



The Captain's Log

Newsletter of the Stockton Portsmen

Connecting members, supporters, and friends of the Stockton Portsmen

September 2026 - Issue #85

Charting Our Course – Music Has a Way of Bringing Us Together

Sometimes the best chorus events are the simplest ones.

Music on the Porch Day was a perfect example. We were one of six groups performing throughout our community that day, and it was great knowing that music was being shared in different places around the neighborhood.

At our porch, we got together, sang some songs, enjoyed each other's company, and shared our music with anyone who happened to stop by.

And people did! Throughout the evening, we had an estimated 50–100 people stop by to listen. Some stayed for quite a while, some stopped for just a few songs, and some even sang along with us. It was casual, it was fun, and it was exactly what the evening was supposed to be.

One of my favorite parts was seeing people who came to listen and eventually singing along. It was a great reminder that music is meant to be shared. Sometimes all it takes is hearing a familiar song to go from being part of the audience to being part of the music. That also ties in nicely with what we've been doing through our 26 Weeks of Harmony. Growing our chorus doesn't always have to mean a big recruitment effort. It can be as simple as talking about what we do, inviting someone to rehearsal, sharing an upcoming event, or letting someone experience firsthand how much fun we have together. Music on the Porch gave us another opportunity to do just that.

A big thank you to everyone who came out and sang and helped make the evening happen, and to all the friends, neighbors, and visitors who stopped by. You made it a really enjoyable evening.

Now we're heading into fall, and there's plenty ahead for the Portsmen. We'll have more opportunities to sing, spend time together, share our music with the community, and hopefully introduce a few more people to barbershop along the way.

On a personal note, I'll be doing some traveling this month, so I'll miss a few Tuesday nights. I'll miss seeing everyone and singing with you, but I'll look forward to being back soon.

Whether you're a member, a friend of the Portsmen, or someone who has thought about giving barbershop a try, there's always room to join us. Sometimes you just have to start by singing along.

In Harmony,

Sue Atkins
President, Stockton Portsmen

Musical Director's Message: by Bill Litz

Most of us have heard the old saying: **"How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time."**

It's a little strange when you think about it. Why an elephant? Why not an **extra-large pizza** or a **Farrel's Zoo**? But the point is that when something seems enormous, even a little intimidating, the way to accomplish it is to stop worrying about the size of the beast and concentrate on the next bite.

I think that's a pretty good description of where we are with our newest chart, *I've Got the World on a String*.

When we first look at a challenging new song, it can feel a little like standing in front of a very large elephant. There are notes to learn, words to memorize, rhythms to master, entrances and releases to coordinate, vowels to match, chords to tune, dynamics to shape and eventually, all of that has to come together with meaning and confidence to create an artistic performance.

That's a lot of elephant.

Fortunately, we don't have to eat it all at once. We take one bite: learn a phrase. Another bite: clean up a rhythm. Another: lock in an entrance. Another: get that chord ringing. And then we take another bite...and another...and another...

Eventually, something remarkable happens.

The elephant gets smaller.

And when we finally finish, we have more than just another song in our repertoire. We have a trophy.

Every difficult song we have conquered became something we could put on the shelf. Or, better yet, take onto the risers and show off. Every time we perform one of those songs, we can look back and think, *"We remember when that looked impossible."*

And that's where the elephant metaphor gets really interesting.

When we successfully tackle a big musical challenge, we learn something important: **our idea of what is possible changes**. The song that once seemed out of our reach is now part of our repertoire. The next difficult chart doesn't look quite so frightening. We have evidence. We've done this before.

So next we can go hunting for a woolly mammoth.

And perhaps someday, we look back at *I've Got the World on a String* and realize it wasn't such a monster after all.

Of course, there's always the possibility that someone will eventually find a **zebra-striped woolly mammoth with a bow tie and six key changes and a tag with a thirty second hanger** and say, "Think we can learn this one?"

I suspect our answer will be, "Sure. Where's the music?"



But getting there takes all those small bites: **learning the notes, words, rhythms and, ultimately, performing with meaning and intention.**

None of those bites are particularly heroic by itself. But put enough of them together, and suddenly we're standing on stage singing something that, weeks or months earlier, looked impossible.

And there's another thing we learn along the way: in barbershop, we don't eat the elephant alone. **We eat it in four-part harmony.** One section may have the

melody, another is chasing the bass notes, the tenors are sparkling up there in the stratosphere and the baritones are doing...whatever it is baritones do... and somehow, when it all comes together, we have harmony.

That's how a chorus grows.

Not by suddenly becoming capable of doing everything, but by repeatedly deciding that we're willing to tackle something a little bigger than we've tackled before.

So, as we work on *I've Got the World on a String*, don't be discouraged by the size of the elephant.

Find your next bite.

Take it.

Then take another.

And before long, we'll be looking at an empty plate, a new trophy for the shelf, and wondering what we're going to eat next.

Because when we work together, one bite at a time, **there's a whole lot more music we can conquer than we might think.**

A Moment of Teacher Talk.....

Just as each of us has different strengths, talents, and challenges, we also have different ways of learning. Have you ever wondered why the person next to you can understand something quickly while you are still trying to make sense of it? This can happen anywhere, especially during chorus rehearsals. Often, it depends on how the material is presented and how you best receive information.

This is connected to your learning style. Here are the identified learning styles that most of us fall into.

- **Visual Learners:** Learn best through images, charts, graphs, color-coding, and diagrams.
- **Auditory Learners:** Absorb information best by listening, speaking, participating in discussions, and hearing lectures or recordings.
- **Reading/Writing Learners:** Thrive on text-based information, making detailed notes, reading lists, and writing summaries.
- **Kinesthetic Learners:** Retain knowledge best through hands-on experiences, physical movement, touch, and practical tasks
- **Multimodal Learners:** Use a flexible combination of two or more of these learning styles depending on the subject.

I know without a doubt I am a kinesthetic learner (says the physical education teacher with her Masters in Kinesiology).

This was very apparent when Bill, Sue and I visited the Peninsulaires rehearsal a few weeks ago. The amazing guest coach Cary Burns was trying to get us to create a resonance to our sound and approached it, as any good vocal coach would do, by walking us through things concerning our palate, our tongue, pushing the sound to the back of our throat and how to breathe. He could use all the words in his arsenal as to how to produce the best sound. He could have shown us pictures of what our spaces and palates are doing as we breathed through each note. Until I could feel what he was talking about, I just wasn't getting it. (Actually, maybe it's a baritone thing. 😊) But seriously, to avoid frustration and losing interest in what we are trying to accomplish, take note (pun intended) of the type of learner you are. See if there are ways you can adjust to both how you receive information and how you share information.

John Hunt = prime example with his notebook!

Sending Love Notes, Nance (Past President)

Four Heaven's Sake

A Barbershop Quartet

John Hunt

Steve Lund

Dave Harmon

Willis Nitschke

UPDATE: 9-7-2026

Retirement is prime time for travel vacations. August saw all *Four Heaven's Sake* members take trips. John went horseback riding. Steve went to Colorado. Willys went to Missouri and all points in-between. Dave cruised the Greek islands. One rehearsal with all four of us and off we went to a Disney-inspired marketplace - in, of all places, Downtown Stockton.

Noel Pastrana's dream of hosting such an event included Spiderman and Snow White actors and a facsimile performance of the Main Street Barbershop Quartet. He looked online for a barbershop quartet, found the Portsman Chorus website, looked at pictures of the chorus quartets and sent an email requesting *Four Heaven's Sake*. I guess from our picture on the website, he thought we looked the part enough to be asked to represent the classic Dapper Dan's quartet at *The 1313 Marketplace* on 9-5-26 at the Waterfront in Stockton.

Fortunately, a year ago we had done a Disney themed baby shower for Daisy. So, throwing a set list together was not difficult. Eight Disney songs and eight barbershop classics made 42 minutes worth of music to sing as we meandered through the 30



booths and across the venue. There were raffle drawings throughout the day (8 am to 1 pm). We arrived at 9:00 am and sang until we couldn't any more at 11:30 am.

We sang to princesses, families and fans of all ages. Snow White graciously received "Let Me Call You Sweetheart" while remaining in character during and after the song! It was fun to see the reaction of surprised attendees as we showed up at a new spot and just started

to sing. Cameras came out and smiles reflected the joy received. What a gift we are given to be able to share the joy we get from singing. As our president shared with me the day before we sang, if we know that we sing for ourselves, then the honesty of what we share in song is what the audience gets to take home (my takeaway).



Noel (the event organizer) looked a bit weary from all the activity he put into this event. So, we finished out our 2+ hours by singing “You’ve Got a Friend in Me” to him and his family. He received our message by jumping up, thanking each one of us with a hug and asking us to return for his next event. How could we say, “No,” Four Heaven’s Sake?!?!?!?



September Birthday Celebrations

Chuck Roots – 9/5

Al Farnum – 9/20



Where: COS Music Building
Who: High School Students
When: September 12, 2026

\$10 INCLUDES ALL-DAY COACHING BY THE NEWFANGLED FOUR, SHEET MUSIC,
 AUDIO TRACKS, LUNCH, DINNER,
 T-SHIRT, & PUBLIC PERFORMANCE
 (SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE) VISALIAMIGHTYOAKCHORUS.ORG

PRESENTED BY:



Dr. Dan Wessler



ALL DAY WORKSHOP LEARNING THREE SONGS, DIRECTED BY
 DR. DAN WESSLER, THEN PERFORMING IN THE EVENING
 SHOW. THE NEWFANGLED FOUR WILL TOP OFF THE EVENING
 WITH A 40 MIN. SET.

REGISTER NOW



FAR WEST HARMONY FESTIVAL SACRAMENTO



MEET YOUR CLINICIANS

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 19TH
9:00 A.M. - 5:00 P.M.

Antelope High School
7801 Titan Drive
Antelope, CA 95843

Open to all high school students
\$10.00 - SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE
Registration Required - email here:
harmonycampfestival@gmail.com



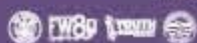
KATY DANE

2022 NAFME Music Educator of the Year



KEITH HARRIS

2024 International Modelist Chorus Director



Bring Harmony to Your Next Event

Book the Stockton Portsmen or One of Our Quartets!

A mixed-voice a cappella chorus celebrating 70+ years of harmony in the Central Valley.

Looking to add warmth, charm, and polished harmony to your next event? Whether you're planning a lively celebration or a heartfelt ceremony, the Stockton Portsmen Chorus or one of our talented quartets will bring unforgettable music tailored to your occasion.

Perfect for:

- Community Concerts and Festivals
- Grand Openings and Ribbon Cuttings
- Memorial Services and Celebrations of Life
- Holiday Tree Lightings and Caroling Events
- Weddings, Anniversaries and Private Celebrations
- Corporate Gatherings and Award Ceremonies
- Patriotic and Civic Events (National Anthems, Veterans Day, Memorial Day, etc.)
- Senior Living Communities and Community Outreach Programs
- Singing Valentines and Special Deliveries (Birthdays, Anniversaries, etc.)

Flexible Performance Lengths:

Our typical sets range from 20 to 40 minutes, but we're happy to tailor the timing to suit your specific program or audience needs.

Now booking Holiday 2026 performances!

Whether you're planning a holiday party, tree lighting, community celebration, or seasonal gathering, reserve your date early while openings are still available.

Contact Us:

Email: Info@StocktonPortsmen.org

Phone: (209) 881-SING (7464)

Website: <http://www.stocktonportsmen.org/>

**We'd love to bring harmony to your special event.
Reach out today and let's create something memorable together.**

Mission Statement:

Provide the greater Stockton area with quality Barbershop chorus and quartet music and wholesome family entertainment, while encouraging every individual of good character who loves to sing the opportunity to find their place with us.

Weekly Chapter Meetings:

Curious what it's like?

Come visit a rehearsal no pressure, just great music and great people. Come experience harmony with us. Visitors are always welcome on Tuesday evenings. No audition is required, just a love of singing and community.

Location: Zion Lutheran Church, Grace Hall - 808 W. Porter Avenue, Stockton, CA

Tuesday Rehearsals:

6:00 PM – 7:30 PM Chorus Rehearsal

7:30 PM – 8:30 PM VLQ, except board meeting nights (3rd Tuesday of each month)

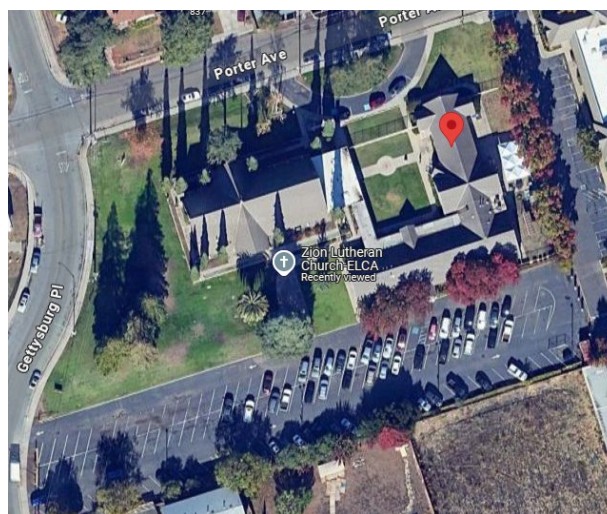
Rehearsals may occasionally be held at an alternate location, so please check the calendar for the most up-to-date information. [Click here to access the Stockton Portsmen Calendar](#)

Website: <http://www.stocktonportsmen.org/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/194542747456>

Directions:

- From Pacific Avenue go west on Porter Way, turn south on Gettysburg Pl then turn east into the Zion Lutheran Church parking lot.
- From Pershing Avenue go east on W. Swain Road, turn north on Gettysburg Pl then turn east into Zion Lutheran Church parking lot.



****SAVE THE DATE****

Upcoming Events

- 9/12 Youth Harmony Explosion (Visalia, CA)
- 9/19 Far West Harmony Festival (Antelope, CA)
- 10/6-11 2026 Pan Pacific and FWD Fall Convention (Honolulu, Hawaii)
[Click Link for details & registration](#)
- 10/18 Stockton Portsmen 72nd Charter Anniversary
- 12/5 Festival of Trees (Chorus) – 10am - 12pm (Micke Grove)
- 12/6 Festival of Trees (VLQ) – 10am - 12pm (Micke Grove)
- 12/12 Stockton Portsmen Holiday Show @ 2:30 pm
- 12/15 North Stockton Rotary Club @ 12:30 pm
- 12/18 Philomathean Club Performance
- 12/20 Friends of the Fox – Movie “White Christmas” (Stockton, CA)
(Sing in lobby 1:00pm - 1:30pm) [Click for more details](#)
- TBD Stockton Portsmen Holiday Roadshow & Remote Rehearsals

Tuesday Rehearsals – Visitors always welcome!

Barbershop Links:

Barbershop Harmony Society <https://www.barbershop.org/>

Far Western District <https://www.farwesterndistrict.org/>

Mixed Barbershop Harmony Association <https://www.mixedbarbershop.org/>

Stay Tuned a Cappella Chorus Sacramento: <https://www.facebook.com/StayTunedChorus>

Voices of California (VoCal) <https://www.voicesofcalifornia.org/>

Westunes Magazine <https://www.farwesterndistrict.org/news/westunes/>