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Barbershop Harmony Society Fact Sheet

Society name

- The Society is properly referred to as the Barbershop Harmony Society.
- Legal name: The Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barber Shop Quartet Singing in America, Inc. or SPEBSQSA, Inc. Note: no periods between letters of abbreviated form.

Size

- 30,000 members in more than 800 chapters in the United States and Canada; world's largest all-male singing society.
- Approximately 2,000 quartets registered with The Barbershop Harmony Society headquarters; an estimated 1,000 more quartets are active but not officially registered.
- Affiliated organizations in: Australia, Germany, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa, Sweden, The Netherlands, Great Britain. There are also barbershop singers in Denmark, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Uganda, China, Hungary, Spain, Brazil, Argentina, Iceland, and the Russian Federation.
- Governed by an elected board of directors; administered by a professional staff at Harmony Hall in Kenosha, Wisconsin.

Motto

- "Keep The Whole World Singing."

Founding

- First meeting: April 11, 1938 at the Roof Garden of the Tulsa Club in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Mission

- "Enriching Lives through Singing"

Activities of the organization

- Education of members and the general public in music appreciation, particularly barbershop singing.
- Advocacy at all levels of society to keep recreational and social singing an important part of our culture.
- Charitable projects on a local and national basis, including many funded through Harmony Foundation, the Society's official charity.
- Public performances enhance community cultural life, preserve the art form, and bring cheer to all.
- Quartets and choruses contribute more than 100,000 man-hours per year singing for more than half a million people at churches, schools, hospitals, senior centers, etc.

Barbershop Harmony Society

- Music publishing and distribution of cassettes, compact discs, DVDs and videotapes for entertainment and education.
- Contests in quartet and chorus singing at local, regional, and international levels.
- International champions named in chorus, quartet, and college-quartet divisions at international convention each July; international seniors champions named at midwinter convention each January

Education programs

- Harmony College, a week-long school held each summer, brings together more than 600 Barbershoppers from around the world with a world-class faculty of vocal coaches, arrangers, choreographers, and educators to explore all facets of the barbershop hobby.
- Directors College provides instruction in conducting barbershop choruses.
- Regional Chapter Operations Training Seminars held each fall teach members how to run their local chapters, recruit members, develop musically and better serve their communities.
- Visits by staff music specialists enhance performance and education programs in local chapters.
- The Society publishes numerous manuals and produces videos on vocal techniques, singing skills and chapter administration

Youth Outreach programs

- The Young Men in Harmony program is designed to preserve the art form by introducing it to a new generation of singers.
- Harmony Explosion camps give high school students and teachers the opportunity to explore harmony with their peers.
- The MBNA America Collegiate Barbershop Quartet Contest selects a national champion from colleges across the continent.
- Educator outreach introduces barbershop to music teachers at all levels.
- Many Barbershoppers are active in their communities, in parent-teacher associations, in arts advocacy groups and in education coalitions, working to preserve arts education in school curricula.

Charitable and community activities

- Harmony Foundation, Inc., is the Society's official charity. Donations made to the Foundation's general fund special projects of the Barbershop Harmony Society, including Directors College scholarships, Harmony Explosion Camps, Heritage Hall Museum of Barbershop Harmony.
- Barbershoppers donate sizeable amounts of money and time, and numerous performances to local charitable activities and vocal music education programs in their communities.

What is barbershop harmony?

- Four-part, unaccompanied, close-harmony singing, with melody in the second voice, called the "lead."
- Tenor (counter-tenor voice) harmonizes above the lead singer; bass sings the lowest harmonizing notes, and the baritone provides in-between notes, to form consonant, pleasing chords.
- Barbershop is a "melting pot" product of African-American musical devices, European hymn-singing culture, and an American tradition of recreational music.
- Melodies in the vocal and skill range of the average singer, with lyrical emphasis on simple, heartfelt emotions: love, friendship, mother, moon & June & the girl next door.