

MUSIC CATEGORY

I. INTRODUCTION

Music is defined as the song and arrangement, as performed. The Music Category judges the suitability of the material to the barbershop style and the performer's musicianship in bringing the song and arrangement to life. The Music judge is responsible for adjudicating the musical elements in the performance. He judges the extent to which the musical performance displays the hallmarks of the barbershop style and the degree to which the musical performance demonstrates an artistic sensitivity to the music's primary theme.

The sensitive handling of musical elements, such as melody, harmony, and embellishments, demonstrates musicality in a performance. A strong musical performance is one in which everything provided by the composer and arranger is skillfully delivered and effectively integrated in support of the musical theme.

II. MUSICAL ELEMENTS

Melody – 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. On occasion, the melody may be carried by some part other than the lead, as specified below:

- When the melody is transferred to a part other than the lead, that part should predominate and should be sung with melodic quality.
- Tenor melody may be used briefly. It is acceptable in tags or when some appropriate embellishing effect can be created.
- When the melody lies too low for the lead singer to project adequately, it may be transferred to the bass.

Lyrics – The song should be predominately homophonic; that is, all voices should sing the same words simultaneously. This does not preclude the appropriate use of non-homophonic devices such as patter, backtime, echoes, and bell chords.

Harmony – Consonant harmony is the most characteristic element of the barbershop style. The Music judge's evaluation is based in large part on the amount of consonance in the performance. A high score requires a predominance of major triads and dominant seventh chords (often called the barbershop seventh chord) in strong voicings, as well as in well-tuned, well-balanced, and synchronized chords.

Other than the major triad, the most prominent chord should be the 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 Music score, even forfeiture in extreme cases. As the Music judge listens to a song/arrangement that is low in barbershop seventh and ninth chords, he will make a decision as to whether the arrangement is still characteristic of the barbershop

style. Does the arrangement still create musical tension, often resolving around the circle of fifths? 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 Music score.

Rhythm and Meter – Extremely complicated rhythms are not characteristic of the barbershop style and will result in a lower Music score. Beyond that, any rhythm that the performer can sing while maintaining quality barbershop sound is acceptable. The song should use only standard meters such as 2/4, 4/4, 3/4 and 6/8. Performances should demonstrate a clear underlying meter unless altered for comedic purposes.

Construction and Form – Construction and form refer to the horizontal (melodic) structure of the music. Construction and form should provide both unity and contrast in satisfying proportions. The Music judge evaluates the artistry with which forward motion is maintained and the degree to which the horizontal flow supports the song's theme. Lengthy non-singing interludes should be in service to the song.

Embellishment – One of the hallmarks of the barbershop style is the use of embellishments of many kinds, such as swipes, echoes, key changes, bell chords, patter effects, and backtime. The Music judge's score is to some degree an evaluation of the arranger's skill in choosing and placing embellishments where they best support the theme of the song.

Embellishments in which all four parts are not singing the same words at the same time must not be of such duration and prominence that the performance is no longer predominantly homophonic.

Solo or duet passages, and solo with neutral syllable background, may be used if brief and musically appropriate.

III. PERFORMANCE ELEMENTS

Consonance – The level of consonance achieved in a performance derives from two factors: the inherent consonant potential of chords chosen by the arranger, and use of the proper vocal techniques to successfully execute the chords in performance.

- A high Music score requires the predominance of barbershop sevenths and major triads in a predominantly homophonic texture.
- The consonance level is diminished by the performance of chords outside of the barbershop vocabulary, incomplete chords, or non-chords.
- The consonance level is also diminished by the sustained use of non-homophonic devices.

Theme – The theme is the principal musical statement of the song. It may be based on the song's lyrics, rhythm, melody, or harmony. The Music judge evaluates the performer's choices of appropriate voicings and embellishment when used to enhance the song's theme and delivery.

Embellishment – The Music judge evaluates the effectiveness with which the performer uses embellishments for their intended purpose, such as the use of rhythmic propellants to create forward motion or key lifts to heighten the level of intensity. The performers' ability to successfully execute the embellishments may influence the Music judge's perception of when a song has too many, or too few, embellishments.

Delivery – The Music judge evaluates the musical artistry with which the performer integrates melody, lyrics, harmony, rhythm, tempos, form, vocal color, dynamics, and forward motion to allow the song to come to life. The Music judge also evaluates how the flow and contour of phrases support and define the lyric’s climactic moments.

Performers should strive to communicate the song itself in an authentic, sincere, heartfelt manner.

Execution – Well-executed music has accurate harmony and rhythm, steady tempos, clean synchronization, matched word sounds, and clear articulation.

IV. SCORING

The Music judge’s evaluation is based on the appropriateness of the music to the barbershop style and the musicality of the performance. The Music judge’s guardianship of the barbershop style serves as a screen or filter through which the music must pass. The Music judge evaluates the performer’s sensitivity in delivering the theme of the song and his accuracy in executing its musical elements.

V. MUSICAL ELEMENTS NOT IN THE BARBERSHOP STYLE

1. Use of instrumental accompaniment
2. Lack of predominantly homophonic texture.
3. Melody not sung primarily by the lead.
4. Excessive passages sung by less than four parts.
5. Use of chords not in the barbershop chord vocabulary, and lack of feature of the barbershop seventh chord.