



Our Chorus Photo

Here we are just before going on stage for the **LO'L District Contest** in Rochester, Minnesota in late October. This is a chorus ready to sing our hearts out on *If I Can Dream* and to conjure up something enchanting in *That Old Black Magic*.

MIDWEST VOCAL EXPRESS
ANNUAL CHRISTMAS SHOW
**CHRISTMAS
TRADITIONS**

FEATURING VINTAGE MIX DECEMBER 8TH 2018 MIDNIGHT CROON
2:30 & 7:30

THE SABER CENTER
FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS
8222 SOUTH 51ST STREET,
FRANKLIN, WI

FOR TICKETS: GO TO WWW.MVE.ORG

Oak Creek Christmas Tree Lighting Performance on Wednesday, December 5 – Jim Franklin

For the second year in a row, Oak Creek has asked us to sing at the tree lighting event at the Drexel Towne Center. We will perform our Christmas songs this coming Wednesday. We meet first at the Oak Creek Civic Center at **5:30pm**.



Dress Attire: Dress Weather Appropriate, feel free to accessorize with festive wear (hats, gloves, etc.)!

Songs to know: Our Christmas Songs

Times are as follows: 5:30pm - Meet at Oak Creek Civic Center (8040 S 6th St, Oak Creek, WI 53154). We will warm-up a bit, but please warm-up also in your car since we won't have much time.

After event: Pizza at **Bryan Ziegler's** favorite pizza place: **Mod Pizza** <https://modpizza.com/locations/oak-creek/> at Drexel Towne Center (where we sing) at 160 W Town Square Way, Suite 100, Oak Creek, WI 53154

Monday, December 10, 2018 VA Performance – Jim Franklin

One of my favorite performances each year is singing at the **VA Hospital**. The photo below is from last year in the warm up room for our annual caroling outing at the **VA Hospital** after our weekend Christmas shows. After the performance, many went last year across the street for our afterglow at the **4th Base** on National Ave. to continue our Christmas cheer, which may well occur again.



Where: Milwaukee VA Medical Center (Zablocki) at 5000 W National Ave, Milwaukee, WI 53295. Take the A or C Bank elevators to the **9th floor**. Go to the **Activity Room** on Independence Hall (9C) and we will warm up and leave your coats in there.

When: 6:00 PM
arrive, we sing at 6:30. If you are running late, warm up in your car and get focused before arriving.



What: Spirited performances of Christmas songs from the show.

Wear: Business casual with a caroling twist, something like we did for the opening of our Christmas Show, or what you wore to work, if you came directly from work.

Interview with returning MVE member Curt Nash

MVEer asks: Great to have you back singing **Lead** with us again, Curt. What changes have you seen in the chorus since you were last a member?

Curt replies: When I was last a member, I was in both the Fish and Penguins sets, the County Fair, and the Pinocchio sets. It was great.

Then I had two things that significantly interrupted my singing with the MVE. I had a chronic respiratory issue that tends to run in my family and a divorce that interrupted all sorts of things.

But I am so happy to be back with the MVE. We seem to have a more focused atmosphere with a feeling of “forward motion,” toward our goals. I feel that **Bryan Ziegler** is talking directly to me in our rehearsal practice. His direction is a topnotch coaching session, helping me to be a better singer. It is really extraordinary.

MVEer asks: I think you are singing with other groups as well as the MVE. What are they?

Curt replies: I am in four choruses right now.

I sing with the **Master Singers of Milwaukee** (<https://www.mastersingersofmilwaukee.org/>), which performs a wide variety of great music of all eras, genres and composers past and present, typically accompanied by piano.

I also sing in the **Heart of Harmony Chorus** in West Allis (<http://www.hohchorus.org/>).

I sing in the choir of **Fox Point Lutheran Church**, in Fox Point, Wisconsin (<http://foxpointchurch.org/worship.iml?mdl=music-ministry.mdl>). We will be



presenting a Christmas cantata by Mark Hayes called *Magnificat*, a single-movement piece for choir and chamber orchestra. It will be presented at both services on December 16.

But I am so very pleased to sing with the **Mighty MVE** once again!

MVEer asks: Wow, so glad you are back with us, Curt. Were you a singer earlier on as well?

Curt replies: Yes. I was in the **Männechor Choir** at UW-LaCrosse (<https://www.uwlax.edu/music/ensembles/choirs/#tm-m%C3%A4nnerchor>). We competed with other choirs, similar to Barbershop Chorus competitions, but we were accompanied. I majored in Business at UW-LaCrosse.

Currently, I sell real estate and I also work in schools helping students with physical limitations.

MVEer says: It is great you are singing with us again. Do you have any closing thoughts?

Curt says: It is great to be back. It takes a great deal of effort to learn all the newer songs, but it is really worth it. So **happy to be MVE** once again.



November in Puerto Vallarta with Derek and Sarah!

Our intrepid Chapter President **Derek Balke** and the beautiful **Sarah Nagel (now Balke)** were married on Friday, Nov. 2 in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico on the ocean. Barbershoppers from the



MVE and **Melodeers** from Northbrook as well as other family and friends all came to wish them great joy and happiness. Those who came loved dancing outside, touring downtown Puerto Vallarta, and some even went wind surfing, zip lining, repelling down waterfalls, hiking, and other adventures. But one of the most popular was getting



cocktails served to them at the swim up bar in the resort, called **The Barceló**. Eating was also a very popular experience. We wish love and happiness to Sarah and Derek. ♥

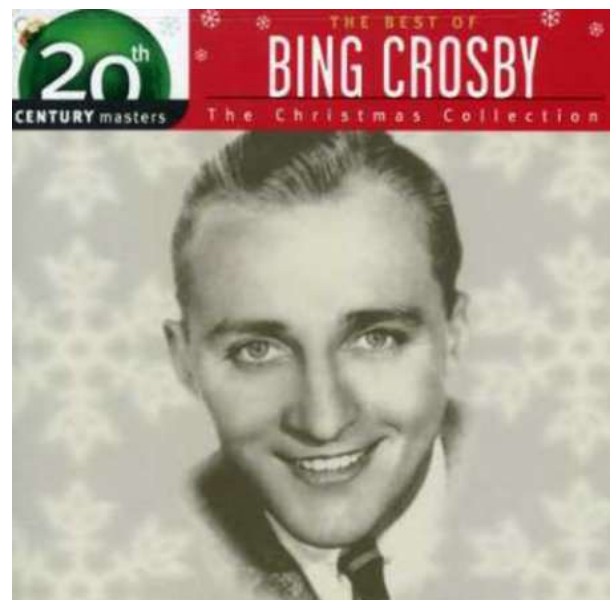
December Calendar

Monday, December 3	Rehearsal at 7pm at St. Luke's
Wednesday, December 5	Drexel Towne Center, Oak Creek 5:30pm Tree Lighting Performance
Friday, December 7	Final practice on stage at Franklin HS, Saber Center at 7PM
Saturday, December 8	Two Christmas Shows , watch for call times
Monday, December 10	VA Hospital in Milwaukee – Arrive at 6PM
Monday, December 17	NO REHEARSAL, but a Board Meeting and Pteam Meeting instead
Monday, December 24	NO REHEARSAL
Monday, December 31	NO REHEARSAL

I'll Be Home for Christmas: A WWII Song

Written by the lyricist Kim Gannon and composer Walter Kent and first recorded in 1943 by **Bing Crosby**, who scored a top ten hit with this song. The song was to honor soldiers overseas who longed to be home at Christmas time, but "*I'll Be Home for Christmas*" has since gone on to become a Christmas standard.

Notice that the song is being sung from the point of view of a soldier stationed overseas during World War II, writing a letter to his family. In the message, he tells the family he will be coming home and to prepare the holiday for him, and requests snow, mistletoe, and presents on the tree. The song ends on a slightly melancholy note, with the soldier saying, "I'll be home for Christmas, if only in my dreams."



Hear Bing Crosby at: (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dL71eMc1blw>)

What is it like to sing baritone? – Fred Kanel, North Georgia Barbershop Singers, reprinted from the Huffington Post, Jan. 23, 2014

The short answer is that baritone is the hardest but most interesting part and singing it in a group of any size is great. Singing it in a quartet is fantastic!

The barbershop parts

The melody is sung by the **lead**; he's the center of the audience's attention when a quartet is singing. The **tenor** is above the lead, often singing the kind of harmony that people improvise in casual group singing. The **bass** sings the low notes, often dramatically low ones at the end of phrases. The **baritone** sings between the lead and the bass, singing notes that people aren't normally aware of but that are essential. This makes the baritone part sung alone sound strange because it doesn't match either the melody or the normal harmonies that people are used to hearing.

What I thought singing baritone would be like

When I was around barbershoppers at their conventions and tried to do casual group singing, it was evident that baritone was the part my vocal range was best suited for. But I hated it and thought it was a terrible part to have to sing. It wasn't melodic; it jumped around from place to place, often with funny intervals between successive notes; it had lots of accidentals (*i.e.*, sharps, flats, or naturals marked in the music). It seemed to me that the part was made up of the "garbage notes" that *somebody* had to sing and so were given to the baritone. (I later learned that barbershoppers actually joke that baritones have to sing the notes nobody else wants!)

What singing baritone is actually like

When I finally joined a barbershop chorus and started really learning my part instead of trying to sight-read it on the fly, my outlook changed. Once all those accidentals became second nature I realized that they were what gave the real flavor to the song and made it interesting - like the seasoning in the stew.

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Barbershop music frequently uses a special kind of chord, called a **Seventh chord**, which has a distinctive sound. This chord is very similar to most chords in "normal" music (called tonic chords) except that tonics and sevenths differ by exactly one note. And that note is often sung by the baritone, so his voice is the one that *makes* it a seventh - without him it's just a tonic.¹

Once I learned my part to the chorus' repertoire, I really took pleasure in singing a part that not everybody can sing but that is so vital to the barbershop sound.

What singing baritone in a quartet is like

Now I sing baritone with two different quartets. In a chorus, your errors of commission or omission will probably not be noticed; in a quartet there's no hiding place. Not only do you have to know your part completely but you have to be able to blend it in perfect synchrony with the other three voices. (Details can await a separate question.) My quartet practices about seven hours a week to continue to improve in these areas.

Although doing this right adds to the challenge of quartet singing, that extra effort is more than outweighed by our sheer joy at hearing the music we create and seeing its effect on our audiences. Usually that's happiness and delight but on more than one occasion we have watched people cry at particularly moving passages in our songs. The baritone in the quartet has the pleasure of giving the music the nuances of its special sound and the awareness that he is *the* guy who's doing that.

The joy of singing barbershop

At barbershop conventions before I started singing, I would watch four guys get together in a restaurant or a hotel lobby and open their mouths and create this amazing music out of nothing but their four voices. I couldn't stop grinning from ear to ear and no one else listening could either. Now that I sing in barbershop quartets I actually *am* one of those four guys who light up people's lives that way. It's an amazing experience and I can't recommend it highly enough.

You don't have to read music or understand music theory to sing barbershop. Barbershoppers are really welcoming of newcomers, and they have CD's of your part being sung that you can learn from (which is the method I prefer.) If you've ever wanted to sing barbershop music - perhaps in a group so you don't stick out while you're learning - go to <http://barbershop.org> and find a chapter in your area.

ⁱ Tom Serb, Professional guitarist, founder and director of Midwest Music Academy says about seventh chords, "Chord symbols are a shorthand way of communicating the chord formula - and chord formulas are the notes measured against the major scale of the chord root. When you see "maj7" in a chord, it means the seventh is taken from the major scale, and you'll use the formula 1-3-5-7. A Cmaj7 chord is the notes C-E-G-B. When you just see "7", the chord is a "**dominant 7th**" chord . Dominant 7ths have the formula 1-3-5-b7, so C7 is C-E-G-Bb."

Editor's Note: The Dominant 7th are the chords that are so distinctive in barbershop arrangements.