



Introducing the New CMEA Bay Section Festival Evaluation System

The CMEA Bay Section Board has been hard at work this past year to renovate the way Bay Section festivals are evaluated beginning in 2016. Our work includes the development a new, comprehensive festival evaluation system as well as an extensive overhaul of the sight-reading process. We believe these changes will enable adjudicators to deliver a more objective assessment while providing directors and their students with specific qualitative feedback.

Evolution and Changes

Up until the early 1990s, CMEA Bay Section Large Group Festivals used a system similar to our current Solo and Ensemble evaluation, which consisted of a series of checkboxes (Superior, Excellent, Good, Fair, Needs Improvement) to assign ratings in a multitude of categories (11 in all). Adjudicators would derive a composite rating from these checkboxes. This was fairly simple if the preponderance of boxes were the same. If the majority of boxes were marked “superior,” the composite rating was superior. However, if the checkboxes were split somewhat evenly (e.g. 6 marked superior and 5 excellent) or all over the map (e.g. 2 marked superior, 5 excellent and 4 good) adjudicators were challenged to determine a composite rating, a process that many felt yielded overly subjective results. In that first case (6 superior, 5 excellent) there were instances where adjudicators went either way, assigning a Superior or an Excellent rating on a varying basis.

In the year 2000, an evaluation system based on a point scale was implemented as a means to quantitate ratings — a system we have used until this day. The former multifarious categories were distilled into four broad categories: Quality of Sound (30 pts), Musicality (30 pts), Technique (30 pts) and Other Factors (10 pts). The openness of the 30-point categories was intended to provide adjudicators with flexibility in assigning numbers. A traditional 100-point scale delineated the ratings ranges: Superior

90-100; Excellent 80-89; Good 70-79; Fair 60-69; Needs Improvement below 60. While this system was a vast improvement over its predecessor, over time several inadequacies became apparent:

- The format of the evaluation form is “one size fits all” that does not sufficiently address specific performance criteria germane to our various genres of performing ensembles (band, choral, jazz and orchestra). Furthermore, there are no specific measures on the form to guide its application to accommodate various levels of groups.

- The 30-point categories (Quality of Sound, Musicality, Technique) are too large, leading most adjudicators to utilize only the upper third of the numeric range. If a group receives a Superior rating, it must have an average score of 27 in the 30-point categories. Think about that for a moment — a spread of only 4 points (score of 27, 28, 29, 30) out a possible 30 can be applied if a group is to earn a Superior rating. In order to receive an Excellent rating, a group must average 24 points in each category, utilizing a scant 7-point range.

- Over the years, numeric scores have become inflated and the lower end of the ratings spectrum (Fair and Needs Improvement) is rarely used.

- The nebulous nature of the Other Factors category has become a source of controversy because it lacks specificity and is highly subjective. The majority of groups routinely receive a score between 8-10 points, creating a de facto “free point” situation that sometimes becomes contentious when a group scores below that threshold.

- Many adjudicators have resorted to determining the final numeric rating before filling out the score/comment sheet, and making their numbers fit. Under this scenario, the adjudicator uses a type of “deficit approach” to scoring, where the

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group starts with 100 points, and points are subtracted to arrive at a final number and a rating. As a result, the quantitative aspect of the evaluation process has become arbitrary, and somewhat capricious.

In the previous evaluation systems, the important missing ingredient is the direct application of an evaluation rubric. The new *CMEA Bay Section Festival Evaluation System* is based on a performance standards rubric that is embedded into the fabric of the evaluation form — a strikingly different approach than we have ever seen. This new system will enable adjudicators to deliver specific qualitative feedback while providing directors and students with more objective and authentic quantitative assessment. On the Monday following a festival, rather than reading score sheets with numbers, a circled rating and a few written comments, you can share with your students the entire evaluation rubric and score sheet containing specific criteria used by the adjudicators to evaluate their performance and to assign the numeric rating.

Highlights of the new *CMEA Bay Section Festival Evaluation System*

The new *CMEA Bay Section Festival Evaluation System* features three interrelated components: the Performance Evaluation Scale and Rubric, the Performance Comments and Score Sheet, and the Adjudicators Worksheet. These forms can be found on the Bay Section website at www.cmeabaysection.org.

1. The Performance Evaluation Scale and Rubric

The foundation of the new system is the Performance Evaluation Scale that integrates a sliding point scale with a performance-based standards rubric. The standards are delineated into five columns that incrementally increase from left (low) to right (high). Key concepts within the parameters of each column are denoted by check boxes, allowing adjudicators to readily identify areas related to the performance. Another significant feature is that the standards rubrics are idiomatic to different types of ensembles. The rubrics for Band/

Orchestra, Choral and Jazz utilize different and unique vocabulary, which adjudicators might use to amplify their written and spoken comments.

Excerpt from Band/Orchestra Rubric

QUALITY OF SOUND

Tone Quality/Intonation

- Most individuals/sections demonstrate correct tone production.
- Tone is affected at extremes of registers and dynamics.
- Lapses in breath support and/or bow control adversely affects tone.
- Instruments are somewhat in tune.
- Harmonic intonation and chord tuning are inconsistent.
- Listening and adjusting skills are developing; some attempts to correct intonation problems.

Blend/Balance

- Blend and balance are affected by problems in dynamic and range extremes.
- Balanced sound is sometimes achieved; some performers need to adjust volume(s) to allow other parts to be heard. Overall listening skills are evident.
- Instrumentation and/or equipment issues adversely affect the ensemble sound.

TECHNIQUE

Rhythm/Precision/Facility

- Notes are performed correctly most of the time; occasional errors are evident.
- Rhythmic precision is evident; errors occur occasionally.
- Attacks and releases require more consistent accuracy.
- Players demonstrate awareness of pulse and tempo, although lapses occur occasionally.
- Technical facility shows adequate preparation, however some mistakes are noticeable.

Articulation/Bowing

- Articulation/bowing technique and style are somewhat uniform, but lack consistency.
- Articulations/bowings may lack clarity and control.
- Attacks and releases are inconsistent.

Excerpt from Jazz Rubric

IMPROVISATION

Technique/Time

- Soloists are still developing the technical skills necessary to effectively communicate ideas. Time suffers as a result of technical challenges.

Interpretation/Notes/Style/Musicality

- Soloists demonstrate a limited knowledge of jazz style or vocabulary.
- Incorrect notes or scales are used over chord progressions. Musical thoughts are not formed and as a result lines are often fragmented/unconnected.
- Limited variety and quality of solo(s).

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Excerpt from Choral Rubric

QUALITY OF SOUND

Tone Quality/Intonation

- Most individuals/sections demonstrate correct tone production.
- Tone is affected at extremes of register and dynamics.
- The ensemble is somewhat in tune.
- Melodic intonation and harmonic tuning are inconsistent.
- Listening and adjusting skills are developing; some attempt to correct intonation problems.
- Less demanding melodies, intervals, and harmonic structures performed successfully.

Blend/Balance

- Blend and balance are affected by problems in extremes of dynamics and registers.
- Characteristic ensemble sound sometimes achieved; overall listening skills are evident.
- Voicing issues adversely affect the ensemble sound.

TECHNIQUE

Rhythm/Precision/Facility

- Note accuracy is sometimes evident; occasional errors occur.
- Attacks and releases require more consistent accuracy.
- Rhythmic precision and note accuracy are evident; occasional errors occur.
- Singers demonstrate some awareness of pulse and tempo, although lapses occur.
- Technical facility is evident some of the time; minor mistakes are noticeable.

Articulation/Diction

- Articulation, diction, and technique are somewhat uniform, but lack consistency.
- Diction is somewhat clear and stylistically appropriate some of the time.
- Diphthongs are performed correctly some of the time.

The Sliding Point Scale

The new system features a sliding point scale that is adjusted to accommodate the established standards of performance for ensembles at various age and experience levels. The combination of the three-pronged sliding scale, the four-level rating system and the five-column rubric offers a distinctive, adaptable and authentic approach to festival evaluation.

Located at the top of the evaluation form, the sliding point scale is divided into three parts (classifications) each of which is outlined using a shadow box. The numeric ranges within each classification defines four levels of performance: Superior: 13-15 points; Excellent: 9-12 pts; Good 5-8 pts; Fair: 1-4 pts. The “Needs Improvement” category has been eliminated. Of course, directors can still request that the performance be adjudicated for “Comments Only” without a rating.

FAIR 1	2	3	4	GOOD 5	6	7	8	EXCELLENT 9	10	11	12	SUPERIOR 13	14	15
FAIR 1	2	3	4	GOOD 5	6	7	8	EXCELLENT 9	10	11	12	SUPERIOR 13	14	15
FAIR 1	2	3	4	GOOD 5	6	7	8	EXCELLENT 9	10	11	12	SUPERIOR 13	14	15

Classifications of Ensembles

When registering for a festival, directors will have the discretion to select from one of three classifications (the scale with which they want their ensembles to be evaluated) that best suits the age and ability levels of their ensemble(s). A document to help directors choose the appropriate classification will be available for reference on the festival registration weblink. Below is a brief synopsis of the three classifications:

• **Class 1 Elementary School Ensembles (grades 5-6); Middle School Beginning and Intermediate Ensembles (grades 6-8)**

The Class 1 Scale applies a significant mechanical shift of the point scale toward the left in comparison to the other classifications. This shift keeps the criteria consistent while maintaining a less stringent scoring/rating

result. The 5th column is eliminated because it would be very extraordinary (if impossible) for ensembles in this class to achieve the performance standards outlined in that column.

• **Class 2 Middle School Advanced Ensembles (grades 6-8); High School Novice and Intermediate Ensembles (grades 9-12)**

The Class 2 Scale applies a more modest mechanical shift of the point scale toward the left. The scale is weighted more toward the center columns to provide reliable and authentic feedback that is more in line with groups at this level.

• **Class 3 High School Advanced Level Ensembles (grades 9-12)**

The Class 3 Scale utilizes the full range of the rubric. *(continued on page 15)*

2. The Performance Comments and Score Sheet

The new system will, as in the current format, assess performances as related to four main areas: Quality of Sound, Technique, Musicality and Other Factors. While these are similar to our current model, they have been reimagined and refined. The three major captions (Quality of Sound, Technique, Musicality) have been divided into two sub-captions worth 15 points each, enabling the adjudicators to more accurately address specific ensemble performance issues. (With Jazz, the points allotment is slightly different. Please see Keith Johnson's article for Jazz scoring details.)

- **Quality of Sound (30 points total)**
 Tone and Intonation (15 pts)
 Blend and Balance (15 pts)
- **Technique (30 points total)**
 Rhythm, Precision and Facility (15 pts)
 Articulation and Bowing (15 pts)
- **Musicality (30 points total)**
 Interpretation, Style and Phrasing (15 pts)
 Expression, Sensitivity, Dynamics (15 pts)

A significant change has been made with the Other Factors category, which has been revamped into a more objective area that assesses Choice of Music, Stage Presence, and Effect of Presentation. The category has been weighted to emphasize the importance of the repertoire selection, while acknowledging other elements that affect the performance.

Other Factors (10 points total)

- **Choice of Music (1-6 pts)**
 Appropriate for the ensemble's ability level
 Quality and suitability for the festival
 Variety of selections (styles, tempos, periods)
 Overall programming effect
- **Stage Presence (1-2 pts)**
 Professionalism and deportment
 Appearance (uniformity, posture)
- **Effect of Presentation (1-2 pts)**
 Any noticeable characteristic of the ensemble that the adjudicator feels has a positive or negative affect

In keeping with current practice, space is provided for adjudicators to provide written commentary to amplify their recorded

comments, as well as to highlight areas checked on the rubric. The Comments and Score Sheet will be printed on the reverse side of the Performance Evaluation Scale and Rubric, providing directors and students with feedback regarding their performance, as well as information that may guide them toward higher standards of performance.

New Ratings Ranges

The use of the sliding scale has necessitated a significant change in regard to the assigning of ratings. New, expanded ratings ranges will allow greater flexibility by the adjudicators when assigning ratings, while using a more authentic point system. Note that the "Needs Improvement" rating has been eliminated.

The new ratings ranges are as follows:

Superior	80 - 100 pts
Excellent	60 - 79 pts
Good	34 - 59 pts
Fair	6 - 33 pts

3. The Adjudicators Worksheet

The Adjudicators Worksheet assists adjudicators with the mechanics of using the new system. This worksheet will enable adjudicators to better manage their numbers in order to avoid erasures and errors on the Score Sheet and to keep a visual record of how each performing ensemble's score was derived.

Implications and Outcomes

The primary goals of the new *CMEA Bay Section Festival Evaluation System* are to clearly align our method of assessment with standards of performance and to provide directors and students with authentic positive and critical feedback that is meant to encourage and foster musical growth.

CMEA Bay Section ran a pilot program this past year, in which a few veteran judges shadow-adjudicated at select Jazz, Band/Orchestra and Choral festivals. The scores from the pilot adjudicators did not factor into the ratings at these festivals; rather the data was used for comparison with the scores from *(continued on page 16)*

the actual judges assigned to these festivals. The adjudicators in the pilot reported they were able to be acutely objective when assigning point values and unconcerned with the point total until it was time to add up the points from the Performance Evaluation Scale.

The new system is more complex than our current evaluation method and will undoubtedly pose some moderate challenges to adjudicators who are using it for the first time. The transition may be a bit rocky for everyone — adjudicators and directors alike. Adjudicators will undergo extensive training sessions this fall and again at the Winter Conference in order to become familiar with the format, and mentor adjudicators will be assigned to all festivals to facilitate the implementation of the new system.

To accommodate the new system, performance slots at all festivals will be increased by 5 minutes. Band/Orchestra and Jazz festivals will now be scheduled in 30-minute time blocks; Choral festivals will increase to 25 minutes. Please note that this increase is to allow the adjudicators extra time for completing the evaluation forms. The time allotted to actual performance will remain as in the past: 17 minutes for instrumental groups and 13 minutes for choral groups.

A major advantage to using the new system is that adjudicators can use specific vocabulary or phrases from the form as part of their spoken comments, and that they can use the checkboxes to target specific areas within the rubric.

Because adjudicators will be directed to closely adhere to the standards rubric, **numeric scores will most likely trend lower across the board**, and more genuinely reflect the level of performance. For example, a group that usually receives a score of 90 may see scores dip into the low 80s, which is still a Superior rating, but it shows the director and students that there is room for growth. In another scenario, the difference between scores of 90 and 95 is infinitesimal on a numeric scale, but quite large in terms

of the level of performance. Using the new system, these scores might translate to 80 and 90, revealing a more significant gap between scores. Both scores qualify as a Superior rating, but the director and students in the group scoring an 80 can readily see the areas needed for improvement.

Another likely outcome is the potential for wider variances between the adjudicators' numeric scores due to the increased ratings ranges. The stipulation in the Handbook requiring judges to be within one rating of one another will remain in effect, but because each of the ratings spans a 20-point gamut, scores between adjudicators may vary more dramatically than they have in the past.

Groups earning Unanimous Superior ratings, regardless of the numeric point value (if it's in the 80s) will still be eligible for the Unanimous Superior Award. However, it may be a rare occurrence for a group to receive a score in the 90-point range. In order to diminish any hint of competition, the Board is recommending that ratings no longer be posted at festival sites.

Sight Reading Changes for 2016

Some significant changes in Band, Orchestra and Jazz sight-reading procedure and evaluation will take place beginning in 2016. It is important to note the following information pertains only to Band/Orchestra and Jazz festivals. Changes to Choral sight-reading are in development for implementation in the future.

- A new standards-based rubric has been developed for sight-reading, the details of which are presented below.
 - We will continue to offer directors the choice to either Sight Read or to take a Clinic. A new feature is that directors may now choose to sight read for "Comments Only", without receiving a rating.
 - Directors will still have 2 minutes to study the score and a 5-minute instructional period to talk students through the sight-reading selection. However, a major procedural
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change will transfer the responsibility of interpreting rhythms and notation from the director to the students. Directors will no longer be able to demonstrate the music by singing melodies, clapping rhythms, etc. Students, on the other hand, will be allowed to silently finger their parts, sing or clap rhythms if asked to do so by the director, and anything else, **except** play their instruments during the instructional period.

- A superior rating in sight-reading is required of all groups, including middle school ensembles, in order to be eligible for the Unanimous Superior Award.

New Sight Reading Evaluation Form

A new performance-based standards rubric has been developed for sight-reading, enabling adjudicators to provide a more authentic assessment. The format of the new rubric is similar to the one developed for performance where the standards within the rubric are delineated into columns that increase incrementally from left to right, and key components within each category are denoted with checkboxes for quick reference.

The new Band/Orchestra Sight Reading Evaluation Form uses a 70-point formula to assess the following seven categories:

- **Accuracy of Rhythm (10 pts)**
 - Correct reading of rhythms and meters.
 - Recovery from errors
- **Accuracy of Notes (10 pts)**
 - Note accuracy, accidentals, key signatures
- **Stylistic Details (10 pts)**
 - Articulations, bowings, style and tempo indications
- **Musicality (10 pts)**
 - Phrasing, expression, and dynamics
- **Response to Other Players (10 pts)**
 - Listening and adjusting skills, intonation, blend, balance, and precision
- **Response to Conductor (10 pts)**
 - Ability to follow style gestures
 - Communication
- **Group Discipline (10 pts)**
 - Alertness, cooperation, posture
 - Attention to instructions

The new Jazz Sight Reading Evaluation Form will assess these categories:

- **Accuracy of Rhythm (10 pts)**
 - Correct reading of rhythms and meters
 - Recovery from errors
- **Accuracy of Notes (10 pts)**
 - Note accuracy, accidentals, key signatures
- **Style/Interpretation (10 pts)**
 - Feel, articulation, phrasing, tempo, and inflection
- **Musicality (10 pts)**
 - Listening, adjusting, blend, intonation, interaction, expression, and dynamics
- **Time (10 pts)**
 - Pulse, tempo, feel, and drive
- **Improvisation (10 pts)**
 - Vocabulary, time, technique, attention to chord changes, and variety
- **Group Discipline (10 pts)**
 - Alertness, cooperation, posture, attention to instructions

The ratings ranges for Sight Reading are as follows:

Superior	56 - 70 pts
Excellent	41 - 55 pts
Good	21 - 40 pts
Fair	7 - 20 pts

Providing a quality festival experience is paramount to the mission of CMEA Bay Section. As we continue into the 21st century, we believe that the new festival evaluation system is a vast improvement over previous models and that the standards-based rubric format will provide directors and students with an authentic assessment tool that will better assist them in the music classroom.

All of the information presented here in this article, including all of the new performance and sight-reading evaluation forms can be found on the website at: www.cmeabaysection.org. **T**