

4 MUSICALITY CATEGORY

I. INTRODUCTION

A. The Musicality Category

Merriam-Webster defines **musicality** as “sensitivity to, knowledge of, or talent for music.” The Musicality category judges the degree to which performances demonstrate musicality in the barbershop style. The category assesses the musicianship demonstrated in bringing the song and arrangement to life. Further, the category assesses the ensemble’s skill in accurately and artistically delivering music in the barbershop style. The best examples of musicality in the barbershop style will feature:

- a) Music suited to the ensemble
- b) An ensemble that both understands and demonstrates intent and perspective in developing the music
- c) The key elements that define the barbershop style

Guiding principles of musicality in both compositions and performances, including tension/release, unity/contrast, and theme/variation, are common across most musical styles. Implementing these guiding principles in the development of a rewarding musical journey requires sensitivity to the song and arrangement’s **musical parameters**. Skillful musicians incorporate parameters such as melody, harmony, rhythm, lyrics, tone color, dynamics, and embellishments in their delivery of the music. The Musicality category assesses the marriage of technical elements, such as precise execution of harmony and rhythm, and artistic elements, such as shape, inflection, destination within a phrase, and overall arc and development of the music. Performances exhibiting high levels of musicality feature a purposeful performer, informed by the composer, lyricist and arranger, effectively integrating and skillfully delivering these core concepts.

Barbershop is not a musical genre; it is a **style** of arranging and delivery that can be applied to multiple genres of music. Every musical style has aspects which are indigenous to, and expected within, the style. The Musicality category ensures performances are rooted in the **core elements of the barbershop style**:

- a) 4-part a cappella
- b) Featured consonant harmony via strongly voiced chords in the barbershop vocabulary
- c) Melody primarily in an inside voice
- d) Harmonic variety and richness featuring characteristic chord progressions
- e) Primarily lyrical, homorhythmic textures (although additional textures are used for contrast and development).

Performances exhibiting high levels of musicality in the barbershop style demonstrate the core elements of the style and feature accurate and artistic rendering of the key musical parameters in support of the guiding principles of musicality.

B. Relationship with Other Scoring Categories

The current BHS Contest and Judging System features scoring categories designed to overlap with each other. Each category views the entire performance from its own unique perspective, and the same performance factors often influence more than one category's scoring.

The Singing (SNG) category assesses the technical and qualitative aspects of the performer's sound and the resulting vocal artistry. Since these factors affect the harmonic integrity, they will also affect the Musicality judge, who assesses the integrity of the harmony in the performance. Singing that suffers from poor synchronization, intonation, or vocal quality will also negatively impact such musicality areas as delivery and execution. Performances exhibiting believability through artistic rendering of the musical line will be rewarded both by SNG (Vocal Expression) and MUS (Delivery).

The Performance (PER) category assesses the performer's ability to bring the song and arrangement to life through visual and vocal elements. PER judges evaluate the performer's artistry, believability, entertainment value, and emotional impact, considering the chosen entertainment theme. These factors often influence the Musicality category, as the musicianship evaluated by Musicality (MUS) judges and the creation of mood and believability evaluated by PER judges are strongly correlated. Both judges are listening for thematic development. The MUS judge assesses how well the group uses its own unique musical abilities to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the arrangement in light of thematic development opportunities.

II. MUSICAL ELEMENTS

There are certain characteristics in an arrangement that help the listener recognize a song as having been arranged in the barbershop style. The Musicality category ensures performances are rooted in the **core elements of the barbershop style**. Performances earning the highest Musicality scores will feature these elements. If any of the musical elements listed below are absent in the song or arrangement as performed, then the Musicality score will be lower as a result.

1. All songs must be sung without musical accompaniment or instrumental introductions, interludes, or conclusions. This does not preclude the use of a sound-making device for a special effect, as long as such cannot be construed as instrumental accompaniment (See the official *Contest Rules*, Articles IX.A.2.a and Article X). Hand clapping and finger snapping are permitted whereas vocal percussion where the result is greater than four-part texture is not permitted. Choruses need to exercise caution, ensuring a lack of ambiguity related to greater-than-4-part texture (See official *Contest Rules*, Article IX.A.2.b).
2. Barbershop is a four-part cappella style. At no time should the musical texture exceed four parts. In a chorus contest, the spoken word, brief and appropriate, is not considered an additional "part" in this context. However, a soloist singing a fifth musical line is considered an additional part. This applies even if the soloist is singing the same notes as one of the choral parts but with different word sounds, as occurs when the chorus leads are

matching the soloist's notes on a neutral syllable (See official *Contest Rules*, Article IX.A.2.b).

3. A discernible melody should be present and distinguishable for most of the song. The melody is most consistently sung by the lead, with the tenor harmonizing above the melody, the bass singing the lowest harmonizing notes, and the baritone completing the chord (See official *Contest Rules*, Article IX.A.2.c).
4. Lyrics should be sung by all four parts through most of the duration of the song. This does not preclude the use of solo and other devices employing neutral syllables used for contrast or as embellishing devices. In fact, such textural contrast, executed well with sensitivity to the music, can lead to higher levels of musicality. Rather, this applies to performances whose duration is dominated by non-lyric or neutral syllable devices (See official *Contest Rules*, Article IX.A.2.d).
5. Other musical elements, such as chord vocabulary, characteristic chord progressions and harmonic richness, strong voicings, and primarily homorhythmic texture, are essential in successfully rendering the barbershop style. These are interwoven into the performance elements and are reflected in the MUS score (See official *Contest Rules*, Article IX.A.2.e).

III. PERFORMANCE ELEMENTS

The Musicality category judges musicality in the barbershop style. The category assesses the musicianship demonstrated in bringing the song and arrangement to life. Further, the category assesses the performer's skill in accurately and artistically delivering music in the barbershop style. The best examples of musicality in the barbershop style will feature:

- Music suited to the performer
- A performer that both understands, and demonstrates intent and perspective for, the music
- The key elements that define the barbershop style

The performance elements of the Musicality category consider the **guiding principles of musicality**, such as tension/release, unity/contrast, and theme/variation, which are common across most musical styles. A satisfying and rewarding musical journey requires sensitivity to the song and arrangement. The Musicality (MUS) judge weighs both technical (*harmonic integrity, execution*) and artistic (*thematic development, embellishments, delivery*) elements of this journey. These elements are not assessed independently; the MUS judge considers how these elements work together and even overlap to inform the judge's holistic assessment of the musicality exhibited in the performance.

A. Harmonic Integrity

1. The primary hallmark of barbershop music is its consonant harmony. The integrity of the harmony is the degree to which consonant harmony is produced by a good quality, locked, ringing unit sound. Consonant chords are pleasing to the ear based on:
 - a. *Physics*. Coincident partials low in the harmonic stack.
 - b. *Stylistic expectations*. Certain chords (regardless of their inherent dissonance between intervals) are deemed indigenous to the style. For example, the dominant seventh and

ninth chords are considered dissonant in traditional musical circles due to the tritone interval. Barbershoppers consider them consonant because of their close association with the style and the coincident partials low in the harmonic stack of strongly voiced inversions.

2. Harmonic Integrity assesses the vertical nature of the harmony. High quality harmonization is achieved through several factors:
 - a. Predominantly consonant chords (major triads, dominant (barbershop) sevenths and ninths). See items A.8 and A.9 (below) for more information.
 - b. Strong voicings (root position, second inversion) of consonant chords. See item A.8 (below) for more information.
 - c. Good vocal quality and locked, “ringing” sound.
 - d. Precise synchronization, matching word sounds and resonance, appropriate balance, and accurate tuning of the chord sequence as performed by the ensemble.
 - e. Avoiding non-barbershop chords, incomplete chords or non-chords except for specific embellishing purposes.
3. Harmonic integrity also assesses the horizontal nature of harmony.
 - a. The Musicality judge assesses the degree to which the fidelity is maintained as the ensemble progresses chord to chord. In a high-quality performance, clean ringing chords are constantly present—even when chords go by quickly within a phrase.
 - b. Chord progressions in the barbershop style are based on the harmonic practice of dominant seventh (and ninth) chords resolving around the circle of fifths, while also making use of other resolutions. Musicality judges expect to hear harmonic richness, variety and strongly voiced chords including tritone tension. Examples which can lead to a sense of redeeming harmonic value include:
 - i. Secondary dominants (particularly VI7 and II7) which progress around the circle of fifths to the tonic
 - ii. Tritone substitutions functioning as secondary dominants
 - iii. Rich harmonic variety of consonant chords (this includes major triads and other strongly voiced chords in the barbershop vocabulary)
 - iv. Dominant 7th / 9th chords on a variety of roots
 - v. Featured usage of any of these seventh chords (e.g., bVI7, bVII7/9, VII7, IV7)
 - vi. Other circle resolutions that don’t resolve to the tonic (e.g., III7-vi)
 - vii. Performances that feature chords with tritone tension (e.g., half dim / minor 6th)
4. Although the melody usually lies between the tenor and bass, occasional deviations are allowed and may be carried by some part other than the lead. The Musicality score will reflect any lessening of barbershop sound that may result.

5. The melody should clearly define a tonal center, and its tones should define implied harmonies that employ the characteristic harmonic patterns and chord vocabulary of the barbershop style in order to achieve a high degree of consonance.
6. The song should be primarily homorhythmic; that is, all voices should sing the same word sounds simultaneously. This does not preclude the appropriate use of non-homorhythmic devices such as patter, back time, echoes, and bell chords. The greater the use of non-homorhythmic material, the greater the need for clean execution, maintaining consonance.
7. All parts should sing lyrics most of the time. Extensive non-lyrical passages (neutral or nonsense syllables, humming, or instrumental imitation) might lessen the potential for "lock and ring" and should be musically appropriate. The Musicality judge assesses how such devices influence development and consonance.
8. Music in the barbershop style should primarily use chords in the barbershop chord vocabulary. The extent to which the various chords in the vocabulary contribute to a quality barbershop sound depends on their frequency and duration.
 - a. Other than the major triad, the most prominent chord should be the dominant (barbershop) seventh chord. Songs that favor the use of any other chords over the use of dominant seventh chords and major triads may result in a lower Musicality score.
 - b. The overall consonance potential is affected by the prominence, duration and frequency of use of the various chords in the barbershop chord vocabulary. The consonance potential, from highest to lowest is:
 - i. Major triad and dominant barbershop seventh
 - ii. Dominant ninth with root omitted (or minor sixth or half-diminished seventh)
 - iii. Major triad with ninth added and minor triad
 - iv. Minor seventh (or major sixth)
 - v. Major seventh, diminished seventh, barbershop seventh with flatted 5th, augmented triad, augmented dominant seventh, diminished triad, dominant ninth with fifth omitted
 - vi. Non-vocabulary chords (any chords not listed in III.A.7)

While brief and musically appropriate use of out of vocabulary chords is allowable, this may result in a lower score due to diminished consonance.

9. Appropriate voicings are essential to create a characteristic barbershop sound.
 - a. The style demands strong voicings but allows occasional exceptions for valid musical reasons (i.e., third or the seventh in the bass).
 - b. Delicate balance voicings need careful execution (i.e., high seventh in the lead or baritone, divorced bass).
 - c. Voicings should generate complete chords, with few exceptions (dominant ninth chord, devices that involve fewer than four parts, the occasional echo, lead-in, or rhythmic device in the bass).

- d. Dissonant non-chord tones are to be avoided (except for brief scale-type passages in the bass).
 - e. The performance of incorrect notes, resulting in unacceptable chords, will result in a lower score due to execution.
10. The range of the parts should allow all singers to produce a quality sound, dependent on each performer's ability, as to highlight the resonant sound characteristic of the barbershop style.

B. Execution

1. Execution emphasizes the accurate rendering of musical elements. While *Harmonic Integrity* focuses largely on vertical aspects of music (tuning and balancing chords to create an enhanced sense of lock and “ring”) and the horizontal aspect of chord progressions. Execution focuses more on horizontal aspects of rhythm, words and notes. Musicality (MUS) judges assess the degree of articulation of pitches and rhythms, synchronized word sounds, maintaining tonal center, steady tempos, tempo changes, agreement on beat subdivision, and rhythmic groove. High levels of musicality involve excellent execution with consistent harmonic integrity between harmonic pillars, minimizing distractions and enabling the ensemble to elevate artistic sensitivity in their performance.
2. Execution is tied to the *Delivery* element in the Musicality Category. Execution emphasizes the performer's technical precision, while *Delivery* emphasizes the artistic expression of the musical line. C-level performances often face delivery challenges due to inaccuracy. A-level performances feature enhanced artistic delivery through precise execution of the musical line.
3. Precise execution poses greater challenges for choruses compared to quartets at a given Musicality level. Choruses encounter synchronization difficulties involving pitch accuracy, word sounds, resonance, tone colors, rhythms, and notes within each section. Synchronization errors between the chorus and conductor's gestures fall under the Execution element of the category. MUS judges weigh these aspects differently for choruses compared to quartets.
4. MUS judges assess the arrangement's suitability for the performer and its impact on the ensemble's ability to execute the musical line successfully. If the arrangement features challenging vocal ranges, rhythmic complexity, or harmonic intricacy that the performer cannot comfortably navigate, it may lead to execution errors and a lower Musicality score. On the other hand, when a challenging arrangement is accurately executed by a highly skilled ensemble, this highlights their musical abilities, resulting in a higher Musicality score.

C. Delivery

1. Delivery emphasizes the artistic expression of the musical line through skilled rendering of the song's elements. A strong delivery showcases the singers' understanding of melody, lyrics, harmony, rhythm, tempo, construction, tone color, dynamics, flow, and their importance. The Musicality (MUS) judge assesses the performer's musical artistry, assessing how well they integrate the song's elements, employ embellishments, and bring the song to life.

2. The MUS judge assesses the degree of musicality displayed in the *phrasing and delivery of the lyrics*, especially in songs where the lyrics are central to development. Momentum, flow, relative weighting of syllables, and contour of phrases result in meaningful rendering of lines and define the lyric's climactic moments. The MUS judge:
 - a. ...rewards performances which demonstrate an understanding of *tension and release* to maintain direction and musical interest. Successful performers use variations in harmony (especially tritone dissonance), texture, dynamics, and pacing to build intensity in the music. This builds anticipation in the listener of an eventual resolution. In general, the greater the tension preceding the release, the more satisfying the result for the listener.
 - b. ...assesses the degree of musicality displayed in the performance of rubato and ad lib passages. Distortion of form due to excessive rubato and ad lib may result in a lower Musicality score.
3. The MUS judge assesses the effectiveness of the performance of chords and voicings that are designed to highlight a word or phrase or generate a certain mood. The judge also assesses the use of dynamic levels and vocal color to support musical development.
4. The MUS judge assesses the musicality displayed in the execution of tempos and rhythms. This includes the appropriateness of the choice of tempo and the musical sensitivity of the rhythmic accentuation.
5. The MUS judge assesses the skill with which the performer uses the music's rhythmic devices, such as bass propellants, echoes, patter, back time, push beats, and syncopations, to establish and propel the tempo, especially in songs where rhythm is central to development. When these devices are well-executed, the tempo and rhythm contribute to satisfying musical development.
6. The balance among voice parts should be such that the melody always predominates, although brief passages having ambiguous or non-existent melody are permitted in introductions, tags, bell chords, stylized segments during repeats, or improvisational-type passages of a song.
7. When the melody is transferred to a part other than the lead, that part should predominate and should be sung with melodic quality.
8. Songs sung in the barbershop style generally use standard meters such as 2/4, 3/4, 4/4, cut time, 6/8, 9/8 or 12/8. This does not preclude the use of non-standard meters, but in any case, the meter should be well-defined by the performance unless altered for comedic purposes.

D. Thematic Development

1. Melody, lyrics, rhythm, and harmony are crucial aspects of a song, and they can be combined and developed by the performer. There are many paths to successful development; these paths vary greatly depending on the source material. Successful musical development requires the *performer* to utilize the *composer's* and *arranger's* ideas while incorporating their own musical skills and ideas.
 - a. The composer provides source material, developing melodic, rhythmic, lyric, and harmonic themes in the original composition. The composer also creates the song form

- with repeated sections. (such as AABA, ABCA, or repeated stanzas or refrains like VCVCBC, etc.).
- i. Lyrical themes can be further broken down into defining the literary theme (happy love, asking for forgiveness, love lost, etc.)
 - ii. Rhythmic themes can be further broken down into swing, subdivided triplets, driving tempos, etc.
 - b. The arranger makes choices about harmonization, voicing of chords, embellishments, changes to musical elements and form, and may create a medley or montage to tie songs together.
 - c. The performer takes the material provided by the composer and arranger then applies their own musicianship, as well as stylistic execution, dynamic and rhythmic choices, to further develop the song and arrangement.
 - d. Sometimes, the original song includes sufficient development without the need for the arranger to create interest. In these cases, the performer is most successful following the composer's journey.
 - e. In some cases, the performer is required to take more responsibility to develop the song, particularly when the arranger creates a straightforward arrangement.
2. All musical parameters (melody, lyrics, rhythms, harmony) play different roles in developing the music. The performer makes choices based on the song, arrangement, and their own interpretation.
 3. Occasionally a quartet or chorus will choose to do a comedic performance. The Musicality (MUS) judge first assesses whether the comedy is dependent upon one or more of the musical elements (melody, lyrics, rhythm, and harmony). It could be that the comedy is independent of the music. If this is the case, does comedy interfere with the natural musical development? If the musical elements are designed to enhance the comedic performance, the MUS judge starts with the question "Is it funny?". Once the comedy begins, the MUS judge will evaluate how the musical elements develop and enhance the comedic performance.
 4. The MUS judge assesses the balance between unifying themes and contrasting material. Added material should stem from thematic song material, driving musical interest with unity and contrast. If it falls short, the performer must showcase their own skills to create musical interest.
 5. The MUS judge assesses the performer's use of the song's construction, including form and harmonization.
 - a. The performer shapes phrases and sections of the song to deliver and develop it successfully.
 - b. The MUS judge assesses the performer's level of artistry and musicianship in maintaining forward motion, groove, dynamics, sensitivity to melodic shape, lyrical phrases, and tempo choices.

- c. When assessing a medley/montage, the MUS judge assesses it as a complete entity, showcasing well-coordinated sections unified by a central musical theme or lyrical idea.
6. Under thematic development, the MUS judge assesses opportunities provided by the song and arrangement in combination with the performer's utilization of the material and their own musicianship.
 - a. Repeated sections and new sections should provide opportunities for musical development and variation.
 - b. The performer should demonstrate an understanding of the provided material, as their skills in developing the song are being evaluated.
 7. A successful barbershop performance incorporates harmonic themes achieved through resolving barbershop sevenths and ninths using the circle of fifths. Tritonal tension in these progressions is crucial for any barbershop song's development. Effective utilization of this harmonic development is rewarded in performances.

E. Embellishment

1. Embellishments are characteristics of an arrangement beyond a basic barbershop harmonization of the source material.
 - a. Successful musical development involves a satisfying sequence of events, achieved through effective use of *embellishments* that provide the opportunity for unity and contrast. The barbershop style is known for its diverse embellishments which include (but is not limited to) swipes, echoes, key changes, bell chords, patter effects, and back time.
 - b. The Musicality (MUS) judge assesses the performer's accuracy and musicality in executing embellishments that enhance the song's development. The judge's score considers the arranger's skill in selecting and placing supportive embellishments. Well-embellished songs that provide satisfying development and harmoniously blend key musical themes will earn higher Musicality scores.
2. The MUS judge assesses the effectiveness with which the performer uses embellishments to aid in the development, such as the use of rhythmic propellants to create forward motion or key lifts to heighten the level of intensity. The performer's ability to execute the embellishments may influence the MUS judge's perception of the degree to which a particular song may be under- or over-embellished. Some embellishments, such as patter and bell chords, are most effective with precise synchronization. Embellishments in which all four parts are not singing the same words at the same time should be executed in such a way that the primary lyrics are heard and understood. Occasionally, the music creates special opportunities for visual devices. Effectively performed, such occurrences may increase the perception of musicality, resulting in a higher Musicality score.
3. While the melody is usually in an inside voice, the use of tenor or bass melody is acceptable as a contrasting embellishment.
4. While all four parts usually sing lyrics, non-lyrics and neutral syllables can be used as contrasting devices. The most common example is neutral syllables accompanying the melody in brief passages to feature the melody or establish rhythmic contrast. Passages

with non-lyrics for all four parts may also be used, such as a scat section, an instrumental impression, or a neutral syllable introduction to a song. Effectively constructed and performed, such embellishments may contribute to the development leveraging rhythm or lyrics, resulting in a higher Musicality score.

5. The arranger generally uses the composer's melody as the basis for harmonization and embellishments. Altering the melody may also be a form of embellishment, although melodic alterations may be distracting when the melody is well-known. When altering a well-known melody, it is incumbent upon the arranger and performer to convince the listener to accept the altered version. Alterations of a melody can be especially effective in a repeated section of a song. When used effectively, melodic alterations can enhance the musicality and lead to a higher score.
6. Altering the composer's lyrics is also a form of embellishment. Lyric alterations can be effective in some cases, for example:
 - a. Personalizing a song to the ensemble or the performance environment, including gendered/non-gendered language.
 - b. Ensuring the intent is more easily understood by today's audiences.
 - c. Changing the intent of the original source material to create comedic impact, e.g., in the case of a parody.
 - d. Contributing to the musical development of the performance.
 - e. Altering lyrics to create ensemble impact, e.g., ending the tag on an open "ah" vowel instead of the original lyric "oo."

Similar to melodic alterations, lyric alterations may also be distracting when the lyrics are well-known. Effective use of lyric alterations can result in a higher musicality score.

7. The melody and harmonization should complement each other. Alternative harmonies can serve as embellishments, offering thematic development, emphasizing key words or phrases, and enhancing consonance. When used effectively, they can contribute to a higher Musicality score. If the implied harmony in a song is unclear, the arrangement can employ suitable harmonic progressions that align with the melody and support the song's development. It's worth noting that adherence to the harmony in published sheet music is not mandatory. However, altering recognizable harmonic progressions can also be distracting, similar to melodic and lyrical alterations.
8. Tags are an integral and unique part of the barbershop style and should be adjudicated for how effectively and satisfyingly they summarize or complete the song's development. In a barbershop performance, effective tags can be very simple and straightforward, or more involved and include more development.

IV. SCORING

A. Scoring Methodology

1. The Musicality (MUS) judge's evaluation is based on the musicality of the performance and the appropriateness of the music to the barbershop style. The Musicality judge will adjudicate each performance based on a lifetime of listening experience and evaluate the particular performance without regard to prior performances and without preconceived ideas of how the music should be performed. No reward is given for the degree of difficulty of the arrangement; the performance is judged on its technical and artistic merits.
2. The MUS judge's assessment is based upon a holistic awareness of the performer's sensitivity in thematic development of the song (including embellishments), their artistic delivery, the degree of harmonic integrity and their accuracy in executing its musical elements. Awareness of how stylistic aspects such as chord progressions and vocabulary enhance the thematic development and delivery of the musicality will be rewarded. Early in the performance the judge establishes an approximate score based on the general level of musicality. As the song unfolds, this score is continually adjusted to reflect the performer's consistency, their understanding of the various musical elements, the delivery and execution of the song's critical moments, the suitability of the music to the performers, and how musicality is enhanced by elements of the barbershop style. At the end of the song, the judge assigns a numerical score from 1 to 100.
3. The MUS judge is both an advocate and guardian of the barbershop style. Certain musical elements—as denoted in section II—are linked to the song and arrangement, while other aspects are assessed holistically as part of the performance. If one or more judges deems one or more of the arrangement's musical elements outlined in Article IX of the contest rules was not satisfied, they will conference with the other MUS judges to determine whether the holistic score should be lowered via penalty. Based on criteria stated in the Musicality category description, it is still possible for judges to disagree when performances are “on the edge” stylistically.

B. Scoring Levels

The A Level

- a. A-level scores (81 to 100) are given to excellent performances that display the most consistent musicality. There are very few distractions, and scores are maximized when the performance strongly features the hallmarks of the barbershop style.
- b. A performance earning a mid-A score (87-93) features exceptional mastery of the musical elements, demonstrating consistent excellence in technique in support of artistry. The harmony is wonderful, consistently consonant, reflecting excellent intonation and proper balance. The performer showcases continuous development and sensitivity to the composer and arranger's musical themes, presenting a cohesive vision. Purposeful and sensitive use of embellishments enhances the song's thematic development. The delivery demonstrates superb, continuous artistry, effectively conveying the subtext and completely engaging the listener. Distractions are rare, and the music is well-suited to highlight the performer's strengths.

- c. The rare and significant artistic performance in the A+ range (94-100) is truly transcendent of technique. Minor technical issues do not distract from the overwhelming and unyielding sense of musicality. Embellishments continuously support thematic development. The musical line is organic, purposefully and sensitively delivered by the performer, demonstrating unyielding excellence and artistry.
- d. In A- range (81-86), occasional distractions can occur in the performance. The thematic development may have brief interruptions, or the performer's technique may be somewhat evident. In one way or another the display of musicality is not totally consistent.
- e. Distinguishing differences between A and B levels often has to do with consistency and sensitivity of performance.

The B Level

- a. B-level scores (61-80) are for performances that demonstrate varying degrees of competence of the musical elements. The music is generally well suited to the performers. Thematic development is evident, demonstrating awareness and sensitivity to musical themes, but there may be moments where technique distracts from the artistry.
- b. A performance earning a mid-B (67-73) score features competency in the musical elements, demonstrating generally accurate execution in support of the musical line. The harmony is generally consonant with clearly distinguishable chords, reflecting good intonation and balance. The performer generally reflects an understanding of and sensitivity to the composer and arranger's musical themes, with high musicality in its best moments. Tasteful use of embellishments enhances the song's thematic development. Musical delivery starts to emerge in the mid-B level, demonstrating moments of artistry and engaging the listener. Distractions are still present, but the degree to which they interrupt the listener's enjoyment decreases when approaching B+.
- c. The B+ range of scores (74-80) is for performances that have only minor distractions. Artistic aspects of the performance, such as delivery and thematic development, are becoming more evident. Part of the performance may be at the A level, but the performers do not achieve the high level of consistency required for an A score.
- d. In the B- range (61-66) of performances, the performance is still competent and demonstrates proficiency in rendering the music and arrangement as written, but there may be several distractions and occasional examples of C-level performance. Thematic development and sensitive delivery of the music are often hindered by execution and harmonic integrity distractions. Lack of sensitivity to embellishments may cause interruptions in the flow of the musical line. Part of the performance may also be of mid-B level of quality.
- e. The difference between B and C levels is often a matter of consistency. In a B-level performance, the performer is in control of the performance of the song and arrangement. In a C-level performance, the song and arrangement may be too difficult or not suitable for the performer.

The C Level

- a. C-level scores (41-60) are for performances that reflect an ordinary command of the musical elements, with flaws appearing often in the performance. The general level of accuracy is adequate, not offensive; most musical elements are definable, although some serious performance errors may occur. The song's thematic development is inconsistently supported by the performance. Delivery of the musical line is often mechanical, lacking a sense of flow and direction. Distractions occur at many points in the performance. Some musical inconsistencies may result from an imperfect fit of the music to the performers.
- b. In a performance earning a mid-C (47-53) score, most chords are still distinguishable, though the degree of consonance may suffer rather frequently. The execution of the musical line often lacks accurate synchronization and articulation. The embellishments adequately support the song, although several may not. Thematic development is inconsistent and typically is not demonstrated beyond what is inherently in the arrangement. The delivery of musical elements may be mundane or mechanical, lacking sensitivity. Musicality is frequently not demonstrated.
- c. At a C+ level (54-60), some elements of the performance may be at the B level, but other elements display inconsistency and an inability to sustain musical delivery and development.
- d. In the C- range (41-46), the performance reflects the lack of a sensitivity and understanding of musical parameters for thematic development. The performance exhibits consistently mechanical delivery and significant flaws in execution.
- e. The difference between C and D levels is often that the C-level performance has acceptable delivery and execution and significantly more consonant sound. C-level performances demonstrate an awareness of musical elements, but the performers often lack the skill to execute at a B-level. D-level performances do not demonstrate the same level of awareness.

The D Level

- a. A D-level score (40) is for performances that suffer from poor command of the musical elements with fundamental problems throughout the performance. There are constant distractions. The music may be poorly suited to the performer.
- b. In a performance in this range, the singing may have little consonance and, at times, be so out of tune that the intended harmony is undecipherable. The embellishments may often detract from the song, owing either to design or performance. The delivery may be incongruous with the music, reflecting a lack of understanding of its elements.
- c. Often, the musical elements are poorly executed, reflecting lack of preparation, ignorance, or extreme nervousness. Thematic development may be ambiguous, at worst, not discernible.
- d. Performances in this range normally occur because of a lack of skill, preparation, or understanding of the musical elements.

- e. On rare occasions, a score of 1 can be awarded where there are no rules broken, but a 40 seems inappropriate. For example, if a group is unable to start a song despite several attempts, and eventually abandons the song, the resulting score would be a 1.

C. Use of the Judging and Scoring Forms

1. The Musicality judge will determine a scoring range early in the performance and track the fluctuation of the score as the performance continues. On the judging form the judge notes both artistic and technical strengths and weaknesses that affect the score as the music progresses. The MUS judge may also track the form of the song and identify featured moments of characteristic chord progressions in performances—particularly where the performance is lacking an overall sense of the barbershop style.
2. The primary purpose of the judging form is to aid in the preparation for the competitor feedback session. The lower portion of the form includes space to summarize main strengths and opportunities for improvement, which can serve as a starting point for the feedback.
3. The final score is written first in the box on the scoring form (CJ-26) and then copied onto the judging form (CJ-23) in the box in the lower right corner. Please complete the CJ-26 form before finalizing notes on the CJ-23.

D. Differences Between Quartet and Chorus

1. Since barbershop is a quartet style, all of its musical elements should be characteristic of a quartet performance. Therefore, in adjudicating a chorus performance, the Musicality judge discourages elements that could not be performed by a quartet, such as chords containing more than four notes (produced either intentionally or by wrong notes being sung). At no time should the musical texture exceed four parts. The spoken word, brief and appropriate, is not considered an additional “part” in this context. However, a soloist singing a fifth musical line is considered an additional part. This applies even if the soloist is singing the same notes as one of the choral parts but with different word sounds, as occurs when the chorus leads are matching the soloist’s notes on a neutral syllable.
2. Choral singing presents greater potential for inaccuracy in the delivery of musical elements, especially certain rhythmic devices, key changes, and special voicings. For a chorus’s performance to exemplify the barbershop style, each part should be sung with unity, without individual voices straying out of tune or synchronization.
3. Choruses utilizing a solo voice backed by the chorus need exercise caution related to ensuring a lack of ambiguity related to greater than 4-part texture. This is particularly true when using a microphone. This does not prohibit the use of a soloist or quartet on the microphone with no chorus singing behind them. If a chorus finds a way to do this and it clearly does not exceed 4 parts, no penalty will be assessed. However, if there is any confusion, the MUS judges should conference to discuss whether penalties are warranted.

E. Penalties Up To and Including Forfeiture

1. Any forfeiture by a Musicality (MUS) judge would be as a result of a violation of Article IX.A.2.a-e or Article V.A.2 of the official *Contest Rules*. Penalties (up to and including forfeiture) by the Musicality judge are appropriate only as a result of the former.
2. The MUS judge focuses on the musicality as outlined in the performance elements of the category. In most cases the score is holistically derived based on the judge's lifetime of experience. This holistic score includes core elements of the barbershop style, such as chord vocabulary, strong voicings, characteristic chord progressions featuring secondary dominants and tritonal tension, harmonic richness and variety, and degree of homorhythmic texture. The highest MUS scores are awarded to performances featuring high levels of musicality, in vehicles strongly rooted in these stylistic elements.
3. However, if one or more of the Musical Elements are lacking in the performance and the ear is drawn to this omission, then the MUS judge may consider assessing a penalty.
 - a. Use of instrumental accompaniment. As specified in Article IX.A.2.a of the official *Contest Rules*, songs must be sung "without instrumental introduction, interlude, or conclusion." Any instrumental musical performance before or during a song will result in forfeiture of score for that song. An instrumental interlude between songs will result in the forfeiture of song 1. This does not preclude the use of instruments exclusively for pitch taking or sound effects.
 - b. Exceeding a four-part musical texture. As specified in Article IX.A.2.b of the official *Contest Rules*, "at no time should the musical texture exceed four parts." The spoken word, brief and appropriate, is not considered an additional "part" in this context. A chorus performance with passages exceeding a 4-part musical texture is subject to penalty up to and including forfeiture depending on the frequency and duration of this texture. The Musicality judge will consider intent when assessing this penalty and it will not be applied to choruses that are considered to be creating additional parts accidentally through the singing of incorrect notes. Less latitude will be granted with a chorus soloist using a microphone, backed by the chorus.
 - c. Melody. As specified in Article IX.A.2.c of the official *Contest Rules*, "a discernible melody should be present and distinguishable for most of the song. The melody is most consistently sung by the lead, with the tenor harmonizing above the melody, the bass singing the lowest harmonizing notes, and the baritone completing the chord. Excessive passages with the melody not in an inside voice may result in penalties."
 - d. Lyrics. As specified in Article IX.A.2.d of the official *Contest Rules*, "lyrics should be sung by all four parts through most (>50%) of the song's duration. Excessive passages without words in all four parts will result in penalties." Use of non-lyrical passages as an embellishment for creating unity/contrast in the development of the music are not subject to this penalty and will be assessed as part of the quality of the performance.
 - e. Use of a substantial part of one song in performance of another song. As specified in Article V.A.2 of the official *Contest Rules*, "within all rounds of a specific contest, a contestant may not repeat a song or a substantial part of any song. In the context of these rules, the term song may refer to a single song or a medley in which major portions of two or more songs are used. A parody of a song previously sung would be

considered repeating a song.” It further provides that a “Musicality judge shall recommend forfeiture to the Panel Chair if a contestant repeats a song or a substantial portion from one of its songs in another song.”

4. The Musicality judge declares forfeiture by awarding a score of zero. Forfeiture results when one or more elements of the performance violate the contest rules. When a penalty or forfeiture of score has been applied, the judge should note the reason for such on the judging form on the line, “Penalties: _____ Reason: _____” and on the appropriate line(s) of the penalty grid on the scoring form. If some action, but not drastic action, is appropriate for a violation of Article IX.A.2 of the official *Contest Rules*, the judge may apply a smaller penalty.
5. All penalties of 5 or more points will be notated on the scoring slip. The judge will indicate the net score with penalty applied as the total score, as well as the number of penalties and applicable rule provision for the penalty. Any Musicality judge wishing to apply a penalty of 3 or more points in total must first conference with the other Musicality judges, and the Musicality judges must agree to the level of rule violation but not discuss the actual points or the performance score.
6. Scoring reduction levels should be applied per the following guidelines:
 - a. 3-4 – An arrangement that doesn’t meet “enough” minimum expectations, but the audience thinks it is barbershop
 - b. 5-9 – The deficiency makes a barbershop audience and a Musicality judge uncomfortable. This will be due to one or two overriding issues.
 - c. 10+ – Significant barbershop deficiencies according to the rules, but there is still barbershop texture to the arrangement.
 - d. Forfeiture - Nothing redeeming about this performance as it relates to contestable music and/or the hallmarks of the barbershop style. As described in [The Judging System, Section II](#), there is “an unequivocal and definite violation of the rules” resulting in no quality rating being appropriate.

5 PERFORMANCE CATEGORY

I. PERFORMANCE AND ITS IMPACT

The Performance judge evaluates the degree to which a performance creates an entertaining experience or effect on the audience. Every aspect of the performance impacts the judge's impression or perception. Terms such as believability, creativity, authenticity, and other descriptors are used to characterize the performance and are appropriate for use in the barbershop style.

Performers of any contemporary musical form, including barbershop, strive to create an entertaining experience. That experience is what keeps the audience engaged and connected to the performer by invoking emotions, altering their sense of time, and creating moments that are remembered or talked about after the performance has concluded. The performer should be encouraged to explore various methods of communication and expression to deliver the most impactful performance. Simply learning just the notes and words of a song is not enough to create this impact. Whether it is the lyric, musical style, arrangement, staging, physical expression, costume or other factors, all options should be considered for the experience to be maximized.

II. PERFORMANCE CATEGORY DESCRIPTION

A. Performance Characteristics

A performance is comprised of one or more characteristics whose presence and impact are evaluated by the Performance judge. These characteristics include (but are not limited to):

1. **Believability:** This characteristic is expressed through behaviors that are true human traits and they may display a range of behaviors or emotions. These could include compassion, love, joy, excitement, sadness, frustration, anger, and anything in between or in any combination. The degree of believability in a performance creates a level of connection with the audience. Performances which lack this connection may be perceived as merely technical. Other terms that are synonymous with believability include authenticity, genuineness, honesty, and transparency.
2. **Communication:** Another characteristic of a performance is storytelling: the communication of a message. This is not limited to lyrics. It can also be represented by cadences, rhythms, and forms of non-verbal expression. All of these working together allow the audience to experience and understand the message and have a sense of closure at the end of the performance. Impactful performances are those where the performer goes beyond simply learning the notes and words of a song. The performer understands the lyric, the characters, and the desired goal, and uses them to create a performance that is meaningful and connected to an intended purpose. If the communication is not clear, the audience may not easily follow the story or understand the performer's role within it.
3. **Creativity:** By utilizing the performer's imagination and exploring unexpected ideas, a performance can create suspense, comedy, surprise, excitement, or anticipation. Performances lacking substantial creativity could be interpreted as predictable, imitating

other performers, or boring. Creative performances may also include references to history, pop culture, or even previous performances.

4. **Quality of Sound:** The sound is integral to the impact of a barbershop performance. There is a certain visceral thrill from hearing barbershop chords that display high levels of vocal skill, tuning, unity, and expression. However, the quality of sound can also be impacted by poor execution or lack of technique. Inconsistency of the sound can detract from the performance if other characteristics are not strong enough to overcome this distraction.
5. **Artistry:** Artistic performances are those where a performer demonstrates control and mastery over aspects of the performance allowing the audience to sit back and enjoy it. At the highest levels, the performance appears effortless, spontaneous and consistently captivating to the audience. At lower levels, a lack of artistry may be presented as awkward, underdeveloped, or poorly delivered musically or comedically.
6. **Rapport:** A connection between the audience and performer is the result of rapport that has been created by the performance. At a high level, rapport allows for a deeper relationship with the audience, keeping them engaged and receptive to the entire performance. An absence of rapport may cause the audience to lose interest or trust in the performance.
7. **Stylistic Adherence:** Barbershop is an a cappella musical style and thus should be represented using 4-part harmony. It should not just serve as some musical accompaniment to another predominant performing art style. Artistic choices which significantly deviate from this style may holistically influence the effectiveness of the performance.

B. Components Utilized by the Performer

A performer will utilize various musical, vocal, and visual components to produce, support, and amplify the characteristics listed above. No performance requires all components to be present since certain components would not do service to certain songs. The Performance judge evaluates the presence and degree to which these components contribute to the performance. The judge may also define these components as follows:

1. **Musical:** The performance may contain various musical components that create interest, support the lyric or generate unique effects for the audience. Examples include:
 - a. Phrasing and delivery of the lyric that is conversational and appropriate to the context of the song.
 - b. Highlighted melody lines or harmonic moments that create interest or contrast.
 - c. Moments of dynamic contrast that are representative of believable lyric delivery.
 - d. Embellishments, such as swipes and echoes, that reinforce statements or questions.
 - e. Rhythm or tempo that create excitement and build or release energy.
 - f. Key changes that reinforce or indicate a change in the message.
 - g. Chords or musical lines that evoke emotional response or create mood.

2. Vocal: Vocal components contribute to the sound of a barbershop performance, and the degree to which the audience is entertained. Examples include:
 - a. Vocal expression, including color and texture in words/phrases that reflect honest emotion.
 - b. Vocal quality, which allows freely produced and supported sound that maximizes the performer's authentic and natural characteristics of their voice.
 - c. Unity and synchronization, which creates a sense of precision or clarity.
 - d. In-tune singing that generates a sense of expansion of sound, which is a satisfying aural effect for the audience.
3. Observed/Visual: Appropriate visual components add aspects of humanity, realism, or spectacle to support the song and messaging. Examples include:
 - a. Character development is a representation of who the performer intends to be within the context of the performance.
 - b. Facial expression and body language that supports the performer's role and emotions that are shared with the audience.
 - c. Staging, including the placement of singers across the stage to create appropriate scenery or effect.
 - d. Attire, costume, and props, which can help enhance characters and create appropriate backdrop.
 - e. Physical expression, including designed or improvised movement and gestures to enhance the message or subtext.
 - f. Directing the attention of the audience with focal points, aimed at guiding the audience member to specific singers or to an area of importance.
4. Individuality/Personality: When a performer accesses aspects of their own unique personality and/or behaviors, it creates a natural, expressive nature to many of the musical, vocal, or physical components. This is enabled when the performer has a willingness and courage to let the music mirror life and the human condition (morals, conflict, emotions, etc.) Successful performances exhibit this individuality from each performer, along with a clear and believable message from the ensemble.
5. Style: The performer may choose to employ a performance style that they feel is appropriate to the music, emotional plan, or subtext. There is no one performance style that is specific to a certain type of music, and performers are encouraged to explore choices that have the potential to connect with the audience in the most meaningful way. Some of these styles are:
 - a. Traditional "stand and sing"
 - b. Comedic
 - c. 4th wall (i.e. performed as if there is no audience)
 - d. Retro, nostalgia
 - e. Spectacle, high energy

- f. Connected to, or relevant to current events (i.e. satire, anthemic)
6. Integration: The performer considers the components above and weaves them together in a meaningful way. Rather than seeing each piece of the performance separately, all of the musical, vocal, and visual components outlined above work together to create the characteristics outlined in Section A. These components do not need to be equally balanced but should be considered appropriately.

C. Scoring Methodology

1. The Performance judge experiences the performance and analyzes it in order to provide an accurate score and helpful feedback.
 - a. The Performance judge holistically evaluates the performance and determines a score based on the overall entertainment value. Factors that affect the entertainment value, either strengths or suggestions, are noted for discussion with the performer during feedback.
 - b. The Performance judge should identify when a performance effectively displays characteristics listed above and which components require further or modified attention to have the greatest positive impact. Minor distractions may or may not be relevant. At lower levels, the judge should be able to discern and discuss the lack of appropriate performance characteristics.
2. The Performance judge determines the score for a song on a scale of 1 to 100 points. The lowest holistic score is a 1. Forfeiture and penalties for rules violations are addressed in Section G below.
3. Each performance is judged on its own merits. The Performance judge will not consider expectations related to other performances (either by the same performer or anyone else). This should not discourage the use of references to past performances or events known to and appreciated by the audience, as they have potential for enhancing the characteristics of the performance.
4. The Performance judge should be aware of the ebb and flow of entertainment value and emotional impact throughout a song and derive the score from the overall effect.

D. Scoring Levels

The A level

- a. A-level scores (81 to 100) reflect outstanding levels of entertainment value. Performances in this range reflect the high skill level of the performer and appear to be effortless. Many aspects of the performance are memorable beyond the event itself. These performances display levels of honesty that hold the audience's attention. Components utilized by the performer define the performance characteristics at the highest levels.
- b. The upper range of A scores (94 to 100) is assigned to truly exceptional performances. The applicable adjectives are all superlatives: superb, exquisite, breathtaking, captivating, hilarious, overwhelming, deeply moving, etc.
- c. The midrange of A scores (87 to 93) is assigned to performances where the listener is

usually unaware of the techniques employed; they are caught up in the artistic effect of the total performance. These performances are masterful, with opportunities for improvement lying in the subtleties of creating more believability or in further creative approaches to surprise the audience.

- d. The lower A range (81 to 86) is where the feeling of excellence is present, but some minor distractions are felt and not all of the performance components may be fully developed. Evidence of effort and technique by the ensemble may contribute to these minor distractions.

Coaching strategies for the A level: To continue to progress through the A scoring range, the group needs to commit to the pursuit of excellence in every aspect of their performance. Encourage performers to be secure with their technical abilities and continue to move beyond just technique. Uncover the performer's preconceived thoughts about performance to help elicit a more honest and human performance. Risks should be taken to create memorable events. Help them to allow their humanity to show forth by living within the subtext of the music and character.

The B level

- a. B-level scores (61 to 80) are indicative of performances that demonstrate the growth and technical execution of the performance components. They will exhibit basic to very good musicianship, rapport with the audience, and focus on performance skills at a consistent level.
- b. The upper range of B scores (74 to 80) reflects performances that display consistent use and awareness of techniques and tactics. These performances have direction and meaning due to the performers' focus on the appropriate components; in some cases, one component may be stronger than others. The performances feel under control and may display moments of creativity or artistry at the A level.
- c. The midrange of B scores (67-73) reflects performances that display confidence in technique. At this level a performance plan is evident but may not be completely accomplished. These performances tend to be entertaining but lack engagement due to an overreliance on technical elements.
- d. In the lower range of B scoring (61 to 66), performance components are starting to be introduced and are developing in consistency. These performances display emerging levels of emotional content, or adherence to a plan. The result is usually a competent and acceptable performance but is generally lacking in effective characteristics.

Coaching strategies for the B level: Throughout the whole range of B scores, the ensembles are focused on some level of technique. For performances in the upper half of the B scores, encourage performers to begin to move beyond technique, rather than continuing to focus on technique as an end in itself. Encourage performers in the lower half of the B scores to understand the emotional motivation behind the performance, to drive the plan. Techniques may not be fully developed yet and should continue to be addressed.

The C level

- a. C-level scores (41 to 60) are given to performances that have weak to adequate entertainment value. They can be enjoyable due to a singular component but are generally inconsistent in holding the attention of the audience member. A portion of the ensemble may be unaware of the fundamentals necessary to create a consistent and effective performance and could lead to the audience becoming uncomfortable about the performance. The interest of the listener is frequently lost due to lack of musical or vocal consistency, poor execution, or nerves.
- b. In the upper half of the C range (51 to 60), the existence of a plan may be observed, but it is inconsistently or poorly executed. Moderate skill level and awareness contribute to undistinguished or uncomfortable performances.
- c. In the lower half of the C range (41 to 50), very few performance or musical skills are present, thus creating an uncomfortable effect on the audience. The ensemble may complete the performance, but it is weak in overall effect.

Coaching strategies for the C level: Throughout the range of the C scores, performers may be beginning to embrace the basic performance skills required but can also be unaware of where to start. Focus on getting the performer to experience more than just words and notes by providing practical tools. Create a space for them to start to explore performance possibilities. Create and celebrate small successes to drive awareness and motivate the performer so that they might experience what is possible.

The D level

- a. D-level scores (1 to 40) are reserved for performances lacking entertainment value or conveyance of the song's emotional potential in either the musical or visual components. Basic skills needed for performance are absent, and words and/or chords could range from being mostly sung to being completely missing. Poor (D-level) performances will be assessed as a holistic score of 40 instead of an exact score, absent a penalty.

Coaching strategies for the D level: Throughout the range of D scores, performers demonstrate a lack of skills and awareness. Provide the performers with a basic understanding of the foundational skill sets. Create a successful experience within the performance. This level requires care and compassion from the judge to encourage the ensemble going forward.

E. Use of the Judging and Scoring Forms

1. The judging form for the Performance category is laid out in a manner intended to align with the Category Description, while allowing for individual styles of note taking.
2. Main working areas and tools
 - a. There is an overall grade-level scale at the top of the form, and a horizontal bar calibrated from 1 to 100 to assist the judge in arriving at the final overall score.

- b. The qualitative scoring guides serve as a reminder of the distinguishing characteristics of the A, B, C, and D levels as described above.
 - c. The main body of the form is open and unformatted, allowing the judge to adopt the judge's own preferred note-taking style and to record data for feedback. A description of the various performance events, lyric-line references, emotions, moods, audience impacts, and net effects become useful aids in determining the score and relating the progress of these factors throughout the course of the song.
 - d. The list of performance elements and components on the left margin helps the judge focus upon attributes of the performance that display strengths or expose opportunities for improvement.
 - e. Spaces are provided to reference strengths and suggestions, reason for any penalty or forfeiture of score and amount thereof (if applicable), and the judge's score for the performance.
3. The final score is first written in the box on the scoring form (CJ-27) and then copied onto the judging form (CJ-24) in the box in the lower right corner.

F. Differences between Quartet and Chorus

An ensemble larger than a quartet typically has a director. The director should support and enhance the performance and not become a distraction to the audience, unless this is intended for comedic or other effect. The role of the director in a performance may vary from featured to virtually unnoticed but will be judged as part of the effectiveness of the holistic performance.

G. Penalties Up To and Including Forfeiture

1. Penalties (up to and including forfeiture) by the Performance judge may be appropriate only because of the following:
 - a. As specified in Article IX.A.3.a of the official *Contest Rules*, songs must “be neither primarily patriotic nor primarily religious in intent...” Most anthems and hymns are examples of clear violations. Songs that merely refer to national pride or a deity may be acceptable. Judgment calls are made for songs that fall in between these extremes. (See below and [Position Paper IV](#) in this *Contest and Judging Handbook*.) Scoring reduction levels should be applied per the following guidelines:
 - 1) Mild Violation: The performance is primarily patriotic or religious, due to an infrequent but definitive instance of devotion to a deity or nation. A penalty of 5-9 points would be applied and the violation would be noted on the scoring and judging forms.
 - 2) Moderate Violation: The performance is primarily patriotic or religious due to additional instances or combinations of artistic choices (such as staging or physical expression) and lyrics that encourage the devotion of religious or national beliefs. A penalty of 10-15 points would be applied and the violation would be noted on the scoring and judging forms.

- 3) Forfeiture: A performance that reflects the maximum penalty could be one where the inherent (as written) nature of the song is so primarily patriotic or religious that the performer cannot make any artistic choices which would diminish the strong impact created by the content of the song. Forfeiture is indicated by awarding a zero on the scoring and judging forms.
- b. As specified in Article IX.A.1 of the official *Contest Rules*, songs performed in contest must align with the Society’s Statement of Acceptable Taste, and Article IX.A.3.b of the official *Contest Rules* provides for penalties up to and including forfeiture for “a contestant’s songs, actions, or attire that are not in acceptable taste” (See below and [Position Paper II](#) in this *Contest and Judging Handbook*.) Scoring reduction levels should be applied per the following guidelines:
- 1) Advisory only– The performance requires a feedback discussion/comment but the overall intent or impact of the taste event was not significant. No penalty assessed, as the taste issue could be deemed inadvertent.
 - 2) Moderate Violation – The performance clearly requires a feedback discussion. This could be due to an instance or two of clear taste issues that could impact a portion of the audience. The degree of impact on the entertainment value by such a taste distraction(s) would result in a penalty of 5-9 points and would be noted on the scoring and judging forms.
 - 3) Serious Violation – The negative taste impact of the performance is seriously apparent to the majority of the audience (due to reoccurring/suggestive themes and/or staging done in poor taste) and represents a performance that lacks significant entertainment. A penalty of 10-30 points would be applied and would be noted on the scoring and judging forms.
 - 4) Severe Violation - The impact is so severely negative that forfeiture of score is the only accurate representation of the level of impact due to its impact on the entire audience. Examples of this could be the use of vulgar lyrics and staging, or demeaning language towards a specific demographic.
 - 5) In rare instances, the Performance judge(s) might need to stop a performance if it is deemed extremely detrimental to the audience (regardless of demographic). In those cases, the Performance judge(s) immediately informs the Panel Chair who will stop the performance.
2. The Performance judge declares forfeiture by awarding a score of zero. If some action, but not drastic action, is appropriate for a violation of Article IX.A.3 of the official *Contest Rules*, the judge may apply a smaller penalty. When a penalty or forfeiture of score has been applied, the judge should note the reason for such on the judging form on the line: “Penalties: _____ Reason: _____” and on the appropriate line(s) of the penalty grid on the scoring form.
 3. All penalties of five or more points will be notated on the scoring slip. The judge will indicate the net score with penalty applied as the total score as well as the amount of penalty/penalties and applicable rule provision for the penalty. Any Performance judge wishing to apply a penalty of five or more points in total must first conference with the other Performance judges and the judges must agree to the level of rule violation but not

discuss the actual points or the performance score. If the judges cannot agree to the level of rule violation, then the lowest level of penalty range agreed to by all judges must be assessed. If the judges cannot agree that any rule violation has occurred, then no penalty shall be applied.

4. Article IX of the official *Contest Rules* specifies: “All songs performed in contest must be arranged in the barbershop style...” Although the Musicality category is the category primarily responsible for adjudicating barbershop style issues, Performance judges also have a responsibility to preserve the style through particular attention to the artistic aspects of the style noted in paragraphs [I.B.4, 5, 6, 9, 10, and 11](#) of The Judging System in this *Contest and Judging Handbook*. These aspects are adjudicated in terms of the quality of the performance but are not subject to penalty or forfeiture.
5. Performance Judges are also responsible for adjudicating Articles XI and XII of the official *Contest Rules*. (For further information, see the chapter on [Position Papers](#) in this *Contest and Judging Handbook*.)
 - a. For the Performance judges, Article XI.A.1 of the official *Contest Rules* relates to the performer (chorus or quartet) utilizing others outside of the members of the performing group to enhance the effectiveness of the performance. This would likely be the result of some collusion between the performer and other singers or audience members prior to the performance. If this is evident, and not a reflection of some spontaneous reaction by members of the audience, then the Performance judge may apply a penalty up to and including forfeiture for violation of Article XI.A.1.
 - b. Article XI.A.2 states “Barbershop performances should not contain vulgar, suggestive or otherwise distasteful actions, lyrics, or attire.” Staging is defined as the use of props or sets, the handling of props, the use of physical actions, or a combination of these. Staging that is suggestive, vulgar, or otherwise not in acceptable taste is subject to penalty or forfeiture. Any penalty for staging that is not in acceptable taste should be indicated on the IX.A.3.b “Not in Good Taste” line of the scoring form. Penalty (scoring reduction) guidance for this article is the same as Article IX.A.3.b above. In addition to penalties and potential forfeiture by the Performance judge(s), the performance may be stopped by the Panel Chair per Article XIV.A.3 of the official *Contest Rules*.
 - c. Article XII of the official *Contest Rules* states “Non singing dialogue is generally not a part of a contest performance. However, brief comments made with supporting visual communications may be permitted more clearly to establish mood/theme, to assist the transition of packaged songs, or to add to the effect of closure of mood/theme.” Violations of Article XII are adjudicated in terms of the quality of the performance but are not subject to penalty or forfeiture.

6 SINGING CATEGORY

I. INTRODUCTION

One ingredient that clearly identifies barbershop music is its unique sound. It is the sound of barbershop that allows the transforming of a song into an emotional experience for the performer and audience. The best barbershop singing combines elements of technique and emotion to create an artistic result.

Barbershop singing shares elements of good singing with other forms of ensemble vocal music. Primarily, the listener expects to hear the pleasing effect of in-tune singing from voices that are free and resonant, exhibit no signs of difficulties, and are free from individual distractions.

When intonation, balance, vowel tuning, and freely produced tones are executed at a high level, the sound of the quartet or chorus can appear to be greater than the sum of the sound produced by the individual voices. We call this “expanded sound” or “expansion”. The terms "lock" and "ring" have also been used to describe the unique sound, even though their contemporary meanings have changed.

This presence of expansion will always be one of the hallmarks of the style. Chord selections, homorhythmic treatment, and efficient tone choices are driven by this stylistic element. Any listener to a barbershop performance expects to be thrilled by the sound of a ringing chord or awed by the purity and beauty of a soft and elegant expression of a song. Great barbershop singing demands mastery of vocal and ensemble skills to create the breathtaking effects of barbershop musical artistry.

The Singing judge evaluates the degree to which the performer achieves artistic singing in the barbershop style. Expanded and artistic singing is accomplished through precise intonation, a high degree of vocal skill that includes efficient tone production, and unified execution. Appropriate vocal expression completes the emotional delivery. Mastering these elements of good singing results in the unique sound that is barbershop harmony.

Below is a closer look at some key elements that contribute to successful vocal delivery in the barbershop style.

II. ELEMENTS OF SINGING

A. Intonation

1. Barbershop singers adjust pitches to achieve perfectly tuned chords and yet sing a melodic line that remains true to the tonal center. Barbershop singers strive for more precise tuning than is possible with the fixed 12-tones- per-octave of the equally tempered scale of fixed-pitched instruments, such as the piano. Essentially, just intonation is used for harmonic tuning while remaining true to the established tonal center.
2. Melodic intonation refers to the system by which pitches are chosen for the melody of the song. Barbershop melody singers tend to use notes that preserve the tonal center while simultaneously serving the requirements of both melody and harmony. Melody singers need to be aware of harmonic tuning as well as staying true to the tonal center.

3. Harmonic intonation refers to the pitches chosen primarily by the non-melody singers. Good ear singers will naturally tune a harmonic interval to be free of beats—that is, in just intonation. Just intonation reinforces those harmonics (overtones) that are common between any two pitches and creates combination tones (sum and difference tones) between any two pitches or harmonics. These added tones are the physical cause of barbershop chord “lock” and the expansion of sound. How well a chord “locks” is directly related to the accuracy of harmonic intonation.
4. Tonal center refers to the key feeling, or tonic, of the song. This key feeling should remain constant; maintaining precise harmonic intonation and melodic tonal center is the responsibility of all the singers in the ensemble. They all sense the forward progression of the harmony in addition to maintaining the tonal center. All singers, including the melody singer, tune to an anticipated melodic line that would maintain the tonal center. Singers of roots and fifths of chords own the greater responsibility to be in tune, both with the anticipated melody and the tonal center. Singers of thirds and sevenths of chords who are not on the melody will adjust their pitches to achieve justly in-tune chords.

B. Vocal Quality

1. The three descriptors of good vocal production are: well-supported, freely produced, and resonant. A resonant vocal tone that conveys the sensation of a single pitch, that is produced freely and without apparent stress by well-managed breath support, and that enhances (or at least does not detract from) the artistic impact of a song may be said to possess good quality.
 - a. Well-supported: Dictionaries define support as a foundation or base for something. Vocal support starts with proper alignment. A properly aligned body frame will reduce the stress and tension placed on other areas of the body, thus reducing tension in the voice. With a well-supported body frame, a singer may then focus on efficient breath management.
 - b. Freely produced: healthy and consistent vocal fold closure is free from stress and tension. Virtually any unnecessary muscle tension may interfere with a freely produced tone, as could laryngeal position.
 - c. Resonance: Vibrations that are created at the vocal folds pass into the vocal tract (the throat [pharynx], mouth [oral cavity] and nasal cavities) and are amplified or dampened by adjusting both the shape and position of the vocal tract and associated structures (soft palate, tongue, mouth cavity, lips). This process of filtering vocal sound, which affects the perception of the fundamental frequency and formants, is referred to as vocal resonance. While the quality and color (timbre) of a voice depend on the singer's ability to develop and use various vocal resonators, they should make healthy vocal choices which embrace and accentuate the best resonant qualities of their natural voice.
2. Additional factors affecting vocal quality:
 - a. To achieve a more authentic performance, singers should maximize the most pleasing and artistic qualities of their individual voices. A singer should embrace the vocal qualities that are inherent and natural to the unique characteristics of that singer. While some concessions may be made in the interest of ensemble unity, these should not be at

the expense of healthy singing.

- b. Singing at a high volume can make individual overtones louder. However, doing so can affect the quality of expansion (by enhancing unpleasant overtones) or even distort a singer's pitch. Singers should use caution when singing with great intensity to ensure they are making healthy vocal choices appropriate for their skill level.
- c. Performers are encouraged to choose music that suits their capabilities and that feature the strengths and minimizes the weaknesses of the ensemble. The singing judge evaluates the overall vocal performance. There are no benefits in choosing difficult or easy music, only in choosing music that the ensemble can sing well.
- d. In barbershop singing, some vibrato, especially within the lead voice, can be very effective in enhancing the emotional content of the music. However, too high a vibrato rate and/or excessive pitch fluctuation, will affect expansion and ensemble unity.
- e. Tremolo is a rapid oscillation between two distinct pitches with accompanying loss of the sense of a central pitch. Lack of muscular coordination is a primary cause for tremolo. Tremolo is unacceptable in good singing.

C. Unity

1. Unity describes the net effect of ensemble-unifying techniques. Most a cappella vocal forms utilize some of the following: matched word sounds and timbre, volume relationships (balance), synchronization and precision, sound flow, and diction.
2. Word Sounds and Timbre
 - a. The resonant characteristics of the vocal tract determine an individual's voice timbre. The singer can control and change the shape of the vocal tract, thereby altering its resonant characteristics. Each vowel sound requires a unique positioning and shaping of the elements that affect resonance: the throat, mouth, tongue, jaw, and lips.
 - b. Subtle adjustments of the vocal tract are used to achieve matched word sounds. Each vowel sound exhibits a set of formant frequencies unique to that particular vowel. The singer can develop awareness and sensitivity to these formant frequencies, to enable the word-sound match between voices to be finely tuned.
 - c. The untrained singer may experience a natural tendency for the vocal timbre to darken at lower pitches and volumes and brighten at higher pitches and volumes. This tendency is called migration. To achieve a wider range of uniformity, the singer may modify vowel sounds at the extremes of the singer's range by making subtle adjustments in vowel sounds (formant frequencies) to create the impression to the listener that no change in timbre occurs throughout the singer's range. This is best achieved through proper vocal technique throughout the range, rather than artificially modifying the vowel sound. When done correctly, greater consistency in expansion can be achieved.
3. Volume Relationships (Balance)
 - a. The basic perception of the barbershop ensemble is that of a melody singer with harmony accompaniment that is unified with the melody.

- b. The most consonant intervals are between notes whose frequencies may be expressed as ratios of small whole numbers. These include the unison (1:1), octave (2:1), perfect fifth (3:2), and perfect fourth (4:3). The less-consonant intervals have frequency ratios of relatively large numbers, such as the major third (5:4) and harmonic minor seventh (7:4). Notes of intervals that are most consonant should predominate over those that are less consonant as this can lead to improved expansion.
 - c. Higher tones are easier to hear than lower tones. Thus, lower tones must be sung with more energy to be perceived as equal in volume to higher tones. Properly balanced tones are necessary for maximizing expansion.
4. Synchronization and precision
- a. Each syllable has a primary vowel sound, or target vowel. Anticipatory consonants or vowels may precede the primary vowel sound, and continuant consonants, vowels, or diphthongs may follow the primary vowel sound. For optimal synchronization the primary vowel sound should be fully realized on the pulse beat for that syllable. Normally, anticipatory sounds occur before the pulse beat, during time borrowed from the previous note, or breath. Pitch changes between primary vowel sounds should be executed together in all voices otherwise both intonation and expansion may suffer.
 - b. Most of the singing time is spent sustaining the primary vowel sound, with the anticipatory and continuant sounds lengthened or shortened appropriately to create a natural diction. Primary vowel sound length, when compared to all other sounds, will be adjusted by the singer to effect changes of mood and expression. Synchronization execution by the ensemble enables consistent expansion.
 - c. Precision inaccuracies can trigger other problems. Singers can avoid perceived intonation errors by starting their individual notes at the same time. With a focus on precision, singers can achieve uniformity of the pulse beat.
5. Sound flow
- a. Resonance should be carried through all voiced sounds. Stopping and starting the voice increases the opportunity for precision errors detracts from the continuous flow of the music and leads to inconsistent expansion.
 - b. The use of staggered breathing by a chorus to avoid breaks in the flow is not typical of the barbershop quartet style. Ideally, phrases should not be excessively longer than those that could be sung by an individual in one well-managed breath. Overlapping (parts singing through while another part breathes) is acceptable. These techniques should only be employed in such a way as not to draw attention to the technique itself.
6. Diction and articulation
- a. Diction is the choice of word sounds, or pronunciation, as well as the clarity of word sounds, or enunciation. Word sounds include primary and secondary vowel sounds, diphthongs, triphthongs, and consonants. Proper articulation is appropriate execution of those sounds, usually free of regional dialects and intelligible to the listener.
 - b. Singers think words and phrases but do not sing words *per se*. They strive to provide the audience with a collection of sounds that they decode into understandable words. Part of the singer's job is to determine all the sounds in a lyric line, ensure that the

ensemble matches these word sounds, then execute those sounds in a way that allows the audience to easily decode the lyric and enjoy the ensemble's enhanced expansion.

- c. Proper diction characteristics are clarity, accuracy, ease, uniformity, and expressiveness. Vowels make up a majority of all the sounds in vocal music; they should be true to the words being sung. Natural use of consonants is also very important to diction, as they carry the meaning of the words. They should not be overemphasized, dropped, or substituted inappropriately to attempt better sound flow. Singing them correctly helps to carry the voice, focus it, enhance its loudness, and supply emotion.

D. Vocal Expression

1. Artistic barbershop singing must provide for flexibility in self-expression, to allow for a variety of vocal emotions as implied by the lyric and music. An important difference between a mechanical musical instrument and the vocal instrument is the ability for the singer to deliver a genuine emotional impact of the lyrics and notes, and thus fully communicate the message of song to the listener.
2. Vocal expression is the marriage between good vocal technique and sincere delivery within the context of the song's message. Singers should strive for technical proficiency across the ensemble while honoring the song's theme.
3. Some common approaches used to enhance expressive vocal quality are:
 - a. Enunciation - Diction appropriate to the song is necessary. This enables the listener to comprehend the words and maintain musical flow, so the listener's attention is drawn to the lyric's meaning and not to its execution. Enunciation can be used to help emulate certain feelings or emotions reflective of the song's lyric.
 - b. Articulation - Singers have a variety of tools at their disposal, from emphasizing consonants so words sound crisp, to delaying vowels so words sound slow or even muttered. There are often a variety of artistic choices to be made within the context of the song.
 - c. Word sounds - The execution of vowels and consonants, both in timing and in placement, affect the delivery of expressive lyrics. Word sounds can be used to influence the feeling of a song, for example slowing the words down to emulate patience or speeding up word sounds to emulate excitement. See section C (Unity) above for details about word sound unification and synchronization across the ensemble.
 - d. Tone color / (Timbre) - The lyric of a song might suggest certain changes in vocal tone for different words or phrases, even possibly changing dramatically within one phrase for special effect. The choice might be different for an exciting mood than for a melancholy or dramatic one. Performers may even choose an exaggerated tone for parody or comedic results. Timbre can also influence clarity and expansion.
 - e. Inflection - Vocal lines that are embellished tastefully with inflections can enhance the emotional feeling and lyrical intent of the song.
 - f. Other techniques are limited only by the creativity of the performers.

4. For these techniques to be artistic, they must effectively communicate the emotional content of the song. There is a natural correlation between the performer's command of vocal skill, their vocal expression, and the generation of emotion. Care should be taken not to overuse these devices to the point where they become the focal point, unless desired. Great vocal skill allows the performer to generate many subtle variations and levels of emotion with far less apparent effort, which adds to the message and believability. Performances come across as honest, sincere, and genuine when the execution of vocal expression is delivered in a transparent manner.

E. Summary

Expanded and artistic singing is accomplished through precise intonation, a high degree of vocal skill that includes efficient tone production, and unified execution. Appropriate vocal expression completes the emotional delivery. Mastering these elements of good singing results in the unique sound that is barbershop harmony.

III. SCORING

A. Scoring Methodology

1. The Singing judge evaluates the performance of each song for the level of mastery of the singing elements. The elements are:
 - Intonation
 - Vocal quality
 - Unity
 - Vocal expression

The judge assigns an overall rating based on an appraisal of the degree of achievement of vocal artistry in the barbershop style.
2. The Singing judge awards a score from 1-100 points per song. Judges weigh the performance of the particular song against their cumulative listening experience and assign the score accordingly. The score is relative to a theoretically perfect performance. Judges strive for objectivity in scoring, yet any assessment of the overall artistry naturally includes a subjective point of view.
3. Each performer is compared against the judge's base of listening experience, not against other performances in the same contest. Judges will note what elements influenced their score. More importantly, they will note significant ways to improve the performance.

B. Scoring Levels

The A level

- a. A-level scores (81 to 100) are given to performances of the most consistent artistic barbershop singing. There are very few distractions owing to lack of singing skill; rather, the focus is primarily on expressive singing.
- b. A typical performance earning a mid-range A score (87-93 points) features few, if any, intonation errors, excellent vocal quality, consistent unity, consistent expansion of

- sound, and an overall perception of vocal expression and artistry that transcends technique.
- c. A performance at the upper range of A (94-100) would likely be a significant artistic experience for any listener, possibly transcending measurable elements to define its success. Performances in this range need not be flawless, as flawless performances can actually draw attention to the technique. Rather, the performance and experience are characterized more by the expressive artistic result and not the technique employed.
 - d. In a performance at the low end of the A range (81-86), an occasional technical distraction can occur. The performer may show great skill but the "technique is showing." The performer may be inconsistent, having phrases of higher A mixed with phrases of a lesser level.
 - e. The distinguishing difference between lower A and upper B levels is often the perception of artistry as the combination of great skills into one transparent whole.

The B level

- a. B-level scores (61 to 80 points) are for performances that frequently show skills of artistic barbershop singing, mixed with more distractions or lack of artistic unity.
- b. A typical performance in the mid-range of B (67-73 points) is only occasionally out of tune, frequently exhibits good vocal quality, is often a unit, has infrequent interruptions in expansion of sound and has apparent use of vocal expression. The performance may even have a short duration of A-level quality.
- c. The upper range of the B scores (74-80) is for performances that may demonstrate great skill across most singing elements—but not the mastery of them. The performance will be technically sound yet will likely have some distractions. Artistic expression will be present, but with limited agreement across the ensemble.
- d. In the lower range of B performances (61-66), skill errors may provide significant distractions in some phrases, but most of the performance is still good. Intonation and vocal quality are slightly better than satisfactory. Expansion of sound is inconsistent.
- f. The difference between lower B and upper C levels is often a matter of consistency of skill and blending into an artistic unit.

The C level

- a. C-level scores (41 to 60 points) are for performances that demonstrate adequate skills, with some signs of artistry but with notable inconsistencies in performance.
- b. A typical performance in the mid-range of C (48-53) will have intonation problems. The vocal quality is satisfactory but not improper and could be improved by basic vocal skills. Unity is impeded by word sound mismatches, faulty chord balancing, or even choice of material, and expansion of sound occurs as often as not. Some artistic moments would be evident.
- c. The upper range of C scores (54-60) is for performances that may be partly at the B level but show several distractions, inconsistencies, and inability to sustain the artistry.
- d. In the lower range of C performances (41-47), offensive intonation or vocal quality

- may be exhibited occasionally, and the perception of unity and expansion of sound is more infrequent.
- e. The difference between lower C and upper D levels is often that the C performance has acceptable quality and fewer unpleasant sounds.

The D level

- a. D-level scores (1 to 40 points) are for performances in which the elements of good singing are rarely heard. Poor (D-level) performances normally will be assessed a score of 40 instead of an exact score. Little is gained by an exact score in this range and specifics for improvement can be covered in the feedback session.
- b. The upper part of the D range is typified by performances that have rare moments of acceptable skills, which appear to be accidental or out of control of the performer.
- c. The middle part of the D range typically exhibits a major lack of vocal skill. Wrong notes may be prevalent. In-tune chords are rare. Vocal quality and tone color will most likely be poor or offensive. Dissonance is the norm. Individual voices will be consistently predominant, and the ensemble rarely sings as a unit.
- d. The lower part of the D range is almost never encountered. A significant performance error, such as poor pitch-taking or nerves, could reduce an otherwise mid-D performance to the lower end.
- e. Performances in this range usually occur because of a lack of skill, nerves, lack of knowledge, neglect, intentional focus on non-singing aspects of the performance, or significant lack of preparation.

C. Use of the Score Sheet

1. The scale and box are reminders of the judging ranges and the concept of the overall effect. Many may want to circle or flag a range on the scale, or a particularly appropriate phrase in the box, and use arrows down to a written comment below.
2. The element list is a selected list of ideas to circle or check off for later comments. Consider it to be for reference; it can serve as an abbreviation list for comments as well.
3. During the performance, the judge will identify only two or three of the most significant elements of the performance and several "fixes" for any of these elements. The judge will also point out where in the performance the best singing occurred and why, thereby giving the performer a chance to relate to the good experience firsthand.
4. The Singing judge will determine, through practice, how much detail is necessary to trigger recollection of the performance and focus on the major items. Flaws in the smallest sense are not relevant; the judge will be looking at the broader perspective. The judge will find elements of the performance that, if changed, would most significantly result in improvement.
5. The highest scores will be earned by performances solidly within the barbershop style that offer the greatest opportunity to create stylistic and artistic singing.
6. The final score is first written in the box on the scoring form (CJ-28) and then copied onto

the judging form (CJ-25) in the box in the lower right corner.

D. Differences Between Quartet and Chorus

1. The basic sound of barbershop is found in the quartet performance. Four voices achieving vocal artistry in the manner described above produce a sound unique to this art form. When one adds more singers to each part, a similar effect can be obtained but with significant differences. We have learned to recognize these differences and evaluate the chorus singing sound in its own unique form.
2. Choruses are more able to blend, or even hide, the differences of pitch and timbre between the singers than is possible in quartets. The net result can be less demand from the individual singer while sustaining a unique and vital sound from the chorus. The vitality of sound still depends on the degree of agreement of voices within sections (parts), as well as the relationships between sections.
 - a. Wrong notes and more than four parts in a chorus performance have a muddy effect on the whole ensemble, or, at its worst, depart from the barbershop style. This results in lower scores.
 - b. The perception of a unit sound requires that individual voices not be heard. In a quartet, each person retains their own recognizable voice, whereas in a chorus, no individual tone color should be discernible.
 - c. Precision of the chorus takes on a new challenge as there are more possibilities for error. The preparation of the singers, as well as the skill of the chorus director, greatly affects this aspect.
 - d. Larger choruses can generate a larger quantity of sound than smaller ones, as well as a greater ability to bury the problems of any individual. However, the judging of choruses emphasizes the quartet-like cleanliness of the sound, not the volume. Volume of sound on its own will not have a positive impact on the Singing judge.

E. Penalties Up To and Including Forfeiture

1. Singing judges are solely responsible for adjudicating Article X of the official *Contest Rules*. Any penalty or forfeiture by a Singing judge would be a result of a violation of Article X.B of the official *Contest Rules*.
 - a. Article X.B. prohibits contestants from using their own electronic amplification, but does permit limited, brief, and relevant sound effects or electronic means of pitch taking. It also prohibits the use of recorded music or speaking, as well as use of technology to enhance the performance electronically. Violation of Article X.B. may result in penalties up to and including forfeiture.
2. The Singing judge declares forfeiture by awarding a score of zero. When a penalty or forfeiture of score has been applied, the judge should note the reason for such on the judging form on the line: “Penalties: _____ Reason: _____” and on the appropriate line of the penalty grid on the scoring form.
3. All penalties of five or more points will be notated on the scoring slip. The judge will indicate the net score with penalty applied as the total score as well as the amount of

penalty/penalties and applicable rule provision for the penalty. Any Singing judge wishing to apply a penalty of five or more points in total should first conference with the other Singing judges and the judges must agree to the level of rule violation but not discuss the actual points or the performance score.

IV. INTEGRATION WITH OTHER CATEGORIES

The Performance category is principally responsible for evaluating entertainment value in a barbershop performance, which includes visual and vocal elements. The sound created by highly artistic singing can positively enhance the overall emotional effect of a performance. Conversely, elements of the sound that are not of good quality (such as tuning) could diminish the overall effect of the performance. Vocal expression is important to the Performance category as well, as entertainment value and emotional context can be enhanced with this element.

While the Singing category evaluates the technical and qualitative aspects of the performer's sound, these factors also affect the Musicality category in determining the level of consonance, consonant harmony being the primary hallmark of the barbershop style. Singing that suffers from poor synchronization, intonation, or vocal quality, or other sound problems will also negatively impact such music areas as thematic development, delivery, and execution.

8 POSITION PAPERS

The following Position Papers are included in this chapter (Click a title to go to that page):

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I. MUSICAL COMPLEXITY/OVER-EMBELLISHMENT

A. Introduction

This paper aims both to clarify the position of the Musicality Category regarding what complexity and over-embellishment are and to provide general guidelines for how they can be recognized and adjudicated in performances of songs other than parodies.

B. Background

The Musicality Category respects the roots of our style in "ear" music and discourages performances that seem to be more a demonstration of arrangement devices than the performance of a song, which is defined by the melody, lyrics, rhythm, and implied harmony. At the same time, embellishment is a fundamental characteristic of the barbershop style, and relatively wide latitude is given to arrangers to embellish with a variety of devices, which help create musical interest, as well as provide for both unifying and contrasting thematic material.

Accordingly, the Musicality Category wishes to allow the arranger a reasonable degree of license and creativity in writing arrangements of varying levels of complexity, with varying approaches to thematic development that are suitable for contest use, while asserting that the primary theme must be based on musical elements: lyrics, rhythm, melody, harmony, or a combination of song elements.

C. Policy

Arrangements that are overly complex or over-embellished are the result of a level of embellishment that:

1. Obscures the song itself. A guiding principle for defining the barbershop style is that “Embellishments ... should support and enhance the song” (See [The Judging System, section I.B.8](#), of this *Contest & Judging Handbook*). When this principle is compromised, the Musicality judge may no longer be hearing the song itself but rather a catalogue of ornamental devices that do not support the basic song elements.
2. Produces a musical texture that compromises the requirement that barbershop music is “characterized by consonant four-part chords for every melody note in a primarily homorhythmic texture” (See [The Judging System, I.A.1](#), of this *Contest & Judging Handbook*).
3. Alters the composer’s melody beyond the parameters described in the [Musicality Category Description, III.C.4](#) of this *Contest & Judging Handbook*. In addition, performing ability is an integral part of adjudicating whether or not the arrangement is overly complex or over-embellished. The performers’ abilities influence the Musicality judge’s perception of the degree to which a particular song is or is not over-embellished. Given a song with a high number of embellishments, a group performing at the A level may be able to perform it in such a way that the embellishments do not overwhelm the song or performance. The same arrangement performed at the C level may create the perception that the song is over-embellished. The judging system recognizes and provides a basis for scoring these two performances differently under the [Musicality Category Description, Section III](#), and [Introduction](#). Performing ability notwithstanding, the Musicality score will be lowered for song performances that are inherently over-embellished and overly complex. Outside of

parody performances, guiding principles for adjudicating complexity and over-embellishment are:

- a. Barbershop performers may take great liberties with the rhythms of a song. However, the arrangement should not modify lyrics, melody, and implied harmony to the extent that the song itself gets lost. The guideline in Musicality Category Description, [III.C.4](#) stating that stylizations should result in “a passage suggestive of the original” may be compromised if two or more of these three elements are modified. In particular, rewriting the melody with different harmony for much of a repeated song section will likely result in a passage that is not suggestive of the original.
- b. The main statement of a song is generally in the chorus of that song. Accordingly, the Musicality judge is prepared to accept more modification of a verse, even in the first statement, than of the chorus. Abridging a verse to make it an introduction to the chorus is acceptable as long as it is musically appropriate.
- c. Extensions are acceptable at the end of a song section, provided they contain an even number of measures and are artistically appropriate.
- d. The Musicality judge will reduce a score for distracting melody alterations in proportion to their incidence and/or impact on the overall arrangement. It is understood that the Musicality judge can only become distracted by altered melodies when the judge definitely knows the correct melody.
- f. Regarding Musicality Category Description, [III.C.4](#), it is understood that a repeated section usually means a verse or chorus, but sometimes the last A phrase within the first statement of an AABA section may be stylized effectively.
- g. The arranger is expected to use the composer’s melody as the basis for harmonization and embellishment a song. Melodic alterations might be distracting, especially when the melody is well-known. Alterations that are made for the purpose of satisfying the standards of acceptable harmonic progressions and harmonic rhythm stated in [II.4](#) are not permitted. Alterations are acceptable in the following circumstances:
 - (i) Minor melodic alterations may be made to enhance the potential for increased consonance and singability, as long as the notes that are changed are not essential to defining the character or shape of the melody.
 - (ii) When an alteration of the melody is commonly known and accepted.
 - (iii) When, in a repeated section (verse or chorus) of a song, the arrangement alters or stylizes the melody. Stylized segments may occur during repeats of a song section as long as the stylization results in a passage suggestive of the original. Alterations beyond these parameters will result in a lower Musicality score.

II. TASTE

Performances containing bad taste, or which could be considered offensive, are not common in Barbershop contests. Performers are usually aware of the need to have positive audience engagement.

The test of whether a performance is distasteful or offensive is whether, in whole or in part, it would be offensive to today's audiences or society in general.

The Performance judge will assess whether the performance's impact offends contemporary society's standards of cultural currency and sensitivity. These rare performances may range from inadvertent offense to a complete disregard for the potential impact on the audience. Judicial discretion in analyzing these situations is paramount, and judges draw on their own life experience as well as their judicial education and training.

Performances that are considered in poor taste will be subject to penalty up to and including forfeiture by the Performance judge(s). In cases where there is not clear intent to be distasteful the judge may afford the benefit of the doubt to the performer.

If a performance raises questions or could meet the above criteria, the Performance panel will conference to discuss a possible action. (For guidelines see the [Performance Category Description, Section II.G.1.b](#), of this *Contest and Judging Handbook*.)

III. OBSCURE LYRICS

The first responsibility of any art form is to communicate. The use of obscure lyrics can make it difficult to carry out that responsibility and therefore may interfere with the delivery of emotional impact to the audience. This can conceivably result in a lower Performance score.

The audience should not have to work hard to clearly understand the message being communicated by a barbershop performance. Consider the following lyric lines: "The sky isn't blue for a red, rosy hue is there in the air today" or "I was jealous and hurt, when your lips kissed a rose, or your eyes from my own chanced to stray." In isolation, with one of this type of line at a time the audience could probably glean the message and could be convinced by the surrounding material that their guess was accurate. But too much of this type of lyric would leave most barbershop audiences frustrated. An example of a song whose lyrics get in the way of communication is "Send in the Clowns." This song's obscure lyrics require a highly skilled performer to effectively communicate the meaning of this song to the typical audience.

The heartfelt performance is not just an attitude or emotion of a song or theme, but rather the lyrics must contribute to generating human emotions in the listener. If either the emotions or the words are unclear, obscure, or ambiguous, heartfelt delivery is affected, which will generally result in a lower-scoring performance.

Notwithstanding the above, there is nothing inherently wrong with folksy, artsy, or poetic songs. They can be magnificent, thought-provoking and emotional works of art. Many of these songs are not, however, typical of the material we have come to understand as "barbershop." The Contest & Judging System has a stated responsibility to preserve the barbershop style; therefore, contestants should choose material with lyrics they can effectively communicate on its first performance.

IV. PATRIOTIC AND RELIGIOUS PERFORMANCES

A. Patriotic Performances

References to national pride or the military are generally acceptable in contest. The rule violation would come into play in a performance where the theme is primarily extolling a particular national government. Examples include performances of national anthems or similar songs (for example, *O Canada*, *God Bless America*, or *I'm Proud to Be an American*). Such songs shall be considered primarily patriotic, and that song's scores would be subject to a penalty up to and including forfeiture by the Performance judge.

This rule does not prohibit the use of songs of an historical national nature, or general characterization of any nation. There is a wealth of contest-worthy material that falls into the acceptable range, such as *Yankee Doodle Dandy*, *My Old Kentucky Home*, *Over There*, *If There'd Never Been an Ireland* and many more.

The rule also does not prohibit the use of satire, or other comedic political material or manner of performance.

The Performance judge, in determining the application of this rule, will assess whether a typical audience would reasonably determine a song as performed to be primarily patriotic.

B. Religious Performances

References to God, religion or prayer are acceptable as long as the performance is not primarily focused on extolling a deity. Many songs refer to elements of religion or prayer without the focus being primarily religious. These can be work or struggle songs, many rhythm, dance, show vehicles or those alluding to a "revival". Examples include *Get Happy*, *Blow Gabriel Blow*, *Wind Beneath My Wings*, *You Raise Me Up*, etc.

The test of whether or not a song or performance is primarily religious is not based on religious language or whether a song is published in a hymnal. Many secular songs are often utilized because of their message of uplift and spirituality offering hope and encouragement to all people, some of which allude to positive values and the impact of a power greater than ourselves, while not meeting the guideline of being primarily focused on extolling a deity.

The Performance judge will always be guided by the principle of primary focus and the likely impact of the performance of the song in its entirety on the audience. Where there is reasonable doubt that a performance would meet the criteria of being primarily religious, benefit must go to the performer and no penalty is justified. Otherwise, the Performance judge shall apply a penalty, up to and including forfeiture. (For guidelines see [Performance Category Description, Section II.G.1.a](#) of this *Contest and Judging Handbook*).

V. SCORING DIFFERENCES AMONG JUDGES

The Contest and Judging System adopted by the Society in 1993 has moved the judging of contestants toward an evaluation of the artistic impact of a performance on the audience, as opposed to an analysis of the craft of creating effects. Therefore, the judge's individual perspectives have become more relevant, since the judge not only represents, but is a part of, the audience.

The audience that the judge represents may be defined as a mature, musically astute, experienced barbershop audience, whose primary focus is being entertained in the barbershop style. Any attempt to define all of the terms in the preceding sentence would be inappropriate, as it would run contrary to the natural diversity that exists within audiences and among judges.

Whereas scoring differences in the past may have reflected differing opinions on the technical effectiveness with which a performance was delivered, under the current judging system, differences among judges may now reflect the differing emotional impacts upon the judges that performances may have created.

Since each judge, like each member of the audience, has different life experiences and personal backgrounds, some performances may create differing types and levels of impact upon different judges and therefore be reflected in their scoring. For example, a performance intended to be a tribute to Jimmy Durante may not have as much impact on a thirty-year-old judge as on an older judge who can relate to having actually seen Durante's performances. Such a performance would have a similarly diverse impact on the audience, because of the age spectrum that exists. Many other examples could be given, but this same principle affects performances that include inside jokes, period material, or any other performance that has, as part of its content, an attribute not universally understood or appreciated by the audience.

Performing material or using a style of delivery that invites a mixed reaction among audience members relative to taste, empathy, comprehension, relevance, or some other facet, also invites the chance of a mixed reaction on the part of the judges. It is natural that this mixed reaction may be reflected in scoring, as it should be.

Certainly, the Performance Category intends to reward creativity in both concepts and delivery of concepts, but that creativity must "connect" with, and be appreciated by, the audience and the judges, to have emotional impact. Obviously, those performances that are universally enjoyed by all members of the audience will also have the best chance of being uniformly appreciated by all of the judges. Such performances will lessen the chances of divergent scoring.

If divergent scoring is to be minimized, the responsibility rests both with the judges and the contestants. Judges must accept training on category standards and agree to implement that training to the best of their ability. Contestants must work their craft and artistic skills toward the goal of reaching every member of the audience to the greatest degree possible.

VI. MUSICALITY CATEGORY PROCESS FOR STYLE PROBLEMS

The Musicality Category uses its email forum to discuss style issues. We have a standing rule that Musicality judges report style problems from recent contests to the category, which then holds a discussion. Factors include the relationship between performance and current category wording, matters of degree, appropriate amount of effect of the problem on adjudicated score, and any aspects of natural style evolution that may exist. The forum discussions keep judges current on the state of our thinking about style, and the category will continue to use this process as an integral component of our style guardianship role.

The progression typically follows this pattern:

1. Questionable material is heard in contest. In real time, Musicality judges decide to what extent the material affects the performance and score.
2. The performance becomes the subject of discussion, initiated either by a panel judge or an outside query, and is brought to the attention of the Category Specialist.
3. The Category Specialist initiates an internal discussion of the performance and the style issues involved. All sides of the issue are openly discussed in the Musicality Category forum.
4. A consensus is reached (if possible) on how this and similar material should be handled in the future.
5. Individual judges align their adjudication to the Category consensus, with the understanding that this is the expected reaction when hearing this or similar material in future contests.

VII. FREQUENCY OF THE BARBERSHOP 7th CHORD

One of the defining hallmarks of the barbershop style is the barbershop 7th chord (major-minor 7th (1-3-5-^b 7)). The previous Arrangement (ARR) Category description stated that arrangements should have a minimum of 33% barbershop 7th chords by duration (at first it was 35% and later lowered to 33%). The Musicality Category Description continued this legacy requirement. The percentage was derived by taking arrangements that were considered solid barbershop and counting the frequency of 7th chords to the total number of beats.

The Musicality Category accepts a wider spectrum of songs for competition arranged in the barbershop style than the Arrangement Category did. Most of them still met this criterion. However, there were a number of songs that fell short of this requirement, even though the songs were clearly and solidly barbershop. Barbershop singers and audiences accepted them as barbershop. Judging these songs against this criterion created discrepancies in application as well as incorrectly assessing the true count of 7th chords. As a result, this criterion is no longer appropriate to assess stylistic suitability.\

The Musicality judge listens to the musicality of the performance through the filter of the barbershop style. The Musicality judge is in a position to address performance issues that are generated by the elements of the song and/or arrangement that may be stylistically weak. Through this, the intent of featuring the hallmark of the barbershop 7th chord is maintained without a need to quantify the actual count.

At the heart of the barbershop 7th chord is the tritone interval (augmented fourth). In a barbershop 7th chord, the tritone is the interval between the 3rd and flatted 7th (^b7). We find this relationship not only in the barbershop 7th chord but also in the traditional 9th chords used in barbershop (1-^b 7-2-3, 5-^b 7-2-3 of scale tones) as well as other chords such as the half-diminished 7th (1-^b 3-^b 5-^b 7). The role of the tritone is critical in barbershop. Songs that feature circle-of-fifths movement exhibit what is known as tritonal movement, which creates energy and tension. As a result, these songs will have a high frequency of barbershop 7th and 9th chords and provide the characteristic sound of barbershop.

Arrangements that have fewer barbershop 7th and 9th chords could result in several performance deficiencies. Arrangements that feature more minor triads and minor 7th chords could exhibit a lower consonance level. Quartets/choruses that do not possess high levels of tuning will have more problems and the score will likely be lower than an arrangement with a higher 7th count. Arrangements that do not have high circle-of-fifths motion will have less built-in tension. Quartets/choruses will have to work harder in order to overcome this weakness in the music. Delivery and thematic development will likely be lower, affecting both Musicality and Performance scores. From an audience perspective, arrangements that are low in 7th chord count may not be as appealing as songs that are higher in 7th chord count.

As the Musicality judge listens to a song/arrangement that is low in barbershop 7th and 9th chords, the judge will decide as to whether the arrangement is still characteristic of the barbershop style. Does it still create musical tension? Does it still provide opportunities for lock and ring? If it does, then it is acceptable. Arrangements that do not provide for these attributes will likely result in a lower Musicality score, and the Musicality judge will identify the weakness of a low barbershop 7th and 9th chord count as part of the reason.

VIII. STATISTICAL VARIANCES

There are many statistical tests available to detect “variances”. “Dixon’s Q Test” was chosen for its simplicity.

Steps:

1. Calculate the range (R) from the highest and lowest values.
2. Calculate the largest distance (D) from the most extreme value (high or low) to its nearest score.
3. Calculate the ratio of $Q = D/R$.
4. If that ratio is “statistically significant”, then it is a variance.

“Statistically significant” depends upon how many judges and the confidence that it is truly a variance and not by chance and chance alone. 90% confidence level was chosen.

Judges	Q (90%)
3	0.941
6	0.560
9	0.437
12	0.376
15	0.338

It is possible that 5 out of the 6 judges were extremely close (e.g. 71,70,71,71,70). A final score of 73 would flag as a variance in this example, but both C&J and competitors would accept this sort of variability in scores. As a matter of policy to avoid minor anomalies, the difference between the identified variance and the nearest score, higher or lower, has to be greater than four (4) points before an official variance would be generated.

EXAMPLE:

MUS = 77, 68 PRS = 78, 77 SNG = 76, 77

- The total range (R) is $78-68 = 10$.
- The largest distance (D) is $76-68 = 8$.
- $Q = 8/10 = 0.800$.
- For a double panel (6 judges), the critical value is 0.560.
- Since $Q = 0.800$ is greater than the critical value of 0.560, we would conclude that the MUS Category has a variance.
- The difference between the lowest score (68) and next lowest score is $76-68 = 8$. This is greater than 4 so this song would flag as a variance for the MUS Category.

At the end of the contest round, the PC will provide the MUS category with all scores for that performance. After the MUS judges review their notes, the MUS judges could stand by their

original scores or one (or both) MUS judges could modify their scores for either song in the performance per Article VII.B.2 of the official *Contest Rules*.

A variance will also be generated for any song in which a single judge's score is more than 5 points from the average of that judge's category. For example, on a double panel a variance will be generated for any scoring difference of 11 or more points within a single category. This is the traditional computation used on the Scoring Analysis generated at the end of each contest session and indicated by an asterisk.

For a single panel a variance is also generated when the high or low score is at least 10 points from the middle score. This accounts for a limitation of Dixon's Q Test with a small sample.

The SCJC recognizes that from time to time, a score is provided by a judge that is too high or too low relative to the rest of the panel. This often happens when all of the category elements are not properly weighted or there were distractions that led to the result. In other cases, there can be disagreements between judges within a category. In any event, this process is available to enable judges to reflect upon the performance and all information before finalizing the official scores. The SCJC wishes to ensure that the competitors receive the scores they deserve and doesn't want a potential judicial error to affect competition status or advancement.

IX. COMEDIC CONCEPTS AND TECHNIQUES

Barbershop audiences love to laugh, and the rush of having a huge comedic hit has driven many Barbershop performers to include comedic elements in their performances. While different things are found amusing by different people, most successful comedic barbershop performances exhibit hallmarks of good comedic concepts and technique. The Performance Judge will evaluate these, and their resulting comedic effect, as part of the overall entertainment value of the performance.

Here is a brief description of some of the more common concepts and techniques.

The Comic Premise: Comic situations arise from the juxtaposition of a ridiculous character in a normal world, or vice versa. The Comic Premise is the gap between comic reality and real-world reality. In barbershop performances, we often see a quartet with three seemingly normal characters trying to soldier on despite the antics of the fourth one, usually the goofball standing on the end. Other examples of a strong comic premise include "fish out of water" situations such as hillbillies arriving in the big city, or aliens coming to Earth to sing in a quartet contest. Barbershop choruses have earned laughs by singing about real human feelings, but playing the roles of aquarium fish, or vegetables, or plastic green army men. A strong comic premise provides the structure and theme for a skit or performance; without one, a series of jokes can seem random and empty.

Characterization: The strength of a comic premise often depends on the audience being able to easily recognize the characters and personalities being portrayed by the performers. Barbershop performances, and other forms of low comedy, often use easily recognizable Stock Characters: the Nerd; the Jock; the Yokel; and so on. Once the audience has an expectation of how a character might behave, comedy can be derived by delivering the unexpected. In a two-song performance, there is very little time to convey character traits, but suitable costuming, brief spoken words, or stereotypical gestures can often do the trick.

The Rule of Three: When presented with information, humans intuitively search for patterns; it helps us learn, remember, and understand. Comedy is derived from delivering the unexpected, so comedy writers set up their gags in three parts; three is the smallest number required to establish a pattern. The first two phrases (or looks, or gestures) are consistent with each other, which sets up an expectation for the next one. The third one takes a left turn, and that surprise creates the laugh. It's as easy as 1, 2, C!

Timing: The secret of great comedy; pace and delivery affects the success of a joke. A fast pace can improve some gags but ruin others, and the skillful use of "beats" can be a source of comedy in itself. A beat is a pause used to allow the audience to absorb and process the action, or to create tension and expectation before a punch line. Jack Benny and Victor Borge are famous for using the "extended beat," and in the barbershop world, the quartet FRED also made good use of this technique.

Setups and punch lines: These could be sung, spoken, or acted out physically. In any case, for a comedic moment to be successful, there has to be clear and clean communication, and there are several ways to accomplish this. Excellent enunciation of song lyrics, especially if they are parody lyrics that the audience has not heard before, is essential. Successful sight gags usually feature crisp gestures and movements, i.e. the visual equivalent of excellent enunciation. Punch lines, whether spoken or sung, are often best constructed with the funniest word of the punch line at or near the end. Also, a contrast between setup and punch line heightens the surprise; an intensely delivered setup followed by a deadpan punch line (or vice versa) is a common device. Once again,

skillful comic performers use beats and allow brief amounts of space in between looks or gestures; all the better to allow the audience to absorb and understand the action.

X. DISTINCTLY SEPARATE CHORUSES

The SCJC seeks to establish a balance between providing opportunities for members to compete in more than one chorus, while at the same time ensuring fairness to all competing choruses.

However, the concept of “fairness” has two divergent set of concerns:

1. It would be unfair to the other choruses in a contest to allow the same group of singers to perform as two or more separate choruses while competing for the same contest award. For example, two separate chapters could each enter their chorus into one contest comprised of dual chapter members, which could then essentially be the same ensemble getting two opportunities at the same award. Likewise, that same unfair scenario could occur if a single chapter wished to create and enter more than one chorus (with mostly the same chapter members) into a contest.
2. It would also be unfair to prohibit a chapter from entering more than one chorus into the same contest if they were actually distinctly different ensembles. [The previous version of Article I.B.2 of the official *Contest Rules* only allowed a chapter to enter one chorus per contest.]

Recent changes to the Society membership policies now allow for (and encourage) chapters to establish more than one chorus. Therefore, the limitation for a chapter to enter only one chorus to compete had to be addressed, while at the same time protecting other competitors from one chapter “stacking” multiple choruses against them unfairly. Article I.B.4 of the official *Contest Rules* uses the threshold of a 75% overlap to provide a balance of fairness thus addressing both sets of concerns.

1. While individual members can compete in more than one chorus, each chorus ensemble must still be distinct or “unique enough” so that each group of singers is only competing once for that award.
2. Chapters that are evolving additional choruses may initially contain several overlapping members from within their chapter. Each chorus (if it is “unique enough”) should be allowed to compete at the same contest against all of the other choruses. C&J would not be very encouraging of new choruses to form, if we were to expect that every new chorus would be required to charter as a separate chapter just to be eligible to compete.

Some have asked why this rule is necessary since many districts offer separate awards for men’s, women’s, and mixed (all voices) choruses. The reason is that many districts have established “overall” district championship awards as well as most-improved awards extended to choruses of all gender classifications. To help chapter and chorus leaders better understand how to comply with the rule, the following use cases are provided as examples of two ensembles that are close to the 75% threshold calculation. While all of these groups would be eligible to compete for separate awards – those just over the threshold would not be eligible to compete for the same award.

To help chapter and chorus leaders better understand how to comply with the rule, the following use cases are provided as examples of two ensembles that are close to the 75% threshold calculation. While all of these groups would be eligible to compete for separate awards – those just over the threshold would not be eligible to compete for the same award.

1. Two choruses with 20 and 40 members: 14 are in both. Eligible because the smaller chorus has 70% that are also in the larger chorus.

2. Two choruses with 30 and 50 members: 23 are in both. Not eligible because the smaller chorus has 76.7% that are also in the larger chorus.
3. Two choruses each with 13 members: 9 are in both. Eligible because the “smaller” chorus (either one) has 69% that are also in the other chorus.
4. Two choruses each with 13 members: 10 are in both. Not eligible because the “smaller” chorus (either one) has 76.9% that are also in the other chorus.

XI. ELECTRONIC ENHANCEMENT, SOUND EFFECTS & RECORDED SOUND

Within Article X.B of the official *Contest Rules*, there are a few restrictions that could benefit from elaboration.

Article X.B.3 of the official *Contest Rules* restricts the use of artificial enhancement, whether through electronic or other devices. Examples would include functioning hand-held microphones, long megaphones (as seen in cheerleader squads), or even kazoos. The purpose of this rule is to maintain the focus on the natural, acoustic hallmarks of the barbershop style, and the fair adjudication of the natural skill of our singers.

As such, any penalties assessed would be commensurate with the device's impact on the overall vocal performance. A single note is likely to receive a minor deduction, while entire phrases could result in a 0 being awarded by the Singing Category. The use of hands to imitate an "old time radio" effect or to beatbox are not considered within this rule and would be adjudicated under the appropriate category.

It is important for the performer and judge to consider the difference between singing and making a sound effect. Yelling "Hey!" into a megaphone would not be considered singing. Similarly, using a kazoo to create a brief duck call noise would also not be considered singing. Length and context will help determine if it is sung. When in doubt, the Singing and Performance categories should consult. If deemed to be a sound effect, the Performance Category would adjudicate it holistically under Article X.B.4 of the official *Contest Rules* as to whether it was a benefit to the performance.

Article X.B.2 of the official *Contest Rules* discusses the use of recordings, both musical (vocal or instrumental) and the spoken word. Restricted instances would include interludes between songs, or a pre-recorded introduction of a performance. It is important to note that this rule exists even during non-singing time, either between songs or during breaks in a song. The purpose of this restriction is to focus our attention on the skills of the performers on stage and not allow the influence of additional performers to be introduced via recording.

As such, any penalties assessed would be commensurate with the recording's impact on the overall performance. A single note is likely to receive a minor deduction, while lengthy interludes or drawn-out speech could result in a 0 being awarded by the Singing Category. Please note that use of recordings over the top of 4 parts singing can draw additional attention as being than 4-parts at once. Instruments being played beyond that of pitch-taking is already disallowed within the Musicality Category, and this rule will be considered similarly.

This restriction does not affect the use of brief recordings that would be considered a sound effect. A church bell chiming 3 or 4 notes would be considered a sound effect. A church bell playing the entire line of a song would be discussed as a potential penalty. The sound a simple doorbell or knocker would also be considered a sound effect. A voice shouting "Who's there?" or "What?" would also be considered a sound effect, however, a voice asking, "Who is it that stands at my door!?" would likely be considered as recorded speech.

Repetition of a sound effect or multiple sound effects within a performance can rise to the level of being considered recorded music or speech. When in doubt, the Singing and Performance categories should consult. If deemed to be a sound effect, the Performance Category would adjudicate it holistically under Article X.B.4 of the official *Contest Rules* as to whether it was a benefit to the performance.