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Gary Fisher's Contest Summary

The ChooChoo Chorus had a great time in Knoxville this past weekend for our annual Dixie District Fall competition. Even though we didn't do as well as we would have hoped, I think every man there had a good time singing and learning. After the competition, each chorus met with evaluators of the three separate categories that are judged...Music (Artistry), Singing (Theme), and Presentation (Entertainment). Here is what we learned from three separate judges:

MUSIC - Showboat had an uncertain start and there was too much disconnection throughout the song. In other words it was "not smooth" and there was some choppy singing. We need to work on filling out those rough spots by finishing our phrases. Some individual singers were heard, leading to a downgrade in our score. He heard someone using vibratto, which is a "no-no" in singing barbershop. Crusin' Down the River had some better embellishments and he felt that some of the downbeats had too much punch on them. We have to work on our unity while still providing contrast on the individual phrases.

THEME - Showboat seemed more together during the opening than during the chorus. We must follow through on the consonants and using the proper mouth shapes in forming our vowels. (Keep an eye on that chart on the right hand wall, guys, for examples on how to do this.) We have to watch our tripthongs, allowing us to use proper mouth shapes to sing the words. The judge used the example of putting your fingers just in front of the earlobes and opening your mouth. You should feel your jaw drop and your fingers move into the hole left by simply opening your mouth. Cruisin' proved to us that we must learn the proper breathing techniques in singing barbershop. He used the example of a bellows where the throat is the neck of the bellows and when you push air through it, it comes out in a quick whoosh. DON'T do that. When you breathe, control the air that comes out and it will make a more smooth sound. When you are singing a word that has a strong vowel sound such as the ooo in the word crusin', get to that vowel sound and follow through on it. You must keep your throat open to move air through it.

PRESENTATION - On Showboat he congratulated us on being totally involved facially throughout the song, HOWEVER, there was not a whole lot of change in those facial expressions. Every phrase needs to express the feeling written into that line. This way, the facial expressions will change and keep your audience emotionally involved. The judge felt that the bridge in the song was out of sync and suggested we take out the bell chords (bng, bng, bng). Crusin' had too much sway while we were going from side to side; we need to make that sway more subtle and smooth it out. On this song he said there was no depth of facial change. We must work on changing every phrase with the emotion written into that line. *Gary Fisher*