

SOUND CATEGORY

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SOUND CATEGORY

INTRODUCTION

The focus of the sound category is the evaluation of unit sound in the barbershop style. Unit sound occurs when tones are properly produced, accurately tuned, blended and balanced. In barbershop terminology, this is referred to as “lock-and-ring.” Although the sound judge does not evaluate vocal technique in and of itself, the sound category does include evaluation of the basics of correct singing. Reasonable proficiency in the basics of correct singing must be achieved before the performer’s efforts in any of the four categories will be totally successful.

The responsibility of the sound judge is twofold. She first uses the standards of her category to determine the extent to which the performance has met the established criteria; she then uses that information to arrive at a numerical score that accurately reflects the quality of the performance in her category.

The task of the sound judge is to recognize, identify and evaluate the individual components which, when combined, result in the locked, ringing, unit sound inherent in the barbershop style. She rewards a performance wherein:

- All singers consistently apply techniques of good vocal production.
- Total accuracy exists both horizontally within individual part lines and vertically within individual chords.
- Vocal qualities are blended both within chorus sections and within the overall quartet or chorus unit, culminating in a composite, well-produced, musical sound.
- Cone-shaped balance of voices or sections is maintained.
- Overall application of vocal and stylistic technique enhances the identifiable characteristics of the barbershop style, resulting in a musical performance in the sound category.

Although these major elements have been listed separately, it is almost impossible to judge them individually, since a weakness in one area frequently affects other areas.

UNIT SOUND (0-70 Points)

VOCAL SKILLS

Most vocal authorities agree that the five base elements of vocal production are posture, breathing, phonation, resonance and articulation. These five body actions build on each other in the order given.

Posture

Correct singing postures is an upright, slightly forward stance with the body

weight primarily on the balls of the feet. A careless body stance will inhibit the actions of the breathing and vocal mechanisms. The rib cage must be erect, with the shoulders back but relaxed and the head aligned over the spinal column so that the column of air in the pharynx — the primary resonating chamber — is upright.

Common posture problems include the following:

- a. Swayback stance. This literally cuts off breath support, making it impossible for the singer to produce a steady, sustained tone.
- b. Slumping of the rib cage or bending forward from the waist. This makes it impossible for the singer to breath efficiently, because the rib cage must be erect and capable of expansion to allow air to enter the lungs quickly.
- c. Head and/or jaw thrust forward or upward. This disturbs the air column in the pharynx, affecting resonance, and impairs the function of the vocal mechanism by altering the position of the larynx. Often a quick glance upward by a judge will confirm her suspicion that poor posture is the cause of a vocal problem, and she may suggest that correcting the posture will help to solve the vocal problem.

Breathing

After the instrument is properly aligned (posture), actuation comes from the breathing muscles. The most efficient breathing for singing is a combination of the abdominal and thoracic (rib cage) breathing methods. Clavicular (high chest) breathing is categorically wrong for singing and may even be potentially damaging vocally. For singing, the breathing mechanism consists of two sets of muscle groups which work antagonistically to produce support. They are:

Muscles of inhalation:

- a. External intercostal muscles, which lift the rib cage and expand it outward to increase potential vital capacity;
- b. Diaphragm (partially involuntary), which pulls downward to increase potential vital capacity and to pull air into the lungs.

Muscles of exhalation

- a. Internal intercostal muscles, which lower the rib cage and contract it inward, decreasing vital capacity and/or expelling air from the lungs;
- b. Transverse and oblique abdominal muscles, which pull inward and upward, exerting pressure against the lowered diaphragm, pressing air upward through the vocal mechanism.

Proper inspiration for singing begins with a relaxed jaw, a relaxed, open throat and an erect, expanded rib cage. The abdominal muscles are then allowed to relax downward

and this action pulls a maximum amount of air into the lungs quickly and efficiently. If the rib cage is not erect and expanded, the potential vital capacity will be reduced or the intake of air will cause the chest to heave upward. If there is tension in the jaw/throat area, inhalation will be noisy because the throat will be constricted and the vocal cords partially closed, making it impossible to quickly get a sufficient quantity of air into the lungs.

Proper expiration for singing begins with a relaxed jaw, a relaxed, open throat, an erect, expanded rib cage and a lowered diaphragm. While the intercostal muscles maintain the rib cage in its erect, expanded position, the transverse and oblique abdominal muscles lift against the diaphragm, slowly pressing air from the lungs upward through the vocal cords.

A significant majority of the problems experienced by the average singer can be attributed to either faulty breathing or improper breath support. These problems include the inability to sustain phrase endings, inconsistency of tone quality and lack of tone flow. As with posture, when a judge hears a vocal problem, an upward glance will often confirm her suspicion that breathing or breath support is faulty. There is no shortcut to proper breathing; it is the very foundation of good singing. However, proper control of the muscles involved cannot be mastered in a day—or even a year—of diligent practice and instruction. The wise contestant will heed a comment from a judge that work on breath support is advised. Mastery of this one will accomplish more than any other single factor in improving the caliber of vocal performance in all four categories.

Phonation

Phonation is the action of the vocal cords in speaking and singing, functions which have been superimposed upon the vocal cords. The initial purpose of the vocal cords was to function as a valve to seal off the lungs against the entry of food, water and other foreign objects. There are at least three body reflex actions that will close the vocal cords; only one of these provides the correct approximation and correct amount of tension for singing purposes.

Swallowing muscles: The vocal cords can be closed with the group of muscles referred to as the "swallowing muscles." Swallowing closes the vocal cords tightly - so tightly that they cannot vibrate freely for production of sound. The swallowing muscles also close the epiglottis over the trachea, or windpipe, as an added protection for the lungs. It is possible to produce sound when the vocal cords are closed with the swallowing muscles; however, additional muscle action is then required to open the epiglottis and to attempt to enlarge the constricted throat. The resulting tone will generally be tight (i.e., constricted), both because of tension in the throat and because the vocal cords are closed too tightly to vibrate freely.

Bearing-down muscles: The vocal cords can be closed by using the abdominal muscles that bear down. Closure in this manner seals off the lungs to create intrathoracic pressure to give greater leverage for lifting heavy objects, for child-bearing and for evacuation of solid waste from the body. Again, this closure is too

tight to permit the vocal cords to vibrate freely, so sounds produced in this manner will be tight and constricted. In both of these cases, forcing the vocal folds to vibrate while closed so tightly will create irritation that may lead to hoarseness, laryngitis or nodules. This adjustment of the vocal folds sets the muscles in such a manner that smooth transition between vocal registers is impossible.

Abdominal and intercostals muscles: Finally, the vocal cords can be closed by the action of lifting the transverse and oblique abdominal muscles against the lowered diaphragm. This action initiates a nerve reflex from the phrenic and vagus nerves which closes the vocal cords so that they are still able to vibrate freely for production of sound. With this muscle action, a smooth transition between the vocal registers can occur. However, for this action to occur the jaw must be relaxed and free and the throat must be relaxed; tension in either area will cause the swallowing muscle group to close the vocal cords.

The release of air must be controlled, or managed, by the action of the transverse and oblique abdominal muscles against the diaphragm. The singer whose technique is faulty will usually resort to controlling the release of air with the throat, thereby utilizing the swallowing muscles. If technique is correct, with the rib cage erect and expanded and expiration muscles working correctly, the throat can remain open and air will not escape until the abdominal muscles lift against the diaphragm.

Vocal problems arise when phonation is not coordinated with the release of air. If the singer releases air through the vocal cords before they approximate, a breathy tone results; if the vocal cords approximate before air is released, a tight or constricted tone is produced. A breathy tone lacks energy and carrying power; a constricted tone cannot make full use of support from the breath and will not be properly resonated. A completely relaxed throat is a must for proper functioning of the vocal cords to produce clear, beautiful tones.

Resonation

Resonation is the amplification and enrichment of the tones produced; without resonation, tones would be thin and barely audible. An explanation of acoustics is not within the scope of this discussion. However, it should be noted that the quality of any sound is highly dependent upon the size, shape and surface characteristics of the cavity in which it is resonated.

The pharynx is one of the primary resonators for the vocal instrument. The use of the pharynx is enhanced by singing with a relaxed jaw, an open throat and an elevated soft palate. When the breathing mechanism is functioning properly, the singer is able to use the pharynx for proper resonation of vocal sounds.

Sensations of resonance are not uniform in all individuals. Two singers producing similar tone qualities on the same pitch will not necessarily feel the same sensation in the same place; one may describe a forward sensation, while the other "feels" it farther back. For that reason, the judge should not attempt to describe to a contestant, on the

scoresheet, where tones should be placed or where sensations should be felt. She should, rather, describe the quality of sound that is desired to fulfill category requirements and leave it to the performers to determine how to achieve that quality.

Articulation

Articulation is the process by which sounds are shaped. In singing, vowels are sustained and consonants provide only split-second interruption. To form consonants, we must use the tongue, lips or soft palate, which involves tensing one or more muscles of the swallowing group. The tensing required for proper articulation, however, must be only momentary; when the singer fails to release this tension to sing vowel sounds, the result is an inconsistency of tone quality.

ACCURACY

The ultimate in a locked, ringing sound cannot be achieved without total accuracy. Accuracy problems can be divided into several general areas: notes, intervals, chords, tuning and intonation.

Notes

Inaccurate singing can be simply defined as the singing of wrong notes by one or more voice parts and/or by one or more voices within a voice section. The singing of wrong notes may simply be due to a momentary lapse of memory brought on by an overwhelming case of stage fright, or it may be that the right notes were never learned or even that the wrong notes appeared on the music. The singing of wrong notes often results in chords that are noticeably incomplete or in combinations of notes other than those recognized as valid barbershop chords.

Intervals

The distance from one note to the next in any one part is defined as an interval. A primary cause of inaccurate singing is careless interval singing. Developing a good sense of interval singing is the foundation of barbershop tuning.

Chords

Inaccurate chords occur when the performer sings a pitch that is relatively correct but does not adjust that pitch so the chord locks in total accuracy. To insure lock and ring, certain scale tones must be tuned (i.e., either raised or lowered, sharpened or flatted) to make chords lock. (Refer to Section III-E, page 2, for a table of frequencies using Pythagorean tuning.)

Chord accuracy is primary. Each of the four tones must be sung with such accuracy of pitch that each chord is "locked in" and is clearly identifiable. The most complete accuracy is obtained by four well-resonated tones of like timbre and color utilizing the overtones produced by each voice, blended together in such a way that chords possess the full-bodied richness that adds up to total accuracy, not mere tone accuracy.

Tuning/Intonation

The Pythagorean scale is a tuning system that produces a sharper, brighter sound and is particularly good for barbershop harmony. Through prolonged exposure, most individuals have developed a mental concept of tuning based on the tempered scale used for tuning keyboard instruments. (A comparison of the Pythagorean scale and the tempered scale can be found in Section III-E, page 2.) Utilizing the Pythagorean scale as a tool in singing will result in a more accurate performance.

In its broadest sense, the term “intonation” covers the problems described in the preceding section on accuracy. In general, intonation deals with the manner in which pitch is produced, including coordination between the listening apparatus and the vocal mechanism.

In the sound category, intonation problems often refer to those errors associated with the physical production of tone or vocal quality. One common intonation problem occurs when vowel production is not uniform and the resulting chord appears to be out of tune. For example, if three voices are singing “luv” while a fourth sings “lahv,” the chord may not lock and might sound out of tune. Agreeing on the appropriate vowel sound will usually correct this problem.

Intonation problems can also result from tones that lack focus and clarity. Another definition of intonation refers to the tonal center of the individual tone. When this tonal center is not established by focus and clarity in the voice, intonation problems can occur.

Other problems may result from tension in the jaw or throat, from a closed soft palate or from failure to make maximum use of the resonating cavities. A tone improperly resonated can sound flat. Four improperly resonated tones can seem out of tune, although any one (and perhaps all) may be individually in tune with a piano.

Section/Part Accuracy

Out-of-tune singing occurs in a chorus when voices within a section are not in complete accord on the precise tuning of chord components. For totally in-tune singing to exist, all voices within a section must sing the same frequency and the selected frequency must be in tune with the remaining tones of the chord. (Refer to Section III-E.)

Synchronization

In the sound category synchronization is a necessary element of harmony accuracy, since the sound judge is listening for instant accuracy and total lock-and-ring. The sound judge rewards a performance in which total unit sound exists, i.e., chords are locked from the instant they are sounded. Lack of synchronization affects unit sound because it can mar a blended musical unit, prevent instantly matched vowels and distort a solid barber-shop sound.

BARBERSHOP BLEND

The sound judge is concerned with evaluating the combination of voices or voice parts into a single blended unit. In her evaluation she still rewards the composite quality obtained by combining correctly produced voices into a blended, musical unit. Quality of sound is the first consideration. The sound judge will not reward a combination of voices that are poorly or incorrectly produced simply because they are blended. Two major factors affect the development of a blended sound: common approaches to tone production and vowel production.

Tone Production

Although certain individual voices have, at least for a time, a natural ability to produce pleasing tones without concentrated application of correct production techniques, these voices are the exception, not the rule. Lack of correct support, lack of tone clarity and focus, lack of resonance and/or a general lack of freedom in the voice can make blend difficult, if not impossible, to achieve. (For a complete discussion of this subject, refer to the Vocal Skills section of this book.) A common approach to vocal production is the basis for achieving a barbershop blend.

Vowel Production

The second major factor affecting the development of a blended sound is lack of a uniform approach to vowel sounds. To produce matched vowel sounds, it is important that the jaw be relaxed and free, the throat relaxed and open and tones projected with the energy provided by a foundation of good breath support.

One of the common faults of the untrained singer is the attempt to form vowel sounds by altering, or even contriving, the external mouth position. When this occurs, formation of vowels is moved from the pharyngeal area, where it occurs naturally in the properly produced voice, to the mouth cavity, where proper resonance cannot occur. Vowel sounds produced in this contrived manner will lack the consistency of quality achieved when vowels are produced in the pharynx.

The sound judge's concern with vowel production is limited to the issue of uniformity, since blend cannot exist when vowel production is not uniform. Matters dealing with the choice of vowel sound for pronunciation of given words fall within the scope of the expression category. (Refer to Appendix D, Table of English Vowel Sounds and International Phonetic Alphabet, for assistance in arriving at the vowel sound desired.)

Vowel modification, technically speaking, refers to the natural alteration of sound that occurs when pitch (frequency) rises beyond the natural frequency of a given vowel sound. This phenomenon rarely affects any voice but the tenor, for it occurs only at the high end of the tenor range. At high pitches, all vowels modify toward shorter, more neutral sounds and toward the more central vowels. The sound judge must recognize that it is acoustically impossible for a voice to produce, for example, a pure "ee" sound on an extremely high pitch, and she should not penalize a singer for failure to do so.

The term “vowel modification” is sometimes used to describe the intentional alteration of vowels to enhance barbershop balance and blend. This technique includes using a brighter, more forward approach to vowels produced on lower pitches and a more neutral approach to vowels at the high end of the tenor range. The sound judge will neither reward nor penalize for the specific use of this technique. If blend is not distorted and the overall sound is good, the score will reflect that quality. If in attempting to apply this technique the singer contrives the vocal mechanism, resulting in tension in the mouth, jaw or swallowing muscles, the sound judge will recognize the existence of faulty vocal production techniques and will score the performance accordingly.

Chorus Blend

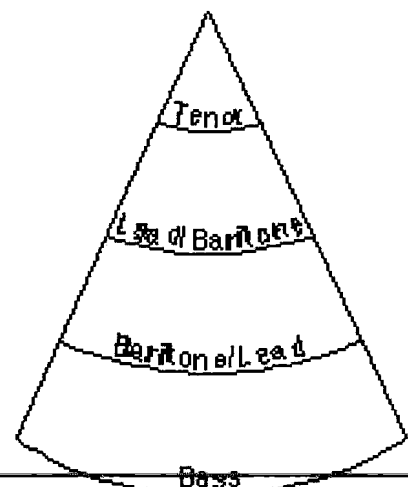
The same basic principles apply to evaluating the performance of either a chorus or quartet. A section should have unit sound and demonstrate section blend. Variation in vowel formation within any section will result in distortion of section blend. One single voice in any section or, indeed, in an entire chorus, can be so out of tune, so loud or so different in quality that it destroys the performance of the entire chorus.

In addition to listening for section blend, the sound judge also listens for section-to-section blend. For example, a well-blended bass section may have a brilliant, lively sound that might be entirely correct, but it may not blend with the mellow lead section. A common approach to vocal skills by all sections will minimize differences from section to section.

BARBERSHOP BALANCE

Barbershop balance has certain characteristics that distinguish it from other styles of vocal music. Church or glee club music (SATB) is balanced cylindrically, all voices singing with equal weight and intensity. Progressive jazz (when sung in harmony) and modern harmony are sung with inverted-cone balance, i.e., the top voices sing with more weight and intensity and the lower voices sing with less weight and intensity. When a barbershop chord is in balance, the voices are purposely unequal in volume.

Using the visual concept of the cone, the sound judge can readily evaluate the balance of a performance. The principles of barbershop balance and singing through the cone, as experienced by individual voice parts, were discussed in the vocal production portion of the Guide to Vocal Skills. (Refer to section 1 pages 1-2.) It should be understood that balance is not merely a question of volume. To achieve optimum vocal balance, the voices to be balanced must first be blended. In the illustration, the lead and baritone are shown in alternating positions to serve as a reminder that both must lighten or broaden their tones as their position in the chord changes.



Occasionally one voice or voice section will appear to be overbalancing the rest. The sound judge will recognize that the voices in question are singing with techniques of good vocal production and the other voices/sections are not. In this case, the remaining voice-sections need to develop equal proficiency with the section that appears to be out of balance. Comments by the sound judge should be carefully worded lest they indicate that those singing correctly should use an inferior or incorrect method of tone production to achieve balance.

Common Balance Problems

Tenor: Frequently, the tenor voice or section sings with a heavy quality, lending too much weight to the top of the chord. A tenor or tenor section whose quality does not complement that of the lower voices will generally appear to be out of balance. Conversely, when the tenor line goes below the lead line momentarily, tenors may fail to make the vocal adjustment required to fill the chord completely.

Lead: Leads often sing their part with equal weight and intensity, no matter what their position in the chord or in what portion of their range the note lies. The resultant problem depends on the capabilities of the other voice sections. If the other sections are strong, the leads will probably appear to be in balance on higher notes and underbalanced on lows. If the other sections are weak, the leads will probably appear to be in balance on lower notes and overbalanced on highs. Leads must remember that the approach to singing in the barbershop style requires more depth of tone and more volume on lows and a light, more lyrical tonal quality with less relative volume on highs — an approach exactly opposite to that used in classical singing.

Baritone: The most common baritone balance problem is similar to that of leads, except that baritones tend to sing most comfortably and, therefore, with most strength in the middle of their voice range. The baritone cannot rely only on her position in her overall range to indicate the volume or intensity required; her balance is also contingent upon her proximity to the lead note and whether she is above or below the lead. Baritones frequently sing many consecutive notes of the same pitch, while the lead moves between positions above and below the unchanging baritone note. It is the job of the baritone to adjust her balance within each chord, even though her note remains the same. When she sings below the lead, in the lower portion of her range, good balance requires that she sing with more depth of tone than would be used by the lead on that same pitch. When she is above the lead, in the upper portion of her range, good balance dictates that she sing with a lighter tone than would be used by the lead on that same pitch.

Bass: The most common bass balance problem is the inability to balance low tones properly. Because of the vocal range of the bass part, it is necessary for the basses to sing with more depth and volume as they descend in pitch. This problem is magnified when the group loses overall pitch. Conversely, the upper part of the bass range requires use of the head register for proper resonance.

It is relatively easy for any group, including one with limited vocal capability, to achieve balance on sustained chords. The real accomplishment lies in maintaining balance when chords move rapidly and when individual part lines are demanding. The ultimate in barbershop balance exists only when all chords in a given performance are properly balanced so as to provide a continuous impression of the cone-shaped sound. The sound judge will evaluate the performer's ability to balance all chords, not just those which were sustained. A complete, balanced chord sound should always be identifiable, even on passing chords.

Intended Imbalance

When the melody leaves the lead voice, traditional balance is abandoned and the quality and authority normally found in the lead voice are transferred to the voice singing the melody. The sound judge will evaluate the degree of proficiency with which these melodic transfers are handled and subsequently balanced.

ARTISTIC SOUND (0-30 points)

In summary, the barbershop sound is achieved by combining the components of correctly produced, blended voices singing with total accuracy and cone-shaped balance in a manner consistent with the barbershop style. The following paragraphs describe application of good vocal technique and correct blend and balance in such a manner as to achieve an artistic barbershop performance.

ENERGIZED VOCAL LINE

An important characteristic of a barbershop performance is energized sound. Energy is an intangible quality that applies to all components of the sound category. A barbershop sound of above-average quality consists of tones possessing energy. A significant amount of that energy is derived from proper breath support, but a certain amount can also be attributed to a positive, confident mental attitude and to the quality of "life" imparted to the voice by a lifted facial countenance.

Artistic sound also has vitality. The best barbershop performance combines technical proficiency with artistic flexibility into a vital, energetic, barbershop sound.

An energized vocal line is achieved when the singer permits breath to be released, or managed, through the vocal cords in such a way that the vocal line demonstrates vitality and life. If the singer properly masters the elements of vocal production, an energized vocal line should result.

The sound judge will appropriately reward a sound that is correctly produced and energized. However, a performance that combines correct, energized vocal technique with a strong, positive mental commitment to the style and mood of the song will transform a technically correct performance from a matter of academic interest into an emotional experience for the listener. To convey the essence of the barbershop performance

to the listener, each singer must put “heart” into her voice, using it artistically to convey sincere feeling for the message of the song. Without heart, emotion and energy, a mechanically perfect performance can be achieved but there will be no aesthetic beauty and no thrill for either the audience or the musician.

TONE FLOW

Tones must move easily from syllable to syllable and from note to note with as little interruption of the sound as possible. The effect of singing a flowing phrase should be similar to the kind of connection of tone that would be achieved if a melodic line were sung on a sustained “ah.” Many singers overuse the lips and jaw, making tone flow impossible. Flowing tones supported to the end of each phrase are a requirement of the sound category.

Tone flow in a chorus presentation may be affected by the director’s conducting techniques. Choppy and inappropriate conducting gestures will prevent the chorus from achieving continuous tone flow. The chorus and director must work together as a unit to achieve a continuous, uninterrupted and energized tone flow.

DYNAMIC FLEXIBILITY

A well-produced voice is capable of vocal flexibility and a wide range of expressive dynamics. A singer of average ability can demonstrate limited proficiency at a variety of dynamic levels, but a singer with above-average ability can sing at high volume levels without sacrificing quality and at low volume levels without losing energy and support. A complete evaluation of vocal ability must include assessment of tone production at all dynamic levels. If the performer fails to demonstrate these abilities, the sound judge has not been given a basis for a complete evaluation.

Although evaluation of the propriety of dynamics is not within the scope of the sound category, the sound judge will evaluate the ability of the performer to maintain barbershop balance at all dynamic levels. Balance must also be maintained throughout dynamic changes, i.e., *crescendos* and *decrescendos*.

A wider range of dynamic levels is possible in chorus singing than in quartet singing; the sound judge will be listening for good, quality singing, not for mere volume. She will be alert to the chorus that exceeds its vocal limitations for the sake of volume and will not be influenced by the size of the chorus. Although 75 voices might produce a bigger, more thrilling sound than 25 voices, they are subject to three times the chance for error. The sound judge bases her evaluation on how well the chorus meets the criteria of the sound category. Chorus size is not a factor in the evaluation.

VOCAL STYLE

The sound judge recognizes that sometimes a different vocal style is used in the delivery of a ballad than in the delivery of an uptune. Ballad singing generally requires a

more mellow, more flowing, less driving vocal style than that required for presenting a rhythm tune. Both techniques can be correct; the key is the ability of the group to select and utilize the vocal style most appropriate to the message of the song.

Creative devices such as bell chords, swipes, embellishments, echoes and key changes are employed to add interest and excitement to the barbershop performance. For example, certain chord swipes or other progressions require the artistic use of a slide, or *portamento*, rather than clean interval singing. When this device is used, all parts slide from one note to another rather than moving directly to the next tone. When appropriate and when executed flawlessly, this device can be as exciting for the listener as it is for the performer. Whenever a slide is used in a competition performance, the sound judge will evaluate its overall effectiveness and the degree of efficiency and technique with which it is performed.

Since one of the elements of unit sound is uniformity of vowel sounds, the unit is almost always destroyed when different sets of lyrics are sung by one or more voice parts for a sustained period, such as in a patter or echo effect. In arriving at her score, the sound judge will consider what portion of the performance was affected by this lack of unit sound.

The performer should be aware that the use of these techniques will be rewarded by the sound judge only if they are executed correctly and if they do not interfere with the accurate unit sound.

SCORING THE CATEGORY

The primary responsibility of a Sweet Adelines International judge is to determine the level of proficiency in her category for each competitor's performance and to place each competitor in the proper ranking in relationship to other competitors in the contest. To perform this task, the judge assigns numerical scores which accurately represent the level of each performance in her category. The composite numerical scores of the entire judging panel establish final placement for all contestants and are the basis for determining the winners of awards.

The sound category has been divided so that the 100 points available for each song performed are allocated as follows:

Unit Sound	0 – 70	points
Artistic Sound	0 – 30	points

The performer's ability to sing correctly influences all facets of scoring in the sound category. In evaluating the unit sound portion of the sound category, the sound judge does not count the number of errors that have been detected. Rather, she recognizes that consistent accuracy problems reflect a lowering of the caliber of performance. A performance that is totally lacking in accurate, locked chords will not receive any reward for

accuracy. The sound judge bases her score on that portion of the performance that fulfills the *combined* standards of this portion of the category.

To be rewarded in the artistic sound portion of the category, the performer must have sufficiently mastered the other elements of the category: correct vocal skills, accuracy, tuning and intonation, blend and balance. A performance that lacks musicality cannot be considered artistic, no matter how appropriate the vocal style or how much “heart” the group demonstrates. This portion of the sound category will rarely be highly rewarded unless the performance exhibits a high degree of development in the area of unit sound as well.

The sound judge does not judge technique; she evaluates a product that results from the performer’s application of technique. When there is an overall sound that meets the criteria of the sound category, there is no reason for the judge to examine technique. When the resulting sound falls short of those standards, the judge evaluates technique in an attempt to identify, for the benefit of the performer, areas needing improvement.

The sound judge seeks a musical sound that draws the audience out of their daily experiences into a world of joy and exhilaration. Beautiful sounds, correctly produced and expressed from the heart, create an enduring musical experience and surely prove the greatest showcase for the barbershop style of music.
