



ON THE RECHORD

Capital Chorus newsletter Feb/March 2015

No 10



New MD heralds new era for Capital Chorus; Pippa celebrates with “selfie”

How the chorus “photo-bombed” Pippa’s “selfie”.

Capital Chorus has a new musical director. She’s Pippa Goodall, a music graduate and experienced conductor, who at the age of 23 is the youngest person ever to have led the chorus.

Pippa began her musical career early. A former chorister at Salisbury Cathedral, she formed and conducted a girl’s close-harmony choir while still at school, but it was during her time at Manchester University that she was bitten by the “barbershop bug”. As an undergraduate she attended the boys’ chorus concert in her first term, and was transfixed throughout the whole performance. She went on to found a girls’ chorus among the students, Amethyst Cappella, in the process becoming the University’s first ever female student conductor. In her second and third year she conducted a local church choir, and another group specialising in early choral music. She achieved first class honours, and upon graduating Pippa joined Surrey-based Viva Acappella, an ensemble ranked among the top two-dozen female barbershop choruses in the world.

Pippa’s appointment followed a rehearsal “audition” and a rigorous question-and-answer session involving the whole chorus, to which all candidates were invited to submit. The entire chorus was impressed with her authority, her attention to detail, the understanding which she brought to each song and the clarity with which she was able to explain how she wanted the chorus to interpret it.

Pippa has told us she’d like the chorus to be heard more often at concerts and public events. She’s keen that we should attract new members and she’d also like us to improve our placing in competition at the annual British Barbershop convention, which takes place in May at Llandudno in North Wales. In the meantime she’s already brought a breath of fresh air to our Monday night rehearsals. At her first one she set a new precedent by taking a “selfie” with the chorus and posting it on Facebook where the picture was immediately greeted with 25 “likes”. For those of us still getting to grips with the complexities of the personal computer this does indeed seem like a new era.

Forthcoming events.

Concert of “Historic Proportions”



Capital Chorus are delighted to have been invited to perform as special guests on Saturday, February 28th at a concert hosted by our near neighbours, the Magna Carta Barbershop Chorus from Staines. It's 800 years since the signing of the historic Charter which still underpins our cherished liberties, so it might not be too far-fetched to suggest that the two choruses will be combining to do for Barbershop what the Barons did to King John – namely nailing some superb ringing chords and asserting our rights to sing some awesomely good songs. Word has it that male and female quartets will also be performing on the night, along with the Capital Concert band. If you're up for some sparkling entertainment then the venue is The White House Community Centre in Hampton – 45, The Avenue TW12 3RN. Tickets will be available on the door at £10 – adults and £5- Children, or you can book in advance by calling 01895 231876. The show starts at 7,30pm – we'll look forward to seeing you.

Later, in May the chorus will be appearing at the annual London Sangerstevne choral festival, which takes place at St Matthews Church, Ealing Common. The event is free to attend and features choirs from across Europe singing in a wide variety of choral styles. Further details can be found on the event website <http://www.londonsangerstevne.org.uk/festival>

Another chance to see...



The Chorus performed with Rock Choir in a memorable concert last November at St Barnabas Church in Ealing. Fortunately the event was recorded and can be found on YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KwHcvlY3tg8>

Behind the Scenes. A Ballad of Copyright

There's nothing that Capital Chorus loves more than to sing. But to sing in public requires a great deal of work behind the scenes. In the next few editions of "On The Record" we'll focus on the efforts our hardworking singers put in "below the radar". In part one, Richard Millar (lead) takes us through some of the pitfalls of intellectual property and a song about a mining disaster.....



Richard Millar

The principles of copyright are easy. A creative work entitles the creator to royalties during his/her life and for 70 years after. Often the creator will sell the rights to a company which collects all future royalties in exchange for an up-front lump sum. Barbershop songs have an additional dimension – the arranger has to be paid too – but the principle is the same.

During his time as the Chorus musical director last year Julian Nicholl had negotiated for us to perform an arrangement of a superb American folk-song, The Ballad of Springhill, with well-known US barbershop singer/arranger Steve Tramack. It happened before I became involved, so clearing the rights for us to sing the song looked easy. Steve works with BHS, the US barbershop lot, who had the rights from Stornking Music, song-writer Peggy Seeger's copyright owner; fine, except the BHS right only covered North America. So, working with Steve who was very helpful throughout, I had to begin again: going to an agent in Beverley Hills who managed the Stornking portfolio and asking for permission to sing Peggy's song in the UK. The agent said it would cost the chorus \$300 for a period of two years. I am used to paying £50 to £75 with no time limit. So I got down on my email knee and explained we are a small chorus of poor Brits, singing for fun on a Monday night with occasional gigs for charity, and also that we loved the song, and desperately wanted to be able to sing it. Thankfully she came back with an offer of \$60 and no time limit. "Done deal." But she had not realised that while we were negotiating BHS had acquired the world-wide rights to the song.

So I had to scrap the deal with Stornking and go back to BHS and pay for its involvement: BHS clearance, per copy fee, territory fee, arrangers fee.

Just as well it is a great ballad for us to have in our rep.

Richard Millar, Capital Chorus Copyright Man

Bog-standard quartet is flushed with success.



Skulking in a ladies' loo in the early hours of a cold December morning is perhaps not the most obvious way for an aspiring quartet to gain a reputation. As our chorus chairman warned us, "you can get arrested for that sort of thing".

To be sure the emailed appeal we received from the BABS (British Association of Barbershop Singers) quartet register had seemed intriguing. The booking was for 5,30am. The client was, apparently, ITV. And the gig, so we were told, involved providing some "pampering" for the television presenter Philip Schofield as he freshened up towards the end of a marathon 24 hour charity broadcast.

At this point doubt set in. Our quartet, Apocappella had been together for only a few months. Our sound is very much a work in progress and we weren't sure that our harmonies and blend of voices had anything like the capacity to pamper anyone. Our first outing at the prelims round of the annual quartet competition in Birmingham last November garnered us a workmanlike 31st place. To our immense chagrin we came a single point behind our friendly rivals, Routemasters. Both quartets were formed by members of Capital Chorus, and at the following Monday's chorus night you'd have thought Routemasters had just won the World Cup, while Apocappella were sick as the proverbial parrot.

But as Julian, our lead said "what the hell." So we phoned the number and spoke to a very friendly and encouraging TV researcher named Rosie. The first thing Rosie wanted to know was whether we had a video the producers could view and assess. The second question was "did we have our own hats and dickie-bows?" This was not the sort of thing we were hoping to be asked. If we lacked a little confidence in our musical aptitude as a quartet, then this was as nothing compared to our sartorial shortcomings. For our prelims performance we'd managed to find four checked-shirts that almost matched, and the judge who debriefed us had offered some gentle chiding over our casual appearance. What was needed was an emergency trip to the gentleman's outfitters. Appropriately the day was Black Friday which, like barbershop itself, is a recent import from the United States. Even more fittingly, Black Friday turned out to be Black Tie Friday in the shop we tried first – for one day only the neckwear we needed was on special offer, and happily, we bought it for a snip.

So, another call to Rosie who promised that ITV would find us some straw boaters, before moving on to the knotty problem of whether we had a song in our repertoire with the capacity to "pamper" Philip Schofield. The producers, it seemed, were happy enough with our sound, but Rosie explained that what they really wanted

was a song which would “inject some fun into the early hours to keep Phillip chipper and bring in the money for Text Santa!” There was a collective gulp as we looked over our limited repertoire and realised how tall an order this was. Ballads and easybeat songs simply didn’t cut it. We even considered speeding up a couple of polecats but in the end we plumped for a doo-wop song called “Good old A Cappella” which seemed to fit the bill nicely.

But how would it go on the day? Oddly, there was no time to feel nervous as we were ushered into the four cubicles which lined the brightly-lit ladies restroom deep within ITV’s London Television Centre. Dave our bass, had to share his none-too-spacious stall with Becky, another production assistant who would give him the cue to open the door and begin to sing (she had a walkie-talkie). And did Philip Schofield enjoy the song? We can’t say for sure because – such are the demands of a busy live programme that we never got to speak to him. But he jiggled along with vigour as he washed and shaved, and his reflection in the bathroom mirror looked happy enough. He also managed to time his ablutions so that they ended just as the song did – which is a trick I guess you must learn when you work on the telly. As for our inexperienced quartet, the elation at having pulled off this very unusual gig without a hitch lasted most of the day. And if we ever want to relive the moment, well, there’s always YouTube. You’ll find us here https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xi8sDk_X8-0

John Beesley (tenor)

Wonderweb

Thanks to the tireless efforts of **Cliff Abelman** (bass) the brand new **Capital Chorus** website is waiting to welcome you. It’s packed with news, features, photos, video and information, and you’ll find it at www.capitalchorus.co.uk

PS. Don’t forget you can find **CapitalChorus** on **Facebook** and follow **@capitalchorus** on **Twitter** for all the latest news, gigs and gossip from London’s leading men’s barbershop harmony chorus. Or why not come and meet us in person any Monday evening from 7.45pm. We practice at **Kingsdown Methodist Church, Northfields Avenue W13 9PR.** (Nearest Tube Northfields). We look forward to seeing you soon.