



that someone will include barbershop on the list. Yet, if you spend a little time with any of the various quartets that are subsets of The Harmeneers Chorus, you might be surprised at the attention that they can draw.

I have had the privilege of being a part of several of their performances, as an actor in skits that tie the songs together. I recall driving home after one such engagement in Lynchburg. Having gone straight from the office to the theater, I had skipped dinner, and was ravenous.

There are chapters across the society that set very high standards of musical skill for acceptance to membership and to hear them perform is a delight. But the society is inclusive enough for there to be chapters whose first goal is for the members to experience the joy of singing to the best of their ability. Such is my chapter. Our audiences come away from our performances uplifted because they see the members' pure joy of singing and entertaining.

~ Gary Bennett

The Harmeneers put on an annual show in November, in which they perform several choral numbers, and also break out into individual quartets.

So, I decided to make a pit stop at McDonald's for a late night meal.

Just as I was sitting down to eat, one of

the quartets walked in the door. They spotted me immediately, and I invited them to join me. As we sat and ate, it was clear that these fellows really enjoyed one another's company, as they guffawed while trading insults and regaling me with stories.

After we finished, one of them stood up, and asked, "Well, boys – what do you think? Should we sing?" None hesitated as they stood up together in the crowded restaurant.

I remember thinking to myself that this might not be the best choice of venues for an impromptu barbershop recital. The place was full of mostly young people, representing a wide swath of cultures and interests. I found myself hoping that they would not be rude or discourteous to these guys as they laid their talents on the line amid the clamor of the crowd.

Someone blew a pitch pipe, and after just a few notes, the dining room fell silent, except for the glorious four part

harmony of my friends, singing songs that were older than the grandparents of most of those present. Not only did they enjoy the performance, they applauded enthusiastically, and asked for more. I have rarely seen young people display such a show of respect for their elders, but it was more than that: they enjoyed it.

This scene has been repeated on several occasions on which I had found myself in the company of one or the other of The Harmeneers' quartets. Music is indeed the universal language, and The Harmeneers are among its most capable ambassadors.

From the outside, The Harmeneers might appear to be a very exclusive club, with strict criteria for membership. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. They gladly welcome anyone who can carry a tune and would like to improve their skills. For the most part, none of the members are professional musicians, but they are associated with a national organization, and they have a qualified director who works with them to achieve a very polished sound.

The group has placed well in some regional and national competitions, and it's all the result of their dedication and love for what they do. As soon as they finish performing their annual show, they go right to work on the next year's show. They practice a repertoire of tunes regularly, and every year they try to learn a few new songs in keeping with the theme for the upcoming show.

The funds raised from their shows are used to provide scholarships for local youth who may be interested in pursuing musical education. They earn supplemental revenue by offering singing Valentines in February. For a relatively modest fee, they will send a quartet on site to the object of your affection. They'll travel to the job, school, hospital, or anywhere else in the area. After singing two songs, they will present a card and a silk rose to your intended.

Sometimes, they'll be asked to sing at an event that is raising money for a worthy cause, and they always try to accommodate. In addition to their passion for music, they all seem to share a strong sense of patriotism:

I know the membership consists of people from all

Tantalizing TRUFFLES

Bodacious BRITTLES

- Gourmet Chocolate
- Espresso Bar & Speciality Coffees
- Tea & Kombucha
- Pastries
- Cakes & Pies
- Breakfast & Lunch
- Full Service Catering
- Corporate & Personal Gifting

WINNER BEST OF SMITH MOUNTAIN LAKE AWARDS • 2016

Certified Chocolatier

(540) 297-LOVE (5683)

1035 Mercantile Street • Suite 101 • Moneta, VA 24121

www.StacysSweetSpot.com

Twitter Facebook Instagram Pinterest

Area's largest selection of outdoor furniture

Dining sets, seating groups, chaise lounges, umbrellas, hammocks, and more!

Your local dealer for

Award Winning Custom In-Ground Pool Builder

national pools

OF ROANOKE INC.

3112 Melrose Avenue, Roanoke, Virginia
540-345-7665 • www.nationalpools.com