

This document is intended to be used in conjunction with the Official Rulebook and Evaluation Criteria, and not as a substitute for either. Download the Official Fine Arts Rulebook and the Evaluation Criteria at www.faf.ag.org/rules.cfm.

INSTRUMENTAL CATEGORIES

1. FIND A COACH WHO UNDERSTANDS CHURCH MUSIC.

You probably get instrument lessons from your school or maybe with a private instructor. If your instructor isn't also a church musician, you need a Fine Arts Coach—most commonly someone from your church who is familiar with and understands the unique nature of church music. This person should possess an understanding of music ministry and the program of Fine Arts, which you need in addition to musical instruction. Hopefully, this coach can help you use and prepare your gifts for ministry in your own church.

2. PLAY TO YOUR STRENGTHS.

Find a piece that challenges you, but also suits your existing skills. If you have an excellent tone quality, are good with difficult rhythms, or can play the full range of your instrument well, make sure that is a feature of your piece.

3. PLAY YOUR SONG FOR YOUR SCHOOL OR PRIVATE INSTRUCTOR.

Gain their feedback on presentation/technique and communication.

4. SOLOISTS MUST SELECT A SONG THAT CAN BE PLAYED FROM MEMORY.

Young instrumentalists don't often play without music, so it is likely to be new territory for you. Here's a thought: being able to hum/sing/whistle the song all the way through by memory might be a useful first step toward knowing if you'll be able to memorize the piece well enough to play by memory. (Note: If you are an ensemble, use of sheet music is allowed for the Fine Arts Festival performance.)

5. SMILE THROUGH YOUR INSTRUMENT.

People can see your emotions, if your face tenses up when you mess up, even if you look unexpressive! Your instrument is a tool of communication not something to hide behind. While you need to use arms and fingers to play the instrument, people will look to see what you're 'saying' with your face, your eyes, eyebrows and a smile.

6. THINK ABOUT HOW YOU WILL POSITION YOURSELF.

Do you sit? Do you stand? The most important question is: What's best for your audience? Make sure you can be seen from behind your instrument, and face the crowd as much as possible.

7. TAKE CARE OF THE "WHAT IF'S?"

What if your best reed breaks or you run out of slide grease? Prepare for the what-ifs. Instruments can fail you. Bring extra strings, extra reeds, whatever you use.

8. PLAN FOR YOUR ACCOMPANIMENT MUSIC FROM THE START.

Playing a music piece with no soundtrack/accompaniment behind it can lack the feel of it being a real piece of music. Yet, there are many successful pieces that use no accompaniment. It might be best to check in with your music instructor on this one. Ask them if you should use accompaniment based on the musical arrangement you are using. However, it is very important to decide this from the start, as it will affect how you prepare and practice.

9. CHOOSE AN INTERESTING ARRANGEMENT.

When the church sings songs together, verses and choruses are often repeated. Usually, these worship experiences focus on the words of the song. When we listen to a melody without the words, we may or may not be thinking of the words to that melody. This is why the arrangement of a musical piece can be very important because the arrangement is what makes it interesting when there are no words to take the focus. It might be uninteresting for the listener to hear the melody repeated identically two or three times. So, fill those minutes with something un-boring by letting your coach or instructor work with you on the song arrangement.

10. PRACTICE SMART.

Should you practice the easy parts or the hard parts? Okay, you may have guessed right, but it is often more fun to practice what you already have mastered, isn't it? Those the hard parts with their trouble spots make you trip up in your fingerings, squeak when you meant to stay steady, or blow the wrong note. However, for any musical practice, you cannot improve unless you hit those trouble spots 'til you get it right. It's the only smart way to practice!