



AMERICAN TRADITIONS VOCAL COMPETITION

2018 AMERICAN TRADITIONS VOCAL COMPETITION APPLICATION

INSTRUCTIONS AND RULES

The American Traditions Vocal Competition is excited to celebrate its 25th year exploring all of the wonderful and diverse musical traditions present in American music. We challenge singers to select varied repertoire, creating three thoughtful and interesting song programs for three distinct rounds of competition. An audio-only “prescreen” precedes invitation to live rounds in Savannah, Georgia for the opportunity to perform for three celebrated judges and over \$35,000 in cash prizes.

Competition Dates: February 19 – 23, 2018

Applications Open August 1, 2017

Applications Closed 10pm EST Friday, October 20, 2017

Applicants will be notified of their result by 10pm EST Sunday, November 5, 2017

ELIGIBILITY:

- Applicants must be at least 18 years old by February 19, 2018
- Former Gold Medalists are not permitted to compete after winning
- You may only compete in Savannah, GA a total of 3 times in every 5 years

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS:

- Choose nine (9) songs – each song must represent a different genre of American music, taken from our list of fifteen (15) genres (found on p.2)
- Choose an interesting song order that varies style, tempo, vocal quality and any other considerations for programming.
 - You will create three programs, each with three different songs – encompassing all nine of your song selections. Each program corresponds to an advancing round in the competition week, i.e., Quarterfinals, Semifinals, Finals
 - Please note that there are three additional, named, and genre-specific monetary awards that are **only eligible for the Quarterfinal and Semifinal rounds**. Anyone who is competing in the 2018 live rounds has the opportunity to win these awards so long as they program the appropriate selections in the Quarterfinal or Semifinal rounds.



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- The Johnny Mercer Award (\$750) for the best performance of a Johnny Mercer song, presented by The Friends of Johnny Mercer, Inc. and Armstrong State University
- The Sherrill Milnes American Opera Award (\$500) for best performance of an American Opera aria
- The Ben Tucker Jazz Award (\$500) for best performance of a jazz song
- Make an audio recording of your Quarterfinal program, (your first live round, should you advance to the Savannah portion of the competition) and create audio files (mp3, aiff, wav, aac) to send along with your submission.
 - These recordings should have accompaniment (not a capella) and be of a decent quality – use your best judgment. They should be recent, but can be recycled from another recording session if you already have them recorded.
 - Each file **MUST** be named in a format similar to that of their application.
 - Ex. First Name Last Name. Song Title. Genre
 - Ex. Sam Smith. The Possum Song. Songs of Johnny Mercer
- Complete application form on the Application page of our website.
- Upload three audio files where indicated to accompany your application
- Submit \$55 application fee where indicated
- Application deadline is 10pm EST on Friday, Oct 20, 2017.

SCORING:

Scoring for the American Traditions Vocal Competition is non-cumulative. Therefore, each round is scored separately. Performers are scored on three criteria - Technique, Diversity of Program, and Artistry, on a scale of 1-10. A perfect score for any given round is 30, or a score of 10 given by each judge. Scores for specialty awards are separate from overall scores.

REPERTOIRE GUIDELINES:

Each of your nine (9) songs must represent a different genre, chosen from the following:

Opera	Art Song
Musical Theatre	Gospel
Hollywood	Songs of Johnny Mercer
Jazz	Blues
Folk	Religious Music
Country & Western	Popular Music of 1950-1980
Rock/Pop Singer-Songwriters 1980 - today	Cabaret
	Great American Songbook



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- An American composer (either natural-born or naturalized) must have written all songs presented in the American Traditions Vocal Competition. The following composers, songs, and shows are NOT American, and are commonly mistaken to be:
 - Joni Mitchell, David Foster, Andrew Lloyd Webber, Gian Carlo Menotti, *Les Misérables*, “Pure Imagination”, The Beatles, Sir Elton John, Adele, Sting, David Bowie
 - When selecting repertoire from 1980–today, please make sure the songwriter is the same as the performer. Many contemporary songs have a long list of songwriters who contributed to the song’s creation. We are seeking *singer-songwriters* of popular music for this genre, ex. Tracy Chapman, Sara Bareilles, Billy Joel, etc. It is also important to note the songwriter’s nationality, as many songs commonly thought of as “American” are written by songwriters from other countries.
- Original Songs. A contestant may submit an original composition, as long as it strictly falls into one of the ascribed categories.
- Self-Accompaniment. A contestant may accompany themselves on an acoustic instrument for one (1) song in their full program of nine (9) songs. This selection must be decided at the time of application, and marked as such. If the contestant chooses to self-accompany, their pianist will leave the stage for that number; it is not a collaborative venture. No contestant may accompany another contestant. Contestants must remember this is a vocal competition, and perform in such a manner that showcases the voice, rather than the instrument.
- Other Languages. A contestant may choose one (1) song in their full program of nine (9) to sing in a different language, if they so wish. Because of America’s history as a ‘melting pot’ of other cultures, many American composers have written music in the language of their heritage, or of a culture that interests them. Please bear in mind that there will be no translation provided on the contestant’s behalf, and it falls upon the performer to provide an explanation of the song, if the contestant feels it is necessary. **The composer must be a natural-born or a naturalized American citizen.**
- There are strict time limits for each Round of competition, as follows:
 - Quarterfinals: 12 minutes
 - Semifinals: 14 minutes
 - Finals: 16 minutes
 - Timing *starts* the moment the music begins, or contestant begins to speak, and *ends* when the final song is complete.
 - Speaking on stage is allowed and encouraged, but be sure that it does not detract from your singing time, as time limits are watched carefully. Consider planning out what you might say ahead of time, and incorporate that into your complete program.
 - 1 point will be subtracted for *every minute* a contestant goes over the time limit.



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GENERAL COMPETITION INFORMATION:

- The application fee of \$55 is nonrefundable.
- Each Quarterfinalist who travels to Savannah to compete in the live rounds will be awarded a check for \$300 if they do not advance to Semifinals. This is to help defray the cost of travel.
- The American Traditions Vocal Competition retains a staff of highly skilled, diversely talented pianists to support and collaborate with their assigned contestants. Rehearsal time is built into the week's schedule and there is no additional charge to the contestants.
- If a contestant chooses to bring their own pianist, they may do so at their own expense.
- A combo (bass and drums) is available for the Final round, should a contestant wish to use them. There is no additional expense to use the combo, however each contestant must provide appropriate charts if they wish to perform with the additional instrumentalists.

VENUES:

Quarterfinal and Semifinal Rounds

Skidaway Island United Methodist Church
54 Diamond Causeway
Savannah, GA 31411

Final Round

The Historic Savannah Theatre
222 Bull Street
Savannah, GA 31401

PRIZES:

First Prize	Gold Medal, and a paid performance with the Savannah Philharmonic	\$12,000
Second Prize	Silver Medal	\$6,000
Third Prize	Bronze Medal	\$3,000
Fourth Prize	Fourth Place	\$1,200
Fifth Prize	Sponsored by the Savannah Friends of Music	\$1,200
Special *	The Johnny Mercer Award for best Johnny Mercer song, sponsored by The Friends of Johnny Mercer, Inc. and Armstrong State University	\$750
Special *	The Sherrill Milnes American Opera Award for best aria, presented by operatic legend, Mr. Sherrill Milnes	\$500
Special *	The Ben Tucker Jazz Award for best Jazz performance, presented by Mrs. Gloria Tucker, wife of the late Mr. Ben Tucker	\$500
Special	The Richard Chambless' People's Choice Award is presented to both a Quarterfinalist and a Semifinalist who do not advance	\$500 (2)



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GENRE DEFINITIONS:

Art Song – This genre highlights songs written by an established, classical, American composer that are not found within an opera. Art songs are typically found as part of an opus or a song cycle, and are traditionally poetry-based, textually. Classical composers with large song canons include Samuel Barber, Ricky Ian Gordon, Aaron Copland, Charles Ives, Jake Heggie, et al.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_song

Blues – A song style and form derived from African-American communities in the Deep South, typically incorporating the twelve bar chord progression, the blues scale, call-and-response patterns, and oftentimes lyrics that express worry or depression.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blues>

Cabaret – A style of singing that tells a personal story – most keys are lowered to speech range to further the reach of the song’s lyrics. This is a category that is a bit of a “draw bag” in terms of musical style, but performance style is critical. By relating a song to their own life, a performer can spin almost any song to be a Cabaret song– either through an original arrangement (a unique cover in a new style, tempo, key or mood), a standalone musical theater song, a story-song or humorous song, or by relating a memory a performer would like to share before or during the song’s performance. Cabaret shows off a performer’s unique personal history and performance style. *While the American Traditions Competition respects the cultural significance of hip-hop and rap, on the basis of judging a vocal contest, no spoken word is allowed in this competition.*

http://www.excavatingthesong.org/For_Education_Purposes_Only/Cabaret_Song-Types_and_Structure.html

Country - A song from either the contemporary or traditional Country music canon.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Country_music

Folk (Contemporary & Traditional) – A song often shared through oral tradition, based on American themes of society, politics, history and culture. Folk music is often sung and performed in a simpler manner, with a focus on mood, text and melody.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Folk_music

Gospel – A style of singing based in the Christian tradition, in which the vocal style matches the celebratory text, often containing praise, admonishment, salvation, wonder, and **high notes**.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_music



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Great American Songbook - A collection of some of the most important and influential American popular songs and jazz standards from the early 20th century. These songs were written to be sung in speech range and not typically meant for showy vocalism. Many of these songs were written and made popular during wartimes and feature WWI and WWII as lyrical material. The songs are straightforward and often include a rubato verse that leads into the popular refrain.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_American_Songbook#Style

Hollywood – A song from an Original Score of a film or television show, or a “Theme Song” specifically written for a film or television show. If the film has also been adapted into a musical, the song must have been written for the film first, or the film only. *While the American Traditions Competition respects the cultural significance of hip-hop and rap, on the basis of judging a vocal contest, no spoken word is allowed in this competition.*

<http://www.businessinsider.com/the-best-original-songs-from-movies-2016-7>

Jazz – Jazz grew out of the New Orleans music scene of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It can best be categorized as a style of music performed with the use of blue or bent pitches, swung or syncopated rhythms, and a style that oftentimes utilizes improvisation. Within this category, you will find standards, Dixieland, big band, bebop, cool jazz, swing and other jazz-derived subgenres.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jazz>

Religious Music – Songs of religious worship from any religious traditions such as a Spiritual, a hymn, contemporary Christian music, Jewish liturgical music, or any other religious song meant to be sung in a place of worship.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious_music

Musical Theatre – A song by an American composer, written for the musical theatre. The song selected may be any style as long as it is from a pre-existing musical. *It is important to note that while the American Traditions Competition respects the cultural significance of hip-hop and rap, on the basis of judging a vocal competition, no spoken word is allowed in this contest.*

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Musical_theatre

Opera – An aria from an opera or operetta written by an American composer, with a varied compositional output. The time period is large, spanning composers from Victor Herbert (who gained American citizenship in 1902) to Jennifer Higdon and her contemporaries.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opera>

Popular Music of 1950-1980 – American popular music went through many shifts during this time period, so there are vast opportunities for diverse song choices. Rockabilly, Rock’n’roll, Doo Wop,



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Funk, R&B, Soul, and Psychedelic Rock were all a part of this time period where live instrumentation was key.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music_history_of_the_United_States#1940s_and_1950s

Singer-Songwriters of Pop/Rock 1980-today – This genre focuses on pop/rock songs written from the year 1980 up until today, that have been made famous by their American songwriter. Examples of contemporary singer-songwriters include John Mayer, Sara Bareilles, Jason Mraz, Billy Joel, Prince, Jewel, Jon Bon Jovi, Shawn Colvin, Tracy Chapman, et al. *It is important to note that while the American Traditions Competition respects the cultural significance of hip-hop and rap, on the basis of judging a vocal competition, no spoken word is allowed in this contest.*

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music_history_of_the_United_States#1980s_and_90s

Songs of Johnny Mercer – songs containing lyrics or music written by Savannah’s own Johnny Mercer (save those on the Do Not Sing list). Johnny’s entire library is housed at Georgia State University, and can be found at the link below, or on the downloadable file on the application page. You can request the information, chords, or lyrics for any song and they will email it to you!

<http://library.gsu.edu/search-collections/special-collections-archives/johnny-mercercollection/>

One More Thing:

Many singers tend to select (in the words of Pop/Rock guru Sheri Sanders) “Low Hanging Fruit”. Part of our mission is to educate people about where American music styles overlap, where they diverge, and to dig deeper into the massive musical canons of each genre. With this in mind, a Do Not Sing list has been created, and will be enforced. Please do not select the following songs – reach out to our Artistic Director, or consult web resources such as Google or Spotify if you have questions regarding unique and specific song choices, and where to find them. This list is subject to change pending performer’s song choices, year after year.

Do Not Sing

Moon River
Blues in the Night
Over the Rainbow
The Girl in 14-G
Maybe This Time (*Cabaret*)

Anyplace I Hang My Hat is Home
Summertime
At Last
His Eye is on the Sparrow
Gimme, Gimme (*Thoroughly Modern Millie*)

Please reach out to our Artistic Director, Mikki Sodergren, with any questions you may have at msodergren@americantraditionscompetition.com. Thank you so much for your interest and we look forward to hearing you!