
Music Division

Local Level Veteran Participation - VA Local Staff Contacts should keep track of all Veterans who enter through their facility and enter Veteran information into **Local Level Veteran Participation Excel sheet**. VA Local Staff Contacts may access the Local Level Veteran Participation Excel sheet in the Microsoft Teams channel: NVCA Competition-Local Staff Contacts or by emailing Arts4Vets@va.gov.

Submit Top Three Finalists in Each Category - Facilities may submit the top three finalists in each category. A formal competition is not required at the local level but is strongly encouraged. All eligible Veterans should be given the opportunity to participate regardless of degree of talent.

National Judging and Results - The national judging will occur in October-December via the digital image judging process with results being announced in January. VA Local Staff Contacts at each facility will be notified of the competition results via E-mail and through Microsoft Teams channel: NVCA Competition-Local Staff Contacts. All first-place winners from the national level of the competition will be invited to attend and participate as chorus members in the live stage show performance at the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival.

***Note:** Not all first-place winners will be selected to perform their solo/group entry in the show. Due to time constraints, the Festival show directors will choose approximately 25 dance, drama, and music first-place entries to perform in the show. The remaining first-place attendees will be invited to participate in the Festival chorus.

First-Place National Winning Veterans Invited to the Festival - Veterans invited to the Festival and who accept the invitation to attend must commit to participating fully in the Festival week to the best of their ability. The Festival week is structured with daily workshops, seminars, rehearsals, exhibitions, and the stage show performance. Veterans should not view their attendance at the Festival as a vacation experience. While there are downtimes, attendance and full participation is required at all scheduled events.

Veteran Artists, Writers, Performers who are also VA Employees

VA employees who are eligible to compete and if invited to attend the Festival event, must use annual leave (AL), compensatory time off (CT), sick leave (SL) or disabled veteran leave (DVL) (SL and DVL are only appropriate when the individual's participation is part of their required medical treatment/ordered by their provider), travel CT, or, leave without pay (LWOP). Normal leave approval procedures and rules, as outlined in VA Handbook 5017 and applicable labor agreements, apply.

Tips for Taking Better Video Recordings

Please take a few extra minutes preparing a video correctly to give your Veteran the best chance possible during the judging process and to save hours of time with the judging process for our judges who donate their time.

- **Be sure to check that all videos play with video and audio before submission.**
- **Focus on the performer** not on the accompanist. Avoid taping from the back of the room. Stage presence cannot be judged if you cannot clearly see the performer.
- When video recording dance acts, it is necessary to include the whole-body in the entire recording, including the feet.
- **Sound control** is important! Clear audio makes a performance much easier (and enjoyable) to judge. Make sure your sound is good and balanced. Be aware of the accompaniment being too loud. Oftentimes we see/hear the speaker/player is next to the video camera and it is difficult to hear the performer.
- Consider holding your local competition and then video recording **ONLY** the acts that will be sent forward for national judging.
- **Dance, drama, and music entries** will be accepted digitally (MP4, WMV, MOV, Unlisted Youtube link) through the Arts4Vets App.

Music Division Rules

1. All entries in the dance, drama and music divisions must be recorded after October 1, 2023.
2. Veterans need to communicate (as early as January 2024) with their local VA facility to find out their local competition deadline date.
3. Veterans may submit entries in up to three solo categories and three group categories in the dance, drama, and music divisions, however they may only submit/be a part of one entry per category. Each entry must be different. The same entry cannot be submitted into two categories within a division.
4. **Veterans may only submit one entry per category.** A Veteran may not have more than one entry in a category moving forward to the national level of the competition.
5. Veterans who have received a gold medal in the same category from any of the 5 divisions (art, creative writing, dance, drama, and music) for two consecutive years must enter a different category the third year. Failure to comply with this rule will result in the entry being disqualified.
6. References to diagnosis and explanations of emotional or personal content related to the Veteran will not be read or communicated to the national judges. The exception to this rule is an entry submitted into a category that requires a write-up.
7. Suggested length of performance - no longer than three minutes.
8. Entries that contain a combination of the creative arts (to include visual arts, design, film, literature, dance, dramatic and musical performance) should be entered into the Mixed Arts category in the Drama division – see page 46, Category #13.
9. Judges reserve the right to move an entry to the appropriate category or disqualify the entry if rules are not followed.
10. Music entries must be recorded live. No voice-over dubbing will be allowed. No lip syncing to a pre-recorded track will be allowed.
11. A medley of songs in an entry must be continuous/overlapping. Editing video compilations or starting/stopping songs to combine multiple songs as one entry will not be allowed.
12. Once an entry has placed first in the music division at the national level of competition, it is not eligible to be entered again. (Example: If a Veteran or group places first with a music selection in a category one year at the national level, the Veteran or group may not enter that specific music selection again in the competition, but he may enter that category again with a different

music selection.) Music entries that have not placed first at the national level of competition should not be entered more than two consecutive years.

13. If an accompanist is needed for an entry, they may only provide background accompaniment and not take instrumental leads or solos. (Example: An instrumental group entry may consist of eligible Veterans taking leads on saxophone, trumpet and guitar accompanied by VA staff or volunteers on piano, drums, and bass. The VA staff or volunteer accompanying the entry may not take a lead or solo.)
14. An original composition may be placed in categories other than original.
15. Entries submitted into the original vocal categories must include the typed lyrics. **Entries submitted without a copy of the lyrics will be disqualified.**
16. Only one voice may be present to be considered a solo. Once a second voice is added the **entry becomes a group entry and singers must meet eligibility requirements.** If back-up voices are present, they must be eligible Veterans and their inclusion would make the entry a **Vocal Group**. Back-up singing by VA staff, volunteers, and ineligible Veterans will result in disqualification. **Back-up tracks that have the Veteran's voice dubbed in, vocalizers, and harmonizers are not allowed.**
17. The presence of any vocalizations in an instrumental entry will eliminate that entry from competing in the instrumental category except for Instrumental Drums/Percussion and the Band/Ensemble categories.

Vocal Music Categories

- **Vocal Solo:** One Veteran singing.
- **Vocal Group:** To meet the intent of the categories for **Vocal Group**, the group must have **more than one eligible Veteran singing**. (Example: One eligible Veteran being accompanied on instruments by other eligible Veterans does not meet the definition of a vocal group. Instead, this type of entry would be a vocal solo with accompanists.)

VOCAL SOLO

1. **Vocal Solo Country/Folk/Bluegrass**
2. **Vocal Solo Pop**
3. **Vocal Solo Rock/Blues** - Example: Eagles, Rolling Stones, Elvis Presley, Queen, BB King, Buddy Guy, etc.

VOCAL GROUP

4. **Vocal Group Country/Folk/Bluegrass**
5. **Vocal Group Pop**
6. **Vocal Group Rock/Blues**

VOCAL SOLO OR GROUP

7. **Vocal Rap/Hip Hop** - Solo or group.
8. **Vocal Classical/World/Ethnic** - Solo or group. A vocal selection that reflects the music characteristics of a specific ethnicity, culture, or country. The selection should be from a culture other than that of English-speaking North America. Use of ethnic instruments as accompaniment is encouraged. This category does NOT include popular music.
9. **Vocal Jazz** - Solo or group. Example: Louis Armstrong, Billy Holliday, Fred Astaire, Tony Bennett, Norah Jones, Diana Krall, etc.
10. **Vocal R&B/Soul/Funk** - Solo or group. Example: Motown, Sam Cooke, John Legend, Al Green, James Brown, etc.

11. **Vocal Broadway** - Solo or group. Show Tunes, **not movies**. (Example: “People” would be acceptable as it is **also** from a Broadway show, not because it is from a movie. “New York, New York” would not be acceptable as it is from a 1977 Liza Minnelli movie.) *Specify the Broadway show after the title.*
12. **Vocal Patriotic** - Solo or group.
13. **Vocal Spiritual** - Solo or group.

ORIGINAL VOCAL

Original vocal compositions composed by one or more eligible Veterans judged solely on the merits of the composition. Lyrics and music must be composed entirely by an eligible Veteran/s and that Veteran/s will be the one entered in this category. A performer or group other than the composer may perform the work, but the composer(s) should be shown on the video.

A copy of the typed lyrics must be attached to the entry form. **Entries submitted without a copy of the lyrics will be disqualified.**

14. **Original Vocal - General Topic** - Solo or group.
15. **Original Vocal - Military Experience** - Solo or group.

Instrumental Music, Band/Ensemble, and Special Recognition Categories

- **Instrumental Solo:** One Veteran playing
- **Instrumental Group:** To meet the intent of the categories for **Instrumental Group**, the group must have **more than one eligible Veteran performing instrumental solos/leads or making other essential contributions musically to the entry other than just accompanying.** There are no limits to the number of accompanists in the group but care should be taken that non-eligible Veterans (i.e. staff, volunteers, Veterans who are not eligible to compete) are not performing solos/leads.

NOTE: The presence of any singing in an instrumental entry will eliminate that entry from competing in the instrumental category, except for entries in the Instrumental Drums/Percussion and Band/Ensemble Categories.

INSTRUMENTAL SOLO

16. Instrumental Solo Pop
17. Instrumental Solo Jazz/R&B/Soul

INSTRUMENTAL GROUP

18. Instrumental Group Pop
19. Instrumental Group Jazz/R&B/Soul

INSTRUMENTAL SOLO OR GROUP

20. Instrumental Country/Folk/Bluegrass – Solo or group.
21. Instrumental Rock/Blues – Solo or group.
22. Instrumental Broadway - Solo or group. Show Tunes, **not movies**. (Example: “People” would be acceptable as it is **also** from a Broadway show, not because it is from a movie. “New York, New York” would not be acceptable as it is from a 1977 Liza Minnelli movie.) *Specify the Broadway show after the title.*
23. Instrumental Patriotic - Solo or group.

24. **Instrumental Spiritual** - Solo or group.
25. **Instrumental Classical** - Solo or group. Conventional music following long-established principles other than a folk, jazz, or popular tradition (mid 1400s – late 1800s). Examples include symphonies, concertos, oratorios, operas, sonatas, fugues or any combination of dance movements such as suites. New age music may be submitted into this category.
26. **Instrumental World/Ethnic** - Solo or group. An instrumental selection that reflects the music characteristics of a special ethnicity, culture, or country. The selection should be from a culture other than that of English-speaking North America. Use of ethnic instruments is encouraged. This category does NOT include classical or popular music.
27. **Instrumental Drums/Percussion** - Solo or group. It is the intent of this category to showcase non-melodic percussion instruments, i.e. trap set, congas, bongos, spoons, rhythm instruments, etc. This category would exclude percussion instruments that can produce an obvious melody line, i.e. xylophone, vibraphone, marimba, etc. Accompaniment may be present as desired and may include melody line OR VOCALS, but ONLY the percussionist will be judged. **Vocal percussion beat boxing should be entered into this category.**

ORIGINAL INSTRUMENTAL

New score of music. A new song entirely, not an interpretation of an existing song. Original instrumental compositions composed by one or more eligible Veterans judged solely on the merits of the composition. Music must contain a distinct melody line and must be composed entirely by an eligible Veteran/s and that Veteran/s will be the one entered in this category. A performer or group other than the composer may perform the work, but the composer(s) should be shown on the video. Lead sheets and chord progressions are helpful to the judging process but are not required.

28. **Original Instrumental** - Solo or group.

BAND/ENSEMBLE CATEGORIES

To meet the criteria for the Band/Ensemble categories, the group must consist entirely of eligible Veterans and must include **at least 2 members (at least one must be a singer and at least one must be an instrumentalist)**. All group members must be shown on the video. **The presence of non-Veterans (including non-Veteran VA staff) will result in the entry being disqualified.** Accompanists are not allowed in this category.

29. **Band/Ensemble – Country/Folk/Bluegrass/Pop**

30. **Band/Ensemble – Jazz/R&B/Soul/Rock/Blues**

SPECIAL RECOGNITION

This category is for vocal or instrumental music entries that recognize individuals who exhibit creative expression through use of music while possessing significant physical or psychological limitations. The intent of this category is to reinforce the concept of the arts as therapy, where an individual uses artistic expression to facilitate successful treatment outcomes. **VA staff may accompany and vocally cue or assist Veterans with entries in this category.**

31. **Special Recognition**

Entries in this special recognition categories **MUST** also include:

- **A Word document containing a typed statement/narrative** (50 to 250 words) composed by a VA staff person or the Veteran explaining why the Veteran is deserving of special recognition. **Entries submitted without a write-up will not be judged.**
- Consent form 10-3203 and 10-5345 (included in this handbook) must be signed and dated by the Veteran. The staff contact person submitting the entry for the Veteran should safeguard the signed consent forms at their VA facility.

Sample Music Judging Criteria

Sample Music Judging Score Sheet

Category Number and Name:	
Title of Entry:	

(All Categories EXCEPT Originals)

Intonation (unless piano)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Rhythm	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Interpretation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Stage Presence	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Blend & Cohesiveness (if group)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

TOTAL SCORE _____

(Originals)

Melody Line	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Rhythm	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Style	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Lyrics (if vocal)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

TOTAL SCORE _____

How to Submit Entries to the National Competition

Entries may be submitted **only by VA Local Staff Contacts** to the national level of the competition using the Arts4Vets App.

Non-VA Staff from other government Veteran medical facilities will not have upload access to the Arts4Vets App and may continue submit entries in other ways. Please reach out to the National Director or division chairpersons to coordinate.

Veterans will not be able to submit their own entries through to the national level of competition or directly into the Arts4Vets App. They must work with the VA facility where they are enrolled and meet the local competition deadline dates.

File Naming Convention: There is no required file naming convention. Files uploaded to the Arts4Vets App will automatically be renamed to coordinate with the entry data.

Music Division Entry Form

Solo Entry

Veteran Name:		Email:	
Gender:		Phone #:	

**Gender information used only for national participation data collection.*

Group Entry

Veteran Name and Gender

Veteran Phone Number and Email

**Gender information used only for national participation data collection.*

Group Name:	
Number of Veterans in Group:	

Category Number and Name:	
Title of Entry:	
Categories 11 & 23, specify from what Broadway show:	
If entering an instrumental category, what instrument is the Veteran playing:	

List all accompanists – Everyone that is visible or heard on the video must be identified as an accompanist or eligible Veteran.	Accompanist's name:
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***Veterans:** By entering this competition, you acknowledge that your name, email, phone number, entry, and entry detail information may be uploaded into the VA Arts4Vets/Salesforce Application for the purpose of collecting and organizing competition entries.

Veterans: *I/we have read all the rules for the division in which I/we am/are entering. If my/our entry places first at the national level, I/we understand that I/we will be invited to attend the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. It is required that I/we attend and participate in rehearsals for the entire event. I/we have signed the required Consent for Picture/Voice form (VA form 10-3203).*

Veteran(s) Signature(s):

VA Staff Checklist

- Meets the competition eligibility criteria
- Is approved to enter the NVCA Competition as a representative of this VA facility
- Has signed the necessary consent forms (10-3203 and if necessary, 10-5345) – reference Page 10 for links to forms

