

YOUTH FESTIVAL OF HARMONY – 2008

By Hugh Devine and Carolyn Schmidt

Sixty-six students throughout New Jersey and New York attended this year's eighth Annual Festival of Harmony (FOH) on April 12 in Rahway, NJ (30 boys and 36 girls). The students enjoyed a day of FUN and FELLOWSHIP while singing barbershop harmony!

Music Educators and Students Learned From the Pros

Students were taught singing techniques and barbershop basics by two top-level quartets – **REVEILLE** and **a.k.a.** Each group – boys and girls – spent the day learning three songs that they performed in the evening concert. Music educators accompanied their students and observed the day's teaching sessions. During the day, the Festival Staff conducted a clinic for the educators to hear their suggestions and reactions to the program and how it might benefit their schools' music programs. In addition, evaluation surveys that were provided by the Barbershop Harmony Society were completed by students and music educators with their opinions of the FOH.

Student Evaluations

- Overall, students were extremely pleased with the FOH. Ninety-four percent of them thought it was an “outstanding” or “very good” experience to work with the teaching quartets.
- The top five attributes that the students liked “best” about the FOH were as follows:
 - Great, awesome teachers
 - The music, arrangements, barbershop style
 - Meeting new people, singing with other students, being with their friends
 - Hearing adult barbershop quartets sing
 - Improving their singing and harmonizing skills
- Most students thought that the FOH either met or exceeded their expectations; a few examples of their comments...
 - “I didn't realize that it was going to be so much fun!”
 - “I have learned so many new techniques for singing and how to present myself.”
 - “It was way more fun!”
 - “I was not expecting to work with individual sections--awesome!”
 - “I got more than I expected! Thank you for the experience.”
- Most students would attend another FOH in the future. Many students thanked the Festival Staff for running the FOH; a few examples of what they said...
 - “Well done!”
 - “Good job.”

- “Thank you to everybody who dedicated their time and thanks to the quartet.”
- “It was amazing.”
- “Thank you to everyone who helped! If it were not for you guys, this would not happen.”

Music Educators Evaluations

- Overall, music educators were highly complimentary of the Festival.
 - On a seven point scale where 7.0 means “excellent,” educators gave the FOH a rating of 6.7 for their overall experience with it.
 - They rated the teaching quartets 6.9.
 - They rated the benefits to their choral music program 6.6.
- All of the music educators said they would recommend the FOH to other music educators.
- All of the music educators said they thought their students enjoyed the FOH experience; some of the comments were...
 - “We’ve seen lots of smiles today.”
 - “Awesome.”
 - “This is our third year and THEY are the ones insisting that we come back.”
 - “They enjoy working with the teaching quartets and meeting other young singers.”
 - “Students received high levels of vocal and musical training. All aspects of instruction were well planned, thought provoking and useful.”
- All of the music educators felt that attending the FOH benefits their choral music program; some of the comments were...
 - “Yes, new teaching aspects that they didn’t have before.”
 - “Absolutely.”
 - “Definitely.”
 - “Yes, it is great for recruitment.”
 - “Yes. I think that any activity that involves my students singing more often and creates alternative performance opportunities greatly benefits a small program such as ours.”
- Some of the benefits of the FOH to music educators’ choral music programs were as follows:
 - “Demonstrates technique. Helps raise the bar to encourage us to achieve excellence.”
 - “Validates musicianship in the areas of vocal production, musicality and performance.”
 - “It helps with recruitment and students bring the skills they learn and share them with other students.”
 - “Encourages them to be their best or even better.”
 - “Ear-training, independence of singing, confidence.”

- Music educators said that they learned the following ideas and tools at the FOH:
 - “Exercise/practice methods.”
 - “Vowel techniques; breathing; vowel sounds.”
 - “Warm-up techniques; music selection.”
 - “Stylistic nuances of barbershop and healthy singing skills.”
 - “Listening skills.”
 - “Sight-reading skills.”

Nine Organizations Attended the Festival of Harmony

The student organizations that were represented are the following:

- James Caldwell High School, West Caldwell, New Jersey
- Celebration Children’s Choir, Roselle, New Jersey
- Cinnaminson High School, Cinnaminson, New Jersey
- Crossroads North Middle School, South Brunswick, New Jersey
- Mendham High School, Mendham, New Jersey
- New Egypt Middle School, New Egypt, New Jersey
- Phillipsburg High School, Phillipsburg, New Jersey
- Rahway High School, Rahway, New Jersey
- St. Francis Prep, Queens, New York

REVEILLE and a.k.a. Served as Instructors for the Day

The boys were taught by **REVEILLE**, 2002 District Quartet Champions of the Mid-Atlantic District, International Qualifiers, and members of the Big Apple Chorus. **Fern Sicilia, John Ward, Joe Hunter, and Mark Paul** are the quartet members. The girls were taught by **a.k.a.**, a Region 15 SAI new quartet made up of four seasoned members--**Stephanie Britson, Gayle Doughtie, Harriette Walters, and Janell Paviolitis**. Both teaching quartets did a marvelous job with the students and incorporated expressive moves and creative staging to enhance the singing. Audience members, at the evening performance, enjoyed enthusiastic performances by both Festival choruses, student a cappella groups, and the very talented educator quartets.

The Festival was Managed Jointly by the Barbershop Harmony Society (BHS) and Sweet Adelines International (SAI)

The Festival was managed jointly by members of the Barbershop Harmony Society and Region 15, SAI. This year’s Festival Committee included **Joe Weiss, Doug Brown, Carl Lund and Rich Taylor** (Rahway Jerseyaires), **Don Pennell** (Rahway High School), **Hugh Devine, Alan Hirst and Ray Walker** (Princeton Garden Statesmen), **Allan Dean** (Chorus of the Atlantic), **Marc Perez** (Freehold Battleground Chorus), **Carolyn Schmidt** (Hickory Tree Chorus), **Patty Danner** (Mendham High School and Hickory Tree Chorus), **Alan Gramkow** (Bogota High School), **Mark Paul** (Big Apple Chorus), **Jim**

Rohn (Philadelphia Sounds of Liberty), and **Harriette Walters** (Greater Nassau Chorus). Two new members of the Committee for 2007-2008 were **Mike D'Andrea** (adjunct music educator at James Caldwell High School and the Montclair Dapper Dans), and **Jeff Winik** (Easton Brothers in Harmony and Princeton Garden Statesmen).

Major funding was provided by **Rahway Savings Institution** and through a grant from the **Union County Division of Cultural and Heritage Affairs**.

Additional funding was provided by the following:

- Rahway Jerseyaires
- Princeton Garden Statesmen
- Mid-Atlantic District
- Freehold Battleground Chorus
- Red Bank Chorus of the Atlantic
- Sweet Adelines International Region 15
- Chord Lords Quartet
- Barbershop Harmony Society/Harmony Foundation

Planning Has Begun for the 2009 Festival of Harmony

You can participate in the success of the 2009 FOH by doing the following:

- Learn more about the FOH – visit the web site at www.festivalofharmony.org
- Let students and teachers know about the Festival of Harmony

Please send your tax deductible contribution (payable to *Festival of Harmony*) to Carl Lund, FOH Treasurer, 42 Janet Court, Milltown, NJ 08850-1212. We will return an acknowledgement to you for your tax files.

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