

Music Performance: Medieval Music

Category Rules

This category is for performances of medieval music (c. 475-1400 C.E.). It also includes pieces newly composed in a faithfully medieval style, such as those that would score highly as an entry in the Music Composition: Pre-17th Century category. Pieces from before 475 C.E. or after 1400 C.E. may be included if the entrant can demonstrate that the piece is medieval rather than ancient or Renaissance in style; a short explanation for this decision must be included in the entry's documentation. The performance may be no longer than 15 minutes. Performers may present excerpts or abridgements of a longer work in order to comply with this time limit.

The performance may employ any voice(s) and/or instrument(s), either solo or in ensemble. Groups of performers will be evaluated as a single ensemble unless one or more entrants wish to be judged as individuals (ex: a soloist performing with an accompanist); in this case, individual entrants will register for the competition as separate entries and will remind the judges that they are to be scored individually. Individual entrants will be judged on their own performances only; any other performer is not scored, except as it directly impacts the entrant's performance. Performances that involve potentially dangerous materials, such as fire, should be prepared to perform outdoors. Any entry that exhibits danger to the entrant(s), judges, or audience will be immediately disqualified.

Research and Documentation (Score: 0-4 points)

Documentation should include historical information relevant to the piece as well as reasoning behind performance decisions. For full points, the entry's documentation should discuss the music's style, structure/form, and societal context (i.e., where it would have been performed, by whom, under what circumstances, for what purpose, etc.); and the entrant's chosen performance practices as they relate to the time(s) and place(s) the piece comes from.

For full points, a copy of the score should be provided for each judge. The score should adequately convey all composed (i.e., not interpreted or improvised) musical material and may be in any of the following formats:

- Modern Western notation.
- Modern Western notation with extended notation, if modern Western notation alone is unable to convey composed musical material. All forms of extended notation must be explained in the documentation.
- Figured bass, tablature, lead sheets, chant notation, and other standardized Western forms of notation, if stylistically appropriate to the piece.
- A detailed written description of the piece's musical content, structure, and (if applicable) lyrics. The description should convey all composed musical material.
- A recording of the piece by the entrant or any other artist. The recording must be accompanied by a means to play it, plus a written document detailing any intentional differences between the recording and the entry as performed. The document should also identify which elements of the performance on the recording are interpreted or improvised (not composed).
- Any combination of the above, as long as it adequately conveys all composed musical material.

All other scores, for example those used in the performance or elsewhere in the documentation, may be in any form that is stylistically and culturally appropriate to the piece.

- 0 No documentation provided with entry. Face-to-face judging adds very little information.
- 1 Minimal information is provided for time, place, style. Face-to-face judging adds some background info.
- 2 As in #1, generalized sources are given with no emphasis on primary and/or scholarly resources. In face-to-face judging, no further understanding of the resources is evident. Materials and methods of composition of the entry are described.

- 3 As in #2, there is a good balance of resources: primary and/or scholarly sources well supported by other resources. Documentation and/or face-to-face judging provides well developed discussion of research. Materials and methods of composition are described and reasons for choices discussed.
- 4 As in #3, in-depth and extensive documentation provides a good balance of resources, emphasizing primary (if available) and/or scholarly resources backed up with a significant selection of other resources. Documentation and/or face-to-face judging provide a good explanation of original research and experimentation related to the research. Face-to-face judging indicates a keen grasp of the research and the entrant can discuss it easily with active engagement. Appendices included in documentation (if any) help provide further pertinent information to subject and time period.

Materials and Methods (Score: 0-4 points)

Rate the quality and the historical accuracy, not the difficulty, of the materials and methods used in the performance. Materials include musical source material (i.e., the piece being performed) and instruments, plus instrumental accessories that affect sound quality, such as mutes. Performers who use post-period instruments or instrumental accessories will receive full points (for example, an adult female singing a part originally intended for a male child; or: a violin is used in place of a vielle), provided the substitution is logical and the differences are adequately explained in the documentation. Methods include performance techniques (i.e., physical actions the performer takes to create the performance).

- 0 Entry is completely modern with no relationship to period elements or practices.
- 1 Use of modern materials and methods to produce a performance that does not conform to period practice but which has some relationship to the medieval period (ex: performance employs some basic period stylistic elements, but uses modern chordal progressions and sounds modern).
- 2 Use of both modern and period materials and methods to produce a performance that has modern and period elements (ex: melody is period, but vocal technique and accompaniment are modern).
- 3 Use of primarily period materials and methods to produce a performance that sounds authentic (ex: piece is documentable to the medieval period and technique is close to period technique but not perfectly appropriate; or: piece is newly composed in a period style and performed with appropriate technique and accompaniment, but a few compositional or performance elements are not stylistically appropriate).
- 4 Use of totally authentic materials and methods (ex: piece is documentable to the medieval period and is performed with appropriate technique and style; or: piece is an excellent example of a newly composed piece in a medieval form and is performed with appropriate technique and style).

Scope (Score: 0-6 points for each bullet item)

Rank the **ambition**, not the success, of the entry for each applicable element respective to the intended style.

- Difficulty of technical execution: This includes rhythmic execution, articulation and phrasing, intonation, dynamics, timbre/tone, posture, embouchure, fingering, etc., as appropriate to the instrument and the specific style of the piece performed. It also includes all visual components of the performance (ex: gestures, facial expressions, dance, interactions with props, etc.) Note: This category is for technical execution only; costumes, props, etc., themselves may be scored in the Judge's Observation section.
- Musical complexity: This includes the complexity of melodic, rhythmic, and/or harmonic components, as well as all other relevant musical aspects of the piece. While technical execution addresses the difficulty of physically producing the desired sounds, musical complexity addresses conceptual difficulty.

Optional

- Amount of original work: If the entry contains original work such as transcription, arrangement, reconstruction, stylistically appropriate improvisation and ornamentation, etc.
- Degree of audience interaction: Unless the performer has documented that audience interaction is inappropriate for the piece, assess all methods used to connect with the audience besides sound production, including eye contact, visual responses to the audience, etc.

- Ensemble synthesis: If there is more than one performer, assess how performers interact with one another (ex: intonation, tempo, articulation, volume, etc.), as appropriate to the style of the piece.
- Linguistic challenges: If the performance includes spoken or sung text, assess the intelligibility of vocalized speech sounds including pronunciation, speed of delivery, etc., as well as related issues such as translation and orthographic challenges (such as those that may be presented by languages not written in the Latin alphabet). Do not judge any introduction to or commentary on the piece as part of this category, unless it is clearly intended to be part of the work being performed.
- Memorization: Unless the performer has documented that memorization is inappropriate for the piece, assess the amount of music and/or number of performance elements performed from memory, as well as to their relative difficulty. Entries that have more elements available for memorization, or where memorization is more difficult (for example, 12th-c. Occitan lyrics may be more difficult to memorize than 16th-c. English lyrics), will earn more points relative to other entries of the same musical style.

Skill (Score: 0-6 points for each bullet item)

How well are the technical aspects of the piece executed? Rank the **success** of the entry for each of the following (see Scope for descriptions).

- Success of technical execution.
- Demonstrated understanding of musical complexity.

Optional (if applicable)

- Quality of original work.
- Effectiveness of audience interaction.
- Degree of ensemble synthesis.
- Success of linguistic expression.
- Success/accuracy of memorization.

Ingenuity (Score: 0-4 points)

Judge the ingenuity of the entry. Was the entrant resourceful and inventive in their approach to creating their entry? Does the entry reflect the entrant's vision of period context? Is original thought, contemplation, interpretation and vision, according to the entrant's period interpretation evident?

Judge's Observation (Score: 0-6 points)

Rank the performance as a whole: How well do all the separately judged parts fit together? The entry's overall effect is judged in this section, and points may be given for impressive aspects of the performance that may not fit in other categories (ex: the piece was learned from medieval notation; or: staging and costuming greatly enhanced the performance). This is the only section of the Criteria where the judge may allow her/his/their personality, private opinions, and personal preferences to influence scoring.