



# OFFICIAL RULES GOVERNING THE 2025 AGO REGIONAL COMPETITIONS FOR YOUNG ORGANISTS

The purpose of the Regional Competitions for Young Organists (RCYO) is to encourage younger organists to pursue excellence, to gain performance experience, to develop service-playing skills, and to receive recognition for their achievements.

## COMPETITION SUMMARY

1. The recorded round requires a completed application form and a recording of the required repertoire listed below. Competitors may choose which final round they would like to be considered for based on the dates and locations of the 2025 conventions. A competitor may also elect to be randomly assigned to one of the two groups.
2. Each of the two final rounds will include up to four competitors performing the repertoire listed below. The two final rounds will be held in Phoenix and Fort Worth in conjunction with the AGO conventions taking place in each location.
3. Up to two Rising Stars will be named from each convention competition and will be invited to perform at the 2026 National Convention in St. Louis, Missouri. Each Rising Star will be awarded \$5,000.

## IMPORTANT DATES

### Application Deadline

February 1, 2025

### Announcement of Finalists

March 30, 2025

### AGO 2025 Phoenix

June 16–19, 2025

### AGO 2025 Fort Worth

June 30–July 3, 2025

## ELIGIBILITY

A competitor must be born after July 1, 2002. Membership in the AGO is required. Applicants who do not reside in the United States are responsible for their own travel costs, where applicable, as well as understanding and complying with U.S. visa requirements.

## MINORS

A competitor who is under the age of 18 at the time of the competition must be accompanied by a parent or responsible adult at all times.

## APPLICATIONS

Applications must be submitted online no later than February 1, 2025. Online applications are available at [AGOHQ.org](http://AGOHQ.org). Applications must include the following:

1. Proof of age (photocopy of driver's license, birth certificate, or passport)
2. \$50 nonrefundable registration fee
3. Biography and a high-resolution color headshot photograph, for purposes of publication should the applicant advance in the competition. The biography and photo will not be released to the judges, in order to preserve the anonymity of each candidate.
4. A continuous, unedited audio recording of all the required repertoire, made with the aid of a proctor. The proctor can be a teacher, minister of music, clergyperson, recording engineer, or equivalent professional and must attest to the recording being made by the contestant with no editing. The proctor must complete and sign the proctor's report included with the application.

## RECORDED ROUND

### Repertoire

*Competitors will record their performance of the following two selections:*

1. A prelude (a toccata or fantasia is acceptable) and fugue or two contrasting movements of a trio sonata by Bach. BWV 582 is acceptable; BWV 553–60 are not acceptable.
2. A composition by a composer born after 1860.

The total recorded performance time of the two works must not exceed 25 minutes. Please note that the time limit for the final round is 30 minutes, not including the hymn.

### Recording Process

The competitor may choose the organ on which to record their competition entry. Where possible, the organ should be in good working condition and adequate to play all chosen literature. Competitors may set pistons, and the use of sequencers is allowed. It is the competitor's responsibility to schedule any needed practice time on the chosen organ.

The only people present at the time of the recording should be the competitor, the proctor, the page-turner (optional), the recording engineer (optional), and any required parent or responsible guardian. The proctor can also be the page-turner and/or the recording engineer. At the end of the

recording session, the proctor should check the recording to ensure that it is complete. The recording file should be named 2025 RCYO Application Recording and uploaded to the applicant's application. In addition, the proctor should complete, sign, and upload the proctor's report to the application.

The two works may be played in any order.

### Adjudication

The applicants will be split into two groups based on the final competition location chosen by each applicant.

Each group of applicant recordings will be rated by three independent judges in strict anonymity. Each judge will document their evaluation of the application recording and provide written comments that will be sent to competitors by March 30, 2025. Up to four competitors will be chosen for each final round. Judges reserve the right not to name four finalists, and the judges' decisions are final.

Judges' identities will be revealed at the conclusion of the round. Judges' comments may not be quoted in future press materials.

### Finalists

Up to four competitors from each group will be chosen from the recorded round to compete in the live final rounds.

## LIVE FINAL ROUNDS

The live final rounds will be held in conjunction with the 2025 AGO conventions in Phoenix and Fort Worth.

The specifications of the organ will be provided by the respective competition coordinator. These will include compass, manual layout, number and location of pistons for each division, availability of memory levels, and other console accessories.

### Repertoire

1. The same two selections chosen for the recorded round.
2. A composition of the competitor's choice.
3. Hymn—choose one:  
SALZBURG  
MELITA  
DIADEMATA  
MORNING STAR

The competitor will introduce the hymn as though leading a large, enthusiastic congregation in the singing of all stanzas. At least the first stanza of the hymn must be played from the version downloaded from AGOhq.org. Published, improvised, or transposed arrangements may be used for the introduction and any subsequent stanza, if desired.

When choosing repertoire for the final round, competitors should keep in mind the balance of the program. The total performance time of the three works must not exceed 30 minutes, including piston setting, but not including the hymn.

Competitors must provide a perusal score for each of three judges. Any identifying marks on perusal scores should be erased or concealed. Obtaining three scores can be a lengthy process. The following list suggests various ways to acquire scores:

- a. Contact friends, teachers, AGO chapter members, or other colleagues for permission to borrow their copies.
- b. Borrow scores through academic library consortia.
- c. Use Interlibrary Loan through local public or academic libraries, realizing that this can take several weeks. The WorldCat database indicates the locations of the nearest libraries that have the score(s) in question in their collections.
- d. Purchase new copies.
- e. Request written permission from the copyright holder(s)—typically the publisher—to photocopy the score(s).

Page-turners will be available on request to the competition coordinator; they may not assist with registration, pulling stops, or providing advice.

### Adjudication

There will be three judges for the final round. Judges will be screened from viewing the performers to ensure anonymity. The decisions of all judges are final and not subject to appeal. Judges reserve the right to withhold any or all prizes. Each of the judges will provide signed comments for the competitors, to be sent to them in the week following the convention. As with the recorded application round, judges' comments regarding the competitors' performances in the final round may not be quoted in future press materials. At the conclusion of the competition, finalists will be given the opportunity to speak with the final-round judges.

### Registration, Travel, Housing, and Meals

1. The convention will provide a complimentary convention registration to each finalist.
2. The convention will provide finalists with housing, meals, parking, and local transportation during the rehearsal and competition period.
3. AGO National Headquarters will reimburse each finalist's travel expenses to and from the convention up to a maximum of \$500 each.
4. Chaperones will not receive any remuneration from the Guild.

### Practice Time

1. A minimum of three hours of practice on the competition instrument will be arranged for each competitor during the days immediately preceding the competition, and the competitors should plan to make themselves available on whichever day(s) they are assigned.
2. Each competitor will be given 30 minutes on the competition instrument on the day of the competition.
3. No one except a monitor and page-turner/assistant should be present during practice sessions on the competition instrument, except in the case of the competitor being a minor. In that situation, a guardian must also be present. Neither the monitor, the page-turner/assistant, nor the guardian may advise the competitor in any way.
4. Practice time will also be scheduled at other local venues, from the date of arrival through the date of the competition.
5. A second organ or piano will be made available for warm-up prior to the competitors' performance.
6. A competitor may record their own practice time. Competitors may not share this recording with anyone for feedback.

### Performance

No recording is allowed during the competition performances.

### Winners

1. Up to two Rising Stars will be selected by the judges from each convention final.
2. Rising Stars will each receive \$5,000 in prize money and will be invited to perform a joint winners' recital during the 2025 convention.
3. Rising Stars will be invited to perform at the 2026 AGO National Convention in St. Louis. They will be reimbursed by AGO National Headquarters for their convention registration, four nights at the convention hotel, up to \$500 in travel costs, and up to \$180 in food costs.
4. Rising Stars will be featured in *THE AMERICAN ORGANIST* magazine.

### DISQUALIFICATION

A competitor will be disqualified for failure to abide by the rules. Disqualification will be determined by mutual agreement among the convention coordinator, the vice president/councillor for competitions, and the convention competition coordinator. Any questions regarding interpretation of the rules should be addressed to the national RCYO Committee or AGO National Headquarters.

The RCYO Committee has the sole authority to interpret and enforce the rules and procedures of the competition. Any supplemental rules, clarifications, or corrections issued in any form by the committee are to be considered an official part of these rules.

### Regional Competitions for Young Organists Committee

Vivienne McKay, Director ([vivmckay@att.net](mailto:vivmckay@att.net))

Colin MacKnight

Ray Nagem

Peggy Haas Howell, Vice President/Councillor for Competitions (current)

Jonathan Ryan, Vice President/Councillor for Competitions (past)