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FRONT LINES

People, products, trends, services & more



A (Habeus) Chorus Line: (left-right, rear) Justin Klimko, Joseph LaBella, Brian Figot; (left-right, middle) Mark Lezotte, Sara Fischer, Judith Zorn, Michael Leibson, Angela Williams, Patricia Mallon; (front, center) James Robb.

Court Jesters

By day they toil in the halls of justice, arguing pardons and punishments. But at night the local troubadours known as A (Habeas) Chorus Line harmonize their way into the court of musical parody.

The troupe of attorneys and other legal personnel lampoons politicians and celebrities as well as their own maligned profession in humorous songs such as "If I Were the Chief Judge" (to the tune of "If I Were A Rich Man") and a number titled "Tax Code Rap." In the world of (Habeas) Chorus Line, John Mellencamp's "Jack and Diane" becomes a song about Jack Kevorkian.

"We're like the Capitol Steps, but more musical," says Jim Robb, assistant dean of the Wayne State University Law School and the group's musical director. Robb orchestrates the troupe's music with a synthesizer.

The group got together five years ago when Assistant U.S. Attorney Geneva Halliday decided the Detroit chapter of the Federal Bar Association (FBA) needed to liven up its annual spring dinner. The

Chorus Line was hastily assembled and proved such a hit that it's now the highlight of the event.

"The May FBA dinner begins our season," Robb says. "We develop a new show each year and perform variations of it at different bar-related events, annual meetings, conventions and retirement parties." Last year, for instance, they entertained the Cleveland chapter of the Federal Bar Association at Jacobs Field, home of the baseball Indians, and catapulted into the national spotlight with a gig at the Grand Hotel on Mackinac Island for the Sixth Circuit Judicial Conference.

The six men and four women in the group rehearse once a week and have a repertoire of 150 original songs. Lead lyricist is Grosse Pointe attorney Justin Klimko, who considers the songsters' stage performances recreational and therapeutic: "It's a great release for us and shows a more humorous side to the profession."

So far, audiences have had no objections.

For more information, call Jim Robb at (313) 577-4834 or Justin Klimko at (313) 225-7037.