

# MUSICALITY CATEGORY

<b>I. INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>p. 1</b>
A. The Musicality Category .....	p. 1
B. Relationship with Other Scoring Categories .....	p. 2
<b>II. MUSICAL ELEMENTS</b> .....	<b>p. 3</b>
<b>III. PERFORMANCE ELEMENTS</b> .....	<b>p. 4</b>
A. Harmonic Integrity .....	p. 4
B. Execution .....	p. 6
C. Delivery .....	p. 7
D. Thematic Development .....	p. 8
E. Embellishment .....	p. 10
<b>IV. SCORING</b> .....	<b>p. 12</b>
A. Scoring Methodology .....	p. 12
B. Scoring Levels .....	p. 12
1. The A Level .....	p. 12
2. The B Level.....	p. 13
3. The C Level.....	p. 14
4. The D Level .....	p. 14
C. Use of the Score Sheet .....	p. 15
D. Differences between Quartet and Chorus .....	p. 15
E. Penalties Up To and Including Forfeiture .....	p. 16

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. The Musicality Category

Merriam-Webster defines **musicality** as “sensitivity to, knowledge of, or talent for music.” The Musicality category judges the degree to which performances demonstrate musicality in the barbershop style. The category assesses the musicianship demonstrated in bringing the song and arrangement to life. Further, the category assesses the ensemble’s skill in accurately and artistically delivering music in the barbershop style. The best examples of musicality in the barbershop style will feature a) music suited to the ensemble, b) an ensemble that both understands, and demonstrates intent and perspective in developing the music, and c) the key elements that define the barbershop style.

**Guiding principles** of musicality in both compositions and performances, including tension/release, unity/contrast, and theme/variation, are common across most musical styles.

## MUSICALITY Category Description

Implementing these guiding principles in the development of a rewarding musical journey requires sensitivity to the song and arrangement's **musical parameters**. Skillful musicians incorporate parameters such as melody, harmony, rhythm, lyrics, tone color, dynamics, and embellishments in their delivery of the music. The Musicality category assesses the marriage of technical elements, such as precise execution of harmony and rhythm, and artistic elements, such as shape, inflection, destination within a phrase, and overall arc and development of the music. Performances exhibiting high levels of musicality feature a purposeful performer, informed by the composer, lyricist and arranger, effectively integrating and skillfully delivering these core concepts.

Barbershop is not a musical genre; it is a **style** of arranging and delivery which can be applied to multiple genres of music. Every musical style has aspects which are indigenous to, and expected within, the style. The Musicality category ensures performances are rooted in the **core elements of the barbershop style**: a) 4-part a cappella, b) featured consonant harmony via strongly-voiced chords in the barbershop vocabulary, c) melody primarily in an inside voice, d) harmonic variety and richness featuring characteristic chord progressions, and e) primarily lyrical, homorhythmic textures (although additional textures are used for contrast and development).

Performances exhibiting high levels of musicality in the barbershop style demonstrate the **core elements of the style** and feature accurate and artistic rendering of the key **musical parameters** in support of the **guiding principles of musicality**.

### B. Relationship with Other Scoring Categories

The current BHS Contest and Judging System features scoring categories designed to overlap with each other. Each category views the entire performance from its own unique perspective, and the same performance factors often influence more than one category's scoring.

The Singing (SNG) category assesses the technical and qualitative aspects of the performer's sound, and the resulting vocal artistry. Since these factors affect the harmonic integrity, they will also affect the Musicality judge, who assesses the integrity of the harmony in the performance. Singing that suffers from poor synchronization, intonation, or vocal quality will also negatively impact such musicality areas as delivery and execution. Performances exhibiting believability through artistic rendering of the musical line will be rewarded both by SNG (Vocal Expression) and MUS (Delivery).

The Performance (PER) category assesses the performer's ability to bring the song and arrangement to life through visual and vocal elements. PER judges evaluate the performer's artistry, believability, entertainment value, and emotional impact, considering the chosen entertainment theme. These factors often influence the Musicality category, as the musicianship evaluated by Musicality (MUS) judges and the creation of mood and believability evaluated by PER judges are strongly correlated. Both judges are listening for thematic development. The MUS judge assesses how well the group uses its own unique musical abilities to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the arrangement in light of thematic development opportunities.

## MUSICALITY Category Description

### II. MUSICAL ELEMENTS

There are certain characteristics in an arrangement that help the listener recognize a song as having been arranged in the barbershop style. The Musicality category ensures performances are rooted in the **core elements of the barbershop style**. Performances earning the highest Musicality scores will feature these elements. If any of the musical elements listed below are absent in the song or arrangement as performed, then the Musicality score will be lower as a result.

1. All songs must be sung without musical accompaniment or instrumental introductions, interludes, or conclusions. This does not preclude the use of a sound-making device for a special effect, as long as such cannot be construed as instrumental accompaniment (See Articles IX.A.2.a and Article X.) Hand clapping and finger snapping are permitted whereas vocal percussion where the result is greater than four-part texture is not permitted. Choruses need to exercise caution, ensuring a lack of ambiguity related to greater-than-4-part texture. (See Article IX.A.2.b)
2. Barbershop is a four-part a cappella style. At no time should the musical texture exceed four parts. In a chorus contest, the spoken word, brief and appropriate, is not considered an additional “part” in this context. However, a soloist singing a fifth musical line is considered an additional part. This applies even if the soloist is singing the same notes as one of the choral parts but with different word sounds, as occurs when the chorus leads are matching the soloist’s notes on a neutral syllable. (See Article IX.A.2.b)
3. A discernible melody should be present and distinguishable for most of the song. The melody is most 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. (See Article IX.A.2.c)
4. Lyrics should be sung by all four parts through most of the duration of the song. This does not preclude the use of solo and other devices employing neutral syllables used for contrast or as embellishing devices. In fact, such textural contrast, executed well with sensitivity to the music, can lead to higher levels of musicality. Rather, this applies to performances whose duration is dominated by non-lyric or neutral syllable devices. (See Article IX.A.2.d)
5. Other musical elements, such as chord vocabulary, characteristic chord progressions and harmonic richness, strong voicings, and primarily homorhythmic texture, are essential in successfully rendering the barbershop style. These are interwoven into the performance elements and are reflected in the MUS score. (See Article IX.A.2.e)

## MUSICALITY Category Description

### III. PERFORMANCE ELEMENTS

The Musicality category judges musicality in the barbershop style. The category assesses the musicianship demonstrated in bringing the song and arrangement to life. Further, the category assesses the performer's skill in accurately and artistically delivering music in the barbershop style. The best examples of musicality in the barbershop style will feature:

- Music suited to the performer
- A performer that both understands, and demonstrates intent and perspective for, the music
- The key elements that define the barbershop style

The performance elements of the Musicality category consider the **guiding principles of musicality** such as tension/release, unity/contrast, and theme/variation, which are common across most musical styles. A satisfying and rewarding musical journey requires sensitivity to the song and arrangement. The Musicality (MUS) judge weighs both technical (*harmonic integrity, execution*) and artistic (*thematic development, embellishments, delivery*) elements of this journey. These elements are not assessed independently; the MUS judge considers how these elements work together and even overlap to inform the judge's holistic assessment of the musicality exhibited in the performance.

#### A. Harmonic Integrity

1. The primary hallmark of barbershop music is its consonant harmony. The integrity of the harmony is the degree to which consonant harmony is produced by a good quality, locked, ringing unit sound. Consonant chords are pleasing to the ear based on:
  - a. *Physics*. Coincident partials low in the harmonic stack.
  - b. *Stylistic expectations*. Certain chords (regardless of their inherent dissonance between intervals) are deemed indigenous to the style.
    - i. For example, the dominant seventh and ninth chords are considered dissonant in traditional musical circles due to the tritone interval. Barbershoppers consider them consonant because of their close association with the style and the coincident partials low in the harmonic stack of strongly-voiced inversions.
2. Harmonic Integrity assesses the vertical nature of the harmony. High quality harmonization is achieved through several factors:
  - a. Predominantly consonant chords (major triads, dominant (barbershop) sevenths and ninths). See section III.A.8 and 9 for more information.
  - b. Strong voicings (root position, second inversion) of consonant chords. See section III.A.8 for more information.
  - c. Good vocal quality and locked, "ringing" sound.
  - d. Precise synchronization, matching word sounds and resonance, appropriate balance, and accurate tuning of the chord sequence as performed by the ensemble.
  - e. Avoiding non-barbershop chords, incomplete chords or non-chords except for specific embellishing purposes.

## MUSICALITY Category Description

3. Harmonic integrity also assesses the horizontal nature of harmony.
  - a. The Musicality judge assesses the degree to which the fidelity is maintained as the ensemble progresses chord to chord. In a high quality performance, clean ringing chords are constantly present—even when chords go by quickly within a phrase.
  - b. Chord progressions in the barbershop style are based on the harmonic practice of dominant seventh (and ninth) chords resolving around the circle of fifths, while also making use of other resolutions. Musicality judges expect to hear harmonic richness, variety and strongly-voiced chords including tritone tension. Examples which can lead to a sense of redeeming harmonic value include:
    - i. Secondary dominants (particularly VI7 and II7) which progress around the circle of fifths to the tonic
    - ii. Tritone substitutions functioning as secondary dominants
    - iii. Rich harmonic variety of consonant chords (this includes major triads and other strongly-voiced chords in the barbershop vocabulary)
    - iv. Dominant 7th / 9th chords on a variety of roots
    - v. Featured usage of any of these seventh chords (e.g., bVI7, bVII7/9, VII7, IV7)
    - vi. Other circle resolutions that don't resolve to the tonic (e.g., III7-vi)
    - vii. Performances that feature chords with tritone tension (e.g., half dim / minor 6th)
4. Although the melody usually lies between the tenor and bass, occasional deviations are allowed and may be carried by some part other than the lead. The Musicality score will reflect any lessening of barbershop sound that may result.
5. 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 in order to achieve a high degree of consonance.
6. The song should be primarily homorhythmic; that is, all voices should sing the same word sounds simultaneously. This does not preclude the appropriate use of non-homorhythmic devices such as patter, backtime, echoes, and bell chords. The greater the use of non-homorhythmic material, the greater the need for clean execution, maintaining consonance.
7. All parts should sing lyrics most of the time. Extensive non-lyrical passages (neutral or nonsense syllables, humming, or instrumental imitation) might lessen the potential for "lock and ring" and should be musically appropriate. The Musicality judge assesses how such devices influence development and consonance.
8. Music in the barbershop style should primarily use chords in the barbershop chord vocabulary. The extent to which the various chords in the vocabulary contribute to a quality barbershop sound depends on their frequency and duration.
  - a. Other than the major triad, the most prominent chord should be the dominant (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 Musicality score.

## MUSICALITY Category Description

- b. The overall consonance potential is affected by the prominence, duration and frequency of use of the various chords in the barbershop chord vocabulary. The consonance potential, from highest to lowest is:
  - i. Major triad and dominant barbershop seventh
  - ii. Dominant ninth with root omitted (or minor sixth or half-diminished seventh)
  - iii. Major triad with ninth added and minor triad
  - iv. Minor seventh (or major sixth)
  - v. Major seventh, diminished seventh, barbershop seventh with flatted 5th, augmented triad, augmented dominant seventh, diminished triad, dominant ninth with fifth omitted
  - vi. Non-vocabulary chords (any chords not listed in III.A.7)

While brief and musically appropriate use of out of vocabulary chords is allowable, this may result in a lower score due to diminished consonance.

9. Appropriate voicings are essential to create a characteristic barbershop sound.
  - a. The style demands strong voicings but allows occasional exceptions for valid musical reasons (i.e., third or the seventh in the bass)
  - b. Delicate balance voicings need careful execution (i.e., high seventh in the lead or baritone, divorced bass)
  - c. Voicings should generate complete chords, with few exceptions (dominant ninth chord, devices that involve fewer than four parts, the occasional echo, lead-in, or rhythmic device in the bass).
  - d. Dissonant non-chord tones are to be avoided (except for brief scale-type passages in the bass).
  - e. The performance of incorrect notes, resulting in unacceptable chords, will result in a lower score due to execution.
10. The range of the parts should allow all singers to produce a quality sound, dependent on each performer's ability, as to highlight the resonant sound characteristic of the barbershop style.

### B. Execution

1. Execution emphasizes the accurate rendering of musical elements. While *Harmonic Integrity* focuses largely on vertical aspects of music (tuning and balancing chords to create an enhanced sense of lock and “ring”) and the horizontal aspect of chord progressions. Execution focuses more on horizontal aspects of rhythm, words and notes. Musicality (MUS) judges assess the degree of articulation of pitches and rhythms, synchronized word sounds, maintaining tonal center, steady tempos, tempo changes, agreement on beat subdivision, and rhythmic groove. High levels of musicality involve excellent execution with consistent harmonic integrity between harmonic pillars, minimizing distractions and enabling the ensemble to elevate artistic sensitivity in their performance.

## MUSICALITY Category Description

2. Execution is tied to the *Delivery* element in the Musicality Category. Execution emphasizes the performer's technical precision, while Delivery emphasizes the artistic expression of the musical line. C-level performances often face delivery challenges due to inaccuracy. A-level performances feature enhanced artistic delivery through precise execution of the musical line.
3. Precise execution poses greater challenges for choruses compared to quartets at a given Musicality level. Choruses encounter synchronization difficulties involving pitch accuracy, word sounds, resonance, tone colors, rhythms, and notes within each section. Synchronization errors between the chorus and conductor's gestures fall under the Execution element of the category. MUS judges weigh these aspects differently for choruses compared to quartets.
4. MUS judges assess the arrangement's suitability for the performer and its impact on the ensemble's ability to execute the musical line successfully. If the arrangement features challenging vocal ranges, rhythmic complexity, or harmonic intricacy that the performer cannot comfortably navigate, it may lead to execution errors and a lower Musicality score. On the other hand, when a challenging arrangement is accurately executed by a highly skilled ensemble, this highlights their musical abilities, resulting in a higher Musicality score.

### C. Delivery

1. Delivery emphasizes the artistic expression of the musical line through skilled rendering of the song's elements. A strong delivery showcases the singers' understanding of melody, lyrics, harmony, rhythm, tempo, construction, tone color, dynamics, flow, and their importance. The Musicality (MUS) judge assesses the performer's musical artistry, assessing how well they integrate the song's elements, employ embellishments, and bring the song to life.
2. The MUS judge assesses the degree of musicality displayed in the *phrasing and delivery of the lyrics*, especially in songs where the lyrics are central to development. Momentum, flow, relative weighting of syllables, and contour of phrases result in meaningful rendering of lines and define the lyric's climactic moments. The MUS judge:
  - a. ...rewards performances which demonstrate an understanding of *tension and release* to maintain direction and musical interest. Successful performers use variations in harmony (especially tritone dissonance), texture, dynamics, and pacing to build intensity in the music. This builds anticipation in the listener of an eventual resolution. In general, the greater the tension preceding the release, the more satisfying the result for the listener.

## MUSICALITY Category Description

- b. ...assesses the degree of musicality displayed in the performance of rubato and ad lib passages. Distortion of form due to excessive rubato and ad lib may result in a lower Musicality score.
3. The MUS judge assesses the effectiveness of the performance of chords and voicings that are designed to highlight a word or phrase or generate a certain mood. The judge also assesses the use of dynamic levels and vocal color to support musical development.
4. The MUS judge assesses the musicality displayed in the execution of tempos and rhythms. This includes the appropriateness of the choice of tempo and the musical sensitivity of the rhythmic accentuation.
5. The MUS judge assesses the skill with which the performer uses the music's rhythmic devices, such as bass propellants, echoes, patter, backtime, push beats, and syncopations, to establish and propel the tempo, especially in songs where rhythm is central to development. When these devices are well-executed, the tempo and rhythm contribute to satisfying musical development.
6. The balance among voice parts should be such that the melody always predominates, although brief passages having ambiguous or non-existent melody are permitted in introductions, tags, bell chords, stylized segments during repeats, or improvisational-type passages of a song.
7. When the melody is transferred to a part other than the lead, that part should predominate and should be sung with melodic quality.
8. Songs sung in the barbershop style generally use standard meters such as 2/4, 3/4, 4/4, cut time, 6/8, 9/8 or 12/8. This does not preclude the use of non-standard meters, but in any case the meter should be well-defined by the performance unless altered for comedic purposes.

### D. Thematic Development

1. Melody, lyrics, rhythm, and harmony are crucial aspects of a song, and they can be combined and developed by the performer. There are many paths to successful development; these paths vary greatly depending on the source material. Successful musical development requires the *performer* to utilize the *composer's* and *arranger's* ideas while incorporating their own musical skills and ideas.
  - a. The composer provides source material, developing melodic, rhythmic, lyric, and harmonic themes in the original composition. The composer also creates the song form with repeated sections. (such as AABA, ABCA, or repeated stanzas or refrains like VCVCBC, etc.).
    - i. Lyrical themes can be further broken down into defining the literary theme (happy love, asking for forgiveness, love lost, etc.)



## MUSICALITY Category Description

- ii. Rhythmic themes can be further broken down into swing, subdivided triplets, driving tempos, etc.
  - b. The arranger makes choices about harmonization, voicing of chords, embellishments, changes to musical elements and form, and may create a medley or montage to tie songs together.
  - c. The performer takes the material provided by the composer and arranger then applies their own musicianship, as well as stylistic execution, dynamic and rhythmic choices to further develop the song and arrangement.
  - d. Sometimes, the original song includes sufficient development without the need for the arranger to create interest. In these cases, the performer is most successful following the composer's journey.
  - e. In some cases, the performer is required to take more responsibility to develop the song, particularly when the arranger creates a straightforward arrangement.
2. All musical parameters (melody, lyrics, rhythms, harmony) play different roles in developing the music. The performer makes choices based on the song, arrangement, and their own interpretation.
3. Occasionally a quartet or chorus will choose to do a comedic performance. The Musicality (MUS) judge first assesses whether the comedy is dependent upon one or more of the musical elements (melody, lyrics, rhythm, and harmony). It could be that the comedy is independent of the music. If this is the case, does comedy interfere with the natural musical development? If the musical elements are designed to enhance the comedic performance, the MUS judge starts with the question "Is it funny?". Once the comedy begins, the MUS judge will evaluate how the musical elements develop and enhance the comedic performance.
4. The MUS judge assesses the balance between unifying themes and contrasting material. Added material should stem from thematic song material, driving musical interest with unity and contrast. If it falls short, the performer must showcase their own skills to create musical interest.
5. The MUS judge assesses the performer's use of the song's construction, including form and harmonization.
  - a. The performer shapes phrases and sections of the song to deliver and develop it successfully.
  - b. The MUS judge assesses the performer's level of artistry and musicianship in maintaining forward motion, groove, dynamics, sensitivity to melodic shape, lyrical phrases, and tempo choices.
  - c. When assessing a medley/montage, the MUS judge assesses it as a complete entity, showcasing well-coordinated sections unified by a central musical theme or lyrical idea.

## MUSICALITY Category Description

6. Under thematic development, the MUS judge assesses opportunities provided by the song and arrangement in combination with the performer's utilization of the material and their own musicianship.
  - a. Repeated sections and new sections should provide opportunities for musical development and variation.
  - b. The performer should demonstrate an understanding of the provided material, as their skills in developing the song are being evaluated.
7. A successful barbershop performance incorporates harmonic themes achieved through resolving barbershop sevenths and ninths using the circle of fifths. Tritonal tension in these progressions is crucial for any barbershop song's development. Effective utilization of this harmonic development is rewarded in performances.

### E. Embellishment

1. Embellishments are characteristics of an arrangement beyond a basic barbershop harmonization of the source material.
  - a. Successful musical development involves a satisfying sequence of events, achieved through effective use of *embellishments* that provide the opportunity for unity and contrast. The barbershop style is known for its diverse embellishments which include (but is not limited to) swipes, echoes, key changes, bell chords, patter effects, and backtime.
  - b. The Musicality (MUS) judge assesses the performer's accuracy and musicality in executing embellishments that enhance the song's development. The judge's score considers the arranger's skill in selecting and placing supportive embellishments. Well-embellished songs that provide satisfying development and harmoniously blend key musical themes will earn higher Musicality scores.
2. The MUS judge assesses the effectiveness with which the performer uses embellishments to aid in the development, such as the use of rhythmic propellants to create forward motion or key lifts to heighten the level of intensity. The performer's ability to execute the embellishments may influence the MUS judge's perception of the degree to which a particular song may be under- or over-embellished. Some embellishments, such as patter and bell chords, are most effective with precise synchronization. Embellishments in which all four parts are not singing the same words at the same time should be executed in such a way that the primary lyrics are heard and understood. Occasionally, the music creates special opportunities for visual devices. Effectively performed, such occurrences may increase the perception of musicality, resulting in a higher Musicality score.
3. While the melody is usually in an inside voice, the use of tenor or bass melody is acceptable as a contrasting embellishment.

## MUSICALITY Category Description

4. While all four parts usually sing lyrics, non-lyrics and neutral syllables can be used as contrasting devices. The most common example is neutral syllables accompanying the melody in brief passages as a way to feature the melody or establish rhythmic contrast. Passages with non-lyrics for all four parts may also be used, such as a scat section, an instrumental impression, or a neutral syllable introduction to a song. Effectively constructed and performed, such embellishments may contribute to the development leveraging rhythm or lyrics, resulting in a higher Musicality score.
5. The arranger generally uses the composer's melody as the basis for harmonization and embellishments. Altering the melody may also be a form of embellishment, although melodic alterations may be distracting when the melody is well-known. When altering a well-known melody, it is incumbent upon the arranger and performer to convince the listener to accept the altered version. Alterations of a melody can be especially effective in a repeated section of a song. When used effectively, melodic alterations can enhance the musicality and lead to a higher score.
6. Altering the composer's lyrics is also a form of embellishment. Lyric alterations can be effective in some cases, for example:
  - a. Personalizing a song to the ensemble or the performance environment, including gendered/non-gendered language.
  - b. Ensuring the intent is more easily understood by today's audiences.
  - c. Changing the intent of the original source material to create comedic impact, e.g., in the case of a parody.
  - d. Contributing to the musical development of the performance.
  - e. Altering lyrics to create ensemble impact, e.g., ending the tag on an open "ah" vowel instead of the original lyric "oo."

Similar to melodic alterations, lyric alterations may also be distracting when the lyrics are well-known. Effective use of lyric alterations can result in a higher musicality score.

7. The melody and harmonization should complement each other. Alternative harmonies can serve as embellishments, offering thematic development, emphasizing key words or phrases, and enhancing consonance. When used effectively, they can contribute to a higher musicality score. If the implied harmony in a song is unclear, the arrangement can employ suitable harmonic progressions that align with the melody and support the song's development. It's worth noting that adherence to the harmony in published sheet music is not mandatory. However, altering recognizable harmonic progressions can also be distracting, similar to melodic and lyrical alterations.
8. Tags are an integral and unique part of the barbershop style and should be adjudicated for how effectively and satisfyingly they summarize or complete the song's development. In a barbershop performance, effective tags can be very simple and straightforward, or more involved and include more development.

## MUSICALITY Category Description

### IV. SCORING

#### A. Scoring Methodology

1. The Musicality (MUS) judge's evaluation is based on the musicality of the performance and the appropriateness of the music to the barbershop style. The Musicality judge will adjudicate each performance based on a lifetime of listening experience and evaluate the particular performance without regard to prior performances and without preconceived ideas of how the music should be performed. No reward is given for the degree of difficulty of the arrangement; the performance is judged on its technical and artistic merits.
2. The MUS judge's assessment is based upon a holistic awareness of the performer's sensitivity in thematic development of the song (including embellishments), their artistic delivery, the degree of harmonic integrity and their accuracy in executing its musical elements. Awareness of how stylistic aspects such as chord progressions and vocabulary enhance the thematic development and delivery of the musicality will be rewarded. Early in the performance the judge establishes an approximate score based on the general level of musicality. As the song unfolds, this score is continually adjusted to reflect the performer's consistency, their understanding of the various musical elements, the delivery and execution of the song's critical moments, the suitability of the music to the performers, and how musicality is enhanced by elements of the barbershop style. At the end of the song, the judge assigns a numerical score from 1 to 100.
3. The MUS judge is both an advocate and guardian of the barbershop style. Certain musical elements—as denoted in section II—are linked to the song and arrangement, while other aspects are assessed holistically as part of the performance. If one or more judges deems one or more of the arrangement's musical elements outlined in Article IX of the contest rules was not satisfied, they will conference with the other MUS judges to determine whether the holistic score should be lowered via penalty. Based on criteria stated in the Musicality category description, it is still possible for judges to disagree when performances are “on the edge” stylistically.

#### B. Scoring Levels

##### 1. The A level

- a. A-level scores (81 to 100) are given to excellent performances that display the most consistent musicality. There are very few distractions, and scores are maximized when the performance strongly features the hallmarks of the barbershop style.
- b. A performance earning a mid-A score (87-93) features exceptional mastery of the musical elements, demonstrating consistent excellence in technique in support of artistry. The harmony is wonderfully, consistently consonant, reflecting excellent intonation and proper balance. The performer showcases continuous development and sensitivity to the composer and arranger's musical themes, presenting a cohesive vision. Purposeful and sensitive use of embellishments enhances the song's thematic development. The delivery demonstrates superb, continuous artistry, effectively conveying the subtext and completely engaging the listener. Distractions are rare, and the music is well-suited to highlight the performer's strengths.

## MUSICALITY Category Description

- c. The rare and significant artistic performance in the A+ range (94-100) is truly transcendent of technique. Minor technical issues do not distract from the overwhelming and unyielding sense of musicality. Embellishments continuously support thematic development. The musical line is organic, purposefully and sensitively delivered by the performer, demonstrating unyielding excellence and artistry.
- d. In A- range (81-86), occasional distractions can occur in the performance. The thematic development may have brief interruptions, or the performer's technique may be somewhat evident. In one way or another the display of musicality is not totally consistent.
- e. Distinguishing differences between A and B levels often has to do with consistency and sensitivity of performance.

### 2. The B level

- a. B-level scores (61-80) are for performances that demonstrate varying degrees of competence of the musical elements. The music is generally well-suited to the performers. Thematic development is evident, demonstrating awareness and sensitivity to musical themes, but there may be moments where technique distracts from the artistry.
- b. A performance earning a mid-B (67-73) score features competency in the musical elements, demonstrating generally accurate execution in support of the musical line. The harmony is generally consonant with clearly distinguishable chords, reflecting good intonation and balance. The performer generally reflects an understanding of and sensitivity to the composer and arranger's musical themes, with high musicality in its best moments. Tasteful use of embellishments enhances the song's thematic development. Musical delivery starts to emerge in the mid-B level, demonstrating moments of artistry and engaging the listener. Distractions are still present, but the degree to which they interrupt the listener's enjoyment decreases when approaching B+.
- c. The B+ range of scores (74-80) is for performances that have only minor distractions. Artistic aspects of the performance, such as delivery and thematic development, are becoming more evident. Part of the performance may be at the A level, but the performers do not achieve the high level of consistency required for an A score.
- d. In the B- range (61-66) of performances, the performance is still competent and demonstrates proficiency in rendering the music and arrangement as written, but there may be several distractions and occasional examples of C-level performance. Thematic development and sensitive delivery of the music are often hindered by execution and harmonic integrity distractions. Lack of sensitivity to embellishments may cause interruptions in the flow of the musical line. Part of the performance may also be of mid-B level of quality.
- e. The difference between B and C levels is often a matter of consistency. In a B-level performance, the performer is in control of the performance of the song and arrangement. In a C-level performance, the song and arrangement may be too difficult or not suitable to the performer.

## MUSICALITY Category Description

### 3. The C level

- a. C-level scores (41-60) are for performances that reflect an ordinary command of the musical elements, with flaws appearing often in the performance. The general level of accuracy is adequate, not offensive; most musical elements are definable, although some serious performance errors may occur. The song's thematic development is inconsistently supported by the performance. Delivery of the musical line is often mechanical, lacking a sense of flow and direction. Distractions occur at many points in the performance. Some musical inconsistencies may result from an imperfect fit of the music to the performers.
- b. In a performance earning a mid-C (47-53) score, most chords are still distinguishable, though the degree of consonance may suffer rather frequently. The execution of the musical line often lacks accurate synchronization and articulation. The embellishments adequately support the song, although several may not. Thematic development is inconsistent, and typically is not demonstrated beyond what is inherently in the arrangement. The delivery of musical elements may be mundane or mechanical, lacking sensitivity. Musicality is frequently not demonstrated.
- c. At a C+ level (54-60), some elements of the performance may be at the B level, but other elements display inconsistency and an inability to sustain musical delivery and development.
- d. In the C- range (41-46), the performance reflects the lack of a sensitivity and understanding to musical parameters for thematic development. The performance exhibits consistently mechanical delivery and significant flaws in execution.
- e. The difference between C and D levels is often that the C-level performance has acceptable delivery and execution and significantly more consonant sound. C-level performances demonstrate an awareness of musical elements, but the performers often lack the skill to execute at a B-level. D-level performances do not demonstrate the same level of awareness.

### 4. The D level

- a. A D-level score (40) is for performances that suffer from poor command of the musical elements with fundamental problems throughout the performance. There are constant distractions. The music may be poorly suited to the performer.
- b. In a performance in this range, the singing may have little consonance and, at times, be so out of tune that the intended harmony is undecipherable. The embellishments may often detract from the song, owing either to design or performance. The delivery may be incongruous with the music, reflecting a lack of understanding of its elements.
- c. Often, the musical elements are poorly executed, reflecting lack of preparation, ignorance, or extreme nervousness. Thematic development may be ambiguous; at worst, not discernible.

## MUSICALITY Category Description

- d. Performances in this range normally occur because of a lack of skill, preparation, or understanding of the musical elements.
- e. On rare occasions, a score of 1 can be awarded where there are no rules broken, but a 40 seems inappropriate. For example, if a group is unable to start a song despite several attempts, and eventually abandons the song, the resulting score would be a 1.

### C. Use of the Score Sheet

1. The Musicality judge will determine a scoring range early in the performance and track the fluctuation of the score as the performance continues. On the score sheet, the judge notes both artistic and technical strengths and weaknesses that affect the score as the music progresses. The MUS judge may also track the form of the song and identify featured moments of characteristic chord progressions in performances—particularly where the performance is lacking an overall sense of the barbershop style.
2. The primary purpose of the judging form is to aid in preparation for the competitor feedback session. The lower portion of the form includes space to summarize main strengths and opportunities for improvement, which can serve as a starting point for the feedback.
3. The final score is written first in the box on the scoring form (CJ-26) and then copied onto the judging form (CJ-23) in the box in the lower right corner. Please complete the CJ-26 form before finalizing notes on the CJ-23.

### D. Differences between Quartet and Chorus

1. Since barbershop is a quartet style, all of its musical elements should be characteristic of a quartet performance. Therefore, in adjudicating a chorus performance, the Musicality judge discourages elements that could not be performed by a quartet, such as chords containing more than four notes (produced either intentionally or by wrong notes being sung). At no time should the musical texture exceed four parts. The spoken word, brief and appropriate, is not considered an additional “part” in this context. However, a soloist singing a fifth musical line is considered an additional part. This applies even if the soloist is singing the same notes as one of the choral parts but with different word sounds, as occurs when the chorus leads are matching the soloist’s notes on a neutral syllable.
2. Choral singing presents greater potential for inaccuracy in the delivery of musical elements, especially certain rhythmic devices, key changes, and special voicings. For a chorus’s performance to exemplify the barbershop style, each part should be sung with unity, without individual voices straying out of tune or synchronization.
3. Choruses utilizing a solo voice backed by the chorus need exercise caution related to ensuring a lack of ambiguity related to greater than 4-part texture. This is particularly true when using a microphone. This does not prohibit the use of a soloist or quartet on the microphone with no chorus singing behind them. If a chorus finds a way to do this and it clearly does not exceed 4 parts, no penalty will be assessed. However, if there is any confusion, the MUS judges should conference to discuss whether penalties are warranted.

## MUSICALITY Category Description

### E. Penalties Up To and Including Forfeiture

1. Any forfeiture by a Musicality (MUS) judge would be as a result of a violation of Article IX.A.2.a-e or Article V.A.2 of the contest rules. Penalties (up to and including forfeiture) by the Musicality judge are appropriate only as a result of the former.
2. The MUS judge focuses on the musicality as outlined in the performance elements of the category. In most cases, the score is holistically derived based on the judge's lifetime of experience. This holistic score includes core elements of the barbershop style, such as chord vocabulary, strong voicings, characteristic chord progressions featuring secondary dominants and tritonal tension, harmonic richness and variety, and degree of homorhythmic texture. The highest MUS scores are awarded to performances featuring high levels of musicality, in vehicles strongly rooted in these stylistic elements.
3. However, if one or more of the Musical Elements are lacking in the performance and the ear is drawn to this omission, then the MUS judge may consider assessing a penalty.
  - a. Use of instrumental accompaniment. As specified in Article IX.A.2.a of the contest rules, songs must be sung "without instrumental introduction, interlude, or conclusion." Any instrumental musical performance before or during a song will result in forfeiture of score for that song. An instrumental interlude between songs will result in the forfeiture of song 1. This does not preclude the use of instruments exclusively for pitch taking or sound effects.
  - b. Exceeding a four-part musical texture. As specified in Article IX.A.2.b of the contest rules, "at no time should the musical texture exceed four parts." The spoken word, brief and appropriate, is not considered an additional "part" in this context. A chorus performance with passages exceeding a 4 part musical texture is subject to penalty up to and including forfeiture depending on the frequency and duration of this texture. The Musicality judge will consider intent when assessing this penalty and it will not be applied to choruses that are considered to be creating additional parts accidentally through the singing of incorrect notes. Less latitude will be granted with a chorus soloist using a microphone, backed by the chorus.
  - c. Melody. As specified in Article IX.A.2.c of the contest rules, "a discernible melody should be present and distinguishable for most of the song. The melody is most 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. Excessive passages with the melody not in an inside voice may result in penalties."
  - d. Lyrics. As specified in Article IX.A.2.d of the contest rules, "lyrics should be sung by all four parts through most (>50%) of the song's duration. Excessive passages without words in all four parts will result in penalties." Use of non-lyrical passages as an embellishment for creating unity/contrast in the development of the music are not subject to this penalty, and will be assessed as part of the quality of the performance.



## MUSICALITY Category Description

- e. Use of a substantial part of one song in performance of another song. As specified in Article V.A.2 of the contest rules, “[w]ithin all rounds of a specific contest, a contestant may not repeat a song or a substantial part of any song. In the context of these rules, the term song may refer to a single song or a medley in which major portions of two or more songs are used. A parody of a song previously sung would be considered repeating a song.” It further provides that a “Musicality judge shall recommend forfeiture to the Panel Chair if a contestant repeats a song or a substantial portion from one of its songs in another song.”
4. The Musicality judge declares forfeiture by awarding a score of zero. Forfeiture results when one or more elements of the performance violate the contest rules. 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. If some action, but not drastic action, is appropriate for a violation of Article IX.A.2, the judge may apply a smaller penalty.
5. All penalties of 5 or more points will be notated on the scoring slip. The judge will indicate the net score with penalty applied as the total score as well as the amount of penalty/penalties and applicable rule provision for the penalty. Any Musicality judge wishing to apply a penalty of 3 or more points in total must first conference with the other Musicality judges and the Musicality judges must agree to the level of rule violation but not discuss the actual points or the performance score.
6. Scoring reduction levels should be applied per the following guidelines:
  - a. 3-4 – An arrangement that doesn’t meet “enough” minimum expectations, but the audience thinks it is barbershop
  - b. 5-9 – The deficiency makes a barbershop audience and a Musicality judge uncomfortable. This will be due to one or two overriding issues.
  - c. 10+ – Significant barbershop deficiencies according to the rules, but there is still barbershop texture to the arrangement.
  - d. Forfeiture - Nothing redeeming about this performance as it relates to contestable music and/or the hallmarks of the barbershop style. As described in The Judging System, Section II, there is “an unequivocal and definite violation of the rules” resulting in no quality rating being appropriate.

## **MUSICALITY Category Description**

(This page intentionally left blank)