

Gear Engineer by Day, Baritone by Night

When they're not solving the latest mechanical engineering puzzle, the seven members of the group sINGer are busy engineering their voices to create the perfect sound. Yes, you read that correctly. Mechanical engineers *do* have hobbies outside of gears.

The group sINGer (the ING stands for Ingenieur) was founded in a pub in Germany. Members of the group were all participants of the Collegium Musicum Choir of RWTH Aachen University. "We used to go to a pub after rehearsal and we spoke quite often about founding an *a cappella* group," says Jannik Henser, RWTH Aachen University (WZL). "One Thursday evening in 2006 we decided to make things happen. Our goal was to sing songs of the Comedian Harmonists, but we started with some barbershop arrangements."

The members of sINGer: Rüdiger Ruwe (counter tenor), Sebastian Wittgens (counter tenor) Alexander Hoffmann (tenor), Andreas Röhser (baritone), Jannik Henser (baritone) and Ulrich Dehof (bass) and standby Dr. Felix Kruse (baritone) all have a background in engineering. "Three of us are still studying mechanical engineering (diploma/masters degree), two are Ph.D. students and two are working as engineers at the German Aerospace Center," Henser adds.

They have performed concerts with partner groups (Vokalschlag, einKlang, Collegium Musicum), participated in charity events and have sung at the International Chorbiennale Aachen (chorbiennale.com). The group performs everything from traditional German and Irish folk songs to some Billy Joel (*The Longest Time*) and even some film music of John Williams.

You'd think there is very little common ground between gear engineering and singing *a cappella* but the group manages to find a nice balance.



"In singing, the psychological aspects play a more important role. The goal of singing is mainly to create a good feeling in the brain of the audience. It is not easy to plan this. Sometimes it happens that one first recognizes on stage that one should sing in a different way," Henser says. "On the other side, engineering can be a good help for the rehearsals. If you have a good understanding of acoustics and an accurate ear, it is possible to 'engineer' a good sound."

For Henser, singing is a nice change of pace from his daily routine.

"After hard and concentrated work as an engineer there is nothing more relaxing than going to a rehearsal. It happens very often that headaches or muscle tensions vanish after two hours of singing," he says.

Of course, you can't take the engineer out of the singer no matter the time or the place. "Sometimes it happens that one of the members brings a model of a special gear to the rehearsal and the rehearsal needs to be paused until everybody has figured out how the gear mechanism works," he adds.

When the group members aren't singing or working they enjoy sports, dancing, aviation, foreign languages and family. The most important goal is to keep the group together, even though some of the members have moved to other cities. They continue to get together and rehearse on a project-based concept. "The biggest challenge for the group is finding enough time in the day for rehearsals and concerts," Henser says.

sINGer is looking forward to putting aside the math and engineering soon and focusing once again on the music.

"We were invited to sing three to four songs in the big Eurogress concert hall in Aachen," Henser says. "We are all looking forward to this event."

For more information on sINGer visit the group's homepage at www.singer-aachen.de or check out some video performances at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bCpukrczYAM>, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f3lA7Erf0Xc> and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mzzVq-Op8pEa>. 

