

GUIDE TO PARTICIPATING IN A SOLO & SMALL ENSEMBLE MUSIC PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

SEPTEMBER 2023



56 South Third Street, Hamburg, PA 19526
(610) 562-9757
www.PMEA.net

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	3
SECTION 1: SOLO & SMALL ENSEMBLE MPA’S – THE SYSTEM.....	4
A. Goals.....	4
B. Music Performance Assessment (MPA) Program Infrastructure.....	4
C. MPA Contexts.....	4
D. Eligibility.....	4, 5
E. Calendar.....	5
F. Scheduling Performance Dates and Times.....	5
G. Registration.....	5, 6
H. Choosing Repertoire	6, 7
I. Assessment Forms	8
J. Adjudicators.....	8
K. Communicating with the Host Prior to the MPA.....	8
SECTION 2: SOLO AND SMALL ENSEMBLE MPA’S – THE EVENT.....	8
A. Check-in.....	8
B. Holding/Warm-up Area.....	8
C. Assessment Areas	9
D. How the Adjudicators Use the Assessment Form	10
E. Returning Assessment Results to Directors/Sponsoring PMEA Members.....	11
F. Medals.....	11
G. After the MPA.....	11

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 who 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 Solo & Small Ensemble MPA:

- *Solo Assessment Forms for Winds, Percussion, Strings and Vocal as applicable*
- *Small Ensemble Assessment Form for Winds, Percussion, Strings and Vocal as applicable*
- *Medals Order Form (Optional)*

Online forms issued from PMEA include the following:

- *Registration Form*
- *Selective Music List Requests Form*

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

SECTION 1: SOLO & SMALL ENSEMBLE MPA'S – THE SYSTEM

A. GOALS

The overall goals of *PMEA Music Performance Assessment* applicable to *Solo & Small Ensemble MPA's* include:

- To provide interscholastic, educationally valid assessment contexts within which instrumental or vocal music students in grades 3-12 from Pennsylvania schools who are sponsored by a PMEA member may participate
- To foster musical achievement
- To provide directors with recommended resources from which to select graded repertoire most appropriate for their soloists and small ensembles

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

Students in grades 3 -12 who are enrolled in a band, orchestra or chorus class are eligible to participate in one or more *PMEA Solo & Small Ensemble MPA(s)* in any PMEA District.

Each participating student must be sponsored by a PMEA member. The PMEA member may be a student's director, private teacher, youth ensemble director, or a retired PMEA member. While it is common for private teachers to want to sponsor students to participate in a Solo & Small Ensemble MPA context, note that the private teacher **must be a PMEA member**. Private teachers do not need a music education degree, as active membership in PMEA is open to persons engaged in music teaching or other music-related educational work. Accompanists are not required to be members of PMEA however they may only sponsor students if they are a PMEA member.

Cyber students may participate if they are sponsored by a PMEA member. Home-schooled students may be sponsored by a private teacher who is a PMEA member or a PMEA member director in their school district of residence. Parents cannot sponsor the student but may transport the student to and from the MPA.

The Sponsoring PMEA Member or parent transporting students, preferably the Sponsoring PMEA Member, **must remain on site** throughout the MPA until the students have performed and are ready to depart.

Students from neighboring states are welcome to participate in a PMEA MPA if the sponsoring adult is a member of that state's MEA/NAfME organization.

Small ensembles are defined as ranging from a duet of two students through a small ensemble of up to 12 students. While it is recommended to have one student on a part, more than one student on a part is permitted.

Students may participate in a maximum of three performances at a given MPA; a maximum of one solo and two small ensembles or up to three small ensembles. Hosts have the option to permit a student to participate in more than three performances if time slots are available within the overall schedule.

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 (www.pmea.net/mpa). Contact hosts with questions. Additional hosts are always welcome to provide more site and date options.

F. SCHEDULING PERFORMANCE DATES AND TIMES

Solo & Small Ensemble MPA's are normally held on a Saturday due to the facility needs for this context involving multiple rooms and the large number of students and adults entering and exiting the building throughout the day. Hosts are permitted to hold an MPA on a weekday evening if the available time frame can accommodate the number of participating students.

Scheduling performance times is at the discretion of the host. Hosts will prioritize scheduling students from a given school within the same time frame as much as they can to limit that school's total time on site.

G. 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. The Sponsoring PMEA Member, the director or other adult, is required to complete and submit the Registration Form that provides both hosts and PMEA with essential information necessary for planning the MPA.

The online Registration form must be submitted **no later than four weeks in advance** of the MPA to best facilitate the scheduling process for the host given all the aspects involved.

On page 2, directors/sponsoring PMEA members indicate the total number of participating solos and small ensembles, calculating the total fee owed using the following structure (updated for 2023-24):

- Soloist \$20
- Small Ensemble of 2-5 Students \$35
- Small Ensemble of 6-12 Students \$50

*All registration fees include a medal for each student participant

Upon submission of the form, a confirmation email will be sent to the director/sponsoring PMEA members that includes a copy of the completed form to be used as an invoice for requesting payment.

Directors/sponsoring PMEA members must mail a check for the total Registration Fee owed issued payable to *PMEA* to the host that will be received no later than three weeks in advance of the MPA. **Students cannot participate if the registration fee has not been received.**

Refunds will not be issued for students who withdraw within two weeks of the event or otherwise do not attend, a policy intended to discourage withdrawals due to preparation concerns or ineffective planning that did not account for schedule conflicts. Extenuating circumstances causing a withdrawal within two weeks of the MPA will be considered.

Hosts are not obligated to hold an assigned performance slot if payment has not been received given the priority to fill all performance slots without any holes. Schedule gaps result in not effectively using the adjudicator's time while other performers wait.

Directors/sponsoring PMEA members may substitute a different student soloist or a different student participant(s) in a small ensemble *ON THE SAME INSTRUMENT* for those who already registered and paid should a withdrawal occur, given the ease of simply replacing the participant(s) on that instrument in a performance slot that is already scheduled.

While including as many participants as possible is a goal, the logistics of this context will permit additional soloists or small ensembles to register after the deadline only if time slots are available within the overall schedule and the registration fee payment is received in advance. Refunds will not be issued for late registrations if the students involved withdraw or otherwise do not attend after being registered.

H. CHOOSING REPERTOIRE

The sponsoring PMEA member, the director or other adult, is required to complete and submit the online *Declaring Participants & Repertoire Form* with information about the student performers and the repertoire that each soloist and small ensemble will perform. Each soloist or small ensemble performs one piece.

The Prepared Piece, whether a solo or a small ensemble piece, must be a graded piece as provided by the publisher, within another state's selective music list, or indicated on a music distributor's website. Grade level information is particularly helpful to the adjudicators. There is no PMEA selective music list for Solo & Small Ensemble.

Recommended resources for repertoire options include the following:

- A published graded individual piece or one from a published collection
- [Texas University Interscholastic League \(UIL\) Prescribed Music List](#) (Instrumental & Vocal)
- [Florida Bandmasters Association \(FBA\) List](#) (Woodwinds, Brass & Percussion)
- Other publicly available state music lists, including neighboring states such as MD, NY & OH

Directors/sponsoring PMEA members are permitted to substitute repertoire after the registration form is submitted but must notify the host as far in advance of the event as possible.

The repertoire selected should be no longer than six (6) minutes.

Instrumental solo and small ensemble music **does not** need to be memorized. Vocal solos **must** be memorized. Small vocal ensemble music is strongly recommended to be memorized but not required.

Soloists are required to perform with a live accompanist or recorded accompaniment. Recorded accompaniments are often available from publishers or recorded in advance by a pianist. Unaccompanied solos (except for percussion) will not be permitted even if composed as unaccompanied.

Students not being accompanied by a pianist must provide their own playback source and speaker with hosts providing a table and extension cord. An adult may accompany the student to operate the technology involved. Using a sound file for the accompaniment is required given that a stable, consistent internet connection is likely not able to be guaranteed. *Operating the technology involved in a recorded accompaniment is the sole responsibility of the performer with the host and adjudicators not responsible for resolving issues.*

Most percussion solos, including those for snare drum, mallets, timpani and multi-percussion, normally do not include accompaniment and may be performed as written. If the given percussion solo does include an accompaniment, the parameters included above will apply.

Soloists and small ensembles are permitted to perform music from Broadway, movies, jazz, and video games. Please avoid Pop or Rock styles. Contact the MPA Coordinator directly with questions about performing a particular piece. Also consider repertoire by living composers and composers from diverse backgrounds.

Within the *Declaring Participants & Repertoire Form*, use the same link indicated on Page 2 of the form to access the separate, online *Declaring Participants & Repertoire Form - Soloists* and the link on Page 3 of the form to access the separate, online *Declaring Participants & Repertoire Form - Small Ensembles* to provide the remaining information about the student performers and the repertoire being performed.

On the *Declaring Participants & Repertoire Form*, choose an Assessment context for each soloist and small ensemble, either *Traditional* or *Comments Only*. The *Comments Only* context includes the adjudicator's written and post-performance verbal comments but with no scores or ratings. The registration fee is the same for students participating in either Assessment context.

Once completed, upload the *Declaring Participants & Repertoire Form – Soloist* and/or *Declaring Participants & Repertoire Form – Small Ensemble* where instructed. Up to ten (10) soloists can be listed on one Soloist form; up to five (5) small ensembles can be listed on one Small Ensemble form. Complete additional forms if there are more soloists and/or small ensembles participating.

All music performed by the students for assessment must be originals. Directors/sponsoring PMEA members normally amass a library of original solos and small ensembles over time, purchasing duplicates as needed for more than one student performing the same solo.

Upon entering the assessment area, students will provide a copy of the music being performed to the adjudicator, which may be a photocopy, with the measures numbered in pencil. Music with multiple pages should be **taped** appropriately and **not stapled**, as stapled pages are difficult for an adjudicator to manipulate during the performance. Retrieve the music from the adjudicator before exiting.

Small ensembles are urged to assign one student per part. Small Ensembles of five (5) or fewer members may **not** be conducted. Small Ensembles of six (6) or more from any grade level may be conducted. Small Ensembles of any size that includes students from grades 3-8 may be conducted.

I. ASSESSMENT FORMS

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

J. ADJUDICATORS

The number of adjudicators needed is dictated by the extent of different instruments or voices involved and the number of soloists and small ensembles registered for each. Adjudicators must have a music degree. As the assessments are not blind, adjudicators are not permitted to assess students that they are currently affiliated with at schools, private studios or youth ensembles.

Adjudicators are not permitted to aid or coach students during the performance. The performances of all soloists playing a given instrument and small ensembles of a given instrumentation/voicing (i.e. clarinet choir or string quartet, or soprano duet) must be assessed by the same adjudicator.

K. COMMUNICATING WITH THE HOST PRIOR TO THE MPA

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

- The final schedule of performance times
- Instructions for bus parking and where to enter the building
- A list of percussion instruments provided, especially if instruments beyond the minimum required are available.
- A map of the facilities to assist in locating the many different assessment areas
- A list of adjudicators
- Where to pick up the compiled, completed Assessment Forms for their students.

SECTION 2: SOLO & SMALL ENSEMBLE MPA'S – THE EVENT

A. CHECK-IN

Upon arriving at the MPA site, the director/sponsoring PMEA member must first check in at the designated group entrance to confirm that the registered students have arrived and where the students are to proceed first, usually to a *Holding/Warm-up Area*. Participating students should arrive at least 45 minutes before their assigned performance times. While parents are permitted to transport their child to and from the event, those student(s) must check-in at the same time as the director/sponsoring PMEA member and other students from that school.

B. HOLDING/WARM-UP AREAS

The *Holding Area* is a space for students to store instrument cases, coats and personal belongings and most often also serves as the *Warm-Up Area*. Hosts may also provide additional areas. Directors/sponsoring PMEA members and/or other adults are welcome to assist their students in this area with warm-up and tuning. Some choose to warm-up and tune all students from their school at one time. Students may warm-up in this area prior to their performance(s). Music stands are not provided. Students are responsible for monitoring the clock to arrive at their assigned Assessment Area on time.

Directors/sponsoring PMEA members, accompanists, chaperones and parents often wait along with the students in the auditorium as the *Holding Area*. As parents may pick up their children after they perform, they need a place to wait.

C. ASSESSMENT AREAS

The *Assessment Areas*, normally classrooms or ensemble rooms, are to be equipped with enough space, chairs and music stands for the scheduled participants, especially the larger small ensembles. Students may stand or sit when performing.

Hosts will provide an upright piano or keyboard in each assessment area for a live accompanist. All electronic keyboards provided must have ample range, weighted keys and the appropriate speaker volume level and be set to produce acoustic piano sounds. If using a recorded accompaniment, students must provide their own playback source and speaker with hosts providing a table and extension cord.

A 10-minute time slot is scheduled for each soloist and small ensemble to include entering the space, adjusting seating and stands as needed, setting up and testing the recorded accompaniment (if used), playing a few notes to check balance with an electronic keyboard or recorded accompaniment, additional warm-up notes (optional), performing the prepared piece, verbal feedback from the adjudicator, and exiting. A performance may only be performed and adjudicated once.

Directors/sponsoring PMEA members, other adults, and other students are permitted to listen to performances as the capacity of the space reasonably permits and at the discretion of the performers. Adjudicators may limit capacity if necessary. Video and audio recordings are prohibited.

For percussionists, hosts will provide an appropriately sized Assessment Area and are required to provide the following large percussion instruments: bass drum, four timpani, bells, xylophone, vibes, marimba, and chimes. Students are responsible to provide their own mallets and sticks along with any other instrument required, including snare drums, crash and suspended cymbals and any auxiliary/accessory percussion instruments. Directors/sponsoring PMEA members should communicate with the host to inquire if any other instruments could be provided other than what are already required. (I.e., medium-sized accessory instruments such as concert toms or temple blocks).

D. HOW THE ADJUDICATORS USE THE ASSESSMENT FORM

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	PMEA	LETTER	APPROX. PSSA	
	RATING	DESCRIPTOR	GRADE	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. This list is also helpful for directors and their students for classroom use.

E. RETURNING ASSESSMENT RESULTS TO DIRECTORS/SPONSORING PMEA MEMBERS

Accurately and efficiently processing assessment results throughout the MPA is one of the host's most important responsibilities. The host or designee will proceed quickly to confirm the assessment results, enter the final score and rating in the designated columns on the summary ratings forms provided, and compile the Assessment Forms from each school into a manila envelope. After all the students from a given school have performed, directors/sponsoring PMEA members will be able to pick up the envelope at a designated location. Ratings for other soloists and small ensembles are not provided.

F. MEDALS

- Each student soloist or member of a small ensemble will receive a PMEA MPA medal: a Blue/White ribbon for those earning a 'I'; a Gold/White ribbon for those earning a 'II'; or an all-White ribbon for those earning a rating lower than 'II' or participating in Comments Only. Providing a medal best offers extrinsic recognition as funded by registration fees the same as for the plaques and certificates provided to large ensembles.

- To receive the medals, directors/sponsoring PMEA members must complete and submit the online [Medal Request Form](#) (available within the MPA area of the PMEA website) after the MPA. Be sure that the form accurately reflects the preferred shipping address along with the total number of each level of medal earned: a Blue/White ribbon for those earning a 'I'; a Gold/White ribbon for those earning a 'II'; or an all-White ribbon for those earning a rating lower than 'II' or participating in 'Comments Only'.
- The request will be cross-referenced against the assessment results provided by the host with the medals subsequently mailed to the address provided.

G. AFTER THE MPA

Directors/sponsoring PMEA members are recommended to consider the following additional actions after the MPA:

- Thank the administrator who granted permission for the students to participate, any colleagues, accompanists or private teachers who assisted before or during the event, and any parent volunteer chaperones for their support
- Use the Assessment Forms as educational tools to enhance the overall experience for the students involved as well as in the classroom as appropriate to benefit other students in the program
- 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
- Attend the annual meeting of the *MPA Committee* at the PMEA In-Service Conference. Any interested 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/sponsoring PMEA members - I hope that this *Guide* provides the information needed to successfully participate in a *Solo & Small Ensemble Music Performance Assessment* sponsored by *PMEA MPA*.

To experienced participating directors/sponsoring PMEA members- 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 (mpa@pmea.net) with questions and suggestions.