

Comments from the Judges' Pit...

Region 11 – QUARTET TRENDS

SOUND Category – Janie Macchiaroli

- Many good singers crossed the stage. Most exhibited at least a basic understanding of good vocal skills, but all would benefit from continued attention to posture, breathing, phonation, resonance, articulation. One you make progress in these areas, then other areas need further attention: blend, vowels, balance. Balance issues for many quartets.
- A few quartets had note accuracy issues. Most need to focus on clean interval singing.
- Higher-achieving quartets need more artistry – dynamics, energized line, vocal style.
- C-level groups need to enhance their breath support. Phrase ends were dropping off, and the tone was unsteady in these instances.
- Blend came and went in almost all groups. A few voices (leads especially) were dark or covered-sounding. Lots more resonance would be beneficial – some singers were not using all their resonators. Consistency is the key.

MUSIC Category – Mary Ann Wydra

- Mostly good choices of strong arrangements.
- Harmony accuracy and musical unity need more work. More attention to dynamics.
- Even though most quartets are choosing good, contestable music, some are not at the vocal capability level to carry them off and sing them in tune. Some very good arrangements fall into the category of jumpy part lines or jumpy melody lines. Examples are: You Turned the Tables On Me, When I Fall in Love, A Tree in the Meadow.
- One surprise song/arrangement, even though done in jest, offended one of the judges. It wasn't a good choice for contest anyway.
- Keeping vocal energy alive at softer levels is a goal. Mismatched vowels keep some chords from ringing.
- Some quartets are using a choral approach to their songs.

EXPRESSION Category – Patti Burklund

- Region 11 is full of good quartet singers! However, more training and education in the basics would result in a more unified approach and performance.
- More education is needed in the art of vocal freedom and getting beyond the technical and into the emotional. Few quartets achieved the emotional communication that is really at the heart of this category.
- More education about forward motion, and its impact on phrasing and lyric flow would be a huge advancement.
- Vocal skills generally good, but continue to educate. Sync and unity were a problem for every quartet.
- Vowels, diphthongs, consonants, and enunciation are the areas to focus on – specifically vertical alignment of all the basics. Some nice things happening in the area of musicality. Good plans for lyric flow and phrasing, although forward motion was lacking in many quartets. Need more contrast/dynamics.
- Quartets do not have a thorough understanding of emotional communication, as few really achieved characterization.

SHOWMANSHIP Category – Melanie Wroe

- **ENTRANCE** – every moment on stage is part of the performance so be sure to rehearse your musical “framework” – the entrance and pitch-taking process. Lots of enthusiasm was seen upon entry, but often the quartet's energy fell as they approached the mic, making costume adjustments and/or excluding the audience as they turned to one another. Tighten up the timing and rehearse it with ENERGY!
- **COSTUME** – lots of snug-fitting pants up there, ladies. Remember, the audience has 6 full minutes to scrutinize every detail so wrinkles or outlined body parts are quite distracting. Keep it professional at all times.
- **BODY MOVES** – so many beautiful faces and sincere animation. Now bring your BODIES along! :) Let feet move, practice natural gestures, and allow energy to flow freely to keep you looking confident and sincere. Get out of the box by selling character from the toes!

Comments from the Judges' Pit...

Region 11 – CHORUS TRENDS

SOUND Category – Janie Macchiaroli

- Continue to emphasize vocal skills, especially posture and breathing for lower-achieving choruses.
- Need to repeat the importance of vocal skills in allowing/enabling singers to blend and balance properly.
- Breath support will always be a need for lower-achieving choruses.
- Intonation is sometimes misunderstood – clarification will be very helpful to all.
- The importance of clean-interval singing is necessary for all four voice parts individually and for all parts combined.
- Higher-achieving choruses need to better understand how to allow artistry to emerge in their performances.

MUSIC Category – Mary Ann Wydra

- Keep working on vocal skills, musical unity and musical energy.
- Most choruses are choosing strong arrangements – good for you. Sometimes they are beyond the performer's abilities, however. It would better to pick a less busy arrangement, and lock and ring every chord. There is no “difficulty” factor in barbershop.
- More work needed at softer volumes to add variety and artistry to your plans.
- Lots of musical unity issues keep choruses from scoring higher.
- For “Open Division”, contest songs should be the strongest one musically and be strong barbershop material.
- Thanks for a wonderful music-filled weekend with very good performances to match!

EXPRESSION Category – Patti Burklund

- Continue to develop vocal skills. Sync/unity is a significant area that needs attention.
- Vowels, diphthongs, consonants and enunciation need to be stressed for ALL choruses.
- Some good things happening in the area of musicality, but you have barely scratched the surface.
- Lyric flow and phrasing generally good, but forward motion is lacking for many.
- Take more risks with your dynamic plan.
- Emotional communication is not fully understood.
- You would be well-served to go back to basics, and focus on development of breath support and vocal stamina. It is the very foundation of our craft, and it's not possible to achieve success without this basic.
- Lots of promising, potential things happening in the area of musicality – you just need to take more risks, and crawl into the storyline to bring it to life.
- Mostly, just continue your path for making wonderful music through education, vocal freedom and love for barbershop!

SHOWMANSHIP Category – Melanie Wroe

- **PHYSICAL EXPRESSION** – Always the challenge: free up, but don't lose control! It's a fine balance – keep exploring.
- **COSTUMES** – very effective for the most part. Layered tops needed when wearing those “travelers pants”.
- **MAKEUP** – mostly great job here. Just stick to dramatic application in a neutral palette. Add rouge just before you go on stage as it gets absorbed.
- **ENTRANCE** – lovely opening faces, but energy was often lost just before the musical start. Pump up here and start every song (even ballads) with, at a minimum, a pleasant face to “hook” your audience.
- **UNITY** – an issue in nearly all groups at all levels. Strive to sing TOGETHER, no matter how much passion or choreo is going on. Unity issues rob the group of command, and affect that all-important musical impact.

