

*International Medalist*  
**GREAT NORTHERN UNION**  
**CHORUS**

**92.1 Scores GNU Bronze!**



**GNU earns highest score ever in third place medalist finish in Anaheim at the BHS International Chorus Competition...**



# International Medalist GREAT NORTHERN UNION CHORUS

HILLTOP CHAPTER • SPEBSQSA



GNU's News

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## GNU earns highest score ever in third place medalist finish in Anaheim at the BHS International Chorus Competition...

7/4/2009 10:39:49 AM by *Wally Brink* (as reported on [gnunion.com](http://gnunion.com))

The Great Northern Union Chorus is excited to announce a third place medal finish in the Barbershop Harmony Society Chorus Competition in Anaheim, CA on July 3, 2009. The medal was won with 86 men on stage and a score of 2764 out of 3000 and an overall average of 92.1%. The score is the highest score ever achieved by the GNU and the highest ever earned by a Land O'Lakes District chorus or quartet.

Director Peter Benson led the GNU to the medals and quotes "I am very proud of the entire GNU organization. We took a strategic break from BHS International contests the last two years to re-organize and focus on reaching a consistently higher level of performance and our score reflects our hard work and effort. The GNU leadership and membership came to Anaheim with a plan and goals in our sights and we exceeded our goals in many ways. It's been a great weekend for the GNU." Peter Benson has been the director of the GNU since 2004 and earned the GNU four International births and two medals. Benson continues, "This is the beginning of the new GNU and we still have much work to do to prepare for our next International contest as we continue to develop and grow our musicianship. It's an exciting time to be a part of the GNU!"

Additionally, two other GNU quartets earned high placing in the BHS Quartet Competition with *Vocality* earning a bid into the semi-finals and finishing 19th and *X-Factor* finishing 23rd out of the top 50 Quartets.

In the Collegiate Quartet Competition, *Expedition* placed 10<sup>th</sup> out of the 26 groups qualifying for International.



*Vocality*



*X-Factor*



*Expedition*

## Great Northern Union-Officers & Directors

Tom Semple – President

Bob Dowma – Treasurer

Roger Wambheim – Secretary

Kenneth Slinde – VP-Membership

Walter Brink – VP-Marketing & Public  
Relations, Project Manager

Gary Little – Chapter Chorus Manager

Luke Norell – Member at Large

Scot Kvigne – Member at Large, Assistant  
Music Director

Jay Fahl – Member at Large

Brent Buresh – VP-Music & Performance

Bill Lydecker – Immediate Past President

Martin Monson – VP-Chapter Development

Ken Gilmore – Member at Large



## **The International Experience**

*by Alex Donaldson*

The Barbershop Harmony Society's International competition is something that all barber-shoppers across the world dream to compete in every year. The Great Northern Union, had had the privilege of singing on the International stage for twenty consecutive years, but after the 2006 competition it was decided that the GNU would take two years off from competing in order to further grow and develop their musical excellence. Well, 2009 was the year the GNU returned to that stage.

Through our rehearsals leading up to the competition we were continually getting more and more excited to get back on the stage. But it wasn't just the desire to get back to competing that had us pumped up, it was the fact that we realized how much we, as a chorus, had improved over the past two years.

Our journey reached a new threshold in the fall of 2008 when we scored the highest ever score for a chorus in the Land O' Lakes District Competition, and were crowned the chorus champions for our District, earning us the third place seeding going into the International Competition to be held in Anaheim, California in July 2009. We had scored an unfathomable 89.1, which just blew us away. We were on top of the world at this point. (continued on page 4)

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So, over the next eight months leading up to the International competition in Anaheim we began to really work hard toward becoming the best chorus on the GLOBE. We learned a new ballad that we felt had gold medal potential. We brought in coaches. We were excited to get back on the International stage and show the world that we were back, and that we were better than ever!

Well, the time finally came. We were on our way to Anaheim to reach for the gold!

When we all had arrived we began rehearsing, becoming more and more excited for what was about to take place. As a chorus we had bonded closer than ever during that time.



Breakfast at IHOP



Physical Warm-up with Jay Fahl



Vocal Warm-up with Jim Emery



Scott Kvigne & Roger Stanfield Work Presentation



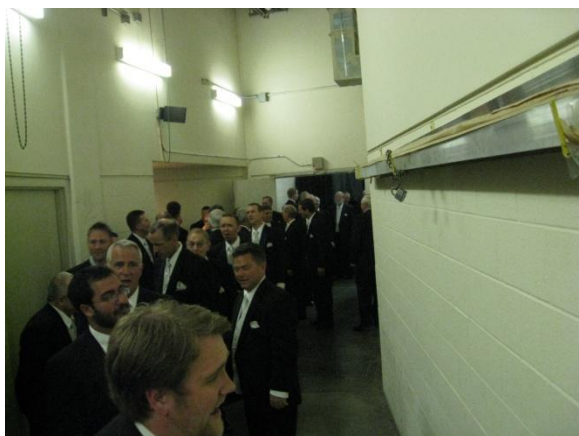
"Chunking" with Pete

*GNU's News August 21<sup>st</sup>, 2009*



Tux Time!

The day had arrived and we felt more prepared than ever before. We walked onto the stage, behind the curtains, prepping ourselves mentally for what was about to take place. We were ready!



“The Horses Are In the Starting Gate”

The emcees announced our introduction, “From the Land O’ Lakes District, under the direction of Pete Benson, THE GREAT NORTHERN UNION!!” It was our time to give the audience what they desired. We sang both of our songs with a passion unlike any other time that we could remember when singing on a contest stage. Our time went by in a flash.

*GNU’s News August 21<sup>st</sup>, 2009*



“Blame It On My Youth”



“How Do You Do Dear?”



“Put Your Arms Around Me Honey!”

After we finished our turn on stage we had a few hours until the results would be announced. We wanted to hear our scores, but we had to wait and watch the night session before we could hear the rankings.

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We watched some great performances that night, but finally, the time had come to hear the scores for the top five choruses. They announced the fifth and the fourth place chorus scores, and we were all left asking ourselves, where would we end up? Then, "The third place chorus with an overall score of 2764, and a 92.1 average, The Great Northern Union!" The chorus members erupted out of their seats screaming with excitement. We had scored the highest score in Land O' Lakes District history. There was no keeping our excitement back!



Well, our celebrations didn't end in the arena. After they announced the scores for the top two choruses we went right out into the hall of the arena and began jumping around, hugging each other, screaming and chanting, "GNU! GNU! GNU!" We were ecstatic!

We had just achieved something that we never thought possible. By many accounts, we would now be considered in an elite group of choruses within the Barbershop Harmony Society. We had done what we came to do!

*GNU's News August 21<sup>st</sup>, 2009*

More photos at:

<http://public.fotki.com/danp2000/bhs/2009/international>

[http://picasaweb.google.com/roger.theresa/GNUAnaheim?authkey=Gv1sRgCNbEoZT\\_ypD2wAE&feat=email#](http://picasaweb.google.com/roger.theresa/GNUAnaheim?authkey=Gv1sRgCNbEoZT_ypD2wAE&feat=email#)



**(as presented in the first GNU public newsletter)**

What an honor it is for me to be writing the first director article for the first GNU public newsletter. This is an exciting new piece for the GNU and just a sample of the many new and exciting directions this great chorus is heading. We're glad that you are one of our supporters and we hope that you will find this a worthwhile publication for the future.

To say that these are exciting times for the GNU would be a huge understatement. In case you hadn't heard, we just returned from the Barbershop Harmony Society International Contest in Anaheim, CA where we earned our highest score ever, and a 3<sup>rd</sup> Place Medal!! Yes, that's 3<sup>rd</sup> in the world! And while it was an amazing week for us and a huge accomplishment for the chorus, the most amazing part of it all was the journey.

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Three years ago the leadership of the GNU sat down and took a good hard look at where we've been and where we wanted to go. Though we were certainly proud of all of our past accomplishments, we knew that if we really wanted different results, we had to do things differently. As they say, "A goal without a plan is just a wish." Our team detailed "3 year plan" which included, among other things, a 2-year break from our 20 year streak of competing at International.

So what did we do? Well, that's a secret, but the results speak for themselves. During our "time off" we grew our singing membership from 68 to 86, with 27 rookies on stage in Anaheim! We performed for the North Central ACDA convention, released a new CD, expanded our concert season, did collaborations with some of the finest college choirs and other groups in the country, went on a tour, worked with the best coaches, earned the highest score ever in the LOL District contest, rehearsed in as many venues as possible, developed a strong brotherhood within the chorus, and learned how to think and act like a Champion.

The most significant thing to note about all of the above is that none of it happened by accident! We learned the importance of developing a plan, believing in it, working very hard to execute it, celebrating success along the way, and ultimately accomplishing some pretty huge goals. I am very blessed to have a great leadership team, people who are not only visionaries, but also willing to step up and do the hard work. And of course none of that would matter without the amazing talent, attitudes, dedication, and drive of the singers in the GNU.

We are on an exciting ride and I have a good feeling that this is only the beginning of something great. I want to invite you to get in on the action!

Sincerely,

Peter Benson

**Anaheim Gospel Sing July 2, 2009**





*GNU's News August 21<sup>st</sup>, 2009*



# Friends & Family Night

June 25, 2009



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## Board of Directors Update

by Roger Wambheim

### Board of Directors Update

Unlike some past years, the GNU Board of Directors has been routinely meeting every month this year. In addition, the Board is making a transition from its historical focus on operational details (i.e., what's happening next month) to strategic planning (i.e., where are we going over the next 3-5 years). Although we had great success in Anaheim, this was just one step in the process, not the highest peak in the mountain range.

We could talk about the necessary, but mundane, activities that the Board oversees (e.g., setting the budget, approving expenditures, establishing the concert schedule, overseeing the work of each of the Vice Presidents, Anaheim logistics, etc.). Instead, here are a few highlights:

- Although we still depend heavily on our membership for volunteer assistance, the GNU will be hiring two additional part-time staff positions starting this fall to improve our administrative efficiency and grow our organization. If you know any talented individuals that with the skills and interest contact Tom Semple.
  1. Sales – focus on group sales, sponsorships, grants, etc.
  2. Administrative Support – advance planning and operational execution
- The GNU contributed \$150 for a scholarship to the Harmony Explosion Camp and \$500 to the Harmony Works Open.

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- The GNU is now a member chorus for both the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) and Chorus America.
- A Facility Planning team led by Gary Little has been launched to look at the long-term facility needs for the Chorus (i.e., rehearsal space, office space, storage, etc.).
- There is a website project underway to rebuild the GNU website capabilities for both member use and external stakeholders (e.g., ticketing, merchandise, recordings).
- There are several exciting ideas in the mix for 2010 and 2011. Stay tuned for more information as these solidify.

There are elections coming this fall for Officer and Member-at-Large positions on the Board. If you've got the ideas, energy and talents to help lead this extraordinary organization into its 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and beyond, contact Tom Semple or Marty Monson.

**Como Park 7/14/09**

Photos by Kathy Litchfield



**Quartet News by Steve Anderson**

Engage had the pleasure of singing on stage with the St Paul North Star Chorus at the Como Park Pavilion on June 16<sup>th</sup>.



The St Paul chapter does three concerts each summer at Como. The June concert features the St Paul chapter and their quartets.

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The July performance features all the barbershop choruses in the area and the show in August brings in a Sweet Adelines chorus from White Bear Lake called the Lake Country Chorus.



The Worship Space

More photos at:

<http://picasaweb.google.com/roger.theresa/GNUGraceChurch?authkey=Gv1sRgCJL26bbY9ZXRsqE#>



Photos by Steve Hardy and Annie Anderson

**The Great Northern Union provided special music for worship services at Grace Lutheran Church in Eden Prairie, Minnesota on Sunday August 2, 2009.**

Photos by Roger Meyer



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*It was a "Great Day"!*

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Family Picnic at Staring Lake Park  
in Eden Prairie, Minnesota 8/2/09

Photos by John Babbs, Dawn Homberg & Roger Meyer

<http://tinyurl.com/le5jw2> (link for more photos)





## Upcoming Events

9/24/2009 Joe Connelly coaching session

9/26/2009 Autumn Choral Classic

10/24/2009 District Contest

11/21/2009 Season Finale

## Expedition Quartet

Jeremy Ganswindt, tenor; Jay Fahl, lead; Bryan Ziegler, bari; Jake Umhoefer, bass  
715-308-3420

Please e-mail your current quartet information to:

[ttwheeler\\_56150@hotmail.com](mailto:ttwheeler_56150@hotmail.com)

Ellis Jones, Tenor  
Bruce Gray, Lead




# MAGIC

Barbershop Harmony & Sleight of Hand

507-934-2372  
bgray@gustavus.edu



Don Miller, Baritone  
Bill Lydecker, Bass



# SNAP!

A Cappella Quartet

Contact: Phil Jensen  
Phone: 952-435-2827  
E-mail: snapquartet@charter.net


Tenor: Jeff Aldrich  
Lead: Phil Jensen  
Baritone: Heath Walker  
Bass: Darren Hoehne

## Talk of the Town

A Barbershop Quartet

Judd Orff - Lead  
Keith Fransen - Tenor  
Matt Hall - Bass  
Jim Hall - Baritone

Contact  
(651) 439-3108  
juddorff3108@msn.com



## X-Factor

Keith Olson, Tenor; Seth Fetzer, Lead  
Brent Graham, Baritone; Tim Milbrandt, Bass  
<http://www.facebook.com/pages/X-factor-quartet/32797549272>

# Engage

Barbershop Quartet

Minneapolis MN 612-866-1856  
[WWW.ENGAGEQUARTET.WEBS.COM](http://WWW.ENGAGEQUARTET.WEBS.COM)

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JAY      TONY      DAVID      ROBERT



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