

AUDITION REQUIREMENTS – JUNIOR BACH FESTIVAL 2026

The **AGE LIMIT** is 18 years as of February 1, 2026, except for vocalists, gambists, harpsichordists, organists, and accompanists, who may be as old as 20 years on that date. Older ages are permissible if applying students are still attending high school.

MUSIC must be identified by Schmieder index number, as listed in the current Bach-Werke-Verzeichnis (BWV) catalog of works composed or arranged by J. S. Bach. Transcriptions (but not arrangements) for modern instruments may be entered. Suites and concerti may be submitted by selected movements or as complete works.

It is highly recommended that teachers and applicants consult the closest version possible to the original work. Some editions have been highly edited and may even be misleading about the composer's original musical intentions.

MEMORIZATION is recommended for solo performance on all instruments, although use of sheet music is now permitted. We assume that members of ensembles, **defined as 2 or more players**, will use music. This includes concertos with keyboard accompaniment, although memorization by the solo instrumentalist is encouraged.

AUDITION CONTENT: The options for audition material are quite flexible. Some students like to submit one relatively short piece, which can include one or two movements from a large work. Up to 3 “shorter” pieces with different BWV numbers can be submitted, but total playing time should not exceed 15 minutes. Any number of movements can be selected from larger works such as Suites and Sonatas. Of course, presentation of complete works is always welcome.

PLAYING TIME in minutes must be stated accurately. Judges reserve the option to select only certain movements for Festival performance. Complete works rarely exceed 20 minutes. An entry may consist of more than a single short piece (but not more than 3 compatible pieces with different BWV numbers) on the same instrument, provided that total audition time does not exceed 15 minutes. Repeats should not be played unless ornamented differently. Da capo repeats are permitted, and should be factored into duration calculations.

THE AUDITION FEE for the 2026 Festival is \$80. If a student wishes to audition on more than one instrument, a separate application will need to be submitted. In such instances, **no additional registration fee is required.** This will not apply, however, if one of the applications is an **ensemble.**

ACCOMPANIMENT: Although the original instrumentation is preferred, solo works requiring a chamber ensemble may be auditioned with a keyboard reduction instead. If a work includes an accompaniment, it should not be performed without it. Accompanists may be up to 20 years of age on February 1, 2026. **For vocalists,** however, we have generally permitted adult accompanists. For other auditions, an adult accompanist may be approved in consultation with our Music Director. However, an accompanist under the age of 21 is preferred if possible.

SUBMITTING AUDITIONS: Auditioning for Junior Bach is now done by recording. An audio recording – an MP3 file, for example, is recommended. **Vocalists, however, are requested to submit video recordings.** A “video” recording is acceptable for other students as long as the camera does not show the performer, or if the video picture is blocked out. **Auditions are always anonymous to the judges,** and there must be no words, titles or pictures on the recording that would identify the student. Audition recordings will be submitted separately from the text registration. While your **written** application is due on **December 1,** you have until **January 10** to submit your audition recording. Please refer to our document **“HOW TO APPLY”** on this website.

JUDGING: The Junior Bach Association will assemble panels of three professional judges to evaluate each audition. The Judges are highly esteemed musicians who both perform and teach locally, nationally, and internationally. Judges will evaluate their respective audition panels separately and virtually, though they will have the ability to consult with each other on any audition performance. In the case of multi-movement works, Judges will have the option of selecting only the movement(s) they recommend for a Festival performance. The panel’s composite grade will determine whether a student will be invited to perform in the Festival. The grades will be confidential. Each of the three judges’ comments and suggestions will be sent to the student or ensemble’s teacher or coach, to be reviewed with the student.

Criteria

The Junior Bach Festival recognizes that a musical performance evolves through a complex creative process involving many technical and artistic decisions. The student should consider his or her performance to be concert ready.

In addition to awarding audition grades, Festival Judges will usually provide technical suggestions or comments about performance practice, style, and interpretation.

In an effort to establish an equitable, consistent, and supportive evaluation process for auditioning students, Festival Judges grade auditions on the following criteria as applicable:

Accuracy of rhythm and intonation

Appropriate for concert performance?

Adherence to Bach's articulation and dynamic indications

Observation of appropriate rhythmic emphasis in compositions based on dance forms

Clarity of voicing in counterpoint

Applicants of similar age will be judged together, and student age will be taken into consideration in the evaluation process.