

PERFORMANCE CATEGORY

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I. PERFORMANCE AND ITS IMPACT

The Performance Judge evaluates the degree to which a performance creates an entertaining experience or effect on the audience. Every aspect of the performance impacts the judge's impression or perception. Terms such as believability, creativity, authenticity, and other descriptors are used to characterize the performance and are appropriate for use in the barbershop style.

Performers of any contemporary musical form, including barbershop, strive to create an entertaining experience. That experience is what keeps the audience engaged and connected to the performer by invoking emotions, altering their sense of time, and creating moments that are remembered or talked about after the performance has concluded. The performer should be encouraged to explore various methods of communication and expression to deliver the most impactful performance. Simply learning just the notes and words of a song is not enough to create this impact. Whether it is the lyric, musical style, arrangement, staging, physical expression, costuming or other factors, all options should be considered for the experience to be maximized.

II. PERFORMANCE CATEGORY DESCRIPTION

A. Performance Characteristics

A performance is comprised of one or more characteristics whose presence and impact are evaluated by the Performance Judge. These characteristics include (but are not limited to):

1. **Believability:** This characteristic is expressed through behaviors that are true human traits and they may display a range of behaviors or emotions. These could include compassion, love, joy, excitement, sadness, frustration, anger, and anything in between or

in any combination. The degree of believability in a performance creates a level of connection with the audience. Performances which lack this connection may be perceived as merely technical. Other terms that are synonymous with believability include authenticity, genuineness, honesty, and transparency.

2. **Communication:** Another characteristic of a performance is storytelling: the communication of a message. This is not limited to lyrics. It can also be represented by cadences, rhythms, and forms of non-verbal expression. All of these working together allow the audience to experience and understand the message, and have a sense of closure at the end of the performance. Impactful performances are those where the performer goes beyond simply learning the notes and words of a song. The performer has an understanding of the lyric, the characters, and the desired goal, and uses them to create a performance that is meaningful and connected to an intended purpose. If the communication is not clear, the audience may not easily follow the story or understand the performer's role within it.
3. **Creativity:** By utilizing the performer's imagination and exploring unexpected ideas, a performance can create suspense, comedy, surprise, excitement, or anticipation. Performances lacking substantial creativity could be interpreted as predictable, imitating of other performers, or boring. Creative performances may also include references to history, pop culture, or even previous performances.
4. **Quality of Sound:** The sound is integral to the impact of a barbershop performance. There is a certain visceral thrill from hearing barbershop chords that display high levels of vocal skill, tuning, unity, and expression. However, the quality of sound can also be impacted by poor execution or lack of technique. Inconsistency of the sound can detract from the performance if other characteristics are not strong enough to overcome this distraction.
5. **Artistry:** Artistic performances are those where a performer demonstrates control and mastery over aspects of the performance allowing the audience to sit back and enjoy it. At the highest levels, the performance appears effortless, spontaneous and consistently captivating to the audience. At lower levels, a lack of artistry may present as awkward, underdeveloped, or poorly delivered musically or comedically.
6. **Rapport:** A connection between the audience and performer is the result of rapport that has been created by the performance. At a high level, rapport allows for a deeper relationship with the audience, keeping them engaged and receptive to the entire performance. An absence of rapport may cause the audience to lose interest or trust in the performance.
7. **Stylistic Adherence:** Barbershop is an a cappella musical style, and thus should be represented through the use of 4-part harmony. It should not just serve as some musical accompaniment to another predominant performing art style. Artistic choices which significantly deviate from this style may holistically influence the effectiveness of the performance.

B. Components Utilized by the Performer

A performer will utilize various musical, vocal, and visual components to produce, support, and amplify the characteristics listed above. No performance requires all components to be present since certain components would not do service to certain songs. The Performance Judge evaluates the presence and degree to which these components contribute to the performance. The judge may also define these components as follows:

1. Musical: The performance may contain various musical components that create interest, support the lyric or generate unique effects for the audience. Examples include:
 - a. Phrasing and delivery of the lyric that is conversational and appropriate to the context of the song;
 - b. Highlighted melody lines or harmonic moments that create interest or contrast;
 - c. Moments of dynamic contrast that are representative of believable lyric delivery;
 - d. Embellishments, such as swipes and echoes, that reinforce statements or questions;
 - e. Rhythm or tempo that create excitement and build or release energy;
 - f. Key changes that reinforce or indicate a change in the message;
 - g. Chords or musical lines that evoke emotional response or create mood.
2. Vocal: Vocal components contribute to the sound of a barbershop performance, and the degree to which the audience is entertained. Examples include:
 - a. Vocal expression, including color and texture in words/phrases that reflect honest emotion;
 - b. Vocal quality, which allows freely produced and supported sound that maximizes the performer's authentic and natural characteristics of their voice;
 - c. Unity and synchronization that creates a sense of precision or clarity;
 - d. In tune singing that generates a sense of expansion of sound, which is a satisfying aural effect for the audience.
3. Observed/Visual: Appropriate visual components add aspects of humanity, realism, or spectacle to support the song and messaging. Examples include:
 - a. Character development that is a representation of who the performer intends to be within the context of the performance;
 - b. Facial expression and body language that supports the performer's role and emotions that is shared with the audience;
 - c. Staging, including the placement of singers across the stage to create appropriate scenery or effect;
 - d. Costuming and props, which can help enhance characters and create appropriate backdrop;
 - e. Physical expression, including designed or improvised movement and gestures to enhance the message or subtext;
 - f. Directing the attention of the audience with focal points, aimed at guiding the audience member to specific singers or to an area of importance;

4. Individuality/Personality: When a performer accesses aspects of their own unique personality and/or behaviors, it creates a natural, expressive nature to many of the musical, vocal, or physical components. This is enabled when the performer has a willingness and courage to let the music mirror life and the human condition (morals, conflict, emotions, etc.) Successful performances exhibit this individuality from each performer, along with a clear and believable message from the ensemble.
5. Style: The performer may choose to employ a performance style that they feel is appropriate to the music, emotional plan, or subtext. There is no one performance style that is specific to a certain type of music, and performers are encouraged to explore choices that have the potential to connect with the audience in the most meaningful way. Some of these styles are:
 - a. Traditional “stand and sing”
 - b. Comedic
 - c. 4th wall (i.e. performed as if there is no audience)
 - d. Retro, nostalgia
 - e. Spectacle, high energy
 - f. Connected to, or relevant to current events (i.e. satire, anthemic)
6. Integration: The performer considers the components above and weaves them together in a meaningful way. Rather than seeing each piece of the performance separately, all of the musical, vocal, and visual components outlined above work together to create the characteristics outlined in Section A. These components do not need to be equally balanced, but should be considered appropriately.

C. Scoring Methodology

1. The Performance Judge experiences the performance and analyzes it in order to provide an accurate score and helpful evaluation.
 - a. The Performance judge holistically evaluates the performance and determines a score based on the overall entertainment value. Factors that affect the entertainment value, either strengths or suggestions, are noted for discussion with the performer at the evaluation.
 - b. The Performance Judge should identify when a performance effectively displays characteristics listed above and which components require further or modified attention in order to have the greatest positive impact. Minor distractions may or may not be relevant. At lower levels, the judge should be able to discern and discuss the lack of appropriate performance characteristics.
2. The Performance judge determines the score for a song on a scale of 1 to 100 points. The lowest holistic score is a 1. Forfeiture and penalties for rules violations are addressed in Section G below.
3. Each performance is judged on its own merits. The Performance Judge will not consider expectations related to other performances (either by the same performer or anyone else).

This should not discourage the use of references to past performances or events known to and appreciated by the audience, as they have potential for enhancing the characteristics of the performance.

4. The Performance Judge should be aware of the ebb and flow of entertainment value and emotional impact throughout a song and derive the score from the overall effect.

D. Scoring Levels

1. The A level

- a. A-level scores (81 to 100) reflect outstanding levels of entertainment value. Performances in this range reflect the high skill level of the performer and appear to be effortless. Many aspects of the performance are memorable beyond the event itself. These performances display levels of honesty that hold the audience's attention. Components utilized by the performer define the performance characteristics at the highest levels.
- b. 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.
- c. The midrange of A scores (87 to 93) is assigned to performances where the listener is usually unaware of the techniques employed; they are caught up in the artistic effect of the total performance. These performances are masterful, with opportunities for improvement lying in the subtleties of creating more believability or in further creative approaches to surprise the audience.
- d. The lower A range (81 to 86) is where the feeling of excellence is present, but some minor distractions are felt and not all of the performance components may be fully developed. Evidence of effort and technique by the ensemble may contribute to these minor distractions.

Coaching strategies for the A level: To continue to progress through the A scoring range, the group needs to commit to the pursuit of excellence in every aspect of their performance. Encourage performers to be secure with their technical abilities, and continue to move beyond just technique. Uncover the performer's preconceived thoughts about performance to help elicit a more honest and human performance. Risks should be taken to create memorable events. Help them to allow their humanity to show forth by living within the subtext of the music and character.

2. The B level

- a. B-level scores (61 to 80) are indicative of performances that demonstrate the growth and technical execution of the performance components. They will exhibit basic to very good musicianship, rapport with the audience, and focus on performance skills at a consistent level.
- b. The upper range of B scores (74 to 80) reflects performances that display consistent use and awareness of techniques and tactics. These performances have direction and meaning due to the performers' focus on the appropriate components; in some cases, one component may be stronger than others. The performances feel under control and may display moments of creativity or artistry at the A level.
- c. The midrange of B scores (67-73) reflects performances that display confidence in technique. At this level a performance plan is evident, but may not be completely accomplished. These performances tend to be entertaining but lack engagement due to an overreliance on technical elements.
- d. In the lower range of B scoring (61 to 66), performance components are starting to be introduced and are developing in consistency. These performances display emerging levels of emotional content, or adherence to a plan. The result is usually a competent and acceptable performance, but is generally lacking in effective characteristics.

Coaching strategies for the B level: Throughout the whole range of B scores, the ensembles are focused on some level of technique. For performances in the upper half of the B scores, encourage performers to begin to move beyond technique, rather than continuing to focus on technique as an end in itself. Encourage performers in the lower half of the B scores to understand the emotional motivation behind the performance, to drive the plan. Techniques may not be fully developed yet and should continue to be addressed.

3. The C level

- a. C-level scores (41 to 60) are given to performances that have weak to adequate entertainment value. They can be enjoyable due to a singular component but are generally inconsistent in holding the attention of the audience member. A portion of the ensemble may be unaware of the fundamentals necessary to create a consistent and effective performance and could lead to the audience becoming uncomfortable about the performance. The interest of the listener is frequently lost due to lack of musical or vocal consistency, poor execution, or nerves.
- b. In the upper half of the C range (51 to 60), the existence of a plan may be observed, but it is inconsistently or poorly executed. Moderate skill level and awareness contribute to undistinguished or uncomfortable performances.

- c. In the lower half of the C range (41 to 50), very few performance or musical skills are present, thus creating an uncomfortable effect on the audience. The ensemble may complete the performance, but it is weak in overall effect.

Coaching strategies for the C level: Throughout the range of the C scores, performers may be beginning to embrace the basic performance skills required but can also be unaware of where to start. Focus on getting the performer to experience more than just words and notes by providing practical tools. Create a space for them to start to explore performance possibilities. Create and celebrate small successes to drive awareness and motivate the performer so that they might experience what is possible.

4. The D level

- a. 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. Basic skills needed for performance are absent, and words and/or chords could range from being mostly sung to being completely missing. Poor (D-level) performances will be assessed a holistic score of 40 instead of an exact score, absent a penalty.

Coaching strategies for the D level: Throughout the range of D scores, performers demonstrate a lack of skills and awareness. Provide the performers with a basic understanding of the foundational skill sets. Create a successful experience within the performance. This level requires care and compassion from the judge to encourage the ensemble going forward.

E. Use of the Score Sheet

1. The judging form for the Performance category is laid out in a manner intended to align with the Category Description, while allowing for individual styles of note taking.
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. 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 performance elements and components on the left margin helps the judge focus upon attributes of the performance that display strengths or expose opportunities for improvement.
 - 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 (CJ27) and then copied onto the judging form (CJ24) in the box in the lower right corner.

F. Differences Between Quartet and Chorus

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 effect. 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 holistic performance.

G. 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.3.a of the contest rules, songs must “be neither primarily patriotic nor primarily religious in intent...” Most anthems and hymns are examples of clear violations. Songs that merely make reference to national pride or a deity may be acceptable. Judgment calls are made for songs that fall in between these extremes. (See below and Position Paper V, Chapter 9 of the *Contest and Judging Handbook*.) Scoring reduction levels should be applied per the following guidelines:
 - 1) Mild Violation: The performance is primarily patriotic or religious, due to an infrequent but definitive instance of devotion to a deity or nation. A penalty of 5-9 points would be applied and the violation would be noted on the scoresheet.
 - 2) Moderate Violation: The performance is primarily patriotic or religious due to additional instances or combinations of artistic choices (such as staging or physical expression) and lyrics that encourage the devotion of religious or national beliefs. A penalty of 10-15 points would be applied and the violation would be noted on the scoresheet.
 - 3) Forfeiture: A performance that reflects the maximum penalty could be one where the inherent (as written) nature of the song is so primarily patriotic or religious, that the performer cannot make any artistic choices which would diminish the

strong impact created by the content of the song. Forfeiture is indicated by awarding a zero on the scoresheet.

- b. As specified in Article IX.A.1 of the contest rules, songs performed in contest must be “in good taste” and Article IX.A.3.b provides for penalties up to and including forfeiture for “songs or action by a contestant that are not in good taste.” (See below and Position Paper III, Chapter 9 of the *Contest and Judging Handbook*.) Scoring reduction levels should be applied per the following guidelines:
 - 1) Advisory only– The performance requires an evaluation discussion/comment but the overall intent or impact of the taste event was not significant. No penalty assessed, as the taste issue could be deemed inadvertent.
 - 2) Moderate Violation – The performance clearly requires an evaluation discussion. This could be due to an instance or two of clear taste issues that could impact a portion of the audience. The degree of impact on the entertainment value by such a taste distraction(s) would result in a penalty of 5-9 points and would be noted on the scoresheet.
 - 3) Serious Violation – The negative taste impact of the performance is seriously apparent to the majority of the audience (due to reoccurring/suggestive themes and/or staging done in poor taste), and represents a performance that lacks significant entertainment. A penalty of 10-30 points would be applied and would be noted on the scoresheet.
 - 4) Severe Violation - The impact is so severely negative that forfeiture of score is the only accurate representation of the level of impact due to its impact on the entire audience. Examples of this could be the use of vulgar lyrics and staging, or demeaning language towards a specific demographic.
 - 5) In the rare instance, the Performance judge(s) needs to stop a performance if it is deemed extremely detrimental to the audience (regardless of demographic). In those cases, the PER judge(s) immediately informs the ADM, who will stop the performance.
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.3, 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 five 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 Performance judge wishing to apply a penalty of five 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 barbershop 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. For the Performance Category judges, Article XI.A.1 relates to the performer (chorus or quartet) utilizing others outside of the members of the performing group to enhance the effectiveness of the performance. This would likely be the result of some collusion between the performer and other singers or audience members prior to the performance. If this is evident, and not a reflection of some spontaneous reaction by members of the audience, then the Performance Judge may apply a penalty up to and including forfeiture for violation of Article XI.A.1.
 - 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 that is suggestive, vulgar, or otherwise not in good taste is subject to penalty or forfeiture. Any penalty for staging in poor taste should be indicated on the IX.A.3.b “Not in Good Taste” line of the scoring form. Penalty (scoring reduction) guidance for this article is the same as Article IX.A.3.b above. In addition to penalties and potential forfeiture by the Performance Judge(s), the performance may be stopped by the Panel Chair per Article XIV.A.3.
 - 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.