

Emceeing: a Barbershop St. Patrick's Day script

Welcome!

Here is another Barbershop presentation script—for those eager to read Barbershop presentation scripts. Enjoy!

I'm Gordon Burgett, blogmaster of my own blog, which you are now reading. 90% of the posts here refer to writing, editing, publishing, speaking, and related commentary about selling one's ideas and information.

The other 10% discuss emceeing, which is an extension of my speaking activities, which are in turn linked to the 2000+ paid presentations I've offered in the past 30 years. Still, the scripts shared here are to a special group I have been part of for about 16 years: barbershopping, first in Santa Maria, CA; more recently in Marin County (north of San Francisco), CA. Through these blogs I have exchanged scripts written and techniques learned with other script writers for their barbershop groups. (You may see the other emceeing script info by writing in "emceeing" in the search box upper right on this page.)

So this is a short script when the Marin County Golden Gate group sang at a St. Patrick's day gathering which I found in a box of past (but shamefully unblogged) emceeing material. I think it took place in about 2013. Sadly, I don't recall anything more. I suspect it was in the middle of a speaking tour across CA when I came home that day to emcee and sing, and in the rush to get back out to complete the tour I forgot to leave any more details. That's it. You can see that I'm a real person at www.gordonburgett.com!

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Here, from the depths, is the script of this mysterious presentation:

Good evening, we are the Marin Golden Gate Barbershop Chorus, directed by Phil DeBar. I'm Gordon Burgett, and this dapper fellow is our Associate Director, Paul Wren, who Phil is about to ask to lead the group in "Danny Boy."

[I've lost the actual text here but I must have introduced Phil DeBar, our Director, and he gave a short, audience-involved demonstration of what barbershopping is about. He had the audience sing one of the four voices in a short song, to try their talents at harmonizing!

Then I asked Phil to lead the Chorus in "Amazing Grace."]

I continued:

"We've already heard some of our favorite Irish music and we're enjoying St. Patrick's Day festivities and food, so maybe a few Irish jokes would be in order.

Father Murphy, infused by religious fervor, swept into a bar in Donegal.

He grabbed the first man he saw and said, "Do you want to go to Heaven?"

"I do, father!" the man replied, so the priest told him to stand by the door.

Father Murphy turned to a lively lass and he asked her the same question.

"Oh yes, father, I do." So he pointed at the door and suggested she join the other man already there.

Then Father Murphy saw Billy O'Toole shrinking in a corner,

trying to be invisible.

"O'Toule," he said. "What about you? Do you want to go to heaven?"

"Oh no, thank you, Father. No I don't!" came a fast reply.

The priest looked bewildered and said "Are you telling me that when you die you don't want to go to heaven?"

O'Toole replied, "Oh yes, Father, I do—but when I die. I thought you were rounding up a group to go right now!"

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Are you ready for some more music? But let me ask you first,

Does anybody have a birthday today? If so, would you raise your hand?

(If a hand went up, I'd ask them to stand up and tell us something about themselves because we had a gift for them.)

(If nobody responded, I'd ask, "If any of you had a birthday in the past year, would you raise your hand?" The moment the hands went up, the chorus broke into "Happy Birthday!")

HAPPY BIRTHDAY! I wished them all when the music ended, then I suggested they give themselves a hearty round of applause for having lived so long!

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When the chorus sat I asked, "How about some grand quartet singing?"

Not only can our first group make great sounds, they are international imports brought here today for your merriment. They come from four places, all hot beds of melody: fellows, raise your hands when I tell where you are from: our bass, ____ from Uruguay; ____ , the lead from England; ____, the

baritone, from Texas, and _____, our tenor, from the Bronx.
Ladies and gentlemen, this is Opus IV!

Our second quartet has lesser pedigrees—they come from Fairfax, San Rafael, Mill Valley, and Point Reyes. Let's welcome _____, _____, _____, and _____ (they stepped forward when I gave their names). They are called the MarinTones...

You surely heard about Poor Paddy and his life of sorrow and pain. But things finally changed for Paddy—and it happened on St. Patrick's Day too. He had found the love of his life, and had promised to mend his ways, particularly about not forgetting about their dates and that he would never again be as much as one minute late.

So you can imagine his distress when he arrived at the restaurant to dine with his sweetheart and he couldn't find a parking spot!

Around the block he drove, then two blocks. He was in a panic when he pulled over and prayed: LORD, take pity on me! If you'll find me a parking place I'll go to MASS every Sunday of my life, I'll quit drinking Irish whiskey, I'll....

Just then the car parked in front of him pulled out.

He looked to heaven and shouted as loud as he could, "NEVER MIND! I've found one!"

How about two more songs from the Marin Golden Gate Barbershop Chorus, directed by Phil DeBar?

Get ready to "Turn Your Radio On...", then a favorite oldie, "I Want a Girl Just Like the Girl That Married Dear Old Dad."

It's surely unfair and unkind to mix an Irish holiday, an Irishman, and some of the best brewed Gallic grog in the same joke, but I've been given special permission from old Saint Patrick himself—because when I told it to him even he too couldn't stop laughing...

It's about Muldoon who had been out drinking into the wee hours, and one suspects it was not his first time either.

So he kicked off his shoes and crept into his house so he didn't awaken his true love, Kathleen.

He was heading up to the bedroom but only made it up two steps before he fell backward on his rump.

Unfortunately, he had a bottle of whiskey in each back pocket!

But he was so afraid he might have made too much noise for Kathleen, he fumbled back on his feet, found a light, turned around, and dropped his pants. There in the hallway mirror he saw his own rear end cut and bleeding. So he found a box of Band-Aids, and put one on each place where he saw blood.

Then he crawled up the stairs, fell into bed, and was barely asleep when he saw that the sun was up—and he felt his lovely Kathleen pulling on his big toe.

"Muldoon," she said, "you were out drunk again last night!"

"Oh," he groaned, "Have mercy. Why would you say such a mean thing?"

"Because when I went downstairs the front door was wide open, there was booze bottle glass all over the floor, and there was a trail of blood from the glass right into this very bed!"

"But mostly it was because of those Band-Aids stuck on the hallway mirror!"

I suppose there's been a Muldoon in every house. Let's sing two more songs to lift Muldoon's holiday spirit. There's no home on any holiday more forgiving than the HOME ON THE RANGE...or a promise more joyous than being "Once in Love With Amy..."

Finally, what day would be more appropriate for a miracle than a Saint's Day? And who would be better equipped to shake loose that miracle than a local Irish priest driving back to Marin County from San Francisco after perhaps over-enjoying just such a celebration?

Father Timothy had just crossed the Golden Gate Bridge and was creeping down the hill when a cop pulled him over. The policeman leaned in, smelled the sweet aroma of alcohol, and saw an empty wine bottle on the car floor...

"Have you been drinking, Father?"

"Ah yes, officer, but just water."

The trooper asked him, "Then why do I smell wine?"

The priest looked down, saw the bottle, and shouted "GOOD LORD! He's done it again!"

Ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of all of the chorus, we thank you for being such a welcoming audience. Let me once again acknowledge the MarinTones, Opus IV, and our director, Phil DeBar... [who asked Paul Wren to close the show with "America the Beautiful."]

Emceeing: full sample script, 7/4/2014

Since we've received many requests for completed Barbershop scripts, as formats or models for similar club or organization presentations, here is the July 4, 2014, program at the Marin County (California) Fair.

(The live rendition is on You Tube, though the sound capture is fairly poor, being an outside show [in a tent] and surrounded by other live activities, including a giant, musical Ferris Wheel about 150 feet away.)

4th of JULY SCRIPT (2014)

To start the program the group sang **"AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL."**

Thank you.

Welcome to our country's birthday party, Marin County style!

We are the Marin Golden Gate Barbershop Chorus, our director today is Mr. Paul Wren, and I'm Gordon Burgett.

It's an honor to be invited back, for many years now, to the Ben and Jerry's Stage on the festive Fourth. We are delighted to see so many of you here today. We're going to offer a wide selection of American music this sunny Friday, much of it patriotic, plus folk songs and Broadway classics.

Let's start with a 1957 song by Ricky Nelson: **"HELLO, MARY LOU":**

Since we're on a love-song roll, how about two more songs that have survived the ages.? The first is "**I'M GONNA SIT RIGHT DOWN AND WRITE MYSELF A LETTER,**" followed by "**I DON'T KNOW WHY I LOVE YOU LIKE I DO...**"

If you don't mind, let me point out something sort of odd. (Point at a kid in the audience.) Would you do me a favor? Your name? Would you stand up and look at the audience. Can it be a coincidence that, in our audience today, ____ is wearing the very same thing that the colonists wore at the Boston Tea Party... a t-shirt. Thank you, _____.

Let's hear a patriotic favorite written three or four times by Irving Berlin, who died a short while ago at the age of 101. He wrote the first version of this song in 1918 when he was serving in WWI, and he rewrote it again in 1938. Here's the rendition sung for years by Kate Smith: "**GOD BLESS AMERICA!**"

Our next song was made popular by Nat King Cole, the Mills Brothers, Frank Sinatra, Rod Stewart, and maybe a dozen more. It's called "**NEVERTHELESS.**"

You're a great audience. Would you like to know how barbershopping differs from other chorale or group singing? Let's ask Paul, who flew in all the way from England to make us sing, how that works. Then Paul will show how the 4-part melodic blend sounds in another favorite oldie, "**CONEY ISLAND BABE...**"

[The demonstration, involving four soloists and the chorus, used the song "**MY WILD IRISH ROSE.**"]

There's also the less frolicsome side of the Fourth of July. Of course we remember and hail our country's independence, but

also we can't forget, sadly, the many lives lost to win and preserve a more just and a better way of life. It's somewhat paradoxical that three famous Americans who symbolize and helped define that freedom actually died on the Fourth of July: John Adams and Thomas Jefferson (on the same day) and James Monroe. For them, and for the thousands more lost on battlefields and at home protecting our liberty, and for all of you too who have also lost a loved one recently, here's a beautiful, heart-felt song that conveys our condolences: "**I BELIEVE.**"

The singers are going to take a short glottal break. It's my privilege to present Paul Wren again. Paul's going to share a funny story. If you listen carefully you might detect a slight Oxford accent!

Thank you, Paul.

It'd be hard to find two songs more American than our next offerings: first, "**TAKE ME OUT TO THE BALL GAME**"—baseball buffs are invited to sing along!—followed by the song "**TODAY.**"

I see a lot of you guys out there humming and moving your lips. If you've enjoyed our musical foray and wish you were up here singing, come and join us on Monday nights from 7:30-10 at the First Presbyterian Church at Ross and Kensington in San Anselmo. We'd like to have you on stage with us next year. And if you hurry, we'd love to have you with us on November 2, always the first Sunday in November, in our annual Fall Show at 2 p.m. in the last building back there. That's the Showcase Theater. There will be information fliers on the stage when we finish. And yes, it's true: if you join us you too can have your own stunning red shirt!

Three more songs!

You probably can't believe it to look at us, but we're almost all married (some of us often), so we want to sing a sweet love song to our long-suffering wives, who let us loose every Monday night to practice—and, of course, for all of you other sweethearts here today...

Here's "**WHEN THERE'S LOVE AT HOME,**" followed by a national home song we all share: "**HOME ON THE RANGE.**"

We're about sung out, and we want to come down and shake your hands, so our favorite closer is next. First, let's give a hand to a merciless, imported taskmaster, Paul Wren. And also to the singers of the Marin Golden Gate Barbershop Chorus...

You've been a fun audience. We hope we have helped you have a fun fair.

Our closing song always brings our listeners to their feet! Please join us in singing the well known closing stanzas of "**THE STAR-SPANGLED BANNER!**"

Emceeding: the thinking behind writing the 11/4 two-hour show script

On 11/4/12 the Golden Gate Marin County Barbershoppers performed the two-hour show called "Barbershopping from Coast to Coast" at the Civic Center in San Rafael. (See the actual

script on the blog mentioned below.)

I wrote and emceed that show, so let me share the thinking that went behind its preparation and editing.

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First, before we get into copy prep, let me suggest three related blogs about emceeing, plus four speaking products here. What do I know about emceeing and speaking? See [Gordon Burgett](#) for more information about the 2000+ paid speaking/emceeing performances I've given.)

* [“Emceeing: how to write a script that works!”](#) (posted 7/3/12)

* [“Emceeing or show planning: What to remember when prepping a one-hour presentation”](#) (posted 8/7/12)

* [“Emceeing: a full script for a two-hour show”](#) (posted 11/4/12) This is the script talked about in this “the thinking behind...” blog.

* A new \$4.95 ebook including the above blogs plus more how-to information is at [“Emceeing, Show Planning, and Script Writing,”](#) plus an excellent booklet, [“How to Be a Great Emcee”](#) from SpeakerNetNews (\$4.85) is buyable, full of current, applicable “emceeing” information.

* **“Four Special Tools That Get Speakers Booked First!”** (ebook, available through [order form](#) or from Kindle, Nook, and Smashwords)

* **“How to Set Up and Market Your Own Seminar”** (audio seminar with workbook, available through [order form](#))

This blog is the fourth of the emceeing series: * [“Emceeing: the thinking behind writing the 11/4 two-hour show script \(12/26/12\)”](#)

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Writing the 11/4/12 script was more complex than emceeing the

show.

Since I had written several B/S shows in Marin County (and for an earlier chapter in Santa Maria, CA), the "show committee" asked me to go at it again.

We needed a general theme to wrap the singing around, since we were already blessed with an excellent stage/theater at the Civic Center in San Rafael, CA, where we had given the last six or eight shows, always the first Sunday afternoon in November. Its maximum capacity was about 300, and we usually drew almost that many paying attendants, at \$15 (seniors) or \$20 (general audience). That also included a lighting technician and some set-up help, plus ticket selling through the County Box Office and at the show. (There were plenty of practice and dressing rooms, plus easy access for the stage rafters.)

I asked the show committee to pick the theme. President Obama was elected to his second term a few days after the show, so politics was suggested. So was travel, and a few other ideas. They had used the political theme once before and there was some reluctance about the possible partisanship. The enthusiasm for travel was somewhat muted too, but we agreed on a sort of cross-country bus trip for the chorus where we could sing the 15 or so songs at the locale that made the most sense, like "Coney Island Babe" when we were near New York and "Route 66" as we crossed from Chicago to L.A.

Many Barbershop shows are rather simple in structure because the choir only knows so many songs, can only learn four or five more (if they're not too complex), and choreography can't be too involved or require too much dexterity because the group is usually in their 60's plus, stiff, standing on risers (some rather precariously), and already encumbered with new lyrics, the notes, and the order of the script, and are reticent to flap around.

So the driving force will be the emcee, a few singing actors, the imported acts, quartets, and the occasional line delivered by a chorus member on cue. Most of the music is unaccompanied (there is a starting pitch note). Sometimes background music or sound comes from a tape projected from the sound booth. There are usually three microphones: the emcee has one and there is a dual microphone in the center of the stage to pick up chorus and quartet sounds. Finally, there is a spotlight, or several, directed at the action from behind the audience (or from the sound booth).

Those are your tools if you are writing the show. I've found it most productive to let the committee set out the format, suggest any innovations, propose any changes from the usual shows, and select the theme (and maybe title). After that, I ask the director for any ideas/help he can offer plus the rough order he'd like the songs sung. I then write a rough draft and send it to the director and committee members, ask for any suggestions or ideas (again), modify the draft, and then post it on a website, and ask the chorus to look at it and offer ideas/suggestions. Then I pretty much pound it out and show it to the director, and thus the show is born. (If you don't take control of the script at about mid-point, chorus members will be tinkering and dabbling with every line until show time.)

Here were the components of the 11/4/12 Marin show: (1) travel was the theme, (2) "Barbershopping from Coast to Coast" was the title, and (3) two acts, the first, "the show," the second, the invited headliner quartet, local quartets, and the chorus for four more songs. To that we added a well known local entertainer (a Spike Jones imitator).

I proposed that we start the show with a noisy bang-bang act, without introduction (since traditionally the shows were too wordy and slow at the outset.) We'd have Joe Bondanza (Spike Jones) walk onto the extended stage (with the curtain drawn behind) to sing "Mule Train," then the emcee in a gaudy

costume and a high black magician's hat would come through the curtain, bow, walk over to the lectern on the left side, the curtain would part, a few words would be spoken, the group would be introduced as it entered and climbed the risers. They'd start singing "I Want a Girl..."

The only thing different was that the emcee was a poet, and inside his high hat were a billion words from which to make his talking poetry—if he couldn't find a rhyme, he'd take off the hat, thump it hard, and from the assorted words that came out he'd find the proper ending.

So I had to write the script in poetry, and also deliver it loudly and clearly so the audience could hear every word.

We had to create the image of a bus, so we had the singers on the ends of the risers hold a hood or the back bumper. The group also entered carrying suitcases, which they stacked in front of or behind the bus. They wore travel togs: hats, jackets, scarves...

From there the emcee explained where they were and indirectly introduced the songs, and the chorus and quartets provided the music as they visited Coney Island, Philadelphia, the South, Chicago to Joplin to Barstow, Route 66, the Range, San Francisco, and ended with "God Bless America."

What I had in mind when I put the frame of the script together, then fine tuned it, was that the show must move quickly, have lots of fun in it, set up the songs as best I could, make the transitions as smooth as possible, and keep the same spirit and drive up in the second half that we created in the first part.

In fact, all I knew about "Spike Jones" was that he was funny and very reliable professionally. (We spoke for about five minutes before the show, and he understood why he was the opener in both acts. He was a great choice.)

It was somewhat the same with the highlight guest quartet, called Prime Time, two lads and two lasses. They gave me their introduction when we met about 30 minutes before the show began; they had been on the stage for about 20 minutes before that so they could figure out the microphone, the stage, and the lights. That was it: I relied on the others who selected them that they were capable. Turned out they were excellent. I lucked out twice. (I much prefer to have heard some performance tapes and get their introduction a week or two in advance, but it simply didn't happen here—and it wasn't needed.)

The rest of my interaction with the group before the day of the show was with one committee member who was script liaison. Bill liked the script from the beginning, and really gave me full reign.

And, of course, with the chorus director, Phil DeBar, who was a veteran at performing and staging. He too liked the poetry idea (I vacillated about it from the beginning to the end, and am still not sure it made a lot of sense, but others seemed to think it was clever, the hat with a billion words was funny, and it added another positive dimension.) With Phil we mostly positioned the songs and the pacing, then it was up to me to make it happen. He fit in perfectly, adding fun and gusto to the songs.

Once we had the order ironed out, the final songs chosen, and knew what would work in the second act about getting the quartets on and off, the chorus on the risers, all of the end-of-the-show acknowledgements of the performing groups, and the joining together to sing our usual closer, "Keep the Whole World Singing," then I could tinker with the wording of my emcee script—just so I kept all the rest intact. (I was the only person with the word-by-word final script, which I had to follow closely because of the rhyming in each line, in Act One.)

All shows have zero-hour changes. It turns out that I had forgotten that before the intermission we asked all who wished to deposit a business card (or the info on small sheets we had on the table, with pencils) so we could award free tickets to next year's show—and add the participants to our e-list for the annual show promotion in 2013.

“Who will announce the raffle and the winners?” I was asked about five minutes before Spike Jones baffled the audience. Mike, our treasurer, was in charge of the raffle, so I asked him if he could do that. Just step to the front of the stage, near the end of Act One, and before Spike Jones returned for Act Two. He did like a pro, and I just wrote in the spots he would appear, I turned to him, and Mike kept the words to a minimum in his sophisticated English accent. Whew!

That was it, really. I had a few friends in the chorus with stage background and I asked them if/where my patter could be shortened and sharpened, and each had a thought or two (you don't see the deletions here, but they amounted to about four lines).

As I reread the show now, I see that I spoke too much in the beginning. Yet others didn't see that, feeling that the words settled the audience after the antics of “Spike Jones” and gave the chorus some time to adjust before singing. Others were very kind in their post-show comments, so I believe it worked well.

That's a bit of insight into the emceeing and writing. I hope it helps.

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett