



Big Chicken Chorus

Audition Process

The audition process for the Big Chicken Chorus is in place primarily to be certain that candidates who present themselves can be taught the skills necessary to make a positive contribution to the BCC's performances. It is the concept of a *positive contribution to the performance* that is the driving force behind the BCC's philosophy of including everyone possible. All candidates for membership in the chapter, whether new to barbershopping, or potential transferees from other chapters, are required to be auditioned.

There is also an ongoing concern to be certain that members who have been inactive get exposure to the current level of performance required of the chorus. To that end, all returning inactive members, who have been inactive for a year or more, must stand for audition to be considered on active status. Only active members may sing performances with the chorus.

Minimum Criteria

In order to include singers and potential singers into the chorus, and to exclude those who cannot and/or cannot be taught to sing, certain minimum criteria have been established. In order to be considered for membership in the Big Chicken Chorus a candidate must:

1. Demonstrate the ability to match pitch. The candidate must be able to duplicate a pitch sung, or played on a pitchpipe or keyboard for him. Some candidates will match the pitch an octave away. Once this error is pointed out, the candidate must adjust to the pitch in the correct octave. Care must be taken to select notes for duplication that are well within the candidate's singing range.
2. Demonstrate a sense of tonal center. We typically use "My country 'tis of thee, Sweet land of liberty, Of thee I sing!" The line is sung for the candidate in a very expressive manner in a single breath, with physical involvement to demonstrate performance requirements. The candidate is then asked to repeat exactly what he has heard. The first and last pitch of this line are the same. Non-singers will have difficulty in producing a recognizable melody line.
3. Demonstrate some sense of rhythm. This test does not need to be terribly difficult. However, if the candidate cannot show some metric and rhythmic understanding, he

will have difficulty mastering the common rhythmic elements of the style (*i.e.*, syncopation, *et al.*) If the exercise in paragraph 2 above is done very well, this criterion may be considered to be satisfied.

4. Demonstrate the ability to display emotions facially. At a minimum, a bright smile which displays the upper teeth, and a convincing look of surprise will show trainability.

The above are the *minimum* criteria for membership. During the process of testing for these skills, an assessment is made of the candidates mastery of posture, breathing technique (including breath control and breath management), phonation, diction, vocal range and timbre, confidence in the vocal instrument, tuning ability, and ability to harmonize.

Pre-Audition Assessment

Every effort is made to identify non-singers and suggest that the formal Audition might be a challenge to them before the process is initiated. All members of the music team are made aware of guests who might become candidates for membership. If a singing problem is detected, members of the music team will listen to the person and efforts will be made to head off a problem before a formal Audition takes place. This is a first line of defense, which operates informally, but fairly effectively.

The Audition Session – Phase I

A candidate must attend three of four consecutive meetings before he is scheduled for an audition. The Audition Session generally lasts 20 to 30 minutes. The assessment process is generally finished within about 5 minutes and the candidate is informed that he has passed the audition. The balance of the time is taken in providing the candidate with training in the fundamentals of vocal production. In the typical session, breathing takes the majority of time.

This session may be the only time the member gets one-on-one instruction in the way that we want him to sing. All are given homework to do to improve their singing, and an invitation for further instruction if they want it.

The Audition Session – Phase II

As part of the briefing by the Membership VP prior to the Audition, the candidate is asked to prepare for Audition one of the current repertoire songs of the Big Chicken Chorus. The current recommendation is that the Candidate prepare *Georgia On My Mind*, but he should feel comfortable selecting any of the BCC repertoire with which he is confident. (Selecting one of the BarberPolecat Program songs is NOT acceptable for the purposes of this Audition.)

The candidate will be asked to sing his part along with the Auditioning VLQ (as chosen by the Chorus Director). This means that he will be able to sing with someone else

singing his part with him. He may hold the music to sing the Audition. The Phase II audition may occur on the same night as the Phase I Audition, or on a subsequent rehearsal night at the pleasure of the Candidate.

When the Candidate sings with the Audition VLQ, the Chorus Director and the Section Leaders will listen for adequate preparation, accuracy of pitch, synchronization, appropriate volume levels, and general mastery of the piece of music presented. As a member of the Big Chicken Chorus, the Candidate will be expected to learn his music (words and notes) in private rehearsal away from the chorus rehearsal hall.