



2026 YOUNG COMPOSERS COMPETITION

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I. RULES

A. Eligibility

1. Composers. This competition is limited to residents of the United States and Canada between the ages of 18 and 40 years at the time of entry submission deadline (July 5, 2026). Previous winners are ineligible. Members of The Capital Hearings, their family members, and those with close professional relationships to Members are also ineligible.

2. Voicing and length. Entries shall be scored for *a cappella* mixed choir, and should be suitable for performance by 12-14 voices (with or without divisi). Entries must be between two and five minutes in length. Any style or genre of music is permitted, *i.e.*, works need not be considered classical. Jazz, pop, rock, world, crossover works, etc. are all welcome.

3. Theme. Entries must relate to The Capital Hearings' 2026 theme, *Once Upon A Time*. This theme explores faith in various forms—religious, personal, and national—while highlighting how music helps communities endure hardships, express grief, and sustain belief in difficult times. You will have an opportunity to explain the thematic connection in your submission form.

4. Original composition. Entries must be original musical compositions, not arrangements of pre-existing works (folk songs, pop songs, instrumental works, etc.). However, limited excerpting / musical quotation of other works for artistic reasons is permissible.

5. New work. The Capital Hearings claim the right for first performance. Therefore, compositions must be new works, never before recorded or performed in any form in public,

outside a studio or classroom in an academic forum or workshop setting, with no public premiere intended.

- Entries may have been previously submitted in other contests, providing that no part of the composition has been a prize-winning entry.
- Prior publication of the work is disqualifying. However, if a work has only been *self*-published, the composer may submit the work if (A) no actual sale or distribution has occurred, **and** (B) the work is ***withdrawn from sale*** until a result for this competition is announced.

6. Rights to texts. Compositions using copyrighted texts ***must*** be accompanied by (A) proof of the composer's right to use and/or distribute the text for the submitted work, **and** (B) proof or other relevant information regarding The Capital Hearings' ability to license the text for a first commercial recording of the work.

B. Procedures

1. No entry fee or costs. There is no fee for entry. This competition has also been designed to eliminate any need for composers to incur duplication, mailing, or other costs.

2. One work per submission. Only one composition per submission will be accepted, but multiple submissions are welcome.

3. Deadline. All entries must be received by 11:59 PM (Eastern) on Sunday July 5, 2026. Notification to winner(s) and all participants will be provided two to three weeks after the submission deadline. Applicants will be notified by that date if any delays occur in the evaluation process.

4. Materials for submission. Entries are accepted online only through our **submission form**. The following items are required:

- **Score.** Scores should be provided in PDF format and must be clearly identified as to *title* and *source of text*. **The composer's name should NOT appear on the score.**
- **Audio.** The audio realization may be MIDI, MP3, etc. If no audio exists or can be made to replicate the composer's intention, please explain why in the space provided in the submission form.

- **Text.** A standalone version of the underlying text(s), unless this is already included in the score PDF. The purpose is to facilitate easy reading of the text / poem / etc. as part of our evaluation process. **English translations of any foreign-language texts must be included.**

The Capital Hearings will ensure that digital files and/or physical copies will not be shared, forwarded, or distributed beyond our membership.

5. Additional material regarding copyrighted texts. Texts first published in 1931 or later are usually copyrighted, except for certain exceptions like U.S. Government works. Read [here](#) for details. For works using any text(s) that are not in the public domain or created by the composer, **applicants must include:**

- Proof of the composer's right to use and/or distribute the text for the submitted work, *and*
- Proof or other relevant information regarding The Capital Hearings' ability to license the text for a first commercial recording of the work, e.g., information about a lyricist you have collaborated with.

6. Evaluation copies. The Capital Hearings will produce physical copies of selected entries for evaluation purposes, potentially including a reading of finalists by the ensemble. For all entries not awarded, these copies will be collected and destroyed once the competition has concluded.

7. Awards. The cash award is \$1,000. Multiple awards may be made in the same year. The Capital Hearings reserve the right to make no award if no entry is deemed to be of sufficient quality and/or suitability for our ensemble. However, it is our good-faith intent to make at least one award.

8. Legal. This Competition is governed by District of Columbia law. Courts covering D.C. shall have exclusive jurisdiction over all claims, and all parties accept such jurisdiction. Entrants release The Capital Hearings from any claims related to entry, and agree to indemnify The Capital Hearings against any third-party claims, including copyright infringement claims, that may result from submitting an entry.

II. AGREEMENT WITH AWARDEES

1. Scope. This agreement shall apply between The Capital Hearings and the composer of any work awarded in the 2026 Young Composers Competition (hereafter “Composer”).

2. Award. The amount of the award is \$1,000 cash.

3. Copies. Composer grants The Capital Hearings permission to make and/or retain sufficient physical copies of the awarded work for the use of its members. Copies will be destroyed upon Composer’s request only if required for third-party publication.

4. Performances. Composer grants The Capital Hearings the right to premiere the awarded work in 2026, and a perpetual worldwide non-exclusive license to perform the awarded work. However, The Capital Hearings reserve the right to award an entry without performing the work.

5. Travel. If Composer is interested in attending the premiere, The Capital Hearings may, at their option, explore whether a portion of Composer’s travel expenses can be subsidized.

6. Archival recording. The Capital Hearings will endeavor to create and provide Composer with an archival recording of the premiere or an early performance. The Capital Hearings and Composer grant each other permission to use this recording for promotional purposes only, including on their websites, submission for grants or contests, etc. Both The Capital Hearings and Composer agree to provide appropriate credit to the other party.

7. License for first commercial recording. Composer grants The Capital Hearings a license to make and distribute the first commercial recording of the work. The Capital Hearings agree to pay Composer royalties at the statutory rate for compulsory licenses, *e.g.*, 9.1 cents / copy for physical CDs. This license shall be *exclusive* to The Capital Hearings (that is, Composer may not license first recording rights to others) for the period ending two years after the premiere, or October 1, 2028, whichever is earlier. The Capital Hearings will provide a good-faith opportunity for Composer’s artistic feedback. This may include offering comments on an archival recording of the premiere.

8. License for marketing material. Composer grants The Capital Hearings permission to use or publish texts or other related material in connection with the work, such as for program notes, liner notes, on its website, or in marketing materials. Such uses will be properly credited to the author(s). Composer further grants The Capital Hearings permission to use Composer’s name, likeness, biography, and related information for marketing purposes, including in promotional materials.

9. Limit on future publication. No publication of the awarded work may occur until after the premiere, or October 25, 2026, whichever is earlier. Any future publication must indicate that the work was awarded in this competition. Example: “*Winner of The Capital Hearings 2026 Young Composers Competition.*” This also applies to any re-distribution of a previously self-published work that was withdrawn from sale in connection with this competition.

10. Legal. This Agreement is governed by District of Columbia law. Courts covering D.C. shall have exclusive jurisdiction over all claims, and all parties accept such jurisdiction. Composer releases The Capital Hearings from any claims related to the awarded work, and agrees to indemnify The Capital Hearings against any third-party claims, including copyright infringement claims, that may result in connection with the awarded work.

III. INSTRUCTIONS FOR SUBMISSION

1) Collect the following digital materials:

- Score (PDF format) – **your name should NOT appear on the score**
- Audio realization (MIDI, MP3, etc.)
- A standalone version of the underlying text(s), unless already included in score PDF (PDF or Microsoft Word).
- If in a foreign language, an English translation is required.
- If text or other quoted materials are not in the public domain, proof of the composer’s right to use and/or distribute the text for the submitted work *and* proof or other relevant information regarding The Capital Hearings’ ability to license the text for a first commercial recording of the work, e.g., information about a lyricist you have collaborated with.

2) Complete the Online Submission Form at <https://caphearings.seamlessdocs.com/f/composers>

*Submissions will be accepted through **July 5, 2026.***

Inquiries should be directed to composers@thecapitalhearings.com.

Thank you so much for your submission!