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The Troub



Enriching lives through singing and serving local communities



PIONEER DISTRICT NEWSLETTER

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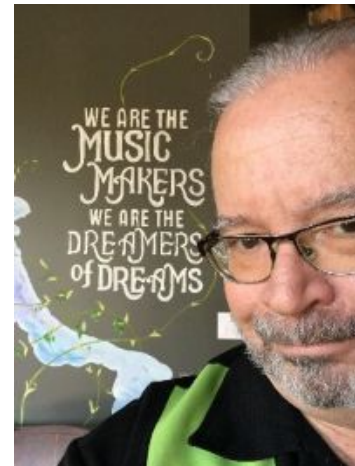
Pioneer District President

Traveling the New Path Forward

Plant the bulbs that will flourish for decades

April greetings! The hope of spring is eternal and the hope for singing together is real, even though we are in a holding pattern for the moment. When I included the line below in my March message, I intended it to be a caution and not a prophecy. ***"The evolving world around us may well mean your path might not be***

straight nor the pace swift. It is certain, however, to require all of us to be flexible.”



The current spike in Covid cases will dissipate and we will travel down our Path Forward in due time. As you proceed on your chosen path, I also remind you of this suggestion from last month, ***“Pay attention and travel safely, my friends.”***

Final preparations underway for UnConventional 2

I encourage you to [sign up and participate in the district's UnConventional 2](#) event April 23 and 24. Details are included below. Sure, we'd rather gather in person — and we will someday. In the meantime, being together in the digital realm is a wonderful alternative. This convention has some new features, including a quartet show and [benefit raffle](#).

A word about the UnConventional raffle

The hands-down favorite part of my personal barbershop journey is the annual MountainTown Harmony Explosion camp for young singers, ages 15-25. It took me a bit of time to overcome the disappointment when the 2020 event was cancelled. Planning for 2021 is underway and change will be part of it. A new itinerary and financial model are two changes, as is a flexible model that will allow us to make 11th hour adjustments if we need to. The last thing we want to do is to cancel it.

We're excited for our singers that the new financial model includes a cut in the registration fee — from \$289 to \$89. This is possible thanks to a change in itinerary and to a new approach in balancing the budget.

It was suggested that district convention raffle proceeds might be best used close to home. The district board agreed and approved Harmony Explosion 2021 to be the beneficiary in order to reduce out-of-pocket costs for families. We recently acquired the raffle license and hope you will support the cause by [purchasing tickets](#). Click that link or visit our district Facebook page.

Website News

One component of a useful website is current information. You can help with that by sharing significant news items about your chapter or quartet. The addition of bullet points sent from

around our district will become our history when reviewed by the next generation of barbershoppers. You can email your bullet points to the district gmail account at pioneerdistrictbhs@gmail.com

Spring is stirring around Pioneer

My mother is an avid gardener. People make a point to travel by her yard, especially in early spring, when hearty and healthy bunches of daffodils are the headliners. My go-to saying for spring is “April showers bring May flowers.” We certainly have experienced some rainy days over the past year, and we’re due those May flowers! My wish is that you overcome those dreary days and begin to exhibit your full colors collectively. Mom would remind us the bulbs we plant today can flourish for decades to come.

Be well, my friends!

SINGcerely!

Joe McDonald
District President

Read previous president updates by [CLICKING HERE](#)

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Who’s ready to see their friends from across the district?

UnConventional 2 brings us all together April 23 and 24

What’s the next best thing to gathering in person? UnConventional 2, the Pioneer District’s spring convention, April 23 and 24, rain or shine!

It’s a great way to connect with old friends and make new ones. You’ll be able to see each other, laugh, sing, learn and prepare for the days when in-person rehearsals, concerts and conventions return to our lives.



Here are the highlights:

- It's free. [Register today!](#)
- Participate in [keynote addresses, learning sessions, panel discussions and discussion circles.](#)
- You won't want to miss [Sandi Wright](#), the internationally acclaimed barbershop singer, director, coach and judge, when she talks Saturday afternoon about wellness and caring of the aging voice.
- More than a dozen current and past Pioneer quartets will send your spirits soaring during an original, recorded show called Chorditorium, at 3:15 p.m. Saturday. Trust us, you'll be singing and smiling for days after this grand finale!
- Buy your tickets for an exciting [reverse-drawing raffle](#) while they last and do your part to help families offset the cost of this summer's Harmony Explosion camp for youth ages 15-25. Reverse raffle means we'll draw tickets for a couple of hours Saturday afternoon, with the owner of the last remaining ticket slated to win \$400. You need not be present to win.
- You really want to see your friends again. Go ahead. [Register now!](#) You'll receive an email Wednesday reminding you of the login info.

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BHS board member Maria Christian builds on history

Michigan native sees opportunities, helps others sing and grow

Music runs deep and it runs strong in Maria Christian.

Her father helped found the acclaimed Brazeal Dennard Chorale in Detroit in 1972, which included fellow Detroit Public Schools teachers and music educators and is one of the longest standing organized choral groups in the country.

Her grandmother, Gladys Wade Dillard, was a music educator who started the first community school of music in Detroit and taught many of the city's jazz greats, including Tommy Flanagan.

Today, Christian is in her 11th year directing Song of the Lakes Sweet Adeline's Chorus in Flint and sings bass in the First Class quartet.



She was one of the first female members in the Barbershop Harmony Society, noting that when full membership became possible, "You didn't have to ask me twice!" She had long participated in BHS programs as she sought to learn from others who excelled in barbershop.

This year, she was elected a member at large on the Society's Board of Directors and serves as the only director from the Pioneer District.

"I've always believed opportunities present themselves and you can either run from them or embrace them," said Christian, a principal analyst with DTE Energy whose role often includes drafting policy for underserved communities and low-income populations.

Her perspectives often come from being a high school and collegiate athlete and basketball coach, a chorus director, wife and mother. They include:

- Life-long learning is essential. Barbershop Harmony Society's Harmony University was a life changer each of the four years she attended.
- Magic happens when people sing together.
- Those who achieve vocal success have a responsibility to help others enjoy singing.

Christian respects the all-male traditions of barbershop, just as she respects the all-female traditions of the Sweet Adelines. At the same time, she notes that advancements can happen when you look further.

Earlier this month, Christian talked about the evolution of barbershop just before joining a Zoom call to learn from the Rochester-based Guardians of Harmony as they planned their return to rehearsals.

“Here’s how I explain what’s possible. Think about an umbrella and about opportunities. Your chapter can have an all-male chorus and also have other brands or products,” Christian said. “What products can we offer to serve our communities in all capacities? We can respect tradition while also understanding that opportunities come with expansion.”

Christian, who’s been in champion choruses and quartets, also is a strong voice for smaller chapters focused on fun, camaraderie and improvement rather than high-level competition.

“The majority of choruses, both men and women, are small. They’re not the big choruses; those are few and far between. ... The small choruses are the ones, just like small-town America, that do a lot with a little,” Christian said.

- [Watch a clip from Maria’s interview](#)

“People look at Vocal Majority and Vocal Spectrum and say, ‘I can’t do that.’ I say, ‘Well, you might not. But you can do YOU, and that’s what we’re going to focus on. ... And when you’re you, great things happen.’”

Sounds a lot like advice Maria once received her friend, “Papa” Jack Slamka.

“We were up at camp in Harrisville and he took me aside and said, ‘Maria, don’t you ever sing bass like a man. You sing bass the way you sing bass!’”

You do you. And magic happens.

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Choose your vocal adventure



Check out this free [YouTube series](#) from Donya Metzger, who serves on the Harmony University faculty. You'll find 100 days of vocal exercises for embodied, expressive singing. What could be better as we think more and more about rehearsing together again someday?

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