

Hello, singers!

Congratulations, you've made the best decision of your life—singing barbershop! If you've never experienced barbershop before, hopefully this letter will give you the basic gist so that we're all on the same page before you arrive. Barbershop is a type of a cappella singing that has four-part harmony, where the melody is mostly in the second highest voice. Barbershop relies heavily on chord tension and release and the tuning of overtones—this means it's a super challenging genre to sing but also AMAZING when it's done well.

To help you choose what part to sing, here are some descriptions of the parts we use in barbershop:

Lead

Lead is the second highest voice and generally is the melody. It tends to fall in the soprano 2 range. If you like to sing the melody and you have a strong middle singing range, this part is probably for you.

Bass

Bass is the lowest voice and sings the lower harmony. It's important to have a strong bass section because the bass part is the foundation of a lot of the chords we sing. Usually in Young Women in Harmony voicing, the bass part doesn't go below an F or Eb below middle C, making it just a little lower than an alto 2 part. If you have the lower range, you should absolutely sing bass.

Tenor

Tenor is the highest voice and sings the harmony above the lead. Tenor is similar to a soprano 1 singing range, but is sung completely differently. The tenor part should generally be the quietest in the chord, which is a challenge since it is rather high. If you can float those high notes without being louder than a lead section, you should sing tenor.

Baritone

Baritone is in a similar range to lead but sings basically all the harmony notes that are left over. Sometimes the notes are above the lead, and sometimes the notes are below the lead. If you love the challenge of learning some difficult notes and have a great ear for harmony (or you already own a pitch pipe...), you're probably a baritone.

Hopefully this is helpful in choosing which part to learn! Go ahead and start listening to your learning tracks as soon as you get them so that we can all be super prepared—of course if people are struggling with notes when we all arrive, we'll make sure everyone is singing the right pitches, but I think we would all love to breeze through that part of the process so we can get to the good stuff faster and make some really amazing music!



Looking forward to meeting all of you!

In harmony,

Melody Hine, Ain't We Got Fun Youth Festival Director