

Emceeing: another modest example, from 7/5/15

(I was asked by a group of performers/students for some sample emceeing scripts four years ago, so here is my occasional response. This time I was asked by our Barber Shop interim director, Paul, if I'd do the emceeing for the Marin County Fair, in San Rafael, about 20 miles north of San Francisco. But there were restrictions that might affect the show, he said.

I suspected that meant I'd have to wear an embarrassing costume or, horrors, the singers would also have to dance. It was time limitation. I think we usually sang for 45 minutes. This year it would be 30. Easy enough. Either I say less, say it faster, we sing fewer songs, or if we were running out of time we'd improvise on the spot, probably by reducing the number of songs at the end.

Paul chose 10 songs, none lasting very long, and I trimmed too, so it ended right on the button, without rushing. It was a grand day too: sunny (we were in a large tent), a whiff of breeze, and maybe 80 degrees. Lots of attendees, meaning that by the end of the show our "hall" was almost full. (That's typical: the first song is clapped at, with huge relief, by our wives and visiting cousins—relief because we all got on the stage and nobody, yet, had stepped or fallen off. By the end of the short show most of the people passing by and hearing patriotic songs they knew had gathered up, and many sat down. This crowd was active, vocal, and seemed to enjoy the program a lot.

You might also notice from the script below that we start by singing, then we introduce ourselves and welcome the curious on-lookers.

The only other item that might pique your curiosity is the reference to the plea for rain that we would sing for. It's very dry in California, and our area is no exception, so when the song ended and I had asked them to join the plea when we, the singers, raised our hands to heaven, the audience did too, and laughed and some even clapped.

That's it. This is a simple script—hard to go wrong with six jokes that funny—but not atypically it took several hours to write and prune. And on the stage it felt like it lasted two minutes! Happy holiday!

SCRIPT: July 5, 2015

MUSIC

AMERICA, THE BEAUTIFUL

Welcome to America's 239th birthday, even if we're a day late. We are the Marin Golden Gate Barbershop Chorus. It's our honor to be invited to stir your patriotic blood again at the Marin County Fair. Last year our singers gave me the five of the funniest Independence Day jokes ever told, to share. Many are still laughing. So we are doing it again this year. *Six* jokes rather than just five! (You need not applaud.)

But music first. We just heard **AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL**. How about **I'M GONNA SIT RIGHT DOWN AND WRITE MYSELF A LETTER?** Then we'll add a special song in honor of today. It's called **TODAY**.

Apropos, today, July 5, we are led by our proudest display of brotherhood, a true Tory himself, Maestro Paul Wren.

MUSIC

Yes, it's time for three of the funniest patriotic jokes ever told. Ready?

* If rats and cockroaches lived in George Washington's home, you know what we'd call it? MT. VERMIN.

* You know what you call a fake patriot? **UNCLE SHAM.**

* You know what they call the protest that dogs held in 1773?
THE BOSTON FLEA PARTY.

That's enough, three jokes at a time, so you don't hurt yourselves...

Here's a song for your sweetheart, your spouse, or your country. It's called **I DON'T KNOW WHY I LOVE YOU LIKE I DO.**

It's followed by a tune you all know, a kind of national prayer:

GOD BLESS AMERICA...

MUSIC

I see some of you duffers of all ages moving your mustached lips just wishing you were up here harmonizing and that you could have a red shirt like ours. So when we finish today please come up to the stage and get a card that tells how to join in. You needn't be Caruso. If you can carry a tune and it won't drop on your foot, come and have fun...

One more thing: you see that building over there? That's where we put on our annual show—this year it's on the second to last Sunday in November, the 22nd, at 2 p.m. We have some super champion quartets joining us—and we hope that all of you, of all genders, will too...

How about two more songs? Most of our chorus members are married, so for them and their suffering brides, we will sing **WHEN THERE'S LOVE AT HOME.** And yes, alas, some of our singers are singles—they are probably wearing white socks, or one white sock—so the second song is for them, a deterrent to despair called **HELLO MARYLOU.**

MUSIC

I owe you three more bell-ringers before we finish with three

foot-stomping tunes...

Are you ready? They're dangerously funny so hold on.

* If you crossed a vegetable with our first president, what would you get? **GEORGE SQUASHINGTON.**

* What quacks, has webbed feet, and betrays his country? **BENEDUCK ARNOLD.**

* And what would you get if you crossed a famous, fat founding father with a famous monster? **BENJAMIN FRANKLINSTEIN**

—

Should we give these brave singers a round of applause before they launch into the last medley?

And let us give you a hearty thank you for actually applauding our vocal efforts. Our first final song is a plea to the weather gods, called **RAIN**. When we plea for moisture by raising our hands at the end, please join in! (The trees will thank you.)

Then we'll take you rain hunting when we **RIDE THE CHARIOT!**

And the last song you know. Why not join us singing the last verse? (To the blog readers, it was the **STAR SPANGLED BANNER.**)

MUSIC

END OF PERFORMANCE. (Singers fall off of stage.)

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

(There are several earlier emceeing samples at this site. Write emceeing in the search box upper right and all-or-most-will appear.)