

Society for the **P**reservation and **P**ropagation of  
**B**arber**S**hop **Q**uartet **S**inging in the **U**nited **S**tates

# **Worldwide Barbershop Quartet Contest Rules**

## **FINAL VERSION Dated 09-16-22**

**This document represents the Final Version 1.1.5 of the World Barbershop Quartet Contest Rules  
submitted to the SPPBSQSUS Board of Directors on April 12, 2022.**

**It has been developed, in conjunction with the Barbershop Style Team (Team Leader: Steve  
Delehanty,) by the Contest Rules Team: (Jay Giallombardo (Team Leader), Kenny Hatton, Bobby Gray,  
Jr., Scott Brannon, George Gipp and Ken Buckner)**

# **SPPBSQSUS - Worldwide Barbershop Quartet Contest**

## **Official Contest Rules (Version 1.1.3 dated 5-24-2022)**

**Contest Rules Development Team Members:**

**Jay Giallombardo (Team Leader), Ken Hatton, Bobby Gray, Jr., Scott Brannon, George Gipp, Ken Buckner**

### **1. Definition of Competitors:**

Each contestant shall be a member of the organization and each quartet shall consist of four (4) male singers.

### **2. Style Definition:**

Barbershop quartet music is a style of four-part a cappella singing with some particular characteristics.

- The four parts are called lead, tenor, baritone, and bass.
- The melody is sung by the lead, with brief transfers to other singers permitted.
- The tenor sings a harmony part which is almost always above the melody.
- The bass almost always sings below the lead part.
- The baritone sings notes in the middle which complete the chord.
- Barbershop music is primarily homophonic.

Polyphonic passages are not only permissible but a musical necessity, as the creative use of embellishment is an essential part of the barbershop style, including:

- call & response
- swipes
- echoes
- bell chords
- back-time
- patter refrains
- rhythmic propellants
- sustained or rhythmic neutral syllable support of brief solo passages.
- melodic embellishment
- brief solo passages

Short portions of a song may be sung by fewer than four voices for effect and musical contrast.

The style is characterized by songs sung predominantly in English with clear, relatable lyrics and easily singable melodies. Harmonically the songs should largely suggest the use of major and minor chords with frequent use of barbershop seventh (dominant and secondary dominant seventh) chords which resolve around the circle of fifths and sometimes other resolutions. The music should have an easily discerned tonal center and a balanced, symmetrical form. Thus, the song's arrangement, and by implication the arranger, play an important part in creating the presentation of the song and closing it effectively.

The song/arrangement should be primarily homophonic (all parts move in the same rhythm, singing the same lyrics at the same time). Polyphonic passages (swipes, echoes and embellishments) should not be the primary feature of the arrangement. However, the artistic use of brief polyphonic passages is permissible to provide contrast.

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In summary, to meet this Style Definition, a song must first be suitable to be arranged in the Barbershop Style. The performance should leave no doubt in the minds of the audience that they have just heard a Barbershop Quartet. Spoken words should be brief and supportive of the overall message of the song. Finally, the lyric and/or performance must not exhibit poor taste.

### **3. Panel Selection – (Grand Poobah):**

One (1) Grand Poobah (GP) shall be appointed by the Contest Committee Chairman. The GP shall have the overall responsibility for judging and contest scoring (i.e., the manager of all aspects of the actual contest; judge orientation, judge score tabulations, computer operations, and any other aspects of the contest event such as decisions handling distractions/issues that may occur during the contest).

### **4. Panel Selection (Shepherds):**

Three (3) members, certified by the organization's "Style Definition Team" will be appointed by the Grand Poobah in conjunction with the Style Definition Team Leader. These men will be known as the "Shepherds of the Style." One of the Shepherds will be designated as the "Chief of Staff" (COS) Shepherd of the Contest. The Shepherds may confer, but all three must fail the performance unanimously, to disqualify any quartet. **(See Attachment C for detailed information regarding the Grand Poobah and the Shepherds.)**

### **5. Panel Selection (Judges):**

We will ask our members in attendance to volunteer to serve as judges as they arrive to register for the convention on Thursday. The volunteers will attend an orientation at the convention site, in advance of the competition. Any Volunteer who has a relative or a quartet he has coached within the previous six (6) months in the quartet competition will be declined. The Grand Poobah will then determine how many judges are to be assigned to each round of competition and will draw at random the names of the judges for each round. The Shepherds will be the same for all rounds of a contest, but the volunteer judges may be different for each round. The Grand Poobah has the option to include up to three non-member, celebrity judges to be a part of the judging panel.

### **6. Panel Selection (Timer):**

The Grand Poobah shall appoint one (1) volunteer to serve as Timer. His sole responsibility will be to time the quartet's performance from entrance to exit and record the time on the appropriate "Time sheet form". [See Attachment C for maximum time requirement and penalty for going over the allotted time]

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### **7. Panel Selection (Computer Operator):**

The Grand Poobah shall appoint one (1) qualified individual to operate the Computer Application Ranking System which shall produce all required reports, forms, and documents required and will tabulate the Official results of the Contest.

### **8. Traveling Trophy:**

The first-place quartet is to be sworn as "Keeper of the Terry Clarke Memorial Trophy," which is to be made in his image, in honor of Terry's lifelong dedication to excellence in barbershop quartet performance, fairness and irreverence toward the outcomes of contests. The expense of this trophy is to be paid by donations from members and non-members of the Society. Additional awards (ribbons, medals, pins, certificates, rings etc.) denoting categories of placement may be awarded by the Society to the participants.

### **9. Exclusion:**

Non-members of the Society are to be excluded from entering the competition.

### **10. Limited Quartet Field:**

The first contest will be open to the first twenty-five (25) quartets who register. Before a quartet registration is submitted, all four men must be Members-In-Good-Standing of The Society. A system will be set up (in advance of the contest announcement), to receive contest registrations electronically. In the event two or more registrations are received at the same time, the maximum number of quartets approved can be increased by the Grand Poobah. Five additional quartets who register will enjoy status as "Stand-By Quartets." In the event of a scratch by a registered quartet, a Stand-By Quartet will be invited to take its place, in order of contest registration.

### **11. Registration Form:**

The Worldwide Barbershop Quartet Contest Entry Form must include the names, membership numbers and voice-parts of the four singers, as well as the official song title(s), copyright owner(s), composer(s), lyricist(s), and copyright date(s) of the song(s) the quartet plans to sing in each round of competition. The form also awards ownership of the quartet's contest performance rights to the Society, for the purposes of audio and visual recording sales, including hard copies and on-line digital recordings.

### **12. Permissions:**

The Society will procure ASCAP, BMI and/or such other licenses necessary, to cover the songs'

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(protected works') performance-rights. Permission to arrange and to make copies of sheet music is the responsibility of each competing quartet, who will hold the Society harmless in the event the quartet should violate any copyright-laws.

### **13. Number of Songs & Time Limits:**

In the Semi-final Round, each quartet will sing one song, to be held on Thursday of convention-week, at a time and place to be announced. In the Final Round, the top ten (10) quartets will perform two songs on Saturday of convention-week at a time and place to be announced. The eleventh-place quartet will serve as mic-testers for the final round. Stage time for a one-song round cannot exceed four and one-half (4.5) minutes, and stage-time for a two-song round cannot exceed nine (9) minutes.

**A quartet who exceeds the allowable stage time shall be disqualified.** The only exception to this rule shall be a unanimous declaration by the Grand Poohbah and the Chief of Staff that the audience's exceptional reaction to a quartet's performance caused the quartet to exceed the time limit.

### **14. Ranking System:**

Each quartet performance will be scored by the judges. The scores will be entered into the computer system which shall tabulate ranking, points and placement. The quartet will receive points commensurate with each individual Judge's ranking. **(See Attachment A - Ranking System).**

### **15. Late Arrival:**

Any quartet who does not enter the stage immediately after the MC calls the quartet name three (3) times may be moved to the end of the contest. The quartet will be razed without mercy by the Master of Ceremonies during their introduction.

### **16. Categories:**

There are no judging categories. Judges know which quartets they like better than others. Preferences may be based on any criteria, with the exceptions of race, religion, ethnicity, nationality, or sexual orientation.

### **17. Performance Rules:**

The Shepherds may disqualify for any violation related to spoken words and song selection inappropriate to the Barbershop style and performance. Disqualification must be unanimous among the three Shepherds. **(See Attachment B – Performance Rules)**

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#### **18. Disturbances:**

In the event a disturbance (caused by other than the competitors) creates a distraction in the opinion of the Grand Poobah, he will offer the quartet the option to perform again, without penalty, after the other competitors are finished. In that event, the quartet must accept the ranking of its subsequent performance.

#### **19. Eligibility of Champions:**

Any member of our Society's First-Place quartet is ineligible for subsequent competitions, unless his new quartet includes three men who have never finished first in a Worldwide Barbershop Quartet Contest sponsored by the Society.

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## ATTACHMENT A – RANKING SYSTEM SCORING

### OVERVIEW

#### Definitions:

- Score: The value given to a performance by a judge in the range of 1-100
- Rank: A highest to lowest sequencing of the judges' scores (also called preference)
- Points: A fixed quantity of values awarded based on judicial rankings

#### Benefits:

*A Ranking system has the benefit of providing Audience-Selected judges their "preference" based on their personal criteria of musical quality, fun, excitement, and enjoyment rather than prescribed scoring system of specifically evaluated musical and performance criteria. The Average person determines their level of enjoyment which is, in part, a reflection of the entire audience. The "points" awarded for preference, based on score, has a fixed value. Other favorable rankings from judges can accumulate, and the total points provide placement ranked on the judicial preferences of all judges.*

### SCORING

1. Judges will score each performance with a number from 1-100 (per performance; not per song).
2. Judicial preference is indicated by the following:
  - A. A higher score is more favorable
  - B. A lower score is less favorable

### RANKING

3. Ranking - In the Semi-Final round of competition, each judge's score, from highest to lowest by computerized sorting, produces 25 potential ranks for each quartet and calculates Total Rank Points, based on these fixed values (per judge):
  - A. 1st Rank receives 25 points; judge's highest score.
  - B. 2nd Rank receives 24 points; judge's 2nd highest score.
  - C. 3rd Rank receives 23 points; judge's 3rd highest score.
  - D. 4th Rank receives 22 points; judge's 4th highest score.
  - E. 5th Rank receives 21 points; judge's 5th highest score.
  - F. 6th Rank receives 20 points; judge's 6th highest score.
  - G. 7th Rank receives 19 points; judge's 7th highest score.
  - H. 8th Rank receives 18 points; judge's 8th highest score.
  - I. 9th Rank receives 17 points; judge's 9th highest score.
  - J. 10th Rank receives 16 points; judge's 10th highest score.
  - K. 11th Rank receives 15 points; judge's 11th highest score.
  - L. 12th Rank receives 14 Points; judge's 12th highest score.
  - M. 13th Rank receives 13 points; judge's 13th highest score.

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- N. 14th Rank receives 12 points; judge's 14th highest score.
- O. 15th Rank receives 11 points; judge's 15th highest score.
- P. 16th Rank receives 10 points; judge's 16th highest score.
- Q. 17th Rank receives 9 points; judge's 17th highest score.
- R. 18th Rank receives 8 points; judge's 18th highest score.
- S. 19th Rank receives 7 points; judge's 19th highest score.
- T. 20th Rank receives 6 points; judge's 20th highest score.
- U. 21st Rank receives 5 points; judge's 21st highest score.
- V. 22nd Rank receives 4 points; judge's 22nd highest score.
- W. 23rd Rank receives 3 points; judge's 23rd highest score.
- X. 24th Rank receives 2 points; judge's 24th highest score.
- Y. 25th Rank receives 1 point; judge's 25th highest score.

### **POINTS**

- 4. In the Semi-finals 25 Quartets shall be scored by each judge.
- 5. The judges' Top 11 scores will have the ranking points accumulated to produce Total Points.
- 6. With 15 judges, many quartets will receive high, mid, and lower ranks from 1, more, or even all of the judges.
  - A. A Quartet could receive the maximum of fifteen (15) 1<sup>st</sup> rankings totaling: 165 points
  - B. A Quartet could receive 3 different ranks, 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, totaling: 27 points
  - C. A Quartet could receive no ranks, totaling: 0 points
- 7. A Semi-Final Points Ranking Report is generated by a proprietary software program that fixes the rank based on the judicial scores and judicial preferences. It is reviewed and certified by the Grand Poobah.
- 8. It is possible (though highly unlikely) that the final computer rankings could produce a tie. In that event, the tie will stand and both groups shall be awarded the position with the position below left unawarded. The exception will be for First Place where there will be a judged one (1) song sing-off for the Gold Medal. The judges for the final round will serve as judges for the sing-off.
- 9. The Top 10 quartets with highest Point Totals are qualified for the Top 10 Finals
- 10. 11<sup>th</sup> place winner will be designated the Mic-Tester

### **SELECTION OF THE TOP 11**

- 11. Top 11 are selected from the Top 11 Point Totals based on judicial scoring ranks
- 12. Official Top 10 selection is approved by the Grand Poobah (GP) and provided to the MC for Announcement.
- 13. Order of Appearance for the Top 10 is by hat draw
- 14. 11<sup>th</sup> place is awarded the honor of Mic-Tester for the Top 10 Finals
  - A. Mic-Tester shall sing 1 song, first, before the Top 10 finals begin.



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### **QUARTET PLACEMENT**

The Computer Awards Ranking System software produces a **unique number of award points\*** for every performance based on the basic premise of "Judicial Preference". (\*see "tie" exceptions outlined in Paragraph 8 above)

Judicial preference, indicated only indirectly from judges' scores, creates these determinations, arriving at a final quartet placement.

- Ranking Preference
- Ranking Counts
- Highest Ranks
- Points Awarded
- Quartet Placement

### **MEDALISTS – Finals Round**

15. Top five (5) medals are chosen in similar fashion based on the ranking of point totals. Scores will not be cumulative from the previous round.

Ranking points resulting from the Semi-Final Round will be used only to select the top ten (10) quartets and the mic tester. Only the ranking points resulting from the Final Round will be used to rank the top ten quartets. In the Final round of competition, each judge's score, from highest to lowest by computerized sorting, produces 10 potential ranks for each quartet, and calculates Total Rank Points, based on these fixed values (per judge):

- A. 1st Rank receives 10 points; judge's highest score.
- B. 2nd Rank receives 9 points; judge's 2nd highest score.
- C. 3rd Rank receives 8 points; judge's 3rd highest score.
- D. 4th Rank receives 7 points; judge's 4th highest score.
- E. 5th Rank receives 6 points; judge's 5th highest score.
- F. 6th Rank receives 5 points; judge's 6th highest score.
- G. 7th Rank receives 4 points; judge's 7th highest score.
- H. 8th Rank receives 3 points; judge's 8th highest score.
- I. 9th Rank receives 2 points; judge's 9th highest score.
- J. 10th Rank receives 1 point; judge's 10th highest score.

The 1st Rank quartet is awarded the gold medals and the Terry Clark Memorial (traveling) Trophy. The 2nd Rank quartet is awarded the silver medals. The 3rd, 4th and 5th Rank quartets are awarded bronze medals. The 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th Rank quartets are awarded Finalist Pins."

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### **ATTACHMENT B – PERFORMANCE RULES**

#### **Contest Presentations / Talking**

Song introductions, voice-overs, acting / interacting, use of endearments, humor, and any other “Vaudevillian type – Family Oriented banter is allowed when appropriate and cohesive to the performance.

Inappropriate talking, distracting or not pertinent to the performance may result in disqualification (See procedure for disqualification).

#### **Musical Selections – Songs from any era meeting musical and lyrical standard**

##### **Patriotic – Allowed**

While the song may be acceptable it still must pass Stylistic aspects of Harmony, Melody, Rhythm, and Form.

**Exception:** National Anthems are not allowed.

#### **Gospel or Religious - Gospel Up-tunes, Spirituals, Hymns are allowed.**

Religious text predominately as glorification of “Deity” or “religious symbolism”, pertaining to “crucifixion” or “resurrection” may be disqualified.

While the song may be acceptable it still must pass Stylistic aspects of Harmony, Melody, Rhythm, and Form.

#### **Poor Taste – May result in disqualification**

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### ATTACHMENT C – GRAND POOBAH, SHEPHERDS, and TIMER(S)

1. Shepherds are responsible for determining suitability of and conformance to the “Barbershop” Style in the performance as defined by the Style Definition [*Attachment A*] and the Performance Rules [*Attachment B*]
2. PASS - No action required of the Shepherds
3. FAIL – All three (3) Shepherds must agree to apply a “FAIL” to the performance.
  - a. The COS Shepherd shall document on the “Disqualification (DQ) form” the violation(s) resulting from a FAIL determination.
  - b. A copy of this form is available to the competitor on request.
4. Grand Poobah (GP) – Oversees and Approves Contest Operations
  - a. GP shall not be a Shepherd
  - b. GP shall be responsible for all Computer Operations.
  - c. GP shall have oversight of the Judge Selection:
    - Drawing for Judges and/or appointment of celebrity judges
    - Judge Orientation
    - Distribution of Scoring Forms
    - Main point of contact for any questions regarding contest operations
  - d. The GP shall be responsible for validation of all Official Reports
5. Time-Keeping
  - a. The Timer shall be appointed by the GP and shall not be a Shepherd.
  - b. Timing is from Entrance to Exit
    - The Maximum time allowable without penalty shall be four and one-half (4.5) minutes for one (1) Song Semi-Final Session and nine (9) minutes for two (2) Song Finals Session.
    - **Noting that the purpose of a time limit is critical to the overall contest operations, the penalty for a quartet exceeding the maximum time allotted shall be severe; resulting in a disqualification**
    - Timing violations shall be noted and documented for official rankings by the Grand Poobah.
    - Disqualification for exceeding the time limit can be waived at the Grand Poobah’s discretion, only in the event the extra stage time is due to the inordinate amount duration of applause.