

How to be a great bass

Some bass singing tips from champ **Bill Meyers**.

submitted by Bill Myers, bass of Revival, 1998 International Champions

The bass singer delivers the essence and character of the barbershop sound. I just love to sing along with recordings featuring good, quality bass singers and from there develop my own style of singing bass. It's fun and you learn a lot from the experts. You learn how to sing intervals with ease and accuracy, how to balance chords and how to sing with quality all up and down the scale. Why wouldn't any bass singer want to sing along every day with the best we have? It's difficult to pin down just three of my favorite barbershop bass singers, but here's a start. These three are also genuinely nice guys and fun Barbershoppers to be around. What a wonderful combination!

Jim Henry - Here's a guy who puts more of his personality in the music he creates than any other barbershop bass I know. I respect his commitment to a quality sound all up and down the scale. Jim gives enough of his ego away to complement his quartet with just enough sound to blend and match to perfection. Yet his dominant bass color is always evident when The Gas House Gang (1993 champion) sings. I sing bass with him by tape every day.

Don Barnick - Really not a bass singer, by his own admission, but probably the very best at making the vocal apparatus work for the job; he was a gold medal tenor with Grandma's Boys in 1979. However, using all of his resonators, Don was able to command the rich, quality, up-front ping in the bass sound all up and down the scale with the 1992 international champion Keepsake. You will not find a finer example of one using what the good Lord gave him to work in his favor. I sing bass with him by tape every day.

Rick Staab - One of the all-time greats. Here's a guy who was born with a golden bass voice. He'll be the first to tell you, "It was a gift from above." I think he sang a bad note once in 1977. Not sure which note it was, but at least one. Always, always, with quality and richness, always resonant, always accurate. Just the kind of bass singer most leads pray for. His voice was made to order for the legendary 1978 champion Bluegrass Student Union. Ah, I remember them well! I sing bass with him by tape every day.

Bill's ten tips for better bass singing:

- Sing every note with a quality sound
- Sing with full face vowels
- Sing every day

- Vertical "Ahh" on the inside of every vowel
- Every five seconds, energize
- Get a coach
- Step into the picture the lyric creates
- Sing on top of the air
- Resonant, warm spin in the sound
- Always be working on a new song

Bill Myers teaches "How To Be A Great Bass" at Harmony College.

Additional resources

Here is a new, voice-specific discussion list for those most important Barbershop harmony singers, the 'foundation' folks, the Bass singers:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/BBSBasses/>

This list is for information, techniques, assistance, and pointers that Bases can use to improve their performance and increase their fun quotient in Barbershop.