

Frequently Asked Questions

What is NYSSMA (New York State School Music Association)? The mission of the New York State School Music Association is to advocate and improve the education in music of all people in New York by promoting appropriate music activities and programs in the schools and communities of New York State.

What is WCSMA (Westchester County School Music Association)? This is the association that is responsible for making sure all festivals and auditions are run properly in Westchester County.

What are the All-County/All-State festivals? The festivals are divided into three categories: Elementary, Intermediate and All-State. Elementary is grades 4, 5 and 6, Intermediate is grades 7, 8 and 9 and All-State is grades 10, 11 and 12. At each level the festival will consist of performances by an Orchestra, Band and Chorus. At the All-State level, these festivals will also include performances from a Jazz Band and Jazz Chorus.

How does my child get into All-County/All-State? For the Elementary level Band and Orchestra students, there is a separate audition date where pieces selected by WCSMA must be performed. For Elementary and Intermediate Chorus, the school music teacher selects a small number of students to participate in the festival. In grades 6, 7 and 8 the student's NYSSMA rating will determine eligibility for the Intermediate Festival for Band or Orchestra. For All-State you must be in grades 9, 10 or 11 to audition. Eligibility is determined by the NYSSMA rating. Because All-State is the most competitive level, students are expected to have high scores in levels V-VI.

What does the audition entail? Students are expected to perform scales, a prepared piece, and sight-reading during their audition.

Soloists Specific Requirements:

1. Soloists (except Harp, Percussion and Instrumental Jazz) applying for a rating:
 - a. Every soloist performing for a rating must:
 - 1) Perform one piece from the solo section of the current Manual.
 - 2) Sight-read.
 - 3) Play scales (instrumentalists only).The order that these are to be played in is at the discretion of the student.
 - b. Solo performing time will be limited to six minutes for Levels I-IV; and eleven minutes for Levels V-VI.
Sight-reading is required of soloists applying for a rating. An eight-measure melody will be furnished at the Festival site. Each sight-reading example shall meet the criteria listed in Section VIII below.
 - c. Vocal solo selections – *for non All-State applicants*, the key and voice classification are at the discretion of the teacher. The letter code is provided only as a guide for the teacher. Specific language is required only where noted. Baroque ornamentation is optional.
 - d. Scales requirements:
 - 1) **Woodwind, brass, and guitar soloists** will play three (3) one octave scales from memory at moderate speed, ascending and descending, to indicate knowledge of scales rather than technical skill. The scales performed will be selected by the adjudicator.

Levels I-II soloists must prepare any three (3) major scales from memory.

Levels III-IV soloists must prepare any seven (7) major scales from memory.

Levels V-VI soloists must prepare fifteen (15) major scales from memory.

- 2) **Piano Soloists** will play three (3) one octave scales from memory, ascending and descending, to indicate knowledge of scales rather than technical skill. The scales performed will be selected by the adjudicator.

Level I soloists must play from memory three (3) prepared major scales, one octave, hands separately or hands together, any tempo.

Level II soloists must play from memory three (3) prepared major scales, two octaves, eighth notes, hands separately or together, M.M. quarter note = 72.

Level III-IV soloists must play from memory three (3) of the seven (7) prepared major scales, three octaves, triplet eighth notes, hands together, M.M. quarter note = 72. All three scales will be selected by the adjudicator.

Level V-VI soloists must play from memory three (3) of the fifteen (15) prepared major scales, four octaves, sixteenth notes, hands together, M.M. quarter note = 92-112. All three scales will be selected by the adjudicator.

- 3) **String soloists** will play three (3) one octave scales from memory at moderate speed, ascending and descending, to indicate knowledge of scales rather than technical skill. The scales performed will be selected by the adjudicator.

Levels I-II – All String players

-prepare from memory three (3) one octave major scales.

-perform from memory three (3) one octave major scales.

Levels III-IV – Violin and Viola

-prepare from memory seven (7) major scales – two (2) of the seven in two octaves.

-perform from memory three (3) major scales – one (1) two octave and two (2) one octave scales - all three scales chosen by the adjudicator.

Levels III-IV – Violoncello and Double Bass

-prepare from memory seven (7) major scales – one (1) of the seven in two octaves.

-perform from memory three (3) major scales – one (1) two octave and two (2) one octave scales – all three scales will be chosen by the adjudicator.

Levels V-VI – Violin, Viola and Violoncello

-prepare from memory fifteen (15) major scales in two octaves.

-perform from memory three (3) two octave major scales.

Level V-VI – Double Bass

-prepare from memory fifteen (15) major scales – prepare E, F, F#/Gb, and G in two octaves.

-perform from memory two (2) octave scales and one (1) one octave scale – all three scales will be chosen by the adjudicator.

4) **Scoring for Scales:**

Levels I-IV (28 point system)

- 3 scales correct - 4 points
- 2 scales correct - 3 points
- 1 scale correct - 1 point
- 0 scales correct - 0 points

Levels V-VI (100 point system)

- 3 scales correct - 5 points
- 2 scales correct - 4 points
- 1 scale correct - 2 points
- 0 scales correct - 0 points

2. **Snare Drum Soloists:**

- a. Every soloist performing for a rating must:
 - 1) Perform one piece from the solo section of the current Manual.
 - 2) Sight-read.
 - 3) Play rudiments.The order that these are to be played in is at the discretion of the student.
- b. Solo performing time will be limited to eleven minutes for any level. Suitable cuts, at the discretion of the Adjudicator, may be made in a composition which exceeds the time limit.
- c. Sight-reading is required of soloists applying for a rating. An eight-measure melody will be furnished at the Festival site.
- d. The long roll and three additional rudiments will be played from memory as described for the chosen level of performance. Rudiments will be chosen by the adjudicator from the lists indicated for that level. All tempo indications for rudiments are for minimum speed requirements within that Level. Rudiments may be played faster. All rudiments will be played at a steady tempo except for the long roll. Participants must be prepared to play each rudiment eight (8) times. For a list of the rudiments, please see your music teacher.

What level piece should my child play? Categorization of music by level:

Level I – very easy: Easy keys, meters, ranges and rhythms. Recommended for newly organized groups, elementary school groups and beginning soloists.

Level II – easy: May include changes of tempo, key, meter and mood. Recommended for advanced elementary school, middle school with some experience, junior high school groups and for soloists of limited experience.

Level III – moderately easy: Increasing demands of techniques, range and interpretation. Recommended for advanced middle school, junior high school, second organizations in high school and soloists of intermediate ability.

Level IV – moderately difficult: Recommended for advanced junior high school groups, average high school groups, and soloists of advancing ability.

Level V – difficult: Recommended for more advanced high school groups and soloists of experience and proficiency.

Level VI – very difficult: For musically mature groups of exceptional competence and the most advanced soloists.

Can I play any piece of music I want? No. Only selections from the NYSSMA manual edition XXVII (effective July 1, 2003) are permitted for evaluation grades. Ask your music teacher for a list of eligible pieces.

Does my child need a private teacher to prepare for the audition? Having a private teacher is not required. However, working with a private teacher is highly recommended to facilitate preparation for the audition.

How do I sign up? At all levels you must sign up with your child's school music teacher.

What are the dates? Dates are available from your child's school music teacher or you can log onto www.wcsma.org or www.croton-harmonschools.org/PVCWeb/Music/nyssma.htm to obtain information.

Where are the auditions held? Every year there is a lower and upper county audition site for NYSSMA as well as a specific site for the Elementary auditions for All-County.

How long does the audition take? Auditions will take approximately 10-15 minutes each, depending upon the level.

Where can music be purchased? Music can be purchased at your local music store or online. See your music teacher for a list of music stores in your area.

Top Do's and Don'ts for the Audition Process

1. You should have two legal copies of your music. The instrumental part and the piano accompaniment can count as your two copies. ***Photocopies are illegal and not allowed in the audition room.***
2. Be familiar with the original copy of your piece. Feel free to transfer markings in pencil if you have been using a photocopy. Please don't wait until the last minute to purchase your music!
3. You must pay your audition fee when you sign up with your school music teacher. Because you are reserving a time slot with the NYSSMA adjudicators, there will be no refunds if you choose not to take the audition.
4. Changing your audition piece at the last minute is ***not*** recommended.
5. Be prepared! Remember necessary supplies for your instrument or voice (i.e. ***music***, water, extra reeds, ***music***, valve oil, rosin, extra strings, ***music***, instrument, bow, sticks/mallets, ***music*** and a positive attitude.)
6. First impressions go a long way. Dressing nicely shows the adjudicator that you are serious about your audition.
7. Please be early for your audition. To be on time is to be late. You need to give yourself at least ½ hour to check in and warm up.