

What is the Sing Along Group About?

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12/7/2016



Mark and Shirley entertaining West Lake Skilled Care Facility, 2015

Use what talents you possess; the woods would be very silent if no birds sang there except those that sang best. Henry Van Dyke, Presbyterian Minister, 1908.

We Practice in Public. Mark Saiki, Creator of the Sing Along Group, 1988.

How to Join my Sing Along Group.

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We have been many things, throughout the years. I have sung with around one hundred singers, at the Little Sisters of the Poor Orphanage, Good Samaritan Homeless Shelter, Warren United Methodist Church School, Family Tree Shelter for Abused family members, Temple Emanuel, churches, Fort Logan National Cemetary (for a World War II pilot, who sang with us. His favorite artist was Jim Reeves), after-prom, and schools. I was named Best Sing Along Group by *Westword* Newspaper. My group has been on radio twice and Television once. My group has performed for fourteen years in Denver, Colorado, and now for four months in Las Cruces, New Mexico.

Other than the two mantras above, my Sing Along Group follows three basic principles. First, my late mother (who was a choir member, gospel music composer, who also played the piano and

harp, and she sang with us), said that people like the music, which was popular, during their dating years (which is when they were 16 – 25 years old).

Second, I believe in variety. Audiences love to hear their favorite songs, duets, arrangements, gestures and odd couples (for example, singing gospel with a country twang). Along with the traditional virtues of runs, vibrato, phrasing, enunciation, dynamics, and minor chords. If a young person sings with a sixty-year-old man (me), we bring different musical experiences, love of different artists, composers and styles of music. We create figurative harmony and synergy (the sum is greater than our individual parts).

Finally, I know that almost all nursing homes are desperate for entertainment. My mother and Ron's mother, who lives in a nursing home in New York, have said that the highlight of their day is listening to the musicians, who come to entertain them (based upon my observation most of whom are not as talented as I am). Last month at the Aristocrat in Alamagordo, a resident asked me a first time ever question, "Why did you start coming to Alamagordo?" because she said that so few performers come to entertain them. There are scores of church and school choirs, many of which sound much better than me, who would be welcome at nursing homes on a regular basis. However, they do not come for a variety of reasons, chief of which is that they do not think they are good enough. Based on fourteen years of experience, I can say with certainty, even their practice performances are good enough for our Old Folks at Home (Stephen Foster, the first American to make a living by composing popular music).

The bottom line is join me and sing with me. Schedule some joint concerts. Come and add your voice to the mix. Come and have fun and do community service at the same time.