

Saratoga Soundtrack

Hooked on Harmony



They're a young singing group with a sweet sound and big ambitions.

By Amy E. Tucker

The founding members of Saratoga Soundtrack, formed last fall to bring women's barbershop singing to the area, say Saratoga Springs has turned out to be the perfect location for their initiative in harmony.

"Saratoga was untapped (for women's barbershopping), so we thought it would be a great place to start a new chorus, to get in on the ground level and make it what we wanted it to be," explained Jenn Hunter, a Saratoga Springs resident who sings baritone and is a team leader.

"Saratoga has such a rich connection to the arts," she added, "so we knew we'd get a lot of support. The ballet is here and the (men's) Racing City Chorus is here, so people know about barbershop music."

What Is Barbershop Singing?

Barbershop harmony is a musical style in which songs are arranged in four-part harmony and sung a cappella, or without accompaniment. What differentiates barbershop from other musical styles is that the top (tenor) part is sung in harmony, and it's the second (alto) part that's the melody. The final two harmonies are sung in baritone and bass.

It's called "barbershopping" because it evolved at a time when the local barbershop was a social center of many communities, from the 1860s to the 1920s.



One year later, the Saratoga Soundtrack has 15 members of all ages and backgrounds who are eagerly preparing for an exhibition appearance in April at a regional competition sponsored by Sweet Adelines International, the educational and governing body for women's barbershop. As a new group, the Soundtrack will not formally compete against other choruses, but their performance at regionals in Syracuse will be an important opportunity to be evaluated.

Saratoga Soundtrack Director Nancy Faddegon of Latham served for many years as assistant director of the Capitaland Chorus, the outstanding Albany chapter of Sweet Adelines.

"It's a lot of fun, and easy to get hooked on the harmony," said Faddegon, who sings tenor. "It's challenging to sing a cappella. You have to work at it, to learn your part and know how to sing it so that you're in sync with the other parts. But, when you sing it right, it creates a euphoric feeling."

Faddegon, who also arranges music for the chorus, selects songs with a mix of contemporary styles and old standards. She said that before joining Sweet Adelines in 1980 as a member of the Albany group, she had an "average" musical background.

"I sang in glee clubs and played piano and guitar, but my biggest musical growth has been through this organization," Faddegon said. "It's an educational organization with lots of opportunities to learn as much as you want about the art form and music theory in general."

Twenty-two-year-old Alexis De Persia-Norelli of Saratoga Springs, a bass who is the chorus's youngest member, joined because she wanted to continue singing after college.

"Saratoga is perfect; it's such an arts town," De Persia-Norelli explained. "The people here love music and the arts, and there are lots of street festivals and oppor-

tunities to showcase performances."

Saratoga Soundtrack, whose members meet weekly at the Methodist Church of Saratoga Springs on Henning Road, is now chartering to join Sweet Adelines



International. The chorus auditioned last August and was approved for the next step, which will allow them to secure non-profit status to begin fund-raising and accept charitable donations.

"Of course, the fund-raising that we like to do best is to perform," said Faddegon. "Any money that we make for performances goes back into purchasing music, costuming and travel."

The group's current focus is on recruiting new members and developing the ones that have already joined.

"Our goals are still forming because we're so new," said Hunter. "We're focusing on performing good music and forming the sisterhood that comes from singing together in a chorus. We want to hold ourselves up to a high level of singing and eventually compete."

Region 16 of the Sweet Adelines stretches

from Albany to the Canadian border, but that didn't daunt Faddegon, who formed a quartet with a fourth singer living in Canada.

"We get together once a month," she

explained. "And, thanks to technology, we send each other sound files over the computer to practice in between."

Hunter said that while some people think of Sweet Adelines as older women with an old-fashioned style of music, that's not the case. "It's really a modern organization with a forward-thinking way of looking at performance, entertainment and women," she said.

"We have a wide range of women from stay-at-home moms, like me, to professional women, and we range from our 20s to our 50s. We're linked through our love of music. It transcends all of our differences." ■ ■ ■

Amy E. Tucker is a freelance writer and editor from Clifton Park, N.Y.

For more information on women's Barbershop in Saratoga, visit: <http://www.SaratogaSoundtrack.org>.