

Philosophy, Goals, Rules and Important Information

Please read this entire document thoroughly, as it contains important rules and information. These rules and information were adopted from the general rules of the Harmony Sweepstakes and they have been changed in all the places possible to make them more specific for the Chicago regional. If there are any questions, please contact Andrew Blendermann (847-749-4994), referred to hereafter as "The Producer". You can also reach us via e-mail, at sweeps@blenderful.com.



Purpose

The purpose of the Harmony Sweepstakes A Cappella Festival is to promote the appreciation and performance of vocal harmony. It achieves this purpose by showcasing groups in the exciting atmosphere of a competition and by attracting an audience that is largely "a cappella friendly" to provide singers with an exceptional performance experience.

Our essential purpose is twofold:

1. To put on a highly entertaining show.
2. To provide the performers with both a positive experience, and with the tools to help them progress in the performance of vocal music.

Philosophy

Although it is a competition, it should always be a friendly and supportive one where the common goal is to create a special evening of camaraderie and intimacy for singers and audience alike. The majority of the participants already have this attitude and do not have to be asked to cooperate. However, on occasion, we do see individuals who can carry the competitive angle to such an extreme that they actually become rude and derogatory, and even malicious. These people must be dealt with swiftly and sternly. This is not acceptable behavior and will not be tolerated.

Goals

The Harmony Sweepstakes A Cappella Festival is a widely recognized national showcase for vocal musicians, enabling its participants to achieve their goals through exposure to growing audiences. We seek to broaden the scope and appreciation of a cappella as an art form. We hope that the Harmony Sweepstakes will serve as a Mecca of sorts for all vocal harmony enthusiasts. Our aim is to keep our events friendly and supportive, emphasizing the spirit of "harmony through harmony." We want to offer growth experiences for singers in all stages of their careers through competitions, conferences and ever increasing groups of regional events.

Rules

General

We try to remain flexible, and if we find something that's not working, we'll look at changing it. If a question comes up and there is no written rule for it, the guideline we use is: "Is it in keeping with our philosophy and purpose, and is it fair to all groups?" When in doubt, ask!

Group Size

Competing groups must consist of at least **three** members and at most **eight** members. Larger groups may select combinations of performers to compete, but only eight members will be allowed to compete and if they win, only the competing members will be flown to the finals.

Entry Fees

An entry fee of \$10.00 per singer per group (that is \$40.00 for a quartet, \$30.00 for a trio, etc.). Fee is due at the time of registration.

Competing Again

If a group wins its regional competition but does not win the national finals, it must skip a year before competing in their regional again (they may host their regional following their winning year). If a group wins their regional and the

finals, they will not be eligible to compete again, but they may certainly host, if possible.

Time Limit

A strict ten minutes per group is allowed. Timing begins when a group starts to perform and ends when it finishes its last song. If your introduction is 3 minutes, that is part of your ten minute total. A group may use its ten minutes any way it likes (i.e. 3 songs, or one long medley, or 5 short songs, etc.). The audience will be instructed to keep applause between songs to a minimum. Groups stand to lose up to 50% of their overall scores by going over time. This keeps the show to a reasonable length and keeps the competition fair to all groups.

Song List

Groups should let the Producer know which songs they will be performing as far in advance as possible. A list needs to be made for the judges' reference, as well as the group scheduling, to avoid back to back song duplication. A group may change its song selection up until the show call (approximately 1 1/2 hours before show time) but the more advance preparation time we have, the better.

Instruments

"A cappella" means without musical accompaniment, so basically, no instruments are permitted. Some hand-held percussion enhancements may be allowed, such as tambourines, maracas or the occasional kazoo. The basic guideline here is that, if the instrument is an integral part of the number as opposed to an incidental enhancement, it would not be acceptable. Please discuss these options with your Regional Producer well in advance of the performance.

Music Style

Any style of music will be considered, but the event is geared toward performance and innovation. Also, it should be kept in mind that this is a family show, and though we don't want to be Disneyland clean, all lyrics and movement should be kept within the realm of good taste and PG acceptability.

Order Of Appearance

The order is determined by the Producer and announced to the groups when they arrive at the hall or club on the afternoon of the competition. We schedule the groups carefully, to avoid similar groups going back to back, and to put some space between groups performing the same song. Groups are welcome to indicate a preference for performance order, providing they understand that there is no guarantee that they will get it.

Hosts

A host will open the show with one or two tunes and MC the show. This is usually last year's Chicago Regional winner. The host group will also perform after all the other groups, while the judges are deliberating.

Judges

We usually have a panel of three to five judges from the music business, media and educational fields.

Judging Process

Groups are judged 50% on musicality and 50% on performance, with an emphasis on originality. Good performance does not necessarily mean flashy costumes and tricky choreography. It simply refers to the degree in which the audience was entertained. Judges are encouraged to jot down notes that will help to improve the groups performance and to give an overall score to assist in the final placement, as opposed to scoring every little thing a group does or does not do. Each group will receive a copy of the judges' comments for their group.

Comp Passes and Tickets

Each group is allowed one complimentary ticket only, for a guest. Please remember that the shows tend to sell out, and any family and friends should buy their tickets early! If you have friends or family that are interested in seeing the show and are willing to help out, check with the Producer to find out if volunteers are needed. If you want your comp ticket with a group of other tickets, we can try and arrange this by calling the box office and ordering your comp ticket with the others in your group. Please call the Producer if you have any questions.

Dressing Rooms / Watching The Show

Unfortunately, there is not enough room to give each group their own dressing room. There will be separate rooms available for men and women but everyone will have to share the rooms. If there are enough empty seats in the theater, groups will be allowed to sit in the balcony and watch the show. Last year we almost sold out and there were very few empty seats. We will do the best we can to let you see the show, but don't count on it. Obviously, common courtesy will be essential here, and if there is a crowd backstage, the group that is "on deck" should have priority over the others.

Warm Up Area

The way the theater is set up, there are few if any good areas for warming up while the show is in progress. There is a "green room" area, but it's far from soundproof. We will try and organize groups so that while Group A is performing, Group B is backstage, and Group C is in the green room.

Programs

These will be geared toward the performing groups, with as much space as possible for whatever biographical information you wish to have printed. Each group will be allotted at least a short paragraph which should include the name of the group, its members and a bit of history. Please get your information to the Producer as soon as possible, preferably in electronic format. You can send it to sweeps@blenderful.com.

Sound Checks

Groups will need to provide a mic plot to the Producer (how you want the mics set up for your first number, how many do you need, etc.). There will be some time to do sound checks before the house is opened, and groups will be allowed a few minutes each on stage. Groups will be given sound checks in the order in which they check in, first come first served. There will also be a rehearsal for the closing song. Once the sound levels are set, VERY LITTLE if any change will be made for each group's performance during the show.

Sound System

It is imperative and every effort will be made to insure that the sound system used in each competition is of top quality with an emphasis on plenty of good monitors. The sound person is to be instructed to keep the mixing to a minimum and once levels are set, allow the groups to do their own mixing at the mics.

Special Effects

These should be avoided. Groups will not be allowed to supply their own additional electronic or amplification equipment.

Best Original Song, Best Original Arrangement

The Harmony Sweepstakes competition presents two awards for "outstanding achievements": an award for the best original song, and an award for the best original arrangement. No charts are required. They will be judged solely on the songs as performed during the competition. Please indicate on the song list you submit if you want a particular song considered for the original song and/or original arrangement recognition. The only qualifications are:

Original Song: composed by a member of your group

Original Arrangement: composed by anyone, but using an arrangement by a member of your group

Closing Song

At the end of each competition, the groups are all brought back on stage for the awards. After all awards are given, the show will close with everyone (including the audience) singing together.

Finally

We know it is impossible to answer all of the questions that may come up, so please feel free to contact us with any questions:

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