



International Medalist
GREAT NORTHERN UNION
CHORUS

HILLTOP CHAPTER • SPEBSQSA



GNU's News

December 31, 2009

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2009 Season Finale Goes The Distance!



Great Northern Union Saturday November 21st at Benson Great Hall, Bethel University, St Paul, Minnesota



Benson Family Singers



Trademark



Vocality



Crossroads



...more photos by Dan Meyer, Dawn Holmberg , Kathy Litchfield & John Babbs <http://tinyurl.com/ycns5tq>
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2010 Great Northern Union Officers & Directors

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Treasurer: Bob Dowma
Immediate Past President:
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VP – Development: Martin Monson
Co-VP – Music & Performance:
Brent Buresh
Co-VP – Music & Performance:
Jay Fahl
Co-VP – Marketing: Luke Norell
Co-VP – Marketing: Dan True
VP – Logistics / Chorus Manager:
Gary Little
Member at Large: Jeff Goenner
Member at Large: Ken Gilmore

Show Chairman and Project
Manager: Wally Brink
Assistant Director: Scott Kvigne
Director: Peter Benson

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GNU's News December 31, 2009



Director's
Corner
by Peter
Benson

2010 Focus on Fundamentals

There is much excitement building for our 2010 season. The anticipation of new repertoire, more performance opportunities, a new competition package, building membership, a feature in the Harmonizer, and moving closer to being the best chorus on the globe, really gets my adrenaline going. But, perhaps because of the music teacher in me, the thing that excites me most about the 2010 season is improving the fundamentals of the GNU singing machine!

While we have always worked hard on techniques to improve our singing and performance level, this year I'd like to take a more deliberate approach. Tony Robbins says "Repetition is the mother of skill." I like that. Tweaking specific chords, vowels, or rhythmic passages in particular songs will only take us so far. The key for overall improvement is in developing new habits through drill & repetition. Sound fun? It does to me! The 3 main areas of focus for this year will be: 1. Pitch, 2. Rhythm, and 3. Word Sounds.

Pitch This is our area of greatest concern. In music, pitch is everything. Now, a group of our caliber obviously does not have blatant tuning problems, but the slow downward migration of tonal center has become an issue. (that's a nice way of saying "flattening") Many factors contribute to intonation problems including vocal production, register changes (singing in the "heavy voice"), interval inaccuracies

(ascending too small, descending too big), and believe it or not, rhythm. The list goes on and on. In my opinion, though, the number one reason for flattening is lack of awareness. Pitch must always be at the forefront of our minds. We must realize that flattening will be a natural tendency unless we work against it. Many drills will be forthcoming, including some that you can work on at home.

Rhythm Often overlooked in vocal music, rhythm is key to all aspects of singing. The term rhythm covers many areas: pulse, duration, tempo, meter, and phrasing. Our focus will be primarily on maintaining steady pulse. Rhythm is also related to sync. and choreography! Drum machine will be our friend.

Word Sounds Diphthongs, triphthongs, and singable consonants are among the elements in the word sounds category. Proper execution of word sounds will also improve synchronization and rhythm. To me, this is essential to bring out the meaning of the text to our audiences. We know how to do this; it's just a matter of going there all the time. Jim Emery has much in store for us in this area.

Just as our physical warm-up drills have contributed greatly to our "Motion Drives Emotion" attitude, rhythm, pitch, and word sound drills will bring our music to life and take us one step closer to International Championship. I'm ready for it, are you?



Awards Banquet

The Annual Awards Banquet was held Thursday December 17, 2009 at the Fort Snelling Officer's Club. Everyone in attendance enjoyed a delicious meal, fellowship and fun with special Christmas tree ornaments and light up pen "wands" provided by Bruce Watson.

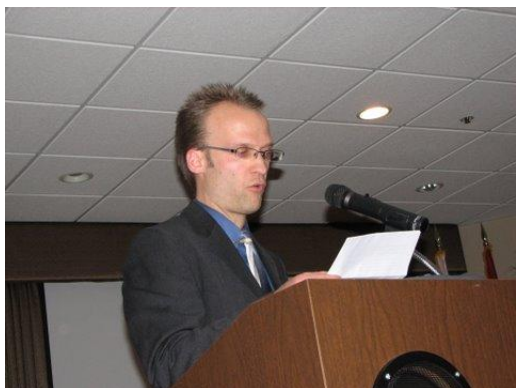
Top ticket sellers were awarded CD Recordings by "Stormfront", who will be the headlining guest quartet for the 2010 season finale next November. Winners were: Ken Slinde, Kent Mickelson, Marty Monson, Scott Kvigne, Judd Orff, Don Challman, Norm DeCarlo, Bob Griffith, Mike Brama, and Bob Dowma. Special thanks to Bob Canella for his excellent ticket sales organization and coordination skills again this season.



Emcee Ken Slinde looked especially ready for Christmas in his sharp tuxedo complete with red bowtie. Ken had the 2008 winners of each award present to the 2009 winners.



The coveted “Best Improved Face” award was presented by Ken Gilmore to Roger Wambheim. The “Happy Feet” award was presented by Luke Norell to co-winners Heath Walker and Jay Fahl. Roger Wambheim presented the “Rookie of the Year a.k.a. New GNU” award to Terry Wheeler. The Theresa Meyer Award, presented for among other things, loyalty by someone outside the singing membership, went to Vickie Hurd. Ken Slinde presented the prestigious “Barbershopper of the Year” award to Art Van De Water.



President, Tom Semple and Chapter Development Vice-President, Marty Monson, addressed the gathering as did Director, Pete Benson. They all talked about the past concert season, third-place finish at international, an upcoming article in The Harmonizer about GNU, and the

exciting things planned for next year and the silver anniversary season in 2011. The evening concluded with the singing of “Go The Distance”.



Best Improved Face



Happy Feet



New GNU



Theresa Meyer Memorial Award



Barbershopper of the Year

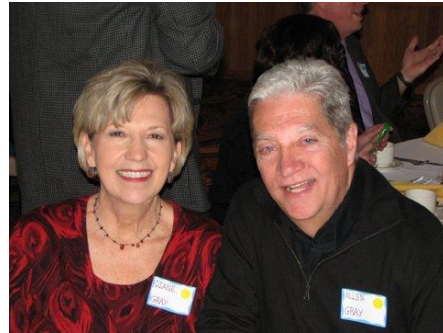


Go the Distance

More photos by Roger Meyer & John Babbs:

<http://tinyurl.com/yc3rzvm>

New Member Profiles



Allen Gray

My wife, Diane and I live in Burnsville and have lived there for the forty one years that we've been married.

I spent 35 years or so as a film director here in the Twin Cities, working freelance and for various production companies. I spent most of my time directing commercials (Target, 3M, Johnson Wax, Hamm's Beer, and Skyline Chili) and producing and directing corporate film and video. I retired from that about 9 years ago and pursued my own photography business. I do some commercial work during the winter (catalog, table top, product shots) and spend my summers at art fairs selling my own landscape and cityscape photography.

My membership card says I've been singing for 31 years, but I think it's longer than that. I started singing with the Bloomington chorus and sang with them for a number of years until I heard this young new chorus at the Rochester District competition called the Great Northern Union. They won their first contest, and I decided that fun through musical excellence was what I wanted. I joined up and sang with them for about ten years or so. During that time, I served as Chapter President, Membership VP, and Chorus Manager. But then, the flame went out. Frankly, I got tired of working on the same contest songs over and over. I dropped out of chorus singing, but continued to sing with my quartet, Random Sample (a seniors quartet).

After a number of years, I got the bug to sing with a really good chorus again, and after hearing the GNU when they won the District contest after sitting out for a while, I decided to attend a rehearsal and see what it was like. Needless to say, I was hooked, and the flame was re-kindled. I was thrilled with the direction the chorus was headed, and I was thankful I still had the vocal equipment to go along for the ride. I used to sing Bari, but moving to Bass helped preserve the old vocal cords.

How exciting it has been to be back. It has given me a new purpose and motivation to be the best I can be. Under Pete's leadership, hard work is rewarded with being able to produce that unique GNU sound that truly thrills an audience. It's exciting to think of the direction this chorus is headed, and I'm proud to be a member hanging on for the ride.



Dan True

For the past eleven years I have lived in Chanhassen, MN. Prior to that, I lived in my home town, Blue Earth, MN.

I have been married to Karen for 26 years. We have two daughters, Kelsey, 23 and Stephanie, 20.

My current position is at UnitedHealth Group Information Technology as a program manager.

The last eleven years have been technology based. But my first paying job was a crop farmer in the Blue Earth area for 20 years.

My high school music teacher introduced me to barbershop in 1976. I fell in love with the harmonies and have been singing it ever since. I have no formal music training, other than high school choir and barbershop every week.

March of 2010 will mark my 24th anniversary of being a member of the society. I wish I knew there was a society to join back in high school.

I have only been a member of GNU for a short time and my experience has been fantastic, so far. Being able to sing with Peter again is wonderful. The level of dedication and involvement is shared by the entire membership.

Working toward a common goal of being the best singing ensemble we can be, is invigorating. Of course, the highlight of my short GNU career was the third place finish in Anaheim.

Besides singing, I enjoy golf, fishing and traveling.

Board of Director's Notes by Roger Wambheim

2009 has been another good financial year. The Chorus is close to achieving a long-time goal: establishing a reserve fund equal to 10% of the annual operating budget.

The new CD, *Go the Distance*, is in progress. The activities that are underway now include reviewing and tweaking the recordings from the Finale, obtaining the mechanical licenses and developing the artwork and copy. The goal is to have it ready for the March Collegiate concert.

During 2009, we added 16 members to the GNU. Of those, 3 were reinstatements of former members, 8 are now dual members from other choruses, and 5 are new members. 23 years of Chapter legal documents from the Secretary and Treasurer files dating back to the inception of the chorus have been scanned and there is now a digital archive of these important records.

The Music and Performance Team is

actively looking for a set of new audio-visual equipment to support our rehearsal needs.

2010 Great Northern Union Schedule so far (subject to change)

Thursday January 7 - Season Kick-Off Rehearsal, UMCP, Richfield

Thursday January 14 - Guest Night

Thursday January 21 - Guest Night

Thursday January 28 - Riser Placement w/J.W. Park

Friday February 5 - Gig, Eagan, East View HS

Saturday March 6 - Gig, Woodbury/Lake Elmo

Saturday March 13 – Concert #1, Collegiate, Vagrants, current Collegiate Champs, UW-EC Singing Statesmen

Friday April 16 - Annual Tour Start

Sunday April 18 - Annual Tour End

Thursday April 22 – Joe Connelly Coaching

Friday May 14 – Judy Potzgay Coaching, Choreography FRONT ROW ONLY

Saturday May 15 -- Judy Potzgay, Coaching, Choreography

Saturday June 12 - Concert #2

Tuesday July 20 - Gig, Como, St. Paul

Thursday August 5 - Gig, Northfield, MN All State Choir, St. Olaf

Sunday August 22 - BHS Day with the Twins, inaugural season in new ballpark

Saturday September 22 - Concert #3, MN Boys Choir

?? ?? ?? – Gig/Tour, NIACC, IA

Monday October 4 - EXTRA rehearsal

Monday October 11 - EXTRA rehearsal

Friday October 22 – District

Saturday October 23 – District

Saturday November 13 - Concert #4, Finale, Storm Front Medalist Quartet (featuring our very own Syd Libsack)

Sunday November 14 - Concert #4, Finale, Storm Front Medalist Quartet (featuring our very own Syd Libsack)

Rehearsals from Finale through the end of the year.

(STAY TUNED FOR MORE SCHEDULE INFO)





Jeremy Ganswindt *Tenor*
 Jay Fahl *Lead*
 Bryan Ziegler *Baritone*
 Jake Umhoefer *Bass*
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