

# MASTERS CLASS

July 1, 2010

BHS Convention  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Presented by:



AMBASSADORS  
OF

HARMONY®

St. Charles, Missouri

2009 International Chorus Champion

## Agenda

- Welcome – Denny Wofford
- Important Decisions the Chapter Made - Jim Henry, Music Director
- Warm Up – Jonny Moroni, David Wright
- Repertoire Rehearsal - Jim Henry
- Sectional Demonstration – Brandon Guyton
- Rehearsal with Visual Involvement – Scott Wilson
- Questions and Answers - Jim Henry, David Wright
- Concluding Song

### Attachments:

1. About AOH
2. Important Decisions Made Over the Years
3. Membership and Audition
4. "Singlish" Primer
5. AOH Shows and Trips

For accompanying information about our leadership, history, auditions, techniques and shows, go to [www.aoh.org/2010MastersClass.pdf](http://www.aoh.org/2010MastersClass.pdf).



## **International Chorus Champions**

St. Charles, MO

Website: [www.AOH.org](http://www.AOH.org)

### Musical Leadership

Music Director – Jim Henry

Associate Music Director – David Wright

Assistant Directors – Brandon Guyton, Jonny Moroni

### Administrative Leadership

Chapter President – Bill McLaurine

Vice-President, Music & performance – David Carlisle

Vice President, Chapter Development – Shawn King

Vice President, Communications, Marketing, PR - Joel Currier

Secretary – David Cade

Treasurer – Tim Stahlman

Past President – Denny Wofford

Board Members at Large – Stephen Haynes, Barry Moore, Mike Rubin, Matt Suellentrop

Chorus Manager – Jim Inghram

Show Chairman – Denny Wofford

### Organization History:

The St. Charles Chapter was formed in 1963 by 26 men at St. Charles, Missouri, and affiliated with the Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barber Shop Quartet Singing in America, Inc. (Barbershop Harmony Society) in April of 1964. Current membership in the chapter is over 200 men, ranging in age from 10 to 85. Members of The Ambassadors of Harmony come from throughout the Metropolitan St. Louis area as well as from outside the area. There are currently approximately 160 in the performing chorus.

### Vision and Mission Statement:

“The Ambassadors of Harmony will be recognized as the highest quality and most entertaining choral organization in the St. Louis metropolitan area and the Barbershop Harmony Society. Our mission is to educate our membership in order to continually improve in vocal quality, performance, and personal fulfillment in a cappella singing. When we perform, our goal is to give a gift that will change the lives of the people in our audience.”

### About The Ambassadors of Harmony

The mission, stated above, has created an environment in which the chorus continues to strive for musical and performing excellence. The Ambassadors of Harmony chorus has an extensive a cappella repertoire, including contemporary, Broadway, gospel, folk, and light jazz music, and we maintain as well a continuing commitment to preserving and singing in the barbershop harmony style. Our music appeals to audiences of all ages.

From 1993 through 2003, in 2006, 2007, and 2008. The Ambassadors of Harmony Chorus won First Place in the chorus competition for the 5-state Central States District of the Barbershop Harmony Society.

In the same period it acquired four 4th Place and five 3rd Place Bronze Medals, two 2<sup>nd</sup> Place Silver Medals in International chorus competition, as well as the 2004 and 2009 Gold Medals. We are now preparing to commence our off-years from competition to work on recordings and performances.

The Ambassadors of Harmony provide the finest a cappella entertainment to St. Louis area patrons, performing to sellout audiences at their annual Christmas and Spring shows, and at many other events such as:

Municipal Opera performances including "Oklahoma", "White Christmas", "South Pacific", and have supplied quartets for "Music Man" and other productions.

Crescendo Concert Series

Columbia Chordbusters Christmas Show

Land of Lincoln Chorus Show

St. Louis Mayor's Prayer Breakfast and St. Charles Mayor's Luncheon

Sunday afternoon KFUE-FM radio show "From the Garden Live"

Christmas carols at one of the large St. Louis area shopping malls and on South Main Street in St. Charles during the Christmas season.

Half Time Show at St. Louis Rams game

The Ambassadors of Harmony have performed in Ireland, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, and England, and are planning a trip to the east coast in 2011.

Quartets from The Ambassadors of Harmony deliver Singing Valentines each year throughout the St. Louis area.

Visit us any Thursday night. Our rehearsal begins at 7:00 PM at Memorial Hall in Blanchette Park on Randolph Street, St. Charles, MO.



## International Chorus Champions

### Important Decisions Made By The St. Charles Chapter Over the Years

1. David Wright, as director, made the chapter get off our chairs and stand up during rehearsals.
2. We quit singing “The Old Songs” at beginning of rehearsals because it perpetuated “gang singing”.
3. We instituted auditions for the chapter.
4. We started bringing in coaches to teach us various aspects of the craft.
5. We started an annual “Retreat”. In the beginning it was held at a remote location, requiring everyone to commit to attending for the entire event.
6. Kevin Keller directed warm-ups, emphasizing and using his special techniques to reinforce the need for proper pitch.
7. We instituted the “team” concept of directing, using assistant directors for warm-ups, auditions, etc.
8. We emphasize round vowels, as taught to us by Brandon Guyton and others.
9. Chorus does not take the pitch prior to starting a song.
10. We often do a body and pitch “lift” at the beginning of each song phrase.
11. During rehearsals, we always have someone behind the director, listening to pitch and notes or watching the visual attitude to make immediate corrections.
12. We were able to achieve an attitude that we actually believed we could win the gold medal.
13. After winning our first Gold Medal, we set our sights on perfecting our vocal craft, with an eye toward creating greater delight for our audiences and scoring higher point totals at International.

14. We have sought received a lot of wonderful coaching from some of the best coaches we know, including Greg Clancy, Brandon Guyton, and Mike Slamka.



## Membership and Audition

Welcome to the Ambassadors of Harmony Audition section.

When you visit our rehearsal, you'll be welcomed by men from every walk of life. We invite you to sing with us when you visit. A Guest book with sheet music to our arrangements will be handed to you when you arrive. Please return it as you leave at the end of a rehearsal. We begin our rehearsals with warm up exercises, and we always sing a "tag" or two before we begin the rehearsal,

Tag: A coda; the ending of a song, often repeating the final words and designed to make a complete and satisfying arrangement. We learn tags "by ear".

Our audition process has evolved over the years in order to enable us to grow to become International Champions, and is quite challenging. You may audition for membership by

- Coming to and participating in three consecutive rehearsals, and
- Completing a live audition with our Music Committee by singing your part to the song "I'd Love to Live in Loveland" in a quartet. You don't have to memorize the song, but you must be able to sing all the words and notes correctly, with good intonation, and a tone and quality that will blend well with the chorus.

I'd Love to Live in Loveland - Sheet Music

Learning Files by Tim Waurick are available for this song with your Part on the Left Channel

You may also get the sheet music at a rehearsal, along with a learning CD for your voice part. Take a routing sheet with you to the audition that you can get from the Chapter Secretary.

As you practice your part to this song, it will be helpful for you to attempt to match the tone quality you hear in the learning track, and to practice singing exactly together with the other parts.

Our craft has a strong visual component, so being able to visually portray the "story" and emotion of the songs visually is always very important. Because of this there is also some initial visual review and instruction which you'll receive.

Our standard guideline is that you have 3 months and 3 tries to pass the initial qualification. But don't rush it - it's best to practice on your own and then to practice with a quartet before rehearsal or during our break as many times as you need to in order to be ready for the actual audition.

If a prospective member hasn't been able to pass the initial audition after 3 tries, the Music Committee may suggest other possibilities for further learning of our craft.

Once you've passed the initial audition and visual review,

- the Directors will initial your routing sheet and you can pay your dues to become a member of The Ambassadors of Harmony. Give the routing sheet to the Secretary.
- You'll be given a second routing sheet that you'll need to have initialed by several members of our board and music committee covering everything from your uniform to your name badge.
- Once that's completed, you'll officially be a member of the Ambassadors of Harmony. Then you'll have an opportunity to audition to become a member of the Performing Chorus, and will have access to the learning tracks and sheet music for our complete repertoire.

Members of the Ambassadors of Harmony Performing Chorus are committed to perfecting their skills by practicing on their own, and to attending all rehearsals and performances.

We also are committed to respecting our Directors and each other when we perform either at rehearsal or public performance. [Click here](#) to see what we mean.

- Performing Chorus Audition

To audition to become a member of the Performing Chorus, you must first have passed the initial, live quartet audition. Then you'll need to record yourself singing your part with the chorus to the two current contest songs, using your own or a borrowed personal recording device. It's a good idea then to listen to it and check yourself to make sure you did your best job. If you think you can improve on it, try it again at the next rehearsal. It needs to be lyric and note perfect, and of a quality that blends well with the chorus. When you have a recording that you want reviewed, give it to your section leader.

Tenor - Tim Waurick

Lead - Rich Knight, Eric Dalbey

Baritone - Mark Keever, David Carlisle, Jonny Moroni

Bass – Jim Henry, Hal Maples

You'll also need to learn some choreography since we don't always stand still when we sing! Our Visual Performance team will help you learn the movements that go with the song, along with helping you allow your face and body to show the joy you're going to feel when you sing the great music we have the privilege of performing. As part of the

performing chorus qualification, your visual performance will be observed during rehearsal.

Our standard guideline is that you have 3 months and 3 tries to pass the performing chorus qualification.

When your section leader approves your audition recording, and you've been passed by the Visual Performance Team, you are a member of the performing chorus. Then you have a lot of repertoire to learn!! We have in our repertoire anywhere from 12 - 15 songs at any given time, plus another 15-20 songs for Christmas. As we add new ones, some old ones may be dropped off the list. Learning files (or CD's) and sheet music for these songs are available. Some of these songs also have planned choreography or stage movements for you to learn.

You'll be on your honor to learn the remaining chorus repertoire prior to your first performance, and on your honor to take yourself out of a performance if you don't know all the songs we're singing in it. We have found that this works very well. However as performances draw near, the members of the Music Team will visually monitor rehearsals in case there are those who obviously don't know the words to the songs they're singing because this truly "sticks out" visually in a performance. In the few cases where this occurs they may ask the person(s) involved to "sit out" an upcoming performance if they are unable to learn the song(s) by then. They will also listen "around the risers" for voices not singing the right notes, and offer feedback and or take action to ask a member to sit out a performance, if appropriate. This information is offered here to let you know that we are dedicated to offering the highest quality, and most professionally presented music in our performances. In most cases, asking members to "sit out" isn't necessary, because our members know to take themselves out of a performance if they know they aren't fully prepared.

Members also know that their regular attendance at rehearsals and performances is essential to their being "ready" to perform as a member of the Ambassadors of Harmony. Our attendance requirements are that a member be present for 65% of rehearsals throughout their entirety. The requirement is 75% for members who are in the front row. Many of us believe this to be a minimum, and think that 90-100% is what Champions are about.

Members who are inactive for six months or more are required to pass the Performing Chorus Audition (recording and visual) upon their return before they can again perform with the Ambassadors of Harmony.

Our current repertoire is listed below:

We also have a Christmas repertoire of more than twenty songs. The Ambassadors of Harmony, being a world class chorus, will present you with both a challenge, and an opportunity to give a most beautiful gift to those who hear us sing. We welcome your desire to join us and we look forward to singing with you!



## International Chorus Champions

### Riser Etiquette

In agreeing to and practicing what follows, we, as Ambassadors of Harmony, commit to treating our rehearsals as if they were performances, so that we practice what we most want to execute on stage.

**WAIT:** If you arrive late, or step down from the risers and are returning, simply stand on the side and wait until invited by the Director to take your place.

**No Crossing:** Under no circumstances should we ever cross in front of the Director while getting on the risers. If crossing to the far side of the risers, walk behind him instead, or circle behind the risers.

**Have Fun** – by enjoying the great stuff the Director has to offer. Save your fun with your neighbor until after the rehearsal. (Exception – see Ten Second Rule)

**Ten Second Rule:** If the Director has not addressed the chorus within ten seconds, then you can talk quietly with your riser neighbor until the director resumes. Keep your eye on the director so you know when he has resumed, and then *immediately* give him your attention.

**Listen, Don't Fix:** Often when there's a pause, chorus members try to correct their own mistakes or those of their neighbors. Although this may seem important, **RESIST**. You will miss important comments from the Director that affect everyone in the chorus. Bear in mind that the Director fixes all the problems eventually.

**Listen, Don't Sing:** When the Director is demonstrating how to sing a particular passage, do not sing with him. He's usually doing that to demonstrate micro-differences in pitch, nuances of vocal quality, or in some cases, notes or words. If you sing with him, you keep yourself and everyone else from hearing him, and instead, you become the example. That keeps us all from learning from the expert.

When the Director is speaking to the chorus, don't pass the time singing or reviewing your part. It makes it difficult for all of us to pay him proper attention and to learn, because we're instead paying at least some attention to you.

When the Director is working with another section or sections, don't sneak-sing your part with them. You may think no one will notice, but it's guaranteed the Director will notice, and be distracted by it.

**Listen, Don't Hum or Sing:** When the pitch pipe is sounding, don't hum the pitch. It keeps you and everyone else from hearing the pitch accurately.

# Singlish – A Tool for Choral Unity

Technique as Taught by Jim Henry

Notation – Hal Maples

“Singlish” is a term coined by one of our long-time members, Gil Nussbaum. It refers to the way we sing word sounds. When you first learn Singlish, it may seem unnatural, but from an audience member’s perspective, it produces word sounds which are much more like the spoken word than those heard in traditional choral or operatic singing, and the words are understood more clearly, because every member of the group has put his own dialect aside and is singing them the same way. Singlish is what led to many people attending our Gold-Medal performance in Louisville commenting about our remarkable unit sound, each section sounding like one voice. When a choral group masters Singlish, it can also produce a very full, rounded sound that audiences find both exciting and which can help convey the emotion of the story being told. What you’ll read here has been generally accepted by our Directors and coaches, and is what they teach, along with great vocal techniques such as

- Starting with an erect stance, chest lifted, shoulders dropped, feet shoulder width apart.
- Getting full, low breaths, expanding the lower abdomen and the rib cage, without lifting the shoulders, and keeping the chest lifted.
- Forming in front the vowel we are about to sing on the breath.
- Breathing with soft palate lifted, with the back of the lower jaw dropped, creating a feeling of “breathing through the jaw hinges”.
- Singing by maintaining the lifted palate, and jaw-dropped space in back, while placing the tone forward, as if at the teeth, in order to produce a round, yet bright sound.
- Singing with frontal focus in the mouth shape, almost creating a bell with the lips, in order to avoid spread vowel sounds.
- Keeping lots of space in back, while keeping the word sounds small in front, in order to make the line of the song flow while keeping the emotional value of consonants.

As we’ve practiced and made these things more automatic, the quality of our singing has improved.

## Vowels

- In AOH craft, Singlish vowels are sung with a lot of vertical space at the back of the jaw, with the sound forward-focused at the teeth, with lips tucked at the corners and lifted off the front teeth, so that the vowel sound doesn’t either “spread”, thinning out the sound, or fall back in the throat and sound dark; and with the top of the tongue placed against the lower gum line in front. Vowels are sung as “purely” as they can possibly be sung. We also attempt to put a lot of the “o” vowel into all our vowel sounds, which gives the chorus a very full, rounded tonal quality. If you’re new and don’t know what this may sound like, ask your section leader or assistant for a demo.
  - Vowel sounds include
  - a – diphthong - notation – ā-ee

- ah – notation – ah
- a – short “a” sound – notation – ă
- aw – as in “all” – notation - aw
- e – notation – ee
- e – short “e” sound – notation – eh
- i – diphthong - notation - ah-ee
- i – short i sound – notation – ih
- – diphthong – notation oh-oo
- oo – as in “cool” – notation - oo
- oo – as in “book” – notation - {oo}
- u – short u as in “love” – notation – uh
- “Schwa” notation – oe – defined as “an unstressed mid-central vowel” – the sound is something between “uh” and “{oo}”. It can also be a compromise between “ih” and “eh”. Examples of the schwa sound are found in French words like “neuf”, and are used in Singlish just as they are in English to make the phrasing sound more natural. For example, when we speak the word “alone” we don’t say “**ah**lone”, which automatically puts emphasis on the first syllable; we say “oe-**lone**” with the first syllable as a schwa rather than an “ah”. When we say “the band”, we don’t say “**thuh** band”; we say “thoe **band**”. It turns out that when we sing these words and sustain the sounds with a tone of definite duration, our natural tendency may be to do the opposite. So we pay particular attention to using the “schwa” appropriately. – notation – oe.

### Consonants

- Consonants which occur after a vowel are thought of and sung as connected with the next syllable, e.g., “bleak and unbearable” is sung “blee – kă – nuh – nbeh – ruh – ble”.
- Singable consonants – sound through which the tone is sustained - l, m, n, - are sung with greater emphasis and louder volume than a preceding or trailing vowel so that they are clearly heard, and do convey the emotional content of any song. Singing to “**M**ary” communicates more emotion than singing to “Mary”. Singing “I **L**ove you” conveys much more meaning than singing “I love you”.
- Fricatives – defined as “a consonant characterized by frictional passage of the expired breath through a narrowing at some point in the vocal tract”. These are the “hard” consonants like c, k, p, q, t. Fricatives can be used to emphasize a particular thought, although sometimes it may be important not to overstress them. Other hard consonants like d and t are often soften with just a hint of “s” to bring more emotion into a phrase. The Director usually determines how we’ll interpret fricatives in any particular instance.

### Diphthongs

- a - eh-ee
- i - ah-ee
- – o-oo
- the word “you” or the same diphthong in “view” – ee-oo
- ou or ow - ah-oo – never ă-oo

- er – diphthong of schwa and “r” pronounced with tongue down, bringing the tip of the tongue up at the very end of the syllable to produce the “r” & prevent “chewing on the r sound” - notation - oe-r
- Diphthongs which precede a following syllable are thought of and sung as connected with the trailing consonant and following syllable, e.g., “knight with his banners” is sung “kna<sup>h</sup> – eet<sup>wih</sup> – th<sup>-hih</sup> – zb<sup>ă</sup> – ner<sup>z</sup>”.

That was also an illustration of what written Singlish looks like. It’s written that way in our notes as a reminder for how each phrase of the song is to be sung. As with all of our published notes and teaching aids, our Directors have the final word on how any phrase in a song is to be sung. They have permission to change anything “on the fly” for either artistic or musical reasons, and it’s our job to follow their lead. So avoid taking any of this information as absolute hard and fast rules, because there can always be exceptions, if the Directors see a need for them.

These notation forms for Singlish will be used in song notes published for members on the AOH web site.



## **International Chorus Champions**

### Show Information

Along with the many contracted performances that The Ambassadors of Harmony do each year, we also produce two major shows.

Our Spring Show, entitled *Voices in Harmony*, is always the last Saturday in June, scheduled as 2:00 PM matinee, and an 8:00 PM performance. This performance started out as a vehicle for our chorus and quartets to showcase their International competition sets, but they have developed into very successful shows. The *Voices in Harmony* format is a concert style, with the chorus opening the show with usually six or seven songs. This is followed by a quartet set, then intermission. The second half is opened by our second quartet, then the chorus comes back for their final set. The show usually runs approximately 2 ½ hours.

Our second production is our Christmas Show, which we call *Sounds of the Season*. Multiple performances are scheduled annually on the second weekend of December. There are Friday, Saturday shows at 8:00 PM, a Sunday Show at 7:00 PM and a Saturday and Sunday matinee at 2:00 PM. Unlike our concert style show in June, this show is scripted from start to finish. The first half represents the lighter side of Christmas and features the chorus with skits and vignettes popping in and out. That is followed by a quartet set. After a 20 minute intermission the second half is opened with a set from a second quartet. The chorus then returns to perform a series of sacred Christmas songs around a themed script and acting. Lighting, acting, script, costuming and special-effects lighting are an essential part of our Christmas Shows.

Our show production team consists of our Director, Associate Director and two Assistant Directors, show Producer and a show Chairman. Unlike a number of chapters, we do not change this team with each show. The Music leadership, show Producer and show Chairman have been working in partnership for several consecutive years which has resulted in the high quality of shows we now produce. We have been very fortunate to have within our Chapter the talent to plan, coordinate and stage these shows and even write the scripts on most occasions.

### Chapter Funding and How We Use the Funds

Our major sources of income for the chapter are the two shows described above. Our total net revenues of both shows combined have increased into high five figures. Singing Valentines and performance fees also provide funding for our activities.

The chapter's major expenses include the following:

1. We pay registration packages for every singing member attending our district and International contests.
2. We also provide partial travel compensation to each contest for every singing member. For the international contest, we use a point system based on attendance and participation in chapter events. For district contests, we provide a fixed amount determined by the Board.

3. For our overseas trips we have tried to provide most, if not all, the cost of airfare for each singing member. For our trip to England in 2006 we paid each singing member's airfare and 3 nights lodging.