

**Greater Columbia Chapter of the American Guild of Organists
YOUNG ORGANIST COMPETITION 2026
Saturday, March 7, 2026
10:00 a.m.**

Rules of the Competition

Eligibility

The competition is open to students currently enrolled in Grades 8-12 who are studying organ. Membership in AGO is not required. Transportation and housing for the competitors must be arranged and paid for by the contestants. Participants younger than 18 years of age must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. Previous first place winners are ineligible to compete. Three contestants are chosen from the entries to compete in the final round on **March 7, 2026**.

Competition Dates

If you are chosen as a finalist, you will come to Columbia SC for the final round, which will take place on **Saturday, March 7, 2026**, beginning at **10:00 a.m.** Finalists will be assigned two hours of practice on the competition organ on **Friday, March 6, 2026**, and a twenty-minute warm-up on the instrument on the day of the competition. The student alone is allowed to practice and set registrations.

Repertoire Requirements

1. A major work by J.S. Bach of at least 5 minutes duration.
2. A contrasting piece composed after 1800.
3. A hymn chosen from the list provided with the rules of the competition (p.3).
The pieces must be original compositions for pipe organ. Total performance time for the two solos and the hymn should not exceed 30 minutes. Memorization is not required.

How to enter

The student must complete the application form for *The Young Organist Competition 2026* as found on the Greater Columbia AGO website. The student must pay the \$50 entry fee (**check payable to the Greater Columbia AGO Chapter must be received by February 1, 2026**) and submit an unlisted video of the required repertoire as outlined above. Competitors should perform the same repertoire on the video and in the live competition. Students should also send a brief biography and a photo. All materials must be sent to the chair of the competition online or in hard copy and must be received by **February 1, 2026**. Each performance should be a **continuous, unedited** performance.

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Deadlines

The deadline for submission of the application, the \$50 entry fee (**check made payable to the Greater Columbia AGO Chapter**), the biographical information, the photo, and the virtual performance is **February 1, 2026**. **The entry fee must be received by the February 1 deadline**. The semi-final round will be judged by a committee of organists from the Greater Columbia AGO Chapter. Students will be notified of audition results by **February 15, 2026**.

Photocopies

The use of photocopied or other illegally reproduced copyrighted scores without the written permission of the copyright holder is prohibited and will disqualify a competitor from participation in the competition. (Exceptions to this rule apply only to reductions for performance and to pages duplicated for the purpose of facilitating page turns. In such cases, the competitor must have the original score with her/him.) Upon request, a page turner will be provided for both the practice session and the competition.

Applause

The competition is open to the public. Applause is encouraged at the end of each student's complete performance.

Prizes

The first-place winner will receive \$3000, the second-place winner \$2000, and the third-place winner \$1500. The hymn-playing award will be \$1000 and is given separately from the repertoire award. The winner of the first-place award will be expected to return to Columbia during the next AGO program year to perform a solo recital with financial compensation from the chapter. An article about the event and a picture of the winners will be submitted to the AGO magazine, *The American Organist*.

Disqualification

A competitor will be disqualified for failure to abide by the rules. Disqualification will be determined by the Committee on *The Young Organist Competition 2026*.

Withholding Prizes

The judges shall reserve the right to withhold any or all prizes.

Ties

In the event of a tie for first place, a run-off shall be held immediately. Competitors shall repeat their entire programs.

Results

The judges will deliberate immediately following the performances and winners will be announced promptly.

Hymn Requirement

Please choose one of these three hymns which can be found in a standard hymnal.

St. Clement
Earth and All Stars
Leoni / Yigdal

Play an introduction and three verses.

1. Introduction
2. First verse as written
3. Second verse with right hand playing solo melody on one manual with correct harmony in left hand on second manual and pedal
4. Third verse with alternate harmonization

Expectations:

1. Sensitive phrasing of the texts is expected.
2. Tempo and registration appropriate to the text of the hymn and for congregational singing in this acoustic.
3. Breaths between verses and within the stanzas.
4. Articulation which highlights the text and leads good singing.