

NATS National Student Audition Categories of Entry in NSA Regions, Districts, and Chapters

The National Student Auditions begin at the region-level and progress to the national preliminary, semifinal, and final rounds. If meeting the level of study and age requirements, student-singers may enter multiple genre categories. Region auditions should offer all yellow-highlighted categories contained in the “Categories of Entry” section of this document on page 8. Student-singers may only advance to the National Student Auditions by placing 1st-5th in a region’s NSA. Students placing in Chapter or District auditions will not be automatically advanced to the National Student Auditions.

Terminology applying to ALL NSA Categories

CATEGORY	Categories are defined by voice type. Treble: Soprano, Mezzo-Soprano, Contralto, Countertenor Voices 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 13 TBB: Tenor, Baritone, Bass Voices 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14
CATEGORY NUMBERS	Categories numbers also reflect the student’s level of study. Children–Middle School Youth 1 & 2, High School (HS) 3 & 4, Lower: one–two years post-HS 5 & 6, Upper: three–five years post-HS 7 & 8, Advanced: post-undergraduate 9 & 10, Other Adults 11 & 12 Nontraditional Students 13 & 14
LENGTH OF STUDY	Length of voice study determines the selection of an appropriate Category of Entry. Total voice study with a voice teacher (NATS Member or Non-NATS Member) either in an independent studio or collegiate/conservatory program or with any number of voice teachers is a determining factor in NSA’s post-high school categories only. Length of voice study is counted in years, not in semesters. POST- HIGH SCHOOL STUDY Lower: students 22 or younger, in their 1 st or 2 nd year of post-high school voice study Upper: students 24 or younger, in their 3 rd , 4 th , or 5 th year of post-high school voice study and not enrolled in a graduate voice program Advanced: post-baccalaureate students aged 30 years or younger in their 4 th or higher year of post-High School voice study Counting years of study begins with the first day of post-high school study—meaning the first year of voice study is in progress. For example, a student in their fifth undergraduate semester of voice study is in their third year of study. Any reasonable portion of a year will be counted as one year—even if the singer stops taking weekly lessons during a portion of that year, excepting if the singer is ill and unable or forbidden to sing during that time for medical reasons.
AGE LIMIT	Age limits are determined by the age of the entered student on September 1 st , the first day of each NSA audition cycle. Singers above the age limit of a category may not compete in that category. When a singer is above or below the age limits for their level of study, that student may enter their level of study category for comments only OR enter any available Non-Traditional student category, which does not advance to national levels of NSA. A student will not change their level of category(s) of entry or entered repertoire in an audition cycle.
REPERTOIRE	High school-aged categories and younger in Chapter and District auditions may require two or three selections as best serves the needs and tradition of the Chapter or District. Regional and National Auditions will require three selections in all High School Categories.
AUDITIONING MEMBER-TEACHERS	NATS teacher-members who meet the requirements of a student audition category in terms of their age and years of study—may enter student auditions through the NATS member with whom they are currently studying, but they may not enter themselves in the audition. If they enter their students in the audition, they must be available to adjudicate a category in addition to auditioning.
OFFENSIVE LANGUAGE IN AUDITIONS	The National Association of Teachers of Singing requests that NATS members guide their students in selecting NSA audition repertoire that embraces our mission to be a welcoming and supportive community of members and students who celebrate the unique identities, varied backgrounds, and experiences of all individuals. NATS asks teachers to remain mindful of lyric/text content that respects the wide range of ages and identities of those participating in our NSA as well as those present in our audiences at NATS events. To honor the music’s copyright owners, no lyric substitutions of offensive lyrics are allowed unless a clean version is published or legal permission for a change is obtained.

Classical CL Audition Terminology

Aria	An aria is a solo from an opera, oratorio, mass, cantata, zarzuela, operetta, or works titled “concert aria.” Oxford Online definitions will be used for the purposes of NATS student auditions. For example, Purcell’s selections from the semi-operas and masques are considered songs.
24/26/28 Italian Art Songs and Arias	The repertoire found in the 24/26/28 Italian Art Songs and Arias collections may be counted as an aria or an art song in the high school and lower classical categories. For the singers in the upper and advanced categories, these pieces may ONLY count as an art song, regardless of origin. Any repertoire found outside of these collections will be considered only as the composer intended as an art song OR aria.
Memorization	All repertoire must be performed from memory with the exception of Oratorio, Mass, Requiem, and Cantata Arias. Singers may hold music scores for these types of arias as is traditional performance practice.
Original Languages	All selections should be sung in original language or in translation, if warranted by common performance practice.
Transposition	Published transpositions are permitted. Singers are expected to retain the composer’s intended style of music and to convey the essence of the character portrayed in the larger work. Performances not fulfilling these requirements may result in lower scores from adjudicators.
Art Song in English	English must be the original language of the art song.
Repertoire/Categories	The word “classical” in this context refers to art songs and arias from the classical genre, not limited to the Classical period of Mozart and Haydn. No musical theatre, pop, soul, jazz, rhythm and blues, <i>etc.</i> may be entered in the Classical Category. Published arrangements of folk songs, spirituals, and traditional hymn tunes in English are widely accepted as a part of the classical genre. Students in classical categories may present one selection of this type to fulfill the English art song requirement.
Judicious Cuts	Judicious cuts in piano introductions, piano interludes, piano music after the vocal solo is completed as well as internal cuts of opera arias are allowed as is common performance practice. Cuts of verse or verses of selections are not allowed. In the case of strophic pieces, all verses should remain that are traditionally included.
Comments Only	Any registered student may elect to sing for comments only and participate exclusively in a preliminary audition. Adjudicators will not score auditions entered for comments only.
Double-Dipping	Singers entering more than one NSA category (Classical, Commercial Music, Musical Theatre, and/or Spirituals) are allowed to enter the same selection in more than one category provided the repertoire requirements of each category are met. Teachers and students are reminded that the standards in each genre category are different. A successful audition in one category will not necessarily produce success in a second category—unless altered to address the different standards of performance. Standards are defined in each NSA adjudication rubric. In exception, the Spiritual Categories and CL Categories are adjudicated by the same rubric of classical performance standards. If a singer advances in NATS Auditions (chapter, regional, national rounds) in more than one category, they may not sing the same selection in multiple final auditions. Please see the NSA FAQ for additional information.

Musical Theatre MT Audition Terminology

Musical Theatre Selections	Repertoire is selected from musicals including film musicals, revues, operettas, musical theatre song cycles, and stand-alone musical theatre songs. Only <i>one</i> of the required selections may be an operetta aria <i>or</i> a stand-alone musical theatre song.
Musical Theatre Styles	The singer is expected to select musical theatre songs from varied styles of music including bluegrass, blues, calypso, country, electro-pop, folk, gospel, jazz, legit, operetta, pop, pop-opera, rap, rhythm and blues (R&B), rock, soul, <i>etc.</i> The selected repertoire will engage the singer's ability to access a variety of vocal colors to communicate character and story (<i>see musical theatre rubric</i>). The audition will showcase the full spectrum of each singer's vocal and dramatic abilities.
Transpositions	Published transpositions are permitted, but singers are expected to retain the composer's intended style of music and to convey the essence of the character portrayed in the larger work.
Judicious Cuts	As found in common professional performance practice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Judicious cuts in piano introductions, piano interludes, piano music after the vocal solo is completed, and dance breaks in musical theatre selections are allowed. • In the case of numerous verses, some verses may be cut.
Original Languages	Selections must be sung in the original language or in translation as warranted by common professional performance practice.
Memorization	All selections must be performed from memory.
Comments Only	Any registered student may elect to sing for comments only and participate exclusively in a preliminary audition. Adjudicators will not score auditions entered for comments only.
Double-Dipping	Singers entering an MT category plus CL and/or CM categories are allowed to enter the same selection in more than one category provided the repertoire requirements of each category are met. Crossover repertoire may be judiciously entered in MT and additional categories. For example, "Lonely House" from <i>Street Scene</i> may be entered as a selection in an MT category and as an aria in a CL category. Similarly, "If I loved you" from <i>Carousel</i> may be entered in both MT and CM categories, but in the CM category, the song must be performed in a specific CM style different from the musical's original style of music. Teachers and students are reminded that the standards in these genre categories are different. A successful audition in one category will not necessarily produce success in a second category—unless the performance is altered to address the different standards of performance. Standards are defined in each NSA adjudication rubric. If a singer advances in NATS Student Auditions (chapter, regional, national rounds) in more than one category, they may not sing the same selection in multiple finals. Please see the NSA FAQ for additional information.
Authentic Performance	A genuine tone unique to each singer for the purpose of sincere communication with no elements of vocal impersonation.

COMMERCIAL MUSIC CM AUDITION TERMINOLOGY

Accompaniment Options	Singers may perform with any or any combination of the following accompaniment options: a pre-recorded instrumental track without backing vocals, a live collaborative instrumentalist, or in a limited capacity (<i>see CM categories of entry in Appendix A</i>), accompany themselves on an acoustic instrument.
Arrangements	Original or published arrangements of musical theatre selections are accepted in CM categories in NATS Student Auditions, ONLY when performed in a distinct commercial music style different from the musical or subsequent revival of the musical in which the song originated.
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 included in the classical and musical theatre NATS Student Auditions categories. Commercial music includes bluegrass, blues, contemporary Christian, country, folk, gospel, jazz, pop, rap, rock, rhythm and blues (R&B), soul, and all ethnic music, <i>etc.</i>
Cover Song	A cover song is a selection performed by someone other than the composer or original recording artist. Performing a cover does not imply an imitation of the original recording artist.
Diva Microphone	A smaller microphone worn on the singer's head.
Microphone Technique	Auditions are to be performed with amplification. In live auditions, all singers are required to use the amplification equipment provided. In video auditions, the use of a microphone off-camera or on-camera (on a stationary stand, diva microphone, and/or handheld microphone) is an artistic choice influencing interpretation. When using a microphone, the singer needs to make intentional choices of the microphone's placement (whether handheld, using a stationary mic stand, or diva microphone). When choosing to use a handheld microphone, the singer will make intentional choices in the distance of the microphone from their mouth to create stylized effects.
Rhythmic Groove	An organic embodiment of the beat that goes beyond specific notation or time signature, often referred to as the rhythmic feel of a song.
Vocal Stylisms*	In Commercial Music's genre-specific elements of vocal interpretation, vocal stylisms are often not notated in the music. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate ONSETS vary among fry, slide, yodel, growl, breathy, cry, creak, flip, scream, <i>etc.</i> • Appropriate RELEASES vary among abrupt glottal stops, breathy, fall-off, fall-up, shadow vowels, fry, creaky, gaspy, <i>etc.</i> • Appropriate NUANCES/EMBELLISHMENTS vary among riffs/runs, licks, flips, pitch slides, pop-appoggiatura, yodel/register shifts, pitch bends/scoops, <i>etc.</i> Visit NSA Resources on NATS.org to hear specific audio examples.
Memorization	All selections must be performed from memory.
Comments Only	Any registered student may elect to sing for comments only and participate in the preliminary audition. The judges will not score auditions entered for comments only.
Off-Camera	Not visible on video, placed beyond the edge of the camera's frame.
Full Song	An entire song, no internal cuts. Intros and outros may be abbreviated to accommodate audition's time limits.
Authentic Performance	A genuine tone unique to each singer for the purpose of sincere communication with no elements of vocal impersonation.

**Edrie Means Weekly coined the term Vocal Stylisms in her teaching of Commercial Music and Musical Theatre.*