

Competitor Eligibility

Generally, participants in the *Stars and Shipes* competition must not be, nor ever have been, a full-time paid professional in either a performing position or collegiate teaching position, as of July 1, 2026. Exceptions will be considered on a case-by-case basis. There is no age limitation, and the competition is open to anyone world-wide. Previous first-place winners of the competition are not eligible to win prizes, but may reenter the competition to receive feedback.

Competition Process

Competition Registration

In order to register for the competition, you must fill out the registration form [here](#)

After completing the form, you must also pay the appropriate amount through PayPal to us at starsandshipes@gmail.com. Once this is complete, you will receive an e-mail confirming your eligibility for the competition.

Competition Fees

There are two sets of fees for entry into this competition, early and regular.

The Early Fees are available until **July 1, 2026**:

- \$75 - Competition Registration, masterclass attendance, and written feedback from judging panel for up to three rounds of competition
- \$125 - Competition Registration, written feedback, and live feedback session (50 minutes)

After **July 1, 2026**, The Regular Fees apply:

- \$100 - Competition Registration, masterclass attendance, and written feedback from judging panel for up to three rounds of competition
- \$150 - Competition Registration, written feedback, and live feedback session (50 minutes)

Entrants can pay on one date and submit their recordings at a later date, no need to have everything ready at once.

Preliminary Round

All rounds of this competition will be treated like “live” rounds with the screen removed. To emulate this, competitors will submit unedited video recordings of the entire round of excerpts.

All pieces must be played in one take, with no cuts or editing allowed. (for example, each excerpt will transition fluidly into the next one; feel free to take a few moments between pieces).

Competitors will submit links to video recordings of the preliminary round materials to starsandshipes@gmail.com by the due date: **July 6, 2026 @ 11:59 PM (Your local time)**.

After recording your video, upload the file to YouTube as an *unlisted* file, and send the link to us to finalize your entry. Unlisted videos are only viewable by the owner of the video, and anyone who has access to the link. These can easily be changed to *private*, or removed after the competition. (We will not share links with anyone outside of the judging panel without your written consent)

Please contact us at starsandshipes@gmail.com with any questions or concerns about materials submission.

Do not edit or splice anything within a specific file. Any evidence of editing may result in disqualification from subsequent rounds of competition.

Semi-finalists will be announced **July 10 @ 5:00 PM EDT**.

In the spirit of maintaining a true military-band audition experience, there will not be a predetermined number of individuals that advance to the following round. However, a minimum of 6 applicants will advance to the semi-final round, and a minimum of 4 will advance to the final round. Three winners will be named, and while ties are permitted (along with splitting of any prize money associated with those places) all announced awards will be dispersed to the winners.

Semi-Final Round

The repertoire for the Semi-Final and Final rounds is the same, and can be found on the website.

Selected excerpts and cuts for the semi-final round will be announced **July 10, 2026 @ 5:00 PM EDT**. All Semi-finalists will then have until 11:59 PM on **July 13** to submit links to an unedited video of themselves performing all of the excerpt cuts in the prescribed order.

Post this video as an *unlisted* video on YouTube, and send the link to us at starsandshipes@gmail.com to complete your entry.

From these semi-finalists, the judges will choose a number of finalists that is not predetermined.

Final Round

Finalists will be announced **July 15, 2026 @ 5:00 PM EDT**

The final round will function the same way as the Semi-Final Round, but with potentially different cuts.

Cuts for the final round will also be announced **July 15, 2026 @ 5:00 PM EDT**. All Finalists will have until 11:59 PM on **July 20 (your local time)** to submit links to an unedited video of themselves performing all of the excerpt cuts in the prescribed order.

Post this video as an *unlisted* video on YouTube, and send the link to us at starsandshipes@gmail.com to complete your entry.

Additional Rounds

Additional rounds may be asked to further narrow down a highly qualified pool of competitors at the judges' discretion.

Competition Prize

Prize information will be listed on the website, and will include first, second, and third place prizes. The prize money will be awarded through PayPal, or an alternative method of payment as discussed with the winners.

Panel Feedback

By entering this competition, all competitors are entitled to written feedback from the panel of judges for each round of competition they participate in. One of the benefits of this competition is receiving feedback from several different people, each who have their own style of playing, teaching, listening and learning. This feedback may be very short and to-the-point, or more expansive. All of this feedback will be equally useful, and representative of the realities, challenges, shortcomings, and strengths that you display in your playing! Please direct any questions or concerns about your feedback to me directly at starsandshipes@gmail.com.

Those competitors who pay for the video feedback will be able to schedule a “live” meeting with Dr. Shipes through Zoom, in addition to the written feedback after the competition has concluded. This session can take the form of a lesson as well, and will last around 50 minutes.

Disclaimers

Participation in this competition is contingent on the competitors' access to the required technology needed to record audio and video, send and receive e-mail, and access to the internet during the course of the competition.

While editing is not allowed – you are certainly allowed to record your video and audio on separate devices and merge the two together using simple editing software like iMovie. However, splicing between excerpts (or within excerpts), pitch correction, fixing wrong notes, etc, is not allowed and will result in disqualification.

There are real-time deadlines in the semi-final and final rounds that must be adhered to as part of this competition. If these deadlines are not met by a competitor (materials are not submitted by the deadline) then they may be disqualified from the competition.

It is possible that websites like YouTube might go offline for maintenance or due to other problems that are unforeseeable during the course of this competition. If that occurs, please be ready to share a standard definition video (480p) of your submission with starsandshipes@gmail.com through Google drive, Dropbox, OneDrive or another file sharing service. We will communicate with competitors when we notice any widespread issues like this.

There will be no refunds of competition fees issued once the competition has taken place.

In extenuating circumstances like these or for any reason whatsoever, the judging panel may decide to extend deadlines to accommodate competitors in the spirit of fair competition.

All competition decisions made by the panel of judges are final.

Any and all questions should be directed to starsandshipes@gmail.com

**Written and reviewed April 23, 2026.