

# The PSRA Class

The goal of the PSRA class is to build achievement of fundamental skills through a structured training program that can be transferred to a simple and logical show. That may sound similar to the goal of PSA class, but PSRA units compete with a more restricted skill set than PSA units. If a unit's goal is to run around the floor playing a lot of notes, they are probably better served in PSA or PSO. If a unit wants a big production, they are probably better served in PSA or PSO. The assumption in PSRA is that units might not have uniforms that match the show concept. They might not have flats or even a floor. PSRA units might not have sound systems for front ensemble amplification. Regardless of resources, all instructors can focus on teaching fundamental performance skills, and that's precisely the goal for PSRA.

To reinforce that goal, the weights of the scoring system for the Music and Visual captions in the PSRA class are adjusted, emphasizing the unit's performance of a narrow range of skills. The composition subcaptions are worth 25%, while the performance quality subcaptions are worth 75% of those caption scores. Thus, in Music (worth 30% of the overall score) the composition subcaption is worth 7.5% of the overall score and the performance quality subcaption is worth 22.5% of the overall score. This puts greater emphasis on achievement of the skills that are asked of the students rather than the complexity of the composition. In the evaluation of composition subcaptions, judges further this goal by valuing the compatibility of the vocabulary to the level of the performers over the difficulty of the vocabulary. For Effect captions the weighting is unchanged, with Music Effect or Visual Effect subcaptions worth 50% and Overall Effect worth 50% of the respective captions. Judges reinforce the educational goals of the class in these captions by valuing logical development over time, presence of high and low points of intensity, and simple variety over depth of show concept or production value.

WGI has traditionally been reticent to provide a laundry list of rudiments, visual efforts, etc.. that determine where the lines are between classes. These lines are ever-evolving, and a checklist of skills can lead to stagnation of creativity. Because PSRA involves a more focused skill set, AIA has attempted to provide greater clarity for this class. Below is a PSRA description from the Classification article —

Responsibilities are often not layered (i.e. playing and moving often do not occur at the same time from the battery.) Any simultaneous responsibilities are extremely limited in terms of vocabulary and velocity. Some common vocabulary for snares/tenors often includes, but is not limited to, simple one or two hand accent/tap patterns, eighth note hand motion doubles (16<sup>th</sup>'s), simple paradiddle patterns, or isolated flams. Portions of the show with greater exploration of basic

vocabulary are usually done without visual contribution. Multiple mallet usage in the pit is rare and not necessary for success in this class.

The differences between units in all classes are based on an overall sense of unit maturity, but there is a heightened scrutiny of the skill sets used in PSRA in order to preserve the educational intent of that class. To that end, the following skill sets are considered closer to basic or intermediate in nature, and as such are not conducive for PSRA units.

Performance tempos that exceed 172 bpm  
Heavy use of mixed meter  
Triplet rolls at a moderate tempo (156+) in snares and/or tenors  
Compound Flam Patterns in snares/tenors  
Complex crossing patterns in tenors  
Dense bass drum passages (spit 16ths or sextuplets at 144+, roll passages, etc...)  
Multiple Mallet Usage other than limited double vertical strokes  
Choreographic responsibilities  
Sustained environmental challenges (listening environments, etc...)  
Layered events beyond traditional marching and playing (body movement during feature segments)

The list above does not represent a comprehensive list of PSA or PSO skills, but the use of these skills signals judges that the unit is working to stretch themselves technically and may be better suited for another class. Units attempting to compete in PSRA should construct their shows in the spirit of the class, utilizing a focused, fundamental skill set with few layered responsibilities and emphasizing simple, logical communication over complexity and production value.

Below are some questions and answers that might also help explain more about the class-

*Are the sheets the same for PSA and PSRA?*

They are similar, but the term fundamental skills should substitute basic skills. This class focuses on a smaller skill set. There are also some considerations of the subcaptions, such as simultaneous responsibility, range of content, etc...that are still recognized but not emphasized. This is due to the fact that we're dealing with a narrower skill set by design. Considerations such as clarity of intent and compatibility of content with training program are much more important in determining composition scores.

*Are the time requirements the same for PSA and PSRA?*

Yes, so if a unit is moved from PSRA to PSA they won't need to alter their show to fit within time restrictions.

*Are the scores of a PSRA unit comparable to the scores of a PSA unit?*

No. While the sheets are similar, the skill sets involved are different. The expectations are different. The weights of the subcaptions are different. These factors make it impossible to accurately compare scores between these classes. It is completely plausible that PSRA units could score higher than PSA units and not necessarily be competitive with them if they were in the same class.

*Who should register for PSRA?*

Any units that are new to the activity and have performers in early stages of technical development should consider PSRA. Middle School units are also best served in PSRA. Some units that competed in PSA in the past and have been unable to progress competitively might consider registering for PSA, keeping in mind that the programs must reflect a narrower skill set...a unit must be focusing on fundamental skills in order to compete in this class. That might not be a bad thing for some units to do if they felt they have hit a wall competitively in PSA.

*Will new units with less experienced staff and a low budget be uncompetitive in this class?*

No. This class uses vocabulary that beginning students should be able to achieve. The scoring system focuses on student achievement. The roll of the staff as teachers is emphasized, while their roll as producers is deemphasized. This should allow for even the least experienced units to have the opportunity to succeed if they focus on achieving simple skills at a high level.

*Is this the same thing as an A2 class in guard?*

Not really. A2 guards use the same sheet as A3 and A1 guards. Those class distinctions are based on scores. PSA units use a greater depth and variety of skills than PSRA units. The scores are not comparable from class to class.

*Does this mean that PSA is for groups that compete at WGI regionals and PSRA is for local A units?*

Not really, although the titles of the classes can make that confusing. Units that compete at WGI regionals do not necessarily have to be in PSA. Additionally, many PSA units also choose not to compete in WGI regionals. Being in the PSA class is not conditional on regional participation. Skill set and maturity level determines classification. Adding to the confusion is the rule that AIA units that compete at WGI

competitions must compete in the same class locally as they do nationally...provided WGI has an equivalent class. WGI doesn't have a PSRA class, so units registered for PSRA in AIA may compete at WGI in PSA.

### *How does reclassification work between classes?*

The article dealing reclassification spells this out a little clearer, but essentially if the judges at a show feel a group is misclassified they will refer the unit to the percussion advisory board. The unit has a week to produce a video of a recent performance or rehearsal for review by the advisory board via youtube link or dropbox. The advisory board will give the recommendation 3 days after receipt of the video, and the percussion coordinator will inform the unit staff.

### *Can a unit move down from PSA to PSRA?*

Yes, however, a unit will never be forced to move down a class. If judges think that a unit might be in a better competitive environment in a lower class they will usually tell the staff of a unit. If a unit wishes to change to a lower class they can request to the EBOD that they be reclassified. They can also request a review by the percussion advisory board to get a second opinion. If the skill sets in the show are commensurate with the lower class, the EBOD usually grants these requests.

### *Sometimes it's difficult to find shows that consist of only these rudimentary skills. What do I do to stay within the skill sets of the PSRA class?*

Don't be afraid to rewrite difficult passages and narrow the focus of the skill sets in a show. The goal is high achievement. That's why the class deals with a smaller range of skills. Don't be afraid to reduce multiple lines or thin out instrumentation to give the program clarity given the instrumentation of a unit and the acoustics of a gym.

If you have any more questions about PSRA or any other classification issues please feel free to contact the percussion coordinator for your region or the percussion judging coordinator.