

12/12/06

Barbershop Christmas
by
Tom Holbrook

WOW... is the only word that describes the concert just held at Savannah Center by the Heart of Florida Barbershop Chorus. Those attending two sold out performances sat for two hours and soaked up some magnificent close harmony sung by over 100 good looking, multi-shaped men with an average age of about 67 and a very talented Octet from Denver, CO, with an average age of 35, who were guests on the show.

For those who know nothing about Barbershop Music allow me to share a few important points about this music phenomenon. The greatest and most perfect musical instrument is the human voice, as created by the head Man himself. Nothing is more beautiful than or as pure as harmonious notes sung un-accompanied (a capella) by those who know what they're doing, and those providing the music December 2nd knew their way around a chord.

In Barbershop jargon, Barbershoppers don't sing the chords of a song, we "bust" them, "crack" them, "hit" them, "swipe" them, "milk" them and "ring" them, constantly seeking the precise "blending together" of four notes which, when perfectly aligned, produce a "phantom" fifth voice, which we call an "overtone." Barbershop aficionados, once they have experienced participating in the production of and hearing this "fifth voice," react not unlike Odysseus did to the music of the Sirens... being drawn to it incessantly... tie me to the mast quickly. Ask those who've experienced these overtones and they will describe it as a "rush", or getting all "goose bumpy" up and down the spine. It is truly euphoric and addictive for those who've tasted of it. Do quartets and choruses produce these overtones on, or ring, every chord? The majority doesn't, but some do and that's what identifies a champion. As knights of the realm searched for the Holy Grail so it is the Barbershopper's constant quest to "ring" every chord.

It seems most Barbershop music deals with the subject of love... both lost and found. Nothing moves the soul more than love and no music stirs the soul more than Barbershop music. Its chord structure is heavy on dominant and diminished 7th chords, usually over 50% of a song's content, and they are the secret ingredients to a recipe for "emotion manipulation." Listen and you will find in the love songs we sing no strict rhythm, adhered to as in most genres, instead the rhythm is adapted to the mood of the love story creating a greater visualization in the audience's mind.

Most of those belonging to the Heart of Florida Chorus have retired to this area and have sung in Barbershop choruses and quartets in the cities and states from which they came. Some read music but most don't. Each one I've met thus far, however, has a love for singing and are wanting to

be part of something that can affect the hearts of the people in this area. Many in the chorus have been singing Barbershop for over 30 years while some in the group have just gotten “hooked.”

Scott Werner, our director comes from the Alexandria, Virginia area and for over 25 years directed the Alexandria Harmonizers Chorus, capturing 12 International Championship Medals 4 of which were gold. He is the one who, somehow, motivates and energizes the group every Thursday evening from 6:30 pm – 9:00 pm at North Lake Presbyterian Church in The Villages. If gentlemen, of any age, are interested in becoming part of this group contact our President Ken Carter at 259-3574 for details.

The recent concert featured “The Denver a Capella Project,” a mixed octet of 4 women and 4 men who totally mesmerized everyone who heard them. Their music, by the way, did not include any Barbershop. They sang Jazz, Renaissance Madrigal, Traditional and Classical selections during the evening and their voices were such a perfect blend and clear quality they received several standing ovations. Their professional quality talent and humorous interludes complemented the Barbershop Chorus and provided an evening of great diversity and enjoyment for all who attended.

For those who like good Christmas music don’t forget, again, the Village Voices Christmas concert, one time only, will be held December 20th at Church on the Square. I guarantee another night of great song and fun if you attend so get there early and bring 10 of your closest friends.

By the way... to my singing buddy who asked “Why is the Green Room called the Green Room in theaters,” no one, absolutely no one, has a definitive answer to that. The first known mention of a Green Room was in 1701 but nothing said about why it was green and why they use it to host waiting guests or actors. Many thoughts as to why but absolutely no “for sure” reason. If anyone out there can prove their theory send it on and I’ll tell the world. Sorry!

Until then... have a great week.

#