



2026 Nelda Hodges Young Artist Competition Rules and Procedures

Nelda and Eddie Hodges have been generous donors, active volunteers, and innovative leaders of the Abilene Philharmonic Orchestra, Foundation, and Guild for almost sixty years. Eddie Hodges honored his wife with the establishment of the Nelda Hodges Young Artist Competition Endowment to inspire and reward young people's love for music.

Eligibility

1. Candidates must be between 12 and 18 years old, as of August 1, 2024.
2. Candidates must reside and attend school in Texas EXCEPT Texas Education Agency Regions 4, 10, 11, 13, 20 (please refer to the graphic at the end of the document to check your eligibility).
3. Candidates who have graduated high school are ineligible to compete.
4. Candidates must perform an orchestral instrument - woodwind, brass, string, percussion, or piano.
5. Previous 1st Prize Winners are ineligible to compete.

All questions of policy and procedure, including eligibility will be resolved by the Abilene Philharmonic, whose decision(s) will be final.

Application

To enter the competition, an eligible applicant must submit all of the following:

1. Completed and signed application form
2. A legible photocopy of your birth certificate or other satisfactory proof of birth date.
3. A non-refundable entry fee of USD \$25.00.

Applications and recordings must be submitted by March 5, 2026.

Repertoire

1. Candidates will select and perform two (2) contrasting solos, including accompaniment (if applicable). Candidates must furnish their own accompanists.

2. Additional major works may be allowed at the discretion of the judges. All repertoire decisions are final.
3. The total duration of the selected pieces must be no less than 5 minutes and no longer than 25 minutes.
4. Candidates must perform the same repertoire for the preliminary and final rounds.

Preliminary Round

Preliminary Round video submissions are due with application on March 7, 2025.

1. Preliminary round recordings will be reviewed by a panel of distinguished judges, including Maestro David Itkin.
2. All decisions of the panel are final.
3. Finalists will be notified by Friday, March 20, 2026.

Final Round Concert

The Final round concert will be held on Saturday, April 11, 2026 at 3:00PM (location TBD).

1. Finalists will be notified by March 20, 2026.
2. Finalists will be required to provide their own accompanist (when applicable).
3. Finalists must report to registration 30 min prior to scheduled performance time or risk forfeiting their scheduled performance time.
4. Due to time constraints, finalists may not be asked to perform the entirety of each selection.
5. The finalists will provide electronic copies of their musical selections to the APO for judges to view.
6. Judges will consist of a panel of distinguished musicians including Maestro David Itkin.
7. The panel of judges will listen to the finalists live and will select up to three contestants to receive the scholarships.
8. All decisions of the panel are final.

Scholarship Amounts

1st Prize: \$1,500

2nd Prize: \$1,000

3rd Prize: \$750

1. The scholarship award must be used to further the recipient's music education. This can include but is not limited to music festival expenses, music camps, textbooks, instrument/equipment purchase or repairs, private lessons, instrument supplies, and musical scores.
2. Prize winners **may also be** invited to perform at one or more Abilene Philharmonic events following the competition. These events may include special events, fundraisers, or other concerts and events with or without the Abilene Philharmonic Orchestra. These performances are at the sole discretion of the Abilene Philharmonic and its Music Director.
3. The panel reserves the right to withhold any or all awards if no applicant is deemed meritorious.

Eligibility Map (Texas Education Agency Regions 4, 10, 11, 13, 20 EXEMPT)

