Hymns in Harmony

June 9. 2002

"The instant choir"

To add the beauty of the old hymns back into the service…

As a member of both a church choir and a Barbershop chorus, I've "been there" as a person learning to sing songs in harmony. I joined the choir because I couldn't "find" the harmony of hymns on my own during the church service. Now I can.

Parts

All of the hymns in the Lutheran Book of Worship (LBW) have a "melody". Many of the hymns have harmonies that can be sung as well as played on the organ.

When a hymn can be sung in harmony, the familiar melody part is called "Soprano". In addition, there are three other "parts".

The four parts are: "**Soprano**" … traditional melody \
"**Alto**" / upper clef
- - - - - -
"**Tenor**" \ lower clef
"**Bass**" /

The parts are shown stacked up here because that's how the notes appear in the LBW. In the upper (Treble) clef, Soprano notes are at the top with Alto notes below. In the lower (Bass) Clef, Tenor notes are above with Bass notes at the very bottom.

Learning the Parts

Traditionally, choirs are divided into four "sections", with each section singing one of the four parts. The person in each section who can learn a part the quickest is called a "section leader" and helps the other people in his/her section to learn the part.

What's new here is that the computer is acting as the "section leader" for all four parts. **Each part comes out a different speaker**, and all four speakers are synchronized to the same time. The "beat" is included so that you can understand the precise duration of the notes in each part. Thus, all four sections can learn their parts in the same room at the same time. The computer monitor displays all the words of all the verses of the music, synchronized to the melody.

All four verses of the hymn will be played six times. **You'll have 24 opportunities to learn both the notes and the timing of a part in the next 15 ½ minutes.** We'll be done four minutes before the service. The hymn we're practicing will be the closing hymn of the service.

After the service, I'd like to hear how it went for you.

In praise,
Jeff Setterholm