

Northwest Sound ... The First 10 Years

In 1984, 25 local singers determined there was enough interest to create a Puget Sound area elite chorus. By 1985, we had a director, Bob Brock, and a charter. By October, the Northwest Sound Chorus was created.



Performance in 1986

Our third district championship, in 1990, came with our new director, Bobby Gray, Jr. Bobby arrived with a dream of a large chorus, so he convinced us to merge with our sponsor chapter, the Lake Washington Skippers, starting the "big-chorus" era.

We went on to win our first District Championship in Calgary in 1986 and represented the district at the Hartford International Contest in 1987 (below). The chapter's "elite chorus" era continued with another District championship and a trip to the Kansas City International Contest in 1989.

Northwest Sound went to the next three International Contests. We had over 90 on stage and placed ninth in New Orleans in 1992 and ninth in Calgary in 1993 (below).



1987 Hartford International (14th place)

In 1990, the chorus decided to find a new director. We also toured Europe, led by our interim directors, Northwest Sound members Jim Kahlke and Stu Turner.



1989 Kansas City International (10th place)

In the early years, the Northwest Sound hosted many cabarets. In 1987, we moved to the Fifth Avenue Theater. We hosted the Hi-Lo's at the Fifth in 1989.



1993 Calgary International (9th place)

We took an "Off Year" from contests to tour England, Scotland, and Wales. We celebrated our 10th anniversary with our sixth trip to the International Contest - in Miami in 1995.



1994 Tour of England

During the "big chorus" era, we held annual shows at the Fifth Avenue and the Paramount. We presented annual Holiday Shows, too. With Bobby a member of the Association of International Champions (AIC), we hosted two AIC shows right here in the Northwest.



Finding Ourselves ... 1996-2005

We spent the early years of our second decade trying to "regain our momentum" while continuing our big venue shows. We re-auditioned the entire chorus and created a Monday night rehearsal for learning notes. Wednesday's rehearsal was only for polish.

During the 90's we sang at many Mariners Games and even a Seahawks Game.

In 1997, Bobby Gray Jr. announced that he needed to leave the area for family reasons. His last performance with the Northwest Sound was at our Vocal Majority Show in November, 1997.



1997 National Anthem at the Mariners' Game



1998 Eugene District (3rd place)

This decade was our era of finding ourselves. After Bobby left, we brought Bob Brock back for a couple of years. Bob Tried individual voice lessons, but we kept shrinking. Bob decided to step down after we competed at the 2000 Division Contest with only 25 on stage.

We then hired Stu Turner to lead us. With Stu, we began to regrow. We had some fun shows in this era including a Greatest Hits show. With this show, we reconnected with a few more familiar faces. In 2002, we traveled to Alaska for the District Contest.



2002 Anchorage District (3rd place)

In 2004, we brought in Denny Stiers after he moved back into the area from Eugene. With Denny, came even more singers. Under Denny and Stu, the chorus grew back to 75 men. Our second decade peaked with a win at the 2005 District Contest in Calgary, which qualified us for the 2006 Indianapolis International contest.



2005 Calgary District (1st place)



Building Through Education ... 2006-2015

After placing 20th in Indianapolis in 2006, we moved on to a new director, Donny Rose, and an "educating and building" era. Donny helped create the "sing, Sing, SING!" program, which helped us expand our youth outreach. We also had many younger family members in the chorus at this time.



2006 Indianapolis International (20th place)



2009 Anaheim International (19th place)

Donny took the chorus to three International contests over his eight years as director. But it was right after Donny announced his position at the Society Headquarters that the chorus finally achieved another District Championship in Surrey in 2014, the first since 2005.



2011 Kansas City International (23rd place)



2012 Portland International (mic testers)

The close of our third decade brought a quick director search and the hiring of Ken Potter. We traveled to Pittsburgh for the 2015 International Contest after hosting our "KennyPalooza" show.



2015 Pittsburgh International (21st place)

During this era, we hosted several youth quartet festivals and invited many local school music ensembles to sing on our shows. We also tried many different show venues including Beneroya Hall but we settled into the Bellevue High School PAC.



Change and Challenge ... 2016-2025

With our fourth decade came an era of change and challenge. We kept ourselves together through Barbershop Harmony Society (BHS) changes and a pandemic. Right from the start Ken fully embraced the "sing, Sing, SING!" program, we fostered a youth chorus for a short time, and we ran several quartet initiatives. In response to BHS introducing the "Everyone in Harmony" program, we created Northwest Mix and welcomed women into the chapter.



2016 Nashville International (13th place)

The Northwest Sound continued to win district contests, qualifying for the next two Internationals. In 2017, we drew first in the chorus contest so we created our own parodies to honor the occasion.



2017 Las Vegas International (17th place)



2022 Charlotte International (22nd place)

Ken has led us for 10 years, the longest of any of our directors. We are so thankful to have had Ken through this decade of change. Now we are preparing for a new era as we celebrate 40 years as a chapter.

