



## BACKGROUND

### Barbershop Harmony Society

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[www.barbershop.org](http://www.barbershop.org) | [www.facebook.com/barbershopharmonysociety](https://www.facebook.com/barbershopharmonysociety)

# FACT SHEET: Barbershop Harmony Society

## Name, governance and legal

- **Barbershop Harmony Society** or **BHS**. The Society's full legal name is the Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barber Shop Quartet Singing in America, Inc. or SPEBSQSA, Inc. (Note: no periods between letters of abbreviated form. "Barber Shop" is styled as two words in the full legal name only; in all other uses, "barbershop" is a single word.)
- Organized as a **501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation**. Governed by an elected board of directors.
- Administered by a **professional staff of 35+** at Harmony Hall in Nashville, Tennessee.
- **Annual budget \$6.6 million**, with revenues in roughly equal portions from membership, conventions, and merchandise. Approximately \$1 million annually in program funding from donors through [Harmony Foundation International](#)

## Size and reach

- Approximately **20,000 Members and Associates**.
- Approximately **700 chapters** in the United States and Canada
- Approximately **1200 quartets** registered with the Barbershop Harmony Society headquarters; an estimated 1000 more quartets are active but not officially registered.
- Age distribution: equal numbers of people joining between age 18-25 and age 62-69
- In 2018, membership policy was expanded to include women. Approximately **####** women are enrolled as Members and Associates.
- A comparable number of women sing with [Sweet Adelines International](#) (~20,000 members) and [Harmony, Incorporated](#) (~2700 members)
- Affiliated organizations in: Australia, Finland, Germany, Great Britain, Holland, Ireland, New Zealand, The Netherlands, South Africa, Spain, Sweden. There are also barbershop



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singers in more than 30 countries, including Argentina, Brazil, China, Denmark, Hungary, Iceland, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Uganda, and the United Arab Emirates.

- Total population of barbershop singers in various societies is more than **70,000 worldwide**

## Vision and mission

- Vision: **“Everyone in Harmony”**
- Mission: **“Enriching Lives through Singing”**
- Motto and theme song: **“Keep The Whole World Singing”**

## What is barbershop harmony?

- Four-part, unaccompanied, close-harmony singing
- Melody is carried in the second-highest voice, called the **lead**
- The **tenor** harmonizes above the lead singer
- The **bass** sings the lowest harmonizing notes
- The **baritone** provides in-between notes, to form consonant, pleasing chords.
- Performed in ensembles of all sizes: **quartets** (four singers), **choruses** (usually 12 or more singers, up to as many as 160 singers, most commonly 15-30 singers)
- Performed in **all-male, all-female, or mixed groups**

## Activities of the organization

- **Education** of members and the general public in music appreciation, particularly barbershop singing, by way of schools, contests, and publishing.
- **Sheet music publishing**, with more than 4500 titles in catalog. Worldwide commercial distribution through [shop.barbershop.org](http://shop.barbershop.org) and [Hal Leonard Corporation](http://www.halleonard.com)
- **Video production** and [YouTube distribution](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCv8v8v8v8v8v8v8v8v8v8v8) for entertainment and education
- **Contests in quartet and chorus singing** at local, regional, and international levels.



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- **Partnerships with music education** and choral organizations such as American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) and National Association for Music Education (NAfME) at all levels to advocate for recreational and social singing for life
- **Merchandising** and sales of recordings, education materials, and apparel/lifestyle products
- **Charitable projects** on a local and national basis. Quartets and choruses contribute more than 100,000 man-hours per year singing for more than half a million people at churches, schools, hospitals, senior centers, etc.

## Education programs

- **Harmony University**, a week-long school held each summer, brings together more than 700 Barbershoppers from around the world with a world-class faculty of vocal coaches, arrangers, choreographers, and educators to explore all facets of the barbershop hobby. HU offers special tracks for directors, quartets, and general barbershop singing. Continuing Education Units available for music educators.
- **BHS Online** offerings deliver free and fee-based instruction in vocal technique, arranging, directing and many other facets of barbershop performance.
- Numerous **manuals and videos** teach vocal techniques, singing skills and chapter administration

## Next Generation Barbershop outreach programs

- Support for **music educators in the classroom** with music and materials that appeal to younger singers
- **Age-appropriate quartet contests** provide incentives to explore close-harmony singing
- **Youth chorus festivals** provide subsidized participation in high energy performance settings
- Many Barbershoppers are active in their communities, in parent-teacher associations, in arts advocacy groups and in education coalitions, working to preserve arts education in school curricula.

## Charitable and community activities



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- [Harmony Foundation International](#), the Society's official charity, funds nearly \$1 million annually in support of community singing and education programs.
- Barbershoppers donate sizeable amounts of money and time, and numerous performances to local charitable activities and vocal music education programs in their communities.

## Origins and Founding

- The music originated in the late 1800s in African American communities of the South, with deep ties to jazz musical techniques. (And yes, it really was sung in barbershops!)
- First meeting of the Society: April 11, 1938 at the Roof Garden of the Tulsa Club in Tulsa, Oklahoma.
- First quartet contest held June 1939; first chorus contest held July 1953
- Sweet Adelines International founded in Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1945; Harmony, Inc. formed in 1957.