

The Effect of Synchronization on the Judging Categories

Overall

Since overall musicality is important to all categories, and since musicality is, in part, a result of unity, or synchronization, it appears that synchronization is a component of all categories.

Music

In order for chords to be clear and easily identifiable by the Music Judge, they must be carefully aligned vocally, with notes, syllables, and phrases begin sung with precision and unity. Incomplete chords are often a result of lack of synchronization.

Sound

Synchronization in the Sound Category is a necessary element for harmony accuracy, since the Sound judge is listening for instant accuracy and total lock-and-ring.

Expression

The Expression Category is the one category in which a portion of the total points allowed (40%) is based on absolute synchronization in the performance of each song. In her evaluation of the diction/synchronization, the Expression judge considers the mechanical aspects that, when perfectly synchronized, result in a flawless performance of the vertical elements of vocal ensemble music. These include correct use of vowels, diphthongs, consonants, enunciation, and synchronization of all attacks and releases.

The determining factor in evaluating the lyrical interpretation (60%) portion of the category will depend upon the varying degrees of proficiency by the performer in maintaining a unified focus to the aforementioned facets of the category.

Showmanship

As it applies to the Showmanship Category, a synchronized performance is one in which all of the visual aspects of the musical presentation meld together so as to be perceived by the audience as a solid unit.

Synchronization as it Applies to the Four Judging Categories

Although synchronization is specifically addressed only in the Expression Category, its presence, or absence, has a sweeping effect on every category. An in-depth analysis could be undertaken to equate the lack of synchronization to the various components of each category, but perhaps the easiest way to grasp its significance is to think of it in terms of **unity**, an element that is frequently addressed in every category. By definition, synchronization implies that whatever is happening is occurring at exactly the same time and rate, without any variables, while unity indicates a quality of oneness and continuity, without deviation or change. In other words, the two terms are synonymous.

The Judging Category Description Book provides us with a thorough explanation of the technical aspects by which a performance is assessed by each judge and it is incumbent upon the contestant to acquaint herself with those basic tenets of our craft. We must then recognize that **every** area of the performance must be approached in a synchronized and unified manner.

Specifically, the Music judge may determine that a song meets the criteria of a good barbershop arrangement; however, if the presentation lacks a synchronized, unit approach in execution, the value of even the best arrangement is lost to the listener. With the goal in mind of creating a performance in the “barbershop style”, the Sound judge applies her technical knowledge to assess whether the end product resulted in a locked, ringing, unit sound. Again, if the technical aspects of the category have not been executed in a synchronized manner, this **cannot** be achieved and the very essence of our art form is lost! In several areas we can graphically see the lack of synchronization and unity as it relates to the Showmanship Category. Choreography not executed together creates a jarring visual picture, or costumes and make-up that vary in appearance destroy unity and distract the listener. Most importantly, however, is the ability of the performer through a total unit and synchronized approach, to effectively communicate, both musically and visually, the message of the song to their audience. Finally, it is the Expression judge who specifically addresses the issue of synchronization as it applies to a given performance. However, it should be obvious by now that it is such an integral part of each category that the Expression judge is simply serving as the spokesperson who directs the contestant’s attention to its presence or absence.

We hear the phrase “things are out of synch” applied to many situations, some more obvious than others. For example, if we watch a hockey game, the skaters appear to be rushing helter-skelter up and down the ice, with no apparent sense of synchronization. On the other hand, when we see skullers propel their boat across the finish line, their synchronized efforts are apparent to even the most casual observer. However, although more obscure in the hockey game, a synchronized approach is present, and necessary, in both team endeavors. Quartet and/or chorus performances represent a team effort and, although its identity may seem more obscure in three of the categories, synchronization and unity are at the very heart of every aspect of our performance.