

NHMEA LARGE GROUP FESTIVAL **GUIDELINES AND INFORMATION**

Elementary/Middle School Festival: March 14, 2026 at Manchester Memorial HS

High School Festival: March 21, 2026 at Bow High School

(overflow on March 20, 2026 if needed)

Contact: Chris Belding (cbelding@sau19.org)

The application deadline for this year's festival is Friday, January 16, 2026.

Applications will not be accepted after this date as the form will be closed.

Space is limited and date/time requests will be scheduled in the order in which applications are received. Payment is due at time of application. Invoices for districts paying by purchase order will be sent out the first week in February. Final payment must be received before the date of the festival you are attending.

PHILOSOPHY

The New Hampshire Music Educators Association, through the Large Group Festival, wishes to provide a means of competent, objective evaluation of musical performance without the obvious problems inherent in school music "contest" formats. Participants in the Large Group Festival may perform on an adjudicated basis for a rating, or for comments only. Those who elect to perform for a rating must select music in accordance with the requirements set forth in the following regulations and must sightread. Music selections for sight reading will be one grade level lower than the ensemble's performance level. This plan allows the director to choose music of a degree of difficulty suited to his or her own group, regardless of school enrollment or other arbitrary factors. Quality of performance involving tone, intonation, balance, phrasing, rhythmic accuracy, etc., is emphasized. Students are motivated by the desire to earn a high rating, rather than by competition with other students or a need to "win".

PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS

- NHMEA membership. Each school must be a current sponsoring district member. This may be verified through the NHMEA treasurer.
- All ensemble members must be members of the school.
- Unsportsmanlike conduct, destruction of property, improper behavior, or smoking on school grounds will result in the disqualification of that organization from the festival.
- Schools from neighboring states are allowed to participate in the festival. Directors of such groups should contact the Large Group Chairperson for information and application forms.
- **The registration fee will be \$230.00 per ensemble should be made payable to NHMEA and sent to NHMEA (details in the registration form)**
- Each participating group **MUST** have completed the online registration form by the **STATED DEADLINE** along with a check or school purchase order to be scheduled.

DIRECTOR INFORMATION

ENSEMBLE SIZE: Ensembles may be of any size, but should always check with the chairperson to make sure we can accommodate. Directors with exceptionally large ensembles should check with the festival chairperson regarding stage size, riser space, availability of stands, and adequate space for warm-up.

ADJUDICATOR SCORES: Directors shall provide THREE SCORES (condensed or full) for each selection to be performed. A single instrument part will not be accepted. Copies of scores will be accepted only if accompanied by a letter from a music retailer or publisher to the effect that the music has been ordered. Failure to provide musical scores for the adjudicators shall result in disqualification from the rating process. Such groups will be allowed to perform, but will be provided with general adjudicator comments only. *All scores must have measures numbered!* There will be a penalty of one rating for failure to number measures in all adjudicator scores.

RECORDINGS: All adjudicators' comments will be recorded. At the completion of your performance, you will receive a set of 3 files with the judge's comments and 1 clean recording of your performance.

PICTURES: Still, motion picture and video recording cameras that might disrupt the performance may not be used in the performance area.

SCHEDULING: The deadline for receiving registrations will be January 16th, 2026. Care will be taken to separate ensembles which are directed by the same person and/or include the same participants. Whenever possible, groups performing at similar levels will be scheduled together. Each ensemble will have 30 minutes for setup, performance, and strike with an additional 30 minutes for sight reading/ clinic.

FESTIVAL RATINGS : The rating/comment sheets for ensembles participating in the festival will be released by the Tally Room as soon as they are available. Ensembles will be given a certificate by the Large Group chairperson. The chairperson will also present a plaque order form for ensembles that have received a final "IV" rating .

AWARD PLAQUES: Directors of performing ensembles may purchase award plaques for an overall rating of "IV" from Bale Pin Company, if they so choose. Directors will receive an order form to order a plaque, which must be sent to the Large Group Chairperson within 2 weeks of the final festival.

Due to an increase in manufacturers costs, plaques are now \$65.00 and are not included in the registration fee.

You are encouraged to listen to other groups perform while at the festival. Please instruct your students in proper concert etiquette, so that all groups might have a good audience for which to perform.

MUSIC REQUIREMENTS

Music selected for a rating at the festival can be selected from the following sources:

- The New York State School Music Association (NYSSMA) Manual
- The Wisconsin State Music List, The Texas State Music List
- The New England Music Festival List, The National Band Association Manual
- The Super List for Strings (available through MENC)

*****If the repertoire selected is not on a list, or the list is not accessible to a director, a grade level may be chosen at the discretion of the director using the grade level guidance documents provided.*****

One (1) of the selections must be listed AT OR ABOVE the performance level selected by the ensembles and their director. The two other selections are “free” selections. Any group deciding to perform more than 3 selections (time permitting) must indicate which selections they wish to be adjudicated.

Directors are free to select the levels (graded I to VI) at which they wish their group(s) perform. Directors may also elect to have their group perform for comments only. Comments only ensembles are not able to be graded, and will not have plaques awarded. Elementary groups have the option to perform unlevelled selections, the literature performed to be selected by the director, without restrictions. Grades will be given, but there will be no sight reading and no plaque awarded.

Ensembles shall perform three (3) selections within a 25 minute performance slot. All groups who wish to try for a plaque must sight-read. Sight-reading will take place in an area closed to the public except for members of the group, their director and people working with the festival. The sight-reading music that has been selected is one grade level below your scheduled performance level. Groups performing for “comments only” and those who have chosen not to sight-read may have their sight-reading time for a workshop on their performance.

Sight-reading procedures are as follows: After the music has been distributed, the director and the students will be allowed three minutes to study the piece. The students will be allowed to discuss the piece with each other while the director studies the score. They may not play or sing during this time. The director will then have an additional two minutes to explain the selection to the group. Group members may not play or sing the music prior to sight-reading. Directors may clap or speak rhythms and answer questions as needed. Choral groups will be provided with a sight-reading chorale that will be sung a cappella, and a starting note will be provided. All groups are allowed to sing/play a scale in the exercise key before sightreading. After sightreading completion, ensembles will then be provided with a short workshop by one of their adjudicators.

GRADED MUSIC

Music is classified into six levels of difficulty, as described below. Directors are free to choose music from any grade they feel is most suitable for their ensemble(s).

Grade I: Easy keys, meters, ranges and rhythms. Recommended for newly formed groups or young, inexperienced players.

Grade II: May include changes of tempo, key, meter, or mood. Recommended for junior high school ensembles and high schools with small enrollment.

Grade III: Increasing demands of technique, range and interpretation. String parts may include a third position. Recommended for junior high ensembles and young high school ensembles.

Grade IV: Moderately difficult. String parts may include the first five positions. Recommended for average high school ensembles and advanced junior high ensembles.

Grade V: Difficult music of considerable technical and musical demands. String parts may include the first seven positions. Recommended for more advanced high school groups.

Grade VI: For musically mature groups of exceptional competence.

EQUIPMENT FURNISHED BY THE HOST SCHOOL

Instrumental performance areas will include: a bass drum, 4 timpani, chairs, chimes, a xylophone and a minimum of 50 stands per area. A podium will be provided whenever possible. If a performing group needs more than fifty stands, they must provide the extras themselves.

Choral performance areas will have risers, whenever possible, and a tuned piano. (Schools should plan on bringing their own keyboards for warm up).

The sight reading area will be furnished in the same manner as the instrumental performance area. Any extra percussion instruments necessary to cover the selected sight-reading pieces, will not be provided.

Special Note: Publicity by radio, television or newspaper claiming “state championship” by any participating group is considered unethical under the group rating system. Such practice may be the basis for elimination from further NHMEA events.