



The MVEer Monthly September 2020

September Calendar

Mon. August 31 – Zoom Rehearsal @7pm - **Plans for Christmas & Cleveland**

Mon. September 7 LABOR DAY – **no rehearsal**

Mon. September 14 - Zoom Rehearsal @7pm

Mon. September 21 - Zoom Rehearsal @7pm

Mon. September 28- Zoom Rehearsal @7pm



Tues. September 29 Zoom **Board Meeting** @8pm – other members welcome,
just ask Jim Franklin for the link

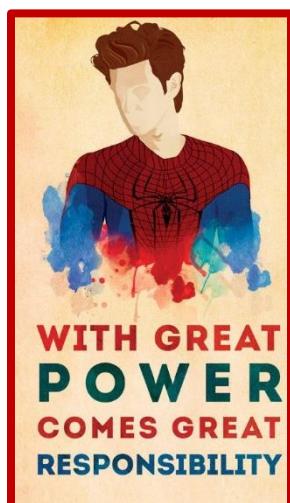
How to be a Great Bass by

Dan Wessler – Brief Notes from
July 27 Zoom Rehearsal

Each of the four members of **After Hours** took our sections into breakout rooms. **Dan Wessler**, the quartet's bass is a music educator and has taught classes on this very topic at Harmony University. We had 29 in our bass breakout room.

He began saying that basses need to take on the motto of Peter Parker of Spiderman, "**With Great Power**

Comes Responsibility." Often the voice of the bass sung well has power in the sound of a chorus or quartet. There are four tenants for us to be a Great Bass.



1. Constant and Concrete Foundation of the Sound

Dan noted two basses that shine in giving a concrete and constant foundation to the sound as **Chris Hallam** (Vocal Spectrum). He played song by Vocal Spectrum and we could hear the importance of what the bass was doing.

2. Consistency Throughout Your Range

As a bass, don't get dark on the top. Change as little as possible. In doing scales up and down, just use more air as you go up. Or bubbling, practice your resonance. Be consistent, open, beautiful. **Rick Staab** (Blue Grass Student Union) was

his great example of never varying his placement throughout his range, whether on lyrics or even do-do-do sounds that we give to support the top three voices.

3. Be Melodic

If we are mechanical, the group will sound mechanical as well. But if we sing melodically, the whole sound musical, compelling, and colorful. He had two heroes to point out for melodic singing. Even with just a few notes, **Jim Henry** (Gas House Gang) demonstrates the power of being melodic. The second hero of melodic singing was **Martin Jangö** (Lemon Squeezy with *Pass Me the Jazz* https://youtu.be/es_TYo7K3yo). Dan noted the colorful colors and different flavors, more consonants without “chewing” to keep the wall of sound going.

Dan encourages Basses to experiment, try out different ways to show melodic feelings, and see what really works. Some won’t work, that is okay. But some will work. Find ways to be melodic.



4. Be on Top of the Pitch and be Bouncy

Choruses and quartets often “tune to the bass,” so if you are flat, you’ll bring the rest down with you. I try not to use the word “pitch” as it gets groups nervous. Rather, I prefer to say, “bouncy,” as it tends to remove lazy singing and the proper amount of air. Other times, I ask groups to do bubbling as this tends to impact air and a bouncy feeling.

To be bouncy, move your head and shoulders. Move like a cello with long movements. Try singing 16 counts of a note, gradually intend to move up $\frac{1}{2}$ step while singing it. This shows that you don’t have to drift down but can move up to be on top of the pitch or “be bouncy.”

Breakout members asked: **How can I expand my range?** Dan said we need to have natural good singing in your God-given range, but we can expand it a bit up and down. One exercise for singers is to sing in falsetto and bring your falsetto down lower and lower. As low as you can take it. Over time, you will bring that lower than at first. This helps both your upper range and your lower range.

The basses wanted more, but we were called back to the Zoom group meeting. All said thank you to Dan, who called himself, “the second-best bass in **After Hours**.” Thanks, Dan.
■





B/3W Tour Aug 23-25, 2013 – Our History - Submitted by Randy Will

The bus was loaded and ready right at midnight, engine humming in the grade school parking lot. The Midwest Vocal Express Men's A Cappella Chorus members trooped on board the comfy motor coach, pillows, ear buds, and laptops at the ready, for the 12-hour excursion to Shawnee Mission High School in Overland Park, Kansas.

Thus began a collaborative undertaking involving three championship-level choruses – the “**Best of Three Worlds**” (B/3W) A Cappella Road Tour. From that midnight rendezvous on Friday, August 23 through the following Sunday afternoon, August 25, the mighty MVE covered 1100 miles through five states, performing three shows in three cities over the span of 48 hours – thereby logging a piece of barbershop history.

It all started with Chorus President **Mike Lietke's** vision to bring these three groups together to accomplish several goals: Performance excellence, sharing administrative best practices, and fellowship through staying in each other's houses. His concept for the project was proposed more than a year in advance, while considering ways to commemorate the Chorus' 25th Anniversary year.

Additionally, the **Skyline** quartet - composed of two members each from the MVE and Central Standard chorus in Kansas City, MO – had already established creative connections, exchanging coaching and administrative expertise. The MVE also has similar ties with the **Sound of Illinois** chorus in Bloomington, IL, through BHS International Top 10 quartet **After Hours** (bari Brian Ziegler is an MVE member) – as well as building relationships while enjoying SOI's memorable Afterglow at BHS International in Portland.

Final agreement and confirmation was struck this past February 2013, with tour committees established for each chorus. To say the logistics were challenging would be an understatement: establishing per member costs; arranging transportation; setting rehearsal facilities and schedules; arranging meals & lodging; promotional efforts; voice assessment and riser placement; stage management at each venue – let alone learning three new pieces of music for the full chorus performances – all were accomplished between that February phone conference and August 23.

All told, no major issues arose – all activities started within 10 minutes of the established itinerary for the weekend. (Yes – really.) All 100+ chorus members were extremely flexible as schedules were adjusted, and really “rolled with the punches” – particularly at the Illinois State University Arts Center stage, which had no curtain (but an incredibly enthusiastic audience)!

The level of cooperation and fraternal attitude between the three groups, their admin. teams and their directors – **Rob Mance**, **Terry Ludwig**, and **Josh Umhoefer** – is a tremendous testament to the true mission and purpose of our Society.

A few memorable highlights:

- At our very first rehearsal, **Rob Mance**, Music Director of Central Standard (currently working toward his PhD. in Choral Conducting) had every single man sing “Row Your Boat” by voice part and placed each accordingly on the risers to produce the best possible sound for the big chorus – an impressive accomplishment, completed in less than an hour.

So....needless to say, we had his number. As Rob stepped before the full chorus in Greendale for our final rehearsal of “Stars & Stripes Forever,” on his downbeat, all 127 men sang “RRRYB” in unison. It took about three seconds to sink in – but upon realization he'd been “punk'd,” Rob promptly distributed high-fives all around. (And...despite that little prank, Rob nonetheless fulfilled his agreement to conduct the same process the following night at MVE's regular rehearsal!)



- The Show in Bloomington Stood out for many reasons – primarily the wildly enthusiastic audience, as previously mentioned. Since there was no curtain, all 120+ men filed on stage while the MC intoned his introduction. Not only did the audience applaud during the entire walk-on, they also rewarded us with an explosive, spontaneous, spine- tingling standing ovation – at the intermission!
- At the Marriott Bloomington afterglow, many tags were rung, songs sung, brotherhood reinforced, and – for the MVE anyway – a tradition upheld. After past competitions, our esteemed and beloved former music director, **Russ Foris**, would intentionally seek out a wedding party to crash, and the chorus would serenade the happy couple with “Story of the Rose.” A worthy contingent of MVEer's continued that observance in Bloomington – at the insistence of the Father of the Bride, no less.

MVE Music Director **Josh Umhoefer** summed up the weekend: “Directing the B/3W Chorus was an amazing experience. To have that many men paying close attention to my directing was a thrill I'll remember always. Each day I would communicate a new goal to provide another layer for the performance, and the chorus exceeded my expectations....what fun, and what an awesome sound!” ■

Farewell to TGI Fridays in Greenfield, WI

The post-rehearsal watering hole now is **The Brass Bell**. But we have for a number of years gone to **T.G.I. Fridays** at 4637 S 76th Street next to **Best Buys**. But this is one of 386 closures nationwide for the restaurant chain, which is 20% of their restaurants. There are still 3 locations in Wisconsin of TGIF, in Appleton, Madison, and Brookfield.



Our current location is **The Brass Tap** at 7808 W Layton Ave, Greenfield, WI 53220



We have also gone to **Panther Pub & Eatery** in Greenfield, 5651 Broad St, Greendale, WI 53129, where their outside seating has been greatly improved.



For a time, we went to **Ray & Dot's Tap** 6351 W Grange Ave, Greendale, WI 53129

