

Music Category evaluates the *musicality* of the performance, *quality* of song and arrangement, and degree to which the performance meets the requirements of *barbershop style*. ~ by Lynda Keever

- ✓ Song and arrangement are accurately performed and within the vocal capabilities of the performer.
- ✓ Musical *performance* is appropriate to the lyrics, harmonies & rhythm, and to the barbershop style.
- ✓ Song is lyrically and melodically appropriate to the barbershop art form and was arranged with harmonization and voicing consistent with the characteristics of the barbershop style.

What is Barbershop Style?

- ✓ melody not in the top voice,
- ✓ strong bass line,
- ✓ using the four-part chords which promote “lock and ring”
 - Specific chord structure using the 11 allowable chords,
 - Arrangement that follows barbershop conventions and utilizes embellishments,
 - Cone-shaped sound,
 - Untempered tuning (Pythagorean tuning)
 - Delivery in the style appropriate to the song, and interpretation of the arrangement.
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SONG AND ARRANGEMENT (0-30 POINTS)

Note: . If a performance shows vocal skills that have inaccurate pitch, inconsistent vocal quality and inconsistent good balance, the music judge will point out that the fault does not lie with the arrangement, but with the singers’ need for a vehicle better suited to the group’s capabilities.

SONG: MERIT AS COMPETITION MATERIAL ~ Songs in the style of the “American Popular Song” (1890 through 1940 songs) had parameters (verbal, melodic, harmonic and rhythmic) that easily lent themselves to the barbershop style.

FORM ~ The most important element of form is that the song has eight-measure increments. An intro and/or tag may be present, a refrain or ‘chorus’ will have 32 (maybe 40) bars. Verses may be 16 bars. The chorus of a song usually demonstrates melodic unity (AABA, or ABAC, etc.). Blank verse poetry does not usually make good barbershop.

The structure of the arrangement is evaluated, as well. This is usually an intro, verse, chorus, tag. The chorus is the only necessary element; a tag is usually necessary as well. If an intro and tag are present and were written by the arranger, they must match the chorus in style. Medleys must contain songs that are either similar in theme or musical style, and they must build to a musical high point. Transitions between songs must not distort the good form of the overall song.

MELODY:

- ✓ The melody should be interesting, singable, and coincide with the lyrical high point of the song.
- ✓ Generally, songs in major keys are best, though occasionally minor modes may be used for effect.
- ✓ Changes in the melody should not be made unless common use has made those changes familiar.
- ✓ The implied harmonies of the original composition should be followed,
- ✓ The best songs are those with a dominant-to-tonic resolution (rather than the “amen cadence”)

LYRICS

- ✓ Lyrics should have metric unity and an obvious rhyme scheme with a saleable, satisfying message.
- ✓ Religious or patriotic songs are not suitable for competition. The music judge may grant a score of zero for this.
- ✓ English is the language of barbershop, the occasional foreign language word or phrase will not be penalized
- ✓ Lyrics are to be G-rated. Good taste is the standard. Music judges do not evaluate political correctness.
- ✓ Lyrical alteration is handled the same as melodic alteration. If there’s an obvious reason, and the change is in good taste, no penalty will be assessed. Parodies are judged in the same manner as original lyrics, with good taste again being the issue.

ARRANGEMENT (Harmonization, Harmonic Progression, Voicings, Meter & Creative Devices)

HARMONIZATION Appropriate musical framework:

- ✓ Eleven chords (**major triad**, minor triad, augmented triad, major 7th, **dominant 7th**, , minor 7th, diminished 7th, major 9th, **dominant 9th**, major 6th, minor 6th,)
- ✓ Diminished triad and minor ninth chords are not acceptable.

HARMONIC PROGRESSION: Chord flavor should mirror the implied harmony & should emphasize the melody.
VOICINGS A strong bass line enables our characteristic lock and ring, basses are best found on the root or fifth. If the melody goes too high or low for a lead singer, it is permissible to put the melody in another part for a note or two. Melody in a different part should be limited in duration.
METER Barbershop style songs have simple, symmetrical meter, usually 2/4, 3/4, 4/4, cut time, or common time. 6/8 or 12/8 are also acceptable (often for "stomp" sections).
CREATIVE DEVICES These are used by the arranger to add musical interest, such as swipes, echoes, solo passages, patter, bell chords, instrumental effects, and key changes.

PERFORMANCE (0-70 POINTS)

VOCAL SKILLS: Vocal skills appear in EVERY category. In the music category, they **affect** these areas:

- * chord & interval accuracy * chord clarity * tuning * section unity
- * vocal skills can enhance or detract from the planned phrasing and dynamic plans.

HARMONY ACCURACY: Minimum standard is correct notes. Fine tuning is evaluated as well, as Pythagorean tuning is required to produce lock and ring. If a three tone chord is used where a four-tone chord is required, harmony accuracy is affected.

BARBERSHOP STYLE: The performer is the channel through which the arrangement is conveyed to the listener.

- ✓ **TEMPO** Tempo is the speed or pace at which music is performed. In barbershop, there is either strict adherence to tempo (uptunes) or *rubato* or *ad lib* delivery of ballads. An uptune should be sung in tempo, though it may be appropriate to use *rubato* for the intro or verse. Once a tempo is established, though, it should be maintained consistently throughout. There may be breaks for stomp tempo. Care should be taken that frequent tempo changes do not fragment the message of the song. Ballads are usually delivered in the *rubato* style, but still must maintain the implied meter of the song. Some ballads may benefit from slow swing tempo delivery. Other types of songs suggest their own tempos – marches or waltz songs, or Dixieland jazz. A novel treatment of tempo can only be rewarded if the treatment is musically valid. The judge will evaluate the effectiveness of tempo choice and effectiveness of delivery.
- ✓ **RHYTHM** Rhythm is the patterns of varying note values within each measure. Both downbeat and backbeat songs are appropriate for barbershop.
- ✓ **MUSICAL UNITY** Unity occurs when all singers sing vowels correctly and simultaneously, sing chords in tune and simultaneously. Synchronization is particularly important to achieve musical unity. If unit is missing, chords will be indistinct, incomplete, fuzzy, out of tune, and lacking clarity. In quartets, unlike approach to vocal production also contributes to lack of unity.
- ✓ **PHRASING** The phrase is a division of the musical line, like a clause or a sentence. A song is a story, and artistic phrasing maintains the continuity of that story. A good arrangement indicates logical phrasing. The performer is responsible for using the arrangers' phrase design. Constant forward motion is required. Occasional periods of rest are necessary for vocal effects or relief to the ear of the listener, and to build to a high point. Some problems with phrase delivery are: plodding phrases, choppy phrases, patterned phrases, dropped phrases, or isolated phrases. The phrase design must lead to the musical climax of the song. The overall design must carry the listener through the entire story, and not breakdown over individual words or phrases. Music and expression work hand in hand to evaluate the musical and lyrical phrasing. Flaws in one category affect the other here.
- ✓ **DYNAMICS** This is the variation in volume levels within the performance. Appropriate dynamic choices and their execution are one way an ensemble shows musical artistry. Artistic dynamics are one of the characteristics of barbershop style. Most frequent dynamic problems are: insufficient contrast, patterned dynamics, ineffective dynamics, and inappropriate dynamics.
- ✓ **MUSICAL ENERGY** Performers seek to generate excitement. When the techniques of the music category have been fulfilled, musical energy provides that extra ingredient to provide satisfaction for the listener and the performer. This includes vocal energy, commitment to the song and the arrangement.

MUSICAL ARTISTRY: The music judge seeks an artistic, energized projection of tone. The ultimate musical performance is achieved when the performer reaches out at the beginning of the performance, takes the audience in the palm of her hand, and keeps them there spellbound until she has conveyed her musical message. When all elements of the music category are achieved, the performer has the freedom to present a magical experience for the performer and the listener.

ALL JUDGES ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR DETERMINING THE LEVEL OF PROFICIENCY IN HER CATEGORY OF EACH COMPETITOR'S PERFORMANCE AND TO PLACE EACH PERFORMANCE IN THE PROPER RANKING IN RELATION TO OTHER PERFORMANCES IN THE COMPETITION.

- ✓ Ability to overcome technique and present artistic performance that seems effortless.
- ✓ Musical energy – present at all times. No let up from beginning to end.
- ✓ Use of all the goodies and devices in the arrangement to elicit the desired emotional response from the audience
- ✓ Delivery of a magical performance – grabbing the audience from the pitch and keeping them spellbound to the end.
- ✓ **LIVING IN THE MUSIC**

The music category is about choosing suitable songs and having them arranged with appropriate barbershop embellishments, voicing, harmonization and devices. It's about choosing arrangements suitable for the ensemble. It's about having the vocal skills to achieve the plans created for the song by the director or the quartet. It's about command of oneself and one's instrument, and the ability to transcend technique, live inside the music, and create a magical portal for others to walk through so that they can see the wonders you found in your music.

Here, as in the expression category, musical performances that move the audience get the highest scores.

[illegible]

MUSIC

Contestant's Name _____ Contestant # _____

Contest: Region # _____ Chorus Region # _____ Quartet Date _____

☐ Int'l Quartet Semifinals ☐ Int'l Chorus Semifinals ☐ Int'l Quartet Finals ☐ Int'l Chorus Finals ☐ Harmony Classic

JUDGING CRITERIA

SONG & ARRANGEMENT (0-30 points)

Merit as Barbershop Material

Form/Melody/Lyrics

Arrangement

Harmonization

Voicing

PERFORMANCE (0-70 points)

Vocal Skills

Harmony Accuracy

Barbershop Style

Tempo

Rhythm

Musical Unity

Phrasing

Dynamics

Musical Energy


Musical Artistry

Suitability to Performer


PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

SONG #1 _____ SONG #2 _____

score
song 1



score
song 2



**BONUS
POINTS**

SCORING LEVELS
(for one song)

94 - 100	A+
86 - 93	A
80 - 85	A-
74 - 79	B+
66 - 73	B
60 - 65	B-
54 - 59	C+
46 - 53	C
40 - 45	C-
34 - 39	D+
26 - 33	D
20 - 25	D-
0 - 19	F

Bonus Points
awarded for
performance
package.
International Finals
and Harmony
Classic only.

TOTAL
SCORE

Judge _____