

New York State School Music Association

Composition/Improvisation Committee Criteria for the Evaluation of Compositions

The committee evaluates the submitted compositions based on three broad criteria:

- Compositional Technique
- Overall Musical Appeal
- Creativity

Compositional Technique includes the following elements, where applicable:

- organization of pitch elements (such as melody, harmony, and counterpoint)
- organization of rhythmic elements
- formal design
- accuracy and clarity of notation
- appropriate writing for instruments and/or voices

Overall Musical Appeal includes the following aspects:

- stylistic coherence (regardless of the particular style)
- effective handling of unity/variety and tension/release
- effective use of dynamics, articulations, and expression marks
- interaction of all of the elements (atmosphere, mood, direction and flow of the music)

Creativity refers to aspects of the piece that reveal the composer's individual "voice," and distinguish the piece from a musical exercise or a direct imitation of another piece.

If some of these terms are unfamiliar to you, please discuss them with your teacher or contact the committee chairperson at comp@nyssma.org

Although compositional quality is the primary consideration for inclusion in the Young Composer honors Concert, the committee also attempts to select pieces in a variety of styles and genres representing all three age categories (K-5, 6-8, 9-11).

The criteria for evaluation listed on this page are not intended as a "checklist" that each student should go through as they compose a piece. Each piece is unique, and the committee attempts to assess each composition on its own terms.