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# HISTORY OF SPEBSQSA/BHS CONTEST & JUDGING

PART 7 – THE “NEW” CATEGORIES 1993

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BHS CERTIFIED MUS JUDGE, 1998-PRESENT  
MUS BOARD OF REVIEW, 2001-2007  
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2020 BHS HALL OF FAME



# CATCHING UP



# WHERE DID WE LEAVE OFF?

- All categories are struggling with confusion and some amount of contention, both in the general public and even with judges within the categories
  - “Younger” judges are challenging old doctrine with an eye towards artistry
- Changes are being made constantly to address trends on contest stage and concerns by the public
  - Both ARR and SP are limiting in what is acceptable
  - Some aspects of the categories are not flexible enough to be evolutionary as the style and trends evolve
- “Keep It Barbershop”, through many challenges is in decline
  - Still very much present, creating a divide amongst members
- Future II Committee has challenged a number of items as it relates to judging
- Article 6 concerning chorus member eligibility continues to be rewritten



## FUTURE II COMMITTEE

- As the membership started to decline in the 1980's the Future II Committee was formed to study in depth how the society might evolve to meet the needs of members going forward into the future
  - A number of the recommendations dealt specifically with judging





# FUTURE II RECOMMENDATIONS

## OBJECTIVES OF THE FUTURE II COMMITTEE

- Perpetuate the Barbershop Style by Sharing our Love for it with People of all Ages throughout the World.
- Contests should be Judged to Reward Performances that:
  - Are Most Representative of the Barbershop Style
  - Lead to the Broadest Participation
  - Expand the Joy of Competition



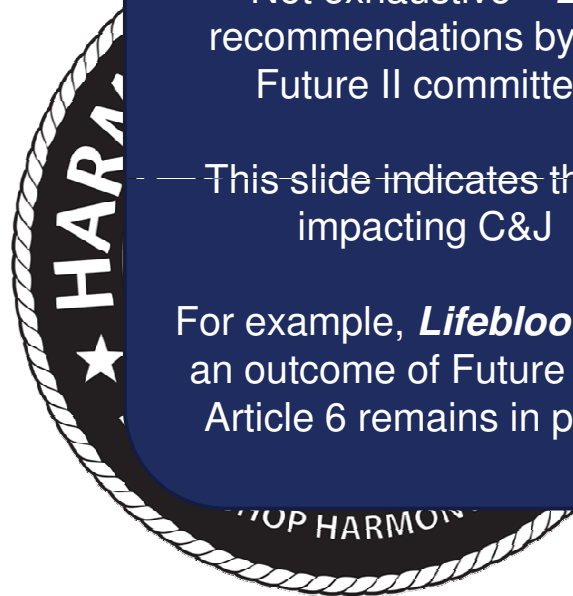
## THE CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED BY FUTURE II

- Balance the Preservation and Perpetuation of the Barbershop Style
- Emphasize the Overall Elegance and Naturalness of Performances
- Focus on Arrangements that are Easily Singable by the Group
- Reward Singing Quality that Results from Freely Produced, Resonant Sound
- Balance Oral and Visual Presentations to Achieve Authenticity
- Emphasize an Overall Result that is from the Heart without Gimmicks.
- Promote Chapter Growth and Well-Being through the Joy of Contest Participation

Not exhaustive – 28 recommendations by the Future II committee

— This slide indicates those impacting C&J

For example, *Lifeblood* was an outcome of Future II yet Article 6 remains in place



# CATEGORY ISSUES

- All categories are struggling with some aspects of adjudication
  - All categories as written have some lack of flexibility
    - With a rewrite/reinterpretation there is the opportunity for new thoughts and ideas
    - Reset of expectations which facilitate change
  - SND, INT, and ARR in theory could be judged without watching the group
    - Sometimes the group would do something visually and the other judges were confused or missed what was happening.
  - By design there is no acknowledgement of overlap, yet many judges recognize that there must be overlap
    - “Musicianship” really wasn’t owned by any category
    - The culture was very much, “We work on Sound, then Interp, then SP – we need to add SP”, or “We haven’t worked on that category much”
- Another common culture that C&J was fighting was “What are the judges wanting?” vs “What does the audience want?” that spanned all categories, and fought internally as well



# SOUND

- Expanded Sound
  - Can suffer from intonation or quality issues and yet score well. Vice versa can sing well but not recognized due to lack of expansion
- Because the categories are somewhat independent, quality of singing is likely underweighted



# INTERPRETATION

- Problems with “IMPACT” affecting perception of scoring well and song choice
- Disconnect with mood generation vs quality of singing
- Problems with a disconnect between the song and arrangement vs the actual delivery
  - Inputs such as dynamics, tempos, etc. does not necessarily generate mood and an artistic performance
- Problems with rewarding a plan vs rewarding what makes sense
  - Often collection of techniques vs natural



# STAGE PRESENCE

- Disconnect between the visual and vocal interpretation
- Members left with “faces”, precision of movement and “hems and belts being uniform” as defining SP
- Many SP judges and other leaders have been concerned about “entertainment” vs precision and execution
  - Larry Ajer is proposing a whole new vision which deals with artistic thoughts – musical and emotional development is organic with the music




# ARRANGEMENT

- Of all categories, this was losing relevance
  - Members didn't care to understand it or cared to understand it
  - Problematic arrangements were disappearing
  - Arranging skills were improving overall by members
  - ARR score was disconnected from whether it was a good choice for the performer
  - The contest style had become too narrow and a barbershop style was growing outside the contest stage
  - Some of the finest musicians in SPEBSQSA were travelling to contests and not being able to share wisdom or have a real impact



# CHANGES

- Six Categories (SND, INT, SP, ARR, SEC, COJ) to Four (CA, MUS, PRS, SNG)
  - Ron Black, Larry Ajer, and David Wright leading the development of the categories under Four Hooplines
  - Financial impact of 10 to 8 judges on a double panel
- Time Penalties are removed
- Evaluations vs A&R's
  - Coaching vs Verbal assessment
- Common Ground
- Single Category School every three years
  - Applicant/Candidate Cycle aligned
- Assumed many clerical duties from Harmony Hall



There has been constant communication to the membership for nearly two years concerning upcoming changes.




# 1993 DEFINITION

## Definition of the Barbershop Style

Barbershop harmony is a style of unaccompanied vocal music characterized by consonant four-part chords for every melody note. The melody is 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. The melody is not sung by the tenor except for an infrequent note or two to avoid awkward voice leading, in tags or codas, or when some appropriate embellishing effect can be created. Occasional brief passages may be sung by fewer than four voice parts.

Barbershop music features songs with understandable lyrics and easily singable melodies, whose tones clearly define a tonal center and imply major and minor chords and barbershop (dominant and secondary dominant) seventh chords that resolve primarily around the circle of fifths, while making frequent use of other resolutions. The basic song and its harmonization are embellished by the arranger to provide appropriate support of the song's theme and to close the song effectively.



Barbershop singers adjust pitches to achieve perfectly tuned chords in just intonation while remaining true to the established tonal center. Artistic singing in the barbershop style exhibits a fullness or expansion of sound, precise intonation, a high degree of vocal skill, and a high level of unity and consistency within the ensemble. Ideally, these elements are natural, unmanufactured, and free from apparent effort.

The presentation of barbershop music uses appropriate musical and visual methods to convey the theme of the song and provide the audience with an emotionally satisfying and entertaining experience. The musical and visual delivery is from the heart, believable, and sensitive to the song and its arrangement throughout. The most stylistic presentation artistically melds together the musical and visual aspects to create and sustain the illusions suggested by the music.



# FUNDAMENTAL ASPECTS OF THE STYLE

## 2. Fundamental features of the barbershop style expected to remain invariant over time:

- a. Unaccompanied vocal music.
- b. Consonant, four-part chords, almost completely in root position and second inversion, tuned relative to the melody in just intonation.
- c. The tenor sings above the melody with few, always brief, exceptions.
- d. A predominance of barbershop sevenths and major triads.
- e. Barbershop seventh chords resolving primarily on the circle of fifths.
- f. Embellishments and harmony appropriate to the song.
- g. An attempt to maximize the expansion of sound by singing in tune using just intonation, adjusting volume relationships of the voice parts, matching word sounds, and synchronization.
- h. Easily understood lyrics and easily singable melodies and phrases.
- i. Freedom to be creative with the forward motion of the music, within reasonable bounds of metrical consistency.
- j. Development of the emotions of a song to a single, straightforward climax, as defined by the performers.

- k. Performances characterized by a natural, resonant, full-voiced (except possibly for tenors), authentic, and heartfelt presentation by performers singing for the pure enjoyment of the music and its emotional content.

Although we are attempting to preserve and encourage a particular style of music, and there are fundamental features that we expect will remain invariant over time, the barbershop style is continually evolving. What was considered non-stylistic in former years may be accepted today. Conversely, that which was suitable previously might not be acceptable now. It is possible that a few of the musical effects that are considered non-stylistic today may be accepted in the years to come.

## 3. Guiding principles for defining the barbershop style:

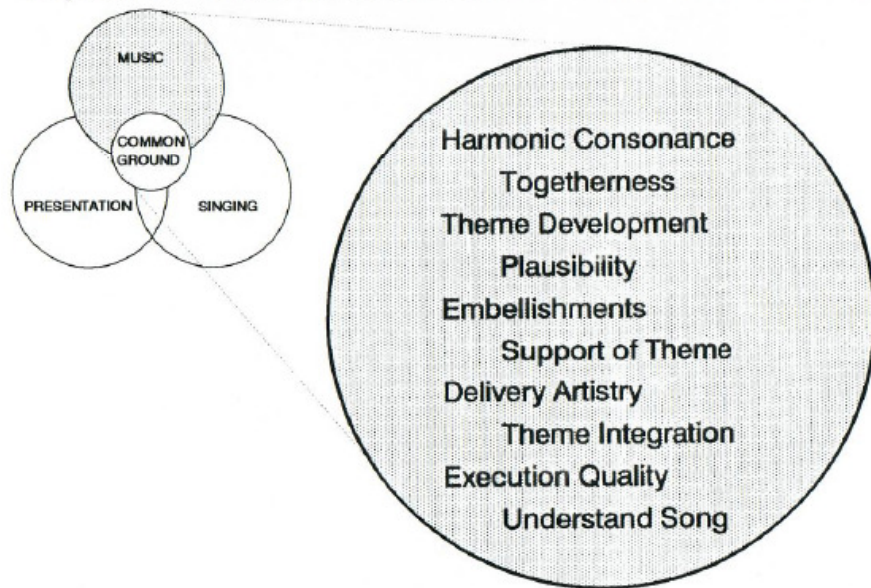
- a. The music and the presentation of the music must reflect the fact that we sing relatively straightforward, ingenuous songs, sung "from the heart," that are easily understandable to the audience.
- b. The barbershop style is typified by a resonant or full-voiced presentation without vocal stress or lack of control.

- c. The presentation of the music should always enhance and support the song.
- d. The music and presentation of the music should offer the greatest possible variety while preserving the barbershop style, in particular the barbershop sound. Accordingly, any interpretive or staging device, posture, motion, or prop that interferes with either the performer's ability to produce barbershop sound or the audience's ability to appreciate it, may be considered unstylistic.
  - (1) Overly sophisticated and complex performances might be incongruous with a relatively simple song performed in the barbershop style.
  - (2) Barbershop choruses are free to employ more dramatic staging plans, devices, props, or standing formations, as long as these do not detract from the barbershop sound, and as long as they are appropriate to the song.

# MUSIC

## MUSIC CATEGORY

Impact on Audience: A Sensitive Performance of All Musical Elements



Song 1: \_\_\_\_\_

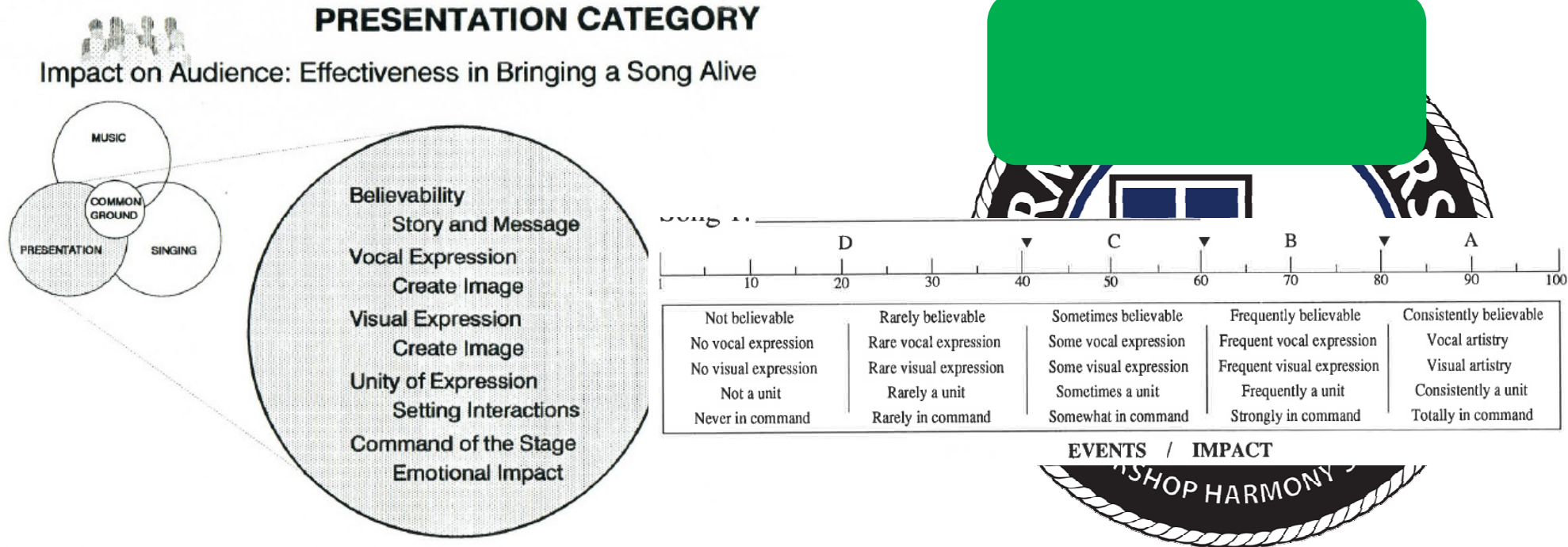
D					C					B					A									
1	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100														
Not consonant					Rarely consonant					Sometimes consonant					Primarily consonant					Consistently consonant				
Indiscernible theme					Ambiguous theme					Inconsistent theme					Effective theme					Continuous theme				
Inadequate embellishment					Weak embellishment					Adequate embellishment					Tasteful embellishment					Artistic embellishment				
Meaningless delivery					Awkward delivery					Mechanical delivery					Sensitive delivery					Artistic delivery				
Unskillful execution					Poor execution					Ordinary execution					Good execution					Excellent execution				

Change from Arrangement Category:

Focus on How Well Song Comes Across in addition to Arrangement

Judges will still penalize for non-barbershop songs and/or arrangements

# PRESENTATION



Change from Stage Presence and Interpretation Categories:

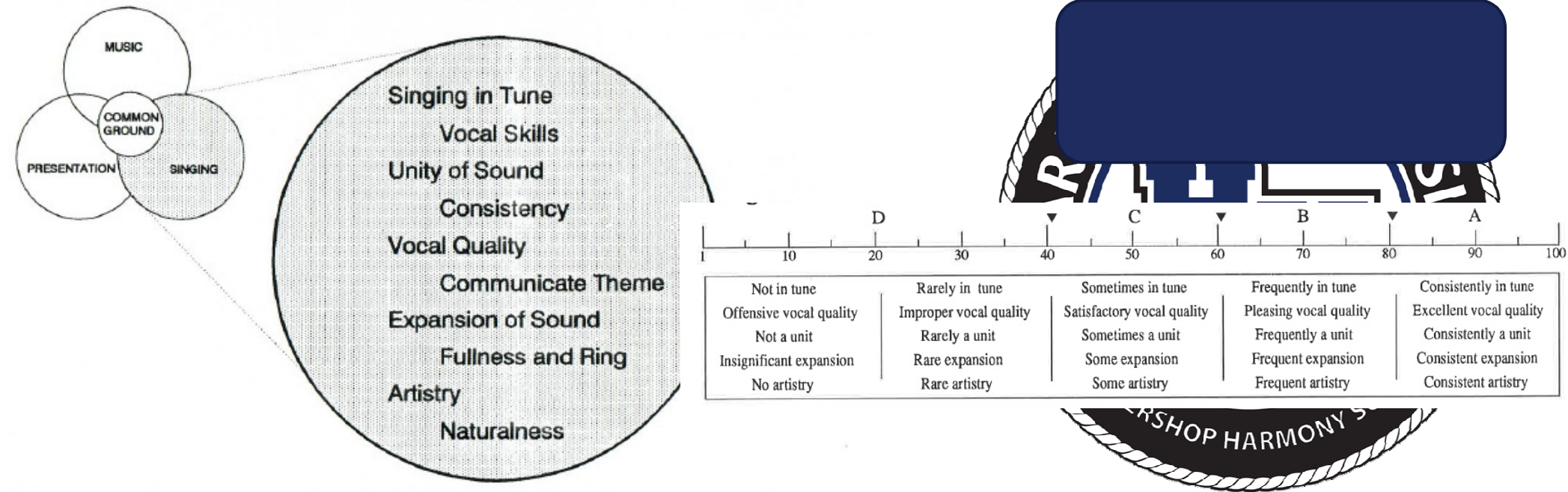
Focus on Overall Quality and Impact of Vocal and Visual Presentation

Judges may forfeit score for bad taste or rule violations.



# SINGING

## Impact on Audience: Artistic Singing in the Barbershop Style

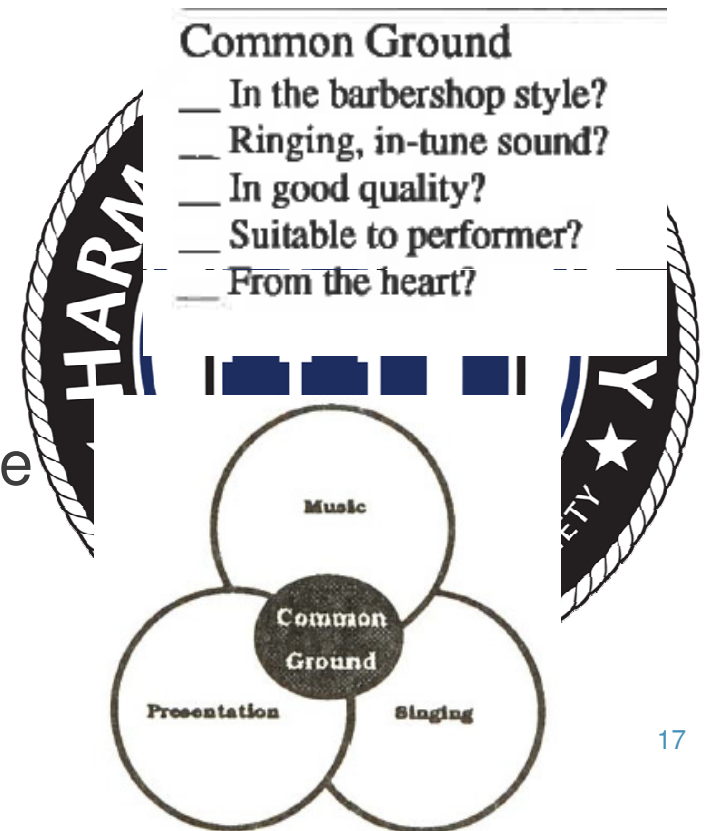


Change from Sound Category:

Focus on Intonation, Quality, Unity and Artistry in addition to Expansion

# COMMON GROUND

- Preservation of the Barbershop Style
- Intonation
- Vocal Quality
- Suitability of the Music to the Performer
- Self-Expression and Heartfelt Performance



# COMMON GROUND – OVERLAP OF CATEGORIES

## 1. MUSIC AND PRESENTATION

There is a strong correlation between the musicality with which music is rendered, as evaluated by the Music judges, and the generation of mood, as evaluated by Presentation judges. Both judges are listening for a clearly defined theme and featured musical element, be it melody, harmony, rhythm, lyrics, or some combination of these elements.

## 2. MUSIC AND SINGING

By choosing particular music, performers make vocal quality choices, owing to their capability of singing that music. Both the Music and Singing judges will evaluate the relative consonance of harmonies, the tessitura, the dynamic demands, and the accuracy of execution.

## 3. PRESENTATION AND SINGING

There is a natural correlation between vocal skill and the generation of emotional impact as evaluated by the Presentation category. A lack of vocal skill will impede the generation of mood to the audience. Conversely, great vocal skill allows the performer to generate many subtle levels of emotion. The choice of vocal color is important to judges in both categories.



# CONTEST ADMINISTRATOR

## CONTEST ADMINISTRATOR CATEGORY

### CONTENTS

- I. Introduction
- II. Contest Administrator (CA) Duties
  - A. Scope
  - B. Pre-contest Correspondence at Home
  - C. At the Contest Site, Prior to the Start of the Contest Sessions
  - D. Contest Operation
  - E. After Leaving the Contest Site
- III. Standard Correspondence
  - A. District Associate Contest and Judging Chairman
  - B. Panel of Judges
  - C. Assistant Contest Administrator
  - D. Convention Chairman
  - E. Judging Services Coordinator
  - F. Masters of Ceremony
  - G. Post Contest

### DESCRIPTION OF THE CONTEST ADMINISTRATOR CATEGORY

#### I. Introduction

The Contest Administrator is responsible for the orderly management and operation of barbershop competitions under the contest and judging rules of the Society. Accordingly, he must have a full and complete knowledge of the rules. He must communicate effectively both in writing and verbally. The Contest Administrator must be sensitive to the needs of both competitors and judges at a barbershop contest. Preferably, he is an experienced competitor in both chorus and quartet contests. He must have a thorough knowledge of the tools used in the preparation and scoring of a contest, particularly the use of a computer. The Contest Administrator must exhibit a good judging image so as to command the respect and attention of both the competitors and the judges. He must be humble and be able to work unobtrusively. He must be able to keep information confidential. He must



possess the understanding and good judgment required to make decisions in difficult circumstances.

The Contest Administrator has responsibilities to the competitors, the judges, the audience members, the district sponsoring the contest, the host chapter, and the International Contest and Judging Committee. He is responsible for ensuring the best possible environments for competitors to perform, for judges to adjudicate the performances, and for audiences to enjoy the performances. The Contest Administrator is responsible for a smooth and orderly contest, with minimal delays. He provides information to the host district regarding the facilities, and he is responsible for providing scoring summaries for the contest. He notifies the host chapter of any special needs of the judging panel. He has a responsibility to provide to the International Contest and Judging Committee all necessary paperwork and copies of electronic data produced as a result of the contest.



# FORFEITURES – RULES

## ARTICLE IX: SONGS AND ARRANGEMENTS

- A. A song performed in contest must be in good taste, be neither primarily patriotic nor primarily religious in intent, and have a melody and implied harmony consistent with the barbershop style. All songs performed in contest must be arranged in the barbershop style, which is an unaccompanied vocal style of music. Songs must be sung without any kind of musical accompaniment and without instrumental introduction, interlude, or conclusion. The latter provision applies to both the entire performance and each individual song.
- B. In chorus contests, selected use of a soloist or small singing unit, such as duet or trio, is not permitted except for limited use of a select quartet, which is acceptable as long as it is brief.
- C. Contestants must comply with the copyright law in the acquisition, arranging, and learning of songs for contest performance.
- D. Violation of this article will result in penalties up to and including forfeiture by one or more judges, or, in the case of copyright law violations, post-contest action deemed appropriate by the International Board of Directors.

## ARTICLE X: SOUND EQUIPMENT AND STAGE SETTING

- A. The best possible sound equipment will be provided, if needed. Monitor speakers are permitted. Such equipment should be operated by a competent operator. The stage setting will be set up sufficiently in advance of the starting time of the contest so that the sound equipment and lighting may be tested under the supervision of the Contest Administrator. The contest will not start until the Contest Administrator has given his approval.
- B. Contestants may not use their own electronic amplification. Violation of this rule may result in forfeiture by the Presentation judge(s).

## ARTICLE XI: STAGING

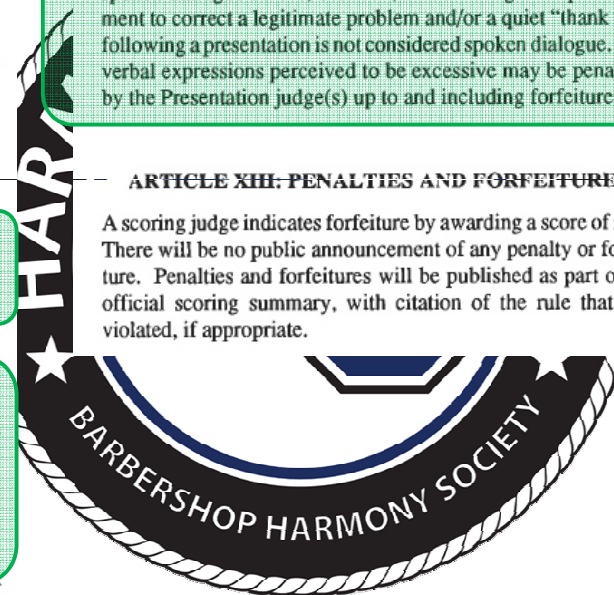
- A. Persons who are not members of the competing chorus or quartet may not appear on stage during the performance.
- B. Actions by any contestant that are deemed suggestive, vulgar, or otherwise not in good taste will not be allowed.
- C. The Presentation judge(s) will have jurisdiction over issues of staging. See the Presentation category description in the *Contest and Judging Handbook* for a discussion of unacceptable staging.

## ARTICLE XII: VERBAL COMMENT

Contestants will not tell jokes, make introductions, or use any spoken dialogue before, between, or after songs. A quiet comment to correct a legitimate problem and/or a quiet "thank you" following a presentation is not considered spoken dialogue. Any verbal expressions perceived to be excessive may be penalized by the Presentation judge(s) up to and including forfeiture.

## ARTICLE XIII: PENALTIES AND FORFEITURES

A scoring judge indicates forfeiture by awarding a score of zero. There will be no public announcement of any penalty or forfeiture. Penalties and forfeitures will be published as part of the official scoring summary, with citation of the rule that was violated, if appropriate.





# FORFEITURES – CATEGORY DESCRIPTIONS

## E. Forfeiture

1. Forfeiture results when elements of the song/arrangement render it unsuitable to the barbershop style. This may be due to one or more of the following:
  - a. Insufficient percentage of barbershop seventh chords.
  - b. Excessive use of chords not in the barbershop chord vocabulary.
  - c. Excessive number of major seventh chords, major sixth chords, minor seventh chords, or other weak harmony.
  - d. Absence of circle-of-fifths resolutions.
  - e. Non-standard meters or non-stylistic rhythms.
  - f. Absence of form or meter, when accompanied by other serious flaws.
2. Instrumental accompaniment will result in automatic forfeiture. An instrumental interlude between the two songs of a contest performance results in forfeiture of both songs.

## E. Forfeiture

1. Forfeiture results when some element(s) of the presentation renders it so unsuitable to the barbershop style that drastic action is required. This may be due to one or more of the following:
  - a. The presentation flagrantly violates contemporary standards of good taste in terms of lyric, visual, or other performance aspects.
  - b. The presentation violates one or more specific rules that call for forfeiture as set forth in the *Contest and Judging Handbook*. These rules address items such as spoken introductions, religious or patriotic music, etc.

## E. Forfeiture

1. Forfeiture results when some element of the singing renders the performance so unsuitable that drastic action is required. Examples include performances of completely non-barbershop material, gross abuse of the vocal apparatus, no discernible intonation or chords, or intentional abuse of musicality and artistry.



# WILL THE RESULTS OF THE CONTEST CHANGE?

## Will the results of the contest change?

### MUSIC:

There will not be a drastic change, but hopefully there will be a shift which favors performers who have command of their music and who are sensitive to its various elements. The shift will disfavor contrivedness and gimmickry.

### PRESENTATION:

In some cases, yes. The real issue will be that quality will always win. Such common ground elements as in-tune singing can have a much larger impact than was true in the old categories. In addition, emphasis on scoring artistry in the total presentation will tend to eliminate the effect of contrived visual or vocal tricks traditionally used to produce higher scores. This and other elements of the scoring process could definitely change the outcome of a contest from what it might have been in the old system.

### SINGING:

Maybe, probably—but we'll rarely know by how much. Although we are parallel judging right now and know what differences there are in the outcomes between the official panels and the practicing judges, it is usually small changes of ranking. Expect honest and musical performances to score better than now ... manufactured and faked ones to score less.



# WHAT SHOULD THEY DO DIFFERENTLY?

## What should competitors do differently to prepare?

### MUSIC:

They should devote more effort to understanding their music, and planning the performance accordingly. They should identify its theme and its climax, and understand how the various segments (verse, chorus, interlude, etc.) and embellishments (swipes, key changes, rhythmic propellants, etc.) contribute to the whole.

### PRESENTATION:

It should always be the goal of every competitor to sing as well as possible, in the barbershop style, and to make that presentation as interesting, enjoyable and entertaining as talent, skill and experience would allow. That is exactly how to prepare for the new categories. Learn the craft of performance, sing well, have fun, be true to the art form and, if you achieve these goals, the score should follow. Pick good songs, sing them well and have a lot of fun. If the craft is an issue of concern, read the articles, study the category descriptions or call someone in the judging program for advice.

### SINGING:

Do try to perform honest, good music. Do pick songs you can sing well. Don't try to determine what the new system "wants" in order to score well. Do sing better. Don't think of bad singing as an inherent quality of our style. Do spend more time finding out how to sing better in tune. You'll like it!





# TIME PENALTIES

- Recall that time penalties were introduced back in the 1940's
  - We were in a deductive scoring period in the 1940's
  - Time limitations allowed competitors to be scored almost on a mistake per minute basis
- Once the 1950's and 1960's came along, scoring was far more holistic yet time limits continued on
- Quartets and choruses would choose music based upon time. Quartets might order their music from round to round to not violate the limits. In some cases they would alter the delivery to meet the time limit requirements
- Several parties challenged the idea of the value of having time keepers in the pit during the development of the new categories and the team agreed to set them aside and see what happened



# EVALUATIONS VS A&R'S

- A change in how we educated our competitors was a request of Future II
  - A weakness in the A&R's is they were sit-down "Here's what happened" for about 10 minutes and often didn't provide education
  - Although past ICJC's saw the value in education, the primary goal was to score the contest and pick the winners
    - The new goal is education and the secondary goal is to rank order the competitors
  - The solution was to provide 20 minute coaching evaluations per category, where the majority of the time was singing/performing
    - If done well, often an enjoyable and informative aspect to the competition
    - Coaching ability required adds a new dimension for all new and previously certified judges



## NEXT TIME

- In our next episode, we will
  - Discuss the early years of the “New Categories”
- Video Series is “free”
  - Donations in the name of this series are gladly accepted to <https://give.barbershop.org/preserve>
- Any new information you may have, please contact me at [kkbari@charter.net](mailto:kkbari@charter.net)

