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My City™ magazine

Just a Bunch of Guys Who Love to Sing “Flint Arrowhead Barbershop Chorus”

Cheryl Dennison ♦ May 1, 2014



Born in the quaint American establishments where hair was cut, barbershop quartet and chorus music is a genre dating back to the early 1900s. Today, it is enjoyed by folks all around the world. Bill Karas of Flushing was watching the Flint Arrowhead Barbershop Chorus perform one evening at the Courtland Center Mall when he got so caught up in the performance, he stood up and started harmonizing along with the group. Bill's impromptu performance was enjoyed by those sitting nearby who told him, "You should join that group." And he did! "It's been so much fun!" he exclaimed. "It's the most beautiful music in the world."

The Flint Arrowhead Barbershop Chorus is a member of the Barbershop Harmony Society. The Flint group, which is Chapter 27 in the Pioneer District, is celebrating its 75th anniversary this year. The 30 members meet to rehearse every Tuesday at the Rehearsal Hall at Courtland Center Mall. *My City Magazine* met up with four of the members: Doug Lynn, Vice President of Membership; John Noteware, President; Dave Lonsbury, Bass Section Leader and Bill Karas, who is in charge of PR and Marketing. And all four are very passionate about the group. John has been a member of the Society for 47 years. He developed a love of the genre at a very early age as his parents both sang barbershop music, his mother in the women's counterpart to barbershop chorus, the Sweet Adelines.

Barbershop music is a style of *a cappella* – read: unaccompanied – music that has a unique feature. The songs have four-part arrangements and each part with its own role. Generally, the lead sings the melody, the tenor harmonizes above the melody, the bass sings the lowest harmonizing notes and the baritone completes the chord, usually below the lead. According to Doug, a 15-year group member, the defining characteristic of barbershop music is the "ringing chord." This is a name for one specific and well-defined acoustical effect when listeners hear a fifth note, even though only four notes are sung. Also referred to as "expanded sound," "the fifth voice" and the "overtone," this effect gives barbershop music its popularity. "When it all comes together, it gives you goose bumps and brings tears to your eyes," Bill smiles, adding that it has been described as "hearing the angels sing."

The FABC Musical Director, David Longroy, is described by his fellow singers as "a very talented man." "David can sing all four parts," says John. "He has perfect pitch." A church choir director for many years, David has directed the group since 2006. "And barbershop music is a whole different genre with a whole different approach," he laughs. He was used to working with an accompanist, but always loved *a cappella* music and wanted to give it a shot. "I've loved it since I was a kid listening to Music Man," he remembers. The Barbershop Harmony Society sent Dave to three annual Harmony University training programs, intensive weeklong sessions where he learned a great deal. Dave says his sensitivity to tune and pitch has come in handy and the group is singing very well together, attracting large audiences.

A nonprofit organization, The FABC participates in many activities throughout the year in addition to performing an Annual Show in May. This year's performance will be held on May 10 at the Holy Family Church in Grand Blanc. The whole community is invited for an evening of harmony and a

delicious meal catered by the Temple Dining room. Proceeds from the Annual Show, which is their biggest fundraiser, are used for operations so the group can continue to perform. They also donate to Toys for Tots and Old Newsboys of Flint. The group performs four times per year at the Courtland Center Mall, and Downtown at the Back to the Bricks event in August. On the second Sunday in October, the group hosts an annual chicken dinner at the Masonic Temple. "The guys serve the dinners and bus the tables," John laughs. "We're singing waiters!" The group also provides a little holiday warmth for local shut-ins during the Christmas season, and makes each Valentine's Day really special, as well. Members will "sing to your sweetheart" – a singing Valentine! (How romantic is that?) Bearing roses and a box of candy, tuxedo-clad singers treat the recipient to two or three songs. In the summer, the FABC has an annual picnic in Frankenmuth to which friends, family and members of other barbershop chorus chapters are invited to join in song and fellowship.

"To sum it up, we're a bunch of guys who love to sing!" exclaims Doug, "And we thoroughly enjoy bringing a smile to someone's face while doing so." He invites men of all ages who love singing to stop by the Rehearsal Hall at Courtland Center. "We're waiting for you to join us on Tuesday nights," Doug says. "Just walk in at 7:00 p.m. and be welcomed by the Chorus who will make it happen for you. It's that easy!"

End.



Come Sing Barbershop Music!
"We Are Looking For Men Who
Love To Sing"

Flint Arrowhead Barbershop Chorus
Stop by any Tuesday evening at 7:00 p.m.
For information on membership (or performance)

please call our toll free number 844.370.6470
Check us out at: FlintArrowhead.org
or Facebook.com/ArrowheadChorus