

Handout #1

Characteristics of the Individual Voice Parts

TENOR

- The average range for tenors is E above middle C to G in the second octave above middle C.
- Lightness of quality, an almost bell-like clarity and sufficient maturity of sound to complement the lower voices, particularly the lead.
- The voice must be capable of singing high notes with consistent quality and control.
- The tenor part is sung with a lighter vocal adjustment and with much less vibrato than that used to sing soprano.

LEAD

- Because the lead voice generally carries the melody, the part must be sung with musical authority.
- Ideally the voice has clarity, brilliance, depth. Maturity, and a sense of style that sets their voice apart from the other three.
- The part should be sung with a sufficient amount of color to add interest to the tone, but never so much that it distorts the locked chord characteristic of the barbershop style.
- The lead sings in the approximate same range as an alto, G below middle C to D in the second octave above middle C.
- Much of their vocal authority comes from utilizing the lower chest register and they must be able to execute a smooth transition between the lower and the upper registers so that quality remains consistent between the extreme ranges.
- The voice should also be capable of a wide range of expressive dynamics.

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BARITONE

- This voice provides the important fourth tone of the chord and must be flexible in vocal quality.
- Sings in approximately the same range as the lead, G below middle C to B above middle C but with less authority.
- In most arrangements they sing in the lower portion of their range more frequently than the upper.
- Consistency of quality between upper and lower registers is always desirable, when their position in the chord is below the lead, they sing with a depth of tone that fills the gap between lead and bass; when their position in the chord is above the lead their quality becomes more like the tenor.
- Vocal flexibility and appropriate handling of the intricacies of the baritone part play an important role in achieving the lock and ring characteristic of the barbershop sound.

BASS

- Must be able to sing with vocal authority for they provide the foundation for the barbershop sound.
- The barbershop arranger assists them by providing a strong chord tone, usually the root or the fifth.
- The bass sings a range comparable to that used by a contralto or second alto, C below middle C to F above middle C.
- The bass voice must have a mellow, melodic quality, with sufficient weight to add the desirable bass timbre to the overall sound.
- They must be capable of sufficient volume and projection on the lowest tones so that her sound is not obscured by the higher voice parts.
- Their vocal quality must complement that of the lead voice.