

VP Music Report

Oct 27, 2018

Minutes of the Music Team meeting – Saturday, Oct 27, 2018.

- The Team discussed the results from District Convention and identified one thing in each judging category that would catapult us forward
 - Music [BHS Category description: The Music Category judges the arranger's skill and the performer's musicianship in bringing the mood or story of the song to life, and the suitability of the material to the barbershop style.]
 - Area of focus: Consistency of air flow. The concept of a "destination" will help us visualize the implementation of consistent air flow. This will help eliminate choppiness in our singing and enhance the way we finish phrases.
 - What was our status two years ago? As a group, we were not in sync with breathing. We were singing as a bunch of individuals, not as a united chorus. Some disagreement in phrase interpretation.
 - Where are we now? Each section is doing much better in singing as a unit. The overall Ensemble is also doing better. We attain a high level of musicianship much of the time. Occasionally phrase endings fall off.
 - Where we are going – By focusing on the consistency of air flow the Music Team believes we will consistently achieve unity of sound as a chorus with high musicianship. Finesse of phrase endings.
 - Singing [BHS Category description: The degree to which the performer achieves artistic singing in the barbershop style: the production of vibrant, rich, resonant, technically accurate, and highly skilled sound, created both by the individual singer's use of good vocal techniques, and by the ensemble processes of tuning, balancing, unity of sound and precision.]
 - Area of focus – Realizing that we sing word sounds, not words. Some words have multiple word sounds. We will be identifying the word sounds and work toward uniformity in how we sing them. Proper placement (forward sound; raised soft palate; etc.) and reducing (preferably eliminating) muscle tension in the jaw and neck will help. Each man needs to pay attention to his body and know his personal capabilities and limits and sing within those capabilities and limits. Note that capabilities and limits can and will change over time.

- What was our status two years ago? There was virtually no uniformity in vowel sounds. And we were trying to attain uniformity by changing the shape of our lips, the force with which we sang and tightening up to achieve higher pitches.
 - Where are we now? There is a general understanding of and appreciation for the impact of forward placement and relaxed singing. But it's not consistent. Old habits die hard. Yet, frequently matching occurs naturally.
 - Where we are going – Matching vowel sounds with proper placement, relaxation and resonance will enable the chorus to achieve lock and ring in virtually all of its chords.
- Performance [BHS Category description: A barbershop performance refers to how the artist communicates his/her message and vision via the transformation of a song into an entertaining experience for an audience.]
- Area of focus – Consistently deliver the message of the song, phrase by phrase, with natural movement that fits the lyric and emotional content. While changes in volume dynamic is also relevant, we are doing pretty well there and believe the visual element will have a greater impact in the quality of our performances.
 - What was our status two years ago? The majority of members had little or no natural physical movement during the performance of a song. We had to program in specific motions which, when done, looked robotic and lacked emotional content, although it did match the intent of the song.
 - Where are we now? Almost all singers are physically involved in the delivery of every song in some way. There is still a high degree of “thinking” going on and the movement is not as natural as it could be. But we have not mastered the difference between natural expression of the song and “acting” the song.
 - Where we are going – The Music Team will provide a clear “message” for each song. We will clarify the emotional content for each phrase. This will enable each man to then convey the message through natural movement within his physical capabilities.

- We have a lot of which to be proud. Our performance at Contest was head and shoulders above anything we have done in recent memory. Regardless of the numbers, it's important to know how others perceived our performance.
 - Ron Black – “That’s the best I’ve heard The Peninsulaires in decades.”
 - Almost identical comments from
 - Dick Whitten Nor Cal West VP who added “I watched and listened to your warm up and you did not leave it in the warm up room.”
 - Bernard Priceman - BHS Board member, Past FWD President and multi winner with the "Masters"
 - Martin Fredstrum - Performance Judge who has coached the chorus in the past
 - Karie Shively – “I got goose bumps more than once. In a good way.”
 - Larry Valencia spoke with someone who said: “I expected a decent performance from The Peninsulaires but got a lot more than I expected.”
- Director has increased the frequency of delivering coaching instructions to sections and/or individuals. We need the rest of the men to realize that those instructions can be as applicable to their section and/or themselves. This point will be mentioned regularly.
- We intend to continue to use Chris Lewis as a coach. Director will coach Chris on being a coach. We will provide Chris a clear set of objectives as well as a schedule. We will hold him to the schedule.
- Another possible coach in Mike Cating. He is working on his credentials as a Performance Judge.
- We will be incorporating more sectional/small group work into weekly rehearsals. Director and Music Team feel that the group is now in a position to use sectional activity to enhance the three focus areas mentioned above. Starting after Cabaret, a 30 minute sectional/smaller group component will be inserted into each rehearsal. We discussed several modes of implementation for sectional time.
- Beginning immediately, Director will incorporate Assistant Directors into rehearsal activities. The objective is to provide real-time feedback to the chorus regarding the three areas of focus described above.