

## **Contest Judges - Biographies**

### **Liam Whitney - Performance Judge**



With a lifelong passion for theatre and music, Liam began singing barbershop in high school under the tutelage of fellow AGBJ Judge, David Brooks. He then became part of Vocal FX Chorus, where he has represented New Zealand at two international conventions, placing as high as 6th in the world. During that time, Liam studied theatre and film at Victoria University of Wellington, and saw great potential in combining the world of theatre performance with the world of barbershop.

In 2019, Liam trained with London's premier physical theatre company Frantic Assembly, where he was instructed by some of the world's greatest practitioners. He was then invited to tour his solo show at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, where he picked up a prestigious Star Award. Liam also traveled around Italy, teaching English through the art of drama and performance. In 2022, Liam was awarded the BFNZ scholarship to attend Harmony University, where he was mentored by some of the best performance coaches in the society. He was also made a BHNZ certified coach, and in 2023 became a certified performance judge.

Currently Liam works as an intermediate school drama and music teacher and spends his spare time coaching ensembles in performance and DJing nightclubs around Auckland.

### **Richard Reeve – Performance Judge**



With a lifelong love of musical theatre and harmony singing, Richard discovered barbershop in 2003, going on to sing in choruses and quartets in NSW, WA and Qld. He has won BHA quartet gold medals with Alliance (BHA Hall of Fame) and TLA and chorus gold medals with Vocal Evolution and Boulevard, representing Australia at BHS International numerous times.

Richard served on the Vocal Evolution management committee for the decade he was with the chorus, including as President for its first BHA gold medal, and in the Music, Marketing and Membership portfolios. He was Music Director of the Brisbane River City Clippers for two years and BHA Vice President for five years.

Richard is a member of the BHA National Education Faculty, where he teaches classes on chorus leadership, the history of barbershop/ BHA, and performance. He has been a judge since 2009 and is delighted to return to BHNZ for another convention.

### **Alex Morris - Musicality Judge**



Alex completed a Bachelor of Music (Composition) at the University of Western Australia in 2009. An accomplished composer, arranger and choral director Alex is in demand around the world as a vocal coach teaching classes and running workshops with regular appearances as faculty at the Barbershop Harmony Society Harmony University. In 2022 Alex was inducted into the Barbershop Harmony Australia Hall of Fame.

Alex is the former Music Director of Vocal Evolution, leading them to three

Barbershop Harmony Australia gold medals as well as former Music Director with Geelong Harmony Chorus (Sweet Adelines Australia), shOUT Youth Chorus and cult choir sensations Shania Choir and The Shanties Choir who regularly tour Victoria and further abroad.

Performing regularly as Bae Marie, Alex has used queer performance art to develop interactive experiences for children and adults alike. Alex has made a name for himself as a DJ spinning high energy sets with a presence behind the decks to match. In December 2021 Alex launched Sunday School which is a monthly performance platform for emerging queer DJs in Naarm. He has a passion for education and loves nothing more than to share the joy of music.

### **Nick Schurmann – Musicality Judge**



Nick Schurmann is a music teacher and choral conductor based in Perth, Western Australia. He directs several school-age and adult choirs including the Baden Street Singers, who he last year led to become Australia's first all-gender barbershop Open Chorus Champions. Nick is a sought-after vocal arranger and has invested significant time in writing barbershop for mixed-gender voices, including contributing a chapter to the BHS Arranging Manual.

### **Rob Sequeria – Singing Judge**



Rob's music background is in drums, percussion, piano, guitar, voice and jazz. He grew up in Sydney, Australia playing drums in a 16-piece big-band called "Group Therapy". He then sang lead vocals and played piano in a jazz quintet. His vocal stylings were compared with Nat "King" Cole and Harry Connick Jr, an incredible honour.

Rob's love for teaching and coaching began with teaching drums and guitar, followed by coaching a cappella quartets and choruses in the Barbershop Harmony Society (BHS), Barbershop Harmony Australia (BHA), Barbershop Harmony New Zealand (BHNZ) and Sweet Adelines International (SAI) organisations. He's been on faculty at several California harmony schools, BHS Far Western District faculty, BHA National coaching faculty and BHNZ coaching faculties.

In 2005, four years after discovering the magic of barbershop singing, Rob was asked to take on the assistant director role at Voices in Harmony, a 100+ strong a cappella chorus, under the tutelage of Dr. Greg Lyne. Rob led the chorus to a 2008 BHS International 3rd place medal as assistant director, Music Vice President and Lead section leader.

Rob has designed and taught choreography for small and large choruses in America, Canada and Australia, culminating in the international bronze winning package designed for Voices in Harmony. Returning to Australia, Rob founded Vox Canvas, Sydney's premier a cappella chorus. Rob is the Music Director of Vox Canvas and led them to being Pan Pacific Champions, winning a Gold Medal in Auckland, 2023.

Rob is a BHA/BHNZ certified Singing (SNG) judge and the SNG category specialist for Australia and New Zealand. He thoroughly enjoys bringing the joy of a cappella, choral and barbershop singing to ensembles via his love for singing, coaching and teaching tags.

## **Kelly Shepard Singing Judge**



Kelly Shepard hails from the USA and has been singing barbershop since 1982, when he and his friends thought it would be 'cool' to form a barbershop quartet! This fascination with the harmony dark arts led to a 30-year career as a music teacher and to a lifetime of singing in barbershop quartets and choruses. Kelly was lucky enough to find himself singing with the Masters of Harmony and has two international chorus gold medals with them. He also managed to trick Metropolis into choosing him to sing baritone and won two international quartet bronze medals with them.

Since moving to Australia eight years ago, Kelly has won the Australian open quartet medal and the Pan Pacific men's quartet gold with The Collective, and directs Mixed Vocal Project, an Australian medallist chorus from the Gold Coast. He is humbled and excited to be a Singing Judge and is enjoying his very first trip to Wellington!

## **Kevin Day – Administrative Judge**



In 2014, Kevin became a Contest Administrator and has been part of the judging panel for contests in both Australia and New Zealand since then. At the Judges school in Auckland in September 2023, he requalified as an Administration Judge for the next three years. When he's not collating scores or herding quartets through evaluations, Kevin is a cyber-crime fighter for the Financial Markets Authority.

## **Linda Vinall – Administration Judge**



Linda was first introduced to Barbershop in 2008 in a mixed quartet, singing with her Husband in the bass clef parts. Expanding her involvement, she became a founding member of a Sweet Adeline Chorus in Adelaide, South Australia. Linda has competed in quartets and chorus contests nearly every year since so has the perspective of competitor and as well as sitting in the pit. She served as the Events Coordinator

for Sweet Adeline's Australia (21-23) She currently is singing with Gospo Collective which completed a season in the Adelaide Fringe and recently their first interstate tour with a concert in Sydney "A Night at the Barracks". When not singing, her employment involves delivering training to volunteers in person and online. Playing in a Brass Band (another hobby shared with her husband) adds another musical dimension.

Linda first qualified as a Contest Administrative Judge in 2011 and has enjoyed many contests in both Australia and New Zealand. At the Judges school in Auckland Sept 2023, her title changed to Administrative Judge as part of the changes across the review of the judging categories. She continues in the role of category lead. Linda is looking forward to seeing many barbershop friends and hearing great harmonies in Wellington.