

23rd TORONTO – NIAGARA REGIONAL VIRTUAL CONTEST FACT AND INFORMATION SHEET

The 23rd Toronto-Niagara Regional Virtual Contest will take place over two weekends beginning Friday **November 13-15 & 21-22**. We will be running four contest rooms simultaneously for Length of Study, NAIC Qualifications, Evaluation, Age, Test List and Pop for Piano and Voice. All other instruments will be LOS and Evaluation only. All string instruments; violin, violin and cello will compete in the divisions, while all band instruments will compete against each other in a band instrument division. Approximate time blocks are 3-8 on Fridays, 9 to 5 on Saturday and Sunday. The virtual award ceremony is scheduled for Sunday November 22, 2020. Registration Opens October 15, and closes October 25.

Awards

Instead of Trophies we will be awarding plaques, medals and ribbons, the format of these awards makes for easier shipping with less probability of the awards begin damaged. Awards will be mailed to the teachers to distribute to their students or if a teacher lives in the Detroit area may arrange to pick them up at Quick Made Trophies in Warren, MI. We are researching having a Canadian distributor for pick up in Canada

Pricing

US Dollars -All solos are \$20 for the 1st and 2nd solos, \$15 for the 3-5th solos; \$25 for NAIC qualifications. A \$25 enrollment fee is charged per student (this includes the virtual contest t-shirt)

Events

Due to the time restrictions based on the nature of the virtual contest, we will only be running the following events:

Piano: Test List, Length of Study, Pop, Evaluations, NAIC Qualifications for Classical and Pop.

Voice: Test List Musical Theatre/Broadway, Test List Classical/Art Song, Age Broadway, Age Classical, Pop, NAIC Qualifications for Musical Theatre/Broadway, NAIC Qualifications Classical/Art Song, NAIC Pop, Evaluations

Guitar & Keyboard: Length of Study and Evaluations

Accordion, Strings & Band Instruments: Length of Study and Evaluations

Virtual Contest Format

The American Guild of Music contest will look different than an in-person contest. We will be using the ZOOM platform to conduct the contest. In order to participate, you must have a ZOOM compatible device such as a computer, tablet, or smartphone. Please read the following to understand the general format of the contest:

- 1) Prior to the competition, you will receive an email with your schedule as well as a "Meeting ID." The Meeting ID is your link to access the contest rooms. You cannot enter the contest without this information.
- 2) AGM will be using the "Breakout Rooms" feature to run our contests. Upon logging into the meeting with the provided code, you will be placed into a waiting room. The Contest Director will then "open the door", and you will be placed into the general session. This is NOT the competition room. The Contest Director will then move you to the Breakout Room that your performance will occur.
- 3) Once you are placed into a Breakout Room, you will see the other contestants in your division as well as an AGM Host and the judge. The AGM Host will be running your contest room and will be your point of contact if there are any issues or questions. If you need to ask a question of the AGM Host, please utilize the "Chat" feature rather than speak out.

- 4) During the contest please ensure that your camera is on the entire time and that you are respectful to all performers. You may use the “Applause” reaction at the end of each performance to congratulate each performer.
- 5) At the conclusion of the division, the AGM Host will let the room know of its completion. To leave the contest, click the “Leave Meeting” button.
- 6) Please note: even if you will be using the same meeting code for multiple contests you will need to re-login at the beginning of each event in order to be placed into the correct contest room easily.

Device Sound Settings

In order to deliver the best sound quality of your performance, the American Guild of Music recommends (but does not require) that all participants use a microphone plugged into their device. It is especially recommended for those that will be participating using a mobile device such as a phone or tablet.

A suitable, affordable USB microphone such as Blue Microphone’s “Snowball” model works sufficiently in capturing sound for Zoom to process. (DISCLAIMER: AGM has no affiliation with Blue Microphones or their products.)

When plugging a USB microphone into a phone or tablet, additional adaptors may be required.

All contestants are responsible for testing any sound equipment BEFORE the competition to ensure it’s in working order and proper adjustments. Performers will not be allowed time for sound level checks and device set-up once a contest begins.

Prior to the contest, please adjust the following sound settings in Zoom:

- Don't allow microphone to automatically adjust volume
- Enable original sound
- Disable Suppress Persistent Background Noise
- Disable Suppress Intermittent Background Noise
- Auto Echo Cancellation (not aggressive)

Setting Up Your Device for the Contest

In general, devices used for competition should be set so that a performer can be clearly seen.

Please note the following for specific instruments:

- Piano & Keyboard Events: The camera should be set so that the judge can clearly see the performer’s face, hands, feet (for pedaling), and the music stand. If all of that is not possible, the judge must at least see the student’s face, hands, and the piano music stand.
- Vocal Events: The camera should be set square on and the judge can see the top half of the performer’s body.
- Wind/String/Percussion Events: The camera should be set so that the judge can see the performer from the waist up or so that the instrument, performer’s hands, and face are all visible to the judge.

Other considerations for device set up:

- Lighting is important. The judge should be able to clearly see the performer and the instrument (in non-vocal events). Please avoid standing in front of a light or window, and have a light shining on the performer for enhancement if needed.
- Setting. While we understand there are limitations, please ensure that your setting does not contain any profanity, sexually explicit content, or obscene gestures in the decor, lighting, etc.
- Please remember this is a contest and we want everyone’s health and safety to take top priority. Be sure you are competing in a comfortable, socially distanced space if performing from somewhere outside of the household.

General Device Safety

- Ensure your computer, smartphone (Android/Samsung/iOS) or other device is up-to-date on its computer software and patches. Check for updates regularly and do not leave your computer or device off for long periods without getting updates.

- Ensure that your computer or smartphone device has an up-to-date anti-virus product installed. We recommend purchasing one from a well-known vendor such as McAfee, Sophos, Trend Micro, Symantec or MalwareBytes.
- Keep your web browser up-to-date. Using current versions of Chrome, Microsoft Edge, Firefox, and Safari. If you are unable to install the latest versions of the software, we recommend you limit the use of that device.
- We will be using ZOOM as our service provider for the Virtual Contest, please download the zoom app and create an account. Ensure that your device (computer, smartphone, or tablet) is Zoom compatible either through an internet browser or the Zoom app,
- Ensure that the email address provided on your contest registration is an up to date and accessible address as the American Guild will be using the registration email provided to send out competition information and zoom meeting ID.
- Ensure your device is fully charged. If your device powers down due to lack of power during your performance, you will be marked based on the performance to that point.
- Ensure that your WIFI connection is working. For best coverage, turn off the WIFI on all extraneous devices except the one device required to connect to ZOOM.

Conducting Safe Online Contest Events

The American Guild of Music considers the safety of all participants in high regard. We will be following strict protocol for the safe delivery of each performance.

To increase the security and privacy of our online competition, here are some of the steps that we take to ensure safe delivery of content:

- Contestants will be emailed a meeting code with a specific date and time of entry. Do not share your Personal Meeting ID publicly, and do not use it to host meetings.
- Contestants will be placed in a waiting room until their event begins
- An AGM room monitor will control the muting and unmuting of all participants
- AGM will disable file transfers
- AGM will prevent participants from saving the chat
- AGM will disable the option for participants to record locally
- AGM will control screen sharing and annotation so that only the host can share and annotate when necessary
- AGM will disable private chat between users
- AGM will remove a participant if they have not been invited or become disruptive in the session
- Participants will be able to chat with the AGM host only, in the event that they are experiencing technical difficulties.
- AGM Judge is NOT the host, and as in all AGM Contests, communication between the performer and the judge is strictly prohibited and must go through the AGM

Instrumentation for Piano Competition

For AGM Virtual contests, piano competitions may use an acoustic piano OR a 76-88 weighted electronic keyboard. Please follow the guidelines below for your competition instrument.

Acoustic Pianos: If possible, please ensure that your piano has been recently tuned. However, there is no penalty to a student's score unless the judge feels the tuning drastically detracts from the student's performance.

Digital Pianos: When keys on a digital keyboard are weighted, they feel more like playing real piano keys. Weighted keys are a feature that help electronic pianos/keyboards feel more like the action of an acoustic piano. If you are still unsure, please search online for the brand/model of your keyboard and review the manufacturer's description. Students using a digital piano or keyboard for the contest should ensure that it uses weighted keys as it affects the ability to properly perform dynamics. If a performer uses an instrument

without weighted keys or does not allow for dynamic contrast without adjusting the overall volume, a penalty will be incurred as all markings in a musical competition will be judged. Students using a digital piano or keyboard should also ensure they have working accessories that replicate an acoustic piano to properly perform their work (i.e. sustain pedal). A penalty may be incurred if such an accessory is not used and is called for in the score, or the judge feels its absence detracted from the performance.

Prior to competition, those using a digital keyboard or piano should ensure they have done a sound check to set the proper volume level for their instrument. If a judge cannot hear it, or if the sound is distorted from a loud volume, it may affect the performer's score

Please note, all rulings of the judge are final so it is best to ensure that your instrument is properly set up and tested BEFORE the contest.