

SCORING LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

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MUSIC

1. A level (MUS)

- a. A-level scores (81 to 100) are given to excellent performances that feature the hallmarks of the barbershop style and display the most consistent musicality. There are very few distractions.
- b. A performance earning a mid-range A score (around 90 points) features an outstanding mastery of the musical elements, resulting in an excellent performance. The harmony is wonderfully consonant, ringing, and pleasing, reflecting excellent intonation and proper balance. The embellishments artistically support the song's theme. The delivery is marked by superb musicality. The musical elements are executed with great accuracy. The song is sung from the heart and its theme is communicated throughout, resulting in the listener's total involvement. There are almost no distractions. The music is extremely well suited to the performers.
- c. The rare and significant artistic performance at the upper range of A displays consistently artistic embellishments in support of a continuous theme presented with the highest degree of musicality.
- d. In a performance at the low end of the A range, occasional distractions can occur. The performers' technique may be somewhat distracting and the display of musicality somewhat inconsistent.
- e. Distinguishing differences between A and B levels often have to do with consistency and sensitivity of performance.

2. B level (MUS)

- a. B-level scores (61 to 80) are for performances that frequently demonstrate a good mastery of the musical elements. The music is generally well suited to the performers. The theme of the song is well communicated, but there may be moments where technique becomes apparent.
- b. In a performance in the mid-range of B (around 70 points), the harmony is generally consonant, with chords clearly distinguishable, and the embellishments tastefully support the song. The performance generally reflects understanding of, and sensitivity to, the music, with high musicality in its best moments. The musical elements are generally executed accurately.
- c. The upper range of B scores is for performances that have only minor distractions. 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 lower range of B performances, the performance is still good, but there may be several distractions and occasional examples of C-level performance. Part of the performance may also be of A-level quality.
- e. The difference between B and C levels is often a matter of consistency.

3. C level (MUS)

- a. C-level scores (41 to 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 theme is inconsistently supported by the performance. 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 at the middle of the range (around 50), the degree of consonance may suffer rather frequently but most chords are distinguishable. The embellishments tend to support the song, although several may not. The delivery of musical elements may be mundane or mechanical, lacking sensitivity. Musicality is not demonstrated.

- c. At the top of the range, some elements of the performance may be at the B level, but other elements display inconsistency and an inability to sustain musical delivery. d. At the bottom of the range, a performance reflects the lack of a clear theme, consistently mechanical delivery or 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.

4. D level (MUS)

- a. D-level scores (1 to 40) are 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 at the middle of the range (around 20), the singing may have little consonance and, at times, be so out of tune that the intended harmony is unintelligible. 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. Often, the musical elements are poorly executed, reflecting lack of preparation, ignorance, or extreme nervousness. The theme may be ambiguous; at worst, not discernible.
- c. Performances in this range normally occur because of a lack of skill, preparation, or understanding of the musical elements.

PRESENTATION

1. A Level (PRS)

- a. A-level scores (81 to 100) reflect outstanding levels of entertainment resulting in totally appropriate and believable emotional effects. Emotions are presented believably, and the audience has totally bought into the emotional impact of the performance. There are no significant traces of artificial or unnecessary embellishments.
- b. To achieve an A score, only the total effect must be judged as A. The vocal and visual components may or may not both be of A quality depending on their relative importance to the overall effect.
- c. The upper range of A scores is assigned to very exceptional achievements. There are no discernible flaws and the applicable adjectives are all superlatives: superb, exquisite, breathless, captivating, hilarious, overwhelming, deeply moving, etc.
- d. The mid-range A score is given for presentations that exhibit unyielding excellence. The listener is normally unaware of the vocal and visual techniques employed; he or she is caught up in the artistic effect of the total presentation. The presence of "star quality" is unmistakable.
- e. At the lower end of the A range, the feeling of excellence is definitely present, but some minor interruptions are felt.
- f. Traits that distinguish between A and B levels of Presentation relate to the presence of subtlety and artistry. The A score implies an extremely high level of consistency in the generation of emotional impact – there are almost no distractions. In summary, the A score denotes excellence as opposed to competence.

2. B Level (PRS)

- a. B-level scores (61 to 80) are indicative of performances that deliver frequently appropriate and believable emotional or entertainment content. Such presentations are frequently of high quality. They will usually exhibit good musicianship, rapport with the audience and good performance skills.
- b. The upper range of B scores indicates increasing levels of excellence in the presentation. Such performances keep the audience almost totally involved, moved emotionally, or entertained, as appropriate. Some instances of A-quality performance are common.

- c. In the mid-B range, the judge may find that all achieved effects are appropriate and properly presented. These performances are quite enjoyable.
- d. At the lower range of B scoring, nominal consistency is demonstrated but distractions may occur. The result is usually a competent but undistinguished presentation.
- e. Traits that distinguish between B and C levels of Presentation relate to the presence of skill mastery and competence. In a B performance, there is an obvious grasp and use of barbershop performance techniques throughout most or all of the presentation. In summary, the B score denotes competence and consistency in the use of performance skills

3. C Level (PRS)

- a. C-level scores (41 to 60) are given to performances that have an adequate emotional effect but are generally marked by occasional severe interruptions in the generation of emotional impact. The interest of the listener is frequently lost due to lack of consistency, poor execution, stage intimidation, or, frequently, poor understanding of good presentation approaches.
- b. At the upper end of the C range, some consistency is displayed. These are fairly entertaining performances despite some occasional significant interruptions.
- c. Performances in the mid-C range are marginally acceptable for public performance. A mid-C performance is recognized as adequate barbershop but will likely be characterized as a basic rendition of the song without exhibiting skills that add a significant level of interest or entertainment value.
- d. At the lower end of the C range, the limited vocal and/or visual presentation skills being exhibited produce presentations that are fairly poor in overall effect.

4. D Level (PRS)

- a. D-level scores (1 to 40) are assigned to presentations that are poor in execution, plan and/or skill. The performer may totally disregard, or be unaware of, proper approaches to presentation of a barbershop performance. Little or no entertainment value or conveyance of the song's emotional potential is evident in either the musical or visual components.
- b. The upper half of the D-level is for performances where performance skills are severely lacking or absent but most of the notes and words are being sung. The lower half of the D-level is for performances where not only are the performance skills lacking, but also many notes and/or words are being missed.

SINGING

1. A level (SNG)

- a. A-level scores (81 to 100) are given to performances of the most consistent artistic barbershop singing. There are very few distractions owing to lack of singing skill; rather, the focus is primarily on artistry.
- b. A typical performance earning a mid-range A score (around 90 points) features few, if any, intonation errors, excellent vocal quality, consistent unity, consistent expansion of sound, and an overall perception of expression and artistry that transcends technique.
- c. A performance at the upper range of A would likely be a rare and significant artistic experience for any listener, possibly transcending measurable elements to define its success. Performances in this range need not be flawless, as flawless performances can actually draw attention to the technique. Rather, there is no perception of technique, only the artistic result.
- d. In a performance at the low end of the A range, an occasional technical distraction can occur. The performer may show great skill but the "technique is showing." The performer may be inconsistent, having phrases of higher A mixed with phrases of a lesser level.

- e. The distinguishing difference between A and B levels is often the perception of artistry as the combination of great skills into one transparent whole.

2. B level (SNG)

- a. B-level scores (61 to 80) are for performances that frequently show skills of artistic barbershop singing, mixed with more distractions or lack of artistic unity.
- b. A typical performance in the mid-range of B (around 70 points) is only occasionally out of tune, frequently exhibits good vocal quality, is often a unit, has infrequent interruptions in expansion of sound and has some artistry.
- c. The upper range of B scores is for performances that do not have any substantial breakdown in artistry, but minor distractions occur. Some part of the performance may be at the A level, but other parts show lack of skill or a breakdown in the overall artistry.
- d. In the lower range of B performances, skill errors may provide significant distractions in some phrases, but most of the performance is still good. The performance may have a short duration of A-level quality. Intonation and vocal quality are better than satisfactory. Expansion of sound is inconsistent.
- e. The difference between B and C levels is often a matter of consistency of skill and blending into an artistic unit.

3. C level (SNG)

- a. C-level scores (41 to 60) are for performances that demonstrate adequate skills, with some signs of artistry but with notable inconsistencies in performance.
- b. A typical performance in the mid-range of C (around 50) will have intonation problems. The vocal quality is satisfactory and not improper and could be improved by basic vocal skills. Unity is impeded by word sound mismatches, faulty chord balancing, or even choice of material, and expansion of sound occurs as often as not. Some artistic moments would be evident.
- c. The upper range of C scores is for performances that may be partly at the B level but show many distractions, inconsistencies, and inability to sustain the artistry.
- d. In the lower range of C performances, offensive intonation or vocal quality may be exhibited occasionally, and the perception of unity and expansion of sound is infrequent.
- e. The difference between C and D levels is often that the C performance has acceptable quality and few unpleasant sounds.

4. D level (SNG)

- a. D-level scores (1 to 40) are for performances in which the elements of good singing are rarely heard.
- b. A typical performance in the mid-range of D scores (around 20) exhibits a major lack of vocal skill. Wrong notes may be prevalent. In-tune chords are rare. Vocal quality and tone color will most likely be poor or offensive. Dissonance is the norm. Individual voices will be consistently predominant, and the ensemble rarely sings as a unit.
- c. The upper range of D scores is for performances that have rare moments of good skills, which appear to be accidental or out of control of the performer.
- d. The lower range of D scores is almost never encountered. A significant performance error, such as poor pitch-taking or nerves, could reduce an otherwise mid-D performance to the lower end.
- e. Performances in this range usually occur because of a lack of skill, nerves, lack of knowledge, neglect, intentional focus on non-singing aspects of the performance, or significant lack of preparation.