



## Tips for Adjudicating at the SERNATS Student Auditions

*Thank you for sharing your time and wisdom with us.  
Our student auditions are to be conducted with dignity, efficiency, and with consideration for the young performers in accordance with established NATS Audition policies*

### At the beginning of each adjudication round

Please take a moment to familiarize yourself with the age and experience range of the category you are adjudicating. *Note: Some category names and numbers are new this year!* Do not begin judging until all three judges are present. Introduce yourselves to each other. Appoint a timekeeper. Appoint a judge to usher auditionees in and out of the room or to work with a runner if one is present.

### First song

Let the student choose the first song, then take turns among the adjudicators to choose the rest of the pieces as time permits.

You will evaluate four categories for each singer: Voice Characteristics, Technique, Musicianship, and Artistry. Assign an evaluative score to each of these four categories using this scale:

1	2	3	4	5	6
Superior	Excellent	Quite Good	Average	Marginal	Weak

*Please note that Lower Numbers Denote Stronger Performances.*

Since “1” is the best score in each category, with four areas to evaluate, a total of 4 is the best possible score a singer may receive. When selecting scores, keep this in mind:

Adjudicators’ scores are added together in the Tally Room, and all singers with a total score of 6 or lower from any two adjudicators advance to either a Run-off or a Final Round.

- Ex. 1. Adjudicator A – score of 6; Adjudicator B – score of 9; Adjudicator C – score of 4 = singer advances  
Ex. 2. Adjudicator A – score of 4; Adjudicator B – score of 7; Adjudicator C – score of 7 = singer does not advance

If there are 5 or fewer singers with the required scores in any category, all 5 singers advance directly to the Final Round. If more than 5 singers have the required scores in a category, all singers with the required scores will advance to a Run-off Round, where each singer will sing one selection of their choice before a different panel of adjudicators who will rank the singers in order of preference. The rankings will be averaged in the Tally Room and the top 5 singers will advance to the Final Round. If there is a tie in the run-offs, the adjudicators will consult and rank the tied singers.

Please be sure to give specific comments and/or explanations if you give a high score in any single category on your scoring sheet.

During preliminary rounds, you will not adjudicate your own students but may be required to adjudicate students from other voice studios where you work. This is especially common in run-offs.

### Comments

Constructive, helpful comments are best; be honest but try to include at least as many positive as negative comments on each sheet. NEVER give single category scores of 4, 5, or 6 without giving very specific reasons why on the sheets.

Sign each scoring sheet legibly, but **do not** write any contact information on any sheet. No adjudicator may list his or her institution, telephone number, or address on any adjudication sheet. No singer’s address or school shall appear on the adjudicators’ repertoire sheets,

**Category 19:** this special general category is For Comments Only. Do not assign any numerical scores in this category, but do write comments.

**No discussion, please**

There should be no conferring or discussion about singers or scores during the auditions. This is for the benefit of the students and to maintain fairness in the adjudications.

**Stay on time!**

Designate one adjudicator to be the timekeeper and stay on time. It's fine and in fact necessary to write while singers are singing. It is also fine to ask a singer to stop mid-song if time runs short. If you get ahead, feel free to take a break.

**If a singer is ill**

Hear them if they wish to sing. It is your decision how you wish to score them.

**Repertoire and scores**

As per national NATS guidelines, students and accompanists must use legal scores. No *illegal* copies of songs or even individual pages may be used. However, *legal* printouts of music are allowed, such as printouts from sources like CD sheet music, musicnotes.com, schubertline.com and others.

If a student brings in questionable music, look for a company logo or usage statement printed on the music, or a "festival use" letter.

Should any question arise about repertoire, scores, or possible disqualification, do not challenge a student during the audition time. Hear the student sing, and then send the music or matter to the Tally Room for a decision.

**Guests**

Other singers and guests may come into the room, if space allows. Should they behave in any manner you find distracting or detrimental to performers, you may ask them to alter their behavior, or to leave. Cell phones, other electronic devices, and cameras (including video) should not be used in the Adjudication Rooms. The only exception is a Staff Photographer. If you have a problem, send a message to the Tally Room.

**\*\*At the end of each category\*\***

Collate the scoring sheets (by performer). Then come with all other adjudicators from your category to the Tally Room to deliver the sheets and wait to be released by the event officials there.

**If you're new to NATS adjudicating, or new to adjudicating a classical or theater category**

Relax, and trust your instincts. You will be fine!

**OVERVIEW OF GENERAL PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS  
IN CLASSICAL AND MUSIC THEATER SINGING\***

	<b>CLASSICAL</b>	<b>MUSIC THEATER**</b>
<b>TONE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Of primary importance and takes precedence at times over clarity of text</li> <li>• <i>Chiaroscuro</i> is the ideal – both brilliance and richness desired</li> <li>• Low larynx, high soft palate, consistent pharyngeal space maintained</li> <li>• Breathiness and nasality are not generally present</li> <li>• CT-dominant (cricothyroid muscle) in middle range as well as high range</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beauty of tone secondary to clarity of text</li> <li>• Speech-dominated</li> <li>• Brighter, brassy sound</li> <li>• Laryngeal height and/or pharyngeal shape are maintained</li> <li>• Breathiness and nasality maybe used frequently for vocal color or expression</li> <li>• TA-dominant (thyroarytenoid muscle) in low and middle range</li> </ul>
<b>VOWELS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Tall" – strong resonance in fundamental and higher harmonics</li> <li>• Formant tracked to permit projection over orchestra</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Wide" – stronger resonance in higher harmonics</li> <li>• Speech-like, w/out formant tracking which is unnecessary because of amplification</li> </ul>
<b>CONSONANTS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sometimes articulated softly or ignored for the sake of vocal beauty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stronger consonants for word definition</li> </ul>
<b>DYNAMICS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crescendos often result in increased vibrato and opening of vowel</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crescendos call for maintenance of straight tone until the end, when vibrato is added (in "belt" and jazz styles)</li> <li>• Speech-like vowel quality is maintained</li> </ul>
<b>VIBRATO</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiated at onset of phonation</li> <li>• Continuous throughout</li> <li>• Ideally even</li> <li>• Typically between 4 and 7 cycles per second</li> <li>• Approximately 1/2 step excursion above and below the given pitch</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Usually initiated toward the end of a sustained tone</li> <li>• Only used for expressive purposes on sustained tones</li> <li>• Less excursion above and below given pitch</li> <li>• Faster or slower cycles than in classical singing are acceptable</li> </ul>
<b>RANGE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performer stays within his/her "Fach"</li> <li>• Generally, only pitches which can be produced freely and beautifully are performed in public</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extreme ranges of pitch and loudness are sometimes called for</li> <li>• "Unbeautiful" pitches are acceptable, especially if they relate to or heighten the drama</li> </ul>
<b>ACTING</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secondary to beauty of sound, although of increasing importance, particularly in the opera world</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More important than sound quality</li> <li>• Projecting the meaning of the text through facial expression and body language is required</li> </ul>

\*This chart has been adapted from the materials of, and used with the generous permission of NATS member Sharyn J. Mapes.

\*\*Some music theater singing more closely resembles classical singing, such as in *The Music Man* or *Phantom of the Opera*, but still requires clarity of text and strong acting ability.