

Don't just sing in the shower - join a choir and share your passion



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Sing Out

If the term 'male choir' conjures up visions of a group of stuffy old men singing hymns, you've got it all wrong. These guys are groovy.

Men of Many Parts

They should be on *Stars in Their Eyes*, but these guys are having way too much fun for that!

When Warwick Day walked into his first City of Sails Barbershop Chorus rehearsal, the choir sang "You're as Welcome as the Flowers in May" and he was hooked.

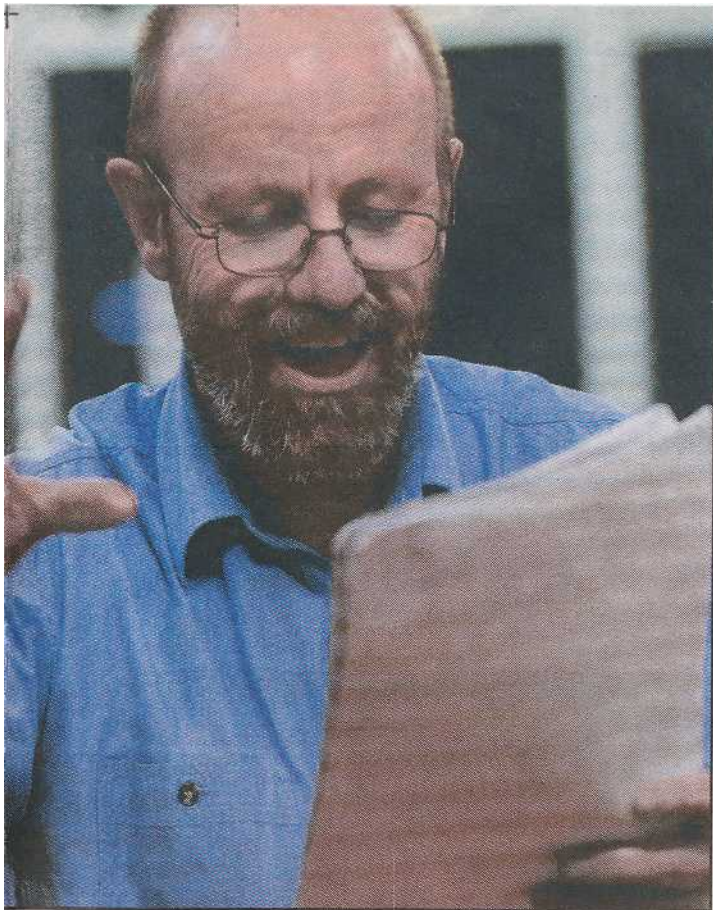
The 60 year old logistics manager knew he would be back next week and now he's a fully fledged member and travelling to Wellington to take part in the National Chorus and Quartet Competition.

Warwick's story is typical of many of the 40 strong men's choir. Trevor Marinovich (58) was stopped at traffic lights one evening in 2006, and noticed a banner on a pedestrian bridge which said something about men who love to sing in harmony. He was intrigued enough to follow it up, and thus became exposed to the world of barbershop music.

Ross McMillan joined the chorus in 1996. As a child he'd listened to his father and uncles singing Mills Brothers songs 'a cappella' (unaccompanied) and had always loved hearing unaccompanied singing. "I'm just sorry that I waited another 35 years before I did something about it," he says.

Ben Trollip, the 25 year old musical director of the chorus sang in a school barbershop group and joined City of Sails in his last year of school. "Reason? I just love singing. I love barbershop harmony." The relative youngster in this group believes a cappella singing provides a unique experience to both the singer and the audience. "And barbershop harmony provides a good access to this type of music - it is easy to pick





up (even for non-musicians) but offers never-ending opportunities for improvement. The choice of songs can be as varied as you like - most music can be arranged to suit a barbershop quartet. I've even heard a quartet sing Mozart's Eine Klein Nachtmusik! The fellowship is also fantastic, and as musical director I get a buzz out of the music that the chorus creates - there really is a good vibe. I'll be singing until I die."

Hopefully the chorus will get a few more years out of him yet, since his contribution to the choir is hugely valued. He spends a lot of his spare time expanding his musical directing knowledge, including spending time in the US each year to keep up with the latest techniques.

All in all, the group has a huge range of experience, as you might expect of a chorus with a 30 year history. Barbershop music is a unique style of a cappella four-part harmony and when all four parts are in perfect balance, a joyous "ringing" or overtone sound is produced.

Surprisingly, it's not difficult to sing barbershop. It just requires a lot of practice. Trevor Marinovich learns his part by singing in his car. "I'm sure I get lots of strange looks at traffic lights," he says, "but I don't care, because I'm enjoying myself. I look forward to our Monday night practices because that's a world away from what I'm doing during the rest of the week.

Others find similar satisfaction from being part of the chorus. As Ross McMillan recalls: "I was never a terribly social person in that I didn't have a wide circle of friends, and I never thought belonging to the chorus might change that. I figured I would go along, practice singing, and then go home. It never occurred to me I would make so many new friends. The camaraderie I experienced



backstage just before my first ever competition performance is something I will never forget."

And barbershop is like that. There has to be great teamwork to produce that blended sound, with no one voice standing out. "You must blend seamlessly with the other members singing your part, and you must also be fully aware of the other parts being sung around you," Trevor explains.

Chorus president Richard Hedley, an engineering manager, also enjoys the common sense of purpose, the fun and congeniality. The 56 year old believes it's good for "a bunch a blokes to do things together". He had no musical training but says it's not hard to get started. And now, nine years on, he feels the chorus provides him with a sense of continuity in that it's always there, regardless of the other challenges he might be facing in his life.

"I'll continue to sing for as long as it remains fun," he says. "If it wasn't, why would I give up every Monday evening to get together with other guys and practice for two and a half hours?"

Commitment to the choir, he says, is summed up by the words a colleague has emblazoned on his music folder: "If you are too busy to sing, you are too busy!"

The City of Sails Barbershop Chorus rehearses on Mondays from 7.30pm at the Balmoral Bowling Club. For more info email pres@cityofsailschorus.com or go to www.cityofsailschorus.com

