

Society Board Member Report - Spring 2014

Your Society Board of Directors continue to serve the membership by reviewing the current state of the organization, analysing the information gathered from meetings and personal contact with the membership, considering options and opportunities presented, and providing a voice of the member in making decisions about the direction and dynamics of the Society.

In the past couple of months, the Board met at the Mid-Winter Convention in Long Beach, California, and held a conference call to conduct Society business. We reviewed the current financial standing, the membership trends and statistics, the requirements of our annual planning cycle, election of a replacement board member, revisions to the Society's Governance Manual and Bylaws, addressed an ethics violation issue, and responded to requests and recommendations from several of our Society committees.

The Mid-Winter Convention in Long Beach was very successful; from the kick-off party aboard the historic Queen Mary ocean liner, cum hotel, to the 20 youth choruses competing on stage, to Harmony University classes and the Seniors Quartet competition, to our special guest, Camille Kolles of El Sistema USA, this convention was a great success.

Financially, we continue to find ways to economize our resources. Convention revenues still fall below projections, however, we have managed to offset some losses through vacant staff positions and increased sales at Harmony Marketplace. The Society is attempting to shift away from member dues as the major revenue stream for operations and to explore new and innovative ways of earning funds to see us into our future. This may see us be more proactive in one of the things we do best - publish musical arrangements. We currently have an excellent relationship with the Hal Leonard Music Company and have agreements in place to build upon their marketing abilities.

Our membership slide seems to be leveling off, as we sit just below 23,000 members. Of continuing concern is the number of non-renewals in the first and second year of membership. We are getting men coming through the door, but how do we keep them engaged and involved in our organization and give them the kind of experience they require? We are trying to tackle that issue and provide the tools to help every chapter address this concern. In the future, you may see some new membership models, like an ensemble-based membership or other variation to allow for greater flexibility in having people belong to the Barbershop Harmony Society.

The Annual Planning Cycle committee addressed the Society's 2014 AIMS and recommended that we need to make them more specific and measurable, and to build them for multiple years to better provide direction and resource allocation for the future. Part of this will be in the expansion of our reach through collaboration with other, like-minded organizations, such as the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) and the El Sistema program. We are excited about these potential partnerships and the growth we can have in helping to train new voices with barbershop music.

Lastly, I encourage you to take advantage of the many Society-sponsored events; from online Harmony University classes, to our upcoming International Convention in Las Vegas, Nevada - June 29 to July 6 at the MGM Hotel, Harmony University at Belmont University in Nashville, TN - July 27 to August 3, and the Midwinter Convention in New Orleans, Louisiana - January 6 to 11, 2015. There is so much happening and so many things available to you as a member. Make sure you're getting the best value for your membership in the Barbershop Harmony Society. Together, we are making the music that is making a difference.

Gerry Borden