



## MUSIC CATEGORY

*The Music Category judges the musical performance of the song and arrangement, evaluating its suitability to the Barbershop Style and your musicianship in bringing the song and arrangement to life.*

### **Overview of the 5 key performance elements of the Music category:**

**(i) Consonance, (ii) Theme, (iii) Embellishment, (iv) Delivery, (v) Execution**

**D Level: 1-40 : Evidence of musicianship is rare or awkward**

<b>Characteristics of this score</b>	<b>Ways to improve</b>
Scores for this level are for performances that suffer from limited understanding of the musical elements with constant distractions.	Ensure notes are learnt accurately. Seek opportunities for education in the barbershop style.
The music may be poorly suited to the performer.	Ensure music selected is within the current capabilities of performers – seek advice from Music Judges if unsure.
The performance may suffer from frequent tuning errors, making it hard to identify the intended harmony (chords).	Ensure notes are learnt accurately, and that basic good singing techniques are learnt to support the musical delivery.
Limited or no understanding of the use of embellishments, (e.g. swipes, echoes etc). The delivery may conflict with the music, reflecting a lack of understanding and control of its elements.	Listen to good examples of barbershop, spending time thinking about how the harmony parts are supporting the melody and how the swipes and echoes are used to enhance the music. Ensure the relevant voice-part singers know what their embellishment is intended to achieve in terms of musical flow.
The primary musical theme (strength) may be ambiguous or indiscernible. i.e. Melody, Rhythm, Harmony, or Lyric.	Have members agree on the primary musical strength of the song by considering each of the options – read the lyrics, sing the melody and harmony to a neutral syllable, if an up-tempo song does it have a strong underlying pulse that drives the song. Decide which musical theme (see left) should have the dominant role and ensure that the musical plan supports the chosen theme and is within the capabilities of the performers to deliver successfully.

***To progress from a D to a C score; the performers need to ensure basic singing skills are in place, notes are sung accurately and opportunities in the arrangement are recognised and demonstrate the barbershop style.***



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**C Level: 41-60 : Evidence of musicianship is present but inconsistent.**

Characteristics of this score	Ways to improve
C-level scores (41 to 60) are for performances that reflect some understanding of the musical elements, with distractions appearing often in the performance. These could be related to tuning, the musical plan or its delivery.	Ensure notes are learnt and sung accurately, pay attention to the tuning of every chord. Seek educational opportunities in the barbershop style.
For scores over 50 the general level of accuracy is adequate and most musical elements are distinguishable.	Work on ensuring that skills learnt are delivered more consistently. Listen to good examples of barbershop, analyse how the harmony parts support the melody and how the arranger has placed swipes/echoes to enhance the music.
For scores under 50 there will be more inaccuracies occurring and some musical elements may be unclear or misunderstood by the performers.	Work on ensuring that basic singing techniques are learnt to support the musical delivery. Listen to good examples of barbershop, analyse how the harmony parts support the melody and how the arranger has placed swipes/echoes to enhance the music.
The song's theme is inconsistently supported by the performance.	Agree on the primary musical strength of the song by considering each of the options – read the lyrics, sing the melody and harmony to a neutral syllable; if an up-tempo is there a strong underlying pulse that drives the song? Decide which should have the predominant role and ensure that the musical plan consistently supports the chosen theme.
For scores in the middle of the range (~ 50), the degree of consonance (good tuning, lock and ring) may be intermittent, but most chords and harmonic progression are distinguishable.	Ensure notes are learnt and sung accurately, pay attention to the tuning of every chord.
For scores over 50 the embellishments generally tend to support the song, although there may be some missed opportunities. The delivery of musical elements may have some sensitivity.	Identify the embellishments and work out the purpose of each one in relation to the chosen musical theme, and the needs of the song and arrangement. If unsure, try out all the ideas and options, and seek advice if necessary.
For scores under 50 the embellishments may not support the song, and there may be some misunderstanding. The delivery of musical elements may be mechanical, needing more sensitivity.	
At the top of the range, some aspects of the performance may be at the B level, but other aspects display inconsistency.	Regularly record and review your rehearsal performance and identify areas where skills need consolidation across the group.
Music may be an imperfect fit to the performer.	Ensure that material chosen for contest highlights skills that you have mastered and does not expose your current weaknesses. Seek advice from Music Judges if unsure.

***To progress from a C to a B score; the performers need to perform at a more consistent level.***



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**B Level: 61-80 : Good musicianship is demonstrated by effective and sensitive performances.**

<b>Characteristics of this score</b>	<b>Ways to improve</b>
B-level scores (61 to 80) are for performances that frequently demonstrate a good mastery of the musical elements. The music is generally well suited to the performers. The theme of the song is well communicated, but technique is generally apparent in the delivery.	Focus on fine tuning to maintain consistency and unity within parts and across the group. Seek educational opportunities to learn how to produce more expansion and gain further understanding of devices used in barbershop arrangements.
The upper range of B scores (74+ ) is for performances that have only a few minor distractions. Part of the performance may be at the A level, but the performers do not achieve the high level of consistency or artistry required for an A score. Technique is likely to be evident.	Increase musical understanding of all members through education and support, and develop technical skills to the point of unconscious competence, so that full attention can be given to the artistic delivery of the performance of the song and arrangement.
In a performance in the mid-range of B (67 to 73) points), the harmony is generally consonant (good tuning, lock and ring), with harmony clearly distinguishable, and the embellishments tastefully support the song. The performance generally reflects understanding of, and sensitivity to the music, with high musicality in its best moments. The musical elements are generally executed accurately though there may be some minor distractions. At this level groups may attain similar scores due to mastery of different musical elements while needing further development in other areas.	If consistent consonance needs more attention, work on fine tuning and balance of every chord in the song. Develop knowledge of why certain chords may have been chosen by the arranger at particular points in the song.
	All singers need to develop understanding of the role of their voice part at every point of the song, particularly embellishments, in order to maximise the musical potential of the song and arrangement.
In the lower range of B performances (61-66), the performance is good, but there may be some distractions and occasional examples of C-level performance. At this level groups may attain similar scores due to competency in different musical elements while needing further development in other areas.	Consolidate all basic singing skills and seek external support and coaching to help highlight and address particular areas for improvement.
In the lower range of B performances there may be a mismatch between the demands of the arrangement and the competence of the performing group.	Ensure that material chosen for contest highlights skills that you have mastered and does not expose your current weaknesses. Seek advice from Music Judges if unsure.

***To progress from a B to an A score; the performers need to perform at a more consistent and artistic level that transcends technique.***



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**A Level: 81-100 : Excellent musicianship is demonstrated by consistent and increasingly artistic performances.**

<b>Characteristics of this score</b>	<b>Ways to improve</b>
A-level scores (81 to 100) are given to excellent performances that feature the hallmarks of the barbershop style and which display the most consistent musicality. There are very few distractions. Artistry becomes increasingly evident.	Pay attention to all aspects of the performance to remove remaining distractions. Work to make the performance of the song your own. Consider commissioning arrangements to suit the character and particular strengths of the group. Develop musical knowledge, confidence and creativity through analysing excellent examples of barbershop performances and by seeking appropriate specialist support.
The rare and significant artistic performance at the upper range of A (93+) displays consistently artistic embellishments in support of a continuous theme presented with the highest degree of musicality.	Pay attention to all aspects of the performance to remove remaining distractions.
A performance earning a mid-range A score (87 to 93) features an outstanding mastery of the musical elements, resulting in an excellent performance. The harmony is wonderfully consonant, ringing, and pleasing, reflecting excellent intonation and proper balance. The embellishments artistically support the song's theme. The delivery is marked by superb musicality. The musical elements are executed with great accuracy. The song is sung from the heart and its theme is communicated throughout, resulting in the listener's total involvement. There are almost no distractions. The music is extremely well suited to the performers.	Pay attention to all aspects of the performance to remove remaining distractions and apply finesse. Seek appropriate specialist support.
In a performance at the low end of the A range (81-86), occasional minor distractions may still occur but the overall level of performance is consistently excellent and has some pleasing artistic merit.	Pay attention to all aspects of the performance to remove remaining distractions such as occasional sync errors, chords out of balance, musical choices or limitations in the written musical arrangement. Every individual performer needs to understand and take ownership of the role played by their own part as well as have some understanding of the roles played by other voice parts at every point in the song. Seek appropriate specialist support.