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## Young Singers Take Barbershop Title

By NEAL E. BOUDETTE

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Score a big victory for the Barbershop Harmony Society's youth movement.

The organization, which strives to preserve the uniquely American style of a cappella singing known as barbershop, has been struggling for years to attract younger singers.

This struggle was the subject of a [page one Journal article](#)<sup>1</sup> last week.

But at the society's 2007 singing competition in Denver this weekend, a group made up almost entirely of men in their 20s harmonized their way to this year's gold medal in the barbershop chorus contest.

The Westminster Chorus, based in Westminster, Calif., won the society's Gold Medal just five years after it was formed in 2002 as a kind of singing fraternity.

"This is one of the greatest moments of my life," Russ Squires, one of the founders of the chorus, said by cellphone. "I never imagined we be champions this soon." ([Hear the audio of their performance.](#)<sup>2</sup>)

Ed Watson, the society's chief executive, said Westminster's championship indicates barbershop can captivate younger singers, even those raised on rock and roll and other modern forms of music.


"This is fantastic for the society," Mr. Watson said. "If we're going to preserve the barbershop style we have to get younger guys involved." Westminster's victory "will get a lot of people excited about barbershop."

It was a narrow victory. The competition ended with Westminster tied with the Ambassadors of Harmony. Westminster was declared the winner because it scored higher marks for the quality of its singing. The chorus's closing song, an upbeat number called "Strike Up The Band," was followed by a "riotous" ovation from the crowd of several thousand at Denver's Pepsi Center, Mr. Squires said. "We were off stage and it was still going on," he said. "They just wouldn't stop."

Westminster "did a great job singing barbershop," Mr. Watson said.

In the quartet competition, Max Q was named champion, beating out O.C Times, a foursome of men in their 20s who also sing in the Westminster Chorus. Max Q is made up of four music professionals from Texas and Florida. ([Hear Max Q's performance.](#)<sup>3</sup>) Most of the society's quartets consist of purely amateur singers. Max Q finished a very close second a year ago.

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Under the society's rules, quartets can no longer compete after winning gold. That leaves O.C. Times as the early favorites for next year's championship.

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(6) javascript:var

target=window.open("http://link.brightcove.com/services/player/bcpid1078546340','Barbershop','scrollbars=no,resizable=no,status=no,width=486,height=412');

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