

What's New in PMEA Music Performance Assessment for 2026!

Tom Snyder, MPA Coordinator

The PMEA State Board approved four proposals involving the Music Performance Assessment program at their July 2025 meeting that will be implemented during 2025-26.

- **Approved three core documents for Jazz Ensemble MPA's: 1) *Guide to Participating in a Jazz Ensemble MPA*; 2) *Guide to Hosting a Jazz Ensemble MPA*; and 3) *Jazz Ensemble MPA Assessment Form*.**

Jazz Ensemble MPA's were reinstated in 2025 but now able to be implemented in 2026 with these three updated documents now aligned within the existing MPA system replacing what was last utilized in 2011 for the benefit of all directly involved---students, directors, hosts, and adjudicators.

- **Approved the structure for 'Special Venue MPA's' outlined in the *Guide to Hosting a Special Venue MPA*.**

The first 'Special Venue MPA' was held in partnership with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra at Heinz Hall in Pittsburgh on April 8, 2025. Interest has emerged concerning possibly pursuing similar partnerships at distinctive venues elsewhere in the state. This guide defines a structure as a foundation for these initiatives based on the lived experience of producing the Heinz Hall MPA for the benefit of all directly involved---students, directors, hosts, adjudicators and partner organizations.

- **Approved additional updated content and wording within the Assessment Forms for Band, String Orchestra, Chorus, Solo (Winds/Percussion/Strings/Vocal), and Small Ensemble (Winds/Percussion/Strings/Vocal).**

The MPA Assessment forms for large ensembles, small ensembles and solos have been updated further from when first developed in 2008 and significantly updated and implemented throughout the 2025 season. Feedback from adjudicators and directors in addition to my own analysis has motivated further tweaks to content and wording for the benefit of all directly involved---students, directors, and adjudicators.

- **Approved extending the piloting of Marching Band MPA's statewide through fall 2025 and fall 2026.**

The eventual goal is to add a music performance assessment opportunity through PMEA for marching bands that perform in all styles, including bands that do not participate in competitions at all or do not wish to participate in the 'ranking' or 'placement' aspect of a typical competition. A Marching Band MPA is intended to function as a 'performance assessment component' embedded within an existing festival-type event. Participation would be optional for the directors involved within a financial structure similar to a large ensemble (BOC) MPA. Two more fall seasons are needed for the pilot program to be announced and promoted throughout the entire school year to foster discussion and motivate participation in additional pilots throughout the state.

Consider participating in an MPA in 2025 or hosting within one of the many available format options.

Contact your PMEA District's MPA Rep or me directly with questions about any aspect of the MPA program at mpa@pmea.net.