

A tall San Francisco trombone player in Northern California's Rossmoor Big Band and FFS member with a rich and active music background suggested at our Portland convention that the unique Freshmen harmony, four voices making a five sound is most unusual. Bart Miller inquired - "Can we talk about it (maybe as a way to grow the FF fan base)?" And, we did. Former FF followers have done so in the past, putting four voices together in music language we all could comprehend. Bart Miller, dealing in real estate during the business day, desired to dig into the depths of THE SOUND. What better direction to take than request Ross Barbour to delve into the subject? Ross here offers a new intro to the comprehensive Mosaic Record album (The Capitol Years) notes and description of the FF Sound. Thanks Bart for your spark and signal that Ross return to the original charts, signature, and FF contributions to vocal jazz harmony. Growing the so-called fan base is always a concern of the Society and it remains on our long view agenda. Take it, Ross!

Dick Baldwin
FFS President

THE UNIQUE FRESHMEN SOUND by Ross Barbour

The Freshmen wanted to sing five-part chords, but they had only four voices. We found, if we sang the four harmonies correctly, spread the chord over a wide area and chose the right notes, our sound caused a harmonic vibration in the listener's ear. That harmonic note is called an "overtone". When we sang four notes, and the listener's ear made up one, the listener was hearing a 5-note chord by four voices. Of course, there are many other ingredients to the prescription.

GOOD MEN

First, you must find three other guys who have the same dream you have, guys who will like each other and who's voices sound like a quartet, and who play the correct instruments. Oh . . . and they'll have to be willing to rehearse a lot to perfect the sound, and to travel a lot. When you have all that, you start with these other things.

USE VOLUME

Don't be timid even on slow songs. You decided to make this sound, so make it broadly and proudly. Put yourself into it, and care a lot. If you love it, you'll make each chord exciting.

PRONOUNCE

Each word should be pronounced the same way by all members. If he is singing "Ooooo" with a smile, correct him. "Ooooo" and "Oh" require a round mouth, and never sing "yew". Practice that until it becomes a habit. If you are singing "Tiiime," and he is singing "Timmme," you must agree on one or the other. Never sing "Tieem".

NO VIBRATO

This is important. Read it twice. Vibrato kills quartet chords. If you have a vibrato, lose it. If you can't lose it, go to another group. You may use the vibrato during a vocal solo only.

GOOD SONG

Choose a song that lends itself to the good chords you plan to sing. Then, sing every chord that will fit. Don't overdo and become absurd. Try to make the song prettier. We usually sang the melody "as written" the first time through out of respect for the author. We made our changes in the second time through.