

## Steven Mead presentation for the AGM of the AoBBA 19-1-25

Time to think about *real trials* of a criteria-based adjudication system?

The system I am explaining today has basically been in existence, from my point of view, for 15 years now and has existed in various forms for a few decades before that.

### Main features

A performance can be judged by a combination of 10 (in this instance) separate categories, some overlapping of course, and it provides a level playing field for bands and adjudicators alike.

With this system, each category can be marked out of a total of 20 points with four main subcategories:

**fair 1-5, good 5-10, very good 10-15, outstanding 15-20.**

The criteria descriptions are specified in a document which you can see here and online. The wording has stood the test of the last 15 years, but it's always open to discussion and re-working.

### History

I have used the system primarily with the 4Barsrest website at three major contests (Open/Nationals/Europeans) for about 12 years in succession. As many of you will know, I attempted to show the functionality, and I believe the value of the system by announcing the marks for each performance just a minute or two after the conclusion of each performance with the results posted online on the website. The system does not of necessity mean that results are announced after each band but can be revised at the end of the contest if desired.

During the last 12 years I believe this system has developed the following and popularity amongst conductors and band musicians.

I believe the Association of Brass Band adjudicators could embrace the system, and I hope in the future it can be used for all brass band contests, of all sections and with all types of contests. It is transparent for all involved.

### Open or Closed ?

I believe it works whether open or closed adjudication is used. I believe it is worthwhile even if the precise marking breakdowns are not made public but used to secure rank placing.

My essential belief is that a performance can be marked against these criteria rather than relying on comparative analysis with performances, often six hours apart.

### Prepared.

It demands that an adjudicator is completely prepared before each competition, before the first band has played. I also believe that a judge would benefit from knowing the standard/level that is possible within a particular contest, be it a third section regional contest or the own-choice of the Europeans.

## Trialling

I believe that by exploring and trialling this system we can demonstrate that we are a modern forward-thinking organisation that is keen to bring itself in line with most other major music competitions around the world. I don't believe there's anything unique about the brass band movement that means we should fundamentally judge in different ways to other established music ensemble contests that already embrace the system or variants of it.

## Tick-box

This is not 'tick-box' adjudication, this is a format of adjudication that allows the judge to listen carefully to a performance then reward precisely after a performance has been concluded, taking in all aspects of the performance that are outlined on the criteria. This is not just about highlighting and punishing mistakes, *this is about rewarding **degrees of excellence***.

This is about us being able to distinguish degrees of accuracy in performance, consistency of tuning and intonation, being able to appreciate the faithfulness of a performance to the score but also acknowledge and reward high levels of musicality both soloistic and ensemble, and skilful negotiation of the score by the conductor and faithful to the composer's wishes.

## Subjective/Objective

Adjudication is a subjective business, but I am all for building more objectivity into our analysis of performances. I believe that's our responsibility. As you will see from notes that I am providing today, I also believe that we can use a similar system to adjudicate solo contests, ensemble contests and entertainment contests.

## Systems

There are no 'perfect' systems, making musical 'judgements' are not as simple as that. However, I cannot subscribe to the 'blank piece of paper' marking systems followed by lengthy discussions. I've been part of this for many years in competitions where there have been no criteria whatsoever, and it's not something that I would choose to see happen. I can't subscribe to the notion that any of us would start listening and start thinking of numbers and trying to put numbers in boxes during the performance. I would expect that we listen to a performance, taking in all aspects of it, then simply reflect what we've heard, being objective in several areas, i.e. what happened, and adding our own subjective and personal reaction to aspects of the performance too. I firmly believe that such a marking system will enable us to do this quickly and easily giving us something incredibly useful to offer all the competitors at the end of the performance. From my own experience the more familiar you are with the criteria explanation sheets, this system becomes very easy to use, and I believe long-term for most brass band contests, the mark sheets that bands receive can be very beneficial for them going forwards

## Functionality - How it works

SM will explain his own methodology.

Following this

**Questions would now be very welcome.**

## 1. Mark sheet for traditional brass band contests, all sections

	FAIR					GOOD					VERY GOOD					OUTSTANDING					SCORE
	-	-	-+	+	+	-	-	-+	+	+	-	-	-+	+	+	-	-	-+	+	+	
Technical accuracy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
Rhythmic precision and clarity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
Control of full dynamic range	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
Ensemble precision	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
Tuning/intonation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
Band sound quality	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
Balance/clarity of textures	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
Quality of soloists	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
Overall understanding - direction and shaping of the entire work, phrasing, appropriate tempi and articulation of the music	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
Total musicality from the band - style, commitment, elegance, beauty, control of all moods	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	

Short clarifying comments:

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## 2. Mark sheet for brass band entertainment contests

### Entertainment contests

	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	-+	+	+	-	-	-+	+	+	SCORE
	+																				
<b>Performance</b>																					120
<b>Technical accuracy (rhythm/pitch)</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
<b>Variety of Expression and Moods</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
<b>Ensemble precision</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
<b>Tuning/Intonation</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
<b>Sound Quality / Balance</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
<b>Quality of soloists</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
<b>Programme</b>																					40
<b>Programme – variety</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
<b>Originality</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
<b>Entertainment</b>																					40
<b>Ability to hold audience's attention</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
<b>Professionalism and marketability</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	

Short clarifying comments if necessary:

**TOTAL**

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### 3. Mark sheet for brass ensemble contests

	So so !		Fair		Good		Very good		outstanding		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
<b>Accuracy (rhythm/pitch)</b>											<b>X2 =</b>
<b>Ensemble precision</b>											
<b>Sound quality</b>											
<b>Ensemble Balance</b>											
<b>Tuning/Intonation</b>											
<b>Making Music</b>											<b>X3 =</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>											

#### 4. Mark sheet for brass solo contests

##### Solo Contest

	So so !		Fair		Good		Very good		outstanding		Half points can be used
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
<b>Accuracy - technique (rhythm/pitch)</b>											<b>X2 =</b>
<b>Tone Quality</b>											
<b>Tuning/Intonation (and relation to accompaniment)</b>											
<b>Artistry – style/virtuosity/lyricism</b>											<b>X2=</b>
Short clarifying comments if necessary:										<b>TOTAL (60)</b>	