Dear Directors and All-State students:

We hope this email finds you having started a school year like none other! MMEA has undergone many changes this summer, but we are here to serve you as we have in the past and continue to grow and improve our programming.

I have been working through the summer as part of the All-State Task Force, a group that includes the Vice Presidents for Choir, Band, Orchestra and the Jazz Chair and music educators from across the state to evaluate the feasibility of hosting the February All-State event. After consulting with potential collegiate partners in the Twin Cities, Orchestra Hall and our invited conductors, we are prepared to move forward with either a hybrid or fully virtual All-State Festival to be held on three Saturdays in January and February of 2021. The details of this event are forthcoming, but we are envisioning an event that includes:

- two Saturday events online to meet conductors, work in sections and prepare music
  - presently looking at January 16 & 30, 2-3 hour commitment
  - virtual student hangouts and social events
- Mid-February Saturday Festival- 4 hour in-person event at Orchestra Hall or Minneapolis Hilton
  - date is yet to be finalized (February 13 and 20 are possibilities)
  - focus of in-person event is musical connection and team building
  - video recordings of rehearsals and performances could replace virtual ensemble
  - all available safety strategies will be implemented including reduced ensemble sizes, distancing and use of larger spaces, masking and use of PPE
- The alternative to the Saturday Festival in-person day would be a similarly timed online event which would include sectionals, sessions with conductors, team building and social events and guest artist performances or presentations
- Virtual ensemble is an option for fully online and hybrid options
  - Virtual watch party would be held later in the spring

Before we move ahead with our plans, we wanted to reach out to your students and their families and give them an **opportunity to weigh in on the option to hold an in-person festival as the culminating activity of the camp.** We know that we can successfully combine videos into a professionally produced video-college of music from each ensemble, but we also know from our conversations with the staff at Orchestra Hall that it is possible to follow Minnesota Department of Health regulations for events and performances. There is strong, but not unanimous support among our committee to offer rehearsals and informal
recording sessions for each ensemble that follow safety mitigation strategies for musicians. These safety guidelines will include distancing, use of large rehearsal and performance spaces, masks or other safety equipment as deemed appropriate. So much has been learned since the beginning of the summer from studies such as those being funded by the National Federation of State High School Associations (www.nfhs.org) and more data about these strategies continues to emerge.

We are asking that you send this email and the link below to your All-State students. Do not send to students selected as alternates. If you have questions about which students were selected for All-State email info@mmea.org. We would like responses by November 10 to inform our planning as we move forward. It is not necessary for students to submit any personal contact information or payment information at this time. In preparing for both in-person and virtual scenarios, students and families should expect the participation fee to be $350 for the hybrid event.

https://bit.ly/2RUc8Uv

Thank you for everything you are doing to keep music alive in your schools and communities. We appreciate your patience and flexibility as we navigate uncharted territory in providing an All-State experience that is both safe and valuable to our students.

In music,

Dr. Catharine Bushman
MMEA Collegiate Chair
Associate Professor of Music Education/Instrumental Conducting
St. Cloud State University
collegiate@mmea.org