



TOPANGA BANJO•FIDDLE CONTEST JUDGING CRITERIA 2008

www.topangabanjofiddle.org

The methodologies used by the contest have developed over the years and will continue to do so as new suggestions are received and considered. Beginning with an article on Banjo and Fiddle Judging by Allan Hjerpe, subsequent refinements have been contributed by Bill Jackson, JoEllen Lepidus, Howard Yearwood, Dorian Keyser and others.

Judging is based upon a 100-point scale using the following guidelines:

INSTRUMENT CATEGORIES

Scoring

<i>INSTRUMENTS</i>	Banjo	Fiddle	Guitar	Mandolin	Other Instruments
Pitch	10	25	10	10	15
Rhythm	25	25	25	25	25
Musicianship	25	10	25	25	25
Technique	30	30	30	30	25
Stage Presence	10	10	10	10	10

CONSIDERATIONS

Pitch: Instrument tuning and proper bridge placement

Rhythm: Measure-to-measure as well as the entire number (speed-up / slow-down). It can be very difficult for a judge to determine if tempo changes are intentional.

Musicianship: Based upon the overall performance. Was it tasteful and dynamic? Was it entertaining?

Technique: Technical competence including fingering, bowing, picking, etc.

Stage Presence: An average score of five is enhanced or diminished depending upon presentation.

Other Considerations:

Timing: Numbers MUST complete within three minutes.

Back-up: While no extra credit is given for the presence of a superior back-up, points may be deducted for a poor performance.

Original Material: Since the judges may have no way of knowing the origin of music or style, only the performance may be considered.

Difficulty: Judges will consider the difficulty of the piece as performed when deducting for mistakes.

BAND

A band consists of at least three members including at least one banjo or fiddle. Each band shall play two numbers, one of which shall be an instrumental. The other shall have two or more members singing in harmony with instrumental back-up, and may include breaks and runs. Entries deviating from this requirement shall have no score awarded. Both numbers should complete within five minutes.

Scoring

INSTRUMENTAL NUMBER		SINGING NUMBER	
Pitch	10	Pitch	15
Pace / Rhythm	25	Pace / Harmonies	25
Technique / Musicianship	30	Instrumental Support	25
Instruments	25	Blend / Harmonies	25
Stage Presence	10	Stage Presence	10

SINGING

A traditional song (pre 1940) of any style may be performed with or without accompaniment. Songs should be primarily in English so as to be understood by the judges and should complete within three minutes.

Scoring

Pitch	15
Enunciation / Sound Quality	25
Rhythm	25
Style / Material	25
Stage Presence	10

CONSIDERATIONS

Enunciation: Can the words be understood?
Pitch: In tune with instruments? Absolute pitch if unaccompanied. Instruments in tune?
Rhythm / Pace: In time with back-up? Pace suitable for chosen song?
Style: Is the style consistent with the song and its traditions?

BACK-UP INSTRUMENTS

	<i>GUITAR</i>		<i>OTHER</i>	<i>BACKUP</i>
Pace / Rhythm	25		Pitch	15
Chords / Chord Changes	25		Rhythm	25
Fits into the group	25		Musicianship	25
Runs	15		Technique/ Fits into group	25
Breaks / Runs	n/a		Stage Presence	10
Pitch	10			n/a

CONSIDERATIONS

The back-up instrument should provide a steady rhythm, pace and complementary runs. Attempts to 'dazzle' detract from the performance of the contestant.

SUGGESTIONS

Pick material that is within your capabilities. Even though difficulty is considered, the point system penalizes mistakes and unevenness far more than it rewards dazzling technique.

Keep an even tempo. Start on the slow side and try not to speed up. Rehearse, with your back-up if applicable, before coming to the stage.

Observe how others utilize the microphones. Crowding them causes distortion, but you must be heard to be judged.

If you wish to improve your performance for next year, send a request to the registrar or the judge coordinator to have your scores sent to you. It is valuable to know in which areas you were strong or need improvement, and to see how you fared compared to the winners in your category. Requests may be called in to the Hotline or requested via email at info@topangabanjofiddle.org.