

Number	Entry	Category	Registration Requirements
531-533	Piano Music	Performance	Sign up on student registration form. Submit project info & sheet music online. Dates on website.

OFFICIAL STATEMENT OF ACCEPTABLE MUSIC FOR EXCEL CONVENTION COMPETITION

The intent of music competition is to encourage students to develop their musical ability and apply their musical talents to Christian values. Competition arrangements are to be Christian, patriotic, or classical rather than secular. Music must be appropriate for a typical Pentecostal church service. EXCEL recognizes the wide spectrum of “acceptable” music among Pentecostals and strives to accommodate distinctive styles from different churches represented. EXCEL does not necessarily endorse music performed during competition. Judges will evaluate contestant compliance to criteria on the judge’s form without prejudice for or against any particular style of Christian music.

MUSIC DIVISION RULES

1. Sheet music must be submitted. If music is changed, printed score must be rewritten to reflect the changes. Music must be performed exactly as the score.
2. Vocal contestants will perform with a microphone. Contestants may sing a capella; be accompanied by an adult, sponsor, or student (of Convention age) playing a piano supplied by the convention; or use a sound track. Also some instrumentals are eligible for accompaniment (see instrumental guidelines). Soundtracks must be submitted with sheet music online.
3. Students appearing in music competition should observe the performance appearance guidelines found on pages 10-11, as they will affect judging. Carelessness on these points could detract from an otherwise excellent presentation:

Poise/Self-Confidence

- a. **Approach** - The approach is one of the most important elements in speaking, public reading, or singing. The contestant should walk confidently and briskly to the podium or front of the room and establish eye contact, pause for 5-10 seconds, and begin his presentation.
- b. **Eye Contact** - Unless following a musical score, he should avoid looking down, at the ceiling, or out of the window. Eyes should move back and forth over the entire audience, slowly and naturally.
- c. **Posture and Gestures** - The rule for posture is DO NOT SLOUCH! The contestant should stand straight, but not lock his/her knees. Gestures should be free and flow naturally from enthusiasm. Natural movements are more effective than forced gestures.
- d. **Delivery** – Vocalists should project the voice, using the diaphragm, and plan breathing.

Preparation - Preparation and practice are prerequisites for all musical performances.

Platform Presentation - Introduction of entry before the judges: Contestants in platform presentations are to give their first and last name and title of presentation distinctly (“My name is John Doe and I will be playing the Blue Danube Waltz”). For entries involving more than one person a spokesman should be selected.

NOTE TO JUDGES: This introduction is NOT to be counted as time against their presentation.

4. All music is to be memorized. (EXCEPTION: Instrumental ensembles.)
5. Personal amplification equipment for competition is not encouraged but may be allowed in some cases. Check with the Convention Coordinator at registration. ALSO, UPON ARRIVAL AT EXCEL CONVENTION, CONSULT SOUND TECHNICIAN WELL BEFORE YOUR SCHEDULED PERFORMANCE IF YOU NEED TO LINK YOUR EQUIPMENT WITH THE HOUSE SYSTEM FOR YOUR PERFORMANCE.

HINTS FROM THE MUSIC JUDGES

Most of the music judges' comments deal with intonation and rhythmic accuracy; that is, the ability to sing and play on pitch and to perform the music exactly as written, giving all value to each note and dynamic marking. While poise, polish, and appearance contribute to a good performance, nothing can compensate for failures in intonation of rhythm. These are the heart of musicianship. Vocalists can improve their ability to sing on pitch by practicing good support. Instrumentalists need to practice proper playing with deep breathing, good embouchure, correct fingering, etc. The accompaniment is a vitally important part to a musical entry, so be sure the ability of the accompanist or the quality of the recording is as high as possible. The accompanist may improvise to enhance the performance, if desired.

CAUTION: Choose music that is not overly difficult for the experience and capabilities of the singer or player. It is better to choose music that is simpler than to attempt to perform music that is beyond the reach of the student.

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC, PIANO CATEGORIES

(531-532) Piano Solo – Separate competition categories for male and female contestants. (Piano provided by convention.)

(533) Piano Duet - Two people playing the same piano. Contestants may be male, female or mixed. (Piano provided by convention.)

TIPS ON PREPARING FOR CONVENTION - INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

TONE QUALITY

General

Beauty of Tonal Color

Each instrument or ensemble group possesses a unique characteristic tone quality (color). Performers are expected to achieve this tonal color in performance. Listen to quality recordings of professionals, and strive to match their tonal color as you play. Listen to classical soloists or chamber groups to develop a refined sound. Poor tone quality is usually an indication of improper air concepts on winds, poor bow control on strings, or improper stroking on percussion instruments.

Control and Stability

These terms refer to evenness of tone and ease of tonal production. These are best achieved by daily, thoughtful practice of long tones and scales throughout the instrument's range over a long period of time. Be prepared to spend many years of consistent practice developing control and stability of a beautiful tonal color.

Solo

Range Development

Choose a solo that demonstrates your full note range. Solos that require tones that are too high or low, and solos that do not demonstrate the performer's full range should be avoided or modified.

Embouchure (Winds)

The embouchure (lip and jaw function) should work freely to allow the air stream to cause a proper vibration. Secure the services of a professional private instructor to develop proper embouchure habits.

Ensemble

Balance of Parts

Keep in mind that the melody line must predominate, and that accompanying parts must present a unified foundation for the melody whenever it is present.

Group Blend

Blend the voices of the ensemble so that they present a unified tonal color, one that is characteristic for the type of group that you are presenting. Strive to develop a classical chamber sound.

INTERPRETATION AND MUSICIANSHIP

Phrasing

This element, more than any other, separates maturity levels in performance. Only a small percentage of the dynamic and tempo variations are actually indicated in the score. Identify each phrase, then identify the highest point of intensity within each phrase. Finally, use the following tools of expression, tempo, and dynamics to enhance that point of intensity within each phrase.

Expression, Tempo, Dynamics, and Spirit

Strive to present the emotional intent of the composer, and the spiritual qualities of the song's message (when applicable).

Tradition

Some pieces, especially sacred classics, require some understanding of the musical period during which they were written, i.e., Renaissance, Baroque, etc. Listen to several professional recordings of your piece and other similar pieces from that musical period, then match the traditional styles that you hear on the recordings.

TECHNIQUE

General (All instruments)

Demonstrated Fluency and Overall Technical Ability

Choose a piece that emphasizes your strengths. Fluency refers to technical freedom on the instrument. Many years of faithful practice under the direction of a good teacher are required to develop fluency and a wide-ranging technical ability.

Articulations/Fingering/Hand Positions/Posture

Efficiency of stroke technique/Individual stroke consistency/Group stroke consistency. Choose the stroke patterns that produce the styles and expressions that the piece requires. Then practice those patterns carefully under the watchful eye of an instructor to develop consistency. Remember - PRACTICE MAKES PERMANENT.

RHYTHM

Precision

Rhythmic precision refers to the accurate execution of each written rhythmic figure. Any variation to the written rhythms should be noted on every judge's copy.

Metre

Each time signature receives its own characteristic pulsation within every measure. This pulsation seldom varies throughout the piece unless it is interrupted by special articulations. The performer must learn the metrical pattern of each time signature so that the pulsation and variations in that pulsation can achieve the intended effects.

Rhythmic figure Interpretation

Not only is rhythmic precision important, but it is also important to achieve the interpreted style of unique rhythmic figures. Listen to recordings and secure the assistance of a professional instructor to assist in this area.

Accents

Give special attention to every accent (both written accents and accents that are implied by the metre). There are several types of accents, and each style of piece requires its own special treatment of accents. Also, accents are performed at different intensities depending on the dynamic level at the time.

PRESENTATION

Suitability to Ability

Choose a piece that clearly shows your ability, keeping in mind that a piece does not need to be difficult to be musically excellent and to minister to fellow believers.

Suitability to Musical Style

Follow the suggested guidelines carefully. Keep in mind that the music itself will develop an atmosphere. That atmosphere should be consistent with the spirit of the song and the spirit of the service in which the piece is being played.

Stage Presence (soloist)/ Stage Appearance (ensemble)

Soloists should try to present a spirit of quiet confidence. Do not look at the judges or audience while playing. Simply concentrate on the music. Ensembles should try to sit or stand in an attractive formation. Give each instrument plenty of room. Take whatever time is needed to set up your performance area to give an attractive and orderly appearance. You may look at each other if doing so enhances musical communication and performance. Develop a simple, silent, hidden (if possible) starting signal.

Entrance/Exit

Take some time to develop an orderly entrance and exit. Look positive from the time that you enter the performing area to the time that you leave.

Memorization bonus (solos, duet, trios and quartets only) If in doubt, use the musical score. This allows most people a better opportunity to concentrate on musical aspects of their performance. Large ensembles should not attempt to perform from memory. The time that is taken in memorization can be spent in more valuable musical pursuits.

Time Limit Time your piece when you are selecting it. Choose a piece that fits easily into the time limit. Cuts and tempo variations to make the time limit are often quite distracting.

JUDGING CRITERIA

AREAS OF EVALUATION	POSSIBLE POINTS
I. Technique and Musicianship	
A. Meter	6
B. Melody	6
C. Fingering	6
D. Accents and Staccato	6
E. Precision	6
F. Pedal Usage	6
II. Interpretation	
A. Tempo	6
B. Style	6
C. Phrasing	6
D. Dynamics	6
E. Over-all Interpretation	6
III. Presentation	
A. Deportment/Departure	6
B. Does the presentation minister to the listener	6
C. Memorization	6
D. Suitability of Ability	6
IV. Appropriateness of Selection	
A. Appropriateness	5
B. Difficulty	5
TOTAL POINTS	100

Time limit: Maximum, five minutes.

MUSIC PRACTICE CHECK LIST

Note to Students: Use this form to have someone knowledgeable about music periodically evaluate your performance. This will build your confidence in strong areas and help you identify areas you need to improve before performing at Convention. Practice will improve your performance!

Student's Name _____

Category _____

Song Title _____

Sponsor initial approval choice of song _____

Supervisor _____ Student _____

Definitions and Helps to consider:

I. **Tone** - The pure clear sound of a pitch

A. Beauty (intonation) a sound that is the correct pitch (beautiful and pleasant to hear) _____

B. Color - the brilliance of tone with variety _____

C. Strength and Control - both restraint and power _____

II. **Accuracy** - The correct notes and timing

A. Meter - the unit of a rhythmic pattern (3/4) (4/4) (6/8) etc. _____

B. Chords - the putting together of tones (they should be pleasant) _____

C. Accents - to emphasize (play or sing louder) a note or group of notes _____

D. Precision-specifically accurate, strictly as the music indicates _____

III. **Articulation** - The playing or pronouncing with understandable sound

A. Slurring - connecting notes smoothly _____

B. Bowing (strings) - making sounds clearly with a bow _____

C. Embouchure (wood instruments) the correct lip or mouth position _____

D. Fingering - the right finger on the right note or in the right position _____

E. Ensemble - the clarity of the combined sounds _____

F. Attacks - the starting sound without NOISE _____

G. Cut-offs - the quality of the ending part of the sound _____

H. Clarity - especially words: **understandable, vowels/consonants produced accurately** _____

IV. **Interpretation** - The expression of the message during the performance

A. Tempo-the speed of the song that best fits that selection _____

B. Style-the kind of music, march, soft hymn, etc. _____

C. Phrasing-expressing a FEELING created by the way a group of notes is played, **excitement, calmness, sadness, changes coming faster or more slowly** _____

D. Dynamics - the overall changing of volume: louds, softs, etc. _____

V. **Presentation** - The act of performing a musical piece for a person or group

A. Musicianship - the quality and flow of the selection _____

B. Deportment - the actions or gestures from the second the student is visible, during the performance, and while leaving the area _____

C. Posture - physical stance/position of body, feet, shoulders, and hands of the performer _____

D. Memorization - playing or singing the selection by memory _____

VI. **Appropriateness of Selection** – See the OFFICIAL STATEMENT OF ACCEPTABLE MUSIC at the beginning of this Music section of the Guidelines.