

The Barbershop Style • Contest & Judging System

Definition of the Barbershop Style



Barbershop harmony is a style of unaccompanied vocal music characterized by consonant four-part chords for every melody note in a predominantly homophonic texture. 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. 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 often resolve around the circle of fifths, while also making use of other resolutions. Barbershop music also features a balanced and symmetrical form, and a standard meter. 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.

Determining Relative Rank

Music

Judges in this category adjudicate the musical elements in the performance: melody, harmony, range and tessitura, temp and rhythm and meter, construction and form, and embellishments. They judge the extent to which the musical performance displays the hallmarks of the barbershop style, and the degree to which the musical performance demonstrates an artistic sensitivity to the music's primary theme.

Presentation

These judges evaluate how effectively a performer brings the song to life. They respond to both visual and vocal aspects of the presentation, to evaluate the interaction of these aspects in creating the image of the song, as well as everything about the performance that contributes to emotional impact on the audience.

Singing

Judges in this category evaluate the degree to which the performer achieves artistic singing in the barbershop style: the production of vibrant, rich, resonant, technically accurate, and highly-skilled sound, created both by the individual singer's use of good vocal techniques, and by the ensemble processes of tuning, balancing, unity of sound and precision. They listen for a sense of precise intonation, a feeling of fullness or expansion of sound, a perception of a high degree of vocal skill, a high level of unity and consistency throughout the performance, and a freedom from apparent effort that allows the full communication of the lyric and song.

Each judge may award up to 100 points per song.

2012 NE Division Contest Judges

Music

Jay Krumbholz — EVG
Tony Sparks — RMD

Presentation

Sam Papageorge — FWD
Roger Stanfield — LOL

Singing

Craig Ewing — FWD
Phil Debar — FWD

Contest Administrators

Chuck Hunter — FWD
Randy Rensi — SWD

FWD Judge Candidates:

Martin Fredstrom (Presentation)
Randy Stringfellow (Presentation)
Kent Richardson (Contest Adm)