

Our
President,
**Neil
Lantz**



How About the Number “Four”?

Despite the comings and goings of countless popular vocal jazz groups over the past seven decades, none can compare with the wonderful uninterrupted record of the Four Freshmen. And, as members of the Society, we are so fortunate to be able to enjoy the long musical history of our favorite group and to have another opportunity at this year's convention to get “up close and personal” with the guys. We very much appreciate the presence and participation of Group #25 again this year and, as always, we welcome Bob, Stein, Tommy, and Jon to the 31st annual gathering of the best fan club in the world!

The more I thought about the name FOUR FRESHMEN, the more I began to recall the names of several other popular jazz and pop vocal groups that began a few years after the Freshmen and included the word or number “Four” in their names – The Four Aces (1950), Four Lads (1950), Four Coins (1952), Four Tops (1953), Four Preps (1956), Kirby Stone Four (1958), and the Four Seasons (1960). A few years later, along came the Four King Cousins (1966) and more recently Just 4 Kicks with FF alum Kirk Marcy. And, of course there are a few other vocal quartets worth mentioning, although not named the Four “somethings.” Arguably, that list would include the Ames Brothers (1948), Crew Cuts (1952), Hi-Los (1953), Manhattan Transfer (1969), and the Singers Unlimited (1971). Admitting my favoritism, however, none has enjoyed the sustained success of the Four Freshmen. Unlike the Four Freshmen, many have come and gone.

My apologies if I've omitted any of your favorite “fours” of which there may be a few. However, my point is a simple one. The performance history of those listed above has been long for some, while relatively short for others. In any case, no vocal jazz/pop quartet has matched the 70 year uninterrupted performance history of the Four Freshmen! We members of the Four Freshmen Society should indeed be thankful for our wonderful memories of the Freshmen groups that have gone before and proud of our unwavering support of today's lineup, Group #25. I look forward to seeing them and you at the Convention this October in South Bend.

FN JULY, AUGUST, SEPTEMBER 2018

Stages of Life

by Bob Ferreira

The Summer months always bring a sense of nostalgia and reflection for me, for it was in June of 1992 that I was flown down from Seattle to Las Vegas for a mere four hours to audition for this storied group. It was July of that same year I officially became a “Freshmen,” and August 1st when I made Las Vegas my new home.

Like all my predecessors, my years in this group have been spent traveling the world in search of stages on which to perform this great music and I consider myself blessed to have entertained on some of the most beautiful, prestigious, and unique stages in the world, but what is it that really makes a stage so incredible to perform on? For me, was it the thrill of standing on the 50-yard line singing the Star Spangled Banner at Three Rivers Stadium in Pittsburgh for a Monday Night Football game? Was it the joy of experiencing the unrivaled acoustics when we performed at The Great Hall of Moscow? Was it the sizable yet intimate ambiance of the historic Chat Noir Cabaret Theater in Oslo, Norway? Perhaps it was the intensity that was felt from playing the multitude of tiny, crowded, and sometimes smoke-filled clubs like “Birdland” in Tokyo or the humble little rooms like The Jouge Gallery in the alpine-esque village of Fuchu, Japan? Or, in keeping with my Japan experiences, could it have been the sheer uniqueness of performing at a modern day version of a Geisha house in downtown Hiroshima? All these examples are just a few of the wonderful memories I have of some very unique and special moments on stage, and I didn't even really touch on all the amazing venues I have played right here in the USA! Yet, after all this the question still stands... What is it that makes a stage so incredible to perform on?

Like most things in life, answers to even the simplest of questions can or should evolve with our experiences, and one can only hope that those answers will be enriched with humble wisdom from having lived those experiences. For example, if one were to ask me 25 years ago what it was that made a concert stage so amazing to perform on I might have answered:

“I don't know. Maybe a stage that is in a grand hall and able to seat hundreds or thousands of screaming fans.”

If you were to ask me the same question 15 years ago I might have answered: “You know, probably a hall that isn't necessarily huge, but has wonderful acoustics and has beautiful aesthetics.”

Nowadays, if that same question were to be posed to me I would express my appreciation for a specific venue, but my general answer is simply:

“People.”

This certainly touches on one of the basic premises of my previous article “APPLES AND ORANGES,” so forgive the redundancy, but one thing I have certainly learned in this long road trip of mine is that no matter how large or small, reverberant or dry, ornate or utilitarian a venue may be these venues are only as good as the crews and staffs who run them and the fans who fill their seats to support them and their performances. Our core purpose as entertaining musicians is to improve the human experience through a mutual love and the ubiquitous language of music. In the big scheme of things these types of venues are built to accentuate that human experience. Without people these “grand halls” are mere empty edifices of impressive (or perhaps dismissive) architecture. I have more fond memories of the wonderful and interesting souls I have had the privilege of experiencing than I would ever have in just “Playing a beautiful hall.” I have come to appreciate these interactions and developing friendships more and more as the years roll on. I have seen how the stages in my life as a Four Freshmen have evolved in unison with the stages of my life as a simple human being. My humble conclusion is that I am happy to have shared these ‘stages’ with so many amazing people. Whether an entertainer or accountant, a painter of portraits or painter of houses, gregarious or reclusive in nature, I hope you all hold as profound an appreciation for the ‘stages’ on which you have performed in your lives and hold dear all those who have made those experiences worth cherishing.