Barbershop Choral Music in Edmonton

The musical world has many different genres such as classical, jazz, country and western, and so forth. Unique among all of these is acappella four-part harmony singing. Originating in the United States, it is a blend of bass, baritone, lead or melody, and tenor voices that unite to form what is commonly known as Barbershop harmony. This musical art form is performed by both men and women in chorus and quartet settings.

While this form of choral music was very popular in the late 1800’s through the early 1900’s, its popularity had begun to fade by the 1930’s. In response to its decline, 26 men gathered at the Roof Garden of the Tulsa Club in Tulsa, Oklahoma, to share an evening of Barbershop harmony. From that meeting evolved the Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barber Shop Quartet Singing in America, more commonly known as SPEBSQSA. From this modest beginning, this society, now rebranded as the Barbershop Harmony Society, is the acappella home of over 14,000 members singing with 760 choruses in 14 countries.

Edmonton became part of this musical fellowship in 1954 with the chartering of the Edmonton chapter of SPEBSQSA. Its chorus, the Oil Capital Chorus, performed at various venues with its first show held in May of 1955 at the Victoria High School auditorium. As well, it was one of the inaugural performances for the newly opened Edmonton Jubilee Auditorium in 1957. In later years the chorus name was changed to Klondike Chordsmen in keeping with the Klondike Days theme of Edmonton’s summer-time celebration.

Barbershop harmony continues to be part of the Edmonton musical scene with the Grove City Chorus, chartered in 1992, sharing four-part acappella harmony with appreciative audiences at a variety of public and private performances such baseball games, seniors’ homes, Fort Edmonton Park, church halls, etc. Currently based at Aldergrove Community League Hall, the chorus welcomes invitations to entertain. They also invite men who love to sing to join the chorus and help share the ringing chords of Barbershop harmony.

Further information is available at the chorus website, ebhchorus.ca, or by phoning Les at 780-222-7844.