Whatever Happened to Harmony Accuracy (adapted from a Pitch Pipe article written in 2007 by Joni Bescos)

Once upon a time..... (a story of the 50's and early 60's) – one judge – "Harmony and Tone Accuracy"

"Present day singers do not use their ears"

Present day part learning method (learning CD's) is not conducive to using one's ears

Present day singing skills have vastly improved, performance skills have vastly improved, but singers do not understand, nor do they think about "the land of chords"

Present day judging panels judge harmony accuracy. A challenge for all is to rediscover using our ears to listen and understand/sing our part in the CHORD, not our part line.

A. Basic to In-Tune Singing – notes and beyond

1. The singing tone begins with a "power" supply of air; sufficient air pressure is applied to support each phrase from beginning to end – this creates the feeling of forward motion and excitement
2. Managed breathing /supported breathing relates directly to solid phrase singing; a consistent, accurate and energized tone flow exists
3. The core muscles support the vocal instrument and the delivery of an accurate vocal line
4. A beautiful and tuned tone quality needs a constant and supported flow of air "power"
5. Musical accuracy depends on breath management/support
6. Exercise/dedicated practice is needed to develop the "power" supply of air
7. After addressing the "power" supply of air, address correct notes and words. Never stop checking your own performance for notes that have morphed into an incorrect note
8. Resonance is present in all voices, produced with a common vocal approach, and in all parts of the vocal range
9. Similar mental/vocal/physical energy exists in all singers

B. Tuning and Intonation of Barbershop chords – beyond Pythagorean Tuning

1. Do you know what <u>part of the chord</u> you are singing: root, 3^{rd}, 5^{th}, or 7^{th}?
2. A TRIAD is a three part chord. Two voices will double the root in a major triad, the 3^{rd} in a minor
3. Each part of a triad/chord is sung with lock and ring in mind.

a. Root in a triad – strong volume, middle of the pitch or slightly sharp
b. 5^{th} – Firm volume; higher than the pitch of the note (high 5)
c. 3^{rd} – Lighter volume: very high pitch

4. A FOUR PART chord is a 7^{th} chord. All four notes are sung, one by each voice part.
   a. Root in a 7^{th} – strong volume; middle of pitch or slightly higher
   b. 5^{th} – Firm volume; higher that pitch of the note
   c. 3^{rd} – Lighter volume; very high pitch
   d. 7^{th} – Almost as strong a volume as the root; slightly under pitch

C. Tonal Center – responsibility rests with all – sing to the key note/do

1. Leads: Main keepers of the key and tonal center; Basses: Sing all 5ths of every chord higher than you think you should; Baritones and Tenors: Sing all your roots and 5ths of every chord with more authority and fullness.
2. All parts – sing 2^{nd} note of the scale higher than you think you should; know where the octaves are and what part you octave with; know when you sing a major 2^{nd} with another part and sing it with more authority and fullness – both parts must be equal.
3. Ascending lines must climb accurately and high – check frequently with a pitch pipe to make sure you are staying in key.
4. Descending lines must be sung on the stingy side. Listen carefully. Check with a pitch pipe.
5. Lock all octaves – a must. Make special note of the root octaves.
6. Sing sharp accidentals high. Also, a natural accidental that raises a note.
7. Mark your music!!! Mark repeated notes, too, as they must lift and float
8. Part line intervals are accurate and tuned instantly – no "futzing" after you get there
9. Intervals and resulting chords lock encourage ring

D. Synchronization – affects all four categories

1. Synchronized delivery enhances harmonic accuracy, and encourages chord lock and ring
2. Issues in the music:
   a. Large/awkward intervals
   b. Range problems
   c. Phrase length – long phrases may create breath debt causing delivery issues
   d. Tempo disagreement
   e. Note delivery insecurities
3. Issues with lyrics:
   a. Word emphasis/articulation disagreement
   b. Articulation disagreement
   c. Length of consonants – including omissions
   d. Lyric insecurities

e. Length of the breath between phrases differs
f. Vowels are sung differently – too long, too short, slow to target, overlooked diphthongs, lacking in resonance or just plain old, erroneous vowel choices

4. Issues with performance:
   a. Choreography hampers delivery of music/lyrics
   b. Visual overshadows the music/lyrics – too much body movement
   c. Mental focus on choreography, not on the musical artistry
   d. Visual unity does not exist; no sense of the total plan
   e. Stage fright diminishes vocal control and visual/vocal congruity
5. Issues with singing skills
   a. Physical/vocal tension or music is too difficult for the performer
   b. Breathing difficulties get in the way
   c. Over/undersinging diminishes vocal flexibility
   d. Listening skills not adequately developed in all; lack of teamwork
   e. The "plan" is interpreted differently
   f. Lack of air creates a choppy delivery
   g. Singers differ in mental energy and focus

Blend and Balance

1. Singers have a strong foundation of vocal skills (breathing, accurate interval singing, vocal freedom, matched concept and performance of resonance, similar pronunciation/vowel match, and appropriate register mix exists)
2. No individual voices stick out of the unit – no oversinging; individual's personal sound is perhaps altered for the sound of the ensemble and the quality of the music sung
3. Each section has matched resonance, matched vowel match, matched interpretation
4. Singers understand and practice ensemble singing skills
   a. Create a singing space which lets other voices in – shared space
   b. Listen to other voices and embrace them creating a well-resonated, blended ensemble
   c. Aware of need to make personal adjustments to join the ensemble space – personal choices give it up for ensemble sound – conflicts/disagreements have no place here
   d. Ensemble understands how to create the desired sound. Each chorus/quartet has their own unique sound and need to make the most of it
5. Rehearsals include unison singing, duetting, trioing, as well as four-part singing
6. Rehearsals emphasize the uniqueness of the ensemble - use of kinesthetics, role playing, and imagery.