



THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF SINGING

2026-2027

NATIONAL STUDENT AUDITIONS COMMERCIAL MUSIC CATEGORY GUIDE



**Clearer expectations.
Better resources.
Stronger auditions.**

The National Student Auditions are evolving to better serve today's singers, teachers, adjudicators, and auditions teams while preserving the educational excellence and integrity that define the program. Discover a clearer, more consistent, and more accessible NSA experience through refreshed regulations, practical resources, and the OneAudition initiative.

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National Student Auditions Mission Statement

The NATS National Student Auditions are put forth in the spirit of the National Association of Teachers of Singing's objectives.

The National Student Auditions are designed to:

- Inspire and encourage singers and teachers to continue their dedication to, and growth in, the art of singing
- Embrace all genres of vocal music as art worthy to be studied, respected, and appreciated
- Create a collegial, supportive, and inclusive atmosphere that encourages excellent artistic singing
- Provide constructive, written feedback from a panel of experienced and impartial adjudicators
- Recognize and honor outstanding performances
- Create the NSA as a structure that continues to evolve and improve with each audition cycle

Our National Student Auditions Regulations are an outgrowth of the Mission Statement and have been put in place to achieve a number of objectives. They are meant to standardize the registration, categories and repertoire for all NATS auditions with an eye toward uniformity and ease of process, drawing on research from singer auditions in the 15 regions as well as at the chapter level. In this way we can bring the NSA in line with other national bodies that have set their own standards for local through to national events.

The regulations also serve to:

- Allow for a comparison of scoring data from one end of the NSA to the other.
- Establish a shared vocabulary and definitions for vocal music repertoire as it is presented in our auditions.
- Put in place common systems for language and scoring so that a teacher or singer, whether acting as adjudicator or singer, can move between chapters and regions with a clear grasp of what a NATS audition entails.
- Offer categories that are reflective of the diversity, inclusion and cultures within our growing membership and their particular areas of expertise.
- And finally, to give the singers of our members a chance to hone the necessary skills in a setting that is safe and supportive, rather than one of a talent competition.

Why the National Student Auditions?

What is the purpose of NSA auditions?

The National Student Auditions exist first and foremost as an educational experience and series of opportunities for a singer. The audition process promotes intentional repertoire selection, artistic discovery, and the development of efficient, versatile, and expressive singing.

Teachers play a central role by selecting repertoire that builds progressively from one level of achievement to the next. Each selection serves as a stepping stone, reinforcing established skills while introducing new artistic and technical concepts. Over time, these carefully sequenced experiences develop complete singers who communicate with technical security, musical understanding, stylistic versatility, expressive artistry, and professional confidence.

The National Student Auditions recognize that artistic excellence is achieved through consistent growth rather than a single performance highlighting ten minutes of the singer's semester. Success is not simply measured in the NSA Auditions by rankings or awards, but by each singer's continued development as an artist, musician, and communicator. Every audition provides an opportunity to celebrate progress, identify the next stage of growth, and advance the educational mission of NATS.

The Role of New Repertoire in Artistic Development

One of the primary educational goals of the National Student Auditions is to encourage the continued study, growth in building competence in varied musical styles, and performance of new solo repertoire for every singer. Each audition cycle provides an opportunity for singers to expand their musical knowledge, develop new technical and artistic skills, and discover works that contribute to their long-term growth as complete musicians.

To support this educational mission, repertoire performed in a previous National Student Auditions cycle should not be reused during the next annual chapter and region cycle. While revisiting repertoire remains an important part of vocal study and performance, the National Student Auditions are intended to inspire continued exploration and learning through the preparation of new literature. By encouraging fresh repertoire each cycle, NATS helps singers broaden their artistry, deepen their musicianship, and build a more diverse and meaningful repertoire throughout their studies.

Auditions or a Competition?

Isn't this a competition?

Using the Oxford definitions as a starting point, there is an important conceptual distinction that supports the philosophy of the NATS National Student Auditions. Oxford defines an audition as *“a short performance given by an actor, singer, etc., so that somebody can decide whether they are suitable to act in a play, sing in a concert, etc.”* In other words, an audition is fundamentally an adjudication of readiness or suitability.

By contrast, Oxford defines a competition as *“an event in which people compete with each other to find out who is the best at something.”* The defining purpose of a competition is ranking participants against one another to determine winners. Applied to the National Student Auditions, these definitions highlight a distinction that is often misunderstood:

NSA Auditions	NATS Competitions
Evaluates the individual singer against the standards established by the NATS rubrics	Compares singers against one another
Focuses on artistic development and growth	Focuses on determining rankings and winners
Multiple singers may demonstrate the same level of achievement	Rankings are necessarily limited
Recognition is earned by meeting objective standards	Awards are earned by outperforming other competitors

The National Student Auditions are an educational audition process that includes competitive elements. Singers are first evaluated against published standards of vocal and artistic achievement. Those who meet established benchmarks may earn recognition, such as Semifinalist, based on merit rather than quota. Competitive ranking is then used only to determine advancement to the final round and the awarding of final placements.

The National Student Auditions are rooted in the educational mission of NATS. They provide a structured environment in which singers learn to prepare, perform, receive professional feedback, and refine their artistry. While the auditions include competitive recognition, their primary purpose is to promote excellence in the teaching and learning of singing.



NATS

NATIONAL STUDENT AUDITIONS

ONE AUDITION

ONE PROCESS. ONE STANDARD. EVERY STUDENT.

Different voices.
Different journeys.

One destination.

The NATS **OneAudition** initiative creates a consistent, transparent, and sustainable audition experience at every level while honoring local traditions and individuality.

A strong community.
A bright future.

Together!

CLEAR & ACCESSIBLE

Clear, easy to understand regulations that set expectations and empower every participant.

FAIR & CONSISTENT

Systems that promote fairness, consistency, and opportunities to resolve errors before they impact student eligibility.

STRONGER TOGETHER

Practical resources and collaborative networks that empower and support singers, teachers, and auditions teams.

OneAudition strengthens the integrity of NATS auditions and preserves the spirit of encouragement, collegiality, and student-centered growth.

ONE COMMUNITY. ONE MISSION. ONEAUDITION.

NATS OneAudition Initiative

The NATS OneAudition initiative seeks to create a more consistent, transparent, and sustainable audition experience for singers, teachers, adjudicators, and Auditions Chairs at every level of the organization. Whether participating in a chapter, region, or national audition, NATS members should encounter a process that is recognizable in format, language, expectations, and adjudication practices while still allowing space for local traditions and regional identity.

OneAudition is focused on three primary goals:

- creating clear and easily digestible regulations for all participants,
- establishing systems that promote fairness, consistency, and opportunities to resolve errors before they impact singer eligibility,
- and supporting Auditions Chairs through practical resources and collaborative networks.

By developing common frameworks, terminology, and procedures, OneAudition strengthens the integrity of NATS auditions while preserving the spirit of encouragement, collegiality, and singer-centered growth that has long defined the organization.

Something New Just for You!

A Better NSA Experience Starts Now

For generations, the National Student Auditions have inspired singers, challenged teachers, and served as one of NATS' premier educational experiences. As our organization has grown, musical styles have expanded, and technology has transformed the audition process, it was time for our resources to evolve alongside them.

The NSA Refresh is designed with one goal in mind: to make every audition experience clearer, more consistent, and more accessible for everyone involved.

Behind the scenes, every regulation, rubric, and audition process was carefully reviewed. We simplified language, removed unnecessary complexity, reorganized information around the needs of our members, and created practical resources that help singers, teachers, adjudicators, and auditions teams understand expectations before the first note is sung.

The result is not a new National Student Auditions—it is a stronger one. The educational mission and integrity of NSA remain unchanged, while the experience becomes more transparent, more equitable, and easier to navigate at every level.

Clearer expectations. Better resources. Stronger auditions.

What can you expect?

- Consistency through OneAudition
- Dedicated rules and regulations documents for each division: Classical, Commercial Music, and Musical Theatre
- Educational growth over competition
- Repertoire guidelines with a renewed emphasis for the long-term development of our singers as artists ending double dipping
- Revised repertoire regulations to simplify the process and keep the categories serving the music they were created for
- Simplified regulations written for singers, teachers, adjudicators, and Auditions Chairs
- Standardized auditions across every level of NATS
- Transparency in procedures and advancement

Your Path to NSA

The annual NSA cycle begins on September 1st and ends on July 31st.



Region Auditions

- NSA starts at the region level. Some regions use chapter auditions as qualifying rounds, but only the final region results can send a singer to NSA.
- Only singers placing 1st–5th in their region's nationally eligible categories advance to the National Preliminaries, and only with qualifying scores of two 90's or an average of 90 from the regional preliminary round. Singers tied for 1st–5th also advance. Winning at the chapter or region level does not automatically qualify you.
- The songs you submit at the national level must be the SAME songs you performed at your region audition.

National Student Auditions Qualifying Round

Qualified singers get an invitation in April. To enter, you must:

- Complete the online registration and pay the national fee
- Submit one unlisted YouTube video for each required song
- Perform the same repertoire you entered at the region auditions
- Follow all the video submission rules

About 15 singers per category advance to the National Semifinals.



National Semifinals

Semifinals happen at the NATS National Conference (even years) or the Summer Workshop/AuditionCon (odd years).

- You perform songs from your regional entry
- You choose your first song
- Adjudicators pick the rest, within your category's time limit
- Three singers per category advance to the Finals

National Finals

- Each finalist performs one song from their list
- Adjudicators rank the finalists independently
- 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place awards are given in each category
- Every finalist receives a certificate



National Entry Timeline

- March 30: Regions send in qualified singers and approved repertoire
- 2nd Friday in April: Deadline for national registration, fees, and YouTube videos
- Early May: Preliminary adjudication finished
- Mid-May: Semifinalists notified
- June/July: National Semifinals /Finals

National Entry Fee

- \$95 per category
- Covers the Preliminaries, Semifinals, Finals, and admission to conference or workshop events
- Separate from chapter or region fees
- Nonrefundable
- \$25 technology fee for CM entries

Collaborative Pianists

- You may bring your own or request a staff pianist
- Staff pianists for Semifinals cost an extra fee
- Short rehearsals are provided before Semifinals
- Finalists using staff pianists get a short rehearsal or sound check before Finals

ENTERING SINGERS IN NSA

A quick-reference guide to eligibility, teacher designations, and singer entry requirements.

Who May Enter NSA?

- When entering a singer, there is an age and voice type requirement as well as a length of study component to determine category eligibility.
- The relevant date for age is September 1st of the 2026-2027 audition season.
- The singer is required to be currently studying with a NATS Professional, Emeritus or Emerging Professional member who is in good standing.
- Where applicable, teachers are to provide the information of any former or other instructors on the list.

Eligibility to Enter Singers

- Singers may be entered in chapter, region and national auditions by Professional, Emeritus or Emerging Professional members who are in good standing. The NSA Audition process is not open to Pre-professional or Affiliate members to enter singers.
 - An exception can be made for Canadian chapters that have charitable organization status.
- In the case of a teacher with membership in more than one chapter, or region, entry into NSA auditions for each singer is limited to a single region.

Voice Teacher Designations

- **Primary Voice Teacher** - main instructor teaching regular lessons
- **Concurrent Voice Teacher** - teaches regularly alongside primary
- **Supplemental Voice Teacher** - teaches occasionally (less than weekly)
- **Former Voice Teacher** - previously taught singer but no longer teaching
- **Remote Voice Teacher** - teaches singer from a remote online location

Transparency and respect for singer choice are emphasized in all auditions.

NSA OVERVIEW

The Rule of 90

A singer must earn two scores of 90+, or an average score of 90+ from the three adjudicators, in the preliminary region rounds to be eligible to advance to the NSA Qualifying Rounds

Eligibility & Advancement

- Students must meet age & study requirements as of Sept 1 of the current cycle
- May enter multiple genre categories
- Place 1st–5th with qualifying score (two scores of 90+ or an average of 90+) to advance to nationals
- Chapter winners do NOT automatically advance to region events
- Students may only enter one region's NSA per genre and cycle

Region & National Rules

- Teacher's region based on NATS address
- Students follow that region's specific procedures regarding chapter/ advancement to region
- Qualify for nationals only through regional participation
- Singers must score 90+ (two scores or average) from preliminary round to advance
- Teachers may belong to multiple chapters and regions

Teacher Responsibilities

- Coordinate with co-teachers before registration
- Submit all forms and materials on time
- Cannot submit telephone numbers nor emails of minor singers in any NATS auditions. All information for minors must be that of the parent/guardian.
- Follow repertoire & copyright policies
- Cannot accompany singers live
- Must not appear in video submissions
- Serve as adjudicator when requested
- Assist singers advancing to nationals

Key Rules for Students

- Each singer can only be entered once per cycle in one region's auditions
- Must currently study with entering teacher
- Age/study level fixed as of September 1
- Member-teachers cannot enter themselves into an audition
- Post-high school categories are open to age-eligible singers studying with NATS member depending on the length of study and degree enrollment and progress

What's New in CM 2026-2027

Sing NEW Repertoire

Repertoire performed in the 2026-2027 National Student Auditions cycle should not be reused from the previous NSA cycle's chapter, region, or national student cycle. (page 4)

No Double Dipping

Singers entering multiple NSA categories (Classical, Commercial Music, Musical Theatre, and/or Spirituals) may NOT use the same selection in any other category including the American Negro Spirituals category. (page 14)

Tracks can include background vocals

A prerecorded instrumental backing track, which may include backing vocals but may NOT include lead vocals. (page 14)

No Musical Theatre Songs in Commercial Music

Eligible repertoire must have originated in the commercial music industry. Songs originally written and released by commercial recording artists are eligible, even if they were later incorporated into a stage, film, or television musical. Songs originally written for a stage musical, film musical, television musical, opera, or other dramatic work are NOT eligible. (page 15)

When does my time begin?

The time for ALL NSA auditions begins when the singer begins their slate. (page 27)

Teachers enter singers in the NSA Qualifying Round

Teachers will now be responsible for entering their singers in the NSA Rounds using AuditionNow. (page 38)

Reminder About Amplification in CM

All CM auditions must use only ONE microphone to amplify the vocals through an external speaker. Mics cannot feed directly into the camera. No additional microphones may be used for any purpose. (page 15)

NSA REGULATIONS - ALL CATEGORIES

AGE LIMIT

A singer's age category is determined by their age on September 1, the first day of the NSA audition cycle, and remains the same throughout that cycle. An audition cycle begins in September and finishes in July.

- Students may not enter a category if they exceed its maximum age limit.
- Students enrolled in or holding a music degree who are older than the age limit for their level of study may enter that category for comments only or enter an eligible Non-Traditional Student category (non-advancing) according to requirements.
- Students whose age qualifies them for a higher category than their current level of study may choose to enter the higher age-appropriate category competitively.
- NSA categories have no minimum age requirements except the Avocational Adults Category, Non-Traditional Adults Category, and the Hall Johnson Spirituals Competition.

ARRANGEMENTS

An arrangement is an adaptation of an existing song or composition. It may include a new accompaniment, changes to melody, rhythm, harmony, or form, or even a different musical style.

AUDITIONING MEMBER TEACHERS

Eligible NATS member-teachers may compete in NSA auditions through their current teacher but may not self-enter. Those entering singers must also be available to adjudicate one category at the auditions.

CATEGORY

Categories are defined by voice type, age range, and length of study.

- All Voices: Children 1, Youth 2, and Spiritual Categories
- Treble Voices: Soprano, Mezzo-Soprano, Contralto, Countertenor Voices in Categories: 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13
- TBB Voices: Tenor, Baritone, Bass Voices in Categories: 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14

CATEGORY NUMBERS

Children & Youth: 1 & 2 - All Voices. Unchanged voices sing in treble categories.

For the remaining categories, odd numbered categories are for treble voices:

- High School (HS) - 3 & 4
- Lower Post-HS: one-two years Post-HS - 5 & 6
- Upper Post-HS: three-five years Post-HS not in a grad program - 7 & 8
- Advanced: four+ years Post-HS and/or in graduate program - 9-10
- Avocational Adults: 11 & 12
- Non-Traditional Adults: 13 & 14

NSA REGULATIONS - ALL CATEGORIES

COMMENTS ONLY

Any singer may elect to enter a category auditioning for comments only and participate exclusively in a preliminary audition. Adjudicators will not score auditions entered for comments only.

LENGTH OF STUDY

Children, Youth, and High School categories are based on grade level, not years of study.

Post-high school categories are based on a combination of age and the total years of voice study with any teacher, including private study, group lessons, college, university, or conservatory instruction.

- Lower Post-HS: Age 22 or younger; 1st–2nd year of post-high school voice study
- Upper Post-HS: Age 25 or younger; 3rd–5th year of post-high school voice study and not enrolled in a graduate voice program
- Advanced: Age 30 or younger; 4th year or higher of post-high school voice study after completing a bachelor's degree.

Counting a year of study begins on the first day of post-high school voice study. Once a singer begins study during an NSA cycle (September–July), that cycle counts as one full year of study, regardless of whether the singer continues weekly lessons for the entire cycle. Exceptions may be granted only in extraordinary circumstances when the singer is medically unable or formally prohibited from singing for a substantial portion of the cycle. Any exception must be approved by the Auditions Chair.

OFFENSIVE LANGUAGE IN REPERTOIRE

NATS encourages teachers and singers to select NSA repertoire that reflects its commitment to a welcoming and respectful community for participants and audiences of all ages and backgrounds. Teachers should carefully consider lyric content. To respect copyright, lyrics may only be altered to perform a clean version when a published version does not exist.

REPERTOIRE CHANGES

Once the qualifying NSA event has concluded, there is no room for any alteration of the repertoire. Those singers who move on to the NSA Qualifying rounds from the region auditions must put forward the very pieces that were submitted, vetted and approved by the chair of the region audition. Any deviation from performing the approved repertoire following the region level, even in part, will render a singer Ineligible to Advance to the next step of the NSA rounds.

NSA Commercial Music (CM) Regulations

ACCOMPANIMENT OPTIONS

Singers may perform each audition song with any of the following accompaniment options:

- a prerecorded instrumental backing track, which may include backing vocals but may NOT include lead vocals (neither human nor synthesized)
- one live, non-amplified acoustic collaborative instrumentalist
- or for a limited number of songs (see CM Categories' Repertoire Requirements), the singer may accompany themselves on a non-amplified acoustic instrument

Only one acoustic accompanying instrument is allowed in CM auditions without the use of additional amplification including a piano sample on an electric keyboard. Live rhythmic instruments such as shakers or tambourines count as an accompanying instrument.

AGE APPROPRIATE

Selections should be appropriate in technical difficulty, musical style, language, subject matter, and performance demands, allowing the singer to perform with musical accuracy, comprehension, and efficient vocal production. Teachers should carefully consider emotional content, staging, choreography, gestures, and physical interactions. Repertoire involving mature romantic relationships, sexuality, abuse, violence, addiction, suicide, or other adult themes is generally not appropriate for Children and Youth categories. Selections should reflect emotions, experiences, and performance expectations that the singer can communicate authentically and age-appropriately.

AUTHENTIC PERFORMANCE

A CM singer performs as themselves, not a character. A genuine tone unique to each singer for the purpose of sincere communication with no elements of vocal impersonation is expected in CM.

COMMERCIAL MUSIC

Each CM audition may include one or more commercial music style(s). Commercial music includes all genres of vocal music performed by recording artists, not performed to meet the performance standards in NSA's classical and musical theatre rubrics. Commercial music includes bluegrass, blues, contemporary Christian, country, folk, gospel, jazz, pop, rap, rock, rhythm and blues (R&B), soul, and all ethnic music, etc.

COVER VS. ORIGINAL SONG

A cover is a song performed by a singer other than the composer or original recording artist. Performing a cover does not imply an imitation or impersonation of the original recording artist. Both covers and a limited number of original songs are permitted in certain CM Categories outlined in the repertoire requirements.

CONTRASTING SELECTIONS

Contrasting selections will vary in tempo, text, dramatic content, composer, character portrayed, vocal colors, and style of music. Two or more songs by the same composer is a violation of this regulation and renders the singing Ineligible to Advance. Substantial variety among selections should result in a higher preliminary audition score.

NSA Commercial Music (CM) Regulations

DOUBLE DIPPING	Singers entering multiple NSA categories (Classical, Commercial Music, Musical Theatre, and/or Spirituals) may NOT use the same selection in any other category.
FULL SONG	An entire song. No internal cuts of lead vocals; intros and outros may be abbreviated to accommodate audition's time limits; instrumental breaks as well as repeat and fade tags may be cut, abbreviated, or kept to accommodate the audition's time limits.
MEMORIZATION	All selections must be performed from memory, including any self-accompaniments played.
MICROPHONE TECHNIQUE	All CM auditions must use only ONE microphone to amplify the vocals. No additional microphones may be used for any purpose. The singer's microphone may be placed on a stationary stand, handheld, or any combination of both. No headset or diva microphones are allowed. In live auditions, all singers are required to use the amplification equipment provided. In video auditions, the singer's microphone must be on-camera and must audibly amplify the vocals through an external speaker. The use of a microphone requires artistic choices, which influence vocal interpretation. Intentionally varying the distance of the microphone from the singer's mouth creates stylized vocal effects and is one of the standards adjudicated in NSA's CM categories.
REPERTOIRE LIMITATIONS	Eligible repertoire must have originated in the commercial music industry. Songs originally written and released by commercial recording artists are eligible, even if they were later incorporated into a stage, film, or television musical. Songs originally written for a stage musical, film musical, television musical, opera, or other dramatic work are NOT eligible. If there is any doubt, please check your references under publisher information: ASCAP/BMI databases, Wikipedia, MusicBrainz. At the NATS Student Auditions, singers are adjudicated on their individual artistry, vocal technique, musicianship, and interpretation through the performance of solo repertoire. Accordingly, repertoire originally written for duets, trios, quartets, or larger ensembles in a production is not permitted.
RHYTHMIC GROOVE	The rhythmic groove of a CM song is reflected in the singer's body in an organic response to the rhythm of the music. An organic embodiment of the beat goes beyond specific notation or time signature; this distinct rhythmic feel/groove of a song is an essential element in CM performances.
VOCAL STYLISMS	In Commercial Music's genre-specific elements of vocal interpretation, vocal stylisms are often not notated in the music. All sounds are acceptable when used appropriately in a CM genre. As appropriate to the selected CM style, vocal stylisms may include vocal: • ALL SOUNDS ARE ACCEPTABLE IN CM: creaky, gaspy, etc. • ONSETS varying among fry, slide, yodel, growl, breathy, cry, creak, flip, scream, etc. • RELEASES varying among abrupt glottal stops, breathy, fall-off, fall-up, shadow vowels, fry, • NUANCES & FLOURISHES varying among riffs/runs, licks, flips, pitch slides, pop-appoggiatura, yodel/register shifts, pitch bends/scoops, etc. ◦ (Edrie Means Weekly coined the term Vocal Stylisms in her teaching of Commercial Music and Musical Theatre.)

NSA Commercial Music Categories of Entry

TERMINOLOGY AND ABBREVIATIONS

- TREBLE - Soprano, Mezzo-Soprano, Contralto, Countertenor, and Unchanged Voices
- TBB - Tenor, Baritone, Bass

Categories Advancing to the National Rounds: CM 1, CM 2, CM 3, CM 4, CM 5, CM 6, CM 7, CM 8, CM 9, and CM 10 including their sub-divided categories. Upper (7/8) and Advanced (9/10) categories will be combined at the National Levels.

- AS – American Negro Spirituals
- CL – Classical Art Songs and Arias
- CM – Commercial Music
- HJ – Hall Johnson Spirituals Competition
- HS – High School
- MT – Musical Theatre

Determining the category and repertoire requirements

When a singer studies with a current NATS Professional, Emeritus, or Emerging Professional member in good standing, teachers should consider the following details and collect information before beginning registration:

1. First determine what category the singer belongs in:
 - a. Treble or Tenor Bass Baritone (TBB) - Singers will sing in the category that best describes their voice type that fits into the Treble or TBB designation.
2. Second, determine the singer's age as of September 1 of the competition cycle (September - July)
3. Finally, determine the singer's Grade or Length of Study
 - a. Singers in Pre-K through Grade 12 enter the category that matches their current grade level, provided they do not exceed the category's maximum age limit.
 - b. Singers having completed the equivalent of high school and/or secondary education must consider the length of study.
 - i. Counting a year of study begins on the first day of post-high school voice study. Once a singer begins study during an NSA cycle (September–July), that cycle counts as one full year of study, regardless of whether the singer continues weekly lessons for the entire cycle. Exceptions may be granted only in extraordinary circumstances when the singer is medically unable or formally prohibited from singing for a substantial portion of the cycle. Any exception must be approved by the Auditions Chair.
 - ii. **Spirit of the Rule:** The purpose of this policy is to ensure equitable placement by counting a singer's progression through time, not simply the number of lessons taken. Exceptions are intended only for extraordinary situations in which a singer is genuinely unable to continue vocal study because they cannot sing—not for scheduling conflicts, changes of teacher or school, study abroad, personal choice, or temporary interruptions in lessons. Auditions Chairs should apply the exception only when the extraordinary circumstances clearly prevent the singer from engaging in voice study for a substantial portion of the NSA cycle.
4. After determining the category the singer will compete in, then the teacher should consult the repertoire requirements for the category found on pages 19-25 in the Commercial Music Category Guide.

Unique to Commercial Music Auditions

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Singers must use ONE microphone amplified through an external speaker to amplify the vocals for all CM auditions.• A mic fed directly into a camera is NOT amplified and does not meet the requirement. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A prerecorded instrumental backing track, which may include backing vocals but may NOT include lead vocals (neither human nor synthesized). |
|--|---|

Commercial Music Accompaniment Options

- A prerecorded instrumental backing track, which may include backing vocals but may NOT include lead vocals (neither human nor synthesized).
- Singers may choose to use one live, non-amplified collaborative acoustic instrumentalist per song in their audition.
- Backing tracks may include backing vocals but may NOT include lead vocals.
- For a limited number of songs (see CM Categories' Repertoire Requirements), the singer may accompany themselves on a non-amplified acoustic instrument.

Acoustic Instrumentation

Only one acoustic accompanying instrument is allowed per song in CM auditions.

- When set to a piano sample, electronic keyboards are a singular, accepted exception to the acoustic instrument requirements.
- Acoustic instruments may not be amplified, except in live concert finals.
- Live rhythmic instruments such as shakers or tambourines count as an accompanying instrument.

Is it This OR is it That?

How do I determine if a song belongs in CM or MT?

Step 1: Google the song's title

- Check out Wikipedia
 - Do you see the words **from, originated by (singer) in larger work, for, or trunk song?**
 - Yes? Go to Step 2
 - No? You have a CM song

Step 2: Google the larger work

- Check out Wikipedia
 - Do you see the words **abandoned/unfinished musical, animated musical, animated musical series, concept musical, cruise ship musical, internet musical, movie musical, musical, musical film, musical song cycle, musical television series, revue, televised musical...**
 - Yes? You have an MT song!

Still unsure? Email the CM Coordinator at nsacm@nats.org.

Always Remember Us This Way

Article Talk

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Always Remember Us This Way is a song by American singer [Lady Gaga](#) from the 2018 film *A Star Is Born* and its soundtrack. Written by Gaga, [Natalie Hemby](#), [Hillary Lindsey](#), and [Lori McKenna](#), and produced by Gaga with [Dave Cobb](#), the piano-driven country ballad was inspired by 1970s music and recorded at the [Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival](#) and [EastWest Studios](#) in Los Angeles. In the film, Gaga performs it

"Always Remember Us This Way"	
Single by Lady Gaga	
from the album <i>A Star Is Born</i>	
Released	January 4, 2019
Recorded	2017
Studio	EastWest (Los Angeles)
Venue	Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival
Genre	Country
Length	3:30

A Star Is Born (2018 film)

Article Talk

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

A Star Is Born is a 2018 American musical romantic drama film produced and directed by [Bradley Cooper](#) (in his directorial debut) with a screenplay by Cooper, [Eric Roth](#) and [Will Fetters](#). It stars Cooper and [Lady Gaga](#) in lead roles, with [Dave Chappelle](#), [Andrew Dice Clay](#) and [Sam Elliott](#) in supporting roles. It follows an alcoholic musician (Cooper) who discovers and falls in love with a rising singer (Gaga).



Reminder: NO Musical Theatre in Commercial Music

Eligible repertoire must have originated in the commercial music industry. Songs originally written and released by commercial recording artists are eligible, even if they were later incorporated into a stage, film, or television musical. Songs originally written for a stage musical, film musical, television musical, opera, or other dramatic work are NOT eligible.

- If there is any doubt, please check your references under publisher information: ASCAP/BMI databases, MusicBrainz, Wikipedia.

NSA CM Children & Youth Requirements

Category CM 1 - Children Commercial Music - All Voices

- Voice Type: All Voices
- Age Limit: 11 years
- Length of Study: Does not apply
- Grade: Pre-K, Kindergarten, 1st Grade, 2nd Grade, 3rd Grade, 4th Grade, 5th Grade
- Audition Length: 6 minutes
- Repertoire Requirements (TWO Songs)
 - TWO age-appropriate selections from Commercial Music repertoire in a CM style
 - One song may be self-accompanied on a non-amplified acoustic instrument.
 - One song may be an original song.
 - Songs originally written for a stage musical, film musical, television musical, opera, or other dramatic work are NOT eligible.
 - The repertoire must be contrasting by composer, tempo, and text to avoid the singer becoming Ineligible to Advance in subsequent rounds.
- Categories may be subdivided in chapter and region auditions. When subdivided, the following Age and Grade limits apply:
 - CM 1A - Age Limit: 9 years. Grades: PK - 3rd Grade
 - CM 1B - Age Limit: 11 years. Grades: 4th - 5th Grades

Category CM 2 - Youth Commercial Music - All Voices

- Voice Type: All Voices
- Age Limit: 14 years
- Length of Study: Does not apply
- Grade: 6th Grade, 7th Grade, 8th Grade
- Audition Length: 6 minutes
- Repertoire Requirements (Two Songs)
 - TWO age-appropriate selections from Commercial Music repertoire in a CM style
 - One song may be self-accompanied on a non-amplified acoustic instrument.
 - One song may be an original song.
 - Songs originally written for a stage musical, film musical, television musical, opera, or other dramatic work are NOT eligible.
 - The repertoire must be contrasting by composer, tempo, and text to avoid the singer becoming Ineligible to Advance in subsequent rounds.
- Categories may be subdivided in chapter and region auditions. When subdivided, the following Age and Grade limits apply:
 - CM 2A - Age Limit: 12 years. Grades: 6th and 7th Grades
 - CM 2B - Age Limit: 14 years. Grade: 8th Grade

NSA CM High School Requirements

Category CM 3 - High School Commercial Music - Treble Voices

- Voice Type: Treble
- Age Limit: 19 years
- Length of Study: Does not apply
- Grade: 9th Grade, 10th Grade, 11th Grade, 12th Grade
- Audition Length: 8 minutes
- Repertoire Requirements (THREE Songs)
 - THREE age-appropriate selections from Commercial Music repertoire in a CM style
 - One song may be self-accompanied on a non-amplified acoustic instrument.
 - One song may be an original song.
 - Songs originally written for a stage musical, film musical, television musical, opera, or other dramatic work are NOT eligible.
 - The repertoire must be contrasting by composer, tempo, and text to avoid the singer becoming Ineligible to Advance in subsequent rounds.
- Categories may be subdivided in chapter and region auditions. When subdivided, the following Age and Grade limits apply:
 - CM 3A - Age Limit: 16 years. Grades: 9th - 10th Grades
 - CM 3B - Age Limit: 19 years. Grades: 11th - 12th Grades

Category CM 4 - High School Commercial Music - TBB Voices

- Voice Type: TBB
- Age Limit: 19 years
- Length of Study: Does not apply
- Grade: 9th Grade, 10th Grade, 11th Grade, 12th Grade
- Audition Length: 8 minutes
- Repertoire Requirements (THREE Songs)
 - THREE age-appropriate selections from Commercial Music repertoire in a CM style
 - One song may be self-accompanied on a non-amplified acoustic instrument.
 - One song may be an original song.
 - Songs originally written for a stage musical, film musical, television musical, opera, or other dramatic work are NOT eligible.
 - The repertoire must be contrasting by composer, tempo, and text to avoid the singer becoming Ineligible to Advance in subsequent rounds.
- Categories may be subdivided in chapter and region auditions. When subdivided, the following Age and Grade limits apply:
 - CM 4A - Age Limit: 16 years. Grades: 9th - 10th Grades
 - CM 4B - Age Limit: 19 years. Grades: 11th - 12th Grades

NSA CM Lower Post-High School Requirements

Category CM 5 - Lower Post-HS Commercial Music - Treble Voices

- Voice Type: Treble
- Age Limit: 22 years
- Length of Study: 1-2 years post-high school
- Audition Length: 10 minutes
- Repertoire Requirements (THREE Songs)
 - THREE selections from Commercial Music repertoire in a CM style
 - One song may be self-accompanied on a non-amplified acoustic instrument.
 - One song may be an original song.
 - Songs originally written for a stage musical, film musical, television musical, opera, or other dramatic work are NOT eligible.
 - The repertoire must be contrasting by composer, tempo, and text to avoid the singer becoming Ineligible to Advance in subsequent rounds.
- Categories may be subdivided in chapter and region auditions. When subdivided, the following Age and Length of Study limits apply:
 - CM 5A - Age Limit: 20 years. Length of Study: 1 year Post-HS
 - CM 5B - Age Limit: 22 years. Length of Study: 2 years Post-HS

Category CM 6 - Lower Post-HS Commercial Music - TBB Voices

- Voice Type: TBB
- Age Limit: 22 years
- Length of Study: 1-2 years post-high school
- Audition Length: 10 minutes
- Repertoire Requirements (THREE Songs)
 - THREE selections from Commercial Music repertoire in a CM style
 - One song may be self-accompanied on a non-amplified acoustic instrument.
 - One song may be an original song.
 - Songs originally written for a stage musical, film musical, television musical, opera, or other dramatic work are NOT eligible.
 - The repertoire must be contrasting by composer, tempo, and text to avoid the singer becoming Ineligible to Advance in subsequent rounds.
- Categories may be subdivided in chapter and region auditions. When subdivided, the following Age and Length of Study limits apply:
 - CM 6A - Age Limit: 20 years. Length of Study: 1 year Post-HS
 - CM 6B - Age Limit: 22 years. Length of Study: 2 years Post-HS

NSA CM Upper Post-High School Requirements

Category CM 7 - Upper Post-HS Commercial Music - Treble Voices

- Voice Type: Treble
- Age Limit: 25 years
- Length of Study: three-five years Post-HS not in a grad program
- Audition Length: 12 minutes
- Repertoire Requirements (FOUR Songs)
 - FOUR selections from Commercial Music repertoire in a CM style
 - Up to two songs may be self-accompanied on a non-amplified acoustic instrument.
 - Up to two contrasting songs may be original songs.
 - Songs originally written for a stage musical, film musical, television musical, opera, or other dramatic work are NOT eligible.
 - The repertoire must be contrasting by composer, tempo, and text. An exception is granted for the composer rule up to the number of original songs allowed in the category.
- Categories may be subdivided in chapter and region auditions. When subdivided, the following Age and Length of Study limits apply:
 - CM 7A - Age Limit: 23 years. Length of Study: 3 years Post-HS
 - CM 7B - Age Limit: 25 years. Length of Study: 4-5 years Post-HS not in grad program

Category CM 8 - Upper Post-HS Commercial Music - TBB Voices

- Voice Type: TBB
- Age Limit: 25 years
- Length of Study: three-five years Post-HS not in a grad program
- Audition Length: 12 minutes
- Repertoire Requirements (FOUR Songs)
 - FOUR selections from Commercial Music repertoire in a CM style
 - Up to two songs may be self-accompanied on a non-amplified acoustic instrument.
 - Up to two contrasting songs may be original songs.
 - Songs originally written for a stage musical, film musical, television musical, opera, or other dramatic work are NOT eligible.
 - The repertoire must be contrasting by composer, tempo, and text. An exception is granted for the composer rule up to the number of original songs allowed in the category.
- Categories may be subdivided in chapter and region auditions. When subdivided, the following Age and Length of Study limits apply:
 - CM 8A - Age Limit: 23 years. Length of Study: 3 years Post-HS
 - CM 8B - Age Limit: 25 years. Length of Study: 4-5 years Post-HS not in a grad program

NSA CM Advanced Requirements

Category CM 9 - Advanced Commercial Music - Treble Voices

- Voice Type: Treble
- Age Limit: 30 years
- Length of Study: four+ years Post-HS and/or in graduate program
- Audition Length: 15 minutes
- Repertoire Requirements (FIVE Songs)
 - FIVE selections from Commercial Music repertoire in a CM style
 - Up to two songs may be self-accompanied on a non-amplified acoustic instrument.
 - Up to three contrasting songs may be original songs.
 - Songs originally written for a stage musical, film musical, television musical, opera, or other dramatic work are NOT eligible.
 - The repertoire must be contrasting by composer, tempo, and text. An exception is granted for the composer rule up to the number of original songs allowed in the category.
- Categories may be subdivided in chapter and region auditions. When subdivided, the following Age and Length of Study limits apply:
 - CM 9A - Age Limit: 26 years. Length of Study: 4-7 years Post-HS
 - CM 9B - Age Limit: 30 years. Length of Study: 7+ years Post-HS

Category CM 10 - Advanced Commercial Music - TBB Voices

- Voice Type: TBB
- Age Limit: 30 years
- Length of Study: four+ years Post-HS and/or in graduate program
- Audition Length: 15 minutes
- Repertoire Requirements (FIVE Songs)
 - FIVE selections from Commercial Music repertoire in a CM style
 - Up to two songs may be self-accompanied on a non-amplified acoustic instrument.
 - Up to three contrasting songs may be original songs.
 - Songs originally written for a stage musical, film musical, television musical, opera, or other dramatic work are NOT eligible.
 - The repertoire must be contrasting by composer, tempo, and text. An exception is granted for the composer rule up to the number of original songs allowed in the category.
 - Categories may be subdivided in chapter and region auditions. When subdivided, the following Age and Length of Study limits apply:
 - CM 10A - Age Limit: 26 years. Length of Study: 4-7 years Post-HS
 - CM 10B - Age Limit: 30 years. Length of Study: 7+ years Post-HS

NSA CM Adult Avocational Requirements

Category CM 11 - Adult Avocational Commercial Music - Treble Voices

- Voice Type: Treble
- Age Limit: 18+ years
- Length of Study: no limit
 - For singers neither pursuing nor holding degrees in music nor working as professional musicians
- Audition Length: 10 minutes
- Repertoire Requirements (THREE Songs)
 - THREE selections from Commercial Music repertoire
 - One song may be self-accompanied on a non-amplified acoustic instrument.
 - One song may be an original song.
 - Songs originally written for a stage musical, film musical, television musical, opera, or other dramatic work are NOT eligible.
 - The repertoire must be contrasting by composer, tempo, and text to avoid the singer becoming Ineligible to Advance in subsequent rounds.
- This category does not currently advance to the National Student Audition Qualifying, Semifinal and Final rounds.

Category CM 12 - Adult Avocational Commercial Music - TBB Voices

- Voice Type: TBB
- Age Limit: 18+ years
- Length of Study: no limit
 - For singers neither pursuing nor holding degrees in music nor working as professional musicians
- Audition Length: 10 minutes
- Repertoire Requirements (THREE Songs)
 - THREE selections from Commercial Music repertoire
 - One song may be self-accompanied on a non-amplified acoustic instrument.
 - One song may be an original song.
 - Songs originally written for a stage musical, film musical, television musical, opera, or other dramatic work are NOT eligible.
 - The repertoire must be contrasting by composer, tempo, and text to avoid the singer becoming Ineligible to Advance in subsequent rounds.
- This category does not currently advance to the National Student Audition Qualifying, Semifinal and Final rounds.

NSA CM Adult Non-Traditional Requirements

Category CM 13 - Adult Non-Traditional Commercial Music - Treble Voices

- Voice Type: Treble
- Age Limit: 18+ years
- Length of Study: no limit
 - For singers pursuing or holding degrees in music whose age or level of study falls outside the limits of other categories
- Audition Length: 10 minutes
- Repertoire Requirements (THREE Songs)
 - THREE selections from Commercial Music repertoire
 - One song may be self-accompanied on a non-amplified acoustic instrument.
 - One song may be an original song.
 - Songs originally written for a stage musical, film musical, television musical, opera, or other dramatic work are NOT eligible.
 - The repertoire must be contrasting by composer, tempo, and text to avoid the singer becoming Ineligible to Advance in subsequent rounds.
- This category does not currently advance to the National Student Audition Qualifying, Semifinal and Final rounds.

Category CM 14 - Adult Non-Traditional Commercial Music - TBB Voices

- Voice Type: TBB
- Age Limit: 18+ years
- Length of Study: no limit
 - For singers pursuing or holding degrees in music whose age or level of study falls outside the limits of other categories
- Audition Length: 10 minutes
- Repertoire Requirements (THREE Songs)
 - THREE selections from Commercial Music repertoire
 - One song may be self-accompanied on a non-amplified acoustic instrument.
 - One song may be an original song.
 - Songs originally written for a stage musical, film musical, television musical, opera, or other dramatic work are NOT eligible.
 - The repertoire must be contrasting by composer, tempo, and text to avoid the singer becoming Ineligible to Advance in subsequent rounds.
- This category does not currently advance to the National Student Audition Qualifying, Semifinal and Final rounds.

NSA Commercial Music Division Tools

Access the forms and tools you need for your chapter, region, and the national rounds of the auditions.

Minor Chaperone JOT Form

- A parent or guardian must complete the NATS NSA Minor Chaperone Form for their student.
- Failure to submit this form AT LEAST two weeks (14 days) prior to the beginning of the chapter, region, or national event will remove the minor student from the competition. Late forms will not be accepted.

Printable Commercial Music Division Elements

- [All-in-One 2026-2027 COMMERCIAL MUSIC CATEGORY GUIDE](#)
- [NSA Commercial Music Regulations, Rubrics, and Sample Comments](#)
- [NSA Regulations - All Categories](#)

Tools and Reminders for Recording Videos for NATS Auditions

- [Printable CM Video Guidelines](#)

NSA Audition Materials

- [Minor Chaperone JOT Form](#)
- [NSA Blank Adjudications Sheets](#)
- [NATS Code of Conduct](#)
- [NATS NSA Appeal Process](#)

NSA Adjudication Training Videos

- [NSA Children & Youth Adjudicators Training](#)
- [NSA Classical Categories Adjudicators Training](#)
- [NSA Commercial Music Categories Adjudicators Training](#)
- [NSA Spirituals Categories Adjudicators Training](#)
- [NSA Musical Theatre Categories Adjudicators Training](#)

NSA RATING AND SCORING

All NATS National Student Auditions use the same scoring system to ensure consistency across all levels of auditions.

Audition Structure

- Rounds may include: Preliminary, Quarterfinal (when needed), Semifinal (when needed), and Final.
- Larger categories may be divided into multiple preliminary groups.

Preliminary and Quarterfinal Auditions

- An audition begins with a piece of the singer's choosing, followed by whatever the adjudicators call for up to the time limit.
- Time begins when the singer begins their slate.
- Performance must start from the beginning of the song; alternative starting points or cuts to ensure a certain portion of the song fits in the time limit are not allowed.
- Adjudication completed in accordance with the official NATS rubrics with scores from 70-100.
- Advancement to the next round requires a mark of 90 or higher, whether from an average or two individual scores.

Semifinal Auditions

- Perform one selection from submitted repertoire
- Adjudicators score (70-100) or rank numerically
- Up to five singers advance to Finals; when there is a tie for the lowest place, all tied singers may advance
- Adjudicators may not confer before submitting results

Final Auditions

- Perform one complete selection from entered repertoire
- Adjudicators rank independently, highest to lowest. Adjudicators will confer to break ties.
- Lowest combined ranking = top placement
- Awards presented after all finals completed

NSA Scoring System

- Current official NATS adjudication forms and rubrics used at all levels
- Scores range from 70-100 for objective adjudication and constructive feedback as guided by the NATS rubric
- Written comments must be provided during preliminaries; may be provided during semifinals
- Adjudicators must provide sufficient comments to reflect the score given

Understanding ITA

Although uncommon, a singer, singer's teacher or the singer's collaborative pianist may make a decision during a live or recorded audition that renders the singer Ineligible to Advance to the next round of the competition because they violated a rule of the NSA Auditions. An Auditions Chair may issue an ITA at any stage of the audition process once the matter has been reviewed, even if the protocol violation was not identified by previous adjudication panels or Auditions Chairs. An ITA is issued to ensure the consistency of the auditions throughout chapter, region, and national auditions.

What actions might render a singer Ineligible to Advance?

- entering repertoire that does not meet the category's requirements
- entering repertoire that does not contrast by composer, tempo and text
- entering the same repertoire in multiple categories and/or regions in the same season
- entering a song originally written for a stage musical, film musical, television musical, opera, or other dramatic work in the Commercial Music categories
- entering the auditions under the name of a teacher who is not the singer's primary or concurrent teacher
- failure to submit required documents by published deadlines at any level of the audition
- performing in a category for which one's age and grade or level of study as of 9/1/2026 does not qualify them
- performing repertoire not entered in the qualifying audition in National NSA
- performing with any visual or auditory cues to assist with recollection of text or music (Exception: Oratorio, mass, requiem and cantata arias may be performed with a score, consistent with common practice)
- performing invalid cuts of vocal content
- performing with invalid accompaniment for the given category
- performing in costume, using props, and/or set pieces during the audition
- performing WITHOUT a microphone amplifying the voice through an external speaker in CM auditions
- violating copyright law when accompanying musician performing from a score that is not compliant with U.S. copyright law
- violating the NATS Code of Conduct
- violating anything listed on the Video Submission Guidelines as making a video audition invalid (page 39)
- visually or audibly revealing the identity of one's teacher, or the teacher's or singer's school, location, chapter, or region
 - please note: this is not an exhaustive list but provides the most common ITA violations

NATS COPYRIGHT POLICY

NATS encourages all teachers, singers, and collaborative pianists and requires participants to affirm compliance with the NATS Copyright Policy.. Copyright law protects musical works and prohibits unauthorized reproduction, including photocopying, scanning, photographing, or taking screenshots of copyrighted sheet music. Students and collaborative pianists are responsible for using only authorized music. Failure to comply with copyright law may render the singer Ineligible To Advance in NSA auditions. in NSA auditions.

Acceptable Music

- ✓ Original printed scores
- ✓ Legally purchased digital scores with proof of purchase
- ✓ Public domain editions legally downloaded in the USA from sources such as IMSLP or Song Central

Unacceptable Music

- ✗ Photographs, scans, or screenshots of copyrighted music
- ✗ Shared PDFs or screenshots provided by teachers, friends, or colleagues
- ✗ Copies made from library books, anthologies, or online images without a licensed download

A musical work can be in the public domain, while a specific edition of the score can still be under copyright. For example, Schubert's songs are public domain, but a newly engraved Peters edition is not.

- Collaborative musicians and their singers may use any legally owned printed score, but they cannot scan, photograph, or copy a copyrighted edition simply because the underlying composition is public domain.

Copyright law prohibits photographing or digitally reproducing sheet music, including taking photos, to be used on iPads or tablets.

- ✓ Singers and their collaborative pianist must perform from legally purchased, printed music or an officially licensed digital score with proof of purchase.
- ✓ Downloads from the public domain in the United States- such as IMSLP or Song Central – must be the exact downloadable editions.
- ✗ When a collaborative musician chooses to perform from an illegal copy during the auditions, the onus of responsibility for the copyright violation preventing the singer from advancing to subsequent rounds rests with the musician.

By participating in NSA events, all teachers, singers, and collaborative musicians affirm compliance with the NATS Copyright Policy.

NSA Commercial Music Auditions Rubric

Each singer's performance is adjudicated in comparison to the following standards as applied to the category of entry.

- Singers may choose to sing all their selections in one CM style or vary their selections in multiple CM styles.
- Each singer's performance is adjudicated in comparison to the following standards as applied to the category of entry.

STANDARD	DEVELOPING 70-79 points	ADVANCING 80-89 points	MASTERING 90-100 points
ARTISTIC INTERPRETATION • The performance is authentic. • The performance offers a unique, stylized interpretation of the music. • The performance is specific to the selected style of commercial music.	The singer needs an increased understanding of the stylistic elements of each selection. The interpretation lacks authenticity and is not unique to the singer.	The singer is advancing in the ability to communicate the stylistic elements of each selection. The interpretation has moments of authenticity unique to the singer.	The singer is mastering the ability to communicate the stylistic elements of each selection. The interpretation is authentic and unique to the singer.
LYRIC COMMUNICATION • The lyrics are articulated in the style appropriate to the selected style of commercial music. • Vocal tract shaping and diction enhance the individuality of the performance.	Articulation is incompatible with the style of the song. The singer is beginning to engage the lyrics to embody the essence of each style.	Articulation is often compatible with the style of each song. The singer is often engaging the lyrics to embody the essence of each style.	Articulation is compatible with the style of each song. The singer is consistently engaging the lyrics to embody the essence of each style.
VOCAL STYLE • The song's artistic interpretation includes expressive vocal stylisms characteristic of the selected style. • Interpretive vocal stylisms may include varied vocal onsets, releases, nuances, and embellishments, which stylistically color the vocal tone with fry, cry, growl, breathiness, etc. (See CM Terminology)	Vocal interpretations lack the vocal stylisms characteristic of each genre. The singer is beginning to develop a facility with vocal stylisms.	Vocal interpretations include some vocal stylisms characteristic of each selection's style. The singer is developing a facility with artistic vocal stylisms.	Vocal interpretations include vocal stylisms characteristic of each genre. The singer has proficient facility with artistically effective vocal stylisms.

NSA Commercial Music Auditions Rubric, cont

Each singer's performance is adjudicated in comparison to the following standards as applied to the category of entry.

STANDARD	DEVELOPING 70-79 points	ADVANCING 80-89 points	MASTERING 90-100 points
MUSICIANSHIP - Performance is in tune. - Rhythmic groove enhances the performance. - Memorization is secure and accurate.	Pitches need to be more accurate. The style and rhythmic groove require further study. Memorization is incomplete.	Most pitches are accurate. The style and rhythmic groove are developing. Memorization is organic and mostly accurate.	All pitches are accurate. The style and rhythmic groove enhance the performance. Memorization is organic and accurate.
VOCAL PRODUCTION - Each commercial style requires a variety of authentic vocal colors and sounds culturally viable for the chosen style of music performed. - Vocal tone may include some form of a mix of Mode I (Chest/TA) and Mode II (Head/CT) as well as varied organic, primal sounds borne of raw emotion. - All CM styles are reliant on amplification. The microphone is used dynamically to facilitate vocal stylisms as well as projection/production.	The singer is beginning to show ability in meeting the vocal demands of each song, is able to make some appropriate choices in keeping with the specific style and emotion of each song.	The singer shows advancing ability in meeting the vocal demands of each song and is often able to make appropriate choices in keeping with the specific style and emotion of each song.	The singer is mastering the ability to meet the vocal demands of each song and makes appropriate choices (subtle or dramatic) in keeping with the specific style and emotional expression of each song.
BREATH MANAGEMENT - Inhalation is efficient to the style and may be noisy or silent in response to raw emotion. - Exhalation provides stability and vocal energy. The appearance of effort may be intrinsic to style.	The singer is beginning to inhale efficiently to meet the demands of each style. Exhalation needs to provide more stability and vocal energy.	The singer inconsistently inhales efficiently to meet the demands of each style. Exhalation inconsistently provides stability and vocal energy.	The singer is mastering efficient inhalation to meet the demands of each style. Exhalation provides stability and vocal energy.
ENSEMBLE (comments only) The singer and pianist coordinate their efforts toward the same artistic goals in the performance.	The singer and pianist seem unsynchronized. The artistic goals of the performance were unclear.	The singer and pianist are often coordinated in their efforts toward the same artistic goals in the performance.	The singer and pianist are consistently coordinated in their efforts toward the same artistic goals in the entire performance.

NSA Children & Youth Rubric

Each singer's performance is adjudicated in comparison to the following standards as applied to the category of entry.

STANDARD	EXPLORING 70-79 points	DEVELOPING 80-89 points	ADVANCING 90-100 points
VOCAL EASE & COMFORT - Vocal freedom in singing - Lack of strain in singing - Accessing a vocal range appropriate for the age/physical maturity of the singer - Demonstrating an emerging awareness of healthy vocal coordination	The singer demonstrates emerging vocal freedom with occasional tension or inconsistent tone. Range and vocal choices are generally appropriate for their age and stage of development.	The singer performs with increasing vocal freedom, healthy tone, and age-appropriate range. Breath and vocal coordination are becoming more consistent.	The singer performs with natural vocal ease, consistent healthy production, and confident use of an age-appropriate range without unnecessary tension.
PITCH & RHYTHM - General pitch matching - Tempo awareness - Rhythmic consistency - Timing vocal entrances - Ability to continue with recovery skills - Musicianship skills are developing	The singer demonstrates basic pitch and rhythmic accuracy with occasional errors but is able to recover and continue.	The singer performs with generally accurate pitch, steady rhythm, and growing musical independence.	The singer performs with consistently accurate pitch, rhythmic security, musical confidence, and stylistic awareness appropriate to the repertoire.
TEXT COMMUNICATION Clarity and understanding of lyrics is present at a level appropriate to the student's age NOTE: Missing teeth, retainers, teeth-straightening trays, braces, etc.—will all alter some pronunciations/articulations.	The singer communicates the text with emerging clarity and understanding appropriate for their age. Diction supports basic communication.	The singer clearly communicates the text with growing expressive intent and understandable diction.	The singer communicates the text with confidence, clarity, and genuine connection while remaining age appropriate.
EXPRESSIVE ENGAGEMENT Willingness to communicate and connect to the song's music and lyrics/text in age-appropriate expression.	The singer shows a willingness to communicate the character or mood of the song with emerging expressive choices.	The singer makes thoughtful expressive choices that support the text and demonstrates increasing confidence in performance.	The singer presents an engaging, sincere performance that communicates the story naturally and authentically for their age.

NSA Children & Youth Rubric, cont

Each singer's performance is adjudicated in comparison to the following standards as applied to the category of entry.

STANDARD	DEVELOPING 70-79 points	ADVANCING 80-89 points	MASTERING 90-100 points
PERFORMANCE READINESS - Secure memorization - Independence in performance - Ability to complete selections with continuity - Foundational performance skills	The singer is generally prepared, demonstrates memorization, and completes the performance with occasional lapses in confidence or independence.	The singer performs from memory with growing confidence, independence, and stage awareness.	The singer performs with confidence, secure memorization, poise, and independence throughout the performance.
STYLE OF MUSIC Age-appropriate levels of differences in the audition's performance as appropriate to the category— whether CL, MT, or CM music. NOTE: See genre-specific rubric as needed for further details	The singer demonstrates emerging awareness of the stylistic expectations of the selected genre.	The singer performs with increasing understanding of the style, character, and performance practices appropriate to the genre.	The singer demonstrates a confident, age-appropriate understanding of the musical style and performs with stylistic consistency.

NSA VIDEO SUBMISSION GUIDELINES



NATS VIDEO AUDITION CHECKLIST

RECORD IT. SHARE IT. OWN THE STAGE.



National Association
of Teachers of Singing



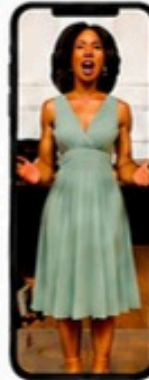
DO THIS
RECORD HORIZONTALLY
(Landscape)



GIVES JUDGES THE BEST VIEW!



NOT THIS
RECORD VERTICALLY
(Portrait)



Uses less
screen space
& doesn't show
your best.

VS.



Questions?
Check the official
NSA Video
Submission Guidelines
at nats.org
or ask your teacher.



CAN THE JUDGES SEE YOU?

YES!

- Face is visible
- Full or upper body in the frame
- Good lighting
- Expression & storytelling are easy to see

NOPE!

- Dark or backlit
- Half your body off screen
- Camera pointed too high or low
- Face hidden behind music stand



SOUND CHECK

DO

- Make sure judges can hear YOU
- Balance singer & track
- Watch your video before uploading
- Are you using an amplified mic in CM?

DON'T

- AutoTune
- Audio filters
- AI voice enhancement
- Audio editing



ONE TAKE ONLY

DO



Record each song
in ONE continuous take.
Start. Perform. Stop.

DON'T



No splicing.
No editing mistakes out.
No combining takes.



ACCOMPANIMENT

QUALITY BACKGROUND TRACK

Use a high-quality background track that supports your performance.



REMEMBER

- Use legal music.
- Follow copyright rules.



LOOK PROFESSIONAL

THINK:

- Recital
- Audition
- Masterclass

DON'T WEAR:

- Pajamas
- Masks

FINAL UPLOAD CHECKLIST



Slate on each video



Sound checked



Video watched completely



Landscape video



Correct repertoire



Uploaded before deadline



Good lighting



Singer visible



Single-take recording

YOUR GOAL:

MAKE IT EASY FOR ADJUDICATORS TO FOCUS ON

- YOUR SINGING
- YOUR STORYTELLING
- YOUR ARTISTRY

— NOT ON TECHNICAL PROBLEMS.



TOP 5 MISTAKES



Recording vertically



Performer too close



Missing deadlines



Poor lighting



Uploading the wrong song

Full NSA Video Recording Guidelines

Recording Location

Record your submission as you would a live audition or recital. Videos may be recorded in a home, school, church, synagogue, recital hall, rehearsal room, or voice studio with suitable acoustics, with or without an audience. Dress professionally as you would for an audition or recital; costumes and inappropriate attire are not permitted.

You may submit an unedited video of a performance before a live audience, provided you can be clearly seen and heard in the video, the video was recorded after September 1st of the current NSA audition season, and the accompaniment and microphone requirements for the category are met. Remember to record and attach your verbal slate.

Recording

- Record in LANDSCAPE (horizontal) orientation from a fixed, audience-centered position.
- Face the camera as you would face adjudicators in a live audition.
- Keep your face and at least your upper body visible in the frame; adjust as needed to capture your performance and avoid excessive headroom.
- Include the required slate either as part of the recording or edited onto the beginning of the otherwise unedited performance video.
 - I am (Your Name)
 - I will perform (Title of Selection)
 - from (Title of Larger Work when applicable)
 - by (Composer's Name)
- All video auditions must be recorded on or after September 1 of the current NSA audition season.
- Submit a separate, unedited video for each song or aria
- Videos cannot:
 - pan or zoom during a performance
 - use recording equipment that alters the acoustics of the venue or the sound quality of the singer by adding distractingly unrealistic reverb, altering the pitches sung, digitally altering or filtering the vocals either during or after the video is filmed

Full NSA Video Guidelines

IMPORTANT: Teachers will register qualifiers for NSA

- Moving forward, the student's primary teacher will be responsible for entering qualifying singers into the National Student Auditions YouTube Preliminary Round and completing all required post-qualification materials, with the exception of the NATS Minor Chaperone Form, which will continue to be completed separately.

Video Audition - Performance

- Each video requires that the singer complete their slate as outlined above.
- Perform each of your selections from memory in your video.
- Participants in ALL NSA Categories (Classical, Commercial Music, Musical Theatre, and/or Spirituals categories) must perform full songs. 16-bar, 32-bar, etc., audition cuts are not accepted and will result in an ITA.
- The identity, logo, or image of your teacher, school, location, or NATS chapter/region must not be spoken or revealed in your video in any way including posters, photographs, reflections in mirrors/glass/shiny surfaces, diplomas, flags, banners, video's titling and description, etc.
- YouTube is the only video uploading platform accepted. (No video auditions uploaded to Vimeo, Flickr, Vevo, or personal websites, etc. will be accepted.)

NSA Collaborative Musicians in CM Categories

- If your voice teacher serves as the collaborative musician, their face and identity must not be visible in the video.
- Collaborative musicians must perform on any acoustic instrument from memory or a copyright-compliant score.
- A page-turner (other than your voice teacher) may appear on camera if needed.

Full NSA YouTube Setting Guidelines

YouTube Video Settings

YouTube is the only video platform accepted. No video auditions uploaded to Vimeo, Flickr, Vevo, or personal websites, etc. will be accepted.

- You **MUST** upload your video in LANDSCAPE/HORIZONTAL ORIENTATION or the platform will automatically qualify the video as a SHORT and the recording will not be eligible for adjudication.
- Select “Unlisted” in the privacy settings found under the Broadcasting and Sharing Options, when uploading your video files to YouTube. No other settings are accepted in NSA.
- Each video’s title should be in the following format: NATS NSA – Singer’s Full Name
- All video titles must be the same at all levels of NSA. Video titles must not contain any reference to chapter, region, school, teacher, etc.
- Type in the YouTube “Description” for each video:
 - I DO NOT OWN THE COPYRIGHT TO THE MUSIC PERFORMED IN THIS VIDEO. THIS IS A singer AUDITION NOT FOR PROFIT OR MONETIZATION.
 - Title of Selection”
 - Title of LARGER WORK whenever applicable
 - Composer’s Name
 - if a Commercial Music selection, ADD: & Lyricist’s Name
- Turn OFF the video comments option on each video uploaded to YouTube.
- YouTube channel background, banner, titles, logos, and Images must NOT reveal teacher, school, location, NATS chapter, region, studio names, or affiliations of the teacher or the student auditioning.

Please follow these guidelines

- Corrections to invalid videos, broken video links, and incorrect video links will not be accepted after the submission deadline.
- Whenever possible, invalid video submissions will be adjudicated for comments only.
- Invalid video submissions are Ineligible To Advance to the next level of auditions.

Full NSA Video Submission Guidelines

Before Adding Video Links

Prior to pasting video links into AuditionNow, it is the responsibility of the NATS member entering the singer to:

- confirm that you have the required slate for each video
- confirm that the video was uploaded and plays in landscape orientation
- confirm that the video and music are in sync
- confirm that the volume of the singing is adequate to be adjudicated
- confirm that the performance is of a complete selection
 - Extended silences before and after your performance may be trimmed

It is essential to confirm that the video performance matches the selection's title on YouTube and on your entry's registration. Copy and paste errors duplicating links make an audition Ineligible To Advance.

Confirming Video Links

- NSA National Qualifying Round video submissions are always due on the 2nd Friday of April.
- Whether using AuditionNow or AuditionWare, the teacher will need to paste the individual web link/URL for each YouTube video to upload under the correct repertoire item on the platform
- Do not paste video links with a space before or after the link
- Upload 2, 3, 4, or 5 separate videos matching the number of selections required in your NSA Category of Entry.
- Confirm that there are not any copy and paste errors nor duplicate links well in advance of the deadline.

Full NSA Video ITA Considerations

Invalid Video Considerations

Teachers and singers are responsible for ensuring that all repertoire, video recordings, submissions, and registration materials comply with NSA requirements. Failure to meet these requirements will result in a singer being designated Ineligible to Advance (ITA). Careful review before submission allows adjudicators to focus on the singer's artistry and performance rather than avoidable procedural or technical issues.

The following issues make a video submission and singer's entry Ineligible to Advance to subsequent rounds:

- YouTube & Access Issues
 - Videos uploaded as private or public
 - Videos removed by the user or by YouTube for copyright infringement
 - YouTube submissions that are monetized
 - Copy and Paste issues, duplicate video links, and failure to override a link from a previous audition
- Repertoire & Eligibility Issues
 - Repertoire that violates the NSA Guidelines for the category
 - Video submissions of repertoire not vetted, approved and performed in the region category that qualified the singer for National Preliminaries
 - Videos recorded before September 1 of the 2026/2027 NSA audition cycle
 - Videos that are incomplete; full songs are required
- Identity & Confidentiality Violations
 - Videos revealing the identity, image, school, location, studio, or affiliation of the teacher, singer, NATS chapter or region that might be included in the YouTube channel, title, description, reflections, posters, diplomas, banners, flags, etc.
- Recording & Technical Violations
 - Videos without the required spoken slate
 - Videos recorded in portrait orientation
 - CM Videos that did not utilize an external speaker for amplification of the solo vocals - no direct mic to video is acceptable
 - CM videos that recorded with multiple microphones or headset/diva mics
 - AS, CL, MT videos that use an amplified microphone in the recording
 - Videos that pan or zoom during the performance or that use multiple cameras
 - Videos using audio or video processing that alters the singer's sound, pitch, or acoustics through filters, effects, excessive reverb, or digital manipulation
- Performance Rule Violations
 - Videos in which the singer appears to be reading or using written aids
 - Videos conducted or side-coached by another person during the recording
- Accompaniment Violations
- Other violations listed in the division category guide

A History of NATS Auditions

National guidelines for Student Auditions (SA) were first conceived in 1977. Following a national survey of chapters and regions, a committee chaired by Judith Nicosia Civitano developed the 1993 Guidelines for Student Auditions, which served NATS for the next sixteen years.

A 2007 survey of chapter and regional policies led to further revisions by a committee including Kathleen Arecchi, Elaine Case, Roma Prindle, Connie Roberts, and Anne Christopherson. Their work established a mission statement for Student Auditions, clarified responsibilities for organizers, and identified best practices.

In 2010–2011, a committee chaired by Norman Spivey explored creating a national audition system that would allow singers to advance from a region to the national student auditions. Building on this work, a committee chaired by Deborah Williamson developed the National Student Auditions (NSA) Guidelines, which were approved by the NATS Board of Directors in 2012.

From 2012–2014, the NSA structure, categories, repertoire requirements, and fees were finalized and published online. The NATS Board approved the launch of National Student Auditions in 2013, and the inaugural national semifinals and finals were held in Boston during the 2014 NATS National Conference. More than 150 singers participated, 37 advanced to the finals, and 24 singers shared \$30,000 in awards.

In 2014, Dan Johnson-Wilmot and committee members Karen Brunssen, Mark McQuade, Robert Wells, and Melanie Williams developed a national model for Student Auditions based on NSA Guidelines. The model established greater consistency across chapters and regions while creating a pathway for singers to progress from local auditions to national audition. Today, more than 10,000 NSA auditions are heard annually.

In 2022, the NATS Executive Board expanded NSA opportunities by adding 16 new categories, including Commercial Music divisions and additional Classical, Musical Theatre, and Commercial Music categories for children and youth. Introduced during the 2023–2024 audition cycle, these additions increased the annual NSA offerings to 34 categories, in addition to the biennial American Negro Spiritual categories and the alternating Hall Johnson Spirituals Competition.

National Student Audition Regulations continue to be reviewed and revised regularly by the NSA Regulations Committee with input from NSA Auditions Chairs and NATS members.

Have Questions?

Need help?

If you have questions about the NATS Student Auditions process, your first point of contact should always be the Auditions Team for the event in which you are entering students—your Chapter, District, Region, or National auditions. As always, thank you in advance for extending grace to the volunteers that are organizing, preparing, and running your auditions.

These teams are trained to support participants with registration, repertoire requirements, scheduling, and event-specific procedures. Beginning with your local auditions team ensures that questions are answered quickly and consistently, using the policies and procedures that apply to your event.

If additional guidance is needed, the Auditions Team will consult with the National Student Auditions (NSA) Team on your behalf to obtain clarification or resolve complex questions. This process promotes consistent interpretation of the regulations while allowing the NSA Team to focus on policy matters that require national review.

Please begin all audition-related questions with your event's Auditions Team. They are your primary resource and will coordinate with the NSA Team whenever additional assistance is required.

NSA Team Emails for Chapter and Region Leadership Questions

NSA Emails for Chapter and Region Leadership Questions

NSA Classical Music - nsaCL@nats.org

NSA Commercial Music - nsaCM@nats.org

NSA Musical Theatre - nsaMT@nats.org

NSA Spirituals (American Negro Spirituals and Hall Johnson) - nsaCL@nats.org

NATS Competitions & NSA Leadership

Emily Sinclair - NSA American Negro Spirituals, Classical, and Hall Johnson Coordinator

Ellie Seligmann - NSA Commercial Music Coordinator, CM Advisory Panel Chair

Autumn West - NSA Musical Theatre Coordinator, MT Advisory Panel Chair

Marcía Porter - American Negro Spirituals Advisory Chair

Lori Laitman - Art Song Composition Award Coordinator

Barbara Hill Moore - Barbara Hill Moore Emerging Teaching Artist Award Chair

Dana Lentini - Children & Youth Advisory Panel Chair

Danielle Talamantes - NATS Artist Award Chair

Frank Ragsdale - NATS National Musical Theatre Committee Coordinator

Diana Allan - Past Vice President of Auditions

Alexis Davis-Hazell - NATS Past-President

Randall Umstead - NATS President

Melissa Greenblatt - NATS Executive Director

Casey L. Carter - NATS Vice President of Auditions

NSA Regulations Committee

Diana Allan, Casey L. Carter (chair), Melissa Foster, Alexis Davis-Hazell, Allison Houston, Dan Johnson-Wilmot, Katherine Jolly, Dana Lentini, Sandra Oberoi, Holly Palmer, Marcía Porter, Ellie Seligmann, Emily Sinclair, Autumn West, Randall Umstead

ANS Advisory Panel

Casey L. Carter, Alexis Davis-Hazell, Everett McCorvey, Barbara Hill Moore, Marcía Porter (chair), Michael Preacely, Randall Umstead, Rosalyn Wright Floyd

Art Song Competition Award

Casey L. Carter (chair), Lori Laitman (coordinator), Randall Umstead

CM Advisory Panel

Casey L. Carter, Alexis Davis-Hazell, Melissa Foster, Susan Hanlon-Ferrer, Lyndia Johnson, Holly Palmer, Zipporah Peddle, Ellie Seligmann (chair), Noel Smith, Justin T. Swain, Randall Umstead

C&Y Advisory Panel

Beverly Blouin, Karen Brunssen, Casey L. Carter, Eva Kendrick, Dana Lentini (chair), Nikki Loney, Randall Umstead

METAA Advisory Panel

Casey L. Carter, Bronwen Forbay, Melissa Greenblatt, Jen Jimenez, Barbara Hill Moore, Jeanai LeVita, Randall Umstead

MT Advisory Panel

Susan Boddie, Casey L. Carter, Ronald Land, Joshua May, Paul Patinka, Caroline Schiller, Randall Umstead, Autumn West (chair), Deirdre Welborn

NATSAA Advisory Panel

Casey L. Carter, Andrew Garland, Melissa Greenblatt, Jen Jimenez, Emily Siar, Danielle Talamantes (chair), Randall Umstead

NMTC Advisory Panel

Tiffani Borelli, Casey L. Carter, Kelly Gabrielle Murphy, Jen Jimenez, Sue Matsuki (chair), Catherine McDaniel, Cassie Okenka, Frank Ragsdale (coordinator), Matt Redmond, Katie Travis, Randall Umstead