

# River Ramblings

Editor - Jeffrey Grimmer

## *Another Great Performance*

### *The Riverblenders go to Orange City Iowa:*

In January of 2013, Janine Calsbeek of the Orange City Arts Council, contacted Bruce Gray about needing some entertainment for August 14th, 2013 in her cities weekly entertainment. In fact, her Board was specifically asking for Barbershop music. Ever on the hunt for performances, Bruce got back to Janine ASAP. Bruce met with chorus members. A music team meeting and Board meeting later, resulted in a confirmation to Janine and preparations our August 14th performance.



On August 14th, after loading the risers and refreshments to (water) and refreshments back (not water) at Christ The King Church. As a credit to all the organizing by Stan, we boarded the bus promptly at 2pm. The trip to Orange City by Lake Crystal Coaches was relaxing and very enjoyable. Once in Orange City we quickly got a bite to eat and unloaded our equipment in preparation for entertaining the folks.



Jacob got the chorus warmed-up while the sound crew put the final touches on our mics. Show-time was 7pm and we were ON-TIME!



Jacob got great sounds from the chorus, Arv did a superb job as our MC and Narrator. Both Magic and Riverbend Quartets did an excellent job musically and also gave the chorus a break from standing on the risers. Following our performance and re-loading all the equipment, we enjoyed our ride back to Mankato.

The results of our efforts, was a great response from the folks in Orange....and....a wonderful experience for the Riverblender Chorus.

Ron Meyer, President

## Orange City, Iowa Trip







More Orange City



Pictured above is our former director Derek Glenna with his new wife Emily. They were married on August 24, 2013.

## Moondogs Mania



On August 2, the group above, met to sing for the Moondogs and the Thunder Bay teams at Franklin Rodgers Baseball Park in Mankato. We had a great group and sang very well. Another standing ovation performance!!!

We were able to get photos of some of the activities that take place before the game and we would like to thank Steve Pettis's daughter for taking the group picture by the bus.

## Harmony University 2013 – A Year To Remember!

### By: Jacob Ritter

Going into Harmony University this year, I didn't quite know what to expect. While the best conductors in the society have impressed me, I didn't have a good understanding of the wealth of talent and intelligence that comprise the Barbershop Harmony Society. With the wide offering of classes to choose from, could the BHS really provide that much leadership and support?

The answer to that question was a resounding yes. During the entire event, we were surrounded by capable and caring teachers who knew the best way to communicate effectively with a wide variety of skill levels and personalities. Each of the five teachers that I worked with over the course of the week displayed a strong comprehension of their information and presented it in a way that students could relate to. This made for classes with strong learning environments, enabling the students to take risks and ask tough questions. This was a necessary aspect for my classes as a member of the director's college, for many of the students had little to no conducting education outside of Harmony U. Thanks to the positive atmosphere, many of those students were willing to direct several times at the front of the class and make strides on their techniques.

My own experience as a student at Harmony University was very positive and educational. In particular, I enjoyed my classes on coaching and conducting the most. In Music Coaching II, students had the opportunity to listen to different quartets perform and then practice giving them coaching in our focused area, the music category. Steve Delehanty, a long time judge in the music category who is also a master of barbershop theory and arrangements, led our group. I thoroughly enjoyed working with Steve because of his professional demeanor and his expertise. He was very good at letting you know things that you did well, yet was able to give great constructive criticism. Thanks to his class, I feel a lot better about my ability to coach quartets. In my Conducting III class, I had the opportunity to work with Don Campbell and other talented directors. The class represented a large pool of talent and included directors from Canada, New Zealand, and England. It was wonderful to be amongst them as the up-and-coming directors of the society. The class focused on our existing skill-set as conductors and how we could make our own gesture better. In my experience, I realized that I have significant work to do managing my floppy wrists and clearly indicating where the downbeat of the measure is. In addition, I realized that my facial expressions were not nearly as strong as they could be and worked to get a better handle on what works to communicate emotion effectively.

Other highlights of Harmony University included meeting other great conductors and singers, getting to officially “woodshed” for the first time, an unbelievable outpouring of good will by the members at the Bash on Thursday night, meeting one of my idols from the vocal group *The Nylons*, and enjoying the company of Doug Peterson and many other old friends, including Larry and Marty Monson, several friends from The Great Northern Union and other choruses I have known over the years. But, the best moments of the entire event, were the wonderful performances from the Youth Chorus, the Director's Chorus, Central Standard, and the one and only Ringmasters on Saturday night. What an amazing performance with an amazing crowd!

All things considered, I would highly recommend Harmony University to anyone who wanted to become a better singer, quartet member, or director. The Barbershop Harmony Society really flexed its muscles in this amazing event. Many of the attendees believed that this was possibly the best Harmony University in its many years of existence. Congratulations to the Society on a successful HU in 2013. See you next year in Tennessee!!



## August Churches



On August 11th, a day after the infamous Riverblenders Auction, the group above headed out to the Mapleton/Medo churches. We had another glorious day and the parishioners were really lively today. We received many standing ovations!!

We started out the day having wake up juice and rolls at Medo Church, thanks go out to Chuck Schubbe for lining that up.

It has been nice to have Jacob directing us at most of the churches this summer!  
Thanks to all of the guys that made these performances.



The Riverblenders sang in the Mankato area on August 25th. They met at Christ The King Lutheran Church at 7:15am for wake up juice and treats. After warm up they sang at Christ The King Lutheran Church then traveled to Belgrade Methodist Church, Bethlehem Lutheran Church, First Presbyterian Church, Resurrection Lutheran Church and finished up at Hosanna Lutheran Church at 11:00am.

We had a great group and sang to vary enthusiastic parishioners. Thanks go out to all that participated, the people that lined up the churches and to Joel Botten for leading the organization of church performances this year.



# Riverblenders Annual Auction - 2013





## More Auction Pictures



## Nice To Know

### Youth Chorus at the Fall Convention

Gentlemen:

The registration forms are on the [www.loldistrict.org](http://www.loldistrict.org) website for the young men you are sponsoring, to the Fall Convention. Go to the site and click on the Youth Zone, and go to the LOL Youth Festival Oct. 2013, La Crosse, Wi., click on that spot, and at the bottom of that page you will see the forms. Please note a \$20 registration fee to partially cover festival expenses. As a chapter, you will have to determine covering that fee for each student.

The Indianhead and St. Croix Valley chapters just sent this note to all the music educators in our area. I received four responses already. I expect more over this week.

Here is the note:

To: Music Educator

Re: Youth In Harmony events

Welcome back to the new school year. As you get started, I would appreciate an opportunity to visit your choirs to talk about our upcoming Youth In Harmony events. Our local festival is in Amery, January 18, 2014; go to our website at [www.youthinharmonyfestival.org](http://www.youthinharmonyfestival.org) for more details. We will also have a Young Men's Youth Chorus at the LO'L District Convention, Oct. 12, 2013 in LaCrosse, Wisconsin. We hope to have 100 on stage for the Saturday evening performance at the convention, for all attending barbershoppers. Go to [www.loldistrict.org](http://www.loldistrict.org) and click on the youth zone box for information

I need about 20 minutes to explain and to show our website, for them to see what has happened in the past, and what this is all about.

Your response would be appreciated. Then we can arrange the best day for you to have us.

Thanks in advance.

Jon Buss

LOL District Youth in Harmony Director

Phone: [715-410-7324](tel:715-410-7324)

Use it if you like it or use your version. They need to be contacted now before they get too far into the fall. Good luck. Jon Buss

**Our Director, Jacob Ritter, will be coming early to rehearsal (6:00 PM). The reason for this, his commitment to our new members and those of us that need additional training on our music.**

## Calendar

### September 3, 2013 - Tuesday

Loyola High School Band Room

Regular Practice - 7:00 PM\*

### September 10, 2013 - Tuesday

Board Meeting - 6:00 PM

Loyola High School Band Room

Regular Practice - 7:00 PM

### September 17, 2013 - Tuesday

Loyola High School Band Room

Regular Practice - 7:00 PM

### September 24, 2013 - Tuesday

Loyola High School Band Room

Regular Practice - 7:00 PM

### October 1, 2013 - Tuesday

Regular Practice - 7:00 PM

Coaching - Larry Monson

### \*October 13, 2013 - Sunday\*

Show - Gaylord

(Possible Church Performances)

### October 25- 26, 2013

LO'L District Contest

La Crosse, Wi

### December 1, 2013 - Sunday\*

Holiday Concerts - with Sweet Adelines

Mankato - 3PM - St. Peter - 7:30PM



## Harmony College - 2013

Assistant Director - Doug Peterson

First of all, thank you to all the Riverblenders for sending me to Director's College at Harmony University! It's something I long have wanted to do, and as I'm sure you all know, desperately what I needed. Even though I have waved my arms in front of you for many years, I have had no formal training. I was a high school choral director for 3 years, an assistant director for the Battle Creek Cereal City Chorus, but all without any training other than observation of my high school, college and other barbershop directors. I have had a moderately strong music education - piano lessons, high school band and choir, church choir, barbershop choruses - but again no formal directing instruction. I was in attendance at Harmony College back in 1978 or 79, but that was with a quartet that I sang with at that time, and not nearly as memorable as it was this year.

Therefore, this was a great opportunity for me to refine my skills. One major take away was that as an assistant director, I have a much larger job than I previously thought. I have to learn Jacob's musical interpretation so I can step in when needed and not steer the chorus in the wrong direction. If I just show up when called upon and 'do it my way', It would distract the chorus from doing what they know.

It was great to be able to spend a lot of time with Jacob and discuss plans for the chorus as well as directing techniques/methods. Even though we roomed together, we promised not to tattle on each other's little quirks and eccentricities, so don't ask.

I was surprised by the number of youth and women in attendance. Not only were women directors attending director college, but many Sweet Adelines and Harmony Inc-ers were also there learning about better singing and other aspects of 4 part a cappella singing, barbershop-style. Approximately 80 youth ages 10 - 25 were there, and all of them received a free registration to next years International Convention in Las Vegas. Jacob has already mentioned in rehearsal how that came about, so if you haven't heard, ask one of us. It's too long to explain in writing.

Each day started with a general assembly where a vocal warm-up was given by a different faculty member each day. It was interesting to learn how many different ways there are to warm-up, and they all reinforce good singing. That was followed by a different faculty member teaching a new song. Music and learning tracks were provided in advance, all had the opportunity to learn or at least familiarize themselves with the music. Finally, another faculty member taught a tag. Then off to classes.

Assembly started at 8:30 or so, and classes started at 10 and continued into the evening, with breaks for lunch and dinner. Classes were given for 'Joe Barbershopper', director's, and quartets, as well as a chorus. Tag singing occurred everywhere and all the time.

All quartets that were attending gave a performance on Saturday evening, along with a director's chorus, youth chorus, and the chorus attending Harmony U. Highlight was an appearance by the 2012 champs, Ringmasters, from Sweden. I hope you all can get a chance to see them in person. What a dynamic, energy filled, fun performance - not to mention fantastic singing!! It's a shame all that talent has to be wasted on youth!!

There are many other aspects to Harmony U that won't be mentioned for the sake of brevity. Last of all though, is the time spent with other barbershoppers, some of whom you may have met before, and most whom you've never met before. I found myself wishing I could spend more time with all of them. Barbershoppers are wonderful people and it's a fantastic hobby we get to partake in!! If you like what we do, there are great ways through Harmony U and the C.O.T.S. school to learn a lot more than what we can get once a week. If you are interested, I hope more of you can have the chance to go.

Finally, a last word of thanks to the chorus and board for sending both Jacob and myself. It shows a great commitment to good singing. Even though Jacob was attending on a scholarship from LOL, the fact that the board agreed to send an assistant as well, says a lot about the commitment this chorus has to providing good entertainment to our audiences.

BTW, I'm thinking it would be cool for the Riverblenders to have our own 'motto', something on the order of the Marines 'Semper Fi'. What do you think??

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## It's Great To Be a Barbershopper! – The Outpouring of Love by the BHS

### By: Jacob Ritter

At the end of each of the rehearsals we have on Tuesday nights with the Riverblenders, I take great pride in reciting the words "It's great to be a barbershopper!" after we sing through Keep the Whole World Singing. It is a tradition that many choruses have done for many years, but to me, it has a special meaning.

Thanks to my experiences with the Barbershop Harmony Society, I have experienced the depth of compassion and love that many of its members have not only for the preservation of the barbershop style of music, but also the appreciation of many forms of a cappella and the manner of friendship and camaraderie that comes with it.

When I was a freshman in college at Doane College in Crete, NE, I was lucky enough to be chosen to perform in Doane's premiere vocal group, the Doane Choir. This group was given the opportunity to represent Doane in several fashions, including a European Tour that was set for the summer following my freshman year, as it did every three years. Being a freshman, I would have another chance to go during my senior year, but I desperately wanted to attend this first year, as it would be my first opportunity to travel abroad and see some amazing countries. Unfortunately, due to financial reasons, it seemed I would not be able to attend.

At the time, I was a member of the Homestead Harmonizers, a barbershop chorus out of Beatrice, Nebraska. The chorus supported my collegiate quartet Deluge and while I did sing with the chorus for a short period of time, I didn't become as involved as I could have over the course of my time at Doane. That is why I was astonished to find out that one of the members of the chorus had anonymously donated half of the cost of my trip!! It was only thanks to this generous gift that I was able to go with the Doane Choir to Europe that year. That was my first real experience with the generosity of barbershoppers for the cause of music, but it would by no means be my last!

Fast-forward 12 years to the fall of 2012, when Ryan Killeen came to a rehearsal of the Riverblenders to speak on behalf of the Harmony Foundation. As he gave his pitch to us about the Foundation, I didn't have any idea how the chorus would respond. To my surprise, as many of you know, the Riverblenders went above and beyond expectation and donated more money per capita than nearly any other chorus in the society! I can't tell you how proud I was to be your director when I heard that news. Not necessarily because of your generosity, but because of your outpouring of love and support for a hobby that we all cherish so deeply. Although I had only been with the chorus for a few weeks, it was a crystallizing moment for me that I knew this was a group worth pouring effort into!

Finally, I come to Thursday night at Harmony University in August of 2013. On this night each year, the BHS hosts an event simply called "The Bash", which is used to raise money for the Harmony Foundation. The night was an enjoyable evening of food, funny and original performances from impromptu groups, and a large raffle that was to be concluded by the grand prize: two paid registrations to the 2014 International Convention in Las Vegas, Nevada. Eventually, it came time for the big drawing. A number was called, and a stately, older gentleman headed up to the podium to claim his prize. Once he reached the podium, he stopped and spoke softly to the MC of the event and headed back to his seat. To everyone's surprise, the gentleman had declined the prize and said he wanted it to go to a young person who might not get a chance to attend the event otherwise. Everyone in the audience was moved. In response to this generous offer, the MC began the task of organizing a drawing of young people's names so that a winner could be chosen. But before he could draw the name...

"I have decided that I would like to have another name drawn from the hat, and I will sponsor another young person's international registration." Another gentleman had found his way up to the podium, and announced his intentions! But it wouldn't stop there: "Would anyone else out there like to take up this challenge?"

I was sitting at the same table about 10 chairs down from the first volunteer: Rich Knight, the lead of the 1993 international champion quartet The Gas House Gang. I don't think I have ever seen a hand fly up so fast! I was so proud to see my childhood idol acting so selflessly. His enthusiastic response was followed by another, and another, and another. Sixteen names were drawn to receive free registration that night, only to be followed by more and more in the coming days, until by Saturday night, all 78 people 25 years old and younger at the event all received registrations to Las Vegas! Never in my life have I seen such an outpouring of support for young people to become involved. It is was the stuff dreams are made of.

So when I say that I am proud to be a barbershopper, it has meanings on a lot of levels. I am proud to be a member of a society that represents more than just the preservation of a musical style; it represents a quality of character and a spirit of giving. It is a spirit that reaches countless numbers of people in countless ways. It is a spirit that is a bright light in a world that is full of darkness and filled with shallow, uninspiring ways to bring short-lived fulfillment. It is a spirit that has commanded so many wonderful people across this world to make themselves better singers and, more importantly, better people.

Congratulations to all who call this great society their own. It truly is "GREAT TO BE A BARBERSHOPPER!"

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