

Windham Regional Arts Council
39th Annual Young Artist Music Competition
COMPETITION GUIDELINES

Saturday, January 24, 2026 at 1:00 pm

von der Mehden Recital Hall

University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT

In case of inclement weather, the event will be postponed to January 31, 2026.

Review the guidelines below and visit the [competition website](#) to register online.

Entry deadline: January 14, 2026.

Competition & Honors Overview

The Young Artist Music Competition includes **two performance categories**—the General Competition and the Concerto Competition—as well as a **non-performance honor**, the Feather Spearman Award, which recognizes community service through music.

Students may enter one or more performance categories and may also apply for the Feather Spearman Honor if eligible.

Eligibility

- Open to vocalists and instrumentalists in grades 7-12 enrolled in public, private, or home school.
- Eligible instrument categories: piano, strings, wind, percussion, and voice.

Performance Competition Categories

1. General Competition

Students may compete individually and/or as part of an ensemble. Students entering the General Competition may also enter the Concerto Competition on a different instrument.

- If there are fewer than 4 entries in a category/age group, categories may be combined at the discretion of the competition committee.

Individual Entries

- Soloists may compete on a second instrument within the General Competition (a separate entry form and fee are required for each instrument).
- Individual entrants may also participate in an ensemble.
- Awards by age group (grades 7-9 and 10-12):
 - 1st place: \$150
 - 2nd place: \$125
 - 3rd place: \$100

Ensemble Entries

- Ensembles may consist of 2-5 members.
- Ensemble entrants may also compete individually.
- Awards (awarded to each ensemble member):
 - 1st place: \$150
 - 2nd place: \$125
 - 3rd place: \$100

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2. Concerto Competition

The Concerto Competition is judged separately from the General Competition.

- **Repertoire must be a concerto movement, concertino, or showpiece with orchestral accompaniment.**
- Students may enter both the Concerto and General Competitions if competing on different instruments.
- Students may compete individually or as part of a 2–5-member ensemble.
- Previous Concerto Competition winners may compete again on a different instrument.
- Maximum performance length: **12 minutes**.
- Piano accompaniment is strongly recommended. Competitors should contact an accompanist **at least one month** before the event and rehearse well in advance.
- Awards:
 - 1st place: \$150
 - 2nd place: \$125
 - 3rd place: \$100
 - At the discretion of the judges, the winner may be invited to perform their concerto with the Willimantic Orchestra in a 2026 concert.

Special Awards & Honors

1. Musicianship Awards

These awards honor distinguished community members, supporters of the arts, and their families. They are given at the judges' discretion.

- All performing competitors are eligible unless otherwise noted.
- Awards:
 - Mr. D Scholarship Award: \$300 (Grades 7-8 only)
 - Bellingham Piano Award: \$500
 - Gerry String Award: \$200
 - Gerry Wind Award: \$200
 - McDevitt Voice Award: to be announced

2. Feather Spearman Honor

This community service-based award honors Feather Spearman, who served as competition director for over 20 years. It recognizes one student who has used their musical talent and passion to make a positive impact on their community.

- **This award does not require competition performance.**
- Eligible service can take place through a non-profit organization, school, faith-based group, health care facility (such as a rehabilitation center, hospital, assisted living facility, or nursing home), or a similar organization.
- All students grade 7-12 are eligible.
- Candidates are interviewed by committee members (parent/guardian required if under 18).
- Recipient is selected by the competition committee.
- No application fee.
- Award: \$200

Performance Guidelines

Time Limits

- General Competition pieces: maximum 7 minutes.
- Concerto Competition pieces: maximum 12 minutes (10-12 minutes strongly recommended).

Vocalists

- Acceptable: art songs (any language), selections from musicals, operettas, operas, and oratorios.
- Not allowed: pop music or original compositions.
- Songs must be developmentally appropriate.

Ensembles

- Must consist of 2-5 performers.
- May include any combination of instruments and/or voices.
- Members may also enter as individuals.

Accompaniment

- Performers are responsible for arranging their own accompanist.
- Two grand pianos are available at the venue.
- Recommended accompanists:
 - Dr. Priyeshni Peiris Perera - 959-929-1392
 - Richard Cooper - 860-371-0807
- Competitors should secure an accompanist **at least one month** before the event and rehearse well in advance.
- Recorded tracks are not permitted.
- Performers may compete without accompaniment only if their piece allows.

General Information

Attire

To maintain a professional and respectful competition atmosphere, participants should wear formal or semi-formal performance attire. These standards are similar to those required at All-State and collegiate-level performances, making this a valuable opportunity to practice appropriate concert dress.

- Suggested attire: button-down shirts, (ties optional), dresses or blouses with conservative necklines and hemlines, and leggings only with a tunic/dress mid-thigh or longer.
- Not permitted: blue jeans, T-shirts, athletic wear, polo shirts, flip-flops, or sandals.

Schedule

- 1:00 – 4:00 pm: Competition (Grades 7–9, Grades 10–12, and Concerto division)
- 4:00 pm: Awards Ceremony

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Photography & Recordings

- A professional photographer will take photos of participants with parental permission.
- Families and guests may not take photos or videos during performances.

Judging

- Judges will evaluate performances based on technical ability, musical interpretation, and overall artistry.
- Judges' decisions are final.
- Judges reserve the right not to award a prize if the performance standards are not met.

Registration

Forms & Deadline

- Complete and submit entry form(s) and payment via the [competition website](#).
- Each form must be signed by the student and a parent/guardian.
- **Deadline: January 14, 2026**

Fees

- Performance categories (General or Concerto): \$35 per entry
- Ensembles: \$35 per member
- Second entry on a different instrument: \$30
- Feather Spearman Honor: No fee (performance not required)

Communication

- WRAC will email families for general updates.
- Parents/guardians will be contacted by phone for specific questions.

Contact Information

- **Carol Twardowski-Heap, Competition Director**
(860) 933-8015 or 1880house@sbcglobal.net
- General inquiries: contactus@windhamrac.org

About WRAC and the Young Artist Music Competition

The Windham Regional Arts Council (WRAC), founded in 1983, is a non-profit volunteer organization dedicated to supporting the arts. The Young Artist Music Competition, now in its 39th year, showcases the superb talent of young performers. Our mission is to provide encouragement, build confidence, and offer valuable performance experience as a stepping stone to future opportunities, whether on a collegiate path or in a community setting.

We look forward to sharing a wonderful day of music & fellowship!