

## A Music Educator's Perspective of Barbershop Youth Outreach

Notes and editing from an interview with C. Hobson for 2015 HCNW Youth Outreach Panel Discussion

Rich Lapp is 34 year vocal music educator in the Boise School District, having taught both junior high and high school choir students. Mr. Lapp's choirs have earned perennial top honors in competition and he has earned the respect and recognized admiration of his peers. In June, 2015 Rich assumed a position as the Director of Music Education in the Boise School District. Rich joined BHS as a youth with his father and brothers in Southern California. He is currently the director of the Boise Chordsmen and has been a key supporter of the Idaho Youth Festival for its 8 years of existence.

**Key Requirement For Success** – There must be one person, a DRIVER, who has a vision of the outreach event and a passion to see it through all the way. The event “cannot start casually” and must be ready to fly before introduction to music educators.

**Educator Buy-In** – “As an educator, it (the Boise festival) worked for me because it was all in, the entire choir (or choirs), which allowed me to designate class time to introduce the music – notes, words and rhythms.” “The kids won't take the initiative outside of the classroom, no matter what resources are provided.” “If all are included, the teacher will take on a ‘minimal’ responsibility in the classroom for the barbershop event.”

**Event Timing** – The time of the year is crucial for success. The event must fit in the public school calendar, not a barbershop or any other calendar. “What works best for us is at the beginning of the school year or the beginning of the calendar year – 3-4 weeks after the start of either term.”

In response to a question regarding perception of barbershop among music educators, Rich said it is improving, that the A.C.D.A. (American Choral Directors Association) by BHS (Marty Monson and his team efforts) and SAI is improving the image/reputation. He said this is a prime time to promote local youth outreach barbershop efforts.

**Event Music** – “Basic, clear, clean-cut barbershop – that's what kids need” Rich said that event organizers may feel a need to seek music that is more “up to date” for young kids. “That's garbage” “Have them sing “Down Our Way and Heart of My Heart – a great tune, music anyone can recognize as barbershop.” “They love the chords.” “Give them a chance to be successful.” Utilize the Educator Packets offered by BHS and SAI. Avoid violations of copyright rules and do not encourage violations by teachers. Most teachers prefer legal PDF copies to hard copies. Fulfill your obligations for legal copies as best you can. Teachers all have access to copiers in the schools and can produce additional copies as needed.

### Event Music Resources –

- *You Tube* – If you would like to promote barbershop to the educators and expose them to performances from top quartets and choruses don't just refer them to You Tube because they will NOT do a search on their own. Give them specific links to someone like Ringmasters or other collegiate champions to improve the odds of them taking a look and listen.
- *Learning Tracks* – A few teachers may use them but most will likely not. That's not the way they teach. You could provide a quality 4- part track like those available at [www.timtracks.com](http://www.timtracks.com). Make sure they are GOOD tracks.
- *Live Quartets in the Classroom* – Educators will welcome the “right” barbershop quartet to the classroom 4-5 weeks prior to the scheduled event, as it will kick-start the event for the students. It should be a scripted

10-15 minute informative, fun entertaining presentation. Be careful in your selection of representative quartets.

- *Youth Ensembles on Our Barbershop Shows* – Good idea and an opportunity to expose teachers and young singers to barbershop and provide a welcome donation to their program from the show proceeds.
- *Teacher Contact*– Always seek a face to face contact when introducing your outreach program to teachers. They all have a “prep” period each day when they can offer a 15 minute or less meeting. Talk about your program goals; let them know you are not recruiting, you are demonstrating and teaching sound principles and you are helping youth to know that music is available to them beyond formal education years, for life! Email is always better than phone calls. Keep emails short, positive and often for the 4 weeks leading up to your program. Remind them of event details, what is expected of them, tidbits about the teaching or performing quartet and the clinicians, etc. – twice a week to keep them focused on the event.

Note: When starting a new program, a contact with the School District Music Coordinator (if there is one) to review event goals and get teacher contact information is a good idea.

**Women’s Voicing Concern** – When a teacher voices concerns for his/her girls singing barbershop, they are usually concerned with young females singing the bass part. It is a legitimate concern so do NOT poo poo the concern or treat it lightly. Choose music arrangements carefully. Seek suggestions from SAI for music that isn’t too low for young voices. Choral teachers divide their singers into Soprano 1&2 and Alto 1&2. Alto 2 singers sing as low as barbershop basses so they are already singing those notes. It is just in a different clef and not that big of a deal. However, we must be prepared by being aware of the concern and show respect for the concerns of the teacher. Validate the concern but teach around it. In truth, young men’s efforts to reach bass, tenor or even high lead notes, not just in barbershop, should be just as much a concern as young women singing bass.

**Clinician Selection** – We want clinicians who know barbershop but more important, we need clinicians who know and understand kids and know how to teach. Learn to instruct clinicians as to what you expect of them. Clinicians need to include a visual component in their interpretation of the event music, especially for the girls. It adds to the “fun factor” and is a hallmark of the barbershop style.

**Encourage Student Small Ensembles** – Try to make student ensembles an important part of your event. Provide suitable quartet music to the teachers for encouragement of quartet singing in addition to the teacher packets you have already or will provide. Suggestion is 6 songs for men and women – including a patriotic and Christmas theme. KEEP it barbershop! This could be a simple and great way to begin an outreach program.

**Guest Quartet** – Suggest male collegiate-age quartets who score in the 70’s. Send them the music and ask them to be familiar with the male selections or the female selections if you select a female quartet.

#### **Other Notes:**

- Educators will allow a short time frame in the classroom for your barbershop event – likely 2-3 weeks maximum.
- Start small.
- Be patient.
- Prepare for tough times and disappointments.
- It’s all about the kids!

# Financing Youth Outreach Programs

Prepared for Youth Outreach – 2015 HCNW

Funding is a major challenge for chapters that set out to sponsor youth outreach programs. Costs include music; learning tracks; clinician travel, expenses and fees; quartet travel, expenses and performance fees; venue rental; T-shirts; food or snacks/water; mailings; flyers; advertising; programs; etc. Expenses can be as little as a few hundred dollars for a donation to a school choir program performing on your show, punch and cookies for an afternoon clinic or several thousand dollars for a large event. If you are just starting out, make sure you begin small so you handle expenses with resource that already exist. As your youth event grows, you will likely need to find outside financial resources to keep the cost of youth participation at a minimum.

## Chapter Funds and Member Donations

Often local chapters and chapter members are willing to help get things started providing an expanded “buy-in” and resulting increase of support by local barbershoppers.

## Grants

Fortunately, both the Barbershop Harmony Society and Sweet Adeline International are very supportive of youth activities. The philanthropic organizations associated with our societies, Harmony Foundation International (BHS) and the Young Singers Foundation (SAI), have grant programs that give generously to youth outreach efforts with emphasis on start-up and growing events. There is a large demand for grant funds. Formal grant applications are required an application deadlines based on the date of your event must be met. Here are links for grant applications.

### *Harmony Foundation International*

<http://www.barbershop.org/resources/membership-resources/grants/>

### *Young Singers Foundation*

This foundation is NOT currently accepting applications for grants while the board of directors is reviewing their “mission and procedures”. The website states that the grant status can be monitored at

<http://www.sweetadelineintl.org>

The Evergreen District of BHS is blessed to have the *Bud Leabo Memorial Fund*, and one of its stated missions is support of school music programs. The contact person is Don Craig – Email: [doncraig@shaw.ca](mailto:doncraig@shaw.ca)

Local grants are available from philanthropic foundations in most communities. Many of these foundations have youth education and the support of the arts as part of their mission. Barbershop youth outreach fits both areas and requests to fund ongoing community youth music education programs have been well received when requested. These organizations are easy to find and often have available funds go unused because they are simply not requested. State and provincial governments have set aside funds to assist local efforts to benefit the greater community. This source should be investigated and applied for as appropriate. Many businesses contribute to the community and could be approached for support of youth music education programs.

## Participant Fees

Our events will be more meaningful to our young participants if they have a little “skin in the game”. We are all aware that most school music programs do not pay for extracurricular student activities. Most school choral programs have developed methods to put together the monies required for special events during the school year and educators usually will not object to a nominal charge per participant for a barbershop event if they choose to involve their students. If your event does not involve complete school choral groups, most individual participants can handle a reasonable fee.

## Show Tickets

A small admission charge to the event show will generate funds to offset some expenses.

# Funding Development of the Idaho Youth Barbershop Festival

An Example of Youth Outreach Funding – Submitted by the Boise Chapter - Youth Outreach Panel Discussion 2015 HCNW

2008 – Funding came from a \$1,000 seed money from the Boise Chordsmen Chapter (not actually used), a \$15/student participation fee, a \$5/adult \$3/student (non participant) show ticket fee and \$10 per student/educator contribution for up to 100 participants by Harmony Foundation International

2009 – \$1,500 from the Young Singers Foundation (SAI), \$15/participant fee, same show ticket prices and the same \$10 per participant from Harmony Foundation International

2010 (2 festivals held (January and September) \$1,300 – Young Singers Foundation, \$15 participant fee, same show ticket prices

At this point in time, with the participation growing by close to 25%/year, it was obvious that additional funding needed to be found. Just when we needed it, another member of our chorus volunteered to assist in a festival leadership capacity, bringing talents and experience and a spark to move our event to another level. The number of students and schools participating had grown to a point that we could not put all the young people on the stage for the combined music selection. Our director suggested we contact one of the local universities.

2011 Big changes. Our event was moved to another community 20 miles from Boise to the campus of Northwest Nazarene University and their beautiful performing arts center. There were no charges by the university, as we were bringing 600 high school students to their campus and they were pleased to have us. We went to a 2 event format on consecutive days to better accommodate the number of participating schools. Funding sources remained the same but we received over \$1,000 from a Quilting organization (proceeds from their annual quilt show). They agreed with the benefit we were providing to the education community and we were able to provide a service to help set up and take down their show displays. Also, by going to 2 separate events we were able to get another \$1,000 from Harmony Foundation Intl. (\$10/per participant up to 100)

2012 and 2013 Same funding, including the quilting group contribution. In 2013, in one of our planning sessions, our director expressed his feelings that the event had matured to the point that it should be held at the Morrison Center for Performing Arts in Boise and perhaps we could get a grant to fund the use of the facility. We took a leap of faith and scheduled the Morrison Center for 2014. The 2012 events were both at the Nazarene university. In 2013, we held one event at the university and the other at a Boise high school auditorium.

2014 Our co-director's first attempt at writing a grant was successful and not only were we able to fund the finest facility in our state, we were able to fund expenses for Ringmasters on their North American tour. We were able to reduce student fees to \$10 and provide a FREE concert on consecutive nights for the community. We were slightly under the income needed with unexpected expenses. However, we learned that in making grant applications, it is okay to ask for more than your known expenses because you only will receive reimbursement for receipted expenses anyway. The counsel given by the grant administrators, "Ask for more

money next time!”. We have also implemented a Festival Sponsorship program, allowing local businesses to sponsor 1 or many students to our festival for \$10/student.

Note: Starting in 2012, we expanded our outreach program with the High School Vocal Contest, held in January in conjunction with our chapter sponsored A Capella Fusion. This program gives student quartets and other small ensembles the opportunity to perform again in front of an appreciative audience and win some nice prizes. They can perform any genre but it must be a capella. The groups are “judged” by a panel of 3 (usually teachers and a community personality) and the audience gets to choose their favorite. We also applied for and received a grant to cover the facility and other expenses for this fun event. Show proceeds go to the Rescue Mission.

These are our planned funding resources for the 2015 Boise Chordsmen Youth Outreach:

- Outreach Vision Grant – Harmony Foundation International (awarded)	\$4,000
- Young Singers Foundation Grant (awarded)	\$1,200
- Idaho PieceMakerS (quilters) (anticipated)	\$1,200 est.
- Morrison Endowment Foundation (awarded)	\$21,000
- Student Participation Fees	\$6,000 est.
- Sponsorships	\$1,500 est.

2016 (January) High School Vocal Contest

- Contestant fees (\$10/student)	\$1,000 est.
- Morrison Endowment Foundation (awarded)	\$9,400

In summary, we have found that funding is not an insurmountable obstacle. Put together a viable program, make changes as necessary, be prepared to explain to funding sources “why” you have put the event together and the “how” will happen. It truly works and the rewards are incredible!

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## **The**

### **Speedy Acapella Singing SYstem**

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A new song has just been handed out when three new prospective members walk in. Not to worry, SASSY is with you. Hand the newbies copies of the song and invite them to sit in. Tell everyone to follow along in the score but not to sing at all until cued by the director. All at once the glorious sound of a great quartet fills the room. But something is different! Each singer is hearing his part prominent with the others in the background, all at the same time and all in the same room, and without any headphones. Use the Chuck Greene method or your own favorite method of learning, but tell the guys to start singing only the parts they are comfortable with and only when they are comfortable. In an amazingly short time you will all have the wonderful experience of singing a song exactly on pitch and exactly on time, no pain, no strain, no bother. And your prospectives, no matter how much singing they have done, will have an experience unlike any other in their lives.

SASSY is a newly invented and patented electronic system for teaching music to choruses. Using special equipment, re-engineered sound tracks, a knowledge of room acoustics and the physics and physiology of human sound perception, SASSY gets her amazing results. She is easy to handle and responds to the push of a button.

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## USING SASSY

To use SASSY you will need a license for the patent from the Rogue Valley Harmonizers. You will need a computer. We use any laptop (MAC or PC) made in the last five years with either ITUNES or MEDIA PLAYER installed. SASSY comes in several models depending on the size of the chorus, the technical proficiency of at least one chorus member to run it, and the budget. You will also need one specially reformatted recording of learning tracks for each song. None of the conventional commercial recording formats will work. We can reformat or supply appropriate learning tracks for any song available with learning tracks from BHS. We recommend using the very best learning tracks available. You will need some external hardware that depends on the system configuration suited to your chorus.

For technical and sales consulting please contact Mark Larsen at [mnlarsen@charter.net](mailto:mnlarsen@charter.net). He has the most experience using SASSY in a chorus, in school instruction and with quartets. SASSY works well in all situations.

## Marketing Your Chapter

To get started marketing your chapter, please study the Article “Does Your Chapter Stand Out” published in the March/April 2011 issue of the Harmonizer magazine. It is available to members on line from the BHS web site. Our chapter has been following the plan described in that article. Then, for additional advice or assistance, please contact Bob Hall, [rhallrmv@charter.net](mailto:rhallrmv@charter.net). Too many chapters are effectively hiding from their communities. It is to be expected that those chapters are not getting the support they need.