



## Barbershop Training and Practice Online

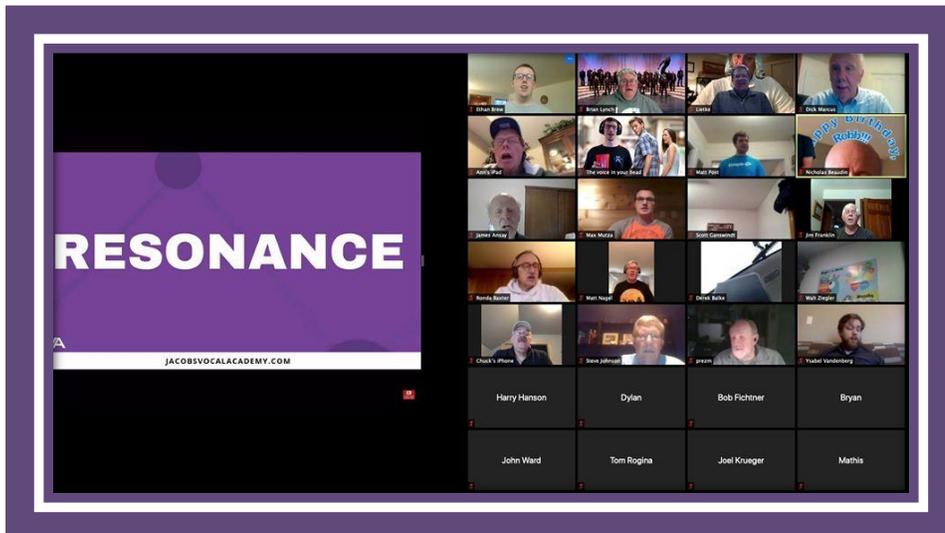
Each Monday, the MVE practice meets on Zoom. We mute each person except **Brian Ziegler**, who leads us in practice of our songs. But we've expanded this into great barbershop training. Recently, **Mike Lietke** led us in training on the meaning and historical shifts of emphasis over his 32 years as barbershopper from *Presentation* that had stressed uniformity and precision to our current

**Performance Category** where we want to tell our story and communicate our feelings and message more fully. The Performance Category more fully aligns with our motto of

***Storytelling through Song.***



**Mike Lietke** had us watch videos of performances of the same song by different performers to see which really got the message across. Some asked questions about the acrobatic moves during a performance, as we enjoyed from **Westminster**. Actually, the **Midwest Vocal Express** was way in front of the curve on this as **Bret Kelso** (first row on left in 2015 in Pittsburgh with **Central States** and **Sound of Illinois**) in our chorus was tossed high in the air during our "Get Me to the Church On Time," performance wearing a tuxedo!



## Musical Parodies

The word "parody" derives from the Latin *parodia*, which is a burlesque poem or song. Most of us might think of "**Weird Al**" **Yankovic's** ***Eat It*** as a great parody of **Michael Jackson's** song ***Beat It***. But many of the contest songs we sing have elements of parody in them.

When the words are reworked to fit a Fish, Penguin, or Gnome Set, we are often using a group of songs together to tell our story, using some new words.



**Patrick McAlexander** follows in this great tradition in barbershop of arranging songs intended to tell one thing originally and freshening it up in a new arrangement to tell a brand-new story.

One arrangement and lyrics he did was for the **New Fangled Four** called **The Wells Fargo Wagon**. Here in this 2018 performance, watch that arrangement:

<https://youtu.be/5Gnh5ld3EK4>

When you listen to our MVE version of **Pmack's** arrangement, you will quickly see how our version is designed "especially" for us by **Mike Lietke** and **Bryan Ziegler**, see "*Origin of Lyrics*," on pages 5-6.

## Interview with Max Mutza

**MVEer asks:** Max, we are very glad you have been singing with us since back when we were all in the same room and now when we practice on Zoom. I think you knew several MVE guys from your days at MSOE that you sang with there. Who are they and how did they get you to our chorus?

**Max says:** I was introduced to MVE by **Matt Post**, who I first met being part of *Mainstreet Song and Dance Troupe* in High School. Although we were never part of the group during the same period, **Matt** was still involved when I joined. At **MSOE**, **Matt** was heavily involved with the student-led music programs. Again, we didn't cross



paths because of the age difference, but we were part of the same groups. I did however sing with **Ethan Brew** during my time there. Matt and I crossed paths again when I got an engineering internship with **Milwaukee Tool**, where he also works.

In a sense, I have been following his footsteps all these years without really knowing it. **Matt** invited me to an MVE rehearsal two summers ago and I loved it! Unfortunately, I wasn't in a place where I could commit at the time but am excited to have the opportunity to sing with this group on a more regular basis!

**MVEer asks:** Have you an amusing story about your time with **Dylan Keegan, Ethan Brew, Matt Post**, and others at MSOE? Spill!

**Max says:** I only had the chance to sing with **Ethan Brew** at MSOE given my age difference with Dylan and Matt, but we had a blast! He was the director of the Men's Choir my freshman year. I can't say there were any particularly amusing stories, but I had a good time putting together some Beach Boy songs and Under the Boardwalk. **Ethan** was always a good asset to have around because he too is a mechanical engineer, so I was able to ask him questions about my studies as well.

**MVEer asks:** Please tell us a bit about your overall musical background, Max. What other musical groups have you been in?

**Max says:** Music has been a large part of my life for many years; however, I really dove into it during high school. There I was involved in multiple choirs, bands (playing mostly percussion), and musicals (e.g., *Singin' in the Rain*, *Hello Dolly*, etc.). During that time, I was also involved in *Mainstreet Song and Dance Troupe*, where I first met **Matt Post**.

At MSOE I have been involved in both men's and combined choruses. I have also been the lead in a quartet with a few others from MSOE: **Eric Pasbrig, Josh Svehla, and Gabe Olaciregui**. I can assure you I have been trying to get them to come to some MVE rehearsals. We are a more casual quartet and have mostly performed for school functions but have also sang at a few community fundraisers as well.



Ah, isn't that **Tim Beutel** of *After Hours*?

**MVEer asks:** Of the songs we are working on, which is your absolute favorite? Also, what part are you singing?

**Max says:** I sing lead but have also dabbled in tenor and baritone from time to time. I don't know if I can narrow it down to a single song. For the more upbeat songs, I probably enjoy The Sadder But Wiser Girl the most. As for the slower songs, I really like Open Arms. The arrangement captures the beauty and emotion very well. I need to work on breathing to tackle some of the long lead parts towards the end though 😊. Within the greater barbershop community, my favorite arrangements are probably Better Than I as performed by **Crossroads** and When I See an Elephant Fly as performed by **Vocal Spectrum**.

**MVEer asks:** This is a strange time of isolation. Are you able to work now and what do you do? How is social distancing working for you at work?

**Max says:** I am currently finishing up my mechanical engineering degree through MSOE. Online classes have been a little different, but I have been able to adjust pretty well. I am set to graduate at the end of May, but the actual ceremony has been postponed to September. After graduation I will be working full-time at Milwaukee Tool as a mechanical engineer in new product development. But with everything going on, my start date was pushed back to August 31<sup>st</sup> so I am still trying to figure out my plans for this summer.

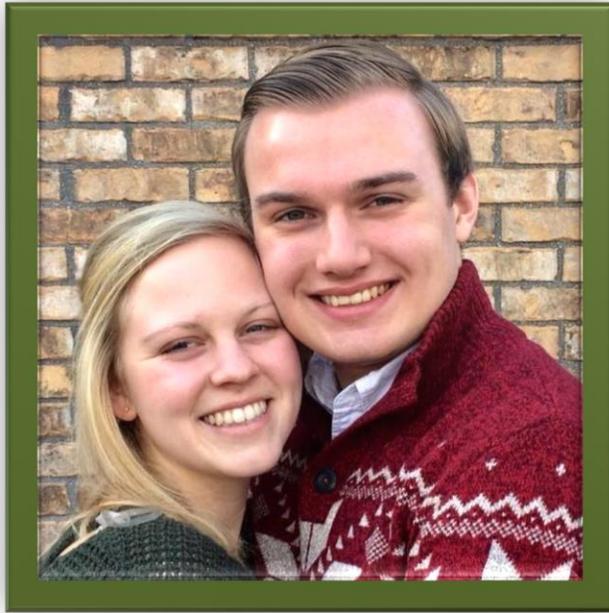


**MVEer asks:** Tell us about your family, Max. Are you married? Are you from somewhere in Wisconsin originally?

**Max says:** I am originally from Waukesha, WI. I am the youngest of three, with an older brother and sister. My extended family is rather large as my mom is the youngest of nine and my dad is the oldest of four.

In February, I got engaged to my high school sweetheart and girlfriend of five years, **Maddy Ogren**. We are planning to get married in July of 2021. After getting married, we plan to settle down somewhere in Waukesha where I will work as an engineer and she will work as an elementary school teacher.





**MVEer asks:** We are also interested in your hobbies outside of singing? What are they?

**Max says:** I love spending time with family and friends! I enjoy spending time outdoors hiking, kayaking, and canoeing. Many such experiences developed from my time in Boy Scouts, as I am an Eagle Scout.

In a more professional setting, I am a member of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) and have enjoyed being the president of MSOE's Student

Government this past year. I have many interests, but music is definitely towards the top of that list. I have loved singing with MVE and hope to do so for years to come!

**MVEer says:** Max, we are very happy you are singing with the **Mighty MVE**. Thanks for doing this interview.



## **Origins of Lyrics – Two Questions for Mike Lietke**

**MVEer asks:** Who wrote the lyrics for the *Wells Fargo Wagon* for **The Newfangled Four**?

**Mike Lietke answers:** **Pmack** said if his memory is correct, he wrote everything they sang. Forgive him if there is a line or two for which it is not true.

**MVEer asks:** Then who wrote the *new lyrics* for our version?

**Mike says:** I took a first crack and MVE'ing the piece. **Bryan Ziegler** helped rework some of the changes and we worked together for what we got... For instance, the *Barbershop/Don't Cut Hair* is all his. My rhyme for a different idea was clunky due to the stress syllables falling on unstressed beats. That is how we have always worked through these things at MVE.

- The verse (MM1-23) is a 3/4 rewrite of Patrick's original lyric while retaining the "*Holy crap it's coming.... It's like Christmas!!!!*" Vibe.
- The *Cheesehead Set* was mine, and Bryan had the same question of "What is a Cheesehead Set?" until I explained the vision of somebody popping up in the chorus wearing a Hat, Tie, Can Cozies, and all other things Cheesehead at that point.
- The word "SET" mentioned above was needed to keep the bathtub joke from International Champ **Bluegrass Student Union's** version of the song - where the original Lyric in the music is:
  - In March I got a grey mackinaw  
And Once I got some grapefruit from Tampa  
Montgom'ry Ward sent me a bathtub and a crosscut saw
  - Not certain if it was **BGSU** personnel that changed it or the arranger of their version, **Walter Latzsko**
- MM100-108 **Bryan** and I discussed a lot. I knew we wanted a passing self-referencing bit bringing up that the MVE staged one of the most iconic and beloved contest sets ever in our medalist **Fish Set**. At the same time, it could not be TOO over the top and pandering. This hits it just right.
  - There are two quarter rests immediately after to all our guy to do a timed, knowing "*take*" to the audience. One of the things I have known through the ages is that you never want to let an audience gloss over something they are *supposed to see and react to*. Help them out.
  - I suggest practicing that *take* during those rests.
- Then comes the Hair bit, which is almost all **Bryan** as mentioned above.

There is a bunch planned for this song, including a real wagon traversing the stage. What will it contain?

**Wait and see!**

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