

NYSSMA Festivals

Interested in having your playing evaluated/graded? What about having the opportunity to perform in ensembles with other musicians throughout St. Lawrence, Jefferson and Lewis counties? If so, please communicate with your instructor early within the new season (Sept. – October), so preparations and steps can be made toward your registration for NYSSMA solo festival. Registration for your inclusion within zones 4 or 5 NYSSMA solo festival takes place in early January. Most students are registered for the zoned festival their school district participates in, as shown here. However, you may be allowed to register for an alternate zone if need be; please consult your studio teacher.

Zone 4: Herkimer, Oneida, Oswego

Zone 5: Jefferson, Lewis, St. Lawrence

Please see your instructor for further details and read through the Q & A list below.

1. What is a NYSSMA festival?

NYSSMA (New York State School Music Associate) sponsors approximately 145 solo and small ensemble, and major ensemble festivals in New York State each spring. At solo and small ensemble festivals, students are given a performance evaluation that involves playing a graded solo from the NYSSMA Manual, playing scales and sight-reading. At major ensemble festivals, school bands, choruses and orchestras are evaluated.

*2. How do I register my child?

All NYSSMA registration is done through the student's school music program. Information regarding scheduling times and appropriate materials should be received from the school music teacher or the head of the school's music department. The school district or private school must be a school member of NYSSMA.

*If your child receives private instruction, please consult your child's instructor for the exact protocol for registration.

*3. Can I register directly as an individual or through my child's private music teacher or studio?

No. Registration is only done within the music department, through the school the student attends, AND with specific guidance from your private instructor. Your child's private music teacher will assist you and communicate directly with your school's music department prior to registration to ensure registration is correct.

4. Is this a competition?

NYSSMA festivals (other than for All-State) are evaluations, not competitions. Students may compete with themselves from year to year, but NYSSMA does not view festivals as competitive.

5. What music can be played?

Students who desire a rating must choose a graded solo from the NYSSMA Manual. Students who desire comments only can perform any music and are not required to play scales or sight-read.

6. Where can I see a manual?

Most schools and many teachers have a copy of the NYSSMA manual. It can also be found at many public libraries. The manual can be purchased at www.nyssma.org/manual. The manual contains rules and regulations as well as the extensive solo lists. It should be noted, however, that the manual is designed for use by music teachers and is not intended as a student or parent publication.

7. Do I need a 2nd copy of sheet music for the adjudicator?

A second copy of the solo is highly recommended, but not required. A piano accompaniment part may be used as the second copy, although it is important to be sure the solo part in the piano copy exactly matches the solo that the student will perform.

*8. What about photocopies?

Any legal copy may be used, but if the legality is in doubt, it is wise to check on it before the day of the festival.

*Please check w/your studio teacher about photocopied music.

*9. Do I need an accompanist?

Accompanists are not required except for All-State. They are highly recommended for vocal soloists. Because of the difficulty in obtaining sufficient pianos, most (not all) festivals do not allow accompanists for non-vocal or non-All State soloists. Recorded and electronic accompaniments are permitted, but students must supply the equipment and be able to set it up and perform within the time allotment.

*Please check w/your studio teacher about accompaniment for your instrument.

10. Who are the adjudicators?

NYSSMA adjudicators are professional teacher/musicians who have received instruction on the NYSSMA adjudication system.

11. Are home-educated students allowed to participate?

Yes, New York State allows home-educated students to participate, but the decision to register your child lies within the hands of each school district's governing body.