



Unlocking The Music Category

AN OVERVIEW

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Music Category Basics

- The primary focus of the music category is the performance of a song arranged in four-part harmony, 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.

In SA, 70% of the Music Category is devoted to Performance in the barbershop style.

The other 30% is devoted to the Song & Arrangement and its effectiveness as a representative of the barbershop style.



Music Category Basics

At its heart, the Music Category is simply about the music you choose and how you lift that music off of the page.

Elements of the Music Category

Judge _____

Contestant's Name _____ Contestant # _____

Contest: Region # _____ Chorus Region # _____ Quartet Date _____

Int'l Quartet Semifinals Int'l Chorus Semifinals Int'l Quartet Finals Int'l Chorus Finals Harmony Classic

JUDGING CRITERIA

<p>SONG & ARRANGEMENT (0-30 points)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Merit as Barbershop MaterialForm/Melody/LyricsArrangement<ul style="list-style-type: none">HarmonizationVoicing	<p>PERFORMANCE (0-70 points)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Vocal SkillsHarmony AccuracyBarbershop Style<ul style="list-style-type: none">TempoRhythmMusical UnityPhrasingDynamicsMusical EnergyMusical Artistry
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**FREE!
JCDB
Online!**

SUITABILITY TO PERFORMER

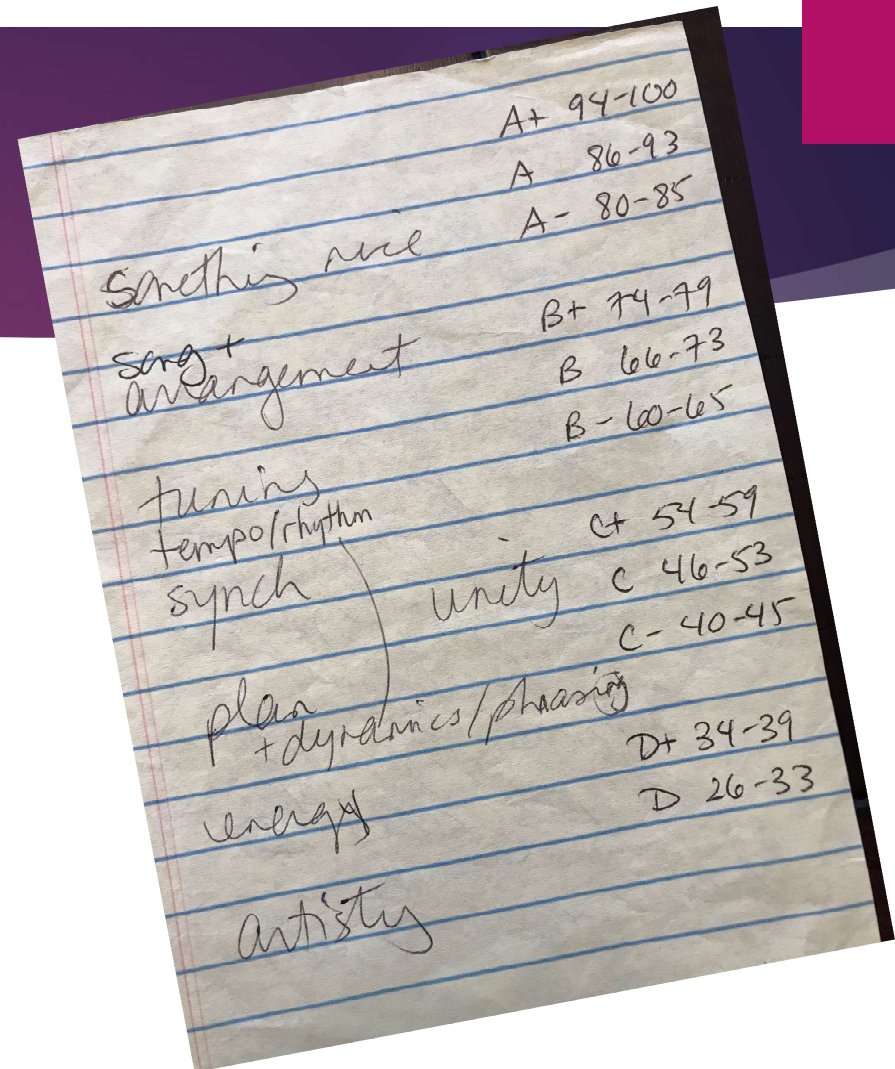
Song 1 _____

Song 2 _____

Judge _____

Elements of the Music Category

Or - this is the super-simple version I keep on my table when judging...



A handwritten grading scale on lined paper, tilted at an angle. The scale lists various musical elements and their corresponding letter grades and score ranges. The elements are: 'Something nice', 'song + arrangement', 'tuning', 'tempo/rhythm', 'synch', 'plan + dynamics/phrasing', 'energy', and 'artistry'. The grades range from A+ (94-100) down to D (26-33). A large bracket on the right side of the paper groups the 'tuning', 'tempo/rhythm', and 'synch' categories under the heading 'unity'.









Element	Grade	Score Range
Something nice	A+	94-100
	A	86-93
	A-	80-85
song + arrangement	B+	74-79
	B	66-73
	B-	60-65
tuning	C+	54-59
tempo/rhythm	C	46-53
synch	C-	40-45
plan + dynamics/phrasing	D+	34-39
energy	D	26-33
artistry		

Performance Level Guidelines

MUSIC CATEGORY	MUSIC CATEGORY	MUSIC CATEGORY
A+ LEVEL (94-100) <i>Flawless</i> Highly creative arrangement of strong barbershop song Complete mastery of vocal skills demonstrated Tuning of all chords is instant and impeccable Interpretive plan captures essence of barbershop style Interpretive plan flawlessly executed Artistry and finesse epitomize the barbershop style. Performance completely transcends technique	A LEVEL (86-93) <i>Near Perfect</i> Creative arrangement of strong song Exceptional mastery of vocal skills demonstrated All chords instantly tuned into locked, musical unit Interpretive plan fully supports song and arrangement High level execution of interpretive plan Strong sense of barbershop style with artistry and finesse Performance consistently transcends technique	A- LEVEL (80-85) <i>Excellent</i> Strong song, arrangement shows some creativity High level of proficiency in vocal skills demonstrated Chords usually tuned into locked, musical unit Creative interpretive plan appropriate to song Strong execution of interpretive plan Strong sense of barbershop style usually evident. Performance usually transcends technique.
B+ LEVEL (74-79) <i>Very Good</i> Good song, arrangement shows some creativity Strong vocal skills demonstrated Minor tuning problems affect chord clarity Synch problems occasionally affect chord alignment Interpretive plan well designed for song and performer Minor flaws in execution of interpretive plan Artistry beginning to emerge over technique.	B LEVEL (66-73) <i>Good</i> Good song, well arranged Vocal skills strong, but not habitual Chord clarity inconsistent Minor synch problems affect chord alignment Good design for interpretive plan Focus on technique interferes with delivery of plan Some achievement in artistry and finesse evident	B- LEVEL (60-65) <i>Promising</i> Good arrangement of acceptable song Vocal skills generally good, but inconsistent Frequent minor intonation and tuning problems Frequent internal synch problems affect chords Plan good, but some lapses in forward motion Delivery of plan controlled, lacks freedom Focus on technique inhibits artistry
C+ LEVEL (54-59) <i>Satisfactory</i> Good arrangement, presents challenges for performer Work on vocal skills apparent, but still in progress Consistent minor tuning problems impact chord clarity Sense of musical unity apparent, but inconsistent Interpretive plan evident Interpretive plan needs to be internalized for unit delivery Mechanical delivery overrides attempts at artistry	C LEVEL (46-53) <i>Acceptable</i> Song and arrangement good, but may be difficult Vocal skills understood, but application inconsistent Tuning errors and some wrong notes impact chords Frequent synch errors, but some sense of unit apparent Interpretive plan sometimes apparent Delivery of plan needs stronger support and stamina Vocal problems make artistry difficult to recognize	C- LEVEL (40-45) <i>Fair</i> Good arrangement, too difficult for performer Vocal skills weak, but beginnings of work apparent Consistent tuning and accuracy errors affect chords Consistent lack of chord alignment Interpretive plan sometimes difficult for performer Stronger vocal skills needed to deliver plan effectively No apparent attempts at musical artistry

	C Acceptable <i>Fair</i>	Satisfactory <i>Acceptable</i>	B- Promising	B Good	B+ Very Good	A- Excellent	A Near Perfect	A+ Flawless
Regional Level Arc - Music								
Artistry	Inhibited by vocal skills	Mechanical	[TECHNICALLY FOCUSED]			[ARTISTRY EMERGING]		
Energy	Lacking	Needs stronger support + stamina	-[PRESENT]-			[HIGH LEVEL]		
Plan	Too Difficult	Sometimes	-[EVIDENT]-			-[GOOD PLAN]-		
Musical Unit	Consistent	Lack of chord Alignment	[SENSE OF UNIT]			-[SYNCH ERRORS]-		
Harmony Accuracy	Consistent	Some WRONG NOTES	[CHORD ERRORS]			-[TUNING ERRORS]-		
Song & Arrangement	-[GOOD, Too difficult]	SUITABILITY? may be difficult	-[GOOD]			-[STRONG]		
Vocal Skills	WEAK Beginning	UNDERSTOOD Application Inconsistent	APPARENT In Progress	Good, Inconsistent	[STRONG] (not habitual)	Highly Proficient	Instantly Creative	Impeccably Highly Creative
	Don't get it just yet. C-	Starting to get it, can't do it. C	Get it, sometimes do it. C+	Get it, can't always do it. B-	Get it, mostly do it. B	Get it, do it, now let it go. B+		

The Elements at Work

Performance	Recording	Level	Music Score	Performance	Recording	Level	Music Score
Somewhere Over The Rainbow		C-	42	If I Love Again		B	69
Love's Old Sweet Song		C	51	If I Give My Heart To You		B+	76
Singing Your Love Song to Somebody Else		C+	57	Once Upon A Time		A-	81
Bundle of Old Love Letters		B-	63	It's You		A	88

Music Category Tips

- ▶ Build and refine the foundation...
 - ▶ Hone your individual vocal skills
 - ▶ Choose arrangements that showcase your vocal capabilities as they are today
 - ▶ Learn to sing with harmony accuracy – correct notes, in-tune, then finely tuned
 - ▶ Solidify the musical unit – breaths, onsets and releases together, chords aligned vertically
- ▶ As the foundation is built...
 - ▶ Explore more creative phrasing and dynamics in your delivery
 - ▶ Build energy and stamina so you can deliver a musical journey to your audience
 - ▶ Strive to be singer-driven. Every singer takes personal responsibility for the performance
- ▶ When the foundation is solid...
 - ▶ Focus on energy, artistry and audience impact
 - ▶ Surprise and delight



Extra Slides

Song and Arrangement – 30%

- ▶ Unaccompanied (a cappella), close harmony, four-part vocal music with the melody primarily in a middle part (not top, not bottom).
- ▶ 'Popular song' form. Generally 8-measure building blocks. Chorus demonstrates melodic unity (ex. AABA, ABAC, ABACA).
- ▶ An 'interesting' melody and a General Audience lyric. Lyric demonstrates metric unity and an obvious rhyming structure.
- ▶ Harmonization *primarily* consisting of major triad, dominant seventh and dominant ninth harmonizations. Chord progressions *primarily* utilize dominant-to-tonic resolution.
- ▶ Arrangement structure: Chorus is mandatory. Intro, verse, tag, bridge optional.
- ▶ Every melody note is harmonized i.e. texture is primarily homophonic (vs. polyphonic)
- ▶ Voicings strengthen the lock and ring characteristic of the barbershop style.
- ▶ Embellishments are utilized for dramatic effect or to achieve continuity in the absence of instruments.

Performance – 70%

- ▶ The performer's level of vocal skills can impact chord accuracy, interval accuracy, tuning, chord clarity and, in a chorus, section unity. Phrasing and dynamics can also be affected.
- ▶ Harmony accuracy includes correct notes and fine tuning.
- ▶ Barbershop style included an evaluation of tempo selection, use of rhythms, musical unity, phrasing, dynamics and musical energy.
- ▶ Musical artistry occurs when all other aspects of the category have been achieved - in glimpses at lower levels, more consistently at higher levels.
- ▶ Suitability considers the 'fit' of the arrangement to the performer. If it is too difficult, it will showcase weaknesses/challenges in the performer skillset.