

The Masters of Harmony
2021 - 2025 Vision Statement
and Strategic Plan

July 2021



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Executive Summary

Masters of Harmony Mission Statement

The Masters of Harmony is a male musical ensemble, performing primarily in the barbershop style and dedicated to musical excellence. Our mission is to preserve the uniquely American art form known as barbershop harmony, promote fellowship among our members, encourage music appreciation in schools and the community, contribute to musical causes, and support other singing organizations.

(Adopted 11/20/06)

Over the past five months, the board of the Greater Los Angeles Chapter of the Barbershop Harmony Society concluded that the chorus should focus itself outward, engaging more in service and celebration with the local community while still sustaining its historic connection to the international barbershop world if we are to grow and prosper. As the Masters of Harmony enters its thirty-sixth year, the leadership of the chorus has developed this plan to enhance the organization and guide its activities for the next four years.

This plan will guide a new effort to move us down that path. After consulting with chorus members, researching comparable choruses in the region, and evaluating the Masters' own status and needs, the board has adopted a new vision statement supported by four goals and related objectives. The vision, goals and objectives seek to support our Mission Statement and sustain the chorus's historic excellence while better positioning it to serve the broader community.

Masters of Harmony Vision Statement

The Masters of Harmony is an entertaining and dynamic vocal ensemble recognized by a broad, worldwide audience for its award-winning performances.

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Introduction

Purpose

This vision / strategic plan provides focus and direction for the next four years, as the Masters of Harmony move through our fourth decade of vocal excellence.

In 2020, the Masters celebrated our 35th anniversary as a member chorus of the international Barbershop Harmony Society. The chorus has experienced remarkable success over those three and a half decades: we have earned nine gold medals in international barbershop choral competition; we have appeared at venues worldwide and brought delight in vocal harmony to countless thousands throughout Los Angeles and the Southern California region.

This document is intended to provide a chorus vision for the next four years. But more broadly, it will move the chorus down the path of greater recognition and success at home – a path that will allow the Masters of Harmony a secure place in the Southern California choral community.

Current Environment

The Masters of Harmony is returning from a pandemic-imposed lockdown after 15 months. We continued our weekly rehearsals using computer technology not possible a few years back. Zoom and JackTrip kept us together. The world changed and the “downtime” was not wasted by the chorus leadership.

Director Alan Gordon challenged us at our annual (virtual) banquet to examine what we do and why we do it. He put emphasis on the “it.” Several weeks later Kevin Keller (BHS Hall of Famer) presented a keynote address at the virtual midwinter convention. Kevin encouraged us to use this time to discover the “What ifs” and the possibilities. The chapter’s board of directors under the leadership of Joe D’Amore did just that.

The board prepared a list of “What ifs” that ran the gamut of “wow” to “no way.” Nothing was too out there. The board then boiled the list down to four goals. This document lays out the goals and the subgoals.

A key takeaway from the exercise was that we have been self-limiting our “it” to the “Barbershop Bubble” of fans and singers. This is a declining population. We need to break out and become known outside that bubble. By doing so we can expand the bubble.

Championship excellence will always be our guiding light, and we should reflect that light onto a greater audience.

Vision and Objectives Overview

Vision

The Masters of Harmony is an entertaining and dynamic vocal ensemble recognized by a broad, worldwide audience for its award-winning performances.

Objectives

- Increase future membership growth by tapping into experienced male singers from other musical genres.
- Broaden our patron base across diversified cultural communities and emphasize cultural equality and inclusion.
- Bring our art form to our local and regional communities to affect future growth and possible increased revenue.
- Increase community awareness and attract qualified singers while giving back to Greater Los Angeles and becoming relevant outside the “Barbershop Bubble.”
- Focus outward and engage more in service and celebrations with the local community while still maintaining our historic connection to the international barbershop world.
- Create the type of exposure that will attract men who are looking for the same thing we experience when we get together or take the stage.
- Implement marketing and public relations strategies to secure convention performance opportunities.
- Align ourselves with the music industry for commercial gigs that will give us the exposure we seek.
- Explore new performance venues where our four-part, a cappella / barbershop art form has limited exposure.

Goal 1

Modernize and enhance our show performances...



DESCRIPTION

The Masters are known for vocal excellence in a traditional concert setting. While our existing audience members expect traditional performances, they love the unexpected break from the routine, i.e., “Under the Sea” and “Betelehemu.” Contemporary a cappella singers and audiences expect more. More variety may attract a diverse audience and introduce the Masters to potential singers.

GOAL 1.1

Provide both live and virtual performances. Live performances may also be streamed.

GOAL 1.2

Give our singers a wider variety of performance opportunities to keep them engaged and looking forward to the next event.

GOAL 1.3

Develop innovative and interesting scripts for our shows that support a strong show theme. Choose songs that match the theme and tell an enchanting and entertaining story.

OUTCOME AND IMPACT

Completing this goal will enhance our reputation as consummate performers and encourage a broader (new to Barbershop) audience. Our shows will become “must-see” events and our singers will enjoy a more immersive performance experience. Southern California will mark their calendars for our annual events. **(See Goal 4.3)**

Goal 2



Encourage/form smaller, Masters Ensemble-type groups and/or quartets to perform the music of various genres and do shows or parts of shows...

DESCRIPTION

Tradition holds that performing with less than 60 singers is not a true Masters' performance. This barrier can limit the number of clients and the variety of performances we book. Specialized ensembles can provide a unique offering, e.g., Gospel, jazz, mixed voice. We will be able to tailor the performance to the client and venue.

GOAL 2.1

Provide smaller groups for certain events due to space or other requirements.

GOAL 2.2

Use Masters of Harmony members and/or collaborate with other choruses and/or singing groups in the area (Barbershop Harmony Society, Sweet Adelines International, Harmony Incorporated, mixed groups, ensembles from local churches, schools, colleges, etc.)

GOAL 2.3

Maintain director/music team artistic and quality control and ensure these groups are led autonomously and by qualified individuals.

GOAL 2.4

Provide variety and greater interest in our shows.

GOAL 2.5

Develop potential to increase patron base and membership in the Masters of Harmony.

GOAL 2.6

Showcase our talent as a premier, performing chorus by creating "must-see" shows for any audience. (*See Goal 1*)

OUTCOME AND IMPACT

Completing this goal will lead to greater performance flexibility and expand our "market" providing more revenue and exposure for the Masters. It will also give our members more opportunities to entertain.

Goal 3

Collaborate with other choruses and/or choral groups in the area...



DESCRIPTION

Los Angeles has a vibrant and diverse choral community. The Masters participate in a small corner of that world. We have extraordinary tools that we can share and access to many more via BHS. By seeking out other singing organizations to support and collaborate, the Masters will gain much more than we venture. The return on investment will be outstanding.

GOAL 3.1

Identify and collaborate with others to form ensembles (**Goal 2.2**). Include the Barbershop Harmony Society, Sweet Adelines international, Harmony Incorporated, mixed groups, ensembles from local churches, schools, colleges, etc. This could become part of the smaller groups/ensembles component.

GOAL 3.2

Identify and join choral arts groups both national and regional, e.g., Chorus America and the Contemporary A Cappella Society of America.

GOAL 3.3

Participate in regional workshops and showcases, e.g., the Los Angeles A Cappella Festival.

GOAL 3.4

Leverage the Masters' relationship with choral educators at all levels to support their music programs.

OUTCOME AND IMPACT

Completing this goal will lead to greater awareness of the Masters and our contributions to the choral community. Community outreach will support current and future grant requests. It will surface performance opportunities and encourage more guests to our rehearsals and audition for membership.

Goal 4

Increase awareness of the Masters brand throughout the Greater Los Angeles area...



DESCRIPTION

The Masters of Harmony often describe ourselves as “the best-kept secret in Southern California.” Although the Masters are world renowned in the “Barbershop Bubble,” most of the local community is unaware of our existence. The chorus will engage in an organized branding and public communications campaign to increase regional awareness of the benefits we offer to the community.

GOAL 4.1 Gain understanding of brand awareness.

The lack of awareness of the Masters is partly a result of the chorus’s own lack of awareness of what our brand is or should be, or how to convey that publicly. The chorus leadership will engage in a new effort to understand our brand and how brand communication will enhance community visibility.

GOAL 4.2 Develop and execute a marketing plan.

For many years, the Masters have marketed individual events separately with no coordinated strategy and no general marketing of the chorus’s work. In tandem with developing a distinct brand, the chorus will adopt a new marketing effort that highlights the many aspects of the chorus’s contributions to the community as well as individual concert programs.

GOAL 4.3 Hold a predictable concert season and recognizable annual event.

Over the last few years, the Masters-produced concerts have become unpredictable, with venues and dates changing annually. Even dedicated fans have had to work to track the performances. The chorus will establish a predictable concert schedule in predictable venues with the target of establishing an annual schedule that may be marketed well in advance as a concert “season.”

OUTCOME AND IMPACT

Completing this goal will lead to greater awareness of the Masters and our contributions to the community, from the schools and churches of Los Angeles to the residents of the greater Southern California area. The Masters will expand our social media followers by an order of magnitude, appear in a dozen news stories each year, and drop the tag of “the best-kept secret in Southern California.” The resulting improved awareness of the chorus will expand audiences and singing opportunities, bringing the life-affirming value of vocal harmony to hundreds more people every year.

Path Forward



Implementation is the obvious challenge presented by this vision/strategic plan. As always, the Masters will rely on many members, emeriti, and family to achieve these milestones.

The plan is structured so that success of each subgoal will make remaining aspects of the plan easier to achieve. Thus, the completion of a few initial steps toward each goal should improve the chances of success for all and increase enthusiasm toward reaching the goals. We expect that, with organized effort, the dedication and support of our members and supporters will bring the plan to fulfillment.

The chapter president will appoint a chapter officer to oversee the execution of the plan.

As the Masters begin to work through these initial activities, the operations teams will also begin to identify further activities necessary to achieve the goals and objectives. The board of directors will review the actions taken annually, as well as further plans developed by the operations teams. These annual reviews, in addition to regular board meetings, will ensure plan implementation and identify any needs for plan revision.

Success will be measured by the number and variety of performances and new singers at rehearsals. Our commitment to excellence will not change.

We are the Masters of Harmony!



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