

# *American Academy*

## *Solo and Small Ensemble Competition*

### **Instrumental Guidelines**

The AA Solo and Ensemble Competition desires to have the highest quality music competition possible for all 5th - 8th grade American Academy students. Such a competition is intended to demonstrate a student's instrumental, vocal, dance, and theatrical skills, while encouraging a student to reach their highest potential.

1. Instrumental students may use recorded accompaniment tracks for their preliminary audition, however, accompaniment arrangements must be available in printed music form and performed by a live accompanist (guitar, piano, etc.) if the participant is selected to perform in the final round.
2. Solo/Ensemble music must be available in printed music form.
3. Contestants may perform solo (without accompaniment) if that is how the composition was intended on being performed (no published printed accompaniment).
4. Performances should be no more than 5 minutes long.
5. Instrumentalists may choose a performance piece from any genre, however, musical theatre and classical selections are highly encouraged.
6. Instrumentalist contestants include any instrument from the woodwind, brass, string, or percussion family.

\*Note: The judging criteria is different for piano and other instrumentalists.

### **When selecting a performance piece, please consider the following:**

#### **ELEMENTS OF MUSIC**

**Melody**—A good melody has a definite high place near its conclusion so that there is a sense of climax and resolution.

**Harmony**—Harmony should support the melody and play a subservient role.

**Rhythm**—The rhythm of a song has much to do with the overall integrity of the piece. A subtle rhythm or sense of pulsation with a balance of regular accent patterns and occasional syncopation for variety and interest is acceptable. A musical composition should have a definite beginning, build to a climax point, and communicate a definite sense of conclusion.

## APPEARANCE

There is no required dress for the first round of auditions but students are encouraged to either come in more formal attire, appropriate dance attire, or their uniform.

For the final round, students are required to wear formal attire that adhere to the American Academy dress of choice guidelines:

Boys: Dress pants and a dress shirt or a tuxedo with either a vest or cummerbund without a jacket or appropriate costume or dance attire.

Girls: Dresses, skirts or dress pants and dress shirts or appropriate costume or dance attire.

## GENERAL PERFORMANCE GUIDELINES: IMPORTANT!!!!

All copies of music, tapes, and judging forms must be CLEARLY LABELED with the contestant's name, grade, campus, and category.

1. Two copies (can be photocopied) of the arrangement, as performed, must be given to the judges before a performance. Music must be performed exactly as it appears on the score. For example, if chords are changed or there are adaptations due to range, music should be rewritten to reflect the changes. Submitted copies must include the musical score and the lyrics. The judges must receive copies of the corrected/changed scores. Copies must be CLEARLY LABELED with the contestant's name, campus, and the category.

2. Contestants may sing a cappella; be accompanied by an adult or student playing a piano (if accompanying student is not registered in the competition, that student may not be qualified to win); or use an accompaniment CD/Thumbdrive (instrumental only). Record only one song per CD/thumbdrive.

Note: Contestants are to make sure the recording is of the best possible sound quality.

3. All vocal is to be memorized (exception - Large Vocal Ensembles).

4. There should be a pre-selected spokesperson for each group who will introduce the group, the campus(es) represented, and the title of the song to be performed. (This is not counted against performance time.)

5. Personal amplification equipment for competition must be provided by student if needed for instruments like electric guitar. Amplification is not permitted at preliminary audition unless for electric guitar or instrument. (Microphones will be provided in final round as needed)

6. Musical competition time limit is 5 minutes. If competition piece exceeds the 5-minute time limit, the contestant will receive a .5-point deduction for any portion of thirty (30) second increments. (For example, a piece timed at 5:12 would receive a half-point deduction from the total score. A piece at 5:42 would receive a deduction of a full point from the total score.)

7. One piano will be provided unless requested in advance.

\* All other instruments are to be provided by the student.

## Checklist for Music:

1. Copies of music: Three (3) copies must be brought to the competition. Submitted copies must include the musical score and the lyrics.
2. Judge's Forms: Submit three (2) copies, properly filled out. (These forms will be available on site and the AA performing arts website.)
3. When selecting music for vocal or instrumental music competition, careful attention should be given to level of difficulty. Songs with too much unison or lack of distinct, individual parts do not usually place well. All members (duet, trio, quartet, etc.) or sections (ensemble) should demonstrate an ability to "carry" their individual parts with proper pitch, tone, and blend.
4. Small Ensemble (2-5 contestants\*) Time limit: 5 minutes There may be only one school entry under the designation "Small Ensemble." Each member of the small ensemble MUST register individual in the AA School Store to participate!
5. If a student plays accompaniment, he or she is not included as a contestant unless registered in the AA School Store prior to the preliminary round. (\*The adult accompanist is not considered a contestant.)
6. Ensembles larger than 5 are no permitted.

## HINTS FROM THE MUSIC JUDGES

Most of the music judges' comments deal with intonation (the ability to sing and play in tune) and rhythmic accuracy. The printed music is to be performed exactly as it is written. Often, student performers have lost many points because they performed a piece according to the way they have heard it in the past instead of the way the music indicates. Both vocalists and instrumentalists need to be aware of the fact that good intonation is often made easier by obtaining a qualified instructor who can teach the basics of breathing, posture, and other items that are the foundation of good musical performance. Please be aware that the accompaniment is a vitally important part of a musical entry. If the accompanist does not have the ability to easily perform the accompaniment, it will undoubtedly cause the score to be lowered. Recognizing the fact that many published arrangements deliberately simplify piano accompaniments so more pianists can easily perform the music, the judges will allow improvisation in the piano accompaniment; however, this liberty does not extend to the actual contestant. Do not choose music that is overly difficult in an effort to impress the judges. It is impossible to hide the fact that you are performing music that is beyond your ability. Instead of raising your score by selecting impressive selections, your score will be lowered because you cannot perform the music well. It is better to choose simpler music that you can perform well.

# PIANO JUDGING CRITERIA

## Areas of Evaluation (POSSIBLE POINTS)

Appearance and deportment (1-5)

Difficulty (1-10)

Memory (1-15)

### Musical features

- A. Melody—clearly heard (1-10)
- B. Phrasing (1-10)
- C. Rhythm (1-10)
- D. Pedaling (1-10)
- E. Tempo (1-10)
- F. Dynamics and performance indications (1-10)
- G. Smoothness of execution (1-5)

Proper Documentation Submitted (1-5)

**TOTAL POINTS (100)**

# INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC JUDGING CRITERIA

(Woodwind, Strings, Brass, Percussion)

Areas of Evaluation (POSSIBLE POINTS)

## Tone

- A. Beauty/clarity (1-4)
- B. Color/character sound (1-4)
- C. Strength, control, and embouchure (1-4)
- D. Intonation (1-4)

## Technique and Musicianship

- A. Meter (1-3)
- B. Melody (1-3)
- C. Fingering and hand positions (1-3)
- D. Accents (1-3)
- E. Precision (1-3)
- F. Slurs (1-3)
- G. Bowing (strings), tonguing (wind instruments) (1-3)
- H. Attacks (1-3)
- I. Releases (1-3)
- J. Accuracy (1-3)
- K. Memory (1-15)

## Interpretation

- A. Tempo (1-5)
- B. Style (1-5)
- C. Phrasing (1-5)
- D. Dynamics (1-5)

## Presentation

- A. Deportment (1-3)
- B. Posture (1-3)
- C. Balance and integration of accompaniment (1-4)

## Selection

- A. Degree of difficulty (1-4)
- B. Proper Documentation Submitted (1-5)

TOTAL POINTS (100)