

One of our newer members Gary Little had this to say:



While the ultimate experience would have been to have heard "Hilltop" read last, there were two others that stand out for me.

The penultimate was performing my first official act as chorus manager and receiving the congratulatory letter at the end of the contest that provides the contact information for International. Gosh ... I thought I had a first edition of "Romeo and Juliet" in my hands. Understand, I've been in barbershop for over twenty years, and while I have been with a chorus that finished second at district several times, none of those ever ended in notification that we had a wild card spot; actually, at that time, wild cards were only a glint in Kenosha's eye. So, there I had the marvelous epistle in my hands I had been waiting to see for over twenty years, and no one cared. Well, it's not that no one cared, it was more like what was "tidings of great joy" to me was business as usual to everyone else.

But the ultimate, since denied first place, was hearing AARP's-a-Chord (pictured below) sing "Old Bones, inside an old raincoat ...". I was there when Earl Moon and his quartet premiered his arrangement at a Wednesday night Whittier Choralaires chapter meeting. I heard it at after glows and other chapter meetings after that, always done by Earl's quartet with Earl doing the solo. But the most memorable time I heard "Old Bones" was when that same quartet, with Earl doing the solo, did it at my wedding. So yes, when Gary sang "Old Bones", I felt a lump in my throat, tears in my eyes, and I saw Earl step forward.

That's my Rochester experience.





Voices Only (pictured top left) won the District Quartet Championship with an average score of 77.4. We should expect to see them representing the District in Denver this summer at the Barbershop Harmony Society International Contest. However, they must qualify at prelims in Winnipeg this May with a score of 76 or better. Quest and After Midnight should round out a great contingent to Denver.

Also featured at the District contest last October was a mixed quartet visiting from France. Pictured above, the group was very well received while the audience waited for the contest results.

The Great Northern Union hosted a Hospitality Room after the quartet finals on Saturday evening. Hospitality rooms are an opportunity for quartets from around the district to sing for appreciative audiences. The mixed quartet pictured on the left was from the Milwaukee area.

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

Note: The GNU is taking the month of December off from regular rehearsals.



The Great Northern Union's season finale was held at the Great Benson Hall on the campus of Bethel University on November 18th. It was a great ending to our 1st ever Concert "season". Joining us on our show was the very talented 16 member mixed a capella group from Lakeville High School, **Encore** (pictured above). GNU director, Pete Benson, is also the choral director for Lakeville South High School. What a job he has done with this group of young people! Several of the guys have come to the GNU rehearsals. What a great addition they will make if they decide to join us.

A special treat for the audience was the return of one of our favorite quartets, **Excalibur**. Pictured below left, they also sang a fun but embarrassing song at the afterglow to one of the young ladies from Encore.

The last song in the concert featured two quartet "spots" which gave Steve Anderson a chance to sing in a quartet with his twin brother, Rick. It was the 1st time in 30 years (since highschool) that the two brothers performed together in a quartet. Singing with them were Bob Dowma and Steve Hardy. Since the "pickup" quartet was a combination of two active and past quartets, the **Happiness Emporium** and **Live Wire**, they were dubbed "**Live Emporium**" (pictured bottom right). Tickets for next year's concert season are available from Bob Cannella. Contact him early for the best seats in the house!



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 3rd^d 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.



be evaluated for its contribution to the overall effect of the presentation.

The Presentation judge evaluates how effectively a performer brings the song and arrangement to life—that is, to what degree is the audience entertained through the performer’s communication of the story/message/theme in its musical and visual setting. He will, of necessity, respond to both the vocal and visual aspects of the presentation, but he will principally evaluate the interaction of these aspects as they work together to create the image of the song. He will determine a single score based on the quality and appropriateness of the overall effect.

In short, the Presentation category will evaluate everything about the performance that contributes to or detracts from the entertainment of the audience.

Contest and Judging Handbook Page 20 9/01

**PRESENTATION CATEGORY
DESCRIPTION OF THE PRESENTATION CATEGORY**

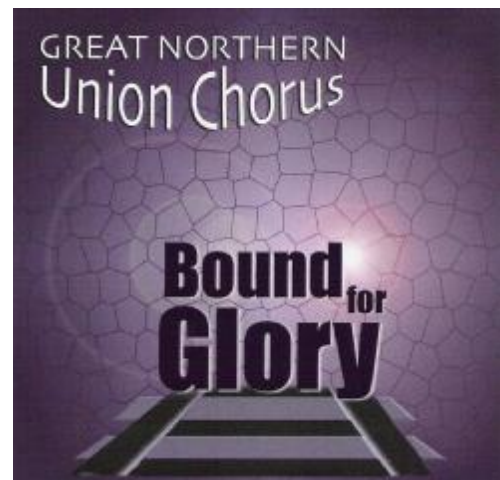
I. Introduction

The first rule of any art form is to communicate. In a barbershop performance, “Presentation” is communication via the transformation of mere notes and words into an entertaining experience for an audience. The words, notes, and other symbols on the printed page are the composer’s and, subsequently, the arranger’s gift to the performer. The presentation of the song is the performer’s gift to the audience.

The arranger is, therefore, the first musical interpreter of the song. The performer interprets the composition and its arrangement through the development of one or more themes in preparing a complete presentation that encompasses both visual and vocal elements. Finally, the audience interprets the work of composer, arranger, and performer, to the degree they have become emotionally involved in the song as it has been presented.

The end goal is a high level of entertainment, which is the ultimate measure of the performer’s efforts to create an effective barbershop performance. The means to that end are as varied as the creative process and the ability of the audience to comprehend what is presented.

The Presentation Category is structured to score the net overall effect of barbershop presentations and to analyze the events of a performance, their impact on the audience, and their effect in terms of entertainment value, audience rapport, artistry, expressiveness, and unity of the presentation. Each vocal and visual event that occurs in the presentation of a barbershop song will



Bandwagon
 Contact:
 Jim Barloon
 3823 Oak Park Circle SE
 Rochester, MN 55904
Come along for the ride!
 Phone: 507-288-3021 Email: jibbass@juno.com

Quest
 BARBERSHOP
 QUARTET

JAY
 MIKE
 BRENT
 TIM

Tim Milbrendt
 833 Balsam Ct. NE
 Pine Island, MN 55963
 507-356-2993
 tkjm@earthlink.net

Ellis Jones, Tenor Bruce Gray, Lead

MAGIC
 Barbershop Harmony & Sleight of Hand

507-934-2372
 bgray@gustavus.edu

Don Miller, Baritone Bill Lydecker, Bass

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

Aarps-A-Chord

Contact:
 Bob Griffith
 9124 Utica Ave S
 Bloomington, MN 55437
 952-891-5473



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

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 EMPORIUM**
 BARBERSHOP
 QUARTET

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 CONTACT: Rod Johnson
 1308 Blue Phlox Court
 Northfield, Minnesota 55057
 507.645.5750

After Midnight
 a barbershop quartet

Tom Marchinsky
 952-931-9715
 tom_bbshcp@hotmail.com

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 support
 these
 GNU
 quartets!

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 A Land O' Lakes Quartet

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 STEVE ANDERSON

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 STEVE HARDY*

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