

NCBA Concert Festival Committee
Grade Level Descriptors

GRADE 1

RHYTHM:

- Whole, half, quarter, eighth, and dotted half notes
- Occasional dotted quarter eighth note Rhythms
- Percussion rhythms may include sixteenth notes (4 per beat)

METER:

- 2/4, 3/4, 4/4
- Possible occasional simple meter change after fermata

RANGES/TESSITURA:

- See attached

KEYS:

- Bb, Eb, F
- Possible occasional simple key change

MELODIC TREATMENT:

- Limited bass melodic patterns
- Scalar patterns for brass
- Very limited use of accidentals
- Four and eight measure phrases

SCORING/TEXTURE:

- Scored as if oboe, bassoon, horn, euphonium, and tuba are absent.
- Clarinet and Trumpet can be two part with uniformity of rhythms throughout the parts
- Ample doubling of parts
- Melody may be found in all instruments
- No solos

HARMONIC TREATMENT:

- Unisons, thirds, fourths (limited), fifth, sixths, and octaves
- Triads

MUSICAL MATURITY:

- Selections with a strong rhythmic pulse
- Limited use of ritardandos (ending in fermatas); no accelerandos
- Tempo Changes only after fermatas
- Limited dynamic variation
- Predictable arranging and orchestration

- Considerable repetition in percussion with limited use of rolls (no snare drum rolls on fermatas)
- Predictable binary and ternary forms

GRADE 2

RHYTHM:

- Whole, half, quarter, eighth, dotted half notes
- Dotted quarter eighth note patterns
- Triplets, sixteenth notes patterns, and syncopated rhythms
- Percussion rhythms include expanded sixteenth note patterns

METER:

- 2/4, 3/4, 4/4
- Occasional, simple 2/2, 6/8
- Occasional, isolated meter changes

RANGES/TESSITURA:

- See attached

KEYS:

- Bb, Eb, Ab, F
- Occasional, simple g and c minor passages.
- Key change

MELODIC:

- Occasional bass line melodies patterns
- Harmonic partial leaps for brass (e.g. trombone Bb-F)
- Predictable accidentals
- Simple modal melodies
- Four and eight measure phrases

SCORING/TEXTURE:

- Melody usually found in all instruments
- Doubling of parts across sections
- Low brass and woodwind bass line; trombones may deviate occasionally
- Occasional solos

HARMONIC TREATMENT:

- Unisons, thirds, fourths (limited), fifth, sixths, and octaves
- Triads
- Primarily consonant intervals
- Suspended triads and seventh chords

MUSICAL MATURITY:

- Limited rubato
- Limited use of ritardandos and accelerandos
- Moderate dynamic variations
- Moderate use of repetition in percussion; moderate use of rolls
- Primarily binary and ternary forms; moderate use of variation techniques

GRADE 3:

RHYTHM:

- Whole, half, quarter, eighth, dotted half notes
- Dotted quarter eighth note patterns
- Triplets
- Basic sixteenth notes pattern and dotted eighth sixteenth
- Basic six-eight, and five eighth rhythms
- Syncopated rhythms
- Percussion rhythms include expanded sixteenth note patterns

METER:

- 2/4, 3/4, 4/4, 2/2, 6/8, 5/8
- Occasional meter changes

RANGES/TESSITURA:

- See attached

KEYS:

- Bb, Eb, Ab, F, C
- g,c, minor passages
- Occasional key changes

MELODIC:

- Steps, skips, occasional leaps within key, these are permissible in all instruments
- Predictable accidentals
- Occasional modal melodies
- Extended phrase lengths

SCORING/TEXTURE:

- All instruments receive melody during the piece
- Occasionally parts doubled by at least one other instrument
- Two parts for flute, alto saxophone, trombone, and horn acceptable
- Three parts for clarinet and trumpet acceptable
- Some solos acceptable
- Generally up to three separate melodic lines

HARMONIC TREATMENT:

- Unisons, thirds, fourths (limited), fifth, sixths, and octaves
- Consonant and dissonant intervals
- Suspended triads and seventh and ninth chords
- Suspensions

MUSICAL MATURITY:

- Use of ritardandos, accelerandos, and rubato
- Frequent use of dynamic variations
- Use of varied, less predictable arranging and orchestration
- Frequent use of rolls in percussion
- Multiple mallet parts
- Any basic formal structure

GRADE 4:

RHYTHM:

- Whole, half, quarter, eighth, dotted half notes
- Dotted quarter eighth note patterns
- Triplets
- Expanded sixteenth note patterns and dotted eighth sixteenth
- Expanded six-eight, and five eighth rhythms
- Syncopated rhythms
- Percussion rhythms include expanded sixteenth note patterns

METER:

- 2/4, 3/4, 4/4, 2/2, 5/4, 7/4, 6/4, 3/8, 6/8, 5/8, 7/8, 9/8
- Meter changes

RANGES/TESSITURA:

- See attached

KEYS:

- Bb, Eb, Ab, Db, G, F, C
- g, c, a, d, f minor passages
- Key changes

MELODIC:

- Steps, skips, occasional leaps within key, these are permissible in all instruments
- Moderate use of accidentals
- Mild non-standard tonal procedures
- Some modal melodies
- Odd length phrases
- Extended phrase lengths

SCORING/TEXTURE:

- All instruments receive melody during the piece
- Occasionally parts doubled by at least one other instrument
- Two parts for flute, alto saxophone, oboe, bassoon acceptable
- Three parts for clarinet, trumpet, trombone acceptable
- Four horn parts acceptable
- Occasional solos
- Generally up to three separate melodic lines

HARMONIC TREATMENT:

- Unisons, thirds, fourths (limited), fifth, sixths, and octaves
- Consonant and dissonant intervals
- Suspended triads and seventh, ninth chords, occasionally scored eleventh or thirteenth chords
- Suspensions

MUSICAL MATURITY:

- The demand for musical maturity corresponds with the increased grade level criteria. This may include but is not limited to length, form, style, genre and intricacy.

GRADE 5:

RHYTHM:

In addition to Grade 4

- Any sixteenth combinations
- Frequent and shifting subdivision
- Sixteenths in compound meters

METER:

In addition to Grade 4

- More frequent meter changes and beat grouping changes
- All simple duple and triple meters
- All compound duple and triple meters
- More frequent meter changes
- 5/8, 5/4, 7/8, 7/4 and shifts in beat grouping possible

RANGES/TESSITURA:

In addition to Grade 4

- Extended playing in extreme registers often paired with dynamic extremes

KEYS:

- D, G, C, G, Bb, Eb, Ab, Db major and relative minors
- More frequent key changes

MELODIC:

In additions to Grade 4

- Frequent use of accidentals
- Moderate use of non-standard tonal procedures
- More frequent use of modal melodies
- Use of odd-length phrases common
- Motive-based melodic treatment.

SCORING/TEXTURE:

In addition to Grade 4

- Unusual instrument grouping
- Extended solo passages
- Exposed individual instrument sections
- Variety of textures and scoring are common resulting in increased listening responsibilities
- Multiple melodic lines used frequently

HARMONIC TREATMENT:

- Use of consonant and dissonant intervals
- More complex or extended chord structure is common.

MUSICAL MATURITY:

- The demand for musical maturity corresponds with the increased grade level criteria. This may include but is not limited to length, form, style, genre and intricacy.

GRADE 6:**RHYTHM:**

- All 16th subdivisions in all meters
- More frequent subdivision
- Use of hemiola and other polyrhythms are common

METER:

- All meters are possible.
- Meter and beat grouping changes are common

RANGES/TESSITURA:

- Extended playing in extreme registers is common, often paired with dynamic extremes

KEYS:

- All keys are possible

MELODIC TREATMENT:

- Extensive use of accidentals is possible
- Extended use of non-standard tonal procedures is possible
- More frequent use of modal melodies
- Use of odd-length phrases and motive-based melodic treatment is common

SCORING/TEXTURE:

- Solo passages can be expected/virtuosic
- Most unusual instrument groupings are possible
- Variety of textures and scoring are used extensively, resulting in increased listening responsibilities
- Full instrumentation is expected
- Multiple melodic lines occur more frequently.

HARMONIC TREATMENT: same as 5**MUSICAL MATURITY:**

- The demand for musical maturity corresponds with the increased grade level criteria. This may include but is not limited to length, form, style, genre and intricacy.