

**PERFORMANCE LEVEL GUIDELINES**

SOUND CATEGORY	SOUND CATEGORY	SOUND CATEGORY
<b>C+ LEVEL (54-59)</b> Work on vocal skills apparent, but still in progress Consistent minor intonation and tuning problems Consistent minor synch problems affect overall unity Frequent errors in vowel production and resonance match Balance inconsistent due to vocal limitations Energy sporadic, with lack of consistent support Fleeting glimpses of at vocal artistry	<b>C LEVEL (46-53)</b> Vocal skills understood, but application inconsistent Intonation and tuning errors, and some wrong notes Frequent synch problems impact chord alignment Vowels occasionally match in passing, not sustained Balance good in mid-range, but not at extremes Energy level weak, need for improved vocal stamina Attempts at artistry masked by vocal problems	<b>C- LEVEL (40-45)</b> Vocal skills weak, but beginnings of work apparent Consistent tuning and accuracy errors Consistent synch problems keep chords from aligning Vowels generally lack common approach to resonance Unable to maintain consistent, song-shaped balance Vocal energy rarely demonstrated No discernible attempts at vocal artistry
<b>MUSIC CATEGORY</b>	<b>MUSIC CATEGORY</b>	<b>MUSIC CATEGORY</b>
<b>C+ LEVEL (54-59)</b> Good arrangement, presents challenges for performer Work on vocal skills apparent, but still in progress Consistent minor tuning problems impact chord clarity Sense of musical unity apparent, but inconsistent Interpretive plan evident Interpretive plan needs to be internalized for unit delivery Mechanical delivery overrides attempts at artistry	<b>C LEVEL (46-53)</b> Song and arrangement good, but may be difficult Vocal skills understood, but application inconsistent Tuning errors and some wrong notes impact chords Frequent synch errors, but some sense of unit apparent Interpretive plan sometimes apparent Delivery of plan needs stronger support and stamina Vocal problems make artistry difficult to recognize	<b>C- LEVEL (40-45)</b> Good arrangement, too difficult for performer Vocal skills weak, but beginnings of work apparent Consistent tuning and accuracy errors affect chords Consistent lack of chord alignment Interpretive plan sometimes difficult for performer Stronger vocal skills needed to deliver plan effectively No apparent attempts at musical artistry
<b>EXPRESSION CATEGORY</b>	<b>EXPRESSION CATEGORY</b>	<b>EXPRESSION CATEGORY</b>
<b>C+ LEVEL (54-59)</b> Work on vocal skills apparent, but still in progress Consistent problems with internal synch Vowels not aligned as a unit, consonants interfere Interpretive plan evident but not executed as a unit Sporadic energy with lack of consistent stamina Insufficient support for effective stylistic use Concern with technique overrides sincere involvement	<b>C LEVEL (46-53)</b> Vocal skills understood, but application inconsistent Frequent internal and external synch errors Vowels need unit approach to resonated production Interpretive plan emerges, but stronger support needed Vocal energy weak, choppy delivery results Stronger vocal skills needed to convey barbershop style Communication rarely reaches beyond footlights	<b>C- LEVEL (40-45)</b> Vocal skills weak, but beginnings of work apparent Consistent synch problems Vowels need free, unit approach to production Interpretive plan needs stronger vocal skills Phrase delivery choppy due to lack of energy and support Attempts at style lack musicality Nerves impair successful emotional communication
<b>SHOWMANSHIP CATEGORY</b>	<b>SHOWMANSHIP CATEGORY</b>	<b>SHOWMANSHIP CATEGORY</b>
<b>C+ LEVEL (54-59)</b> Work on vocal skills apparent, but still in progress Some moments of command Inconsistent stamina in execution of visual plan Lack of consistency in personality and characterization Audience rapport not clearly established Energy sporadic, but frequent attempts evident Some attempt at creative visual plan	<b>C LEVEL (46-53)</b> Vocal skills understood, but application inconsistent Need more confidence to project past footlights More stamina needed to deliver visual plan Little attempt at characterization or identification Audience communication not securely established Energy level falls short of crossing footlights Visual plan evident, but some conflict with musical plan	<b>C- LEVEL (40-45)</b> Vocal skills weak, but beginnings of work apparent Insecure and tentative stage persona Execution of visual plan weak due to lack of stamina No projection of personality or characterization Little evidence of attempt at audience communication Infrequent glimpses of energized delivery Visual plan does not consistently support music

## Difficulty Factors: Women's Barbershop Arrangements

Vicki Uhr

- 1. Range for each voice part** - be sure it falls into the "comfort zone". Here are the average ranges for each part:
  - Lead: Bb below middle C to Bb above middle C
  - Bass: Eb below middle C to F/G above middle C
  - Bari: B below middle C to Bb above middle C
  - Tenor: E above middle C to F above C prime.The larger the chorus, the wider variety of vocal ranges, you can stretch those limits a bit, especially on low end lead and low end bass.
- 2. Smoothness of the melody line.** Avoid wide interval jumps in the lead part, particularly in uptunes where the line must be executed quickly. We expect the bass part to jump around, but again it will work better in uptunes if there's not too much of it. Ballads are more flexible. The wide interval jumps make tuning, tempo and synchronization errors more probable.
- 3. Spread voicings** (two octave type chords). They are beautiful and we like a few spread chords here and there for variety and balance, but too many are difficult to balance and to sing with strength. Example of a challenging song due to spread chords is "That Old Quartet of Mine."
- 4. Check the baritone line in relation to the lead line.** You don't want to see the bari predominantly above the lead throughout a song. For best barbershop balance (cone) they should be below the lead or a mixture of above/below.
- 5. Breathing places.** As obvious as this sounds it can be a problem - we see it more often in uptunes. Be sure the arrangement is structured so that the singer gets natural places to breathe.
- 6. Voice leading.** Sing through each part line separately. Any given part line should flow smoothly and be reasonably easy for the singer to hear and execute. Baritones usually can handle what other parts would consider "illogical" intervals - it's characteristic of their part, and they can hear it.
- 7. Energy requirements.** Any arrangement that pushes the current vocal skills of the singing group will be difficult for them. This is especially true of uptune medleys.
- 8. The key of the song.** Some keys are just more difficult; anything arranged in "C" for example. The most easily sung keys for our singers' voices are Ab, Bb, Eb and F.
- 9. Key Changes.** While exciting to the structure of an arrangement, they do present challenges! Look for easy key changes - where the leads stay on the same note throughout the change, for example - until the group is capable of handling more difficult transitions.
- 10. Accidentals.** The more sharps or flats that occur outside of the key signature of the song the more difficult the piece of music. This doesn't mean you should avoid a piece of music with a few accidentals, but if the paper is peppered with them, take another look.
- 11. Lyrics.** Look for singable vowels and consonants. Some consonants are executed easily and will carry a tone - "m, n, l". Others stop the sound - "t, k, ch," etc. "S" sounds are notorious for creating synch problems. The more stopper consonants there are in a song, especially in fast-moving passages, the more difficult it will be for the group to perform well. You should also look for open vowel sounds on target chords, such as the ends of phrases and any notes that will be held. "Ah" and "oh" vowels are great. "Ee" and "ooh" sounds are harder to sing with quality, especially on high-voiced chords; it is also hard to sing them loudly.

## CHECKLIST FOR MUSIC SELECTION:

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(Bailey, Diamond, Gooch,  
McNeill, Barrows)

**Rate the following from 1-5 with 1 being weak and 5 being strong.**

**Song Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

- \_\_\_ Interesting melody line?
- \_\_\_ Each voice part performing in her optimal range most of the time?  
Lead? \_\_\_ Bass? \_\_\_ Baritone? \_\_\_ Tenor? \_\_\_
- \_\_\_ Smooth/singable part lines for Lead? \_\_\_ Bass? \_\_\_ Baritone? \_\_\_ Tenor? \_\_\_
- \_\_\_ Strong musical climax? (Ballad lyrics create tension for emotional impact leading to a strong musical/lyrical climax?)
- \_\_\_ Strong intro. that sets up the story line?
- \_\_\_ Strong tag that reinforces the ending?
- \_\_\_ Good potential for dynamics?
- \_\_\_ Effective tempo possibilities?
- \_\_\_ Potential for effective choreography?
- \_\_\_ Few or simple key changes?
- \_\_\_ Clear message/tells an interesting story?
- \_\_\_ Message appropriate to the performing group?
- \_\_\_ Physical/energy demands match the chorus/quartet's abilities?
- \_\_\_ Rhythmic and dynamic patterns match those of the words?
- \_\_\_ Rise and fall of the melody fits the story told in the lyrics?
- \_\_\_ Embellishments add interest but do not hinder the performance?
- \_\_\_ Challenges in the voice parts match strengths of the chorus/quartet?
- \_\_\_ Chord voicings strong?
- \_\_\_ Strong barbershop flavor? (Chord progressions create interesting and varied harmony appropriate to the barbershop style?)

### Use in Repertoire:

- \_\_\_ Contest ballad?
- \_\_\_ Contest uptune?
- \_\_\_ Show opener?
- \_\_\_ Show theme related?
- \_\_\_ Show finale?
- \_\_\_ Swing ballad?
- \_\_\_ Comedy/variety?
- \_\_\_ Heavy ballad?
- \_\_\_ Driving uptune?
- \_\_\_ Choreography/staging showcase?
- \_\_\_ Solo?
- \_\_\_ Signature song?

### Special Considerations:

- Projected length of learning time? \_\_\_\_\_
- Coaching/extra staging time needs? \_\_\_\_\_

*HANDOUT #4*

GUIDELINES FOR RAISING YOUR PERFORMANCE LEVEL

To raise level from C – to C:

- Begin a long-range vocal development program that will, in time, produce a tension-free, well-resonated tone from each member
- Require internalization of the words, music and choreography to contest songs from each member
- Begin a stress management program that will allow each member of the chorus to sing as well as she is able under the tension that comes with competition.
- Learn to choose good but simple competition material
- Focus on harmony accuracy in the barbershop style
- Learn how to produce proper vowel sounds together and how to articulate consonants correctly and together

To raise level from C to C+

- Continue with vocal skill development programs
- Understand and be able to sing in the barbershop style
- Develop a sense of unity within and between sections
- Learn the proper way of interpreting in the barbershop style
- Learn about and use appropriate dynamics, lyrically and musically
- Build vocal and visual stamina to produce a more secure product