



## ‘You can’t hide behind your tuba’

Members of Belmont High School’s barbershop group sing. Front row, from left, are Johnny Bryant, 17; Isaac Loring, 17; and Tyler Bryant, 15. Back row, from left, are Jesse Bassett, 17; Leland Clark, 15; Marty Smock-Joyal, 15; and Jon O’Sullivan, 15. The group recently performed at the school’s spring concert and plans to expand its song list.

**Leland:** Marty, Isaac, me and Jon went to a barbershop youth music festival in Alton and we learned three songs: “The Lion Sleeps Tonight,” “Little Darling” and “Under the Boardwalk.” After that, we took what we learned and put it into this group. The problem was, we couldn’t do just a quartet, because we weren’t strong enough. Second of all, Marty and Isaac could go low and middle, Jon and me can only sing up high, we have no low range at all. So we brought in other people.

**Jon:** (At the concert, we got a) standing ovation. Everybody just bolted up. It was amazing.

**Jesse:** They stood up and started applauding before we finished. It’s thrilling to know everybody likes us that much and they couldn’t stay in their seat.

**Leland:** Jessie said, “So this is what it’s like to be God.”

**Johnny:** When you’re singing, there’s no brass or no mutes. If you mess up, that’s you messing up. You can’t hide behind your tuba or your trombone. You gotta pass that whole shyness thing.

**Tyler:** A lot of people say, “Oh, you’re in chorus. You guys are gay.” And we’re like, “What is that supposed to mean? We just like singing.”

**Marty:** They can’t sing, so they’ll put me down because I can. That’s

just been my concept of it.

**Johnny:** It’s kinda turning around now. We’re starting to have this power. People are seeing, “Oh, the cool kids are joining chorus.” For once, people are starting to see really how cool singing can be.

**Jesse:** We’ve sort of become backwoods folk heroes. We’re the closest thing to rock stars that this school’s seen in a while. Just looking at the group we have here; we’ve got the nerds, the losers, the miscreants, the jocks and the preps, all in the room singing together.

**Marty:** At our last concert, we definitely got more of a response from the gifted girls, like the seniors. They were pretty impressed. There’s potential, there’s potential.

**Jesse:** I’ve got more attention from girls’ moms than the girls themselves. That’s not exactly the demographic we were aiming for, but it’s still good.

**Jesse:** One of the great things about a cappella and barbershop is that you can do it after you graduate from school. It’s something you can continue doing for years and years and years.

**Leland:** It’s funny what Jesse said about this being a lifelong thing. For the past two years before I got out of home schooling and came to public school this year, I’ve been a member of the Lakes Region Chordsmen, a barbershop group. People in there have been singing barbershop for over 50 years, and, like, some of my best friends are 85. I’ve met some great people singing like this.

To hear several of the group’s songs and view photos, visit [concordmonitor.com](http://concordmonitor.com).

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