



LASTING FRIENDSHIPS – ENDURING MUSIC
PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

June 2019

IT'S ALL ABOUT BEING RELEVANT!

As many of you know, I was at the International Convention for a few days last week. I generally show up for the July Convention on Sunday, the District Presidents meet for an informal meeting and dinner on Sunday, and then the District Presidents meet all day on Monday. We address issues of concern to the District Presidents, and we share ideas and best practices with each other. The next day we generally attend the Society Board of Directors meeting which is open to the public. At that meeting I, as the District Presidents Council Moderator, have the opportunity to address the Board.

This year however, the Society Board of Directors held open Board meetings on both Monday and Tuesday. In fact, a proposal to the Society Board made by the District Presidents Council was taken up by the Board first thing Monday morning. The Council determined to start its meeting later so that we could attend the Society Board Meeting that was addressing that proposal.

You may recall in a prior letter I indicated that the Council had sent a proposal to the Society Board which would provide that each District be given a vote for each officer and director on the Society Board. The Society Board initially tabled the proposal, but then, in June, moved it to the July Agenda. The discussion undertaken by the Board was the single most eye-opening experience I have had in my 4 years on the District President's Council. To let you know the process, each member of the Board was allowed 5 minutes to voice his opinion regarding the proposal. Then the District Presidents Council was allowed to have two members address the Board for 5 minutes each.

The eye opening portion came when virtually each member of the Society Board indicated two things in their presentations:

1. The Society Board of Directors is not responsible to the dues paying membership of the Society. Rather the Board sees it responsibility to the singing community as a whole. As such, the membership is not a focus of the Board.
2. According to the Society Board, no member of the District Presidents Council (and by extension anyone else) has any idea what it takes to be a member of the Society Board, to whom or what they are responsible, and exactly what its job/responsibility is,

and so the District Presidents don't have the necessary background to cast a vote for members of the Board of Directors.

The hubris, the absolute arrogance, of the individual members of the Board of Directors was almost a shock to me. However, given the decisions that have been made over the past year, the manner in which those decisions have been made, the attitude of the members of the Board of Directors regarding the comments and concerns of our dues paying members, leads me to the inevitable conclusion that the Board does, in fact, feel completely insulated from any accountability to the dues paying members of the Society.

So, after all of those speeches by each member of the Board, I had the opportunity to address the Board before they voted. The thrust of my presentation was that, in allowing each District to have a vote for each officer and Board Member there would be a mechanism where the dues paying members of the Society would have their voices heard in the vote. While I recognized that the Board did not feel any obligation to the dues paying members of the Society, they needed to consider the financial constituency of the dues paying members, without which, there would not be sufficient financial support to have the Society continue.

The Board rejected the proposal of the District Presidents Council, and then modified it to allow the Council to have one vote beginning in July, 2020. We will see how that plays out.

As regards the proposed contest rule changes to which so many of you responded to the Board and the survey, I want you to know your voice was heard. It was not well received, but it was heard. I was chided, and later reprimanded, for asking my District members to send responses to the Board of Directors. I was reprimanded for disclosing to my membership constituency the proposal before the Board wanted it released. My response was that I am not responsible to the Board for its timing decisions, but I am responsible to communicate issues to my membership, to who I am responsible. I would not, and did not apologize for bringing the matter to the membership.

Congratulations to Frontier for its 18th place finish at International. Once again they have shown they are an elite quartet. The music they provide for our enjoyment is top quality, and the Pioneer District is proud to have them represent us. Similarly, Hemidemisemiquaver 4 was outstanding in their set on the International stage. Pioneer is justly proud of the way they represent our District at International. Thanks to both quartets for your dedication to the art form, and for your representation of Pioneer.

If, at any time, you have anything you want to ask me, or have the Board review or address, feel free to contact me by email at pio.district.pres@gmail.com. I will do my best to get back to you in an appropriate amount of time, or put you in contact with the appropriate member of the District Board.

Dave Montera
2019 President – Pioneer District