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HOW HOSTING A PMEA MPA CAN BENEFIT YOU AND YOUR PROGRAM

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For ensemble directors, developing and implementing a performance schedule throughout the school year is a process fraught with unexpected obstacles usually accompanied by an endless barrage of paperwork. Even with the annual performances, new issues often emerge that take an inordinate amount of time to resolve. Once a calendar is in place, directors wanting to participate in PMEA MPAs must then find a site that is close enough on a date that doesn't conflict with their own performances or other activities involving their students, such as other ensembles' performances, musical theatre, trips, testing windows, or spring and Easter breaks.

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

First, the Host chooses the MPA date. Being able to select the best date within the district calendar and auditorium availability that works for all of the district's ensembles that want to participate is a huge benefit. After a few potential dates are identified, hosts are urged to reach out to directors throughout their area concerning possible interest and availability on the potential dates. Controlling the choice of date best enables participation by other ensembles within the district and by enough other schools to meet or, hopefully, exceed the minimum of six ensembles required to host an MPA.

The Host may choose to host an MPA comprised of only that district's ensembles if at least six ensembles participate. An MPA with five ensembles is permitted if the Host agrees to waive the hosting honorarium. This is referred to as an 'Internal MPA'. While making the MPA experience available to interested ensembles from other schools is preferred, hosting an Internal MPA can be an attractive option, especially for first-time hosts.

Second, the Host also controls the performance schedule, which can be tricky when dealing with restrictions that limit when students are available within the school day. Ensembles can complete an MPA in about three class periods, which helps directors from within the district and nearby schools to secure permission to participate when not permitted to miss an entire school day. Hosts benefit from the opportunity to accommodate the preferences of their own



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district's ensembles as much as possible while also striving to best meet the scheduling and travel needs of ensembles from other schools.

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

In addition, three financial considerations benefit Hosts. First, hosting an MPA saves travel costs to another site, which can be a welcome benefit amidst increasing budget constraints. This cost savings could then fund the buses for ensembles from other district buildings to travel to and from the high school to participate. Not having to travel outside of the district also limits the time students need to be excused from class, which could be the difference in receiving permission to participate.

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 the registration fee for one ensemble or simply use the funds to support their programs in another way.

Third, Hosts incur no costs, serving more as a site manager for an outside organization – PMEA - rather than the point person for their own event with its own income and expenses. The host collects the registration fees from the participating ensembles and submits them to PMEA, which then pays the normal costs involved, including adjudicator stipends, adjudicator hospitality (meals and beverages), recordings, and the award plaques and certificates. Parent booster groups often support the event by providing adjudicator meals and beverages, certainly welcome within the tight overall state MPA budget.

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

Comprehensive Guides to Hosting 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 is most challenging the first time through given all the unknowns involved. Hosting in subsequent years quickly becomes routine.

Directors throughout Pennsylvania are urged to consider hosting a PMEA MPA. It would be wonderful to have ample MPAs for bands, orchestras, and choruses within every PMEA District to offer options for all directors to choose among. Given the extent of available resources, technology, and support from both my position and the PMEA office, it is easier now more than ever for a first-time host to smoothly implement a successful MPA.



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All hosts are to be commended for their dedicated efforts in facilitating the benefits that Music Performance Assessment through MPA provides for participating students and directors. Each host should enjoy the intrinsic satisfaction derived from knowing that their 'above and beyond' efforts make a difference for ALL involved!