

## **Region 5 2009 Competition Judges Notes**

### **Showmanship – Peggy Gram**

#### **Choruses:**

Vocal skills for choruses placing top 3-5 need continuing work here to elevate the overall musicality.

Costumes & makeup were good overall.

Choreography – some plans a little beyond capability of performers to sustain and keep musicality.

Pitch taking is of concern – especially at the lower achieving levels. Teaching relationship to “do” is essential.

Facial involvement in ballads is spotty throughout most levels – understanding that a wide range of emotions exist in all of them and should be portrayed by the singers.

Characterization is a valuable tool to unify the individual approaches to the visual elements of the plan. It can be explored by choruses of all levels.

All directors doing a solid job in the showmanship category.

#### **Quartets:**

Vocal skills – Many need to continue work here.

Need more emphasis on characterization and more freedom in physical expression

Pitch pipe technique - Don't tune out the audience when taking the pitch

Costumes not bad overall

Choreography – many need a little stronger visual plan

Taking an audible pitch would have been an improvement for each quartet from 9-16. We need to disabuse all our quartets of the notion that “good quartets don't need to take an audible pitch.”

Some clever visual planning going on. Several of the lower scoring quartets could have benefitted from some visual plan in their vocal production.

By & large, the groups are not immersed in the music – what mood they want to create in the audience, what other performers have done with the music; rather they’re doing what they’ve heard another barbershop group do.

Explore, take risks! Keep working on vocal skills to be able to support those risks!

## **Sound – Dale Syverson**

### **Choruses:**

A few rocky, out of tune starts when the timing from the audible pitch to the rhythm of the entry breath is not well-defined. Overall need a stronger more complete understanding of all the implications of “unit” and its importance not only in the sound category, but all four categories. If it’s possible to do so, leveling the training of vocal skills might accelerate the learning once there are 3 pretty distinct levels of need here – basic, intermediate & advanced. Each one has their own issues to address.

Basic – address the need for developing good vocal skills and the base elements of clean interval singing.

Intermediate – address the tuning issues of the category and varying vocal line challenges such as fast/slow, soft/loud, etc.

Advanced – fully explore the vocal energy commitment to make the sound fully BBS.

### **Quartets:**

The overall skill-building should follow the hierarchy of the 5 judging categories:

1. Vocal Skills
2. Accuracy
3. Barbershop Blend
4. Barbershop Balance
5. Artistic Sound

Most of the quartet made good choices for starting their song – whether or not they take an audible pitch, their score is only affected by how well in-tune they begin. Unfortunately, too many ensembles think there is a penalty for taking an audible pitch – NOT TRUE! Tuning is a major issue this category – the quartets that understand and have developed their ability to tune need help with consistency and vocal risks. The quartets that are not skilled at tuning need a different level of education that addresses the basic vocal skills of this category and the tuning of simpler intervals.

Need more vocal character without the flutter that disturbs the lock & ring. Need more depth and resonance.

## **Expression – Nancy Field**

### **Choruses:**

Embellishments – learn about the characteristics of BBS style.

Work on dynamics and finesse.

Synch – need more singing in tempo and singing vowel to vowel.

Tempo internalization

Vocal skills not always at level demanded by song choices.

Dynamic patterns – Learn how to sing from soft to loud with support and finesse.

Explore the use of vocal texture for drama.

Higher level of vocal freedom would allow vocal character to emerge.

### **Quartets:**

Vocal skills and synchronization generally good but need to work on unit approach to vocal freedom.

Embellishments – need to explore musical tension

More energy needed.

Pitch taking – Quartets need to do this to establish key – too many chose not to which results in many out of tune song starts and affects overall performances.

Ballads – more attention to strengthening ad lib approach and design.

Dynamics – Learn how to expand range – louds w/control and finesse. Not enough softs to define emotional contrasts.

Learn how to handle transition out of tempo from 4/4 – 2/4 stomp, etc.

Take risks – develop vocal character – get inside the lyric/music to add vocal drama.

## **Music – Sharon Carlson**

### **Choruses:**

Nice variety in song choices (parodies are clever but must be sung well, too.)

Need more attention to harmony accuracy, musical unity and musical energy was inconsistent.

Some bold ideas but cautious singing.

More attention needed in the use of backbeat of barbershop uptune – lifeblood tuning/synch of embellishments and swipes.

Good beginning energy that fades with lack of stamina.

Work on those vocal skills.

### **Quartets:**

Songs & arrangements – there's so much more music out there. Don't be afraid of the old good stuff.

Need more interest in the rhythm of the song and more understanding of ad lib in phrasing.

Musical energy needs to be from the heart – not from speed of song.

Very cautious singing overall – take more risks vocally.

More attention to singing with dynamic contrast – very little beautiful softs. Lots of medium volume without finessing from loud to soft or vice versa.

More genuine emotion displayed in music is needed.

Trust vocal skills and push a wall occasionally.