

## **Contemporary Vocal Ensemble Category Added to Contest**

Kathy Briggs, OMEA Choral Chairperson

kathy.briggs@smapdx.org

OMEA and ACDA are excited to announce that a proposal was passed this fall which adds a contemporary vocal category for ensembles. (Ensembles only, not solos.). This change was made to allow ensembles to perform music from contemporary a cappella, vocal jazz, and barbershop genres. This category will be all-inclusive of voicing (treble, T/B, SATB) and size (2 – 16 students). Teachers should be sure their ensembles are entered in the correct category(ies) for their selected repertoire, and students in ensembles may perform in more than one category. For example, a quartet of students may sing an accompanied piece by Mozart in the Small Mixed Vocal Ensemble category, and also sing a Deke Sharon contemporary a cappella arrangement in the Contemporary Vocal Ensemble category. Or an ensemble of 16 treble voices can sing pieces by Debussy and Morley in the Large Treble Vocal Ensemble, and then sing a treble barbershop arrangement in the Contemporary Vocal Ensemble category. For student ensembles performing vocal jazz, please note that there are no microphones allowed. We hope this new category allows for less confusion when choosing literature for ensembles and encourages more vocal ensembles to participate in their district Solo & Ensemble contest. All other policies and procedures for advancing to the OMEA State Chamber Contest apply. The full proposal that was passed is below.

**The State Chamber Ensemble contest rules shall now include the addition of a Contemporary Vocal category in Rule 1.4; the addition of 1.4.14 “Contemporary Vocal ensembles may perform a cappella and/or accompanied by piano or acoustic instruments. The use of vocal microphones is not allowed.”; and change Rule 3.4.1 to include “Students performing in the Contemporary Vocal Category may perform contemporary a cappella, vocal jazz, musical theatre, or barbershop genres.”**

The benefits and rationale for this rule change are as follows:

- There is ongoing and growing interest in contemporary vocal ensembles among our students.
- We have had a number of vocal ensembles competing with technically challenging repertoire from the genres of contemporary a cappella, barbershop, and vocal jazz at the state level, having advanced with the same repertoire from their district contests.
- Currently, student ensembles performing contemporary vocal literature have been deducted points for their use of this repertoire, as is the current rule to do so (Rule 3.4.4). This deduction, however, has been inconsistent among adjudicators and has resulted in confusion and complaints.
- Opening the vocal ensemble repertoire to be more inclusive of musical genres and will encourage more participation from student ensembles.
- The addition of this category will eliminate the comparison of musically valuable, yet technically different genres.
- The same ensemble adjudicator(s) may be used in each vocal ensemble room, knowing they will be ranking ensembles in various categories, as is often the current practice.

**OREGON STATE CHAMBER ENSEMBLE CHAMPIONSHIP**

# 1 STUDENT ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

- 1.1 Participating students must be enrolled in the appropriate school performing ensemble/class for the instrument/voice on which they are performing.
- 1.2 All students must be in grades 9-12. All members of the chamber ensemble must be from the same school.
  - 1.2.1 For 1A-3A schools, students in the 7th and/or 8th grades of feeder schools may represent the high school they will be attending.
- 1.3 Participating students have four consecutive years of eligibility beginning with their ninth-grade year.
- 1.4 The following categories will be included in the State Chamber Ensemble Contest. SMALL Categories are 2-4 students plus accompaniment; LARGE categories are 5-16 students plus accompaniment:

## Woodwind Ensemble Division

- Woodwinds: Small Category
- Woodwinds: Large Category

## Brass Ensemble Division

- Brass: Small Category
- Brass: Large Category

## Percussion Ensemble Division

- Percussion: Small Category
- Percussion: Large Category

## String Ensemble Division

- String: Small Category
- String: Large Category

## Treble Vocal Ensemble Division

- Treble Vocal: Small Category
- Treble Vocal: Large Category

## Tenor/Bass Vocal Ensemble Division

- Tenor/Bass Vocal: Small Category
- Tenor/Bass Vocal: Large Category

## Mixed Vocal Ensemble Division

- Mixed Vocal: Small Category
- Mixed Vocal: Large Category

## **Contemporary Vocal Category**

- **2-16 students**
- **Treble, Tenor/Bass, or Mixed Vocal**

- 1.4.1 Only one piano (single pianist) may be used in an ensemble and will not count in the ensemble number for category assignments.
- 1.4.2 A participant performing on piano in an instrumental ensemble must be a student who meets student eligibility requirements. (String orchestra piano reduction accompaniments are exceptions)

- 1.4.3 An ensemble must consist of at least two (2) and no more than sixteen (16) instrumentalists/vocalists. Personnel may not change during the ensemble's performance time.
- 1.4.5 Ensembles may not be conducted externally.
- 1.4.6 An instrumental ensemble shall be placed in the division which includes the most instruments. (E.g., two trumpets and one clarinet would be a brass ensemble; three violins, two trumpets, and two percussion would be a string ensemble.) An ensemble which has an EQUAL number from two categories as the largest representation must choose its category at the time of registration at the regional level. (E.g., a trumpet/clarinet duet must choose to be a woodwind ensemble or a brass ensemble.) This category may not change.
- 1.4.7 A mix of vocal and instrumental categories, as scored, is allowed in the ensemble contest, and will be placed in the category with the largest representation. (E.g., fourteen men singers, two flutes would be Men's Vocal; six women singers, six men singers, and string quartet would be Mixed Vocal.) There can be no mix of voice and instrument categories in a "small category" ensemble.
- 1.4.8 Small Category ensembles will be limited to one performer per part. Large category ensembles may have multiple performers per part.
- 1.4.9 Ensemble personnel must be the same as those who qualified at the regional event. If any participants are unable to be at state, an ensemble may participate with fewer students than participated at the regional level as long as the new size does not change the ensemble category and each individual student participates in the same category as he/she qualified (no substitutions allowed).
- 1.4.10 Incidental percussion may be performed by singers in a vocal ensemble, as scored in the music.
- 1.4.11 A student may be a member of more than one (1) ensemble.
- 1.4.12 Alternates accepted for the state contest will be notified by the event manager.
- 1.4.13 Ensemble members who qualify for the state contest and then change schools may not participate in the state contest.
- 1.4.14 Contemporary Vocal ensembles may perform a cappella and/or accompanied by piano or acoustic instruments. The use of vocal microphones is not allowed.**

## **2 REGIONAL CONTEST REQUIREMENTS**

- 2.1 Only one first-place district winner in each category will automatically qualify for the state contest.
- 2.2 All region winners and alternates must have received a "I" rating in their region contest to qualify for the state contest. If no one receives a "I" in a given category, there will be no state qualifier in that category. (NOTE: "+" and "-" ratings are not "official" ratings. A "I-" carries the same weight as a "I" in determining eligibility and qualifiers from a region.)
- 2.3 If a "I" rating is given in a category at the regional level, there must be a state qualifier in that category from that region. (NOTE: "+" and "-" ratings are not "official" ratings. A "I-" carries the same weight as a "I" in determining eligibility and qualifiers from a region.)

- 2.4 First and second alternates will be selected in each category if two or more performers receive a “I” rating. It will be the responsibility of the adjudicator to determine which performers are alternates. (NOTE: “+” and “-“ ratings are not “official” ratings. A “I-“ carries the same weight as a “I” in determining eligibility and qualifiers from a region.
- 2.5 Ensembles wishing to be eligible for state must observe rule 1.4.3 (personnel may not change during the ensemble’s performance time) at the regional contest.
- 2.6 Alternates will be considered for the State Chamber Ensemble Contest and will be notified so by the Contest manager under the following circumstances:
  - 2.6.1 If the first place winner in a region contest cannot participate in the State Contest, the alternate (if there is one) in that category in that same region will qualify for the state contest.
  - 2.6.2 A maximum of fifteen (15) will be allowed in each category at the State Chamber Ensemble Contest (there are 15 separate regions.) If the total number of state qualifiers in a category is less than fifteen, alternates will be selected to perform on a priority basis based on the number of entries in that category from each regional contest. First alternates from the region with the largest number of entries in a given category will be first selected for the State Contest. If there are still openings remaining after all first alternates have been selected, the same procedure will apply to second alternates.
  - 2.6.3 In case of tie for alternate selection based on regional category participation, the total number of students participating in the Regional Contest will determine the order of selection.
- 2.7 One adjudicator must judge all candidates in a given category at the regional level. If this is not possible a playoff (singoff) must be held. The same judge may adjudicate all entries in more than one category.
- 2.8 The adjudicator will select the winner from the eligible pool of ensembles. The selections of the adjudicator shall be final; it shall be the responsibility of the event manager to ensure that the appropriate number of students are selected.
- 2.9 Adjudicators who judge at any regional contest must be qualified in the division to be adjudicated. Vocal ensemble adjudicators must be current OR ACDA certified adjudicators. A case-by-case waiver for smaller districts or those with less access for certified adjudicators may be provided. Except in an emergency situation, for any given regional event no K-12 school music educator may adjudicate a category which includes his/her students, no adjudicator who gives private lessons may adjudicate a category which includes his/her own private students and no adjudicator may adjudicate a category which includes his/her own children.
- 2.10 Entries wishing to perform at a region contest that were not registered by the teacher using the prescribed registration system for that region’s contest, by the published deadline, are not eligible for the State Chamber Ensemble Championship. They may be allowed to participate, for comment only, at the discretion of the region contest manager on a space available basis.
- 2.11 An entry that performs at a time slot other than as assigned or authorized by the contest manager will perform for comment only.
- 2.12 Entries at the regional level that use any kind of electronics other than a piano provided by contest management during performance will perform for comment only and not be eligible for the state contest.

### 3 STATE CHAMPIONSHIP REQUIREMENTS

- 3.1 Three judges will listen to each ensemble. Three published copies of each piece need to be provided for the judges. In extreme cases where it is difficult or impossible to provide published copies, photocopies may be used but will not be returned following the performance. In such instances where photocopies are used, a letter from a music supplier or publisher must be provided stating that the music could not be obtained in a timely fashion and any legal copyright requirements or stipulations will subsequently be followed by the participant, including but not limited to destroying the copies used and purchasing replacement copies. Without such a letter, the participant will perform for comment only and will not be eligible for first, second or third place honors.
- 3.2 Memorization is not required at the state championship.
- 3.3 No electronics of any kind may be used during performance in any division at the State Chamber Ensemble Championship.
- 3.4 Types of literature:
  - 3.4.1 Vocal: Students will perform an art song or music representing master literature. **Students performing in the Contemporary Vocal Category will perform contemporary a cappella, vocal jazz, musical theatre, or barbershop genres.**
  - 3.4.2 Instrumental: Jazz, pop, or rock is not acceptable.
  - 3.4.3 Percussion: An ensemble may perform rudimental, ancient, or symphonic type works.
  - 3.4.4 Judges are instructed to grade down in the literature category if the previous rules are not met.
- 3.5 Points of judging
  - 3.5.1 Musicianship: Musical feeling and interpretation that is in good taste and includes tonal balance, precision, phrasing, tempo, expression, artistic effectiveness, etc.
  - 3.5.2 Tone: Beauty of tone quality.
  - 3.5.3 Intonation: Correctness of pitch or playing in tune.
  - 3.5.4 Technique: Correct and proper tonguing, articulation, bowing, fingering, diction, rudiments, etc.
  - 3.5.5 Literature: Quality of literature should be representative of state level competition.
- 3.6 Ensemble members must perform the same instrument type as which they qualified at the regional level.
- 3.7 Participants do not have to perform the same music at the state contest that they performed at the regional level.
- 3.8 An ensemble may NOT perform a piece any member of that ensemble has performed at a previous year's State Chamber Ensemble Contest.
- 3.9 Each ensemble desiring an accompanist must provide its own. Only one piano will be available in each performance room.
- 3.10 Adjudicators hired to judge at the state contest must be qualified in the division to be adjudicated. Vocal ensemble adjudicators must be current OR ACDA certified adjudicators. They may be school or private teachers of some participants, but they must use their best professionalism to avoid bias for or against their students. Except in an

emergency situation, no adjudicator may adjudicate a category which includes his/her own children.

### 3.11 Scheduling

3.11.1 Groups will be scheduled to perform only if registration guidelines and timelines published on the OMEA website are followed.

3.11.2 Performances will be scheduled at 10-minute intervals. Plan no more than seven minutes of performing time. Students will be stopped if they exceed their total time limit of 10 minutes.

3.11.3 In scheduling, no categories will be “mixed.” That is, judges must hear all competing like instrumental/vocal ensembles before any other category performs.

3.11.4 Ensemble scheduling will be done so as to accommodate conflicts between groups from the same school.

3.11.5 Aside from 3.11.4, scheduling will be done randomly.

3.11.6 An entry that performs at a time slot other than as assigned or authorized by the contest manager will perform for comment only.

### 3.12 Scoring

3.12.1 Each judge will give written comments and a rating to all participants. Each judge will rank all participants from first to last. These rankings will be compiled to score the winner, second place and third place. If a tie exists, the judges must meet and break the tie by consensus.

3.12.2 If a majority of the judges deems a participant to be the winner, that participant will be designated the winner no matter what the ranking of the minority of judges.

3.12.3 The adjudicators will select first, second and third place. The selections of the adjudicators shall be final and it shall be the responsibility of the event manager to ensure that the appropriate number of students are selected.

3.12.4 Announcement of winners. All first, second and third place winners will be announced at the award ceremony at the end of the day’s activities.