

Biennial NSA Auditions

American Negro Spiritual NSA Categories

Nationally, the American Negro Spiritual Category is offered in NATS summer workshop years and the Hall Johnson Spirituals Competition is offered in NATS conference years (national finals in odd-numbered years). The 3 American Negro Spiritual Categories are offered in each region's NSA with singers placing 1st – 5th advancing to the national preliminaries. Chapters are also encouraged to add these categories to chapter auditions. Where applicable, chapter auditions may serve as qualify students to advance to their region's auditions. These spirituals may appropriately be performed by all races of singers sincerely performing in a classical style.

American Negro Spiritual Audition Terminology

Spirituals	Arrangements in classical style of the North American Negro Spirituals by composers similar in style to the spirituals of Hall Johnson, R. Nathaniel Dett, Florence Price, Moses Hogan, Edward Boatner, Undine Smith Moore, James Weldon and J. Rosamond Johnson, Margaret Bonds and others. The classical style excludes Gospel, Blues and Jazz music. See below for a link to more information available online.
Memorization	All audition selections must be performed from memory.
Diction	Because of the idiomatic nature of the spiritual, diction restrictions will be relaxed. Standard English pronunciations may be observed, e.g., “de” or “duh” may be replaced with “the.” For more advanced students, the scholarly study of diction in spirituals is equivalent to studying the lyric diction of other languages.
Transposition	Copyright-compliant, purchased transpositions are allowed.
Spirituals in English	English must be the original language of the selection.
Classical Style	The word “classical” in this context refers to singing spirituals in the classical style with only mild deviations and interpolation to what is written in the music and without musical theatre, pop, gospel, contemporary Christian, soul, jazz, rhythm and blues expressions or vocal technique. See the NSA Spiritual Adjudicator Training Video for the differences between Spirituals and Gospel Songs and more details on performing Spirituals in NSA.
Judicious Cuts	Piano introductions, piano interludes, piano music after the vocal solo is completed, and internal cuts of spiritual selections are allowed as in common performance practice. Cuts of a verse or verses of selections are not allowed. In the case of strophic pieces, all verses should remain that are traditionally included.
Comments Only	Any registered student may elect to sing for comments only and participate exclusively in a preliminary audition. Adjudicators will not score auditions entered for comments only.

[Additional information](#) about the Biennial American Negro Spiritual NSA Categories

**Spirituals not found
in the [Approved Spirituals Repertoire](#) online**
may be vetted and approved by contacting one of the following NATS members:

Alexis Davis-Hazell adavishazell@ua.edu
Barbara Hill-Moore bhmoore@mail.smu.edu
Everett McCorvey everett.mccorvey@uky.edu
Marcia Porter MPorter@admin.fsu.edu



CWR American Negro Spiritual Categories

Note: Any or all categories may be split or combined, in order to facilitate judging assignments and to ensure that the audition is self-sustaining. The target division size is 10-20 singers. If a division is larger than 20 singers, it may be divided further. Categories are determined by student age on September 1, 2024.

CATEGORY		LENGTH OF STUDY	AGE LIMIT	TIME LIMIT	REPERTOIRE
AS 3	High School American Negro Spiritual	No limit	14-19	8 minutes	Three American Negro Spirituals contrasting by composer, tempo and text. See approved spirituals repertoire, p.17
AS 7	First Through Third Year College Age American Negro Spiritual	0-3 years post high school	23	10 minutes	Three American Negro Spirituals contrasting by composer, tempo and text. See approved spirituals repertoire, p.17
AS 9	Fourth/Fifth Year College Age and Graduate Age American Negro Spiritual	4+ years post high school	30	12 minutes	Four American Negro Spirituals contrasting by composer, tempo and text. See approved spirituals repertoire, p.17