The Bohemians

Singing was an avocation of members of The Bohemians, a male a cappella singing group that performed in Oregon from 1954 to 1962. The singers—who worked at such professions as law, medicine, education, design, and transportation—performed at the Portland Civic Theater, at banquets, and on radio and television in Portland and other cities around the state.

Some of the original members of The Bohemians were part of the group for its entire existence. Members included Bob Albrecht, Bob Bain, Jim Bjorge, Norm Browning, Bob Day, Bud Deller, Joe Einwaller, Chuck Hayden, Gil Knapp, Dick Lalli, Boyd Lewis, Bob Mercer, Bill Miller, Dale Morgan, Dick Muhle, Gene Petroff, Elliot Savage, Eddie Thomas, Al Van Veen, Dave Williams, and Dick Williams**.**

Portland lawyer James Bjorge, who had sung with the Whiffenpoofs at Yale University, rehearsed the group, and they performed without a conductor. Male singing groups were popular in the 1950s, and others included the Classic Chorale and the Apollos. The Bohemians held their rehearsals at The Bohemian, a restaurant in Portland's Hollywood neighborhood.

The group sang in several languages, including English, Latin, German, French, German, and Welsh. They memorized their repertoire, which included eight popular pieces: “Here She Comes” and “Teasin’ Melody,” arranged for the Whiffenpoofs, and crowd pleasers such as “Lydia the Tattooed Lady,” “My Cutie’s Due on the 2222,” “Slide Trombone,” “Swizter Boy,” and “Tyrolean Carols,” which involved yodeling.

The Bohemians sang each year at Timberline Lodge on New Year’s Eve and produced an album, *After Ski*, there. Governor Mark Hatfield invited them to sing at the governor’s mansion and in the rotunda of the Capitol. They also performed for visiting dignitaries, such as the king and queen of Nepal, and sang on the Andy Williams variety show. Marshall Bartholomew, the director of the Yale Glee Club, called them “the best singing group in my memory.” In July 1959, The Bohemians performed for American servicemen and women in a four-week tour of military bases in Europe.

The Bohemians took no bookings after 1962, but they loved to sing together and continued to perform for members’ weddings and other celebrations. In 1985, they performed at a celebration for Richard L. Kohnstamm's thirtieth anniversary at Timberline Lodge, perhaps the group's last performance.

Written by Susan Hayden

Further Reading:

Grondahl, Hilmar. "Bohemians Win Praise." *Oregonian*, Dec. 15, 1958, sec. 2, p. 5.

Grondahl, Hilmar. "Tuneful 'Pops' Concert Makes Audience Happy." *Oregonian*, February 28, 1959, sec. 1, p. 8.

Swing, Bill. "Bohemian Choral Group Versatile." *Oregonian*, December 11, 1956, sec. 3, p. 1.

Copyright © 2008-2013 Portland State University