



# CHOOSING THE RIGHT MUSIC

**Applicable for Rising Star and YWIH Video Contest**  
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Choosing music for competition is sometimes challenging, but finding the song and arrangement that best fits your vocal capabilities and knowledge of what makes for strong barbershop competition material will be key to your success in competition.

1. Whatever you choose must be sung with solid vocal production (support, space, freedom) and accurate notes, intervals and chords sung in synchronized unity. Choose songs that fit your vocal ranges and your abilities to sing with consistent support and accuracy under performance stress.
2. Competition music should contain:
  - A memorable, sing-able melody
  - Strong barbershop chords - triads, barbershop 7ths, barbershop 9ths (especially at important spots in the song) points of resolution, phrase ends, climax
  - A foundational bass line consisting primarily of the roots and fifths of chords
  - The baritone below the lead most of the time
  - Lyrics you can handle with precision
  - Manageable jumps in part lines
  - Progressions to key changes that make sense

Additional information regarding up-tunes:

- The tempo is the message – it needs to be consistent with few changes. These changes should make musical sense
- Rhythmic interest and variation
- A clearly identifiable character or story with whom/which you can identify
- A good, recognizable dynamic plan
- Places to breathe
- An exciting intro and tags

Additional information regarding ballads:

- Strong chords predominant throughout
- Memorable “hook” or thought – often the title of the song
- A story or sentiment to which you can relate
- Clear, recognizable structure of song’s story (beginning, middle, end) with phrases that build to a climactic point
- Climactic point, a destination, where the musical line and the lyrical story reach the same high point at the same time
- Places to breathe

Final comments:

- Singing two up-tunes or two ballads in contest is fine; singing one of both types also shows your expertise in two styles.
- Many modern songs do not fit the requirements of strong barbershop contest arranging
- Sing what you sing best!
- Choosing music is complex; seek help. Coaches, arrangers, and music judges are happy to consult with you. Just ask.