

Chorus Chatter

News and Musings for Young at Heart Chorus Members

Issue #28...December 5, 2019

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Jingle Bells is one of the best-known and commonly sung American songs in the world. It was written by James Lord Pierpont (financier J.P. Morgan's uncle) and first published in the autumn of 1857 under the title "One Horse Open Sleigh." Although originally intended for the Thanksgiving season and having no connection to Christmas, it became associated with Christmas music and the holiday season decades after it was first performed by blackface minstrel performer Johnny Pell in 1857 at Ordway Hall in Boston. The song was first recorded in 1889 on an Edison cylinder.

Ways to Improve Your Voice Every Day

Here are a few ways to keep your voice in shape between our practices and performances:

- Sing every day, even a little. Five minutes every day is better than a once-a week marathon.
- If you're somewhere where singing isn't appropriate, rehearse in your head. The voice actually flexes in sympathetic response.
- Breathe correctly and with good posture when you speak. Remember, you can't breathe correctly when you're slumped in a chair.
- Speak in the right pitch, and vary your pitch. Most men speak too low because they believe a low voice sounds authoritative. A well-supported, free and resonant voice is the most authoritative, regardless of its pitch. Also, varying pitch is good for the voice and keeping the attention of the listener.

The Harmonizer



I ASKED MY GRANDPA, "AFTER 65 YEARS, YOU STILL CALL GRANDMA DARLING, BEAUTIFUL, AND HONEY. WHAT'S THE SECRET?" HE SAID, "I FORGOT HER NAME 5 YEARS AGO AND I'M SCARED TO ASK HER."

The Christmas Song is a classic Christmas song written in 1945 by Robert Wells and Mel Tormé and commonly subtitled "Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire." According to Tormé, the song was written during a blistering hot summer in an effort to "stay cool by thinking cool." He recalled, "I saw a spiral pad on his (Wells') piano with four lines written in pencil. They started 'Chestnuts roasting...Jack Frost nipping...Yuletide carols...Folks dressed up like Eskimos.' Bob didn't think he was writing a song lyric. He said he thought if he could immerse himself in winter, he could cool off. Forty minutes later, that song was written." Tormé wrote all of the music and some of the lyrics.

Great Philosophers of the Past Century

Jean Kerr: *The only reason they say 'Women and children first' is to test the strength of the lifeboats.*

Prince Philip: *When a man opens a car door for his wife, it's either a new car or a new wife.*

Harrison Ford: *Wood burns faster when you have to cut and chop it yourself.*

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Preservation of the Pipes

With Winter on its way, even out here in the desert, we have to be more proactive about our health. Staying active, eating healthy and getting a good night's sleep will boost the body's defenses, but what else can we do to fight off colds and stay healthy? Here are a couple of tips.

Use the "elbow cough." Bacteria can live on the hand for long periods of time following a politely covered cough. Cover your cough into your elbow instead, since germs usually do not survive on clothing for quite as long, and you won't be touching anyone with your elbow.

Wash or sanitize your hands more frequently, since bacteria live on doorknobs and other items touched by a lot of people. Sanitize or wash after using a tissue so you don't spread germs to others.

Finally, hydrate! Not only is drinking water beneficial to the body and singing voice, it also helps keep coughing down. Water can serve to clear up irritating post nasal drip and help soothe a cough. *Sharon Paquette Lose in Choral Director Magazine*



How Music Benefits You

When you listen to music, your brain releases dopamine, the same neurotransmitter that makes you feel good when you eat chocolate. It's also associated with being in love. One small study found that just the anticipation of knowing the best part of a song is coming can get the dopamine flowing.

Listening to music that brings you joy causes the blood vessels to expand, increasing blood flow and improving cardiovascular health, according to a study by the university of Maryland. A separate review of 26 studies covering almost 1,000 heart disease patients found that music reduced heart rate, blood pressure and anxiety. *Readers Digest*



Larry Farmer joined us recently at the invitation of his friend, Jim Maxon. As a full-time caregiver, Larry says he is thankful that Jim saw that he needed an outside activity in his life.

Larry was born in Washington, DC and spent his career there, working as an electrician through Local 26 of the IBEW. He started singing in choral groups at the Richard Montgomery High School in Rockville, Maryland and says he has a funny story to tell about how that came about. That experience gave him a love of singing in choirs and other singing groups that has lasted throughout his life. He's been active in churches since he was in his 20s and always has been a part of their choirs.

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After he retired 15 years ago, Larry and his wife, Betty, moved to Las Cruces. Here they joined the Morning Star United Methodist Church and both sang in the choir. For about four years, they also sang with the New Desert Harmony Singers.

About five years ago, Betty had a stroke that affected her left side. The following year, she fell and broke her left hip. A year later, she broke the same hip in another fall. As her full-time caregiver, Larry says he welcomes the diversion that being a part of Young at Heart provides.



Eddie Cantor was known as an “illustrated song” performer, comedian, dancer, singer, actor and songwriter. Born in New York City in 1892 as Isidore Itzkowitz, he was regarded almost as a family member by millions because his top-rated radio shows revealed intimate stories and amusing anecdotes about his wife Ida and five daughters.

Among his hits that we have sung are “Makin’ Whoopie,” “Ida,” “If You Knew Susie,” “Ma! He’s Makin’ Eyes at Me,” “Baby Face,” and “How Ya Gonna Keep ‘em Down on the Farm (After They’ve Seen Paree?)”.

Cantor’s eye-rolling song-and-dance routines led to his nickname, “Banjo Eyes.” His charity and humanitarian works were extensive, and he is credited with coining the phrase and helping to develop the March of Dimes.

If you want the rainbow, you have to tolerate the rain

Fortune Cookie

This is Your Newsletter, so if you see or hear something interesting or helpful about singing, music and health, or anything else we have in common, please share it with your chorus family. Just send it to me, and I’ll try to include it in a future newsletter.

Ray

DO Sing in the Shower

The shower, with its cocoon of privacy and superlative acoustics, brings out the diva in us all. And we would be wise to take the steamy stage and croon away. Research shows that *singing enhances immunity and boosts your mood*. So, whatever your style, sing your heart out, and soak in song’s health benefits. *Submitted by Joan Kowalski*

Singing for Health in Canada

At the Heritage, a seniors’ center in West Kelowna, B.C., Canada, 50 members of *Sing for Your Life Canada* get together for an hour-and-a-half to belt out nostalgic selections from their handouts—“Edelweiss,” “Somewhere My Love” and Vera Lynn ditties from the 1940s. “The goal is to get our members’ brains to really work,” says music facilitator Patricia Dalglish.

Sing for Your Life Canada was established by Nigel Brown in 2009 to combine equal parts activity and advocacy. The sessions are the result of two clinical studies by the U.K.–based Sidney De Haan Research Centre for Arts and Health, which examines the role of participative art activities in promoting individual well-being. The research subjects reported numerous benefits, from better lung function and breathing to reduced stress and improved mood. *Readers Digest Canada*