

PERFORMANCE CATEGORY

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I. THE ART OF PERFORMANCE

One significant goal of any art form is communication. A barbershop performance refers to how the artist communicates his/her message and vision via the transformation of a song into an entertaining experience for an audience. The performance of a song is the artist's gift to the audience, whose experiences, memories, and imagination transform that gift into an emotional experience. The performers' goal is to create a high level of entertainment through the performance. The means to that end are as varied as the personality, abilities and creative skills of the performers.

The Performance judge evaluates entertainment within the Barbershop style. Vocal and visual elements, in the context of the song choice and delivery, are evaluated for their contribution to the overall entertainment effect of the performance.

II. PERFORMANCE CATEGORY DESCRIPTION

A. Characteristics of the Barbershop Performance

1. Barbershop Style

Barbershop is a musical art form, and therefore the type of entertainment with which we are concerned, must principally be a form of music supported by artistic delivery and not simply a musical accompaniment of another form of art, such as drama, dance, or comedy. That is, in a true barbershop performance, the barbershop style of music remains a key feature of the performance. This does not preclude the innovative use of these other art forms, in appropriate balance with the barbershop style.

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2. Audience Rapport

The degree to which the audience is entertained is dependent upon the degree to which they are receptive to the performer and the performance. It is the performers' responsibility to engender receptivity, engagement, or connection with the audience.

3. Creativity

Within the bounds of good taste, great freedom is permitted for the individual, the performing group, and the fundamental style of music that is being performed. There is no "one way" to sing in general, or to sing barbershop in particular, just as there is no "one way" to stage a song in the barbershop style. Performers are encouraged to develop their own style and identity. Performances can be two entirely stand-alone works or can be a "package" that builds one song upon the other.

4. Artistry and Expressiveness

Visual and vocal expressiveness serve to communicate the emotional content of the song and to engage the audience in the performance. The success a performer achieves is measured by the Performance judge's sense of the degree to which the audience is entertained, enhancing entertainment value. However, for some forms of comedy and fantasy, believability must be suspended for maximum effectiveness. Events that could be considered offensive to an audience, if taken at face value in a serious performance, take on a different character when presented within the confines of well-presented comedy (i.e. farce, parody, slapstick, etc). Audiences instinctively understand this, so this should be reflected in the Performance adjudication. For more sophisticated artistic performances, it is the performer's responsibility to connect and engage in a clear and effective manner.

5. From the Heart/Believability

The entertainment value is higher for performances that are perceived by the audience to be from the heart. These performances are characterized by effective mood creation through the performers' visual involvement and vocal expressiveness. The use of natural, realistic, and appropriate body language, staging, dynamic levels and tone color can create performances that the audience will believe in and relate to. Performances filled with technicalities, or formerly accepted "barbershop" traits (or mannerisms) may be technically impressive but will likely not create emotionally realistic performances to modern audiences. The Performance judge determines how successful the performer is at achieving a "from the heart" and believable performance.

6. Integration with Other Categories

The effectiveness of any performance will be predicated by the performers' skills and abilities in all aspects of that performance, many of which are also evaluated by the Music and Singing judges. The Performance judge must recognize when the overall impact is being affected positively or negatively by an element that is also judged in another category and must make note of that elements' impact from the Performance Category's perspective.

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B. Performance

1. Vocal expressiveness is used to define and maintain the performer's chosen approach for the song and includes the use of musical tools, elements and descriptors, such as forward motion, attention to meter, dynamics, and style descriptors such as legato, staccato, etc. Often, one of the musical elements will predominate, depending on the song. These tools should be appropriately used in order to create a realistic and believable mood or emotion. These devices are not meant to be mandatory or visible tools that become the main functions of performing music. In an ideal performance the presence of these tools is transparent and in service of the mood creation/communication.

2. Visual expressiveness is communicated by the physical presentation of the story or determined approach of the song and may use devices in a manner similar to that of the vocal elements. The use of any props or other mechanical devices should support, rather than detract, from the performance of the song. The Performance judge evaluates the quality of the performers' visual expressiveness in terms of appropriateness, timing, precision (where appropriate), unity, naturalness, and believability as it contributes to the overall effect and entertainment value of the performance. Believability is at its greatest when mannerisms, body language, gestures and facial features enhance the true message of the song.

C. Visual/Vocal Balance

Both the audience and the Performance judge interpret the performance through their eyes and ears simultaneously. To optimize effectiveness, the performer must integrate the vocal and visual aspects in a purposeful manner. For a given song, either aspect, vocal or visual may predominate per the performers' intent. As a result, the judge takes into account the balance between vocal and visual elements and the resulting effectiveness of the entertainment value.

D. Comedic Performances

1. The performer may plan to include comedic moments during the performance designed to elicit a range of reactions from the audience, from gentle smiles to uproarious belly laughs. A wide variety of lyrical, visual, and musical ideas may be used to generate comedic moments.

2. A detailed review of comedic styles, concepts, and techniques, and how they might be utilized in a barbershop performance, would be too lengthy to incorporate into this document. (See Position Paper X, Chapter 9 of the Contest and Judging Handbook for further discussion.)

3. The Performance judge will evaluate the performer's use of comedic styles, concepts, and techniques and their resulting comedic effect, as part of the overall entertainment value of the performance.

E. Scoring Methodology

1. The Performance judge simultaneously experiences the performance, like an audience, and analyzes it. Judges position themselves mentally and emotionally so that the two thought processes occur in an integrated manner.

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a. The Performance judge measures the overall effect of the performance with a focus on entertainment value, and a score is determined based on the degree of entertainment value achieved. Events that affect the entertainment value, whether positive or negative, are noted for discussion with the performer at the evaluation.

b. The Performance judge identifies visual and vocal interferences and distractions that prevent the group from realizing its maximum effect and audience impact. Minor errors may or may not be relevant. The Performance judge holistically determines those events which, if changed, would result in a measurable improvement in the overall effect. The judge should be sensitive when attention is focused on an obviously featured technique and the underlying emotions of the song may have been given secondary consideration.

c. Performances which are truly integrated, entertaining, and artistic should provide a more rewarding experience for the audience than those with accumulated technique or mannered/patterned characteristics and should be encouraged.

2. Representation of the Barbershop Style

a. It is important for the Performance judge to evaluate all performances within the context of contemporary standards of the barbershop style. It is recognized, however, that barbershop is an evolving style of music within an ever-changing cultural context. Therefore, the judge uses awareness of societal and musical influences on the barbershop style as a backdrop against which to evaluate performances.

b. Performances that are relevant to the audience and their cultural expectations will likely be more impactful and should serve to enhance the entertainment value.

3. The Performance judge determines the score for a song or medley on a scale of 1-100 points. The lowest quality score is a 1. Forfeiture and penalties for rules violations are addressed in section I below.

a. Each performance is judged on its own merits – therefore, the Performance judge will not consider expectations related to other performances (by the same performer or anyone else). This does not preclude the positive impact of reference to performances or other events known to and appreciated by the audience, thus achieving an entertaining carryover effect.

b. The score represents the evaluation of the overall entertainment value achieved. There may be a substantial difference in quality between the vocal and visual components. Therefore, the Performance judge derives the score only from the overall effect, while properly evaluating the contribution of each component.

c. The skilled performer attempts to take the audience on a dynamic journey toward an emotionally satisfying conclusion. The Performance judge must be sure to remain aware of the ebb and flow of entertainment value and emotional impact throughout a song and arrive at an appropriate score at the conclusion of the performance.

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F. Scoring Levels

1. The A Level

Any A level scores (81 to 100) reflect outstanding levels of entertainment. To achieve an A score the total effect must be judged as A. The vocal and visual components may or may not both be of A quality depending on their relative importance to the overall effect.

- a. 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.
- b. The mid-range A score [87 to 93] is assigned to performances that exhibit unyielding excellence. The listener may be unaware of the vocal and visual techniques employed; they are caught up in the artistic effect of the total performance.
- c. At the lower end of the A range [81 to 86], the feeling of excellence is definitely present, but some minor interruptions are felt.

Traits that distinguish between A and B levels of performance relate to the presence of subtlety and artistry. The A score implies an extremely high level of consistency in the delivery of entertainment value. In summary, the A score denotes excellence as opposed to competence.

2. The B Level

B level scores (61 to 80) are indicative of performances that deliver competent and increasingly believable emotional or entertainment content. They will exhibit basic to very good musicianship, rapport with the audience, and performance skills.

- a. The upper range of B scores [74 to 80] indicates a substantial presence of excellence. Such performances keep the audience almost totally involved, and moved emotionally. Some instances of A-quality performance are demonstrated.
- b. In the mid-B range [67 to 73], the judge may find that most effects are appropriate and properly presented. These performances are often quite enjoyable and may be memorable, in spite of the presence of technical flaws.
- c. At the lower range of B scoring [61 to 66], nominal consistency is demonstrated but distractions may occur. The result is usually a competent but undistinguished performance.

In a B performance, there is a grasp and use of barbershop techniques. In summary, the B score may denote competence and consistency in the use of performance skills or an unbalanced mix of A level and C level skills (vocal vs. visual).

3. The C Level

C level scores (41 to 60) are given to performances that have weak to adequate entertainment value. The interest of the listener is frequently lost due to lack of musical or vocal consistency, poor execution, stage intimidation, or poor understanding of effective performance approaches.

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- a. At the upper end of the C range [54 to 60], some consistency is displayed. These are acceptable performances despite distraction and interruptions.
- b. Performances in the mid-C range [47 to 53] are marginally acceptable for public performance.
- c. At the lower end of the C range [41 to 46], the limited vocal and/or visual skills being exhibited produce performances that are weak in overall effect.

4. The D Level

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.

- a. The upper half of the D-level is represented by performances where performance skills are severely lacking or absent but many of the notes and words are being sung.
- b. The lower half of the D-level is represented by performances where, not only are performance skills lacking, but also most notes and/or words are being missed.

G. Use of the Score Sheet

1. The judging form for the Performance Category is laid out in a manner intended to allow great facility in judging the performance.
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 sheet is left open and unformatted, allowing the judge to adopt the judge's own preferred note taking style and to record data for evaluation counseling. The suggested approach is to proceed down the page chronologically as the song unfolds. 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 key concepts and performance elements on the left margin helps the judge focus upon vocal and visual attributes of the performance that make positive or negative contributions to the overall effect achieved.
 - e. Other spaces are provided that relate to Entrance - Intro, Attire and Break – Acceptance - Exit. Spaces are provided to make reference to 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.

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H. Differences between Quartets and Choruses

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 purposes. 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 integrated whole.

I. Penalties Up To and Including Forfeiture

1. Penalties (up to and including forfeiture) by the Performance judge may be appropriate only as a result of the following:

a. As specified in Article IX.A of the contest rules, songs must “be neither primarily patriotic nor primarily religious in intent...” Anthems and hymns are examples of clear violations. Songs that merely make reference to national pride or a deity are acceptable. Judgment calls are made for songs that fall in between these extremes. (See Position Paper V, Chapter 9 of the Contest and Judging Handbook.)

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.1, 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 5 or more points will be notated on the scoring slip. Any Performance judge wishing to apply a penalty of 5 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.

4. Article IX of the contest rules specifies, “All songs performed in contest must be arranged in the barbershop style...” Although the Music Category is the category primarily responsible for adjudicating “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 (Chapter 4 of the 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 contest rules. (For further information, see Position Papers, Chapter 9 of the Contest and Judging Handbook.)

a. Article XI.A.1 prohibits persons who are not members of the competing chorus or quartet from appearing on stage during the performance. An exception to this rule permits non-member chorus directors, who may appear with their chorus, provided their appearance and performance is in conjunction with their role as a director. Notwithstanding the previous sentence, non-member directors may not sing with their chorus.

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Violations of this article should be reported to the Contest Administrator by indicating this on the penalty grid on the scoring form. The CA will take action to disqualify and declare the contestant ineligible.

b. Article XI.A.2 states “Actions by any contestant that are deemed suggestive, vulgar or otherwise not in good taste will not be allowed.” Staging is defined as the use of props or sets, the handling of props, the use of physical actions, or a combination of these.

Unacceptable staging is staging that is suggestive, vulgar or otherwise not in good taste. Violations of Article XI are adjudicated in terms of the quality of the performance but are not subject to penalty or forfeiture. (See Position Paper III, Chapter 9 of the Contest and Judging Handbook.)

c. Article XII 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.