

# TALKING RULE UPDATE

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In our ongoing initiative to add reality and relevance to our contest performances, three years ago we came to the realization that a "two-song - no-talk" performance had a plastic and unrealistic feel about it. We were seeing forced or badly done mime to help set up songs and performance packages. The rule as it existed didn't even allow for such things as "All Aboard" or "a.. One, Two, Three" ... etc. To address this situation the "talking rule" was approved three years ago and our performers have been, as they always do, testing the boundaries of the rule. The rule reads currently:

## **ARTICLE XII: NON-SINGING COMMENT/DIALOGUE**

**Non-singing dialogue is generally not a part of a contest performance. However, brief comments made with supporting visual communications may be permitted more clearly to establish mood/theme, to assist the transition of packaged songs, or to add to the effect of closure of mood/theme. Spoken words deemed to be excessive or detrimental to the performance shall be penalized by the Presentation judge(s) up to and including forfeiture.**

Obviously the word "brief" is one of the major components of the rule that we judge. "Brief" is not judged necessarily by quantity of words or duration of time, i.e., ... anything over X number of words or Y number of seconds is a penalty. However, our judgment needs to consider the purpose and intent of the rule and as judges we are chartered with the responsibility of creating a "sense of boundary" by the way we adjudicate performances. In creating a more "real" environment in which to present our barbershop songs, the category determined that limiting the interpretation of the rule to "All Aboard" or "One, Two, Three" was not in the best interest of the competitors and was too narrow an interpretation regarding a competitor's ability to create talking, dialogue, or voice-overs that would enhance the performance, generate mood, provide for smooth transitions, etc. However, it was also determined that some of our competitors had strayed too far from the basic tenet that our contests are still, and always will be, primarily presentations of music.

At the recent category school there was much discussion of how we are to adjudicate the "talking rule" and how we are to interpret "brief". The intent of this rule is to address dialogue or spoken words before, in between or after the 2 song performance. In making this determination we chose to expand the definition of "brief" to state that any talking, dialogue, or voice-overs ... or visual "takes" for that matter, needed to be **"on-point, concise, and effective."**

Additionally, we determined that it would be appropriate to penalize and list as penalties on our sheets any violations of this rule. The penalty is, as all penalties seem to be, "up to and including forfeiture" and shall be determined by the judge when weighing the severity of the infraction. This penalty is to be applied "on top of / in addition to" of any score lowering of the performance that resulted from the rule violation / act creating interference or causing a "detriment" to the overall impact of the performance.

Our contests are primarily music oriented and any talking, voice-overs, transition material, etc., should be considered as "spice" added to the musical

performance and should enhance the overall impact / entertainment value of that musical performance, not be an end unto themselves.

IMPORTANT NOTE TO OUR COMPETITORS: **THIS IS A CHANGE** from how we have operated - our consciousness has been raised, and we will apply the rule more stringently starting this fall. As a rule of thumb, if you have more than a few words or more than 2 lines of dialogue, you will have to be very sure that the level of effectiveness and pertinence and value to the overall performance is very high. If you can imagine the same effect being had with less words or dialogue, this implies that shorter would be more effective and therefore more prudent.

We communicate this to all of you prior to the fall season, so as not to shock or "ambush" competitors who have already prepared packages and performed them at International or other levels of competitions. As stated above - **THE RULE DID NOT CHANGE, BUT WE WILL ADMINISTER IT MORE STRINGENTLY.**

If you have questions about gray areas, please feel free to contact a Presentation judge - our answer will be that we would have to adjudicate in real time to give an accurate answer, but as laid out above, we think this is a clear set of guidelines to work within.

We are always looking to allow and encourage our performances to be more real, more natural and more effective, But we also need to maintain the sense of this as a musical competition, within the barbershop style.

Thank You.

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