

NYSSMA FAQ's

What is NYSSMA?

NYSSMA is actually an acronym that stands for **New York State School Music Association**. Their website homepage is www.nyssma.org. NYSSMA is the parent organization of SCMEA (Suffolk County Music Educators' Association)

What does NYSSMA do?

Go to NYSSMA's website and click on "Information" and then "About Us" to read their mission statement and learn all about what they do.

What is a NYSSMA solo/ensemble festival?

A NYSSMA solo/ensemble festival is a performance venue that provides students with an opportunity to be assessed by a NYSSMA certified adjudicator on solo or ensemble music they have prepared. The purpose of this assessment is to provide the student(s) with positive feedback and constrictive criticism in an effort to help improve performance.

What happens at a NYSSMA solo/ensemble festival?

The soloist or ensemble enters a specified room to perform for an individual adjudicator. In addition to the prepared literature, soloists performing for a grade will be asked to perform a specified number of major scales (see NYSSMA manual or speak to your teacher) and a short (approximately 8 measures) sight-reading example. Ensembles are only required to perform the prepared literature.

What is the difference between a solo and an ensemble?

A solo is an individual performance. An ensemble can be anywhere from two (duet) up to sixteen (16) musicians, depending on the requirement of the repertoire. Anything above sixteen (16) players is considered a "major ensemble" and must perform at a NYSSMA "Majors" Ensemble Festival.

How long does the adjudication take?

The entire process takes approximately ten (10) minutes for a level 1-4 adjudication and fifteen (15) minutes for a level 5-6 or All-State adjudication.

Can parents be present in the adjudication room during the performance?

Yes, parents are allowed in the adjudication room, but not during the sight-reading requirement part of the adjudication.

Can the adjudication be recorded?

No, NYSSMA does not allow any audio or video recording devices in the adjudication room.

How does a student select his/her NYSSMA solo/ensemble to prepare?

Typically, the students' teacher or private teacher will help them select the appropriate music to prepare, based on the ability of the student or students performing it. The music must be listed in the current NYSSMA manual in order to be evaluated. Every teacher in the school district and most music stores have access to this manual. Presently, the manual is not offered online.

How does a student prepare for an adjudication and who can help?

Preparing a NYSSMA solo or ensemble properly requires a lot of time and practice. It is up to each individual student to practice diligently and to prepare his/her music. The repertoire is above and beyond the regular in-school lesson program requirement. One-on-one tutoring is highly effective and may be necessary in preparing for the adjudication. Depending on availability and scheduling, the school music teacher may or may not have time to assist in the preparation of the music. When possible, it is advisable and beneficial to secure a private instructor for this purpose.

What are the rewards/benefits of preparing a NYSSMA solo?

Preparing any piece of music has a variety of aesthetic rewards and technical benefits. Students who practice diligently and do well will experience a wonderful sense of satisfaction while becoming better overall musicians on his or her instrument/voice. Adjudicators are trained to provide not only positive feedback but also constructive criticism designed to help students become better musicians.

How are NYSSMA solos/ensembles rated in difficulty?

The NYSSMA rating scale for all solos and ensembles starts at level 1 (easiest) up to level 6 (hardest). All-State soloists must perform literature selected from the level 6 category.

How does the scoring system work for the assessment?

Level 1-4 music is rated as "Outstanding", "Excellent", "Good", etc. on a scale of 1-28 with 28 being a perfect score. Level 5-6 music is rated as A+, A, A-, B+, B, etc. on a scale of 1-100 with 100 being a perfect score. Points are given in major categories such as tone, intonation, technique, accuracy, interpretation, scales and sight-reading. Narrative comments are also written by the adjudicator to provide positive feedback, constructive criticism and to explain any point deductions.

Does NYSSMA accommodate students with disabilities?

Yes, if a student has a disability that requires more time or has impaired vision and needs the sight-reading materials enlarged or any other type of disability, your school music teacher can provide a "Student with Disabilities" form to be filled out and signed by the teacher, parent and school principal. This form will be kept confidential and given to the adjudicator prior to the adjudication.

What is the financial commitment involved?

Each solo or ensemble time slot must be purchased by the student. The current fees are as follows:

Regular solo/ensemble level 1-4 - \$16.00

Regular solo/ensemble level 5-6 - \$24.00

Piano solo/ensemble level 1-4 - \$22.00

Piano solo/ensemble level 5-6 - \$30.00

Any All-State solo - \$30.00

In addition to the above fees, students must also pay for any piano accompanist fee, if a piano accompanist is being used.

What will the student receive after the adjudication is over?

Within approximately one week of the festival, each participating student will receive the original adjudication form back, completed by the adjudicator. The Half Hollow Hills music department will also provide each student with an official NYSSMA corresponding medal of accomplishment. Medals are usually distributed sometime shortly after the festival and before the end of the school year, depending on availability.

What is an All-State adjudication?

Students performing an All-State solo will be scored on a special All-State adjudication form, with the same criteria as a level 6 solo. The only difference is that the student is now competing against every other student in New York State on that particular instrument or voice part. Every student will be entered on a statewide proficiency list. This list will be used to select students for All-State performance ensemble honors. Consequently, adjudicators must be more stringent when grading for All-State than a regular level 6 solo.

When can a student elect to go "All-State"?

It is recommended that students obtain at least a NYSSMA level 5 or 6 A+ before attempting to perform for an All-State adjudication. The school music teacher who registers the student for the festival is the only person who can complete an All-State application and must recommend the student to perform an All-State solo.

Can pianists be adjudicated for All-State?

No, pianists are not eligible for the All-State ensembles program. In lieu of the All-State program, any pianist who scores a perfect score of 100 on a level six solo may apply for the annual NYSSMA piano showcase to perform at during the All-State festival. Approximately a dozen pianists from across New York State are selected for this opportunity each year. Please call Dr. Lilla's office for details.

What does it mean to go for "Comments Only"?

When a student or teacher requests a "Comments Only" rating, the performer(s) will receive the same narrative comments from the adjudicator, without any numerical grades or score.

Why would a student choose to go "Comments Only"?

There are several reasons why a student may choose to go "Comments Only":

1. High school seniors who are graduating and no longer eligible for the All-State program often opt to go "Festival", as the grades are no longer relevant but they still wish to receive narrative comments from an adjudicator.
2. Students who did not prepare the music well enough may also request a "Comments Only" rating to avoid a poor grade.
3. Students who have accidentally prepared a piece of literature that is not listed in the NYSSMA manual cannot be adjudicated for a grade but are allowed to go "Comments Only" for narrative comments only.

Can a student prepare more than one solo?

Yes, but it is not advisable due to the rigor and commitment involved in preparing for an adjudication. However, students are not allowed to perform the same solo twice in the same year on the same instrument or voice.

Is a piano accompanist required?

No. Pianos are available for accompanists in All-State rooms and vocal rooms only. Pianos are not available in regular level 1-6 brass, string, woodwind and percussion adjudication rooms. Vocalists and All-State soloists may choose to provide a piano accompanist or recorded accompaniment. All-State soloists must provide accompaniment if the literature they are performing has an accompaniment part. When providing a recorded or computerized accompaniment, the student must also provide his/her own audio playback equipment.

Can photocopies of music be used for the adjudication?

Absolutely not. Photocopied music is illegal. Students who arrive with photocopied music will be asked to leave the site.

Must a student have two (2) originals of the music, one for the judge?

It is advisable, but not mandatory to have a legal copy (original) for the adjudicator to look at during the performance and one for the piano accompanist (if applicable). If only one legal copy is available, the adjudicator may have to look over the shoulder of the performer.

Can music downloaded from a website be used for the adjudication?

Yes, providing the student also has a receipt from the website the music was purchased from.

Can students request a specific time for their adjudication?

Yes and no. The registration form asks for time preferences, but there is no guarantee a specific time request can be granted. Students should make the NYSSMA festival a priority by making themselves available for the duration of the festival until a time confirmation is received.

When should the student receive confirmation of the adjudication time?

Finalized schedules are confirmed and distributed to teachers approximately 7-10 school days before the festival.

What if a student cannot perform on the scheduled date of the festival?

Students must attend the festival that is assigned to Half Hollow Hills. NYSSMA does not provide a means of scheduling students elsewhere. Under extenuating circumstances, Dr. Lilla can attempt to schedule a student at another festival at the mercy and discretion of the site host. Consequently, there are no guarantees. All-State adjudications must receive a site variance approval letter from NYSSMA before being scheduled elsewhere, and only under extreme, extenuating circumstances will this be done.