

## 52nd Annual Coalcracker program

# Harmony, humor, hymns and heritage

By JOE PLASKO

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It was an evening filled with harmony, humor, hymns and heritage.

The 52nd Annual Night of Harmony, held Saturday night at the Tamaqua Area School District Auditorium, left the crowd of 600 in attendance feeling, to borrow from one of the song titles, sitting on top of the world.

The annual performance is sponsored by the Coalcracker Chorus, a chapter of the Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barber Shop Quartet Singing in America which includes members from eastern Schuylkill and Carbon counties.

The chorus, under the music direction of Dan West, had 33 members on stage decked out in their trademark white sport coats and singing a variety of selections, ranging from popular to sacred and patriotic numbers.

This year's show was dedicated to the memory of departed Chorus members Richard "Dick" Gerhard and Herman "Hermy" Morgan.

One of the driving forces behind the chorus, Gerhard was a section leader for the leads and sang with several quartets, as well as having a hand in producing the annual Night of Harmony. Morgan, who sang bass with the chorus, was

remembered as a quiet man with a great sense of humor who enjoyed the fellowship of the chorus.

West led the chorus in the first two selections, "Another Opening, Another Show," and the traditional favorite "Sweet Adeline." Chorus president Gaylord "Skip" Poole took over for the toe-tapping "Hello, Mary Lou", while West returned to direct "I'd Give a Million Tomorrows," a song West noted was penned by Milton Berle.

Chorus members Charlie Snyder, Ed Wassmer, Bob Evans and Herb Gasker performed a selection about New Orleans as part of their popular side quartet, 70 Plus 4. Evans quipped that the name refers to the members ages, which now total 309.

The chorus concluded the first act with a rousing "This Little Light of Mine," complete with colorful tambourines.

Other numbers performed by the chorus included "I'm Sitting On Top of the World", which featured Gary Rarick atop a large mock-up of a globe; "Sweet Roses of Morn"; Hoagy Carmichael's "Up a Lazy River"; "Everyone Loves a Lover"; and a patriotic "Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory" medley arranged by Poole.

The two featured groups for the evening were the comedy foursome Razzmatazz and Magnum, a quartet of splendid crooners.

**Razzmatazz**, which hails from the Lancaster area, were billed as the Ohio Invitational Comedy Quartet Champion and lived up to it with its side-splitting routines, including one based on Tim Allen's "Tool Time" from the television series *Home Improvement*, and another dressed as farmers, which included take-offs on "Old McDonald" and "New York, New York."

Razzmatazz concluded with a hilarious version of the Coasters' hit, "Along Came Jones," with all four members dressed for the part, including the damsel in distress.

Magnum, the 2002 Mid-Atlantic Division Finalist Quartet, features 125 years of barbershop quartet singing and dazzled the audience with a smooth set highlighted by a medley from *Music Man* ("Lida Rose"/"Till There was You"), "Danny Boy" and "As Time Goes By."

The show concluded with the Chorus joined by both quartets for the presentation of the flag by the Tamaqua Raider Marching Band Color Guard and the singing of "The Star-Spangled Banner," "Thank You Dear Lord for the Music" and "Teach the Children to Sing".



JOE PLASKO/TIMES NEWS

Gary Rarick is "Sitting on Top of the World" during a performance of that song by the Coalcracker Chorus as part of its 52nd Annual Night of Harmony at the Tamaqua Area School District Auditorium.



"Along Came Jones" sang the members of Razzmatazz, dressed up as they acted out the Coasters' song.