

Music Division

OFFICIAL A.C.E. STATEMENT OF ACCEPTABLE MUSIC FOR STUDENT CONVENTION COMPETITION

A.C.E. desires to have the highest quality music competition possible. Such competition is intended to demonstrate a student's instrumental and vocal music skills, while encouraging a student to apply his musical talents to Christian values. A.C.E. encourages all students to aspire to reach their highest potential; maximizing the gifts God has given them.

Please note: A.C.E. fully supports the authority of the local church and does not ask churches or Christian schools to adopt these music guidelines as their ministry standard. Furthermore, such standards are not given to imply greater spirituality. It is our privilege to minister to a very diverse group from various denominations, each having a particular distinctive in musical standards. In an effort to show deference to those attending, A.C.E. has set specific standards for our competition. We respectfully ask that all sponsors and students maintain good Christian character and graciousness at all times, especially in adhering to and respecting the standards set forth for convention.

Competition arrangements are to be Christian or patriotic rather than secular. Classical instrumental music is allowed as long as it is non-offensive to Christian values or good taste.

Music sung or played with a jumpy, sensual, or worldly style is not acceptable. Contemporary Christian, jazz, gospel rock, or gospel country music are not acceptable. In our music guidelines, "contemporary" refers to a style of music, not the date on which a piece was written. Music must be appropriate for a typical conservative fundamental church service (musical arrangement, text, and presentation). In Vocal and Instrumental Music categories, contestants are not permitted to use the musical score. Narration and/or dramatic dialogue are not allowed.

An analysis of music, text, and performance techniques are essential in determining whether a song/performance is suitable. Music is appropriate only when the lyrics, musical style, and presentation are consistent with Biblical principles.

A.C.E. requests that ALL VOCAL ENTRIES be presented in the ENGLISH LANGUAGE. We apologize that we are not able to grant any exceptions.

APPEARANCE

Gentlemen: Dress shirts, ties, and jackets should be worn for all music performances with the following exceptions:

1. School uniforms
2. A tuxedo with either a vest or cummerbund without a jacket

Ladies: Nice church outfits should be worn for all music performances with the following exceptions:

1. School uniforms
2. Formal attire that meets the modesty requirements for convention

When selecting a musical piece, please consider the following:

ELEMENTS OF MUSIC

Melody - A good melody has a definite high place near its conclusion so that there is a sense of climax and resolution.

Harmony - Harmony should support the melody and play a subservient role.

Rhythm - The rhythm of a song has much to do with the overall integrity of the piece. A subtle rhythm or sense of pulsation with a balance of regular accent patterns and occasional syncopation for variety and interest is acceptable. The rhythm must not overtake the melody, harmony, message, or overall flow of a song. Avoid musical compositions with excessive repetition of a melodic phrase, harmonic pattern, rhythmic pattern, or any combination of these three. Music with continuous syncopation, dominant beat, highly accented backbeat, and/or break beat is not acceptable.

Worldly Identification - The message carried by a musical style does not change by simply adding religious or Scriptural lyrics.

A musical composition should have a definite beginning, build to a climax point, and communicate a definite sense of conclusion. The musical sound must not detract from the message of the words.

TEXT

Accuracy - Good lyrics must be Biblically accurate in both definition and associative meaning.

The key to a truthful presentation of text is balance and careful examination under the Holy Spirit's direction that the words are "pure."

Implications - Any implied ideas must be examined to make sure that nothing unacceptable is implied and that the intent of Scriptural teaching and principle is satisfied. A wise performer will always check the implied communication of a song's message to verify its total accuracy.

Crossover Songs - The lyrics must CLEARLY state at some point Whom the song is about. Avoid songs that have no direct reference to the Lord and others that are written to reference only "He" or "Him" whenever God's name is mentioned - "crossover songs." (Such songs are acceptable in both the secular and Christian communities, as the song could easily be sung in the content of a secular love song.) The attributes of God should be maintained in the highest regard any time He is addressed.

Message - Good lyrics say something of value. Not every song needs to be as profound as our richest hymns, but good lyrics never include trite phrases just for the sake of rhyme. Such phrases are designed for entertainment rather than edification. Good lyrics fulfill a definite purpose. If the text is sung as a hymn, it should express some Godly attribute that helps us worship the Lord. If the text is sung as a gospel song, it should be a message that encourages us. The message should also be simple enough that almost anyone can easily understand it, relate to it, and apply it.

PERFORMANCE TECHNIQUES

Presentation - Give careful attention that the musical presentation does not reflect secular styles (breathy, sensual, and so on). "Crooning," "sliding," "sagging," or other such terms are vocal crutches and should be avoided. Use caution that the presentation is not done in an "entertainment" attitude or style.

Movement - No choreography, planned or unnecessary bodily movement (including hand clapping, foot stomping, deaf signing, finger snapping, etc.), will be permitted. Occasional movement of the hands/arms for dramatic effect (i.e., placing hand to heart, raising hand toward Heaven) is permitted but should be used sparingly. Competitors should stand erect; bend knees slightly to relax rigid leg muscles, with arms and shoulders relaxed and thumbs resting at the side-seam of clothing.

Questions to evaluate musical selections/performances:

1. Does the music glorify God, not the performer or composer?
2. Does the music reflect Biblical doctrine and Godly living?
3. Is the rhythm a subservient feature that does not dominate the music?
4. Does the background music play a subservient role to the lyrics and not distract the listener from the message?
5. Are the lyrics Biblically accurate?
6. Is the performance a straightforward presentation, focusing on vocal technique that employs proper breathing (avoiding breathy tones, sagging and sliding pitches, and/or choreographed movement)?
7. Is the music easily identifiable as a Christ-honoring piece as opposed to a "new sound" as in secular or entertainment styles?
8. Does the music invoke positive responses?
9. Does the selection draw the listener closer to God and uplift his/her spirit?
10. Does the music praise the Lord, focus on God, or deliver a clear spiritual message?

When evaluating musical selections, an appropriate piece will always yield a "YES" response to all of the questions given.

NOTE: Any student performing a selection that violates the music standards presented in these guidelines (in musical content, text, or presentation) will not place in competition. Please give careful attention to the musical selection and ensure that it meets the standards set forth in these guidelines.

GENERAL PERFORMANCE GUIDELINES

Contestants may sing a cappella; be accompanied by an adult or student (of convention age) playing a piano; or use an accompaniment tape/CD (piano only). Note: Contestants are to make sure the recording is of the best possible sound quality. Poise and presentation are part of the judging criteria; thus contestants are not to provide their own accompaniment.

A student may not use the same song two years consecutively in the same event. In addition, the same selection is not to be used by multiple groups from the same school in the same year.

VERY IMPORTANT - See Platform Competition Division for poise and appearance guidelines.

All vocal and instrumental music is to be memorized.

There should be a preselected spokesperson for each group who will introduce the group, the school represented, and the title of the song to be performed. (This is not counted against performance time.)

Personal amplification equipment for competition is not allowed.

Musical competition time limit is:

- Junior category – 2-3 minutes;
- Senior category – 4-5 minutes.

For example, if senior competition piece exceeds the 5-minute time limit, the contestant will receive a .5-point deduction for any portion of thirty second increments. (For example, a piece timed at 5:12 would receive a half-point deduction from the total score. A piece at 5:42 would receive a deduction of a full point from the total score.)

Checklist for Music:

When selecting music for vocal music competition, careful attention should be given to level of difficulty. Songs with too much unison or lack of distinct, individual parts do not usually place well. All members (duet, trio, quartet, etc.) or sections (ensemble) should demonstrate an ability to “carry” their individual parts with proper pitch, tone, and blend.

In ALL music categories, male and female contestants are judged together.