

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

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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.

Classical 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
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.	• You have the beginnings of a rich, colorful voice. • Your sound must be a vehicle for expression of text. • The [u] vowel is overly modified to my ear. • Allow your sound to carry more naturally. • The lower register could resonate more freely.	• More pressure may not be the answer in order to tune that pitch - you may have to make a space, lip, or vowel change. • I would love to hear more clean/clear/unmodified vowels in your lower and middle voice. • If you modify too much it then becomes about your sound.	• Balanced resonance from top to bottom. • Beautiful tone. I want to listen to you and the words. • Excellent tonal consistency and ring. • Your tone communicates with ease and beauty.
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.	• Take time for breath. • Continue to work for legato where your breath is more continuous. • Breath management will strengthen longer phrases.	• I see you taking a deep inhalation most of the time, but I wonder if you could take more time with the inhalation. • Take time for relaxed inhalation, almost as if you choreograph the breath into the interlude before it's time to sing.	• When you take your time, you are better able to prepare the pharynx and release the larynx for a warmer, more opulent tone that we are hearing in your singing today.
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.	• Final schwas should not be nasal. • Some syllables are indistinct. • Continue refining language accuracy.	• Diction is generally clear and idiomatic in inflection, although I would like to hear stronger consonants in the German diction. • There are times in this piece where your articulation/enunciation seems very natural, in spite of the pitches being well outside the range of. I think this is really important. Other times it seems like you are over shaping or over enunciating.	• I appreciate the attention you are paying to make sure that the audience gets the text, but in these moments, we lose some of the naturalness/sense of honesty because the articulation chops us the sound. • Every word contributed to the storytelling.

Classical Sample Comments

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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.	- Continue refining pitch accuracy. - Observe more details in the score. - Memorization needs greater security.	- Fine legato singing and expressive phrasing. - I appreciate that you explore all aspects of your vocal color - from soft, intimate tones to full, dramatic tones. - Musical preparation is evident. - Continue refining stylistic details.	- A mature technique supported artistic freedom. - Well prepared with stylish, expressive ornaments that show the colors of your delightful voice. - There is wonderful flexibility to your instrument as demonstrated in the Handel aria – a wonderful aria for you.
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.	- Continue developing dramatic commitment. - Stronger physical intention will enhance communication. - What are you thinking about during the introduction? - Watch overall pacing. - More nuance needed in the musical line.	- Your performance is energetic. would like to see the physicality match your voice. - Your performance is engaging. - Continue deepening your dramatic choices. - Match your physical expression to your vocal storytelling.	- The Mozart recitative was well paced and presented with a clear dramatic intent. The aria demonstrated fine legato lines and expressive phrasing of this aria. - The aria demonstrated fine legato lines and expressive phrasing despite the breakneck speed required of this aria.
ENSEMBLE (comments only) The singer and pianist coordinate their efforts toward the same artistic goals in the performance.	- Greater coordination with the collaborative pianist will strengthen the performance. - More attention to ensemble details will support your artistic goals.	- Consider responding more actively to musical details from the accompaniment. - The collaboration supports the performance effectively.	- Excellent collaboration with the accompaniment. - You demonstrate strong awareness of ensemble, timing, and communication to bring this tale to life.