



# DOROTHY SUTTON PERFORMANCE FESTIVAL

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR ADJUDICATORS

The mission of DSPF is to foster a sense of inclusivity and support, encouraging and celebrating musical accomplishments at all levels of development. DSPF is not a competition but a festival for student musicians of all ages, including children, teens, and adults. All students who obtain a superior performance rating and a qualifying score on their music theory examination earn an invitation to perform one piece at the state recital showcase. The recitals include performances representing outstanding achievement at all levels from beginning through advanced. To support the festival's inclusive mission, judges must observe the following guidelines:

- 1. Ratings must reflect only how performances meet their music's requirements. Judges must not reward or penalize students for their age or their music's difficulty level.** For example, judges must award a superior rating for a fluent and expressive performance of early elementary repertoire. Conversely, judges must give a lower rating to a student who performs more advanced music with errors or lapses in expression. In addition, a younger student who performs intermediate repertoire with errors must not receive a higher rating than an older student who presents a recital-ready performance of less advanced music. In sum, ratings must assess performance quality and not the level of advancement relative to the student's age. This policy supports the idea that one is never too old or young to express oneself through music and that artistry can happen at all levels of development. This approach ensures fair and just assessment for all participants.
- 2. Adjudicators must not assign ratings to rank students against each other or use percentiles or quotas to guide their ratings.** For example, if ten students at different levels present recital-ready performances, all ten merit a superior rating. Conversely, if a judge hears few polished performances, they must award only a few superior ratings.
- 3. Adjudicators must select one work representing the student's highest level of achievement.** The student will be invited to perform this piece in the state showcase recitals if eligible. **For the state showcase, a student must perform the work chosen by their adjudicator.** Adjudicators may select the more demanding piece if they assess both as recital-ready.
- Folksong arrangements are acceptable for elementary and intermediate students. However, transcriptions or simplified arrangements of solo or ensemble pieces are not eligible for inclusion in the state showcase recitals unless the original composer is the arranger (e.g., Liszt transcriptions, Brahms's *Waltzes*, op.39, Ravel's two-hand arrangements from his *Mother Goose Suite*). **In their written comments, adjudicators must identify works that do not conform to these requirements to prevent their inclusion in the state showcase recitals.** If a student playing a simplified arrangement is rated superior, the judge must select the work eligible for the state recitals.
- Memorization is required for solo pianists and vocalists, strongly encouraged but not required for other solo instruments, and not required for duets and ensembles. Adjudicators must follow Section 6e below for solo performances that do not meet the memorization standard.
- 6. Adjudicators must assign one of the following overall ratings for each audition.** Adjudicators have discretion in choosing a rating if they believe the student's two pieces demonstrate inequivalent performance quality.
  - Superior.** The student presents a recital-ready performance that is fluent, accurate, stylistic, and expressive throughout.
  - Excellent**—The performance is primarily secure and expressive, with one or more details that need refinement to achieve fluency and concert readiness.
  - Good**—The performer demonstrates some technical skill and expression and needs to address recurring or salient details to achieve concert readiness.
  - Developing**— The performance is not fluent, continuous, or complete yet. Extensive additional preparation is needed to achieve concert readiness.
  - No Rating-Comments Only**— Adjudicators must assign this rating to students who do not give sheet music to the adjudicator or do not meet memorization requirements.
- 7. Adjudicators must provide clear, specific, actionable, and constructive feedback.** To support students' growth, judges must identify details that support their rating. The audition chair will provide a rating sheet template for judges who prefer to type their responses.
- Adjudicators must provide only written feedback during the audition and not give spoken commentary or coaching. This guideline ensures a fair and consistent adjudication process for all students.