

## To the leadership of all Harmony Brigades:

We hope this message finds you healthy and in good spirits, despite our forced hiatus from Brigade-style quartet singing. This note contains a brief summary of discussions among a Committee created by the President of AXQHB to serve the Harmony Brigade community with expert advice of Brigade members, consisting largely of singers with professional expertise in public health, medicine and other technical or data-driven fields, as well as singers who have served in the leadership of several of the Harmony Brigades.

Our goal is to be a resource for leadership of the Brigades as we all weigh the risks of planning to hold a Rally in the COVID-19 era. We present below several high-level recommendations that the leadership of any Harmony Brigade can implement without any detailed knowledge of epidemiology, the physics of droplets in the air, or statistics on local health conditions.

We are available to assist each Harmony Brigade in making informed decisions to enable their members and guests to get back to Brigade-style quartet singing, but to do so when it is safe. Questions can be directed to the group via Don Schreiber at [president.axqhb@gmail.com](mailto:president.axqhb@gmail.com).

The BHS published in June a set of guidelines for choruses and quartets (<https://files.barbershop.org/PDFs/COVID/COVID-19-Interim-Guidance-for-BHS-Ensembles-and-Singing-Communities-v1.0.pdf>). We support and endorse the BHS statement.

The BHS recommendations, however, do not address the full range of issues that are specific to a Harmony Brigade Rally (a brief summary of issues is listed at the bottom of this note). We are still working on guidelines that are specific to holding a rally. We offer these recommendations for planning in the meantime:

- ***No Brigade should hold a Rally until the BHS schedules an International convention or district-level program.*** Many of us hope this to occur in the spring or summer of 2021, at which point a vaccine may or may not be widely available. It is possible, however, that conditions would require that it be held later. *Note that the BHS provides insurance for our Rallies, and there may be complications if a Brigade does not follow their lead.*
- ***Each Brigade should have discussions with their members to determine their comfort level with singing under various public health conditions.*** These discussions could be a broad survey of members and guests, or less formal discussions among a smaller group of singers.
- ***The Harmony Brigades individually and jointly explore ways to enjoy more limited Brigade-style singing.*** Sure, we'd all love to have our rally next month, but until that is possible, we can consider virtual or online Brigade-style quartet singing events; smaller rallies or those that limit the number of quartet singers with which each person sings; outdoor singing that does not require overnight hotel stays, perhaps held at more than one location in each Brigade's geographic footprint; any other suggestions that you might have.

The Committee will closely monitor the pandemic and provide additional guidance as time goes on and medical advances are made. We will continue to work on suggestions for alternatives to traditional Brigade Rallies.

<signed>

*The eXtreme Quartetting Re-opening Advisory Committee (XQRAC)*

## **XQRAC Members**

**Dr. George Korch** - XQRAC Chairperson, Epidemiologist, Director of National Biodefense Analysis and Countermeasures Center at Battelle National Biodefense Institute LLC, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Health faculty, Past Ass't. US Secretary of HHS, Past Pres. AHB

**Dr. Gary Holmes** - XQRAC Co-Chair, Chief, Division of Infectious Diseases, Department of Medicine, and Hospital Epidemiologist, Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center, Fort Hood, TX. 2003-2019. Brigade Ambassador, LSHB

**Dr. Dale Bieber** - MD internal med, Professor Univ of Iowa Carver Medical School, Member NCHB, NPHB, AHB, IHB

**Dr. Don Salz** - Clinical Psychologist, Harmony Platoon Founder and leader, HSHB

**Calvin Schnure** - XQRAC Communications Mgr. Social Scientist, Economist, Past Pres AHB, LSHB, NCHB, NEHB, Treasurer MHBNE

**Rick Yarto** - XQRAC Secretary, Math Teacher, Founder and Past President LSHB, IHB

**Mark Schuldenfrei** - XQRAC Librarian and media specialist. IT specialist and project planner, President NEHB, MHBNE

**Tamara Hitchcock** - Accountant, Brigade Ambassador, Board member MHBNE

**Stephanie Schmidt** - Germany, EHB Co-Founder, MA Math, med minor, EHB President, UKHB

**Blair Brown** - Liaison to Society Board, BHS Board Member, Lead of World Champion Quartet "Double Date", Professional Singer

**Don Schreiber** - Ex-Officio, AXQHB President, AHB, NCHB, IHB, LSHB

## **A library of backup information**

The XQRAC studied dozens of medical, musical, scientific, and social articles and studies and created a library of information. From that library, the following documents were instrumental in helping the XQRAC develop its initial guidance:

<https://files.barbershop.org/PDFs/COVID/COVID-19-Interim-Guidance-for-BHS-Ensembles-and-Singing-Communities-v1.0.pdf>

<https://www.nfhs.org/media/4030003/aerosol-study-prelim-results-round-2-final.pdf>

<https://www.barbershop.org/singing-organizations-response-to-aerosol-research-study>

[barbershop.org/covid-webinar-summary](https://barbershop.org/covid-webinar-summary)

Prevalence of Asymptomatic SARS-CoV-2 Infection

<https://www.acpjournals.org/doi/10.7326/M20-3012>

## **Specific issues raised by Harmony Brigade-style quartet singing:**

Unfortunately Harmony Brigade-style singing has several aspects that could foster the environment for a "superspreader event". These include:

- Singing in closed spaces with frequent switching of partners, with the aim of singing with all or nearly all participants at a rally;

- Quartet singing is “robust” singing, where lock-and-ring may generate more risk of transmission, and masks and distancing may interfere with producing overtones;
- Chorus rehearsal and performance for the public, a quartet contest in closed spaces with limited ability for distancing;
- Group singing at meals and meetings, and performing impromptu songs around hotel staff, hotel guests, and others who are not attendees of the Brigade;
- Community sing-outs in schools, retirement communities and other venues;
- Afterglow party with guests and more singing;
- Sharing of music books and/or sheet music;
- Breath-driven pitch pipes;
- Non-singing activities including shared meals (Friday eve, Saturday breakfast, lunch and dinner; Sunday breakfast), shared hotel rooms for 2-3 nights, travel to/from rally by plane, ride sharing, etc.;
- Hotel contracts, insurance and liability issues that go beyond what a typical BHS chapter may face.
- Several committee members noted that they can’t imagine a more perfectly dangerous way to spread SARS-CoV-2 than a traditional Harmony Brigade Rally.