

GUIDE TO PARTICIPATING IN A CHORAL MUSIC PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

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INTRODUCTION

The fundamental goals of this *Guide* have not changed since the first *Manual* was released in 1986:

- To provide directors with the information needed to successfully participate in an MPA
- To answer common questions about participating in an MPA
- To provide an ongoing reference for those who have participated in the past
- To identify any changes and new aspects of participating
- To provide practical suggestions for participants, especially those new to MPA's

In turn, feedback is welcome from all involved for this Guide to best serve as a relevant resource.

The name of this program changed from "PMEA Adjudication" to "PMEA Music Performance Assessment" in 2008. The events themselves continue to be called "MPA's" or "Music Performance Assessments." This change simplifies and clarifies what we are and focus upon what we do --- music performance assessment.

All forms and items needed to participate in and to host an MPA are posted within the Music Performance Assessment area of the PMEA website at www.pmea.net.

The following forms are used when participating in a Choral MPA:

- *Choral Music Performance Assessment Form*
- *Choral MPA Rating Summary Form*
- *Medal Order Form (Optional)*

Online forms issued from PMEA include the following:

- *Registration Form*
- *Declaring Prepared Pieces Form*
- *Selective Music List Requests Form (If needed)*

Contact Tom Snyder, MPA Coordinator, with questions, at mpa@pmea.net or (724) 816-0420.

SECTION 1: CHORAL MPA'S - THE SYSTEM

A. GOALS

The overall goals of *PMEA Music Performance Assessment* include:

- To provide interscholastic, educationally valid assessment contexts in which any instrumental or vocal music student from Pennsylvania schools who is sponsored by a PMEA member may participate
- To foster musical achievement
- To provide extrinsic recognition for the musical achievement of individuals and ensemble through plaques, certificates, and medals (optional)
- To enable directors to select repertoire most appropriate for their soloists and ensembles from graded levels of music delineated within the *PMEA Selective Music Lists*
- To provide students and directors the opportunity to hear performances by ensembles and soloists from other schools when possible

B. MUSIC PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT (MPA) PROGRAM INFRASTRUCTURE

The *Music Performance Assessment Coordinator* is initially responsible for administering the MPA system, to chair the *PMEA MPA Committee*, to promote participation by PMEA member directors and their students, and to attend the annual meetings of the Student Performance Events Council (SPEC) as a voting member. The MPA Coordinator reports to the Chair of the Student Performance Events Council, the PMEA President and the PMEA Executive Director.

The *PMEA MPA Committee* meets annually at the annual PMEA In-Service Conference to provide input concerning direction, policies and procedures. The PMEA MPA Committee is informally composed of all MPA hosts and the chair of the MPA Music Review Committee, currently Dr. Tad Greig from Westminster College, as well as the PMEA District MPA Representatives. All interested PMEA members are welcome to attend, especially directors who have participated in an MPA, and actively participate in the dialogue.

C. MPA CONTEXTS

The following Music Performance Assessment (MPA) contexts are available:

- **BAND & ORCHESTRA** Band, Full Orchestra and String Orchestra
- **CHORUS** Mixed, Treble and Tenor/Bass
- JAZZ ENSEMBLE
- PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE
- SOLO & SMALL ENSEMBLE Woodwind, Brass, Percussion, String and Vocal

PMEA Music Performance Assessment does not currently provide an MPA context for Vocal Jazz or Show Choirs.

D. ELIGIBILITY

Participating directors are urged to be members of PMEA. If the director is not a NAFME/PMEA member, the ensemble may still participate, but with a higher fee charged as indicated on the Registration Form. Ensembles from neighboring states are welcome to participate in a PMEA MPA at the member rate if the

director is a NAFME member in that state. Any student enrolled in a band, orchestra or chorus class at an elementary, junior high/middle school or high school is eligible to participate with that ensemble in a PMEA MPA.

No student may perform with an ensemble if not enrolled in that ensemble's curricular class.

E. CALENDAR

The most current *MPA Calendar*, listing dates, sites, hosts, contact information and links to the online Registration forms, is posted within the *Music Performance Assessment* area of the PMEA website. Contact hosts with questions. Additional hosts are always welcome to provide more site and date options.

F. SCHEDULING PERFORMANCE TIMES

Scheduling performance times is at the discretion of the host. Directors are urged to lock in performance times when confirming participation, as available times often determine whether an ensemble can participate given travel distance and return time parameters. Scheduling as soon as possible is even more essential for schools planning to bring more than one ensemble, especially those with the same director. Directors are also encouraged to plan their day to include time to watch and support other ensembles when possible.

G. PERFORMANCE CONTEXT: TRADITIONAL OR FESTIVAL

Directors may choose to participate in either the *Traditional* or the *Festival* performance context. The *Traditional* context, most common throughout the country, continues intact within PMEA Music Performance Assessment. The *Festival* performance context, unique to PA, includes a menu of available options for directors to customize a performance assessment experience that best meets the needs of their ensemble at that time. Directors new to PMEA MPA may be more comfortable with participating in the *Festival* context rather than not at all. Some schools choose to participate in the *Traditional* context with their high school or top ensemble and then also bring a second ensemble or middle/junior high school ensembles to participate in the *Festival* context.

TRADITIONAL:

- **Three Selections from the PMEA Selective Music List**

Three Prepared Pieces must be chosen from the existing *PMEA Selective Music List*. Directors may request approval to perform a piece not on the list by completing the online *Selective Music List Requests* form, which will be processed by Dr. Tad Greig at Westminster College, the MPA Committee member responsible for approving pieces and confirming grade levels.

- **Ratings & Audio/Written Commentary**

Ensembles receive audio commentary in real time and written comments on the Assessment form from the three adjudicators.

- **Wording for Award Plaque**

Directors are asked to choose which rating terminology to include on the PMEA Award Plaque, either the traditional PMEA terms (Superior, Excellent, Good or Fair) or the terms adapted from PSSA's (Outstanding, Advanced, Proficient or Basic). Directors are encouraged to display their PMEA MPA Plaques with pride in their rehearsal rooms or display cases.

- **Medals (Optional)**

Directors of ensembles that earn a rating of *I: Superior/Outstanding, II: Excellent/Advanced* or *III: Good/Proficient* have the option to order official PMEA MPA Medals for their students through the PMEA office to proudly display evidence of their ensemble’s achievement on their concert attire and graduation robes.

FESTIVAL:

- **Three Selections of Choice**

Directors may choose any three pieces as their Prepared Pieces from among those already being rehearsed in class. The pieces are not required to be listed within the *PMEA Selective Music List*. The titles and grade levels do not need to be submitted.

- **Assessment Options**

Directors may choose to receive ‘Ratings & Comments’ through the real-time audio commentary and the ratings and written comments using the Assessment Form or ‘Comments Only’ with the same commentary but with no scoring or ratings issued.

- **Wording for Award Certificate if Ratings& Comments Assessment Option is Selected**

Directors are asked to choose which rating terminology to include on an official PMEA Award Certificate recognizing participation, either the traditional PMEA terms (Superior, Excellent, Good or Fair) or the terms adapted from PSSA’s (Outstanding, Advanced, Proficient or Basic). Directors are encouraged to display their PMEA MPA Award Certificates with pride in their rehearsal rooms or display cases.

A side-by side comparison of both performance contexts follows:

MPA PARTICIPATION	TRADITIONAL	FESTIVAL
Choice of Repertoire	Selected from PMEA Selective Music List (SML) or as approved	Any pieces the ensemble is already rehearsing; titles do not need to be submitted in advance
Grade Level	Declared by the director from the graded repertoire included in the PMEA SML or as approved	Grade levels do not need to be declared.
Scoring and resulting Rating using the PMEA Assessment Forms	Included	Optional
Adjudicator Comments through digital audio commentary in real time and written on the PMEA Assessment Form	Included	Included
Recording	Included	Included
Award Recognition	PMEA Award Plaque	PMEA Award Certificate
Rating Terminology	Choice between Superior/Excellent/Good/Fair or Outstanding/Advanced/Proficient/Basic	If receiving a Rating, choice between Superior/Excellent and Outstanding/Proficient, etc.
Individual Student Medals	Optional – available for purchase separately	Not available

H. REGISTRATION

The PMEA office generates an online *Registration Form* customized for each MPA linked within the Music Performance Assessment Calendar document posted within the PMEA website. Directors click on that link to complete and submit the Registration Form that provides both hosts and PMEA with essential information necessary for planning the MPA. Directors are recommended to register online as soon as they receive permission to participate and then contact the host to confirm a performance time, as the performance time is often a key factor impacting whether a school can participate.

Directors are asked to mail the Registration Fee check issued to PMEA to the host no later than three weeks in advance of the MPA. PMEA will send a confirmation email with a copy of the completed online Registration Form for directors to print and use as an invoice, if needed. An ensemble cannot perform unless both the online Registration Form and the check have been submitted.

Registration Fee:

Traditional performance context = \$235
Festival performance context = \$200

The difference in the registration fees is the approximate cost of the Award Plaque and its mailing compared to that of the Award Certificate. All other costs are the same for both contexts.

The Registration Fee will be refunded if the ensemble withdraws prior to two weeks before the MPA. The Registration Fee will not be refunded for an ensemble that withdraws within two weeks of the MPA.

This policy is intended to discourage withdrawals for non-extenuating reasons, such as preparation concerns or ineffective planning. Extenuating circumstances causing a withdrawal within two weeks of the MPA will be considered. By being notified two weeks or more in advance, a host can best implement schedule adjustments, such as replacing the ensemble with another from a waiting list or better accommodating scheduling preferences.

Motivated by feedback from throughout the state, directors are asked to provide information within the online Registration Form to comprise a general 'Ensemble Profile', including:

- Number of students in the ensemble
- The ensemble's status at this school (Top, Second, Only Band/Orchestra, etc.)
- Average number of scheduled rehearsals per 5-day week and length of rehearsal period
- Grade levels of student members of the given ensemble
- Size of the school by number of students
- School district's high school PIAA Classification for football to convey relative size of the district where applicable

Unique to Pennsylvania, hosts provide the Ensemble Profile information for their participating ensembles to the adjudicators to enhance awareness and overall frame of reference within which the given performance is perceived and assessed.

I. DECLARING PREPARED PIECES FOR PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

Choirs must perform three Prepared Pieces. Directors are required to declare their three selected Prepared Pieces on the online *Declaring Prepared Pieces* form with the link provided in the confirmation email to each director after submitting the online Registration Form. Within this form, directors provide the Title, Composer/Arranger, Year Published and approved PMEA Grade Level for each of the three pieces.

After providing that information, the director will provide the summary *Declared Grade Level for PMEA MPA*. If all three pieces are at the same grade level, that would be the Declared Grade Level. If the three pieces are at different grade levels no more than two levels apart, the Declared Grade Level would be as indicated within the table below:

PIECE 1	PIECE 2	PIECE 3	DECLARED GRADE LEVEL FOR PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT
1	1	2	I
1	1	3	II
1	2	2	II
1	2	3	II
1	3	3	II
2	2	3	II
2	3	3	III
2	2	4	III
2	3	4	III
2	4	4	III
3	3	4	III
3	4	4	IV
3	3	5	IV
3	4	5	IV
3	5	5	IV
4	4	5	IV
4	5	5	V
4	4	6	V
4	5	6	V
4	6	6	V
5	5	6	V
5	6	6	VI
6	6	6	VI

If the three pieces are at different grade levels more than two levels apart, the Declared Grade Level would be the average of the three levels rounded to the closest whole number, with a x.5 rounded up.

For those ensembles participating in the Traditional context, the summary Declared Grade Level for PMEA MPA is included on the PMEA Award Plaque. The director will also declare on this form their preferred rating terminology for the PMEA Award Plaque or Certificate (where a rating is issued) as described above.

J. ASSESSMENT FORMS

The PMEA *Assessment Forms* for all MPA contexts reflect current assessment practices. Directors are urged to use the *Assessment forms* as classroom tools before and after the MPA.

K. ADJUDICATORS

Hosts contract three adjudicators for a *Choral MPA*.

L. COMMUNICATING WITH THE HOST PRIOR TO THE MPA

Directors are urged to be proactive in communicating with the Host in advance to confirm the final arrangements involved at the given site, especially if participating for the first time. Final confirmations should include:

- The final schedule of warm-up and performance times
- Instructions concerning bus parking and where to enter the building
- A list of adjudicators
- Stage set-up, including location of the piano and any other instruments or equipment used
- Percussion or other instruments to be provided for accompaniment (i.e. drum set, bongos, amplifier)
- Where to access adjudicator and performance recordings after the MPA
- Plans to watch other performances if possible

M. TO SUBMIT AT THE ON-SITE CHECK-IN

Directors are to submit three manila envelopes (10x13 recommended), one for each adjudicator, labeled with the school name, ensemble name and Adjudicator #1, 2 or 3. Each envelope must contain a copy of the music for each of the three Prepared Pieces with the measures numbered if not already numbered by the publisher. Music must be originals unless the piece is out of print. Copies may then be made, but only with written permission of the publisher provided. If copies are made, pages should be taped rather than stapled. Music does not need to be provided for any on-stage music used.

N. QUALIFYING TO PERFORM AT THE PMEA IN-SERVICE CONFERENCE

One performance slot at the annual PMEA In-Service Conference is dedicated for a band, orchestra or chorus chosen from the PMEA Music Performance Assessment program. This ensemble is selected from recordings submitted within the same deadlines and criteria as those for all performance slots. To be eligible for consideration for this prestigious, dedicated slot from PMEA MPA, the ensemble must have participated at a PMEA MPA in the Traditional performance context and received a rating of 'I' from each adjudicator, known as straight 1's. The decision to apply is that of the director. The recording submitted does not need to include repertoire performed for the MPA.

SECTION 2: CHORAL MPA'S - THE EVENT

A. CHECK-IN

Upon arriving at the MPA site, the director must first check in at the designated group entrance to confirm that the ensemble has arrived, submit the three envelopes containing music for the adjudicators, and confirm where the students are to proceed first, usually to a *Holding Area*.

B. HOLDING AREA

The *Holding Area* is a space to store coats and personal belongings. No singing or playing instruments brought to accompany the singing is permitted. Student or parent assistants normally secure this area throughout the event. Most ensembles arrive wearing their concert dress. Hosts are not required to provide locker room access or dressing rooms, often not possible during the school day. The ensemble normally stays in the holding area until proceeding to the *Warm-Up Area*. If time permits prior to the scheduled warm-up, directors may have their students watch another ensemble perform. Directors have relayed that watching another group is valuable in and of itself and often lowers the performance anxiety of their own students.

C. WARM-UP AREA

The formal *Warm-Up Area* is normally a large ensemble room with enough chairs available to seat all the students. Hosts are responsible to provide a piano that has been recently tuned. The length of the warm-up time slot is 30 minutes.

D. AUDITORIUM STAGE

The auditorium stage is where the formal assessment of the three Prepared Pieces takes place. The length of the performance time slot in the auditorium will be 30 minutes. This time frame includes entrance, set-up, optional warm-up, performing the Prepared Pieces, and exit.

The stage is to be equipped with risers, a conductor's podium and piano. Hosts must ensure that the piano has been recently tuned. Directors have the option to use a conductor's podium. Hosts must provide students or parent volunteers as a stage crew present throughout the MPA to assist with moving the podium and piano as preferred by the director.

Hosts are strongly recommended to use choral risers with enough units to accommodate the largest participating ensembles. Hosts are permitted to use platform risers if necessary but must notify participating directors in advance.

The participating ensembles are responsible to provide their own instruments used for accompaniment, such as percussion instruments, and must be self-contained, responsible for moving them from bus to warm-up to the stage. While most directors prefer to use their own equipment, instruments that their students are accustomed to using and hearing, they may contact the host about possibly providing some of the instruments and equipment if available. Directors often appreciate not having to worry about transporting percussion instruments such as a drum set or congas on a school bus.

In addition to the adjudicators, the only audience would be the ensemble's chaperones, students from other ensembles, or students from the host's ensembles. The audience is permitted to clap after each piece.

E. WARM -UP

Directors may choose to perform any warm-up piece or an exercise sequence prior to performing the Prepared Pieces. The total on-stage warm-up should be completed within three minutes. The performance of the warm-up is not assessed. Music or information about the warm-up music does not need to be provided. While common practice for choruses has been to NOT do a warm-up of any kind on stage, that decision is up to the director.

F. PERFORMING THE PREPARED PIECES

After the announcer introduces the ensemble, director, pieces, and adjudicators, the director may conduct the Prepared Pieces. After the first two pieces are finished, step aside and wait until signaled by the center adjudicator to proceed. A multi-movement piece can be conducted normally with no need to wait for adjudicators between movements.

G. HOW THE ADJUDICATORS USE THE ASSESSMENT FORMS

The adjudicators assess the overall performance and assign a Score from 1-15 for each of five Evaluation Areas: Tone, Intonation, Accuracy, Technique, and Interpretation, according to the following rubric and descriptors:

SCORE	RATING	PMEA DESCRIPTOR	LETTER GRADE	APPROX. PSSA EQUIVALENT
13-15	I	Superior	A+	Outstanding
10-12	II	Excellent	A	Advanced
7-9	III	Good	B	Proficient
4-6	IV	Fair	C	Basic
1-3	V	Unprepared	U	Below Basic

The three-point range within the scoring for each Evaluation Area provides adjudicators with considerable flexibility in conveying their assessment within a given rating.

The scores for each of the five Evaluation Areas are added together to determine the Total Score, which is then converted to a Final Rating according to the following rubric and descriptors:

TOTAL SCORE	FINAL RATING	PMEA DESCRIPTOR	LETTER GRADE	APPROX. PSSA EQUIVALENT
63-75	I	Superior	A+	Outstanding
48-62	II	Excellent	A	Advanced
33-47	III	Good	B	Proficient
18-32	IV	Fair	C	Basic
5-17	V	Unprepared	U	Below Basic

The adjudicators will provide Additional Feedback within each Evaluation Area in the middle column of the Assessment Form using pluses “+” or minuses “-” with the short list of critical attributes being evaluated, according to the following descriptors:

+	=	Area of strength; Noticeably strong with rating
Blank	=	Commensurate to rating
-	=	Area of concern; Noticeably needing attention within rating

This component of the Assessment Form enables adjudicators to provide consistent ‘next level’ direct feedback beyond the score itself, readily identifying particular attributes that are positively or negatively affecting the score and resulting ratings.

The adjudicators are to provide additional input through written comments within each Evaluation Area that are clear, concise and relevant. These comments should identify strengths and areas of concern along with suggestions for appropriate enhancements and solutions.

An area listing Other Factors is included in the lower left corner of the assessment form. While the adjudicator provides feedback through pluses and minuses, this evaluation is not scored or part of the Final Rating.

Space for Additional Comments is included on the back of the form, along with a list within each Evaluation Area of attributes for the adjudicators to consider when assessing and as talking points for their oral & written comments. These are also helpful for directors and their students in classroom use.

H. DETERMINING THE SUMMARY FINAL RATING

The Summary Rating earned from the performance of the three Prepared Pieces is determined by combining the Final Ratings from the three adjudicators according to the following table:

DETERMINE THE SUMMARY FINAL RATING BY COMBINING THE THREE RATINGS					
RATINGS FROM THE THREE ADJUDICATORS	I, I, I	I, II, II	I, III, III	I, IV, IV	I, V, V
	I, I, II	I, II, III	I, III, IV	I, IV, V	II, V, V
	I, I, III	I, II, IV	I, III, V	II, IV, IV	III, V, V
	I, I, IV	I, II, V	II, III, III	II, IV, V	IV, V, V
	I, I, V	II, II, II	II, III, IV	III, IV, IV	V, V, V
		II, II, III	II, III, V	III, IV, V	
		II, II, IV	III, III, III	IV, IV, IV	
		II, II, V	III, III, IV	IV, IV, V	
			III, III, V		
SUMMARY RATING	I	II	III	IV	V

FINAL RATING	PMEA DESCRIPTOR	LETTER GRADE	APPROX. PSSA EQUIVALENT
I	Superior	A+	Outstanding
II	Excellent	A	Advanced
III	Good	B	Proficient
IV	Fair	C	Basic
V	Unprepared	U	Below Basic

I. CLINIC

Immediately following the performance of the Prepared Pieces, one of the adjudicators will provide a brief clinic on stage using any time remaining in the 30-minute slot to offer immediate feedback concerning any aspect of the performance. The goal is to personalize the assessment experience by enabling communication directly from an adjudicator, analogous to the in-person communication the sight-reading adjudicator has with bands and orchestras and the direct verbal input provided by the assigned adjudicator to soloists and small ensemble students in that setting.

J. MPA RESULTS & MATERIALS RETURNED FROM THE HOST

Accurately and efficiently processing assessment results throughout the MPA is one of the host's most important responsibilities. The host must proceed quickly to process the assessment results and provide the following items to each director prior to the ensemble's departure:

- *Choral MPA Rating Summary Form*
- Three *Choral Assessment Forms*, one from each adjudicator
- All the music for the Prepared Pieces submitted for the adjudicators

The host will have already provided information concerning how to access the audio recordings from the adjudicators. Ratings from other participating ensembles are not provided.

Hosts are no longer required to provide performance recordings to participating directors.

K. AFTER THE MPA

Directors are recommended to consider the following actions after the MPA:

- Thank the administrator who granted permission for the ensemble to participate, any colleagues who assisted before or during the event, and any parent volunteer chaperones for their support
- Use the performance recording, adjudicator recordings and assessment forms as educational classroom tools to enhance the overall experience for the students
- Email the host expressing appreciation for hosting while also providing positive feedback and constructive suggestions
- Email the MPA Coordinator with feedback from the overall experience along with constructive suggestions concerning any aspect so that the 'system' can continue to evolve to improve the educational experience for all involved
- For those ensembles participating in the 'Traditional' performance context, consider downloading the *Medal Order Form* and order medals for your participating students.
- Attend the annual meeting of the *MPA Committee* at the PMEA In-Service Conference. Any PMEA member is invited to attend, especially those who have participated or are interested in participating in MPA's. While the meeting is informal, this forum includes the 'state of PMEA MPA' along with discussing issues and proposals. This meeting has been an invaluable, productive opportunity to consider possible 'next steps', establish priorities, and exchange perspectives within collaborative dialogue not possible within individual conversations and emails.

To prospective participating directors - I hope that this *Guide* provides the information needed to successfully participate in a *Choral Music Performance Assessment* sponsored by *PMEA MPA*.

To experienced participating directors - I hope that this *Guide* serves as an ongoing reference to refresh memories and answer questions concerning any aspect of participating in a *PMEA MPA*.

Please do not hesitate to contact the MPA Coordinator with questions and suggestions – mpa@pmea.net.