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This year will be the Year of 85! We're aiming to raise our singing level to what any Singing judge would grade an 85% - and to get ourselves to sing "85" always, no exceptions.

AND we're looking to have a consistent 85 men singing at that 85% level on the risers in every rehearsal, every performance, every contest.

So we have a theme for the year: The Drive to 85!

How do we get there? What does it mean?

Let's think about where we are. Where have we been singing? What is our current level?

Pardon me for being frank (with apologies to Frank), but understand that it's not all bad.

The consensus of the Music Team, based on a number of things, including the feedback of contest judges and multiple knowledgeable audience members, is that we have been performing at about a 75% - 79% level. While we felt pretty good about some of our work during our recent Christmas Shows, the reaction was that we sang, for the most part, at about a 75% level that weekend, but had moments in which we got into the low 80s. We didn't do even that well during our recent Fall contest or in the performance immediately after the contest.

A most telling moment occurred, however, just before the Christmas Show. You will recall the rehearsal at which we had the team of Joe Tomecek and Mark Betczynski before us for the entire rehearsal. We astounded ourselves and certainly amazed Joe and Mark by singing our Christmas repertoire better than we had ever sung it, certainly in recent memory.

Two questions arise from that rehearsal: Why did we do that? Why didn't we retain and repeat it?

Let me try to suggest that the major reason for what we did that one time was that we absorbed, for a short time, some important craft principles that Joe T had strongly emphasized in prior rehearsals and that Joe and Mark strongly emphasized that night. Not everyone got it perfectly, but enough of us did, for a while, that the singing vastly improved.

So why didn't we retain it? In fact, why do we consistently do things like this? We sing like crazy for our coaches, then can't reproduce it at the next rehearsal. We have amazing rehearsals on the Mondays just preceding contests, then cannot duplicate that sound in our contest performances.

Those questions have several answers, as we see it.

1. We often don't have the same singers on the risers the next time we rehearse after a coaching session or at a contest after

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The Drive to 85!

Guest Night—January 11

Don't forget to invite friends, the men you know who likes to hum or sing, to our guest night on January 11.



Installation Dinner

Date: Saturday, January 23rd, 2010

Place: LaGrange Country Club

Time: Cocktails: 6:00 Dinner at 7:00

Price: \$31.00 each

Delicious Buffet Style Dinner

Cash bar

Entertainment by: Off the Record

Invitations were handed out or mailed last week: **RSVP and pay by: January 18th**

Plan on coming for a great time and finding out who will be our next Barbershopper of the Year (BOTY).

Drive to 85!—continued

(Continued from page 1)



a great rehearsal, so multiple singers are not clued in to what we had been doing.

2. We have tended not to repeat and reinforce the important craft principles that often go into the best singing.

3. We have, as a chorus, allowed ourselves to tolerate so-so singing and not to ask of each other that everyone take seriously the West Towns Chorus's mission to be the best we can at all times.

This year we plan to focus on the principles of good ensemble singing. While we're not trying to be the VM or Masters of Harmony in a year, we will adopt many of their methods so that by the time we get to the Fall contest, we will shock the audience and judges with the improvement in our singing, at the quality of singing we have achieved: that 85% level.

So hang on tight: it's going to be a great ride. We're going to make it exciting to sing well, to be the best we can be. We have high expectations of ourselves as a Music Team. We hope to pass those high expectations along to each and every one of you. We hope that you will feel that you must bring your best game to every rehearsal and that you will expect those around you to do exactly the same.

The result will be that sublime rush we all get when it all works right. The difference will be getting that feeling every time we sing.

Ed McDevitt

for the West Towns Chorus Music Team

REFRESHMENTS REQUESTED FOR GUEST NIGHT



We would like to request refreshments from anyone willing to contribute for Monday Night's **New Members Night!!** Coffee, punch and water will be provided for chorus and our guests but we need treats which can be things like fruit, veggies, cheese/crackers, cookies, brownies, etc. etc. Anything will be greatly appreciated. Please bring them to the kitchen area at The Moose on Monday prior to practice. Thank you!!

Linda Carey

Emergency Notification Cards

As we start 2010, I would like to keep our **Emergency Card File** up-to-date. This card file lists emergency contact information and any information that may be helpful in the case of a medical emergency such as allergies, known medical conditions, etc. With such a large group, anything can happen at any time. We are an aging chorus and such information is vital to protect us in case of liability and/or first aid situations or emergencies at practices/shows. We have many new members and I want them to have the opportunity to participate. Keep in mind it is **still voluntary** but would like to get as close to 100% as possible (presently we're at 64%).

Rich Carey, Bass Section

If you want to be included into the File, please see me for a card so you can fill it out and return it back to me.

Rehearsal Notes

Here are the reminder notes from the rehearsal on January 4, 2010.

I am writing them up in a way that you can keep them and look back on them to remind you of the lessons taught (and hopefully remembered and learned!)

1. Our focus for the night was proper standing and breathing. Stand tall, fill from the bottom up, expanding the ribs as the diaphragm expands.

- ◆ To practice proper breathing, lie on the floor or on your back and pay attention to your breath. It's really hard to breathe improperly when you are lying on your back.

2. When starting phrases, start out with breath movement – on an H – so that the beginning isn't a hard sound at the start.

3. When we performed the three songs, we were out of breath after the first song (How Deep is the Ocean).

- ◆ That affected the pitch and energy on the second song (Feed the Birds).
- ◆ Between songs, take those moments to breathe deeply. In through the nose, out through the mouth. Slowly.
- ◆ It will help your body recover to keep pitch on the next song.

4. Joe K reminded us often about our mouth shape. Do not let your vowels get wide (east to west as Joe K said).

- ◆ Keep your mouth smaller and have the vowels go through a taller vowel rather than a wider vowel.
- ◆ (Create space in side the mouth, smaller mouth size, and forward placement.)

5. Remember to listen to Vocal Majority's performance of "Sweethearts of Sigma Chi."

- ◆ Our interpretation for chorus 1 will match the VM's. Be sure to review chorus 1 and learn chorus 2 this week. Go over it 3 times a day.

6. On "Sweethearts", measure 51 "gold of her hair" make sure we do not make that choppy and over enunciated.

- ◆ Joe K would like to make sure we keep it smooth as we sing that phrase.

If you missed Jan 4, you're already behind on Sweethearts. Don't miss next week or you'll miss even more.

Jon Hoekema, Lead, West Towns Chorus



Breathing—Sweetheart of Sigma Chi

As you are learning chorus 2 this week, and reviewing chorus 1, a reminder of the breath places in chorus 1.

Measure 32 – before "The girl of my dreams"

Measure 40 – after "I know"

There is no breath at measure 44 – sneak a breath someplace else in the phrase so that you can make it through (not after co-ed in 42, there is no breath there either).

But don't breathe as the same place as your neighbor. We don't want every one sneaking a breath at the same place.

Measure 48 – after "afterglow"

Measure 56 – after "western sky western sky"

Measure 60 – after "dreams"

Measure 64 – after "Sigma Chi"

Jon Hoekema



Marketing Help Wanted

A new West Towns Chorus Marketing and PR Committee is being formed to work with the Music Committee and Chapter Development Committee to accomplish the following:

- ◆ Raising funds for our chorus;
- ◆ Getting more shows for our chorus;
- ◆ Recruiting more singers for our chorus;
- ◆ Getting more audience for our chorus shows;
- ◆ Raising the awareness of our chorus to the outside world.

To that end, we are looking for individuals (both within the chorus and outside the chorus) who have a willingness and the expertise in the following areas:

Fund Raising and Grant Writing – Grant Requests need to be submitted annually to the Illinois Arts Council, DuPage Community Foundation, Hinsdale Center for Performing Arts, Sara Lee Corporation, just to name a few. If we don't ask for it, we won't get it.

Singing Engagements for the full chorus and VLQ – Letters, emails and phone calls need to be made to an appropriate list of corporations, governmental units and convention planners to try to obtain singing engagements for the chorus. This person would also be responsible for completing our "PR Kit" (consisting of our Marketing DVD, brochure, Song Repertoire, WTC newspaper articles, and the IRS non-profit designation letter.) This person would also work with a "booking agent" if it is deemed appropriate to hire one. This person would coordinate with the Music Committee and Marketing VP before any singing engagements are committed to in writing.

Marketing Web Site Coordinator – This person would work with Diane to make sure that our web site can be upgraded to include more "Marketing oriented material." A section could be added where visitors to the site could donate money to West Towns Chorus (we are after all, a 501©3 charitable organization.) Our DVD marketing video needs to be part of the web site. This person would also be responsible for other "internet related opportunities" for West

Towns, such as Facebook page, blogs, etc.

Data Base Coordinator – We have a proprietary data base of close to 5,000 that we send Christmas Flyers to. We have tried to update this list every year based on the insert responses we get during the Christmas show. However, no one is in really in charge of this. This list needs to be cleaned up and coordinated with the TIX.COM internet list, so that our mailings are more cost-effective.

Show Marketing – We need someone to work with the chairman the Christmas Shows and the Spring Shows and the ticket show chairman to "get the word out" to the general public about our upcoming shows. This function is more critical than ever, now that we have lost the subsidy funding from the village of DG (due to their budget cuts) and our (probably) keeping a fourth Christmas show. This would include preparing press releases, and the details about getting the flyers to the general public, either by regular mail, e-mail, mass mailing, etc. If they don't know about our shows, they won't come to our shows.



Annual Patron Newsletter Coordinator. This person would be responsible for putting together a short newsletter recapping Chorus accomplishments/events during the year. This newsletter should go out in September (before our Christmas Show flyer). It should also be posted on our web site. It could be emailed to our patrons or mailed to a select few of our 5,000 list data base. This would be coordinated with our TIX.Com ticket chairman and our web coordinator.

If you are interested in helping your chorus in these areas, please let me know by email at (atumea@sbcglobal.net) as soon as possible. Please tell me which area you would be interested in and capable of helping out with. Please know that each area can have more than one person and that you don't have to be a member of the chorus to help.

Tony Tumea

Schedule of Events

January 2010

- ◆ 11 **Guest Night**—Rehearsal
- ◆ 18 Rehearsal
- ◆ 21 Board Meeting
- ◆ 23 Sat. Installation Banquet
- ◆ 25 Rehearsal

February 2010

- ◆ 1 Rehearsal
- ◆ 8 Rehearsal
- ◆ 13 Saturday—Sandwich Opera-House **Call time: 6:45 PM**
- ◆ 14 Singing Valentines
- ◆ 15 Rehearsal
- ◆ 22 Rehearsal

January 2010

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

SINGING VALENTINES



2010

- ◆ March 13 - Saturday, **IDAH** (Illinois District Academy of Harmony), Bloomington, IL
- ◆ Apr. 16—18 Illinois Spring Convention
- ◆ June 27 - July 4 - International (Philadelphia)
- ◆ Aug. 5 Cougar outing
- ◆ Sep. 24—26 Illinois Fall Convention

February 2010

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28						



March 2010

Sun	Mo	Tue	We	Th	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

The West Towns Chorus

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The views and opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the official views of the Chicagoland West Suburban Chapter aka The West Towns Chorus



2010 Music Team

Director: Joe Kronos
Asst Director: Joe Tomecek
Asst Director: Mark Betczynski
Music VP: Ed McDevitt
Craig Ahlgrim
Jay Bentz
Jim Brown
Trenton Ferro
Craig Lancaster
Jon Hoekema
Eric Sutherland
Don Thompson
Bryan Reeder

Email: musicteam@westtowns.org



IT'S SHOWTIME!

**Let us
Entertain
You!**



Sandwich Opera Performance—Feb. 13

I would like to stress the importance of a full complement of singers for the Sandwich Opera House performance. This show will be almost identical to the Monarch Landing performance. The chorus will be expected to perform for 45 minutes to one hour, after which, the two quartets will each sing for about 20 minutes. The chorus will return for the finale.

This show is part of the Sandwich concert series for local residents and surrounding communities. Please keep in mind that the material we sing is not the easiest music and would prove to be very difficult for anything less than the full chorus to perform. So, please look at your calendars and block out the 13th of February for this show. I'll have directions available soon.

I thought you might be interested to know that Monarch Landing got so many complements about our performance that they have invited us back for next October. We are the only group that has been invited back. I am waiting for the ok from the music committee before I respond to them. People want to be entertained, and that is what we give them.

Jim Ahlgrim