"AMERICA IN MINIATURE": CONSTRUCTING WHITE MASCULINITY THROUGH IMAGINED BLACK PERFORMANCE IN VERNACULAR AND CHORAL MUSIC OF THE UNITED STATES

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the construction of hegemonic white masculinity in the United States through performances of imagined Blackness that, through blackface minstrelsy, were created and solidified in the nineteenth century and, through its legacies, have continued to be performed and developed in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. While the blackface mask eventually fell out of favor, its embodied sonic legacies persisted, traces that Gage Averill calls "blackvoice" and Matthew D. Morrison calls "Blacksound." Nostalgia contributed heavily to blackface minstrelsy's popularity and its subsequent longevity as its listeners yearned for a fabricated past. I consider three musical communities to examine how the legacies of blackface minstrelsy have aided constructions of hegemonic white masculinity in United States vernacular and choral music in these examples, particularly through competition and fraternity. Chapter 2 examines the Barbershop Harmony Society, which, in 1938, codified a version of barbershop harmony that inaccurately credited the genre to white men and thus centered their participation. Chapter 3 focuses on the Philadelphia Mummers Parade, the nation's oldest folk festival, which has routinely invited controversy throughout its history due to the parade's syncretic origins of European yuletide customs and American blackface traditions. Finally, Chapter 4 considers choral performances, particularly my experiences as a performer in Pennsylvania Music Educators Association festivals in 2011 and 2012 and as a member (2012–2016) and director emeritus (2018–2024) of the University of Pennsylvania Glee Club. I analyze how these experiences privileged hegemonic white masculinity over nearly all other identities and how, in my role as director, I aimed to combat its continued (re)construction within the Glee Club. I demonstrate the continued construction of hegemonic white masculinity, through the vestigial practices of blackface minstrelsy, in these musical communities by engaging scholarship from a diverse array of

fields as well as employing autoethnography, data analysis, examination of historical documents, ethnographic interviews, and (participant) observation. I also offer potential avenues for deconstructing that hegemonic white masculinity through Black feminist resistance, as theorized by Patricia Hill Collins and exemplified in the work of the barbershop quartet, HALO, to hopefully enact lasting change in these genres and, eventually, the United States at large.

For my grandmother, Annamarie Christinzio,
who fostered my love of music and education at an early age;

And for my middle and high school music teacher, Gary Travis,
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While the phrase "Many hands make light work" is a bit trite, it holds true for doing something as arduous yet rewarding as writing a dissertation. In some ways, writing the "Acknowledgments" section was just as laborious as writing the body of the dissertation. Countless people have helped me achieve this goal, and while I thought I would know how to express my immense gratitude to them all, I worry that I may forget someone and that my words will not adequately convey just how indebted I am to all of the people who have impacted my life and this dissertation. But I will do my best!

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Rollo balances choral progress with tradition. I remember meeting Stephanie Doktor when she interviewed for an open music theory faculty position at Temple. During a question-and-answer portion of her lecture to current graduate students, my seemingly innocuous question turned into a riveting discussion between the two of us, and I knew that I wanted her to get the job—selfishly, because I wanted to continue talking with her and eventually ask her to be on this dissertation committee, and unselfishly, because she is a fantastic scholar. During my last semester of coursework, I was scrambling to find a course to add when I stumbled upon David Mindich's "Historical Methods for Media and Communication Research" course, housed in the media department. His seminar was instrumental in helping me understand how physical media, such as sheet music, helped to propagate the legacies of blackface minstrelsy, and David's suggestion of looking at the work of Svetlana Boym in conjunction with Stephen Foster was instrumental to this dissertation. I am immensely honored that he graciously agreed to serve as the external reader for my dissertation.

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CHAPTER 1

MINSTRELSY, WHITENESS, AND NOSTALGIA

In June 2022, having recently concluded my fourth season as the professional Director of the University of Pennsylvania Glee Club (Penn Glee Club), a group in which I was a member from 2012 to 2016, the club's undergraduate historian and I decided to catalog the organization's extensive musical and historical archives. The historian sorted through more than 160 years of historical documents while I focused on our extensive sheet music repository. As I pored over the tattering yellowed pages, sorting the music into "keep" and "cull" piles, the historian was surprised to find me putting arrangements of minstrel songs like "The Boatman's Dance" and "Oh! Susanna" into the "cull" pile. Her confusion quickly turned to understanding as I explained the sordid histories of the songs as rationale for their removal from the club's music library. "An organization with as long a history as ours is bound to have songs like this in our closet," I commented. "Sure," she replied, "but I was more shocked since these are songs I learned in elementary school."

About a month later, I held a meeting with my student music team to program our upcoming fall performance. One of the songs that had been suggested by a student was a well-known African American spiritual, and a member of the music team pushed hard for the club to perform it. The majority of the music team—which included the club's diversity, equity, and inclusion co-chairs—rebutted with arguments that the majority-white glee club was not the right group to perform spirituals, even if the club considered itself the university's unofficial musical ambassador. The spiritual was ultimately not selected for performance, though "Kanaval," a composition by Sydney Guillaume with lyrics in Haitian Creole, was enthusiastically supported by the entire music team.

I begin with these anecdotes to start to acknowledge my positionality in this research and to demonstrate the extent that whiteness in United States vernacular and choral music permeates discourse around who can perform what repertoire and in what context. (I discuss my experience as a member and director emeritus of the Penn Glee Club in more detail in Chapter 3.) In this dissertation, I argue that performances of imagined Blackness—calcified in the nineteenth century with the exploding popularity of blackface minstrelsy and its musical legacies—contribute to white male camaraderie and belonging in the United States. While the burnt cork synonymous with blackface minstrelsy has largely fallen out of favor in popular entertainment, the sonic legacies of blackface—what Gage Averill calls "blackvoice" and Matthew D. Morrison calls "Blacksound"—persist across multiple genres and styles, as do nonvocal vestigial practices of blackface minstrelsy.[1] This creation of identity through performance demonstrates Richard Dyer's assertion that "whites remain, for all their transcending superiority, dependent on non-whites for their sense of self."[2]

The phrase "America in miniature" in this dissertation's title was an insight shared with me by Niambi Powell, a singer and licensed clinical social worker who, with her barbershop quartet and nonprofit organization, uses barbershop music in therapeutic workshops to discuss antiracism.[3] Her phrase imagines the barbershop community, of which we are both members, as a microcosm of American[4] society, with all of its variety, history, challenges, and strengths. Through shared musical activity, the barbershop community

[1] Averill discusses his concept of blackvoice in his monograph *Four Parts, No Waiting: A Social History of American Barbershop Harmony* (Oxford University Press, 2003). Morrison discusses his concept of Blacksound in his monograph *Blacksound: Making Race and Popular Music in the United States* (University of California Press, 2024).
[2] Richard Dyer, *White*, 20th anniversary ed. (Routledge, 2017), 24.
[3] See Chapter 5 for more information.
[4] In this dissertation, my use of the term "American" is to refer specifically to the United States, except where noted otherwise.

fosters interactions that are shaped by members' identities and values and, through the special opportunities the community makes possible, shapes participants' and listeners' identities and values. Each of the musical communities discussed in this dissertation represent different versions of "America in miniature." In many ways, this dissertation is as much about the problems and promise of the United States as it is about the construction of hegemonic white masculinity in vernacular and choral music. Keeping that framework in mind helps explain hegemonic white masculinity's continued existence in these communities.

Why Study Whiteness?

Steve Garner argues that "whiteness has no stable consensual meaning," noting that it is best understood as a lens through which to view social relationships.[5] He also posits that whiteness only exists because of its relation to other racialized identities.[6] By Othering those identities through stereotype, whiteness creates a role for itself in society.[7] Garner also argues that whiteness is unmarked rather than invisible and that its unmarked status stems in part from its lack of definition.[8]

Dyer argues that centering whiteness, and thus acknowledging its existence, demystifies it and negates its position as the default or normal state of being: "white people need to learn to see themselves as white, to see their particularity. In other words, whiteness needs to be made strange."[9] Such a decision was not made lightly, however. Dyer expresses his original trepidation in focusing on whiteness in his research, fearful that doing so may draw attention to it and give it another pedestal upon which to stand. Ultimately he decided

[5] Steve Garner, *Whiteness: An Introduction* (Routledge 2007), 1.
[6] Ibid., 2.
[7] Garner, *Whiteness*, 22.
[8] Ibid., 34–39.
[9] Dyer *White*, 10.

to press on, noting that "there is something at stake in looking at, or continuing to ignore, white racial imagery."[10]

So, too, did I consider what to center in this dissertation. In earlier outlines, the crux of my argument centered the imagined Blackness inherent in blackface minstrelsy. However, as I continued conducting research, I recognized a site of a more potent discussion: how performances of imagined Blackness helped to shape whiteness in the United States, particularly for white men. After all, while blackface minstrelsy depicted Black characters—caricatures—on stage, it was largely white men who embodied these harmful performances. As later parts of this introduction will discuss, the history and politics of blackface minstrelsy have been thoroughly explored in scholarship, and it is my aim to peel off the mask, so to speak, of (musical) whiteness, and specifically hegemonic white masculinity, by focusing on its construction through performances of imagined Blackness.

The tendrils of blackface minstrelsy's legacies infiltrate nearly every corner of popular music in the United States, and acknowledging the active role whiteness plays in this process demonstrates how white people, and especially white men, create and view themselves through musical performance at the expense of defining a musical and cultural Other. In discussing the growing trend of white people darkening their skin with tanning products, Dyer notes that

> the desire "to be black"—vividly expressed in white people's relationship to black music and dance—may well inform the fashion for tanning. […] There is no loss of prestige in this. […] It also displays white people's right to be various, literally to incorporate into themselves features of other peoples.[11]

[10] Dyer, *White*, 1.
[11] Ibid., 49.

Examples of white performers donning Blackness litter popular music, from more famous examples like Elvis Presley's appropriative rock 'n' roll to more niche examples like the Boswell sisters, a 1930s hot jazz vocal trio that leveraged the fact that they could "sound Black" to the contemporary ear to sing popular music in a style that had increasingly become all the rage with the rise of recording technology.[12] While this dissertation will focus more specifically on vernacular, folklike popular music communities—barbershop harmony and the Philadelphia Mummers—in addition to choral music, the fact that the legacies of blackface minstrelsy permeate nearly all United States popular music make the arguments discussed here all too relevant to a broader swath of music.[13]

Masculinity, Family, and Competition

Kevin M. Roy and Samuel H. Allen note that a singular definition of "masculinity" is impractical, instead preferring to view its construction as a continuous process as opposed to a logical endpoint.[14] They also acknowledge that "masculinities" has become a more common term to emphasize the multiplicities that word may represent.[15] For the purpose of this dissertation, however, I will focus specifically on hegemonic white masculinity, which has historically—and, in many ways, continues to be—idealized in the United States. Roy and Allen note that hegemonic white masculinity "confers the highest level of power and

[12] Laurie Stras, "White Face, Black Voice: Race, Gender, and Region in the Music of the Boswell Sisters," *Journal of the Society for American Music* 1, no. 2 (May 2007), https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196307070083.
[13] For more information about how the legacies of blackface minstrelsy were infused into popular music, I recommend Matthew D. Morrison's *Blacksound: Making Race and Popular Music in the United States* (University of California Press, 2024), specifically Part II.
[14] Kevin M. Roy and Samuel H. Allen, "Men, Families, and the Reconceptualization of Masculinities," *Journal of Family Theory & Review* 14, no. 1 (2022); 29, https://doi.org/10.1111/jftr.12441.
[15] Ibid., 30.

social capital to those who enact and express it, thereby ensuring the subordination of all other types of masculinities, of women, and of non-masculine 'others.'"[16] They also argue that "masculinities must be reconceptualized as intergenerational family-level processes."[17] These familial relations need not be through blood, either. Shana Goldin-Perschbacher notes that the reasons singer Jeff Buckley selected specific bandmates "had more to do with their character than their musical experience. […] Choosing the right male musician friends to share and support these moments would have been very important."[18]

Each musical community considered in this dissertation confirms the importance of metaphorical or literal family to the construction of hegemonic white masculinity. Many barbershoppers, particularly those in the twentieth century, joined the hobby thanks to male relations, such as fathers, brothers, and uncles. In the Barbershop Harmony Society, fifteen of its eighty-four international quartet champions have had at least one familial connection, with two quartets—the 1951 international quartet champion, the Schmitt Brothers, and the 2003 international quartet champion, Power Play—being entirely made up of family members. Many Philadelphia Mummers, including some of my interlocutors, remark on the importance of family connections in joining a Mummers brigade. The Penn Glee Club considers itself a family, and its alumni are encouraged to remain connected to the organization long after they graduate—as I will discuss in Chapter 3, this point proved tricky when the organization began exploring opening its membership to singers of all genders. And, in the case of some barbershop choruses and the Penn Glee Club, character fit is as

[16] Roy and Allen, "Men, Families, and Reconceptualization," 30.
[17] Ibid., 38.
[18] Shana Goldin-Perschbacher, "'Not with You But of You': 'Unbearable Intimacy' and Jeff Buckley's Transgendered Vocality," in *Oh Boy! Masculinities and Popular Music*, ed. by Freya Jarman-Ivens (Routledge, 2007), 224, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203941904.

important as musical ability. For instance, my barbershop chorus, Parkside Harmony, considers social fit when it makes audition decisions, and there are examples from my time in the Penn Glee Club of prolific singers being denied due to character concerns. The importance of family connections to the construction of hegemonic white masculinity cannot be overstated, and the musical communities discussed in this dissertation demonstrate how family—whether by blood or by association—is important to reifying hegemonic white masculinity within these communities.

Roy and Allen note that the construction of masculinity in the family often changes over time and can even be threatened, though this threat is often dispelled by older male relations modeling resistance through competition.[19] Indeed, competition is integral to the construction of hegemonic white masculinity in these musical communities. In his article about the traveling musical baseball team organized by bluegrass musician Bill Monroe, Bill Hardwig argues that "Monroe constantly speaks of bluegrass in terms that resonate with the bravado and desire for physical superiority so prevalent in traditional masculine competition."[20] In his discussion of Monroe's song, "Ten-Brooks and Molly (The Race-Horse Song)," Hardwig notes that the song "once again fuses Monroe's idea of his music with masculine competition, this time *eliminating the female presence* from this boys-only club" as the female horse, Molly, is run to death.[21] This elimination of a female presence is perhaps most compelling in the discussion of the Mummers wench in Chapter 3. Hardwig concludes by opining that "musical duels and competition, then, serve a very similar role to that of the

[19] Roy and Allen, "Men, Families, and Reconceptualization," 33.
[20] Bill Hardwig, "Cocks, Balls, Bats, and Banjos: Masculinity and Cooperation in the Bluegrass Music of Bill Monroe," *Southern Quarterly* 39, no. 4 (Summer 2001): 38, ProQuest.
[21] Ibid., 40 (my italics).

traditional duels with firearms."[22] Sam de Boise similarly argues that "homosocial networks are key in corroborating men's and boys' gender performances through music, with particular emphases on competition."[23]

While it may seem odd for a touring bluegrass band to challenge local baseball teams, it makes sense to consider sports competition as a way that these musicians helped define and defend their masculinity. The tactic of viewing musical and sports competition in tandem occasionally manifests in the musical communities discussed in this dissertation. For instance, in a 2004 performance of "Fugue for Tinhorns," from the 1950 Broadway musical *Guys and Dolls*, by the Associational of International Champions barbershop chorus, the emcee invites the audience to

> visualize, if you will, all the horses coming to the starting gate […]. Some folks have wondered, and have questioned, whether we can stay friends after being competitors in the big horse race. I do believe we've come up with a way to answer that question once and for all.[24]

More broadly, competition is foregrounded in these musical communities. Nearly every major barbershop organization holds an annual international competition as well as myriad regional competitions. Philadelphia Mummers brigades used to compete for prize money but now do so for bragging rights. And there is an inherently competitive element to auditioning for choral ensembles; organizations were also founded in the twentieth century to foster competitions between men's glee clubs. Competition, when viewed in concert with the

[22] Hardwig, "Cocks, Balls, Bats, and Banjos," 46.
[23] Sam de Boise, "Men, Masculinities and Music," in *Routledge International Handbook of Masculinity Studies*, eds. Lucas Gottzén, Ulf Mellström, and Tamara Shefer (Routledge, 2019), 419, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315165165.
[24] Barbershop Bill, "AIC Chorus – We've Got The Quartets Here (2004 AIC Show)," posted July 18, 2020, YouTube, 2:52, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r_tv5SRgqPE.

construction of hegemonic white masculinity through "family" ties, demonstrates just how malleable and insidious hegemonic white masculinity can be in these musical communities.

The Complex Origins and Intent of Blackface Minstrelsy

Thomas L. Riis notes that "minstrelsy has been and remains a slippery, paradoxical, and tenacious phenomenon,"[25] and scholars continue to debate its purpose. Its origins are a bit more agreed upon. Contrary to popular imagination, "blackface emerged in the American Northeast and not the South, and most early blackface performers developed their acts in Northern cities."[26] Indeed, "minstrel-like ensembles developed in many locations, but minstrelsy became a mass cultural phenomenon with the help of modern technology, transportation, and communication networks provided by cities, especially port cities such as Buffalo, Albany, Philadelphia, and New York."[27]

Despite its northern origins, blackface minstrelsy's association with southern plantation life has helped in propagating a myth of northern nobility and absolution from the evils of enslavement and racism. Yet many of the most popular minstrel performers and composers were born in the northern and midwestern United States, including Thomas D. "T.D." Rice (1808–1860), the creator of the Jim Crow character, who was born and died in New York; Dan Emmett (1815–1904), composer of "Dixie" and founder of the first minstrel troupe, who was born and died in Ohio, and Stephen Foster (1826–1864), one of

[25] Thomas L. Riis, "Minstrelsy and Theatrical Miscegenation," in *The Oxford Handbook of the American Musical*, ed. Raymond Knapp, Mitchell Morris, and Stacy Wolf (Oxford University Press, 2011), 66, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195385946.013.0006.
[26] Brian Roberts, *Blackface Nation: Race, Reform, and Identity in American Popular Music, 1812–1925* (The University of Chicago Press, 2017), 159, EBSCOhost.
[27] Riis, "Minstrelsy and Theatrical Miscegenation," 69.

the most prolific composers of minstrel songs, who was born in Pennsylvania and died in New York State.[28]

Racial impersonation, including blackface, predated the minstrel show in the United States.[29] Toni Morrison notes that the institution of enslavement provided fertile ground for the country's creative output, arguing that "what rose up out of collective needs to allay internal fears and to rationalize external exploitation was an American Africanism—a fabricated brew of darkness, otherness, alarm, and desire that is uniquely American."[30] It would not be until around 1830, as race became more foregrounded in the fledgling nation, that the genre known as blackface minstrelsy came into being. Dyer notes that a sense of whiteness took hold in the United States during this time as a national identity was being forged, with the indigenous populations and enslaved Black people serving as the Other against which to define whiteness.[31] By 1843, the minstrel show comprised a few crucial elements with some variation: a group of men, wearing black makeup to darken their faces and draw attention to their eyes and mouths, played instruments, sang songs in dialect, performed skits, and finished the proceedings with a dance routine.[32]

Blackface performers were often working-class male immigrants, such as Irish Americans, who infused stereotyped caricatures of their Black neighbors with their own existing musical traditions. In fact, Matthew D. Morrison argues that the music of "Jump Jim

[28] A more detailed discussion of Foster's role in minstrelsy appears later in this introduction.
[29] Christian DuComb, *Haunted City: Three Centuries of Racial Impersonation in Philadelphia* (University of Michigan Press, 2017), 3.
[30] Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Harvard University Press, 1992), 38.
[31] Dyer, *White*, 19.
[32] Riis, "Minstrelsy and Theatrical Miscegenation," 71.

Crow" has more in common with the music of the British Isles than with African or African American musical practice.[33] Garner notes that

> migrants from the various Catholic, Southern, Eastern and Central European countries […] were not immediately accepted socially and culturally as white. […] European immigrants thus "became" white on arrival in the New World because they disembarked into a new set of social identities that articulated with those they had brought with them, and one overarching identity was whiteness.[34]

He argues that part of this process of "becoming" white was by constructing Black people and other minoritized groups as savage and earthly.[35] Morrison, too, notes that the most impoverished Irish Americans "became the primary progenitors and earliest audiences for blackface, as they tried to assimilate themselves into whiteness […] against blackness."[36] By participating in blackface minstrelsy, Irish immigrants were able to demonstrate their proximity to Blackness while also acknowledging their difference from it by removing the burnt cork mask. Morrison notes that "blackness served as an arbiter of identity negotiation."[37] Riis argues that minstrelsy became a cultural touchstone in the United States as formerly enslaved people migrated north, making their daily actions and mannerisms a more immediate source of inspiration for the blackface minstrel show.[38]

Gender was also an important site of performance and subversion in the blackface minstrel show. William J. Mahar argues that the minstrel theater's "commodified images of women reinforced existing attitudes about sexuality, prostitution, courtship, marriage, gender

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[33] Matthew D. Morrison, *Blacksound: Making Race and Popular Music in the United States* (University of California Press, 2024), 36–37.
[34] Garner, *Whiteness*, 66.
[35] Ibid., 128.
[36] Morrison, *Blacksound*, 26.
[37] Ibid., 78.
[38] Riis, "Minstrelsy and Theatrical Miscegenation," 68.

equality, and domestic responsibility."[39] These commodified images of women often took shape through the minstrel wench, a role played by a cross-dressed man. The term "wench" has a long and complicated history: "in [a] 1785 British publication […] the wench appears periodically as 'a harlot,' 'a breeding woman' and 'a girl.' […] There is also a distinctly racial designation."[40] As white and Black women became more visible in the public sphere due to the rise of Northern industrialization and urbanization after the War of 1812, white men criticized them through blackface minstrelsy.[41] Wenches also lampooned contemporary suffragettes and female abolitionists by, for example, parodying suffragette speeches. In many ways, the wench "served as a mirror to the larger society's grappling with the transformation of women's roles in urban America in the nineteenth century, especially in the middle class."[42]

Within blackface minstrelsy, the "wench" was a catchall term for multiple strains of denigrating performances of Black femininity. One variant, the "yaller gal," was a light-skinned Black woman who represented the total control white men had in the United States; she was positioned as either the metaphorical object of a man's affections or as literal object due to her being considered his legal possession rather than a human subject.[43] Another variant was the grotesque wench, who rarely took the stage; rather, her visage adorned sheet

[39] William J. Mahar, "Blackface Minstrelsy and Misogyny in Vocal and Choral Repertoires," in *Behind the Burnt Cork Mask: Early Blackface Minstrelsy and Antebellum American Popular Culture* (University of Illinois Press, 1999), 268.
[40] Katrina Thompson Moore, "The Wench: Black Women in the Antebellum Minstrel Show and Popular Culture," *The Journal of American Culture* 44, no. 4 (December 2021): 321, https://doi.org/10.1111/jacc.13299.
[41] Ibid., 319.
[42] Annemarie Bean, "Female Impersonation in Nineteenth-Century American Blackface Minstrelsy" (PhD diss., New York University, 2001), 55–56, ProQuest (3024649).
[43] Moore, "The Wench," 323.

music covers and advertisements around the United States.[44] Minstrel wench characters were used to illustrate to men the dangers and desirability—and dangerous desirability—of women.[45] The minstrel wench was portrayed by male blackface performers dressed in drag, though the audience was very likely in on the secret that the wench was not as feminine as they may have expected, with her baggy, ill-fitting clothing, jagged movements, and the general demeanor of her performance.[46] (Similarly, minstrel shows sometimes depicted some Black male characters, notably Dan Emmett's "Old Zip Coon" character, as "feminine, thereby further posing as a masculine and/or heterosexually normalized white male, or as a sexually deviant queer […] black man."[47])

It is the intent of the blackface minstrel show that has led to scholarly disagreements. One interpretation of its intent comes from Eric Lott, who argues for what he terms the "love and theft" model of blackface minstrelsy:

> It was cross-racial desire that coupled a nearly insupportable fascination and a self-protective derision with respect to black people and their cultural practices, and that made blackface minstrelsy less a sign of absolute white power and control than of panic, anxiety, terror, and pleasure.[48]

For Lott, the Blackness afforded to white performers through blackface minstrelsy allowed them to pantomime their homoerotic desire in addition to lampooning society. Indeed, minstrelsy's prominence in nineteenth-century United States society afforded its practitioners the ability to comment on myriad topics such as "gender, class, politics, and musical taste, as well as race."[49]

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[44] Moore, "The Wench," 320.
[45] Riis, "Minstrelsy and Theatrical Miscegenation," 74.
[46] Bean, "Female Impersonation," 60.
[47] Morrison, *Blacksound*, 58–59.
[48] Eric Lott, *Love & Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class*, 20th anniversary ed. (Oxford University Press, 2013): 6–7, EBSCOhost.
[49] Riis, "Minstrelsy and Theatrical Miscegenation," 74.

Morrison pushes back against the sexual nature of Lott's "love and theft" model. He notes that Lott's model is "based on an anecdote" of T.D. Rice's first performance of his Jim Crow character.[50] The anecdote that Lott cites—which he calls "probably the […] most accurate account of American minstrelsy's appropriation of black cultural practices"—recounts Rice borrowing the clothing of a Black dockhand named Cuff for his inaugural Jim Crow performance and refusing to give the clothes back after Cuff enters the stage, thus supplying the "love and theft" model with its theft.[51] Morrison, however, cites a different account of the creation of the Jim Crow character in which Cuff does not beg for his clothes to be returned.[52] Continuing, he acknowledges that

> the idea that the construction of white, working-class maleness was buttressed by a fascination with (or "love" of) blackness and the theft of "authentic" black aesthetics has been helpful in resuscitating the impact of blackface performance in literary theory developments of the 1990s. However, Lott's formulation also suggests that white desire and an assumed black (racial) authenticity are at the root of minstrelsy's meaning and impact.[53]

The word "theft" implies that something was stolen from the people blackface minstrelsy aimed to emulate but, as Brian R. Roberts notes, the blackface cycle "transformed white fantasy into black nature."[54] Morrison, too, argues that blackface performers used fabricated "Black" sounds and movements that, in turn, came to be considered realistic or even factual representations of Blackness.[55] He ultimately argues that "Saidiya Hartman's formulation of

[50] Morrison, *Blacksound*, 24.
[51] Lott, *Love & Theft*, 18–19.
[52] Morrison, *Blacksound*, 41–42.
[53] Ibid., 24.
[54] Roberts, *Blackface Nation*, 163.
[55] Morrison, *Blacksound*, 37.

'terror and enjoyment"' is a more productive lens through which to examine blackface minstrelsy.[56]

Roberts notes that blackface minstrelsy contained many elements of what Mikhail Bakhtin describes as "carnivalesque." For Bakhtin, the carnival provided a sanctioned opportunity for loosening social restrictions and norms as well as encouraging interaction among a diverse range of society.[57] Roberts defines the nineteenth-century conception of carnival as "a brief period of licensed transgression, sanctioned by authorities as long as it did not get out of hand."[58] While Bakhtinian carnival often allowed for role reversal, where even a commoner could play at being king, Roberts notes that blackface "allowed poor white American males to lift themselves up by punching down."[59] Similarly, Christian DuComb argues that blackface minstrelsy "attracted working-class audiences by mocking not only those at the top of the social hierarchy but also those at the bottom, whose [economic and social] rise posed a threat to the power of laboring white men."[60]

Eventually, with changing tastes in popular entertainment, "the bourgeoning entertainment industry continued to draw on its blackface antecedents to appeal to the largest sect of the populace who had the most access to capital."[61] Morrison notes that Tin Pan Alley's foundations were built on the sounds of blackface.[62] One of the more popular song types to come out of Tin Pan Alley in its early days was the coon song, a subgenre of

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[56] Morrison, *Blacksound*, 25.
[57] Mikhail Bakhtin, "Carnival and the Carnivalesque," in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*, 2nd ed., ed. John Storey (Pearson Education, 1998).
[58] Roberts, *Blackface Nation*, 26.
[59] Ibid., 16.
[60] DuComb, *Haunted City*, 110.
[61] Morrison, *Blacksound*, 135.
[62] Ibid., 151.

ragtime song that used insulting dialect.[63] Roberts notes that "from about 1880 through the 1920s—and probably beyond—coon songs were at the very heart of the nation's popular culture. The vast majority were the stuff of Tin Pan Alley."[64] Morrison notes that the year 1896 was considered the "year of the 'coon song'" due to the extensive publishing output of coon songs from M. Witmark & Sons, a leading Tin Pan Alley music publishing company.[65] Riis argues that, eventually, "minstrel images were transferred directly from the stage to films."[66] Morrison notes that "the sounds and legacies of blackface performance continued to shape popular music after the disappearance of the blackface mask."[67] This dissertation will discuss the barbershop style, the Philadelphia Mummers, and choral music, musical communities in which vernacular songs are frequently included in their repertoires. Because nostalgia is an important element in these communities, I first address nostalgia's role in the development of the minstrel repertoire.

Nostalgia and Blackface Minstrelsy

Crucial to the success of blackface minstrelsy was its nostalgic potency. John Michael Runowicz argues that "nostalgia is a remembering by which the past is refashioned for use in the present."[68] While he acknowledges the power nostalgia has on an individual level, he notes that individual remembrance operates in a larger framework that he terms "collective nostalgia," which has the power to transform the individual as well as communities and even

[63] Riis, "Minstrelsy and Theatrical Miscegenation," 76.
[64] Roberts, *Blackface Nation*, 274.
[65] Morrison, *Blacksound*, 149.
[66] Riis, "Minstrelsy and Theatrical Miscegenation," 78–79.
[67] Morrison, *Blacksound*, 165.
[68] John Michael Runowicz, "Introduction," in *Forever Doo-Wop: Race, Nostalgia, and Vocal Harmony* (University of Massachusetts Press, 2010), 17.

society at large.[69] Susan Key argues that the most important figure for nostalgic minstrelsy is Stephen Foster.[70] Earlier works in Foster's minstrel catalog followed a similar pattern: a simple song with comical—often racist—lyrics written in dialect, eventually published in a manner able to be performed by members of the common American family in the parlor. Songs from this era include "Oh! Susanna" (1848), one of the most enduring blackface minstrel songs. Contrasted with his minstrel songs were his parlor songs, which employed a single narrator, often coded as a (white) man, longing for either a woman or a femininized, nonhuman substitute, such as the home.[71]

> In the 1850s, however, Foster's minstrel output
>
> > offered a blending of the genre's original impulses with heavy doses of nostalgia, sentiment, and deep emotionalism. […] In song and performance there was a gradual backgrounding of the rebellious free black, an increasing turn to the character of the sentimental slave.[72]

It was around this time that blackface minstrelsy began catering to middle-class audiences, providing them a nostalgic refuge from the anxieties of the world, in addition to its previous appeal to the more raucous lower-class audiences that viewed Blackness as dangerous and rowdy.[73] During this time, Foster began removing more obviously offensive characters like the grotesque wench from his sheet music as well as "softening and then eliminating the use of plantation dialect" from his nostalgic minstrel songs.[74] Songs from this era include "Old Folks at Home" (1851) and "My Old Kentucky Home, Good-Night!" (1853). While the former still used dialect—albeit, less harsh dialect than his earlier songs—"My Old Kentucky

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[69] Runowicz, "Introduction," 17.
[70] Susan Key, "Sound and Sentimentality: Nostalgia in the Songs of Stephen Foster," *American Music* 13, no. 2 (Summer 1995): 145–46, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3052252.
[71] Ibid., 165.
[72] Roberts, *Blackface Nation*, 182.
[73] Ibid., 183.
[74] Key, "Sound and Sentimentality," 155–56.

Home, Good-Night!" did not. Morrison notes that Foster helped shift middle- and upper-class opinions about blackface toward a more positive reception through this nostalgic turn.[75]

Key argues that songs like "Old Folks at Home" and "My Old Kentucky Home, Good-Night!," with their enslaved characters/caricatures being nostalgic for home—an emotion heretofore reserved only for white characters—helped to humanize enslaved Black people, and enslavement as an institution, for white audiences.[76] Foster also used sonic markers that would have alerted his contemporary listeners to nostalgia, including the use of the pentatonic scale and Scotch snap. While the five-note pentatonic scale is not inherently nostalgic, its use in nostalgic songs in the mid-nineteenth century was so ubiquitous that it came to signify nostalgia for those audiences.[77] Similarly, the Scotch snap—an inverted dotted rhythm in which the shorter note precedes the longer note—was part of a long tradition associating Celtic music with nostalgia in the United States in the nineteenth century.[78] Figure 1.1 demonstrates both of these musical signifiers of nostalgia in "Old Folks at Home," with each note of the pentatonic scale in a different color and each instance of the Scotch snap circled.

[75] Morrison, *Blacksound*, 112.
[76] Key, "Sound and Sentimentality," 157.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid., 158.

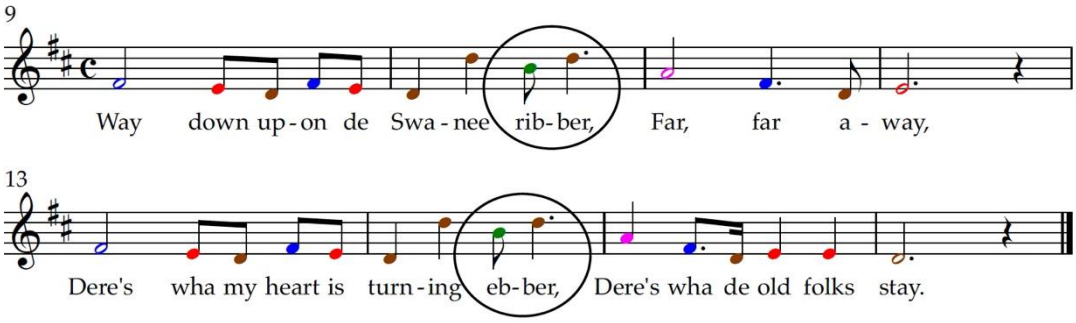

Figure 1.1. Scotch snaps and the pentatonic scale in "Old Folks at Home."[79]

Key notes that Foster's liberal political leanings and steps to mitigate the offensive caricatures of Black people in minstrelsy perhaps signified his sympathies for Black people.[80] Roberts notes that Foster's refashioning of blackface minstrelsy with nostalgic elements engendered a more favorable look upon the genre by its most ardent critics, including Frederick Douglass in 1855.[81] However, Morrison argues that "Foster's 'sentimental' blackface tunes are constructed upon and contributed to the scripting of (anti)blackness."[82] He notes that "there is little evidence that suggested Foster was a supporter of abolitionist causes" and that "Foster was concerned with using blackface as a way to make a career as a serious composer of popular music" rather than necessarily trying to humanize the plight of enslaved Black people.[83] He also argues that "'sincerity' and 'authenticity' are racialized performance tropes embedded into the sound of nineteenth-century blackface minstrelsy, particularly through Foster's pen."[84] Morrison notes that this "sincerity" and "authenticity"

[79] Stephen Foster, "Old Folks at Home" (Firth, Pond, & Co, 1851): 3 (my engraving).
[80] Key, "Sound and Sentimentality," 155.
[81] Roberts, *Blackface Nation*, 183.
[82] Morrison, *Blacksound*, 101.
[83] Ibid., 107.
[84] Ibid.

was grafted onto Black people through blackface as caricatures pined for the very system that oppressed them.[85]

In her landmark work *The Future of Nostalgia*, Svetlana Boym describes two strains of nostalgia: "restorative" and "reflective." Restorative nostalgia aims to recreate a person's lost conception of home through a reconstruction of the past. Boym argues that people who leverage restorative nostalgia "do not think of themselves as nostalgic; they believe that their project is about truth."[86] Reflective nostalgia, on the other hand, understands that the past is long gone and instead relishes in the memories of the past like one would a book or piece of music.[87] Boym acknowledges that

> the two might overlap in their frames of reference, but they do not coincide in their narratives and plots of identity. In other words, they can use the same triggers of memory and symbols, the same Proustian madelaine [*sic*] pastry, but tell different stories about it.[88]

However, I would argue that viewing Boym's dual strands as a mutually reinforcing pair working in concert with each other, rather than two versions of nostalgia that occasionally overlap, yields a potent analysis of blackface minstrelsy's use of nostalgia to engender emotions in its audiences; even to this day, "minstrelsy evokes […] the allure of an idyllic past."[89]

Foster leveraged restorative nostalgia in "Old Folks at Home" to great effect for his contemporaries. The text tells the story of a formerly enslaved Black person longing to return to "de old plantation and […] de old folks at home."[90] The second and third verses

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[85] Morrison, *Blacksound*, 109.
[86] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (Basic Books, 2001): 41.
[87] Ibid., 49.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Riis, "Minstrelsy and Theatrical Miscegenation," 65.
[90] Foster, "Old Folks at Home," 4.

both describe the narrator as missing his "little hut," his "mudder" and "brudder," and the "tumming" of a banjo; the narrator also mentions that he wasted many happy days while living on the old plantation singing songs.[91] In doing so, Foster recreates a vision of the Old South in which happily enslaved people worked on plantations and, upon leaving—either through manumission or escape—realized that they missed the "home" they had come to know and love. In many ways, Foster's music helped perpetuate the Lost Cause of the Confederacy, a revisionist pseudohistory that reframed the Civil War as being a noble fight waged by the South to protect its heritage. By positioning the narrator of "Old Folks at Home" as nostalgic for the old plantation—and its enslavement—Foster was tacitly arguing for Black people's acceptance of dehumanization and subjugation. One of restorative nostalgia's most potent powers is that it "manifests itself in total reconstructions of monuments of the past."[92]

While Foster did not engage in reflective nostalgia himself, his music has provided subsequent generations of audiences a site for such a reading. In describing reflective nostalgia, Boym argues that it is accomplished at the level of the original—as opposed to restorative nostalgia, which can operate at the level of populations—and that "an American way of dealing with the past" is "to turn history into a bunch of amusing and readily available souvenirs, devoid of politics."[93] Any cursory glance at a performance of "Old Folks at Home" on YouTube demonstrates individuals in the comments turning the music into apolitical sonic escapes to a simpler time instead of the potent songs they were and continue to be. Additionally, performers of the songs will use lyric changes to seemingly "correct" the

[91] Foster, "Old Folks at Home," 5.
[92] Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 41.
[93] Ibid., 51.

song, rendering the song apolitical and masking—or even removing—its fraught origins. For instance, Tom Roush, a folk singer, notes in the description of his rendition of "Old Folks at Home" that it "remains popular today even through the 'political correctness' that has swept through our nation. I did take liberties to remove the 'blackface' lyrics so that children could understand the meaning of the song."[94] However, as I will argue in Chapter 2, lyric changes often help to obfuscate the true meaning of a song. And, despite this acknowledgment of removing "blackface" lyrics, Roush includes the pejorative word "darky" in his cover of the song. Ironically, despite Foster never having visited Florida, or anywhere in the South, "Old Folks at Home" has served as the state song of Florida since 1935, with its lyrics revised in 2008.

Positionality and Methodology

My upbringing, education, hobbies, and work experience exposed me to all of the musical communities presented in this dissertation. As a lifelong South Philadelphian, I was made intimately aware of the famous local community known as the Mummers and its parade—the nation's oldest folk festival—by virtue of living a block east of Broad Street, the city's main thoroughfare and site for the parade. I would be jarred awake every New Year's Day by the cacophonous revelry of performers, musicians, and residents having a good time.

In every level of my educational career, I have been involved in musical performance: from daily music activities in my pre-school, to singing in choir during elementary, middle, and high school, to joining my high school's a cappella group, performing in a musical, and taking part in the Pennsylvania Music Educators Association

[94] Tom Roush, "STEPHEN FOSTER'S – OLD FOLKS AT HOME – 1851 – Performed by Tom Roush, posted January 14, 2017, YouTube, 3:36, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lc8V4Vyc5iA.

choir festivals. One of the most formative moments happened in fifth grade, when my music teacher showed the class the 1962 film version of *The Music Man*. My love for barbershop harmony began as I watched the performance by the school board, played by the Buffalo Bills, the champions of the Barbershop Harmony Society's 1950 international quartet competition.

As an undergraduate student at the University of Pennsylvania, I continued embracing my love of music by taking an introductory music theory class and joining the Penn Glee Club. Over the course of my undergraduate degree, I also joined the Penn Glee Club's barbershop subset, the Penn Pipers, the University Choral Society, and performed in opera scenes and musicals as both actor and conductor. I also honed my choral conducting skills as an undergraduate leader of the Penn Glee Club.

After graduating, I gigged as a freelance conductor and joined the local barbershop chorus, Rittenhouse Sound. Within a few months, I was in a barbershop quartet, Always Sunny, that competed at local conventions. I eventually decided to pursue my master's degree in music history at Temple University. This decision came at a very fortuitous time, as the Barbershop Harmony Society had recently announced its "Everyone in Harmony" strategic vision—this vision and its implementation will be discussed at length in Chapter 2. Around the same time, I was offered the opportunity to serve as the interim director of the Penn Glee Club, with the intention of me serving a one-year appointment and helping the organization find a permanent director; ultimately, I was invited to apply for the full position and served as director for six years. I left Rittenhouse Sound to focus on graduate studies and my new position, though I continued singing with Always Sunny.

In my first week of graduate school, the trajectory of my research and academic career was changed due to taking a required course for my degree: Current Topics in Music

Studies, taught by my eventual doctoral advisor, Shana Goldin-Perschbacher. Under her tutelage, my academic interests came into focus, and with her encouragement, I enriched and contextualized my academic interests by taking courses outside of the music department—for instance, a course in Temple's Sociology Department about conducting ethical social research inspired my interest in ethnography. My experience directing the Penn Glee Club enjoyed a mutually beneficial relationship with my academic training, with what I learned in the classroom serving me in the rehearsal room and vice versa.

I continued singing in barbershop ensembles, too. Always Sunny disbanded shortly after the pandemic, but I soon joined a new quartet, Prior Engagement, though I ultimately stepped down from that quartet. Finally, I joined Parkside Harmony, a chorus that rehearses just outside of Hershey, Pennsylvania, in August 2024. I have become more involved in the chorus leadership, serving as the group's Chorus Manager, as well as in the greater barbershop community. I plan to apply to enter the Barbershop Harmony Society judging program when the application window opens again in a few years.

Not once in the above account do I highlight my identity as a middle-class, cisgender white man, but that identity nonetheless shaped the opportunities available to me. Dyer notes that whiteness is akin to a "passport to privilege"[95] and that passport has afforded me myriad benefits: to attend an Ivy League school; to do poorly in my early undergraduate career but still be able to graduate on time despite changing majors midway through; to pursue graduate degrees; and to be able to perform in local, statewide, national, and international venues. I had access to quality music programs and piano lessons during my formative years, which allowed me to pursue music professionally. I was able to direct the

[95] Dyer, *White*, 44.

Penn Glee Club for six years in part because I had been a member. And living in my childhood home while finishing my dissertation afforded me a level of security and stability that many do not have while pursuing graduate studies.

The musical communities discussed in this dissertation, popular with white practitioners, are often shaped by white male fantasies of Otherness; in some cases, these communities have their roots in Black performance practice, purposely obfuscated or revised to fit into a white male narrative. My individual experiences as a scholar and (participant) observer in these communities aligns with that of many of the people whom I am studying and provides more context for the sometimes subtle ways that hegemonic white masculinity—including my own—is shaped by these performances of imagined Blackness.

In his 2004 article inaugurating the *Popular Music Journal*, Charles Hamm notes that the study of popular music had "established an intellectual, methodological and ideological profile that has little in common with institutionized [*sic*] musicology."[96] He also argues that popular music studies has become an ahistorical discipline due to its focus on one slice of popular music and its aversion to empirical data.[97] I had this critique of popular music studies in mind as I wrote this dissertation, which engages with primary sources including sheet music, performances, archival footage, and written sources. I also engage with secondary scholarship drawn from academic fields including African American studies, anthropology, cultural studies, gender studies, history, music education, music studies, sociology, and sound studies. I rely on data analysis, autoethnography, and ethnographic analysis through (participant) observation and interviews to provide context for

[96] Charles Hamm, "Popular Music and Historiography," *Popular Music History* 1, no. 1 (2004): 10, https://doi.org/10.1558/pomh.1.1.9.56027.
[97] Ibid., 13–14.

conversations happening in the communities discussed in this dissertation. As an active barbershop singer—barbershopper—I attend multiple barbershop events, such as rehearsals, conventions, and hangouts, every year. I am also a member of multiple Facebook groups and Discord servers devoted to barbershop. I have discussed aspects of my dissertation research in informal settings with fellow barbershoppers at rehearsals and conventions.

I also conducted an ethnographic study of barbershoppers between 2019 and 2020, at the early onset of the Barbershop Harmony Society implementing its Everyone in Harmony strategic vision. Over a period of six months, I interviewed twenty-two individuals, largely via telephone, about the strategic vision, among other topics related to barbershop and identity. These individuals represent a diversity of identity, including race, age, socioeconomic status, gender, sexuality, region, and years singing barbershop, and their identities are thus pseudonymized to preserve their confidentiality. I have also interviewed barbershoppers outside of the context of an ethnographic study; actual names appear in this dissertation when applicable or necessary, with the use of a last name acknowledging their true identity.

While I am not a member of the Mummers, I was able to attend rehearsals of multiple brigades in the leadup to the 2025 Mummers Parade. At these rehearsals, I spoke with different Mummers and observed their rehearsal practices, culminating in my experience as a spectator at the Mummers Parade on January 1. And my experience attending choir festivals organized by the Pennsylvania Music Educators Association, in addition to my experiences a member and director of the Penn Glee Club, inform my discussion about hegemonic white masculinity in choral settings. All of these musical communities are deeply personal to me, and this dissertation is as much a debt of gratitude

to these vernacular and choral traditions for shaping me into who I am as it is a call to action for them to continue shaping themselves.

Chapter Overview

Chapter 2 examines the Barbershop Harmony Society (BHS; legally, the Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barber Shop Quartet Singing in America, SPEBSQSA) and its recent attempts to reconcile its revisionist past with its hope for a more inclusive future. The early practitioners of codified barbershop music, who framed it as a quintessentially white male American genre, actually emulated Black vocal harmony while simultaneously erasing Black musical contributions and privileging an image of the United States conjured by visual artist Norman Rockwell and musical theatre composer Meredith Willson. Of particular interest is the Everyone in Harmony strategic vision, which the BHS announced in 2017 and implemented to the fullest extent in 2022. There have been three contest cycles since its implementation, and this chapter discusses some of those most recent developments.

Chapter 3 focuses on the Mummers Parade, the oldest folk parade in the United States, which defines the identity of South Philadelphia. The geniality of the Mummers Parade belies the sinister origins of its most treasured traditions, steeped in the halls of the minstrel show. Similar to barbershop organizations, the Mummers face increasing pressure to grapple with their problematic history and reshape their musical and social practices to be a more inclusive organization. Of particular interest to this dissertation's discussion of the construction of hegemonic white masculinity is the gender politics of the Mummers Parade; the minstrel wench, discussed earlier, is the progenitor of the modern-day Mummers wench.

Chapter 4 discusses choral music in the United States, which has long privileged music created by white composers and vocal pedagogical techniques based in racial pseudoscience. Performances of historically Black genres and "global" music are often relegated as novelties in the concert hall, a chance for the performers to "let loose" and relax vocal technique. The history of choral music in the United States, particularly of collegiate glee clubs, is considered in tandem with my experiences as a choral singer that participated in Pennsylvania Music Educators Association (PMEA) festivals in high school, as a member of the Penn Glee Club, and as that organization's director. I look back on my tenure as director as a real-world example of an attempt to combat white patriarchy in choral performance and the pitfalls that can challenge even the best intentions.

Chapter 5, this dissertation's conclusion, summarizes my findings, acknowledges its shortcomings, and discusses its implications and potential future directions. I close by considering potential avenues for deconstructing hegemonic white masculinity through Black feminist resistance, exemplified by the work of HALO, a barbershop quartet of four Black women.

CHAPTER 2

"THAT OLD QUARTET OF MINE":

BARBERSHOP HARMONY AND MALE HOMOSOCIALITY[1]

In April 2023, my then barbershop quartet, Prior Engagement, traveled to Queensbury, New York, to compete in our first competition. In the group I sang lead[2], two men who have previously performed competitive barbershop sang baritone and bass, and a non-binary, femme-presenting newcomer to the barbershop style sang tenor. While checking into our hotel and explaining to the concierge why we had traveled five hours from Philadelphia to sing two songs, the quartet was approached by an elderly barbershop singer—barbershopper—using a large staff as a cane. He made small talk with our quartet's fledgling barbershopper, asking them how they got into the hobby. When they mentioned that it was their first time singing in a barbershop competition, he remarked, "Let me give you a little tip, miss. Did you know that you have to sing the tenor part down an octave than it's written?"

Despite being new to barbershop, the tenor of our quartet has extensive musical experience, holding two degrees in music education and working as a gigging performer, all information that had been shared with the "helpful" barbershopper to explain their musical experience prior to beginning to sing in the barbershop style. None of this was germane to

[1] I would like to express my gratitude to the twenty-two barbershoppers who agreed to talk with me to inform this chapter. I am especially indebted to Steven Armstrong, Kevin Keller, and David Wright, whose expertise on the history of barbershop and BHS's judging system helped me ensure the historical information presented in this chapter was as fair and factual as possible.

[2] In barbershop, the lead part sings the melody. While it is technically the second tenor, the ranges of barbershop voice parts do not line up perfectly with those of choral music.

him, though: all that seemed to matter was that the quartet's tenor presented as female and therefore must have had no idea how singing barbershop worked.[3]

Since its inception in 1938, the Barbershop Harmony Society (BHS) has become near-synonymous with organized barbershop harmony in the United States and, to some extent, the world. As a result, BHS has enjoyed the opportunity to cultivate, influence, and set the standard of what constitutes "barbershop harmony" for nearly one hundred years. Even with the rise of other organizations—particularly those created to support non-male participants—BHS has maintained its status in defining the social, and cultural, and musical definitions of barbershop. Central to BHS's ability to maintain this place of influence is its historical and contemporary proximity to hegemonic white masculinity. Clifton Boyd notes that the various pop culture pastiches of barbershop harmony—be they Norman Rockwell's famous *Barbershop Quartet* or Jimmy Fallon's recurring bit, the Ragtime Gals—remain linked through their displays of white men enjoying the camaraderie of performance.[4]

The Barbershop Style

Before explaining the "why" of barbershop, it would be prudent to define the "what" of barbershop. The version of barbershop that BHS codified in 1938 is a four-part a cappella style of music. Its voices, from highest to lowest, are labeled tenor, lead, baritone, and bass; the lead and baritone parts will often cross in order to maintain the style's hallmark close voicing. Barbershop is predicated on its use of dominant seventh chords; with their

[3] Barbershop arrangements, like most modern choral music, use the octave clef for tenor parts. Nearly every seasoned choral singer, regardless of their experience in barbershop, would know that a tenor part written in octave clef would be sung an octave lower than what is written.

[4] Clifton Boyd, "Keep It Barbershop: Stylistic Preservation and Whiteness in the Barbershop Harmony Society" (PhD diss., Yale University, 2022), 1, ProQuest (29060296).

ubiquity to the style, dominant sevenths are colloquially referred to as "barbershop sevenths."

Prior to 1938, however, barbershop looked and sounded profoundly different. Lynn Abbott notes that "for the male population, at least, [barbershop] was nothing less than the black national pastime."[5] The Black neighborhood barbershop, with its historical role as a place for socializing, provided fertile ground for Black men to experiment with instruments and voice in the creation of a harmonic language. James Earl Henry, building on Abbott's work, examines musical recordings of early Black and white vocal groups to demonstrate the influence Black musical practice had to the barbershop style, noting that

> the strength of the argument lies not in which [recording] example is the earliest, for by the time the recording industry had begun, syncretism had already taken place. Rather, we should consider which cultural aesthetic is more clearly at the heart of these traits. The evidence brought out in this study clearly points to the African Americans as the primary agents of influence.[6]

And another important difference, which Frédéric Döhl's persuasive archival evidence demonstrates, is that the development of the barbershop style was not limited to male singers: "one sixth of the more than 500 quartets […] collected for [his] study from the 1890s to the 1920s [the so-called "golden era" of barbershop harmony] were entirely or in part female."[7] Other influences on the early days of the style include the singing families,

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[5] Lynn Abbott, "'Play That Barber Shop Chord': A Case for the African-American Origin of Barbershop Harmony," *American Music* 10, no. 3 (Autumn 1992): 290, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3051597.

[6] James Earl Henry, "The Origins of Barbershop Harmony: A Study of Barbershop's Musical Link to Other African American Musics as Evidenced Through Recordings and Arrangements of Early Black and White Quartets" (PhD diss., Washington University in Saint Louis, 2000), 70–71, ProQuest (9972671).

[7] Frédéric Döhl, "From Harmonic Style to Genre: The Early History (1890s–1940s) of the Uniquely American Musical Term *Barbershop*," *American Music* 32, no. 2 (Summer 2014): 132, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/americanmusic.32.2.0123.

such as the Rainers and Hutchinsons, who toured the United States. One pertinent element of the Hutchinson family's style was their preponderance for arrangements with melody in the second-highest voice, leaving the young daughter, Abby, to harmonize above the melody.[8]

Of course, one of the most influential sites of the early close-voiced harmony that would lead to the development of barbershop harmony could be found in the minstrel show. As Gage Averill notes, "it was most often the minstrel theater that helped to spread four-part close-harmony singing in black neighborhoods and communities."[9] Averill also acknowledges the myriad quartet traditions that were not dependent on blackface minstrelsy, including the aforementioned traveling family singers, as well as (collegiate) glee clubs, parlor songs, and recreational quartets which served as sites for close harmony to proliferate.[10] Of course, syncretism occurred between the quartet traditions that were not dependent on blackface minstrelsy and those that were. For instance, the American-born Hutchinson Family Singers were staunch abolitionists as early as 1842; one of their most popular abolitionist songs, "Get off the Track!," was a purposeful contrafactum of the minstrel song "Old Dan Tucker."[11] All told, Averill, following Abbott, strongly argues for understanding "the development of barbershop-style close harmony as a complex interaction of black and white forms, performers, aesthetics, styles, and sounds."[12]

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[8] Gage Averill, *Four Parts, No Waiting: A Social History of American Barbershop Harmony* (Oxford University Press, 2003), 24.
[9] Ibid., 45.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Brian Roberts, *Blackface Nation: Race, Reform, and Identity in American Popular Music, 1812–1925* (The University of Chicago Press, 2017), 217–28, EBSCOhost.
[12] Averill, *Four Parts*, 48.

Reframing the Narrative of Barbershop Harmony

At its outset, BHS aimed to set the narrative around barbershop's origins, with far-reaching consequences that still pervade the style to this day. Early barbershop song compilers, such as musicologist Sigmund Spaeth and barbershopper C. T. "Deac" Martin, published songbooks that "glossed over black contributions to close harmony, studiously avoided references to the famous recording and vaudeville quartets of the golden era, and treated Tin Pan Alley songs as a collective cultural commonwealth of white American men."[13] The songs that Spaeth included in his book "complemented a fictionalized, nostalgic narrative of the genre's amateur, rural, spontaneous [and, crucially, white and male] origins."[14] These songbooks proved formative to the fledgling barbershop revival.

Two barbershop revivals coalesced in the United States around the mid-1930s: one in New York and one in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Of particular interest to this dissertation is the latter, which sparked the creation of the organization that would eventually come to be known as BHS. On April 11, 1938, O.C. Cash and twenty-five other men gathered at the Roof Garden of the Tulsa Club to sing barbershop harmony, planting the seeds for what would eventually become the Society for the Preservation and Propagation of Barber Shop Quartet Singing in the United States (SPPBSQSUS).[15] The name was quickly shortened to the Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barber Shop Quartet Singing in America (SPEBSQSA) by the early 1940s, perhaps to accommodate some of the Canadian chapters that had started joining the organization. While BHS maintains "SPEBSQSA" as its legal name, the organization renamed itself as the "Barbershop Harmony Society" in 2004 as

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[13] Averill, *Four Parts*, 87. Spaeth's and Martin's primary issue with the recording and vaudeville quartets was due to the fact that they viewed barbershop as an amateur hobby.
[14] Richard Mook, "White Masculinity in Barbershop Quartet Singing," *Journal for the Society of American Music* 1, no. 4 (2007): 461, https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196307070423.
[15] Averill, *Four Parts*, 100.

part of an effort to rebrand itself to a younger generation.[16] The Tulsa barbershop revival was, in many ways, a conservative reaction to the sweeping economic and social changes affecting the United States and the world at large in the 1930s. In fact, the almost comically lengthy name "SPPBSQSUS" was a parody of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's "Alphabet Agencies" that aimed to resuscitate the United States economy in the wake of the Great Depression. Averill compares the fledgling Tulsa barbershop revival to "a quest to reconstruct a space of privilege for white American middle-class males based on nostalgia for unchallenged and exclusive sociability and camaraderie located in the adolescent memories of middle-aged men."[17] Mook notes that "with their spheres of work and leisure increasingly open to women, middle-class men began to voice concerns about a perceived 'feminizing of America.'"[18]

The barbershop revivalists peddled a false history of barbershop harmony for decades. It began with the aforementioned songbooks that glossed over the Black contributions to the barbershop style and continued with official BHS documents continuing the trend. Less than a decade after BHS's 1938 founding, its treasurer, Joe Stern, wrote an article in a 1944 edition of BHS's magazine, *The Harmonizer*, about the history of barbershop harmony. Stern cited the 1938 edition of *The Oxford Companion to Music*, which argued that a white male barbershop tradition allegedly dates back to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[19] This half-truthful characterization of the origins of barbershop

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[16] Liz Garnett, "Cool Charts or Barbertrash? Barbershop Harmony's Flexible Concept of the Musical Work," *Twentieth-Century Music* 2, no. 2 (August 2006): 245, https://doi.org/10.1017/S1478572206000284.
[17] Averill, *Four Parts*, 91.
[18] Mook, "White Masculinity," 457.
[19] Joe Stern, "History of Barber Shop Harmony," *The Harmonizer* 3, no. 4 (May 1944): 14. https://harmonizer.s3.amazonaws.com/Harmonizer_vol03_no4_may1944.pdf.

harmony has persisted, with the 2011 edition of *The Oxford Companion to Music* noting that the barbershop style

> developed in the USA in the late 19th century. Its ancestry is in the madrigal, the round, the glee (which fostered numerous glee clubs), and the partsong. The barber-shop [*sic*] connection goes back to Shakespeare's time, when a lute was kept handy so that customers could amuse themselves with a little music. Such singing enjoyed a huge revival in the American West during the gold rush. It was taken up by professionals with the minstrel shows of the 1840s and gospel singing groups.[20]

The 1980 edition of the BHS-published *Barbershop Arranging Manual* similarly argues for an England-centric history of barbershop harmony.[21]

One of the earliest examples of BHS positioning barbershop as a white male space is the story of the Grand Central Red Caps, a quartet of Black men who challenged BHS's notions of who barbershop was meant for early in the organization's existence. As mentioned earlier, there were two barbershop revivals in the 1930s. The Tulsa revival was discussed above, but the first happened in New York. As early as 1935, New York was sponsoring barbershop competitions; when O. C. Cash heard about the New York revival, he quickly subsumed it into BHS, considering the New York contingent the first chapter of the organization, and sent membership cards.[22] The two organizations quickly butted heads, however, when the Grand Central Red Caps won the 1941 New York contest, granting them a spot at the international BHS convention that year. Cash was quick to imply that New York instead send the third-place (white) quartet in place of the Grand Central Red Caps (as the second-place quartet was also four Black men). The New York revivalists, a significant

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[20] Peter Gammond, "Barber-Shop Singing," in *The Oxford Companion to Music*, ed. Alison Latham (Oxford University Press, 2011), https://doi.org/10.1093/acref/9780199579037.001.0001.
[21] Burt Szabo and Dave Stevens, eds., *Barbershop Arranging Manual* (SPEBSQSA, 1980): 1.
[22] Averill, *Four Parts*, 107.

number of whom were white, rescinded their membership in response, arguing that a barbershop competition without songs written by Black people would leave them no music to perform.[23] Gage Averill notes that

> not surprisingly, there is little mention of the independent New York contests (either before the founding of SPEBSQSA of after the "porter controversy" [the Grand Central Red Caps being denied the right to compete in the international competition]) in SPEBSQSA publications, and New York was largely written out of the standard histories of barbershop revival, all of which begin institutionally with the founding of SPEBSQSA.[24]

Similarly, Clifton Boyd argues that "the message communicated through this controversy is that Blackness is antithetical to the barbershop tradition—or at the very least, that authentic barbershop music is neither sung by Black people, nor does it bear similarities to Black musics."[25]

Boyd also details the aims of BHS's early leaders to keep the organization white-only for roughly the first thirty years of its existence. He considers the early years of the organization, during which BHS leadership used a strategy of claiming to be against segregation at large while keeping BHS segregated due to circumstances out of its control.[26] Eventually, BHS would cite its own code of ethics as an effective tactic to keep the politics of segregation out of barbershop. The eighth rule of the BHS code of ethics, which is still mailed to every member of BHS, states that "[Members] shall not permit political, religious, or other controversial issues to hinder or inhibit the enjoyment of barbershop harmony."[27] Boyd notes that this approach allowed the leaders of BHS to convince its membership that

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[23] Averill, *Four Parts*, 109–12.
[24] Ibid., 113.
[25] Boyd, "Keep It Barbershop," 34.
[26] Ibid., 23.
[27] "Mission, Vision, and Values," Barbershop Harmony Society, accessed January 29, 2025, https://www.barbershop.org/about/our-vision-mission#codeofethics.

barbershop was apolitical and an escape from the political turmoil of the country and world at large; an earlier iteration of this approach first appeared in the BHS code of ethics in 1942, at the height of United States involvement in the Second World War.[28]

Eventually, BHS's leaders embarked on Project N, which tasked them with figuring out "the best strategy to keep only Black Americans out of [BHS] with as few social and political repercussions as possible."[29] Project N ultimately led to BHS removing "white" from its bylaws and enforcing an unwritten policy that restricted Black men from joining BHS chapters; BHS leadership additionally had the power to remove individual members—i.e., Black men—who were not compliant with (un)written rules.[30] Ultimately, however, BHS was unable to shield itself from criticism of its segregationist policies, and this came to a head in 1963 at that year's international convention, held in Toronto. The Province of Ontario threatened to shut the convention down due to the membership policy, so BHS quietly revoked the policy without much fanfare. It also shifted the decision of integration to individual chapters (instead of forcing all chapters to integrate along racial lines).[31] As Boyd argues, "the racial trauma inflicted during the civil rights era runs deeper than [BHS] knows, and I suspect deeper than is convenient for them to acknowledge."[32] He also notes that current BHS leadership may not be fully aware that its power to expel a member is rooted in BHS's mid-twentieth century desire to remove Black members from chapters in the mid-twentieth century and expresses his hope to work with BHS to bring the history of Project N to light.[33]

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[28] Boyd, "Keep It Barbershop," 23.
[29] Ibid., 45.
[30] Ibid., 54.
[31] Averill, *Four Parts,* 133.
[32] Boyd, "Keep It Barbershop," 72.
[33] Ibid., 74–75.

BHS's white male narrative had lasting effects on the general barbershop populace, as evidenced by my ethnographic interviews with barbershoppers in 2019 and 2020; a full list of my respondents and their demographic information can be found in Appendix A. One respondent, Oswald,[34] noted that he "learned recently […] that the barbershop style has […] its roots in African American tradition." Similarly, Myrtle had to do her own research to find out about the truer origins of barbershop harmony, recounting that

> when I started in barbershop, I would go to retirement homes, and I would tell the story of the origins of barbershop that was sort of ubiquitous in Sweet Adelines, which was: "nobody knows exactly where it came from, but picture four men in straw boater hats singing 'Sweet Adeline.'" The picture from *The Saturday Evening Post* [Norman Rockwell's *Barbershop Quartet*], which is four white guys, that's sort of the image I had in my mind and I thought it was a white art form. I thought white people invented it and nobody ever corrected me.

Spaces for women to sing barbershop eventually came into existence in the mid-1940s. The first to be created was Sweet Adelines International (SAI) in 1945; Averill notes the irony in naming the women's organization after "Sweet Adeline," perhaps the most famous object of affection from a barbershop song.[35] BHS's early influence on SAI is apparent in the latter organization's early racially exclusionary policies. Like BHS, SAI restricted its membership to white women, a policy which came to a head in 1957, when

> the outgoing board introduced a resolution to restrict membership to Caucasian women. [SAI] had no black members, and no one was aware of any black singers who had petitioned to join the organization. Still, the board argued that there had always been a tacit agreement about racial exclusion and that it was time to formalize this policy.[36]

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[34] As mentioned in the first chapter of this dissertation, respondents to my ethnographic survey have had their names pseudonymized. Interviews I conducted with individuals will include first and last names to indicate that those conversations were not conducted pseudonymously.
[35] Averill, *Four Parts*, 128.
[36] Ibid., 132.

Members of SAI who disagreed with this decision broke away, ultimately creating Harmony, Incorporated (HI) in 1959. Boyd notes that SAI was accused of prejudice by the Canadian press in 1963 due to expelling the Ottawa Chapter for allowing a Black woman to sing with the chorus.[37] SAI ultimately rescinded its racist membership policy in 1967. A fuller discussion of the role BHS's played in the creation of women's barbershop organizations appears later in this chapter.

Competition was hugely important to the barbershop revival. Mook notes that the "feminizing of America" that he described led many men to express their masculinity through strenuous sports and other forms of competition, including singing: "in this context, race and gender were inextricably linked by the concept of 'character,' a quality of manhood, virility, and racial superiority that was developed through competition and close contact with other white men."[38] This focus on competition has persisted to the present day, with Boyd noting that "multiple studies have shown that the annual cycle of competitions is what motivates many quartets and choruses to rehearse."[39]

The work of scholars such as Abbott, Averill, Boyd, and Döhl have helped shed light on barbershop's true history and the obfuscation employed by early leaders of the codified barbershop harmony societies. And, to be clear, these societies have done significant work in attempts to, in the words of BHS's anthem, "keep the whole world singing." A later portion of this chapter will discuss some of these endeavors, including BHS's landmark Strategic Vision, "Everyone in Harmony," which was adopted in 2017. First, however, I turn to a crucial element of BHS's construction in its early days: that of (white) male camaraderie.

[37] Boyd, "Keep It Barbershop," 64–65.
[38] Mook, "White Masculinity in Barbershop," 457.
[39] Boyd, "Keep It Barbershop," 139.

Male Fellowship

Of particular importance to the founders of BHS was positioning barbershop as the creation and birthright of white men. One of the ways that they achieved this position was through BHS's organizational structure, akin to the fraternal organizations that had sprouted up in the nineteenth century. Averill notes that "fraternal orders influenced the symbolism, organizational structure, and ideology of the barbershop revival."[40] The nineteenth-century fraternal order was a potent site of male camaraderie, stemming from its vision of male bonding derived from historical sites of gathering.[41] In fact, dating back to the golden era of barbershop harmony, barbershop quartets "enjoyed a strong association with the places and social settings […] that fostered closeness and intimacy between men."[42] Constructing their organization in the style of a fraternal order, BHS's leaders leveraged what Mary Ann Clawson has since identified as four tenets of the fraternal model: references to the past, groups as the building blocks of society, ritual, and masculinity.[43]

Many songs arranged in the barbershop style, particularly the songs arranged and performed in BHS's early days, effectively leverage nostalgia. Jeffrey Eugene Nash notes that "songs about days gone by allow men a safe distance from the subjects of loss, joy, and romantic love."[44] Averill, too, argues that the lyrical content of barbershop songs is crucial to the modern barbershopper's connection to the style.[45] In his study of "approved"

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[40] Averill, *Four Parts*, 103.
[41] Mary Ann Clawson, *Constructing Brotherhood: Class, Gender, and Fraternalism* (Princeton University Press, 1989), 14.
[42] Mook, "White Masculinity in Barbershop," 458.
[43] Clawson, *Constructing Brotherhood*, 4.
[44] Jeffrey Eugene Nash, "Ringing the Chord: Sentimentality and Nostalgia among Male Singers," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 41, no. 5 (2012): 593, https://doi.org/10.1177/0891241611429943.
[45] Averill, *Four Parts*, 155.

arrangements from circa 1990[46], he found that songs arranged in the barbershop style generally fell into four broad categories: "old songs, old 'faces' ('pals' and 'gals'), old places, and old times."[47]

The harmonic language of the barbershop style also leverages nostalgia to prioritize male camaraderie. Nostalgia can manifest musically in many ways, but one of the ways most relevant to the barbershop style is the use of what scholars such as Michael L. Klein identify as the "pastoral topic." Klein argues that "a topic is a semiotic code that associates a conventional label with a constellation of musical signs."[48] He discusses the musical hallmarks of the pastoral topic, including plagal motion and nostalgic sentiment, continuing: "pastoral discourse inscribes oppositions between retreat to the countryside and return to the city. Descriptions of the countryside and its people may be highly idealized, to the extent that they represent notions of a lost golden age."[49]

It will be illustrative to turn now to analyze three examples of the lyrical and harmonic elements of nostalgia common to the barbershop repertoire. The first example is one of the most iconic barbershop songs, "Wedding Bells (Are Breaking Up That Old Gang of Mine)." The song's first lyric line situates the listener in a popular place for male camaraderie: "Not a soul down on the corner." The lyrics also mention "Sweet Adeline," a quintessential song in the barbershop repertoire and, as discussed earlier, the inspiration for the eventual name of the women's group that was borne out of BHS's gender-restrictive

[46] Prior to 1993, there was an Arrangement judging category. After the category's dissolution in 1993, and with the rebranding to BHS in the early twentieth century, the concept of "approved" arrangements is no longer a reality.
[47] Averill, *Four Parts*, 154–55.
[48] Michael Klein, "On Codes, Topics, and Leaps of Interpretation," in *Intertextuality in Western Art Music* (Indiana University Press, 2005): 56.
[49] Ibid., 68.

membership policies. The larger message of "Wedding Bells" laments the loss of male friends for romantic pursuits and marriage, thus threatening their masculinity and contributing to the "feminizing of America" that Mook identifies as a concern of the early barbershop revivalists.

Musically, "Wedding Bells" uses plagal motion frequently, particularly at cadence points. Many barbershop arrangements use plagal motion to evoke a cadence since the tonic is often held by a voice part in an arrangement's ending material (in barbershop terms, a "tag"). Doing so may subliminally evoke feelings of nostalgia, as Klein notes that the pastoral topic is often used to leverage that emotion. Figure 2.1 displays the tag for "Wedding Bells" as performed by BHS's 1998 international quartet champion, fittingly named Revival. The tag—and, thus, the song—ends with plagal motion in the bass voice, which moves from an E-natural to a B-natural, which, when viewed through Klein's description of the pastoral topic, may subconsciously reinforce nostalgia in performers and listeners.

Figure 2.1. The tag for "Wedding Bells (Are Breaking Up That Old Gang of Mine)."[50]

[50] Sammy Fain, "Wedding Bells (Are Breaking Up That Old Gang of Mine)" arranged by David Wright (Mills Music, Inc.: 1929) (my transcription).

The second example, "Down By the Old Mill Stream," is, in barbershop terminology, a "polecat." A barbershop polecat is one of twelve[51] barbershop arrangements that constitute the standard repertoire that every barbershopper should be able to sing at any time. Most of the songs that became polecats have multiple verses and a chorus, but most polecat arrangements only use the chorus. Like the lyrics of "Wedding Bells," the lyrics of "Down By the Old Mill Stream" use nostalgia as a tool. The first verse begins, "My darling I am dreaming of the days gone by, when you and I were sweethearts beneath the summer sky".[52] In this song, a man sings to his wife, reminiscing about the days when they were first courting. Harmonically, there are many instances of plagal motion. Figure 2.2 displays four instances of plagal motion in the arrangement. Each instance is a cadence point in the song; common barbershop practice dictates that these cadence points will feature *rubato* to accentuate the harmony and thus the plagal motion.

The third example is "There's a New Gang on the Corner." Much like the previous two songs, this song capitalizes on nostalgia through its lyrics and harmony. The title refers to the street corner, already a marker for nostalgia in barbershop. The verse mentions that "someone's taking over what belongs to you and me," while the interlude reminisces about what the old gang used to do, including sing to the old folks. The story combines elements of the prior two examples: lamenting the present and yearning for the past. Like "Down By the Old Mill Stream," there are many instances of plagal motion throughout the arrangement, particularly at cadential moments (Figure 2.3).

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[51] In 2015, BHS published a second volume of polecats containing arrangements of twelve additional songs. However, barbershoppers almost always mean one of the original twelve when they say "polecat."

[52] Tell Taylor, "Down By the Old Mill Stream" (pub. by author, 1910): 2, https://digitalcommons.conncoll.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1278&context=sheetmusic.

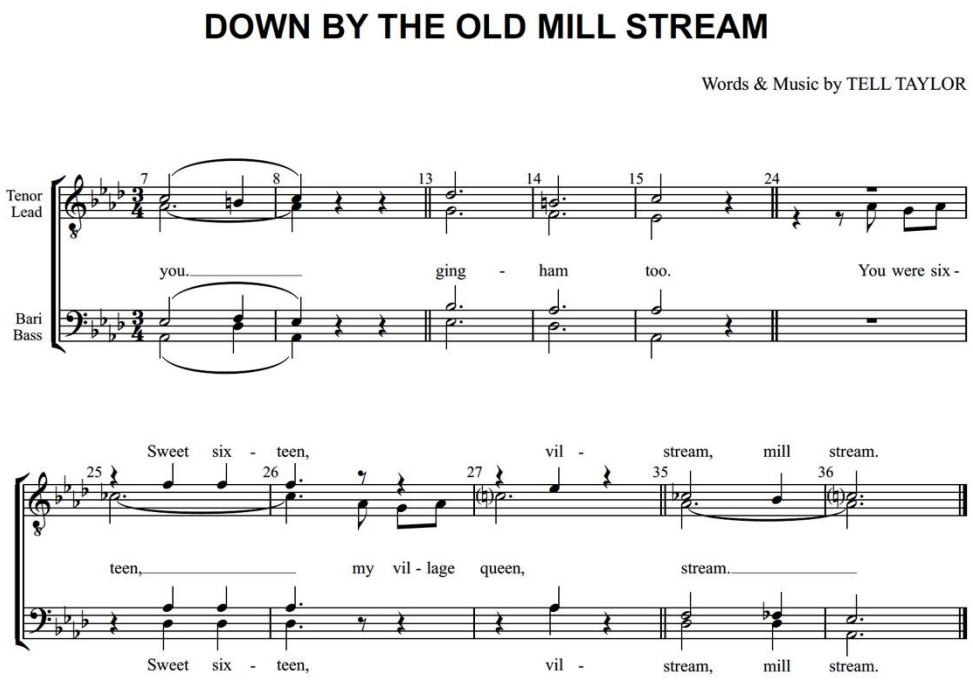

Figure 2.2. Four instances of plagal motion in "Down By the Old Mill Stream."[53]

Figure 2.3. Three instances of plagal motion in "There's a New Gang on the Corner."[54]

[53] Tell Taylor, "Down By the Old Mill Stream," in *The Barberpole Cat Program and Songbook, Volume I* (Barbershop Harmony Society 1992; repr., Barbershop Harmony Society, 2015): 16.
[54] Lindsay McPhail and Walt Michels, "There's a New Gang on the Corner," arranged by Gene Cokeroft (pub. by author, 1949).

While these three songs are but a sampling of the barbershop repertory, they include one of the most famous barbershop songs and one of twelve songs considered core repertoire by BHS, so it is significant that together they demonstrate a clear pattern in barbershop music of using nostalgic markers through titles and lyrics, combined with a (subconscious) evocation of nostalgia through plagal motion, to engender an emotional response in the listener. These elements of nostalgia are only strengthened in live performance, where the quartet's emotional performance often triggers a similar response in the audience, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

BHS's organizational structure embodies the fraternal orders that populated the American landscape in the nineteenth century. BHS divides the United States and Canada into seventeen districts. Within these districts are chapters, which serve as the umbrella organization for a chorus or, in the case of some chapters, choruses. Members who do not belong to a chapter are placed into the Frank H. Thorne Chapter, named after a past BHS president and bass of the 1942 International Quartet Champions, the Elastic Four. Quartets are often formed from within a chorus, giving them the designation of "chapter quartet." SAI follows a similar model, though its districts are called regions and its Frank Thorne Chapter is simply called Chapter-at-Large. HI calls its districts areas and its Frank Thorne Chapter is called the Expansion Area.

Within BHS, chapters often consider themselves to be a family, with the success of a chapter quartet being celebrated by the chapter at large. Anecdotally, I have heard nearly every member—me included—of my barbershop chorus, Parkside Harmony, and our partner chorus, Parkside Melody, refer to our collective chapter as a family at some point. Details about personal lives are shared, celebrated, and mourned as a group. Of course, there are also more literal familial bonds in BHS, as I alluded to in Chapter 1. Barbershop has long

been a place for older male relations to bring their younger male relations, with countless quartets comprising family members. Even O. C. Cash's relations were integral to the history of codified barbershop; his daughter was involved in the founding of SAI, demonstrating that the importance of family was paramount to multiple barbershop organizations, not just BHS.[55] Family connections are also common in choruses, as is the case in Parkside Harmony and Parkside Melody.

BHS's structure and conventions confirm Clawson's argument that "a corporate concept of society assumes that groups, not individuals, are the basic units of society, and that people act, not primarily as individuals, but as members of collectives."[56] In BHS competitions, a quartet is announced by listing its members' chapter affiliation(s) first, with the names of the quartet's members written in the accompanying contest program and rarely said aloud. This tactic privileges the group affiliation over the individual identity.

Rituals are central to BHS's fraternal model. Chapters have different methods for auditioning members that are rigorously followed. Upon joining a chapter, BHS mails new members a membership card and the aforementioned *Barberpole Cat Program and Songbook*. Chapters also often close rehearsals with BHS's anthem "Keep the Whole World Singing" (originally titled "Keep America Singing") and celebrate membership milestones, such as years served or number of new members brought into barbershop. Of course, the rituals of performance are also of note. BHS holds its international competition and convention every year over the week that includes July 4, with that serving as many a barbershopper's annual vacation. In many ways, barbershoppers base their calendars around the rituals of rehearsal,

[55] Averill, *Four Parts*, 127.
[56] Clawson, *Constructing Brotherhood*, 38–39.

performance, and competition. Clawson argues that rituals help organizations to develop kinship and command respect.[57]

Masculinity has defined BHS since its founding, with the organization cultivating its male-oriented image of barbershop for decades. The founders of BHS authenticated nostalgic, neo-Victorian ideals of male intimacy "by invoking the nostalgically constructed 'barber shop,' with references to specific, working-class, urban social institutions—minstrel shows, urban youth gangs, and the saloon—that were widely viewed as havens of masculinity and manly intimacy at the turn of the century."[58] To this day, the barbershop rehearsal functions as a space for men to be, per Nash, "sentimental, loving, and even sensitive without violating the ideologies of masculinity."[59] Nash offers the example of men touching each other during warmups as an indicator of this unthreatened homosocial masculinity. These sentimental touches extend past the warmup; in coaching sessions with Prior Engagement, my quartet mates were instructed to put their hands on my shoulders to metaphorically channel and direct their sound through my lead voice, a tactic that we all found helpful. Additionally, members of quartet features in songs performed by Parkside Harmony often put their arms on each other's backs or sides to breathe as one and convey a more profound sense of closeness among the quartet.

Quartet performances often display what one of my Prior Engagement's coaches called "going there": the idea of demonstrating such a profound state of emotion that causes a song to briefly pause before regaining the composure to continue performing. Unlike most genres of music, where "going there" would be viewed as being too emotional or vulnerable,

[57] Clawson, *Constructing Brotherhood*, 42.
[58] Mook, "White Masculinity in Barbershop," 463.
[59] Nash, "Ringing the Chord," 593.

quartets are often celebrated for "going there" and being able to finish a song. Perhaps the most famous example of "going there" in recent years happened in 2018 at the international quartet semifinals in Orlando, FL. That year's eventual second-place quartet, Signature, performed a rendition of Luther Vandross's "Dance with My Father." At the climax of the arrangement, the lead of the quartet, Daniel Cochran, begins to sob, whereupon the rest of his quartet consoles him with touches and reassuring words—all while one of the members continues humming the pitch to ensure they begin the song again in the correct key. After twenty-six seconds, Daniel regains his composure and begins singing again, tears streaming down his face. The moment was viewed by many as one of the most consequential of the contest, and the song achieved one of the highest scores for a quartet performance that week. Other examples of quartets "going there" permeate YouTube, but Signature's 2018 performance remains the standard-bearer.

As mentioned earlier, organizations like SAI and HI came into existence due to BHS's restrictive membership policies. Clawson notes that men's fraternal organizations debated whether women's fraternal organizations, which were often created to be auxiliaries of their male counterparts, should be "opposed, tolerated, or recognized," with many women's auxiliaries not supported due to a perceived infringement on the masculine character of fraternal organization.[60] Averill concurs, noting that "most male barbershoppers' reactions to female barbershopping ranged from patronizing support for a separate organization to outright disdain and opposition to the very notion of female barbershop singing."[61]

[60] Clawson, *Constructing Brotherhood*, 200.
[61] Averill, *Four Parts*, 127.

As women aimed to carve their own social spaces, Clawson notes that "in what seems an almost demeaning act of subjugation, [women's fraternal organizations] constructed their organizational identities on their relationship to the orders that for so many years had vociferously excluded them."[62] SAI's early years similarly had this tact, with Averill noting that "most of the group's attributes—national competitions, education, service, and chapter organization—followed the model established by [BHS]."[63] BHS leadership ultimately supported the creation of SAI in 1945 as a protective measure to ensure it could maintain its all-male space. Similarly, many of the early titans of BHS and the larger barbershop revival held positions of power in SAI, including directing SAI choruses; "it was decades before [SAI] jettisoned the expectation of being coached and directed by men."[64] Some elements of SAI—and, eventually, HI—still reflect BHS's involvement in the creation of the organization, however. Women's barbershop still designates its voice parts as Tenor and Bass rather than Soprano and Alto. (SATB voice designations are far more common in barbershop arrangements scored for treble and bass voices.)

One area where SAI and the women's auxiliaries discussed by Clawson differ is that BHS had little interest in making SAI an auxiliary of its own organization.[65] This has held true in recent years among BHS, SAI, and HI, with the organizations functioning independently, while occasionally inviting championship-level groups to perform at each other's conventions. Still, though, the image BHS cultivated of barbershop as a masculine hobby has held strong for generations, with SAI and HI groups having a gendered qualifier attached for years. This image of BHS and, by extension, masculine-oriented barbershop, has

[62] Clawson, *Constructing Brotherhood*, 195.
[63] Averill, *Four Parts*, 128.
[64] Ibid., 130.
[65] Ibid., 128.

also held strong in academia. With the exception of a few notable examples, most barbershop scholarship focuses on specifically male barbershop, offering little thought on barbershop performed by marginalized genders. Even recent scholarship can stumble in this regard, lumping SAI in as an organization affiliated with BHS instead of as a separate entity.[66]

Everyone in Harmony: Early Support and Disdain

BHS has helped cultivate a hypermasculine white image of barbershop since its inception, but the announcement of the organization's 2017 Strategic Vision, "Everyone in Harmony," aimed to change that. Acknowledging its history of exclusion, BHS's announcement of Everyone in Harmony aimed to right past wrongs through various events and initiatives. One such event was the awarding of posthumous membership to the Grand Central Red Caps in 2017 and the subsequent announcement of an endowment fund, bearing the quartet's name, to provide scholarships to barbershoppers from minoritized groups. Perhaps the most consequential outcome of Everyone in Harmony, however, was the decision to open membership to singers of all genders and begin the discussion of competitions featuring singers of all genders.

Much like the 1963 decision to leave racial integration open to its membership, BHS's decision to open its membership to singers of all genders was left up to the discretion of individual chapters, with BHS leadership noting that "the principle of local control is central to […] Everyone in Harmony. Every barbershop unit—chapter, quartet, and other

[66] Boyd, "Keep It Barbershop," 3.

communities of artists we support—must be free to pursue its own self-defined greatest happiness and impact."[67]

From its outset, Everyone in Harmony caused divided reactions among barbershoppers. One argument in favor of Everyone in Harmony was its potential to save barbershop from dying, a sentiment that many of my respondents shared. Oberyn argued that "if [BHS does not] pursue this, [then] barbershopping will die. There might be a few diehards that'll keep it going. […] But I just feel that if we don't combine our forces, eventually what we know as barbershopping will just become another a cappella thing that's out there right now." However, Delphine pushed back against this narrative, noting that "if the goal is to acquire resources so that [BHS] can survive, I think that that is a little bit of a colonization approach." Delphine's comments stem from the early days of Everyone in Harmony, when BHS approached HI about potential avenues of partnership. She noted that she perceived the BHS's public outreach efforts to HI as unintentionally feeling like a plea for acquiring resources—in this case, singers from minoritized genders as well as their dues and labor.

Some detractors of Everyone in Harmony questioned the need due to the presence of SAI and HI. Ames noted that

> We joined to get this [all-male barbershop singing], and now they're bringing women in, but there's already a Sweet Adelines [International] organization for women, and there's already a mixed harmony organization that I've heard of. […] So number one, I thought, "Why is that necessary? The women aren't being excluded from barbershop at all. They have their own organization and convention." Number two is [that] changing the general sound of barbershop by mixing women in there […] is that I don't want it to replace men's barbershop.

[67] "Everyone in Harmony FAQs," Barbershop Harmony Society, accessed February 5, 2025, https://www.barbershop.org/everyone/frequently-asked-questions.

Other respondents, including scores of barbershoppers on social media sites such as Facebook, also argued that the existence of SAI and HI negated the need for Everyone in Harmony. Of course, none of these barbershoppers acknowledged the reality that SAI and HI were created to afford an opportunity to sing barbershop to people who were being excluded by BHS on the basis of their gender.

Ames also argued that timbral differences between genders would present problems for Everyone in Harmony, noting that

> I know a lady […] who was trying to get herself into a male chorus […] and can't understand why they won't take her. She doesn't think she changes the sound of the chorus, but if she asked advice from a person with an ear for music like I have, it changes the sound. […] They just do. […] And it is a difference, at least, I hear the difference.

The most interesting takeaway from this quote, besides the fact that Ames argued that his female friend did not have "an ear for music," is the question of how the barbershop sound would be affected by Everyone in Harmony. Another respondent, Rutherford, argued that he simply did not like the sound of a high-voices quartet and was far more likely to tolerate a low-voices quartet that struggled to stay on pitch. He noted that his preferences had nothing to do with sexism and had everything to do with acoustics. Rutherford also argued that low-voice quartets are more adept at creating what barbershoppers consider to be a hallmark of the style: expanded sound. Averill notes that

> the production of expanded sound is the single most important aesthetic consideration in barbershop singing. Good overtone fortification reflects unified articulation (and presumably facial expression), a balance of vocal intensities, and strong, resonant voices. Expanded sound is produced only when all of these other factors cohere. It is because of this that expanded sound […] has taken on a quasi-mythic significance for many barbershoppers, signaling a kind of perfection in group harmony that has been reached, a perfection that serves as a metaphor for the social unity and

> male fraternity (sorority, in the case of the women's barbershop groups) that inspire the practice of barbershop singing.[68]

BHS's judging community eventually published an article noting that the gender makeup of an ensemble does not factor into expanded sound and that it is simply a product of good singing.[69]

Still another argument against Everyone in Harmony was the potential for sexual tension to arise in the rehearsal room. In its Everyone in Harmony FAQs, BHS acknowledged that its longstanding policy of having men's chapters not meet at the same time as women's chapters to prevent "inappropriate fraternization" would no longer be possible and that members should expect to conduct themselves professionally as they would in other venues; BHS also acknowledged that women who felt uncomfortable being in a majority-male space should consider implementing tactics from their everyday lives to remain safe in barbershop spaces.[70] One of my respondents, Prescott, who ultimately supported Everyone in Harmony, did caution that "separating men and women […] can breed a different type of productivity because of sexual interest or conflict." However, in the middle of his own argument, he stumbled upon the realization that queer barbershoppers have been singing in all-male spaces for decades, noting that his chorus has "I don't know, 10, 12 homosexuals […]. And I don't know if it's distracting for them or not. I have no idea what it's like."

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[68] Gage Averill, "Bell Tones and Ringing Chords: Sense and Sensation in Barbershop Harmony," *The World of Music* 41, no. 1 (1999): 49, https://www.jstor.org/stable/41700111.
[69] "Judging Community Addresses Expanded Sound for All Ensembles," Barbershop Harmony Society, accessed February 5, 2025, https://www.barbershop.org/expanded-sound-for-all-ensembles.
[70] "Everyone in Harmony FAQs."

At no point did any of my respondents who cautioned against the intermingling of genders or the perceived acoustical differences of voices acknowledge that all-gender ensembles have existed in other choral genres for centuries.

Perhaps the strongest disdain for Everyone in Harmony came from those who decided to create the Society for the Preservation and Propagation of Barbershop Quartet Singing in the United States (SPPBQSUS) in 2018, borrowing the original name BHS's founders had created.[71] SPPBSQSUS notes that it was "established to ensure that the wholly American institution of Male barbershop quartet singing is preserved in the form and manner in which it was birthed—by utilizing songs typifying those composed during the years between 1890 to 1929."[72] Of course, as has been argued by scholars and in this chapter, the "male barbershop quartet singing" that SPPBSQSUS is hoping to preserve is wholly fabricated, the creation of men who felt the world was changing for the worse due to the "feminizing of America" and decided to reassert their presumed birthright over a style that had been created and enjoyed by all kinds of people before the founding of BHS.

SPPBSQSUS leadership also noted that it felt BHS had become too contest-oriented and aimed to rectify this by deemphasizing contests. However, in 2023, the organization decided to start holding contests and awarding a trophy to the first-place quartet. Quartets were named champions for life, following the convention set by BHS in the 1930s. Of the three quartets who have won the first-place trophy, two were perennial BHS international

[71] SPPBSQSUS has recently started using the moniker "World Barbershop Quartet Association" (WBQA) but, for the purposes of this dissertation, the acronym SPPBSQSUS will be used.
[72] "Our Story," World Barbershop Quartet Association, accessed February 5, 2025, https://www.sppbsqsus.org/copy-of-gentlemen-s-barbershop-quar.

top-ten quartets, perhaps pointing to a different reason not to support Everyone in Harmony: increased competition from new members.

BHS is not the only organization that has experienced membership fracturing due to reckoning with its white male history. In 2022, members broke away from SAI again, though unlike with HI in the 1950s, this breakup was due to inclusion, not exclusion. Members who bristled at SAI's increasing support for transgender women broke away to form TRU Harmony A Cappella, which aims to be "a space for women who want to celebrate sisterhood and all things female."[73] (The organization was also founded in response to vaccine requirements imposed by SAI to participate in competitions after the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.) TRU Harmony, much like SPPBSQSUS, has continued to follow its parental mold in holding competitions and retreats: where it differs is in who it decides is allowed to participate.

Early Challenges

Delphine summarized the early rollout of Everyone in Harmony as "ready, fire, aim." Some of the areas in which BHS's rollout left something to be desired was in its handling of its districts, repertoire, and a focus on gender instead of voicing.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, BHS divides the United States and Canada into seventeen districts. Of particular interest to this discussion is the Dixie District, first created in 1948. In the wake of Everyone in Harmony, countless barbershoppers pushed for the Dixie District to rename itself or for BHS to step in and mandate a change. BHS took a *laissez-faire* tactic to the renaming of the Dixie District, allowing the district to rename itself

[73] "About Us," TRU Harmony A Cappella, accessed February 5, 2025, https://www.truharmonyacappella.com/about.

on its own terms—if it wanted to do so. In recent years, however, events precipitated an eventual change. The first happened in September 2023, when an emcee at the district's fall contest used the phrase "cotton-picking," which prompted the district to put out a statement disavowing that language due to its association with the labor that Black Americans were forced to do in the southern United States as enslaved people and sharecroppers.

About a week after that fall 2023 contest, however, the largest domino fell when the Nashville-based Music City Chorus—which had recently won the 2022 BHS International Chorus Contest gold medal[74]—announced that it would be effectively boycotting all district events until the district changed its name. The chapter noted that it "[could not] in good conscience continue to support an entity that, in its current form, creates and perpetuates barriers for individuals from participating and joining that community."[75] In March 2024, the Dixie District finally changed its name to the Southeastern Harmony District, and the Music City Chorus announced its gratitude for its leadership being part of the task force to change the name, its intent to return to participating in district events, and its acknowledgment that the name change would not be the end of efforts to make the district more inclusive.

Repertoire has continued to be a thorny issue for BHS. Many of the early songs that BHS celebrates as standards of the style are borne from the minstrel tradition. In fact, a significant number of the twenty-four songs included in *The Barberpole Cat Program and Songbook*, *Volumes I and II* are some combination of spirituals, minstrel songs, and/or songs that objectify women. Other ubiquitous barbershop songs, such as "Hello! Ma Baby,"

[74] Unlike barbershop quartets, which retire upon winning gold, gold medal barbershop choruses are eligible to compete again after sitting out of two consecutive contest cycles.
[75] Music City Chorus, "A statement from the Nashville Chapter of the Barbershop Harmony Society," September 27, 2023, https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=810546384412763&set=pcb.810546431079425.

originated as coon songs. As mentioned in Chapter 1, coon songs, which developed out of blackface minstrelsy, helped perpetuate existing stereotypes about Black people and create new ones.[76] At one of the earliest competitions my first quartet, Always Sunny, attended, we performed a medley of George Gershwin's "Strike Up the Band" and Irving Berlin's "Alexander's Ragtime Band." The latter song is a coon song with lyrical references to Alexander, a minstrel archetype, and stereotyped Black dialect.

BHS has tried to mitigate the impacts of its discriminatory repertoire, including changing lyrics. One example comes from *The Barberpole Cat Program and Songbook, Volume II*. BHS's arrangement of "(When it's) Darkness on the Delta" changes the original lyric, "Fields of cotton all around me,/*Darkies* singin' sweet and low," to "Fields of cotton all around me,/*Voices* singin' sweet and low."[77] Some of my respondents felt that lyric changes were sufficient enough to allow for songs to continue being sung, while others felt that lyric changes just covered up the problems inherent to the songs. One respondent, Esme, argued that

> just because the words don't say something toxic, or just because you change a word, does not make its history and its past go away. And I would like to pose the example of the Judy Garland song, "Somewhere over the ___,/ way up high." No matter how many times I tell you the [missing] word is "bathtub," you're not going to unhear the real word.

Another, Odelia, specifically brought up "(When It's) Darkness on the Delta," noting that "Changing something from 'darky' to 'people': that, you might get away with for a little bit, but not really. […] It's kind of deceptive, in a way."

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[76] Matthew D. Morrison, *Blacksound: Making Race and Popular Music in the United States* (University of California Press, 2024), 177.
[77] Jerry Levinson, "(When It's) Darkness on the Delta," arranged by Barbershop Harmony Society, in *The Barberpole Cat Program and Songbook, Volume II* (Barbershop Harmony Society, 2015): 16 (my italics).

Still others argued that removing songs outright would be tantamount to oft-cited debates of whether removing Confederate statues construed a removal of history. These respondents believed that removing these songs would result in a loss of history. Given that BHS's original aim was preserve and encourage the barbershop style, song removal could be seen as undermining the organization's central tenet. And, to its credit, sheet music published through BHS will often include historical information on the last page. However, this information rarely addresses issues that lyric changes necessitate. For instance, the historical information about "(When It's) Darkness on the Delta" discusses who wrote the song, which groups made it famous, and its importance to the barbershop style. The historical information ends by noting "as you sing this arrangement, call to mind the 1930s, when there was little electricity on the Mississippi Delta. As darkness fell, folks along the Delta enjoyed an easier, less complicated life. Invite your audiences to do the same."[78] Historical context is often very rarely provided in barbershop concerts and its omission is especially noticeable in contest settings, during which a group enters the stage, sings its two songs, and exits.

In recent years, BHS's contest system has worked to ensure that songs are not barriers to inclusivity. Steve Armstrong, the immediate past SCJC chair, notes that BHS judges, especially those in the Performance Category, are tasked with educating competitors why songs may be inadvisable to perform in contest.[79] Performance Judges are allowed to levy advisories and even penalties to groups who perform this repertoire. Armstrong acknowledges that Performance Judges are not expected to be historians, and songs may sometimes be dealt with after the fact as a result, but he argues that this focus on educating

[78] Levinson, "Darkness on the Delta."
[79] Steve Armstrong, email message to author, April 5, 2025.

competitors has led to a significant decrease in the number of problematic songs that cross the contest stage and has even started a similar decrease of problematic repertoire in non-competitive venues such as chapter shows.[80] A cursory glance at BHS competition scoresheets confirms Armstrong's point the more reprehensible songs arranged in the barbershop style are slowly but surely disappearing form the contest stage. Anecdotally, I have also observed barbershoppers become more aware of the potential pitfalls of performing repertoire without considering its historical context.[81]

Other barbershop organizations have taken different paths to critically examine—and, in some cases, cull—repertoire in the name of inclusivity. SAI is the most apparent example, and it has taken steps over the past decade to become a more inclusive organization, notably in creating its song evaluation database that guides its members on selecting appropriate repertoire by looking at the composer, lyricist, original intent of the song, and any other information that may help make an assessment. Friends who are members of SAI have told me that songs are given one of five determinations: "Yes" (no issues with the song); "Yes: Note" (the song can be performed but extramusical context might cause an issue); "Yes: Lyrics" (the song can be performed, but some lyrics will need to be changed or omitted), "Yes: Caution" (while the song can be performed, the content and context of the song may not make it an effective vehicle for every group); and "No" (the song should not—and, for the purposes of competition, cannot—be performed).

While the song evaluation database is only available to SAI members, I have seen a few entries posted by members of a barbershop Discord server of which I am a member. And while it is not a perfect tool—to my knowledge, there is no mechanism in place to

[80] Steve Armstrong, email message to author, April 5, 2025.
[81] See Chapter 5 for more information.

ensure a group vets a "Yes: Caution" song before singing it—it does demonstrate that preservation does not have to involve a keep-cull binary and that it is possible to continue performing barbershop at a high level while avoiding some of the most problematic repertoire.

From the beginning of Everyone in Harmony, BHS has used the terms "male/female" and "men/women" to discuss how it is opening its membership. In its Everyone in Harmony FAQs, BHS notes that it "values and respects people of all genders, identities, orientations and expressions. Throughout these materials, the general terms 'men and women' should be understood to encompass and include all people, without intent to exclude anyone."[82] Of course, a much simpler catchall term exists to describe the new people BHS was admitting to its ranks: "singers," or even "barbershoppers." The choice to continue using gendered language instead of gender-neutral language has created problems that would have been avoided with a simple semantic change. While BHS divides its singing groups into one of three categories—men's, women's, and mixed (gender)—solely for data collection purposes that is only viewed by BHS headquarters (Harmony Hall, located in Nashville) and the Society Contest and Judging Committee (SCJC), some districts still use these gender classifications for contest awards. For instance, a quartet comprised of four femme-presenting individuals would be registered as a women's quartet, even if one or more of its members did not identify as female. This focus on gender leaves many individuals feeling unrepresented by these options, whereas a focus on voice parts may provide less consternation—perhaps "men's, women's, and mixed" should be changed to "low-voice, high-voice, and mixed-voice" in the districts that still use these classifications.

[82] "Everyone in Harmony FAQs."

Other issues have arisen due to a focus on the gender of barbershoppers instead of the vocal ranges they exhibit. For example, there have been instances of some barbershoppers, who were assigned male at birth and who sing in the bass range, transitioning to become female-presenting individuals. These individuals have been ousted from their low-voice "all-male" choruses and invited to join the high-voice "all-female" choruses under the same chapter, despite the realities of how the voice responds to gender transition. Jane Ramseyer Miller notes that

> singers who take testosterone as they transition from female to male […] experience a voice transition much like the transition of boys during puberty. For cisgender boys in puberty, the vocal folds both lengthen and thicken, producing a lower range. […] The situation is particularly sensitive for a person transitioning from male to female. While taking synthetic estrogen creates physical changes for a trans* woman, it does not significantly affect voice range for a singer who transitions later in life, and there is disagreement among voice professionals regarding whether taking estrogen can reverse the thickening of vocal folds.[83]

All of these examples demonstrate how BHS has had issue advancing a more progressive agenda through Everyone in Harmony. These problems have demonstrated just how pervasive the legacies of the white male structure that dominated its existence for nearly ninety years are. These legacies have also shown up more recently in BHS's handling of contests.

Contests, Smoke Ring, and "Taste"

On September 24, 2019, BHS sent an email to its members asking for feedback on proposed changes to barbershop contests, as well as FAQs about the proposed changes. BHS provided three different pathways for future contests. The first would create three

[83] Jane Ramseyer Miller, "Creating Choirs that Welcome Transgender Singers," *Choral Journal* 57, no. 4 (2016): 61, https://www.jstor.org/stable/24883861.

separate classifications—men's, women's, and mixed—awarding five medals per classification, with no overall winner. The second would be an actual open contest—with all groups competing against each other—with five medals and an overall winner. The third would be a sort of middle ground, awarding five medals to the top five groups—regardless of member makeup—and one award each to the top men's, women's, and mixed quartet.

On December 10, 2019, BHS announced that it would move forward with the first pathway, but the 2020 coronavirus pandemic stalled the plan to implement it. In light of discussions in the intervening years—both in the barbershop sphere and around the United States and the world—BHS announced in February 2022 that it would instead be implementing the second pathway at its upcoming international competition that July.[84] Then-BHS treasurer John Santora noted that part of the change from the first pathway to the second pathway was an acknowledgment that "'at the end of the day, we knew that separate is not equal.'"[85]

As of March 2025, there have been three international cycles with an open chorus and quartet competition, and the early returns looked promising. In the first year of an open competition, two high-voice quartets finished in the top ten, with GQ becoming the first non-male quartet to win a BHS medal, placing fourth. The most recent international contest in July 2024 featured the most gender-diverse top ten yet. The Ladies, a high-voice quartet that had placed sixth in 2022 and won the 2023 SAI international quartet competition, placed fourth in the BHS competition. Of particular excitement was the debut of two mixed-

[84] While BHS's international contest follows the second pathway, that is not the case for each district; once again, BHS allowed for its districts to decide how to implement contest changes, with a fair number opting to follow the first pathway.
[85] "International Conventions to Have Open Quartet, Chorus Competitions," Barbershop Harmony Society, accessed February 5, 2025, https://www.barbershop.org/bhs-to-have-open-contests.

voice quartets to the top ten for the first time: Smoke Ring in ninth and Sunday Night Social in tenth. To date, low-voice choruses have continued to dominate the medalist rankings. The highest that a high-voice chorus has placed is Sweden-based Stockholm City Voices, which placed sixth in 2023, while Gotham Chorus is the highest mixed-voice chorus, placing third in 2024.

Smoke Ring serves as a particularly fascinating case study into how BHS's history of privileging white male identities at an organizational level has caused issue with its aims to become more inclusive. Smoke Ring is a quartet based out of New York City. As of March 2025, its members sing in some combination of the three Hell's Kitchen chapter choruses Voices of Gotham (low voices), Sirens of Gotham (high voices), and the previously mentioned Gotham Chorus (mixed voices). Every member of Smoke Ring is queer, including one non-binary member, and the quartet has left its mark on barbershop by performing music that celebrates its members' identities and experiences. Smoke Ring made history in 2023 by becoming the first quartet not comprised of four men to win the Mid-Atlantic District quartet championship. The quartet subsequently continued its meteoric rise by performing at BHS's midwinter convention in New York in January 2024 in addition to competing at the 2024 international convention and, as mentioned earlier, came in ninth place in its debut international appearance.

Smoke Ring's first set at the international competition sparked significant debate on social media. The controversy stemmed from the quartet members' outfits. The lead, Stephanie "Tags" Taglianetti, wore a black sequined dress that many in barbershop Facebook groups decried as showing "too much boob." In a Facebook post after the end of the competition, Taglianetti noted that her outfit was chosen to amplify the message of their second song of the set, "There Are Worse Things I Could Do" from the musical *Grease*

(1972), which aimed to comment on the vitriol the quartet has received from all corners of the barbershop world since its creation in 2023. The quartet also received blowback regarding costuming due to some outfit choices by its bass, Gabriel Spector, who wore clothing traditionally designed for women that Spector felt better reflected their gender identity.

The quartet also ran into issues with some of its song choices during the international competition. One that particularly stood out was an arrangement of "Air Conditioner Song" by Christine Lavin. The song remarks on the heat sweeping New York and its protagonist is looking for a man with air conditioning to cool them off. The song's double entendres were amplified by the quartet's choreography, including one instance in which the quartet implied "how big your apartment might be" also referred to their potential lover's penis size. The song was ultimately penalized by the judges for being "Not in Good Taste" due to the multiple double entendres performed.

While BHS is not required to upload contest performances to its YouTube channel, it has become the expectation that BHS will upload contest videos within a few months after the competition concludes. In the wake of Smoke Ring's "Not in Good Taste" penalty, some performances were held off from being published, including three of Smoke Ring's six songs and other quartets' songs, mostly in limbo for references to drinking and promiscuity. What was curious, however, was BHS's decision to upload some videos that did not seem to have been subject to the same scrutiny. For instance, BHS uploaded a performance by a Danish barbershop quartet, the Clementones, singing "When You Are An Addams," from the 2010 musical *The Addams Family*, in which the quartet sings the lyric "When you're an Addams, you really need to love your wife several times a day" while a member of the quartet pantomimes thrusting. Similarly, BHS uploaded a performance by Fleet Street

singing "So You Wanna Marry Daisy?" which includes a very overt sexual innuendo in the lyric "two-ply cream pie." Only Smoke Ring's performance of "Air Conditioner Song" was assessed a "Not in Good Taste" penalty, and the quartet's videos still have yet to be uploaded as of March 2025, eight months after the international competition. It is worth noting that both the Clementones and Fleet Street are comprised of masculine-presenting individuals. It is also worth noting that Smoke Ring's performance of "Air Conditioner Song" at the January 2024 midwinter convention[86] is currently still available on BHS's YouTube channel while the July 2024 international competition version remains inaccessible. The midwinter performance has fewer double entendres, but there are still a few to be found.

In November 2024, BHS distributed a survey to its members to help gather ideas for what constituted BHS's brand. In February 2025, BHS announced that its Board of Directors had adopted a "Statement Regarding Acceptable Taste," with BHS announcing it would dictate all levels of the organization, from competition to its YouTube presence.[87] BHS's decision to adopt a Statement Regarding Acceptable Taste is not wholly surprising; Robert G. Hopkins, an academic who also served as a former chair of the SCJC, notes that "the rules reflect concerns about the regulation of behaviors."[88] Armstrong also acknowledges that BHS contest rules have always included language around performances being in good taste.[89] He notes that he remembers at least three instances in which choruses

[86] Smoke Ring was a featured quartet at the January 2024 midwinter convention because the convention happened in New York City. The quartet did not compete.
[87] "Statement Regarding Acceptable Taste," Barbershop Harmony Society, accessed February 5, 2025, https://www.barbershop.org/acceptable-taste#FAQ.
[88] Robert G. Hopkins, "From 'The Chord Was King' to 'A Dynamic Journey': Changes in the Barbershop Quartet Style in Contests Since the 1950s," *American Music* 38, no. 1 (Spring 2020): 80, muse.jhu.edu/article/752816.
[89] Steve Armstrong, email message to author, April 5, 2025.

received a score of zero from the Performance Category due to being in bad taste, most recently in 2013.[90] With the advent of Everyone in Harmony, more possibilities regarding what might not be considered good taste became reality, and Performance Judges felt that they were being asked to draw the line without any guidance. This feeling ultimately led to the Statement Regarding Acceptable Taste, and while Smoke Ring was not the catalyst for its creation, Armstrong acknowledges that the quartet's performances likely sped up the process for the Statement Regarding Acceptable Taste being created and implemented.[91]

What is most striking about the Statement Regarding Acceptable Taste, however, is its included caveats that content must be "not overtly political, not overtly sexualized, not overtly offensive, [and] without intent to defame or belittle."[92] Such language is at the crux of the delicate balance between the construction of hegemonic white masculinity and BHS's attempts to become more inclusive.

Who—or What—Decides What is Overtly Tasteless?

Since its inception, codified barbershop has relied on its proximity to hegemonic white masculinity to survive. As noted at the start of this chapter, the minstrel show was a formative location for the development of barbershop harmony in the United States, and the 1938 codification of barbershop preserved and encouraged a false barbershop history that lionized the contributions of white men and ignored or erased the contributions of everyone else. Kevin Keller, a barbershop arranger, current BHS president, and historian of BHS's contest and judging system, notes that as late as 1977 (fourteen years after BHS allowed Black men to join), blackface appeared on the international stage, when the Pony

[90] Steve Armstrong, email message to author, April 5, 2025.
[91] Ibid.
[92] "Statement Regarding Acceptable Taste."

Expressmen, a chorus from St. Joseph, Missouri, performed an Al Jolson set.[93] It was around this time when BHS finally banned the use of blackface in performance.[94]

Of course, blackface minstrelsy never fully disappeared from BHS or barbershop. Averill notes that "the repertory still contains the bulk of blackvoice southern pastoral or Dixie songs and most of the early ragtime and coon songs."[95] This assertion was made over twenty years ago and, as noted earlier, the barbershop repertory has significantly shifted over that time. Armstrong does acknowledge that problematic songs still do appear, however.[96] For instance, the previously discussed "Hello! Ma Baby" was performed in both the 2023 and 2024 international competitions. In continuing to perform an imagined form of Blackness, barbershoppers helped to "[enforce] a racialized binary in the white imaginary between blackness and whiteness."[97] In fact, as Averill notes, BHS leadership and barbershoppers more generally viewed the music of groups like the Mills Brothers as separate from barbershop, despite those groups' barbershop roots, influences, and albums; by the 1950s, barbershoppers acknowledged many vocal harmony subgenres that they did not consider to be "barbershop."[98] In many ways, BHS leadership reflected the dominant line of thinking in the recording industry of the time: barbershop was defined mostly by *who* was singing it, not always *what* they were singing. This timeline coincides with the "keep it barbershop" slogan that Boyd notes began taking hold in 1957 as barbershoppers became

[93] Kevin Keller, email message to author, March 22, 2025.
[94] Averill, *Four Parts*, 133.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Steve Armstrong, email message to author, April 5, 2025.
[97] Morrison, *Blacksound*, 10.
[98] Averill, *Four Parts*, 134–36.

interested in performing other styles of vocal harmony, which the traditionalists viewed as a threat to BHS's standing and longevity.[99]

With the advent of Everyone in Harmony, it seemed that BHS was ready to move past its hegemonic white male structure, but that structure has proven to be much more malleable than BHS leadership must have imagined, allowing the construction of hegemonic white masculinity to survive the change. As Boyd notes, "[BHS's] forward momentum is entangled with its core value of tradition, with its desire to preserve (what [it] believes to be) the core tenets of the barbershop style."[100] In some ways, it appears BHS leadership is not aware just how deep this structure runs, such as the extent of Project N that Boyd discusses in his dissertation. In other ways, Everyone in Harmony has laid bare how intertwined the construction and privileging of hegemonic white masculinity is with the historical formation of BHS. I will consider the four points highlighted earlier from the Statement Regarding Acceptable Taste—"overtly political, overtly sexualized, overtly offensive, [and] without intent to defame or belittle"—to demonstrate these issues.

As Boyd argues, BHS historically "sought to convince [its] members and outside parties that there existed a separation between the political troubles of the country and the simple, carefree joy of singing barbershop harmony."[101] In its early decades, BHS relied on its code of ethics to implement and enforce this "no politics in barbershop" stance and the Statement Regarding Acceptable Taste could be construed as a similar tactic. It is interesting to note, however, that BHS's international competition has always fallen on the week of July 4, which Armstrong notes is likely due to venues and hotels being relatively cheaper due to it

[99] Boyd, "Keep It Barbershop," 102–3.
[100] Ibid., 159.
[101] Ibid., 23.

being a holiday and not due to any attempts to be "overtly political."[102] Despite this, the international competition usually features a mass sing-along of "The Star-Spangled Banner" as well as the national anthems of other countries that are represented at the convention. A video from the 2024 international competition of the audience singing "The Star-Spangled Banner" on July 4 remains available on BHS's YouTube page, perhaps undercutting the Statement Regarding Acceptable Taste; it is difficult to think of something more "overtly political" than thousands of people performing the national anthem of the United States on the country's Independence Day. It is also worth noting that Armstrong, who is Canadian, acknowledged that he always feels a little excluded from the July 4 celebrations.[103] Additionally, due to the "overtly political" decision to negate contributions from minoritized communities central to its creation, it would be prudent for BHS leadership to remember that the existence of people from minoritized communities in an organization defined by hegemonic white masculinity is inherently political, as Carol Hanisch argued in her landmark 1969 essay, "The Personal Is Political."[104]

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Smoke Ring's videos have largely been held off of YouTube for eight months. The practice of uploading quartet and chorus performances has helped groups, particularly those newer to the contest circuit, gain traction in the barbershop sphere. In addition to the consequence of limiting Smoke Ring's ability to market itself with high-level performances, the decision to withhold the quartet's performances severely curtails the visibility of a quartet emblematic of the triumphs of

[102] Steve Armstrong, email message to author, April 5, 2025.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Carol Hanisch, "The Personal Is Political," in *Women's Liberation! Feminist Writings That Inspired a Revolution and Still Can*, ed. Alix Kates Shulman and Honor Moore (Library of America, 2021), 134–38, ProQuest Ebook Central.

Everyone in Harmony: a quartet whose members are authentically themselves, presenting entertaining performances unlike almost anything on the barbershop stage. As Boyd notes from his conversations with Black barbershoppers, there is a hesitation to join BHS due to the lack of Black people singing barbershop: in other words, people who look like them.[105] BHS runs a similar risk in withholding the videos of Smoke Ring, one of the organization's most visibly queer quartets, not to mention a district champion and the current highest-ranked mixed-voice quartet in BHS.

Smoke Ring was a source of discussion for weeks, if not months, in barbershop Facebook groups. Some of the comments were particularly homophobic, transphobic, and body shaming. Taglianetti in particular received vitriol due to her body shape and comfort in expressing herself through her quartet's art. For months, she received demeaning texts from a "burner" phone, a phone that is designed for temporary, often anonymous use. The content of these texts range from body shaming to outright sexual harassment. She also received unprompted, unusual, and unwelcome texts from a member of the Association of International Champions (AIC), an organization comprising the winners of BHS's international quartet competition.

In 1973, the United States Supreme Court's landmark decision in *Miller v. California* clarified the legal definition of obscenity. Chief Justice Warren Burger, writing for the majority, put forth a three-part test for future juries to decide whether something is obscene:

> (a) whether "the average person, applying contemporary community standards" would find that the work, taken as a whole, appeals to the prurient interest […], (b) whether the work depicts or describes, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct specifically defined by the applicable state law, and (c) whether the work, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value.[106]

[105] Boyd, "Keep It Barbershop," 144.
[106] Miller v. California, 413 U.S. 15 (1973).

I would argue that "overtly *sexual*" performances in BHS competitions should be subject to discussion. To that point, Smoke Ring performed a clear sexual innuendo on the international stage and was assessed the proper penalty. Of course, other quartets performed "overtly *sexual*" songs in the 2024 international competition, such as the two mentioned previously—the Clementones's thrusting and Fleet Street's "two-ply cream pie"—and received no penalty from the judges, with both of those performances becoming available on YouTube.

The real issue comes from the term "overtly *sexualized*." "Overtly *sexualized*" shifts the onus onto the viewer to determine if a performance was in good taste. BHS competition attendees are now likened to jurors in a court case, vetting performances for prurience, offensive sexuality, or a lack of artistic value. Armstrong notes that something being in bad taste for the barbershop contest stage does not mean that it is not great art, but in practice, this distinction has already led to artistic performances by the empirically ninth-best quartet in the world being withheld. Nothing about Smoke Ring's performance of "There Are Worse Things I Could Do" was "overtly *sexual*" but Taglianetti's dress could be construed as "overtly *sexualized*" when viewed through the white, masculine, neo-Victorian lens with which BHS was founded.

"Overtly offensive" and "without intent to defame or belittle" are very vague language choices that do not convey a true sense of what, exactly, BHS is hoping to assess. Much of the barbershop repertory could be considered "overtly offensive" with "intent to defame or belittle" due to its basis in coon songs and the minstrel tradition more generally. However, David Wright, a mathematics scholar, prolific barbershop arranger, and barbershop historian, notes the difficulty of creating language that adjudicates taste in a way that does not exclude what most would want to include and that can be applied uniformly by

Performance Judges, perhaps explaining why the Statement Regarding Acceptable Taste is vague.[107]

BHS acknowledges in the FAQs for the Statement Regarding Acceptable Taste that its CEO, who is selected by the BHS Board, will ultimately determine what is considered "overtly offensive" (as well as "overtly political" and "overtly sexualized") with the help of an advisory group and that the terms are purposely generalized to accommodate differing perspectives on what these terms constitute.[108] However, it is important to remember that, historically, the most important perspective in BHS was the one that upheld the neo-Victorian white masculine ideals that guided the founding of BHS.

BHS anticipates reaching a final verdict on April 1, 2025, concerning whether to upload the videos from last year's international competition that have been controversially withheld from YouTube. What is particularly interesting to me is how widely BHS will apply the Statement Regarding Acceptable Taste. The most salient point from the FAQs for the future of the white male construction of barbershop is BHS's note that "the 'Statement Regarding Acceptable Taste' seeks to honor [BHS's] historical roots while addressing the evolving expectations of a diverse, multi-generational audience. It aims to preserve barbershop traditions while fostering inclusivity."[109] Only time will tell if BHS aims to remove the myriad coon songs, songs from the minstrel stage, and songs demeaning other minoritized peoples from its extensive YouTube catalog.

Similarly, a task force of BHS's Performance Judges—the same category that assessed Smoke Ring its penalty—recently convened to create a position paper in the hopes

[107] David Wright, email message to author, April 6, 2025.
[108] "Statement Regarding Acceptable Taste."
[109] Ibid.

of shepherding artistic expression while upholding good taste.[110] Reviewing various barbershop and non-barbershop performances, the task force used the exercise to determine where the "line" would be, acknowledging that "the 'line' is a living, breathing thing that will require revisiting on a regular basis."[111] Clothing was a factor in their decision, including a performance of Dolly Parton singing "9 to 5," though the task force ultimately decided that "while [Parton's] gown was somewhat revealing, we all perceived this as acceptable for a barbershop stage—not in small part because of the performance and the fact that [Parton] as a performer radiates wholesomeness."[112] It is worth noting, however, that Parton has acknowledged that

> the way I look, and the way I looked then, was a country girl's idea of glam, just like I wrote in my backwards Barbie song, but people wanted me to change. They thought I looked cheap, but I patterned my look after the town tramp and everybody said she was trash.[113]

Conclusion

From its outset, BHS has positioned itself as the world's authority on barbershop harmony. Be it through competition, arranging manuals, or the cultural imagination, the image of four white men singing in boaters and vests has proven to be near synonymous with common perceptions of a "barbershop quartet." And that image has proven difficult to shake, even with the advent of more knowledge of the style and the creation of organizations like SAI and HI. In many ways, the *image* of barbershop harmony has proven more potent than any song performed in the style. A general member of the United States

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[110] Barbershop Harmony Society, "C&J's Performance Category and Judicial Discretion," accessed February 14, 2025, https://www.barbershop.org/scjc-discretion.
[111] "Performance Category and Judicial Discretion."
[112] Ibid.
[113] Adam Grant, host, Worklife with Adam Grant, season 5, episode 2, "Dolly Parton is Burning Up, Not Burning Out," TED Audio Collective, April 5, 2022, 25 min., 43 sec., https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vi707vxwhjA.

public likely could not sing you a "barbershop song," but they would likely be able describe to you the defining features of a barbershop quartet, with that hypothetical foursome's genders and races rigidly fixed as BHS's founders intended in 1938.

Everyone in Harmony was intended to be a panacea to what ailed BHS—including declining membership as well as a desire to achieve, in the words of former BHS CEO Marty Monson, "radical inclusion"[114]—but its implementation has struggled under the weight of the construction of hegemonic white masculinity. To be clear, that fact is in no way an acknowledgment that Everyone in Harmony was an incorrect move to make, nor does it admonish current BHS leadership for any perceived or actual missteps through its rollout. Rather, it is important to acknowledge that BHS was founded to be a very specific—and in many ways, very historically inaccurate—slice of barbershop harmony by a group of white men who felt slighted by a changing world. As Mook acknowledges, "a primary function of revivalist barbershop was to perform a neo-Victorian mode of white masculinity through closeness."[115] BHS must similarly acknowledge this fact moving forward to continue building upon Everyone in Harmony.

BHS has had its successes in the Everyone in Harmony era, from the renaming of the Dixie District to non-male quartets and choruses achieving high-level success in open international competitions. Where BHS has stumbled has been in its attempts to balance preservation with encouragement. The preservation-encouragement paradigm is a delicate balance, and in many cases, it seems that BHS errs on the side of preserving its white masculine origins while trying to encourage new voices to express their true selves. From

[114] Marty Monson, "What is 'Radical Inclusion?,'" accessed March 22, 2021, https://www.barbershop.org/what-is-radical-inclusion.
[115] Mook, "White Masculinity in Barbershop," 467.

allowing districts to decide to hand out multiple awards based on groups' gender makeups to the recently mandated yet uneven policing of "taste," BHS has reified the hegemonic white masculine construction that Everyone in Harmony aimed to dismantle. Cracks in the façade have begun to show, but they will only continue to do so if BHS is willing to understand how it upholds its white male origin story through its very organizational structure and ready to implement changes that amplify the encouragement of new populations to preserve a style that existed long before O. C. Cash codified a largely fictitious version of barbershop harmony in 1938.

CHAPTER 3

"GONE YES, FORGOTTEN NEVER":

MINSTRELSY AND MASCULINITY IN THE MUMMERS

After a long night ringing in the new year, I woke up on January 1, 2025, and headed to the Broad Street Line, Philadelphia's north-south subway system that runs along the city's main thoroughfare. On my way to the station, I passed large groups of people dressed in simple costumes yet united by their footwear: shoes of all kinds spray-painted gold. Once on the subway, I watched as a woman and her young daughter got on, dressed in frilly costumes and wearing gold-painted shoes. I finally made it to my destination, City Hall, where I could join the police and crowds gathered there to watch a Philadelphia tradition: the Mummers Parade,[1] the longest continuously running folk festival in the United States.

Since January 1, 1901, the city of Philadelphia has sanctioned what, in many ways, resembles a modern minstrel show. The legacies of blackface minstrelsy—of white masculine control over representations of Othered identities—manifest from the Parade's music to the behavior, dancing, and costumes of its participants. Performing as the Other has been a central feature of the Mummers Parade since its inception and even before, as the next section of this chapter will demonstrate. Originally a male-only performance tradition, like blackface minstrelsy, the Mummers Parade featured men playing male characters and cross-dressing men playing women. While women have been allowed to officially participate in the Parade since 1975—prior to that point, they were relegated to more ancillary roles in the Parade—the continued cross-dressing of men in the Parade begets the question of what

[1] In this chapter, the use of "Parade," with a capital "P," refers specifically to the Mummers Parade. "Parade," with a lowercase "p," refers to parades more generally.

constitutes women's roles in the Parade.[2] The Mummers Parade is not unusual for its inclusion of blackface minstrelsy, which was a common part of United States entertainment and, in many ways, still influences it to this day.[3] Yet the Parade's continued inclusion of this derogatory performance practice has raised debate for decades.[4]

Controversy erupted more recently in the aftermath of the 2020 Mummers Parade. That year, the Froggy Carr wench brigade[5] faced criticism after two of its members marched in blackface as part of the brigade's Parade presentation paying tribute to Gritty, the recently created mascot for the Philadelphia Flyers, the city's hockey team; the team's primary colors are orange and black. ""This selfish, hateful behavior has no place in the Mummers, or the city itself,' [former Philadelphia Mayor Jim] Kenney wrote on Twitter."[6] Mayor Kenney's condemnation of the use of blackface was important, especially considering Kenney is a former Mummer himself. Yet it belied the harsh reality that the "selfish, hateful behavior" he decried, in fact, has a very concrete place in the Mummers Parade, and the city of Philadelphia is, in many ways, complicit in allowing that behavior.

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[2] Of particular interest is the role of women in the Parade, an aspect of the Mummers Parade that has not been researched as extensively.
[3] See Chapter 1 for more information.
[4] Anna Orso, "Blackface, Prostitutes, Hate Speech: A Brief History of the Mummers Behaving Badly," *Billy Penn at WHYY*, January 5, 2016, https://billypenn.com/2016/01/05/blackface-prostitutes-hate-speech-a-brief-history-of-the-mummers-behaving-badly.
[5] Wench brigades are one of the five categories of Mummers performers. They will be discussed at length in this chapter.
[6] Oona Goodin-Smith and Barbara Laker, "Parade Brigade Disqualified for 'Use of Blackface' in Gritty-Themed Costumes," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 2, 2020, https://www.inquirer.com/news/froggy-carr-mummers-blackface-new-years-day-jim-kenney-20200102.html.

From Mumming to Mummers

Long before people marched down Broad Street in the first Mummers Parade on January 1, 1901, the city of Philadelphia was home to various instances of holiday revelry, including mumming. Mumming, a European custom celebrated around Yuletide in which working-class people would disguise themselves and perform traveling comedic skits for compensation, made its way to colonial Pennsylvania as early as the seventeenth century.[7] Even from the beginning of colonial American mumming, syncretism was at play, with Charles E. Welch, Jr. noting that

> it was among these early [English] pioneer families, as well as the among the Germans and the Scotch Irish, that the original Mummers were found. Their folk customs, blended with those of the Swedes, produced the early Parade. But the Scots, also, made their contribution.[8]

By the late eighteenth century, the parades grew to be a bit more raucous as their participants used parading to "define their own group identities and to create solidarity for themselves by mocking other dispossessed outsiders, particularly Irish immigrants and blacks."[9] Guns were often fired, giving the revelers and their parades the name "shooters"; in fact, the official name of the Mummers Museum is the "New Year's Shooters and Mummers Museum." Two signs, reproduced in Figures 3.1 and 3.2, within the Mummers Museum display an allusion to firing guns—"With sweet and loud music we now begin. We'll shoot the old year out and the new one in."—and the famous chant revelers would recite to the people whose homes they visited: "Here we stand before your door as we stood

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[7] Christian DuComb, *Haunted City: Three Centuries of Racial Impersonation in Philadelphia* (University of Michigan Press, 2017), 2.
[8] Charles E. Welch, Jr., "'Oh, Dem Golden Slippers': The Philadelphia Mummers Parade," *The Journal of American Folklore* 79, no. 314 (October–December 1966), 524, https://www.jstor.org/stable/538218.
[9] Claire Sponsler, "Philadelphia's Mummers and the Anglo-Saxon Revival," in *Ritual Imports: Performing Medieval Drama in America* (Cornell University Press, 2004), 77, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctv2n7fh3.7.

before. Give us whiskey, give us gin, open the door and let us in. Or better give us something hot, a steaming bowl of pepper pot."

Figure 3.1. A sign in the Mummers Museum alluding to the firing of guns. Photo by Daniel Carsello.

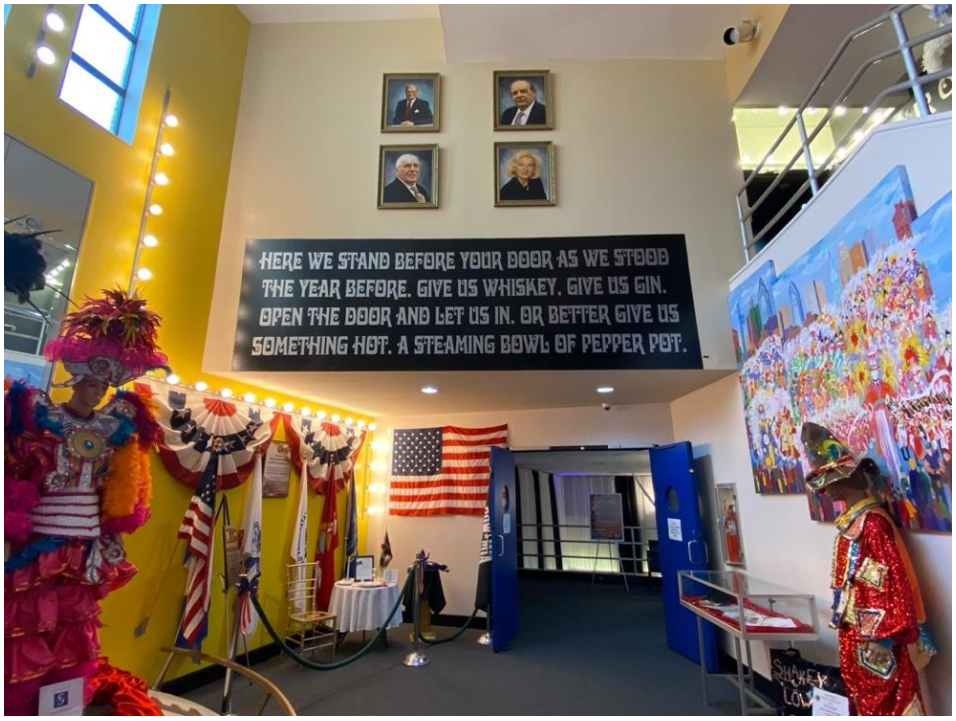

Figure 3.2. The early revelers' famous poem as depicted in the Mummers Museum. Photo by Daniel Carsello.

The city eventually tried to curtail revelry through an anti-masquerade act in 1808, though it was not heavily enforced by Philadelphia law enforcement; the ban was eventually lifted in 1859.[10] Another important development in the history of the Mummers Parade was the 1854 Act of Consolidation, which amalgamated all of the various townships and districts in Philadelphia County under the governance of the city of Philadelphia. Consolidating the city led to an increased focus on the communities south of the original city limits—Black people as well as Italian and Irish immigrants—who also raucously celebrated the new year.

Despite their similarities, Christian DuComb notes that "Mummers' plays should not be confused historically with the Philadelphia Mummers Parade."[11] The modern Parade began after the United States Civil War, and it was legitimized due to its being reported on in the news.[12] When parades got rowdy again, the city cracked down on holiday revelry even more strongly, banning Christmas masquerades in 1872 and stationing law enforcement at popular areas of congregation to enforce the ban. Within twelve years, the New Year's celebrations had become a functionally regimented celebration by diverse clubs.[13]

By the end of the nineteenth century, with the parades seen "as a dying ritual linked nostalgically to the city's past, civic leaders decided to conscript it in 1900 into a massive extravaganza intended to mark the new century and to put Philadelphia on the map."[14] The clubs demanded the Parade happen on New Year's Day—instead of New Year's Eve, as the city offered—and for the city to award prize money, and the city acquiesced to both of these demands.[15] Patricia Anne Masters notes that "the city, through this stipend, recognizes the

[10] Welch, Jr., "'Oh, Dem Golden Slippers,'" 526–27.
[11] DuComb, *Haunted City*, 99.
[12] Welch Jr., "'Oh, Dem Golden Slippers,'" 528.
[13] Sponsler, "Anglo-Saxon Revival," 79–80.
[14] Ibid., 84.
[15] Ibid.

importance of groups like the Mummers to the city's culture and in some cases to neighborhood stability" by allowing social bonds to form through play.[16] The desire for prize money also echoes the focus on competition in the Tulsa barbershop revival, wherein competition was a chance for (white) men to express their virility.[17] According to a Philadelphia Inquirer article from January 1, 1901, the first city-sanctioned Mummers Parade featured "an army of over 3,000 New Year's shooters" marching down Broad Street.[18]

The city's co-opting of the Parade had an additional insidious ulterior motive that was in service to upholding hegemonic white masculinity, however:

> By the 1870s and 1880s, Anglo-Saxonism had become a kind of patrician nationalism among the upper-classes in the northeastern United States and was linked to the growth of nativist elements, as happened in Philadelphia. In 1854 [the same year as the Act of Consolidation] […] a nativist Whig mayor was elected. […] The objects of concern were immigrants from southern Europe.[19]

Part of the city's aim to take control of the Parade was to refashion holiday celebration as an Anglo-Saxon custom, thereby taking non-Anglo-Saxon immigrants' customs and recalibrating them into "American" traditions.[20] This endeavor was successful, with one of my Mummers connections, a member of the Froggy Carr wench brigade, noting that the Mummers Parade can be traced to traditions from the 1600s that came from "over there": Europe.

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[16] Patricia Anne Masters, *The Philadelphia Mummers: Building Community Through Play* (Temple University Press, 2007), 192.
[17] See Chapter 2 for more information.
[18] "How Mummers Will March To-Day: Gorgeous Costumes are Ready for Display in the Great Street Parade," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 1, 1901, 2, NewsBank.
[19] Sponsler, "Anglo-Saxon Revival," 87.
[20] Ibid., 85.

Mumming Minstrels

According to materials in the Mummers Museum, the influx of formerly enslaved Black people to the southern regions of Philadelphia after the 1860s helped incorporate minstrel elements into what would become the Mummers Parade. Christian DuComb similarly notes that minstrelsy had a strong foothold in Philadelphia, remaining popular well after the Civil War and contributing to the fact that Philadelphia was the last city in the nation with a still-operating theater devoted specifically to minstrelsy—that theater was still operating well into the early twentieth century.[21]

Thomas L. Riis notes that "folk theatricals or seasonal holiday celebrations with ancient roots also employed blackface performance in unscripted but widely practiced rituals of chaos, such as Mardi Gras or Carnival, where all is topsy-turvy."[22] Another potential antecedent for the Mummers Parade's reliance on minstrel tropes is the minstrel parade, which Gage Averill describes:

> When minstrel groups came to a town, especially in the later part of the century (after some troupes had swelled to gargantuan proportions), some promoted their performance by parading to the theater […]. Following the managers and stars came the "walking gents," which included singers, acrobats, and comedians, after which came the baton-twirling drum majors and local boys carrying the group's banners. The parades were musical extravaganzas as well, featuring the troupe's brass band, quartet, or chorus, or some other musical attraction. More people saw these parades than bought tickets for the stage shows, and the parades (especially those made up mostly of African Americans) made a lasting impression on American towns.[23]

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[21] DuComb, *Haunted City*, 113–14.
[22] Thomas L. Riis, "Minstrelsy and Theatrical Miscegenation," in *The Oxford Handbook of the American Musical*, ed. Raymond Knapp, Mitchell Morris, and Stacy Wolf (Oxford University Press, 2011), 68. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195385946.013.0006.
[23] Gage Averill, *Four Parts, No Waiting: A Social History of American Barbershop Harmony* (Oxford University Press, 2003), 38.

The minstrel parade perhaps influenced no American town more than Philadelphia, as this section will detail.

The modern Parade features five divisions, with the first year of each division's participation in the Parade listed in parentheses: the comic division (1901), which specializes in satirical, comedic skits; the fancy division (1901), which prioritizes intricate costuming; the string band division (1915), which performs elaborately choregraphed "drills" while playing string, brass, and percussion instruments; the fancy brigade division (1978), which features extravagant Broadway-inspired performances; and the wench brigade division (2003), which features burlesque-style performances. Minstrel elements can be extrapolated from all five divisions, including their names. For instance, Eric Lott notes that "many minstrel performers began their careers in the circus, perhaps even developing American blackface out of clowning (whose present mask in any case is clearly indebted to blackface)."[24] It is not hard to extrapolate a connection between the circus and the comic division. However, minstrel elements are most potent in the string band and wench brigade divisions.

The repertoire and instrumentation of the string bands are replete with vestigial minstrelsy. The unofficial theme song of the Mummers is "Oh! Dem Golden Slippers," composed in 1879 by Black blackface performer and banjoist James A. Bland. Masters incorrectly notes that "Oh! Dem Golden Slippers" is a spiritual composed by Bland.[25] In fact, "Oh! Dem Golden Slippers" is a minstrel song based on a spiritual, "Golden Slippers," which had been popularized by the Fisk Jubilee Singers in the years following the United States Civil War.[26] Mummers continue to honor Bland's contribution to their tradition by

[24] Eric Lott, *Love & Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class*, 20th anniversary ed. (Oxford University Press, 2013), 25, EBSCOhost.
[25] Masters, *The Philadelphia Mummers*, 115.
[26] See Chapter 4 for more information.

spray-painting their shoes gold. Since the 1980s, many Mummers have made it a tradition to visit Bland's grave—located in Merion Memorial Park in Bala Cynwyd, PA—around the time of the Parade to pay him tribute.[27] When I took the trip to visit Bland's grave myself, the administrator knew who he was and was able to quickly walk me to his grave, further demonstrating just how many people come to visit the gravesite. Bland's grave was unmarked until July 15, 1946, when the Lions Club of Virginia helped to erect a headstone which notes that he composed the minstrel song "Carry Me Back to Old Virginny" as well as "600 other songs" (Figure 3.3).[28] The Lions Club of Virginia, which also created the Annual Bland Music Scholarships Program, helped erect the headstone because "Carry Me Back to Old Virginny" is "special music to the Lions in Virginia."[29] Merion Memorial Park also has a historical marker indicating that Bland is buried there (Figure 3.4). A portion of the Mummers Museum focuses extensively on Bland, and a mural near the museum depicts the sheet music of "Oh! Dem Golden Slippers," towering over nearby cars (Figure 3.5).

Other instances of the minstrel repertoire permeate string band performances. In the Mummers Museum, a judging card (Figure 3.6) for the Woodland String Band's 1977 Parade performance, "Patchwork Jubilee," notes that the band performed "Oh! Susanna" in addition to "Oh! Dem Golden Slippers." Intriguingly, Woodland String Band also performed "If I Had a Hammer," Pete Seeger's and Lee Hays's 1949 Progressive movement protest song and Civil Rights anthem.

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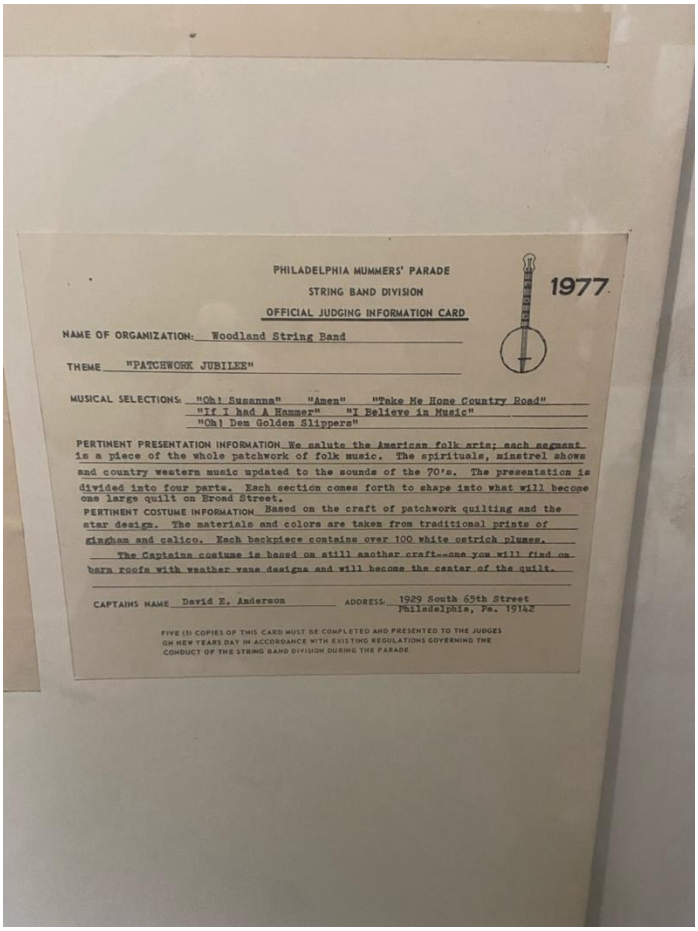
[27] Masters, *The Philadelphia Mummers*, 115.
[28] Charles Haywood, "Bland, James A(llen)," *Grove Music Online*, February 21, 2024, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.03232.
[29] Bland Foundation, "Organization," accessed April 9, 2025, http://www.fortuneintrends.com/blandfoundation/. "Carry Me Back to Old Virginny" also served as Virginia's state song from 1940 until 1997.

Figure 3.3. James A. Bland's headstone. Photo by Daniel Carsello.

Figure 3.4. The historical marker, denoting Bland's final resting place. Photo by Daniel Carsello.

Figure 3.5. A mural near the Mummers Museum depicting the sheet music of the "Mummers national anthem," "Oh! Dem Golden Slippers." Photo by Daniel Carsello.



PHILADELPHIA MUMMERS' PARADE
STRING BAND DIVISION
OFFICIAL JUDGING INFORMATION CARD

1977

NAME OF ORGANIZATION: Woodland String Band

THEME "PATCHWORK JUBILEE"

MUSICAL SELECTIONS: "Oh! Susanna" "Amen" "Take Me Home Country Road" "If I had A Hammer" "I Believe in Music" "Oh! Dem Golden Slippers"

PERTINENT PRESENTATION INFORMATION We salute the American folk arts; each segment is a piece of the whole patchwork of folk music. The spirituals, minstrel shows and country western music updated to the sounds of the 70's. The presentation is divided into four parts. Each section comes forth to shape into what will become one large quilt on Broad Street.

PERTINENT COSTUME INFORMATION Based on the craft of patchwork quilting and the star design. The materials and colors are taken from traditional prints of gingham and calico. Each backpiece contains over 100 white ostrich plumes.

The Captains costume is based on still another craft--one you will find on barn roofs with weather vane designs and will become the center of the quilt.

CAPTAINS NAME David E. Anderson ADDRESS: 1929 South 65th Street Philadelphia, Pa. 19142

FIVE (5) COPIES OF THIS CARD MUST BE COMPLETED AND PRESENTED TO THE JUDGES ON NEW YEARS DAY IN ACCORDANCE WITH EXISTING REGULATIONS GOVERNING THE CONDUCT OF THE STRING BAND DIVISION DURING THE PARADE

Figure 3.6. A judging card of the Woodland String Band's 1977 performance. Photo by Daniel Carsello.

Mummers string bands rely on the banjo, an instrument with fraught ties to blackface minstrelsy. The banjo developed from African prototypes and, by the early nineteenth century, it was associated with Black culture.[30] Part of that association came from minstrelsy due to the instrument's ubiquity in the genre.[31] By the mid-to-late nineteenth century, the idea of the banjo as being a happy instrument played by southern Black men had solidified due, in large part, to the popularity of blackface banjo players.[32] Well into the twentieth century, the banjo remained associated with blackface minstrelsy, as well as with twentieth-century medicine shows, contributing to the instrument's old-timey image.[33] Eventually, much like the Mummers Parade itself, the banjo's "transformation to an Anglo-American white setting incorporated the idea of a 'folk' to help explain the apparent liminality of a native-born Anglo-American subculture."[34] Around the middle of the twentieth century, the banjo began to lose its association with Black culture in place of a Southern rural white authenticity that persists to this day in genres like folk and bluegrass.[35]

In other words, the banjo was recalibrated to be an instrument that meant to engender nostalgic feelings among white people—and, in the case of the Mummers Parade, white men specifically. A sign in the Mummers Museum posits a seemingly unanswerable question about how the peculiar blend of instruments came together to create the Mummer Sound; the answer is that it comes from the minstrel stage. Next to that sign is a case full of

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[30] Karen Linn, *That Half-Barbaric Twang: The Banjo in American Popular Culture* (University of Illinois Press, 1991), 1–2.
[31] Robert B. Winans, "Early Minstrel Show Music, 1843–1852," in *Musical Theatre in America: Papers and Proceedings of the Conference on the Musical Theatre in America*, ed. Glenn Loney (Greenwood Press, 1981), 71.
[32] Linn, *That Half-Barbaric Twang*, 42.
[33] Ibid., 75.
[34] Ibid., 117.
[35] Ibid., 135–38.

the standard Mummers string band instruments (Figure 3.7); clicking on the buttons below the case will play that instrument's part in a standard arrangement of "Oh! Dem Golden Slippers."

Figure 3.7. A case in the Mummers Museum containing standard Mummers string band instruments. Top, left to right: mandolin, glockenspiels, violin. Bottom, left to right: guitar, banjo, accordion, alto saxophone, tenor saxophone, baritone saxophone. Photo by Daniel Carsello.

At the 2025 Mummers Parade, the emcee announced that "this is where it all started" as the first wench brigade lined up to begin its presentation.[36] Indeed, the emcee was more correct than he probably knew. Recall the description of the minstrel wench from Chapter 1. Two wench archetypes dominated the minstrel stage: the light-skinned "yaller gal" who symbolized the total control of white men in the United States and the dark-

[36] While the wench brigade division is the youngest of the five Mummers divisions, it is an offshoot of the comic division, the Parade's oldest.

skinned "grotesque wench" who could be found on the covers of sheet music nationwide. Annemarie Bean notes that the minstrel wench was frequently depicted on the covers of sheet music holding a parasol, dancing with her partner, usually referred to as a "dude."[37] In many ways, the wench "served as a mirror to the larger society's grappling with the transformation of women's roles in urban America in the nineteenth century."[38]

Recall, too, that the minstrel wench was commonly portrayed by a white man, adding a level of gender transgression to the racial caricature inherent in minstrelsy. The audience was very much aware that "the comedy was in the disjunction. […] This was clearly a male playing a female role. Emphasis was on the disclosure, which was achieved through draped rather than close-fitting costuming, body gestures that were overwrought as opposed to finessed, and general physical humor. […] Comic female impersonators were oftentimes large men in dresses."[39] The Mummers, historically, have bristled against the Mummers wench performance being rooted in that of the minstrel wench,

> [asserting] that the wench and the dude, with their dandified attire, were derived from black parodies of white plantation owners and their wives [likely from the cakewalk tradition, which will be discussed later in this chapter]. By framing the tradition this way, [the Mummers] categorized the mocking images as no different from other images of rich and powerful whites whose pretensions burlesque parades parodied.[40]

Recall from Chapter 1, however, that blackface minstrelsy was just as much about punching down as much (if not more) as it was about punching up. Alarmingly, as Masters notes, the

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[37] Annemarie Bean, "Female Impersonation in Nineteenth-Century American Blackface Minstrelsy" (PhD diss., New York University, 2001), 55, ProQuest (3024649).
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid., 60.
[40] Masters, *The Philadelphia Mummers*, 76.

Mummers she spoke with in her ethnography continued to identify blackface as an apolitical performance practice that prioritized having fun above all else.[41]

DuComb strongly argues that "today's [M]ummers wenches are the living messengers of both the antebellum wench act and the turn-of-the-century cakewalk, strutting to the music of Black brass bands, produced by and producing an interracial performance genealogy with no single origin and no single end."[42] Comparisons of the minstrel wench and the Mummers wench lends much credence to DuComb's assertions. Masters notes that "the wench, like 'her' predecessor in the minstrel shows of the early 1830s and 1840s, danced up Broad Street in a garish ruffled dress, carrying a brightly colored and lavishly decorated parasol."[43] Note the similarities between the minstrel wench and the Mummers wench: both carry a parasol and wear ill-fitting, outlandish clothing.

Similarly, DuComb notes that the Mummers wench's signature move, the Mummers Strut, is a legacy of the minstrel wench: "the dance steps and costume pieces of the mummers wench are haunted by the obsolete genre of the wench act."[44] The Mummers Strut, as described by DuComb, is "a high, walking step, danced by the contemporary wench with his knees bent, one hand on his waist or the hem of his dress, and the other hand gleefully swinging a parasol through the air."[45] DuComb's description of the Mummers strut bears a striking resemblance to the cakewalk.

According to Brooke Baldwin, "researchers have not yet pinpointed the origin of the cakewalk, but most believe that it began several decades before its widespread popularity

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[41] Masters, *The Philadelphia Mummers*, 77.
[42] DuComb, *Haunted City*, 135.
[43] Masters, *The Philadelphia Mummers*, 76.
[44] DuComb, *Haunted City*, 126.
[45] Ibid., 123–24.

among whites and concomitant stereotyping in white popular culture, in the slave quarters of Southern plantations."[46] Baldwin argues that the cakewalk is "an Afro-American folk form with roots in African music. All [elements of the cakewalk] combine to make it a genuinely black cultural product."[47] Another point of interest is the name of an antecedent of the cakewalk: the strut.[48] She also acknowledges that, like nearly every other Black form of expression in the United States, white people aimed to co-opt and control the cakewalk; by the beginning of the twentieth century—perhaps not coincidentally, right around the time of the first city-sanctioned Mummers Parade—the cakewalk's popularity was so widespread that it spread into white American and European society, becoming a fad.[49] Of particular irony is that enslaved people used the cakewalk to satirize their white enslavers, which was lost on the latter. In effect, they—and, eventually, the Mummers—became the defenders and practitioners of their own satirizing.[50]

A third connection between the minstrel wench and the Mummers wench that has not been explored in prior scholarship comes from the "yaller gal" variant of the minstrel wench. Katrina Thompson Moore argues that another term for the "yaller gal" was the "fancy," a term used to sexualize Black women that was predicated on proximity to sex work and enslavement.[51] As mentioned previously, two different Mummers categories contain the word "fancy": the fancy club division and the fancy brigade division. While both of these

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[46] Brooke Baldwin, "The Cakewalk: A Study in Stereotype and Reality," *Journal of Social History* 15, no. 2 (Winter 1981): 207, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3787107.
[47] Ibid., 211.
[48] Ibid., 210.
[49] Ibid., 214–15.
[50] Ibid., 208.
[51] Katrina Thompson Moore, "The Wench: Black Women in the Antebellum Minstrel Show and Popular Culture," *The Journal of American Culture* 44, no. 4 (December 2021): 323, https://doi-org.libproxy.temple.edu/10.1111/jacc.13299.

divisions are not typically associated with the wenches, the use of the word "fancy," when viewed in tandem with the troubling legacies of blackface minstrelsy in the Mummers Parade, feels too intentional to be coincidental.

Mummers who dressed as women tended to engender amusement and laughter from their audience, but around the 1890s, the Mummers began to stress a more serious form of female impersonation as the performances were presented to the public.[52] By 1895, there was an award for the best female impersonator, and within ten years, "the female impersonators were required to follow all rules of decorum for biological women" to maintain decorum as the Parade became sanctioned by the city.[53] By 1910, the Mummers Parade was teeming with female impersonators numbering in the hundreds.[54]

Women's Role in the Mummers Parade

Despite the preponderance of dresses and parasols, very few women have been part of the Mummers Parade. Cora E. Leighton notes that the Mummers used cross-dressing through at least the 1960s.[55] Masters notes that the first woman officially marched in the Parade in 1975, likely due to larger societal shifts in attitudes toward women.[56] However, Leighton notes that individual brigades are in charge of their membership, which means that women can still be effectively barred from the Mummers Parade.[57] This tactic is reminiscent

[52] Cora E. Leighton, "Real Girl Dances in Mummer Throng: A Performative Historiography of Gender in the Philadelphia Mummers Parade," *Text and Performance Quarterly* 31, no. 1 (January 2012): 47, https://doi.org/10.1080/10462937.2011.631217.
[53] Ibid., 47.
[54] Ibid., 48.
[55] Ibid., 45.
[56] Masters, *The Philadelphia Mummers*, 88–89.
[57] Leighton, "Real Girl," 46.

of the Barbershop Harmony Society's policies regarding racial and gender integration in 1963 and 2018, respectively.[58]

Leighton also recounts the story of Laura Lee, a reporter for the *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin* who, wanting to be granted larger news stories, made a bet with her editor that she could receive the position if she could march in the Mummers Parade undetected. In 1929, she allegedly marched in the Parade and wrote a news article about it, though Leighton notes that

> despite the fact that Lee's article is a published record, it seems to have a lot of holes in it. The article includes a photo of Lee in her costume, but the photo is not in context, so it very well could have been staged. The story seems to contain a lot of coincidences, so it is hard to say if it is real. Regardless, Lee's article remains the primary example of a recorded instance in which a real woman supposedly escaped the gaze of parade controllers and challenged the Mummers' all-male tradition, and that is enough to have an important impact on the parade community's narrative of their own history.[59]

The Mummers still decry Lee and "remain successful in their attempts to suppress [her] narrative, at the risk of hurting their own image."[60] The Mummers' denial of a woman marching in the Parade nearly fifty years before the official allowance of women is a byproduct of what Leighton describes as a "clandestine reputation" that the Mummers defend through "self-generated historical narratives to state implicitly and explicitly that the parade should continue—that their community has had and will continue to have an important place in the city of Philadelphia."[61] The Mummers similarly deny that pro-women protests occurred in 1972, despite ample evidence pointing to the contrary.[62]

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[58] See Chapter 2 for more information.
[59] Leighton, "Real Girl," 50.
[60] Ibid., 51.
[61] Ibid., 40.
[62] Ibid., 53.

Leighton argues that, despite the best efforts of Laura Lee and the Mummers' allowance of women to join the Parade in the 1970s, "today's version of the celebration consists of groups of mostly working-class white men from South Philadelphia."[63] The idea of femininity in the Parade still conjures up the idea of the Mummers wench. Lott notes that "these 'female' bodies, it is true, were 'also' male, and minstrel performers did not hesitate to flirt with the homosexual content of blackface transvestism […] which no doubt created an atmosphere of polymorphous license that could blur conventional gender outlines (for men)."[64] The homoerotism present on the blackface minstrel stage eventually found its way onto Broad Street. Similar to her minstrel counterpart, the Mummers wench is a male body and a female body; DuComb notes that the Mummers wench struts "in feminine dress while simultaneously displaying hairy legs and bloomers."[65]

Leighton also notes that her Mummers interlocutors maintain that "cross-dressers who convinced the audience that they were biological women were the most famous Mummers of all."[66] The Mummers wench allows for the homosexual taboo to be tolerated, if not outright accepted, as aided by the Parade's Bakhtinian, carnivalesque nature.[67] While the carnivalesque, homosexual reading of the Mummers Parade is certainly plausible, Bean argues instead that the minstrel (and Mummers) wench is popular because of its subversion through gender.[68] Judith Butler notes that

> indeed, the sight of a transvestite onstage can compel pleasure and applause while the sight of the same transvestite on the seat next to us on the bus can compel fear, rage, even violence. […] If the "reality" of gender is constituted

[63] Leighton, "Real Girl," 39.
[64] Lott, *Love & Theft*, 27.
[65] DuComb, *Haunted City*, 124.
[66] Leighton, "Real Girl," 46.
[67] Mikhail Bakhtin, "Carnival and the Carnivalesque," in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*, 2nd ed., ed. John Storey (Pearson Education, 1998).
[68] Bean, "Female Impersonation," 79.

> by the performance itself, then there is no recourse to an essential and unrealized "sex" or "gender" which gender performances ostensibly express. Indeed, the transvestite's gender is as fully real as anyone whose performance complies with social expectations.[69]

While the Mummers wench represents the fluidity of gender performance to Lott, I would argue that, using Butler's argument, the Mummers wench, like the minstrel wench, is a performance of *controllable* femininity, meant to assuage white men of their fears of women increasingly entering social spheres.

The minstrel show was predicated on its demonstration of white male power over the Other, be it Black people, white women, or other marginalized groups. Therefore, in the minstrel show, the wench represented an acceptable version of femininity. Recall the "yaller gal," with her stereotypically attractive features and light skin. She was easily subjugated as figurative property through marriage or as literal property through enslavement. Bean notes that the earlier minstrel wench characters "did not sing, but, rather, stood as an object to behold."[70] Her inability to speak and the ease with which she was subjugated made her an ideal avatar for contemporarily acceptable femininity.

Eventually, the minstrel wench was able to sing and speak, perhaps threatening the delicate balance afforded through her silence. The minstrel show had a remedy for this problem, however. As mentioned in Chapter 1, minstrel wenches parodied suffragettes, female abolitionists, and women more generally by delivering—and botching—suffragette speeches. Because she was incompetent at delivering her message, she was an acceptable suffragette for minstrel audiences; she did not threaten the status quo. As Bean notes,

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[69] Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (December 1988): 527. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3207893?origin=JSTOR-pdf.
[70] Bean, "Female Impersonation," 54–55.

"female-impersonating minstrels categorically put down the anomalies of suffragettes and woman abolitionists through derogatory songs and stump speeches."[71]

In both of these cases, as Moore argues, "the homoerotic nature of the performance can be overshadowed by the imaginative desires of power, sexual desire, and ownership of Black women and control of white women."[72] One could argue that the homoerotic nature of the performance *was* overshadowed by the more potent demonstrations of power and idealized femininity. While she eventually dropped the blackface, the Mummers wench retained many of the qualities of the minstrel wench, including her most desirable trait: her displays of controlled femininity. The Mummers wench, parasol in hand, parades down Broad Street each January as a representation of hegemonic white masculinity's vision of acceptable femininity, whether its practitioners realize it or not.

The minstrel wench was a reaction to the changing roles of women in nineteenth-century United States culture; similarly, in the early days of mumming, per Masters, "women's roles in the Mummer community reflected the traditional female roles enacted in the wider society."[73] Masters is talking about the role of women as support systems for their male counterparts in the Mummers, but one can interpret "women's roles" to additionally refer to the Mummers wench, whose role in the Mummer community is to provide society an acceptable form of femininity and to provide unruly women a model to emulate.

Thus, the rationale for the existence of the Mummers wench, despite the willingness of women to participate in the Parade, is to provide its spectators "women who [know] their place, on the stage and in the world."[74] The carnivalesque homosexuality that Lott argues for

[71] Bean, "Female Impersonation," 56.
[72] Moore, "The Wench," 324.
[73] Masters, *The Philadelphia Mummers*, 87.
[74] Bean, "Female Impersonation," 80.

is certainly present in the performances of the minstrel wench and the Mummers wench, but that is not the only lens through which to view the wenches. In fact, it is not the primary lens one should use, for it obfuscates the true nature of the Mummers wench's subjugation and subversion. In considering Bean's and Butler's analyses, I would argue that the gender transgression of the minstrel wench was the same as that of the Mummers wench: enforcing "acceptable" femininity.

Masters argues that the Mummers eventually came around to having women join their ranks because, simply, "they are talented performers"; as they have helped their brigades win prizes in the Parade, women have become accepted by their male counterparts.[75] However, Leighton—who notes that she is a "self-identified female Mummer"—argues that female Mummers are, by definition, superfluous, noting that "the only thing women bring to a [Mummers] show is femininity, but in the Mummers, the men are fully capable of bringing both the masculinity required to strut up Broad Street and the femininity required to put on a good show. Exceptions to the rule only serve to reinforce it."[76]

However, a more nuanced reading of what women bring to the Mummers Parade would not lead one to argue for femininity but rather for an unacceptable variant of femininity. This unacceptable version of femininity removes the political potency from the Mummers wench, despite the fact that the Mummers are allegedly not interested in commenting on politics.[77] The Mummers' denial of Laura Lee's involvement in the early twentieth century and the pro-women protests of the early 1970s is confusing on the surface,

[75] Masters, *The Philadelphia Mummers*, 91.
[76] Leighton, "Real Girl," 53.
[77] Masters, *The Philadelphia Mummers*, 79.

but viewed through Butler's system, the rationale becomes clear: these actions must be denied and wiped from the historical record not because they embarrass the Mummers but because they render the Mummers wench pointless and threaten the acceptable version of femininity she creates. Even the increasing participation of women in the Mummers Parade must be tempered with the fact that those women are still performing under the auspices that the Mummers have constructed over a century of prioritizing hegemonic white masculinity.

In many ways, women are now filling the role of the historic Mummers wench, yet their performance lacks the gender subversion that infused the Mummers wench of yesteryear with such potency. This is not to say that the fraught performance of femininity derived through the Mummers wench should be reinstated; like her minstrel predecessor, the Mummers wench is a shameful legacy of blackface minstrelsy that demands critical examination. However, the Mummers are currently straddling a line where they want to appear progressive by admitting women to the Parade while retaining the regressivism that allowed for the Mummers wench to thrive well into the twentieth century. Leighton notes that this tension between progressivism and tradition has created consternation in the Mummers Parade: "the performance of gender has historically positioned the Mummers in an overarching paradox. […] This paradox has put the Mummers on the defensive about gender in their community contemporarily. Instead of transitioning with the times, the Mummers have tried to hold onto the parts of their male-only history while arguing that they are not sexist."[78]

[78] Leighton, "Real Girl," 54.

This situation regarding the Mummers wench's transition into femininity portrayed by women parallels her minstrel predecessor. Moore notes that the 1870s saw the debut of minstrel troupes comprised of white women, which led to a new entertainment style: burlesque.[79] Much like the modern female Mummers wench, burlesque inverted its contemporary foil, the minstrel wench, by presenting a societally unacceptable form of femininity that mocked masculinity. So, too, does the modern female Mummers wench render her predecessor, the "female" Mummers wench, defanged through her inversion of acceptable femininity.

More Modern Missteps

While the Mummers wench is the most glaringly obvious legacy of blackface minstrelsy in the Mummers Parade, other examples pepper Broad Street each January. In 1963, the city announced that blackface would be banned from the 1964 Parade. The Mummers protested, and a compromise was initially reached: "blackface makeup would be permitted the Mummers if it was to be used to create a character and not to ridicule any ethnic group. This compromise pleased no one."[80] The Philadelphia chapter of the NAACP further protested the compromise, arguing that the city should not "provide both monetary and symbolic support for mocking images of African American residents."[81] Eventually, the blackface ban was upheld, though not without controversy, as described in detail by Christian DuComb:

> Since the 1964 sit-in on Broad Street, both the comic clubs and the wench brigades have occasionally challenged the city's authority over the Mummers Parade—most notably in 1995, when the seven hundred wenches of the James "Froggy" Carr brigade sat down in the middle of the parade route to

[79] Moore, "The Wench," 325.
[80] Welch, "'Oh, Dem Golden Slippers,'" 533.
[81] Masters, *The Philadelphia Mummers*, 77.

> protest the arrest of their captain and the confiscation of their beer. […] In 1964 some Mummers donned blackface makeup on Two Street [a colloquial term in South Philadelphia for South Second Street] after the official parade had ended, an act of defiance foreshadowed by a large poster of a blackface minstrel displayed on Broad Street earlier in the day. The caption: "Gone Yes, Forgotten Never."[82]

The Mummers have largely circumvented the blackface ban by simply using other colors, but as DuComb notes, "Mummers in dark blue makeup are not in blackface, but they also are not *not* in blackface."[83]

The Parade also featured a controversial performance seemingly every year. Some of the more notorious instances from the mid-2000s to 2016 include the Joseph A. Ferko String Band's 2013 "Ferko's Bringing Back Those Minstrel Days," complete with crimson blackface and references to Al Jolson, and B. Love Strutters brigade's 2009 presentation, "Aliens of an Illegal Kind." This presentation featured a guest performance by the late Joey Vento, the owner of Geno's Steaks in South Philadelphia, who attracted controversy in 2006 when he put a sign in his restaurant requesting his patrons order in English. DuComb notes that "the impersonation of Hispanics and Asians by white Mummers functions as a symbolic attempt to retake possession of space occupied by recent immigrants from Mexico, China, Vietnam, and Cambodia, who have settled in large numbers in the southern part of the city."[84] This attempt to reclaim space "taken up" by immigrants is another example of Italian Americans in Philadelphia becoming white by joining forces with other European Americans against an Other, particularly in the 1960s, when Black Philadelphians attempted to move

[82] DuComb, *Haunted City*, 119.
[83] Ibid., 17 (my italics).
[84] Ibid., 138.

into primarily Italian-American neighborhoods.[85] By 1978, Italian Americans in Philadelphia had "consolidated their identity as white ethnics" thanks in part to the eight-year mayoral term of Frank L. Rizzo, a former commissioner of the Philadelphia Police Department.[86]

It is perhaps coincidental that both B. Love Strutters brigade's and Joseph A. Ferko String Band's controversial performances happened in the Januarys following the election and re-election, respectively, of Barack Obama, the first Black person to serve as the president of the United States. There have also been recent performances that included signs that read "Wench Lives Matter," a clear satire of the Black Lives Matter movement.

Another controversial performance provides an illuminating modern case of the Mummers wench. In 2016, the Finnegan New Year's Brigade (NYB), housed within the comic division, performed a routine that mocked Caitlyn Jenner, who had recently and publicly announced that she was a transgender woman. The routine featured an outwardly appearing male Mummer playing Bruce Jenner, who dances to the Diana Ross song "I'm Coming Out." He is placed into a wheelchair and whisked away by a Mummer dressed as a doctor and four Mummers wenches dressed as nurses. Eventually, the music transitions to Aerosmith's "Dude (Looks Like a Lady)" as "Caitlyn Jenner" appears. Many of the background Mummers hold signs featuring reproductions of the iconic image of Bruce Jenner on a Wheaties cereal box juxtaposed with Caitlyn Jenner superimposed onto a Froot Loops cereal box, perhaps signifying that, to them, she was either queer, crazy, or both.[87]

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[85] Stefano Luconi, "Frank L. Rizzo and the Whitening of Italian Americans in Philadelphia," in *Are Italians White? How Race is Made in America*, ed. Jennifer Guglielmo and Salvatore Salerno (Routledge, 2003), 180, EBSCOhost.
[86] Ibid., 186.
[87] Anthony Stefos, "Mummers Parade Makes Fun of Bruce/Caitlyn Jenner on Fruit Loops Cereal Box," posted January 1, 2016, YouTube, 2:56, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FwOEYnc9lzc.

The irony of four Mummers wenches taking "Bruce Jenner" away to help him transition into "Caitlyn Jenner" is palpable. The four Mummers wenches are not ridiculed throughout the sketch; rather, they are in positions of authority as medical professionals, and their role in the routine is to steer the performance (of gender) along. However, Caitlyn Jenner is ridiculed for her visible transition, be it through the song choices or the posters held by the brigade members. Finnegan NYB brigade's performance reveals that an acceptable femininity, based on the minstrel wench and historical Mummers wench, is still privileged among the Mummers. Any other performance of femininity, especially that of a trans woman who had lived as a famous male Olympic athlete for decades, necessitates scorn and ridicule. The four Mummers wench nurses never return to the performance as their work is done. They have demonstrated acceptable femininity for the audience and helped facilitate abject femininity, one that must be viewed as the opposite of wench femininity and subjected to derision.

Interestingly, the Mummers have responded to criticism as well as changing cultural sentiments about equity. The Mummers have undertaken efforts to make the Parade a more inclusive event over the years, with Masters noting that "the Mummers appear to be open to change."[88] And there have been changes, particularly since 2016. That year saw the creation of a sixth Mummers division, the Philadelphia Division, "created […] to attract nontraditional and ethnically diverse groups" that was dissolved after one year, "incorporating [those clubs] instead into existing parade divisions."[89] In many ways, the Philadelphia Division felt like a tokenizing effort that would feature Mummers with

[88] Masters, *The Philadelphia Mummers*, 94.
[89] Samantha Melamed, "Mummers After Sensitivity Training: I Can See How Caitlyn Jenner Skit Was Offensive," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 22, 2016, https://www.inquirer.com/philly/living/397998501.html.

minoritized identities grouped together into a separate but equal category. There are also brigades that have worked to make their presentations more inclusive. For instance, the Golden Sunrise club, part of the Fancies Division, has performed with dancers from Kaos Mas, a Philadelphia-based Caribbean Carnival band, for the past two years.[90] I witnessed the performance by Golden Sunrise and Kaos Mas—my experience at this year's Parade will appear later in the chapter—but suffice to say it highlighted how much more work the bulk of the Mummers brigades have to do to dismantle the white male construction of the Mummers Parade in order for it to be more inclusive and representative of Philadelphia's demographics.

The 2025 Mummers Parade

To develop a better understanding of the current Mummers brigades than I developed from living in South Philadelphia for three decades, I attended events held by four different brigades—one string band, two comic brigades, and a wench brigade—as well as the 2025 Mummers Parade. I sent emails—or, in some cases, reached out on social media—to as many brigades as I could, asking to attend an event. I also had some Mummers reach out to me, inviting me to attend an event, due to their relationship with my father, a retired union carpenter who knows several Mummers through his former profession.

In reaching out to Mummers brigades, I made it clear that I was interested in hearing how members of the Mummers grapple with the Parade's history and its modern place in the city. I also expressed interest in how members come to join the Mummers and whether that affects their understanding of the Parade's history and its place in Philadelphia. Typically, I

[90] Emily Neil, "'A Warm Welcome': Mummers Look to Include More Communities, Groups Into the Tradition," *WHYY News*, January 1, 2025, https://whyy.org/articles/mummers-parade-cultural-inclusivity/.

observed the Mummers silently, only speaking to my connections or people who came up to me to ask why I was there. Nearly all who spoke with me were largely excited to have me in attendance, with the exception of one person at Froggy Carr Kazoo Day, as I will discuss in an upcoming section. The next sections detail my experience at each event as well as the ensuing Parade.

Fralinger String Band Rehearsal – December 15, 2024

The first event I attended was a rehearsal by the Fralinger String Band (Fralinger), held early in the morning in a parking lot in South Philadelphia. The temperature that day was below freezing, but the band was in good spirits for its three-and-a-half-hour outdoor rehearsal. Before the rehearsal began, I spoke with the band's treasurer, Steve Coper, for thirty minutes. Coper revealed an interesting belief that the string bands are given "a black eye" by the other Mummers divisions due to their penchant for problematic performance. Masters concurs, noting that the string bands demonstrate the "respectable face of the Mummers."[91]

While it is true that other Mummers divisions are frequently the site of problematic performances, Masters's and Copers's argument that the string bands are unwilling, absolved participants is naïve at best. Take "Melodías de los Muertos," performed in 2025 by Joseph A. Ferko String Band—the same band that performed "Ferko's Bringing Back Those Minstrel Days" in 2013—as an example. For the second year in a row, the band worked with NFUSE Dance and Fitness, a Delaware-based movement arts organization. One of its members noted that Ferko's

> theme was centered on Mexico's Day of the Dead tradition, but costumes also included matador outfits, a tradition from Spain. "It's their kind of

[91] Masters, *The Philadelphia Mummers*, 47.

> laziness of not paying attention to the details that should be culturally appropriate and correct, which sucks, because that would make the performance that much bigger and better," [the NFUSE member interviewed] said.[92]

And, as demonstrated earlier in this chapter, the string bands are culpable in upholding minstrelsy due to their repertoire and instrumentation.

Regardless of its veracity, this negative association with the other Mummers divisions makes it harder for the string bands to secure funding—Fralinger raises roughly $150,000 a year for set pieces and costumes through performances, events, and fundraisers—but Coper reassured me that the string bands are still Mummers at the end of the day. Coper also noted that the band is a year-round commitment, rehearsing twice a week, and participating in fundraising throughout the year to provide the considerable sum needed to mount a successful Mummers Parade performance. The following year's theme is selected around February 1. He acknowledged that the theme must be run by the Philadelphia Parks & Recreation Department, which manages the Mummers Parade on behalf of the city, for appropriateness, noting that what he called "ethnic" themes were popular in the past. These "ethnic" themes were the sources of controversy in previous Parades, which necessitated the city putting these theme screenings in place.

Members consider their participation to be a labor of love, especially considering the lack of prize money. In 2008, facing a budget deficit due to the nationwide economic recession,

> the city decided it couldn't afford to give the [2009 Mummers Parade] $336,000 in prize money, which the Mummers say they use to defray costs. The city also wanted to charge the Mummers for all costs associated with the parade, including police, sanitation, and other services. But because the Mummers got short notice, the city worked out a deal to provide $300,000

[92] Neil, "'A Warm Welcome.'"

> worth of services in exchange for organizers' making changes to cut costs, including shortening the duration of the parade.[93]

By 2010, the city stopped awarding prize money. Contrast that with previous years, when every brigade that marched in the Mummers Parade received some amount of the prize money. For instance, the Mummers Museum depicts a list of the prizes awarded to string bands in 1988 (Figure 3.8), with Greater Kensington String Band's "Go for Baroque" set winning the first-place $7,700 prize. Other string bands listed include Avalon String Band's "Indians…And How" set winning $6,500, Trilby String Band's "The Sound of Philadelphia" set winning $4,900, and Ventnor City String Band's "Rainbows of Happiness" set winning the last-place $1,248 prize. Despite this lack of money, winning is still important to all Mummers, as "competitiveness drives the desire to innovate and incorporate what is fresh and new in [Mummers] performances."[94] And Visit Philadelphia, the city's tourism website, notes that "the main prize is year-long bragging rights."[95]

Coper also noted that the string band comprises many fathers, sons, and uncles—he has been participating in the Parade for fifty-three years as a result of these strong familial connections. The musicians and dancers of Fralinger, as with all competing string bands, must be amateurs, though I was told that the definition of "amateur" varies. Additionally, the music has increasingly come to enhance the performance aspect of the presentation.

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[93] Robert Moran, "Mummers Meeting with Philadelphia on Parade Cost," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 5, 2009, https://www.inquirer.com/philly/news/local/20091205_Mummers_meeting_with_Phila__on_parade_cost.html.
[94] Masters, *The Philadelphia Mummers*, 51.
[95] "2025 Mummers Parade in Philly: What to Expect on New Year's Day," Visit Philadelphia, last updated December 10, 2024, https://www.visitphilly.com/things-to-do/events/the-mummers-parade/.

Figure 3.8. A depiction of string band prize winnings from the 1988 Mummers Parade. Photo by Daniel Carsello.

After our conversation, the rehearsal began. The string band stood in a circle to warm up, with a member calling out which songs to perform; selections included funky popular songs and songs from old films and Broadway musicals, including "With Plenty of Money and You" from the film *Gold Diggers of 1937* (1937), "You're Never Fully Dressed Without a Smile" from the musical *Annie* (1977), and "Together (Wherever We Go)" from the musical *Gypsy* (1959). The warmups contained call-and-response patterns, a practice that, among others, Samuel A. Floyd, Jr. argues "underlies all Afro-American music."[96] Following

[96] Samuel A. Floyd, Jr., "Ring Shout! Literary Studies, Historical Studies, and Black Music Inquiry," *Black Music Research Journal* 22 (2002): 52, https://www.jstor.org/stable/1519943.

warmups, the band's drill captain—the person in charge of choreography—gave notes on elements of the performance to improve from a previous rehearsal, at which point the band ran the music for its performance a few times. Afterwards, the band ran the "drill piece," which I understood to be a rehearsal of the performance with choreography but no set pieces, which were still in various states of completion. After tightening up the choreography, the band ran the performance with set pieces: first in segments, then three full times through. After the last full run, the band debriefed the rehearsal in advance of its next one.

The band's theme was "Junkyard Jam" and featured characters such as a junkyard dog, Oscar the Grouch from *Sesame Street*, and Tow Mater from Pixar's *Cars* franchise. While Fralinger members were not wearing full costumes the day I attended rehearsal, I was told that they would be wearing things like dirty laundry, newspapers, and what would look like warped, rusted metal. In observing the rehearsal, I noticed a startling lack of diversity among the band's members. I could count the number of non-white people on one hand, and it appeared that none of the members were Black. Every member also presented as male—recall that Coper mentioned that the band comprises many fathers, sons, and uncles but did not mention mothers, daughters, and aunts. There were two members' wives at the rehearsal, but they largely served as spectators. The age range of the band varied from teenagers to senior citizens; I would approximate the average age to be late thirties or early forties. Side conversations were often small talk on topics unrelated to the upcoming Parade, such as updates on families, HVAC systems, and the new Coca-Cola-flavored Oreos—I was offered one but politely declined. Photos I took at Fralinger's rehearsal are depicted in Figures 3.9–3.14.

Figure 3.9. Fralinger warming up before rehearsal. Photo by Daniel Carsello.

Figure 3.10. Fralinger rehearsing "Junkyard Jam" without set pieces. Note the presence and prominence of the banjo. Photo by Daniel Carsello.

Figure 3.11. Fralinger's junkyard dog. Photo by Daniel Carsello.

Figure 3.12. Some of the scenery flats Fralinger used in its performance. Photo by Daniel Carsello.

Figure 3.13. Fralinger's depiction of Tow Mater. Note the Mummer with laundry on his head. Photo by Daniel Carsello.

Figure 3.14. Fralinger's depiction of Oscar the Grouch. Photo by Daniel Carsello.

South Philly Strutters New Years Brigade Rehearsal – December 17, 2024

The second event I attended was a rehearsal—similarly held in a parking lot in South Philadelphia—of the South Philly Strutters New Year's Brigade (South Philly Strutters), a member of the comic division. This rehearsal was much shorter, lasting only one hour, and was held later in the evening after the sun had set. Because of the lighting, and due to the number of minors present at the rehearsal, I took far fewer photographs at this rehearsal. Upon arriving, I was greeted by the brigade's captain, Anthony Grosso, who told me that the rehearsal would commence shortly. A truck eventually pulled up with a sound system, depicted in Figure 3.15. Unlike the string bands and wench brigades, the fancy division, fancy brigade division, and comic division use pre-recorded music in their Parade performances.

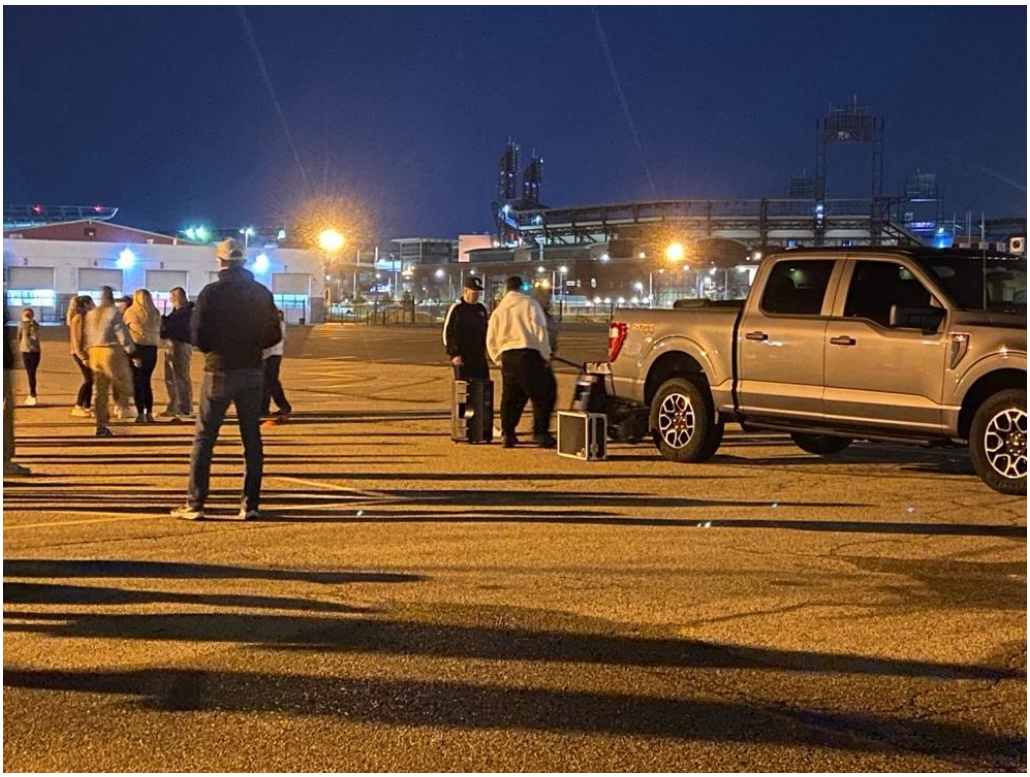

Figure 3.15. A truck with a sound system used at the South Philly Strutters rehearsal. Photo by Daniel Carsello.

The brigade's theme was "Jungle Carnival" and featured many songs from the 2011 20th Century Fox animated film *Rio*. The rehearsal was much less structured than that of Fralinger. It began with children doing a dance while an adult mirrored the choreography back at them. The children then ran off to the side, at which point roughly ten couples stepped forward to do a partner dance. After the partner dance portion, a group of primarily women[97] did some dancing; this group also included one Black man who did a few flips. The performance concluded with the entire brigade marching forward and dancing a bit in place. The brigade repeated the rehearsal a few times before debriefing together. Figures 3.16 and 3.17 depict photos from the South Philly Strutters rehearsal that I attended.

Figure 3.16. The partner dance portion of South Philly Strutters' performance. Photo by Daniel Carsello.

[97] I did not ask the rehearsal's attendees to describe their gender identities to me.

Figure 3.17. South Philly Strutters' rehearsal debriefing. Photo by Daniel Carsello.

While South Philly Strutters is still a majority adult white male brigade, it had many more women and children in its ranks, and they were crucial parts of the performance as opposed to spectators. The adult who mirrored the children's choreography, for instance, was femme-presenting, as were a great many of the people in the partner choreography section. The theme of the performance, outside of the music, was largely unapparent—I did not realize what the theme was until I saw the full performance in the Mummers Parade weeks later. The debrief yielded the most striking aspects of the rehearsal for my study—members were not only provided Parade tee shirts but also cheap parasols that conjured up images of the Mummers—and minstrel—wench. After announcements were finished and the floor was opened for any other notes, one member opined "If you paint your own face, you cannot use black."

Froggy Carr Kazoo Day – December 22, 2024

The third event I attended was not quite a rehearsal but rather a Kazoo Day event hosted by Froggy Carr, the wench brigade that was embroiled in controversy back in 2020 due to two of its members marching in blackface. Kazoo Day is many things to the wench brigade: a fundraiser, a last hurrah before the Parade, and, according one member I talked with, "an excuse to get drunk." The tradition allegedly stems from even before the city-sanctioned Mummers Parade, when the Mummers would march down Two Street, playing kazoos and knocking on doors asking for food and drink.

Froggy Carr's Kazoo Day was held at its clubhouse in South Philly, on Two Street, in the heart of what the city designates Mummers Row (Figure 3.18). When I arrived at the clubhouse, I received a few wary looks from two gentlemen. When I told them I had been talking with one of the brigade's members, Mike Gindville, about attending, they told me he was running late but I could head inside. I paid the $20 entry fee to attend Kazoo Day and entered a decently empty bar with some food trays in the corner. I was asked if I wanted anything to drink but stuck with water, took out my iPad, and began taking some notes as more people started pouring in. Because the Philadelphia Eagles were playing that afternoon, everybody's attention was on the many televisions in the bar, leading to me largely going unnoticed.

Figure 3.18. "Mummers Row" signage on Two Street. Photo by Daniel Carsello.

After a little while, I asked the person helming the Kazoo Day entry fee table if I could take photos. The person sitting with him got very defensive and asked what I had said, but after I mentioned that Gindville had invited me, he grumbled that I could do so. However, I felt like pushing my luck could risk prematurely ending my visit, so I decided to continue taking handwritten notes instead. Around that time, even more people began arriving, including two women, who took over bartending duties from the man who had been doing so up until that point; there seemed to be an assumption that they would. Finally, Gindville arrived and told me that I could sit in on the band rehearsal happening upstairs.

Before heading up there, I was stopped by the man who had gotten defensive with me earlier, who said "Sorry for getting mad at you, buddy, I thought you were a reporter!"

Upstairs was a second bar and an all-male band that was practicing for the Kazoo Day festivities later in the day, when all of the wench brigade's bands perform for each other. The band contained the only Black people in the entire clubhouse—by my rough count, there were at least fifty people in the building—and the instrumentation was mostly brass, woodwind, and percussion. As DuComb notes, the wench brigades frequently hire Black brass bands to provide the accompaniment to their strutting.[98] Figure 3.19 depicts the band rehearsing. The band learned music by rote, listening to a version played through a speaker a few times before playing it back. Its arrangements were much less intricate than those of Fralinger, though the songs played were quite similar to Fralinger's warmups: a mix of funk, soul, and pop. One notable addition, however, was "Oh! Dem Golden Slippers."

Gindville and I spoke briefly, whereupon he mentioned the earlier note that the Mummers came from "over there"—Europe—and the traditions date back to the 1600s. He also mentioned that he has tried many of the divisions but the wench division is the one he most enjoys, particularly due to the lack of rehearsals: "you just dress up and go." Gindville realized that I should speak with Tommy "Otis" Patronis, a member of Froggy Carr and an amateur Mummers historian. He introduced me to Patronis and the two of us went into a back room for some quiet.

[98] DuComb, *Haunted City*, 127.

Figure 3.19. Froggy Carr's band rehearsing for Kazoo Day. Photo by Daniel Carsello.

Patronis, acknowledging he was a bit drunk, began by noting that he was the inaugural winner of the "World Championship of Wenches" ten years prior. He was born in 1978 and began mumming in 1979; his father put him into a father-son comic club and he fell in love with the tradition. He acknowledged, as many of my interlocutors did, that many Mummers join at a young age due to familial connections. Patronis also mentioned that he was waitlisted to join Froggy Carr twice—as it turns out, membership in the brigade is limited to around one-hundred-forty members, and people leave either by being kicked out or passing away.

Despite the restrictions on membership size, Patronis noted that upwards of one thousand people—including a lot of children—will march with Froggy Carr on New Year's Day, with many traveling from out of state. He did not mention whether these reinforcements were former members who had moved away or just people who want to

march in the Mummers Parade without going through the membership process. At that point, Patronis opined about the changing neighborhoods over the past twenty years, arguing that transplants to the city "just do not get" what the Mummers are about. He remained resolute in the fact that Mummers Row is a stronghold for what he believes is one of the oldest neighborhoods in the country.[99] He also argued that being a Mummer should be a year-round commitment due to the brigades having the ability to provide philanthropic support to their members and neighbors, perhaps believing that younger Mummers are not as committed as older generations think they should be.

Patronis then launched into an impassioned discussion of James A. Bland, composer of "Oh! Dem Golden Slippers," and a man whom Patronis referred to as "the P. Diddy of his time, minus the baby oil." Patronis reveres Bland, believing him to be the "height of Afro-American music the world over" whose music demonstrates the "Afro-American" influence in Mummers traditions and music. His hope is to get as many brass bands as possible to make the pilgrimage to Bland's grave in 2029 to play "Oh! Dem Golden Slippers" in honor of the song's one-hundred-fiftieth anniversary. Patronis closed by noting that the Mummers history is largely an oral history. In her discussion of Laura Lee, the reporter who allegedly marched in the Mummers Parade in 1929, Cora Leighton notes that

> indeed, the Mummers closet much of their history in a misguided attempt to promote the parade via a singularly controlled historical narrative. […] Because the Mummers [are] ultimately in charge of their own archives and what questions they [answer], the knowledge buck [stops] with them. […] Very little has been written in primary sources about the parade. […]

[99] The City of Philadelphia maintains that Elfreth's Alley is the nation's oldest residential street. I could not substantiate Patronis's claim that Two Street is one of the oldest neighborhoods in the country, though it is worth noting that the section of the city Mummers Row occupies would not have officially been part of Philadelphia until the aforementioned 1854 Act of Consolidation.

> [Secondary sources] read as official Mummer narrative, promoted and sold by the Mummers themselves, at the Mummers Museum.[100]

After finishing my discussion with Patronis, I had to leave to attend a family event, so I was unable to witness the bands marching down Mummers Row for Kazoo Day.

Vaudevillians New Years Brigade Rehearsal – December 30, 2024

The fourth event I attended was the final pre-Parade rehearsal of the Vaudevillians New Years Brigade (Vaudevillians), housed in the comic division. Vaudevillians markets itself as a queer and femme-led Mummers brigade, so I was anxious to see what the brigade was like and how it would compare with my other experiences.

Even before arriving for the Vaudevillians rehearsal, I knew that it would be unlike the other Mummers events I had attended. My point of contact was the brigade's co-captain, Al San Valentin, a femme-presenting person who is around my age. Since the rehearsal was happening indoors, she asked me to wear a mask due to a recent spike in COVID-19 and flu cases. Upon arriving, I was asked to share my pronouns—a first for me at a Mummers event—and we spoke for about twenty minutes. She noted that brigades in the comic division are sponsored by one of three larger clubs: Goodtimers (which sponsors, among others, South Philly Strutters), Landi, and Murray (which sponsors, among others, Vaudevillians).

Vaudevillians has roughly one hundred members, with an additional thirty expected to march with them in the Parade—many of those thirty had moved away from the city but planned to return to take part in the festivities. When I asked whether the brigade received any pushback, or if there was any tension with the other brigades, due to its self-described

[100] Leighton, "Real Girl," 55.

queerness and femme-presenting leadership, San Valentin assured me that no tension exists, particularly as membership and leadership in other brigades continues skewing younger. Suffice it to say that even the pre-rehearsal interview surprised me—to that point, Vaudevillians represented nearly everything antithetical to what I understood a Mummer to be.

When rehearsal was set to begin, San Valentin first acknowledged my presence to the entire brigade and asked if everyone was okay with being photographed—again, a first for me at a Mummers event. Vaudevillians' set was heavily based on Greek mythology, with Mummers dressed as columns and naiads; there were also Mummers with lightning bolts and three others who operated a Cerberus, coated in what looked like aluminum foil and silver spray paint, giving it a mechanical look. That evening's rehearsal was the first with costumes, so the brigade spent some time admiring each other's outfits. The rehearsal began by first reviewing choreography for first-time attendees before doing a quick spacing walkthrough. Vaudevillians then ran its performance a few times, first to get a feel for its width and then to get a feel for its depth.

Unlike South Philly Strutters, Vaudevillians' performance was much more organized; in many ways, it felt closer to Fralinger's rehearsal. The performance was set to "Is It Love," a nu-disco song created by Jungle Dee, a disc jockey and remixer. The performance began with four Mummers, dressed as columns, dancing in place as the naiads and other Greek characters entered from the sides and danced. The entire ensemble cowered in fear as the Cerberus entered, but they eventually surrounded it and drove it off. Figures 3.20–3.23 depict photos of Vaudevillians' rehearsal.

Figure 3.20. Vaudevillians members taking in each other's costumes for the first time. Photo by Daniel Carsello.

Figure 3.21. Vaudevillians' flats featuring ancient Greek architecture, with Mummers dressed as columns in the foreground. Photo by Daniel Carsello.

Figure 3.22. Vaudevillians' Cerberus. Photo by Daniel Carsello.

Figure 3.23. Vaudevillians rehearsing its Parade performance. Photo by Daniel Carsello.

After rehearsal ended, the brigade had a debriefing. San Valentin led the first batch of announcements, reminding everybody that they had to have a negative rapid test for COVID-19 in order to march in the Parade. I was a bit surprised by this decision, as the Mummers Parade happens outdoors and this level of COVID-19 testing had declined in the United States well before December 2024. She also mentioned that all members of the brigade had to march in golden slippers or risk disqualifying the group from the Parade. She reminded everyone not to use black, brown, yellow, or red face paint so as to not offend—she even mentioned to be wary of using purple face paint, as some lighting can make it appear black. Upon hearing this, I wondered if every group cautions its members against wearing black face paint now in light of the controversies the Mummers have attracted or whether it was coincidental that two brigades mentioned it at the rehearsals I attended. She closed by acknowledging that everyone was expected to be "squeaky clean" while marching in the Parade, and that the rules were a bit looser at post-Parade celebrations on Two Street but members were still to be "little angels." Above all, though, she encouraged them to "relish in the collective joy" of the day. Her co-captain then reminded everyone that there was a fundraiser happening in January that was aimed at paying for brigade's space rental fees.

The event ended with a ceremony, led by a different Mummer. She lit a candle and passed around a small dish with what she called sacred water from the Delaware and Schuylkill Rivers, asking each member to dip their hands in the dish while reflecting on why they were participating in the Parade. The ceremony leader then briefly described a history of the Mummers Parade, acknowledging its European antecedents but notably omitting the blackface elements of the tradition. The ceremony ended with a reminder of what a Mummer is and how Vaudevillians, despite its seemingly incongruous identity with a

prototypical Mummers brigade, was still a part of the Mummers. Members were invited to stick around after the meeting adjourned to take part in a face painting tutorial.

Vaudevillians' claim that it is a queer, femme-led Mummers brigade certainly seemed true on the surface. It was the most gender diverse Mummers brigade I have ever seen, with women comprising the bulk of the membership. There was also much more racial diversity, though the group still appeared to be majority white with few-to-no Black people present. On average, the age group skewed much younger, helped by the larger number of children present. Perhaps the most illuminating element of the rehearsal, however, was the revelation that golden slippers are a requirement of all Parade participants.

Mummers Parade – January 1, 2025

I conclude this section where this chapter began: outside City Hall, bright and early on January 1, 2025, to take in the Mummers Parade. The Mummers Museum claims that "ten thousand participants" take place in the Parade each year.[101] DuComb notes that "by the early twenty-first century, the Mummers Parade drew roughly eight thousand marchers," so such a claim from the Mummers Museum is not unrealistic.[102] I heard from a news reporter, doing a story near my vantage point (depicted in Figure 3.24), that the city had increased its police presence, placed even more barricades than usual, and was using trash trucks to serve as extra physical protection for the Parade and its audience. These measures were implemented in light of the terrorist attack that had happened in New Orleans hours

[101] Mummers Museum, "About the Mummers," accessed March 20, 2025, https://www.mummersmuseum.org/about/.
[102] Christian DuComb, "Mummers," in *The Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia*, accessed March 20, 2025, https://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/essays/mummers/.

before, when a man drove his truck into a crowd on Bourbon Street before exiting his vehicle and opening fire with a firearm.

Across the street, I saw one of the two bleachers that spectators had to buy tickets for in advance. To my left was a makeshift television booth (Figure 3.25) constructed for MeTV (Memorable Entertainment Television), the Parade's official broadcast partner. MeTV broadcasts television sitcoms from the 1930s–1990s, as well as serials, and bills itself as "American's #1 Classic Television Network." The crowd around me was majority white, with a good number of families present.

Figure 3.24. My vantage point of the Mummers Parade. Due to the additional security, I was as close as possible without having pre-purchased a ticket for the seating areas. Photo by Daniel Carsello.

Figure 3.25. MeTV's makeshift television booth for the Mummers Parade. Photo by Daniel Carsello.

The fancy division started the Parade. Most of their performances were smaller, with only a few people per group. The larger ones had some set pieces, but the vast majority were no more than a handful of people doing the Mummers strut to music pumped into the area through speakers. Some of the themes depicted included the wild west, the *Super Mario Bros.* video game franchise, Halloween, and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. The music was an eclectic mix—some of the songs I recognized included the sea shanty "What Shall We Do With the Drunken Sailor," the Beach Boys' "Surfin' USA," and Harry Belafonte's "Jump in the Line"—but nearly every fancy division performance ended with a portion of "Oh! Dem Golden Slippers." As mentioned earlier, Golden Sunrise performed with Kaos Mas toward the end of the fancies division. The dancers from Kaos Mas were some of the only Black femme-presenting people I saw in the Parade.

After the fancy division concluded, the wench brigade division began. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, an emcee declared "this is where it all started" as he announced the arrival of the first wench brigade. Most of the wench brigades followed a similar pattern: their theme was announced and the group strutted in costumes that evoked the theme, dancing to music provided by live brass bands. The majority of the wench brigade members were white, whereas most of the bands comprised Black members.

Masters claims that "the Mummers [are] not interested in 'politics.'"[103] That assertion was at the forefront of my thoughts as I watched wench brigade performances with some political element to them. For instance, Riverfront's "The Hive" and Americans' "Marionettes in Motion" presentations had people marching with flags associated with Blue Lives Matter, a countermovement to the Black Lives Matter movement. In another presentation, Pirates' "30 Parades and Still Funkin' It Up," a man, dressed as a prisoner, strutted while holding a sign. One side of the sign read "Pardon Me Joe [Biden, the outgoing President of the United States]!" while the other read "Don't Forget Me Donald [Trump, who was set to assume the presidency a few weeks later]!"

Many of the wench brigade performances seemed to come dangerously close to violating the edicts from the city to curtail, in the words of Steve Coper, my contact with Fralinger String Band, "'ethnic' themes." Perhaps the most egregious, however, was Oregon New Years Association's[104] presentation of its "Visions of Asia" performance, which presented a broad pastiche of the different cultures of that continent. Mummers carried Chinese lion heads and some wore Asian conical hats; some women wore pink kimonos, a

[103] Masters, *The Philadelphia Mummers*, 79.
[104] This brigade is named after Oregon Avenue, an east-west thoroughfare in South Philadelphia.

traditional Japanese garment. The music included Carl Douglas's disco hit, "Kung Fu Fighting," as well as the East Asian riff, a feature of Western classical music used for centuries to represent composers' fascination with Orientalism; the East Asian riff is sometimes called the Oriental riff, and it is depicted in Figure 3.26. All of the wenches wore golden face paint—in this context, it was much more akin to yellowface.

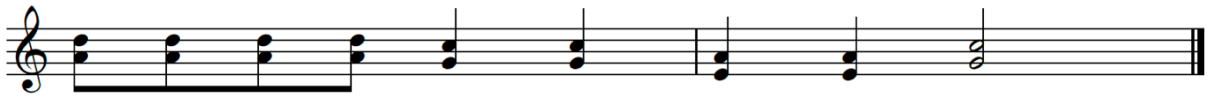

Figure 3.26. My transcription of the East Asian riff used in Oregon New Years Association's presentation of its "Visions of Asia" performance.

According to an article that ran in *The Philadelphia Inquirer* the day of the 2025 Mummers Parade,

> [Oregon New Years Association], though, had followed all Mummers procedures required to use an ethnic theme, said Randy Duque, deputy director of the Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations. Duque said the group had consulted with the Northeast Philadelphia Development Corp., a Chinese American nonprofit, "to develop a presentation that would appropriately reflect a Chinese New Year theme while keeping in the parameters of a wench brigade performance." The theme appeared to go unnoticed by most spectators.[105]

The last wench brigade to march was Froggy Carr, presenting its "Froget About It" theme. In addition to a large Trump flag and a sign that said "[Former Philadelphia mayor] Jim Kenney Sleeps with the Fishes," many of the wenches carried green frog parasols to strut to "Under the Boardwalk" by the Drifters. Froggy Carr's performance seemed largely themeless, even when compared to the rest of the wench brigades, and the brigade wound

[105] Ellie Rushing, "Mummers Parade Draws Crowds and Holiday Cheer Despite New Orleans Violence: 'You Can't Live Scared,'" *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 1, 2025, https://www.inquirer.com/news/philadelphia/mummers-parade-philadelphia-2025-20250101.html.

up placing last among the wench brigades in the 2025 Parade. Oregon's "Asia" performance placed second. The sheer number of people who marched during the wench brigade portion of the Parade confirms DuComb's assertion that "the minimal commitment and preparation required to parade as a wench help explain why the wench brigades are among the only Mummers groups adding rather than losing members."[106]

The comic division was up next. As mentioned above, three overarching comic clubs—Goodtimers, Landi, and Murray—sponsor individual brigades. Goodtimers' brigades, including South Philly Strutters, were the first to march. South Philly Strutters' performance was very similar to that I saw at the rehearsal, with the addition of a jungle backdrop, a person on stilts dressed like a parrot, and strutters in costumes. Once the brigades sponsored by Goodtimers concluded, the brigades sponsored by Landi marched before giving way to the brigades sponsored by Murray. Some of the highlights of the Murray brigades included the Holy Rollers, whose "Broad Street Bullies" theme was inspired by the Philadelphia Flyers hockey team's intimidating style of play during its three consecutive Finals appearances from 1974–1976. Unlike Froggy Carr's 2020 Gritty theme that resulted in blackface, Holy Rollers' members did not use blackface.

The Wild Rovers brigade presented what appeared to be a political satire. Red Mummers and blue Mummers stayed within their own factions, at odds with the other. Suddenly, a Mummer dressed as Uncle Sam appeared, and the red and blue Mummers felt comfortable to comingle as a result. Wild Rovers' presentation was set to Julius Fučík's "Entrance of the Gladiators," op. 68, long known for its association with the circus. Eventually, Vaudevillians marched, with the brigade's presentation receiving a very muted

[106] DuComb, *Haunted City*, 127.

response compared to the other brigades. A friend of mine sent me a text message noting that the commentators on MeTV "hated [Vaudevillians'] symbolism of capitalism's impact on destroying the arts," though he did not explain why. Unlike the other divisions, the comics only announced that Murray Comic Club had won rather than providing a list of all of the various brigades.

The last division to march outside was the string bands. Before the string bands began, Philadelphia's mayor, Cherelle Parker, walked up to where I was standing, speaking with some news reporters about the terror attack in New Orleans as well as the Parade. She was accompanied by members of her staff and Bob Brady, the Chairman of the Philadelphia Democratic Party. Parker eventually made her way up to the makeshift television booth to take part in discussing the string band performances. Masters notes that

> in the early days of the parade, city officials marched ahead of the first performing units; today, the mayor leads the string bands, reflecting a more cynical desire to appear before the largest number of people and thus maximize political gain. (The string bands draw the largest crowds.)[107]

Whether the string bands draw the largest crowds because they perform last or because they are the most popular part of the Parade, Masters's assertion holds true nearly twenty years after she wrote her monograph; the crowd was at its largest as the first string band geared up to perform.

By that point in the day, I had been at the Parade for nearly seven hours, so I only stuck around for the first few string bands. All fourteen string band division performances from the 2025 Mummers Parade are available on the Philadelphia Mummers String Band Association YouTube channel; I attribute the seemingly extra organization exhibited by the string bands to the fact that they perform year-round, as mentioned by Steve Coper from

[107] Masters, *The Philadelphia Mummers*, 126.

Fralinger. The themes ranged from pirates, performed by Woodland String Band, to the successful 2024 film adaptation of the popular Broadway musical *Wicked*, performed by Hegeman String Band, to the video game series *Castlevania*, performed by South Philadelphia String Band. Fralinger performed "Junkyard Jam" tenth. South Philadelphia String Band and Quaker City String Band tied for first place; a Facebook post by the String Band Association acknowledged that there were no protocols to break a tie because a tie among the string bands had never occurred in the history of the Parade. Two string bands—Duffy String Band and Durning String Band—were also disqualified due to violating the rules regarding themes.

Since 1998, the fancy brigade division holds its (ticketed) performances inside the Philadelphia Convention Center in the evening. The decision was equal parts pragmatic and political. Due to the increasing grandiosity of the fancy brigade floats, an indoor venue was necessary. The Fancy Brigade Association worked with various city departments, the Convention Center, television stations, and hotels—all of which were keen to have an option for the Parade to happen in some fashion without having to worry about the weather—to break with tradition and move the fancy brigade division performances indoors.[108]

Conclusion

The 2025 Mummers Parade certainly demonstrated progress toward a more inclusive event through the inclusion of groups such as Kaos Mas and NFUSE Dance and Fitness. The presence and even acceptance of groups like Vaudevillians and Lobster Club—a comic brigade that, according to member Justyn Myers, "tr[ies] to be progressive but also use[s] its

[108] Masters, *The Philadelphia Mummers*, 163.

platform for satirical pokes at the city"[109]—also points to a more tolerant Mummers Parade. While these improvements are worth celebrating, the foundation upon which they are built remains steeped in traditions that celebrate hegemonic white masculinity and its complicated relationship to stereotypes of Blackness and femininity.

Since its inception, the Mummers Parade has provided a space for primarily white men to dress up for myriad reasons: to lampoon local and national politics, to engage in play, to define themselves through an identity—Mummer—that is itself defined through caricature and calumny. From viewing seven hours of the Mummers Parade, I find it difficult to agree with the idea of an apolitical Mummers Parade due to the staggering number of politically charged presentations, not to mention the historical examples cited in this chapter. And, of course, the number of individuals marching in the Parade with Blue Lives Matter flags and political signs belie the Parade's supposedly apolitical ethos. Even the Parade's antecedents were politically charged, such as the eighteenth-century parades that allowed their participants to demean others or perform blackface minstrelsy.

One theme that emerged in all of my conversations with my Mummers interlocutors was the importance of fraternity. Unlike the oftentimes figurative fraternity discussed in Chapter 2, for the Mummers, that fraternity is very literal. Masters identifies a "strong linkage between family and tradition that permeates the Mummer[s]."[110] In her interviews with Mummers, Masters finds that the chance of someone joining the Mummers are increased by (particularly male) family members already being members; she also found that the Mummers view being a member as being an extension of their family.[111] She also

[109] I intended to attend a Lobster Club rehearsal but was unable to do so due to scheduling conflicts.
[110] Masters, *The Philadelphia Mummers*, 131.
[111] Ibid., 132–34.

perceptibly opines that "the Mummers' strength, and in some cases their weakness, lies in family."[112] In my experience visiting Mummers rehearsals and attending the Parade, family was everywhere. From Mummers bringing their wives and children to rehearsals to young children taking part in the Mummers Parade, it was clear that what makes taking part in the Mummers special to its members is the strong bonds of fraternity that develop; these bonds are even stronger if the relationship is familial. One could imagine that the Mummers' reticence to evolve over the past century is due, in part, to a fear of admitting their figurative—and, oftentimes, literal—forefathers had been exclusive in their pursuit of play.

While the Mummers have worked to make the Parade more inclusive over the years, missteps have occurred. The Philadelphia division was supposed to attract people who were historically excluded from—and demeaned in—the Parade, but it was swiftly dissolved after one year, perhaps due to its potential for coming off as tokenizing those communities. More recently, despite partnering with groups like Kaos Mas and NFUSE Dance and Fitness in an attempt to bring more diversity to the Mummers Parade, brigades have still fallen back onto their old habits.

Despite the best efforts of the city and the Mummers, the Parade remains largely white and male. Even the brigades that are housed outside of South Philadelphia function as extensions of the ethos of the South Philadelphia neighborhoods their families came from.[113] There were certainly non-white Mummers in the 2025 Parade, but their presence served a dual purpose as an ideal for inclusivity and a painful reminder of how few minoritized faces were present in a Parade that historically featured the diversity of Philadelphia. Masters argues that

[112] Masters, *The Philadelphia Mummers*, 132.
[113] Ibid., 138.

> the white stereotype associated with the Mummers had at least two consequences. First, it effectively erased the substantial and important contributions of black Philadelphians to the Shooters' traditions. Second, it made the Mummers vulnerable to charges that they were exclusionary and closed at best and racist at worst. A third outcome is plausible, but there is no direct evidence for it—the image may have dampened the enthusiasm of Philadelphia's black communities for joining the in the white parade, or at least competing in it.[114]

Such an argument, however, absolves the Mummers of all blame for stewarding their oral history to "effectively erase" non-white Mummers and places the blame for accusations of exclusion on the very people being excluded.

Incidentally, Christian DuComb was a member of Vaudevillians while he wrote his monograph about the Mummers Parade. He noted that he ultimately joined because of his belief that

> the best way to intervene in the Mummers Parade, to enact a utopian performative, is to join the festivity: to broaden the diversity of participation, to claim the parade as a site of political protest, and to counter dystopic performances of racial and gendered impersonation, which attempt to justify their presence by denying their past.[115]

DuComb's lofty praise for Vaudevillians stems from the group's progressivism, which still manifests to this day: from its membership to its COVID-19 precautionary policies to its acknowledging that black face paint is not the only color that can invite controversy. However, Vaudevillians' progressivism is perhaps undercut by the fact that it is still beholden to the constructions of hegemonic white masculinity that permeate the Parade, from the ceremony that glorified the Mummers Parade's European antecedents to the need to wear golden shoes that engender thoughts of James A. Bland's minstrel song. Even using DuComb's description in the above quote, I would argue that Vaudevillians certainly have a

[114] Masters, *The Philadelphia Mummers*, 72.
[115] DuComb, *Haunted City*, 142.

greater diversity of gender representation, yet it was still a majority-white group with far fewer Black people and other minoritized groups than one would expect from a group that seemingly boasts a "diversity of participation."

Additionally, I would caution against viewing any portion of the Mummers as "utopian." Merriam-Webster defines "utopian" as "an impractical scheme for social improvement," and it is hard to imagine the Mummers, a tradition whose identity and most notable features are deeply entwined with blackface minstrelsy, moving forward without a fundamental reckoning of its past and reorganization of its present. Masters, quoting one of her informants, notes that "this traditional look that Eddie Cantor and Al Jolson and a host of other people have used for years and years [the minstrel theme] was symbolic with Mummery […]. Plantation life [was] the dominant theme through most of the century with the Mummers."[116] In many ways, it continues to be to this day.

Crucially, the Mummers have a wench problem. The Mummers wench is one of the Parade's most recognizable ties to its sordid, blackface minstrel past. Her lasting legacy is more nuanced than the regressive, often homophobic arguments that she is performed by "freaks" or closeted men. Rather, homosexuality takes a backseat in the construction of the Mummers wench in favor of the true goal: societally acceptable definitions of femininity that reward women who know their place, who are unwilling to rock the boat, who are content with sitting on the sidelines as spectators of rehearsals and the Parade instead of marching down Broad Street as an equal.

However, with the removal of the gender exclusionary principles that kept women officially out of the Parade for decades, the Mummers wench had to be recalibrated. The

[116] Masters, *The Philadelphia Mummers*, 83.

resulting Mummers wench is robbed of some of her political potency, as while she still represents the Mummers' idealized femininity, she has lost the gender subversion that revealed who was really arguing for that idealized femininity. In this way, the Mummers wench has become a more insidious caricature. The traditional Mummers wench, like the minstrel wench, is an avatar for white male power, one that demeans anyone that does not conform to hegemonic white masculinity.

While the Mummers Parade has historically been open to only biologically male bodies, it has not been a "male-only" Parade. In many ways, the Mummers Parade is an exercise in controlled femininity, and its wenches provide the vessels for that control. The Mummers wench conjures up a fraught, regressive femininity, but it is still a mode of femininity that continues to be all too common in contemporary society. Any arguments about the gender exclusion of the Mummers must have more nuance to allow for the very real femininity that has existed since the first Parade down Broad Steet on January 1, 1901, and most arguments stop short of affording the Mummers wench her due, instead relying on essentializing the cross-dressing male as either homosexual or closeted. A more nuanced argument would allow for the Mummers wench to reclaim her space as a deeply troubling agent in shaping historical—and even contemporary—views on women and femininity, as well as reflecting those views back to an audience that desperately needs to see them in order to feel safe in an increasingly changing world.

Be it through remaining mute on the minstrel stage, or opening her mouth to spout degrading and mocking speeches and songs, or performing idealized femininity down Broad Street, the traditional "masculine" Mummers wench is easy to understand. Her more modern, feminized counterpart, however, is much more difficult to grasp. All of these

aspects of the wench remain, yet the nature of who performs the wench role occludes who most benefits from its existence.

If women are to continue marching in the Mummers Parade, the organizers of the Parade must consider how the Parade propagates regressive femininity through controllable bodies. Perhaps the Mummers wench should be retired entirely: pack up her dress, put her parasol in the umbrella stand, and simply march down Broad Street. Perhaps she should be provided her proper historical and cultural context: educate the wench on what she represents and how she has been used as a tool of racism, sexism, and white supremacist violence in the United States since the nineteenth century. Perhaps she can be reimagined as a tool for a more positive femininity through more nuanced performances that allow for more diverse constructions of womanhood.

The most aggressive solution would be to completely sever the Mummers Parade and its funding from the city if not outright canceling future Parades. Another path would be to reinstitute the ban on women, allowing the Mummers wench to regain her political potency. Those outcomes are immensely unlikely, however, as the Parade is a Philadelphia mainstay at this point in time and nearly every aspect of United States popular culture has some tie to blackface minstrelsy. Similarly, a ban on women participating in the Parade in 2025 would effectively be a cancelation of the Parade. So, a more nuanced but reasonable path forward must be taken. After all, Masters notes that "the Mummers appear to be open to change."[117]

As to what those changes are, it is unclear. Froggy Carr's 1995 poster was only half correct: blackface is not "gone" from the Mummers Parade. Be it the music performed, the

[117] Masters, *The Philadelphia Mummers*, 94.

performances of gender, or even some of the brigade names themselves, the Mummers are so intimately tied with blackface minstrelsy that a simple ban on face paint was never going to fix the problem. Similarly, the banning of performers who "go too far" belies the more troubling reality: in many ways, the Parade itself goes too far.

Outright canceling the Parade is impractical—at this point, it is as tied to the city of Philadelphia as the Liberty Bell—and would not solve the larger issues at play: the obfuscation of contemporary ties to minstrelsy and regressive gender politics. Perhaps educating Mummers about the troubling histories behind their traditions would yield a more fertile recipe for change and that utopian vision that Christian DuComb hopes for. No matter what the Mummers ultimately do, however, the fact remains that the Parade, and the Mummers wench in particular, is a fascinating, fraught look at how the construction of hegemonic white masculinity often relies on the performance and subjugation of the Other.

CHAPTER 4

"SING LIKE MEN":

CONSTRUCTING HEGEMONIC WHITE MASCULINITY IN CHORAL SETTINGS

In February 2011, I missed a few days of my junior year of high school to participate in the Pennsylvania Music Educators Association (PMEA) District 12 Choir Festival. High school singers from across District 12—which comprises Chester, Delaware, and Philadelphia Counties—convened at a host school in Delaware County to review the festival repertoire, which we had received months prior, under the watchful baton of a guest conductor. We also auditioned to take part in the Region VI Choir Festival, which comprises students from Districts 11 and 12, that was set to happen in March.

The last day of the festival included a concert attended by families and friends. Our repertoire comprised eleven songs, with most of them coming from the choral tradition, including a movement from Johann Sebastian Bach's *Mass in B Minor*, BWV 232, a composition by Johannes Brahms scored for mixed voices and piano, and a folk song arranged by Ralph Vaughan Williams; there was also one song scored for the higher voices and one scored for the lower voices. The selections that stuck out the most to me, however, were two of the songs toward the end of the program. The first was "Dubula," a Xhosa folk song arranged by Stephen Hatfield. The guest conductor had us do some choreography for the song, including clapping, stomping, and arm movements. The second was "Witness," an African American spiritual arranged by Jack Halloran, which closed the concert.

My experience at the 2011 PMEA District 12 Chorus Festival is not uncommon among choral musicians: performing concerts that primarily feature music of white composers, with songs from Africa and the African diaspora creating an opportunity for

singers to "let loose" through movement, clapping, and instrumentation. In many cases, these songs are arranged by white men, demonstrating the white masculine influence over the choral concert tradition. This phenomenon is not limited to choir students in elementary, middle, and high school. Collegiate choirs and glee clubs often employ the same tactics of mostly programming music by white men while reserving music from Africa and the African diaspora to serve as novelties or change-of-pace pieces. I have experienced these tactics firsthand, starting with my experience in high school PMEA concerts, continuing in my experience as a member of the University of Pennsylvania Glee Club (Penn Glee Club), and culminating with my six-year tenure as the director of the Penn Glee Club.

Vocal and Choral Pedagogy

Vocal pedagogy has provided fertile ground for musicians to construct hegemonic white masculinity. In her study of Black blues singers' influence on Broadway belters, Masi Asare argues that "young classical singers are fiercely protected from the potential contamination of pop music vocalization on the grounds of preserving vocal health."[1] Katherine Meizel notes the dominant strain of thought in Western vocal pedagogy that constructs the voice as a static entity, capable only of performing one genre.[2] And E. Patrick Johnson notes that "vernacular [performances] may be caught up in the web of authentic blackness."[3]

[1] Masi Asare, "Vocal Color in Blue: Early Twentieth-Century Black Women Singers as Broadway's Voice Teachers," *Performance Matters* 6, no. 2 (2020): 52, EBSCOhost.
[2] Katherine Meizel, "Introduction," in *Multivocality: Singing on the Borders of Identity* (Oxford University Press, 2020), 2.
[3] E. Patrick Johnson, *Appropriating Blackness: Performance and the Politics of Authenticity* (Duke University, 2003), 78, https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822385103.

In her work on race and vocal pedagogy, Nina Sun Eidsheim argues that "two important tenets emerge from [pedagogical and scholarly] discourses about voice: first, that a person's essential qualities are audible in his or her voice; and second, that race is one such essential, timbrally present quality."[4] In her interviews with thirteen voice students and teachers, Eidsheim discovered that many voice teachers felt that what was "honest" or "healthy" singing for their students was dependent on each student's race and ethnicity.[5] These teachers' assumptions about the voice are based on the nineteenth-century formulation of vocal pedagogy, which was grounded on (pseudo)scientific, colonial racial dynamics; by the end of the nineteenth century, the authority figures on vocal pedagogy had shifted from musicians to anatomists, and something as banal as larynx placement had become racialized.[6] Meizel goes even further, noting that "the early years of Europe's colonial project show that voices were heard even then as markers of cultural identity and difference."[7]

Gender presentation has also exerted its influence in vocal pedagogy. In his study on masculinity in barbershop choruses, Jeffrey Eugene Nash notes that "barbershop singers, and particularly chorus directors, repeatedly refer to barbershop singing as 'manly singing,' by which they mean a full, rich blend of voices with a dominant bass component."[8] When I was a member of the Penn Glee Club, our director would instruct the baritone and bass

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[4] Nina Sun Eidsheim, "Race and the Aesthetics of Vocal Timbre," in *Rethinking Difference in Music Scholarship*, ed. Olivia Bloechl, Melanie Lowe, and Jeffrey Kallberg (Cambridge University Press, 2015), 340, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139208451.
[5] Ibid., 342.
[6] Ibid., 345–54.
[7] Meizel, "Introduction," 8.
[8] Jeffrey Eugene Nash, "Ringing the Chord: Sentimentality and Nostalgia among Male Singers," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 41, no. 5 (2012): 588, https://doi.org/10.1177/0891241611429943.

singers to "sing like men," and there was a nontrivial amount of ribbing toward the tenors for not being able to do so.

Eidsheim ultimately believes that the racialized voice—and, I would argue, the gendered voice—remains potent because our definition of "voice" is incorrect. She argues that

> voice is not a noun; it is a verb. Voice is not sound; it is action. […] And once we understand *that*, we can learn to recognize that any essentializing notion that might arise in our encounter with voice reflects a culturally instilled listening process.[9]

Similarly, Meizel stresses the value of multivocality, defining it as "border crossings within the context of singing."[10] She argues that singers negotiate their identities through vocal performance, noting that those who are multivocal often do so in acts of resistance.[11]

Constructions of hegemonic white masculinity have also historically taken root within the choral classroom. Joyce E. King coined the term "dysconscious racism" to describe "the limited and distorted understandings my students have about inequity and cultural diversity—understandings that make it difficult for them to act in favor of truly equitable education."[12] King argues that dysconscious racism is a form of impaired consciousness that impedes students from behaving in ways that would create equitable learning opportunities while also convincing students that the existing systems are tolerable.[13]

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[9] Eidsheim, "Aesthetics of Vocal Timbre," 364–65.
[10] Meizel, "Introduction," 14.
[11] Ibid., 17.
[12] Joyce E. King, "Dysconscious Racism: Ideology, Identity, and the Miseducation of Teachers," *The Journal of Negro Education* 60, no. 2 (Spring 1991): 134, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2295605.
[13] Ibid., 135.

She also notes that many teachers are not adequately prepared to combat dysconscious racism, noting that "education is not neutral."[14]

Brent C. Talbot notes that "cultural bias permeates every sector of the field of music education," including the choral classroom.[15] He laments the fact that music education, despite possessing immense potential to affect positive change, "chooses to perpetuate an exclusionary system steeped in classism, racism, sexism, heterosexism, genderism, ableism, and ageism."[16] Karen Howard agrees, noting that dysconscious racism is especially potent in the choral classroom. She interviewed twelve choral directors, from middle school through university programs. In analyzing her respondents' comments, she discovered three overarching themes: dysconscious racism in the choral classroom, the need to ethically select repertoire, and the move toward a more critical consciousness to supplant dysconscious racism.

Howard discusses "the common trope of putting an African American spiritual or a 'global' upbeat piece at the end of a programme." One of her respondents did not see an issue with it until a colleague of hers likened it to policies that required Black people to sit in segregated areas on public transportation.[17] Another of her respondents felt that "white conductors knowingly place such pieces at the end of a concert without using the same 'guiding questions' to interrogate the rest of the programme."[18] Howard ultimately argues

[14] King, "Dysconscious Racism," 140.
[15] Brent C. Talbot, "Introduction," in *Marginalized Voices in Music Education*, ed. Brent C. Talbot (Routledge, 2017), 4, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315225401.
[16] Ibid., 5.
[17] Karen Howard, "The Impact of Dysconscious Racism and Ethical Caring on Choral Repertoire," *Music Education Research* 24, no. 3 (2022): 344, https://doi.org/10.1080/14613808.2022.2038110.
[18] Ibid.

that "whiteness as it exists in education needs to be understood […]. Choral courses need to be taught by people with experience in diversifying curricula with integrity."[19]

Choral Music in the Nineteenth- and Early-Twentieth-Century United States

The earliest universities in the United States featured sacred and secular singing, meant to help welcome students into college life and foster the creation of college ceremonies and customs.[20] J. Lloyd Winstead notes that "singing played an important role at Harvard [College, Harvard University's undergraduate college] before the beginning of the eighteenth century as part of [commencement] celebrations."[21] Singing was present in nearly all aspects of early university life, appearing in academic as well as extracurricular organizations.[22] Winstead argues that singing communities in the United became more interested in German composers and singing customs at the beginning and middle of the nineteenth century; previously, they had been more interested in the customs of English singing.[23] This fascination with and favoritism toward Germanic singing perhaps explains the vast popularity of "tours by singing troupes from the Austrian and Swiss border region of the Alps" across the United States in the early nineteenth century.[24]

The first German male choral group in the United States was founded in Philadelphia in 1835 before quickly spreading throughout the northeastern United States.[25]

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[19] Howard, "Impact of Dysconscious Racism," 348.
[20] J. Lloyd Winstead, *When Colleges Sang: The Story of Singing in American College Life* (The University of Alabama Press, 2013), 2–3.
[21] Ibid., 19.
[22] Ibid., 41.
[23] Ibid., 64.
[24] Gage Averill, *Four Parts, No Waiting: A Social History of American Barbershop Harmony* (Oxford University Press, 2003), 23.
[25] Jeremy D. Jones, "The Development of Collegiate Male Glee Clubs in America: An Historical Overview," (PhD diss., University of Cincinnati, 2010), 23–27, ProQuest (3423974).

Jeremy D. Jones argues that "male choral singing in the United States quickly found a foothold on college campuses influenced in part by community male choral groups first established by German-American immigrants in communities throughout the Northeast and Midwest."[26] The first collegiate glee club in the United States was founded in 1858 at Harvard University and was followed by glee clubs forming at schools such as the University of Michigan in 1859, Yale University in 1861, and the University of Pennsylvania in 1862. Countless more sprang up at universities around the country by the end of the nineteenth century. Glee clubs got their name from the glee, a genre popular in England that remained influential in the United States even as collegiate glee clubs used the German *Männerchor* ("men's chorus") as a model for their singing and socializing.[27] Glees "generally consisted of a part song for three or four unaccompanied voices."[28] Joshua S. Duchan notes that "glee clubs began as small groups, ranging from quartets to octets, and by the mid-1800s had become staples of college life and started to multiply"; they would eventually grow in membership as college faculty members began directing them.[29] "At the same time, however, they introduced smaller ensembles, drawn from within their ranks, as separate acts in their concerts to add variety to their program or to enable them to book more performances."[30] One such example is the Penn Pipers, an a cappella subset of the Penn Glee Club that was founded in 1950.

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[26] Jones, "Development of Collegiate Male Glee Clubs," 34.
[27] Winstead, *When Colleges Sang*, 120.
[28] Ibid., 65.
[29] Joshua S. Duchan, "From Nineteenth-Century Glee Clubs to Barbershop Harmony," in *Powerful Voices: The Musical and Social World of Collegiate A Cappella* (University of Michigan Press, 2012), 16, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3998/mpub.911758.5.
[30] Ibid.

Winstead also argues that United States popular music formed a symbiotic relationship with collegiate glee clubs.[31] Matthew D. Morrison acknowledges the critical role music played in the burgeoning popular entertainment business, noting that "blackface [was] the historical foundation of the modern entertainment industry."[32] He alleges that the modern popular music industry emerged by the 1890s, meaning that blackface minstrelsy had already functioned as the "aesthetic and structural basis" of United States popular entertainment for nearly seventy years.[33] Morrison also notes that a turning point for Stephen Foster's minstrel repertoire was his inclusion of a chorus after the late 1840s.[34] Averill notes that

> Foster settled on short, tuneful choruses, *often sung in four parts*, followed by solo verses, a form that was commonly called a "refrain song" at the time […]. […] Although he did not invent the refrain song, Foster helped to popularize and standardize the verse-and-chorus form of the minstrel song.[35]

For instance, Foster's "Oh! Susanna" (1848) is structured to have a solo singer perform the verses and a vocal quartet or chorus to perform the refrain (Figure 4.1). It is not difficult to imagine a glee club performing a minstrel song, appointing one of its members to sing the verses as the ensemble performed the chorus in four parts. Minstrel songs with choruses would provide ample fodder for collegiate glee clubs, and it is under these conditions that they included popular music in their programs.

Duchan notes that "the performances […] were diverse from the start, including European classical pieces but also popular ballads, marches, and airs."[36] While Duchan does

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[31] Winstead, *When Colleges Sang*, 119.
[32] Matthew D. Morrison, *Blacksound: Making Race and Popular Music in the United States* (University of California Press, 2024), 130.
[33] Ibid., 145.
[34] Ibid., 116.
[35] Averill, *Four Parts*, 35 (my italics).
[36] Duchan, "Nineteenth-Century Glee Clubs," 16.

not mention the presence of minstrel songs at early glee club concerts, the Penn Glee Club performed "The Last Cigar," a popular ballad that is a contrafactum of a minstrel song, "Dearest Mae," at its first concert in 1862. Such a performance lends credence to the idea that glee clubs were singing minstrel songs due to the ubiquity of the genre and the musical structure that made them ideal for glee club performances.

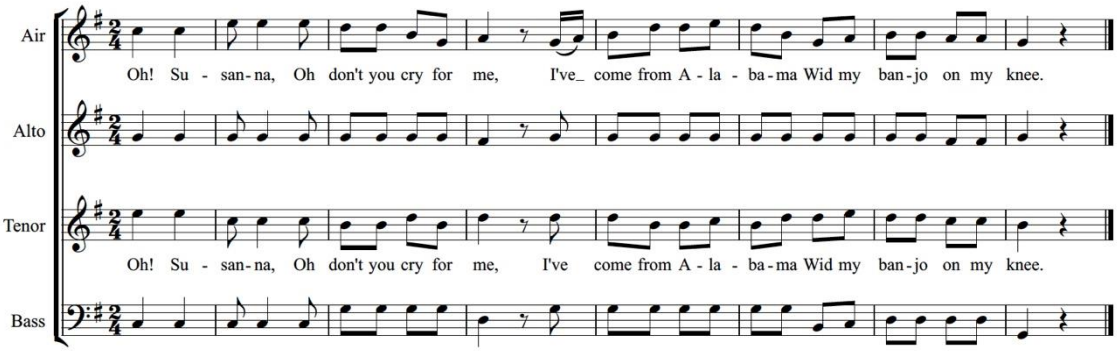

Figure 4.1. The vocal chorus in Stephen Foster's "Oh! Susanna" (1848).[37]

Glee clubs were also important to the cultivation of college songbooks, with Yale University publishing the first, *Songs of Yale*, in 1853; its introduction acknowledged the "public interest in college singing" as a reason for its creation.[38] Many of the earliest university songbooks contained minstrel songs, including *Carmina Princetonia*, the songbook of Princeton University. The minstrel songs in the ninth edition, published in 1900, include "Levee Song" (known today as "I've Been Working on the Railroad"), "Long Tail Blue," "Jingle Bells" (which will be discussed later in this chapter), and a number of songs by Stephen Foster, including "Nelly Bly," "Uncle Ned," "De Camptown Races," "Old Folks at

[37] Stephen Foster, "Oh! Susanna" (F. D. Benteen: 1848), 4–5, https://vmirror.imslp.org/files/imglnks/usimg/f/f7/IMSLP743367-PMLP307941-n1329.pdf (my engraving).
[38] Winstead, *When Colleges Sang*, 84–85.

Home," and "My Old Kentucky Home, Good-Night!"[39] The book also contains "My Last Cigar," the same song with a new text set to a minstrel melody performed by the Penn Glee Club at its first concert in 1862.[40]

As the glee grew in popularity during latter half of the nineteenth century, historically Black colleges and universities formed their own glee clubs.[41] Winsted notes that

> while many of the white colleges sang and sang well, the songs often depicted a more lighthearted fare. Black colleges, with their fresh history of slavery and continuing racial struggles, excelled in singing from a deeper emotional perspective. Many of the songs that students sang were plantation songs [i.e., minstrel songs], much enjoyed by their white audiences, but their repertoire greatly exceeded the broad Anglo-American appetite for the slave songs [i.e., what would eventually come to be known as African American spirituals].[42]

As noted above, white colleges and universities included minstrel songs in their songbooks, but they also included African American spirituals. For instance, the spiritual "Way Up Yonder" is included in *Carmina Princetonia*.[43] Brian Roberts argues that music was part of a concerted effort to reimagine why the United States Civil War was fought in an attempt to heal a fractured nation.[44] One of the most crucial musical tools in reimagining the Civil War was *Slave Songs of the United States*, published in 1867—just two years after the conclusion of the Civil War. Compiled by William Francis Allen, Charles Pickard Ware, and Lucy McKim Garrison, *Slave Songs of the United States* conflated minstrel songs and African American spirituals. In the introduction, the authors note that

> the musical capacity of the negro race has been recognized for so many years that it is hard to explain why no systematic effort has hitherto been made to

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[39] Princeton University, *Carmina Princetonia: The Princeton Song Book*, 9th ed. (Martin R. Dennis & Co., 1900), Google Books.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Winstead, *When Colleges Sang*, 149.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Princeton University, *Carmina Princetonia*.
[44] Brian Roberts, *Blackface Nation: Race, Reform, and Identity in American Popular Music, 1812–1925* (The University of Chicago Press, 2017), 258, EBSCOhost.

> collect and preserve their melodies. More than thirty years ago those plantation songs made their appearance which were so extraordinarily popular for a while; and if "Coal-black Rose," "Zip Coon" and "Ole Virginny nebber tire" have been succeeded by spurious imitations, manufactured to suit the somewhat sentimental taste of our community, the fact that these were called "negro melodies" was itself a tribute to the musical genius of the race. The public had well-nigh forgotten *these genuine slave songs*.[45]

The book contains 136 songs that the three collected in their travels around the southern United States. Two that particularly stand out are number 110, "Run, [N-word], run!," and number 111, "I'm gwine to Alabamy." The lyrical content of both songs suggest that they are more likely minstrel songs than they are African American spirituals.[46]

This conflation of minstrel song and African American spiritual manifested in performance as well. One of the most well-known instances happened with the Fisk Jubilee Singers, a choir that formed in 1871 at the historically Black Fisk University. The group resisted performing minstrel songs and instead pioneered what came to be known as the "concert" style of gospel singing, marked by its formality, in their arrangements of African American spirituals.[47] The Fisk Jubilee Singers embarked on a fundraising trip for the university to little fanfare; it was not until its members performed minstrel songs, often dressed as if they were enslaved, that the tour made any significant financial gains.[48] Winstead notes that

> white audiences grew fond of the plantation melodies, and black singers, once reticent to continue singing songs about slave life, embraced them as well. [… Black singers] found a cultural niche within a broad performance repertoire that moved the emotions of all audiences.[49]

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[45] William Francis Allen, Charles Pickard Ware, and Lucy McKim Garrison, *Slave Songs of the United States* (A. Simpson & Co., 1867), i, https://doi.org/10.5479/sil.78680.39088002074508 (my italics).
[46] Ibid., 89.
[47] Roberts, *Blackface Nation*, 268.
[48] Ibid., 268–69.
[49] Winstead, *When Colleges Sang*, 139.

Glee clubs continued to grow as the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth, with their respective universities recognizing their marketing potency. Perhaps most interestingly, universities used their respective singing organizations to fundraise for their fledgling athletics programs, with Winstead noting that "some college athletics programs owe their existence to college singing."[50] This connection between music and athletics is reminiscent of Bill Monroe's traveling bluegrass band organizing baseball games against local teams.[51] Universities continued publishing song anthologies during this time, though Winstead remarks that "college song anthologies during the early twentieth century included little or no references to songs of the black institutions."[52] Another crucial development to glee clubs—and the hegemonic white masculinity they often propagated—spreading to colleges around the country happened in 1914 with the founding of the Intercollegiate Musical Council, now known as the Intercollegiate Men's Choruses (IMC). Jones notes that

> The organization owes much of its early growth to Albert Pickernell, student conductor of the Harvard Glee Club during his senior year […]. Pickernell believed that creating a glee club competition would be good for the growth of collegiate male singing and would enhance artistic performance standards at the same time.[53]

Such a practice is reminiscent of the neo-Victorian idea of using competition to demonstrate masculinity practiced by the Tulsa barbershop revivalists in the 1930s.[54] Around 1954, the IMC stopped holding glee club competitions due to many disbanding during the Second World War.[55] While the IMC has experienced a decline in membership in recent years, "the

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[50] Winstead, *When Colleges Sang*, 135.
[51] See Chapter 1 for more information.
[52] Winstead, *When Colleges Sang*, 198.
[53] Jones, "Development of Collegiate Male Glee Clubs," 89.
[54] Richard Mook, "White Masculinity in Barbershop Quartet Singing," *Journal for the Society of American Music* 1, no. 4 (2007): 457, https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196307070423. See Chapter 2 for more information.
[55] Jones, "Development of Collegiate Male Glee Clubs," 91.

organization is thriving and plays a vital role in sustaining the long-lived traditions associated with collegiate men's glee clubs in the United States."[56]

Collegiate glee clubs would often serve as the musical ambassadors for their institution and, in some cases, even served as a model of American college life for the rest of the world.[57] Copious glee clubs continue embark on performance tours, serving as *de facto* representatives for their respective universities.[58] Musically, glee clubs continued to evolve, and as they increasingly became directed by music faculty,

> [… they] began distancing themselves somewhat from the lighter fare of college songs toward a more cultivated repertoire. While the glee clubs performed the requisite crowd favorites, popular songs often provided the bookends of a program of more ambitious and more serious selections.[59]

As the twentieth century continued, glee clubs moved away from college songs toward this more cultivated repertoire—in other words, the music of white, male, European or American composers.

Despite this move toward more cultivated repertoire by glee clubs, blackface minstrelsy still had a place in glee club performances. For instance, Ashley Schmidt and Kirt von Daacke note that at the University of Virginia

> other student groups [on campus], including the University Glee Club, also regularly performed in blackface. In 1917, the Glee Club performed "Oh Julius!" with actors in blackface. As a regular part of their performances, the Glee Club would don blackface as the "Janitor Quartet" and sing minstrel tunes.[60]

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[56] Jones, "Development of Collegiate Male Glee Clubs," 93.
[57] Winstead, *When Colleges Sang*, 165.
[58] In my four years as a member and six years as the director of the Penn Glee Club, I performed in and conducted concerts in seventeen countries across five continents as well as across the contiguous United States.
[59] Winstead, *When Colleges Sang*, 165.
[60] Ashley Schmidt and Kirt von Daacke, "UVA and the History of Race: Blackface and the Rise of a Segregated Society," September 4, 2019, https://news.virginia.edu/content/uva-and-history-race-blackface-and-rise-segregated-society.

Vassar College also acknowledges an early-twentieth-century joint performance of its glee club and mandolin club that featured blackface.[61] Blackface minstrelsy also remained popular on college campuses more generally. At Princeton University, students likely began staging minstrel shows in 1886—which they acknowledged was later than most of their peers at other institutions—and these shows lasted until at least 1949.[62] And, at the University of Florida, minstrel shows were used to help finance the school and promote it to prospective students.[63] Myles Sullivan notes that "at least thirty-three amateur minstrel shows were performed by [University of Florida] students between 1914 and 1920 in both Gainesville and on tours across the state."[64]

Much like the mid-twentieth-century female barbershop organizations that emulated their all-male counterpart[65], women's colleges emulated the customs of men's colleges, including borrowing their songs.[66] Mary Ann Clawson acknowledges the irony of women modeling their own organizations on male counterparts which had historically excluded them.[67] Winstead notes that coeducation remained uncommon at universities.[68] Eventually, by the 1970s, with the advent of federal policies such as Title IX, universities began

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[61] Edward N. Welch Morgan, "Vassar in Blackface: Negotiating Tensions of Class, Gender, and Race," accessed March 20, 2025, https://www.vassar.edu/inclusive-history/work/vassar-blackface-negotiating-tensions-class-gender-and-race.
[62] April C. Armstrong, "The Minstrel Tradition at Princeton University," accessed March 20, 2025, https://slavery.princeton.edu/stories/the-minstrel-tradition-at-princeton-university.
[63] Myles Sullivan, "Amateur Minstrel Shows and Blackface Amusements at the University of Florida in the Jim Crow Era," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 99, no. 3/4 (Winter/Spring 2021): 270–71, https://www.jstor.org/stable/27099858.
[64] Ibid., 257.
[65] See Chapter 2 for more information.
[66] Winstead, *When Colleges Sang*, 204.
[67] Mary Ann Clawson, *Constructing Brotherhood: Class, Gender, and Fraternalism* (Princeton University Press, 1989), 195.
[68] Winstead, *When Colleges Sang*, 151.

accepting all students. Some men's groups, such as the Yale University Glee Club and Princeton University Glee Club, opened their membership to all singers in 1969.

Many glee clubs remained single-gender, however. Some chose to do so because there was a comparable women's group with which to collaborate. For instance, the Harvard University Glee Club remains a low-voices glee club[69] but has enjoyed a longstanding relationship with the Radcliffe Choral Society, a high-voices ensemble founded at Harvard University in 1899. The two organizations frequently collaborate together. Obstinance has also factored into glee clubs' decisions to remain single-gender. One of the more drastic cases happened at the University of Virginia. In 1989, the all-male Virginia Glee Club became a Contracted Independent Organization rather than merge with the Virginia Women's Chorus.[70]

From Glee Club to *Glee*: Show Choirs in the Age of Reality Television

Alan L. Alder and Thalia M. Mulvihill argue that

> the history of the art form now known as show choir can be traced back to the early days of Fred Waring, who first assembled an all-male ensemble of instrumentalists (who also sang) […]. Waring eventually added women to his ensemble who, along with some added men, were strictly singers. This group of singers was eventually referred to by Waring and his organization as the *Glee Club*.[71]

Waring and his Pennsylvanians, as the group later came to be called, became popular around the United States through the radio, and as radio gave way to television, choirs began

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[69] In 2018, the Harvard Glee Club opened its membership to singers of all genders who can sing tenor or bass.
[70] Virginia Glee Club, "Who We Are," accessed March 3, 2025, https://virginiagleeclub.org/who-we-are/.
[71] Alan L. Alder and Thalia M. Mulvihill, "Introduction and History of Show Choir," in *The Show Choir Handbook* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 2, ProQuest Ebook Central (italics in the original).

incorporating choreography into their performances as they became visible to the audience.[72] Patrice Madura Ward-Steinman notes that "in 1950, George Krueger created the first popular music glee club at Indiana University […] and many other Midwestern college groups followed suit. It wasn't until the late 1960s and 1970s that high school swing choirs transformed into dancing and costumed show choirs that competed, with obsessive hubs in the Midwest and southern California."[73] Since the 1960s, the show choir has continued taking shape, but it was the arrival of the 2009 cultural phenomenon *Glee* that spurred a renewed interest in show choirs. The fictional drama television show, which fittingly took place in a Midwest high school, chronicled the weekly trials and tribulations of high school through the eyes of the school's misfits: its glee club.

Shows like *American Idol* and *The Voice* have also had an immense impact in the United States, leading to global facsimiles to proliferate. Kay Hartwig and Rowena Riek comment on the prevalence of the talent contest reality show, which they note is "one of the most popular and enduring genres to emerge in the twenty-first century."[74] These shows have also influenced choral music. Hartwig and Riek conducted an ethnography of twelve Australian music educators contextualized in an era with a plethora of televised singing competitions. Their respondents noted that reality television contests and shows like *Glee* "are having a huge effect especially on the adolescent students."[75] Ward-Steinman notes that a potential "misunderstanding of media-influenced students is what constitutes a good,

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[72] Alder and Mulvihill, "Show Choir," 3.
[73] Patrice Madura Ward-Steinman, "Choral Pedagogy Responds to the Media: *American Idol*, *Glee*, *The Voice*, *The Sing-Off*, and…," in *The Oxford Handbook of Choral Pedagogy*, ed. Frank Abrahams and Paul D. Head (Oxford University Press, 2017), 35, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199373369.013.2.
[74] Kay Hartwig and Rowena Riek, "Choir in the Age of *The Voice*," *Australian Journal of Music Education* no. 3 (2015): 37, EBSCOhost.
[75] Ibid., 42.

healthy choral sound" due to the actors on *Glee* being much older than their high-school-aged characters.[76] However, Hartwig's and Riek's respondents ultimately felt that "any publicity for music education and singing is 'good publicity and exposure.'"[77] True to form, as a result, "high school show choirs have continued to grow in popularity and have a large presence throughout much of the United States."[78] Of course, primary- and secondary-level choirs in the model of the traditional college glee club have flourished as well, with national-level organizations such as the National Association for Music Education (NAfME), of which organizations like PMEA are affiliated.

Case Studies in Choral Settings

As I discussed in Chapter 1, I have been involved in choral performance for the majority of my life, from pre-kindergarten, through my time in the Philadelphia public school system, the four years during which I completed my undergraduate education, the time I spent directing ensembles during my graduate studies, to my current experience singing in a barbershop chorus. In the following sections I demonstrate the construction of hegemonic white masculinity in choral settings by analyzing my firsthand experiences as a lifelong choral singer and conductor. I will primarily focus on three areas: first, my experience in high school PMEA conventions; second, my time as a member of the Penn Glee Club; and third, my time as that group's director.

[76] Ward-Steinman, "Choral Pedagogy Responds," 32.
[77] Hartwig and Riek, "Age of *The Voice*," 43.
[78] Ward-Steinman, "Choral Pedagogy Responds," 35.

The Construction of Hegemonic White Masculinity in Pennsylvania Music Educators Association Performances

In 1933, a group of men associated with school, professional, and community bands formed the Pennsylvania Bandmasters Association; this organization held its first concert—a statewide high school band festival—in 1934 and subsequently changed its name to the Pennsylvania School Band Association.[79] Carmen Culp, a former PMEA president—and the organization's first to be a woman—and Dick Merrell, a former editor of PMEA's journal *PMEA News*, note that in 1936,

> the first All State Chorus Festival was presented in Greensburg [part of the Pittsburgh metropolitan area], composed of 202 students representing 91 schools. Eight districts were set up to handle all preparations, rules and business matters pertaining to the festivals.[80]

The organization would ultimately change its name a few more times before becoming the Pennsylvania Music Educators Association in 1947.[81] Culp and Merrell note that "performance festivals remained the focus of the organization until 1968 when interest for the whole educational system of music was evidenced."[82]

PMEA currently divides the state into six geographical regions, and each region further subdivides to produce two districts (for a total of twelve across Pennsylvania).[83] In addition to choir festivals, PMEA sponsors orchestral, jazz band, wind ensemble, concert band, and contemporary a cappella festivals. For the purposes of this section, however, I will focus on the choir festivals. The PMEA choir cycle begins in earnest each November, when

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[79] Carmen Culp and Dick Merrell, *A History of the Pennsylvania Music Educators Association, 1933–2000*, accessed March 19, 2025, https://www.pmea.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/history.pdf.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Ibid.
[83] As a student in the School District of Philadelphia, I was based in District 12 and Region VI.

high school students complete a blind audition, with the judges either facing away from the students or placed behind a screen, to attend their District festival held the following February. Students who are accepted to the District festival attend for two days, during which time they also audition to represent their district at their District's corresponding Region festival held in mid-to-late March. The Region festival follows the same pattern as the District festival, except that the audition held at the Region festival is to represent one's region at the PMEA All-State festival in April. Participation is restricted to sophomores, juniors, and seniors; freshman tenors may participate, however, due to the demand for more tenor voices. The use of auditions and the limited number of spaces available points to a competitive aspect of PMEA in which, as Richard Mook discussed in relation to singing groups, hegemonic white masculinity can thrive.[84]

I participated in the District 12 Choir Festival twice, in my junior and senior years, and the Region VI Choir Festival once, in my senior year. During my time participating in these festivals, the homogeneity of the participants was painfully noticeable; the vast majority were white students in all three festivals I attended. The Pennsylvania Department of Education only lists demographic information as far back as the 2012–2013 school year—the year after my last time participating in a PMEA choir festival—but that school year's demographic data (Figure 4.2) reveals that nearly three-quarters of all students enrolled in public high school that year were white.

[84] Richard Mook, "White Masculinity in Barbershop Quartet Singing," *Journal for the Society of American Music* 1, no. 4 (2007): 453–83, https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196307070423. See Chapter 2 for more information.

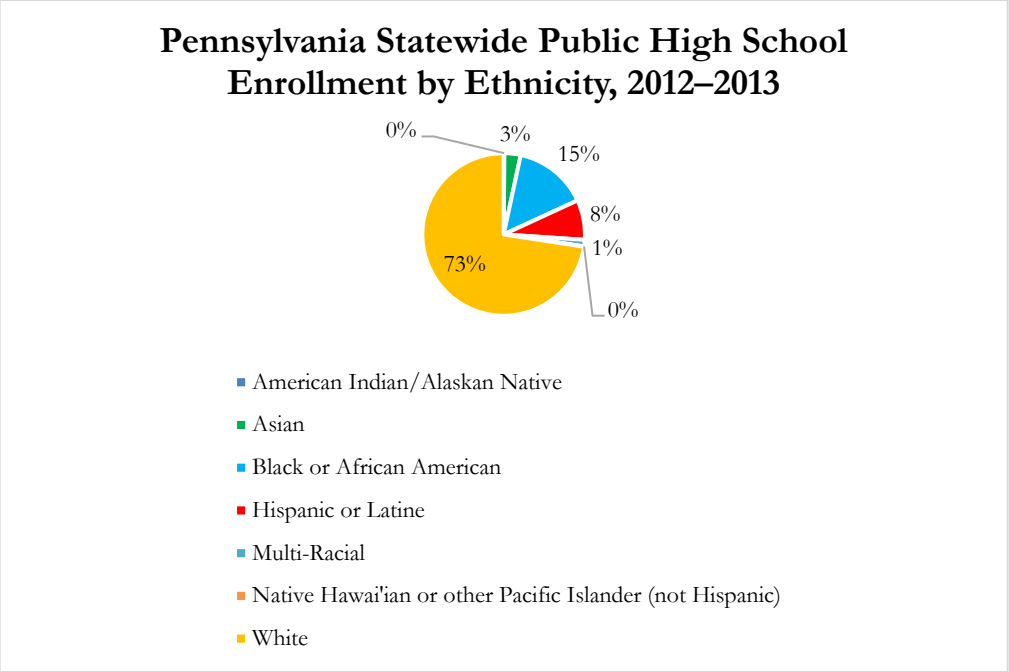

Figure 4.2. Statewide demographic information for public high school students in the 2012–2013 school year.[85]

Our repertoire was also primarily composed and/or arranged by white people. Appendix B lists all of the songs performed across the entirety of PMEA Choir Festivals in 2011 and 2012; songs that I performed in my three festivals are bolded. Across twelve districts and six regions in a two-year period, 272 unique compositions were programmed, with some repeated. Figure 4.3 depicts a breakdown of the repertoire by genre, with 203 (roughly seventy-five percent) of all 272 songs programmed in 2011 and 2012 being choral pieces by white composers. African American spirituals were the next largest genre, with twenty-seven pieces (roughly ten percent) programmed. Of those twenty-seven pieces, ten were arranged by white composers. The remaining fifteen percent was a combination of global pieces (fourteen pieces, or roughly five percent), choral pieces by Black composers

[85] Pennsylvania Department of Education, "Enrollment Data and Statistics," accessed March 18, 2025, https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/padeptofed/viz/EnrollmentDataandStatistics/Enrollment.

(thirteen pieces, or roughly five percent), popular songs (twelve pieces, or roughly four percent), and minstrel songs (three pieces, or roughly one percent).

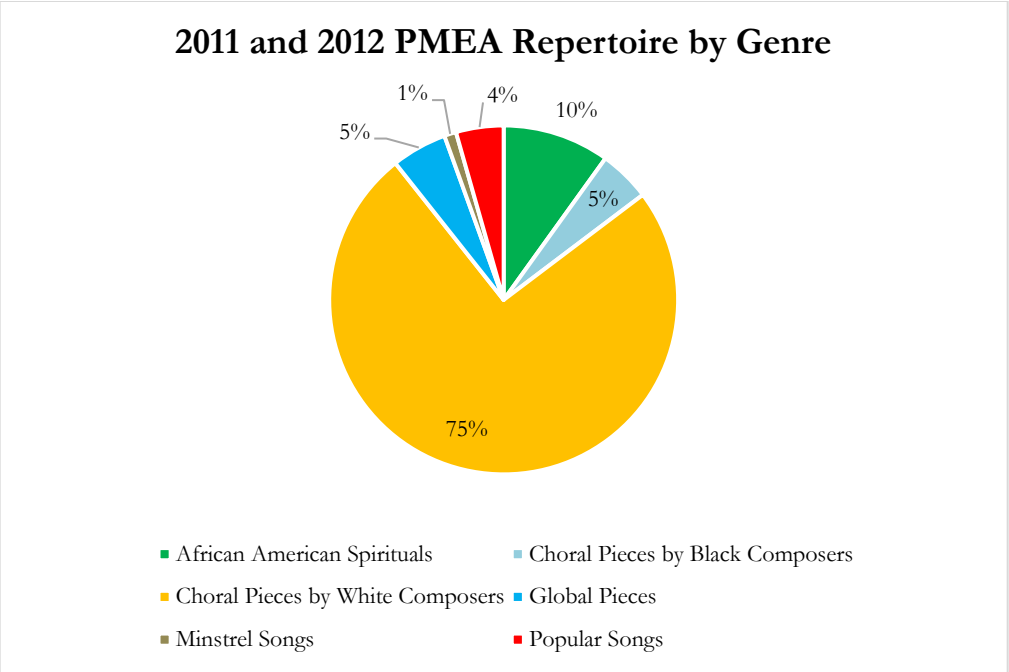

Figure 4.3. The 2011 and 2012 PMEA repertoire broken down by genre.

Unsurprisingly, the ethnicity of the composers and arrangers whose works were programmed in the 2011 and 2012 PMEA choir festivals heavily skewed toward white composers and arrangers (Figure 4.4). They composed or arranged 231 (roughly eighty-five percent) of the songs programmed. Black composers or arrangers contributed thirty-three (roughly twelve percent) of the repertoire, followed by Hispanic or Latine composers and arrangers (six compositions, or roughly two percent), Asian and Pacific Islander composers and arrangers (one composition, or statistically insignificant), and Middle Eastern and North African composers and arrangers (one composition, or statistically insignificant). There is a similarly disparate gender gap among the composers and arrangers of the repertoire used in the 2011 and 2012 PMEA choir festivals (Figure 4.5). Two-hundred-fifty songs (roughly ninety-two percent) of the 272 total songs were composed or arranged by a man. It is worth

noting that two songs were each arranged by a man and woman, which effectively canceled each other out for data analysis purposes.

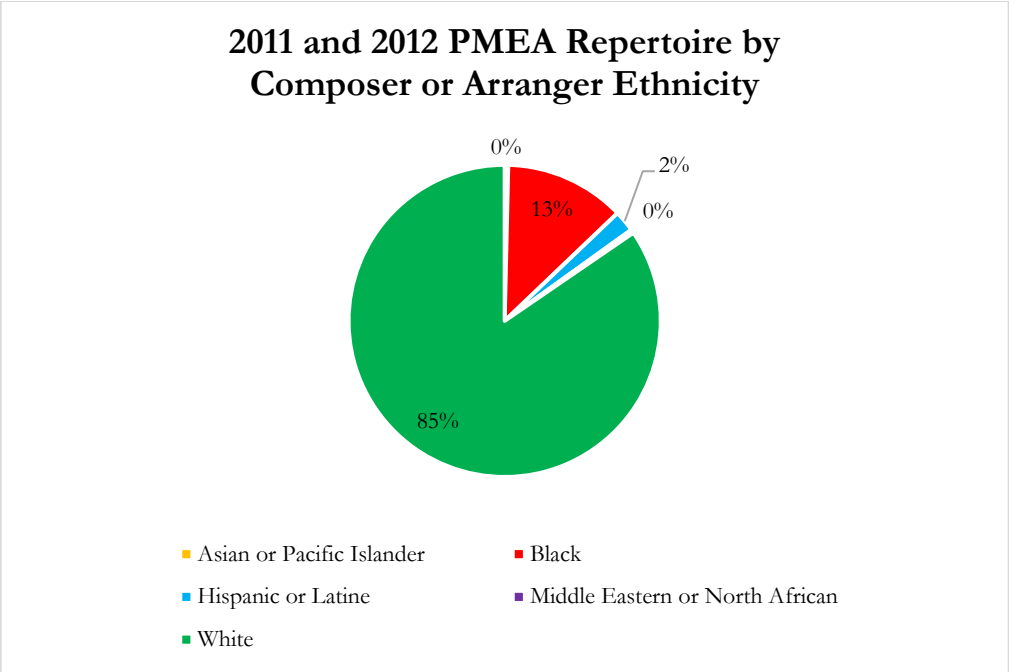

Figure 4.4. The 2011 and 2012 PMEA repertoire broken down by the ethnicity of the composer or arranger.

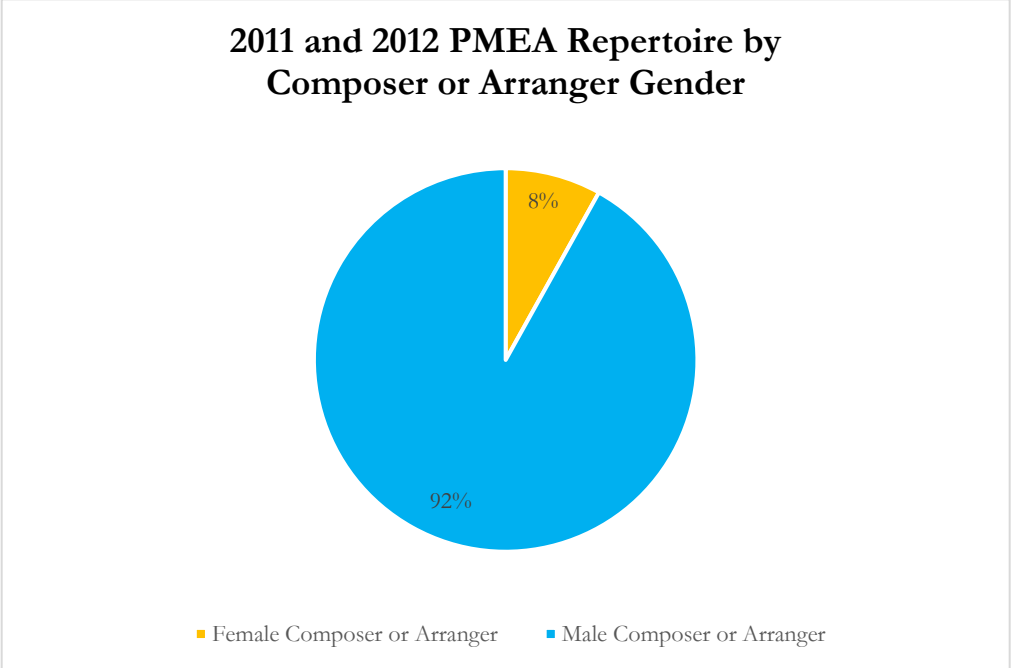

Figure 4.5. The 2011 and 2012 PMEA repertoire broken down by the gender of the composer or arranger.

At the 2011 PMEA District 12 Choir Festival, ten of the eleven songs were composed or arranged by white men; the eleventh was composed by a white woman. As mentioned in the anecdote that opened this chapter, two of the pieces were from Africa and the African diaspora: "Dubula," a Xhosa folk song, and "Witness," an African American spiritual. Both were on the back half of the program, with "Dubula" having choreography and "Witness" closing the concert. At the 2012 PMEA District 12 Choir Festival, all twelve pieces were composed or arranged by men, with eleven of the twelve being white men. "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child," an African American spiritual, was the third-to-last piece on the program; Robert Fountain, a white man, arranged this particular setting. The last song on the program was "Beautiful City," a medley of two African American spirituals arranged by André Thomas, the festival's lone Black composer.

The 2012 PMEA Region VI Choir Festival had the most diversity of the three festivals in which I participated. There were ten pieces: five were composed or arranged by white men, one was composed by a white woman, one was composed by Oscar Escalada (a composer long associated with Argentinian folk music), two were composed or arranged by Black women, and one was composed by a Black man. "E Oru O," a Yoruba song adapted by Rosephanye Powell, opened the concert. Ysaye M. Barnwell's piece, "On Children," was performed by the sopranos and altos. The last song on the program was "True Light," a gospel composition by Keith Hampton, a Black man, that references an African American spiritual, "This Little Light of Mine." We did perform one additional song—"Not One Sparrow is Forgotten," arranged by William Hawley, a white composer—as an encore, but it was not included in the program, making "True Light" the effective closer of the concert.

In all of these concerts, the number of pieces by white composers and arrangers was significantly larger than those by Black composers and arrangers. Songs from Africa and the

African diaspora were often folk songs or spirituals, and it was more likely than not that a white arranger created the version programmed by PMEA. And, as the data shows, the two years that I participated in PMEA featured an overwhelming majority of music composed by white men across the state's district and region festivals. Equally troubling was the disparity of historical and cultural context provided by the guest conductors for most of the songs we performed in comparison with the canonical repertoire. The pieces from the canon—songs like "Der Gang zum Liebchen," "Let their Celestial Concerts All Unite," and "Sicut Cervus"—were given ample historical context, while the songs from Africa and the African diaspora were often given scant historical context. Their placement in concert programs—almost always at the end—often led to them being treated as an opportunity for the choir to "let loose" and provide some excitement as the concert neared its conclusion. Pedagogically, our vowels—which the guest conductors harped on for what felt like hours for the pieces by white composers and arrangers—were relaxed for these pieces, with a more popular feel sometimes encouraged; recall Johnson's argument that popular music vocalization is often thought to be a sign of an "authentic" Blackness.[86] In effect, these songs were encouraged to be a little less perfectionist—a little less "choral"—because the joy of the performance would mask any deficiencies in their execution.

The Construction of Hegemonic White Masculinity in the University of Pennsylvania Glee Club

The Penn Glee Club was founded in 1862 by eight undergraduate white men. Like other contemporary glee clubs, the Penn Glee Club performed a mix of choral music and popular songs. Roughly thirty years after its founding, in 1896, the Penn Glee Club shared a

[86] Johnson, *Appropriating Blackness*, 78.

room with the university's Banjo Club; in 1900, the Glee, Banjo, and Mandolin Clubs had merged to become the Combined Musical Clubs. The popularity of the banjo in blackface minstrelsy[87] lends credence to the notion that glee clubs were influenced by minstrelsy as much as they were by European singing societies.

By the end of the 1950s, the Penn Glee Club emulated the archetypal glee club: an all-male ensemble that performed cultivated repertoire, university songs, and the occasional popular song. However, the 1960s brought formative changes to the organization, many spearheaded by its director Bruce Montgomery, who served in that role from 1956 to 2000. In his autobiography—which doubles as a history of the Penn Glee Club during his tenure—he notes that

> by the 1969–1970 academic year, the country was experiencing a strange new phenomenon. […] All over the country, glee clubs were rolling over and dying like mastodons. If the [Penn Glee Club] was to survive this trend, it would take more than an exciting trip to South America. […] A viable new direction was mapped out for the club […]. We put away the choral risers and built colorful wooden cubes and ladders.[88]

In many ways, what would come to be known as the Penn Glee Club Spring Show emulated the show choir tradition that swept across midwestern high schools in the 1960s and 1970s. To this day, the Penn Glee Club still performs an original, jukebox-style musical production featuring a plot and choreography.

In 2012, the Penn Glee Club celebrated its one-hundred-fiftieth anniversary, hosting a gala held in February, and culminating with being included in the university's Commencement ceremony for the first time in many years in honor of the organization's sesquicentennial; the organization still sings at Commencement every year. That September,

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[87] See Chapter 3 for more information.
[88] Bruce Montgomery, *Brothers, Sing On! My Half-Century Around the World with the Penn Glee Club* (University of Pennsylvania Press 2005), 64.

I began my undergraduate degree and saw the Penn Glee Club perform at the university's Convocation ceremony. A second, gender-inclusive group performed as well, likely to highlight the musical opportunities afforded to non-male singers at the University of Pennsylvania.

I joined the Penn Glee Club as a singing member in 2012 and experienced the construction of hegemonic white masculinity in nearly every rehearsal and performance. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the director, C. Erik Nordgren, who had been handpicked by Montgomery to succeed him, frequently implored the baritones and basses to "sing like men" when he wanted them to have a fuller, richer sound. Tenors were routinely heckled for having high voices, with one Tenor I in particular receiving flak for having a high voice. Penn Glee Club returning members give a nickname to each new member toward the end of their first year in the organization, reminiscent of pledge names used by fraternities. This particular Tenor I's Penn Glee Club nickname was "XX," the sex chromosomal pair normally found in people assigned female at birth, due in part to his high voice.

Central to the construction of hegemonic white masculinity in the Penn Glee Club is fraternal bonding. The Penn Glee Club employs a big-little system, like many United States sororities, in which a new member is paired with a returning member who acts as a mentor. These big-little pairs are sorted into five larger Penn Glee Club families, and a yearly tradition is the big-little reveal at the conclusion of the Fall Show process, at which point new members are welcomed into their families. Much like the familial bonds expressed in BHS chapters, the Penn Glee Club also considers itself to be a family. When I eventually became the organization's director, I would include a line about the Penn Glee Club being like a family and home away from home in a letter given to new members in their welcome packet.

Similarly, competition was important to the Penn Glee Club when I was a member. To circle back to the discussion of Bill Monroe's traveling bluegrass baseball team in Chapter 1, the Penn Glee Club used to hold two annual softball games a year: one against its alumni in the fall and one against the Mask and Wig Club, the University of Pennsylvania's oldest musical comedy troupe, in the spring. The Penn Glee Club found that more members would attend softball practices if they were called "rehearsals." Members also often held video game nights, where bragging rights would be earned through tournaments of *Super Smash Bros*. While none of these events still happen in the organization—to my knowledge—elements of competition continue, be it through limited audition slots or auditions for solos and vocal features.

While the University of Pennsylvania draws its student population from around the world, the majority of the members of the Penn Glee Club were United States citizens during my time in the group. The singing section of the Penn Glee Club was primarily comprised of white men, with a smattering of Asian members and, at most, a handful of Black members. We had one male accompanist. In the 1990s, as Spring Show sets became more involved, the Penn Glee Club created a standing technical crew. The majority of the organization's female members were part of the technical crew in 2012, in no small part due to the common tactic to recommend that a promising female singer—who had expressed interest in auditioning for singing membership—interview for the technical crew since she was otherwise ineligible for membership. Technical members, regardless of their gender identity, were considered "associate members"—in other words, ineligible for full Penn Glee Club membership—for one year, then they could begin the new member process during their second year in the group. The bulk of technical members did not make it to their second year due to misogyny and being what amounted to second-class citizens of the

organization. The Penn Glee Club also had an in-house band, formally created in 2009, which performed independently and in shows. While it accepted instrumentalists of all genders, only one member was not a man when I began my time in the Penn Glee Club.

The Penn Glee Club collaborates with the Penn Dance Company, whose membership comprises mostly dancers assigned female at birth, for its Fall Shows. In 2012, I was informed by an older member that I was entering the group at an advantageous time, as "the girls in Penn Dance only recently started getting hot." Another group we worked with was the Penn Sirens, which was founded in 2011 to serve as a female counterpart—in terms of the repertoire performed and opportunities offered—to the Penn Glee Club. We interacted with the Penn Sirens much less often, with many of the Penn Glee Club members declining to attend social events with the group or mocking their musical output.

The music and shows we performed also privileged hegemonic white masculinity. The bulk of our repertoire were songs of the University of Pennsylvania, many of which were written before women attended the university. As a result, many of the songs used gendered language, such as the popular "Men of Pennsylvania." Another song, "Drink a Highball," included the lyric "For tomorrow may bring sorrow, so tonight let's all be gay," at which point nearly every member would extend limp wrists, a stereotype long associated with gay men. Many of the songs we performed were by white composers and arrangers. Every song programmed by Nordgren in my first Fall Show with the Penn Glee Club was written or arranged by a white person, with the exception of one: "Baba Yetu," a piece composed by Christopher Tin, that was featured in the video game *Civilization IV* and closed our portion of the show. The song is a setting of the Lord's Prayer in Swahili. Nordgren gave us the arrangement of the song two days before the show opened and we were given little assistance in pronouncing the Swahili. Conversely, we received one of our pieces in

Latin toward the beginning of the seven-week rehearsal process and we went over the pronunciation multiple times. The first Spring Show I performed in featured a main character that said racially insensitive remarks, though he was played as an ignorant but well-meaning individual. At the climax of the show, the main character and two others dressed in white sheets, posing as terrorists, to thwart a planned arms deal.

My next two years in the Penn Glee Club featured much of the same. My sophomore year saw the group once again performing songs primarily composed or arranged by white men in our Fall Show, with the exception of one song: "Poor Man Lazrus," an African American spiritual arranged by Jester Hairston, a Black man. Much like with "Baba Yetu," "Poor Man Lazrus" was one of the songs we performed least well, due to lack of preparation, despite it being programmed as our opening number.

My junior year had some of the more egregious instances of hegemonic white masculinity in choral music. Nordgren was receiving pushback from members, including me, about performing a song, "O Sifuni Mungu," due to aspects of the arrangement we found problematic. The song was arranged by Roger Emerson, a white man, and its tempo marking noted that it should be performed "with an 'African' feel." Its description on J.W. Pepper, a website devoted to sheet music sales, notes that "it features a powerful African chorus."[89] In his work on African music, Kofi Agawu notes that

> the first problem in these characterizations [of African music and rhythm] is the putative claim that African music constitutes a homogenous body. […] Why should we bother to learn the strange and often unpronounceable names of people in remote places practicing weird customs when we can simply use the all-purpose term "Africa?"[90]

[89] David Maddux, Marty McCall, Mmunga Mwenebulongo Mulongoy, and Asukulu 'Yunu Mukalay, "O Sifuni Mungu," arranged by Roger Emerson (Meadowgreen Music Company and World Music, 1994). https://www.jwpepper.com/o-sifuni-mungu-1914183-897108/p.
[90] Kofi Agawu, "The Invention of 'African Rhythm,'" in *Representing African Music: Postcolonial Notes, Queries, Positions* (Routledge, 2003), 59, EBSCOhost.

Nordgren overrode our complaints and had the group perform it anyway, with simple choreography and clapping used to indicate its place as a song for people to "let loose." In that show, the group also performed "Circle of Life" from the Broadway version of *The Lion King*. Alarmingly, one of the soloists approached one of the university's dance groups, African Rhythms, and asked if they had any "traditional clothing" he could wear for the performance. They were understandably incensed. The soloist wound up draping a checkered blanket around himself like a tunic, performed barefoot, and used a large staff as a walking stick.

In advance of my senior year, during which I served as the organization's president, the Penn Glee Club let Nordgren go. The new director, Joshua Glassman, was tasked with reinvigorating the Penn Glee Club's choral sound, which had long languished and even atrophied under Nordgren's fifteen-year tenure, in addition to fostering a more positive culture. Glassman's first semester was successful in that regard, though it should be noted that the tendrils of hegemonic white masculinity were still firmly rooted in our repertoire. These tendrils manifested when I approached Glassman about reestablishing the Penn Glee Club songbook, a collection of repertoire that every Penn Glee Club members should be expected to know, even after graduating. The first Penn Glee Club songbook was created in 1977 but was gradually phased out during Nordgren's tenure. In creating a new songbook, I provided Glassman with a list of songs, including some African American spirituals that had been arranged by Montgomery, that we had performed regularly during my time in the group so that he could make informed decisions about which songs to include in the new songbook.

In the Fall Show, we performed "Wedding Qawwali," a piece by Indian composer A. R. Rahman and arranged by Ethan Sperry, a frequent arranger of global music for choir.

Glassman asked two of the group's Indian members to include some choreography for the song, citing a video by Canadian choir Chor Leoni as inspiration. That video featured choreography that appeared to stereotype Indian dance, and the two people Glassman had asked told him that it was a bad idea; he ultimately relented. Glassman also programmed two Jamaican folk songs arranged by Paul Rardin, "Back to Ethiopia" and "Hol' You Han'." The show's theme was "dreams," and Glassman paired songs together and gave them thematic names, such as two shanties being paired as "Sea Dreams." "Back to Ethiopia" and "Hol' You Han"' were paired as "Island Dreams" and, naturally, were the last two songs the Penn Glee Club performed in the show.

The Spring Show continued this troubling trend of Othering music from Africa and the African diaspora. We performed "Bawo Thixo Somandla," a traditional Xhosa song arranged by Sidumo Nyamezele and transcribed by Scott Tucker, a director emeritus of the Cornell Glee Club. The song was popular during the Apartheid years in South Africa, and its text implores God to answer why people are being murdered in the name of Apartheid. While Glassman provided some context for the group when we first started rehearsing it, by the end of the spring semester, Glassman would tell our audiences that the song roughly translated to "Dear God, we are brothers. Why must we kill each other in cold blood?" Conversely, songs in Latin and Czech were given much more care when it came to providing the audience with a translation. He notably also acknowledged to an audience on our performance tour to Tennessee, Louisiana, and Florida that he lumped three of our songs not performed in English—including "Bawo Thixo Somandla"—together "because they are all foreign" after explaining his meticulous planning for the rest of the concert set. Perhaps most alarmingly, he argued in a club-wide meeting that the Penn Glee Club was not being appropriative because "it is only appropriation if you make money off of it," at which point I

pushed back on his definition of "appropriation" and reminded him that the group charged admission to its shows.

There were also procedural tactics that helped maintain the hegemonic white masculinity inherent in the Penn Glee Club. One of the most shameful happened my freshman year, when the organization held an expulsion trial for one of the few Black singers in the group for missing too many rehearsals; many of the white singers in the group had comparable, if not worse, attendance issues, but they were rarely put on a probationary period and never forced to go through a club-wide trial. (Ultimately, the member was not expelled.) In my first year on the undergraduate board of governors, I was tasked with tracking attendance and enforcing penalties, but I changed the policy to be less punitive and resisted suspending members. The previously mentioned associate membership that kept technical members as organizationally inferior to all other members was in place until 2015, when I leveraged my role as president to nullify and eventually amend the section of the by-laws that necessitated associate membership.

In my four years as a member of the Penn Glee Club, many positive changes occurred due to the actions of members. However, the hegemonic white masculine structure of the organization remained intact through the organization's very structure. The core repertoire stressed contributions from white men and music from Africa, the African diaspora, and other historically minoritized communities being Othered, reduced to novelties, and being taken less seriously by the directors programming those pieces.

Rethinking the Place of Hegemonic White Masculinity as the Director of the University of Pennsylvania Glee Club

In April 2018, I was approached by the president-elect of the Penn Glee Club—the organization's first female president—about taking over as the director the following fall, as

Glassman's tenure had soured past the point of no return. I was tasked with building on the Glassman's work honing the organization's choral sound while also providing a more equitable, inclusive experience for all of its the members.

In my first year as director, I wrote program notes for every song the Penn Glee Club performed in its Fall and Spring Shows. For any songs that were not in English, I provided translations in the program, secured pronunciation guides from native speakers, and presented the historical and cultural context of those songs to the organization during the rehearsal process. While this structure was largely well-received, there were some flaws inherent to the methodology. One of my students approached me at the end of my first year to argue that only presenting the context of songs that were not in English effectively Othered those songs and created a culture that assumed that the Penn Glee Club had a monolithic, white culture. Taking that advice to heart, I presented the historical and cultural context of every song programmed for a show or performance tour, in addition to every song in the organization's songbook, for the remaining five years of my tenure.

In my first two years directing the Penn Glee Club, I programmed three African American spirituals. Two were arranged by white men, including one by Bruce Montgomery. Many members of the group expressed their discomfort with performing African American spirituals due to the racial makeup of the group—the singing section was still comprised of mostly white men—in addition to feeling that the group did not rehearse enough to fully grasp the historical and cultural context of spirituals. Rosephanye Dunn-Powell notes that non-Black singers should research the history of spirituals they may be performing as well as become familiar with the text; crucially, she argues that non-Black singers need to have a

deep understanding of "the depth of emotion and meaning of the spiritual" before successfully performing it.[91]

The students also felt that, while the Penn Glee Club considered itself the university's unofficial musical ambassador, that did not mean that it had to perform music from every genre. Subsequent classes of students agreed with these assessments, so I pivoted the Penn Glee Club away from performing African American spirituals in our concerts and removed the two spirituals that were enshrined in the organization's songbook. I also tried to program more non-idiomatic choral works by Black composers. My use of the term "non-idiomatic" is informed by the work of Marques L. A. Garrett, who argues that

> non-idiomatic, as it relates to black composers, refers to the original concert music that is not part of the traditional idiomatic canon associated with Black musicians. That canon includes spirituals, gospel, jazz, hip-hop, and rap among others. There will be pieces that may be based on spirituals or gospel tunes but are, at their core, original songs similar to ones that use chorale tunes in cantatas and popular songs parodied in Renaissance masses.[92]

In my first year as director, I also continued using an old Penn Glee Club arrangement of "Walk Him Up the Stairs," a song from the musical *Purlie*, due to Glassman having programmed it the year before. In the context of *Purlie*, "Walk Him Up the Stairs" is sung by Black sharecroppers as they ironically ask God to save the deceased plantation owner's soul. I did not program it after 2019 due to some of the conversations I had with students as to whether the Penn Glee Club was the correct group to perform the song.

In advance of the 2020–2021 academic year, I helped the undergraduate board of governors create a (student) Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) position for the Penn

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[91] Rosephanye Dunn-Powell, "The African-American Spiritual: Preparation and Performance Considerations," *Journal of Singing* 61, no. 5 (May/June 2005): 469–71, EBSCOhost.
[92] Marques L. A. Garrett, "Beyond Elijah Rock: The Non-Idiomatic Choral Music of Black Composers," accessed March 19, 2025, https://www.mlagmusic.com/research/beyond-elijah-rock.

Glee Club. Working in tandem with the DEI Co-Chairs, I overhauled the music selection process to empower my students to be informed as they suggested music that they wanted the organization to perform each year. I also mandated that at least one DEI Chair be present at every audition to ensure that we were considering all factors in deciding who would be invited to join the group. And, as mentioned in the anecdote that opened Chapter 1 of this dissertation, I modernized the Penn Glee Club's musical library, culling from its repertoire as much as I could.

Of course, not all songs were removed. One song that remains in the Penn Glee Club's repertoire is "Jingle Bells." Kyna Hamill argues that "Jingle Bells" was part of a blackface minstrel tradition of sleighing songs that featured "tintinnabulation, fast sleighs, pretty girls, an upset, and an imperative to sing about the whole event."[93] In discussing with the Penn Glee Club student music team, I decided to use the song as a tool to demonstrate how blackface minstrelsy pervades even the most seemingly innocuous songs. And, while I increased the number of songs programmed that were not written by white composers, I still sometimes fell into the trap of programming songs from Africa and the African diaspora toward the end of a concert program, such as a spiritual in our 2019 Fall Show and "Kanaval"—the piece in Haitian Creole by Sydney Guillaume that I discussed in Chapter 1—in our 2022 Fall Show.

However, perhaps the most consequential change I spearheaded to combat hegemonic white masculinity in the Penn Glee Club was an initiative to open up the Penn Glee Club's singing section to singers of all genders. In 1917, the Women's Penn Glee Club—a separate organization from the Men's Penn Glee Club—was founded by students

[93] Kyna Hamill, "'The Story I Must Tell': 'Jingle Bells' in the Minstrel Repertoire," *Theatre Survey* 58, no. 3 (September 2017): 386, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0040557417000291.

from the women's college. While two women had attended the University of Pennsylvania in 1876 as special students ineligible to receive degrees, the College of Liberal Arts for Women was not established until 1933. Its creation marked the first time that women could receive a traditional liberal arts degree from the university. In 1974, the College of Liberal Arts for Women was absorbed into the School of Arts and Sciences, and in 1976, the University of Pennsylvania opened all of its schools to students of all genders.[94]

Much like Clawson argued, the Women's Penn Glee Club modeled its organization and music on the Men's Penn Glee Club; three separate directors of the Men's Penn Glee Club also served as directors for the Women's Penn Glee Club. By 1920 the two glee clubs performed together for the first time, continuing to perform together for many years in venues on the university's campus and around the city, including with the Philadelphia Orchestra. The Women's Penn Glee Club eventually morphed into the Pennsyngers (later, the Penn Singers) in 1957 and, by 1971, had become an all-gender ensemble that performed light opera in place of glee club repertoire.

Despite performing with the Women's Penn Glee Club in the early twentieth century, the Men's Penn Glee Club remained an all-male low voices organization for the majority of its history. Its first female members, both accompanists, joined in the mid-1950s, though neither was considered an official member of the Penn Glee Club. It would not be until the 1990s that a female accompanist would be officially granted membership in the organization.

The discussion of opening singing membership to all Penn students began as early as the 1970s. Student members of the Penn Glee Club wrote a script about a woman who

[94] Mark Frazier Lloyd, ed., "Women at Penn: Timeline of Pioneers and Achievements," July 2001, https://archives.upenn.edu/exhibits/penn-history/women-timeline/.

dresses as a man and spends an entire year singing with the organization. At the end of the year, she asks to be admitted since she had already performed and passed all of the membership tests. Her request is denied because of "tradition," spurring the Penn Glee Club to sing "Tradition" from *Fiddler on the Roof* to close out the production. This story is reminiscent of the story of Laura Lee, a Philadelphia-area reporter who allegedly marched in the all-male Mummers Parade in 1929.[95] In 1993, the Penn Glee Club faced external pressure to accept singers of all genders. Montgomery recounts the story at length in his autobiography:

> When Sheldon Hackney finished his tenure as president of the University of Pennsylvania in 1993, Claire Fagin was named interim president for 1993–94. […] She virtually ordered me to turn the Glee Club into a coed chorus. There already were five coed choruses on our campus—I was the conductor of one of them—as well as half a dozen smaller coed a cappella groups. I saw no logic in terminating a group with a hundred-and-thirty-one year tradition of fine male choral singing simply because it was all male. […] Not surprisingly, a sizable and powerful group of alumni supported my stand. A tuba player could wish to play with the Curtis String Quartet, but it would drastically change the sound and repertoire. I fought the edict tooth and nail.[96]

Montgomery ultimately won the argument, keeping the Penn Glee Club's singing section all-male. It is worth mentioning that those five gender-inclusive choruses that Montgomery cited had largely ceased to exist by the mid-2010s, with the only ones remaining were housed in the Music Department—the Penn Glee Club, like most extracurricular performing arts groups at the University of Pennsylvania, is not part of the Music Department. The 1990s also saw a lyrical change to "The Red and Blue," the university's fight song and de facto

[95] See Chapter 3 for more information.
[96] Montgomery, *Brothers, Sing On!*, 147.

alma mater.[97] Up until then, the first lyric read "Come, all ye loyal classmen now." As Winstead notes, women who were eventually admitted to colleges and universities lamented the masculine bias of alma maters, which were often written well before women were allowed to attend the formerly all-male universities.[98] Montgomery notes that he was normally against a lyrical change for the sake of "political correctness" but accepted the change to "Come all ye loyal classmates now" since it did not fundamentally alter the meaning of the song.[99]

In 2015, a member of the Penn Glee Club's undergraduate board of governors, who was also a member of the Penn Sirens, brought up the topic of the two groups merging together. The idea was quickly dismissed by the rest of the board—including me as the president—due to neither group's memberships wanting to merge the two organizations and the reality that it would take years of work to make such an initiative possible. The topic lay largely dormant until 2018, when the president-elect of the Penn Glee Club discussed it with me as I accepted her offer to direct the organization. From June 2018 through May 2020, the organization discussed the possibility of opening the singing section to all genders in addition to expressing a desire to continue performing choral music for low voices should a change occur. The organization's leadership also met with the Penn Sirens leadership a few times to discuss how such a change would affect the Penn Sirens. In 2018, the undergraduate leadership of the Penn Sirens was against the Penn Glee Club opening its singing section to

[97] "Hail, Pennsylvania," a contrafactum of the old Russian imperial anthem, "God Save the Tsar!" is the University of Pennsylvania's official alma mater, though only the Penn Glee Club and University of Pennsylvania Band perform it with any regularity.
[98] Winstead, *When Colleges Sang*, 228.
[99] Bruce Montgomery, ed., *Songs of Penn: Honoring Musical Tradition at the University of Pennsylvania* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 170.

all genders; notably, its general membership was open to the idea but this opinion was not expressly divulged.

By May 2020, the Penn Sirens leadership was in lockstep with its membership, expressing its opposition to the Penn Glee Club opening its membership to all genders unless the two groups merged so that the Penn Sirens would not be wiped out by the change, citing the comparatively fewer resources and opportunities afforded to the latter. With the Penn Glee Club having a nearly 140-year head start over the Penn Sirens, the organization boasted an extensive alumni network, endowment, and the ability to perform at high-profile university events and around the world as the university's unofficial musical ambassador. This moniker was especially contentious for the Penn Sirens, who argued that the Penn Glee Club could not truly be the university's musical ambassador, official or otherwise, if its most visible section was still gender-exclusive.

In June 2020, the newly elected Penn Glee Club undergraduate board of governors decided to leverage the inability to rehearse due to the COVID-19 pandemic to focus on making what had come to be known as the Initiative for a Gender-Inclusive Choir (IGIC) a reality. The board of governors approached the leadership of the alumni organization—the Glee Club Graduate Club (GCGC)—about its intention to move past discussing the topic and move toward doing something tangible. The GCGC board of governors was against the IGIC and its president wrote an email to the entire alumni membership expressing this opinion, noting that

> the GCGC Board has reiterated on several occasions to the [Penn Glee] Club leadership its opposition to this initiative. With its expanded band and tech membership, the [Penn Glee] Club is one of the biggest tent organizations on Penn's campus. With the GCGC's help in establishing the 150x150 endowment, the [Penn Glee] Club has thrived as never before. These are all causes for celebration. So too is the all-male [low voices] choral tradition,

> which is core to the [Penn Glee] Club's identity. Changing from this artistic format would result in a fundamentally different organization.[100]

The president of the GCGC board closed his email by inviting other alumni to offer their thoughts on the initiative, noting that doing so would "help to educate the undergraduates on how this fundamental change would impact generations of alum[ni]."[101] Individual alumni responded in droves, lambasting the GCGC board for assuming the entire alumni organization was uniformly against the IGIC and arguing whether the "all male low voice choral tradition" was truly core to the modern Penn Glee Club's identity. Some voiced their opposition to the change, with one person noting that it would lead to increased sexual tension between men and women, much like one of my respondents in my ethnography of barbershop singers reacting to a similar discussion in the Barbershop Harmony Society.[102] Many queer alumni were quick to challenge the insinuation that the Penn Glee Club was solely a heterosexual space.

In July and August 2020, the undergraduate president and I held three Zoom meetings for Penn Glee Club alumni to ask questions and voice their concerns about the IGIC and how it would affect the Penn Glee Club. A common refrain from alumni that were against the initiative was that adding sopranos and altos to the Penn Glee Club would be like adding a tuba player to a string quartet—the same analogy that Bruce Montgomery used in 1993 to argue against the Penn Glee Club accepting singers of all genders—and would thus be incongruous. As I pointed out to alumni who voiced that concern, however, choirs with singers of all genders have been performing for centuries, and the undergraduate

[100] Glee Club Graduate Club President, email message to Penn Glee Club Alumni Membership, June 26, 2020.
[101] Ibid.
[102] See Chapter 2 for more information.

president and I stressed that the IGIC was about expanding the Glee Club's membership pool and repertoire possibilities rather than not wanting to perform choral music scored for low voices.

In November 2020, I convened the IGIC Advisory Committee, comprising myself as its chair, the undergraduate president and historian, the newly elected GCGC president, and various members of the GCGC who had expressed interest in taking part in soliciting data to inform the decision. Throughout the process, alumni sent me vitriolic emails, but one of the most egregious was sent in response to my message announcing the formation of the IGIC Advisory Committee, in which an alumnus opined "What has been done to the original mens [*sic*] glee club is absurd. Why not add a few chimps?"[103] It is worth noting that no decision had been made at that point; to this alumnus, even entertaining the idea of challenging the hegemonic white masculinity that had permeated the Penn Glee Club since its inception was tantamount to the organization accepting apes. Such a comment perhaps also spoke to this alumnus's conflation of gender and race in the Penn Glee Club.

By December 2020, the committee had identified five potential IGIC scenarios: remaining an all-male low voices organization; remaining a low voices organization but opening its membership to tenors and basses of all genders; merging with the Penn Sirens to create an all-voices choir that could perform choral music for high voices and low voices; creating a high voices choir under the Penn Glee Club umbrella; and creating an all-voices choir without merging with the Penn Sirens. The undergraduates strongly preferred the third scenario—merging with the Penn Sirens. In January, I led two meetings with alumni to explain the five potential scenarios before disseminating a survey where alumni could voice

[103] Penn Glee Club Alumnus, email message to author, November 16, 2020.

their opinions on the scenarios. One-hundred-forty-eight alumni, spanning from the Class of 1955 through the Class of 2020, responded to the survey.

Quantitative data analysis (Figure 4.6) revealed that roughly forty-five percent of alumni surveyed preferred that the Penn Glee Club add sopranos and altos in some fashion, while roughly thirty-two percent preferred that the Penn Glee Club remain unchanged or accept non-male tenors. Roughly eighteen percent expressed concerns or mixed feelings and the remaining five percent deferred to the current membership's judgment.

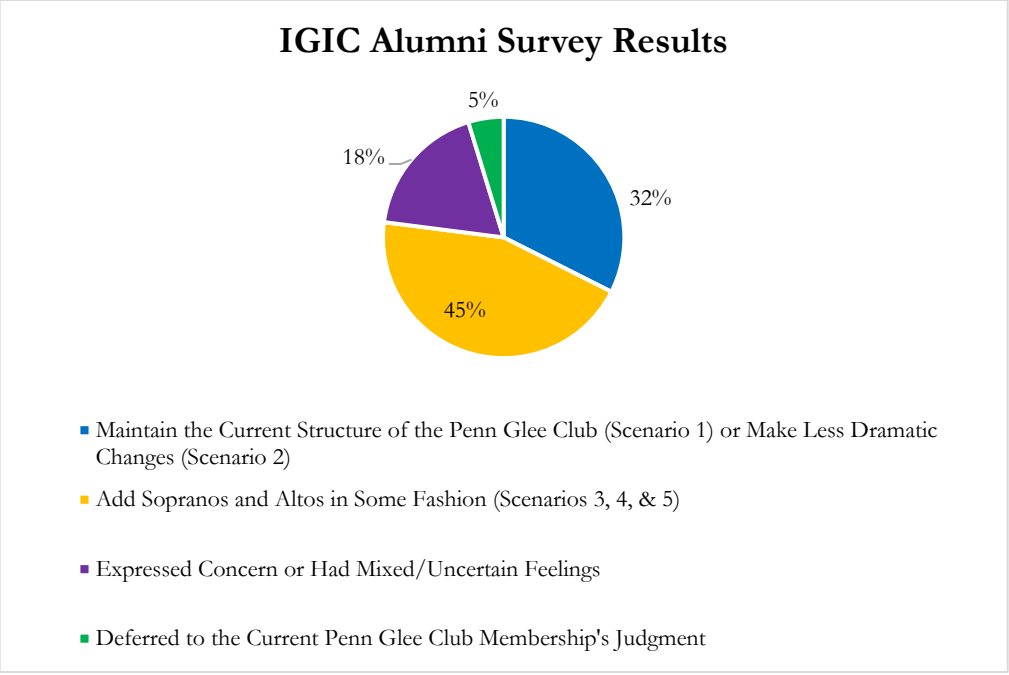

Figure 4.6. Penn Glee Club alumni's opinions on removing the gender restriction on singing membership.

Alumni were also allowed to provide comments and feedback, and many who hoped to keep the organization unchanged—or change as little as possible—did so under the guise of defending the "all-male" choral sound. One alumnus noted that he does not enjoy high voices choral music and "having that as part of a show would lessen the likelihood I would see a show." Another opined that he "loved the fact that the group was all-male. I loved singing in a fraternity. The IGIC puts a permanent end to that aspect of the Club, and to be

honest, that saddens me." Another admonished the undergraduate students, saying that "you folks need to study and stop fleshing out these crazy ideas." Most interestingly, one alumnus argued that it was better for the Penn Glee Club to cease to exist due to changing times than to acquiesce to what he perceived as politically correct culture.

Ultimately, the Penn Glee Club voted to proceed with the third scenario in April 2021, merging with the Penn Sirens and reorganizing itself as an all-voices choir that could perform choral music scored for high voices and low voices. Some of the alumni who were against the decision eventually came around to the idea, though many ceased contact with the organization.

One of my largest talking points throughout the process was ensuring that merging with the Penn Sirens felt like an equal partnership and not like a corporate takeover. Penn Sirens was essentially giving up some of its autonomy to join the Penn Glee Club, becoming an a cappella subset within the organization like the Penn Pipers had been since 1950. The organizational structure of the Penn Glee Club, after merging with the Penn Sirens, is depicted in Figure 4.7.

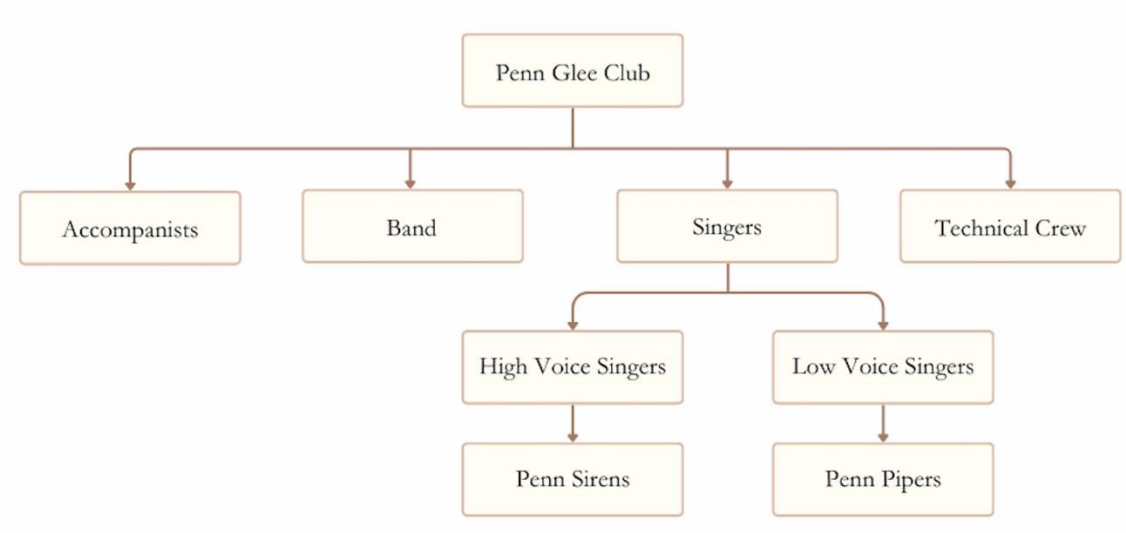

Figure 4.7. The organizational structure of the Penn Glee Club after merging with the Penn Sirens and accepting singers of all genders.

The most consequential and monumental task was to update the Penn Glee Club's music to accommodate sopranos and altos. I met with Penn Sirens leadership to determine which Penn Sirens songs should become part of the Penn Glee Club's repertoire and which songs should remain with the now-subset of the organization. Together, we also selected repertoire with the understanding that the first year would be a trial run for those pieces. Only six songs of the original thirteen selected for that first year remain in the songbook. I also worked with student leadership to update lyrics to reflect a more inclusive Penn Glee Club and university at large, such as the aforementioned "Men of Pennsylvania." Nowadays, the Penn Glee Club requests that "friends of Pennsylvania, let your voices ring."

I devoted the most work to rearranging core Penn Glee Club arrangements for all voices. Perhaps the most contentious songs to rearrange was the Penn Glee Club's anthem, "Afterglow," composed in 1965 by Montgomery. In September 2021, at the first event of the year with alumni present, Montgomery's sister—who had served on the IGIC Advisory Committee and seemed inclined to support the decision—argued that I should not have touched "Afterglow" and left it to be only for low voices, as "the sopranos are drowning out the tenors and basses." When I told her that it was not in the spirit of merging the groups for the organization's anthem to only be scored for half of its singing membership, she told me that the song should only be sung by tenors and basses. She also mentioned that, since she oversaw her brother's musical estate, she owned the copyright and could always revoke the group's ability to sing "Afterglow." To this day, she has not made good on her threat.

The process was not without its warts. In the first year of the fully gender-inclusive Penn Glee Club, many of the Penn Sirens felt uncomfortable with the tan khaki bottoms the Penn Glee Club wore due to the outfit looking infantilizing. The group ultimately switched to wearing gray khaki bottoms, which was well-received. There was also a level of anxiety

among the high voice singers that they had to perform perfectly to prove they belonged in the organization. This anxiety lasted for the bulk of my tenure, though by the end of my tenure, it had largely dissipated. At the most recent Spring Show in early March 2025, as a member of the audience, I had to remind myself that the organization had only voted to open its singing membership to all genders just about four years prior.

Conclusion

Combatting the hegemonic white masculinity inherent to the structure of the University of Pennsylvania Glee Club was a multiyear process that continues to this day. When the vote to merge with the Penn Sirens passed, a contingent of Penn Glee Club membership thought that the work was finished. The final three years of my tenure proved that thinking to be naïve. While much progress was made in accepting singers of all genders, the foundations of hegemonic white masculinity are still present in the organization. For instance, while the Penn Glee Club has had ten individuals serve as a DEI Chair since the position was created in 2020, only two men have held the role, and only one white person has held the role. This disparity reinforces the erroneous notion that diversity, equity, and inclusion should be spearheaded by the people who are most affected by exclusion and that it is their job to educate white people, but particularly white men, about building more inclusive spaces. The organization has only ever had one Black undergraduate president—in the 1990s—and every musical director of the organization throughout its 163-year history has been a white man.

The Penn Glee Club is but a microcosm of larger problems in choral music, however. From its outset, choral music in United States universities has been used as a tool to enforce conformity among its practitioners. It helped create traditions of exclusion, such

as gendered language, that thrive to this day. As glee clubs formed, they leveraged the popular music of the day—minstrel songs—to create variety in their programs. Penn Glee Club alumni that were against opening the singing section to all genders were arguing against gender inclusion, to be sure, but they were also arguing for perpetuating the white masculine structures that have defined United States choral music for centuries. Their arguments of low voice choral music being a "sacred genre" that could not be touched created a façade of holiness that the potential admission of sopranos and altos threatened.

These issues persist at the high school level, too, in organizations such as the Pennsylvania Music Educators Association. Repertoire lists are choked with hegemonic white masculinity, with just a two-year span in the early 2010s revealing a supermajority of compositions by white male composers. There were only three more choral pieces by Black composers than there were African American spirituals arranged by white people, indicating that even when music from Africa and the African diaspora is included, it is often a white person's arrangement that is programmed. These pieces are also usually shunted to the end of a program, when the audience—and, in some cases, the performers—are more likely to be less attentive. Conductors infusing these pieces with choreography and allowing, and sometimes even encouraging, what they believe to be a more popular, "authentically" Black vocal pedagogy calcified these pieces as less serious works—as novelties—that had somehow been elevated to the concert hall.

That is not to say that there have not been strides made in PMEA and the Penn Glee Club. On the contrary, data analysis of the repertoire from the 2023 and 2024 PMEA Choral Festivals reveals marked progress toward more equitable repertoire selections, though there is still an overrepresentation of choral pieces composed by white men; additionally, a

minstrel song, "Ching-a-Ring Chaw," was performed in 2024.[104] Appendix C lists all of the songs performed across the entirety of PMEA Choir Festivals in 2023 and 2024. Figures 4.8–4.10 depict analysis of the repertoire broken down by type of composition, ethnicity of its composer or arranger, and gender of its composer or arranger, respectively. Additionally, Figure 4.11 displays the change between the repertoire percentages from 2011 and 2012 and the repertoire percentages from 2023 and 2024.

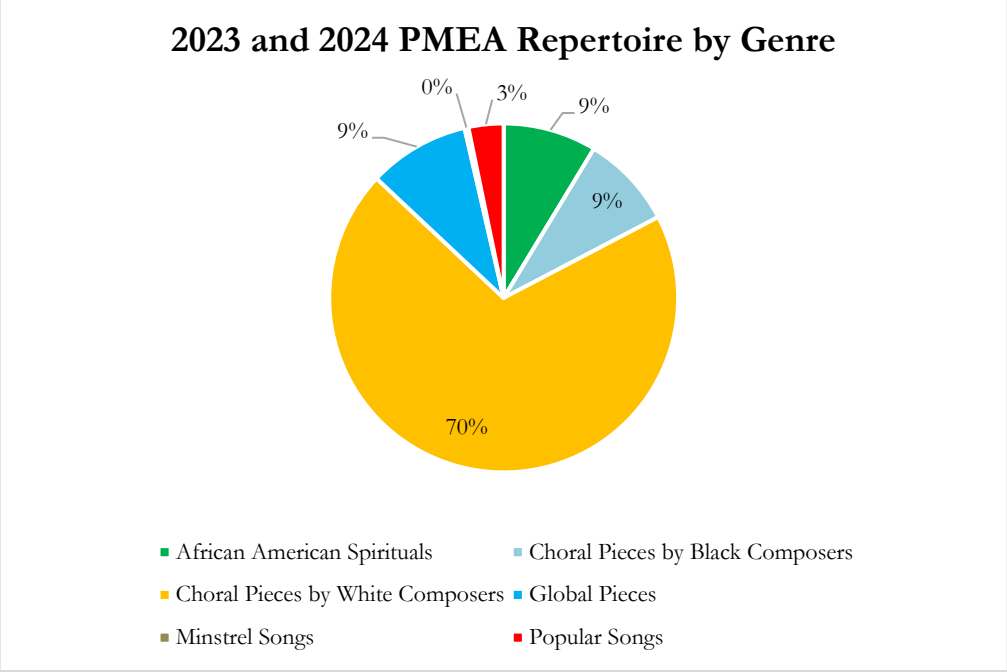

Figure 4.8. The 2023 and 2024 PMEA repertoire broken down by genre.

[104] The arrangement performed in the PMEA festival is based on Aaron Copland's setting of the song, but "Ching-a-Ring Chaw" had its origins on the minstrel stage.

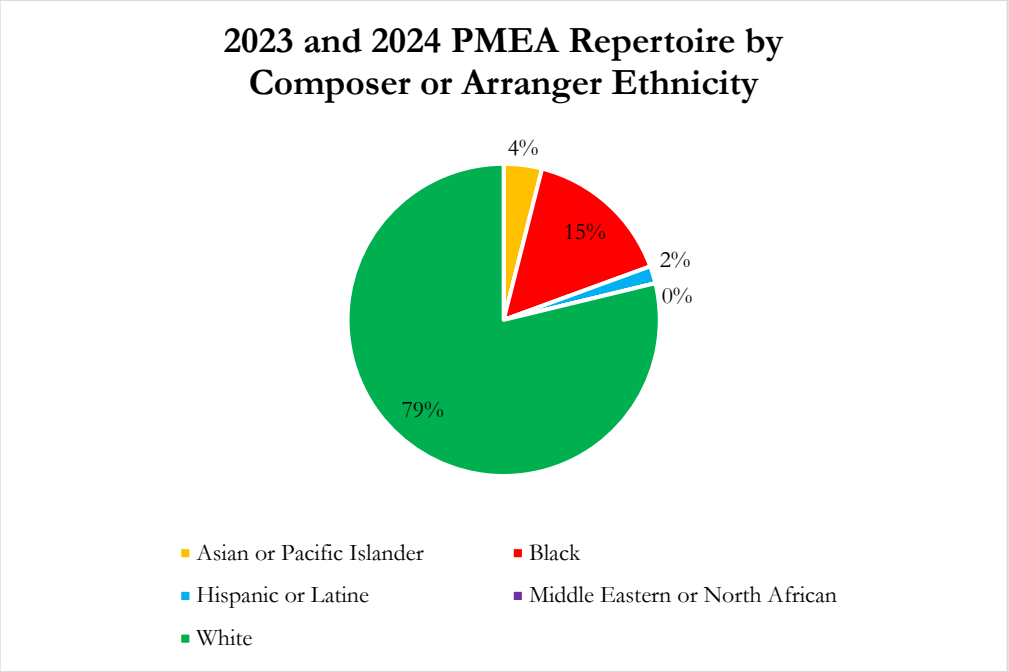

Figure 4.9. The 2023 and 2024 PMEA repertoire broken down by the ethnicity of the composer or arranger.

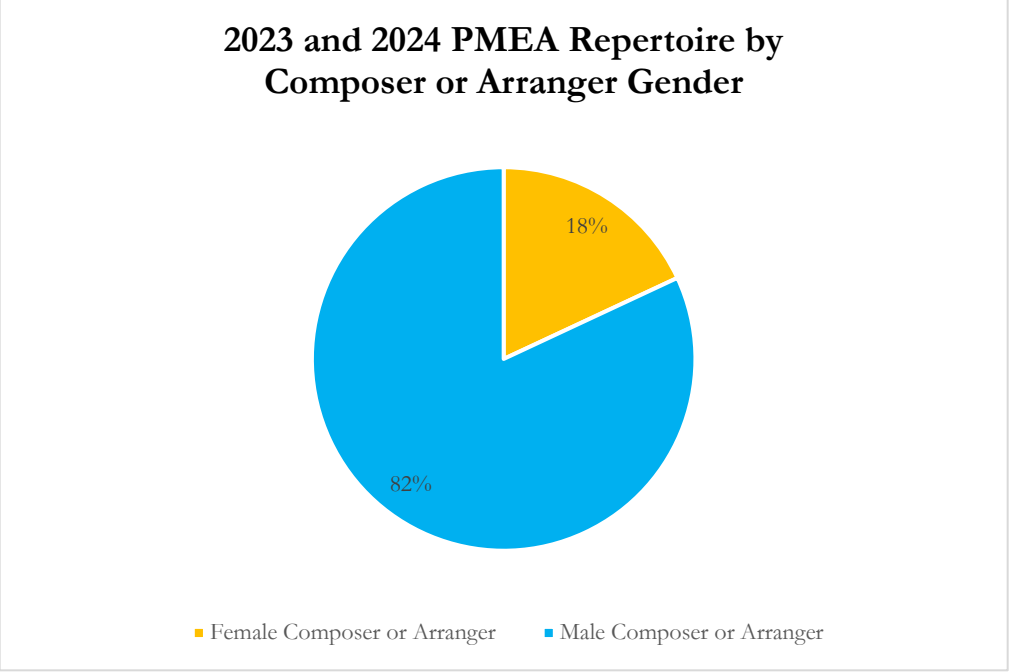

Figure 4.10. The 2023 and 2024 PMEA repertoire broken down by the gender of the composer or arranger.

	CATEGORY	2011 and 2012	2023 and 2024	CHANGE
GENRE	African American Spirituals	10%	9%	-1%
	Choral Pieces by Black Composers	5%	9%	+4%
	Choral Pieces by White Composers	75%	70%	-5%
	Global Pieces	5%	9%	+4%
	Minstrel Songs	1%	0%	-1%
	Popular Songs	4%	3%	-1%
COMPOSER OR ARRANGER ETHNICTY	Asian or Pacific Islander	0%	4%	+4%
	Black	13%	15%	+2%
	Hispanic or Latine	2%	2%	0%
	Middle Eastern or North African	0%	0%	0%
	White	85%	79%	-6%
GENDER	Female Composer or Arranger	8%	18%	+10%
	Male Composer or Arranger	92%	82%	-10%

Figure 4.11. A comparison of the percentage changes between the 2011 and 2012 PMEA Chorus Festivals repertoire and the 2023 and 2024 PMEA Chorus Festivals repertoire.

Additionally, the Penn Glee Club's evolution in the thirteen years between my first rehearsal and its most recent performance is staggering. From smaller language changes—I never once implored the baritone and basses to "sing like men" like my two predecessors were wont to do—to restructuring the organization to accept all singers, to critically examining all repertoire and deciding which genres the group is not equipped to perform effectively, the Penn Glee Club confirms Karen Howard's argument that "working to make visible the effects of whiteness in choral music education is critical in order to effect real change."[105]

This work does not have to be as monumental as restructuring an organization, but it is not as simple as programming a few extra songs by Black composers or placing them

[105] Howard, "Impact of Dysconscious Racism," 340.

toward the beginning or middle of a concert program. Talbot cautions that "representation is only part of the problem of cultural equity."[106] Indeed, a more potent remedy for combatting hegemonic white masculinity in choral settings is acknowledging the insidious ways that hegemonic white masculinity permeates the foundations of United States choral music and working to dismantle those foundations, piece by piece, concert by concert.

[106] Talbot, "Introduction," 6.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In exploring barbershop music, the Philadelphia Mummers, and my experiences as a choral singer and conductor, I have demonstrated how participants in vernacular and choral genres (un)knowingly leverage those genres' legacies of blackface minstrelsy to (re)construct hegemonic white masculinity. The Barbershop Harmony Society (BHS), which has long positioned itself as the worldwide authority on the barbershop style, has faced challenges with implementing its strategic vision, Everyone in Harmony, as the progressivism inherent in the strategic vision is at odds with the organization's conservative founding. The Philadelphia Mummers have similarly grappled with their formation as a syncretic blend of European revelry and minstrel traditions—particularly the minstrel wench—and their attempts to make their annual parade an event by and for all Philadelphians. And entities like the Pennsylvania Music Educators Association (PMEA) and the University of Pennsylvania Glee Club (Penn Glee Club) have grappled with a genre that privileges white composers while tokenizing works by composers who have historically been Othered.

Competition unites these seemingly disparate genres and performance practices in their construction of hegemonic white masculinity. As discussed in Chapter 2, BHS has long focused on competition in its structure, with its contest cycle running from March through October (as well as some competitions for senior-aged and under-eighteen quartets and choruses in January). The biggest draw is its annual international competition in July, a weeklong event that many barbershoppers factor into their vacation plans. Chapter 3 described how the early Philadelphia Mummers requested prize money from the city in advance of the first Parade in 1901. While its members now view the Parade as a "labor of love" due to the lack of prize money in recent years, the competitive nature of the Parade

still awards bragging rights to the brigades that finish in first place in their respective divisions. And while the Intercollegiate Men's Choruses (IMC) has not hosted a collegiate glee club competition in seventy-one years, the fact that they were held in the first place demonstrates a competitive aspect that drove early members of these organizations. PMEA choir festivals only accepted a limited number of singers at the district, region, and all-state levels, artificially creating a competition among students to perform at their highest level before a panel of adjudicators.

So, too, does fraternity—whether by blood or by association—unite these musical communities. Familial bonding has long been used to engender closeness among their respective memberships, and in the case of BHS and the Philadelphia Mummers, those bonds are already in place due to familial relations. Even the Penn Glee Club has had some instances of brothers, cousins, and sons joining its ranks over the years. Kevin M. Roy and Samuel H. Allen note that men, in response to the challenges to masculinity, have taken to joining "social movements that adapt and, in effect, modernize hegemonic [white] masculinity."[1] As this dissertation has demonstrated, even in instances in which organizations and musical communities have tried to answer increased calls for social equity, hegemonic white masculinity has adapted itself to its surroundings to maintain its dominance.

Limitations, Implications, and Directions for Future Research

I have aimed to be meticulous in writing this dissertation. Of course, it is not without its limitations. Most of my barbershop respondents spoke with me at least five years ago at

[1] Kevin M. Roy and Samuel H. Allen, "Men, Families, and the Reconceptualization of Masculinities," *Journal of Family Theory & Review* 14, no. 1 (2022); 33, https://doi.org/10.1111/jftr.12441.

this point, and much has changed across the barbershop landscape since then. In an anecdotal conversation with one of my respondents earlier this year, they were shocked to see just how much their opinions on Everyone in Harmony had changed. I would posit that many of my respondents would similarly find their views had changed, and future versions of this project would benefit from reaching back out to my respondents to see if that theory holds true. I would also be curious to speak with BHS members who joined after the rollout of Everyone in Harmony.

Additionally, while I attended the events of four distinctly different Mummers brigades, I am unsure if my experiences and thoughts would have changed had I attended the events of more brigades. Further development of Chapter 3 would involve me going to more Mummers events and even observing divisions I did not get the chance to interact with in the leadup to the 2025 Mummers Parade. I would also be interested in talking with the City of Philadelphia to discuss my research and see how it could be used to help the Parade continue in its attempts to become more inclusive.

Finally, while autoethnography is a valid and important research tool, I wonder if my reliance on my experiences in the choral world make that chapter a bit less universal than it could be. In the future, I would hope to use my experiences to provide extra insight to my argument as opposed to being the crux of the argument.

However, analyzing how competition and fraternity help to construct hegemonic white masculinity in these three musical communities yields many interesting implications and exciting pathways for future research. Competition is everywhere in music, from something as innocuous as a game of Musical Chairs to something as serious as university and conservatory admissions. Entities like *Billboard* police performers through the lens of hegemonic white masculinity, as evidenced by the uproar over Lil Nas X's and Beyoncé's

country music being decried as "not country." And awards shows prioritize deciding what is the "best" album, song, or artist of the year. Parasocial relationships are also crucial to the musical communities discussed in this dissertation. This fact is especially true in BHS, where the members of quartets who have won international gold are treated as celebrities within the hobby. These parasocial relationships in vernacular music often have a near-familial element to them, and the increasing proliferation of social media portends a reality in which these relationships become more reliant on fabricated familial ties.

I envision myriad further directions for this project, such as a focus on some of the earlier genres intertwined with the legacies of blackface minstrelsy to emerge, including vaudeville, burlesque, and musical theater. I also think that exploring other genres, such as rock 'n' roll and doo-wop, would provide interesting avenues to continue examining how imagined performances of Blackness, with a particular focus on competition and fraternity, help to construct and reify hegemonic white masculinity in the United States.

HALO, Black Feminist Resistance, and Working to Dismantle Hegemonic White Masculinity

To conclude this dissertation, I turn toward the work of a barbershop quartet that may serve as a model to emulate in the hope of effecting what advocates of diversity, equity, and inclusion would deem positive change in these genres and organizations. This quartet is named HALO (Harmony's African-American Legacy Organization), and was founded in 2015 and registered with Harmony, Incorporated (HI). The quartet, whose members are all Black women, made barbershop history as the first quartet of Black singers to compete on the international stage of any major United States barbershop organization.[2] HALO was also

[2] There have been many Black competitors before HALO, but never a quartet of 4 Black people. Notably, the first quartet of non-white singers to win BHS international quartet gold

the inaugural recipient of the Grand Central Red Caps Scholarship, named after the all-Black quartet that was barred from competing at the BHS international quartet competition in 1941.[3] This scholarship afforded the quartet the opportunity to attend Harmony University, BHS's annual weeklong educational event.

The quartet's members—Shana Oshiro, Portia Pitts, Niambi Powell, Jasmine Barnes, and Ashley Conway[4]—also created HALO, Inc., which uses "the barbershop singing (and listening) experience as a therapeutic tool by which we confront historic and contemporary issues of race in our country and around the world."[5] Through HALO, Inc., the quartet leads its Race and #RealTalk program to facilitate the constructive dialogues it aims to create through the barbershop style.

I had the opportunity to interview Oshiro, a board-certified music therapist, and Powell, a licensed clinical social worker, over Zoom in November 2020, where we talked at length about HALO, BHS's attempts to implement Everyone in Harmony, and how the greater barbershop community should continue pressing forward while acknowledging its past.[6] Our interview happened days after the United States presidential election, during a period of vote counting that delayed the announcement of official results, a time during which the incumbent president, Donald Trump began fomenting the unsubstantiated claims

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was Musical Island Boys, a quartet of three Samoan men and one Māori man, all from New Zealand.

[3] See Chapter 2 for more information.

[4] The quartet is based in Maryland, but one of its founding members currently lives in a different state. While this is conjecture, it is easy to assume that the quartet added a fifth member to facilitate performances more easily.

[5] HALO, Inc., "Our Program," accessed March 15, 2025, http://www.haloquartet.org/our-program/.

[6] Shana Oshiro and Niambi Powell, interview by Daniel Carsello, November 8, 2020. I also facilitated a discussion with Oshiro and Powell about these same topics in a graduate seminar in March 2021.

that the election had been stolen from him. It was perhaps that backdrop that inspired Powell to remark "I think [BHS] is like America in miniature in a lot of ways, and particularly in terms of how we struggle with how to deal with a deeply ingrained problem that is so much a part of our identity. A fish doesn't know it's wet until it's out of water."[7]

Angela Y. Davis notes that "for Black women in particular, music has simultaneously expressed and shaped our collective consciousness."[8] It is not difficult to find the crux of Davis's argument in the genesis of Race and #RealTalk. It was created to connect individuals and groups together using barbershop music as an anti-racist conversation strategy by considering the harmonic language of barbershop, with its abundance of tension—often elongated using significant *rubato*—due to dominant-seventh chords and their eventual resolution, as a metaphor for difficult dialogue. Powell noted that HALO also considered barbershop to be "fertile ground [for Race and #RealTalk] because of the way it exists in the modern mind's eye as a specifically white musical art form" despite the Black roots of barbershop harmony.[9] This combination of historical and harmonic tension proved to be a potent source of conversation for Race and #RealTalk. Powell also noted that "change, in general, involves an aspect or a component of grief, and there's therapy for that. And that's why we call what we do community music therapy."[10] Oshiro similarly argued that

> the musical practices of [barbershop], of holding tension and the structure of the voice parts, lend [themselves] very well to scaffolding the concepts that we built around approaches of how to have fruitful dialogue of racism and using the tension and reconceptualizing the tension that presents in discussions and dialogues as something that's beautiful and desirable.[11]

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[7] Oshiro and Powell, interview.
[8] Angela Y. Davis, "Black Women and Music: A Historical Legacy of Struggle," in *Black Feminist Cultural Criticism*, ed. Jacqueline Bobo (Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 217.
[9] Oshiro and Powell, interview.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.

In other words, barbershop harmony is already suffused with harmonic resistance, making it an effective site of working through societal differences.

HALO has attempted to deemphasize the focus on competition in barbershop through Race and #RealTalk. In our interview, I discussed Thomas Turino's concept of participatory and presentational performance with Oshiro and Powell; in the former, the distinction between artist and audience is not rigid, whereas it is clearly demarcated in the latter.[12] Oshiro and Powell felt that Race and #RealTalk fit into both of Turino's performance styles. Powell argued that

> the way we use and engage in barbershop with our Race and #RealTalk programs allows for extended community building and extended participation, so that social bonds can really start to develop but then deepen with one another. And even, the extent to which there is a presentational element to it: usually, after our extended sessions, the whole group of participants is involved in a presentation to the larger community, which also serves to bring other people into participating.[13]

Oshiro concurred, adding that "they're combined because it is communal, but it's presentation within and to the community."[14] Videos of Race and #RealTalk confirm Oshiro's and Powell's argument, with the line between performer and audience member virtually nonexistent by the conclusion of their sessions as the participants join in performance with the Race and #RealTalk facilitators. Oshiro and Powell contrasted the blended performance modalities present in Race and #RealTalk with traditional barbershop performances, which feature a presentational performance followed by shorter participatory performances. In short, Race and #RealTalk confirms Noriko Manabe's assertion in her analysis of protest music, which often—but not always—takes place in contexts outside of

[12] Thomas Turino, "Participatory and Presentational Performance," in *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation* (The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 26.
[13] Oshiro and Powell, interview.
[14] Ibid.

traditional performance spaces, that "it is useful to think of a spectrum of performance styles."[15] Race and #RealTalk is also a clear example of Christopher Small's concept of musicking, in which "to music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing [or] by listening."[16]

Crucially, any perceived inaccuracies that result from the blended performance modalities are immaterial to HALO and also, they hope, unimportant for participants; as Powell argued, "perfection isn't the point. [It's] that element of transcendence through community."[17] What is striking is HALO's commitment to providing its Race and #RealTalk participants with the tools to sing barbershop for the joy of creation, not for the lure of competition. As I mentioned above, HALO has competed in barbershop competitions, so the quartet is not against competition, though, notably, it has not competed since 2016.

When our conversation turned to Everyone in Harmony, Oshiro and Powell noted that they felt it was a positive development for BHS and was largely well-intentioned. Where Oshiro felt that BHS had stumbled was balancing progress with pushback:

> [BHS is] trying to walk a line of retain[ing] their long-standing members who are more conservative in their pre-existing beliefs and notions of society in general, and the younger generations whom they want to attract. That's how it presents to me. And is that enough to make things equal? It is not. Because it has never been.[18]

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[15] Noriko Manabe, "The Evolution of Performance Style in Antinuclear Sound Demonstrations," in *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised: Protest Music After Fukushima* (Oxford University Press, 2016), 178, https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199334681.001.0001.
[16] Christopher Small, "Prelude: Music and Musicking," in *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (University Press of New England, 1998): 9.
[17] Oshiro and Powell, interview.
[18] Ibid.

HALO was featured in many BHS performances in the early years of Everyone in Harmony, particularly at events that meant to highlight the Black origins of the barbershop style. In our interview, Oshiro noted that

> [HALO's] engagement with BHS has definitely helped to increase our visibility and hopefully contributed to the beginnings of change in their organization.[19] As for the depth of our program and approach, we have seen the transformative effects and positive influences of our work for so many individuals and community groups, both within and well beyond the barbershop community.[20]

Powell similarly argued that HALO's mission extends beyond BHS and any barbershop organization, for that matter. HALO does not limit Race and #RealTalk to barbershop organizations or even other singing organizations.

Patricia Hill Collins, in her work on Black women's activism in the United States, argues that Black women take actions to create their own spheres of influence in an existing social framework and also work to transform pre-existing structures.[21] HALO has piloted its Race and #RealTalk program in the barbershop sphere—not to mention in non-singing organizations—to be at the forefront of discussions around race and barbershop, thus carving out for itself a sphere of influence within the barbershop community. HALO has also worked to transform barbershop organizations through its mission rather than accept a broken status quo. Be it Race and #RealTalk, speaking on panels to educate barbershoppers,[22] or appearing at BHS events to spread its message of healing through

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[19] As mentioned previously, HALO is part of HI; the quartet is not part of BHS.
[20] Oshiro and Powell, interview.
[21] Patricia Hill Collins, "Rethinking Black Women's Activism," in *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, 2nd ed. (Routledge, 2014), 204, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203900055.
[22] One particularly vivid memory is members of HALO inviting a quartet of four white women to reconsider singing a medley of songs from *Porgy and Bess*. The quartet ultimately acceded.

harmony, HALO has helped individuals and groups understand and dismantle the legacies of blackface minstrelsy inherent to codified barbershop.

Powell's assertion that HALO's mission extends beyond barbershop provides a potential avenue for change in the Philadelphia Mummers and choral performances, in addition to its continued efficacy in changing conversations in BHS and the larger barbershop community. In codified barbershop and the Philadelphia Mummers, Black feminist spheres are few and far between; HALO is a great example of a quartet carving out its own Black feminist sphere of influence, but it remains the only one a decade after its founding. In the choral world, there are many more avenues for Black feminist spheres of influence and historically Othered groups in general, including organizations such as the Institute for Composer Diversity and websites that have dedicated spaces for these communities, such as a "female composers" category on the website for The Art Song Project. However, despite these additional spheres of influence, the case studies presented in Chapter 4 demonstrate that they are not enough to effectively change the white masculine construction of choral music.

Philip A. Ewell, in his landmark article about the white racial frame that he argues permeates the Society for Music Theory (SMT), suggests that

> we should seek solutions to the problems created by our racialized structures, but we must also reframe how we understand race in music theory, which we cannot do if we rush to find solutions to problems we do not yet understand *or even acknowledge*.[23]

Until the work of scholars such as Lynn Abbott and James Earl Henry, BHS did not officially acknowledge the Black roots of barbershop harmony. Boyd notes that "Abbott's

[23] Philip A. Ewell, "Music Theory and the White Racial Frame," *Music Theory Online* 26, no. 2 (September 2020), https://www.doi.org/10.30535/mto.26.2.4 (my italics).

article caused quite a stir among [BHS] members and leaders, with archival evidence showing that some members felt deceived after discovering that this history of racial exclusion had been suppressed for so many years."[24] He also argues that BHS has yet to fully acknowledge the exclusionary membership policy known as Project N. The Mummers refuse to acknowledge the (alleged) marching of a woman in the 1929 Mummers Parade, decades before they officially allowed women to participate. They also frequently cite the European origins of the Mummers without acknowledging the minstrel elements that pervade the tradition to this day. Self-described progressive Mummers brigades like Vaudevillians are working to challenge the prototypical image of what a Mummer is, yet they still remain in golden slippers. Universities with prominent glee clubs and robust singing traditions published songbooks together while refusing to acknowledge the contributions of Black institutions, despite the fact that their popular repertoire came from the minstrel tradition and its legacies. And organizations like the PMEA continue to devote the bulk of their programming to white composers while rarely acknowledging the wealth of non-idiomatic works by Black composers, with spirituals (often arranged by white people) instead being a far more popular choice for festival repertoire.

To these musical communities' credit, much work has already been done to mitigate their painful, exclusionary pasts. However, in each instance, there is some sort of barrier to fully acknowledging the issues at hand. In many ways, these organizations would be better served "reorienting [their] actions from diversity to antiracism."[25] Ewell notes that part of

[24] Clifton Boyd, "Keep It Barbershop: Stylistic Preservation and Whiteness in the Barbershop Harmony Society" (PhD diss., Yale University, 2022), 125, ProQuest (29060296).
[25] Ewell, "White Racial Frame."

this antiracism includes "restructuring […] some of our institutionalized and racialized structures—a *deframing* and *reframing* of the white racial frame."[26]

For instance, these organizations should focus less on tactics that can be perceived as tokenizing— be it BHS featuring HALO at events, the creation and quick dissolution of the Philadelphia Division in the Mummers Parade, or a few choral pieces from non-white composers placed at the end of a concert program—and perhaps employ some of the Black feminist resistance tactics, like those taken by HALO, to shift from diversity to antiracism. By inviting barbershoppers to use a system they are already comfortable with—barbershop harmony—to dismantle the systems that have created exclusion within that community, HALO provides its participants with a framework they understand to process a legacy they do not. So, too, could Black feminist resistance tactics be used to shed a greater light on the inequities in the Philadelphia Mummers and choral music, perhaps even implementing a similar tactic of using familiar frameworks to soften the blow of reality. As I mentioned in Chapter 3, the Mummers wench could be used as a tool for educating the Mummers about how blackface minstrelsy was central to the creation of their organization and how it has manifested in everything from their instruments to their theme song to their dress. Organizations like PMEA can critically examine whether a festival setting allows sufficient time to provide high school students with enough understanding of the African American spiritual to perform it effectively. And while choral ensembles like the Penn Glee Club are already working to deemphasize hegemonic white masculinity, viewing progress as a goal instead of as a process invites hegemonic white masculinity to remain.

[26] Ewell, "White Racial Frame."

I have seen firsthand the positive effects of educating participants in some of these musical communities. Educating my students as the director of the Penn Glee Club yielded more informed repertoire decisions and created more meaningful performances. However, it is my experiences as a member of BHS that confirm to me that education is crucial to deconstructing hegemonic white masculinity. As I acknowledged in Chapter 1 of this dissertation, I am a member of several Facebook groups and Discord servers dedicated to barbershop. Because of my work on this dissertation, I have become myriad barbershoppers' go-to resource for asking about the appropriateness of performing various songs. Some of these conversations are relatively innocuous, such as questions about whether a change to a song's lyrics would make the song more palatable. Other conversations have been more detailed, such as a more recent one that happened. A barbershop acquaintance reached out to me, telling me that a mutual friend recommended we speak about a repertoire question. The quartet, comprised of four white people, was considering performing a song from *Porgy and Bess* and wanted my advice on how they could best honor the song if they used it in competition. I recommended that, if they really wanted to perform it, that they instead use the song in a show setting, where they could provide their audience with context and commentary. The quartet thanked me for my thoughts and ultimately decided not to compete with the song.

These discussions have revealed to me that people are often unaware of just how pervasive hegemonic white masculinity is in their respective musical communities and that people are often uneducated on these topics rather than antagonistic or hateful. Of course, some participants will and do find these discussions to be unnecessary and irritating, but most musicians and performers aim to entertain their audience, not exclude them. Leading with education instead of excoriation will go a long way toward deconstructing the

hegemonic white masculinity that has dominated these musical communities for so long. In fact, there are myriad examples from my life where educating someone would have been a more useful tactic. For instance, educating the members of the Penn Glee Club about the harmfulness of gay stereotypes may have stopped members from extending limp wrists during "Drink a Highball" much sooner than it happened. Researching the history of the songs may have also helped my first quartet decide not to even consider performing and competing with the "Strike Up the Band / Alexander's Ragtime Band" medley mentioned in Chapter 2.

In the barbershop sphere, HALO does not mean to discourage competition entirely. Instead, it aims to shed a light on alternative paths for performance in barbershop that are not as reliant on a hegemonic white masculine construction. Similarly, I am not arguing that society can wholly deconstruct the hegemonic white masculinity that the legacies of blackface minstrelsy wrought in one fell swoop. Rather, I believe that these smaller-scale deconstructions in spaces like the Barbershop Harmony Society, the Philadelphia Mummers, and choral settings will lead to more wholesale change.

Powell's assertion that BHS is like "America in miniature" stuck with me long after our interview, to the point that I decided to analyze the musical communities in this dissertation with that phrase in mind. In speaking with barbershoppers and members of the Mummers, and in exploring my experience as a choral director, it became clear that "America in miniature" is a perfect summation of these musical communities. Viewing these communities as examples of "America in miniature" may help participants and audiences think about how their interactions with people they know mirror those happening across the United States and throughout its history. As participants and listeners learn more about this music and what it reveals about American history, and interact within our musical

communities, we have an opportunity to reshape not only our musical communities but also our understanding of the United States. The hegemonic white masculinity, constructed through performances of imagined Blackness, in these musical communities remains dangerously potent until participants, with the work of groups like HALO and countless individuals who are leading with education, acknowledge and challenge this damaging but central American archetype and work, in song and in life, to build a better America in miniature.

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APPENDIX A

BARBERSHOP ETHNOGRAPHY RESPONDENTS

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

N.B. All names given are pseudonyms. All information is accurate at the time of the interview (late 2019/early 2020).

Relevant Acronyms: BHS (Barbershop Harmony Society); SAI (Sweet Adelines International); HI (Harmony, Incorporated); MBHA (Mixed Harmony Barbershop Association); SPPBSQSUS (Society for the Preservation and Propagation of Barbershop Quartet Singing in the United States); BHA (Barbershop Harmony Australia)

Ames

AGE	48
GENDER	N/A
SEXUALITY	N/A
ETHNICITY	White
LOCATION	Southern New Jersey
SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS	N/A
POLITICAL AFFILIATION	N/A
BARBERSHOP AFFILIATION(S)	BHS

Atticus

AGE	23
GENDER	Male
SEXUALITY	Straight
ETHNICITY	White
LOCATION	Born in Arizona; Grew up in Northern CA
SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS	Middle Class
POLITICAL AFFILIATION	Independent, Democrat
BARBERSHOP AFFILIATION(S)	BHS

Bartholomew

AGE	68
GENDER	Male
SEXUALITY	Straight
ETHNICITY	White
LOCATION	Michigan
SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS	Middle Class
POLITICAL AFFILIATION	Conservative-Leaning Independent
BARBERSHOP AFFILIATION(S)	BHS, MBHA

Carlisle

AGE	27
GENDER	Male
SEXUALITY	Straight
ETHNICITY	White
LOCATION	New York
SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS	Lower Middle Class
POLITICAL AFFILIATION	Independent
BARBERSHOP AFFILIATION(S)	BHS

Cesare

AGE	53
GENDER	Male
SEXUALITY	Straight
ETHNICITY	White
LOCATION	Born in Fairbanks; Raised in Seattle
SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS	Upper Middle Class
POLITICAL AFFILIATION	Progressive
BARBERSHOP AFFILIATION(S)	BHS

Cosmo

AGE	59
GENDER	Male
SEXUALITY	N/A
ETHNICITY	White
LOCATION	Michigan
SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS	Middle Class
POLITICAL AFFILIATION	Leans Democrat
BARBERSHOP AFFILIATION(S)	BHS, MBHA

Delphine

AGE	34
GENDER	Female
SEXUALITY	Straight
ETHNICITY	African American, Indigenous
LOCATION	Born in Philadelphia; Raised in Maryland
SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS	Upper Middle Class
POLITICAL AFFILIATION	Democrat
BARBERSHOP AFFILIATION(S)	HI

Esme

AGE	39
GENDER	Female
SEXUALITY	Queer
ETHNICITY	White
LOCATION	Hartford, CT
SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS	Lower Middle Class
POLITICAL AFFILIATION	Progressive
BARBERSHOP AFFILIATION(S)	SAI

Hansel

AGE	21
GENDER	Male
SEXUALITY	Straight
ETHNICITY	White
LOCATION	Cincinnati, OH
SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS	Upper Middle Class
POLITICAL AFFILIATION	Leftist Democrat
BARBERSHOP AFFILIATION(S)	BHS

Lottie

AGE	45
GENDER	Female
SEXUALITY	N/A
ETHNICITY	Mexican American
LOCATION	Los Angeles, CA
SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS	Upper Lower Class
POLITICAL AFFILIATION	Unregistered Democrat
BARBERSHOP AFFILIATION(S)	BHS, MBHA

Lysander

AGE	22
GENDER	Male
SEXUALITY	Straight
ETHNICITY	White
LOCATION	San Angelo, TX
SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS	Lower Middle Class
POLITICAL AFFILIATION	Leans Conservative
BARBERSHOP AFFILIATION(S)	BHS

Myrtle

AGE	53
GENDER	Female
SEXUALITY	Straight
ETHNICITY	White
LOCATION	Auburn, AL
SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS	Upper Middle Class
POLITICAL AFFILIATION	Democrat
BARBERSHOP AFFILIATION(S)	SAI, BHS

Nero

AGE	18
GENDER	Male
SEXUALITY	Straight
ETHNICITY	African American
LOCATION	New Jersey
SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS	Lower Middle Class
POLITICAL AFFILIATION	Democrat
BARBERSHOP AFFILIATION(S)	BHS

Oberyn

AGE	66
GENDER	Male
SEXUALITY	Straight
ETHNICITY	White
LOCATION	Warren, PA
SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS	Middle Class
POLITICAL AFFILIATION	Republican
BARBERSHOP AFFILIATION(S)	BHS, SPPBSQSUS

Odelia

AGE	58
GENDER	Female
SEXUALITY	Straight
ETHNICITY	African American
LOCATION	Born in Fort Pierce, FL; Raised in CA
SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS	Upper Middle Class
POLITICAL AFFILIATION	Independent
BARBERSHOP AFFILIATION(S)	HI, SAI

Oswald

AGE	31
GENDER	Male
SEXUALITY	Gay
ETHNICITY	White
LOCATION	Born in CA; Raised in New Hampshire
SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS	Graduate Student
POLITICAL AFFILIATION	Progressive Democrat
BARBERSHOP AFFILIATION(S)	BHS

Petunia

AGE	60
GENDER	Female
SEXUALITY	N/A
ETHNICITY	White
LOCATION	Philadelphia, PA; Now located in Canada
SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS	Lower Middle Class
POLITICAL AFFILIATION	N/A
BARBERSHOP AFFILIATION(S)	HI, BHS

Prescott

AGE	27
GENDER	Male
SEXUALITY	Straight
ETHNICITY	White
LOCATION	Suburbs of Chicago, IL
SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS	Lower Middle Class
POLITICAL AFFILIATION	Independent
BARBERSHOP AFFILIATION(S)	BHS

Rion

AGE	37
GENDER	Male
SEXUALITY	Gay
ETHNICITY	Japanese
LOCATION	Osaka, Japan
SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS	Middle Class
POLITICAL AFFILIATION	Liberal
BARBERSHOP AFFILIATION(S)	BHS, SAI

Ripley

AGE	24
GENDER	Male
SEXUALITY	Straight
ETHNICITY	Mixed
LOCATION	General Philadelphia area
SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS	Upper Middle Class
POLITICAL AFFILIATION	Center-Left
BARBERSHOP AFFILIATION(S)	BHS

Rutherford

AGE	64
GENDER	Male
SEXUALITY	Straight
ETHNICITY	White
LOCATION	Saint Petersburg, FL
SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS	Upper Middle Class
POLITICAL AFFILIATION	Yellow Dog Democrat
BARBERSHOP AFFILIATION(S)	BHS, SPPBSQSUS

Trixie

AGE	51
GENDER	Female
SEXUALITY	Bisexual
ETHNICITY	White
LOCATION	England
SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS	Middle Class
POLITICAL AFFILIATION	N/A
BARBERSHOP AFFILIATION(S)	BHS, SAI, BHA

APPENDIX B

2011 AND 2012 PENNSYLVANIA MUSIC EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION

CHOIR FESTIVALS REPERTOIRE[1]

SONG NAME	COMPOSER/ARRANGER	YEAR(S)	UNIQUE PERFORMANCES
A Cosmic Prayer	Carson Cooman	2011	1
A Girl's Garden (from *Frostiana*)	Randall Thompson	2012	2
A Red, Red Rose	James Mulholland	2011	2
Abendlied	Josef Rheinberger	2012	2
Achieved is the Glorious Work (from *The Creation*)	Franz Joseph Haydn	2011, 2012	2
Across the Fields	Eric William Barnum	2012	1
Adiemus (from *Songs of Sanctuary*)	Karl Jenkins	2012	1
Africa	David Paich & Jeff Porcaro, arr. Philip Lawson	2011	1
Afternoon on a Hill	Eric William Barnum	2011	1
Agneau de Dieu	Rupert Lang	2012	1
Agnus Dei	Javier Busto	2011	1
Ah! si mon moine voulait danser	arr. Donald Patriquin	2012	1
All That Hath Life and Breath Praise Ye the Lord!	René Clausen	2011, 2012	2
Alleluia	**Randall Thompson**	**2012**	**1**
Alleluia (from *Songs of Faith*)	Paul Basler	2011, 2012	4
Alma Llanera	arr. Ángel Sauce	2012	1
Amor de Mi Alma	Z. Randall Stroope	2012	1
And the Glory of the Lord (from *Messiah*)	**George Frideric Handel**	**2012**	**1**

[1] Pennsylvania Music Educators Association, "Festival Repertoire Lists," accessed March 9, 2025, https://www.pmea.net/festivals/repertoire-lists/.

SONG NAME	COMPOSER/ARRANGER	YEAR(S)	UNIQUE PERFORMANCES
And Then Shall Your Light Break Forth / Lord Our Creator (from *Elijah*)	Felix Mendelssohn	2012	1
Animal Crackers, Vols. I & II	Eric Whitacre	2011, 2012	2
Another Spring	Howard Helvey	2012	1
At the Round Earth's Imagined Corners	**Williametta Spencer**	**2011**	**2**
Ave Maria	Franz Biebl	2011	1
Ave Maria	Sergei Rachmaninoff	2011	1
Ave Maria	Anton Bruckner	2012	2
Ave Verum Corpus	William Byrd	2011	1
Awake the Harp (from *The Creation*)	Franz Joseph Haydn	2012	1
Baba Yetu	Christopher Tin	2012	1
Bailando	Greg Jasperse	2012	1
Battle Hymn of the Republic	arr. Peter J. Wilhousky	2012	1
The Battle of Jericho	arr. Moses Hogan	2012	1
Beati Quorum Via	Charles Villiers Stanford	2012	1
Beautiful City	**Traditional, arr. André Thomas**	**2012**	**1**
Blessed are the Men Who fear Him (from *Elijah*)	**Felix Mendelssohn**	**2012**	**1**
Blow the Wind Southerly	English Folk arr. John Cameron	2012	1
Bonse Aba	Traditional, arr. Andrew Fischer	2011	1
Bright Morning Stars	Traditional Appalachian Song, arr. Shawn Kirchner	2011	1
Bringers	Mark Lehnowsky	2012	1
Brothers, Sing On!	**Edvard Greig, arr. Howard D. McKinney**	**2011**	**1**
Camptown Races	Stephen Foster, arr. Jack Halloran	2011	1

SONG NAME	**COMPOSER/ARRANGER**	**YEAR(S)**	**UNIQUE PERFORMANCES**
Canticle (from *Three Sacred Pieces*)	David Conte	2011	1
Cantique de Jean Racine	Gabriel Fauré	2011, 2012	2
Certain'y Lord	arr. Stacey Gibbs	2012	1
Circles of Our Lives	David Brunner	2011	1
Clip Praise	Diane White-Clayton	2012	1
Coelos Ascendit Hodie	Charles Villiers Stanford	2012	1
Consecrate the Place and Day	Lloyd Pfautsch	2012	1
Crucifixus (from *Mass in B Minor*)	**Johann Sebastian Bach**	**2011**	**2**
Daemon Irrepit Callidus	György Orbán	2012	1
Daniel, Daniel, Servant of the Lord	arr. Undine Moore	2012	1
Danny Boy	Joseph Flummerfelt	2012	2
Deep River	**arr. Roy Ringwald**	**2012**	**1**
Der Abend	**Johannes Brahms**	**2011, 2012**	**2**
Der Gang Zum Liebchen	**Johannes Brahms**	**2011**	**1**
Der Gondelfahrer	Franz Schubert	2011	1
Dieu! qu'il la fait bon regarder!	Claude Debussy	2012	1
Dirait-on (from *Les Chanson des Roses*)	Morten Lauridsen	2011	1
Domine Fili Unigenite (from *Gloria*)	Antonio Vivaldi	2011	1
Domine ad adjuvandum me festina	Giovanni Battista Martini	2011	2
Dona Nobis Pacem (from *Mass in B Minor*)	Johann Sebastian Bach	2011, 2012	2
Down in the Valley	arr. George Mead	2012	1
Dubula	**Stephen Hatfield**	**2011**	**1**
Dúlaman	arr. Michael McGlynn	2012	1

SONG NAME	COMPOSER/ARRANGER	YEAR(S)	UNIQUE PERFORMANCES
Dwell in the House	Gale Jones Murphy	2011	1
E Oru O	**adapted by Rosephanye Powell**	**2012**	**1**
Earth Song	Frank Ticheli	2011	2
Elijah Rock	Moses Hogan	2011, 2012	3
Erev Shel Shoshanim	Josef Hadar, arr. Jack Klebanow	2011	2
Exultate Deo	**Hans Leo Hassler**	**2011**	**1**
Exultate Deo	Alessandro Scarlatti	2012	1
Fair Phyllis	John Farmer	2012	1
Five Hebrew Love Songs	Eric Whitacre	2012	1
Flower of Beauty	**John Clements**	**2011**	**1**
Four Strong Winds	Ian Tyson, arr. Larry Nickel	2011	1
Gartan Mother's Lullaby	arr. Neil Ginsberg	2012	1
Gloria (from *The Masque of Angels*)	Dominick Argento	2012	2
Gloria (from *Heiligmesse*)	Franz Joseph Haydn	2012	1
Glorious Everlasting	M. Thomas Cousins	2011	1
Go Down Moses	arr. Mark Hayes	2011	1
God Be in My Head	Jackson Berkey	2012	1
Got a Mind to do Right	arr. David Morrow	2011	2
Richte mich, Gott	Felix Mendelssohn	2011, 2012	2
Hallelujah (from *Christ on the Mount of Olives*)	Ludwig van Beethoven	2011	1
Happy Together	Alan Gordon & Garry Bonner, arr. Ed Lojeski	2011	1
He Watching Over Israel (from *Elijah*)	**Felix Mendelssohn**	**2012**	**2**
Heart, We Will Forget Him	James Mulholland	2011, 2012	2
Heilig	Felix Mendelssohn	2012	1
Home on the Range	arr. Mark Hayes	2012	1

SONG NAME	COMPOSER/ARRANGER	YEAR(S)	UNIQUE PERFORMANCES
Homeland	Z. Randall Stroope	2012	2
Honour the Earth	Sarah Hopkins	2012	1
Hosanna to the Son of David	Orlando Gibbons	2011	2
How Lovely is Thy Dwelling Place (from *Ein Deutsches Requiem*)	Johannes Brahms	2011	3
I Am Not Yours	arr. David Childs	2011	2
I Can Tell the World	arr. Moses Hogan	2012	1
I Carry Your Heart With Me	Z. Randall Stroope	2011	2
I Carry Your Heart With Me	David C. Dickau	2011	1
I Dream a World	Joan Szymko	2011	1
I gondolieri	Gioachino Rossini	2011	1
I Love My Love	**Gustav Holst**	**2012**	**1**
I Love My Love	David C. Dickau	2012	1
I Sing, You Sing	Anders Edenroth	2011	1
I'll Ay Call in by Yon Town	arr. Mack Wilberg	2011	3
I'm Gonna Sing 'til the Spirit Moves in My Heart	arr. Moses Hogan	2011	1
I've Been in the Storm So Long	arr. Jeffery Ames	2011	1
If Music Be the Food of Love	David C. Dickau	2011	1
If Ye Love Me	Thomas Tallis	2012	1
Il bianco e dolce cigno	Jacques Arcadelt	2012	1
In Bright Mansions Above	arr. Roland Carter	2011	2
In My Eyes	Jonny Priano	2011	1
In Remembrance	Jeffery L. Ames	2011, 2012	2
In Remembrance (from *Requiem*)	Eleanor Daley	2011, 2012	2
In Virtute Tua	Grzegorz G. Gorczycki, ed. William Bausano	2011	1
Is Not a Flower a Mystery? (from *Holocaust Cantata*)	Donald McCullough	2011	1

SONG NAME	COMPOSER/ARRANGER	YEAR(S)	UNIQUE PERFORMANCES
It Takes a Village	Joan Szymko	2011	3
J'entends le Moulin	arr. Donald Patriquin	2012	1
Jabberwocky	Sam Pottle	2012	1
Jabula Jesu	arr. Stephen Hatfield	2012	1
Jamaican Marketplace	Larry Farrow	2012	1
John the Revelator	arr. Paul Caldwell & Sean Ivory	2012	1
Johnny, I Hardly Knew Ye	arr. Alice Parker	2011	1
Johnny Schmoker	arr. James Rodde	2012	1
Joshua	Traditional Spiritual, arr. Robert Sells	2011	1
Jubilate Deo	Giovanni Gabrieli	2012	1
Just as the Tide was Flowing	**Ralph Vaughan Williams**	**2011**	**1**
Kaki Lambe	arr. Brian Tate	2011, 2012	2
Kpanlongo	arr. Derek Bermel	2011	2
Kyrie (from *A Thanksgiving Mass*)	Knut Nystedt	2011	1
Lacrymosa & Domine Jesu from (*Requiem*)	Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart	2012	1
Laudate Jehovam Omnes Gentes	Georg Philip Telemann, ed. Stuart McIntosh	2011, 2012	2
Laughing Song	David C. Dickau	2011	1
Let their Celestial Concerts All Unite (from *Samson*)	**George Frideric Handel**	**2012**	**1**
Liebeslieder Waltzes, Nos. 6, 8, 11, 12, & 18	Johannes Brahms	2012	1
Louez le Seigneur	arr. Ralph Johnson	2011	1
Lux Aurumque	Eric Whitacre	2011, 2012	4
Madrigal	Gabriel Fauré	2011	1
Make a Joyful Noise	Carl B. Staplin	2012	1
Make Our Garden Grow (from *Candide*)	Leonard Bernstein, arr. Robert Page	2011, 2012	3
Milonguera	**Oscar Escalada**	**2012**	**1**

SONG NAME	COMPOSER/ARRANGER	YEAR(S)	UNIQUE PERFORMANCES
MLK	arr. Bob Chilcott	2012	1
Muie Rendera	arr. C. A. Pinto Fonseca	2011	1
Music Down in my Soul	arr. Moses Hogan	2012	1
Musicks Empire	Lloyd Pfautsch	2012	1
My God is a Rock	Ken Berg	2011	1
My Song in the Night	Southern Folk Hymn, arr. Paul Christiansen	2011, 2012	2
My Soul's Been Anchored in the Lord	arr. Moses Hogan	2011	3
My Spirit Sang All Day	**Gerald Finzi**	**2011, 2012**	**3**
Ngana (from *Songs of Passage*)	Stephen Leek	2012	1
Niska Banja	arr. Nick Page	2011	1
No Mirrors in My Nana's House (from *Crossings*)	Ysaye M. Barnwell	2011	2
Noel	arr. Brad Holmes	2012	1
Non Nobis, Domine	Rosephanye Powell	2011	2
Nunc dimittis	Gustav Holst	2011	1
O Clap Your Hands	**John Rutter**	**2011**	**1**
O Clap Your Hands	Ralph Vaughan Williams	2012	1
Olà! o che buon' eco!	Orlande de Lassus	2012	1
O Magnum Mysterium	Morten Lauridsen	2011	1
O My Luve's Like a Red, Red Rose	René Clausen	2012	1
O Schöne Nacht	Johannes Brahms	2012	1
O Sing Joyfully	**Adrian Batten**	**2012**	**1**
Ode to Joy	Z. Randall Stroope	2012	1
Oh! Susanna	arr. Mark Hayes	2012	1
Old Dan Tucker	arr. Douglas L. Ipson	2012	1
Omnia Sol	Z. Randall Stroope	2012	1
On Children	**Ysaye M. Barnwell**	**2012**	**1**
Our Time (from *Merrily We Roll Along*)	Stephen Sondheim, arr. Robert Page	2011	1
Panis Angelicus	Eric William Barnum	2011	1

SONG NAME	COMPOSER/ARRANGER	YEAR(S)	UNIQUE PERFORMANCES
Past Life Melodies	Sarah Hopkins	2012	1
Pilgrims' Hymn (from *The Three Hermits*)	Stephen Paulus	2011, 2012	2
Psalm 27	Charles Ives	2012	1
Psalm 98	Heinrich Schultz	2011	1
Psalmus 98 (from *Lumen Christi*)	Nancy Galbraith	2011	1
Regina Coeli	Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart	2012	1
Rejoice	Jeffery L. Ames	2011	1
Revecy venir du printans	**Claude Le Jeune**	**2012**	**1**
Ritmo	Dan Davison	2011	1
Rockin' Jerusalem	arr. André Thomas	2011, 2012	2
Roll, Jordan, Roll	arr. Rollo Dilworth	2011, 2012	2
Rorando Coeli	Jan Vodňanský	2012	1
Salmo 150	Ernani Aguiar	2012	1
Sanctus (London)	Ola Gjeilo	2012	1
Schaffe in mir, Gott, ein rein Herz	Johannes Brahms	2012	1
Sea Fever	**Amy Beach**	**2012**	**1**
See That Babe in the Lowly Manger	arr. Noah F. Ryder	2011	1
Selig sind die Toten	Heinrich Schütz	2012	1
Shenandoah	arr. James Erb	2011	1
Shout for Joy	Dan Davison	2011	1
Sicut Cervus	**Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina**	**2012**	**2**
Sicut Locutus Est (from *Magnificat*)	Johann Sebastian Bach	2011	1
Silent Devotion and Responses (from *Sacred Service*)	Ernest Bloch	2011	1
Simple Gifts	arr. Mark Hayes	2012	1
Sing a Mighty Song	Daniel E. Gawthrop	2011	3
Sing Joyfully unto God	William Byrd	2011	1
Sing Me to Heaven	Daniel E. Gawthrop	2012	1

SONG NAME	COMPOSER/ARRANGER	YEAR(S)	UNIQUE PERFORMANCES
Sing Unto God (from *Judas Maccabeus*)	George Frideric Handel	2012	3
Sleep	Eric Whitacre	2011	1
Some Folks	Stephen Foster, arr. Mark Hayes	2011	1
Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child	**Traditional, arr. Robert Fountain**	**2012**	**1**
Somewhere (from *West Side Story*)	Leonard Bernstein, arr. Robert Edgerton	2011	1
Song for the Mira	Allister MacGillivray	2012	1
Song of Exaltation	John Ness Beck	2011	1
Song of Ezekiel	Michael Torke	2011	1
Soon Ah Will be Done	arr. William L. Dawson	2011	2
Soon Ah Will be Done	arr. Diane Loomer	2012	1
Sorida	Rosephanye Powell	2012	1
Spring (from *Songs of Innocence*)	Karl Korte	2011	1
The Star-Spangled Banner	John Stafford Smith	2011	1
Stars I Shall Find	David C. Dickau	2011	1
Steal Away	arr. Norman Luboff	2012	1
Still I Rise	Rosephanye Powell	2011	1
Sunday (from *Sunday in the Park with George*)	Stephen Sondheim, arr. Paul McKibbins	2011	1
Super Flumina Babylonis	Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina	2011	1
Sure on This Shining Night	Z. Randall Stroope	2011, 2012	2
Sure on This Shining Night	Morten Lauridsen	2011, 2012	4
The Agincourt Song	arr. Ward Swingle	2011	1
The Awakening	Joseph Miller	2012	1
The Barber of Seville	Gioacchino Rossini, arr. Daryl Runswick	2011	1

SONG NAME	COMPOSER/ARRANGER	YEAR(S)	UNIQUE PERFORMANCES
The God Who Gave Us Life (from *The Testament of Freedom*)	Randall Thompson	2011	1
The Heavens are Telling (from *The Creation*)	Franz Joseph Haydn	2012	1
Lamentations of Jeremiah	Z. Randall Stroope	2012	1
The Last Words of David	Randall Thompson	2011, 2012	3
The Lord's Prayer (from *African Sanctus*)	David Fanshawe	2012	1
The Mermaid	arr. Michael Levi	2011	1
The Pasture (from *Frostiana*)	Randall Thompson	2012	1
Prayer of Saint Francis	René Clausen	2011	1
The Promise of Living (from *The Tender Land*)	Aaron Copland	2011	1
The Road Not Taken (from *Frostiana*)	Randall Thompson	2012	1
The Sailor & Young Nancy	**arr. Ernest John Moeran**	**2012**	**1**
The Sounding Sea	Eric William Barnum	2011	3
The Splendor Falls	John Carter	2011	1
The Sweetheart of the Sun	Eric William Barnum	2012	1
The Water is Wide	Douglas Starr	2012	1
There Will Be Rest	Frank Ticheli	2011	1
This Day	William A. Payn	2012	1
This Marriage	Eric Whitacre	2011	1
Toraji Taryung	arr. Kenneth Jenkins	2012	1
Tres Cantos Nativos	arr. Marcos Leite	2011, 2012	2
True Light	**Keith Hampton**	**2012**	**2**
Tshotsholoza	arr. Jeffery Ames	2011, 2012	2
Twa Tanbou	Sydney Guillaume	2011	1

SONG NAME	COMPOSER/ARRANGER	YEAR(S)	UNIQUE PERFORMANCES
Ubi Caritas	**Ola Gjeilo**	**2012**	**1**
Ubi Caritas	Eleanor Daley	2011	1
Vendedores Ambulantes Colombianos	arr. Henry Alviani	2012	1
Veni Sancte Spiritus	Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart	2012	1
Verbum caro factum est Hans	Hans Leo Hassler, ed. Matthew Mehaffey & Heather Buchanan	2011	1
Verleih uns Frieden	Felix Mendelssohn	2012	2
Vive L'amour	arr. Robert Shaw & Alice Parker	2011, 2012	2
Voice of the Soul	Francis J. Nesta	2012	1
Voice Dance	Greg Jasperse	2012	1
Voices of Autumn	arr. Jackson Hill	2011	1
Wade in the Water	arr. Moses Hogan	2011	1
Wade in the Water	arr. Allen Koepke	2012	1
Wake, Awake, for Night is Flying	Philipp Nicolai	2011	1
Walk in Jerusalem	arr. Paul Rardin	2011	1
Warum	**Johannes Brahms**	**2012**	**1**
Water Night	Eric Whitacre	2012	1
Waters Ripple and Flow	arr. Deems Taylor	2011	2
We Rise Again	Leon Dubinsky arr. Stephen Smith	2011	1
Weep No More	**David N. Childs**	**2011**	**1**
West Side Story Medley	Leonard Bernstein arr. Len Thomas	2012	1
When I'm Sixty-Four	arr. Tom Gentry	2011, 2012	2
William Tell Overture	arr. Julia Eschliman	2012	1
Wipip!!!	Sydney Guillaume	2012	1
Wir eilen mit schwachen, doch emsigen Schritten	Johann Sebastian Bach	2011	1
Witness	**arr. Jack Halloran**	**2011**	**1**
Working for the Dawn of Peace	arr. Ron Jeffers	2011	1

SONG NAME	COMPOSER/ARRANGER	YEAR(S)	UNIQUE PERFORMANCES
Worthy to be Praised	Byron Smith	2012	1
Ye Followers of the Lamb	arr. Edwin Earle Ferguson	2011	1
Yes Sir, That's My Baby	arr. Betty Oliver	2012	1
Zigeunerleben	Robert Schumann	2011	3
Zion's Walls	Aaron Copland	2012	1
Zoriu Byut	Georgy Sviridov	2011	1
Zum Gali	Maurice Goldman	2012	1

APPENDIX C

2023 AND 2024 PENNSYLVANIA MUSIC EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION

CHOIR FESTIVALS REPERTOIRE[1]

SONG NAME	COMPOSER/ARRANGER	YEAR(S)	UNIQUE PERFORMANCES
A Jubilant Song	Norman Dello Joio	2023	1
A Palette to Paint Us As We Are	Elizabeth Alexander	2024	1
A Path to Each Other	Jocelyn Hagen & Timothy C. Takach	2024	1
A Set of Chinese Folk Songs, Vol. 1	arr. Chen Yi	2023	1
A Song of Blue	Bob Chilcott	2024	1
A Te Tarakihi (The Cicada)	arr. Brent Stewart	2024	1
Abendlied	Josef Rheinberger	2024	1
Achieved is the Glorious Work (from *The Creation*)	Franz Joseph Haydn	2023, 2024	2
Across the Vast, Eternal Sky	Ola Gjeilo	2023	1
Ad Astra	Jacob Narverud	2024	1
Ain'a That Good News	arr. William L. Dawson	2024	1
Ain't-a That Good News!	arr. Stacey V. Gibbs	2024	1
All Creatures Now Are Merry Minded	John Bennett	2024	1
All of Us (from *Considering Matthew Shepard*)	Craig Hella Johnson	2023	1
All That Hath Life and Breath Praise Ye the Lord!	René Clausen	2023	1
All Too Soon	Stephen Hatfield	2023	1
Alleluia	Elaine Hagenberg	2023	1
Alleluia	Jake Runestead	2023	1

[1] Pennsylvania Music Educators Association, "Festival Repertoire Lists," accessed March 9, 2025, https://www.pmea.net/festivals/repertoire-lists/.

SONG NAME	COMPOSER/ARRANGER	YEAR(S)	UNIQUE PERFORMANCES
America the Beautiful	arr. Jeffrey L. Webb	2023, 2024	2
Amor de Mi Alma	Z. Randall Stroope	2024	1
An di Heimat	Johannes Brahms	2024	1
Anah Dodi V'amar Li (from *Songs of My Beloved*)	Robert Applebaum	2023	1
And the Glory of the Lord (from *Messiah*)	George Frederic Handel	2024	1
and the swallow (psalm 84)	Caroline Shaw	2023	1
And Then Shall Your Light Break Forth (from *Elijah*)	Felix Mendelssohn	2024	1
Angele Dei	Susan LaBarr	2023	1
Antiphon (from *Five Mystical Songs*)	Ralph Vaughan Williams	2023	1
As I Have Loved You	Andrea Ramsey	2023	1
At the Round Earth's Imagined Corners	Williametta Spencer	2024	1
Ave Maria	John Conahan	2024	1
Awake the Trumpet's Lofty Sound (from *Samson*)	George Frideric Handel, arr. Patrick Liebergen	2023	1
Baba Yetu	arr. Roger Emerson	2024	1
Baba Yetu	Christopher Tin	2024	1
Balleilakka	arr. Ethan Sperry	2023	1
Beati Quorum Via	Charles Villiers Stanford	2024	1
Blow Ye the Trumpet (from *John Brown*)	Kirke Mechem	2023	1
Bogoroditse Devo (from *All-Night Vigil*)	Sergei Rachmaninoff	2023	1
Bridge Over Troubled Water	arr. Kirby Shaw	2024	1
Bright Morning Stars	Traditional Appalachian Song, arr. Shawn Kirchner	2024	1

SONG NAME	COMPOSER/ARRANGER	YEAR(S)	UNIQUE PERFORMANCES
Bura Fera	Traditional Yorta Yorta, arr. Ollie Lambert	2023	1
Butterfly	Mie Makaroff	2024	1
Can We Sing the Darkness to Light?	Kyle Pederson	2023, 2024	2
Cantique de Jean Racine	Gabriel Fauré	2023	1
Canto Que Amabas	Z. Randall Stroope	2023	1
Cells Planets	Erika Lloyd, arr. Vince Peterson	2023	1
Chapel Invocation	Johann Sebastian Bach	2023	1
Children Will Listen (from *Into the Woods*)	Stephen Sondheim, arr. Jacob Narverud	2024	1
Chindia	Alexandru Pascanu	2024	1
Ching-a-Ring-Chaw	arr. Irving Fine	2024	1
Choose Love	Kyle Pederson	2023	1
Cindy	American Folksong, arr. Mack Wilberg	2023	1
Come Let Us Join Our Cheerful Song	Richard DeLong	2023	1
Come To Me, My Love	Norman Dello Joio	2024	1
Cornerstone	Shawn L. Kirchner	2023	1
Crossing the Bar	Gwyneth Walker	2024	1
Cry Out, and Shout!	Knut Nystedt	2024	1
Daemon Irrepit Callidus	György Orbán	2024	1
Dancing on the Edges of Time	Craig Carnahan	2024	1
Daniel, Daniel, Servant of the Lord	arr. Undine S. Moore	2024	1
Danny Boy	arr. Joseph Flummerfelt	2024	1
Dirait-on (from *Les Chanson des Roses*)	Morten Lauridsen	2024	1
Disney Fly Medley	arr. Jamey Ray	2023	1

SONG NAME	COMPOSER/ARRANGER	YEAR(S)	UNIQUE PERFORMANCES
Do Not Be Afraid	Philip Stopford	2024	1
Down Among the Dead Men	Ralph Vaughan Williams	2023	1
Down in the Valley	arr. George Mead	2024	1
E Oru O	adapted by Rosephanye Powell	2023	1
Earth Song	Frank Ticheli	2024	1
El Grillo	Josquin de Prez	2023	1
Elijah Rock	Jester Hairston	2024	1
Elijah Rock	Moses Hogan	2024	1
Et in terra pax (from *Gloria*)	Antonio Vivaldi	2024	1
Ezekiel Saw de Wheel	William Dawson	2023	1
Fill My Life with Spring	David N. Childs	2024	1
Finale from *The Gondoliers*	arr. Henry Clough-Leighter & G. Wallace Woodworth	2024	1
Fire (from *Elements*)	Katerina Gimon	2023, 2024	2
Five Hebrew Love Songs	Eric Whitacre	2024	2
Flight Song	Kim André Arnesen	2023	1
Give Me Your Tired, Your Poor	Irving Berlin, arr. Roy Ringwald	2023	1
Glorious Everlasting	M. Thomas Cousins	2023	1
Go Down Moses	Mark Hayes	2024	2
Grace	Mark Hayes	2024	1
Grace Before Sleep	Susan LaBarr	2024	1
Great Day	arr. Marques L. A. Garrett	2023	1
Great God Almighty	Stacy V. Gibbs	2024	1
Gropen	arr. Gjermund Larsen	2024	1
Hallelujah	William David Brown	2024	1
Hark, I Hear the Harps Eternal	arr. Alice Parker	2023	1
Harriet Tubman	Rollo Dillworth	2024	1
He Watching Over Israel (from *Elijah*)	Felix Mendelssohn	2024	1

SONG NAME	COMPOSER/ARRANGER	YEAR(S)	UNIQUE PERFORMANCES
He's Got the Whole World in His Hands	arr. Cedric Dent	2024	1
Hear My Prayer, O Lord	Henry Purcell	2024	1
Hela Rotan	arr. Ken Steven	2023	1
His Eye Is On The Sparrow	arr. Robert T. Townsend & Stacey V. Gibbs	2024	1
His Light In Us	Kim André Arnesen	2023	1
Hold On (Just a Little While Longer)	arr. Remel Derrick	2023	1
Hold On!	arr. Marques L. A. Garrett	2023	1
Homeland	Z. Randall Stroope	2024	1
How Can I Cry?	Moira Gwendolyn Smiley	2024	1
How Can I Keep From Singing?	Gwyneth Walker	2023, 2024	2
How Do I Love Thee?	Eric Nelson	2024	2
How Lovely is Thy Dwelling Place	Johannes Brahms	2024	1
I Am Flying	Nan-Chang Chien	2024	1
I Am Glad	Daniel Schreiner	2023, 2024	2
I Am Loved	Christopher Harris	2023, 2024	2
I Conquer the World With Words	Jonathan Woody	2024	1
I Got a Key	Joni Jensen	2024	1
I Love You / What a Wonderful World	arr. Craig Hella Johnson	2023	2
I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud	Jasper Randall	2024	1
I Will Be Earth (from *Mornings Innocent*)	Gwenyth Walker	2023	1
I Will Sing	Michael Engelhardt	2023	1
I Will Sing	Rosephanye Powell	2023	1
Il bianco e dolce cigno	Jacques Arcadelt	2023	1
In Remembrance (from *Requiem*)	Eleanor Daley	2023	1
In Virtute Tua	Grzegorz G. Gorczycki, ed. William Bausano	2024	1

SONG NAME	COMPOSER/ARRANGER	YEAR(S)	UNIQUE PERFORMANCES
Incantations	Michael McGlynn	2024	1
Introitus (from *Requiem*)	José Maurício Nuñes García	2023	1
Invictus	Joshua Rist	2024	1
It Takes a Village	Joan Szymko	2023	1
It's A Long Way	Nell Shaw Cohen	2024	1
Jeremiah's Fire	Rollo Dilworth	2024	1
Jubilate Deo	Peter Anglea	2024	2
Ka waiata ki a Maria	Richard Puanaki	2024	1
Kindness (from *LOVE*)	William Payn	2023	1
Kyrie (from *Mass in E Flat*)	Josef Rheinberger	2024	1
Kyrie (from *Missa Brevis*, K. 220)	Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart	2024	2
Kyrie (from *Missa Brevis*, K. 275)	Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart	2023	1
Kyrie (from *Requiem*)	José Maurício Nuñes García	2023	1
Lacrymosa (from *Requiem*)	Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, ed. Cameron F. LaBarr	2023	1
Laudate Pueri	Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart	2023	1
Leron Leron Sinta	Traditional Filipino, arr. Saunder Choi	2024	1
Let Everything That Hath Breath	Jeffery Ames	2023	2
Let My Love Be Heard	Jake Runestad	2024	1
Let There Be Peace on Earth	arr. Jim Turk	2023	1
Let Your Heart Be Joyful	Linda Spevacek	2024	1
Liebeslieder Waltzes, No. 6	Johannes Brahms	2023	1
Light of a Clear Blue Morning	Dolly Parton, arr. Craig Hella Johnson	2023	1
Lincoln	Alex Berko	2024	1
Little Innocent Lamb	arr. Marshall Bartholomew	2023	1
Locus Iste	Anton Bruckner	2024	1
Measure Me, Sky	Elaine Hagenberg	2024	1
Media Vita	Kerensa Briggs	2023	1

SONG NAME	COMPOSER/ARRANGER	YEAR(S)	UNIQUE PERFORMANCES
Minoi, Minoi (Samoan Folksong)	arr. Christopher Marshall	2024	1
Modimo	arr. Michael Barrett	2023	1
Mon-Ke-Ya	Zack Taylor	2024	1
Music Down In My Soul	Moses Hogan	2024	1
My God is a Rock	arr. Ken Berg	2024	1
Namhla Kudibene	arr. Michael Barrett	2023	1
Nda Wana	arr. Michael Barrett	2024	1
No Color	Stacey V. Gibbs & Shawn Kirchner	2024	1
No Mirrors in My Nana's House (from *Crossings*)	Ysaye M. Barnwell	2024	1
O Clap Your Hands	M. Thomas Cousins	2024	1
O Love	Elaine Hagenberg	2023	1
O Lux Beata Trinitas	Andrej Makor	2024	1
O My Luve's Like a Red, Red Rose	René Clausen	2024	1
O Radiant Dawn	James MacMillan	2024	1
O Schöne Nacht	Johannes Brahms	2023, 2024	2
O Whistle and I'll Come To Ye My Love	Scottish Folksong, arr. Mack Wilberg	2023	1
Ohtul	Pärt Uusberg	2023	1
Omnia Sol (Let Your Heart Be Staid)	Z. Randall Stroope	2023	1
Os Justi	Anton Bruckner	2023, 2024	4
Peace I Leave With You	Amy Beach	2024	1
Peze Kafe	Sten Källman	2024	1
Pilgrims' Hymn	Stephen Paulus	2023	1
Plaudite Manibus	Branko Stark	2024	1
Please Stay	Jake Runestead	2023	1
Plenty Good Room	arr. William Henry Smith	2024	1
Praise the Lord (from *Judas Maccabaeus*)	George Frederic Handel	2023	1

SONG NAME	COMPOSER/ARRANGER	YEAR(S)	UNIQUE PERFORMANCES
Prayer of the Children	Kurt Bestor, arr. Andrea S. Klouse	2023	1
Rasa Sayang	Malaysian Folk Song, arr. Toh Ban Sheng	2023, 2024	2
Requiem	Erika Gilkyson, arr. Craig Hella Johnson	2023	1
Requiescat	Samuel Coleridge-Taylor	2023	1
Ride the Chariot	arr. William Henry Smith	2023	1
Ring Out Wild Bells	Jonathan Dove	2024	1
Rise Up	Jake Runestad	2023	1
Rise, Shine!	arr. Marques L.A. Garrett & Tom Trenney	2024	1
Rosas Pandan	arr. George Hernandez	2024	1
Salmo 150	Ernani Aguiar	2023	1
Salseo	Oscar Galián	2024	1
Sanctus	Richard Oswin	2024	1
Santo	Michael D. Mendoza	2024	1
She Took His Hands	Nicholas Cline	2024	1
Shenandoah	arr. Derric Johnson	2023	1
Shenandoah	arr. James Erb	2023, 2024	3
Shine Your Light	Greg Gilpin	2023	1
Shout Glory	Byron J. Smith	2024	1
Si Ch'io vorrei morire	Claudio Monteverdi	2023	1
Sicut Cervus	Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina	2023	1
Sign Me Up	Brandon A. Boyd	2024	1
Sing Gently	Eric Whitacre	2023	1
Sing Joyfully	William Byrd	2023	2
Sing to Me	Reginal Wright	2023	1
Sing to the Lord a New Song	Heinrich Schütz	2024	1
Sing Unto God (from *Judas Maccabaeus*)	George Frederic Handel	2024	1
Singkap Siaga	Tracy Wong	2023	1
Sit Down Servant	arr. Stacey V. Gibbs	2023, 2024	2
Siyahamba (from *Freedom is Coming*)	arr. Anders Nyberg	2023	1
So I'll Sing With My Voice	Dominick Argento	2024	1
Song (from *The Dream Keeper*)	William Averitt	2024	1

SONG NAME	COMPOSER/ARRANGER	YEAR(S)	UNIQUE PERFORMANCES
Song for Athene	John Tavener	2023	1
Song of Exaltation	John Ness Beck	2024	1
Song of Miriam	Elaine Hagenberg	2023	1
Soon I Will Be Done	arr. Marques L. A. Garrett	2024	1
Spanish Serenade	Edward Elgar	2024	1
Spirituals (from *Harlem Songs*)	Gwyneth Walker	2023	1
Spring Rain	Eriks Esenvalds	2024	1
Still I Rise	Rosephanye Powell	2023	1
Stomp on the Fire	Andrea Ramsey	2024	2
Sure on This Shining Night	Morten Lauridsen	2023	2
Surge, propera amica mea	Raffaella Aleotti	2023	1
Sweet Rivers	Shawn Kirchner	2023	1
Take Me to the Water	Rollo Dillworth	2023	1
TaReKiTa	Reena Esmail	2023	1
Tell My Father (from *The Civil War*)	arr. Andrea Ramsey	2024	1
That Ever I Saw	Darmon Meader	2024	1
That Which Remains	Andrea Ramsey	2023	1
The Argument	Francis Nesta	2024	1
The Awakening	Joseph Martin	2023	1
The Blue Ridge	Elaine Hagenberg	2023, 2024	3
The Conversion of Saul	Z. Randall Stroope	2024	1
The Ghost of Molly Maguire	arr. Gene Glickman	2023	1
The Gift to Sing	Marianne Forman	2023	1
The Ground	Ola Gjeilo	2023	1
The Last Words of David	Randall Thompson	2023, 2024	3
The Moon is Distant from the Sea	David Childs	2024	1
The Music of Stillness	Elaine Hagenberg	2023	2
The Peace of Wild Things	Jake Runestad	2024	1

SONG NAME	COMPOSER/ARRANGER	YEAR(S)	UNIQUE PERFORMANCES
The Promise of Living (from *The Tender Land*)	Aaron Copland	2024	1
The Road Home	Stephen Paulus	2024	1
The Roof	Andrea Ramsey	2023	2
The Rose	Ola Gjeilo	2024	1
The Sheepherder's Lament	Ronald Staheli	2023	1
The Star-Spangled Banner	arr. Ralph Egyd	2023	1
The Star-Spangled Banner	John Stafford Smith	2023	1
The Times They Are A-Changin'	arr. Adam Podd	2024	1
The Wellerman	arr. Jacob Narverud	2024	1
The Word was God	Rosephanye Powell	2024	1
There is No Rose	Phillip Stopford	2024	1
There Was A Time	Elaine Hagenberg	2023	1
This Little Light of Mine	Kari Ala-Pöllänen	2023	1
Threads of Joy	Tim Brent & Amanda Quist	2023	1
Three Poems from the Parlour	Eleanor Daley	2023	1
To See the Sky	Jocelyn Hagen	2023	1
To Sit and Dream	Rosephanye Powell	2023, 2024	3
To the Mothers in Brazil: Salve Regina	Lars Jansson, arr. Gunnar Eriksson	2024	1
Total Praise	Richard Smallwood	2023	1
Três Cantos Nativos dos Indios Kraó	arr. Marcos Leite	2023	1
True Colors	Matthew Brown	2024	1
Tuba	arr. Michael Barrett	2023, 2024	2
Tundra	Ola Gjeilo	2023	1
Tuttarana	Reena Esmail	2023	1
Ubi Caritas	Ola Gjeilo	2023	2
Untraveled Worlds	Paul Halley	2023	1
Vamuvamba	arr. Boniface Mganga	2024	1

SONG NAME	COMPOSER/ARRANGER	YEAR(S)	UNIQUE PERFORMANCES
Veni Sancte Spiritus	Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart	2023, 2024	2
Verleih uns Frieden	Felix Mendelssohn	2023	1
Viva Tutti	arr. Ralph Hunter	2023	1
Wake Up, My Spirit	Adolphus Hailstork	2023	1
Wana Baraka	arr. Shawn Kirchner	2023	1
Wanting Memories (from *Crossings*)	Ysaye M. Barnwell	2024	1
Wayfaring Stranger	arr. Michael Engelhardt	2024	1
We Are	Ysaye M. Barnwell	2024	1
We Beheld Once Again the Stars	Z. Randall Stroope	2023	1
We Can Mend the Sky	Jake Runestad	2023	1
We Shall Walk Through the Valley in Peace	arr. Undine S. Moore	2024	1
When God Decided to Invent	Joshua Shank	2023	1
When I Rise Up	Anthony Bernarducci	2023	1
Will the Circle Be Unbroken	arr. J. David Moore	2023	1
Will There Really Be A Morning	Victor C. Johnson	2023	1
With a Lily in Your Hand	Eric Whitacre	2023	1
With a Voice of Singing	Martin Shaw	2023	1
Witness	arr. Stacey V. Gibbs	2023	1
Worthy To Be Praised	Byron J. Smith	2023	1
You Do Not Walk Alone	Elaine Hagenberg	2024	1
You Stole My Love	Walter Cecil Macfarren	2024	1
Zadok the Priest	George Frideric Handel	2023	1
Zion's Walls	Aaron Copland	2023	1