

Manhattan Concert Productions  
Graduate Student Conducting Competition  
Application Guidelines

The ACDA Student Conducting Competition was initiated during the 1993 ACDA National Convention in San Antonio, Texas. We again offer this highly successful event at the 2017 ACDA National Conference in Minnesota. The ACDA Student Conducting Competition is funded by Manhattan Concert Productions.

The objectives of the ACDA Student Conducting Awards are three-fold:

- (1) To acknowledge and reward outstanding graduate student conductors;
- (2) To encourage score preparation and advancement of conducting and rehearsal skills; and
- (3) To promote student activity at the ACDA National Convention.

These cash prizes are awarded to the winners of the final round of the conducting awards:

First Prize, Graduate Level: \$1000  
Second Prize, Graduate Level: \$500

In addition, the eight semi-finalists each receive complimentary registration to attend the 2017 National Conference in Minnesota.

#### Initial Selection Process

##### I. Eligibility Requirements

Applicants must meet the following criteria:

- A. Hold valid ACDA student membership. Membership application materials are available at [www.acda.org](http://www.acda.org).
- B. Be a full-time graduate student at a college or university in the United States at the time of application.
- C. Submit a complete application portfolio including the following materials:
  1. Application form (submitted electronically)
  2. Verification of video validity (See II-I below)
  3. Verification by a University official of the student's class standing and fulltime status (letter from Registrar's office, unofficial transcript, etc.)
  4. Audition video recording, uploaded to YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com>)  
\*URL for youtube video that DOES NOT include identifying information  
(please do not include your name in the URL. Please DO NOT include your name in the youtube channel.)
  6. One to two-page résumé of conducting experience
  7. \$30 entry fee

##### II. Audition Preparation Guidelines

Applicants will prepare and upload to YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com>) a video recording of an audition that meets the following criteria:

#### A. Ensemble Preparation

1. The applicant may select the choir.
2. The choir is to be fully familiar with the music to be presented on the video audition. The choir should **not be sightreading** during the audition session.
3. The choir is to be prepared by a conductor **other than the applicant**. Applicant is **not** to prepare the choir in advance of the taping, nor will the applicant have first-hand knowledge of the choir's work in rehearsal or performance on the audition literature.

#### B. Musical Parameters

1. Graduate applicants will conduct two compositions for mixed chorus in the video audition, including:
  - a. a sacred or secular 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, or 19th-Century work, and
  - b. a 20<sup>th</sup>- or 21st-Century composition with mixed meters
2. The compositions should be of contrasting tempi and style.
3. Selections may be unaccompanied or accompanied.
4. Excerpts of longer works may be selected.
5. Keyboard reductions may be for orchestral accompaniments.

#### D. Video Conducting and Rehearsal

1. The applicant should rehearse the choir in such a way as to focus on gestural communication, rehearsal technique, and the development of the musical product (in much same manner as a guest conductor in a festival setting).
2. The selection panel will place primary value on gestural communication, musicianship/listening, and rehearsal technique.

#### E. Camera Angle

1. The camera angle will show a full frontal view of the applicant and all conducting movements.
2. The choral sound and comments of the applicant must be clearly audible on the video recording.
3. The applicant will begin each selection by announcing the title and composer of the work to be presented.

#### F. Personal Identification

1. The applicant will **not** identify him/herself, nor the institution of higher learning in the recorded audition.

#### G. Audition Format and Duration

1. The video recorded selections will be presented consecutively without stopping the recording device between selections
2. The video recording will not be edited in any manner
3. The video recording will show the applicant conducting and rehearsing the choir for a minimum of **ten minutes and a maximum of twelve minutes**
4. The time should be divided equally between the two selections

#### H. Audition Submission

1. It is the responsibility of the applicant to upload the video audition to YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com>).
2. It is the responsibility of the applicant to provide the selection committee with the correct URL for accessing the video. (It is strongly suggested that the applicant cut and paste the URL directly from the browser into the application. The applicant should check the link personally for accuracy prior to submission of the application.) The link or channel should **not** include any information that would identify the applicant.
3. Applicants whose video auditions are not accessible to the committee will be disqualified.

#### I. Verification

1. The video recording will be monitored by two ACTIVE ACDA members (non-students) who will certify on the application form that:
  - a. the applicant has not previously rehearsed the music with the choir nor heard the choir rehearse or perform the music presented in the uploaded audition video, AND
  - b. the applicant meets all of the criteria specified in these guidelines.
2. It is the applicant's responsibility to assure that she/he complies with the rules and regulations of the competition specified in these guidelines.

The completed application materials, verifications, all supporting documentation, and video upload to YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com>) must be completed no later than midnight on October 31, 2016. All application materials become the property of the American Choral Directors Association.

**NOTE: An incomplete or erroneous application will disqualify the applicant.**

#### III. Audition Review Process

- A. The National Student Conducting Competition Committee, hereafter referred to as the "NSCC Committee," will appoint a review panel who will review all submissions with the goal of selecting a maximum of eight graduate students to advance to the semifinal round.
- B. The review panel will place primary emphasis on gestural language, musicianship/listening, and rehearsal technique.
- C. Applicants for the ACDA Student Conducting Competition will be notified by email on or before December 30, 2016 of the student conductors selected to advance to the semi-final round in Minnesota.

## Convention Session

### I. Semi-Final Round

The semi-final round will be held during the ACDA National Conference for the purpose of selecting a maximum of four graduate students to advance to the final round. The following guidelines will be followed:

#### A. Audition Literature

Choral repertoire for the semifinal and final rounds will be selected by the NSCC Committee, in consultation with the Executive Committee, and emailed to semi-finalists by January 15, 2017. It is the semifinalists' responsibility to acquire the selected compositions at their own expense.

#### B. Schedule

The semifinal and final rounds will be held during the ACDA National Conference in Minnesota (March 8-11, 2017).

#### C. Choir

The choir will have prepared the music before the semi-finalists work with them. The semi-finalists should not be affiliated in any way with the competition choir.

#### D. Judges

The NSCC committee, in consultation with the Executive Committee will select judges from the membership. The identity of the judges will not be announced until the end of the round. During the semifinal round, a non-scoring adjudicator will also be provided to offer constructive written comments on each student's conducting. Student conductors will receive these written comments via mail no later than four weeks after the event.

#### E. Conducting Order

The semi-finalists will meet in a separate room to draw for conducting order and will remain there except when they conduct in the performance room.

#### F. Conductor Identification

Each conductor will be identified before the judges and audience by letter name only (contestant A, etc.)

#### G. Semi-Final Audition Duration

Each semi-finalist will be given eight minutes to conduct/rehearse the choir. A timekeeper will inform the conductors when four minutes have elapsed, and when time has expired.

## H. Scoring

Conductors will be evaluated on a numerical scale on items including, but not limited to:

1. Conducting Technique
  - a. Clarity
  - b. Use of both hands
  - c. Cuing
  - d. Releases
2. Interpretation
  - a. Tempo
  - b. Expression/Style
  - c. Dynamics
  - d. Facial expression
  - e. Body language
3. Rehearsal Technique
  - a. Eye contact
  - b. Musicianship/listening
  - c. Verbal directions
  - d. Grasp of singing diction
  - e. Confidence
  - f. Effectiveness of verbal directions
  - g. Pacing
  - h. Treatment of rhythmic and tonal acuity
  - i. Ability to cultivate collective sound

## I. Tabulation and Results

After all semi-finalists at each level have finished conducting, the judges, without conferring, will rank the students.

Two divisional Repertoire & Standards chairs will tabulate the scores. The four students who are selected by the judges will be announced as the ACDA Conducting Finalists and will advance to the final round.

## J. Tie Score

If required, two or more conductors involved in a numerical tie in the voting will be recalled for an additional five minute period of conducting.

## K. Public Access

All sessions in the ACDA Student Conducting Competition are open to all registered convention attendees.

## II. Final Round

The final round for graduate students will be held for the purpose of selecting the winners of the ACDA Student Conducting Competition. The format will be similar to the Semi-Final Round, with the following exceptions:

### A. Conducting Participants

Only those selected to advance from the Semi-final round will participate.

B. Schedule

The final graduate rounds are typically held on Friday, the third full day of the convention in Minnesota.

C. Choir

Conductors will rehearse the same choir they worked with in the semifinal round.

D. Order and Score Tally

After the graduate finals are completed and votes are tallied, the winners of the ACDA Student Conducting Competition will be announced.

Disclaimer

No member of the NSCC committee, nor any judge, teller, or person connected with the selection of semi-finalists or conducting of the semi-final or final rounds shall be involved with any decision involving that person's student (over the past three years) who has applied or been selected as a participant in the ACDA Conducting Competition. The NSCC Committee is under no obligation to award semi-final, final, or winner status if satisfactory candidates cannot be identified. All decisions made by the judges are final.