New Jersey NATS
National Association of Teachers of Singing

49th Annual Festival of Singing for Collegiate and Adult Singers

Saturday, February 21, 2026
The College of New Jersey
2000 Pennington Road
Ewing, NJ 08618

Festival Schedule

9:00 – NJ NATS Chapter Meeting
9:30-9:50 – Judges Meeting
10AM – 4PM – Auditions
12:30 -1:20 pm – "A Practical and Responsible Guide to Choosing & Performing African American Song Literature" with Brandi Diggs
1:30 – 2:50 pm - Musical Theatre Master Class with Jon Price
3:00 - 4:20 pm- Classical Master Class with Brandi Diggs
4:30 (or post-score calculations) - Awards Ceremony and Recital

REGISTRATION: Opens January 19 and closes February 11

Log in to www.nats.org and click the link to AuditionWare on your Members Home Page to register.

Student Entry Fee (per division) - $25.00	Teacher Registration Fee - $25.00
Staff Accompanist Fee - $40.00	Teacher Waiver Fee - $50.00

Brandi Diggs, Coordinator of Vocal Studies, The College of New Jersey, Host

Kathy K. Price, NJ NATS Governor

Jonathan Price, Chapter President
Jessica Walch, Vice President
Elizabeth Robbins, Treasurer
Erica Miller, Auditions Coordinator
Adrienne McKeown, Secretary
Brandi Diggs, Member at Large

Eligibility requirements – Any student currently studying with an active NATS member is eligible. Teachers must belong to both the state chapter and the national organization. NJ, NYC, Lehigh Valley, and Delaware NATS members are welcome to enter students. Membership status will be checked prior to the Auditions. If your membership is not current on the national level, please contact www.nats.org for information. Both Chapter and National dues must now be paid online through the NATS website. Membership fees must be paid before registration.

If the student has been studying with the sponsoring teacher for less than eight (8) months, acknowledgment must be made of the student's former vocal study both on the application and in any public announcements. The NATS Code of Ethics provides that "It is unethical to claim as a pupil one having studied less than eight months with a teacher except where there has been no previous training."

NATS members may enter only their own students in the Auditions**.** Entering another teacher's students, for whatever reason, is unethical and will result in the disqualification of all concerned.

Judging – Teachers must be available to adjudicate in the Auditions. If unable to adjudicate, the teacher should secure a qualified substitute judge (and inform the Auditions Coordinator, Erica Miller, at EricaMillerSoprano@gmail.com). If this isn't possible, contact Erica, check the correct box when registering, and pay the appropriate fee ($50) through AuditionWare. A teacher must either judge, pay the fee, or secure a replacement, or they will not be allowed to enter students in the Auditions the following year. In addition, a judging waiver may be granted for no more than two consecutive years, after which time the teacher must attend the Auditions in order to enter students.

Online registration – Registration is online only via the www.nats.org website. Once you are logged in, click on your user name in blue. From the next page, scroll down to find the green "AuditionWare" button. Click on that and it will take you to the registration site. Enter our New Jersey Chapter in the "Location" spot. Under "Select an event," select the Festival of Singing. You will register your students for the competition and pay all your fees through AuditionWare.

Accompanists – Students are welcome to bring their own pianists or use the NATS-provided staff pianists. No pianist may play for more than 14 individual auditions. You must include your pianist's name or request a NATS staff pianist when you register. If you need a Staff Pianist, please choose either "Staff Pianist, Classical" or "Staff Pianist, MT/CM" and a pianist will be assigned to your students the week of the Auditions.

Food – Singers are responsible for their own water and lunch. There are many on-campus food options. Judges, pianists, and other guest teachers will be provided with coffee and lunch.

Categories – In this packet you will find the categories for the Festival of Singing. We are using the national guidelines in all categories. They are included in this packet for your convenience, and they can also be found in the NATS Resource Center along with additional information you may need: https://www.nats.org/nsaresources.html.

We are continuing to offer one combined **Commercial Music (CM) category**. The NSA Resource Center outlines the specific guidelines for this category and you will need to follow them carefully. Those they can be found at https://www.nats.org/nsaresources.html. Like last year, ***ALL Commercial Music participants will use the Lower Post-High School category requirements.***

A reminder – NJ NATS also offers a **Young Artist Category**, separate from the other adult categories. The **Young Artist category** is for New Jersey NATS Festivals and is not a national category. Additionally – the National Office has now divided the Adult Category into two sections for **avocational** and **non-traditional singers**. Please read the requirements carefully before registering you students.

The **Hall Johnson Spirituals Category** will be part of the Festival this year. This category will serve as a qualifying round for advancement into region auditions for the Hall Johnson Spirituals Competition. Category HJ7 is only for undergraduate students from ages 17-23. Repertoire for this category is specific - more information can be found here: https://www.nats.org/Hall_Johnson_Spirituals_Competition.html.

Below are the categories for the 2025 NJ NATS Festival of Singing. The requirements for each category are listed below and are taken directly from https://www.nats.org/_Library/NSA_Files/2025-26_NSA_Categories_of_Entry.pdf.

Commercial Music (CM) Combined Category:

Category	Voice type	Length of study	Age limit	Time limit
CM Combined	All voices	No limit	None	10 minutes

CM Combined: THREE full songs contrasting by composer, tempo, and text performed in a CM style. Only one song may be an original song, instead of a cover. Only one song may be self-accompanied on an acoustic instrument.

Undergraduate MT and CL categories:

Category	Voice type	Length of study	Age limit	Time limit
MT 5 Lower Musical Theatre	Treble	1-2 years post HS	22	10 minutes
MT 6 Lower Musical Theatre	TBB	1-2 years post HS	22	10 minutes
MT 7 Upper Musical Theatre	Treble	3-5 years post H.S. (undergrad only)	25	12 minutes
MT 8 Upper Musical Theatre	TBB	3-5 years post H.S. (undergrad only)	25	12 minutes
CL 5 Lower Classical	Treble	1-2 years post HS	22	10 minutes
CL 6 Lower Classical	TBB	1-2 years post HS	22	10 minutes
CL 7 Upper Classical	Treble	3-5 years post H.S. (undergrad only)	25	12 minutes
CL 8 Upper Classical	TBB	3-5 years post H.S. (undergrad only)	25	12 minutes

Lower MT: THREE musical theatre selections contrasting by composer, tempo, and text. Only one selection may be chosen from an operetta or musical theatre song literature.
Upper MT: FOUR musical theatre selections contrasting by composer, tempo, and text. Only one selection may be chosen from an operetta or musical theatre song literature.
Lower CL: THREE selections from classical repertoire contrasting by composer, tempo, and text. One art song in English (the original language must be English). One art song in a language other than English. One aria or art song.
Upper CL: FOUR selections from classical repertoire contrasting by composer, tempo, and text. One art song in English (the original language must be English). One art song in a language other than English. One aria. One additional selection from the classical repertoire. At least three languages must be represented.

Advanced Categories:

Category	Voice type	Length of study	Age limit	Time limit
MT 9 Advanced	Treble	4+ years post HS	30	15 minutes
MT 10 Advanced	TBB	4+ years post HS	30	15 minutes
CL 9 Advanced	Treble	4+ years post HS	30	15 minutes
CL 10 Advanced	TBB	4+ years post HS	30	15 minutes

MT Advanced: FIVE musical theatre selections contrasting by composer tempo, and text. Only one selection may be chosen from an operetta or musical theatre song literature.

CL Advanced: FIVE selections from classical repertoire contrasting by composer, tempo, and text. One art song in English (the original language must be English). One art song in a language other than English. One opera aria. One oratorio/cantata aria. One additional selection from the classical repertoire. At least three languages must be represented.

Adult Avocational Categories: Students neither pursuing nor holding a degree in music and not working as professional musicians

Category	Voice type	Length of study	Age limit	Time limit
MT 11 Adult Avocational	Treble	No limit	None	10 minutes
MT 12 Adult Avocational	TBB	No limit	None	10 minutes
CL 11 Adult Avocational	Treble	No limit	None	10 minutes
CL 12 Adult Avocational	TBB	No limit	None	10 minutes

MT Adult Avocational: THREE musical theatre selections contrasting by composer, tempo, and text. Only one selection may be chosen from operetta or musical theatre song literature.

CL Adult Avocational: THREE selections from classical repertoire contrasting by composer, tempo, and text. One art song in English (the original language must be English). One art song in a language other than English. One additional art song or aria.

Non-Traditional Student Categories: Students pursuing or holding degrees in music and whose age or level of study falls outside the limits of other categories

Category	Voice type	Length of study	Age limit	Time limit
MT 13 Adult Non-Traditional	Treble	No limit	None	12 minutes
MT 14 Adult Non-Traditional	TBB	No limit	None	12 minutes
CL 13 Adult Non-Traditional	Treble	No limit	None	12 minutes
CL 14 Adult Non-Traditional	TBB	No limit	None	12 minutes

MT Adult Non-Traditional: THREE musical theatre selections contrasting by composer, tempo, and text. Only one selection may be chosen from operetta or musical theatre song literature.

CL Adult Non-Traditional: THREE selections from classical repertoire contrasting by composer, tempo, and text. One art song in English (the original language must be English). One art song in a language other than English. One additional art song or aria.

Young Artist: Post-graduate

Category	Voice type	Length of study	Age limit	Time limit
YA Adult Classical	All voices	Post-graduate	23+	15 minutes

YA Adult Classical: FIVE selections from classical repertoire contrasting by composer, tempo, and text in at least 3 different languages.

Biennial Hall Johnson Spirituals Competition: Undergraduate students only

Category	Voice type	Length of study	Age limit	Time limit
HJ 7 Hall Johnson	All voices	Undergraduate students only	17-23	10 minutes

HJ7 Hall Johnson: THREE contrasting selections from approved Hall Johnson Spirituals repertoire. See approved Spirituals repertoire on page 8 of the 2025-26 NSA Categories of Entry found here: https://www.nats.org/_Library/NSA_Files/2025-26_NSA_Categories_of_Entry.pdf.

NATS Auditions FAQ

Q: Can I request a specific time for my student's audition?
A: You can try, but because there are so many categories happening at different times throughout the day that are not scheduled until registration is complete, it's impossible to know if your student's category will even be remotely close to the time you are requesting. If your student can only make the audition work during certain hours, you can either sign them up and hope for the best (and they will forfeit their fee if they can't make it), encourage them to cancel the activity they have scheduled, or have them skip the Audition this year.

Q: Where can I find the category requirements?
A: This year, they are listed within the packet, and they can also be found here: https://www.nats.org/_Library/NSA_Files/2025-26_NSA_Categories_of_Entry.pdf

Q: How do I choose a pianist?
A: Please only choose a named pianist if you have spoken directly to that pianist and they have agreed to play for you. If you need to use an official Staff Pianist, please choose the Staff Pianist that corresponds to your category. There will be a Classical Staff Pianist and a Musical Theater/Commercial Music Staff Pianist on the drop-down pianist list. The Staff Pianist fee is $40 per category.

Q: Are there practice rooms available?
A: Yes, but depending on the school, availability may be limited, and practice rooms are on a first come, first served basis. No teacher or pianist may reserve a practice room for their students.

Q: Can my pianist use an iPad?
A: Yes! But all music must abide by the copyright regulations. Even if you own the actual book, you can't just scan it to the iPad and use it. Digital music must be paid for or in the public domain.

Q: Do students need to bring repertoire sheets?
A: Yes! 3 copies, one for each judge. You will find these on AuditionWare once your students are registered, and you can send PDFs to your students to print out. Students DO NOT need to bring copies of their sheet music for the judges.

Q: What do I need to know about the CM room?
A: A bluetooth speaker is provided, so students can connect using their phones. We will also have a microphone and stand available. Students should test out playing their tracks on their phones prior to the event. Ideally, all songs should be combined into one track so nothing need to be reset in between songs. Make sure the phone doesn't turn off the music if the screen turns off.

Q: Do all 2/3/4/5 songs have to fit within the time alotted?
A: No, they do not. Your student will be cut off when the timer rings. Please encourage them to choose their song order accordingly.

Q: Why was my student cut off? I timed all the songs perfectly to fit.
A: Timers are started when the pianist begins playing. When the timer rings, your student will be cut off. Perhaps your student took a drink, or spoke with the pianist between songs, or the pianist played a slightly slower tempo. All students will receive the full time for their respective categories.

Special Topics Class Description and Presenter Biographies

"A Practical and Responsible Guide to Choosing & Performing African American Song Literature"

This lecture will delve into the best methods to source African American Song literature from Art Song to CCM Repertoire. In addition, it will navigate its multiplicity of styles while highlighting the importance of timbre, diction, and performance practices.

Brandi Diggs, Special Topics Class and Classical Master Class Presenter

American Soprano Brandi Diggs is a versatile vocalist who sings operatic and solo repertoire throughout the United States. She recently appeared as a soloist with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, The Atlanta Opera, Kentucky Opera, and as a recitalist at the Kennedy Center and the Wolf Trap National Park for the Performing Arts. An avid performer of contemporary opera, Ms. Diggs sang the title role of The Princess in the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art's commissioned operetta, *Qadar*. Recent performances include Gretel in *Hansel and Gretel*, Susanna in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Frasquita *in Carmen*, Lauretta in *Gianni Schicchi*, Lily in *Porgy and Bess*, and Rosina in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*. She holds a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the University of Cincinnati-College Conservatory of Music (CCM), a diploma from the Peabody Conservatory of Johns Hopkins University, a Master of Music degree from East Carolina University, and a Bachelor of Arts in Music degree from Spelman College. In addition to performing, Ms. Diggs is an educator. Her research is featured within *Trauma-Informed Pedagogy and the Post-Secondary Music Class* published by Routledge Press. At present, she is a professor of voice and the Coordinator of Vocal Studies at The College of New Jersey.

Jon Price, Musical Theatre Master Class presenter

Jonathan is a New York City based voice teacher and pedagogue. His clients have appeared in lead roles in the Broadway, National, and International Touring companies of a wide variety of shows from Ain't Too Proud and Waitress to Mack and Mabel and West Side Story. He holds voice faculty positions with Rider University and Marymount Manhattan College. He is the Assistant Director of the Voice Pedagogy Institute at Westminster Choir College and president of the New Jersey chapter of the National Association of Teachers of Singing. Jonathan also travels the US and Europe as a lecturer, focusing primarily on musical theater voice pedagogy and crossover singing. He has presented a combination of master classes, pedagogy lectures, and "crossover" concerts for Georgia College and State University, the University of North Georgia, the Stilson Institute, and the Loyola Voice Symposium at Loyola University in New Orleans. Jonathan holds a Master of Music degree and Performance Studies Certificate in Voice Performance from The Boston Conservatory and a Bachelor of Music degree from the University of Cincinnati, College-Conservatory of Music.