

R&R Bass Clef Choirs Feature YOUTH HARMONY FESTIVAL RECEIVES ENTHUSIASTIC



by Gary Lindsay
President
Harmony Hawks Chorus

The energy was high as 70 boys began filling the risers in Kelly Truax's classroom on October 5.

They were there for an afternoon of fun and learning how to blend their voices in barbershop harmony.

The boys were from two Eastern Iowa schools. John Hayden, who served as the clinician for the event, brought many of his high school singers from Benton Community. Kelly's students were seventh, eighth, and ninth graders.

One of the Midwest's top quartets, Minor Details, was on hand to help coach the boys and demonstrate vocal technique and the unique sound of barbershop harmony. This quartet, made up mostly of young guys from the Mason City area, competed later at the Fall Central States Barbershop Contest and won second place in a very competitive district.

Our schedule had the students arrive for the afternoon, work with the clinicians for four hours, break for a pizza dinner, and present a program for friends and family at 7 p.m. During the clinic time, the boys learned a bit of barbershop theory, heard the quartet demonstrate, and learned two barbershop songs. They performed the two songs at the evening concert that was attended by approximately 120 of their friends and family members.

The event was the Cedar Rapids Young Men in Harmony Festival, sponsored by the Harmony Hawks Chorus. We hope it will become an annual event. This has long been a goal of

our chorus, because we believe in the value of music education for everyone and that the benefits of singing last for a lifetime. Our chorus motto, "Singing for a lifetime," can only be realized if students are introduced to singing while young.

Several members of chorus were on hand to assist at the event. In addition to providing supervision, they joined the boys on the risers and at sectional breakouts to provide support singing the four parts. Sectionals were led by the Minor Details quartet members, and the boys seemed to really enjoy being led by excellent singers only a few years older than themselves. The quartet has led similar workshops in the past, and one of the quartet members said that having chorus members on hand to support the boys singing was critical to the success of this event.

The chorus also did the fundraising for the event by giving their own donations and seeking grant support. One of the major funders of the event was the Diamond V Community Fund who provided a \$1,000 grant. The funding was used to pay the clinicians, provide snacks and copies of the sheet music that the boys took with them, and an all-they-could-eat pizza dinner. Warning: "All-you-can-eat" with boys this age is a prodigious amount! (*I think they ordered nearly 50 pizzas! – Kelly)

The Barbershop Harmony Society provides many resources for music educators at their website (<https://www.barbershop.org/education/music-educator-resources>). These resources work with both large and small numbers of students, and a cappella barbershop music can be performed anywhere. Barbershop singing is accessible for all and develops good vocal technique and ear training.

The appeal of barbershop music for boys and young men is clear in the success of Kelly's

IVAL RESPONSE

program at Prairie Point. Both her boys and girls choruses have received enthusiastic responses in their many appearances on Harmony Hawks shows and those of our sister chorus Metro Mix. They also performed to a standing ovation at the district Barbershop Society convention in Cedar Rapids. It was also clear on the faces of these boys as they performed their newly earned music to the enthusiastic applause of the families and friends.



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