



Harmo-News

*Welcome to Harmo-News,
the Newsletter of the Plainsmen.*

Once more Dear Friends

First up - International News.

Are the years getting shorter or what???? It seems like only a few weeks ago I was reporting that Forefront had won the International Quartet Contest and we were all looking forward to seeing and hearing them in Blenheim. Can you believe that they only have two weeks left of their Championship year? Yep, Convention in Las Vegas is just around the corner. The contestants have all been confirmed, the qualifying scores published and the performance draws decided. I say "draws" because there are 3 titles up for grabs, Collegiate quartet, Open Quartet and Chorus.

So, who are the top contenders? A couple of surprises in the Open Quartets. Firstly, Main Street, old favourites of mine (Lead, Tony de Rosa) are in the contest. I heard a rumour that they had retired after a succession of top 5 placings but no cigar, but rumours of their demise were obviously exaggerated. They are ranked 2nd with a qualifying score of 90.3. If they can pull it off, and I hope they can, Tony will become only the second person, alongside Joe Connolly, to win 4 Int'l Quartet Golds. Interestingly, Joe sang Lead alongside Tony's Bari in two of those winning quartets, Keepsake and Platinum.

Third qualifiers, Throwback, includes a couple of guys many of us have seen and heard live. Remember Sean Devine, who has been out to NZ as Lead in OC Times? I remember him well - when Men Aloud struck Senior Gold at Takapuna I was presented with my medal by none other than SD who then proceeded to give me a hug. Hugged by Sean Devine - Barbershop heaven!!!! Anyway he's singing Lead in Throwback and alongside him as Bass is Michael Skutt. Michael is a young guy, late 20's, who a couple of years ago won Collegiate Gold and then came out



Throwback

as replacement Bass in OC Times while Corey Hunt was otherwise engaged. Beautiful voice, born to sing, he'll collect a lot more gold before he's done. They qualified 3rd on 90.0 You might like to

check out this link https://youtu.be/U8ZT6_fkh9E where they sing "He's my Brother". Lovely piece of work. I love the way all four of them contribute to selling the story, vocally, physically and emotionally. Truly supportive quartet singing.

Top qualifiers are Signature on 91.9. They shot to prominence last year, coming from nowhere the previous year to claim 4th with 90.9.

It's tight at the top!!!

Signature

Other people of interest - Jacob and Rasmus of Ringmasters fame are singing again in Stockholm Syndrome (qual 9th on 85.1) and the Bari from Ringmasters, the incomparable



Emmanuel Roll, has joined a new quartet, Dream Machine, who qualified down the field with 77. Also known to us is Alex Morris, an Aussie who was part of the Contest Judging Team in Blenheim. He's singing in Lockout, 78.

All the usual big names are lined up in the Chorus contest. Here's the top 5 with their qualifying scores

Vocal Majority 95, Central Standard 92.9, Masters of Harmony 92.9, Toronto Northern Lights 92.4, Zero 89.1. With 3 Chorusses on 92 it's going to be a great contest.

And, in the Collegiate Contest, NZ will again be represented by B Flads. All this stuff is available as a Live Feed. Check it out on the BHS website. All you need is a credit card and a computer. Perfect way to spend a Sunday afternoon.

Local News.

There was a lot of interest in the Naked Choir and, in the end, I think, the judges got it right when they announced Voices Co as the winners. Those of you who were tuned in will have heard Matt Gifford's comment, as the Judges deliberated, that it came down to a matter of "heart vs head".



Voices Co.

Only Matt would really know what he meant by that, but for me it came down to this. Resonance, the family group, had some lovely harmonies and wonderful stage presence. They almost had a Barbershop quality in that many of

their chords locked in a way that Voices Co's didn't. In fact, with my ear now accustomed to Barbershop tuning, there were times when I thought some members of Voices Co were singing flat. They weren't of course, they were in tune by "equal" tuning standards, but not according to the "just" intonation that Barbershop uses.

So, it came down to the harmonic tuning and stage presence of Resonance vs the polished technical performance of Voices Co, heart vs head.

September will see the Westminster Chorus in Christchurch, which promises to be one of the musical highlights on the Ch-ch scene this year. Get your friends and family to mark the date on their calendars, September 16.

By chance I came across another event in Auckland on the following week. It's an a cappella music festival which will include

workshops and coaching sessions during the week with a series of concerts at the weekend.

The headline group, who will lead the workshops etc, are “The Real Group”. I’ve never heard of them but I noticed that the Stellar Singers (MD Brian Lee) are one of the associated groups. Brian is a past NZ quartet Gold medallist and was the founder of the Pride of Auckland Chorus. He’s an extremely accomplished musician and my thinking is that, if he’s involved, this will be a Festival worth attending.

Is there anyone else out there who might be interested? We could perhaps go as a group. Check it out - VoCo Festival.

Competition.

With the Westminster Chorus coming soon to a venue near you I thought I’d ask a question related to them. So

Who is the Music Director of the Westminster Chorus?

And for a bonus prize, name two Int’l Gold winning quartets whose chorus affiliations are with the Westminster Chorus.

(NB - I didn’t specify a category.)

Even more chocolate for naming their members.

Answers please on Mon 26th. WIN CHOCOLATE!!!!!!!

Cheers
Bryan.