



The

# SERENADER

E-Newsletter



Editor: Fred Green poolvacman@gmail.com ■ April 2024 ■ An Occasional Publication As the Need Arises

## FREE YOUR VOICE

by John Newell, Lead, Realtime quartet

If air is a singer's fuel, then the throat is the fuel injector. Fuel needs to pass through unimpeded and steadily.

A clogged injector restricts the flow of fuel and thus reduces the efficiency and output of the entire engine. The clogging in your vocal fuel injector is not so much built-up gunk, but your own muscle actions.

When unclogging your fuel injector, it is about removing impediments - like muscle actions that clamp, squeeze and get in the way. This includes your tongue muscles. The air should pass through freely and without the throat acting as a pressure valve.

It is not possible to open a car's fuel injector wider than it was designed, so don't overdo the muscle action to open your throat beyond it's natural and comfortable state.

ALLOW air to pass through the throat. The throat is not for regulating the flow. It must be loose, supple and free at all times.

## FREE SINGING TIPS

by Yvonne DeBandi from a2z-singing-tips.com

S = Sing through the vocal breaks. If you do not teach the muscles the necessary actions to sing through the trouble spots, success will never be achieved. Sing through it, sing through it again, and again....

..... continued on next page



Our weekly meetings are on Tuesdays, 6:30pm, at **St John's United Methodist Church, 2626 Arizona St NE, Albuquerque, NM 87110**

The church is located one block North of Menaul & one block East of San Pedro.

You can see an online location map here:

<https://goo.gl/maps/9nGS8mcvRKQYFgBE8>

## FREE SINGING TIPS

by Nicole LeGault from a2z-singing-tips.com

S is for Style. Placement (bass & treble, etc...), singing raunchy or raspy (without going hoarse!), vibrato, and falsetto are all stylistic techniques that can be learned, developed and mastered. Why not be as versatile as possible?

## FREE SINGING TIPS

by Mick Walsh from a2z-singing-tips.com

S. Soft Palate. This fleshy little feller needs to be raised when we sing and there's an easy way to do it. Just imagine a little smile at the back of the inside of your throat and hey presto, your soft palate will rise. Have a yawn too. Get used to this yawny feeling as it's something similar to what we want to happen when we raise the soft palate and sing with an open throat. When you yawn though, try not to drop off to sleep. Hello .... You still there... hello ..wake up!!!

## FREE SINGING TIPS

by Teri Danz from a2z-singing-tips.com

S = Sing, Sing, Sing -- Sing everyday. If you aren't in a group, sing in the car, take classes, and most importantly, do vocal exercises. They will maintain your instrument (and build it) as you look for a steady singing gig.

## MAGIC CHORAL TRICK #340

### THE CHOREO MOVE SHOULDN'T UPSTAGE THE FACE

by Janet Kidd

This seems to be such common sense – but I think most of us who use choreography mess up on this one from time to time.

Thanks to David McEachern from the Barbershop Harmony Society's Toronto Northern Lights for this reminder at his coaching session last month.

Does the choreo move match the emotion of the phrase that it's supposed to be enhancing?

He pointed out that even if the move is a great one, or a clever one, if it doesn't match the amount of emotion that we're seeing on all the faces, the move will be a distraction.

As an audience member, we get confused when we're getting Ta Dah!!! from the jazz hands move, and only mild appreciation from the faces.

It's not believable. Like a bad Irish accent in a Hollywood movie, it just keeps getting in the way of the story. (Best example ever – Far and Away, starring Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman [their Irish accents are so, so bad]).

Audiences love to be enthralled by the story or the message of the song – but as soon as there's a technical mismatching – tuning, balance, blend, or a mismatched visual message, we get pulled out of the narrative.

People may praise the clever move – even if it upstages the faces – but they probably won't leap to their feet screaming for more.

When everything is in sync emotionally it's very satisfying for an audience.

The New MexiChords Proudly Presents

# Sentimental Journey



Friday May 3, 2024 7 PM  
Saturday May 4, 2024 2 PM

2626 Arizona NE, Albuquerque  
St. John's United Methodist Church

Admission: \$15, Kids 6 and Under Free

Call (505) 242-4451 for Information or Tickets at the Door  
Cash, Checks, VISA, AMEX, and Mastercard Accepted

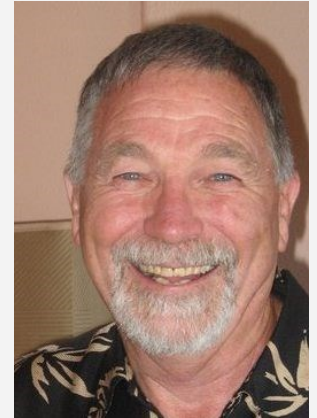
Guest Quartet  
*Quartet of All Time*





## FROM OUR DIRECTOR:

### “BIFFLEISMS”



Well, hello, again. Hope you are all doing well.

The show is coming along swimmingly. The music is almost learned, much of it is becoming polished and we're gonna knock their socks off the first weekend in May! Many, many thanks to the section leaders for running the early bird sectionals and to all of you who have attended them. They have made my job so much easier and have brought us to that exalted place of being able to make real music instead of just getting the notes and words (mostly) right. I hope you've noticed the nuances we've been able to focus on at rehearsals and I know our audiences will! So, thanks again, and congratulations to you all!

Show ad sales – as you might have heard – are vital to our financial health so please, don't put it off any longer. Pick up the phone and sell an ad. You'll be glad you did!

The show is shaping up nicely under the able leadership of Jerry Q. The afterglow plans are in the works, but please remember that the planning of events is only part of the equation. Everyone's participation – and help is needed – is what makes all our events successful. Be aware of opportunities to help. Sign up to help when asked. Then help! Thanks, I know you will!

Ruth has done her usual amazing work planning several events for the rest of the year. Notably the chapter retreat on June 29<sup>th</sup>. Sign up has been slow, but I know that's due to inattention on our part, not an unwillingness to attend this important event. We have a fabulous clinician coming in and this day will be a real milestone on our path to greater success together. So, sign up. OK? Thanks. I know you will.

Tuesday nights continue to be fun and rewarding for me and, I hope, for you. Please, keep bringing guests. It's fun to grow together, n'est-ce pas?

See you Tuesday, champs!

**Do you love to sing? Tired of entertaining only yourself  
in your car or the shower? C'mon out and see how  
much fun it can be to sing with a group of others!**

**See us at:**

**[www.NMChords.com](http://www.NMChords.com)**

**Our chorus and quartets love to sing for our audiences and to share our love of barbershop.  
You are invited to join with us to enjoy an evening of camaraderie and great barbershop  
harmony. Don't miss out on the fun. Come and see what it's all about!**

**What? Weekly Chapter Meeting & Rehearsal**

**When? Tuesdays, 6:30 p.m.**

**Where? St John's United Methodist Church, 2626 Arizona St NE, ABQ 87110**

***This is Part 3 of a 5-part series, “Music and the Mind” by John Colapinto (AARP Magazine, December 2023). Each of the next two months will contain the next part in the series. I hope that you will enjoy these interesting articles.***

### **Part 3 – “Let Me Call You Sweetheart”**

Concetta Tomaino was 24 years old in 1979 when she graduated with a master’s degree in music therapy from New York University. She would go on to become a pioneer in the use of music to treat dementia, and today, at 69, she is a legend in the field, the dedicatee of neurologist Oliver Sacks’ 2007 book *Musophilia*, the past president of the American Association for Music Therapy, and the executive director and cofounder of the Institute for Music and Neurologic Function housed at Wartburg, a senior living facility in Mount Vernon, New York, where I recently visited her. Cheerful and soft-spoken, with a round face and curly brown hair, the Bronx-born Tomaino was, she says, “a big science kid.” But she also played accordion and trumpet. In college, she blended her loves of music and science when she decided to switch from premed to a degree in music therapy.

Tomaino was still a student intern in 1978, fulfilling the 1,200 hours of clinical fieldwork necessary for her master’s, when, at a nursing facility in Brooklyn, she encountered her first dementia patients – a population not then generally considered to be candidates for music therapy. As was common in that era, the dementia patients were severely neglected: heavily drugged, hands encased in mittens to prevent their clawing at themselves, outfitted with nasal gastric tubes for feeding, and left to scream and wail in confusion and anxiety on an upper floor of the facility. “Nobody went up there,” Tomaino recalls. “It was this horrible, horrible place. The cacophony!” A nurse told her, “Oh, it’s so sweet of you to come, but they don’t have any brains left, so don’t expect too much.”

Tomaino refused to believe it. She lifted her accordion and started playing the opening chords of “Let Me Call You Sweetheart,” a hit tune published in 1910 that became even more popular when Bing Crosby recorded it twice, during the Depression and World War II.

She began to sing: “Let me call you sweetheart / I’m in love with you...”

“The noise stopped,” she remembers. “People opened their eyes. Half of them started singing along: ‘Let me hear you whisper / That you love me too.’”

The nurse looked at Tomaino in shock. “She said, ‘What just happened?’”

Two years later, Tomaino was hired as the music therapist at Beth Abraham Hospital in the Bronx – where Oliver Sacks was a neurologist. He was already famous for his 1973 book *Awakenings*, which chronicled his use of the experimental drug L-dopa to awaken patients who had been “frozen” for decades in a coma-like state from a virus called encephalitis lethargica. Tomaino saw an obvious parallel with dementia patients. “So I said to Oliver, ‘Did you ever see this?’ He said, ‘No! Show me!’” Sacks was floored. “He said, ‘We gotta look at this and figure out what the heck is going on!’”

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Through the 1980s, with Sacks' input, Tomaino studied the positive effects of music on the mood and memory of Beth Abraham's dementia patients. The work drew increasing attention after the 1990 release of the movie adaptation of *Awakenings*, and reporters descended on Beth Abraham in search of new medical miracles. In a joint interview with *The New York Times* in 1991, Sacks called music a "neurologic necessity," and Tomaino said that music could "locate the lost personalities" of dementia on a segment of the TV show *48 Hours* when she played a swing tune on her accordion for a near-catatonic dementia patient, who jumped out of his wheelchair and started dancing (he had been in a dance act with his brother in his youth). "The staff got really excited," Tomaino says, "so the physician assistant would sing to him, the orderly would sing to him as they walked. He eventually went back home to his daughter."

Two years after that, Tomaino convened the first-ever conference on Clinical Applications of Music in Neurological Rehabilitation. "The scientific and medical community was still on the fence about music and the brain," she recalls. "We hoped to push the dialogue. We had over 125 people show up, some from outside the country, and we needed to send some away." This gave Tomaino the momentum (and the funding) to help launch, in 1995, the Institute for Music and Neurologic Function at Beth Abraham. Since then, there has been an explosion of interest in the field of music and memory.

Mysteries remain about how memories are created, stored, and retrieved in the brain and how music acts to revivify them in dementia patients, but answers have begun to emerge, thanks to advanced brain scanning technology that did not exist when Tomaino and Sacks did their early research – specifically, the fMRI. This technology uses a strong magnetic field and radio waves to track blood flow throughout the brain, showing what areas are active during physical tasks, like moving the fingers (which "lights up" areas of the motor cortex in an fMRI scan), or during cognitive tasks, including decision-making and memory.

All memories, regardless of how vivid and indelible they seem to us, are electric and chemical signals in our brains that travel through a network of neurons. Decades ago, it was believed that there was a dedicated memory module of the brain where the past was stored. fMRI revealed that many areas of the brain are involved with memory, from the brain stem (seat of automatic tasks like breathing and blinking) and the emotion centers (including the amygdala, with its fight-or-flight reflexes) to the seeing and hearing centers; from the executive areas of the brain (where thinking and decision-making occur) to the part where long-term memories are processed. None of this should be especially surprising when you consider the layered richness of memory – the distant sights, sounds, smells, feelings, and conversations that can be evoked by something as ephemeral as a scent on the breeze.

Memories begin with our five senses, through our experience of the world. The memory that allows you to recognize your mother was first encoded when you were a baby, from seeing, hearing, and smelling her – sensory stimuli that resulted in the firing of neurons that wrote the memory "Mom." Through repeated exposure to your mother, that memory grew increasingly durable, owing to actual physical changes in your brain. When specific groups of neurons are repeatedly activated, they strengthen the synaptic connections between them. ("Neurons that fire together wire together" is the saying in neuroscience.) Which is how a memory vital to your continued existence – *That's my mom!* – becomes strongly encoded and efficiently accessed.

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But even the memory of your mother can be lost if something chokes off the electrochemical signals that flash along those neurons. This is what is thought to occur with Alzheimer's disease. Certain brain waste products – so-called tau tangles and amyloid plaques – as well as other factors, the theory goes, can disrupt and destroy neurons and their connections, especially in areas of the brain associated with memory – even as strong a memory as Mom. Alzheimer's is progressive. As more brain cells die, more of the past vanishes. Of all the attempts to hold on to memories in the face of this loss – through drugs, diet, and exercise – music has proved to be among the most successful. Again, MRI offers a possible explanation for why.

Listening to music, fMRI reveals, is (like memory itself) a full-brain workout; a wide distribution of brain structures light up, including the:

**Brain stem.** Rousing classical music makes the pulse and blood pressure rise; soothing lullabies make them drop.

**Motor centers.** These are the source of the irrepressible urge to tap the toe or bob the head in time with music.

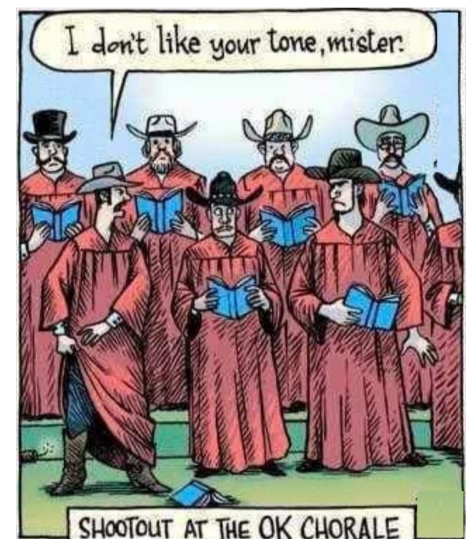
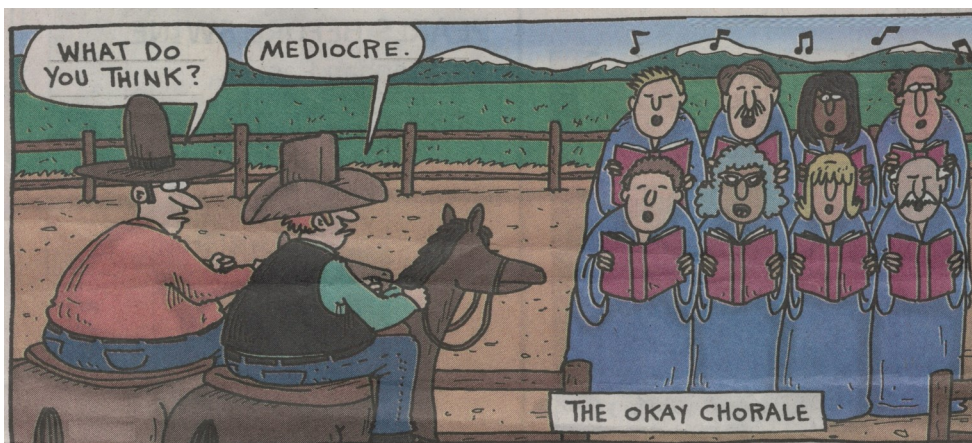
**Language centers.** They light up to a song with lyrics we remember.

**Auditory cortex.** This is where music's pitches and tones are processed.

**Emotion centers.** Here feelings of yearning, joy, exultation, sadness, fear, or loss are touched off by changes in the music's tempo, pitch, volume; in the executive centers, thoughts and memories connected to the music are activated.

**Visual systems.** Think of how a dark and stormy passage of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony can call up images in your mind of black and turbulent skies. Disney did it for us with "Night on Bald Mountain" in *Fantasia*.

This full-brain workout hints at why melodies and lyrics – particularly those from songs that have personal significance to us – have such a peculiar sticking power in our memories. fMRI scans reveal that such "autobiographically salient" music is written into many parts of the brain – the movement center, for instance – not touched by Alzheimer's until the very last stages of the disease. Music, by stimulating these preserved parts of the memory network, seems to reach into those areas of the neocortex, the brain's wrinkled outer layer, to find those neurons that have not yet died off, thus triggering memories thought to be lost forever.



The New MexiChords Calendar  
Upcoming Chorus Events

2024

- 26-27 Apr - Rocky Mountain District Spring Convention, Little America, Cheyenne, WY  
3 May - Spring Show, 7pm, St John's Methodist Church, 2626 Arizona St NE  
4 May - Spring Show, 2pm, St John's Methodist Church, 2626 Arizona St NE  
17 May - Naturalization Ceremony  
30 Jun-7 Jul - BHS International Convention, Cleveland, Ohio  
26-28 Sep - Rocky Mountain District Fall Convention, Little America, Cheyenne, WY  
11 Oct - Naturalization Ceremony  
20 Dec - Christmas Show, 7pm, St John's Methodist Church, 2626 Arizona St NE  
21 Dec - Christmas Show, 2pm, St John's Methodist Church, 2626 Arizona St NE

Stay up-to-date with us by visiting our "Shows & Events" page on the website at:  
[www.NMChords.com](http://www.NMChords.com)

We are a local chapter of the Barbershop Harmony Society (BHS) and a member of the Rocky Mountain District (RMD), which includes parts of the following States/Areas:

Wyoming  
Colorado  
Most of Utah  
eastern Idaho  
southern Montana  
northern New Mexico  
western portions of South Dakota, Nebraska, and Kansas



***The Serenader*** is your newsletter and vehicle for sharing information, stories, and news about the chapter, chorus, quartets, and the people in them. To make it interesting and a fun read, I would encourage all of you to provide articles for publication, photos of quartets in action, our members, chorus on the risers..... Anything that you find interesting and would like to see in the newsletter to share with others. — The Editor







# VOCAL HEALTH TIPS

- ✓ Stay hydrated! Caffeine, alcohol, and some prescription medication dehydrate the vocal folds.
- ✓ Smoking, including vaping, is particularly irritating to the vocal folds.
- ✓ Avoid excessive throat clearing or coughing.
- ✓ Be mindful of how much speaking or singing you do, and stop when you feel fatigued.
- ✓ Avoid excessively acidic foods.
- ✓ Avoid competing with a noisy environment, e.g. restaurants, noisy machinery. Never yell!
- ✓ Pain, hoarseness, loss of control or range, and rapid vocal fatigue are all warning signs. Seek a competent voice health professional.

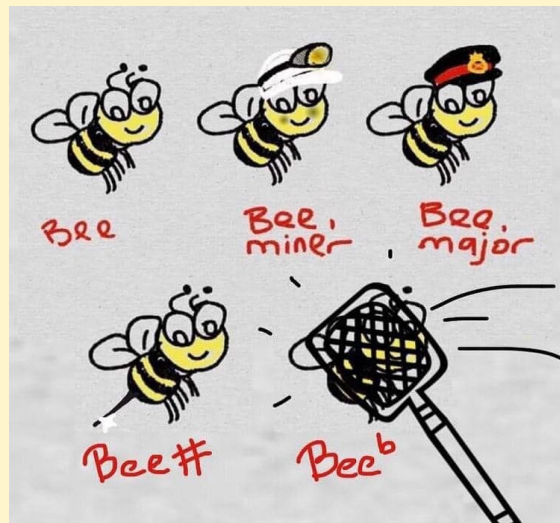
[BARBERSHOP.ORG/VOCALHEALTH](http://BARBERSHOP.ORG/VOCALHEALTH)

A GOOD LIFE IS WHEN YOU SMILE OFTEN, DREAM BIG, LAUGH ALOT AND REALIZE HOW BLESSED YOU ARE FOR WHAT YOU HAVE.

A DAY WITHOUT MUSIC.....

JUST KIDDING....

I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT THAT'S LIKE.



WHEN WORDS FAIL,  
MUSIC SPEAKS

~ SHAKESPEARE

## Your Chuckles for the Month

I just found out I'm colorblind. The diagnosis came totally out of the purple.

What rock group has four guys who don't sing? Mount Rushmore.

My best friend is like my hairline. We go way back.

How did the ancient Romans cut their hair? With a pair of Caesars.

What's the difference between the United States and a flash drive? USA and USB

Whenever my best friends and I play hide-and-seek, it goes on for hours. Good friends are so hard to find.

Some nights, I lie awake thinking about how our oceans are filled with millions of jellyfish and not a single peanut butter fish.

What's the distance from the curb to the front door of a suburban house? One yard.

When a momma ladder with a kid marries another ladder, what does that ladder become? A stepladder.

Bro, do you want this pamphlet? Yeah, brochure.

Giraffes can grow up to 15 feet, but most only have four.

What do you call a nose with no body? Nobody Nose.



### **Our Mission:**

**The members of the Albuquerque Chapter of the Barbershop Harmony Society dedicate themselves to:**

- **Continually seek the joy to be found in singing well in the barbershop style**
- **Promote the benefits of our hobby at every available opportunity**
- **Provide our community with high quality musical entertainment, and**
- **Foster continual musical growth and fellowship among the members**

To be added to our fan list, send your name and email address to [subscribe@newmexichords.groupanizer.com](mailto:subscribe@newmexichords.groupanizer.com)  
To be removed, send your email address to [unsubscribe@newmexichords.groupanizer.com](mailto:unsubscribe@newmexichords.groupanizer.com)