

WHAT IS DIRECTOR CERTIFICATION AND WHY DO WE NEED IT?

by

Ron Knickerbocker for the Chorus Director Development Committee

It has long been acknowledged by the leaders of the Barbershop Harmony Society that the most important difficulty we face when it comes to recruitment and retention of members is the shortage of qualified chorus directors. Certainly almost every chapter has someone who stands in front of them every week and waves his/ her arms while the rest of us sing. Unfortunately, all too many of us got that position, not because of our vast wealth of musical knowledge or our consummate hand skills, but because we were willing to do it.

A few years ago a group of very knowledgeable chorus directors was appointed to discuss ways of solving this difficult problem. They came up with ideas to help chorus directors in several different areas, and some of those ideas have been implemented over the last several years. One of those was to prepare a list of things every good chorus director should know and be able to do. This led to a development of classes to aid the director in his quest to improve his qualifications. These classes are taught at the annual Harmony College / Director College. The plan is that directors will sign up for and complete a planned sequence of classes that will allow them to progress toward greater proficiency as musical leaders. As each director satisfies the requirements for “Certified Director” or “Master Director”, he will receive a certificate of achievement. His achievement will be celebrated in his chapter and at an appropriate District event.

Obviously, one of our goals is to encourage directors to attend Directors College. There are several reasons for this, not the least of which is to meet other directors who face the same challenges we all do and have an opportunity for a discussion of different approaches they might have tried. From a personal point of view, I am a life-long educator as well as a life-long learner. In every class I attend either as a teacher or a student, I learn something new or hear of a different approach to some problem I face. Attending Directors College is good for us on lots of levels; as a social escape, as an educational opportunity, as a chance to build a support network, as an ego-builder when we find that many other directors face the same frustrations we do, or possibly as an ego-deflator when we discover that we haven't handled some situations as well as we could have. In any case, it helps us grow as directors and musicians.

What does the certificate do for you? A certificate has no inherent worth. Having a certificate won't make anyone a better director. The pursuit of that certificate, however, is sure to do so. It indicates to you and to the members of your chorus that you are trying to become a better director- to attempt to make it possible for the members of your chapter to enjoy this hobby even more. In all likelihood the chapter will sing and perform better because of your continuing efforts to improve your directing and musical skills. As an added bonus, you get to experience an intense, exhilarating, and re-energizing week at Director College immersed in Barbershop at its best.

Please give serious consideration to joining the Director Certification Program. Applications are available from your district VP for Chorus Director Development or from me. Your Chapter, your District, and your Society will thank you.