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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 the ‘Adjudication’ program from 1986 through 2019, PMEA renamed it *Music Performance Assessment* to clearly convey its fundamental purpose. The events themselves continue to be most commonly referred to as *MPAs*, also short for ‘Music Performance Assessments, 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 more supported, hopefully, by administrators, school boards, other teachers, directors, parents, and the students themselves. Related terminology changes made for the same reason include ‘assessment forms’ replacing ‘score sheets’, and ‘adjudicators’ replacing ‘judges’.

A longstanding, fundamental goal of the MPA program is to provide quality educational opportunities for a soloist or a small, medium, or large ensemble to receive a rating reflecting the performance level of prepared pieces (and sight reading, where applicable) as 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’ for our academic content area with supporting rationale recognizing strengths and making suggestions for improvement. Directors can benefit from this evaluation process as applied to music performance and then better speak the language of testing and curricular accountability when sharing results and strategies for growth with their music faculty colleagues and administrators.

By focusing on comprehensive, meaningful input through an educational assessment process that combines both ratings and substantive feedback, PMEA Music Performance Assessment is a program striving for increased awareness, relevance, and participation by directors



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throughout Pennsylvania. The goal remains to establish PMEA MPA as an annual performance priority for directors within the 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 MPAs 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. Don't hesitate to contact friends among the participating directors to ask about their MPA experiences.

Within the 'From the Music Performance Assessment Coordinator' section, enjoy the resources curated to that inform perspectives and address topics related to MPA participation.

The last part of the home page directs the reader to essential information for each role--- Director, Host, and Adjudicator---and about each context area. 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 dated but will be replaced, at long last, later this year by new, updated Band, Orchestra and Choral lists.

Reading the *Guide to Participating in a Band/Orchestra or Choral MPA* provides a valuable introduction for directors new to the MPA program. Please feel free to contact me with questions concerning any aspect of participation.

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



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While originally intended for directors new to MPA, some directors continue to choose the Festival option in subsequent years. These directors value performance assessment but are more comfortable with utilizing the available options within the Festival context to align the assessment process to their educational goals for their ensembles. Providing all directors this performance context option each year has been unexpectedly popular and 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 structure along with the typically larger SATB choirs. Choral directors often choose to bring two of their ensembles to an MPA, sometimes more than two! However, MPA's are not yet available for jazz choirs or show choirs.

Note that an MPA structure does exist for Jazz and Percussion ensembles, last used several years ago, that could be updated quickly for an interested host. In addition, the structure is being currently updated for Solo/Small Ensemble MPA's to provide performance assessments for wind, percussion, strings, and vocal soloists along with duets, trios, quartets, and larger small ensembles. We plan to reinstate Solo/Small Ensemble MPA's in 2023----stay tuned!

Guides to Hosting and all forms used 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. These revised forms better reflect current assessment processes as applied to our content area, music performance, and improve ease of use by adjudicators to maximize their educational value for directors and students alike. Details concerning 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 as the Prepared Pieces. To perform a piece or pieces not on 'the list', 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.



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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 with quality assessment opportunities through PMEA MPA!