

NSA Classical Auditions Rubric

Each singer's performance is adjudicated in comparison to the following standards
as applied to the category of entry.

STANDARD	DEVELOPING 70-79 points	ADVANCING 80-89 points	MASTERING 90-100 points
TONE • Resonance and timbre are appropriate to the style with balanced chiaroscuro and ring throughout range. • Transitions through passaggi are smooth and efficient. • Onsets and offsets are clean, clear, and balanced allowing for uniform vibrancy and clarity. • Dynamic flexibility is present. The singer engages the ability to make subtle changes in timbre appropriate to the style and character of the selection.	The singer is beginning to develop vocal resonance and balanced chiaroscuro timbre. Onsets and offsets delay or press the tone and cause extra noise or air. Transitions through passaggi are difficult or uneven. Dynamic flexibility is missing in much of the performance. Vocal colors do not enhance the style and character of the selection.	The singer is advancing in resonance and balanced chiaroscuro through some of the range. Onsets and offsets are mostly immediate, but some pressing or breathiness is present. Passaggi transitions are inconsistent. Dynamic flexibility is evident much of the time. Vocal colors mostly enhance the style and character of the selection.	The singer is mastering resonance. A balanced chiaroscuro tone rings throughout range. Onsets and offsets are immediate and promote clarity. Passaggi transitions are smooth and efficient. Dynamic flexibility is consistently evident in the performance. Vocal colors consistently enhance the style and character of the selection.
BREATH & ALIGNMENT • Inhalation is easy, full, silent, and efficient. • Exhalation provides stability, support, vibrancy, buoyancy, loft, and vocal energy. The alignment, coordination, and release of the head, neck, larynx, jaw, ribs, back, abdomen, legs, and feet assist a dynamic engagement of the vocal instrument.	The singer is developing appropriate respiration. Inhalation is often noisy or insufficient. During exhalation, the singer tenses or collapses requiring extra breaths to complete phrases. Buoyancy and loft are inconsistent. The lack of coordination and alignment of the body hinders a dynamic engagement of the vocal instrument.	The singer is advancing toward appropriate respiration. Inhalation is mostly easy and sufficient. Exhalation often provides stability, support, and vocal energy with some collapsing and tension. Buoyancy and loft are often present. The coordination and alignment of the body are mostly assisting a dynamic engagement of the vocal instrument.	The singer is mastering respiration. Inhalation is easy and sufficient. Exhalation provides support, balanced stability, and energy. Buoyancy and loft are consistently present. The coordination and alignment of the body consistently assists a dynamic engagement of the vocal instrument.
TEXT & DICTION • Languages are sung with accurate pronunciation and effective articulation with idiomatic inflection beyond basic phonetics. • The singer displays a thorough understanding in communicating the text. Phrasing and flow respect the nuance of each language.	The singer is developing some language proficiency but is often inaccurate in pronunciation and articulation. Idiomatic characteristics of the language are not present. The meaning of the text is ambiguous and poorly communicated. Phrasing and flow do not respect the nuance of each language.	The singer is advancing in language proficiency with accurate pronunciation and articulation. Idiomatic characteristics of the language are inconsistently present. The singer often communicates the meaning of the text. Phrasing and flow respect the nuance of each language inconsistently.	The singer is mastering languages with accurate pronunciation and effective articulation. Idiomatic inflection beyond basic phonetics is consistently present. The singer understands and communicates the meaning of the text. Phrasing and flow consistently respect the nuance of each language.

NSA Classical Auditions Rubric, cont

Each singer's performance is adjudicated in comparison to the following standards as applied to the category of entry.

STANDARD	DEVELOPING 70-79 points	ADVANCING 80-89 points	MASTERING 90-100 points
MUSICIANSHIP • Pitches and rhythms are accurate. • Tuning is accurate throughout range. • The markings of the composer, editor, or arranger are observed and present in the performance. Selections are accurately performed from memory.	The singer's musicianship is beginning to develop with many accurate pitches and rhythms. Some errors are present. Tuning is often problematic. The markings in the score are rarely observed or present in the performance. Memorization is incomplete.	The singer's musicianship is advancing with pitch and rhythmic accuracy most of the time. Tuning is mostly accurate and complete with some errors. Many of the markings in the score are observed and present in the performance. Memorization is mostly complete.	The singer's musicianship is refined. All pitches and rhythms are accurate. Tuning is consistently accurate. The markings in the score are observed and present in the performance. Memorization is accurate.
ARTISTRY • The performance synthesizes vocal and physical communication to embody and express the character and story/poetry. • The performance embodies clear musical intent and embraces the uniqueness of the singer. The listeners are engaged in a believable and fulfilling aesthetic performance.	The singer's performance does not embody a thorough understanding of the text and music. Physical, musical, and vocal choices are not contributing to effective communication. The performance is self-conscious and insecure.	Physical, musical, and vocal choices coordinate to create believable moments. An authenticity that embraces the uniqueness of the singer is emerging. The singer is inconsistent in engaging the listeners in a fulfilling aesthetic performance.	Physical, musical, and vocal choices allow the singer to communicate effectively. An authentic performance embraces the uniqueness of the singer. The singer consistently engages the listeners in a believable and fulfilling aesthetic performance.
ENSEMBLE (comments only) The singer and pianist coordinate their efforts toward the same artistic goals in the performance.	The singer and pianist seem unsynchronized. The artistic goals of the performance were unclear.	The singer and pianist are often coordinated in their efforts toward the same artistic goals in the performance.	The singer and pianist are consistently coordinated in their efforts toward the same artistic goals in the entire performance.

American Negro Spirituals Sample Comments

Adjudicators can utilize these suggestions to guide them in making useful comments for each singer during their session.

STANDARD	DEVELOPING 70-79 points	ADVANCING 80-89 points	MASTERING 90-100 points
STONE - Resonance and timbre are appropriate to the style with balanced chiaroscuro and ring throughout range. - Transitions through passaggi are smooth and efficient. - Onsets and offsets are clean, clear, and balanced allowing for uniform vibrancy and clarity. - Dynamic flexibility is present. - The singer engages the ability to make subtle changes in timbre appropriate to the style and character of the selection.	- You're using a vocal color that suited the style and the text. - While soft singing was largely under control, there is room to put more core into the piano dynamics for better continuity. - More ease and consistent release in the upper register would be an improvement.	- The voice has some promising flexibility, especially when warmth and lyricism are called for. - Registration was dealt with carefully, yet a smoother transition between registers would add to consistency.	A warm and focused tone was evident in your performance, one that did justice to the emotional depth and expressive nature of the spiritual.
BREATH & ALIGNMENT - Inhalation is easy, full, silent, and efficient. - Exhalation provides stability, support, vibrancy, buoyancy, loft, and vocal energy. - The alignment, coordination, and release of the head, neck, larynx, jaw, ribs, back, abdomen, legs, and feet assist a dynamic engagement of the vocal instrument.	- Overall, breath management was secure enough to see phrases through with musical intent. - A more economical plan for breath management would serve some of the longer lines better.	- The technique is well-suited to the repertoire, if not for an occasional tension that gets in the way of free production. - The vocal line held up well, though support wavered slightly at the end of a phrase here and there.	Lower abdominal engagement would go a long way in sustaining both phrase length and nuance.
TEXT & DICTION - Languages are sung with accurate pronunciation and effective articulation with idiomatic inflection beyond basic phonetics. - The singer displays a thorough understanding in communicating the text. - Phrasing and flow respect the nuance of each language.	- Diction was for the most part clear and the text easily followed. - On occasion, final consonants got in the way of the legato; a better balance of clarity and continuity would help.	- Some of the internal words might be articulated with a bit more specificity. - To round out the resonance and stylistic coherence, give closer attention to vowel purity. - Stylistic authenticity might be improved in some passages by a more colloquial singing of the text, as the edition or context allows.	- Your diction is a strong point; consonants were present for clarity but did not break the line. - Vowels were unified and served an expressive delivery of the text. - The text was put forward with conviction and a sensitivity to its emotional weight.

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MUSICIANSHIP - Pitches and rhythms are accurate. - Tuning is accurate throughout range. - The markings of the composer, editor, or arranger are observed and present in the performance. - Selections are accurately performed from memory.	- The repetition in the spiritual was given enough of a varied touch to hold interest. - A better balance between classical vocal production and the idiom of the tradition would be an asset.	- There was a steady pulse to your singing which gave the piece's more expressive moments a firm underpinning. - Your dynamic choices were thoughtful and they supported the arc of the piece.	- Dynamic shading was used to good effect in illuminating the narrative and emotional contour of the work. - There are places where a more deliberate inflection would heighten the contrast. In the climactic moments, a more text-driven immediacy would serve the performance well.
ARTISTRY - The performance synthesizes vocal and physical communication to embody and express the character and story/poetry. - The performance embodies clear musical intent and embraces the uniqueness of the singer. - The listeners are engaged in a believable and fulfilling aesthetic performance.	- A deeper study of the cultural context would add to the stylistic authenticity - For the most part, your interpretation had the kind of simplicity and directness one expects from the genre, while still being expressively sincere.	- The phrasing was handled with care, so as to let the melody come across in a natural and expressive manner. - One can see a sincere engagement with the material and an understanding of its language that is still in development. Some technical polish, more consistent management of the breath and clearer text work would do much to enhance the vocal freedom and impact of the performance.	- One could hear an awareness of the communal spirit and call-and-response energy of the genre in your interpretation. - There was a clear sense of the spiritual's mix of lament, hope and resilience in what you did. You handled the emotional side of things with the proper seriousness, eschewing any excess sentimentality.
ENSEMBLE (comments only) The singer and pianist coordinate their efforts toward the same artistic goals in the performance.	Coordination with the accompaniment was secure for the most part; while there were now and then some hesitations in the transitions, it never undermined the overall effect.	Consider responding more actively to musical details from the accompaniment.	- Excellent collaboration with the accompaniment. - You demonstrate strong awareness of ensemble, timing, and communication to bring this tale to life.