



Folly Quarter Middle School Bands

Andrew B. Spang, Director

All About Solo & Ensemble

What is Solo & Ensemble?

The **Solo & Ensemble Festival** is a chance for students to prepare and perform solos or chamber music in front of a judge for comments and awards. *Solos* are pieces performed by just you with another person playing piano. Chamber music, or *ensembles*, are pieces performed by two or more students, usually three to five people playing similar instruments (such as brass, or clarinet ensemble).

There are two levels of Solo & Ensemble, one at the **County Level** and one at the **State Level**. You must receive a "T" (Superior) rating at the County Festival to be allowed to continue onto the State Level.

How do I get to do S&E ?

Interested students should pick an appropriate solo as soon as possible. To get the most from this opportunity, students should work on the solo with a private teacher. Then, in early January, sometimes as early as late December, students should speak to their band director and get a Registration Form. **Students must complete the Registration Form and return it with the appropriate Fee to the Band Director by the deadlines.** Students will have to fill out separate forms at the County and State Levels.

What does it cost?

Solo & Ensemble has a fee, currently \$7 for the Howard County Solo & Ensemble Festival, that each student must pay. Ensembles work differently, be sure to check the Registration Form for accurate costs and fees. *In addition, all students performing solos will have to pay a piano accompanist.* These rates vary from pianist to pianist, on the difficulty of the piece, and depending on how many rehearsals/performances you give.

Is it an audition?

No, this is not an audition and no one is "chosen" for Solo & Ensemble. This is a chance to perform a solo for a respected judge and musician who can

give you feedback on how to improve your playing. However, it does tend to feel like an audition while you are doing it.

What do I need to prepare?

There are two things you need to prepare for your performance at Solo & Ensemble. ❶ **Your Solo:** Obviously, you want to learn the solo you are going to prepare. Keep in mind that you will need to get the music to a pianist who will also need to practice this music. Then, you will need to rehearse with the pianist so that you are both comfortable performing the piece together. ❷ **Scales:** Students should be prepared to play scales. Although the judges usually won't ask for scales, you should be prepared to play a one octave **Chromatic Scale**, except for flute and clarinet players who should prepare a two octave chromatic scale. Also, you will need to know your **Major Scales** up to 4 #s and 4 b's. See your director for a copy of these scales, if necessary. **Is there Sight Reading?** No, there is no sight-reading at Solo & Ensemble.

Where do I get a pianist?

It is *completely your responsibility* to contact and arrange to have a pianist practice and perform with you. Your band director should have a list of qualified and professional pianists. You will need to pay the pianist for their time and efforts. Be sure to get a copy of *Working with Pianists* from Mr. Spang if you are going to do a solo.

Where do I get music?

The music performed must be listed on the **Maryland Band Director Association Solo & Ensemble List**. Actual copies of the music must be purchased from your local music store or ordered through appropriate distributors. You must not perform from photocopies — *that is illegal!* The best advice of appropriate solos for you and your particular instrument will come from your private teacher. Ensemble music can sometimes be borrowed from your band director.