

GETTING STARTED WITH PMEA MUSIC PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

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Thinking about participating in *PMEA Music Performance Assessment*? Not sure where to begin? Do you need to know where to look for the answers to your questions? If you answered, “Yes, yes and yes”, keep reading!

Known as ‘Adjudication’ from 1986 through 2019, PMEA has renamed the program *Music Performance Assessment* to clearly convey its fundamental purpose. The events themselves continue to be most commonly referred to as *MPA’s*, also short for ‘Music Performance Assessment’, that had replaced the term ‘festivals’ several years ago. The term, ‘Music Performance Assessment’, strongly places these events in an educationally valid context more easily understood and, hopefully, more supported by administrators, school boards, other teachers, directors, parents and the students themselves. Accompanying terminology changes have included ‘assessment forms’ replacing ‘score sheets’, and ‘adjudicators’ replacing ‘judges’. PMEA’s assessment forms were dramatically revised in 2009 to better reflect current assessment processes as applied to our academic content area, music performance.

A longstanding, fundamental goal of PMEA MPA is to provide quality opportunities for a soloist or a small, medium or large ensemble to receive a rating reflecting performance level---a snapshot evaluation of how effectively the music curriculum has been implemented. While the rating derived from defined scoring ranges applied to specific criteria is invaluable, the feedback from the adjudicators’ audio recordings in real time and written comments on the assessment forms is equally important to maximize learning and growth for students, the director, and the program as a whole. This is indeed ‘summative assessment’ with supporting rationale and suggestions to improve for our academic content area. Directors can benefit from this evaluation process as applied to music performance and then better speak the language of testing and curricular accountability along with better articulating program strengths and areas of concern when sharing the results and strategies for growth with their music faculty colleagues and administrators.

PMEA Music Performance Assessment, by focusing on comprehensive, relevant, educational input through an assessment process that combines both ratings and substantive feedback, is a program striving for awareness, relevance, and participation by directors throughout Pennsylvania. The goal remains to establish PMEA MPA as an annual performance priority for directors within the hectic schedules and many options available throughout each school year.

How do you ‘Get Started’? If you have not already done so, access the PMEA home page, click on *Conferences and Events* on the main menu bar, and then click on *Music Performance Assessments* at the top of the sub-menu to access the MPA ‘home page’.

On that page, the first link is to the *MPA Calendar*, where you can view the current list of scheduled MPA’s and identify date and site options for your ensemble. A link to the online Registration Form is embedded for each MPA. Don’t hesitate to contact the host with questions. After registering, be sure to communicate with the

host concerning warm-up and performance times, especially if prevailing factors limit your flexibility within available time slots that day.

The next set of links are to lists of *Ensembles that Participated in a Music Performance Assessment (MPA)* in recent years. The lists are sorted by PMEA District and includes each ensemble, school, district and director that participated along with indicating which ensembles earned a rating of I: Superior/Outstanding in the Traditional context. I strongly urge you to contact friends among the participating directors who you would be comfortable talking to about their MPA experiences.

Within the 'From the Music Performance Assessment Chair' section, I recommend that you read "Professional Growth Through PMEA MPA", updated from my article's original publication in the *PMEA News* that highlights how YOU as a director would benefit from participating in an MPA.

The last part of the home page directs the reader to essential information about each role---Host, Adjudicator and Director---and about each context area, including those that are active----Band & Orchestra and Choral--- and those that are inactive at this time. Each link provides access to formal guides to participating and hosting along with related forms. Note that the *Selective Music Lists* information included at this time is woefully dated but will be replaced by new, updated Band, Orchestra and Choral lists for the 2021 season.

In particular, reading the *Guide to Participating in a Band/Orchestra or Choral MPA* would provide a valuable introduction for directors new to PMEA MPA. Each guide has a checklist as its last page that serves as an outline and an ongoing reference. Please feel free to contact me with questions concerning any aspect of participation.

One component of PMEA MPA was created specifically for directors new to performance assessment. Since 2016, directors can choose for their ensembles to participate in either the 'Traditional' or a new 'Festival' performance context. The Traditional context remains standard practice throughout the country for typical performance assessment. Unique in scope, PMEA's Festival context offers directors a menu of options to customize an assessment experience that best serves their students that year. Both are described at length in the participation guides.

While originally intended for directors new to MPA, the Festival context has often been chosen by directors who value performance assessment but become more comfortable in subsequent years with the available options to align the assessment process to their educational goals for the given ensemble that year. Others choose the Traditional context for their ensemble and then encourage colleagues in their district new to performance assessment to also bring their ensembles to participate in the Festival context. Providing all directors this performance context option each year for each ensemble has been unexpectedly beneficial.

If you are a choral director, note that standard medium-sized choral ensembles, such as madrigals, concert chorales, women's choirs and men's choirs may participate within the existing Choral MPA event along with the typical larger SATB choirs. Choral directors often choose to bring two or more of their ensembles to an MPA. However, MPA's are not yet available for jazz choirs or show choirs.

An MPA structure does exist for Jazz and Percussion ensembles that was last used several years ago that could be updated quickly for an interested host. In addition, a structure last active in 2011 exists for Solo/Ensemble MPA's that provides assessments for wind, percussion, strings and vocal soloists along with duets, trios, quartets and larger small ensembles. While these areas are inactive at this time, we hope to reinstate them in the future.

Guides to Hosting and related documents for PMEA MPA areas are also posted. New hosts are welcome throughout the state in every context. We do recommend that directors participate in at least one PMEA MPA before hosting their own unless they have considerable experience participating in performance assessments outside of PMEA.

How will your students' performances be assessed? Download and review the *Assessment Forms* for the given MPA context as revised in 2009, the first updates to 'the sheets' since Adjudication began in PA in 1986 using forms issued by MENC in 1958. These revised forms better reflect current assessment processes and improve ease of use by adjudicators that maximize their educational value for directors and students alike. Details concerning performance assessment and the assessment forms are included in the participation guides.

Not sure what repertoire to perform? Directors with ensembles participating in the Traditional context can start by consulting the existing PMEA *Selective Music List* for their ensemble as posted on the website. Much flexibility exists concerning what repertoire can be approved for participation given that the PMEA lists have not been updated for almost 30 years. To perform a piece or pieces not on 'the list', as it is not likely that any recently-published piece is included, simply complete and submit the *Request Addition to Selective Music List Form* no later than 60 days prior to the MPA. As described in the participation guides, directors with ensembles participating in the Festival context can simply choose any 2 pieces from what they already plan to perform at their next concert.

I hope this helps you 'Get Started' in PMEA Music Performance Assessment! Please contact me at tsnyder@westasd.org or (724) 816-0420 with questions. We continue to welcome feedback from all involved within our ongoing goals to continue to improve 'the system', promote participation, and best serve directors, their ensembles and, above all, their students through quality assessment opportunities through PMEA MPA!