

Palo Alto–Mountain View Chapter Barbershop Harmony Society

This report summarizes highlights of the 2010 Program and presents some goals and issues for the 2011 Program.

Weekly Rehearsals

This section reports on various aspects of our weekly Tuesday rehearsals.

INTEGRATING CACM INTO REHEARSALS

The biggest change in the format and philosophy of weekly rehearsals in 2010 has been the integration of CACM principles. (One of the biggest and most successful changes has been the shift in focus from rehearsing songs as an end in itself to rehearsing skills with songs as the vehicle.) Overall, the CACM effort has been well received and has paid off in member enthusiasm, but some additional fine-tuning remains to be done in 2011:

- Member survey results indicate that members aren't completely sold on the (seemingly arbitrary and impromptu) assignment of roles. (Problems typically arise, in part, to the last-minute changes that must occur when absenteeism impacts the roles that have been assigned.) Maybe some of this role assignment work could be offloaded from Steve to a core group of coaches, who could be the ones to pick and mentor the watchers and listeners?
- We've not yet arrived at a satisfactory process/philosophy for communicating with members prior to and after each rehearsal (see next item).

COMMUNICATING WITH MEMBERS BEFORE AND AFTER REHEARSALS

As we experimented in 2010 with how to best integrate CACM into our rehearsals, we also experimented with some alternative approaches to communicating with the chorus. We went from what was arguably overkill (an email follow-up to each rehearsal, highlighting Steve's, Paul's, and Mark's comments regarding areas for individual practice—not appreciated by all members, for a variety of reasons) to underkill (even to the point of communicating *nothing* in advance of rehearsal about what songs we would be rehearsing that night).

We still need to figure out what will work best overall, and try to maintain that optimum approach consistently from week to week. Maybe the Music Team is the appropriate venue for a discussion of what approach would be best?

PROMOTING QUARTET SINGING THROUGH WEEKLY QUARTET ACTIVITIES

The first half of 2010 continued the previous year's model, with an approximately 15-minute quartet segment being scheduled—not every week, but maybe most weeks, as time allowed. Because the rehearsal schedule tended to come out late (if at all) most weeks, it was tough for Chuck Borrecco to do much planning, and the result was that the quartet program was a little haphazard and less effective than it might otherwise be.

In August we introduced the Pole Cat learning & certification program, which serves the dual purpose of encouraging members to learn the Pole Cat songs, and providing some structure to the quartet program in general. This has been well received, and will continue into 2011.

Survey results from November indicate 1) that people would like to see more quartetting opportunities, and 2) that they'd like to see more structure and continuity to the program. The most popular approach seems to be the one where a coach works with a quartet over the course of several weeks, so that the singers have the opportunity to be coached, and have the chance to sing with the same group for a number of weeks. (Doubling up of voice parts within a "quartet" allows for flexibility in the face of absenteeism, and allows each member of the chorus to be part of a quartet.)

GUEST NIGHTS

We had a successful guest night on June 8th. The programs were well organized by the Membership VP and there was good attendance, but attendance didn't necessarily translate into new members.

It'll be important in 2011 to plan these nights well in advance, so that the requisite marketing can be done in order to advertise them. Ideally, advertisements (newspaper, online) and handouts at singouts will be used to publicize guest nights in 2011.

"SPECIAL GUEST" NIGHTS

We were very fortunate to have a number of special guests at rehearsals throughout the year, including:

- Sean Devine (May 25)
- Musical Island Boys (June 22)
- Gabe Caretto (August 24)

In each case, personal contacts (e.g., Andrew and Steve) were key in attracting these guests, and such is likely to be the case in 2011 as well. It would be good to find ways to encourage people with such connections to take advantage of them, but it's probably not something the Program VP or even a special subcommittee can be expected to handle—perhaps this would fall within the purview of the Music Team?

INTER-CHAPTER RELATIONS

One of the "special guest" nights in 2010 (with the Musical Island Boys) was open to alumni and members from other chapters, with great attendance results. Having a special guest worth traveling for is probably a good way to help ensure attendance and the success of any inter-chapter rehearsal event.

Dave Kocharhook recently indicated that the incoming President of the San Mateo Chapter approached him about visiting them on a Tuesday night. Dave is hoping that we can work visits to two or three other chapters into the 2011 calendar as well.

This may be an area where a subcommittee (or music team involvement?) would be helpful, given the Program VPs relative lack of contacts with the leadership from other local chapters.

Other Program-Related Topics

This section reports on other topics not directly related to the weekly Tuesday night rehearsals..

SURVEYS

We took a membership satisfaction survey twice in 2010—once in January when CACM was first being implemented, and again in November, after the initial implementation was in place (the second survey was primarily intended to gauge the impact of CACM integration on member satisfaction). Results indicate that CACM has been well received overall, and that the chorus is generally moving in the right direction. Planning for next year will necessarily depend on further analysis and discussion of the survey, in order to identify areas for further improvement or changes.

ALL-DAY WORKSHOPS

We had four all-day weekend workshops in 2010:

- March 13th, 2010
- April 10th, 2010
- June 26th, 2010
- August 28, 2010

These were considered successful by the people who attended, but attendance was not as good as it should have been.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

We had the following performances in 2010 (I may have forgotten about some):

- The Sequoias (1/15)
- Antique Car Show (7/25)
- Filoli (12/4)
- Sunnyvale Tree Lighting (12/4)
- Mountain View Tree Lighting (12/6)
- Fremont High School (12/16)
- Palo Alto Farmer's Market (12/18)
- Trinity United Methodist Church (12/19)

This was fewer than the one per month that we try to achieve. This is another area where more proactive leadership would be helpful—possibly from Marketing, from a committee, or from dedicated individuals who are committed to doing whatever it takes to make this happen on a more regular basis, or from a combination of those.

In addition to the frequency of events, another ongoing issue is attendance at those events. Many members say they want more outreach performances, but poor turnout sometimes causes scheduled events to be cancelled.

EXTRACURRICULAR/SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

Social activities in 2010 included 1) the Installation Dinner at Michael's; 2) Jim Turner's potluck picnic, and 3) the year-end Christmas party (any others?). Survey results indicate that some

members would prefer more such activities, including possible activities such as bowling night, theatre night, potluck picnics, etc.

This is another area where a committee might be helpful. Those who most want such activities are probably the ones who would be most motivated to make sure that they happen with the desired frequency, so we should try to identify and encourage these members to take this on.

Open Issues

RECORDINGS

Dave Kocharhook recently suggested that we should have recordings of most of our music available for promotional purposes, because any attempts to increase the number of paid performances will involve being able to provide event organizers with a sample of our work.

Gary will start doing recordings of 2011 rehearsals with this goal in mind (recordings of actual performances may be useful for this purpose as well). If there are issues regarding distribution of recorded copyrighted works, then the Board needs to discuss those and formulate any guidelines that we need to follow in order to stay within what's legal for us to do.

These recordings aren't intended to substitute for the personal recordings we expect members to do on their own.

MULTIMEDIA

We experimented in 2010 with various ways of using multimedia as a tool—both video recordings of the chorus (in rehearsal and in competition) and BHS videos of Barbershop's top choruses and quartets. Overall, members have responded favorably to the use of such materials, and we should try to revive this effort in 2011. (All-day workshops seem to provide a better venue for multimedia than Tuesday night rehearsals, due to time limitations and the amount of program content that we need to cover in a regular three-hour rehearsal).

WHO ARE WE AS A CHORUS

This question has been identified as one that has yet to be clearly answered, and the answer will have an impact on how we approach all aspects of the program in 2011. The program will need to be tailored to support the objectives and goals of the chapter, rather than vice versa.

REHEARSAL LOGISTICS

There are a few specific questions that remain open, due to the wide range of member preferences expressed (and pending resolution of the question of who we are as a chorus):

- Should we have longer/shorter rehearsals (and breaks, warm-ups, quartet activities, chapter meetings, etc.)?
- Should we start/end earlier?
- Should we schedule time for woodshedding as well as quartetting?

PROGRAM BUDGET

There's currently no proposal for a budget for Program activities (nor was there any in 2008, 2009, or 2010). If anyone sees the need for a Program budget, we should discuss and plan for this.