

Hello, my name is Gary Riler and I am the OMEA State Chamber Music Contest Chair. Thank you for sharing your time, talent, and expertise adjudicating one of our regional events. The fact that you have been hired is truly an endorsement of the respect you have earned among music educators in our state.

We have several purposes for this meeting today:

1. To implement a consistent approach to adjudication across our state.
2. To clarify your role as an adjudicator--what your job is and what it is not.
3. To identify your responsibilities tied to adjudicating an Oregon Solo & Ensemble contest
4. To find ways to improve our own adjudication practices in service of helping students grow
5. And finally, to emphasize that first and foremost, this event exists in service of student musicians.

Overall, all participants should leave the event with something positive, while also being challenged to better their skills going forward. It should be clear to students, spectators, and their teachers that you are here to help them grow and not to cut them down.

Your responsibility is very large – student performers will remember this experience for the rest of their lives, and we want them to feel glad that they prepared and performed at this event. Positive experiences today will also encourage students to be life-long musicians and future supporters of the arts.

Hello, my name is Stewart Schlazer and I am the OSAA State Solo Contest Chair. I would like to share some suggestions for

EMPHASIZING FAIRNESS AND AVOIDING BIAS

- While this event is first and foremost an educational experience, our high school contests also recognize performance excellence by qualifying students for the State-level solo and chamber music contests. Given this is a competitive event, fairness is paramount.
- Things will also vary from adjudicator to adjudicator – What is valued most in a performance, how the qualities of skill or artistry displayed are perceived, even one's opinions about literature selection or interpretation. That's the nature of our business. Our goal, however, is to have a consistent approach to the judging process and avoid all appearances of bias.
- When approaching each performance in a consistent, fair and equitable manner, you must avoid questions that should have no bearing on your decision making.
- Some states have moved entirely away from allowing any verbal comments or interaction with participants. We do not want to lose that very powerful teaching opportunity.
- Ultimately, your job is to make decisions based upon the performance displayed today only. Avoid the perception of any potential bias or unfairness by limiting your comments to the skills and artistry demonstrated today. Every state eligible entry must be dealt with consistently, equally, and fairly.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT TO AVOID PERCEPTIONS OF BIAS

- Do not ask if a participant studies privately. Worse, asking who their private teacher is. Even more damaging is that potential follow up---“we’re good friends, they do a great job!” Each performance must be judged on its own merits against a subjective set of standards.
- Do not ask the age of participants, nor their year in school.
- Do not comment on the way participants choose to dress. In addition, appearance should have no bearing on your score.
- Do not comment on the name of the participating school or the involved director, and be mindful to avoid being influenced by your own personal experiences with particular teachers or programs.
- Accompaniment is not required.
- Memorization is not required.
- Original copies of music must be used at district events.
- There is not a required or recommended literature list in Oregon. It is recommended to tread lightly if you choose to comment on literature. Telling a performer that a literature choice is inappropriate, or sharing that you “do not particularly like this piece or composer,” is not acceptable.
 - Might the difficulty of a piece factor in your decision regarding how you ultimately rank one performance above or below another? Perhaps.
 - And of course, suggesting other pieces to explore in your written comments is fine and can serve as a valuable resource.

So... what does a consistent approach to adjudication look like?

- Greet each entry warmly and in the same manner. Your body language, before, during and after performance can speak powerfully---make sure it is a positive voice. If needed, encourage them to start when ready.
 - Do not assist with tuning or establishing a tempo.
 - Please observe the process and comment appropriately, but only after their performance concludes as part of your feedback or work with the solo or group. Again, to assist one but not all in some manner prior to starting could, and perhaps should be perceived as unfairness on your part.
- Once the performance concludes, whether verbally or written during the time remaining, we suggest you employ a “Three C’s” approach:

FIRST: COMPLIMENT

- Point out the positive aspects of what you heard---those things the group or individual did particularly well.

SECOND: CONSTRUCTIVELY CRITICIZE

- Be specific. Avoid generalities like “tone suffers in places” or we heard some “rhythmic and precision challenges.” Given your shortness of time, there is more value in pointing out one or two very specific deficiencies and where they occur, then to make general statements.

THIRD: PROVIDE A COURSE FOR CORRECTION

- Merely pointing out deficiency without providing suggestions for how to improve is not educationally sound. Provide specific solutions for specific problems.

RATINGS

The next step is assigning a rating, relative to the subjective standards of the rubric you have been provided. Your rating should be aligned with both your written and verbal comments.

- Most important is that your rating is based upon what you hear today, at this event. Performances should not be compared to what you may have heard in another region, at the state contest (if having judged or attended before), or perhaps what you expect from your own students.
- The State Contest event should **NOT** be a factor in your rating decision-making. In other words, you should not make decisions based upon whether or not you feel a performer is of state level competition caliber. Our state contest is built upon regional representation. If you hear one or more performances of superior quality today, the region will be represented in the category or categories you are judging.
 - Do your work throughout the day as if you have no knowledge of the state contest-----at the end, you will simply list the top 4 with their score within each category that you adjudicate.
- We have provided you with two record keeping forms for your use.----You are encouraged to use the schedule sheet to record your scores as you award them. This document is for your eyes only and can be destroyed after the event. Having said that, I encourage you to hang on to it for a few days in case your contest manager needs to contact you for further information.
 - The intent of this form is for you to list all performers that you award a superior rating (297 OR HIGHER) within a category you are judging. It is always helpful to make some anecdotal notes that you might find helpful at the end of the day.
 - The second sheet is one you must turn in before leaving and requires your signature at the bottom. You will have one of these sheets for every category that you have been assigned to adjudicate. Your job is to rank the entries that received a superior rating (based on the score you awarded them). The entry with the highest score in that category will be number one, the second best number two, etc. This information is confidential and you must not share it with anyone other than the contest manager.
 - Personally hand this sheet to your contest manager at the end of each category or at the end of your day. You are not free to leave until your manager has had an opportunity to carefully review it with you.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Consistency fueling fairness is what we are after. Toward that end, here are some final reminders that will propel success:

- **Stay on time.** Don't start early, don't run overtime. If your room monitor is responsible for managing the clock, let that person control the starting and stopping, unless of course you believe they are in error. In no case should you make students wait to start if their time slot has started.
- **Keep your place.** Compare the announced entry name to that on your adjudication form making sure all are aligned. You should never stop a performance unless it approaches going beyond the allotted slot length. Equal time for all participants.
- **Watch for important coding regarding state eligibility.** Some performers will not be eligible for state contest consideration.
- Very important---**you cannot change the scheduled performance order for any reason**---that would lead to disqualification. Only the contest manager can adjust today's performance order, and you may not accommodate any request from anyone other than your manager. If anyone asks, send them to your manager.
- As discussed earlier, be aware of what you do, and especially what you say. For example, there should never be mention of the State Contest in your conversation with participants. Saying something like "that's a state level performance" is inappropriate and potentially perceived as meaning they have, or will, qualify for state.

Be consistent in approach---including not offering assistance of any kind prior to performance. We urge you to simply:

- Welcome
- Listen/observe while writing comments
- Provide specific written and verbal comments toward improvement
- Genuinely thank them for performing today and encourage life-long music making.

A COUPLE OF ODDS AND ENDS

- Avoid being left alone with a student in your performance area. That's a time for the door to be open, you to take a quick break outside the room, etc.
- Do not touch students. Find a way to teach the concepts you want without making physical contact.
- We know that some of you are well versed with our rules document, but we do not expect you to be the rules experts---that is not what we are paying you for today. However, there are a couple things you can keep an eye on. One is regarding accompanists for state eligible instrumental chamber ensembles.....
 - Our rules require that an accompanist of a state eligible instrumental chamber ensemble must be a student. If you see an adult accompanying an instrumental ensemble, and that entry has *not* been coded "ineligible for state," then speaking with your contest manager would be appreciated.
 - We do not allow external conducting, whether from a teacher, non-performing student, or any member of the audience.
 - A student within a performing group gesturing to start and stop the performance is fine, **just not the ongoing practice of keeping time**. In all rules cases, however, **do not say anything to the performers at any time**. **Just consult with your manager** as soon as possible after the performance in question.

Thank you once again for all your work. Should you have suggestions for how we can improve our event management, please do share with your host today or feel free to contact us at any time.

Now, we return you to your contest manager who will have additional, important instructions for you.

Gary & Stewart