

Love Songs in Reading PA

By Larry Thren, FFS Eastern Pennsylvania

On an early Fall Sunday afternoon at the Miller Center, the Arts Center of the Reading Area Community College, the Freshmen brought their new Love Songs to a familiar-with-their-sound audience. And if rousing applause after each of the seven songs wasn't proof enough, the CD sales and conversations at the sales table at intermission and after the concert was confirmation – these knowledgeable Freshmen fans loved all seven of them from the newest CD – Love Songs.

Included in the program of twenty songs were the following "Love Songs" – *With Plenty Of Money And You, As Long As I'm Dreaming, Only Trust Your Heart, Stardust, A Nightingale Sang In Berkeley Square, These Foolish Things*, and *I Love You* (Brian, keep writing songs of this caliber!)

The special "ladies" of the Freshmen program namely, Nancy, Mam'selle and Laura, all evoked the familiar audience "oohs and ahhs".

Before introducing "Nancy", Curtis focused the audience by asking "How many Nancys are here today?" To Curtis' surprise there were none.

Later, Bob announced the song "Laura" and drew considerable laughter with the second dedication to "all the Nancys in the audience."

The most poignant moment during the concert came when Bob established a bit of Freshmen history with the audience, stating the "The current Freshmen have been together since 2001. But the Freshmen started in 1948." He then dedicated the next song to the very first Freshmen: Bob, Ross, Don and Hal as he introduced *It's A Blue World*. When comparing the "oohs and ahhs" during this concert, the zenith occurred at this moment, and the customary hearty applause as the Freshmen sang the first couple of measures.

What a great concert – backed by over fifty musicians of the Reading Pops Orchestra on all but two songs. Under the direction of Dr. Willis Rapp, I have never heard the Reading Pops sound better.

I have been listening and attending Freshmen concerts for over fifty years – and this one with the Reading Pops was one of the best – Ohhhh, those LOVE SONGS!

CODA: Back to 2013 by Neil Lantz (continued from page 2)

In early September, 460 members from 32 states and five countries attended the 26th annual FFS Convention, held in Fort Wayne, Indiana to celebrate the 65th anniversary of The Freshmen. Joining the current guys, in remembrance of the original group's first professional contract which began on September 20, 1948 at the 113 Club in Fort Wayne, were former members Bill Comstock, Greg Stegeman, Rod Henley, Kirk Marcy, and widows Sue Barbour and Betty Kratzsch. A rousing jam session Thursday night featured the talents of several Freshmen and our members. Friday night, The Freshmen wowed the dinner crowd with their memorable self-contained show, a throwback to 1948. Saturday night's event was a delightful and classy evening as The Freshmen offered tune after tune from their Love Songs CD, accompanied by members of the Fort Wayne Philharmonic Orchestra, under the guest direction of Dr. Rod Henley. Indeed till three days of the convention offered a wonderful musical (and social) experience for FFS members who made it to Fort Wayne.

In the way of business in 2013, the Corporate Board of Directors named long-time Freshmen fans and Society leaders Barbara (Babs) Frederich and Dorothy (Dot) Lydic as Emeritus members of the Board, joining John Bangs with this well deserved honor. Dot and Babs, like so many of our members, have proudly supported The Freshmen since the early years of the group. In additional action by the Board, Mrs. Ross (Sue) Barbour was elected as the newest Board member. It goes without saying, but I'll say it anyway, that the Board looks forward to Sue's insight and historical perspective in the work of our organization. Welcome aboard, Sue!

October brought a big surprise to our membership as we learned that Vince Johnson had decided to leave The Freshmen to pursue other musical opportunities. Vince was a valued member of the group for thirteen years and made countless friends across the ranks of FFS members. However, in the world of music, as in most other professions, change is inevitable; and we certainly offer Vince our appreciation and very best wishes on wherever his musical interest and expertise may lead him.

Stepping in to complete our favorite group as the 24th member of The Four Freshmen, we welcome guitar virtuoso Stein Malvey from Minnesota. Stein came highly recommended by Brian, Bob, and Curtis, and made his first appearance with The Freshmen on October 5 in Newark, New Jersey. He sings the second part and Curtis has taken over the baritone voice. Instrumentally, Brian moved to bass and Stein took over the lead guitar part. After an intense October rehearsal period in Las Vegas, Group 23 was back on the road beginning on November 1 in San Luis Obispo, California, before crossing the country a few days later to North Tonawanda, New York and then on to Tennessee, Kansas, and Florida.

As of September 3, Membership Director Chaz Cone reported that we had added 133 new households (single and family) to our membership. Our growth in new members has continued to increase since 2008. As of this writing, December 15, Chaz reports that our actual 2013 year-to-date growth is 165 new households. So our growth is healthy; however, our challenge is retention. Looking to the years ahead, please take this as a gentle reminder for each of you to renew your membership when the time comes. As we and our organization age, retention of our membership will be the key to the health and stability of the Society.

There you have it. 2013 was a great year for the Society, and I'm optimistic that 2014 will be even better. As the last measures of this "Coda," and on a personal note, I want to thank all of you for your continued interest and support of The Four Freshmen and the Four Freshmen Society. It is my honor to be your President and I look forward to meeting many of you whom I haven't yet met and to renewing old acquaintances with as many as possible at our 2014 Convention, October 2-4, in Tampa, Florida. I hope to see you then.