



Consider These Options for Participating in or Hosting an MPA This Year!

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Following a limited re-start in 2022 of the Music Performance Assessment (MPA) program with seven hosts and forty-five ensembles permitted to participate by their districts, PMEA is looking forward to 'reboot' with even more hosts and participating ensembles than in the past, building upon the increasing awareness, interest and participation evident prior to the pandemic.

Directors are urged to consider participating in an MPA in 2023 to provide their students with a music performance assessment experience through PMEA, one designed to support the musical growth of all involved.

Many directors are familiar with the *Traditional* ensemble adjudication experience at music festivals while on educational field trips, along with the MPAs sponsored by PMEA. The *Traditional* performance context through PMEA, which is the common structure throughout the country, is detailed within the Guide to Participating in a PMEA Music Performance Assessment available within the MPA area of the PMEA website.

However, directors may not be aware a *Festival* option is available as a performance context, a unique offering not available in other states. Since 2016, the *Festival* option has provided Pennsylvania's ensemble directors with a menu of options available to customize the performance assessment experience to best meet the needs of their students that year. 22% of the ensembles participating in MPAs since 2016 -almost one quarter!- have chosen the *Festival* context.

The *Festival* performance context offers the following options compared to *Traditional*:

- Ensembles may perform any pieces of any grade level. Most directors choose pieces from among those already being prepared for concerts. Pieces are not required to be selected from any list nor are their grade levels submitted.

- For instrumental, participating in the Sight Reading component is optional. If Sight Reading is selected, the director chooses the grade level of the music to be used. If Sight Reading is not selected, the director has the additional option to choose a clinic with the adjudicator assigned to sight reading. A Sight Reading option is planned for the future for choral ensembles in either *Traditional* or *Festival* performance context.

- Directors may choose to receive scores and ratings or the audio and written comments only.

Ensembles choosing the *Festival* performance context receive an official PMEA certificate recognizing participation. The certificate would include the rating. The certificate would include the rating, if requested, and choice of terminology (Superior, Excellent..... or Outstanding, Advanced....etc.). In addition, the registration fee for ensembles participating in the *Festival* performance context is slightly lower than those participating in the *Traditional* context, differing by the cost of the plaque awarded to ensembles participating in *Traditional*.

Exciting new aspects in participation have unexpectedly emerged since the *Festival* context was launched:

- More middle school ensembles, including 6th grade ensembles, are participating, given the flexibility provided by the options.

- Schools are sending their high school ensembles in *Traditional* along with their middle school ensembles in *Festival*, all traveling together to a given MPA as a combined educational assessment/field trip experience, building program unity in both assessment and potentially bonding through a lunch stop on the way home!

PMEA also welcomes new hosts! While directors with experience participating in a PMEA MPA are preferred as new hosts, those who have participated in ensemble adjudication

sponsored by festivals are also permitted. New hosts can be assured that they will be actively supported by PMEA throughout the entire process, from scheduling a date through submitting the post-event reports.

New hosting formats have also emerged in recent years, with hosts inquiring and receiving permission to implement different, exciting variations on the typical event structure, including:

- An *All Festival MPA*, with each ensemble performing in the *Festival* context (with no sight-reading if an instrumental MPA), and with adjudicators rotating to provide each ensemble with an on-stage clinic after the prepared pieces are performed.
- An *Internal MPA* with only ensembles from a single school district. Given that six ensembles are necessary from a budgetary standpoint for an MPA to be financially viable, hosts are realizing that having six is possible with their own middle and high school ensembles, especially with the *Festival* option available. Choral hosts are also including their middle and high school chamber ensembles to total six or more. Districts with band and orchestra programs can often easily total six or more of their own ensembles. This 'self-contained' setting offers flexibility in scheduling and other areas. Programs that start formal performance assessment with middle school ensembles and continue through high school have enjoyed valuable consistency in applying the resulting feedback, informing pedagogy, interpreting the evaluations, and establishing expectations in performance.
- A *Closed MPA* with directors from three or four schools each providing a middle and a high school ensemble among themselves for a six to eight ensemble MPA, working closely together to manage schedules and coordinate planning.

Potential hosts are encouraged to consider other formats that haven't been tried yet but remain possible to propose among friends and colleagues to potentially launch a new MPA site, including:

- An *All Middle School MPA* led by a MS host director who recruits other MS ensembles to participate. The ensembles could participate in either *Traditional* or *Festival* or a combination of both.
- An *All String Orchestra MPA* with only string orchestras at the high school, middle school or combination of both levels

participating. The host would have the advantage of selecting adjudicators specifically with string and orchestra backgrounds to provide even more focused feedback.

It's been inspiring to see these innovative formats evolve in addition to the traditional MPA event structure of all instrumental or all choral ensembles ranging from 6th grade to high school. If interested in having both instrumental and choral ensembles participate in a MPA, keep in mind the logistics involved with stage setup and, equally important, the need to secure adjudicators with sufficient backgrounds in both to serve effectively.

The PMEA Music Performance Assessment program exists for the benefit of all students in all ensembles regardless of size of ensemble or size of school. Every student in Pennsylvania deserves the opportunity to benefit from the performance assessment process. And, all directors deserve that their students, programs and themselves benefit from these focused professional development opportunities provided by their professional association. Directors can customize the MPA experience to meet the needs of their programs by choosing the *Festival* performance context.

Whether ensembles participate in *Traditional* or *Festival*, scores and ratings are not announced, published or posted. MPAs are 'adjudication' events, not competitions, with the focus on the performance assessment process and educational experience for each individual participating ensemble and director.

It would be terrific to have a record number of ensembles and hosts participate next season with MPA sites available within each PMEA District! Please don't hesitate to contact me with questions about any aspect of participating in or hosting an MPA in 2023! ▀