

R.A.W.

A RADICAL APPROACH TO WOODSHEDDING



Book 1A: The R.A.W. Manual

FOLK METHODS FOR BARBERSHOP

First Edition – St. Louis 2026

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This woodshedder’s book belongs to:



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Foreword

by Melody Hine

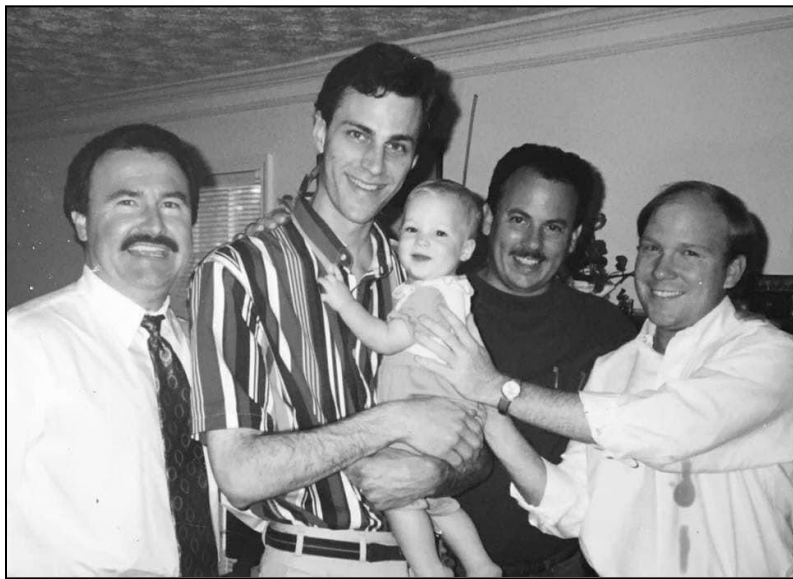
As a fourth generation barbershopper, I understand the value of heritage. Barbershoppers should be connected to our roots and to the aspects of our style that distinguish us from other forms of a cappella singing. Among those aspects is the art of woodshedding, though if you walked into a woodshedding room in the recent past, you might not be convinced of its current relevance.

Additionally, as a former public school music educator, I believe in the importance of ear training. Singing barbershop, due to the nature of how we tune using overtones, is essentially one long ear training exercise. Even more auditory-based is the activity of woodshedding. What a unique and beautiful skill to be able to listen to the movements of the voices around you and react accordingly!

And yet, for all its benefits, a lot of barbershoppers avoid woodshedding. Singing in a quartet can already be challenging and scary on its own. Add to that the perceived threat of “being wrong” or not knowing what to do in front of others in a woodshedding circle, and that understandably may be enough to activate someone’s anxieties and discourage them from trying.

This is where the Radical Approach to Woodshedding comes in. My friends involved in developing this approach have poured their barbershop hearts and music educator minds into this book, creating a reliable procedure for singers of all skill and experience levels. It is my hope and belief that this approach will bring folks into the woodshedding world who would otherwise be too afraid to give it a try, and will re-popularize woodshedding at our barbershop conventions and in our communities. Applying this approach will connect us to our historical roots and to one another, and will make barbershop more accessible to the average singer. We are sustaining the barbershop style and culture into the future with a modern, practical application of one of our defining traditions.

My grandad, Thom Hine, used to say, “If you want to sing tags, you gotta have sharp elbows.” Let’s invite people into our woodshedding circles so they don’t have to find their own way in. Whether you’re reading this as a participant or as a leader, this Radical Approach to Woodshedding is definitely for you. Let’s ring one!



INTRODUCTION

About the RAW Project

To us, woodshedding refers to the discovery and refinement of aural (by ear) four-part harmony in a distinct barbershop style. The purpose of the Radical Approach to Woodshedding (RAW) project is to increase access to the fundamental skill of woodshedding within the international barbershop music community by providing high-quality resources for successful practice. We call our method “radical” because we feel it is a departure from the traditional approaches to woodshedding, in that we strive to blend a broad understanding of American barbershop music history with an inclusive beginner’s aural pedagogy. After all, aural vocal harmony is older than barbershop itself, and ought to be accessible to nearly everyone.

The collaborators behind RAW aim to make woodshedding a cornerstone of barbershop education. This project is the collective effort of a growing number of barbershoppers: performers, arrangers, educators, directors, learning track creators, theorists, and historians alike. We are united in the belief that woodshedding is both an accessible skill and a missing pillar in the culture around barbershop harmony. We are so glad this book has reached you!

Contributors to the RAW project are making a sustained effort to:

1. Better recognize the early African-American roots of barbershop harmony’s development, and the deliberate exclusion of improvised music made by Black musicians across the 19th and 20th centuries from the commonly-told barbershop history,
2. Encourage enjoyable woodshedding experiences within our local, regional, and international barbershop communities,

3. Create and distribute FREE high-quality resources for woodshedding practice, and
4. Revitalize and innovate upon the barbershop aural folk tradition.

This book should prepare you to fluently lead or participate in a woodshedding session using RAW resources. We have included some essays on why woodshedding is important, as well as lessons, exercises, and repertoire for singers of all experience levels venturing into woodshedding.

We hope you will try our methods and consider sharing your reflections with our team so that we can improve our methods & materials in the future. This project relies on the volunteer time, talent, and treasures of singers like you. If you wish to contact us about this project, please find us at:

rawsinging.org

raw.singing.books@gmail.com

The Woodshed on Discord:



With warm gratitude to: Robert Rund, Bill Stauffer, Paul Olguin & the Woodshedders, Melody Hine, Eddie Holt, Clay Hine, Darin Drown, Byron Wolfe, Dr. Jim Henry, Brian Destefano, Julia Kohlenberg, Kim Newcomb, Kevin Juliana, Ellie McCall, the 3rd-5th grade students of Bethesda Elementary in Bethesda, MD, and the students of Cora Howe School in Nashville, TN.

A New Social History

"I figure singing and playing is the same."
— Louis Armstrong

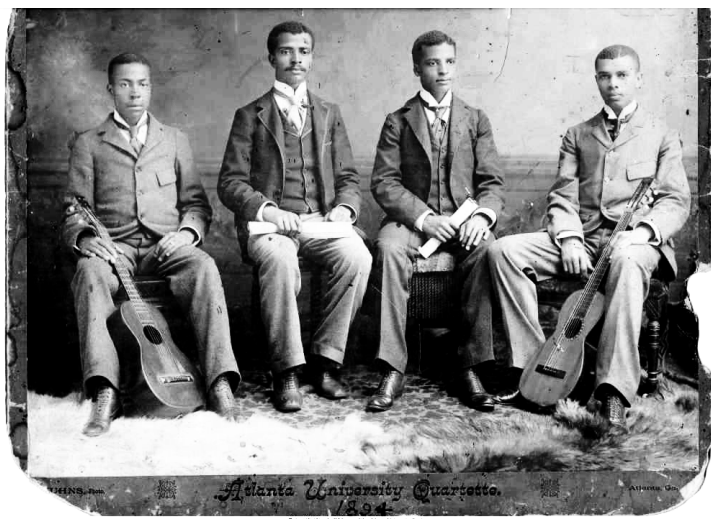
In recent decades, many barbershop revivalists (you and me, dear reader!) have committed to recognizing a more complete social history of barbershop harmony than what has been popular since at least 1938. What is no longer impossible for honest barbershoppers to deny is that while the original formation of the Barbershop Harmony Society did accomplish its goal of building a nationally-successful singing organization and social club (if only for white men of mid-century American society), it also pioneered a socially conservative political movement that wrote African-Americans and women out of the history of American harmony, in more ways than one.

The 2019 inclusion of non-male voices in BHS contests follows in the legacy of abolishing racial segregation within our offending organizations (BHS in 1963 and SAI in 1966). It is important to remember and celebrate these victories, but it is also important that these steps were taken only under immense pressure from both internal and external forces, and with bitter resentment from leadership and membership alike.



The Angelina Four at Keltys Lumber Co., Lufkin, Texas. Ruby Lomax, September 1940. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.

The reality is that following historical practice demands the inclusion of *all* singers in barbershop spaces. Regardless of the Barbershop Harmony Society's own less-inclusive history, barbershop harmony has historically been practiced by men and women, as well as by Americans of all races, in more contexts than we can even imagine in today.



Atlanta University Quartet in 1894, with James Weldon Johnson. Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center.

To the creators of the RAW project, the history of barbershop harmony parallels the history of popular American music. Barbershop at its most inclusive definition is an expression of American identities, conflicts, and narratives spanning the modern era. Our definition includes the influences of ragtime music and New Orleans jazz, church quartets, country blues, mountain music, folk quartets, as well as Tin Pan Alley songs, Broadway musicals, vaudeville theater, and unavoidably, minstrelsy. In short, when we peer past the rhetoric of stale preservation, barbershop music is much larger than we often permit it to be. Spreading this perspective towards barbershop music is our ultimate goal, as part of which we believe “woodshedding” is a necessary component.

Most active barbershoppers in 2026 feel compelled to barbershop music for the devoted community and exciting musical experiences it

offers. However, the historical connection between barbershop music and broader American music history is just as compelling. As stewards of the art form and as musical citizens of the world, we bear a responsibility to untangle the reality of barbershop music's uniquely prejudiced and propagandized past. What is the culture we choose to bear as barbershoppers, and how are we representing it? The picture is still incomplete, but we all continue to paint it, within our "invented tradition".

Every barbershopper has a license to practice and express the kind of aural creativity typical in all American music styles. In the continent's musical evolution, aurally-crafted barbershop harmony forms the bedrock for popular styles such as the blues, bluegrass, jazz, rock n' roll, country, soul, gospel, and hip-hop. Barbershoppers are overdue for a homecoming with improvisational music-making, and it is time for our invented tradition to refocus on improvising and refining authentic, personal quartet arrangements of popular songs. It is time to breathe new life into our creative processes and self-expression.



Members of The Frogs, a performer's guild for African Americans. 1908. New York Public Library.

An Encouraging Call-to-Arms



Dave Stevens leading a gang sing activity at the 1984 St. Louis Convention. BHS Photo Archives, Flickr.

“Participation—that’s what’s going to save the human race.”
—Pete Seeger

Think back to your first barbershop tag, if you can. If you didn’t start singing barbershop in childhood, you might remember feeling unsure, or even insecure about your voice. It is scary to practice something new, and not know if you will succeed! You may have been taught that tag by a loved one, or a new friend, or a total stranger. Regardless, what is likely safe to say is that you felt successful and proud of the results, having been guided by a kind and prepared teacher. You may have sung tens, hundreds, or even thousands of barbershop tags since then. This aural and social process is one of the most satisfying and unique elements of our beloved art form, which we call barbershop music.

In contrast to tag singing, many competitive barbershoppers today might believe that woodshedding is not worth the hassle, even if for fun, and certainly not for repertoire. If you hold these assumptions, we challenge you to question them now. We would say social woodshedding on its own is well worth a little practice. Beyond that, we argue that most quartets can woodshed songs well enough to perform them, and even compete with them—and hopefully be richly rewarded for doing so. In creative terms, a woodshedding quartet has the benefit of four minds working together with instantaneous feedback. The resulting arrangement will also likely be easier for that quartet to sing than an



A candid moment captured outside the “woodshed mezzanine” at the 1951 Convention, in Toledo, OH. BHS Archives, Flickr.

externally-arranged version would be (it was written WITH a voice, not FOR one), and more authentic to the voices who created it in the first place.

Just as you overcame the anxiety of your first tag, you can learn to excel at improvising barbershop harmony, and your musical ear, mind, and intuition will be rewarded in a mysterious and intoxicating new way. You might find yourself in a whole new musical universe that has been running parallel to your own this entire time. It has been waiting for you from the moment you sang your first tag.

BEGINNER PEDAGOGY

How To Use This Book

Any singer who can harmonize independently and utilize musical scales should feel comfortable approaching the singing portions of this book. That being said, an ever-developing understanding of harmony is crucial for any musician. It is possible to have a practical understanding of harmony, and to be an excellent musician, without ever reading music!

Woodshedding is best attempted among patient, friendly faces who share the intention of staying awhile and working together. Creative collaboration is often a more vulnerable activity than singing a taught part, so we recommend that your first few woodshed sessions are with people you know and trust. Crowded spaces are usually not very fun places to woodshed. Woodshedding is more appropriate among people who are comfortable and in no hurry.

Some readers may already be thinking about leading their own woodshedding circles. Remember to be gracious with the inexperienced, but understand that their progress and enjoyment depends on your patience. Let everyone's ideas be heard, and make decisions together. Our resources will hopefully give a framework for newcomers and experienced woodshedders alike to quickly communicate with one another about musical concepts.

Approaching Our Notation

Woodshedders don't need to read music to develop a mastery of their craft, so we have included alternatives to standard notation in our melody transcriptions. RAW notation is more bare than regular sheet music in order to save space, reduce clutter, highlight patterns, and encourage improvisation. Numbers alone will be used to name musical structures: you will never see Roman numerals (**IV⁷**) or lettered chords (**F7**) in our resources. No music in a RAW resource is ever printed in a key—we like to say that our materials are written in the key of **1**.

There are three ways that numbers are used:

- a) **Notes** are named after their scale degree, and will always be marked with a caret (i.e., ^1).
- b) **Chords** are usually constructed out of skipped notes drawn from the scale. With RAW, chords are always shown in bold text (i.e., **5⁷**).
- c) **Intervals** depict a number of steps between two notes, typically counting away from a chord root, and will always be shown in italics (i.e., *5th*). Like chords, intervals can have qualities (major, minor, etc.). We will often italicize written intervals as well, i.e. the *tritone*, *half-step*, and *whole-step*.

Excerpt of "Piano Lessons"

from *The Art of Drowning*

1.

My teacher lies on the floor with a bad back
off to the side of the piano.
I sit up straight on the stool.
He begins by telling me that every key
is like a different room
and I am a blind man who must learn
to walk through all twelve of them
without hitting the furniture.
I feel myself reach for the first doorknob.

2.

He tells me that every scale has a shape
and I have to learn how to hold
each one in my hands.
At home I practice with my eyes closed.
C is an open book.
D is a vase with two handles.
G flat is a black boot.
E has the legs of a bird.

3.

He says the scale is the mother of the chords.
I can see her pacing the bedroom floor
waiting for her children to come home.
They are out at nightclubs shading and lighting
all the songs while couples dance slowly
or stare at one another across tables.
This is the way it must be. After all,
just the right chord can bring you to tears
but no one listens to the scales,
no one listens to their mother.
{...}

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Woodshedding Around The Scales

The knowledge of basic scales is fundamental to RAW methods. Often in music, the melody will switch between using the notes from one scale to that of another, creating opportunities for interesting and necessary chords.

Different scales have different amounts of space between their notes. The major scale always looks like this:

$\wedge 1$	$\wedge 2$	$\wedge 3$	$\wedge 4$	$\wedge 5$	$\wedge 6$	$\wedge 7$	$\wedge 1$
Do	Re	Mi	Fa	Sol	La	Ti	Do

Keep the sound of the scale in your head, since it will give a sense of context and relationship while you sing. Using RAW, whenever we sing, we practice showing our scale number on our hand (as able). Read more on page 22.

The order of *half* (H) and *whole* (W) steps in the major scale is:

$$\wedge 1 \text{ W } \wedge 2 \text{ W } \wedge 3 \text{ H } \wedge 4 \text{ W } \wedge 5 \text{ W } \wedge 6 \text{ W } \wedge 7 \text{ H } \wedge 1$$

Crucially, this leaves a *half-step* from $\wedge 4$ to $\wedge 3$, and $\wedge 7$ to $\wedge 1$. These two half-steps, when sung in opposition, form the essential tonic-dominant relationship.

The Tonic-Dominant Relationship

The *half-steps* in the major scale are pivotal points for suspense and resolution. In their most basic form, these *half-steps* always resolve opposite to one another: $\wedge^4$ resolves down, and $\wedge^7$ resolves up. Note that $\wedge^7$ and $\wedge^4$ serve a dominant function (they create the tension of the dominant 5^7), while $\wedge^1$ and $\wedge^3$ serve a tonic function (resolution to home chord, the 1). We might say that 5^7 is the dominant of the 1 . These resolutions are the basis for the tonic-dominant relationship ($1-5^7$), which in turn forms the backbone of most popular American music. This includes styles that commonly stray from the common major scale, like the blues, jazz, rock n' roll, and of course, barbershop.

Chromatic Notes

There are five other notes in the gaps of the major scale, which we call chromatic notes. These are $\sharp\wedge^1/\flat\wedge^2$, $\sharp\wedge^2/\flat\wedge^3$, $\sharp\wedge^4/\flat\wedge^5$, $\sharp\wedge^5/\flat\wedge^6$, and $\sharp\wedge^6/\flat\wedge^7$. All told, this leaves us with twelve unique notes with which to harmonize. Remember that when using RAW methods, notes are numbered according to their place in the scale. This system should be familiar to many barbershoppers and musicians.

$\flat\wedge^2$ $\sharp\wedge^1$		$\flat\wedge^3$ $\sharp\wedge^2$			$\flat\wedge^5$ $\sharp\wedge^4$	$\flat\wedge^6$ $\sharp\wedge^5$	$\flat\wedge^7$ $\sharp\wedge^6$	
$\wedge^1$	$\wedge^2$	$\wedge^3$	$\wedge^4$	$\wedge^5$	$\wedge^6$	$\wedge^7$		

The Minor Scale

The minor scale is less common across barbershop literature than the major, but is worth knowing. The typical minor scale usually looks like this:

$\wedge 1$	$\wedge 2$	$\wedge -3$	$\wedge 4$	$\wedge 5$	$\wedge -6$	$\wedge -7$	$\wedge 1$
Do	Re	Me	Fa	Sol	Le	Te	Do

Notice the minus sign *before* the number ($\wedge -3$). This is to show that the scale degree itself is lowered when compared to the major scale. So, $\wedge 3$, $\wedge 6$, and $\wedge 7$ are lowered when compared to the major scale. Some songs will use a collection of notes borrowing from both major and minor scales, or even from modes such as Dorian (a diatonic minor scale where $\wedge 6$ is not lowered) and Lydian (a diatonic major scale where $\wedge 4$ is raised to $\wedge \#4$).

The Blues Scale

Barbershop harmony would not be possible without blues tonalities. Many of the chords we use (such as the 4^7) are the result of harmonizing melodies with “blue notes”. Blues notes are “out-of-tune” by their nature, but barbershoppers tune them as half-step alterations of the major scale.

With this framework in mind, blue notes can be found at $\wedge 3$, $\wedge 5$, and $\wedge 7$. That means that in certain contexts, it is normal for those scale degrees to be “flatted” (lowered by a *half-step*), especially in scale passages.

Exercise 1: Find $\wedge 1$. Audiate the major scale slowly, one note at a time. Then sing it, starting on a comfortable low note in your voice. You can also try this exercise with the minor scale, and test your retention of $\wedge -3$, $\wedge -6$, and $\wedge -7$.

- Audiate Do-Ti-Do ($\wedge 171$) silently. Then sing Do-Ti-Do out loud.
- This time, audiate Mi-Fa-Mi ($\wedge 343$), then sing it.
- Choose a *half-step* resolution to sing. While you sing it, audiate the other *half-step* resolution. Then, switch.

Exercise 2: Hold both *half-step* resolutions in your audiation, while you sing Do-Sol-Do ($\wedge 151$). Then, try Re-Sol-Do ($\wedge 252$) and La-Sol-Do ($\wedge 651$).

Hand Signs

If able, you should practice showing your note on your hand while singing. This will ground you to the scale, encourage informed decision-making, and allow other singers to make informed decisions. ^1 through ^5 are simple enough to sign, by starting at your index finger, counting up to your pinkie with your thumb adding to ^5. We show ^6 with an extended thumb, and ^7 with a thumb and index finger, making an 'L'. These signs work best for accessibility and flow reasons. Remember to always show your note with your palm facing away from you—if you ever want to show chord numbers, it is possible to do so by rotating your hand so that your palm faces inward. Make this obvious to your fellow singers.



We recommend showing the chromatic tones as lowered notes of their “upstairs neighbors” (the notes immediately above them in the scale), by bending the fingers or rotating/flexing the wrist. This method is commonplace among many barbershoppers already.

More advanced woodshedders can consider using their hands to indicate chords, rehearsal notes, and more. In all cases, use only

what is imminently comfortable and clear.

Exercise 3: Consult the hand sign glossary in the appendix. Sign your way through multiple octaves of the major scale, going both up and down. Practice the sequence of ^ 5 6 7 1 7 6 5.

Exercise 4: Without singing, practice switching between note signs and chord signs, using a RAW transcription. Imagine you are communicating to other singers and need to tell them something with your hands. How do you do it?

The R.A.W. Procedure

Ahead, we have outlined a three-step procedure for woodshedding between three to four singers. Regardless of your experience level with woodshedding, we recommend that you go into this procedure with the mindset of a beginner. Follow the steps strictly at first—you can move through them more flexibly once you gain confidence and experience. Our guiding principle is to only sing what you understand.

The Guide

This procedure requires a singer to serve as a Guide. The Guide is responsible for directing the group through RAW woodshedding. It is the Guide's objective to keep everyone comfortable and singing with comprehension. Guides should also understand the basic harmony of the melody being woodshedded. However, Guides should not suggest notes unless and until a singer is completely and utterly stumped.

The qualities of a good Guide are similar to those of a good coach or chorus director: they will know which elements require attention and how to quickly attend to issues without disrupting the music-making. This is why we recommend the use of hand signs.

This role can move around the group: some people may want to be the Guide often, and others will not. That is fine.

Exercise 5: Think of a song you find yourself singing/humming in the car, shower, or anywhere. Try to find ^1. If you can, harmonize a recording of the song, staying in a Do pitch area. What notes do you need?

Step 1: Unison Discovery

Before finding any harmonies, the group must all be able to sing the scale and melody of the song. Work on one section at a time. At various points, do not be afraid to jump back to this step, especially when confused or lost.

1.1: Singing the Scale

Audiate and then sing ^1. We recommend singing the scale on a neutral syllable (lu/du, la/da, or li/di). It usually makes sense to sing the scale both up and down. The Guide might spend time directing the singers' attention to certain notes that will be important later on, or model/teach any chromatic notes that will be relevant to the harmony. Experienced groups might skip this step. Move on when all the singers are comfortable and familiar with the scale.

1.2: Singing the Melody

The Guide models the melody to the singers, first in its entirety and then in segments. The entire group needs to learn the melody, and sing it in unison while showing hand signs (this checks for comprehension). When the quartet can confidently loop the melody, singing with expression while showing hand signs, they can move on to the next step.

1.3: Finding a Harmonic Rhythm

As an ensemble, it is crucial to agree on a harmonic rhythm—i.e., how often the chords change—even if the chords haven't been named or decided on. Tapping your hand when you feel the chords change as you sing can show each singer's developing interpretation. Don't move on from this until the whole group agrees on something: you can try multiple interpretations, just not all at once!

RAW transcriptions have a basic harmonic rhythm marked with dots above the scale numbers. Some songs could allow for much more elaborate harmonic rhythms than what we notate, however, very few allow for simpler ones. We are deliberately conservative in this area. Once you have some practice, it should be possible for you to hear the harmonic rhythm of various songs, without using our transcriptions at all.

The image displays three musical staves, each representing a different melody transcription. Each staff uses a single line of a five-line staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 4/4. The notes are represented by dots on the staff lines, with scale numbers (1-7) and solfège syllables (Do, Re, Mi, Fa, Sol, La, Ti) written below them. The first staff is for the melody "My Lord, what a morning." and features a 4/4 time signature. The second staff is for "The whole day through, just an old sweet song keeps" and features a 4/4 time signature. The third staff is for the chorus "Please don't talk a - bout me when I'm gone" and features a 2/2 time signature. The lyrics are written below the notes, with some words hyphenated across measures.

My Lord, what a morn - ing.

The whole day through, just an old sweet song keeps

Chorus
Please don't talk a - bout me when I'm gone

Various RAW melody transcriptions.

Exercise 6: Sing a RAW transcription to yourself. Learn the melody and relate it to the major scale, showing hand signs. Move slowly, and only use lyrics when you can successfully model the melody on a neutral syllable. Once you know the shape of the melody, memorize it.

Exercise 7: Find a popular recording of a song you know from our songbook (Vol. 2), and listen to it. While listening, find the harmonic rhythm. When you are done, compare your work to the harmonic rhythm in our transcription.

Step 2: Harmony Discovery

2.1: Pitch Area Improvisation (PAI)

Tenor and baritone singers will now choose a “pitch area” to inhabit and harmonize. These pitch areas are flexible and elastic, and singers will learn to move between them when needed. This procedure begins by utilizing only tonic **1** and dominant **5⁷**: the two most common chords in the literature. By progressing, the pitch areas will expand outwards to include all twelve notes, with each note being connected to specific, useful, common chords. For now, doubled notes are normal and acceptable, and unison duets should be common!

Mi Area (Tenor Start)

The first harmonizer should sing against the melody, discovering a harmony around only $\wedge 3$ or $\wedge 4$. This fills what we call the **Mi pitch area**. The Mi pitch area eventually expands to the chromatic notes $\flat \wedge 3$ and $\sharp \wedge 4$, and the diatonic note $\wedge 2$.

Notes $\wedge 3$ and $\wedge 4$ are separated by a half-step just like $\wedge 7$ and $\wedge 1$. $\wedge 4$ belongs to the dominant **5⁷** chord, and $\wedge 3$ belongs to the tonic **1** chord. Thus, $\wedge 4$ resolves down to $\wedge 3$, as **5⁷** goes to **1**.

Do Area (Baritone Start)

The second harmonizer should sing against the duet, discovering a harmony around only $\wedge 1$ or $\wedge 7$. This fills what we call the **Do pitch area**. The Do pitch area will eventually expand to include the chromatic notes $\flat \wedge 7$, $\sharp \wedge 1$, and the diatonic note $\wedge 6$. The Do pitch area is often filled by the baritone singer in barbershop music.

$\wedge 7$ belongs to the dominant **5⁷** chord, and $\wedge 1$ belongs to the tonic **1** chord. Thus, $\wedge 7$ resolves up to $\wedge 1$, as **5⁷** goes to **1**.

2.2 Number Pair Improvisation (NPI)

The bass will usually sing in loose counterpoint using roots and *5ths* outlining and connecting the chords being sung. This pattern creates room for all of the other sung harmonies and outlines the chords of the song. Our representation of barbershop bass parts is built on this concept, and we represent this with “number pairs”:

(6,3)	(3,7)	(1,6)	(3,7)	(1,6)		(3,7)
Aura	Lee,	Aura	Lee,	maid	of golden	hair

Excerpt of “Aura Lee”, in number pair notation.

Number pairs represent stable bass notes in RAW transcriptions. These number pairs almost always represent the *roots* and *5th* of structural chords. However, at some moments, a number pair might offer different options like (2,4) or (1,6). In all cases, number pairs represent stable bass options.

Chromatic notes can sometimes be a bridge between number pairs, especially to form diminished chords or more dominant chords. Bases can challenge themselves to bridge these number pairs in all sorts of interesting ways, either in duet with the melody, or after the other two parts have been filled in using PAI.

Step 3: Development

As the group woodsheds, a three to four-part arrangement should begin to present itself, and **Development** of the arrangement begins. This is a complex and multi-faceted step that spirals out into many directions depending on the music at hand. In our eyes, Development is simply the process of making expressive & interpretative decisions to a new arrangement. Many quartets already have some experience with Development, even if they have never tried “real” woodshedding. Remember that RAW is designed to guide quartet singers towards chords, cadences, and textures that barbershoppers already know and love.

Bass As Guide

We often recommend that Guides serve as the bass singer once the melody has been claimed. The choices of the bass singer can substantially limit what options are available to the other singers. A confident bass is beneficial for the group as long as they are able to stay flexible and are mindful to back out of the sound when other singers have options they want to explore. Remember that when you are strict in your interpretation, you can’t serve as a helpful Guide: your fellow singers will have to adapt to you and may work slower and less creatively. Stay close to the melody wherever possible, at least to start.

3.1: Tagging Out Of Doubles

Many historical woodshedded arrangements are rife with three-part chords. Still, to suit modern tastes, doubled notes should be addressed as follows. Usually, being tagged out of your pitch area by the melody evacuates you into a Sol area. Since ^6 (La) and ^5 (Sol) are usable in both tonic and dominant contexts, they are usually safe choices—this is also why Sol is not treated as a true pitch area.

Leaving Do

When the melody invades the Do area, the Do singer can try moving into the area that the melody just vacated. The Do singer will often move down to ^5, if the melody takes ^1 or ^7. ^6 can also often be sung, in either case.

Leaving Mi

When the melody invades the Mi area, the Mi singer can try moving to a note above the melody. For example, if the lead sings ^3 or ^4, the Mi singer might move up to ^5 or ^6.

The Do and Mi singers may choose to trade material as tenor and baritone parts materialize. New choices may open up, or old choices may solidify.

3.2: Voicing & Embellishing The Song

This is when the Guide becomes a limited arranger/director, someone who is meant to facilitate confident experimentation among the ensemble. As a rule of thumb, don't ask any singer to change their note without explaining to them where they are going, and why. The quartet can use their ears and/or the chord glossary (pages 52-53) to discover what notes might be missing in chords with doubled notes, and assign them.

3.3: Varying Texture & Harmony

If the group finishes woodshedding a section that repeats in the form such as a verse, they can easily place this material over a new texture (see the rhythm glossary on page 58), or make chord substitutions. The implementation of unique cadences or swipes is best left for this step (see the swipe glossary on page 57).

All music naturally organizes steady beat into meter. Our brains hear beats organized into groups of 2 (duple) and 3 (triple). The feeling of swing can "slant" the microbeat into uneven pulses, in a variety of ways. In barbershop, we almost always sing in a free rubato, a syncopated straight ragtime feel ("Give My Regards To Broadway"), a simple waltz feel ("Heart Of My Heart"), or some form of slow swing. Note that it will usually be the bass singer's job to establish or break rhythmic textures, and the job of harmony singers to respond accordingly.

General Tips for Harmonizing

1. Fill in pillar chords first.

Passing chords should take last priority, and are often the most finicky to present themselves. Once you can sing a part all the way through with awareness of dissonances, slow the tempo down to fix the passing chords. Use chromatics freely, and see what you find.
2. Always sing with confidence.

Don't be afraid to sing a "wrong" note: it could end up being a suitable chord you didn't expect. Also, be careful not to give in to doubt and sing in between two notes. When this happens, abandon ship and find ^1 before starting over.
3. Create and memorize a part.

You may hear many options during multiple sing-throughs, but eventually you'll have to commit to a choice, out of kindness to the quartet and yourself.
4. Return to the melody often.

At slow speeds, it is easy to lose focus and belabor different voicing/chord options. Any uncertainty at all should cause a harmony singer to return to the melody.
5. Embellish with your ear.

Your brain probably already knows what barbershop embellishments sound like. If you hear or anticipate such a moment, sing it!
6. Don't sing too far away from the melody.

Barbershop is close harmony, and the chords we sing tend to be closely-voiced. More space away from the lead is not always helpful for the quartet.

Reaching The Cliff

The next section will continue to educate singers on the mechanics of harmony, and is structured as a series of short lessons. These lessons are loosely sequenced but also independent of one another. We know and love many singers who believe that an understanding of “music theory” is beyond them, but we ask these readers to give both us and themselves a chance. We have worked very hard to make many of these analytical concepts approachable for a singer who lacks music-reading proficiency. Have a growth mindset!

Regardless of what you do next, it is important to begin developing a language for chords if you wish to progress as an aural singer. Our materials are designed to provide a practical sequence of songs for the purposes of mastering woodshedding and developing an understanding of harmony. In our companion songbook, “Old Tunes For A New Time”, we have tried to choose songs that we believe provide an interesting, diverse, and instructive survey of American music history. Once you feel comfortable, you can apply this approach to harmony to a wide range of music reaching into the modern day. We recommend listening broadly and curiously, and woodshedding in the same manner.

We hope you will use RAW resources in whatever capacity they best serve you. If some singing friends are nearby, we encourage you to pick up a RAW songbook and get started with a simple **1-5⁷** song. At this point, practice is the best thing for you.

Happy woodshedding!

AURAL THEORY

Lesson 1: Building Chords

Think of chords as the fabric we weave the melody into. In this sense, we can interpret four-part harmony as a constellation of numbers moving around the melody. Chords are constructed out of scales, usually in stacks of skipped notes. For instance, the **1** chord from the major scale has [^]135. The **2-** chord from the major scale uses the notes [^]246. Voices move to hit these chords in pleasing arrangements, and usually, with limited movement. A Radical Approach To Woodshedding borrows the Nashville number system, innovated by the Jordanaires quartet, to notate chords. If you are unfamiliar with the sounds of different chord qualities, that is fine; they will become familiar in time.

Unaltered numbers (i.e. **1**, **5**) depict major chords. Minor chords are shown with a minus sign (-) *after* the chord number (i.e. **6-** or **3-**).

Major Scale Chords

1 2- 3- 4 5⁷ 6-

The names of the diatonic chords built from the major scale.

To know what notes are present in these and all the chords we reference, check the chord glossary (pages 52-53) in the appendix.

Immediately, the eye is drawn to the **5⁷** chord, for its unique notation in the sequence. All dominant chords are shown with a superscript ⁷. In the **5⁷** chord, [^]7 is the *3rd*, and [^]4 is *7th*. With RAW as in other notation, dominant *7th* chords are written with a superscripted seven (i.e. **5⁷**) to show the added note. This also applies to other chord extensions such as *6ths* (i.e. **4-⁶**) and *9ths* (i.e. **5⁹**).

Exercise 3: To refresh, audiate the major scale and retain it in your ear. Sing the chord tones of each diatonic major chord in ‘arpeggios’ (chord tones played in sequence melodically). For example, sing : “[^] 1 3 5 3 1, 2 4 6 4 2, “ etc. If other singers are present, assign each person a note from each chord. Sing all of the notes in harmony, listening carefully to each chord’s quality.

Minor Scale Chords

1- 3 4- 5⁷ 6 7

The names of the diatonic chords built from the minor scale.

The 5⁷ chord is not native to the minor scale (^7, the 3rd of 5⁷, is lowered to ^-7 in minor), but since this chord is the source of dominant function, it occurs frequently. The 5⁷ can safely be regarded as a diatonic chord in the minor scale since it is so persistent in the literature. However, this does not mean that the elusive 5- chord won't be found occasionally (usually before a 1⁷). Interestingly, the chord built off of ^2 in the minor key is identical to the 4-⁶.

Basic Chromatic Chords

Most of the chromatic chords (chords using notes from outside of the scale) discussed in this book are expressions of 5⁷ to 1 (i.e. the tonic-dominant relationship). In fact, most of the chords in this book are simply fully-voiced dominant 7th chords built on notes from the major scale.

Using RAW, we sort the common dominant 7th chromatic chords as either sharp or flat, in reference to how the scale degree is altered. Read more about these chords on pages 36 and 37.

b		b		#		
Le	La	Te	Ti	Do	Di	Re
b7⁷	4⁷	1⁷	5⁷	2⁷	6⁷	3⁷
Re	Me	Mi	Fa	Fi	Sol	Si
	b			#		#

Lesson 2: The Circle of 5ths

We can re-order all of the notes in the major scale so that they are patterned in a sequence of *4ths*, or if measured in opposite, *5ths*.

^ 7 3 6 2 5 1 4

We can add our chromatic tones at the ends of this sequence, to order all twelve tones of the chromatic scale. The two ends of this connect into a “circle” at #5 and $\flat$ 6, which are the same note.

^ #5 #1 #4 7 3 6 2 5 1 4 $\flat$ 7 $\flat$ 3 $\flat$ 6

Remember that these notes can be considered a *4th* apart or a *5th* apart, depending on the direction in which you measure. This is why the ‘circle’ is both a pattern of *4ths* and *5ths*.

To summarize, all the twelve notes can be placed in an order that “circles” back to itself, where every note is a *4th/5th* away from the next note in the sequence, and much like a scale, the pattern can repeat indefinitely. Motion around this circular pattern is very common in chord progressions. If you study the chord roots of barbershop progressions, they almost always follow the order and logic of the circle of *5ths*.

Many chromatic chord progressions will only occupy the underlined row of chords in the picture below:

	<u>3</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>1</u>	
7						<u>4</u>
	$\flat$ 5	$\flat$	$\flat$ 6	$\flat$ 3	$\flat$ 7	
		2				

Lesson 3: Sharp Chords

Let us explore the role of the circle of *5ths* progression in chromatic harmony, working backwards from the diatonic 5^7 . There are three unique dominant *7th* chords that only use one sharp (#) note. These sharp chords move relatively strictly into one another, following the circle. The names for each of these are borrowed from the well-known “What Are We Trying To Preserve?” presentation, featuring BHS educator Dave Stevens.

2^7 ($\#^4$) “Coney Island” Chord

... leads to 5^7 . The chromatic note ($\#^4$) belongs to the Mi singer, and resolves by a *half-step* in either direction. The Do singer occupies $\wedge 1$ or $\wedge 6$. The number pair is (2,6).

6^7 ($\#^1$) “If I Had My Way” Chord

... leads to 2^7 , 2^{-7} , and sometimes 2^- . The chromatic note ($\#^1$) belongs to the Do singer, and resolves by a *half-step* in either direction. The Mi singer occupies $\wedge 3$ or $\wedge 5$. The number pair is (6,3).

3^7 ($\#^5$) “Five Foot Two” Chord

... leads to 6^7 , 6^- , and sometimes 6^{-7} . The chromatic note ($\#^5$) belongs to the Mi singer, and resolves by a *half-step* in either direction. The Do singer occupies $\wedge 7$ or $\wedge 2$. The number pair is (3,7).

3^7 is typically the furthest in the sharp direction on the circle of *5ths* that these progressions move in barbershop. The *tritone* of that chord is shared with two flat chords in the next page, all of which use $\#^5 / \flat \wedge 6$.

Lesson 4: Flat Chords

Flat chords are found by “driving in reverse” along the circle of *5ths*. These chords are often used to modulate, harmonize blue notes, or find back-door resolutions to **1**.

1⁷ ($\flat^{\wedge}7$) “Birthday” Chord

1⁷ usually leads to **4** or **4⁷**. The chromatic note ($\flat^{\wedge}7$) belongs to the Do singer, and usually resolves to $\wedge^6$. The number pair is (1,5). Popular American music, beginning with the early blues, has often used **1⁷** along with **16** instead of **1**. Otherwise, this chord is found most frequently in transition to bridges, which frequently tonicize **4**.

4⁷ ($\flat^{\wedge}3$) “Oh Yeah” Chord

4⁷ is often used as a substitution for **4**, and/or as a suspension to **1**. The chromatic note ($\flat^{\wedge}3$) belongs to the Mi singer, and might resolve by a *half-step* in either direction. The Do singer either stays on $\wedge^1$ or moves to $\wedge^6$. The number pair is (4,1). Often, a song will go **1 - 4⁷ - 1** after having already gone through a chord progression and returned home.

4⁻⁶ ($\flat^{\wedge}6$) “What’ll I Do” Chord

This chord is found virtually everywhere in barbershop music. The chromatic note ($\flat^{\wedge}6$) almost always resolves to $\wedge^5$. The number pair is (2,4). While not technically a dominant *7th* chord, the **4⁻⁶** is a common penultimate chord, and it uses a *tritone* between $\wedge^2$ and $\flat^{\wedge}6$ in its resolution. Because of this, it often can be discussed as a dominant chord. The **4⁻⁶** can be theorized as a diatonic chord borrowed from the minor scale. **4⁻⁶** is also a *9th* chord voicing of the $\flat^{\wedge}7$, and so these two chords are often seen together in developing chord progressions.

Lesson 5: 6th Chords

All of the diatonic major chords (1, 4, 5) can have their *5ths* replaced by *6ths*, making them *6th* chords. This gives them a more minor quality than their *5th*-having cousin. Sometimes the *5th* can be sung as a fourth note, but usually barbershoppers will double the root instead.

$$\begin{array}{ll} \mathbf{1^6} & \wedge 1 \ 3 \ \underline{6} \\ \mathbf{4^6} & \wedge 4 \ 6 \ \underline{2} \\ \mathbf{5^6} & \wedge 5 \ 7 \ \underline{3} \end{array}$$

Note that these chords contain all the same notes as diatonic minor chords (i.e. compare $\mathbf{4^6}$ and $\mathbf{2-}$).

$$\begin{array}{ll} \mathbf{6-} & \wedge 6 \ 1 \ 3 \\ \mathbf{2-} & \wedge 2 \ 4 \ 6 \\ \mathbf{3-} & \wedge 3 \ 5 \ 7 \end{array}$$

The $\mathbf{1^6}$ is common in many styles of music, especially the blues and jazz. $\mathbf{5^6}$ is very common in barbershop music as a mid-point of swipes, or as a dominant harmonization of a melody on $\wedge 3$.

Lesson 6: 9th Chords

When a fully-voiced dominant or chromatic chord can not be expressed because of the melody note, its root or *5th* is often omitted in favor of a *9th* (underlined):

4⁹	^6 1 $\flat$ 3 <u>5</u>	^4 6 $\flat$ 3 <u>5</u>
1⁹	^3 5 $\flat$ 7 <u>2</u>	^1 3 $\flat$ 7 <u>2</u>
5⁹	^7 2 4 <u>6</u>	^5 7 4 <u>6</u>
2⁹	^$\sharp$4 6 1 <u>3</u>	^2 $\sharp$4 1 <u>3</u>
6⁹	^$\sharp$1 3 5 <u>7</u>	^6 $\sharp$1 5 <u>7</u>
	Rootless	<i>5th</i> -less

9th chords often appear when the melody is suspended above a chord tone. For example, **6⁹** appears frequently when the the melody is on **^7** but the harmony must move to a **^2**-rooted chord. Often, the melody will resolve down by step, bass moves to the *5th* of the chord, and a fully-voiced dominant chord remains (i.e. **6⁷**).

Lesson 7: Diminished Chords

Nearly any dominant *7th* chord can be substituted with a diminished *7th* chord. These chords have two *tritones* built into them, and are easily invertible: every note is three *half-steps* (a minor *3rd*) away from the next note in the chord, and any note can be considered the root. These chromatic variations can be extremely useful. They often show up when harmonizing neighbor tones, passing between more functional chords, or when the melody is embellishing around $\wedge^5$. There are three unique diminished *7th* chords.

$\#1^{\circ 7}$	$\wedge\#1\ 3\ 5\ \flat\ 7$
$\#4^{\circ 7}$	$\wedge\#4\ 6\ 1\ \flat\ 3$
$7^{\circ 7}$	$\wedge\ 7\ 2\ 4\ \flat\ 6$

Often in RAW resources, the chord root is omitted entirely in notation (i.e. $^{\circ 7}$) since the diminished chord is functioning as a passing chord.

Lesson 8: Augmented Chords

Often, when the melody note is suspended on an odd chromatic note, a true dominant 7th or diminished 7th chord is not possible. In these situations, an augmented chord is often possible. This happens most commonly when the melody note is #^2 but is held over a 5⁷ chord—replacing the diatonic ^2.

These chords can be found functioning as dominant chords when the root moves appropriately (i.e up a 4th or down a 5th), and can even be decorated with 7^{ths} in some cases. When they cannot be, the root can be doubled.

There are four unique augmented chords, but only three commonly-sung ones. Like the diminished chords, they are easily invertible: every note is four *half-steps* (a major 3rd) away from the next note in the chord, and any note can be considered the root.

The common three are:

5+	^5 7 <u>#2</u>
1+, 3+	^1 3 <u>#5</u>
6+ , 4+	^4 6 <u>#1</u>

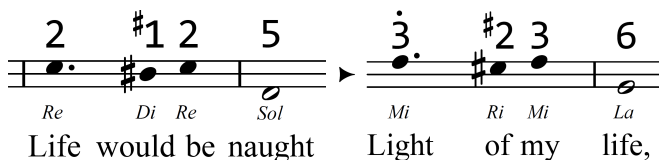
You can easily construct the fourth augmented chord by building major 3^{rds} off of ^2.

Lesson 9: Neighbor Tone Chords

It is common to embellish melodies with brief visits down a half-step from a stable, repeated note. This “neighbor tone” can sometimes require harmonization, most often by moving some or all of the remaining voices down, in parallel to the lead. The opening three notes to “Heart of My Heart” contain a diatonic neighbor pattern, moving from $\hat{1}$ to $\hat{7}$ and back. In most cases of diatonic neighbor tones, no other voices need to move to accommodate the melody:



The next two phrases open with a chromatic neighbor pattern which usually requires harmonization, unless it is fast enough:



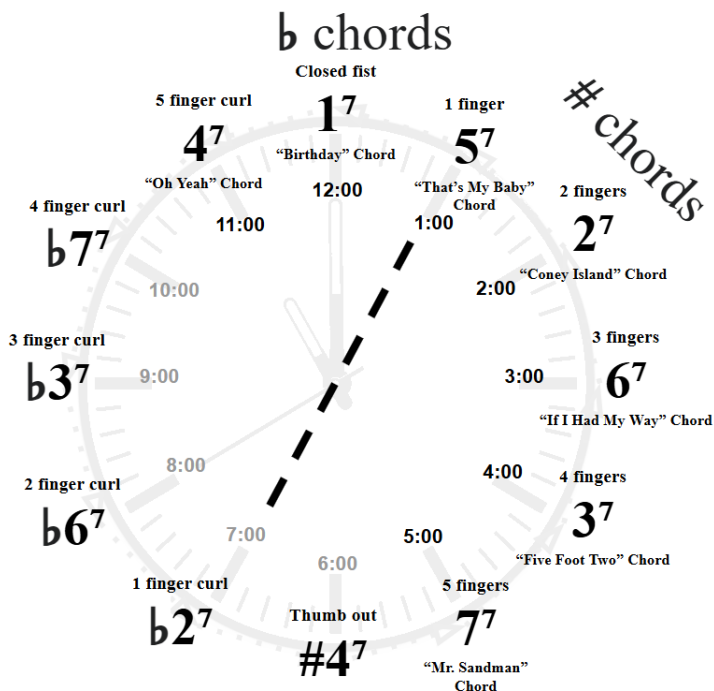
When a chromatic neighbor tone occurs, it can be harmonized with parallel motion from all, some, or none of the harmony singers. A basic rule of thumb is that the baritone and tenor can always move with the lead to harmonize chromatic neighbor tones, while the bass may stay on the root or move in parallel motion with the upper three parts.

Lesson 10: More Chromatic 7th Chords

While most progressions only go as far out as 3^7 in the $\sharp$ direction and 4^7 in the $\flat$ direction, the mechanics of the entire circle of 5^{ths} are significant to chromatic harmony.

An important note about singing $\flat$ chords past the 1^7 is that these can resolve back to the tonic at any time, while $\sharp$ chords need to see themselves all the way back to 5^7 before resolving. Whether you are singing $4^{\flat 6}$, 4^7 , $\flat 7^7$, $\flat 3^7$, $\flat 6^7$, or $\flat 2^7$, you can always return to 1 without fuss.

Barbershop Clock Diagram



A common chromatic substitution is the “*tritone sub*”, which we also refer to as “crossing the clock”. Any dominant 7th chord can be replaced with the chord completely opposite it in the barbershop clock diagram. Try using a *tritone* substitution when you repeat material such as a verse structure, and want to introduce a variation chord. A mix of chromatic harmonies that bounce around the circle of 5^{ths} will lead to satisfying results for barbershop harmony enthusiasts.

Below is a common chromatic progression (A), with several alternate solutions using tritone subs (B, C, D). Substituted chords are underlined:

- A. **6⁷** **2⁷** **5⁷** **1** **4⁷** **1**
 B. **6⁷** **b 6⁷** **5⁷** **1** **4⁷** **1**
 C. **b 3⁷** **2⁷** **b 2⁷** **1** **7⁷** **1**
 D. **6⁷** **b 3⁷** **2⁷** **5⁷** **1**

Sometimes, all the voices can move in parallel dominant chords to match a descending chromatic melody, as shown in example C. We call this sliding technique ‘*planing*’. It is usually easily recognizable in recordings and in melodies. One famous barbershop example of this is the tag of “Where the Southern Roses Grow”, as seen in this arrangement by David Wright:

The image shows a musical score for the song "Where the Southern Roses Grow". It features two staves, treble and bass, with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The melody is written in the treble staff, and the accompaniment is in the bass staff. The score includes lyrics: "val - ley where the south - ern ros - es grow, -" and "grow,". The music is marked with measure numbers 37, 38, and 39. The progression of chords is 6⁷, b 6⁷, 5⁷, 1, 4⁷, 1, which corresponds to example B in the list above. The b 6⁷ and b 2⁷ chords are underlined, indicating tritone substitutions.

Finally, note that in example D, the **b 3⁷** is actually inserted, not substituted. It uses the same tritone as the 6⁷ chord before it, between $\#^1/b^2$ and 5 . Inserting a new chord that uses a common tritone is certainly a common use case for tritone subs.

APPENDIX

Tonal Games

These games are not tied to any particular song, but are meant to be casual experiments that will train your ears.

1. ★ - **Duet Chicken** (*duet competitive*):

Start on a tonic chord. Using RAW hand signs to communicate, pick duets and move them in locked *half-steps*. Singers can take turns making moves, or one person can be Leader and try to create challenging/unique chords. When any one of the singers loses their note, the other duet wins.

2. ★ ★ - **Breathe In, Breathe Out** (*cooperative*):

Take an existing arrangement (woodshedded or not) that you have sung with the group. Working in sections, try to push every chord into its closest possible voicing (i.e. the smallest vocal range). When you are done, expand it back out in a new way.

3. ★ ★ ★ - **4-Swipe Fandango** (*cooperative*):

Start on a dominant chord. Taking turns, each singer directs a swipe from their note to some new dominant chord. The game is cooperative—it is won when the entire circle can manage to achieve four swipes in a row, and then resolve to a tonic chord, without losing the key.

4. ★ ★ - **I'm Not Touching You** (*free-for-all*):

On a neutral syllable or a word that is easy to rearticulate softly ('blue', 'low', 'love') the quartet begins a unison tonic drone. All four singers move to different spots on the scale. Once all four singers have their own note, the game can begin.

The game proceeds in turns. Your objective is to 'tag' another singer by moving to their note. On your turn, you can move once in any direction on the scale. Begin by showing four fingers on your hand: you are permitted to add a *half-step* to your move, once for each finger. If you successfully catch up to someone, they are eliminated, and you have earned a point.

Chord Glossary

The chord glossary is fundamental to the organization of our song collections. As you progress through our materials, you will become more familiar with different chords, and can add them into your vocabulary.

Major

	<i>Rt.</i>	<i>3rd</i>	<i>5th</i>	
1⁶	^	1	3	6
1	^	1	3	5
2⁻⁷	^	2	4	6 1
3-	^	3	5	7
4	^	4	6	1
5⁷	^	5	7	2 4
6-	^	6	1	3

Minor

	<i>Rt.</i>	<i>3rd</i>	<i>5th</i>	
7	^	-7	2	4
1-	^	1	-3	5
3	^	-3	5	-7
4-	^	4	-6	1
5⁷	^	5	7	2 4
6	^	-6	1	-3

Flats

	<i>Rt.</i>	<i>3rd</i>	<i>5th</i>	
4⁷	^	4	6	1 <u>b3</u>
1⁷	^	1	3	5 <u>b7</u>
4⁻⁶	^	4	<u>b6</u>	1 2

Sharps

	<i>Rt.</i>	<i>3rd</i>	<i>5th</i>	<i>7th</i>
2⁷	^	2	<u>#4</u>	6 1
6⁷	^	6	<u>#1</u>	3 5
3⁷	^	3	<u>#5</u>	7 2

Diminished

Rt. 3rd 5th

#1^{o7} ^ #1 3 5 b7

#4^{o7} ^ #4 6 1 b3

7^{o7} ^ 7 2 4 b6

Augmented

1+ ^ 1 3 #5

4+ ^ 4 6 #1

5+ ^ 5 7 #2

6ths

Rt. 3rd 5th 6th

1⁶ ^ 1 3 5 6

4⁶ ^ 4 6 1 2

5⁶ ^ 5 7 2 3

9ths

Rt. 3rd 5th 7th 9th

4⁹ ^ (4) 6 (1) b3 5

1⁹ ^ (1) 3 (5) b7 2

5⁹ ^ (5) 7 (2) 4 6

2⁹ (2) #4 (6) 1 3

6⁹ (6) #1 (3) 5 7

Advanced Flats

Rt. 3rd 5th 7th

b7⁷ ^ b7 2 4 b6

b3⁷ ^ b3 5 b7 b2

b6⁷ ^ b6 1 b3 b5

b2⁷ ^ b2 4 b6 7

Advanced Sharps

Rt. 3rd 5th 7th

7⁷ ^ 7 #2 #4 6

#4⁷ ^ #4 #6 #1 3

Swipe Glossary

A collection of the most common barbershop cadences, embellishments, and harmonizations in barbershop. The names are given by us, and are meant to be memorable/helpful.

Snakes	Scissors	Neighbors	Cadences
1 to 5	Major	Dom. 7th	Sweet Adeline
1 ^{o7} 5⁷	5⁷ 3- 5⁷	5⁷ #4⁷ 5⁷	1⁷ ^{o7} 4-⁶ 1
1 <u>b 7</u> 7	2 3 4	4 3 4	1 -- -- --
5 -- --	5 -- --	2 <u>#1</u> 2	<u>b 7</u> <u>6</u> <u>b 6</u> 5
3 -- 4	7 -- --	7 <u>#6</u> 7	5 <u>#4</u> 4 3
1 <u>#1</u> 2	4 3 2	5 <u>#4</u> 5	3 <u>#2</u> 2 1
2- to 5	Minor	Dim. 7th	3-Step Bridge
2- b 7⁷ 5⁷	4-⁶ b 64-⁶	5⁷ ^{o7} 5⁷	1 1⁶ 1⁷ (4)
6 <u>b 7</u> 7	2 -3 4	4 3 4	3 -- --
4 -- --	-6 -- --	2 <u>b 2</u> 2	1 -- --
2 -- --	1 -- --	7 <u>b 7</u> 7	5 6 <u>b 7</u>
6 <u>b 6</u> 5	4 -3 2	5 5 5	1 -- 5
4 to 5	5-Scissor	5-Split	4-Step Bridge
4 #4⁷ 5⁷	5⁷ 5+ 5⁷	5⁷ b 2ⁱ 5⁷	1 2-⁷ ^{o7} 1⁷
4 3 4	2 <u>b 3</u> 4	4 -- --	1 -- -- --
1 <u>#1</u> 2	5 -- --	2 <u>b 2</u> 2	5 6 -- <u>b 7</u>
6 <u>#6</u> 7	7 -- --	7 -- --	3 4 <u>#4</u> 5
4 <u>#4</u> 5	4 <u>b 3</u> 2	5 <u>b 6</u> 5	1 2 <u>#2</u> 3
6- to 5	1-Scissor	1-Split	Pivot Post
6- b 6⁷ 5⁷	4-⁶ 1+ 4-⁶	1 b 6ⁱ 1	4-⁷ 4-⁶ 1
6 <u>b 5</u> 4	2 3 4	1 -- --	<u>b 3</u> 2 3
3 <u>b 3</u> 2	<u>b 6</u> -- --	5 <u>b 5</u> 5	1 -- --
1 -- 7	1 -- --	3 <u>b 3</u> 3	<u>b 6</u> <u>b 6</u> 5
6 <u>b 6</u> 5	4 3 2	1 <u>b 6</u> 1	4 -- 1

Rhythm Glossary

A collection of the most common textures found in barbershop. Some of the names reference rhythms from other music styles.

"Swim" Chords



Garland Quarters



Oom-pah-pah



Bell Chords



Travis Pick



Walking Bass



Syncopah



Further Reading

“Play That Barber Shop Chord”: A Case for the African-American Origin of Barbershop Harmony.” Article. Dr. Lynn Abbott.

“Four Parts No Waiting.” Book. Dr. Gage Averill.

“Blues People.” Book. Amiri Baraka.

“My Old Kentucky Home.” Book. Emily Bingham.

“Keep It Barbershop: Stylistic Preservation and Whiteness in the Barbershop Harmony Society.” Dissertation. Dr. Clifton Boyd.

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