

UK A Cappella Society

Artistic Merit Policy

Introduction

The UK A Cappella Society (UKACS) strives to produce material that is of both artistic and educational merit, based on its objectives as laid out in the Society's constitution. However, artistic merit is subjective and with few formal certifications specific to the art of a cappella, it will not always be possible to measure content against a set of specific criteria in order to judge its value.

General Statement

Therefore, the society will take into account the following criteria when making judgements on the artistic merit of any content produced or promoted by the Society. At all times, the Charity Commission's guidance on artistic merit will be taken as the platform upon which to make any decisions, but the below guidelines will serve as an extra guideline specific to the art of a cappella in the context of creation or promotion by the UK A Cappella Society.

The presentation or promotion of art by UKACS will primarily be for furthering the understanding and appreciation of the art, or for educational purposes, or both. Any promotion of particular individual artists by the Society will be incidental to the primary purposes of the charity and will be considered by the trustees.

In considering artistic merit, UKACS recognises that all decisions must be in line with fulfilling the requirements of or charitable purposes, which includes meeting the sufficient public access criteria. In order to be judged to be of benefit to the public, all content must demonstrate artistic merit, provide sufficient public access, individual private benefit must be incidental, the content must not be used for non-charitable purposes, the use made of the art will educate the minds of the public or at least be capable of doing so.

Artistic Merit Criteria

When judging artistic merit, the trustees will take into account both the content itself and the artist or content creator who created the content. Any specific criterion outlined below will not be used alone to judge artistic merit, but any combination of these considerations can be used to define artistic merit. The content can amuse and entertain, but when deciding on whether promotion or presentation of the content is charitable, the below criteria are important.

Consideration of **the art itself** in regards to artistic merit may include (but is not limited to) any of the following:

- Skill: Does the content show a high level of skill? Has this skill been recognised or awarded in some way? Can that skill be measured against other content and seen to be superior? Does the content display a new skill, show a new way of using a known skill or show innovation in any other way regarding the skills displayed? Does the content display a person who has a high level of skill? Does the content introduce a new person who has a high level of skill or who is introducing a new skill?
- Beauty: Does the content please the listener? Does the content evoke emotions in the listener that they find worthwhile?
- Intellectual inspiration: Is the content forward-thinking? Does the content remark upon the art form? Does the content provide commentary on the art form? Does the content provoke discussion about the art form? Does the content invite people to question pre-conceived notions about the art form or any other topic?
- Provokes discussion and discourse: Does the content have a message or meaning? Does the content aim to start conversations about important issues? Does the content encourage discussion? Does the content invite people to engage with it? Does the content take a stance on an important issue? Does the content give under-served voices a space?
- Inherent meaning: Does the content say something? How successfully does it get its message across? Does the content tell a story or convey an emotion? Does the content make reference to or build upon other artworks or art forms? Does the content provide a new perspective? Does the content make a statement? Is the content a metaphor or symbol? Does the content deal with intangible human issues?
- Uniqueness: Does the content explore new topics? Does the content display new skills? Is the content innovative? Does the content show people how to be innovative? Is the content breaking new ground within the art form? Is the content moving the art form forward? Does the content provide inspiration on how to move the art form forward? Does the content stand out in its field?
- Fulfilled Intent: If the content is making a statement, trying to evoke an emotion, trying to use or display a new skill, or any of the criteria listed above, does it do so successfully?

Consideration of **the artist/content creator** in regards to the ability to create content that is of artistic merit may include (but is not limited to) any of the following:

- Their level of experience
- Any accolades they, or any group they have been a part of, may have received
- Any relevant musical certifications or experience outside of a cappella that are transferable in relevance.

(NB: There are no formal grades or certifications specific to the art of a cappella, and so relevant experience, transferable experience, and transferable grades or certifications will be considered.)

Examples of the above are listed below (though please note, this is not an exhaustive list):

- The number of years spent taking part in a cappella singing
- The variety of experience in a cappella singing
- The notoriety/success/achievement of the groups they have previously been a part of
- Whether they or groups they have been a part of have received any awards from the Contemporary A Cappella Society (CASA), the International Championship of Collegiate A Cappella (ICCA), or the Contemporary A Cappella Recording Awards (CARA).
- Any experience in working for internationally regarded a cappella companies such as Liquid Fifth or The Vocal Company, or with notable individuals within the a cappella community such as Bill Hare or Deke Sharon.
- They could be a part of a professional a cappella group, such as The Swingles, Accent, NoVI, or VERSA.
- They could have relevant transferable musical experience, awards, or certifications, such as musical grades from the ABRSM or Trinity Exam Boards, experience in classical choirs or orchestras, or awards within the barbershop community (BABS, LABBS, BHS)
- They could have experience in leading diversity campaigns, PR and press, fundraising, or have experience in the charitable sector (these apply to specific trustee positions regarding these areas)

Process for a Trustee or Independent Expert to be able to judge artistic merit on behalf of the Society:

- They will consider the questions listed above and judge the content accordingly.
- They may seek the advice, expert opinion or votes of other trustees on the matter.
- They may seek the advice of independent experts on the matter.
- They may seek previous examples of the artists' work to establish the artist's level of skill.
- They may seek comparative examples of work against which to judge the content, or to benchmark the content within the relevant field.
- They may seek testimonials or references regarding the content or the content creator to ascertain a track record of artistic merit.