

MNSOTA Mary West Solo Competition - FAQs

Prepared by Faith Farr, MNSOTA Mary West Solo Competition coordinator, 2024

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I played on the Winners Recital last year. Can I compete again in the same age Division?

Yes! The rules say:

Students are eligible to win the Givens Violins Grand Prize once in their career. Students are eligible to win the Division Prizes once in each age category. Previous prize winners are always welcome to participate for consideration for the Winners Recital.

(“Grand Prize” means the concerto performance with the Bloomington Symphony. “Division Prizes” means the gift certificates from Givens Violins given to winners in different age divisions.)

Examples:

If you have won the Grand Prize, you can still participate in your age division to play on the Winners Recital and possibly win a Givens gift certificate.

If you have won the Givens gift certificate in your age division, you can still participate in the same division to play on the Winners Recital. When you mature into the next age division you will be eligible for the gift certificate prize in that division.

If you have played on the Winners Recital, you can still participate in the same division to play on the Winners Recital again. We hope students will participate each year and build on their experiences.

What age Division do I participate in?

The rules say:

Elementary Division (age 11 and under) and Intermediate Division (age 12–14) students prepare one piece. Junior Division (age 15–18) and Senior Division (age 19–25) students prepare two pieces in contrasting styles by different composers. **(Determine your student's age as of January 1, 2025.** Students whose birthday is on January 1 should compete in the younger category.)

For the November 2024 competition, students whose birthday is:

1/1/2013 or later compete in the Elementary Division (age 11 and under)

1/1/2010 or later compete in the Intermediate Division (age 12–14)

1/1/2006 or later compete in the Junior Division (age 15–18)

1/1/1999 or later compete in the Senior Division (age 19–25)

We realize this may seem odd to a student with a late November / December birthday, after the competition. For instance someone might be age 14 in early November on competition day, and be age 15 by January 1. This student should compete in the Junior Division, because they will be age 15 as of January 1.

Historically, the choice of the January 1 date goes back many years when there was a National ASTA Solo Competition that had a fall preliminary and spring final with the birthdate set at January 1. MNSOTA followed along and didn't change when the National Competition was stopped.

In addition, a January 1 date allows teachers and students to plan as early as May/June of competition year, before the dates of the competition are finalized.

I live near the border of Minnesota and another state – can my students participate?

The rules say:

Participants must be MNSOTA members or students of MNSOTA members. Participants must live or study in Minnesota.

First requirement: Participants must be MNSOTA members or students of MNSOTA members.

- Members of MNSOTA are members of ASTA (join at www.astastrings.org) who live in Minnesota (ASTA automatically enrolls you in the state chapter of the address you give them) or who tell ASTA they want to be MNSOTA members even though they live in another state.

- E.g. Some teachers who live in WI or ND near the MN border and do most of their teaching in MN choose to be MNSOTA members rather than WI-ASTA or ND-ASTA members.

Second requirement: Participants must live or study in Minnesota.

Examples:

- The usual case: both teacher and student live in MN and lessons are taught in MN. Usually the teacher is the MNSOTA member. Sometimes the student is the MNSOTA member. These students can participate.

Cross border examples:

- School-age participants who live, for example, in WI or ND and travel to have lessons in MN with their MNSOTA member teacher -- these students can participate.
- College students who live elsewhere and study in MN with a MNSOTA teacher -- these students can participate.
- College students who live in MN but study elsewhere and who join ASTA as a MNSOTA student member – these students can participate

My accompanist has time constraints on competition day. How does scheduling work?

The rules say:

- Please plan on being available for the entire afternoon of the competition (12:00–6:00 p.m.). Because judges must hear students in the same age level in a block, we can accommodate special scheduling requests only within that block. The First Round of judging will be in several rooms early in the afternoon.
- Students being considered for the Givens Violins Grand Prize will be asked to play their concerto a second time, at the end of the afternoon, for the full panel of judges. The time of the Second Round depends on the number of participants and other scheduling factors. The Second Round took place 4:30-5:30 in 2023 and is expected to be around 4:00–5:00 in 2024.
- Accompanists will not perform in the Second Round.

Students playing a standard repertoire concerto or concert piece for solo with orchestra will be considered for the Givens Violins Grand Prize / Bloomington Symphony Concerto Performance. These students need to be available noon-6:00 in case they are involved in the Second Round.

Accompanists need to be available noon-4:15, as they are involved only in the First Round.

All special scheduling requests for the student or accompanist must be indicated on the registration form.

How should I prepare cuts?

The rules say:

Students must prepare complete works or complete single movements; cuts are encouraged in piano tutti sections. Because the audition time may be shorter than the entire length of the piece(s), teachers should suggest appropriate cuts for the audition presentation. However, students are expected to prepare the entire piece(s), and the judges may ask for any portion outside of the cuts the teacher suggests.

Elementary and Intermediate level students are scheduled in 6-minute audition slots to play a maximum of 4 minutes of music from one piece. Junior and Senior level students are scheduled in 10-minute audition slots to play a maximum of 8 minutes of music from two contrasting pieces. The competition timer will begin timing when the audition performance begins, and will stop students at the conclusion of their 4 or 8 minute time limit. Tuning to the piano prior to a performance is not included in the playing time limits, but any transition time needed between the two pieces for Junior and Senior level students is, as the clock only stops at the end of the maximum allotted playing time. The remaining two minutes of each audition slot allows for passing time between students, tuning of the next student, and for judges to finalize their thoughts and feedback in written comments.

This means:

- You should learn complete movement(s) / single work(s)
- A "maximum of 4 minutes of music" and a "maximum of 8 minutes of music" means there is no penalty if you present your complete piece(s) in less than 4/8 minutes
- If your piece(s) are longer than the allotted playing time of 4 min (Elementary/Intermediate) and 8 min (Junior/Senior) — you will need to make cuts for the competition day.
- If you need to make cuts, definitely your accompanist should cut transitions.
- If your playing time is still longer than 4 min / 8 min after the piano cuts, your teacher should help you by suggesting cuts in the solo part. Sometimes the sensible thing is to start at the beginning and simply stop when you run out of time. Sometimes the sensible thing is to start in the middle because the middle and ending are more "impressive." Sometimes the sensible thing is to start at the beginning, but then skip to a different section of the solo part.
- If you are preparing two pieces for the Junior/Senior division, your teacher will also advise you on how to allocate your 8 minutes of playing between the two pieces. Possibly you will want to present about 4 minutes of each piece. Possibly you will want to allocate more of your 8 minutes to one piece than the other. With your teacher's advice, you need to prepare an 8 minute presentation that "covers both pieces."

For sure:

- you should be prepared to play the entire piece(s)
- your teacher should advise you on what 4 min / 8 min of music to present.

What does the Time Keeper do?

The rules say:

Elementary and Intermediate level students are scheduled in 6-minute audition slots to play a maximum of 4 minutes of music from one piece. Junior and Senior level students are scheduled in 10-minute audition slots to play a maximum of 8 minutes of music from two contrasting pieces.

The competition timer will begin timing when the audition performance begins, and will stop students at the conclusion of their 4 or 8 minute time limit. Tuning to the piano prior to a performance is not included in the playing time limits, but any transition time needed between the two pieces for Junior and Senior level students is, as the clock only stops at the end of the maximum allotted playing time. The remaining two minutes of each audition slot allows for passing time between students, tuning of the next student, and for judges to finalize their thoughts and feedback in written comments..

For this competition, Elementary/Intermediate level students will be stopped by the time keeper 4 minutes after they start.

Junior/Senior students need to plan how their 8 minutes is allocated between the two pieces. The time keeper will not be involved in the transition between the two pieces. Junior/Senior level students are expected to stop their first piece on their own; take a breath; start their second piece on their own. Junior/Senior level students will be stopped by the time keeper 8 minutes after they start their first piece.

Music for the judges

The rules say:

Please bring a legally published copy (not a photocopy) of your music for the judges. If you are using a printout of down-loaded music (e.g. from IMSLP.org or an e-purchase) you should include verification that the download is legally published (e.g. a screen shot of the IMSLP window that verifies your piece is public domain in the U.S. or a verification of your e-purchase). While there is no penalty for not having music for the judge, it is a common courtesy that we want to encourage.

You can give the judge either your solo part or your piano part which also contains the solo part. Discuss with your teacher and accompanist which is best. Often, if your accompanist has their own piano part, teachers will recommend that students give their piano part to the judges – so the judge doesn't see all the markings in your solo part. If you don't have a spare piano part, giving the judges your solo part, or a borrowed part, or a library part is fine.

As part of preparing for the competition, many teachers recommend "rehearsing" your entire presentation including walking in the door, giving the music to the judges, tuning, performing, picking up your music, and walking out the door.

Photocopies should never be in the competition room.

Your music may be a legitimate copy that has been downloaded from IMSLP.org, but will look like a photocopy. To show the judges that your copy is legit, please **include a printed screen shot** of the IMSLP webpage that shows:

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How do prizes work?

The competition selects students for two performance opportunities.

First Round - with accompanist

- In the First Round, students are competing against others in their same age Division (Elementary age 11 and under, Intermediate age 12-14, Junior age 15-18, Senior age 19-25) for the honor of performing in the Winners Recital on November 13, 2022, 7:00 p.m. at Lloyd Ultan Recital Hall UMN.
- Givens Violins generously provides three gift certificate prizes to the winners in different age Divisions from the First Round
- For the Junior and Senior Divisions, where students prepare two pieces, the judges decide which piece the winners will play at the Recital.
- Performers in the Winners Recital will be announced in person at the end of the judging day, by email the evening of the competition. The complete Winners Recital program will be posted on the MNSOTA.org website the morning after the competition.

Second Round - without accompanist

- The unaccompanied Second Round determines the Grand Prize concerto performer from all of the concerto/concert piece repertoire heard during the First Round
- The Grand Prize Winner will perform in the Winners Recital as well as the Concerto Concert with the Bloomington Symphony on April 21, 2024
- Givens Violins generously provides a cash prize to the Grand Prize Winner.
- The call-backs for the Second Round will be announced soon after the end of the First Round, when the judges have made a thoughtful decision.
- The Grand Prize Winner will be announced at the same time the performers in the Winners Recital are announced – in person at the end of the judging day, by email the evening of the competition, and on the MNSOTA.org website

What qualifies as a “concerto/concert piece” for the Second Round?

The rules say:

The purpose of the Second Round of judging is to choose the Claire Givens Grand Prize winner from students in all age categories who present a concerto/concert piece suitable for performance with the Bloomington Symphony. Students selected for the Second Round will be asked to play their concerto/concert piece (without accompanist) at around 4:30–6:00 for the full panel of judges.”

Any repertoire suitable for soloist accompanied by the Bloomington Symphony will be considered a “concerto/concert piece.” When you register for the competition, you indicate whether there is an orchestral accompaniment for each of your pieces.

What do I play if I’m chosen for the Second Round?

The rules say:

Students should be prepared to play their entire piece, or a maximum of 8 minutes of music in a 10-minute Second Round slot. If the piece is over 8 minutes, the judges have the option of requesting a specific section for you to play.

Just as your teacher should advise you on how to prepare your presentation for the First Round, your teacher should advise you on what 8 minutes of your concerto / concert piece you should have ready if you are selected for the Second Round.

Accompanists do NOT play in the Second Round. You will play your concerto by yourself, so you don't need to consider the time of piano interludes in your presentation.

In the Second Round, the time keeper will stop you 8 minutes after you start if you have not played your entire piece. The judges will expect you to have an 8-minute plan, but may ask for any portion outside of the cuts your teacher suggests.

What do I play if I'm chosen for the Winners Recital?

Elementary and Intermediate Division winners will play all of their competition piece, with appropriate cuts in the piano part.

Junior and Senior Division winners will play all of one of their competition pieces, with appropriate cuts in the piano part. The judges decide which piece each Winner performs. Winners will be told the piece when the winners are announced in person at the end of the competition day, by email the evening of the competition, and on our website the next day.