

COMMERCIAL MUSIC CM AUDITION TERMINOLOGY

Accompaniment Options	Singers may perform each audition song with any of the following accompaniment options: a pre-recorded instrumental track without backing vocals, one live collaborative acoustic instrumentalist, or for a limited number of songs (<i>see CM Categories of Entry Repertoire Requirements</i>) the singer may accompany themselves on an acoustic instrument. Keyboards are a singular exception to the acoustic instrument requirements and are accepted accompanying instruments.
Arrangements	Original or published arrangements of musical theatre selections are accepted in NSA's CM categories, but ONLY when performed in a distinct commercial music style differing from the style performed in the musical. This includes songs included in the scores of jukebox musicals or any musical including pre-existing songs in the musical's score.
Commercial Music	Each CM audition may include one or more commercial music style(s). Commercial music includes all genres of vocal music performed by recording artists, not included in the classical and musical theatre NATS Student Auditions categories. Commercial music includes bluegrass, blues, contemporary Christian, country, folk, gospel, jazz, pop, rap, rock, rhythm and blues (R&B), soul, and all ethnic music, <i>etc.</i>
Cover or Original Song	A cover is a song performed by a singer other than the composer or original recording artist. Performing a cover does <u>not</u> imply an imitation or impersonation of the original recording artist. A limited number of original songs composed by the student-singer are accepted as stated in the CM Categories of Entry Repertoire Requirements.
Microphone Technique	All CM auditions must be performed with a microphone amplifying the vocals. In live auditions, all singers are required to use the amplification equipment provided. In video auditions, the singer's microphone must be on-camera placed on a stationary stand, handheld, or any combination of both. In video auditions, the microphone must amplify the vocals—whether via a direct feed into the camera or through an external amp or speaker. The use of a microphone requires artistic choices, which influence vocal interpretation. Intentionally varying the distance of the microphone from the singer's mouth creates stylized vocal effects. Microphone technique is one of the elements adjudicated in NSA's CM categories.
Rhythmic Groove	An organic embodiment of the beat that goes beyond specific notation or time signature, often referred to as the rhythmic feel of a song. The rhythmic groove of a CM song is often reflected in the singer's body as it responds in time with the music.
Vocal Stylisms*	In Commercial Music's genre-specific elements of vocal interpretation, vocal stylisms are often not notated in the music. As appropriate to the selected CM style, vocal stylisms may include vocal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ONSETS varying among fry, slide, yodel, growl, breathy, cry, creak, flip, scream, <i>etc.</i> • RELEASES varying among abrupt glottal stops, breathy, fall-off, fall-up, shadow vowels, fry, creaky, gaspy, <i>etc.</i> • NUANCES & FLOURISHES varying among riffs/runs, licks, flips, pitch slides, pop-appoggiatura, yodel/register shifts, pitch bends/scoops, <i>etc.</i> Visit the NSA Resource Center on NATS.org for CM resources.
Memorization	All selections must be performed from memory, including any self-accompaniments played.
Comments Only	Any student-singer may elect to enter auditioning for comments only and participate in the preliminary audition. The judges will not score auditions entered for comments only.
Copyright Compliant Scores	CM audition accompaniments may be played from memory, by ear, from copyright-compliant purchased lead sheets or scores, which may legally be altered with notations to create a personalized arrangement, or a purchased transposition of a song. Also compliant are a photocopy, scan, or hand-notated copy of a score in the public domain or a copy with written legal permission of the copyright holder. Original scores used for original songs.
Full Song	An entire song. No internal cuts of vocals; intros and outros may be abbreviated to accommodate audition's time limits; instrumental breaks as well as repeat and fade tags may be cut, abbreviated, or kept to accommodate the audition's time limits.
Authentic Performance	A genuine tone unique to each singer for the purpose of sincere communication with no elements of vocal impersonation. A CM singer performs as themselves, not a character.

*Edrie Means Weekly coined the term *Vocal Stylisms* in her teaching of *Commercial Music and Musical Theatre*.

CWR Commercial Music 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.

****Please make sure to read the style and accompaniment guidelines****

All performers must use a microphone, including in the video round.

CATEGORY		LENGTH OF STUDY	AGE LIMIT	TIME LIMIT	REPERTOIRE
CM 1	Children's Commercial Music	No limit	11 and younger Below 6 th grade	6 minutes	Two contrasting age-appropriate selections performed in a CM style or styles. Only one song may be an original song, instead of a cover. Only one song may be self-accompanied on an acoustic instrument, instead of performing with an instrumental track or a live collaborative acoustic instrumentalist.
CM 2	Youth Commercial Music	No limit	11-14 6 th -8 th grade	6 minutes	Two contrasting age-appropriate selections performed in a CM style or styles. Only one song may be an original song, instead of a cover. Only one song may be self-accompanied on an acoustic instrument, instead of performing with an instrumental track or a live collaborative acoustic instrumentalist.
CM 3A	Lower High School Commercial Music Treble Voice	No limit	14-16 9 th & 10 th Grade	8 minutes	THREE contrasting full songs performed in a CM style(s): At least one ballad and one up tempo included in 3 selections. Only one song may be an original song, instead of a cover. Only one song may be self-accompanied on an acoustic instrument, instead of performing with an instrumental track or a live collaborative acoustic instrumentalist.
CM 3B	Upper High School Commercial Music Treble Voice	No limit	16-19 11 th & 12 th Grade	8 minutes	THREE contrasting full songs performed in a CM style(s): At least one ballad and one up tempo included in 3 selections. Only one song may be an original song, instead of a cover. Only one song may be self-accompanied on an acoustic instrument, instead of performing with an instrumental track or a live collaborative acoustic instrumentalist.
CM 4A	Lower High School Commercial Music TBB Voice	No limit	14-16 9 th & 10 th Grade	8 minutes	THREE contrasting full songs performed in a CM style(s): At least one ballad and one up tempo included in 3 selections. Only one song may be an original song, instead of a cover. Only one song may be self-accompanied on an acoustic instrument, instead of performing with an instrumental track or a live collaborative acoustic instrumentalist.

CATEGORY		LENGTH OF STUDY	AGE LIMIT	TIME LIMIT	REPERTOIRE
CM 4B	Upper High School Commercial Music TBB Voice	No limit	16-19 11 th & 12 th Grade	8 minutes	THREE contrasting full songs performed in a CM style(s): At least one ballad and one up tempo included in 3 selections. Only one song may be an original song, instead of a cover. Only one song may be self-accompanied on an acoustic instrument, instead of performing with an instrumental track or a live collaborative acoustic instrumentalist.
CM 5	Lower (College) Commercial Music Treble Voice	0-2 years post high school	22	10 minutes	THREE contrasting full songs performed in a CM style(s): At least one ballad and one up tempo included in 3 selections. Only one song may be an original song, instead of a cover. Only one song may be self-accompanied on an acoustic instrument, instead of performing with an instrumental track or a live collaborative acoustic instrumentalist.
CM 6	Lower (College) Commercial Music TBB Voice	0-2 years post high school	22	10 minutes	THREE contrasting full songs performed in a CM style(s): At least one ballad and one up tempo included in 3 selections. Only one song may be an original song, instead of a cover. Only one song may be self-accompanied on an acoustic instrument, instead of performing with an instrumental track or a live collaborative acoustic instrumentalist.
CM 7	Upper (College) Commercial Music Treble Voice	3-5 years post high school, not in grad program	25	12 minutes	FOUR contrasting full songs performed in a CM style(s): Up to 2 songs may be original songs, instead of a cover. Up to 2 songs may be self-accompanied on an acoustic instrument, instead of performing with an instrumental track or a live collaborative acoustic instrumentalist.
CM 8	Upper (College) Commercial Music TBB Voice	3-5 years post high school, not in grad program	25	12 minutes	FOUR contrasting full songs performed in a CM style(s): Up to 2 songs may be original songs, instead of a cover. Up to 2 songs may be self-accompanied on an acoustic instrument, instead of performing with an instrumental track or a live collaborative acoustic instrumentalist.
CM 9	Advanced Commercial Music Treble Voice	4+ years post high school	30	15 minutes	FIVE contrasting full songs performed in a CM style(s): Up to 3 songs may be original songs, instead of a cover. Up to 2 songs may be self-accompanied on an acoustic instrument, instead of performing with an instrumental track or a live collaborative acoustic instrumentalist.

CATEGORY		LENGTH OF STUDY	AGE LIMIT	TIME LIMIT	REPERTOIRE
CM 10	Advanced Commercial Music TBB Voice	4+ years post high school	30	15 minutes	FIVE contrasting full songs performed in a CM style(s): Up to 3 songs may be original songs, instead of a cover. Up to 2 songs may be self-accompanied on an acoustic instrument, instead of performing with an instrumental track or a live collaborative acoustic instrumentalist.
CM 11	Adult Avocational Commercial Music (Non-advancing) Treble	No limit	18+	10 minutes	THREE contrasting full songs performed in a CM style(s): At least one ballad and one up tempo included in 3 selections. Only one song may be an original song, instead of a cover. Only one song may be self-accompanied on an acoustic instrument, instead of performing with an instrumental track or a live collaborative acoustic instrumentalist.
CM 12	Adult Avocational Commercial Music (Non-advancing) TBB	No limit	18+	10 minutes	THREE contrasting full songs performed in a CM style(s): At least one ballad and one up tempo included in 3 selections. Only one song may be an original song, instead of a cover. Only one song may be self-accompanied on an acoustic instrument, instead of performing with an instrumental track or a live collaborative acoustic instrumentalist.
CM 13	Non-traditional Student Commercial Music (Non-advancing) Treble	No limit; no graduate degree	25+	12 minutes	This category is for students who seek/finish a degree later in life and don't fit in the traditional age ranges. THREE contrasting full songs performed in a CM style(s): At least one ballad and one up tempo included in 3 selections. Only one song may be an original song, instead of a cover. Only one song may be self-accompanied on an acoustic instrument, instead of performing with an instrumental track or a live collaborative acoustic instrumentalist.
CM 14	Non-traditional Student Commercial Music (Non-advancing) TBB	No limit; no graduate degree	25+	12 minutes	This category is for students who seek/finish a degree later in life and don't fit in the traditional age ranges. THREE contrasting full songs performed in a CM style(s): At least one ballad and one up tempo included in 3 selections. Only one song may be an original song, instead of a cover. Only one song may be self-accompanied on an acoustic instrument, instead of performing with an instrumental track or a live collaborative acoustic instrumentalist.



Cal-Western Region Student Auditions 2024-2025



CM 15	Advanced Commercial Music (Non-advancing) Professional track	No limit	31+	15 minutes	FIVE contrasting full songs performed in a CM style(s): Up to 3 songs may be original songs, instead of a cover. Up to 2 songs may be self-accompanied on an acoustic instrument, instead of performing with an instrumental track or a live collaborative acoustic instrumentalist.
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National Association of Teachers of Singing

NATS Audition Rubric

COMMERCIAL MUSIC CATEGORIES

- Students may choose to sing all their selections in one CM style or vary their selections in multiple CM styles.
- Each singer's performance is adjudicated in comparison to the following standards as applied to the category of entry.

STANDARDS	DEVELOPING 70 – 79	ADVANCING 80 – 89	MASTERING 90 – 100
ARTISTIC INTERPRETATION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The performance is authentic. • The performance offers a unique, stylized interpretation of the music. • The performance is specific to the selected style of commercial music. 	The singer needs an increased understanding of the stylistic elements of each selection. The interpretation lacks authenticity and is not unique to the singer.	The singer is advancing in the ability to communicate the stylistic elements of each selection. The interpretation has moments of authenticity unique to the singer.	The singer is mastering the ability to communicate the stylistic elements of each selection. The interpretation is authentic and unique to the singer.
LYRICS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lyrics are articulated in the style appropriate to the selected style of commercial music. • Vocal tract shaping and diction enhance the individuality of the performance. 	Articulation is incompatible with the style of the song. The singer is beginning to engage the lyrics to embody the essence of each style.	Articulation is often compatible with the style of each song. The singer is often engaging the lyrics to embody the essence of each style.	Articulation is compatible with the style of each song. The singer is consistently engaging the lyrics to embody the essence of each style.
VOCAL STYLISMS* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The song's artistic interpretation includes expressive vocal stylisms characteristic of the selected style. • Interpretive vocal stylisms may include varied vocal onsets, releases, nuances, and embellishments, which stylistically color the vocal tone with fry, cry, growl, breathiness, etc. (See <i>CM Terminology</i>) 	Vocal interpretations lack the vocal stylisms characteristic of each genre. The singer is beginning to develop a facility with vocal stylisms.	Vocal interpretations include some vocal stylisms characteristic of each selection's style. The singer is developing a facility with artistic vocal stylisms.	Vocal interpretations include vocal stylisms characteristic of each genre. The singer has proficient facility with artistically effective vocal stylisms.
MUSICIANSHIP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance is in tune. • Rhythmic groove enhances the performance. • Memorization is secure and accurate. 	Pitches need to be more accurate. The style and rhythmic groove require further study. Memorization is incomplete.	Most pitches are accurate. The style and rhythmic groove are developing. Memorization is organic and mostly accurate.	All pitches are accurate. The style and rhythmic groove enhance the performance. Memorization is organic and accurate.
TONE Singer shows mastery of the vocal demands of songs selected and makes subtle or dramatic adjustments appropriate to the style and emotional expression of each selection. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each commercial style requires a variety of authentic vocal colors and sounds culturally viable for the chosen style of music performed. • Vocal tone may include some form of a mix of Mode I (Chest/TA) and Mode II (Head/CT) as well as varied organic, primal sounds born of raw emotion. • All CM styles are reliant on amplification. The microphone is used dynamically to facilitate vocal stylisms as well as projection. 	The singer is beginning to show ability in meeting the demands of each song and is able to make some appropriate choices in keeping with the specific style of each song.	The singer shows advancing ability in meeting the demands of each song and is often able to make appropriate choices in keeping with the specific style of each song.	The singer is mastering the ability to meet the demands of each song and makes appropriate choices in keeping with the specific style of each song.
BREATHING <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inhalation is efficient to the style and may be noisy or silent in response to raw emotion. • Exhalation provides stability and vocal energy. The appearance of effort may be intrinsic to style. 	The singer is beginning to inhale efficiently to meet the demands of each style. Exhalation needs to provide more stability and vocal energy.	The singer inconsistently inhales efficiently to meet the demands of each style. Exhalation inconsistently provides stability and vocal energy.	The singer is mastering efficient inhalation to meet the demands of each style. Exhalation provides stability and vocal energy.
ENSEMBLE (comments only) The singer coordinates with the accompaniment effectively to accomplish artistic goals.	The singer needs to coordinate more effectively with the accompaniment to accomplish artistic goals.	The singer is advancing in the ability to coordinate with the accompaniment to accomplish artistic goals.	The singer is mastering effective coordination with the accompaniment to accomplish artistic goals.

*Erie Means Weekly coined this term in her teaching of Commercial Music and Musical Theatre.