

Welcome to the Online: JUDGING CATEGORY DESCRIPTION BOOK

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MISSION STATEMENT

Elevating women singers worldwide through education, performance, and competition in barbershop harmony and a cappella music.

VISION STATEMENT

Inspiring and empowering voices to joyfully harmonize the world.

Guiding Principles

Musical Excellence: We honor and embrace artistry, education and innovation in the performance of a cappella music while championing the women's barbershop style.

Culture of Belonging: We create harmony where every voice matters. We foster a culture that provides a joyful place to share our uniqueness within a global community united in song.

Diversity & Inclusion: We celebrate our differences as essential to the rich harmony that unites us. We recognize barbershop's African American origins and learn from our exclusionary past toward Black women. We reject discrimination and unwaveringly strive toward greater awareness, openness and understanding of each other.

Personal Empowerment & Leadership: We encourage and empower everyone to lead from where they are. We foster individual skills, nurture personal growth, and provide education and mentoring to develop strong, effective leaders on and off the stage.

Outreach: We build strong connections by sharing our love of barbershop harmony throughout our communities, countries and the world.

Volunteer Leader Code of Conduct

SingUnited International (SU) is a worldwide women's singing organization committed to advancing the musical art form of barbershop harmony through opportunities in education, performance and competition.

As a leader of SingUnited International, you represent SingUnited International organization to our members and outside world. Your conduct should exemplify professionalism, integrity and respect at all times.

A leader in the organization should pledge to uphold the standards set below.

1. To demonstrate respect for SingUnited International organization, members and headquarters staff.
2. To avoid disparaging talk that might damage the reputation of SingUnited International, SU members and SU headquarters staff.
3. To project loyalty to SingUnited International.
4. To conduct yourself in a professional manner as an extension of the SingUnited International brand and image.
5. To display integrity as an ambassador of SingUnited International.
6. To maintain confidentiality of all proprietary and privileged information to which you are exposed while serving as a volunteer.
7. To appreciate and support other SU volunteers and HQ staff for their contributions, talents, efforts and dignity.
8. To be courteous and respectful of other volunteers'/members' opinions.
9. To adhere to the rules and guidelines of SingUnited International, including those defined in the organization's bylaws, handbooks and guiding rules.

Thank you for the gifts of your time and talents as a leader of this organization. Your efforts as an ambassador of SingUnited International are priceless as we strive to Harmonize the World.

PREFACE

Barbershop harmony is a uniquely American vocal music style born out of African American folk music of the 1800's and rooted in the culture and traditions of Black Americans. Singers such as Sam Lucas, W.C. Handy and the Mills Brothers formed quartets to sing for their friends and family. These amateur singers combined elements used in popular song with their own musical practices, adding new embellishments, complex rhythms and a much wider harmonic vocabulary. * As patrons socialized in the barbershop and other places, someone with a strong voice would lead others in a popular song. The crowd would improvise harmony with a person singing above, someone below and someone jumping above and below the melody to fill out the chord.

Barbershop music is a style of unaccompanied vocal music characterized by consonant four-part chords for every melody note in a primarily homophonic texture. The categories contained in this book specifically describe the guidelines that successful competition material should endeavor to follow. Other forms of a cappella vocal music are performed by SingUnited in many venues outside the context of regional and international contests.

This Judging Category Description Book deals with the barbershop music and performance qualities that provide the strongest basis for competition success in a barbershop contest. In accordance with the SingUnited guiding principles of Diversity and Inclusion and the Culture of Belonging, SingUnited International rejects any song that refers to racist lyrics, messages and history and considers them unacceptable for performance.

SingUnited International is an inclusive organization that honors the diversity of our members and audiences. A performance using songs and arrangements in the barbershop style should display cultural sensitivity that demonstrates both respect for singers and audience alike and a genuine regard for individual and collective harmony.

*Footnote: "Play that Barber Shop Chord: A Case for African-American Origin of Barbershop Harmony". Lynn Abbott, article author; American Music Vol 10, No.3 (Autumn, 1992), pp. 289-325.

FOREWORD

In keeping with its educational purpose and philosophy, SingUnited International is committed to establishing and maintaining the very highest musical standards possible. To achieve these heights, as is true in any other form of music, technical proficiency must be developed. Of equal importance, however, is the performer's ability to use technique to project emotion through the music presented, to portray a story, and to create, through the artistry of song, a truly meaningful experience for both performer and audience.

The elements which, enable the performer to achieve success are defined in the four judging categories. In each performance adjudication, each category reinforces the other three categories. If the performance is flawless in any one category, then it should be almost equally flawless, in the other three categories with only slight variation due to specific category demands. Conversely, when error is present in one category, it will usually affect a portion of at least one other category — and sometimes all three. Judges evaluate one performance, one entity that cannot be divided into four completely separate parts.

Very briefly: The sound judge evaluates vocal production, balance, blend, barbershop sound and the harmonic accuracy with which notes and chords are sung. The music judge evaluates the performance of the arrangement as well as the song and arrangement. The expression judge evaluates the artistic and synchronized delivery of musical language. The visual communication judge evaluates the degree of rapport established with the audience through the visual salesmanship of the musical product. Complete comprehension comes only with understanding the inter-relationships of all four categories.

The International Board of Directors of SingUnited International has adopted the following definition of the barbershop style:

Four-part harmony, barbershop style, is a combination of several characteristics unique to this form of music, such as chord structure (arrangement), the cone-shaped sound, delivery and interpretation. These are integral factors that contribute to the "lock-and-ring" characteristics of singing in the barbershop style.

In competition, the contestant presenting the best musical performance of an arrangement written in the barbershop style should receive the highest total score. In the case of two contestants giving an equal musical performance, the contestant exhibiting more proficiency in the execution of the barbershop style should be awarded the highest score.

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GUIDE TO VOCAL SKILLS

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GUIDE TO VOCAL SKILLS

INTRODUCTION

Vocal skills are an integral part of all aspects of the barbershop style, and all four judging categories are affected by the degree of proficiency in this area. Each category defines how vocal skills affect the fulfillment of the basic requirements of their category. This guide provides general information on the basics of good singing.

VOCAL SKILLS (VOICE PRODUCTION)

Proper *vocal skills* (or *voice production*) provide the foundation upon which good sound is built. They are the first and foremost requisite to achieving blended ensemble sound. For the majority of singers, voice production is the underlying cause of many vocal problems. This may include the ability to maintain pitch or express a wide range of dynamics, interrupted tone flow, balance problems, unmatched vowels, inaccurate intervals, or the ability to sustain phrases.

Although each voice has distinctive qualities, well-produced voices share the following general characteristics:

- The voice has consistency, with a seemingly even tone quality from the lowest register to the highest.
- The voice has a balance of both brilliance (giving a sense of focus to the sound) and resonance (emanating from a throat that is open and free from tension) that leads to the production of overtones.
- Words and phrases flow smoothly and are effortlessly fueled and supported by an endless, uninterrupted supply of breath energy.
- The voice has warmth and color, is free from tension, and is capable of singing with character and emotion.
- The voice can easily sing a wide range and variety of dynamics.

Body Alignment

The body houses the singer's instrument. A dynamic yet stable stance supports the instrument and allows the freely-produced sound that is inherent in the production of ringing chords and overtones. Optimal singing alignment is an upright stance with the ears, shoulders and hip joints vertically aligned and weight evenly distributed on the feet. The chin is parallel to the floor, the jaw is relaxed, and the head is balanced over the spine. The rib cage is open with the shoulders relaxed and the head aligned over the spinal column so that the column of air in the pharynx (the primary resonating chamber) is unobstructed.

Often a quick glance upward by a judge will confirm their suspicion that poor body alignment is contributing to a vocal problem.

Considerations: Because the body works as a whole, no one part operates in isolation. If the body is out of alignment, this may result in tension, pain, misalignment in another part of the body (compensation), or inefficiency of movement. When the body is in an optimal position, there is freedom to move and breathe efficiently. Common alignment problems include the following:

- a. Head forward position — when the head glides forward, the cervical spine becomes compressed, neck musculature tightens, and the thoracic spine compresses; breathing is hindered and there is tension in the vocal mechanism.
- b. Slumping of the thoracic spine — when the thoracic spine is bent forward, the ribs collapse, decreasing lung capacity. In order to breathe efficiently, the thoracic spine should be elongated, allowing the ribcage to expand and allow air to enter the lungs quickly.
- c. Rounded shoulders — this position is closely associated with a slumping thoracic spine and collapsed ribcage. When the thoracic spine is elongated, the ribs are expanded, and shoulders fall naturally into place.
- d. Weight on toes or heels — shifting weight forward onto the toes brings the body's center of gravity forward; the body compensates by tensing muscles on the posterior part of the body to keep the body from falling forward. When weight is shifted back onto the heels, the knees are likely to lock; often the hips shift forward and the shoulders shift back to maintain balance.
- e. Leaning forward — when the trunk shifts forward, the body's center of gravity moves forward over the toes; hips are often slightly bent with the pelvis tilted forward; knees lock; the cervical spine compresses as the head compensates by tilting back.
- f. Position of pelvis — when the pelvis tilts too far forward, the spinal curves are exaggerated and knees lock, creating tension. When the pelvis tilts too far back, spinal curves are decreased, creating obstacles to free body movement and efficient breathing.

Breathing/Breath Management

Breathing for singing has been described as the sensation of inhaling and exhaling at the same time as the intercostal muscles work antagonistically (against each other) to maintain the ribcage in an open, expanded position, allowing most of the work to be done by the diaphragm and the abdominal muscles.

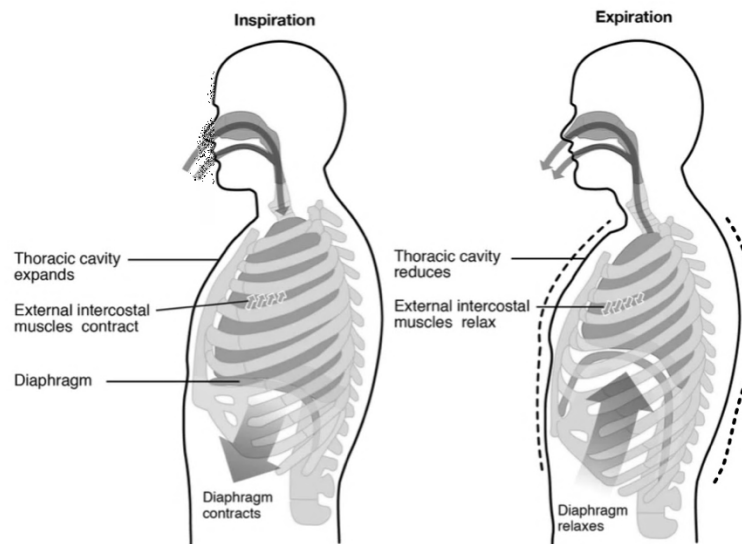


Figure 1: www.singmindfully.com/post/a-crash-course-in-breathing-for-singing

Initiation of sound comes from the breathing muscles. The most efficient breathing for singing is a combination of abdominal and thoracic (rib cage) breathing. High chest breathing is inefficient and inappropriate for singing and may even be potentially damaging. For singing, the breathing mechanism consists of two sets of muscle groups:

Muscles of inhalation (inspiration):

- a. External intercostal muscles lift the rib cage and expand it outward to increase breath capacity.
- b. Diaphragm (partially involuntary) contracts downward to increase potential vital capacity and to pull air into the lungs.

Muscles of exhalation (expiration):

- a. Internal intercostal muscles contract inward, lowering the ribcage to assist in expelling air from the lungs.
- b. Transverse and oblique abdominal muscles contract inward and upward, exerting pressure against the lowered diaphragm, expelling air upward through the vocal mechanism.

Proper inspiration for singing begins with a relaxed jaw, a relaxed, open throat and an expanded rib cage. The abdominal muscles are then allowed to relax while the diaphragm contracts. This action pulls a optimal amount of air into the lungs quickly and efficiently. If the rib cage is not open and expanded, the potential air capacity will be reduced or the intake of air will cause the chest to heave upward. If there is tension in the jaw/throat area, inhalation will be noisy because the throat is constricted and the vocal folds partially closed, making it impossible to quickly get a sufficient quantity of air into the lungs.

Proper expiration for singing begins with a relaxed jaw, a relaxed, open throat, an expanded rib cage and a lowered diaphragm. When exhaling, the transverse and oblique abdominal muscles lift, slowly expelling air from the lungs upward through the vocal folds as the ribcage and diaphragm relax.

Considerations: A significant majority of the problems experienced by the average singer can be attributed to either faulty breathing technique or inconsistent breath management. Body alignment is closely associated with breath management. These problems include the inability to sustain phrase endings, inconsistency of tone quality and lack of tone flow (breath deficient sound). As with body alignment, when a judge hears a vocal problem, an upward glance may confirm their suspicion that breathing technique is a contributory factor.

There is no shortcut to proper breathing; it is the very foundation of good singing. It takes time to develop vocal skills. Even professional singers continue to work on breath management throughout their career. Mastery of this one skill will accomplish more than any other single factor to improve the caliber of vocal performance in all four categories.

Phonation

In order to produce sound, three sources of energy are necessary:

1. The power source is air, fueling the sound.
2. The vibratory source is the vocal folds, vibrating with air pressure from below when closed together.
3. The resonating source is everything above the vocal folds. This defines the characteristics of a singer's sound.

Phonation is the vibratory source, connecting air to sound. The vocal folds vibrate as air (breath) passes through them. The faster the vibration, the higher the pitch, and the vocal folds are thinner and longer. The slower the vibration, the lower the pitch, and the vocal folds are shorter and thicker.

When the singer breathes, the vocal folds are apart. There is no vibration. When they sing (or speak), the vocal folds come together and vibrate. This is phonation. It usually isn't thought of as being a voluntary action because humans vocalize from birth, but it is, in fact, quite voluntary.

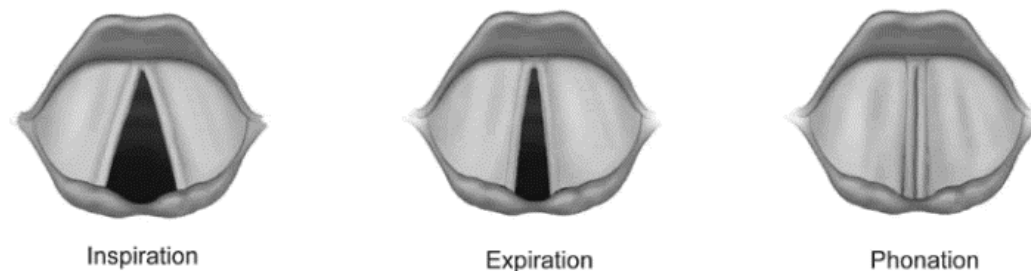


Figure 2: Vocal folds during phonation

Think of the vocal folds as being like the reed or mouthpiece of any wind instrument. It is where the vibration happens. With no instrument attached, it's just that... vibration. The rest of the instrument, its shape and size affect the quality and size of the sound. When the mouthpiece is detached from any wind instrument and air is blown into it, it sounds like vibration alone, or simply air moving through it. The mouthpiece is like the vocal folds - the vibratory source. Then, when the mouthpiece is attached to the instrument, the resonating source is added (the body of the instrument, which is what affects the quality of the sound). In the case of singing, this is the vocal tract (resonating space). The vocal tract is the body of the instrument, and each one sounds different due to its shape and size.

The body needs to take in just the right amount of air for free phonation, and use the right amount of air for free production of sound. The vocal folds come together to vibrate; breathing is quite natural in this process. Too much air pressure below the vocal folds results in press and intonation problems. Too little air pressure results in insufficient vocal fold closure, which can result in a breathy or thin sound, what is sometimes referred to as "lack of breath support."



Figure 3: www.voicecarenetwork.org

Considerations: The initial purpose of the vocal folds was to function as a valve to seal off the lungs against the entry of food, water and other foreign objects. There are at least three body reflex actions that will close the vocal folds; only one of these allows the proper contact of the vocal folds for singing purposes. Singing and speaking are secondary functions of the vocal folds.

Swallowing muscles: Swallowing closes the vocal folds tightly, so tightly that they cannot vibrate freely for production of sound. The swallowing muscles also close the epiglottis over the trachea, or windpipe, as an added

protection for the lungs. It is possible to produce sound when the vocal folds are closed with the swallowing muscles; however, additional muscle action is then required to open the epiglottis and to attempt to enlarge the constricted throat. The resulting tone will generally be tight (i.e., constricted), both because of tension in the throat and because the vocal folds are closed too tightly to vibrate freely.

Bearing-down muscles: The vocal folds can be closed by using the abdominal muscles that bear down. Closure in this manner seals off the lungs to create intrathoracic pressure to give greater leverage for lifting heavy objects, for child-bearing and to assist with bowel emptying. Again, this closure is too tight to permit the vocal folds to vibrate freely, so sounds produced in this manner will be tight and constricted. In both of these cases, forcing the vocal folds to vibrate while closed so tightly will create irritation that may lead to hoarseness, laryngitis or nodules. This forceful adjustment of the vocal folds sets the muscles in such a manner that smooth transition between vocal registers is impossible.

The release of air is controlled or managed by the action of the transverse and oblique abdominal muscles. The singer whose technique is faulty will usually resort to controlling the release of air with the throat, thereby utilizing the swallowing muscles. If technique is correct, with the rib cage open and expanded and expiration muscles working correctly, the throat can remain open and air will not escape unnecessarily.

Resonance

A resonant sound is one which is truly amplified, not just louder. Volume is a dynamic, whereas resonance is a quality or timbre of the voice. Resonance is the amplification and enrichment of the tones produced; without resonance, tones would be thin and barely audible. When singing, resonance amplifies our voices making them sound “fuller” or “larger.”

A resonant sound is multidimensional; it has a pleasing quality rich in high and low harmonics. A louder sound may seem more resonant but actually is just louder in volume, remaining thin and lacking width, height and/or depth. If volume is increased without first adding the resonating space to accommodate that volume, a strained or harsh quality may result.

Considerations: Other aspects of voice production will also impact resonance. Too much air pressure (referred to as *pressed phonation*) or too little air pressure (*breathy or reedy phonation*) below the vocal folds will affect the quality of resonance, as will tension in the jaw, throat or tongue.

A singer who concentrates mainly on resonance in the oropharynx or laryngopharynx may produce a dark or “covered” sound which lacks the brilliance needed for a complete barbershop sound. Conversely, a singer who forces sound through the nasopharynx, without the corresponding balance of oropharyngeal resonance, may produce a thin,

nasal sound which lacks the required depth of tone essential for the creation of overtones.

Intonation

Intonation refers to the physical production of tone, or how pitch is produced by individual voices or with an entire section of a chorus. In general, intonation deals with the manner in which pitch is produced, including coordination between the listening apparatus and the vocal mechanism.

Intonation problems can also result from tones that lack matched resonance. Four improperly resonated tones can seem out of tune, although any one (and perhaps all) may be individually in tune with a piano. Other problems may result from tension in the jaw or throat, from a lowered soft palate or from failure to make maximum use of the resonating cavities.

Articulation/Precision

Articulation is the process by which sounds are shaped to form intelligible thoughts. In speech, consonants are the primary element in enunciating words and vowels are not sustained. In singing, vowels are sustained and consonants provide only split-second interruption.

Considerations: When singers overuse the lips, tongue and jaw, smooth and continuous tone flow is difficult. The optimal vocal posture is always relaxed, open and free of tension.

Choppy singing may result from overarticulation of word sounds. Smoothly delivered vocal lines, supported by consistent breath energy, will result in continuous sound.

Impact of Vibrato

Acoustically, vocal vibrato is a fluctuation in pitch, intensity and timbre — a perfectly normal phenomenon — which is the result of the intermittent supply of nerve energy to the vocal mechanism. The total absence of vibrato almost always results in a colorless, lifeless sound that lacks the full, rich, resonant ring inherent in a well-produced tone. When the sound is properly produced, the singer regulates the amount of vibrato in the voice to give authoritative, lyrical beauty and color to the sound without adding so much vibrato that blend and tuning are impacted.

Within the limited duration of a performance, a judge cannot be expected to identify the cause of an undesirable vibrato. Since locked chords are a vital characteristic of barbershop sound, vibrato that impairs that lock and ring cannot be rewarded. Generally

speaking, the *quality* that results from a desirable, natural vibrato should be outstanding; the vibrato itself should not.

While vibrato is a natural and desirable characteristic of a healthy voice, confusion arises when other, undesirable conditions are termed “vibrato.”

- Vibrations of 5-8 regular pulsations per second are considered to be characteristics of “good” or healthy vibrato.
- Pulsations slower than 5 per second (called a *wobble*) are picked up by the human ear as separate pitches. A vibrato that is too slow or too wide is undesirable, because the two notes cannot blend into one. Once this occurs, chords may become unstable and tuning issues may result.
- A rate of more than 8 pulsations per second is too fast, producing an equally unpleasant sound (called a *bleat* or *tremolo*). Tremolo can result from any of the following: tension in the jaw or in the muscles of the throat or larynx; a fluttering of the epiglottis, from the fluctuating changes in the size and shape of the resonating cavities; singing with too heavy an adjustment; muscular weakness; improper breathing habits; or nervousness.

(Shirlee Emmons, *Focus on Vocal Technique*,
<http://www.sci.brooklyn.cuny.edu/~jones/Shirlee/vibrato.html>)

INDIVIDUAL VOICE PARTS

Along with basic vocal skills, each voice part has a specific responsibility and skillset when singing barbershop harmony. This overview will provide a baseline for exploration of vocal skills discussed above.

For general reference, middle C = C4; the octave below = C3; the octave above = C5.

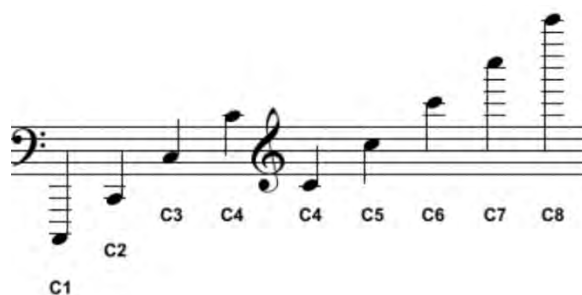


Figure 4: Identification of octave ranges

Tenor



Figure 5: Tenor range

The average voice range for tenors is E4 to A5. The tenor voice has clarity and sufficient maturity of sound to complement the lower voices, particularly the lead voice. Since the tenor part is sung primarily above the lead, this voice must be capable of singing high notes with consistent quality and control, with the breath management skills able to support a range of dynamics. Though the tenor sings in a range comparable to that of a soprano, the tenor part is sung with a lighter vocal adjustment and with much less vibrato than that used to sing soprano.

Considerations: If a tenor voice or section sings with a heavy quality, they may lend too much weight to the top of the chord which affects tuning. A tenor or tenor section whose quality does not complement that of the lower voices or who sings too loudly, will be out of balance. When the tenor line goes below the lead line momentarily, tenors may fail to make the vocal adjustment required to fill and balance the chord completely. As the skill level rises, the tenor should take on the characteristics of the lead voice as they approach or sing below the lead line.

Lead



Figure 6: Lead range

The lead sings in approximately the same range as a mezzo soprano (G3 to E5). The lead voice usually carries the melody, so they must sing with musical authority. The ideal lead voice has clarity, brilliance, depth and a sense of lyrical style that sets their voice apart from the other three, making the lead voice predominant. The lead sings with a sufficient amount of color to add interest to the tone but never so much as to distort the lock-and-ring characteristic of the barbershop style. The lead voice should be capable of a wide range of expressive dynamics and other artistic devices, maintaining consistent quality throughout their vocal range, and the harmony parts are responsible for supporting the dynamics, tempo, rhythm, inflection, artistry and finesse of the ensemble.

Considerations: Leads need consistency in every way: tone, delivery, interpretative plan, tempo, rhythm, vowel choices — the technical and artistic aspects of every category. Lack of consistency leads to synchronization issues for the harmony parts. Developing and negotiating the transition between registers, with a consistent middle range, is of paramount importance. Leads must remember that the approach to singing in the barbershop style requires more depth of tone on lows and less relative volume on highs to maintain barbershop balance.

Baritone



Figure 7: Baritone range

Baritones sing in approximately the same range as the lead (G3 to E5). The baritone voice provides the important fourth tone of the chord and must be flexible in vocal quality. Baritones must be adept at recognizing when timbre, balance and volume modification must occur, based on their position in the chord and their proximity to other voice parts. When their position in the chord is below the lead, baritones sing with a depth of tone that fills the gap between lead and bass; when their position in the chord is above the lead, their quality becomes more like that of the tenor. Vocal flexibility and appropriate handling of the intricacies of the baritone part play an important role in achieving the lock-and-ring which is characteristic of the barbershop sound.

Considerations: The most common baritone balance problem is similar to that of leads; therefore, baritones need to be consistent throughout all vocal registers. The baritone cannot rely only on their position in their overall range to indicate the volume or intensity required; their balance is also contingent upon their proximity to the lead, bass or tenor voice. When baritones sing consecutive notes of the same pitch, they must adjust their balance and tuning within each chord, even though their note remains the same.

As with leads, baritones must remember that the approach to singing in the barbershop style requires more depth of tone on lows and less relative volume on highs to maintain barbershop balance.

Bass



Figure 8: Bass range

Although no comparable voice part exists in female choral music, the bass sings a range comparable to that used by a contralto or second alto (C3 to A4). Like the lead, the bass voice must also be able to sing with confidence and authority, as they provide the overtone series. The barbershop arranger assists the foundation for by providing a strong chord tone, usually the root or the fifth. The bass voice must have a melodic quality, combined with sufficient resonance and presence to add the desirable bass timbre to the overall sound. They must be capable of sufficient projection on the lowest tones so that their sound is not obscured by the higher voice parts. Their vocal quality should complement the lead voice. Bases are responsible for driving and maintaining pulse and tempo.

Considerations: The most common issue for basses is the inability to balance low tones. This may be as a result of the notes being out of range, or the singer attempting to “make bass,” which may lead to pressed phonation or a manufactured tone. Because of the vocal range of the bass part, it is necessary for basses to sing with more vocal presence and volume as they descend in pitch. This problem is compounded when the group loses overall pitch. Conversely, the upper part of the bass range requires use of the upper register for proper barbershop balance and a freely-produced sound. In an attempt to

maintain tempo, basses may resort to a choppy delivery of the musical line. Providing more consistent breath energy may help to smooth out the vocal line.

SOUND CATEGORY

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SOUND CATEGORY

INTRODUCTION

The best barbershop sound is a well-produced, finely-tuned, blended, balanced, artistic and energized sound that is full of ringing overtones and genuine emotion. The sound judge evaluates and rewards unified ensemble sound presented with artistry and musicality.

The sound judge recognizes, identifies and evaluates the individual components which result in the locked, ringing, ensemble sound inherent in the barbershop style. A performance is rewarded when:

- All singers consistently apply techniques of good voice production (vocal skills).
- Total harmony accuracy exists both horizontally within individual part lines and vertically within individual chords.
- Vocal qualities are blended both within chorus sections as well as within the overall quartet or chorus ensemble, culminating in a freely-produced, musical sound.
- Multidimensional balance of voices and sections is maintained.
- Consistent overtone production results in an expanded sound.
- Vocal energy brings life and vitality to the vocal line.
- Use of vocal and stylistic techniques enhances the characteristics of the barbershop style, resulting in an authentic musical performance that connects with the audience on an emotional level.

Although the major elements have been listed separately, these skills are interconnected and one area will impact another.

VOCAL SKILLS

Any discussion of the Sound category must begin with an understanding of vocal skills. The Guide to Vocal Skills (Section I) is incorporated herein by reference.

The focus of the Sound category is the evaluation of ensemble sound in the barbershop style. This occurs when tones are properly produced, accurately tuned, blended and balanced, resulting in the creation of overtones. In barbershop terminology, this is referred to as “lock-and-ring.”

The sound judge recognizes, identifies and evaluates the individual components of vocal technique which, when combined, result in the locked, ringing, unified ensemble sound inherent in the barbershop style as performed by a quartet or chorus.

Body Alignment

Good alignment leads to good singing, because how the singer stands affects the way they sing. When learning to play a musical instrument, the first thing learned is how to hold the instrument. Singing is no different. The body is the instrument; how it's positioned affects the singing. Poor alignment affects the flow of air, making it difficult for the singer to have adequate or consistent breath flow, as well as altering the optimal position of the larynx.

A tall, broad, engaged and comfortable alignment not only allows for good breath technique and a free, open sound, but it also exudes confidence. The goal of good alignment is minimal physical effort and maximum freedom of the body and vocal mechanism.

Dynamic Alignment

Singing is not a static activity, so a singer's stance is not a position which is assumed and then held. A singer's stance serves as a dynamic neutral ground where voice production will be supported and well produced. Static alignment may increase muscle tension in order to "hold" the position, resulting in stiff or tense posture. Dynamic alignment allows the singer to sing freely during physical movement, which is an essential part of an authentic and compelling performance.

A singer's stance is body alignment that is taller and grander than we often choose in our everyday activities. It is buoyant, and it allows and encourages freedom to move. Achieving good alignment involves training the body to function in positions that put the least amount of strain on the vocal mechanism.

Breathing/Breath Management

Breathing is a natural function, and one that can be misunderstood and misapplied for singing. Understanding and developing the breathing mechanism enables singers to manage their breath (both inhalation and exhalation) to suit phrase length, dynamic range, and vocal style, enabling truly musical communication. (This is further explored in the Guide to Vocal Skills).

After the instrument is properly aligned, initiation of sound comes from the breathing mechanism. For singing, breathing consists of two sets of muscle groups which work antagonistically to produce support.

Inhalation for singing begins with a relaxed jaw, a relaxed, open throat and an expanded rib cage. The abdominal muscles are allowed to relax while the diaphragm contracts, and this action allows a maximum amount of air into the lungs quickly, quietly and efficiently.

Exhalation for singing begins with a relaxed jaw, a relaxed, open throat, an expanded rib cage and a lowered diaphragm. The transverse and oblique abdominal muscles lift, slowly moving air from the lungs upward through the vocal folds.

There is no shortcut to proper breathing; it is the very foundation of good singing, and it may take some time and more than a little of the singer's attention. However, mastery of this skill will accomplish more than any other single factor in improving the caliber of vocal performance in all four categories.

Breath Management Challenges

Many of the problems encountered by singers can be resolved by efficient breath management. Tension results when a singer strives to fill every inch of their lungs with air, and they will find it a challenge to achieve the relaxed, efficient inhalation and exhalation required for good voice production and a supported musical sound.

Singers should devise a personal breath plan which enables them to sing each phrase with good vocal quality and sufficient breath energy to sustain the phrase. Unplanned "sneak breaths" in the middle of a phrase are obvious to the listener as they disturb the flow of the sound, causing synchronization problems and impacting musicality and artistry. Performers should ensure that any personal breaths taken outside of the overall breath plan do not disturb the integrity of chords and the overall ensemble sound.

It is challenging to know the exact cause of unstable, shaky sound. An achievable breath plan enables the singer to consistently sing with good vocal quality. This can contribute to a singer's confidence, which results in stable chords, phrases and energized phrase endings.

Phonation

Phonation is, quite simply, connecting air to sound. Air (breath) moves through the larynx, the vocal folds vibrate and sound is the result. (This is further explored in the Guide to Vocal Skills).

Phonation needs to be coordinated with the release of air for a clean onset of sound and beautiful tones. A completely relaxed throat coordinated with the release of air is essential for proper functioning of the vocal folds to produce clear, resonant, ringing tones. Using muscle to force the larynx down when trying to produce a richer or lower sound may result in *pressed phonation*, which removes overtones.

The air that crosses the vocal folds is controlled by the diaphragm, along with the transverse and oblique abdominal muscles. With the rib cage erect and expanded, and inhalation muscles working correctly, the throat can remain open and air will not escape until the abdominal muscles lift to assist in the release of air.

Singers need to train their bodies to take in the appropriate amount of air for relaxed phonation and free production of sound. Too much air pressure below the folds results in pressed phonation and intonation problems. Too little air pressure results in insufficient vocal fold closure, which can result in a breathy or thin sound, or what is sometimes called a lack of “breath support.” By contrast, a singer who controls the release of air with the throat (instead of the transverse and oblique abdominal muscles) will produce a constricted sound which lacks freedom and resonance.

Resonance

A resonant sound is one which is truly amplified, not just louder. Volume is a dynamic, whereas resonance is a quality or timbre of the voice. Resonance is the amplification and enrichment of the tones produced; without resonance, tones would be thin and barely audible. When singing, resonance amplifies our voices making them sound “fuller” or “larger.”

The best barbershop sound requires the use of the entire voice, including all areas of the pharynx — not only height and width in the back of the oropharynx but also appropriate use of the nasopharynx and the upper front part of the face (sometimes referred to as the “mask”). The use of the pharynx is enhanced by singing with a relaxed jaw and tongue, an open throat and a lifted soft palate. When the breathing mechanism is functioning properly, the singer is able to use the pharynx for proper resonance of vocal sounds. Resonance is complete when all these aspects are coordinated at all times.

A resonant sound is multidimensional; it has a pleasing quality rich in high and low harmonics. A louder sound may seem more resonant but actually may just be louder in volume, remaining thin and lacking width, height and/or depth. If volume is increased without first adding the resonating space to accommodate that volume, a strained or harsh quality may result.

Sensations of resonance are not uniform in all individuals. Two singers producing similar tone qualities on the same pitch will not necessarily feel the same sensation in the same place; one may describe a forward sensation, while the other “feels” it farther back. For that reason, the judge will not attempt to describe to a contestant, on the scoresheet, where tones should be placed or where sensations should be felt. They will describe the quality of sound that is desired to fulfill category requirements and leave it to the performers to determine how to achieve that quality.

Articulation

Articulation is the process by which sounds, syllables, and words are formed when the tongue, jaw, teeth, lips and palate alter the air stream coming from the vocal folds. To form consonants, a singer uses the tongue, lips or soft palate (active articulators). Overuse of these active articulators may result in inconsistent tone quality. In *a cappella* music, and in particular the barbershop style, vowels are sustained and consonants provide only minimal interruption. Overarticulation results in a choppy vocal line; too little articulation results in a muddy vocal product.

HARMONY ACCURACY

The goal of a locked, ringing sound can only be achieved with total instant accuracy. Accuracy problems can be divided into several general areas: notes, chords, intervals, tuning, intonation, key center and synchronization, all of which could be and often are interrelated.

The process of breath-to-singing is called an onset. A clean onset is important for total instant accuracy as it impacts intervals, chords and synchronization. This is true both at the beginning of phrases as well as within vocal lines where there might be staggered breathing.

Notes/Chords/Part Accuracy

Accurate part singing can be simply defined as the singing of right notes by all voices. The singing of wrong notes may be due to a momentary lapse of memory or it may be that the right notes were never learned, or even that the wrong notes appeared on the music. No matter the reason, the singing of wrong notes results in chords that are inaccurate, noticeably incomplete or in combinations of notes that were never meant to appear in a specific arrangement.

Chord accuracy is primary in all *a cappella* music. Each note must be sung with such accuracy and precision that each chord is “locked in” and clearly identifiable. The most complete accuracy is obtained by four well-resonated tones of like timbre and color utilizing the overtones produced by each voice, blended together in such a way that chords possess the full-bodied richness that adds up to total accuracy.

In a chorus, out-of-tune singing occurs when voices within a section are not in complete accord on the precise tuning of chord components. For totally in-tune singing to exist, all voices within a section must share the same vocal and tuning approach. Similarly, all voices in a quartet must adopt the same vocal and tuning approach.

Tuning/Intervals

The distance from one note to the next in any one part is defined as an interval, and a casual approach to interval singing and failure to listen and tune to the chord are the primary causes of inaccurate singing. Intervals in barbershop music may require minute adjustments influenced by the rise and fall of the vocal lines and by the intended harmonic progression of a musical line. Barbershop singers need to learn and experience the sound and sensation of finely-tuned and precise harmonic chord progressions, as they are the basis of barbershop tuning.

Out-of-tune singing occurs when the performer is singing a pitch that is relatively correct, but has failed to tune that pitch so that the chord locks in total accuracy. This may occur more frequently in a chorus when the voices within a section are not in complete agreement on the precise tuning of chord components. For totally in-tune singing to exist, all voices within a section must sing the same frequency, reinforcing the overtone series. While good, clean interval singing is of primary importance to a barbershop singer, the ultimate goal in accurate singing is not interval singing (note-to-note), but locked chords which result in total harmony accuracy. One specific

example of inaccuracy is “scooping” into a note, both during onsets and mid-phrase, preventing total chord alignment and accuracy.

A ringing, well-tuned barbershop sound is best accomplished using a combination of Pythagorean tuning and just intonation tuning methods, as opposed to the tempered scale.

Tempered Scale (Equal Temperament)

Most singers have developed a concept of tuning that is based on the tempered scale which is used for the tuning of keyboard instruments. The space of an octave is divided into twelve equal parts called semitones or half steps, with each tone being an identical distance from the next. The intervals in equal temperament are fixed, as on a piano keyboard. These tones do not exactly agree with the frequencies of pitch found in the overtone series – the foundation of barbershop sound.

Pythagorean Tuning

Music in the barbershop style is based on the root-fifth relationship, sometimes also referred to as tonic-dominant. The Pythagorean scale derives all tones from the interval of the perfect fifth as it occurs in the overtone series. Pythagorean tuning can be helpful in maintaining the tonal center of barbershop music.

Just Intonation

Just intonation isn't based on any scale as in Pythagorean tuning – it is based on the harmonic series. It's simply a list of intervals in their most pure form. Voices are not fixed-pitch instruments; they can adjust to micro tuning to make sure chords are perfectly in tune. *A cappella* singers using their ears to tune will typically lean toward just intonation without even knowing it.

Tonal Center/Key Changes

One of the most vital skills necessary for singing *a cappella* music is the establishment and maintenance of the tonal center of the key being sung. It is impossible to finely tune intervals or chords if the tonal center is not solidly in place. This also requires successfully navigating all key changes and modulations, as well as maintaining the new key. It is important for singers to understand that every note has an intervallic relationship to the tonal center (“doh”).

Synchronization/Chord Alignment

Synchronization is a vital element of harmony accuracy. The sound judge is listening for instant accuracy, instant target vowel, and the precision skills that lead to consistent lock-and-ring. The sound judge rewards a performance in which a total unit sound exists, *i.e.*, chords are locked and ringing from the instant they are sounded. Synchronization affects unified ensemble sound and chord alignment, both at the beginning and end of a phrase.

Synchronization within a phrase or word is referred to as “internal synchronization.” Synchronization errors may mar a blended musical unit, may prevent instantly matched vowels, and may distract the audience from an otherwise artistic performance.

Synchronization relates not only to clean chord progressions but also to the successful execution of artistic embellishments (such as slides and swipes) and rhythmic patterns and repeats (echoes). Unintentional “scooping” into a note during an onset or mid-phrase prevents total chord alignment and accuracy. This is not assessed in the same way as a planned stylistic or artistic inflection or grace note.

ENSEMBLE SOUND

The sound judge is charged with evaluating the combination of voices or voice parts as a unified blended ensemble. Quality of sound resulting from good vocal skills is the first consideration. Several other factors affect the development of a blended sound: a common approach to tone production, a freely-produced sound, and unified vowel production. The sound judge will not reward a combination of voices that are poorly or incorrectly produced simply because they are matched.

The same basic principles apply to evaluating the performance of either a chorus or quartet. A section should have uniformity of sound and demonstrate section blend, as well as ensemble blend between sections. A single voice in any ensemble can be out of the blended unit in different ways — out of tune, too loud or a different timbre — thereby disrupting the ensemble sound.

A key component to producing a blended ensemble sound is that all voices must be freely produced. Manufacturing blend by introducing tension into the vocal mechanism will reduce harmonics in the individual voice, reducing the probability of overtones from the ensemble.

Tone Production/Intonation

A common approach to tone production is the foundation of a blended ensemble sound. The goal for all singers is to produce a sound that is fully resonant with tone clarity with a unified approach to vowel sounds. To produce a matched sound with resonance and clarity, it is important that the jaw is relaxed and free in a natural position, the throat is relaxed and open, and tones are projected with the energy provided by a foundation of good breath flow (*i.e.*, “breath energy”).

Intonation refers to the physical production of tone, or how pitch is produced by an individual voice, and may affect harmony accuracy. In general, intonation deals with the manner in which pitch is produced, including coordination between the listening apparatus and the vocal mechanism.

The most complete tonal accuracy is obtained by four well-resonated tones of like timbre and color utilizing the overtones produced by each voice, blended together in such a way

that chords possess the full-bodied richness that adds up to total accuracy. Examples of the most common intonation problems are:

- Unmatched vowel sounds
- Lack of or unmatched resonance
- Lack of tone clarity
- Tension in the jaw, tongue or throat

In the case of intonation problems, the sound judge should point out, when possible, that the problem lies with voice production rather than with the notes, intervals or chords themselves.

Vowel Production

A vowel is a speech sound produced without occluding, diverting or obstructing the flow of air from the lungs. Vowels should be produced through an open, relaxed throat with a tongue and jaw free of tension. The muscles involved in the swallowing mechanism surround the vocal tract, so it is important that these muscles are relaxed during singing for optimal vowel production.

Barbershop is a vernacular art form; therefore, singers' vowel choices should be more conversational while also being freely produced, resonant, open and ringing. The choice of vowel sounds for effective lyrical communication is assessed as part of the Expression category. The sound judge will evaluate the extent to which vowels are matched and unified across an ensemble, because disagreement in vowel match from singer to singer will impact tuning, blend and balance, reducing opportunities for lock and ring.

Vowel sounds formed by altering or contriving the external mouth position and tongue prevent formation of vowels in the pharyngeal area, where it occurs naturally as in speech. This can impact full and free resonance, resulting in a manipulated sound.

Continuous Sound/Tone Flow

Flowing tones, energized to the end of each phrase, are a requirement of the Sound category. The effect of singing a flowing phrase should be similar to the kind of connection of tone that would be achieved if a melodic line were sung on a sustained "ah." Overuse of the lips, tongue and jaw, and inconsistent breath management, inhibits tone flow. Tones should move easily from syllable-to-syllable and from note-to-note with as little interruption of the sound as possible, while still maintaining clarity of articulation so the audience can understand the lyrics.

Tone flow in a chorus performance may be affected by the director's conducting techniques. Choppy and ineffective conducting gestures may interfere with the chorus' continuous tone flow. The chorus and director must work together as a unit to achieve an uninterrupted and energized sound.

Section Unity

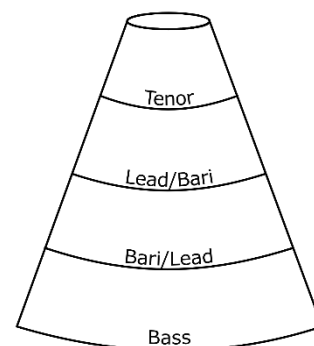
All singers must agree on their approach to vocal skills and freely-produced sound for the major components of a blended, accurate ensemble sound to be successful. The sound judge assesses blend within and between sections. For example, a well-blended bass section may have a brilliant, lively sound that might be entirely appropriate, but it may not blend with a mellow lead section. A common approach to proper vocal skills by all sections will minimize differences, such as vowel or resonance mismatches, that affect intonation.

Barbershop Balance

Barbershop balance has certain characteristics that distinguish it from other styles of vocal music. When a barbershop chord is in balance (sometimes referred to as cone-shaped balance), the voices are purposely unequal in weight and intensity. Many other styles of choral music (notably SATB) are balanced cylindrically with the melody in the top voice and all voices singing with equal weight and intensity, or inverted-cone balance with the top voices using more weight and intensity than the lower voices.

While singing with cone-shaped balance within individual voice parts is desirable, complete barbershop balance requires the interplay of all the parts and all the harmonics available. Balance is not merely a question of volume; to achieve optimal vocal balance, the voices must be full-bodied, multidimensional, blended and resonant.

Using this visual depiction, the sound judge can readily evaluate the balance of the ensemble. In the illustration, the lead and baritone are shown in alternating positions to serve as a reminder that both must lighten or fill their tones as their position in the chord changes. The tenor and bass must achieve balance while still maintaining total vocal freedom. Bases must be careful to not force or push their sound to be loudest, but instead produce a full harmonic spectrum so that the fundamental note doesn't have press or excess muscle. Although positioned at the top of the balance illustration, tenors are not the "smallest voice;" they also must sing with full voice and resonance, being sensitive to appropriate dynamic requirements.



When a single voice is perceived as out of balance with the blended ensemble sound, the sound judge will assess whether this is a volume or quality problem and comment accordingly.

It is relatively easy for a group to achieve balance on sustained chords. The sound judge will evaluate the ensemble's ability to balance all chords, not just those which were sustained. A complete, balanced sound should always be identifiable, even on passing chords. The challenge lies in maintaining balance when chords move rapidly or when individual part lines are demanding. The ultimate barbershop sound exists when all chords are properly balanced throughout all ranges and dynamic levels (especially at extremes).

Intended Imbalance

When the melody leaves the lead voice, traditional balance is abandoned and the quality and authority normally found in the lead voice are transferred to the voice singing the melody. The sound judge will evaluate the degree of proficiency with which these melodic transfers are handled and subsequently balanced.

Ring/Overtones/Expanded Sound

When a voice is freely and properly produced, the resulting sound is rich with harmonics, or ring. And when voices in an ensemble are ringing, audible overtones are present. This is often referred to as expanded sound, and is desirable throughout all ranges and dynamic levels. Expanded sound doesn't require excess volume; it requires the presence of harmonics. When harmonics are not present (usually a result of incorrect voice production), the singer may oversing in an effort to increase volume. Therefore, it is critical for singers to strive toward a freely-produced sound at all times.

ARTISTRY & MUSICALITY

Musicality is defined as sensitivity to, knowledge of, or talent for music. The Sound category recognizes that the relationship between technically proficient singing and singing with musicality is complex. Sound expresses and creates emotions, with a generosity of spirit that connects to the audience. Musicality is the performer's technical knowledge and execution combined with the ability to reflect the emotional intent of the music. Technique and artistry go hand in hand to produce a musical performance. A mechanical delivery may be technically correct, but will not satisfy the singer or audience emotionally. Making an emotional connection with the music is valuable for ensemble sound at all skill levels.

The sound judge will reward a performance that combines a freely-produced, energized vocal technique with a strong commitment to the artistic style and mood of the song, which transforms a technical performance into an emotional experience for the listener.

Vocal Energy

Energy, as defined in the Sound category, combines physical, mental and emotional commitment to the musical product. It is an important characteristic of the barbershop style. The best barbershop performance combines technique and artistry resulting in a vibrant, energized, musical sound. Vocal energy is a macro concept: energy should flow through the entire vocal line, including each chord, phrase and breath.

Dynamic Flexibility

A well-produced voice is capable of vocal flexibility and a wide range of expressive dynamics. The sound judge will listen for good quality singing, not simply for volume. A singer with proficient vocal skills can sing at high volume levels without sacrificing quality, and at low volume levels without losing vocal or breath energy, or clarity.

Although evaluation of the appropriate choice of dynamic level is not within the scope of the Sound category, the sound judge does evaluate the ability of the performer to maintain barbershop balance at all dynamic levels and dynamic changes (*i.e.*, crescendos and decrescendos). All the elements of harmony accuracy and ensemble sound must also remain in place while executing dynamic variations.

Vocal Style/Character

Different songs, and even different portions of songs, may lend themselves to different vocal characteristics. The defining element of artistic sound is the ability of the group to select and utilize the vocal style most appropriate to the song. This may be accomplished by the use of musical devices such as inflection, color, texture or vocal emphasis.

Voices can possess texture and color — concepts normally attributed to things seen, felt and tasted. One can draw from the other senses to describe vocal qualities — smooth, silky, warm, spiky, lush, bright, chocolatey, clear, brassy, velvety, etc. Vocal textures can be used to express emotion, set a mood, or add feeling to the music. The use of vocal textures enhances the audience's emotional connection to the performance.

"Scooping," or the practice of sliding into pitches, results in a temporary accuracy error. This may be an intentional stylistic device; however, any technique that is overused becomes a liability rather than an asset.

Producing a sound that connects with an audience and conveys the message or mood of the music may involve creating a "character voice." A character voice is a distinct personality as expressed through unique vocal qualities. A strong character voice is the means by which the performers express themselves and interact with the audience, because the voice can convey such things as personality, mood, emotion and sentiment. Infusing vocal character into the sound reflects the nuances of an ensemble's personality and draws the audience into the performance. All of these considerations should appear natural and authentic to the listener, not forced or contrived. This is where true artistry shines through.

Artistic Sound

The human voice is a powerful tool for expressing a wide range of emotions. The sound judge evaluates the sound of the voice itself, as it expresses emotions and arouses feelings in the listener. The quality or emotional timbre of the voice can, in and of itself, communicate fear, joy, anger, loneliness, surprise, disappointment and love, to name a few. To produce a completely artistic and musical performance, each singer must put heart into their voice, using it to convey sincere, authentic feeling for the message of the song.

In the Sound category, musicality occurs when an ensemble creates an emotional connection through their sound alone (distinct from any lyrical messages), in the same way that a skillful orchestra is able to evoke an emotional response in their audience. Heart, emotion and energy can elevate a mechanically "perfect" performance into a magical experience for the audience and the singer.

SCORING THE CATEGORY

The primary responsibility of a SingUnited International judge is to determine the level of proficiency in their category for each competitor's performance, and to rank each competitor in relation to other competitors in a contest. To perform this task, the judge assigns numerical scores which accurately represent the level of each performance in their category. The composite numerical scores of the entire judging panel establish final placement for all contestants and are the basis for determining the winners of awards.

The sound judge considers all performances in comparison with the concept of an ideal sound as established by the standards of the category, identifiable as a unified composite sound rather than four voices or four parts. The Sound category combines technical and artistic elements, and the sound of the ensemble is judged holistically with 100 points available for each song performed in the following major components:

- Vocal Skills
- Harmony Accuracy
- Ensemble Sound
- Artistry & Musicality

Understanding the individual components of the category enables the performer to strive for improvement in all areas. Since a major foundation of this category description is devoted to vocal skills, the performer's vocal skill level influences all facets of scoring the Sound category.

SUMMARY

The human voice, free from physiological restrictions, has the capacity to sing emotionally, accurately and in harmony with other voices with creative, imaginative flair. All of this must be firmly based on consistent and seemingly effortless vocal skills. The Sound category values a musical sound that can draw the listener into a world of joy and exhilaration. Beautiful sounds, expressed from the heart, create an enduring musical experience that will provide the greatest showcase for the barbershop style of music.

Judge _____

Contestant's Name _____ Contestant # _____

Contest: Region # _____ ☐ Quartet ☐ Chorus ☐ Diamond Division☐ Int'l Quartet Semifinals ☐ Int'l Chorus Semifinals ☐ Rising Star Date _____**JUDGING CRITERIA****VOCAL SKILLS**

Body Alignment

Breathing/Breath Management

Phonation

Resonance

Articulation

HARMONY ACCURACY

Notes/Chords

Tuning/Intervals

Tonal Center/Key Changes

Synchronization/Chord Alignment

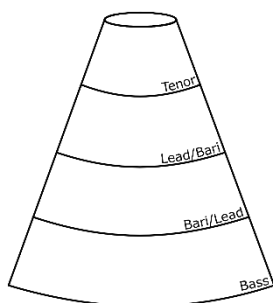
ARTISTRY & MUSICALITY

Vocal Energy

Dynamic Flexibility

Vocal Style/Character

Artistic Sound

**ENSEMBLE SOUND**

Tone Production/Intonation

Vowel Production

Continuous Sound/Tone Flow

Section Unity

Barbershop Balance

Ring/Overtones/Expanded Sound

SONG #1: _____ SONG #2: _____

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	

SONG 1

SONG 2

TOTAL
SCORE

Signed: _____

SOUND

Contest: Region # _____ ☐ Open Quartet ☐ Open Chorus ☐ Eval Only- Int'l Bound Contestant # _____
☐ Int'l Quartet Finals ☐ Int'l Chorus Finals ☐ Harmony Classic Date _____

CATEGORY CRITERIA (0-100 pts)

ENTERTAINMENT PACKAGE (0-100 pts)

CREATIVITY

Scripting/Concept
Imagination/Innovative Staging
Stagecraft (Use of Props/
Costumes/Lighting/Makeup)
Use of music to enhance theme

AUDIENCE CONNECTION

Mood/Emotion/Message
Well-rehearsed/Confident
Movement/Stagecraft
Character/Emcee/Soloist/Specialty
Mic Technique
Audience Response

Theme/Setting/Concept
Story Arc (Beginning-Middle-End)
Script/Organization
Pacing/Transitions/Blocking
Props/Costuming/Makeup

CONTEST SONG: _____

PACKAGE THEME: _____

One Song/Ent. Pkg. 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

One Song/Ent. Pkg. 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

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11/11/2019

CONTEST SONG

PACKAGE

TOTAL SCORE *

MUSIC CATEGORY
OUTLINE OF CONTENT

TOPIC	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. SONG AND ARRANGEMENT	
A. Song	
1. Form	
2. Melody	
a. Changes	
b. Implied harmony	
3. Lyrics	
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b. Lyric Considerations	
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2. Harmonization	
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4. Meter	
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III. PERFORMANCE	
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B. Harmony accuracy	
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- C. Barbershop style
 - 1. Tempo
 - 2. Rhythm
 - 3. Musical unity
 - 4. Phrasing
 - a. Appropriate pacing
 - b. Smooth delivery
 - c. Musical integrity
 - 5. Dynamics
 - a. Vocal capabilities
 - b. Sufficient contrast
 - c. Appropriate to the song and arrangement
 - 6. Musical Energy
- D. Musical Artistry
- E. Suitability to Performer

IV. SCORING THE CATEGORY

MUSIC CATEGORY

The primary focus of the music category is the performance of a song that has been arranged in four-part harmony, barbershop style. The music judge evaluates the musicality of the performance, the quality of the song and arrangement, and the degree to which the performance reflects the hallmarks of the barbershop style as identified in the category description.

The music judge rewards a performance when:

The song is lyrically and melodically appropriate to the barbershop art form and has been arranged in a manner that is consistent with the characteristics of the barbershop style.

The song and arrangement are, as a minimum standard, accurately performed. Additionally, the musical performance is sensitive to the lyrics, harmonic and rhythmic content of the arrangement, and expectations of musical delivery in the barbershop style.

The arrangement is a suitable selection for the performer, showcasing their vocal and musical capabilities and, in an ideal scenario, permits the artistic presentation of a magical experience that is aesthetically satisfying and memorable for both performer and listener.

The music judge evaluates the effectiveness of the song and arrangement on a continuum of weak to strong adherence to the barbershop style.

While almost any song can be arranged in the a cappella style, the extent to which an arrangement adheres to the barbershop style is determined by the appropriateness of the following characteristics that define this form of music: song form and implied harmony, arrangement composition, harmonic progressions, chord voicing and harmonization choices, the use of creative devices and alignment of the lyrical and musical peak for a satisfying musical conclusion. In addition, performance elements such as vocal skills, harmony accuracy (including untempered tuning) and barbershop delivery and interpretation have a significant impact on the perceived strength of a song and arrangement in performance. All of these style characteristics serve to contribute to the “lock and ring” of the chords which is a prominent hallmark of the barbershop style.

Music, like art, never remains stagnant. For example, Western classical music styles such as baroque, renaissance, impressionist or 20th century have distinct and identifiable musical characteristics that evolved over time. A style generally evolves to a point that it no longer resembles the original, and while a new style emerges, the origins remain and are identifiable. In popular music, genres such as jazz or rock include a myriad of subdivisions such as big band, doo-wop, light rock, classic rock and hard rock.

Barbershop harmony has seen its own evolution from its roots in African American folk music. It is intended that the characteristics that make the barbershop style of four-part harmony unique and differentiated from other forms of a cappella as outlined in this category will remain identifiable, if not constant.

The music category covers two major areas: the barbershop song and arrangement and the performance of that arrangement. These topics balance on the fulcrum of suitability to the performer, uniting the song and arrangement and performance elements of the category via the performer themselves.

SONG AND ARRANGEMENT

A song is the combination of lyrics, melody, and harmony implied by that melody into an aesthetic entity. A strong song selection meets the lyric, melodic, rhythmic, and harmonic criteria characteristic of the barbershop style.

SONG

The relative strength of a barbershop song, apart from the arrangement, is determined by the degree to which it meets the criteria outlined in the discussion below.

Form

In the song, form refers to the overall pattern or structure of the song itself, not the arrangement. Until the latter part of the 20th century, American popular song was written in extended song form, or what has come to be referred to as “popular” song form. In this structure, the verse generally consists of two segments of eight measures each (16 measures), and the chorus generally consists of four, sometimes five segments of eight measures each (32 or 40 measures). Additionally, the chorus generally demonstrates melodic unity such as A-A-B-A, A-B-A-C, or A-B-A-C-A form. The most common element in form is the presence of eight-measure increment. Other melodic patterns may be effective if the overall sense of musical symmetry and unity is maintained and will be evaluated based on effectiveness in performance.

The strophic form, typical of hymns and folk songs, with many short verses/choruses sung to the same melody, lacks the melodic variety to be considered strong for barbershop competition. The through composed form, with a different musical line for each section, lacks musical symmetry and unity. A creative arrangement may overcome the inherent weaknesses of these non-traditional forms and will be evaluated based on the effectiveness in performance.

Melody

The melody of the barbershop song is singable, musically interesting, and has a high point that coincides with the climactic point of the lyrics. Melodies that contain a minimum of wide interval jumps are most adaptable to presentation in the barbershop style. Melodies that are wide-ranging or that feature large interval jumps will often require harmonization that results in harmony part lines with similar vocal challenges and will be difficult to execute with consistent accuracy, balance, and vocal quality.

Since the predominant flavor of barbershop harmony is the major mode, the melody should be constructed primarily from tones of the diatonic major scale and the harmony implied by that melody should be consistent with the harmonic characteristics of music in the barbershop style. Sometimes the melody of the intro, verse, or the bridge (B section of an A-A-B-A form) is based on the harmonic minor scale, but the chorus resolves to the major mode. Songs written in the minor mode feature harmonization with a predominance of chords that may be more difficult to tune and ring overtones but may be effective if skillfully performed.

Changes

Occasionally a melodic change can be shown to have occurred over time through common usage. In this instance, the arranger should incorporate the melody note(s) familiar to the listener. An arranger may introduce a variation of the melody to add interest, often in the last instance of a repeated melodic section. If extensive melodic alteration is required, the song in question is probably not the best vehicle for a barbershop arrangement. It is usually permissible to change a melody note by taking it up or down an octave to avoid awkward jumps.

Implied Harmony

The most interesting barbershop songs are those whose melodies imply a wide variety of chord progressions utilizing the dominant-to-tonic resolution. Application of the dominant-to-tonic resolution is a particularly significant characteristic of barbershop harmony, including frequent use of secondary (implied) dominant sevenths. Songs that utilize subdominant-to-tonic resolution as the predominant flavor are more reminiscent of church music (amen cadence) than music in the barbershop style. If a melody requires consistent use of subdominant-to-tonic resolution, the song is probably not typical of strong barber-shop material. Songs that utilize only the I, IV and V chords, a pattern often found in country and pop music, lack the harmonic interest necessary for a strong barbershop harmony treatment.

LYRICS

The lyrics of a barbershop song are like the words of a poem in that they demonstrate metric unity and an obvious rhyming structure. The contrasting form, “through-composed”, is more like prose, where phrase length is not uniform, and no rhyming structure exists. Many art songs and some theatrical songs are based on this “through composed” lyrical structure and lack the sense of unity and symmetry that a lyric pattern with a rhyming structure affords. Also, the lyrics of a barbershop song are set to the melody so that each syllable has its own melody note as opposed to the melismatic melodies found in operatic arias, for example.

The combination of music and lyrics is the total message of a barbershop song, and these elements must complement each other. It is especially important that the lyrical and musical high points coincide. An arrangement that builds musically as well as lyrically to the “punch line” of the story will present a saleable, satisfying message. Good musical form generally dictates that the high point occurs at the end of the third (or next-to-last) eight-measure section of the chorus, or at the beginning of the fourth (or final) eight-bar section. An arranger may create a high point in the tag. While the message of a barbershop ballad is in the lyrics, the message of a barbershop uptune is conveyed by the tempo, rhythm and lyrics.

Song Stipulations:

Competition policies established by the International Board of Directors prohibit the use of songs with religious or patriotic lyrics or official organizational songs as the contest song in a Regional, International or Evaluation Only contest performance. Religious songs include hymns and other songs written to create an awareness of and reverence toward a supreme being. Patriotic songs include national anthems and other songs written to inspire patriotism and allegiance to a particular country. Official organizational songs include “How We Sang Today” and “The Voice of Harmony.” In the Open Division or International Entertainment Packages, religious, patriotic or official organizational songs of SingUnited International may be used as part of the package. The degree to which such use enhances or detracts from the performance is reflected in the judges’ score and commentary. (*JCDB: Penalties Sec. III-C, pg. 4*)

Many songs from Broadway musicals and other sources are not considered religious or patriotic because they were written primarily for entertainment purposes rather than for inspirational values. Competition policies also require that songs be sung in English, though no penalty will be assessed for the occasional foreign language word or phrase found in American popular song-

Lyric Considerations:

Choruses and Quartets are expected to use their filter of sensitivity and inclusivity when choosing music for competition or performance. Not all songs and lyrics arranged in the barbershop style meet these criteria. Songs and lyrics should be carefully scrutinized and evaluated to determine whether they are suitable for performance in competition or any other performance setting. Since the manner of presentation—both visual and vocal—can affect the evaluation of this aspect of lyric performance, the music judge will reward lyric presentations that demonstrate both respect for the audience and a genuine regard for individual and collective harmony.

In accordance with our guiding principles of Diversity and Inclusion and the Culture of Belonging, SingUnited International rejects any song that includes racist lyrics, messages and history and consider them inadmissible for performance. In evaluating the performance of an inadmissible song, the Music Judge will be guided by appropriate application of Rule Infraction Penalties as set out in the Penalties section of this JCDB. (*JCDB: Penalties Sec. III- C, pg. 3*)

Lyric Alteration:

Musical integrity generally requires that the work of an author or lyricist be performed as it was written. Most popular songs are written “in the vernacular,” using words and phrases common to the time but which may have no significance or an entirely different connotation at a later time. Lyric alteration in such cases may enable the listener to understand the original intent. Lyric alterations, substitutions or replacements in songs that are made in an attempt to resolve historically, or culturally offensive material are not recommended. The music judge will assess the effectiveness of and attentiveness to inclusivity in lyric change.

Parodies:

The parody, generally a humorous set of lyrics used as a replacement for the original lyrics, will be evaluated by the music judge in the same manner as if the original lyrics had been presented.

ARRANGEMENT

Structure

Single-song arrangements

The structure of the arrangement is the way the song has been “packaged” by the arranger into a barbershop style presentation. Typical composition includes an introduction, a verse, a chorus, and a tag. These sections and their sequence may vary depending on the nature of the song. The chorus is the only element that must always be present. An intro sets the scene musically and/or lyrically. Sometimes the verse satisfies this requirement, and an intro is unnecessary. The verse usually provides

additional musical and lyrical preparation for the story; however, in many acceptable arrangements the verse is either omitted or used as an interlude between two choruses. The chorus *is* the story; it cannot be omitted. The tag functions as a musical coda, and most arrangements do require a tag unless the composer has provided a tag incorporated into the song itself.

Melodies for the added intro and tag are often composed by the arranger. Sometimes the arranger writes lyrics for these sections and sometimes key words, or phrases are extracted from the author's lyrics. Any section(s) added by the arranger should be stylistically like the song and should contain an identifiable melody line. These criteria also apply to verses or interludes composed by the arranger.

The overall composition, when complete, must adhere to good musical form. Most intros are 4 or 8 measures in length, as are most tags. Most interludes provide 8 or 16 additional measures, depending upon the balance of the composition. Added sections will extend, but should not destroy, the musical form characteristic of the American popular song.

Medley Arrangements

Criteria established for evaluating the composition of single-song arrangements are also applicable to arrangements that contain two or more songs or segments of songs. Overall composition must still meet the standards of good musical form and musical unity must be preserved.

For unity to exist, the songs included in a medley should be similar in theme and/or musical style and they should be presented in a sequence that provides for build to a musical high point. A return to the initial theme always helps to achieve musical unity, particularly when an intervening section presents a contrasting mood or idea.

Transitions between songs or sections of songs should also remain within the boundaries of good musical form so that the overall structure is musically valid. Small sections of many songs in a medley can cause the overall composition to be disjointed and the medley will lack musical unity by merely becoming a list of songs rather than a complete composition.

Harmonization

Barbershop music is essentially tonal, triadic harmony at its strongest in the major mode. The music judge seeks a song appropriately harmonized and arranged in the barbershop style. Songs and arrangements are evaluated as to their relative weakness or strength when considering the hallmarks set forth in this category description. A song that would be more appropriately harmonized in another musical style that has been forced into a barbershop setting, or a song that has been appropriately harmonized in a style other than barbershop would be described by the music judge as weak for the barbershop style.

The basic framework of the barbershop style requires the following:

1. The melody is carried primarily by the lead voice, while the highest voice sings a harmony part.
2. The lowest voice sings a strong chord component
3. All four chord components in a four-tone chord are required.

Chord Vocabulary

Major Triad, Dominant Seventh (barbershop seventh), Dominant Ninth (barbershop ninth)

The strongest barbershop arrangements are built upon the major triad, dominant seventh, and dominant ninth. Often referred to as the “Big Three,” these chords provide the structure that supports and enhances the overtone-producing characteristics of the barbershop style.

The major triad requires the root to be doubled for the strongest voicing. Dominant seventh chords utilize all four tones. Because the dominant ninth chord consists of five tones, one tone must be omitted. The strongest voicing removes the root, and the fifth is sometimes removed in a passing progression.

Songs and arrangements that feature chords other than the “Big Three” in key musical or lyrical spots are described a weaker for the barbershop style. Songs arranged in the barbershop style can involve a wide range of messages—some are happy or joyful, but others are nostalgic or sad. The composer’s melody generally paints a picture that conveys the tone of the message. The arranger, in selecting the framework for the lyric and melodic lines, chooses chords that lend color to the desired message. Often this artistic choice will require more frequent use of chords such as the minor triad, minor sixth, minor seventh and diminished seventh because they help paint the desired picture. It would be incongruous to use bright, happy chords to harmonize a message conveying sadness or despair.

Although the major triad, dominant seventh and dominant ninth should provide the predominant harmonic flavor, the barbershop style chord vocabulary includes the following additional chords that provide harmonic interest and color when used to support the implied harmony of the song.

Major Sixth (or minor seventh, depending on voicing)

The major sixth chord contains the same tones as a minor seventh chord, but when the fifth and sixth tones are adjacent it is named major sixth. Frequently the minor triad can be used in place of the major sixth unless this creates a jumpy part line that is difficult to sing accurately. The major sixth is characteristic of modern harmony, particularly when the fifth and sixth tones are in the lowest voices. In barbershop arrangements, the adjacent tones are usually found in the middle voices.

Major Seventh

The major seventh chord is used when that tone is the melody and change to a substitute chord would involve awkward voice leading. However, acceptable substitute chords are frequently available. The major seventh chord can also be used when that tone is a passing note in a single-part swipe. The major seventh is characteristic of modern harmony, and songs that require frequent use of the major seventh are more appropriately harmonized in the closely voiced modern style.

Major Ninth

The major ninth chord should only be used when that tone is the melody and change to a substitute chord would involve awkward voice leading.

Minor Triad

The minor triad is commonly used as a substitute for its relative major. The minor triad challenges the singer's ability to create the characteristic ring of the barbershop style, and songs entirely in the minor mode are weaker for that reason. The ability of the performer to overcome this obstacle in performance determines the effectiveness of songs that are predominantly minor mode for barbershop arrangements.

Minor Sixth (half-diminished seventh)

The minor sixth/half diminished seventh chord contains the same tones as the dominant ninth chord with the root omitted. However, the dominant ninth chord functions in a different manner as it is almost always used either directly before or immediately after the dominant seventh chord is used, thus retaining its strong major flavor in the phrase. In contrast, the minor sixth/half-diminished seventh chord, when typically used as a tension chord, will always sound more like a minor chord.

Minor Seventh (or major sixth, depending on voicing)

The minor seventh is used primarily in passing in embellishments and tags but can also be used where it is called for in the implied harmony to enhance the mood intended by the composer.

Augmented Triad

The augmented triad is used primarily when the melody is on the raised fifth scale tone. Like the major seventh, this tone is also appropriately used in passing in a single-part swipe.

Diminished Seventh

Like the augmented triad, the diminished seventh is symmetrical in nature and is used primarily as a connecting chord. The diminished triad in contrast lacks the characteristic complete sound and is a weaker substitute that should be used only rarely in passing or to cure voice leading difficulties.

Harmonic Progressions

The chords selected to harmonize the melody should closely follow the implied harmony and should point up that melody rather than causing it to become obscured. Some melody lines offer the arranger a choice of chords or chord progressions, and appropriate variety in harmonization can add interest to an arrangement that might otherwise be repetitious. Originality in harmonization can be rewarded only if the resulting chords or progressions remain in keeping with the song and its implied harmony.

An important characteristic of the barbershop style is that all melody notes must be harmonized by inclusion of the melody in one of the chords listed previously. Nonharmonic tones, passing tones, and non-chords are outside the scope of barbershop harmony. When the melody note is not a part of the chord indicated on the sheet music, the barbershop arranger must find a suitable substitute chord.

Frequent use is made of the dominant seventh/ninth in a secondary position where it functions as the dominant to a scale tone other than the tonic. This aspect of functional harmony is at the heart of the “Circle of Fifths” harmonic progression. In a strong barbershop arrangement, resolutions progress in a sequence established by the Circle of Fifths and lead to the final tonic triad chord voiced in a manner that maximizes the lock and ring feature of the barbershop style. Arrangements that feature any other final chord would not be a strong choice for barbershop competition.

Voicings

The chords that characterize barbershop harmony have been listed above. In evaluating an arrangement, the music judge considers not only the chords themselves, but also the way chords are voiced. Weak voicings of strong chords negatively impact the overall strength of

the arrangement. A strong bass line is one of the factors that enables the lock and ring characteristic of the barbershop style, and the music judge seeks chords voiced to reinforce that strength.

Relative Strength: In most cases, strongest voicing is achieved when the root of the chord is in the lowest voice part. Chords voiced with the fifth in the bass are strong in some cases and weak in others; this voicing is strong in the dominant seventh and dominant ninth, but weak in major and minor triads where it should only be used in passing. Voicing of the relative minor triad with the third in the bass is strong because the minor third interval functions as an implied root of the relative major key. Voicing the third of any other chord in the bass is weak, as is voicing the sixth, seventh or ninth tone of any chord in the bass. Weaker voicings may be permitted when used in a progression to stronger voicings, or when used infrequently or in passing; they should not occur at points of resolution. Since the augmented triad and diminished seventh are constructed of equal intervals, any tone can function as the root.

Triads: Because only three tones are present in the major, minor, augmented and diminished triads there must be a doubled tone to create four-part harmony. Unless an obvious reason exists for assigning two voice parts to the same pitch, the doubled tones should be separated by at least one octave. Strongest voicing results when the root is doubled or when the third is doubled in a minor triad used as a substitute for the relative major. The third of a major triad should never be doubled. Strong arrangements for barbershop always conclude with the tonic triad.

Remaining Chords: The remaining chords have at least four tones and all four must always be present; no doubles are permissible, and no tone may be omitted except for the dominant ninth chord which contains five tones, so one must be omitted. Strongest voicing for the dominant ninth results when the root is omitted, but the fifth may successfully be omitted for a special effect or when required by smooth voice leading. No other tone of the dominant ninth may be omitted.

The tenor usually sings the highest note of the chord, the bass the lowest, and the lead and baritone sing the two notes in the middle, frequently crossing each other. When the melody either goes too high or too low to permit strong voicing in a normal manner, alternate voicings may be used. A high melody, for an isolated note or two, may remain in the lead while the tenor voice fills a position under the lead note. A high melody may only be given to the tenor for a very short time because melody in the top voice is characteristic of modern harmony. A high melody for an extended passage may be transposed down an octave and given to the bass. Low melody, for either an isolated note or an extended passage, may be given to the bass. These alternate melodic voicings must still result in the strong chord structure characteristic of the barbershop style. It is up to the performer to sing the arrangement in such a way that the listener can easily follow any melodic transitions.

The best arrangements incorporate an interesting combination of open and closed voicings. Single-octave voicing should not be predominant in a strong barbershop arrangement. Wide-spread voicings (beyond the interval of the 10th) are particularly challenging for treble voices to lock and ring and should be re-voiced where possible to enhance the characteristic overtone producing sound of the barbershop style.

Meter

Songs appropriate to the barbershop style are characterized by simple, symmetrical meter, usually 2/4, 3/4, 4/4, cut time, or common time. Another meter appropriate to the barbershop style is 6/8, and 12/8 is an acceptable meter for swing-tempo delivery or the slow rock-tempo section of an arrangement, sometimes referred to as “stomp” tempo. Frequent meter changes and asymmetrical meters such as 5/4 or 7/4 are not within the scope of the barbershop style.

Creative Devices

Creative devices are musical devices used by the arranger to add musical interest or to achieve the continuity that would be provided by instrumental accompaniment. A strong barbershop arrangement will always feature the melody and the musical story first and foremost. Creative devices can add significant musical interest, but care should be taken by the arranger and performer to ensure that the heart of the song, the melody and lyric, always shines the brightest.

Swipes, Echoes, and Other Embellishments: The music judge will reward for creative and appropriate use of any of these devices. Excessive use can be a liability rather than an asset, because they may cause musical separation rather than unity and they may upset the balance of musical form or implied meter. They will evaluate the use of swipes, echoes, embellishments, and other similar devices based on their effect on the overall musical presentation.

Solo Passages: Music in the barbershop style is four-part harmony. Pickups, lead-ins, or short solo passages can sometimes eliminate awkward voice leading in the harmony parts, or they can simply be used for special effect. It may fit the mood of a song to have one voice sing words while the other three provide background, and this is permissible for very short passages if the effect is appropriate to the melody and lyrics and if the “background” still creates acceptable, four-part chords.

Patter: Music in the barbershop style is homophonic which, literally translated, means “same sound.” Homophonic music consists of a melody line sung by one voice part and harmonically supported by the remaining voice parts in a structure that results in vertical chords, with the same lyrics simultaneously sung by all voice parts. While patter backgrounds usually provide the harmonic structure characteristic of homophonic music, they do not meet the lyrical criteria, and the extended use of patter is not a strong choice for a contest performance. The performer’s ability to maintain the integrity of the harmonic structure while performing patter sections will impact the evaluation of its effectiveness in the arrangement.

Bell Chords: A “bell chord” is a musical device that utilizes sequential entry of voice parts so that when all four have sung a complete chord is the result. Skillfully handled, these can be an exciting addition to the presentation.

Instrumental Effects: Occasionally the music judge will encounter a situation where, in attempting to create an instrumental effect, the arranger has included a passage with vocal effect sounds such as “doo wah” substituted for words by either three or four voice parts. Extensive use of this device should be reserved for a non-contest presentation.

Modulations: Most barbershop songs include at least one temporary or implied modulation, which helps to add the harmonic variety desirable in a good barbershop arrangement. In the A-A-B-A form, it is usually found in the B section. A permanent modulation, indicated by a new key signature, is a device frequently encountered in barbershop arrangements. Most modulations raise the key either a half step or a whole step, giving a “lift” to the arrangement at an important musical point. In a medley, the modulation may introduce a new song. An effective modulation is always preceded by adequate harmonic preparation, achieved by using a sequence of chords that culminates with the dominant seventh of the new tonic. Any reward given by the music judge will be contingent upon the technical propriety of the modulation and the skill with which it is performed.

It should be noted that musical creativity can be demonstrated as effectively by simplicity as by elaboration. Musical creativity refers to the arranger’s ability to capture and enhance the spirit of the song, be that simple or intricate. Musical creativity is also demonstrated when the arranger has used the right amount of embellishment to enhance the performance capabilities of the song.

PERFORMANCE

VOCAL SKILLS

A section on Vocal Skills has been provided at the beginning of this manual. In the music category, vocal skills affect the performance in these areas: chord accuracy, interval accuracy, tuning, chord clarity and, in a chorus, section unity. The performer’s level of vocal skills can also enhance or detract from the planned phrasing and dynamic levels and the execution of tempos and rhythms. The singers’ ability to deliver with artistry the musical ideas portrayed by the arranger of the song is critical to successfully bringing that music to life.

HARMONY ACCURACY

Correct Notes

Harmony accuracy can be achieved only when all members of the performing group are singing the correct notes. This is a basic requirement of the music category, and the music judge evaluates the arrangement that is performed, not the arrangement written on paper. In a chorus, this includes accuracy within each of the four voice sections.

Fine Tuning

Even when the notes that appear on the written page are sung, incorrect chords, inaccurate chords, and out-of-tune chords can still occur. Subtle nuances of pitch adjustment, proper balance of chord components and vowel match can impact fine tuning of chords sung in the barbershop style, with its characteristic lock and ring.

Inappropriate Doubling

When two parts of the ensemble sing the same note in unison or an octave apart, resulting in a three-tone chord when a four-tone chord is required, the harmony accuracy is adversely affected. The deliberate and appropriate use of unison, duet, or triad harmonization, however, can be an effective tool for creating musical contrast.

BARBERSHOP STYLE

The best barbershop arrangements are only ink on paper until the performer brings them to life. The performer is the channel through which appropriate tempo, effective dynamics, musical phrase lines, and stylistic devices are conveyed to the listener. The following elements contribute to defining the barbershop style of performance as perceived by the music judge.

Tempo

Tempo is the speed or pace at which music is performed. The barbershop style uses two contrasting approaches to tempo—strict adherence to an established tempo, as in an uptempo song (“uptune”) or a swing tune, , and a *rubato* or *ad lib* delivery, as in a ballad. These two approaches may be used separately or in combination, but skill is required when choosing the approach or combination of approaches that fits each individual barbershop song or arrangement.

An uptune should be sung in tempo. It may be appropriate to a particular song to present the intro and/or the verse in the *ad lib* style, but once a tempo is indicated and established it should be maintained and should remain consistent. The established tempo can be effectively broken in certain instances, such as a ritard to set up the tag, a change to rubato for repetition of a section previously sung in tempo, or a break to a rock (12/8) tempo for a section. The performer might even use a steady accelerando to gradually increase tempo. Skillful use of any of these devices can add musical interest to a presentation, but their overuse can destroy the desired musical unity and cause the presentation to seem disjointed. The issue is never the number of times tempo can be changed, but the way transitions are made and whether they are performed without disrupting the overall forward motion. The music judge will evaluate each performance based on whether the devices add to or detract from the total musical effect.

A ballad is usually performed in the *ad lib* or *rubato* style, but an implied meter must still be identifiable even though some measures or phrases will be sung at a faster pace than others. The metric pulse should still make the measure or phrase unit obvious to the listener. Although other forms of choral music generally adhere to strict tempo in ballad delivery, music in the barbershop style is characterized by the artistic departure from strict tempo for effective ballad presentation. Some ballads may also be effectively performed with a slow, swing tempo delivery. In this type of presentation, the challenge for the performer is to ride the wave of established tempo, almost as if a dance band were providing the accompaniment.

Other types of songs suggest specific tempos. A march, for example, should be presented at a tempo that facilitates marching. A waltz requires a tempo to which one can waltz. A song that is of a specific type should be performed in the tempo characteristic of that type of song. When a song is performed at a tempo other than generally identified with that type of song, the music judge will evaluate whether the different setting is musically effective. Like originality in arrangement, a different treatment can be rewarded only if the difference

is musically valid. The music judge will evaluate the propriety of the tempo used to the song presented and the effectiveness of the delivery.

Rhythm

Rhythm is the patterns of varying note values within each measure of the established meter. In common time, for example, the rhythm may simply be two half notes, or quarter-half-quarter, or even dotted quarter-eighth tied to eighth-quarter-eighth. The emphasis or lack of emphasis on certain beats of the measure is a function of rhythm.

Emphasis on the primary or downbeat is characteristic of the march, the waltz, and presentation in *ad lib* delivery.

Jazz and ragtime music, frequently used for barbershop arrangements, are characterized by emphasis of secondary beats, often referred to as “backbeat,” and by syncopation. The most common problem encountered by the music judge when the performer attempts a syncopated delivery is the robbing of time value from the primary beat and resultant distortion of meter. When emphasis is on the secondary beat, the primary beat must still be given its complete time value so that the overall meter is retained, and tempo maintained.

Musical Unity

Musical unity results when all members of the ensemble are singing lyrical elements correctly and simultaneously and are singing chords in tune and at the same time. Ensemble singing requires particular attention to synchronization to achieve musical unity. When the group is not singing as a unit the chords will appear to the music judge to be indistinct, incomplete, fuzzy, out of tune, and lacking in clarity.

Errors in synchronization may result from several causes, including inaccurate interval singing, lack of synchronization within and between sections, and an unlike approach to vocal production.

Phrasing

A phrase is a division of the musical line, somewhat like a clause or sentence in prose. A song relates a story from beginning to end, and artistic phrasing maintains the continuity of that story. A good barbershop arrangement indicates logical phrasing that is congruent with the lyric and melodic phrase structure of the song. It is the performer’s responsibility to take advantage of the arranger’s phrase design.

Because music in the barbershop style is performed without instrumental accompaniment, a consistent sense of forward motion of the musical line is required. Occasional periods of rest are necessary for vocal effects and/or relief to the ear of the listener, and to build toward an effective climax of the musical line. Within each phrase, however, artistic delivery requires a smooth, ongoing sense of connection to the song as a whole.

Some important considerations for effective phrasing are:

Appropriate pacing: Phrases should be delivered at a pace that is natural and appropriate to the lyrics. The singer needs to remain cognizant that each phrase with its artistic nuances is part of the total song, not its own entity. Phrases delivered in a laborious manner lack forward impetus and the listener's interest may be lost.

Smooth phrases: The phrasing plan should maintain an ongoing sense of connection and fluidity in the musical line. When singers emphasize individual chords and beats, a choppy delivery can result. Some common causes of choppy phrase delivery include lack of breath support or excessive jaw motion or a director's conducting style that stresses each beat

When an identifiable pattern of phrasing emerges, the listener's attention can be drawn to the pattern rather than to the song itself. Common examples of patterned phrases can include sustaining the first chord or chords of each phrase, or rapid phrase beginnings that gradually ritard. This type of interpretation is usually unintentional, resulting from failure of the performer or chorus director to give sufficient attention to artistic delivery of the song as a whole.

Musical integrity: Preservation of phrase flow and the sensation of forward motion require that phrase ends be sustained through the logical, musical point of release. When the performer fails to accomplish this, forward motion is disrupted. Dropped phrases frequently result from poor breath management, weak breath support, or weak vocal skills. The singer should remember that breath is the start of a musical phrase, not a reward for getting to the end of the phrase. When the performer sustains phrase endings longer than is musically appropriate, the natural starting point for the next phrase is delayed, resulting in loss of the desired forward motion, disturbing the implied meter.

An effective phrase design will lead to the musical high point of the song. Any phrasing ideas can be individually valid when analyzed out of context. Artistic phrasing, however, remains within the context of the total song so that the overall design emphasizes the entire story, not just the individual words or phrases. In this area, the music judge and the expression judge work hand in hand to evaluate the musical and lyrical phrasing. Flaws in either category will generally affect the other.

Dynamics

Dynamics refers to the variation in volume levels within the performance. The appropriate use of dynamic levels is one of the means through which musical artistry is achieved. In fact, artistic dynamics is one of the characteristics of barbershop harmony. The barbershop performer will find that a good barbershop arrangement of a strong song affords the opportunity to utilize all levels of dynamics as well as subtle variations between the extremes.

When evaluating dynamics, the music judge considers the following:

Vocal capabilities: For dynamic contrast to be effective, the dynamic levels attempted must fall within the range of vocal capabilities of the performer. Effective delivery of dynamic extremes requires tones that are projected with good vocal energy and breath support. Whether soft or loud, musical quality must be preserved. The music judge evaluates the performer's use of dynamic levels appropriate to the music. If these levels go beyond the performer's capabilities, such that louds become unpleasant or softs lose support, the music judge is unable to reward the performer for artistic use of dynamics.

Sufficient contrast: The major portion of any song usually requires variations at moderate volume level, with extreme softs and extreme louds reserved for instances that demand special treatment. Performance at a static dynamic level is as uninteresting as a speech delivered in monotone. The music judge seeks a performance that effectively incorporates all dynamic levels.

Appropriate to the song and arrangement: Volume levels should also be appropriate to the music the performer is attempting to relate. Like phrasing, dynamic levels should be planned in the context of the total presentation so that attention is drawn to the song's musical and lyrical high point. Generally, changes in volume should be smoothly executed. Abrupt changes in dynamic level may be justifiable and will be evaluated based on effectiveness in the performance. It should also be noted when the performer uses an identifiable pattern of dynamic variance, the listener's attention may be drawn to the pattern rather than to the story. The music judge cannot consider alternation between loud and soft volume levels as appropriate use of dynamics if it is done merely for the sake of achieving dynamic contrast.

Greater dynamic levels can generally be achieved by a chorus than by a quartet, but the music judge, like the sound judge, listens for quality singing, not merely quantity or volume. Larger choruses are generally able to achieve higher volume levels than smaller choruses, but the music judge must evaluate the range of dynamics utilized by each. A small chorus that demonstrates the ability to effectively incorporate all dynamic levels possible for its size will receive a higher score for that single aspect of performance than a large chorus using no significant variation in dynamic levels.

Musical Energy

All performing groups seek to generate excitement and entice audience interest, whether performing a driving uptune, a laid-back swing tempo or a dramatic barbershop ballad. Musical energy is that special ingredient designed to provide additional satisfaction and meaning for both listener and performer by varying the intensity of musical delivery over the course of the performance. Musical energy should always be present. When appropriately utilized, this creates a compelling journey for the listener from the opening chords through the musical peak to the logical conclusion of the arrangement.

Musical energy requires not only vocal energy, but also strong mental commitment to the song and arrangement. Musical energy generally rises from the opening of the performance as the performer approaches the musical peak of the song. It is also a key ingredient in the effective performance of many creative devices such as modulations and embellishments typically found in barbershop arrangements. Added vitality helps the performer to convey any mood, any characterization, any dynamic level, any rhythm, or any message with authenticity to the listener and will be rewarded by the music judge.

MUSICAL ARTISTRY

The planned performance—the combination of tempo, rhythm, phrasing, and dynamics and musical energy will be totally effective only when the performer includes “heart” in the delivery. Musical artistry can be present at any skill level but may only be effective when the performance adequately fulfills the expectations of the music category.

True expression is an integral part of an artistic performance. When a performance lacks warmth and sincerity, it becomes mechanical. The listener wants to experience a performance rather than observe it clinically. The music judge seeks a performance that demonstrates an artistic, energized projection of musical expression appropriate to the song and arrangement, whether that expression be full and joyous or lightly whimsical or deeply emotional.

The ultimate in musical performance is achieved when the performer reaches out at the beginning of the performance, takes the audience in the palm of their hand, and holds it there until the performance has concluded, keeping each listener totally spell-bound by the emotional impact achieved. Transcendent musical artistry occurs when all other aspects of the music category have been achieved. The performer then has the freedom to present a magical experience that is aesthetically satisfying and memorable for both performer and listener. Such a presentation of inanimate words and notes will result in authentically portrayed barbershop music.

SUITABILITY TO PERFORMER

Suitability to performer considers the fit of the musical selection presented to the skillset of the performer presenting it. In effect, this element of the music category unites the “Song and Arrangement” and “Performance” elements of the category via the performer. The music judge evaluates the relative suitability of the song/arrangement to the chorus or

quartet by considering the musical capabilities of the ensemble (including vocal skills and barbershop performance skills) against the demands of the song and arrangement performed. For example, the singers must be able to execute the part lines accurately and demonstrate vocal ranges sufficient to handle the extreme highs and lows while remaining in balance (see sound category). The performer also needs to demonstrate sufficient vocal energy, support and musical stamina to handle the phrasing, dynamics and musical characterization required to convey the interpretive plan effectively.

A suitable song and arrangement choice for a performer is generally characterized by:

- each voice part performing in their optimal range as much as possible.
- melody and harmony part lines that are fully supported by interval accuracy and harmony accuracy capabilities of the singers.
- tempos and rhythms that are understood by the performing group.
- a musical message appropriate to the performing group; and
- physical stamina and energy demands (including dynamic and phrasing requirements) that match the performing group's capabilities.

A poor fit between performer and arrangement will impact the quality of the performance significantly and this impact is very likely to be reinforced across the other three judging categories as well. For example, if the chosen arrangement frequently forces singers outside of the current capabilities, the music judge will assess the effectiveness of the performance. The categories of Sound, Expression, and Visual Communication will also be affected as singers struggle to produce their finest sound, effectively communicate the heart of the song and remain composed in performance while battling the demands of the arrangement. At every skill level, the music judge along with the entire judging panel will reward music choices that showcase the performer's current capabilities over highlighting skillsets that are lacking or under development.

SCORING THE CATEGORY

The primary responsibility of a SingUnited International judge is to determine the level of proficiency in their category of each competitor's performance and to place each performance in the proper ranking in relation to other performances in the competition. The judge assigns numerical scores that accurately reflect the level of each performance in their category. The composite numerical scores of the entire judging panel establish final placements for all contestants and are the basis for determining the winners of awards.

The music category covers two major areas: the barbershop song and arrangement and the performance of that arrangement. Suitability to the performer unites the "Song and Arrangement" and "Performance" elements of the category via the performer and is an important factor in determining the score that is awarded.

The music category combines the song and arrangement requirements and performance elements so that 100 points are available for each song in a performance.

No scoring consideration is given to whether the music judge is familiar with the song or arrangement performed. Their score is based on trained, musical judgment.

An arrangement is judged based on its merit as presented by that performer in that specific contest performance. If all contestants used the same arrangements scores would still vary based on the quality of performance and the suitability of the arrangements to each group. Songs and arrangements will be evaluated depending on the degree of adherence to the requirements of the barbershop style as outlined in the category, and the relative strength as performed.

In judging the song and arrangement, the music judge makes an evaluation based on the criteria discussed in the section of this category regarding the barbershop song and arrangement as performed by the competitor. They consider the composition, lyric/melodic congruity, use of creative devices, harmonization, chord progressions, voicings, and suitability to the performer, along with how well the chords and voicings chosen by the arranger and performed by the competitor succeed in painting a musical picture appropriate to the song.

The performance portion of the category includes those elements that transform the written arrangement from paper to living music. They include harmony accuracy and the ingredients that comprise the barbershop style — tempo, rhythm, musical unity, phrasing, dynamics, and musical energy.

Musical artistry is rewarded when the other aspects of the category have been addressed and the heartfelt expression of the musical message becomes the primary experience for singers and listeners.

A flawless performance of a strong song and arrangement would permit the music judge to award the maximum score possible in this portion of the category, 100 point.

Contestant's Name _____ Contestant # _____

Contest: Region # _____ ☐ Quartet ☐ Chorus ☐ Diamond Division
☐ Int'l Quartet Semifinals ☐ Int'l Chorus Semifinals ☐ Rising Star Date _____

SONG & ARRANGEMENT

Merit as Barbershop Material

Song: Form/Melody/Lyrics

Arrangement: Harmonization/
Voicing/Creative Devices

Song 1

SUITABILITY TO PERFORMER

Song 1

PERFORMANCE

Vocal Skills

Harmony Accuracy

Barbershop Style

Tempo

Rhythm

Musical Unity

Phrasing

Dynamics

Musical Energy

Musical Artistry

PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

SONG #1 SONG #2

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-
14 - 19	F+
7 - 13	F
0 - 6	F-

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

7

7

Judge _____

11/11/2019

MUSIC

Date _____

Audience Response

TOTAL SCORE *

One Song/Ent. Pkg.	
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

EXPRESSION CATEGORY

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EXPRESSION CATEGORY

INTRODUCTION

The focus of the expression category is the evaluation of the performer's ability to communicate musically and lyrically. In vocal music, communication is strengthened by meaningful delivery of lyrics, musical diction, artistic phrasing, appropriate dynamics, energy, vocal characterization and a projection of sincere emotion.

The Expression judge listens to a performance with their primary concentration directed to the evaluation of the degree of artistry achieved in the verbal execution and lyrical delivery of the song. Although many specific areas contribute to the success of an artistic performance, they are inseparable in that blended together the result is an artistically satisfying experience. The expression judge rewards a performance wherein:

- Reasonable proficiency in the basics of good vocal production has been achieved, so that a proper foundation for expression is present.
- All members of the performing group have achieved reasonable proficiency in the vertical synchronization of all technical and artistic elements of the song including production of vowels, injection of consonants, turning of diphthongs, attack and release of all syllables and use of nuances and vocal inflections, so that the lyrical presentation demonstrates absolute unity.
- Techniques of phrasing, dynamics, tempo and rhythm are used effectively with consistent energy, vocal characterization, and emotional unity to support the subtler elements of inflection, finesse and smooth delivery of the lyrics, so that the result is an artistic musical presentation.

For purposes of this category description, the expression category has been divided into two major areas: technical elements and artistic interpretive plan. These will be discussed separately.

TECHNICAL ELEMENTS

The broad area called "Technical Elements" encompasses the components that comprise the technical portion of the category, which plays a critical role in the emotional communication of the lyrical message. Since the basis of the barbershop musical art form is the American popular song as outlined in the music category, it follows that the language of barbershop is standard American English, free from the regional speech dialects encountered in various areas of the country and the world.

VOCAL SKILLS

In the expression category, vocal skills affect the performance in the following areas: diction, including vowels and consonants; sustained and supported phrases; control of dynamic range and the ability to produce and maintain the artistic elements of the song.

Breath support is the foundation for good vocal production. The expression judge does not evaluate breath support as such, rather they evaluate the result of good breath support and management or the lack of same. Areas affected include synchronization, forward motion, tempo, dynamics, musicality, inflection and vocal textures, characterization, and energy.

Reasonable proficiency in the basics of vocal production must be achieved for expression to be effective.

SYNCHRONIZATION/UNITY

The components of synchronization - attacks and releases - are considered together because they go hand in hand; one is the beginning and the other is the ending. Musically, the term “attack” is used to indicate the beginning of tone, while “release” signifies its termination. There is, therefore, a tendency to consider attacks and releases as occurring only at the initiation and termination of the musical phrase. In reality, each syllable involves an attack and a release. The term “internal synchronization” is often used to refer to the vertical togetherness that must exist within words and within phrases if the unity of the presentation is to be maintained. The following example illustrates what happens when all elements are not produced by all voices at the same instant:

I STOLE THE GOLD FROM YOUR HAIR

Tenor:	Ah---eeStol-l-theGol-l-l-dFro---mYou---rHai-----r
Lead:	Ah---eeSto--l-theGol--l-dFro--mYou---rHai-----r
Baritone:	Ah-ee--Sto--l-theGol--l-dFro-m-You---rHai-----r
Bass:	Ah---eeSto--l-theGol--l-dFro--mYour-r-Hair-r-r-r

In the example, all voices should be synchronized with what the lead is producing (since that line indicates correct techniques). When this is not the case, errors in synchronization occur. Because SingUnited International’s music is vocal ensemble, as opposed to solo music, this added element of synchronization is necessary for an effective performance.

The expression judge is seeking a consistent *unit* presentation.

Unity strengthens characterization and emotional communication. Every technical and artistic element must be executed together in order to eliminate distractions and allow the listener to hear and understand the story. Further, voices in the ensemble

should be produced in a like manner, creating a strong, unified vocal character rather than an assortment of voices.

Unity will be strengthened when the performers understand the lyrical message, deliver a unified tempo or pulse, cohesive interpretive plan, and unified dynamic plan. A well synchronized and unified performance contains the power, clarity and emotion necessary for a truly expressive communication of the lyrical and musical message.

Synchronization difficulties and the resulting lack of unity may result from various individual skill levels in breathing, vowel production, and energy. Errors result in a lack of unity, which cannot be rewarded by the expression judge. Their score will reflect the effect of these discrepancies on the overall performance and the degree to which the performer has fulfilled the requirements of synchronization and unity.

WORD DELIVERY

Vowels

As noted in the sound category description, vowels are the basis of vocal sound. In seeking a blended unit, the expression judge takes this requirement a step further, for they also require that the vowel sounds for the word in question be correctly pronounced, according to the American English language.

The five pure vowels – “ah,” “ay,” “ee,” “oh” and “oo” – are the vowels of Italian and Latin; in English, two of these vowels are treated as diphthongs. “Ay” is pronounced “eh-ee” and “oh” becomes “oh-oo.” In the American English language, seventeen vowel sounds have been identified. These can be found in the Table of English Vowel Sounds and International Phonetic Alphabet. (Refer to Appendix D).

The expression judge must recognize that correctly produced vowels all modify toward a neutral vowel at highest pitches. As pitch rises, for example, “ee” takes on the quality of “ih” and “ah” modifies toward “uh.” An attempt by the singer to keep the vowel from modifying will result in a pinched, improperly produced tone. Because of the range involved in SingUnited International music, this phenomenon is generally experienced only by the tenor and only in the highest portion of their range. Vowels that are modified naturally will not result in discernible distortion of blend or unit sound.

The most common vowel distortions encountered by the expression judge result from:

- a. Failure to resonate vowels naturally, in a uniform manner.
- b. Use of the wrong vowel sound, resulting in mispronunciation.
- c. Sustaining the incorrect vowel sound of a diphthong, or turning to the secondary sound either too early or at different times.
- d. Failure to sing the final sound of a diphthong, e.g., singing “smile” as “smahle” rather than “smaheelee.”
- e. Failure to produce musical vowel sounds.

When errors are detected in the performer's delivery of vowels, the expression judge must discern whether those errors are consistent, sporadic or rare. Their score will be based on the effect of these errors on the overall, musical performance.

Diphthongs

Simple or pure vowels have but one sound, such as the "ih" in "sit" or the "oo" in "moon." Diphthongs are a combination of vowel sounds. Of the seventeen vowel sounds listed in Appendix D, six are diphthongs. Ay (eh-ee) and oh (oh-oo) are discussed above. The "i" sound in "high" is pronounced "ah-ee," the "ou" in "now" is the combination "ah-oo" and "oi" in "joy" is pronounced "oh-ee." In all five of these instances, the primary vowel sound (target) is given musical emphasis; the secondary sound, or vanish, is attached at the moment of release. In the one remaining diphthong, the reverse is true. The "u" sound in "mute" is the combination "ee-oo" but the initial sound, or glide (ee) is passed over very quickly so that the primary vowel sound (oo) can be sustained. The expression judge will evaluate the performer's delivery of diphthongs in the same manner as they evaluate the production of vowel sounds.

Consonants

If vowels are the basis of musical sounds, consonants can be considered the punctuation. In speech, consonants are articulated in a manner that will add distinction to the spoken word while vowels are not sustained. Singing requires an opposite approach; consonants must be adequately articulated so that lyrics are understandable, but not to the degree that tone flow is noticeably interrupted.

The manner in which consonants are delivered can add style, meaning, artistry and individuality to a performance. This is particularly true of the pitched consonants – "m," "n," "l," and "ng" – and the performer can often sing through these sounds to articulate words effectively without disturbing the musical line. Other consonants can be classified as voiced or unvoiced – those that have pitch and those that do not. Proper treatment of voiced consonants requires that they be produced at the same pitch as the vowel sound contained in the syllable in question.

The musical approach to the singing of final consonants – those at the end of a word or syllable – dictates that the singer delay articulation of the consonant until the last instant before singing the next word/syllable and that the consonant be seemingly attached to the initial sound of the new word/syllable. This is similar to the principle of elision used in speaking the French language, where every spoken syllable ends in a vowel sound, no matter how written. When handled correctly and without emphasis, this practice ensures smooth word delivery. When poorly handled, so that the final consonant is given undue emphasis, the result can be extremely unmusical.

Consonants are de-emphasized in singing for a very important reason. The articulation of consonant sounds requires use of the swallowing muscle mechanism, which, as discussed in the sound category description, creates vocal interference. When consonants

are delivered properly, the required muscles will tense only for the instant involved in articulation, then will relax to allow the singer to produce a free vocal line, without noticeable interruption.

The most common problems the expression judge will encounter with regard to consonants are:

- a. Overemphasis of unimportant consonants, e.g. “lasTUh nighTuh was the enDuh of the worlduh”
- b. Anticipation of consonants, particularly “r,” in a sustained tone, e.g. “mother-r-r-r-r;”
- c. Dropped consonants in the middle of words, such as “remebber” instead of “remember” or “hot” instead of “heart;”
- d. Noticeable use of the wrong consonant sound, such as “sweedie” instead of “sweetie.”

The expression judge will evaluate consonant delivery in much the same manner as they consider vowels. Their score will reflect the degree to which the overall performance was impacted by flaws, when detected.

Enunciation

Enunciation in singing has been defined as the manner of pronouncing words clearly and distinctly. In reality, enunciation involves articulation, but they are not the same. Articulation refers to the physical process involved in the enunciation of any utterance, either speaking or singing. Pronunciation means uttering or articulation of words or sounds in the required or standard manner.

Articulation relates to the physical use of the vocal mechanism; pronunciation relates to propriety of sound produced; enunciation deals with the clarity of sound produced.

In the preceding paragraphs, attention has been given to methods or techniques utilized in striving for understandable lyric delivery without damaging the artistic element. Diction must be clear, sound natural and lend itself to smoothly flowing phrases. This requires not only clear articulation, but also delivering words with subtle inflections and shadings, which reveal the meaning of the words and make the character come to life.

The expression judge rewards a performance in which lyrics are understandable but not over-enunciated, so that musical flow is ever present and the message of the song is not lost. Their evaluation will be based on the degree to which the performer has achieved this goal. They will recognize that effective delivery occasionally requires a suitable compromise to ensure retention of the flowing musical phrase.

Artistry may require some freedom in enunciation at times. The expression judge will allow for and reward successful, expressive deviations from the standard enunciation which add to the emotional communication of the performance.

MUSICALITY

Musicality is sensitivity to and knowledge of music that is successfully demonstrated when the performance reflects and enhances the musical intent of the song. Practically speaking, every element listed in this category will be used to effectively communicate the emotion and character inherent in the music. A musical performance demonstrates accuracy of melody and harmony to artistically present the lyrical message, delivered with appropriate energy, character and finesse.

ARTISTIC INTERPRETIVE PLAN

There are two parts to a vocal performance: the technical part, requiring proficiency in the basics of good singing, and the artistic interpretive part. Effective interpretation transforms singing into a work of art and allows the performer to establish a definite mood in the mind of the listener while communicating the message the song.

An artistic interpretive plan will capture the essence of the message of the song. The elements of a successful interpretive plan include:

- Lyric Flow
- Effective Phrasing
- Forward Motion
- Meaningful Dynamics
- Appropriate Tempo/Rhythmic Elements
- Musical Inflection and Embellishment

LYRIC FLOW

Artistic presentation of vocal music requires that consideration be given to expressive delivery of the lyrics. The lyrics of a barbershop song, if separated from the music, would resemble a poem, because there is a specific meter and rhyming pattern. In setting lyrics to music, the composer reinforces this metric pattern by assignment of notes, note values and placement of important syllables on emphasized musical beats. Proper word stress is essential to the effective performance of vocal music. This involves not only proper inflection of the important words in a phrase but also correct stress of important syllables within each word.

Effective delivery also requires that stressed syllables be connected by forward movement. This is achieved through use of a controlled, continuous sound, allowing the performer, by slight variation in volume, to emphasize important syllables and de-emphasize those that are less important.

Good vocal skills, breath management and a unified/synchronized delivery are crucial elements of effective lyric flow. The use of unified, matched, resonated vowels and diphthongs is essential to the delivery of the lyric line. The performer must be aware that these elements - unified vowels, diphthongs and consonants - when properly used, become emotional elements in the lyric line delivery.

PHRASING

The lyrics of a song should be grouped together into meaningful phrases that flow smoothly. Proper accent or emphasis should be given to dominant words or syllables, minimizing those that are unimportant or subordinate.

The concept of phrasing is not unique to vocal music. Phrase markings are found in instrumental music and are determined by characteristics of melody, harmony and rhythm. In a barbershop song, the words and music work together so that the demands of the musical phrase coincide with those of the lyrical phrase. If the lyrics are considered alone, there is frequently more than one acceptable emphasis point. For example, the line “you sacrificed everything for me” can be read with emphasis placed on the first, second, third or final word and the differences in emphasis will convey subtle changes in meaning. However, when the melody is added, the placement of the highest melody note on “everything” makes the intended emphasis clear. The arranger has reinforced that intended emphasis by use of a dramatic chord voicing on that syllable. The expression judge, therefore, cannot rely on lyrical considerations alone to guide their evaluation of phrasing; they must use a musical approach, being aware of the demands of melody and arrangement. If the musical demands appear to be in conflict with the lyrics, the music will take precedence.

Phrasing is the art of proper expression of every note, bar, and phrase, arranged so that each phrase has interest but remains relative to every other phrase, thus creating a well-balanced overall design. Additionally, maintaining the natural flow of the music allows the story or character to evolve.

Energized breaths play a critical role in phrase plan design. When connected with energized breath, each phrase sounds like part of the paragraph and the story, rather than a stand-alone sentence. When this technique is properly applied the overall message can be more effectively communicated.

Pauses, strategically placed and timed, are an important part of musical expression. Continuous sound, as demonstrated by the compulsive talker, readily points up the need for occasional silence in communication. Pauses are as important as sound itself, for they enable sound to have an effect; they are tools of emotion. The length of a pause has a direct effect on the creation of musical drama. A short pause for a quick breath can create or maintain excitement; a lengthy pause in just the right spot can create a mood change, a feeling of futility or fulfillment, and can set up the proper dramatic climate for the succeeding passage. Pauses should complement the lyrical and musical plan. Not all songs require a dramatic pause and few can support more than one. The expression judge will evaluate the performer’s use of this element based on its propriety, the skill with which it is handled and the emotional communication that results.

FORWARD MOTION

Because music in the barbershop style is performed without instrumental accompaniment, constant forward motion of the singing tone is required. Occasional periods of rest are necessary, both for vocal effect and/or relief to the ear of the listener and to build toward an effective climax of the story line. Within each phrase smooth connection of sounds is necessary for artistic delivery.

The musical term for the desired style of delivery is legato, a basic style of vocal technique consisting of a seemingly uninterrupted, flowing vocal line with corresponding non-interfering articulation and pronunciation.

Choppiness within words and phrases occurs when a legato delivery is not present. This may result from one of the following:

1. Failure to support tones with the breathing mechanism
2. Tension in the jaw and interference from the swallowing muscles
3. Incorrect use or overuse of the articulatory mechanism
4. Over-enunciation
5. A directing style that lacks flow or that stresses beats rather than phrases

Forward motion is achieved by connecting phrases with energized breath support. In an attempt to achieve forward motion, it is important to avoid rushing through phrases, or singing faster without connection to the lyrical or musical intent.

When musical flow and forward motion are not present, the listener's attention is drawn to each individual syllable or word rather than to the overall story. The objective is a performance that effectively communicates a story, not a vocal exercise.

EMBELLISHMENTS

One of the elements of performance in the barbershop style is the creation of musical tension. This is sometimes achieved by the manner in which swipes are executed, when the performer often holds the next-to-last chord to final resolution. Although de-emphasis of unimportant words, i.e., "of," "and," "the," etc., is the norm, there are some instances where this is highly desired, as in embellishments or at the tag.

Embellishments include bell chords, solo passages, swipes, patter background, modulations and instrumental effects. (For further explanation, refer to the "Creative Devices" section in the music category description, Section II-B, pages 7-8.)

Creative and skilled use of embellishments adds musical interest and lyrical intensity to the performance and can enrich the characterization and inherent musical flavor of any given song.

With barbershop tension and release chords, sometimes the tension chord demands prolonged emphasis before resolution. The expression judge will base their evaluation not on whether proper emphasis was given but rather on whether the musical and expressive effect created was in keeping with a performance in the barbershop style. They will evaluate the degree to which successful delivery of the embellishments and emotional communication was achieved. The highest reward occurs when the singers have sufficient vocal and breathing skills to support and energize the well-designed and well-placed embellishment.

DYNAMICS

The expression judge, like the sound and music judges, rewards a performance that demonstrates substantial variation in meaningful dynamic levels. The dynamic level at which a song is performed will generally carry with it inherent expression. For example, medium volume usually conveys a satisfying emotional reaction or matter-of-fact narrative. High volume is generally used to express joy and happiness or, at the other extreme, uncontrollable anguish. When the volume is low, the performer is usually conveying such soft emotions as tenderness or regret or the deeper emotions of sorrow or reverence. Characterization is further strengthened by using all volumes from pianissimo to fortissimo as well as the crescendo, the diminuendo and sforzandos.

In assessing the effectiveness of the dynamics used, the expression judge takes the same musical approach used to evaluate phrasing. They recognize that dynamic patterns are often indicated by chord voicing and progressions, not by the lyrics alone.

The contestant should display musical artistry in the delivery of dynamics, not merely demonstrate the ability to sing at different volume levels. Abrupt volume changes for the sake of “shock value” alone are neither artistic nor musical and cannot be rewarded in the expression category. As in all areas of artistic endeavor, only authentic emotional involvement communicates the message effectively and will be rewarded accordingly. Breath support is a key element in sustaining dynamic volumes and making changes to volume. Musicality suffers when loud volume levels are not properly resonated or go beyond good singing quality, or when softs lose support and clarity. When this is the case, the expression judge cannot reward for effective use of dynamics.

TEMPO/RHYTHMIC ELEMENTS

The terms “tempo” and “rhythm” are defined in the music category portion of this book. The expression judge is concerned with whether tempo and rhythm are appropriate to the effective delivery of the message of the song.

The lyrics of a ballad are usually more dramatic, more meaningful and more emotional than those of the rhythm tune. Presentation of a ballad in the barbershop style generally employs ad lib or rubato delivery, an intuitive, flexible relaxation of strict time, while maintaining an underlying meter throughout the song.

In ballad delivery, the smooth-flowing phrase is of paramount importance. The performer must consider not only the smooth flow of words and emphasis of accent points but also the pace at which lyrics are to be delivered. The musical techniques of *rallentando* and *accelerando* can frequently be effectively employed in ballad presentation, since different rates of movement can imply different emotions.

In the delivery of a rhythm tune, the rhythm becomes the primary factor and lyrics must be artistically handled within the confines of the established beat. The accent points of the lyrics will generally coincide with the accent points of rhythm. The pulse of the rhythm should be apparent but words must still move from one to another in a smooth, connected sequence.

Strict tempo and rhythm can be exciting and effectively used to evoke an emotional response in the listener. Variation of tempo, such as *accelerando*, *rallentando*, *rubato*, *staccato* and *tenuto* and the pause also can be used in creating characterization. Tempo changes can have a dramatic impact on the message delivery. However, too many tempo changes can be a distraction from the overall lyrical plan and interpretive intent. Transitions between tempos need to be purposeful and within the pulse. When handled poorly, the speed of the tempo can result in errors in synchronization, thus affecting overall emotional communication. Including the breath timing into the phrase plan is a key element to successful execution of a specific tempo.

As described in the music category, different types of songs have an inherent rhythm, or character, which should be taken into consideration when planning the execution of a rhythm tune. Since rhythm is the vitalizing element in music, allowing the “character” of the song to come to life, appropriate use of rhythmic patterns adds greatly to the effective communication of the song.

INFLECTION

In speech, one of the primary tools used by the speaker to achieve word inflection is variation in pitch or tone of voice. In singing, inflection emphasizes the intended meaning of words and hopes to create an emotional response in the listener. This can be achieved through the use of variations in volume within a word (rather than variation of pitch, as in speaking), vocal textures, and by the dramatization of vowel and consonant sounds.

A vocal music presentation that lacks inflection is as dull and uninteresting as a speech delivered in monotone. Likewise, a performance with inflection that is not connected to the emotion and lyrical intent of the song becomes mechanical. When performed with finesse, energy and emotional connection, inflection provides another means to communicate the intended message.

ENERGY

Energy is the vital element in the overall presentation. Indeed, energy is the key to whether or not the listener will continue to listen to the performance. A performance that is belabored and tedious is lacking in energy. There must be an energized vocal presentation in all four parts and from every individual singer in order to give vitality to the entire performance.

Energy is essential to the unity, clarity, musicality, artistry and emotional communication of any performance. The performer must maintain consistent energy, not allowing the level of energy to drop for even one moment. This is known as physical stamina and when it is not present the performance can become monotonous, mechanical or lacking in musicality. Synchronization, tempo, dynamics, and forward motion can be negatively impacted if energy is not unified across the performing group.

FINESSE AND ARTISTRY

Finesse refers to the fineness or delicacy of craftsmanship in a performance and the subtlety with which skill is displayed. A performance may demonstrate that the performer has acquired all of the skills discussed in this category description; but if those skills are individually obvious, the performance undoubtedly lacks finesse. Finesse, or artistry, can sometimes account for the difference between a group whose performance demonstrates competence in handling the technical elements but fails to evoke an emotional response, and another whose performance, while not technically perfect, nonetheless leaves the audience breathless. The expression judge rewards a performer whose techniques are artistically integrated into a complete package of musical and emotional experiences for the listener.

CHARACTERIZATION

There is a spirit or energy that is intrinsic with characterization. Subtle changes in the application of energy evoke different responses and enhance storytelling.

Word delivery, inflection, finesse, phrasing, dynamics, tempo and rhythm are the tools used by the performer to establish an appropriate mood or convey the desired emotion. Vowel sounds also can be modified temporarily to represent a character. Diphthongs can be used to evoke different emotions and strengthen characterization when the initial sound and vanish values are slightly adjusted. In addition, utilizing voiced, stop and explosive consonants creates many opportunities for vocal characterization.

Vocal characterization can be greatly enhanced by the use of textures and nuances. To be successful, the ensemble must sing the texture changes with proper vocal production and matched resonance. Additionally, when using a vocal effect, singers need to begin and end the vocal effect as a unit in order to be rewarded by the expression judge.

These elements, when skillfully and artistically combined by the performer, help to touch upon the feelings of the listener. Before the performer can emotionally involve an audience, however, they must become intensely involved themselves. Although it is possible to simulate emotional involvement through the careful and practiced use of certain vocal

techniques, it is rarely possible to completely disguise the artificial. Emotional communication with the audience occurs when real emotion is felt and delivered by each singer.

EMOTIONAL COMMUNICATION

Emotional communication is the essence of the expression category.

From the standpoint of the expression judge, emotional projection and communication can be considered the result of a valid, artistic, lyrical interpretation delivered with energy, characterization, and emotion.

The goal of the performer in the barbershop style is to project a sentiment appropriate to the song and to produce an emotional response in the listener.

Word delivery, inflection, vocal textures and nuances, phrasing, dynamics and tempo and rhythm are the tools used by the performer to begin establishing an appropriate mood or convey the desired emotion. When delivered with energy, forward motion, and artistic breathing, the interpretative plan enhances emotional connection with the audience.

Emotional communication can occur at most levels of performance – genuinely singing from the heart can touch a listener. However, the impact is often greater and more memorable as skills improve. True communication occurs most effectively when the performer demonstrates skill in the “technical elements” of the expression category. In the optimum performance, the audience is not distracted by flaws in the presentation, but is aware only of the beautiful or happy or poignant story that the performer unfolds.

SCORING THE CATEGORY

The primary responsibility of a SingUnited International judge is to determine the level of proficiency in their category for each competitor’s performance and to place each competitor in the proper ranking in relationship to other competitors in the contest. To perform this task, the judge assigns numerical scores that accurately represent the level of each performance in their category. The composite numerical scores of the entire judging panel establish final placements for all contestants and are the basis for determining the winners of the awards.

The expression category combines the technical elements and artistic interpretative plan so that 100 points are available for each song in a performance.

The expression judge evaluates a performance from two different listening orientations: The technical elements discussed in the preceding portion of this category description and the degree of artistry with which the lyrics, or message, of the song are performed within the context of a total musical performance.

In their evaluation of the technical requirements, the expression judge considers the mechanical aspects which, when perfectly synchronized, result in a flawless performance of the vertical elements of vocal ensemble music. These include correct use of vowels, diphthongs and consonants, enunciation, and synchronization of all attacks and releases. Additionally, the expression judge will evaluate the artistic use of these elements and will reward a performance in which these elements are used appropriately. The expression judge bases their score on the degree to which the performance integrates the technical and artistic elements of the expression category.

As previously stated, reasonable proficiency in the basics of good singing technique must be achieved for expression to be effective. It is pointless for the expression judge to give constructive direction regarding artistic expression when the performer needs to master the very basics of proper singing. Additionally, complete evaluation of the performer's achievements in the artistic portion of the category is possible only if the basic requisite of "togetherness" has been fulfilled.

Because artistry must be founded in good techniques, to evaluate the lyrical plan, the expression judge must first consider the degree to which the contestant has mastered the technical requirements of the category. It is possible for a performance to be technically perfect but lacking in artistry. It is not possible, however, for a performance to achieve perfection in the area of lyrical interpretation but be lacking in the technical elements.

Credit for emotional communication is rewarded by the expression judge for a performance which meets the criteria established to such a degree that sincere emotion is projected to the audience and a response is immediately forthcoming. In assessing this response, the expression judge must be cognizant that the response will vary with the mood of the presentation. A rousing, fast-moving, exciting rhythm tune will evoke an enthusiastic, excited response from the audience. After a tender, moving ballad, often the most appropriate immediate response is silence, indicating reluctance to break the spell that has been cast. The type of emotion must be appropriate to the song and compatible with the range of emotions possible for performance in the barbershop style. When a performer has exhibited true emotional communication, the audience will respond in kind with similar emotion, indicating they have received the emotion projected by the performer.

When a SingUnited International quartet or chorus has complete command of all the technical elements of singing and then adds this final bit of frosting, making the audience unaware it is hearing anything other than a beautiful song, straight from the heart, the performers have achieved the ultimate in this category – true musical expression.

Judge _____

Contestant's Name _____

Contestant # _____

Contest: Region # _____ ☐ Quartet ☐ Chorus ☐ Diamond Division

☐ Int'l Quartet Semifinals ☐ Int'l Chorus Semifinals ☐ Rising Star Date _____

JUDGING CRITERIA

(0 - 100 points)

TECHNICAL ELEMENTS

Vocal Skills

Synchronization/Unity

Word Delivery

Vowels

Diphthongs

Consonants

Enunciation

Musicality

ARTISTIC INTERPRETIVE PLAN

Lyric Flow

Phrasing

Forward Motion

Embellishments

Dynamics

Tempo/Rhythmic Elements

Inflection

Energy

Finesse and Artistry

Characterization

Emotional Communication

SONG #1: _____ SONG #2: _____

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

SONG 1	SONG 2	TOTAL SCORE

Signed: _____

EXPRESSION

Contest: Region # _____ ☐ Open Chorus ☐ Open Quartet ☐ Eval Only- Int'l Bound Contestant # _____
☐ Int'l Quartet Finals ☐ Int'l Chorus Finals ☐ Harmony Classic Date _____

ENTERTAINMENT PACKAGE (0-100 pts)

TECHNICAL ELEMENTS	ARTISTIC INTERPRETIVE PLAN	MUSICALITY	CREATIVITY
Vocal Skills	Lyric Flow	Vocal Skills/Accuracy	Scripting/Concept
Synchronization/Unity	Phrasing	Artistry	Imagination/Innovative Staging
Word Delivery	Forward Motion	Evokes Emotion/Story	Use of Props/Costumes/ Lighting/Makeup
Vowels	Embellishments	UNITY	Use of music to enhance theme
Diphthongs	Dynamics	Vocal	AUDIENCE CONNECTION
Consonants	Tempo/Rhythmic Elements	Visual	
Enunciation	Inflection	Energy	
Musicality	Energy	PLANNING	
	Finesse & Artistry	Theme/Setting/Concept	
	Characterization	Story/Message Arc	
		Script/Organization	Movement/Stagecraft
		Pacing/Transitions/Blocking	Character/Emcee/Soloist/Specialty
		Props/Costuming/Makeup	Mic Technique
			Audience Response

CONTEST SONG: _____ PACKAGE THEME: _____

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+
28 - 33	D
20 - 25	D-
0 - 19	F

One Song/Ent. Pkg.	
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

Signature _____

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TOTAL SCORE *

VISUAL COMMUNICATION CATEGORY

OUTLINE OF CONTENT

OUTLINE OF CONTENT

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VISUAL COMMUNICATION CATEGORY

INTRODUCTION

The ultimate goal of any barbershop performance is the communication of music. The three other scoring categories address the quality and artistry of the musical product, while the visual communication category assesses the quality and artistry of the visual product. Studies have demonstrated that the majority of communication is processed and received through visual elements; for this reason, the ability of performers to visually express the emotion, story, and message of a song is a significant part of successful connection with an audience. Ideally, visual communication enhances and supports the music authentically and naturally, so that these elements are intertwined and inseparable to create a total entertainment experience. With effective visual communication, the performer is able to enhance what the listener hears by reinforcing it with what the viewer sees.

The visual communication judge watches and listens to a performance evaluating the degree of communication established with the audience. The assessment considers how artistic and believable the visual demonstration of the song appears. Although multiple visual elements can contribute to successful audience connection, they are inseparable and blend together to create an artistically satisfying experience. For this reason, the visual communication judge's assessment is done in a holistic and global fashion.

The visual communication judge rewards a performance wherein:

- Reasonable proficiency in the basics of good vocal production has been achieved so that a proper foundation for audience connection is present.
- The execution of the visual plan is successful in communicating the message of the song so that the result is an artistic, believable visual presentation. Characterization, physical expression, energy, body alignment, stage presence, unity, and audience connection are all elements that contribute to visual communication. A true connection with an audience is made when the visual plan enhances all aspects of the performance and the singer is able to perform beyond the plan.
- The performer has made creative and appropriate choices in designing a visual plan that will enhance and support the communication of the songs. To this end, various stagecraft tools are available such as choreography/staging, costume, props, makeup and hairstyle. An effective performance will include not only planning in this regard but also successfully bringing the visual plan to the stage.

ELEMENTS OF VISUAL COMMUNICATION (0-100 points)

VOCAL SKILLS

The goal of this category is to evaluate the visual communication of the musical product. Since the quality of vocal production contributes to the musical outcome, vocal skills are an integral part of the performer's ability to appeal to an audience. If the musical output in and of itself does not inspire an audience connection, no amount of visual proficiency will by itself engage an audience. For this reason, the visual communication judge demands the same attention to the details of good vocal production as the other three judging categories.

ENERGY

Energy is the life force of the visual communication category since it propels all aspects of the musical performance and adds a special shine to the visual performance. Energy is the unseen element that transports the performance from the stage to the audience, taking it beyond routine into magic. The presence of this invisible dynamism results in a visceral experience that can contribute to greater audience connection.

Performers who exhibit natural, free, and energized physicality that enhances the music can captivate an audience. Conversely, energy displays that include tension, frantic or dull visual expression and inconsistent levels of intensity across an ensemble can result in the audience's inability to truly appreciate and connect with the musical and visual presentation. Accordingly, a performance well-grounded in effective energy techniques that create audience connection will be recognized and rewarded by the visual communication judge.

CHARACTERIZATION

Characterization delivers a song off the pages of the musical score and brings it to life for an audience. This can be achieved by each performer connecting to and personalizing the song either by adopting a "character" or by singing as themselves. It involves defining the story line and journey for the song and creating a dramatic persona or role for the stage. Effectiveness is assessed based on the achievement of believable and authentic performance. The creation of the characterization plan can occur either after or before the musical and lyrical interpretations are designed; often, the characterization plan influences the musical and lyrical interpretations themselves.

Creating a characterization plan establishes the performer's path for connecting to a song; by doing so it can provide greater clarity for the individual performer and achieve unity within the ensemble. When devising the characterization plan, questions to consider include: Who is telling (singing) the story? Does the character remain the same throughout the song or does a transformation take place? To whom is the message directed? Why are they telling this story - what compels them and what might be at stake? What is the message and what is the emotional journey? It is also useful to outline how long the performer might maintain the characterization during a performance, for

example, from entrance to exit or only during one song. Ideally, the performer will maintain the characterization until the identification with the character reaches a satisfying conclusion. Once characterization has begun, it is not advisable to “break character” for even a moment until the predetermined point of the performance. “Breaking character” can disturb the emotional involvement on the part of the audience and disrupt the audience/performer bond that the performer has worked so diligently to create.

Once a characterization plan is established, physicality and facial expression can be explored to assist with communicating the story to the audience. Tools such as choreography, staging, costuming, hairstyle and makeup can be used to further define the character. For maximum effectiveness, all these elements should be congruent with and enhance the characterization. In addition, care should be taken when creating characterizations so that any deviations from good vocal production are kept to an absolute minimum. For instance, slumped shoulders and downcast faces can convey many emotions, but they can also inhibit proper vocal production and ultimately interfere with effective audience connection.

The paramount goal is to achieve believable and authentic performance. As such, all performers are encouraged to commit 100% to the execution of the characterization plan to ensure that what is presented to an audience gets beyond being a “visible” plan. Greatest impact is achieved when all members of the ensemble participate fully and commit themselves to creating the character by giving up thoughts of inhibition. In this way, the ensemble presents a unified and more complete and believable character that can have a dynamic impact on the audience. When the performer skillfully creates strong characterization, those very characterizations serve to draw the audience emotionally onto the stage and into the performance.

PHYSICAL EXPRESSION

While the term “choreography” is used to describe *planned* movement, “physical expression” describes the *unplanned*, authentic body movement that occurs during a performance. Appropriate, *natural* body movement is one of the indications to the audience that the performer is comfortable and involved in the performance. This in turn supports the audience member’s ability to engage with the performance. Effective physical expression is evident when the performer is connected to the music and story, allowing their body language to support the musical performance so naturally that it cannot be recognized as separate from the music.

How the body is used to express the musical product is a key element in communicating with the audience. Since the body is also the vocal instrument, attention to alignment and attention to maintaining the integrity of the instrument during movement is important to both the musical and visual outcomes. A performer can strive for an energized, relaxed and free stance, allowing arms and hands to fall relaxed and naturally at the sides. Such a stance conveys stage command and also

allows for spontaneity in the performing style. Any non-planned use of arms and hands will ideally flow naturally, freely, purposefully and fluidly as a form of the performer's expression of the music and story. The communication of the musical message may be hindered if rigidity, stiffness, unenergized or unnatural body language and gestures are on display possibly creating confusion and distraction for the audience.

Facial expression is a major component of physical expression as it is the best tool available to the performer for visual communication. The face can convey a wide variety of moods and emotions ranging from joy to sorrow. Appropriate and natural facial expression reflects the message of the song; inappropriate and inauthentic facial expression confuses, distracts and sends mixed messages to the audience. Unlike face-to-face interactions or video screen close-ups, theatrical performance requires more intensity and animation to reach an audience that might be quite a distance away. Subtle facial expressions in theatre are not as impactful, since the performer's job is to communicate with the entire audience, not just the judging panel. However, this does not require exaggerated, insincere animation. Genuine and authentic emotional performance is generated from the inside out, emanating from the eyes, reflected in the facial expression and ultimately enhanced by body language and physicality that clearly conveys the song's musical and lyrical message to the audience.

UNITY

In SingUnited International the performing group, whether it be chorus or quartet, performs as a single entity. Just as the individual voices and voice parts come together to create 4-part harmony and a unified musical product, the visual aspects must be presented in a unified fashion in order for communication to be successfully achieved. Unity does not, however, require that all performers appear as clones of each other within the performing unit. Our ensembles consist of performers of all abilities, shapes, colors, sizes and sensibilities. All of our members are encouraged to bring their own unique selves to the stage to contribute to the overall visual picture. Audience connection is enhanced when performers eliminate visual distractions which might take away from the main focus, which is the visual communication of the performance. Planning and executing a unit performance is an integral part of effective visual communication.

In the preparation phase, items such as costuming, makeup, hairstyle, choreography, staging and riser positioning are some of the tools utilized to enhance the characterization, musical and visual presentation. Every tool chosen is part of an indispensable closely-knit whole and is selected to achieve a closer integration of music and story. Creative possibilities are endless. For example, with respect to costuming, an ensemble may elect to wear identical costumes OR thematically similar costumes OR period pieces to match their characterization and musical selection. Similarly, a choreography example might include an ensemble effectively choosing for the front line, a section, or even a single individual to do certain appropriate choreographed movement alone. In many instances, the appearance of unity can be enhanced by having the remainder of the chorus either simulate the motion assigned to the front row or perform

the same motion on a smaller scale. Keeping in mind that the eye is pleased by balance and symmetry, an attention to the overall visual balance aids the performer in creating the desired unit look. It is NOT mandatory for every member to execute any planned or unplanned movement in a robotic, replicated fashion to indicate precision excellence.

In the execution phase, unity is evident when the musical message is clearly delivered by the ensemble with uniform energy and physical display. Clarity in purpose, intent and musical message evident in the body language and facial expressions assist with taking the plan off paper to create a performance that connects with the audience. The visual communication judge rewards the effectiveness of the unit in a performance based on the successful integration of all performance elements to communicate the musical message.

BODY ALIGNMENT

Effective visual communication occurs when the performer's physical presentation captures the audience's attention compelling them to remain engaged throughout the musical performance.

The body is the singer's instrument. The manner in which one stands and uses their instrument while singing is of great importance. A musical performance can be greatly enhanced when this instrument is allowed to be free, grounded, and energized while standing and moving. When singing, if the body parts are in alignment, a performer's vocal production, breathing, balance, and singing are impacted and, in this way, body alignment contributes to the communication of the music.

In addition, body alignment can contribute to the execution of the characterization of a performance. The singer has options to engage their instrument in certain ways to convey the story line and emotion of a song. For example, to believably communicate the emotion of extreme happiness, the accompanying body language would be upward, buoyant, energized and joyful. For vulnerability, there might be a physical stillness. The ultimate goal is the communication of the song to the audience, and strategic body alignment choices can prevent any disconnect that might occur, for example by dropping heads, sagging shoulders and sunken chests.

Body alignment also contributes to the audience's impression of the performer's confidence and command of the stage. When standing tall, energized and moving freely, the impression for the audience is that of a professional and engaging performer. A performer's poise and self-assuredness are evident when the body alignment and facial expressions reflect this message to the audience. In this way, body alignment is a powerful tool that assists in the communication of the song to an audience.

STAGE PRESENCE

Stage presence is a quality that attracts the attention of an audience. It refers to the charisma, style, sizzling energy and personality of a performer. When a singer radiates stage presence, the performance catapults out to the audience and captivates them.

Typically, this occurs when a performer appears extremely comfortable performing on stage.

The performer has the power and the responsibility to take the stage and create an atmosphere for the audience. The performer's role is to open the lines of communication by presenting themselves with certainty and composure. The audience responds by mirroring the presence of the performer. If the performer's visual plan involves establishing a certain tone for the audience, stage presence assists with the creation of this mood. Communication of the song can happen when the audience is at ease, interested and engaged; if the performer appears nervous and timid, the audience may be distracted from the performance itself and instead focused on concern for the performer. The goal is to evoke an emotional response from the audience, and to achieve this, a poised and confident attitude leads the way for the performer.

The more comfortable the performer feels on stage, the better able they are to infuse themselves into the musical storytelling, which in turn assists with a more convincing, believable performance. This comfort level comes from a high level of preparedness for the performance, as well as experience performing in front of an audience. It is common for performers to experience nervousness and feel a certain amount of healthy apprehension before facing an audience. A successful performer will make constructive use of nerves and focus on entertaining the audience. The unspoken message to the audience is, "I am here to entertain you."

AUDIENCE CONNECTION

For true audience connection to take place, it is desirable for performers to exhibit natural, believable, organic sincerity on stage with their voices, faces and bodies. The audience becomes engaged when the performer is gripped by the music being performed and is able to put heart into their voice and meaning into their physical expression. By doing so, the performer transcends technique and the plans as they exist on paper. A truly inspired performance is one where the performer lets down their defenses, allowing the audience to see their authentic self. This genuine display can occur regardless of the mood or character required by the visual plan. A good actor plays a role with such sincerity that the character becomes believable and feelings in the storytelling appear to be real and in the moment. When such an artistic performance is given, the audience response is to become a participant in the musical experience, one in which they share the emotional message of the character and music being presented.

Audience connection is a circular phenomenon. The performer creates a mood; the audience responds to the mood and to the performance. The performer, sensing the positive response, feeds more energy and vitality into the performance, eliciting a heightened response from the audience! It is the performer's responsibility to initiate this experience and to respect the process when the audience responds in kind. When judging the visual communication category, the judge will evaluate the creation and retention of audience connection during a performance. As an objective part of the

audience, the judge senses when audience connection has been effectively established and can distinguish between the “hometown favorite” reaction and a sincere, unbiased audience response to a praise-worthy musical performance. When some flaw in the performance prevents establishment of audience connection or interferes with the maintenance of the connection, the visual communication score is impacted and will reflect the degree of disconnect. The visual communication judge’s highest reward can be given only when true audience connection is established on entrance and maintained throughout the performance.

MUSICALITY

Authentic visual communication is an integral part of the musical performance. Musicality is achieved when the intent of the music is brought to life by the performance choices and the musical delivery. The essence of true musicality is the performer’s ability to use emotional experiences and genuine theatrical abilities to perform in a way that pulls the audience into a magical experience.

CREATIVITY

Creativity is the act of turning original and imaginative ideas into reality and/or the ability to take existing knowledge and put it into a novel context with new results. There are many opportunities for performers to incorporate creativity in their performances and to display the ensemble’s unique personality or style. Examples include, but are not limited to, visual plan elements such as choreography, staging, costumes, non-singing moments, etc.

Originality is refreshing and uniqueness is welcomed by the audience. SingUnited are encouraged to explore brand new ways to deliver these authentic and real musical performances that the audience craves. Groundbreaking and innovative ideas are memorable and contribute to the growth and evolution of the art form. As part of the artistic process, invoking creativity could require courage and may result in venturing outside comfort zones. This discomfort, however, is an opportunity for growth as performers and a chance to explore new performance horizons instead of mimicking other performance examples.

It is important to note that not all creative ideas, even if unique and original, are in and of themselves effective in a way that enhances the musical presentation. A “new” idea doesn’t always equate with a “good” idea. The visual communication judge recognizes when creative performers use all visual and non-visual elements in a manner that reinforces the message or character of the music. Creativity that is appropriate to the music, to the barbershop style and to the performing group will be recognized and rewarded by the visual communication judge.

STAGECRAFT

Stagecraft are the theatrical tools that are created to assist the performer in bringing the music to life on the stage. When used creatively and effectively, the audience is unaware of each of the following technical elements as individual items and instead enjoys a total performance experience. Designed in advance, the visual plan incorporates these stagecraft elements.

Choreography/Staging

Since physical display complementing the music is an essential part of visual communication, the manner in which the performers move on the stage is an important consideration. An available tool in this regard is planned movement, either in the form of choreography or staging. Choreography refers to moves that are designed to embellish characterization or “dance” to the music. Staging refers to the planned travel around the stage; performers may move on/off the risers or around the stage itself to create pictures or tableaux that provide mood or character enhancement.

Both the designed plan and the execution of the plan are evaluated by the visual communication judge. The judge assesses how the musical presentation is elevated by the choreography and staging, so that if executed flawlessly, the plan itself would be an asset. Choreography and staging are considered effective when they are successfully integrated into the total performance. For example, the plan itself might be very strong, however the implementation of the plan may negatively impact the singing and as such, the audience connection is impacted. In considering the execution of the plan, a unified approach to the visual presentation is desired since carrying out the planned moves with a common intention results in minimizing distractions for the audience. In this way, the audience is musically and visually drawn into the performance and is not left wondering how or why some elements of the visual presentation are detracting from the experience. Effective choreography and staging flows naturally and easily into the performance, enhancing the music performed so that what the eye sees reinforces what the ear hears.

Costume

Costumes may be selected to denote a theme, to illustrate a song or the name of the performing group, or to reflect the personality of the performer. When designing the ensemble’s costume, considerations include presentation of a unit appearance, fit, character, the performing group and stage appropriateness. The same costume may be worn during more than one appearance as a contestant, including successive sessions of one competition or a competition in a subsequent year. The costume chosen may be suitable to both songs in a contest set or it may specifically apply to just the first, but it should not conflict with one or both songs. For example, a clown costume is suitable for two clown or circus songs but could be in conflict if the second song is an Irish ballad.

While most performers reinforce unity by choosing costumes that are uniform in both color and style, it is possible to depart from this sameness while maintaining the unit appearance. When costuming is not identical, care must be taken to ensure that the reason for the difference and the meaning of the costume plan will be obvious to the audience. When this is not the case, the audience and the visual communication judge may become

so involved in trying to determine the connection that they are unable to enjoy the performance. Shoes may be uniform in style, color, and heel heights for a unit look, or groups may choose to use similar styles that will not create a distraction for the audience. Any differences in costume such as hemlines and heel heights become unnoticeable when animated, involved facial expression keeps the audience's attention focused on the performers' faces.

An important aspect of costuming considered by the visual communication judge is fit. How well a costume fits is important to the performers, as this could potentially impact their comfort level on stage, as well as result in insufficient room for the breathing mechanism to function properly. In addition, costumes that do not properly fit performers can present a visual distraction for the audience; at times this distraction can be of such magnitude that the viewer is unable to respond to the performance.

The effective costume points up the faces of the performers rather than directing the viewer's attention elsewhere. Any accessories should always complement the costume rather than providing a point of visual focus or distraction for the viewer. In selecting color and fabric, the performer might consider how it will be affected by the intense stage lighting used in SingUnited competitions. When colors or textures are combined, differences that may not be apparent under normal lighting sometimes become very noticeable under stage lights. When colors or textures are combined, the visual communication judge evaluates their compatibility and the effectiveness with which the combination is implemented so that emphasis remains on the performers' faces.

In selecting a costume for the chorus director, many options are possible. It may be the same style and color as that of the chorus; it may be the same style but of a complementary color; it may be the same style but, when colors are combined, a reverse of the combination (e.g., chorus in red with white accent, director in white with red accent); it may be the same color but a different style; or it may be a different color and different style. The visual communication judge evaluates based on the overall effect.

Makeup/hairstyles

Makeup and hairstyles may also be used to create a mood, scene, or character. The spotlight in a SingUnited performance is on the performing unit and not on any single individual. To reinforce the unit appearance, the performer strives to apply makeup in such a manner that supports the overall picture and minimizes distraction.

Communication with the audience includes the use of the eyes, eyebrows, cheeks, and mouth. The primary purpose of stage makeup is to define facial features so that the audience can see and respond to the performers' facial expressions. Stage makeup is an important part of the stagecraft, whether the costume be a sophisticated gown or that of a specific character. The intensity of stage lighting tends to fade color. The performer can compensate for this by increasing the vibrancy and intensity of stage makeup. Although there is no "rule" that performers must wear red lipstick, experience has shown that a true red is least likely to fade under stage lights. The shade of makeup should result in a natural-looking complexion under stage lights. Again, the audience connection is of primary importance, and any techniques employed to minimize or enhance individual features must remain in harmony with the finished unit look rather than becoming

obvious to the viewer. The visual communication judge bases the evaluation of makeup on the overall effectiveness of the performers' makeup, not on the colors, product or techniques used.

Grooming and hairstyles are tools to enhance characterization, performer personality, and can work in conjunction with the costume choices to create a desired look— casual hairstyle with casual dress, elegant hairstyle with formal dress, period hairstyle with period dress, etc. Uniform hairstyle for chorus or quartet members is not necessary; however, some degree of similarity provides an additional means of enhancing unit appearance.

Props/Stage Decoration

Handheld props and stage decorations can be a creative way to enhance characterization and storytelling, augmenting the entertainment value of a performance. The inclusion of these visual devices is considered effective by the visual communication judge when they add to the musical presentation and do not detract from the focus on the singers. In addition, careful planning and execution is thoughtfully done so that a professional appearance is the result. These tools are permitted in all contest sessions. The visual communication judge rewards the performance where the music and the characterization are enhanced by the successful integration of these visual devices or props.

Non-Singing Moments

Barbershop performances include singing moments and non-singing moments. To enhance audience communication, we use our entire time on stage to create a mood, emotion, character, or scene. Elements we use that do not include singing are entrance to stage, taking the pitch, accepting applause, exit and any non-singing moments that occur during the performance. Some of these may include comedic, emotional, character, or rhythmic pauses. For non-singing moments to be effective, a plan should be in place.

a. Entrance

The entrance is the first impression the audience has of the performer. The performer has the opportunity to establish audience connection by setting the mood for the performance right from the start. An energetic and confident entrance with sincere smiles conveys an implied “thank you” for the applause and “we are glad to be here” attitude. An entrance that is inspired by character, mood, or setting will help to establish that feeling for the audience.

Occasionally a chorus sets the scene by striking a pose or depicting a tableau that prepares the audience for the presentation to come, but which does not involve actual eye contact. When this occurs, the visual communication judge's evaluation is based on the effectiveness of the entrance and the degree of success achieved in preparing the audience for the entertainment to come. The timing of the entrance is important to consider ensuring the desired impact on the audience is achieved.

The visual communication judge begins evaluating a quartet after the emcee has announced the contestant, the lights come up and the first member of the quartet appears. The visual communication judge begins evaluating a chorus after the emcee has announced the contestant, and with or without a curtain, the stage lights come up.

b. Break

The break is that brief period of time between the end of the first song and the beginning of the second. During this interval, the show continues with sincere, gracious and confident acknowledgment to the audience, with the performer conveying an implied “thank you again for your applause,” or may continue in character during the applause. The visual communication judge rewards the performance when all facets of the break are smoothly and effectively carried out so that audience connection is maintained.

c. Exit

An effective exit is one that is well timed. At the conclusion of the final song, the performer again acknowledges the audience in a style compatible with the music just performed. The acknowledgement allows the audience to remain in the mood established by the music, and may transition into a stronger, more confident acknowledgement. As the applause reaches a plateau, the quartet turns and leaves the stage with the same confident attitude demonstrated during the entrance or in the mood of the character, still in command of the stage. The chorus director and chorus members maintain natural radiant smiles and a confident attitude until the curtain closes or the stage lights go down, or they may choose to remain in character. A character inspired exit for either quartet or chorus can be effective, provided a unit delivery is maintained.

d. Pitch Pipe

As a cappella singers, most ensembles use a pitch pipe to locate their beginning notes. The visual communication judge is the only member of the judging panel who evaluates the pitch-taking procedure, and the evaluation is confined to assessing the ease and smoothness with which pitch is taken. If for some reason a firm pitch is not established on the initial attempt, the visual communication judge bases the evaluation of the second and even the third attempt on the performer’s ability to maintain poise and composure and to keep the audience comfortable.

Most quartets still use the traditional pitch pipe because it is easier to slip into a pocket or conceal in some other manner than is the electronic pitch instrument used by some choruses. A pitch pipe retained in the performer’s hand during the performance may become a visual distraction for the audience.

Judges in the sound, music, and expression categories do not evaluate the taking of pitch, so neither penalties nor rewards are incurred in those categories. However, when pitch is not securely established, any or all of those judges may note resulting problems, and those problems will be reflected in the scores.

Some performers prefer to take pitch off stage, before the entrance or before the curtain opens. Successfully omitting the pitch-taking procedure is neither rewarded nor penalized by the visual communication judge. A faulty start, however, can result in a lower score in the sound, music, and expression categories because pitch was not firmly established. If the performer loses composure because of an insecure start, the score in the visual communication category will also be affected.

The entrance, break, and exit can all be used to create a mood, scene, or character. Whether it be the walk-on or some sort of staged scene, the visual communication judge rates the effectiveness of each of these non-singing moments.

Lights

The contest requirement for uniform lighting ensures that all contestants are judged under as nearly the same conditions as possible. Where available, a follow-spot may be used for quartet entrance and exit. Use of special lighting may be permitted for the non-competition songs included in the performance package sessions of SingUnited International competitions; in those instances, contestants are notified in advance of lighting options. The choice of lighting, when available, can assist with mood creation and when used creatively and competently can enhance the audience experience.

CHORUS DIRECTOR

From the greeting to accepting applause, the performance of the chorus director is an influencing factor in the effectiveness of the overall communication of the chorus presentation. The director visually inspires chorus members by providing a model for body alignment, facial expression, emotional projection, sincerity, energy and attitude. The director can play an active part in planned choreography or staging by turning to face the audience. This can be effective if chorus members can successfully continue to perform without direction and without affecting musical unity. An impactful visual plan will ensure that the degree to which the director is featured is done with an attitude of sharing the spotlight with the chorus. In the case where the director is completely integrated into the visual plan and doesn't actually conduct, the effectiveness of the performance is evaluated by the visual communication judge.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

DISABILITIES

Performers with disabilities are not singled out when evaluating a performance. As with all other aspects of this category, the visual communication judge adjudicates how every member is integrated into the ensemble to create a strong unified presentation. The use of assistive devices (canes, walkers, stools, wheelchairs, etc.) in and of themselves are not a visual concern. Effective communication with the audience occurs when distractions are minimized.

NON-SINGING MEMBERS

It is expected that all individuals appearing on stage as members of a competing chorus or quartet will be singing at the times required by their voice part. SingUnited competition rules require that only the director(s) and performing members of a competing chorus may appear on stage. A penalty may result if the presence of a “non-singing” member detracts from the musical performance.

CROWNS

SingUnited competition rules require that crowns in the style of a SingUnited International Quartet Champion be neither worn by nor presented to any contestant other than the quartet winning first place in the international quartet competition. However, a contestant may wear a crown like object as a part of their costuming (ex. medieval, circlet, diadem, wreath, cone hat, etc.).

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

As in all creative endeavors, everything that can potentially be covered by a rule has not yet been conceived. Penalty considerations come into play in those instances where the audience might be negatively impacted. All creative endeavors potentially come with risk and/or reward. Ingeniously clever planning, effectively implemented, can add the finishing touch of success necessary to transform a good performance into a great performance.

SCORING THE CATEGORY

The primary responsibility of a SingUnited International judge is to determine the level of proficiency demonstrated by each competitor in the category and to place each competitor in the proper ranking relative to other competitors in the competition. In doing so, the judge assigns numerical scores that accurately represent the level of each performance in the category. The composite numerical scores of the entire judging panel establish final placement of all contestants and are the basis for determining winners of the awards. The visual communication category combines elements of preparation and performance so that 100 points are available for each contest song in a performance. The visual communication judge assesses all the category elements in a holistic and global fashion. The ideal SingUnited International performance creates an experience so real, so alive, that both performer and audience are caught up in its spell and all else is forgotten in the magic of the song.

VISUAL COMMUNICATION

Judge _____

Contestant's Name _____ Contestant # _____

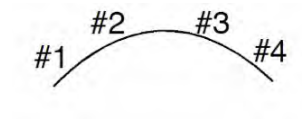
Contest: Region # _____ ☐ Quartet ☐ Chorus ☐ Diamond Division

☐ Int'l Quartet Semifinals ☐ Int'l Chorus Semifinals ☐ Rising Star Date _____

JUDGING CRITERIA (TOTAL 0-100 POINTS)

PERFORMANCE ELEMENTS

- Vocal Skills
- Energy
- Characterization
- Physical Expression
- Unity
- Body Alignment
- Stage Presence
- Audience Connection
- Musicality
- Creativity
- Stagecraft



DIRECTOR

SONG #1: _____ SONG #2: _____

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	

SONG 1

SONG 2

TOTAL SCORE

Signed: _____

VISUAL COMMUNICATION

Contest: Region # _____ ☐ Open Chorus ☐ Open Quartet ☐ Eval Only- Int'l Bound Contestant # _____
☐ Int'l Quartet Finals ☐ Int'l Chorus Finals ☐ Harmony Classic Date _____

JUDGING CRITERIA

CATEGORY CRITERIA(0-100 pts)		ENTERTAINMENT PACKAGE (0-100 pts)	
PERFORMANCE ELEMENTS		MUSICALITY	CREATIVITY
Vocal Skills	Audience connection	Vocal Skills/Accuracy	Scripting/Concept
Energy	Musicality	Artistry	Imagination/Innovative Staging
Characterization	Creativity	Evokes Emotion/Story	Use of Props/Costumes/ Lighting/Makeup
Physical expression	Stagecraft	UNITY	Use of music to enhance theme
Unity		Vocal	
		Visual	AUDIENCE CONNECTION
		Energy	Mood/Emotion/Message
	DIRECTOR		Well-rehearsed/Confident
Body alignment		PLANNING	Movement/Stagecraft
		Theme/Setting/Concept	Character/Emcee/Soloist/Specialty
Stage presence		Story/Message Arc	Mic Technique
		Script/Organization	Audience Response
		Pacing/Transitions/Blocking	
		Props/Costuming/Makeup	

CONTEST SONG: _____ PACKAGE THEME: _____

One Song/Ent. Pkg. 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	

One Song/Ent. Pkg. 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	

Signature _____

--	--

**(Intl Finals Open Division & Harmony Classic only)*
JSS-ENT-VIS Revised 01/22 • SWEET ADELINES INTERNATIONAL

CONTEST SONG

PACKAGE

TOTAL SCORE *

INTERRELATIONSHIP OF THE JUDGING CATEGORIES

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INTERRELATIONSHIP OF THE JUDGING CATEGORIES

Sound, music, expression and visual communication — the four judging categories — reinforce, strengthen and interconnect. This overlapping of the various facets of each category is one of the strengths of the judging system. It is also one of the reasons that a Certified Judge in one category is able to serve in a different category when necessary. One has only to compare the printed scoresheets to verify the interrelationships.

Each category necessarily focuses on a particular area and the majority of points within that category are allotted accordingly; however, a portion of each score is related to one or more other categories. For instance, tempo, phrasing, dynamics and emotional projection can be seen on both the music and expression category scoresheets. Breath support and vowels are found on both sound and expression. Audience rapport and visual communication of a musical product, as found on the visual communication scoresheet, are directly related to the emotional communication and artistic sound noted on the other scoresheets. Vocal skills are a component of all four categories.

Other interrelated facets of the four categories are not quite so obvious. When a barbershop arrangement is constructed with incorrect or awkward harmonic progressions or weak chord voicings, the sound of the performing group will be adversely affected. Good harmony accuracy will be extremely difficult to achieve, as will good barbershop balance. Synchronization, good lyrical flow and the ability to use an adequate range of dynamics, which are prime ingredients of the expression category, will also be affected by problems in the arrangement. Good visual communication entails the ability to capture an audience and deliberately evoke a favorable response. This ability will be seriously hampered if there are problems in the other three categories.

When a performing group relies mostly on choreography to carry the weight of the visual communication category, the other three categories may suffer. With total emphasis on choreography, the physical energy that comes from natural body English and the dramatic impact of continued facial expressiveness is sometimes missing. When these two ingredients are included in a performance, however, the sound gains new vitality, the lyrics seem to flow more smoothly and a larger variety of dynamics becomes easier to perform.

If a performing group fails to observe the basic fundamentals of the sound category, the other three categories will also be affected. A performance that is chronically out of tune cannot possibly earn a good score in any of the four categories. Even if the performers are beautifully groomed and costumed and use appropriate choreography, they will not be awarded a good score in visual communication if the judge and the audience are bombarded with inaccurate singing.

If we consider one of the ingredients for a good score in the expression category, a performing group must sing together. That means starting and stopping each tone, word

and diphthong at the same time. Without such synchronization, all categories will be adversely affected. Lyrics that are not sung with a flow are likely to be penalized in the music category as choppy phrasing. Poor lyrical flow or choppy phrasing may sometimes even be attributed to the type of choreography used by the performing group.

Only in very rare instances will a performance score very high or very low in only one category. This situation could conceivably occur if a totally unacceptable song/arrangement were performed very well in the other categories. The score given by the music judge would be much lower because of the unsuitability of the music. A very good barbershop song/arrangement performed in tune and in balance with good lyrical flow and a suitable dynamic range might still receive a low score in the visual communication category because of very poor grooming or choreography in poor taste.

It is evident that the four categories dovetail and enhance each other. The performing group that selects a good arrangement and follows the rules of the music category should receive a good score from the music judge; however, this can only be the case if that arrangement is performed in tune, with good synchronization, with musical and lyrical flow and with a visual performance that enhances and supports the music performance.

Each of the four categories comprises one quarter of the potential total score. All four categories are equally important and each must receive equal attention from the performer. The resulting performance will be rewarded in all categories.

EFFECT OF MUSIC SELECTION ON THE FOUR CATEGORIES

The selection of music plays a significant role in the sound category in that the degree of the performer's overall vocal skills must match the demands of the musical composition and its delivery. Accuracy, especially in the areas of correctly tuned intervals, synchronization, and blend, can only be achieved when the singer can apply the vocal instrument to the music chosen with consistent support, open resonance, energy and freedom.

The music judge evaluates the relative suitability of the song/arrangement to the chorus or quartet. They consider the vocal capabilities of the ensemble and the skill demonstrated in performing the arrangement. The singers must be able to execute the part lines accurately and demonstrate vocal ranges sufficient to handle the extreme highs and lows while remaining in balance (see sound category). The performer also needs to demonstrate sufficient vocal energy, support and musical stamina to handle the phrasing, dynamics and musical characterization required to convey the interpretive plan effectively.

As discussed in the music category, the choice of music appropriate to the skill level of the performer affects the performer's ability to convey the interpretative plan (expression category) effectively. If the level of difficulty is too high, the performer may be unable to perform the song in a sincere, competent fashion, thus creating a barrier to real emotional communication. When the listener is presented with distractions from a musical, unified presentation, the message can be lost.

Additionally, when the music selected is performed in such a manner that the skills of the performing group are challenged (e.g. a tempo that is too fast), the efforts at artistic elements cannot be fully rewarded by the expression judge. Music that presents opportunities to demonstrate the abilities of the group and is performed in a manner that showcases those capabilities will most likely result in a successful, emotionally satisfying performance.

The selection of music in the visual communication category is a key ingredient to creating onstage magic that will captivate and entertain an audience. Music must be chosen that highlights the groups' vocal skills while allowing their unique personality to shine through as they perform. Careful consideration of the story, emotion and point of view of the songs' lyrics is necessary to ensure that the ensemble can embody the attitude and character of the song they are singing.

Age demographic, group size, ability to perform with energy, characterization and the physical expression needed to bring the song to life are vitally important to the success of the performance.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF SCORING

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GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF SCORING

In each of the category descriptions included in this book, it has been stated that the primary responsibility of a SingUnited International judge is to determine the level of proficiency in their category for each competitor's competition performance and to place each competitor in the proper ranking in relationship to other competitors in the contest. To perform this task, the judge assigns numerical scores that accurately represent the level of each performance in their category. The composite numerical scores of the entire judging panel establish final placement for all contestants and are the basis for determining the winners of awards.

To accomplish this, at the conclusion of each performance, each judge reviews their scoresheet comments. They consider favorable areas as well as the specific errors or general problems noted and makes the above comparisons to assign a numerical score. Performers do not lose "x" number of points for each attack error, each inaccuracy, each gesture missed, etc. Instead, judges consider degree and consistency of error and determine to what extent these problems affect the caliber of performance. Judges do not judge contestants; they judge single performances presented by choruses and/or quartets in competition situations.

Each performance may be awarded a maximum of 200 points (100 points per song) by each judge on the panel. (Information regarding the scoring of the entertainment package at International Competition is included elsewhere in this book.) To aid judges in arriving at accurate scores, the A-B-C-D (level) method of scoring has been adopted. This method is valuable to contestants, because numerical scores are an indication of caliber of performance, or level of achievement, both in any category and overall. The standard is as follows:

	One Song	Two Songs	Total Score (four judges)	Total Score (eight judges)
A+ Perfect	94 - 100	188 - 200	752 - 800	1504 - 1600
A Nearly Perfect	86 - 93	172 - 187	688 - 751	1376 - 1503
A- Excellent	80 - 85	160 - 171	640 - 687	1280 - 1375
B+ Very Good	74 - 79	148 - 159	592 - 639	1184 - 1279
B Good	66 - 73	132 - 147	528 - 591	1056 - 1183
B- Low Good	60 - 65	120 - 131	480 - 527	960 - 1055
C+ High Average	54 - 59	108 - 119	432 - 479	864 - 959
C Average	46 - 53	92 - 107	368 - 431	736 - 863
C- Low Average	40 - 45	80 - 91	320 - 367	640 - 735
D+ Fairly Poor	34 - 39	68 - 79	272 - 319	544 - 639
D Poor	26 - 33	52 - 67	208 - 271	416 - 543
D- Very Poor	20 - 25	40 - 51	160 - 207	320 - 415
F	0 - 19	0 - 39	0 - 159	0 - 319

In analyzing contest scoring, the contestant should remember to consider both the level score (A-B-C-D) and the placement earned. A seemingly low score may accompany a high placement or vice versa. For example:

	Song 1	Song 2	Total	Placement
Sound	70	71	141	2
Music	66	69	135	7
Expression	64	66	130	3
Visual Communication	68	70	138	5
			544	4 overall

Here we have placements of 2, 3, 5 and 7 within categories and an overall placement of 4, but numerical scores are all within the same general “level” — on the high side of B- or low side of B. The 7th place score in music is actually five points higher than the 3rd place score in expression, which should indicate that the caliber of the contest in the music category was higher than the level of achievement in the expression category.

In addition to the above, each category has its own breakdown of available points for each of its areas. In the sound category, 70 of the available points are for the performer’s achievement in unit sound, including vocal skills, accuracy, balance and blend, and the remaining 30 points per song are for artistic sound. In the music category, 70 of the available points per song are allotted to the performance of the arrangement, 30 to the song and arrangement. Of the available points per song in the expression category, 100 points are allotted for achievement in the basic requirements of the category, i.e., vocal skills, energy and word delivery, and artistic lyrical interpretation, i.e., the interpretive plan. In the visual communication category, 100 points are allotted for the degree of communication established with the audience by demonstration of the basic criteria, i.e., good vocal production, design of visual plan, communication of message of the song by physical expression, energy and stage presence, etc. (Refer to the “Outline of Category Weights,” Section III-B, page 3.)

In every contest, only one contestant can be declared the winner; likewise, one receives the lowest score. The contestant who places last in one contest, however, might still have received scores in the C/C+ range, while the contestant who receives the highest scores in another contest may be of the same general caliber. Not all champions give A/A+ performances, nor do all contestants who place last perform at a D/D+ level.

It is the hope of SingUnited International that the scoring level used by its judges will eventually reach the A/A+ level — not because judges are scoring higher but because performances given by contestants are of that high a caliber and because the music they represent is truly outstanding.

OUTLINE OF CATEGORY ELEMENT

SOUND CATEGORY

0-100 Points

VOCAL SKILLS

- Body Alignment
- Breathing/Breath Management
- Phonation
- Resonance
- Articulation

HARMONY ACCURACY

- Notes/Chords
- Tuning/Intervals
- Tonal Center/Key Changes
- Synchronization/Chord Alignment

ENSEMBLE SOUND

- Tone Production/Intonation
- Vowel Production
- Continuous Sound/Tone Flow
- Section Unity
- Barbershop Balance
- Ring/Overtones/Expanded Sound

ARTISTRY & MUSICALITY

- Vocal Energy
- Dynamic Flexibility
- Vocal Style/Character
- Artistic Sound

EXPRESSION CATEGORY

0-100 Points

TECHNICAL ELEMENTS

- Vocal Skills
- Synchronization/Unity
- Word Delivery
 - Vowels
 - Diphthongs
 - Consonants
 - Enunciation
- Musicality

ARTISTIC INTERPRETIVE PLAN

- Lyric Flow
- Phrasing
- Forward Motion
- Embellishments
- Dynamics
- Tempo/Rhythmic Elements
- Inflection
- Energy
- Finesse and Artistry
- Characterization
- Emotional Communication

MUSIC CATEGORY

0-100 Points

SONG & ARRANGEMENT

- Merit as Barbershop Material
- Song: Form/Melody/Lyrics
- Arrangement: Harmonization/Voicing/Creative Devices

SUITABILITY TO PERFORMER

PERFORMANCE

- Vocal Skills
- Harmony Accuracy
- Barbershop Style
 - Tempo
 - Rhythm
 - Musical Unity,
 - Phrasing,
 - Dynamics
 - Musical Energy
 - Musical Artistry

VISUAL COMMUNICATION CATEGORY

0-100 Points

PERFORMANCE ELEMENTS

- Vocal Skills
- Energy
- Characterization
- Physical Expression
- Unity
- Body Alignment
- Stage Presence
- Audience Connection
- Musicality
- Creativity
- Stagecraft
- Director

PENALTIES

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PENALTIES

1. General

Violation of any competition policy adopted by the International Board of Directors is subject to penalty as determined by the panel chair after consultation with the other judges on the panel. Penalties may range from deduction of a specific number of points to disqualification. Any penalty points assessed are deducted from the total score.

2. Time Penalties

a. Performances are timed separately by the panel secretary and page at regional contests, and by the two panel secretaries at international contests. In the event of a variance between the recorded times, the time most favorable to the contestant prevails.

b. Elimination Sessions

- (1) Total singing time of the two separate songs or medleys performed in any SingUnited competition other than an entertainment package session shall be not less than three (3) and not more than seven (7) minutes.
- (2) Timing begins with the first word or chord of a song and ends with the last word or chord of the same song.
- (3) The two songs or medleys performed are timed separately, and times are added together to determine total singing time.
- (4) Penalty for singing over the prescribed time limit is one (1) point for every second, up to a maximum of fifty (50) points. Evaluation only performances that exceed the prescribed limits by thirty (30) or more seconds will result in disqualification. No specific penalty is designated for singing under the prescribed time limit; however, the judges evaluate the effectiveness of undertime performances.

c. Entertainment Package Sessions

- (1) Total Time (Regional): Total time of the entertainment package in the Open Division of any official SingUnited competition is:
 - (a) Quartet: Not more than ten (10) minutes.
 - (b) Chorus: Not more than ten (10) minutes.

Timing begins at the first word spoken or the first chord of the first song, whichever begins the performance, and continues through the

final chord of the last song or the last word spoken, whichever concludes the performance. The three (3) to seven (7) minute timing requirement for the contest song is suspended.

The prepared program must list all planned activity occurring on stage after completion of the entrance and following the official introduction. Planned activity occurring prior to the first word spoken or the first chord of the first song, whichever begins the performance, will result in disqualification if in the opinion of the panel chair and a majority of judges on the panel the time spent is excessive and results in a delay of the contest.

- (a) Overtime: Performances that exceed the prescribed limits by thirty (30) or more seconds will result in disqualification.
 - (b) Undertime: No specific penalties are designated for performances under the prescribed limits; however, judges evaluate the effectiveness of obviously undertime performances.
- (2) Total Time (Regional): Total time of the entertainment package of the entertainment package in the *Evaluation Only: Internationally Bound Division* of any official SingUnited competition is:
- (a) Quartet: Up to fifteen (15) minutes
 - (b) Chorus: Up to fifteen (15) minutes

Timing begins at the first word spoken or the first chord of the first song, whichever begins the performance, and continues through the final chord of the last song or the last word spoken, whichever concludes the performance. The three (3) to seven (7) minute timing requirement for the contest song is suspended.

The prepared program must list all planned activity occurring on stage after completion of the entrance and following the official introduction. Planned activity occurring prior to the first word spoken or the first chord of the first song, whichever begins the performance, will result in disqualification if in the opinion of the panel chair and a majority of judges on the panel the time spent is excessive and results in a delay of the contest.

- (c) Overtime: Performances that exceed the prescribed limits by thirty (30) or more seconds will result in disqualification.
- (d) Undertime: No specific penalties are designated for performances under the prescribed limits; however, judges evaluate the effectiveness of obviously undertime performances.

- (3) Total Time (International Competitions): Total time of the entertainment package in Harmony Classic or the finals session of any official SingUnited competition is:
- (a) Quartet: Not less than ten (10) and not more than fifteen (15) minutes.
 - (b) Chorus: Not less than twelve (12) and not more than fifteen (15) minutes.

Timing begins at the first word spoken or the first chord of the first song, whichever begins the performance, and continues through the final chord of the last song or the last word spoken, whichever concludes the performance. The three (3) to seven (7) minute timing requirement for the contest song is suspended.

The prepared program must list all planned activity occurring on stage after completion of the entrance and following the official introduction. Planned activity occurring prior to the first word spoken or the first chord of the first song, whichever begins the performance, is subject to inclusion in overtime calculation if in the opinion of the panel chair and a majority of judges on the panel the time spent is excessive and results in a delay of the contest.

- (c) Overtime: One (1) point per second is assessed for performances over the prescribed limits, up to a maximum of fifty (50) points.
- (d) Undertime: No specific penalties are designated for performances under the prescribed limits; however, judges evaluate the effectiveness of obviously undertime performances.

3. Rule Infraction Penalties

- a. Inadmissible Songs: In accordance with our guiding principles of Diversity and Inclusion and the Culture of Belonging, SingUnited International rejects any song that refers to racist lyrics, messages and history and consider them inadmissible for performance. Performance of a song deemed inadmissible by the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Council, in all contest divisions, will result in disqualification.
- b. Official Language: The official language for songs designated as competition songs in SingUnited competitions is American English (see the Music Category, JCDB, for additional clarification). Languages other than English may be used for noncompetition songs included in the entertainment package of Harmony Classic or a chorus or quartet finals session. In all competition sessions, the penalty ranges from a minimum of ten (10) to a maximum of twenty-five (25) points, depending on severity. Performance of the competition song(s) not sung primarily in English in open division or evaluation only will result in disqualification.

- c. Religious, Patriotic Songs and Official Organizational Songs: Religious, patriotic or official organizational songs (*Come On And Sing*, *How We Sang Today* and *The Voice Of Harmony*) may not be sung as the contest song(s) in the regional International Division or Evaluation Only (see the Music Category, JCDB, for further clarification). Performance of any song that is considered by the music judge(s) and a majority of the judges on the official panel to be either religious, patriotic or an official organizational song results in disqualification of that song with a score of zero (0) from all official judges. In the Open Division or International Entertainment Packages, religious, patriotic or an official organizational song of SingUnited International may not be used as the contest song and will also result in disqualification of that song with a score of zero (0) from all official judges. In the Open Division or International Entertainment Packages religious, patriotic or official organizational songs of SingUnited International may be used as part of the package. The degree to which such is used enhances or detracts from the performance is reflected in the judges' score and commentary.
- d. Performance Content
 - (1) Eliminations Sessions: Competition performance (time on stage) is confined to singing. An occasional special sound effect (e.g., a cough, a sigh, a clap, a finger snap, a yell, etc.) or vocal exclamation/reaction is permissible, but non-singing conversations, dialogues, monologues or noise-making devices (e.g., bells, whistles, tambourines, drums, etc.) may not be included. In all sessions, the penalty ranges from a minimum of five (5) to a maximum of fifty (50) points, depending on severity. Inclusion of spoken material (beyond a word or two) or noise-making devices during the competition song in an open division performance or during an evaluation only performance will result in disqualification.
 - (2) Entertainment Package Sessions: non-singing conversations, dialogues, monologues and/or sound effects, as defined above, may be utilized in any of the noncompetition songs included in the entertainment package.
- e. Crowns or Tiaras: Crowns worn in the style of the SingUnited International Champion Quartet are prohibited, and will be penalized twenty-five (25) points, or in the case of Evaluation Only or Open Division disqualification. However, a contestant may wear a crown like object as a part of their costuming (ex. medieval, circlet, wreath, cone hat, etc.).
- f. Staging and Lighting
 - (1) Eliminations Sessions: Staging and lighting are uniform for all contestants. No penalty is attached to the use of props or visual devices in any regional or international contest sessions. The degree to which such use enhances or detracts from the performance is reflected in the visual communication score.

All props and visual devices must enter and leave the performance venue with the chorus or quartet. Storage space for any props or equipment, other than riser chairs or medically necessary items, is not provided at the contest venue.

Props or visual devices requiring excessive set up time will be subject to delay of contest penalties.

All contestants are required to leave the stage in the condition they found it. Anything discarded or dropped must be removed and exit the stage with the contestant. In all sessions, penalty for violation is twenty-five (25) points. For contestants performing for evaluation only this will result in disqualification.

Any contestant that purposefully throws an object(s) into the audience or judging pit from the competition stage may be assessed a minimum penalty of twenty-five (25) points up to a maximum penalty of disqualification from the contest.

- (2) Entertainment Package Sessions: Special staging and/or lighting effects may not be incorporated into the songs designated as competition songs but may, at the discretion of the International Board of Directors, be utilized as part of the noncompetition songs included in the entertainment package. This is limited to one color per non-contest song. No penalty is attached to the use of props or visual devices in any International Entertainment Package or regional Open Division session(s). The degree to which such use enhances or detracts from the performance is reflected in the judges' score and commentary.

All props and visual devices must enter and leave the performance venue with the chorus or quartet. Non-members are not allowed in the traffic pattern nor are they allowed to transport prop items in the traffic pattern. Storage space for any props or equipment, other than riser chairs or medically necessary items, is not provided at the contest venue.

Props or visual devices requiring excessive set up time will be subject to delay of contest penalties.

All contestants are required to leave the stage in the condition they found it. Anything discarded or dropped must be removed and exit the stage with the contestant. In all sessions, penalty for violation is twenty-five (25) points. In Open Division this will result in disqualification.

Musical accompaniment is permitted as part of the non-contest songs included in the entertainment package. The degree to which such use enhances or detracts from the performance is reflected in the judges' score and commentary.

Any contestant that purposefully throws an object(s) into the audience or judging pit from the competition stage may be assessed a minimum penalty of twenty-five (25) points up to a maximum penalty of disqualification from the contest. In Open Division this will result in disqualification.

- g. Misconduct: Any contestant, including a chorus director, may receive a penalty ranging from twenty-five (25) points up to and including disqualification for conduct deemed, in the judgment of the panel chair and a majority of the remaining judges on the official panel, to be injurious to the welfare of SingUnited International.
- h. Designated Performance Time
 - (1) Contestants are expected to report for entry into the traffic pattern at the time and place designated by the competition coordinator and/or the Director of Competition, and are expected to be ready to perform in their assigned sequence. Any contestant who fails to appear and/or is not ready to perform in the contest at the time designated is penalized twenty-five (25) points, loses position, and appears at the end of the contest.
 - (2) If failure to appear is due to circumstances beyond the control of the contestant, tardiness may be excused and penalty withdrawn upon the decision of the panel chair and a majority of judges on the official panel. If it is determined that tardiness was premeditated in order to lose position and appear at the end of the contest, the contestant is disqualified.
 - (3) It is expected that a chorus' entrance or exit be completed in a timely fashion. If, in the opinion of a majority of the official panel, a chorus' entrance or exit exceeds a reasonable amount of time, creates a distraction, and/or delays the contest, a penalty may be assessed.
- i. Traffic Pattern: Contestants are expected to move through the traffic pattern as instructed by international staff or personnel officially assigned to manage the traffic pattern flow. A penalty may result if a competitor's action and/or failure to act causes a delay or disruption in the traffic pattern. In all sessions, the penalty ranges from ten (10) to twenty-five (25) points, depending on severity. In open division or evaluation only this may result in disqualification.
- j. Participants: Only the director(s) and performing members of a competing chorus may appear on stage. A penalty may result, if in the opinion of the official panel, the presence of a "non-singing" member is a distraction and/or detracts from the musical performance. If a penalty is deemed necessary, the penalization will range from ten (10) to twenty-five (25) points, depending on severity. In open division or evaluation only this may result in disqualification.

Only the four officially registered members of the competing quartet may appear on stage during the quartet's competition performance.

- k. Minimum Chorus Size: Competing choruses must have at least twelve (12) members on stage in addition to the chorus director(s). A chorus that competes with fewer than twelve (12) competing members, not including the chorus director(s), performs for evaluation only and receives a written evaluation from each judge, provided that all other requirements for entering the competition have been met. Scores recorded on the scoresheet reflect performance levels rather than specific points earned. The number of competing members is calculated according to the List of Competing Members form submitted to the competition coordinator or the Competition Department at the chorus briefing session.
- l. Change in Entertainment Package: Contestants qualifying for Harmony Classic or the finals session of an International Competition are required to present a prepared program, via the Video Cue Sheet, listing the songs to be performed and the order in which they appear, designating the song to be judged as competition material, and indicating the placement of emcee material. It must also list all planned activity or emcee material that occurs prior to the first song or after the last song. Any deviation from the submitted program will result in a penalty of forty (40) points.

Choruses or quartets competing for Evaluation Only or in the Open Division are required to present a prepared program, via Video Cue Sheet, listing the songs to be performed and the order in which they appear, designating the song to be judged as competition material, and indicating the placement of emcee material. It must also list all planned activity or emcee material that occurs prior to the first song or after the last song. Any deviation from the submitted program will result in disqualification.
- m. Disqualification: Any competitor that is disqualified from any competition, in either International division or Evaluation Only division, or Open Division will receive a scoresheet with the levels/scores removed.

COMPETITION PENALTY FORM

INSTRUCTIONS: To be completed by the Chair of the Official Judging Panel.

Session: _____ Regional Quartet _____ Quartet Semifinal _____ Quartet Final _____ Harmony Classic Div. A
 _____ Regional Chorus _____ Chorus Semifinal _____ Chorus Final _____ Harmony Classic Div. AA
 _____ Diamond Division

CONTESTANT #	NAME
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Violation of any competition policy is subject to penalty as determined by the Chair of the Judging Panel, after consultation with the other judges on the panel. Penalties may range from the deduction of a specific number of points to disqualification, depending on the nature and severity of the violation. **These points will be deducted from the total score. Disqualified competitors receive scoresheets with no scores/levels.**

TIME PENALTY	<u>Regional Quartet/Chorus and International Quartet/Chorus Semifinal/Diamond Division:</u> 1 point per second over 7 minutes, total singing time; max. of 50 points <u>International Quartet/Chorus Finals and Harmony Classic Div. A/AA:</u> 1 point per second over 16 minutes, total singing time; max. of 50 points
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RULE INFRACTION:

Performance of a song deemed inadmissible in accordance with our guiding principles. (Contestant disqualified)

_____ Competition songs not sung primarily in English. (10-25 penalty points)

_____ Competition Song(s) religious or patriotic songs or official organizational songs- *Come On And Sing, The Voice of Harmony* and *How We Sang Today*. (Disqualification of song, with score of "0" from all official judges.)

_____ Competition song(s) included extended spoken material and/or noise making devices. (5-50 penalty points)

Crowns, in the style of the organization's International Champion Quartet, worn by contestant. (25 penalty points)

_____ Condition of stage impaired. (25 penalty points)

_____ Throwing object(s) into audience or judging pit from the competition stage.
(25 penalty points up to contestant disqualified)

_____ Conduct of contestants, including director, deemed injurious to the welfare of the organization.
(25 penalty points up to contestant disqualified)

_____ Contestants not ready to perform in their assigned sequence at the designated time. (25 penalty points)

Delay of contest. (10-25 penalty points)

_____ Non-singing member, in addition to director, on stage. (10-25 penalty points)

_____ Quartet competition performance is limited to the four officially registered members of the quartet.
(Contestant disqualified)

_____ Chorus contestants, competing for placement, and appearing with fewer than 12 chorus members on stage, plus the director. (Contestant receives evaluations reflecting performance levels)

_____ Deviation from submitted prepared Entertainment Package. (10-40 penalty points)

_____ Other (specify):

COMMENTS:

TOTAL PENALTY POINTS _____ SIGNED: _____ (Panel Chair) DATE: _____

Distribution: **Original** to Panel Chair, attach to contestant's scoresheet, if applicable.

Yellow copy to Panel Secretary, attach to official scoresheet.

**OPEN DIVISION AND EVALUATION ONLY
COMPETITION PENALTY FORM**

INSTRUCTIONS: To be completed by the Chair of the Official Judging Panel.

Session: _____ Regional Quartet _____ Regional Chorus

CONTESTANT # _____ NAME _____

Violation of any competition policy is subject to penalty as determined by the Chair of the Judging Panel, after consultation with the other judges on the panel. **Penalties will result in disqualification from competition. Disqualified competitors receive scoresheets with no scores/levels.**

_____ **TIME PENALTY** Regional Quartet/Chorus: 30 seconds over or more over 10 minutes total singing time will result in disqualification.

RULE INFRACTION:

- _____ Performance of a song deemed inadmissible in accordance with our guiding principles. (Contestant disqualified)
- _____ Competition songs not sung primarily in English. (Contestant disqualified)
- _____ Competition Song(s) religious or patriotic songs or official organizational songs- *Come On And Sing, The Voice of Harmony* and *How We Sang Today*. (Contestant disqualified)
- _____ Competition Song(s) include extended spoken material and/or noise making devices. (Contestant disqualified)
- _____ Crowns, in the style of the organization's International Champion Quartet, worn by contestant. (Contestant disqualified)
- _____ Condition of stage impaired. (Contestant disqualified)
- _____ Throwing object(s) into audience or judging pit from the competition stage. (Contestant disqualified)
- _____ Conduct of contestants, including director, deemed prejudicial to the welfare of the organization. (Contestant disqualified)
- _____ Delay of contest. (Contestant disqualified)
- _____ Non-singing member, in addition to director, on stage. (Contestant disqualified)
- _____ Quartet competition performance is limited to the four officially registered members of the quartet. (Contestant disqualified)
- _____ Deviation from submitted prepared program. (Contestant disqualified)
- _____ Switching between Open Division and Evaluation Only or International Division. (Contestant disqualified; switching between International Division and Evaluation Only is allowed)
- _____ Other (specify): _____

COMMENTS:

SIGNED: _____

Panel Chair

DATE: _____

Distribution: **Original** to Panel Chair, place in contestant's packet.
 Yellow copy to Panel Secretary, attach to official scoresheet.

ENTERTAINMENT PACKAGE

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ENTERTAINMENT PACKAGE

INTRODUCTION

While the choice of what is entertaining and the evaluation of that choice is subject to personal taste and preference, specific criteria can be used to measure the effectiveness of the performance. The specific criteria, or elements, listed below will be used to uniformly adjudicate the entertainment packages performed in SingUnited International contests.

ELEMENTS

The following areas have been identified and will be evaluated by the judges:

1. Musicality

The basic criteria for public performance are to be observed, that is correct words and notes, in-tune singing, barbershop balance and blend, synchronization, energy, and solid vocal skills to be present. The choice of music must be appropriate for all audiences and rated admissible in the Song Assessment Tool. The quality of the arrangements, the suitability to the vocal capabilities of the quartet or chorus and the appeal to the audience, will be evaluated for effectiveness by the judges. Additionally, overall adherence to barbershop style along with equal musical expertise in other styles of music chosen will be considered in awarding the score.

2. Unity

All aspects of the performance are to be synchronized, energized and unified: The delivery of the music, the spoken material and all visual elements (such as choreography, props, costuming, make up) are thoughtfully constructed and effectively delivered. Additionally, the quartet or chorus must be appropriately engaged in the performance and in the characterization inherently implied in the songs. Facial and physical movements and reactions are to be appropriate and unified.

3. Planning

The choice and continuity of the connective material within the performance are important to the success of the presentation and will be evaluated in these areas:

- Choose a *theme* or *concept* for the performance that reflects the style and personality of the ensemble. Ensure that the script language, the number of roles, physical properties and staging are all appropriate for your performers and the audience. The theme is carried throughout the emcee work, the music, and the movement onstage. The relationship of the songs to each other and the resulting effectiveness of the packaging will be evaluated. A sense of theatricality needs to be evident within the preparation of the presentation.

- The ***script*** must be appropriate to audiences of all ages. It reflects the character of performance and brings all the elements together in a unified whole with a ***story*** or ***message arc*** that demonstrates a beginning, a middle and a logical conclusion. Humor may add fun, audience connection and story line enhancements when it can be delivered effectively in good taste to enhance the story line. The performance flows with no lapses in energy and attention. Script delivery is well rehearsed, timed and delivered in a clear, pleasant voice and with appropriate characterization, and keeps the audience involved during non-singing moments.
- The ***pacing*** of the story is organized to allow the listener to hear, follow, stay involved, and to keep the action moving purposefully. The pacing is determined by the scene length, how fast the action moves and how quickly the audience is provided with information. Pacing affects the mood and allows audience members to connect to the characters, story or message. If the narrative or story development is presented with effective pacing the audience will connect to the message and be able to react to it appropriately.
- Performance ***blocking*** refers to how one or more actors move around the space during a performance. However, blocking is not simply *where* the performers move through a scene, but also *how they interact* with their environment and other actors. This can include body language as well as effective movement of props on stage. Staging a scene is the placement and movement of objects and people in the tableau; it can include lighting to draw the eye to a portion of the stage or provide mood-setting color leading to a seemingly effortless and compelling performance.
- ***Stagecraft***, including but not limited to props, costume and makeup effects can propel the story line and convey a variety of concepts and emotions to the audience. In planning the use of these items, it is essential that they enhance the performance, character or story and not detract from the intent of the scene. Use of props must comply with the rules stated in the *Competition Handbook* and their effectiveness will be evaluated by the judges. (For more information reference the *Competition Handbook*, pg. 18, Section III: Penalties, f. Staging and Lighting, (1) Elimination Sessions.)

4. Creativity

Originality in the performance in all areas, along with overall cleverness and creativity, will be rewarded. The creation of the package reflects an original idea or creative application of an existing theme. Creativity will be demonstrated by: the concept of the package, scripting, emcee delivery, the choreography and visual plans, the use of the stage, lighting effects, movement and blocking, props, musical effects, spontaneous reactions to unforeseen circumstances, and overall interpretation and display of the music. Additionally, the creative use and performance of any specialized personnel, e.g. quartets, dancers, soloists, instrumentalists, assistant directors, emcees and other performers, will be evaluated.

5. Audience Connection

The evaluation of the performance includes the evidence of the performer's planning for and the reaction from the audience. Music and performance are at the heart of emotional communication. Without an audience, there would be no reason to prepare performances. Judges will evaluate the "feeling tone" for the audience as exhibited in the suitability, planning and execution of the performance. The stage demeanor of the chorus or quartet—its confidence, energy, attention, preparation, and discipline—conveys a message and elicits a response from the audience. The degree to which a performer can communicate the emotions, message and spirit of the music will be evaluated by each member of the judging panel.

Effective *microphone technique* requires confidence, solid preparation and clarity. Special attention to the timing of being at the microphone or ready to speak at the appropriate time within the script and in accordance with audience applause is critical. Other considerations include:

- Pacing
- Spoken clarity
- Stage awareness
- Proximity to the microphone
- Audience response
- The performance of any specialized personnel, e.g. quartets, dancers, soloists, instrumentalists, assistant directors, emcees and other performers, will be included in the judges' evaluation. Microphone technique should be highlighted for these performers.

Finally, as in drama parlance, we seek a "willing suspension of disbelief" within our audiences, keeping them engaged and involved in the performance is a result of combining all elements of the performance and presenting them in such a way that the audience is transported from the everyday to another world—the world of entertainment!

SCORING

The primary responsibility of a SingUnited International judge is to determine the level of proficiency for each competitor's competition performance and to place each competitor in the proper ranking in relationship to the other competitors in the contest.

The methods outlined in the General Principles of Scoring apply to the scoring of the contest song included in the Entertainment Package. Scoring the entire performance of the entertainment package differs slightly in that each judge evaluates the performance from an overall point of view, rather than from the aspects of their individual category. Each performance may be awarded a maximum of 200 points by each judge on the panel. This score includes a maximum of 100 points for the contest song and a maximum of 100 for the overall performance package. Information regarding the scoring of the contest song is included in the category descriptions located elsewhere in this book. To aid the judges in arriving at an accurate score for the Entertainment Package, the following method of scoring has been adopted. The standard is as follows:

**0-39—BELOW ACCEPTABLE STANDARDS D+ and below
(0-19 F; 20-25 D-; 26-33 D; 34-39 D+)**

Performances in this range are uncomfortable for the audience. Vocal skills are weak making any real evaluation of the performance difficult. Artistic efforts cannot be appreciated, as the performers' level of vocal ability and performance capability makes it nearly impossible to interpret and communicate the message of the music.

40-45—POOR C-

A poor performance lacks the ability to fully illustrate the integration of musicality and entertainment. The performance is inconsistent and may demonstrate a high level of incongruence along with a lack of basic skills and audience connection.

46-53— FAIR C

A fair performance illustrates an attempt at general musicality and audience entertainment but does not reach above the ordinary. It may include an obvious lack of thorough preparation, an internal rather than an audience focus, too many awkward or "inside" references and standard jokes. It may be characterized by self-conscious reactions. The audience may exhibit nervous or uncomfortable reactions and tepid applause.

54-59—ACCEPTABLE C+

An acceptable performance is characterized by practiced singing and recognizable structure but is merely conventional or familiar. It reveals an advantage over a fair performance in its organization and delivery. Tuning and accuracy issues are still problematic, affecting the overall musical product. A greater sense of security in stage demeanor is apparent, but the performers are not fully engaged in the performance effort. Audience reaction and applause is polite but restrained.

60-65—SATISFACTORY B-

A satisfactory performance presents scattered moments of real enjoyment for the audience. There can be a sense of work being done by the performer, rather than the offering of a gift of entertainment to the audience. Planning is evident, but lapses in energy, musicality, creativity and characterization prevent the audience from becoming totally engaged. There is a sense of the emerging skills and promising creativity of the ensemble, but convincing confidence and involvement is not yet habitual. The audience is not totally relaxed or engaged, but is aware of the performers' efforts and will be encouraging in their response.

66-73—GOOD B

A good performance is one that demonstrates obvious work on singing skills, theatrical planning, and consideration for the specific conditions of the event and audience engagement. Additionally, the performance has a sense of destination and builds to a high point musically and theatrically. Areas that need further refinement are relatively easy to spot. Performers appear grounded, secure, fully prepared and comfortable with the stage but do not yet provide the consistent character and emotional engagement to be believable. Audience reaction for the performers is gratifying and energized.

74-79 VERY GOOD B+

A very good performance demonstrates the performer's devotion to vocal skills and the energy to succeed in the category requirements of accomplished musicians. The entertainment package showcases theatrical structure, creativity and stagecraft as well as the utilization of the unique talents within the ensemble. Performers demonstrate emerging consistency in characterization and believable emotional engagement. The performance is met with enduring and enthusiastic applause and audience reaction.

80-85 EXCELLENT A-

An excellent performance engages the audience's attention at the outset and continues to develop in its musical and theatrical skills, and artful delivery. Because the ensemble is performing with such excellent vocal skill, they are now in a position of being a conduit between the composer/lyricist/arranger and the audience to deliver a message that leaves a lasting impression. The performers are individually involved in the performance, continuously in touch with both the plan and the audience. The performance has a notable impact on the audience to which they respond with sincere and excited appreciation.

86-93 NEARLY PERFECT A

A nearly perfect performance is an experience shared by the performer and the audience. There is a sound that seems to flow effortlessly from the singers and draws the listener into the story, the music and the emotions of the performance. Freedom, authenticity and spirit are evident on stage. Each element blends into a unified presentation, so there is no awareness of segmentation or manipulation, but rather an experience of the performance as a whole. The performance exhibits that certain something which is apparent to everyone. The audience reaction is unrestrained; they seemingly cannot wait to comment to each other about the emotional impact of the performance. Genuine, extended applause and animated appreciation are the result.

94-100—SUPERIOR A+

A superior performance is, in a word, spectacular. It draws seemingly unrelenting applause and excited feedback from the audience. The stage is consistently and constantly alive with ring, color, emotion, spectacle, and vibrancy. The performers, as well as the audience, experience true synergy. This partnership creates a unique, and transformative experience. The performance is seamless in every way. The performance is unforgettable and sets a hallmark for the future.

A judge may award any number within the level that accurately characterizes the performance. Individual comments on the scoresheets will reflect the description of that performance level in specific terms and references.

REGIONAL OPEN DIVISION

INTRODUCTION

Quartets and choruses participating in Regional Competitions may choose the option of performing in the Open Division. A performance in the Open Division at regional competitions consists of a maximum 10-minute package.

Each open division package must include a minimum of one contest song, which will be judged by prescribed contest standards. At least one other song must be included in the performance. Emcee work and special material may be included in the package.

Contestants performing in the Open Division must prepare a complete list of all songs and spoken material that will be included in the package, so that the Official Judging Panel is aware of which song is to be judged as contest material.

SCORING

Each judge scores the contest song included in the package in accordance with the requirements of their respective category. Each judge will award a level for the contest song.

In addition, each judge will also award a level for the complete package. In awarding this score, judges consider:

- Musicality
- Unity
- Planning
- Creativity
- Audience Connection

Scoresheet comments are written for both the contest song and for the other song(s) and material included as part of the Open Division package.

GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING A PACKAGE FOR THE REGIONAL OPEN DIVISION

Each performance will be a maximum of 10 minutes and includes one contest song, any emcee material, and at least one other song. The three to seven (3 to 7) minute timing requirement for the contest song will be suspended. Contestants need to allow for applause when timing the package. The following guidelines should be followed in preparing the Entertainment Package portion of the competition performance:

1. All singing must display competence in vocal skills, musical understanding, and lyrical delivery.
2. Spoken and special material should be congruent with the theme and script and be acceptable for family audiences.
3. The emcee(s) should display preparation, confidence, poise, ease, and a sense of appropriate timing in presentation and in the use of the microphone.
4. The planning of the package should reflect creativity in both its content and delivery. Merely singing three competition-type songs and some limited spoken material, for instance, would demonstrate little imaginative preparation.
5. For the panel to know which song is to be judged as a contest song, each contestant must submit a performance outline at the competition briefing.

GUIDELINES FOR JUDGING THE REGIONAL OPEN DIVISION PACKAGE

Each judge will score the contest song of the package in accordance with the requirements for their respective category and award a level for the contest song.

Each judge will also award a level for the complete package. In awarding the score for the overall performance, judges will consider:

1. **Musicality:** Does the quartet or chorus sing with vocal and barbershop skill, i.e. good vocal production, in tune, and with appropriate tempos and word delivery? Is the musical delivery appropriate to the genre being sung?
2. **Unity:** Does the quartet or chorus perform as a unit with attention to energy, musicality and blend?
3. **Planning:** Does the presentation demonstrate a cohesive theme with a well-planned story arc? Does the script allow for character development, stagecraft and music choices that support that theme? Does the action onstage move at a pace and in a manner that draws the audience into the performance? Does the stagecraft (props, costumes, makeup, blocking, lighting) support the overall plan?

4. **Creativity:** Does the quartet or chorus present a 10-minute package that exhibits imaginative preparation and execution?
5. **Audience Connection:** Does the quartet or chorus demonstrate their commitment to audience rapport and reaction?

Scoresheet comments are written for the contest song and for the other song(s) and spoken material included within the package.

HARMONY CLASSIC AND INTERNATIONAL QUARTET AND CHORUS FINALS ENTERTAINMENT PACKAGE

INTRODUCTION

Quartets and choruses qualifying for Harmony Classic or the International Quartet or Chorus Finals must prepare an entertainment package for that performance. A performance in Harmony Classic or the International Quartet or Chorus Finals consists of a maximum 15-minute package. Penalties for performances that exceed this time are explained in *Sec. III-C*. No penalties will be assessed for undertime; however, a performance that is significantly undertime may not be considered a complete package and will not receive a score for the Entertainment Package.

Each entertainment package must include a minimum of one contest song, which will be judged by prescribed contest standards. At least one other song must be included in the performance. Emcee work and special material may be included in the package.

Contestants performing in Harmony Classic or the International Quartet or Chorus Finals must prepare a complete list of all songs and spoken material that will be included in the package, so that the Official Judging Panel is aware of which song is to be judged as contest material.

SCORING

Each judge scores the contest song included in the package in accordance with the requirements of their respective category. Each judge will award a score from 1-100 for the contest song.

In addition, each judge will also award a score from 1-100 for the complete entertainment package. In awarding this score, judges consider the following:

Musicality
Unity
Planning
Creativity
Audience Connection

Scoresheet comments are written for both the contest song and for the other song(s) and material included as part of the Harmony Classic or the International Quartet or Chorus Finals Entertainment Package.

GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING A PACKAGE FOR HARMONY CLASSIC AND THE INTERNATIONAL QUARTET AND CHORUS FINALS

Each performance will be a maximum of 15 minutes and includes one contest song, any emcee material, and at least one other song. The scoring and penalties for the contest song will be the same as for any other competition performance. The three to seven (3 to 7) minute timing requirement for the contest song will be suspended. Contestants should allow for applause when timing the package.

The following guidelines should be considered when preparing the entertainment package:

1. No song(s) performed as a contest song during the Quartet or Chorus Semifinals may be included as the contest song in the Entertainment package. Quartets and Choruses may wear the same costume for both contest performances.
2. All singing must display competence in vocal skills, musical understanding, and lyrical delivery.
3. Spoken and special material should be congruent with the theme and script and be acceptable for family audiences.
4. The emcee(s) should display preparation, confidence, poise, ease, and a sense of appropriate timing in presentation and in the use of the microphone.

5. Both quartet and chorus performers should display poise and should be able to handle unexpected situations with aplomb, should such arise.
6. If a different lighting combination is selected for non-contest material, contestant should be sure that the color is consistent with the mood of the song or material.
7. The planning of the package should reflect creativity in both its content and delivery. Merely singing three competition-type songs and some limited spoken material, for instance, would demonstrate little imaginative preparation.
8. For the panel to know which song is to be judged as the contest song, each contestant must submit a prepared program at the Harmony Classic or appropriate finals briefing. Any change in the performance from the prepared program will result in a penalty as described in *Sec. III-C*.

GUIDELINES FOR JUDGING HARMONY CLASSIC AND THE INTERNATIONAL QUARTET AND CHORUS FINALS

Each judge scores the contest song included in the package in accordance with the requirements for their respective category. Each judge will award a score of 1-100 for the contest song.

In addition, each judge will also award a score from 1-100 for the complete entertainment package. In awarding this score, judges consider the following:

1. **Musicality:** Does the quartet or chorus sing with barbershop skill, i.e. good vocal production, in tune, and with appropriate tempos and word delivery?
2. **Unity:** Does the quartet or chorus perform as a unit with attention to energy and blend?
3. **Planning:** Does the presentation demonstrate a unified message? Is the scripted material suitable to the audience and the performer? Does the emcee(s) deliver the spoken material well and display effective use of the microphone?
4. **Creativity:** Does the quartet or chorus present a 15-minute, or less, package that exhibits imaginative preparation and execution?
5. **Audience Connection:** Does the quartet or chorus demonstrate their commitment to audience rapport and reaction?

Scoresheet comments are written for the contest song and for the other song(s) and spoken material included within the package.

Penalties for performances that exceed this time are explained in *Sec. III-C: Penalties*. No penalties will be assessed for undertime; however, a performance that is significantly undertime may not be considered a complete package and will not receive a score for the Entertainment Package.

SOUND

Contest: Region # _____ ☐ Open Quartet ☐ Open Chorus ☐ Eval Only- Int'l Bound Contestant # _____
☐ Int'l Quartet Finals ☐ Int'l Chorus Finals ☐ Harmony Classic Date _____

CATEGORY CRITERIA (0-100 pts)

ENTERTAINMENT PACKAGE (0-100 pts)

CREATIVITY

Scripting/Concept
Imagination/Innovative Staging
Stagecraft (Use of Props/
Costumes/Lighting/Makeup)
Use of music to enhance theme

AUDIENCE CONNECTION

Mood/Emotion/Message
Well-rehearsed/Confident
Movement/Stagecraft
Character/Emcee/Soloist/Specialty
Mic Technique
Audience Response

Theme/Setting/Concept
Story Arc (Beginning-Middle-End)
Script/Organization
Pacing/Transitions/Blocking
Props/Costuming/Makeup

CONTEST SONG: _____ PACKAGE THEME: _____

One Song/Ent. Pkg. 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

One Song/Ent. Pkg. 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

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11/11/2019

CONTEST SONG

PACKAGE

TOTAL SCORE *

MUSIC

☐ Int'l Quartet Finals ☐ Int'l Chorus Finals ☐ Harmony Classic Date _____

ENTERTAINMENT PACKAGE (0-100 pts)

Musical Artistry

Props/Costuming/Makeup

Audience Response

[illegible]

TOTAL SCORE *

One Song/Ent. Pkg.	
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

EXPRESSION

Contest: Region # _____ ☐ Open Chorus ☐ Open Quartet ☐ Eval Only- Int'l Bound Contestant # _____
☐ Int'l Quartet Finals ☐ Int'l Chorus Finals ☐ Harmony Classic Date _____

ENTERTAINMENT PACKAGE (0-100 pts)

TECHNICAL ELEMENTS	ARTISTIC INTERPRETIVE PLAN	MUSICALITY	CREATIVITY
Vocal Skills	Lyric Flow	Vocal Skills/Accuracy	Scripting/Concept
Synchronization/Unity	Phrasing	Artistry	Imagination/Innovative Staging
Word Delivery	Forward Motion	Evokes Emotion/Story	Use of Props/Costumes/ Lighting/Makeup
Vowels	Embellishments	UNITY	Use of music to enhance theme
Diphthongs	Dynamics	Vocal	AUDIENCE CONNECTION
Consonants	Tempo/Rhythmic Elements	Visual	
Enunciation	Inflection	Energy	
Musicality	Energy	PLANNING	
	Finesse & Artistry	Theme/Setting/Concept	
	Characterization	Story/Message Arc	
		Script/Organization	Movement/Stagecraft
		Pacing/Transitions/Blocking	Character/Emcee/Soloist/Specialty
		Props/Costuming/Makeup	Mic Technique
			Audience Response

CONTEST SONG: _____ PACKAGE THEME: _____

One Song/Ent. Pkg. 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

One Song/Ent. Pkg.	
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

Signature _____

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TOTAL SCORE *

VISUAL COMMUNICATION

Contest: Region # _____ ☐ Open Chorus ☐ Open Quartet ☐ Eval Only- Int'l Bound Contestant # _____
☐ Int'l Quartet Finals ☐ Int'l Chorus Finals ☐ Harmony Classic Date _____

CATEGORY CRITERIA(0-100 pts)

ENTERTAINMENT PACKAGE (0-100 pts)

MUSICALITY

Vocal Skills/Accuracy
Artistry
Evokes Emotion/Story

UNITY

Vocal
Visual
Energy

PLANNING

Theme/Setting/Concept
Story/Message Arc
Script/Organization
Pacing/Transitions/Blocking
Props/Costuming/Makeup

CREATIVITY

Scripting/Concept
Imagination/Innovative Staging
Use of Props/Costumes/
Lighting/Makeup
Use of music to enhance theme

AUDIENCE CONNECTION

- Mood/Emotion/Message
- Well-rehearsed/Confident
- Movement/Stagecraft
- Character/Emcee/Soloist/Specialty
- Mic Technique
- Audience Response

CONTEST SONG: _____ PACKAGE THEME: _____

[illegible]

One Song/Ent. Pkg.	
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

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**(Intl Finals Open Division & Harmony Classic only)*
JSS-ENT-VIS Revised 01/22 • SWEET ADELINES INTERNATIONAL

CONTEST SONG

PACKAGE

TOTAL SCORE *

ENTERTAINMENT PACKAGE LEVEL – Musicality

A+ Superior (94-100)	A Nearly Perfect (86-93)	A- Excellent (80-85)
• Distinctive and identifiable sound that perfectly balances beauty and power • All creative elements matched seamlessly to musical and lyrical integrity, intent and authentic delivery • Demonstrates artistic restraint, keeping the audience captivated and wanting more • Intuitive sense in execution of Barbershop craft and style • Ensemble and soloists demonstrate superior vocal skills throughout	• Memorable melodies and harmonies encased in a beautiful fabric of clean singing, chord sparkle and meaningful lyrical delivery • Demonstrates understanding and care for composer's intent and message • Exceptional mastery of vocal skills throughout performance • Energy propels consistently and is intertwined with authentic message delivery	• High level of vocal skills usually in tune and fully energized • Barbershop style skillfully delivered with developing freedom and authenticity • Performers are involved in character and message with sincerity most of the time. • Minor lapses in authentic story-telling encased in creative and meaningful plans • Captivating musical delivery occurs, but not consistently
B+ Very Good (74-79)	B Good (66-73)	B- Satisfactory (60-65)
• Accomplished, energized vocal skills on display • Shared resonance and strong wall of sound with emerging consistency • BBS technique and musical and lyrical intent find meaningful unity in delivery • Characterization often adds to artistry and musicality • Engaging and energized, but not yet inspiring or captivating	• Demonstrates a group commitment to musical accuracy and shared vocal skills • Understanding of ensemble singing and part line requirements apparent • Good understanding of musical and lyrical structure and demands they bring • Technical delivery of expressive elements often detracts from overall message. • Good, but not inspiring	• Demonstrates some unified success in vocal and breathing skills • Musical and lyrical delivery contribute to the intended message • Uncontrolled energy and lack of stamina often detracts from consistent musical success • Attempts at dynamic variance and artistry hampered by lack of vocal and breath energy
C+ Acceptable (54-59)	C Fair (46-53)	C- Poor (40-45)
• Successful vocal skill delivery can be found individually at times, but lacks consistency and understanding among all singers • Tuning and synch errors affect overall musicality and inhibit audience connection to musical intent • Planning is apparent, but often sounds contrived or cannot be delivered successfully • Attempts at dynamic variance and artistry are hampered by inadequate vocal skills	• Singing often lacks an understanding of unified vocal skills • Frequent inaccuracies and out of tune singing • Musical efforts are generally individual and inconsistent in delivery • Little evidence of BBS craft or understanding of musical intent	• Vocal Skills are weak with many individual qualities apparent • Inadequate level of performance skills to create a positive musical experience • Planning lacks connection to current vocal skills and struggles to display the music's message and potential

Performances below C- are uncomfortable for the audience. Vocal skills are weak making any real evaluation of the performance difficult. Artistic efforts cannot be appreciated as the performers' level of vocal and performance capability makes it nearly impossible to interpret and communicate the message of the music.

Rev 10/20



ENTERTAINMENT PACKAGE LEVEL – Unity

A+ Superior (94-100)	A Nearly Perfect (86-93)	A- Excellent (80-85)
- Effortless, completely unified vocal and performance delivery throughout the ensemble - All musical and performance elements are performed with superior unity throughout - Performance completely transcends technique from every performer - Technical and artistic elements are totally unified to create a captivating performance from beginning to end - Music, script, staging, costuming and performance fuse together to create a completely unified message throughout	- Exceptionally free and open vocal & performance skills as a unit with rare exception - Tempos, characterization, energy, dynamics and authentic involvement are performed with excellent clarity across the unit - Performance consistently transcends technique throughout the unit - Technical & artistic elements are consistently unified to create an extremely cohesive and entertaining performance - Music, script, staging, costuming and performance consistently create a complete package and message throughout	- Strong and consistent vocal and performance skills throughout the unit - Tempos, dynamics, characterization, energy and authentic involvement in the music and story are demonstrated with a high degree of unity - Performance usually transcends technique throughout the unit - Technical and artistic elements are mostly unified to create a solid unit delivery and mostly consistent performance in all elements of entertainment - Music, script, staging, costuming and performance effectively build to a unified delivery of the message
B+ Very Good (74-79)	B Good (66-73)	B- Satisfactory (60-65)
- Accomplished vocal and performance skills throughout the unit - Tempos, dynamics, characterization, energy and involvement in the music and story are frequently delivered with a strong degree of unity - Performance often transcends technique throughout the unit - Technical and artistic elements are effectively combined to create a solid unit delivery - Music, script, staging, costuming and performance reveal intent and story, and are usually unified in concept and delivery	- Demonstrates a commitment to unified delivery in vocal and performance elements - Tempos, dynamics, characterization, energy and involvement in the music and story show understanding yet lack consistent unity in performance - Performance still reveals technique prominently instead of sincere delivery of the story/message as a unit - Music, script, stagecraft, costuming and performance still developing as a cohesive message/story within the unit	- Demonstrates promising individual vocal and performance skills to build a unit performance - Tempos, dynamics, characterization, energy and involvement in the music and story are developing across the unit - Performance reveals promising moments of unit delivery in music and message - Music, script, stagecraft, costuming and performance beginning to develop a cohesive, unified message
C+ Acceptable (54-59)	C Fair (46-53)	C- Poor (40-45)
- Demonstrates an acceptable level of unity in vocal and performance skills, but lacks consistency and comfort in performance - Tempos, dynamics, characterization, energy and involvement in the music and story are appearing yet ensemble lacks confidence, ease and unity. - Unit approach in music, performance preparation, scripting and theme is developing	- Vocal and performance skill development has begun, but lacks unity - Delivery of music, script and theme is approached individually rather than as a unit - Delivery of tempos and dynamics lack unity much of the time - Lack of ensemble approach to musical plans, script or theme	- Vocal skills are weak, with some work apparent - Performance is lacking necessary level for a real musical experience for the listener and performer - Planning is faulty, and fails to take advantage of the potential of the music

Performances below C- are uncomfortable for the audience. Vocal skills are weak making any real evaluation of the performance difficult. Artistic efforts cannot be appreciated as the performers' level of vocal and performance capability makes it nearly impossible to interpret and communicate the message of the music.

ENTERTAINMENT PACKAGE LEVEL – Planning

A+ Superior (94-100)	A Nearly Perfect (86-93)	A- Excellent (80-85)
- Original, innovative approach to all aspects of planning the scene, which showcases the performers' abilities - Visual aids, lighting, props, staging, makeup/grooming all planned to bring total transformation on stage - Music, script, and timing are planned to perfection, allowing audience to be fully immersed beyond distraction - Impeccable flow of story and music, along with visual pageantry, to showcase a theatrical moment	- Unique and creative approach demonstrated in the creative plan, which suits the performers' abilities - Effective plan for lighting, props; great attention to detail in makeup/costuming; physical elements enhance or do not detract from the performance - Music planned to further the script/storyline, and is executed without interruption of the action onstage	- Musical plans, script and visual effects all well-designed, and generally suited to the performers' skills - Script is well planned and delivered with ease and aplomb by speakers –minor breaks in pacing disturb the momentum of the action onstage - Lighting, props, or other special effects are designed to enhance performance with some degree of expertise - Performers able to embody the scene and character with little evidence of technique or mechanical presentation
B+ Very Good (74-79)	B Good (66-73)	B- Satisfactory (60-65)
- Accomplished musical plans and performance skills on display throughout the performance - Script may be clever and well-planned, but the story arc may not always be successfully resolved - The plans for story and staging reveal the intent of the scene, and are enhanced by the costuming, props, and characterization of the performers - Performers able to “step into” the story and character, but some remnant of technicality mars a truly transcendent performance	- Creative planning that demonstrates interesting and clever concepts - Music, script, staging, costuming still under development - Performers are comfortable with the plan, but some demands of the script, music or staging plan may be beyond their skill - Audience may notice flaws and difficulties, but is engaged and enjoying the performance - Glimpses of skill and achievement in these technical elements, but not always fully embodied by the performers	- Plan apparent with some effective moments in performance - Promising blending of music, script, staging, costuming into a cohesive performance - Skills stable enough to allow some success in carrying out the performance plan - Audience begins to root for the performers' success
C+ Acceptable (54-59)	C Fair (46-53)	C- Poor (40-45)
- Plan is evident but demonstrates limited creativity - Musical and stagecraft efforts in need of further development - Glimpses of success in performance by entertainers, but overshadowed by limitations of technical skills - Audience attention often wanders	- Plan is apparent but not cohesive - Intent of music selection, script, physical plan is unclear much of the time - Performers not able to fully embrace the musical and stagecraft plans, causing many awkward moments - Audience may miss key points of the performance as their attention comes and goes	- Plan is weak or nonexistent - Script is disjointed and may be awkwardly planned to bridge between unrelated songs - Performers are uncomfortable and not able to execute the plan effectively - Movement of performers onstage is stilted or awkward - Audience is uncomfortable with performance

Performances below C- are uncomfortable for the audience. Vocal skills are weak making any real evaluation of the performance difficult. Artistic efforts cannot be appreciated as the performers' level of vocal and performance capability makes it nearly impossible to interpret and communicate the message of the music.

ENTERTAINMENT PACKAGE LEVEL – Creativity

A+ Superior (94-100)	A Nearly Perfect (86-93)	A- Excellent (80-85)
• Original, innovative approach to all aspects of planning • Visual aids, lighting, props, choreography, makeup/grooming bring total transformation on stage • Technical and artistic elements creatively combined in a flawless performance from beginning to end • Music, script, and timing are performed with ease, allowing audience to be fully embraced beyond distraction	• Unique and creative approach demonstrated in visual and musical plans • Effective use of lighting, props, including giving great detail to makeup and costuming, all cleverly illustrated allowing spontaneity and freedom in the performance • Demonstrates deep understanding of composer's intent of each song and message • Overall performance builds to an exciting climax that leaves the audience fully invested in the emotion and message of the music	• Creativity apparent in musical plans, script and visual effects • Lighting, props, or other special effects enhance performance with some degree of expertise • Performers are well prepared in the execution of the plan
B+ Very Good (74-79)	B Good (66-73)	B- Satisfactory (60-65)
• Accomplished musical plans and performance skills throughout the performance • The plans, such as costuming and performance, reveal intent of story and demonstrates preparation in concept and delivery • Performance occasionally transcends technique throughout the unit	• Creative planning that demonstrates interesting and enjoyable moments • Performers are comfortable with the plan, though not fully involved • Music, script, staging, costuming still under development	• Plan beginning to develop with some effective moments • Promising beginnings of music, script, staging, costuming combining into a cohesive performance • Promising individual vocal and performance skills on display
C+ Acceptable (54-59)	C Fair (46-53)	C- Poor (40-45)
• Plan is acceptable and demonstrates occasionally interesting moments • Musical and visual efforts in need of further development • Glimpses of emotional, authentic involvement in music but overshadowed by individual concerns in musical elements	• Plan is adequate but creativity very limited • Performers have not fully embraced the musical and visual plans causing many awkward moments to occur • Intent of musical plans, script, or theme is unclear much of the time	• Plan is weak and ineffective • Musical and spoken efforts barely acceptable • Performers are uncomfortable and are not able to execute the plan effectively

Performances below C- are uncomfortable for the audience. Vocal skills are weak making any real evaluation of the performance difficult. Artistic efforts cannot be appreciated as the performers' level of vocal and performance capability makes it nearly impossible to interpret and communicate the message of the music.

ENTERTAINMENT PACKAGE LEVEL – Audience Connection

A+ Superior (94-100)	A Nearly Perfect (86-93)	A- Excellent (80-85)
- Performance transcends in all areas of communication: musical, lyrical, emotional, & visual message - Both audience & performer transcend time & place and enter into a shared performance experience - Superb command. Impeccable visual performance that is breathtaking. - Impeccable stagecraft elements flawlessly interwoven with the music completely transport the audience.	- Performer is invested in all aspects of the performance and audience is occasionally transported to another time & place - Total command & complete involvement in character of story that exudes joy in performance. - Stagecraft is fully understood & embraced in support of the musical story with only minor lapses.	- Audience remains involved in performance, feeling included in both the idea, planning, and execution of the performance - Performance reflects authenticity & demonstrates concern for the audience. - Audience is involved in the performance & responds to the genuineness of the performer. - Character & personality well defined & projected with strong rapport. High energy consistently on parade. - Stagecraft elements such as staging, lighting, movement, body language & use of props strengthen audience connection with only occasional lapses.
B+ Very Good (74-79)	B Good (66-73)	B- Satisfactory (60-65)
- Creativity & concern for musical, lyrical, & emotional message evidenced regularly. - Use of props & staging designed to interest/entertain audience - Performer's preparation & involvement is evident and sustained moments of audience rapport are evident. - Confidence & command apparent. Character & body language have high level of energy with only minor lapses. - Stagecraft elements including the use of props, staging, movement, & lighting designed to interest/entertain audience. Execution is embraced by most.	- Lyrical & musical connection emerging but lacks emotional connection. - Audience engagement comes & goes but is energized when increased performer involvement is obvious. - Inconsistent energy. Moments of identification with the character & emotional story, but depth of character lacking overall. - Stagecraft plan is apparent, but may be incongruent with musical/lyrical message. Authenticity and meaning are emergent.	- Plan is evident, but execution of emotional message is pedestrian or lacks sincerity. - Inconsistencies in the performance affect audience engagement - Characterization & personality emerging. Energy & command inconsistent. - Stagecraft plan is evident, but doesn't fully support the musical story. Inconsistencies are evident in delivery and execution.
C+ Acceptable (54-59)	C Fair (46-53)	C- Poor (40-45)
- Rare glimpses of involvement from the performer - Audience is observing, rather than participating in the performance as an emotional experience - Moments of command & characterization apparent, but sporadic energy affects performance. - Efforts to design a stagecraft plan are evident, but sporadically embraced & executed. Props and movement distract, rather than support.	- Musical, lyrical, emotional, and visual message not in evidence. - Produces uncomfortable nervous laughter and audience may be fidgety. - More confidence needed to demonstrate unique plans vs. imitation. - Stagecraft plan is vague or cumbersome and misaligned interfering with sharing the musical story.	- Performers are uncomfortable most of the time or skill level doesn't support performance enthusiasm. - Entertainment value not apparent making the audience unwilling participants - Tentative stage persona which affects energy & clarity in performance character. - No stagecraft plan is evident.

Performances below C- are uncomfortable for the audience. Vocal skills are weak making any real evaluation of the performance difficult. Artistic efforts cannot be appreciated as the performers' level of vocal and performance capability makes it nearly impossible to interpret and communicate the message of the music.

RESOURCES

BOOKS

American Academy of Teachers of Singing. Terminology in the Field of Singing. New York: G. Schirmer, Inc., 1969.

Brodnitz, Friedrich S., M.D. Keep Your Voice Healthy. Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, 1973.

Henderson, Larra Browning. How to Train Singers. West Nyack, New York: Parker Publishing Company, Inc., 1979.

Klein, Joseph J. Singing Technique. Anaheim, California: National Music Publishers, 1973.

Matthay, Tobias. Musical Interpretation. Boston: G. Schirmer, Inc., 1914.

Ross, Raymond S., Ph.D. Speech Communication. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1974.

Stanton, Royal. The Dynamic Choral Conductor. Delaware Water Gap, Pa.: Shawnee Press, Inc., 1971.

Uris, Dorothy. To Sing in English. New York: Boosey and Hawkes, 1971.

Vennard, William. Singing the Mechanism and the Technic. New York: Carl Fischer, Inc., 1967.

Westerman, Kenneth N. Emergent Voice. 2nd ed. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Carol F. Westerman, 1955.

Whitfield, Jane Shaw. Songwriters Rhyming Dictionary. No. Hollywood, California: Wilshire Book Company, 1978.

Wilder, Alec. American Popular Song. New York: Oxford University Press, 1972.

GUIDELINES FOR SELF-EVALUATION

Two guidelines for self-evaluation — Evaluating Your Contest Performance and Guidelines for Raising Your Performance Level — are provided to each competing quartet and chorus at regional and international competitions.

EVALUATING YOUR CONTEST PERFORMANCE

1. Read all judges' scoresheets.
2. Check your scores for each category. What level are they? (A+, A, B+ B, C+, etc.)
3. Check the official tabulation to locate your overall placement.
4. Analyze the placements of all contestants by each individual judge.
5. Play your contest tape while you read the scoresheet comments.
6. For comparison, play one of your last rehearsal tapes before competition.
7. Note the one-time errors — those due to unusual circumstances before or during the contest, those due to nerves, etc.
8. List your strengths as indicated on the scoresheets, e.g., "good contest material chosen," "good overall accuracy," etc.
9. List areas needing improvement, e.g., "choppy phrasing," "need more breath support," "not enough dynamics," etc.
10. Note the areas in which there has been improvement since your last competition.
11. Give more consideration to your relative placement in the contest and to your scoring levels than to whether your numerical scores are higher or lower than last year.
12. Set some specific goals for the coming year. Some possible examples:
 - A. Decide to improve in at least *one* area mentioned on the scoresheets.
 - B. Consider getting outside coaching assistance.
 - C. Select contest music earlier.
 - D. Use a tape recorder regularly at rehearsals.
 - E. Accept more performances.
 - F. For choruses, hold regular section rehearsals.
 - G. Ask your Education Coordinator for specific craft classes for your chorus or for the region.

13. After considering all of the above, if you still have questions, write to your judges within 30 days after your contest date. (Judges are permitted to destroy their copies of scoresheets after that time.) It has been suggested that contestants writing to the music judge include a copy of the tape of their performance and a copy of the arrangement. Please send a copy of any correspondence to Competition Services at international headquarters.

**TABLE OF ENGLISH VOWEL SOUNDS AND
INTERNATIONAL PHONETIC ALPHABET**

<u>DICTIONARY</u>	<u>IPA</u>	<u>KEY WORDS</u>
ē	i	we, see, keyed
ĩ	I	sit, is, kid
ā	e	late, same, cade
ě	ε	let, end, ked
ǣ	æ	hat, man, cad
ī	aI	high, my, kite
ä	ɑ	spot, hot, cod
ŭ	A	love, done, cud
ə	ə	about, sofa
ûr	ɜ^	girl, world, curd
ōō	u	moon, fool, cooed
ū	ju	mute, few, cued
oo	U	look, foot, could
ō	o	go, foe, code
ô	ɔ	law, fall, cawed
oi	ɔI	joy, foil
ou	au	now, foul

PERFORMANCE LEVEL GUIDELINES – SOUND CATEGORY

A+ Superior (94-100)	A Nearly Perfect (86-93)	A- Excellent (80-85)
FOCUS AREA: PERFORMANCE MAGIC Complete mastery of vocal skills demonstrated Tuning of all chords is instant and immaculate Ensemble sound is impeccably blended and ringing Flawless delivery of vowels with matched resonance Barbershop balance is always present Seamless vocal lines flow on a river of energy Artistry and musicality showcase the barbershop style Performance is totally captivating	FOCUS AREA: ARTISTRY Exceptional mastery of vocal skills demonstrated All chords instantly tuned into locked, ringing, blended ensemble sound Vowels carry continuous sound with matched resonance Balance maintained at all dynamic levels and ranges Seamless vocal lines consistently energized and flowing Strong sense of barbershop style with artistry and character Performance consistently transcends technique	FOCUS AREA: MUSICALITY High level of vocal skill mastery is demonstrated Chords consistently tuned into locked, ringing ensemble sound Vowels effortlessly produced with matched resonance Balance usually maintained throughout performance Vocal lines usually seamless and fully energized Strong sense of barbershop style usually evident Performance starting to transcend technique; only fleeting moments of concentration/technique showing
B+ Very Good (74-79)	B Good (66-73)	B- Promising (60-65)
FOCUS AREA: MASTERY Strong vocal skills demonstrated; confident delivery Minor lapses in tuning and synch affect chord accuracy Minor errors in vowel production and resonance match inhibit ringing ensemble sound Balance generally consistent throughout the performance Vocal lines well energized and supported with minor lapses Artistry and musicality beginning to outweigh technique Vocal character emerging	FOCUS AREA: CONSISTENCY Vocal skills strong but not habitual Solid sound overall, but chords not consistently locked Minor synch problems affect chord accuracy Most vowels matched/properly resonated; some ring evident Balance may suffer at extreme ranges and dynamic levels Energy and support for vocal lines inconsistent across the ensemble Technique still evident and generally overrides artistry Integration of skills not yet present	FOCUS AREA: ACHIEVEMENT Vocal skills generally good but inconsistent in performance Vocal lines occasionally supported Occasional minor intonation and tuning problems Occasional synch problems affect chord accuracy Vowels initially matched but not consistently resonated; sporadic ring/overtone Balance adjustments inconsistent Energy inconsistent Focus on technique inhibits attempts at artistry and character
C+ Satisfactory (54-59)	C Fair (46-53)	C- Poor (40-45)
FOCUS AREA: UNITY Work on vocal skills apparent, but still unreliable Periodic intonation and tuning problems Synch problems affect ensemble sound and unity Errors in vowel production and resonance match Balance achieved in mid-range, but not yet at extremes Energy sporadic, with lack of consistent support Occasional glimpses of vocal artistry and character; attempts sometimes successful	FOCUS AREA: ACCURACY Vocal skills understood, but application inconsistent Frequent intonation and tuning errors, some wrong notes Part inaccuracies detract from blended ensemble sound Frequent synch problems impact chord alignment/accuracy Vowels occasionally match in passing, but not sustained Balance inconsistent due to vocal limitations Energy level weak, breath stamina inadequate for the demands of the music Attempts at artistry and character masked by vocal problems	FOCUS AREA: SKILL BUILDING Vocal skills weak Individual vocal qualities override ensemble sound Tuning, accuracy and intonation errors Frequent wrong notes apparent, inhibiting unit sound Synch problems keep chords from aligning Vowels generally lack common approach or resonance Barbershop balance not achieved or maintained Vocal energy rarely demonstrated Attempts at vocal artistry or character not yet apparent
D+ Weak (34-39) • D Very Weak (26-33) • D- Very Poor (20-25)		
Performances below C- are uncomfortable for the audience. Vocal skills are underdeveloped and chord accuracy is rarely demonstrated, making any real evaluation of the performance difficult. Artistic efforts cannot be appreciated as the performers' level of vocal and performance capability makes it nearly impossible to interpret and perform the music.		

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PERFORMANCE LEVEL GUIDELINES – MUSIC CATEGORY

A+ Superior (94-100)	A Nearly Perfect (86-93)	A- Excellent (80-85)
FOCUS AREA: PERFORMANCE MAGIC Complete mastery of vocal skills demonstrated Highly creative song/arr. that showcases barbershop style Song, arrangement, and performer seamlessly integrated Tuning of all chords is instant and impeccable All elements synergistically unified Highly creative interpretive plan, intuitive & compelling Artistic delivery epitomizes the barbershop style Performance completely transcends technique	FOCUS AREA: ARTISTRY Exceptional mastery of vocal skills demonstrated Creative, strong barbershop song/arrangement Song/arrangement embodied by the performer All chords instantly tuned into locked, musical unit Outstanding musical unity Creative interpretive plan executed instinctively Strong sense of barbershop style with artistry & finesse Performance consistently transcends technique	FOCUS AREA: MUSICALITY High level of proficiency in vocal skills demonstrated Strong barbershop song/arrangement Song/arrangement showcases performer 's skills Chords usually tuned into locked, musical unit Well-unified musical performance Strong execution of creative interpretive plan Strong sense of barbershop style with consistent energy Performance usually transcends technique
B+ Very Good (74-79)	B Good (66-73)	B- Promising (60-65)
FOCUS AREA: MASTERY Strong vocal skills demonstrated Good song/arr. highlights hallmarks of barbershop Song/arr. may present minor challenges to performer Minor tuning errors affect chord clarity Strong unity, occasional synch errors affect chords Interpretive plan well designed, lacks vocal freedom Artistry beginning to emerge over technique	FOCUS AREA: CONSISTENCY Good vocal skills, but not habitual Good song/arr. highlights hallmarks of barbershop Song/arr. demands occasionally impact performance Occasional tuning errors affect chord clarity Good unity, minor synch errors affect chords Focus on technique interferes with delivery of good plan Some achievement in artistry and finesse evident	FOCUS AREA: ACHIEVEMENT Vocal skills generally good, but inconsistent Good song/arr. highlights hallmarks of barbershop Song/arr. presents some challenges to the performer Frequent minor tuning errors affect chord clarity Generally good unity, frequent synch errors Good basic interpretive plan impeded by skill level Attempts at artistry inhibited by skill level
C+ Satisfactory (54-59)	C Fair (46-53)	C- Poor (40-45)
FOCUS AREA: UNITY Work on vocal skills apparent, but still in progress Song/arr. meets the basic requirements of barbershop style Song/arr. mismatch to skills often result in errors Consistent minor tuning problems impact chord clarity Sense of musical unity present, but inconsistent Interpretive plan evident, energy inconsistent Mechanical delivery overrides attempts at artistry	FOCUS AREA: ACCURACY Vocal skills understood, but application inconsistent Song/arr. meets the basic requirements of barbershop style Song/arr. may be too difficult for current skills Tuning problems and some wrong notes impact chords Emerging musical unit destabilized by synch problems Interpretive plan sometimes apparent, lacks energy Artistry is elusive until technical elements improve	FOCUS AREA: SKILL BUILDING Vocal skills weak, but beginnings of work apparent Song/arr. meets the basic requirements of barbershop style Song/arr. overwhelms developing skills Consistent tuning problems, wrong notes affect chords Consistent lack of chord alignment/unity Interpretive plan is missing or too difficult, energy absent Artistry is elusive until technical elements improve
D+ Weak (34-39), D Very Weak (26-33), D- Very Poor (20-25)		
Performances at the D Level are uncomfortable for the audience. Vocal skills are underdeveloped, and chord accuracy is rarely demonstrated, making any real evaluation of the performance difficult. Artistic efforts cannot be appreciated as the performers' level of vocal and performance capability makes it nearly impossible to interpret and perform the music.		

PERFORMANCE LEVEL GUIDELINES – EXPRESSION CATEGORY

A+ Superior (94-100)	A Nearly Perfect (86-93)	A- Excellent (80-85)
FOCUS AREA: PERFORMANCE MAGIC Complete mastery of vocal skills demonstrated Exemplary performance of open, matched vowels Flawless unit word delivery Flawless execution of masterful interpretive plan Excellent use of barbershop style and vocal drama Strong emotional communication captivates audience Performance fully transcends technique	FOCUS AREA: ARTISTRY Exceptional mastery of vocal skills demonstrated Vowels and diphthongs fully matched and resonated Total unity evident in word delivery Excellent interpretive plan consistently performed as unit Artistic use of stylistic elements and vocal textures Strong character and genuine involvement in message Performance consistently transcends technique	FOCUS AREA: MUSICALITY High level of proficiency in vocal skills demonstrated Vowels consistently matched as a unit Consistent vertical alignment of word elements Minor flaws in execution of strong interpretive plan Strong sense of unit delivery in barbershop style High degree of involvement in character and message Performance usually transcends technique
B+ Very Good (74-79)	B Good (66-73)	B- Promising (60-65)
FOCUS AREA: MASTERY Strong vocal skills demonstrated Minor internal synch problems Occasional problems in vowel alignment Interpretive plan well designed, minor flaws in execution Artistry and finesse frequently evident Genuine involvement in communication of message Artistry beginning to emerge over technique	FOCUS AREA: CONSISTENCY Vocal skills strong but not habitual Internal synch problems with consonants and diphthongs Most vowels well matched, some consonant interference Good interpretive plan, but inconsistent unit delivery Some glimpses of artistry and finesse Inconsistent unit involvement in message Technique still evident & generally overrides artistry	FOCUS AREA: ACHIEVEMENT Vocal skills generally good but inconsistent Frequent internal synch problems with word elements Vowels initially matched but not sustained as unit Good interpretive plan, but stronger unit needed Artistry only evident as part of technique Emotional involvement overshadowed by technique Focus on technique inhibits attempts at artistry
C+ Satisfactory (54-59)	C Fair (46-53)	C- Poor (40-45)
FOCUS AREA: UNITY Work on vocal skills apparent, but still in progress Consistent problems with internal synch Vowels not aligned as a unit, consonants interfere Interpretive plan evident but not executed as a unit Sporadic energy with lack of consistent stamina Insufficient support for effective stylistic use Concern with technique overrides sincere involvement	FOCUS AREA: ACCURACY Vocal skills understood, but application inconsistent Frequent internal and external synch errors Vowels need unit approach to resonated production Interpretive plan emerges, but stronger support needed Vocal energy weak, choppy delivery results Stronger vocal skills needed to convey barbershop style Communication rarely reaches beyond footlights	FOCUS AREA: SKILL BUILDING Vocal skills weak, but beginnings of work apparent Consistent synch problems Vowels need free, unit approach to production Interpretive plan needs stronger vocal skills Phrase delivery choppy due to lack of energy & support Attempts at style lack musicality Nerves impair successful emotional communication
D+ Weak (34-39), D Very Weak (26-33), D- Very Poor (20-25)		
Performances at the D Level are uncomfortable for the audience. Vocal skills are underdeveloped and chord accuracy is rarely demonstrated, making any real evaluation of the performance difficult. Artistic efforts cannot be appreciated as the performers' level of vocal and performance capability makes it nearly impossible to interpret and perform the music.		

PERFORMANCE LEVEL GUIDELINES – VISUAL COMMUNICATION CATEGORY

A+ Superior (94-100)	A Nearly Perfect (86-93)	A- Excellent (80-85)
FOCUS AREA: PERFORMANCE MAGIC Complete mastery of vocal skills demonstrated Impeccable and unforgettable stage presence Magnetically compelling characterization & physical expression Audience totally captivated throughout Energized visual performance breathtaking! Impeccable visual plan supports and enhances music Visual musicality & artistry completely transcend technique	FOCUS AREA: ARTISTRY Exceptional mastery of vocal skills demonstrated Captivating stage presence and star quality on display Authentic characterization and physical expression High degree of audience connection High level of energy exudes joy of performing Visual plan design strongly enhances musical plan Visual artistry and musicality evident most of the time	FOCUS AREA: MUSICALITY High level of proficiency in vocal skills demonstrated Charismatic & effortless stage presence most of the time Characterization and physical expression well defined and naturally projected Strong connection with the audience High degree of energy consistently demonstrated Visual plan design reinforces musical plan Visual musicality mostly evident; fleeting moments of technique
B+ Very Good (74-79)	B Good (66-73)	B- Promising (60-65)
FOCUS AREA: MASTERY Strong vocal skills demonstrated & musicality emerging Strong stage presence and exploring personal charisma Strong visual unity with minor distractions Characterization and engaging physical expression maintained throughout Consistent level of audience connection High level of energy with minor lapses Creative visual plan design that generally supports music	FOCUS AREA: CONSISTENCY Vocal skills strong but still inconsistent Comfortable on stage and generally confident Good visual unity but need further improvement Moments of characterization and natural physical expression Audience connection is good but inconsistent Inconsistent energy level across ensemble Good visual plan design that does not interfere with music	FOCUS AREA: ACHIEVEMENT Vocal skills generally good but inconsistent Stage presence is evident but inconsistent in group & performance Need higher degree of visual unity to limit distractions Some evidence of characterization & involved physical expression Audience beginning to become interested Energy level shows peaks and valleys throughout performance Minor flaws in the design of the visual plan
C+ Satisfactory (54-59)	C Fair (46-53)	C- Poor (40-45)
FOCUS AREA: UNITY Work on vocal skills apparent, but still in progress Moments of confidence support beginnings of stage presence Inconsistent visual unity across ensemble Lack of consistency in characterization/physical expression Increasing attempts at audience connection sometimes successful Energy sporadic, but frequent attempts evident A visual plan apparent, but not always effective	FOCUS AREA: ACCURACY Vocal skills understood but inconsistent and more stamina needed Stage presence tentative and inconsistent Lack of ensemble approach creates visual distraction Little attempt at characterization or natural physical expression Some attempt at audience connection Energy level insufficient Visual plan evident, but may conflict with musical plan	FOCUS AREA: SKILL BUILDING Vocal skills weak and lack of stamina evident Stage presence is insecure Visual unity lacking and is completely individual in approach No projection of characterization or natural physical expression No attempt at audience connection Some attempts at performance energy Visual plan often conflicts with music
D+ Weak (34-39), D Very Weak (26-33), D- Very Poor (20-25)		
Performances at the D Level are uncomfortable for the audience. Vocal skills are underdeveloped and chord accuracy is rarely demonstrated, making any real evaluation of the performance difficult. Artistic efforts cannot be appreciated as the performers' level of vocal and performance capability makes it nearly impossible to interpret and perform the music.		