

Barbershop Singing

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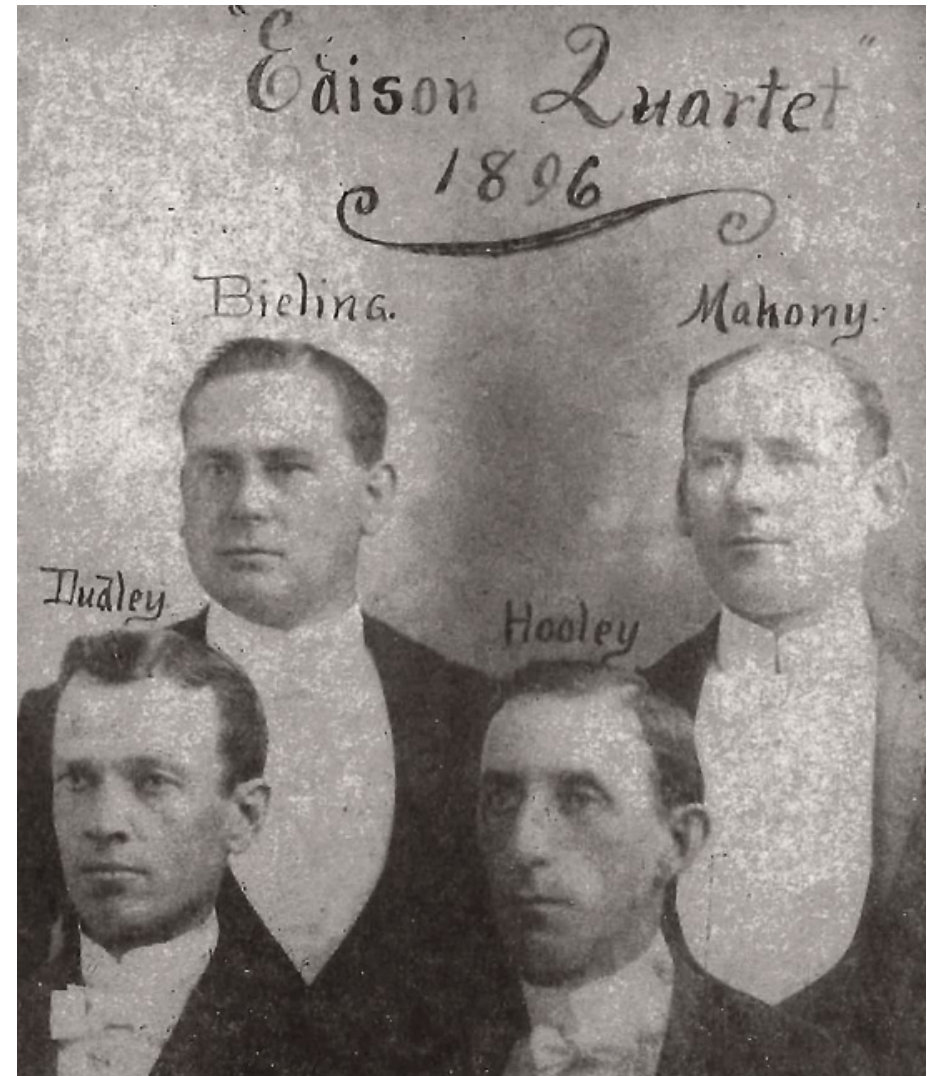
History

- Barbers' music may have started during Elizabethan period
- A feature of African – American barbers, southern USA
- Evolved there in the 1800s
- Mostly triadic with harmony on top
- Lots of improvisation, “slides and snakes”



History/cont

- Early 1900s very popular
- Some Recordings
- Eg Haydn Quartet
(started as Edison Quartet)
- Quartets everywhere, street corners
- Early image of quartets persists



James Weldon Johnson

- Black American civil rights leader
- Politician, Lawyer, musician
- Wrote alternative song to “ Star Spangled Banner”
- Promoted the search for good chords that “ring”

Barbershop Songs early 1900s

- Sweet Adeline (still sung today)
- Take Me Out to the Ballgame
- By the Light of the Silvery Moon
- In the Good Old Summertime

Minstrels

- Late 1800s white minstrels with blackened faces
- Made lots of recordings early 1900s (Africans seldom recorded) Tin Pan Alley era
- Left off some embellishments of original sound that wouldn't record well
- Infused it with some of their own traditions- hybrid sound created
- Stereotype of barbershop singers locked in.

1920s to 1930s

- 1920s and early 1930s evolution of jazz
- Barbershop singing had all but disappeared
- 1938 Owen Cash & Rupert Hall met in a Kansas hotel, “woodshedding”
- Organised meeting of singers in Tulsa- hugely popular- branches established across USA.
- Formation of SPEBQSA - Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of BarberShop Quartet Singing in America

Barbershop Harmony Society

- Chapters world wide
- Including Japan, Germany, Sweden, England
- Arrangers produce music in barbershop style
- Annual regional competitions and annual international event



Barbershop in New Zealand

- Choruses in all main centres
- International winning quartet Musical Island Boys
- International placement chorus - Vocal FX – Tawa
- Annual competitions
- Annual coaching schools, local coaching events

Sweet Adelines

- Formed in 1947- women's organisation
- Chapters in many countries
- Very advanced in New Zealand
- Christchurch City Chorus 5th in International Open Division 2017
- Wellington City Chorus won International Mid Size Division 2018



Sections

- First tenor (harmony part)
- Second Tenor (lead, sings melody)
- Baritone (harmony part)
- Bass (lowest harmony notes, driver of rhythm)

Features of Barbershop Style

- Close harmony, often within an octave
- Consonant, not dissonant sound
- Homophonic chords
- Objective is to “ring” chords
- Augmented and diminished chords and embellishments used for effect

Essentials for Good Sound

- Open, resonant singing
- Matched vowels
- Synchronised words and breaths
- Accurate tuning, “Pythagorean” tuning
- Balancing chords

Assessment Criteria Competitions

- Music – strength of arrangement, embellishments, phrasing
- Presentation – is it believable:? - unity
- Singing – quality of sound- energy, dynamics, synchronisation

Benefits of Barbershop

- Singers may not be music readers –audio learning tracks provided
- Gives opportunity to participate with limited musical knowledge
- Voice quality the best a person can be - not necessarily soloist
- All ages, shapes, sizes, colours
- Good for mental health, stressful times
- Good for lung health and stamina.

Other Benefits

- Learn more about music
- Organisational skills
- Friendships locally, nationally and internationally
- Entertaining community groups
- Portable! Only equipment required is a pitch pipe!

Bernie's Boys