

HOW HOSTING A PMEA MPA CAN BENEFIT YOU AND YOUR PROGRAM

By Tom Snyder, MPA Coordinator
Updated June 2020

For ensemble directors, developing and implementing a performance schedule throughout the school year is a process fraught with conflicts and unexpected obstacles accompanied by a seemingly endless barrage of paperwork. Even with annual performances, new issues often emerge that take an inordinate amount of time to resolve. Directors wanting to participate in PMEA MPA's must find a date and site that works within their own schedules that don't conflict with other activities involving their students, such as other ensembles or musical theatre, PMEA festivals, ensemble trips, athletics, and testing windows along with spring break and holidays.

Rather than dealing with those challenges, directors may choose to host an MPA instead. Hosting includes numerous benefits, particularly the element of control that is often lacking when travelling elsewhere to participate in an MPA. Three of those areas of control are described below.

First, the Host chooses the MPA date. The ability to select the best date within the district calendar and auditorium availability that works for all district ensembles that want to participate, often involving different buildings, is huge. The MPA's performance slots can end up mostly filled by ensembles from the host's own district. Hosts are urged to actively communicate with friends and colleagues in neighboring schools and others throughout the region at the beginning of the planning process concerning possible interest, including time frames that could work for the most interested directors. Controlling the choice of date best enables participation by other ensembles within the district and by enough other schools to meet the minimum of six ensembles. Hopefully, enough ensembles participate to fill the entire schedule! Often, choosing a viable date can determine if the host's ensemble can even participate at all that year if there are conflicts with the other scheduled MPA dates or sites.

Second, the Host also controls the performance schedule, an important aspect when working within the restrictions facing many of the interested ensembles that limit when students are available within the school day. Given the ongoing obsession with standardized testing, it's increasingly difficult for students to be released from classes for any reason as the testing dates approach. Ensembles can complete an MPA in about 3 class periods, which helps directors from within the district and nearby schools to secure permission to participate when less than an entire day is involved. Hosts encounter special scheduling requests of all kinds and benefit from the opportunity to accommodate their district's ensembles as much as possible while also working closely to best meet the needs of ensembles from other schools as well.

Third, the Host is responsible for contracting the adjudicators, offering the opportunity to control who is asked to provide a high-quality assessment experience for the participating students, including his own.

Three financial considerations benefit Hosts. First, hosting saves travel costs to another MPA site, which could be a welcome consideration amidst increasing budget constraints. This cost savings along with limiting time out of class often enables more ensembles throughout the host's district to participate. Many districts won't permit or fund multiple ensembles to travel to another MPA site, often resulting in only the high school ensembles participating.

Second, PMEA funds a \$185 honorarium paid to the Host's student activity account or parent booster group. Hosts often use that honorarium to defray one ensemble registration fee.

Third, Hosts incur no costs. The registration fees from participating ensembles fund the normal expenses involved, including adjudicator stipends, adjudicator hospitality (meals and beverages), recordings and the award plaques and certificates. Parent booster groups often provide adjudicator meals and beverages, certainly welcome within the tight overall state MPA budget.

Similar benefits apply to Solo/Small Ensemble MPA's, especially the control over each instrument's assessment schedule that can often better accommodate the Host's students.

Comprehensive hosting guides for each area are posted within the MPA area of the PMEA website as a resource for prospective, first-time and returning Hosts. Please contact me with questions about any aspect of hosting. As with most such endeavors, experiencing the entire process for the first time is the most challenging given all the unknowns involved. Hosting in subsequent years quickly becomes routine.

I ask directors throughout Pennsylvania to consider hosting a PMEA MPA. Given the extent of available resources, technology and support from the PMEA office, it is easier now more than ever for a first-time host to smoothly implement a successful MPA. I remain indebted to ALL past Hosts for their dedicated efforts in support of the benefits that PMEA Music Performance Assessment provides for participating students and directors. I hope that each enjoys the intrinsic satisfaction derived from knowing that their 'above and beyond' efforts have made a difference for ALL involved!