

Blending Skills

Goal: a weightless, fluidly delivered sound in a *shared space* that rings (aka: unit sound)

Step One: personal skills

strong foundation of vocal skills

breath skills

accurate intervals

vocal freedom/relaxation

fluid movement between registers

vocal flexibility

resonation

correct pronunciation

NOTE: no oversinging...**ever**

adds weight to the sound

increases inaccuracies

limits shared space

destroys any hope of unit

Step Two: same section skills

all of the personal skills

vowel match

all of the above in a space shared with singers of that voice part

Step Three: entire ensemble skills

all of the personal skills

all of the section skills

enlarge the shared space to a "limitless" distance

NOTE: the "limit" of this space is one defined by the need for a focused,
not fuzzy or swallowed sound

all of the above in a space shared with singers of all/any voice part

Important tools for creating and exploring a shared space:

unison

kinesthetics

imagination

THE A+ PERFORMANCE

Sound Category

UNIT SOUND

In a quartet, all members sing all chords in tune instantly.

In a chorus, all members of each section sing the same correct pitch so that all chords are in tune and in balance.

This means that:

- No wrong notes are sung by any member at any time;
- All intervals are precisely tuned by every singer;
- All vowels are properly produced so that no intonation errors occur.

All voices in the group consistently produce tones that are:

- Of even, consistent, good quality;
- Free and relaxed and demonstrate properties of both depth and brilliance;
- Appropriate for the voice part being sung;
- Supported and energized;
- Well resonated and projected.

All voices in the group combine to consistently produce a blend that results from a common approach to good singing.

There is vibrato that results from good tone production, but is not present in such degree that blend or accuracy are affected.

All chords are in balance so that:

- The bass actually sings with the most volume;
- The lead predominates because of her quality (not volume);
- The baritone sings a full tone between the bass and the lead and a lighter tone between the lead and the tenor;
- The lead broadens lower tones when she sings below the baritone;
- The tenor sings a light tone unless she is below the lead, in which case she broadens the tone to fill out the cone.

This balance is consistently maintained throughout the vocal range and through all dynamic changes.

(If all of the above is true at all times, score 70 points.)

ARTISTIC SOUND

All of the above properly produced, blended and balanced sounds are energized and given the vitality appropriate to vocal music in the barbershop style.

Having met the criteria defined above, the performer adds the element of excitement by consistently using the vocal style and delivery appropriate to the message of the song within the boundaries of the barbershop style.

(If all of the above is true at all times, score 30 points.)