



Musings from the pen of Academician Mixie Lidyan...

A problem plaguing nearly all the Sacred Harp singings in the West is the dearth of male tenors and male trebles. Basses seem to be in plentiful supply, so this lack is not simply due to male disinterest in Sacred Harp singing. While searching for a fresh grant proposal for yet another government handout of public tax dollars, and also mulling over the sparseness of male tenors and trebles, one of the recently re-released recordings from the Sacred Harp Publishing Co. was placed in the CD player.

Noticed right away was that the keying of the songs on the recording was markedly lower than is usual at singings on the West Coast; and further that the baritone in the next room was humming along on the tenor part without strain... Hmm...

Hypothesis needing grant money to research: *Lowered keying will result in more males sitting in the tenor and treble sections*

Let's see how this might work out: A whole bunch of notes that used to just barely lie in the baritones' range will now be too low for them. But happily, the high

notes of the tenor part that used to be too high are now reachable. So perhaps as many as half of the "basses" will be encouraged to move over to the tenor section. Hooray!

Tenors might elect to stay in the tenor section, or they may now discover that the treble part is more exciting for their personal vocal range in these new keys.

Many of our female trebles have voices that are too low to be a true soprano (those A's and G's come out squeaky soft if at all) but too high for most of the alto notes and so the lowered keys will feel better to them. And the second sopranos sitting in the alto section will now feel that their part is too low and will be impelled into another section, possibly the tenor, which can always use more voices. The remaining altos will revel in the increased opportunities to boom out notes in their "chest voices."

How can one discover the keys used by the singers on the old recordings if not gifted with perfect pitch? One way is to have a keyboard handy while listening to the CD and to match the tonic note given out by the keyer, or match the last note sung by the basses.

Until Academician Mixie gets her grant money, (the wait estimated to be about as long as it will take Hades to freeze), some of our West Coast singings might elect to test the hypothesis on their own, (in a non-scientific non-academic way, of course), and report their results in this journal?