

Alexandria Harmonizers 70th Anniversary Throwback Thursdays

No. 23 - 1989 Great Dane at 80, Wolf Trap at 20

Wolf Trap Farm for the Performing Arts Gala Performances

Just four weeks before the 1989 International Convention, the Harmonizers were honored to perform on the Wolf Trap Eighteenth Anniversary Gala, *Wolf Trap Salutes Victor Borge*, celebrating his 80th birthday. The show starred **Victor Borge** himself, the **Canadian Brass**, **Stephanie Conte** (soprano), **Robert Merrill** (baritone), and the **Paul Hill Chorale**.

The Journal Newspapers commented on "...the sound of perfectly synchronized barbershoppers," as "the **Alexandria Harmonizers** added their upbeat energy to the production." The chorus introduced Borge by singing special words to "Hey, Look Me Over." Near the end of the song, the chorus parted in the middle and Borge came down the risers to begin his famous comedy act. The Harmonizers also sang "An American Medley" to start the finale with the whole cast singing "Happy Birthday." Many Harmonizers were fascinated to have a nearly personal encounter with Borge, who proved to be as funny and quick offstage as onstage. The show was videotaped for a PBS television special and a commercial DVD was produced.



The Harmonizers, wearing their new white tie and tails, were back at Wolf Trap in the summer of 1991, performing in the *20th Anniversary Gala*. The event was also a celebration of the 75th anniversary of the U.S. Park Service and the 95th birthday of **Catherine Filene Shouse**, the founder of Wolf Trap. Perhaps more significantly, it was the staging of 17 “acts” that would be featured much later in a PBS television production. Three of the acts provided barbershop harmony as performed by the Harmonizers and two quartets, **Second Edition** and **Bank Street**. Among the other acts were **Michael Feinstein**, **Swingle Singers**, **Chita Rivera**, **Linda Hopkins**, **K. T. Oslin**, **Kirov Ballet**, and **Dizzy Gillespie**.

The Harmonizers sang five songs, including one to introduce **Rosemary Clooney**, and “A Gift of Music,” the theme of the show. The entire show staging time lasted five hours due to the number of acts and television production requirements. It finally ended as the **Preservation Hall Jazz Band** led the Harmonizers in a Mardi Gras parade into what little audience remained in the early Sunday morning cold and rain.

Historical Tagline:

Quite a few people who ended their day at the Wolf Trap *20th Anniversary Gala*, had begun it at the *Desert Storm National Victory Celebration* in downtown Washington (June 8, 1991). Some 200,000 flag-waving spectators cheered veterans of the Gulf War as the Nation’s Capital staged its biggest victory celebration since the end of World War II. Stealth fighter planes zoomed overhead, tanks and Patriot missiles rolled by, and more than 8,000 battle-clad troops led by **Army General H. Norman Schwarzkopf** marched past a beaming **President George H. W. Bush** in a display of American military might that crushed Iraq in 43 days.

The Wolf Trap opening ceremonies, led by the **Alexandria Harmonizers** and the **Canadian Brass**, echoed the sentiments of the Victory Celebration with the emphasis on “The National Anthem.” “God Bless America,” and “The Battle Hymn of the Republic.”