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## The Challenge to Excellence

by Jon Hoekema

The key to the success of any chorus is not just the leadership, but the hard work and dedication of the men on the risers. In the past few weeks, the men of the West Towns Chorus have been challenged to sing at an 85%. But it is not just our contest scores that are defined by 85%; the challenge is for everything we do. This chorus desires to be defined with the term “excellence.”

The first time I heard this challenge stated this way was at a mountain retreat in Southern California when the Masters of Harmony were preparing for the 2002 International Contest in Portland, Oregon. Society Music Specialist Kirk Young was invited to our weekend retreat and introduced the concept of listening at a 95%. He challenged the guys on the risers to take individual responsibility for proper vocal production, for singing the vowels correctly and connecting the word sounds, in order that the director, Mark Hale, could concentrate on performance issues.

This is the challenge we have before us

in the West Towns Chorus. If we are to reach and stay at our goal of 85%, each of us, from the director, to the assistant directors, to the section leaders, to the music team, to the Board of Directors, to the guys who fill the risers on Monday nights, each of us must take responsibility for doing our part. We can't afford to have anyone just go along for the ride. Every man must contribute everything he has got.

So, over the next few months, there will be a series of articles challenging us to prepare for the songs at 85%, to rehearse with excellence and to master the fundamentals of great singing, breathing, articulating, performing, and entertaining.

This is not a unique challenge to us. There isn't any chorus in the Barbershop Harmony Society where these fundamentals are not taught and reinforced every week.

I look forward to the journey in our “Drive to 85.”



His wife's grave side service was just barely finished, when there was a massive clap of thunder, followed by a tremendous bolt of lightning, accompanied by even more thunder rumbling in the distance. The little old man looked at the pastor and calmly said, 'Well, she's there.'



## Rehearsal Notes—Jon Hoekema

Since we spent much of our time working through the songs for our Sandwich Performance, most of the comments for these notes will be general and can be applied to all our songs.

1. First of all, GREAT JOB ON RISER DISCIPLINE!

All I can say is “WOW” what a difference from the week before. Let’s keep it up.

2. Joe T mentioned quite a few times as we started singing, think about what singing at an 85% and make the changes that need to be made.

In the next few issues of the Pitch, I’ll have articles on what it takes to sing, think, take pitch and stand on the risers at 85%. Stay tuned.

3. Keep in mind vocal proper vocal production

Forward placement

Tall, open space in your mouth

Small mouth (trumpet shape)

If this is still a little bit of a foreign concept as

we strive for a unified ensemble sound, that’s okay. We’ll be working on it diligently over the next 5 years J starting next week.

4. In “Step in Time” make sure we sing “tiME” Don’t forget the M. We do not “Step in Ti”

5. Smooth lyrical phrasing connects the phrase together and is 85% singing. Without it, we wallow at 75%. That is one of the main differences in that 10%.

Connect the words. That doesn’t mean singing sloppy or singing with a mumbling sound. We have to have a continuous sound between the words and not choppy breaks between words.

As we improve on that, we’ll work on giving the phrases lyrical shape and then connecting lyrically shaped phrases together.

6. Leads – on the pick ups, we need more confidence to all come in on the entrances. We know them. Let’s show the audience (and the directors and the rest of the chorus) that we are the leads.



## Sandwich Opera House

Saturday evening the chorus traveled to Sandwich Illinois and performed at the historic Sandwich Opera House. Although the stage was big and a good time Town Sound helped out almost upstaged everyone with a plastic bacial thank you to Jackers down there and also ence with his special



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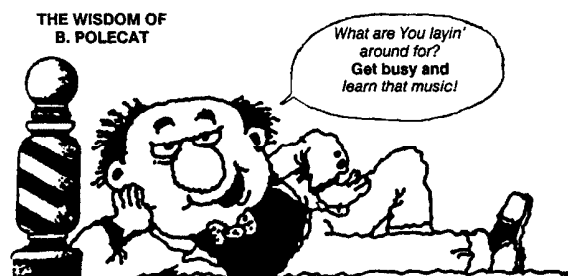
One more thing for rehearsal notes from last Monday:

As we prepared for a performance, some of us missed some of the entrances to songs, looking like deer in the headlights as Joe T started directing.

Some didn't know the starting pitch and didn't know the beginning words. That's around 50%, not 85%.

Take 15-30 minutes and go through the songs we will be singing, make sure you know the first words (*give below*) and the starting pitch.

1. WTC Opener (w/SP) - *We're gonna sing and smile in the West Towns barbershop style*
2. Almost Like Being In Love - *Maybe the sun gave me the power for I could swim Loch Lomond...*
3. They Wrote 'em in the Good Old Days - *Oh the greatest songs of all are the ones that I recall* (Lead pick-up!)
4. Feed the Birds - *Early each day to the steps of St. Paul's the little old bird woman comes*
5. Step in Time [Abbreviated Arrangement] (w/o SP) - *Up where the smoke is all billowed and curled, tween pavement and stars*
6. Hello, Mary Lou - *Passed me by one summer day, flashed those big brown eyes my way*
7. Till There Was You - *Finding your love is not just a game, It's noticing when things are not just the same*
8. Never Go Wrong With A Song - *You know the day, the day is bright though you can't see the sun* (bass pick-up!)
9. How Deep Is The Ocean - *How can I tell you what is in my heart, how can I measure each and every part*
10. Precious Lord - *Precious Lord, take my hand, lead me on, help me stand*
11. I'll Walk With God - *I'll Walk with God from this day on* (unison start)
12. I'm Gonna Live 'til I Die (w/SP) - *I'm gonna live till I die, I'm gonna laugh 'stead of cry*
13. Irish Blessing - *May the road rise to meet you, may the wind be always at your back*



## Birthday's

Happy Birthday to **Neil DeVore**, celebrating his birthday **February 14**.

Also, a belated happy birthday to the following:

Bob Wahl	Jan. 5
Bill Parks	Jan. 8
Bill Luther	Jan. 12
Al Munneke	Jan. 17
Jack Kuncel	Jan. 18
John Oberlin	Jan. 19
John Morrison	Jan. 30
Mike Sevcik	Feb. 2
John Kaindl	Feb. 3
Trenton Ferro	Feb. 8
Ken Franklin	Feb. 10
George Collar	Feb. 11



## Architecture Tour—Ed McDevitt

ARCHITECTURE TOUR THIS WEEK. As part of finalizing my Chicago Architecture Foundation "Historic Skyscrapers of the South Loop" training, I invite my friends to join me next Wednesday or Thursday from 1 PM to 3 PM on a free tour that I will lead. Let me know by calling me or texting me on my cell phone (630-651-6227) or emailing me ([mcdevitt.ed@gmail.com](mailto:mcdevitt.ed@gmail.com)). Come along and I promise that you will NOT be prepared for some of the building lobbies on the tour.

### Directions

Show up at about 12:45 PM at the Chicago Architecture Foundation and meet me in the lobby of the Santa Fe Building, 224 S Michigan, just S of Adams and just N of Jackson, next door to Symphony Center.

If you take the "L":

Green Line to Adams & Wabash, E to Michigan;

Blue Line to Dearborn & Jackson, E to Michigan;

Red Line to Jackson, E to Michigan.



Dress warmly in layers! We will be walking outside mostly, with some mercy stops in those great lobbies, but then back outdoors.

Schedule of Events

February 2010

- ◆ 15 Rehearsal
- ◆ 18 7:30 pm  
Board meeting



22 Rehearsal  
March 2010

- ◆ 1 Rehearsal
- ◆ 8 Rehearsal
- ◆ 13 IDAH—Bloomington, IL
- ◆ 13 Sat. call time 6:15 PM  
St. James Church, Glen Ellyn
- ◆ 15 Rehearsal
- ◆ 18 Board meeting
- ◆ 22 Rehearsal
- ◆ 29 Rehearsal

# February 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						

2010

- ◆ Apr. 16—18 Illinois Spring Convention
- ◆ Apr. 24—Cabaret
- ◆ June 19— Chicago Rush—Nat'l Anthem
- ◆ June 27 - July 4 - International (Philadelphia)
- ◆ July 8—gaming night—tentative
- ◆ Aug. 5 Cougar outing
- ◆ Aug. 18—gaming night—tentative
- ◆ Sep. 16—gaming night—tentative
- ◆ Sep. 24—26 Illinois Fall Convention
- ◆ Oct. 14—gaming night—tentative
- ◆ Oct. 18—Monday Full Chorus Performance—Monarch Landing
- ◆ Dec 10, 11 & 12 —Christmas show

# 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			

# April 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	

# 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 Board**

President:	Jack Fagan
Music VP:	Ed McDevitt
Program VP:	Joe Tomecek
Chapter Development VP:	Jay Bentz
Marketing VP:	Tony Tumea
Treasurer:	Jim Williams
Secretary:	Bob Nicodem
Members At-Large:	Mark Johnson
Immed. Past President	Darryl Nordentoft
Email: <a href="mailto:board@westtowns.org">board@westtowns.org</a>	

## Last Week's Visitors



**Larry Galuszka  
Dan Murphy**