

He Awa Whiria - 2025 BHNZ National Convention

NEWSLETTER 2 - The Headwaters

June 8 2025



Kia ora e te whānau barbershop,

It's hard to believe—we're just **three months out** from the 2025 BHNZ National Convention in beautiful Ōtautahi Christchurch! The excitement is building, and I know that across Aotearoa, quartets and choruses are deep in rehearsal mode, refining their sets and preparing to take the stage with heart and harmony.

This year, our theme **He Awa Whiria – A Braided River** speaks to the way we come together: individual voices, unique paths, merging into something stronger, wider, and more vibrant. Like the mighty rivers of Te Waipounamu, we each bring our own current—our stories, our sounds, our shared passion for barbershop—and converge into a powerful musical flow.

Behind the scenes, our convention team is hard at work, ensuring this year's gathering is **memorable, inclusive, and full of joy**. From logistics to laughter, accessibility to artistry, the mahi continues—because we want every moment, on and off the stage, to reflect the spirit of our barbershop community.

In this newsletter, you'll find:

- ✓ **Accessibility information**—because everyone should feel welcome and supported
- ✓ **An outline of contest judging criteria**—a helpful guide as you polish your performances
- ✓ **Bios of our judging panel**—the knowledgeable and passionate people who will help shape our competition journey
- ✓ **Key convention dates**— to keep your planning on track
- ✓ **Our Communication Channels**—a reminder

Accessibility Information

James Hay Theatre (Performance Venue):

- 4 Accessible Bathrooms.
- Accessible Bathrooms are also Gender Neutral.
- 3 Wheelchair Spaces + Companion Seating in the Stalls - No Wheelchair Access to the Circle.
- Wheelchairs Available for Guests on Request.
- Wheelchair Access to Stage from Warm-up Room.
- Friendly staff who can help you find a quiet space if you're overstimulated.

Still have questions? Use this form to ask: <https://www.venuesotautahi.co.nz/contact-us>

Aldersgate (rehearsal space):

- Everything on the ground floor.
- Accessible & Gender Neutral toilets.
- The garden is a quiet space in case of overstimulation.

Still have questions? Email: venue@aldersgate.org.nz

How Judging Works

He Awa Whiria will be attended by 8 Judges - 2 from each category. Together, these judges ensure that the competition flows smoothly, and that all participants have an equal opportunity to deliver a performance they are **proud** of!

The judging categories present at He Awa Whiria will be:

Contest Administration:

- Administrative

Contest Scoring

- Musicality
- Performance
- Singing

The Administrative Judges are responsible for *managing* every aspect of the contest. Meanwhile, the performance of each song is *scored* by three categories: Musicality, Performance and Singing.

Each judge scores each song out of 100 for specifically their category, and the average of these scores is taken as the score for the song. Although the three categories are unique, the same qualities which positively/negatively impact one category will often similarly affect the other two categories. This means that you will typically see similar scores across all 3 categories.

On the score sheet, each category for each song will have a number out of 200, which is the sum of both judges' scores for that category. For example, the contestant below scored 181 in the Singing Category for song 1, which is an average of 90.5%. The Avg(%) shown on the right side of the scoresheet (89.6) is the average of every judge's scores over both songs. This overall average is the score used to rank the choruses.

Contestant	No	Song	Scores				
			Singing	Music	Perf	Total	Avg(%)
Contestant -	1	Song 1	181	176	180	1075	89.6
		Song 2	178	179	181		

The Judging Categories

The following category descriptions are sourced from the BHS (Barbershop Harmony Society)'s web page on [Contest Judging](#). BHNZ's judging system is designed to closely reflect that of BHS.

Musicality

Musicality is defined as the song and arrangement, as performed. The Musicality Category judges the suitability of the material to the barbershop style and the performer's musicianship in bringing the song and arrangement to life.

The Musicality judge is responsible for adjudicating the musical elements in the performance, judging the extent to which the musical performance displays the hallmarks of the barbershop style and the degree to which the musical performance demonstrates an artistic sensitivity to the music's primary theme(s). The sensitive handling of musical elements, such as melody, harmony, and embellishments, demonstrates musicality in a performance. A strong musical performance is one in which everything provided by the composer and arranger is skillfully delivered and effectively integrated in support of the musical theme.

Performance

The **Performance** judges evaluate how effectively a performer brings the song to life. They judge the entertainment value of the performance; the art of the performance.

One significant goal of any art form is communication. A barbershop performance refers to how the artist communicates his/her message and vision via the transformation of a song into an entertaining experience for an audience. The performance of a song is the artist's gift to the audience; whose experiences, memories, and imagination transform that gift into an emotional experience. The performers' goal is to create a high level of entertainment through the performance. The means to that end are as varied as the personality, abilities and creative skills of the performers.

Singing

In the **Singing** category we judge artistic singing in the barbershop style – listening holistically for ringing in-tune voices that use a free, beautiful and rich vocal quality, which is wonderfully unified and vocally expressive.

Judges in this category evaluate the degree to which the performer achieves artistic singing in the barbershop style: the production of vibrant, rich, resonant, technically accurate, and highly skilled sound, created both by the individual singer's use of good vocal techniques, and by the ensemble processes of tuning, balancing, unity of sound and precision. They listen for a sense of precise intonation, a feeling of fullness or expansion of sound, a perception of a high degree of vocal skill, a high level of unity and consistency throughout the performance, and a freedom from apparent effort that allows the full communication of the lyric and song.

Meet The Judges!

Musicality

[Alex Morris - Sydney](#)

An accomplished composer, arranger and choral director Alex Morris is in demand around the world as a vocal coach with regular appearance on faculty at Harmony University and is also a certified as a Musicality Judge with the Barbershop Harmony Society. Alex is the former Music Director of Vocal Evolution, leading them to three Barbershop Harmony Australia gold medals. In 2022 Alex was inducted into the Barbershop Harmony Australia Hall of Fame. He has a passion for education and loves nothing more than to share the joy of music.



[Ian Mullholland - Perth](#)

Ian has been involved in music from an early age. He can play most brass instruments, piano and guitar. In addition he has mastered music theory and musicianship at a high level. A barbershopper since 1987, Ian has done it all. He has directed choruses, written over fifty song arrangements (and published the Great Australian Barbershop Songbook), sung in two BHA champion quartets and the BHA champion chorus, representing BHA at International level seven times. He helped form the Australasian Guild of Barbershop Judges, and is a qualified Music Judge. He has served on the boards of BHA and Western Region, and is a Life Member of BHA.



Performance

[Richard Reeve - Brisbane](#)

With a background in musical theatre and lifelong love of harmony singing, Richard discovered barbershop in 2003 thanks to Sydney Harmony. Since then he has sung with numerous choruses, including Vocal Evolution for a decade, leading them as President to their inaugural national gold medal in Hobart in 2009. Richard has won national quartet gold medals with Alliance and TLA and has represented Australia at BHS International numerous times in both quartet and chorus. He was Music Director for the Brisbane River City Clippers for 2 years, served on the BHA National Council from 2011 to 2015, has been a BHA Performance category judge since 2009 and is a member of the BHA Education Faculty.



Mike Kelly - Seattle USA

Hailing from Seattle, USA, Mike Kelly has been a certified Performance Category judge with the Barbershop Harmony Society since 2013. He returns to New Zealand after previously judging the 2018 BHNZ Convention in Tauranga, bringing his experience and enthusiasm back to the Southern Hemisphere. Mike sings bass in his family quartet, The Kelly Brothers (formerly Momma's Boys), who have been a crowd favorite since forming in 2007. They are now a regular sight in the semi-finals of BHS quartet contests, and you can enjoy their performances on the BHS Youtube Channel!



Singing

Jay Butterfield - PA USA

Jay Butterfield is a lifelong barbershopper, having joined the Vocal Majority as a teen. He is a certified Singing Judge with the Barbershop Harmony Society and currently serves on the C&J Board of Review for Singing. Jay has directed and medaled with top choruses including Parkside Harmony, the Alexandria Harmonizers, and the Vocal Majority. He has also competed on the international quartet stage, earning a top-20 finish. Holding advanced degrees in Music and Educational Leadership, Jay is one of few BHS "Master Director"s, an award-winning educator, and in-demand coach and voice teacher. He lives with his wife Anne in Charleston, South Carolina.



Rob Sequeira - Sydney

Rob is a multi-instrumentalist with roots in tuned percussion, drums, strings and woodwinds. He's played drums, piano and sang lead vocals in musicals, big-bands and jazz quintets around the traps in Sydney, Los Angeles and San Francisco. Rob teaches drums, piano, guitar and a cappella singing. He's coached international level a cappella quartets and choruses in the U.S., Canada, Asia and Australia. Rob co-led California based Voices in Harmony to an International Barbershop Harmony Society 3rd place bronze medal in 2008. Rob has sung with international level quartets and choruses and is the founder and music director of Vox Canvas, current Barbershop Harmony Australia's 2019 3rd place bronze medalists.



Administrative

Keep an eye out for our next issue, where we will introduce our two administrative judges, **Angie Schonegger** and **Aaron Hewitt**!

Key Convention Dates

 **Detailed Convention Programme information is available here**

(Please note: this will change from time to time – please check it regularly)

[He Awa Whiria 2025 Programme \(PDF\)](#)

Here's a handy summary to help you stay on track as we approach convention weekend:

Event Dates

- **Convention:** Friday 19 – Sunday 21 September 2025
- **Saturday Night Concert:** Saturday 20 September 2025
(featuring Three and a Half Men)
- **Closing Lunch:** Sunday 21 September 2025 *(noon)*

Registration Deadlines

- **General Registration:** Opens 17 May 2025 – Closes 17 August 2025
- **Early Bird Discount:** Available 17 May – 21 July 2025
- **"My Chorus Will Pay" Option:** Available 17 May – 21 July 2025
- **Friends & Family Package:** Opens 17 May – Closes 17 August 2025

Contest Entry

- **Opens:** 17 June 2025
- **Deadline:** 21 July 2025

Merchandise Deadline

- **Merch Orders Close:** 17 August 2025

Ticket Sales

- **Concert & Competition Tickets:** Available after 17 August 2025

Rehearsal Space Booking

- **Spaces Available:** Friday 19 September (from 9:00am) – Saturday 20 September (until 11:30am)
- **Booking System:** Opens once the Contest Draw is released

A Reminder About Our Communication Channels

We'll be sharing updates through the following platforms:

-  [Convention Website](#)
-  [Facebook Event Page](#)
-  [Instagram](#)

 Regular email newsletters will keep BHNZ members informed. You'll find back issues archived on the website.

 Our **FAQ page** will be regularly updated to answer your questions.

Farewell

Every note sung, every rehearsal held, every detail finalised is part of this larger river we're building together. Let's keep that energy flowing as we move towards a convention full of harmony, connection, and celebration.

We can't wait to welcome you to He Awa Whiria this September.

Ngā mihi nui,

Lynn Humphrey (he/him)

Chair, 2025 BHNZ Convention