

Pride of Portland Master Director 700, Ryan Heller



Ryan Heller has been leading Portland's mighty Pride for over ten years. A "barbershop brat," he joined the Barbershop Harmony Society as a high school freshman, singing with then Evergreen District champs, Vocal Gentry. While an undergrad, he earned a scholarship from Sweet Adelines' Young Singers Foundation and received a Young Artist Award from the National Recording Academy. His Master of Music and Bachelor of Music degrees are in conducting and vocal studies from Chapman University (Orange, CA) and Portland State University (Portland, OR).

When Pride of Portland launched a director search, finding someone who would propel the chorus to the next level was the number one priority. Despite his youth, Ryan blew away Pride members at his audition, exhibiting an encyclopedic command of musical theory, impeccable credentials, and a relentless drive. His natural leadership skills were apparent from the start and translated into instant success for the chorus. At his directorial debut at the 2003 Region 24 Competition, he won the Novice Director Award, while Pride earned its second championship.

Under Ryan's leadership, Pride has dominated every regional championship in which it has competed. We have made five appearances on the international stage with four top ten finishes, received the Audience Choice Award at the 2010 International Competition in Seattle, WA, and earned an 8th place finish in the fall of 2012 at International Competition in Denver, CO.

Most recently, Ryan experienced what all Master Directors dream: he received his Master Director 700 award when Pride of Portland earned first place at the last Region 24 Competition in 2013 with a record-breaking score for the chorus of 701 points.

Along with the tremendous distinction of being Pride's Master Director 700, Ryan is the Artistic Director/Conductor of Chorus Austin (Austin, TX). Other recent positions include: Artistic Director/Conduction of Portland Vocal Consort (Portland, OR), Music Director/Conductor of the Southwest Washington Symphony (2003-2013) and Co-Founder/Conductor of the Columbia Chorale of Oregon (2001-2009).

Ryan's musical career has seen many highlights outside his success as a Sweet Adelines Director, including the ASCAP/Alice Parker Award for Innovative Programming from Chorus America (Chorus Austin, 2013) and being named an American Prize Finalist (Chorus Austin, 2013 and 2011).

Anyone who has the pleasure of watching Ryan direct Pride knows his heart belongs to barbershop. With his trademark exuberance, Ryan encourages, cajoles and educates each performer toward becoming the best they can be. In demand throughout the country as a conductor, singer, conference speaker, guest director, and coach, Ryan never fails to bring out the optimal performance in each musician with whom he works. Pride of Portland Chorus looks forward to our continued journey of musical excellence with Ryan as our fearless leader!