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2027 Rules and Repertoire

Rules

The following are the rules governing the 2027 preliminary competition.

1. Contestants must be enrolled as an undergraduate student in an accredited institution and currently studying with an organ teacher.
2. Preliminary contestants are required to submit recorded performances of all three sections outlined in *Repertoire* (below) as mp3 format files and sent via email. This may be a link to a Dropbox account or Google Drive. Links to other websites will not be accepted. The recording of each composition must be continuous (no editing or splicing). Separate mp3 tracks must be made for each composition and hymn with a brief title of the piece or hymn and the contestant's initials in the file name (ex. BWV661_MJP.mp3). Hymns should be recorded in their entirety with an introduction and each stanza or verse included as printed in *The Presbyterian Hymnal*. Compositions employing additional instruments will not be accepted. The recording must contain no speaking or singing. **Entries shall be submitted to organcompetition@ottumwafpc.org no later than January 15, 2027.** An early-bird rate of \$25 will be applied to entries submitted by December 15, 2026. A \$50 fee will be applied for entries after December 15, 2026.
3. Recordings received without all accompanying materials or parts of the repertoire will not be judged. All recordings must consist of performances recorded no earlier than October 1, 2026. All submissions will be acknowledged via email upon request.
4. Recordings entered in the Preliminary Competition will be judged anonymously by a panel of musicians different from the panel of judges for the final round. Three finalists will be chosen to compete at First Presbyterian Church on Sunday, April 11, 2027. The weekend will include a Friday evening recital or hymn festival, a Saturday workshop, and Sunday worship service. All contestants are expected to be present for these events. Time will be scheduled on Friday and Saturday for individual practice on the Tellers Organ which will be used for the Sunday afternoon competition. Housing via home stays and several meals will be provided for the contestants.
5. Contestants will be required to provide a clean copy of any organ score utilized upon request.
6. Preliminary contestants will be notified as to whether or not they have been selected as one of the three finalists or two alternatives following the Preliminary Competition, which will take place the weeks following the January 15 deadline. **A response is required 5 days after the finalist notification.** If any preliminary contestant who is selected as a finalist is unavailable to compete on April 11, 2027, or if any preliminary contestant who is selected as a finalist chooses for any reason not to participate in the Final Competition, the next-highest ranking contestant will be eligible to compete in the Finals.

7. There will be four prizes for the competition: first place will receive \$3,500 and be expected to perform a recital or hymn festival in the fall of 2027 at First Presbyterian, Ottumwa. Second place will receive \$2,500 and third place will receive \$1,500. The fourth prize will be an audience prize in the amount of \$500. The judging will be anonymous on the day of the competition. While the finalists' names will be announced prior to the competition, their names will be kept confidential during the Sunday competition.
8. In addition to the recordings, the following must be attached as PDFs with the submission email.
 - a. A Contestant's Application Form providing all requested information and signatures.
 - b. A completed and signed Confirmation of Recorded Performance form.
 - c. A \$50 entrance fee, paid via the church's website. There is a red CONTRIBUTE button at the top righthand corner of the page. Choose the option "one time". The fee is due at the time of submission. Applications made before or on December 15, 2026 are eligible for a \$25 early-bird entrance fee.
 - d. A stop list of the organ used for the preliminary recording including the builder's name and year. **The same organ shall be used for all repertoire.**
9. The following must be submitted by all **finalists** no later than February 15, 2027:
 - a. A written rationale/description of your treatment of Hymn #1 including singing instructions (see *Repertoire* for specifics).
 - b. A high-resolution professional-quality head shot of the contestant suitable for publicity.
 - c. A biographical sketch describing musical training, professional experience, and intentions for future church music or organ vocations.
10. Travel to Ottumwa is the responsibility of each contestant. However, transportation from the Des Moines (DSM) airport is available. Final contestants shall arrive by the Friday of the competition.

Dates-at-a-Glance

October 1, 2026 | Recordings may be made

December 15, 2026 | Early-bird deadline

January 15, 2027 | Deadline for applications

February 2, 2027 (week of) | Finalists and alternates will be announced

February 15, 2027 | Finalists' hymn descriptions, photos, and biographies due

April 9, 10, & 11, 2027 | Final Competition weekend

Repertoire

The repertoire for the competition is in three sections: select chorale preludes of J.S. Bach, hymn playing, and a choice piece. Repertoire played for the Preliminary and Final Competitions shall be the same.

I. J.S. Bach

Select a chorale prelude from the following

Orgelbüchlein

In dir ist Freude, BWV 615

Leipzig Chorales (Great 18)

Von Gott will ich nicht lassen, BWV 658

Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland, BWV 661

Komm, Gott Schöpfer, BWV 667

Miscellaneous Chorale Preludes

Valet will ich dir geben, BWV 735 or 736

Clavier-Übung III

Wir glauben all an einen Gott, BWV 680

II. Hymn Playing

Select one hymn from each list (1 & 2).

List 1 hymns shall be treated as if included in a hymn festival or festival worship service. They shall include a suitable extended hymn prelude (published or self-published) as the introduction (à la J.S. Bach/Paul Manz chorale prelude tradition) and all stanzas/verses with any desired singing directions. **If the introduction is “self-published”, it must be submitted in a readable format.** Finalists will be required to provide a written rationale for introduction and stanza treatments.

Interludes, modulations, reharmonizations, or stanza/verse designations are permitted, although one stanza/verse should be “straight” from the hymnal. If alternate published harmonizations are used, composers and copyright details must be listed and scores provided for the judges. See example below. All hymns must be played from The Presbyterian Hymnal (1990). Copies of the hymns are available upon request.

List 1

All Glory, Laud, and Honor (ST. THEODOLPH/VALET WILL ICH DIR GEBEN) — #88

Come, Holy Spirit, Our Souls Inspire (VENI CREATOR) — #125

The King of Love My Shepherd Is (ST. COLUMBA) — #171

Jesus Shall Reign (DUKE STREET) — #423

We Know That Christ Is Raised (ENGELBERG) — #495

Example (not on this year’s list):

God of Grace, and God of Glory (CWM RHONDDA)

Imagined within the context of a hymn festival

Introduction by Paul Manz, © 1974 Concordia Publishing House/© 1989 MorningStar Publishers

1: All, in unison

2: Men, in unison

3: All, in harmony

4: Women & Children, in unison

Interlude: excerpt from the introduction by Paul Manz

5: All (reharmonization by John Ferguson, © Augsburg Fortress)

List 2 hymns shall include an introduction and all stanzas/verses. Interludes, modulations, reharmonizations, or stanza/verse designations are permitted. If a published introduction or alternate hymn stanzas/verses is used, composers and copyright details must be listed and scores provided for the judges. The hymn must be able to be sung from The Presbyterian Hymnal (1990). Copies of the hymns are available upon request.

List 2

Cristo vive/Christ is risen (ARGENTINA) — #109

Lift Up the Gates Eternal (PROMISED ONE) — #177

When Israel Was in Egypt's Land (GO DOWN MOSES) — #334

Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love (CHEREPONI) — #367

O Sing to the Lord (CANTAD AL SEÑOR/CANTAI AO SENHOR) — #472

III. Choice Piece

This piece, selected solely by the performer, should be suitable as a joyful postlude (for any season of the church year) and written by a living composer or someone who lived past 1900.

Examples:

Jehan Alain — Litanies, JA119

Adolphus Hailstork — Toccata on 'Veni Emmanuel'

Egil Hovland — Toccata 'Nu la oss takke Gud' (Now Thank We All Our God)

Jean Langlais — Hymne d'Action de grâces "Te Deum" from Trois Paraphrases Grégoriennes

Henri Mulet — Carillon-Sortie

Charles W. Ore — A Mighty Fortress

Charles-Marie Widor — "Finale" from *Symphony No. 6, Op. 42, No. 2*

Louis Vierne — "Carillon" from *24 Pièces en style libre, Op.31*

Louis Vierne — "Finale" from *Symphony No. 1, Op. 14*

Questions?

If you have any questions regarding the competition, please contact Matthew Penning, competition coordinator, organcompetition@ottumwafpc.org.