

IT'S ALL IN THE BOOK...

the Judging Category Description Book.

(Get the book!)

“The primary focus of the music category is the performance of a song arranged in four-part barbershop style. The music judge evaluates the musicality of the performance, the quality of the song and arrangement, and the degree to which the performance meets the requirements of the barbershop style. She rewards a performance when:

The song and arrangement are accurately performed and within the vocal capabilities of the performer.

The musical performance is appropriate to the lyrics, to the harmonic and rhythmic content, and to accepted standards of musical artistry in the barbershop style.

The song is lyrically and melodically appropriate to the barbershop art form and has been arranged with harmonization and voicing consistent with the characteristics of the barbershop style.”

Hey, it's simple! You can go home now.

....OK, let's talk a little more. What's “merit as barbershop material”?

That's how well it measures up to the following:

Form: Usually an intro, sometimes a verse, always a chorus, usually a tag. Composed/arranged in 8-bar segments, e.g. 4-bar intro and 4-bar tag (total 8 bars), 16-bar verse, 32-bar chorus. Could be other configurations, but each segment should still be in 8-bar increments.

Melody: Singable, musically interesting, with a high point that coincides with the climactic point of the lyrics.

Lyrics: Written as a poem, with uniform phrase length and an obvious rhyming pattern. Not acceptable are religious or patriotic lyrics, or lyrics of questionable suitability for a general audience.

Arrangement: Harmonized using the 11 acceptable barbershop chords included in your handouts, arranged using strong voicings with appropriate intervals and progressions that are singable for each part. Creative devices such as swipes, echoes, and other embellishments, when used appropriately, may add to the effectiveness and uniqueness of the arrangement.

Suitability to performer: The song and arrangement should reflect the personality and style of the performing group, and should be within their ability to perform successfully. Music that is too difficult for the performers will not be judged suitable for them.

What about the “performance?”

Vocal skills top the list for a reason: No performance can be successful unless it is built on a solid foundation of vocal skills. They are: Posture, breathing, phonation, resonance, and articulation. The JCDB includes an entire section on vocal skills – *read it!*

Harmony accuracy – *tune it or die!*

Barbershop style – refer to handout #3. This includes appropriate tempo, consistent rhythm, performing as a musical unit, appropriate and effective phrasing, appropriate and effective use of dynamics, and consistent musical energy underlying all other elements of the performance.

Musical artistry – adding “heart” to the delivery through true expression of emotion delivered with solid singing skills.

POP QUIZ

Music judges a) live to reward a deserving performance; b) eat nails for lunch.

Musical unity is a) all parts singing in unison; b) all parts singing together as a unit.

Harmonization is a) four guys standing around a barber pole singing “Sweet Adeline”; b) appropriate use of the eleven barbershop chords with a preponderance of major triads and barbershop (flatted) sevenths.

Voicing involves a) expressing your opinion in a political argument; b) arranging chords so that the best note possible is assigned to each voice part.

Performance evaluation is a) rewarding your toddler for progress in potty training; b) the most helpful part of your scoresheet – the judge’s evaluation and comments.

Arrangers a) create the most beautiful, singable, effective arrangements possible; b) attempt to induce performer insanity by building “traps” into their arrangements. (YOU BETTER GET THIS ONE RIGHT!)