

Responses to Chorus Size Analysis Paper

The paper was distributed to clubs and members on April 26. Submissions were received until 3 June.

Clubs and individuals were asked to consider two models a) the current size-based chorus contest model, and b) a grade-based chorus contest model.

Responses were received from twenty-nine individuals and six clubs.

In response to the statistics presented in the Chorus Size Analysis Paper, three member statisticians received copies of the raw data to run their own analyses. The Council worked with these respondents to refine the original analysis. Following discussion, it was concluded that early on, 1991 – 2001, there was a reasonable correlation between size and scores, however since 2003 there has been a decreasing correlation.

Support For Current Awards

Three individual respondents supported the current sized-based system. One respondent expressed his view, "*there would be little sense of achievement in winning a C grade contest*". Another argued that there were already an adequate number of awards to recognise choruses without diminishing the "bragging rights of the overall chorus contest. The third respondent suggested that there are other rewards that individual choruses gain by participation in the competition; namely choruses set goals and targets typically around scores from which they gain motivation. It was also suggested that conventions are far more than about winning awards but offer the benefit of the camaraderie of mixing with other competitors from different backgrounds and states at the national event.

Three of the six clubs that responded, argued for the continuation of the current size-based approach. One of the clubs that was opposed reiterated the argument that winning the overall chorus contest was inherently superior to winning a B or C grade contest, and should be recognised by maintaining the existing system. Another club claimed that a change to a grade-based model would be contrary to Object 2.b of the constitution: *To promote and encourage vocal harmony and good fellowship among its members . . .*". The chorus extended its argument, claiming it would be contrary to constitutional power 3.c *To initiate, promote and participate in charitable projects and to establish and maintain music scholarships, gift funds and charitable foundations.* The final Club argued that perhaps a score times number award should be introduced. It also argued that the fundamental drivers for BHA chorus competitions should be an increase in membership and an increase in performance skill.

Support for a Grade Based Contest

Overall, the strong mood of individual respondents was in favour of a grade-based contest. Twenty-six individual members supported this system, along with three club responses.

The most colourful comments among those who supported the concept of a grade-based system included:

"Hallelujah"

"I love it. It makes far more sense than the arbitrary chorus sizes."

"It will reinvigorate clubs"

"It will make contests more inclusive"

Such comments generally reflected the mood.

The most colourful critics of the existing size based contest claimed: It has been *"ridiculous"*, *"useless"*.

Implementation of a Grade Based System

A number of members went to the practical issues regarding implementation of a grade-based system.

There was a call to ensure that if a grade-based contest was adopted that the KISS principle should apply: *"I hope it doesn't get too fussy"*.

The main issues:

1. Adding 5% per year for choruses who missed contest the preceding year. This proposal has little support from respondents. It was pointed out the graph of chorus scores vs. year indicates an average increase of a bit less than 1 percentage point per contest gap. Further, the graph indicates that individual chorus score changes with time are levelling out, so the current rate of change would be even less. In fact, you could get 5 percentage points next year for free by missing a contest this year! (*It should be noted that the 5% increase was meant to be penalty to those choruses who skipped a contest, not a bonus*).

This provides two options:

- a. No adjustment due to any expected change in quality be made, or
 - b. The popular solution was for these choruses to attend regional contests in the year they are competing for an assessment.
2. Disagreement with the term grade-based contest. Members pointed out that this would be confusing and in conflict with the existing determination of A, B, C grade choruses (81+, 61-80, 60<). Broadly, the proposed solution was to adopt the notion of Divisions (1st, 2nd, 3rd).

Other issues raised:

1. Possibility of yo-yoing between levels from year to year. The suggested solution was perhaps some sort of averaging over the years.

2. Would contests be conducted in separate grades, or would they be conducted with choruses of all grades interspersed?

Finally, it should be noted that two of Council's most severe critics in the past both commented on how satisfying it was to have the opportunity to provide input into issues facing the Association. Another respondent commented it was disappointing that other members responses were unavailable through a BHA discussion page.

Conclusion

While there was support for a grade-based system, there was also significant support for maintaining the status quo. The BHA National Council will continue to consider this issue and will take no action this year to change the current system.