



Announcing the 2026 Maurice Gardner Competition for Composers

The American Viola Society proudly announces the 2026 Maurice Gardner Competition for Composers, seeking new works for the viola. The winning composition will be performed at the 2026 American Viola Festival, to be held at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, VA, USA on June 3-6, 2026.

Anyone is welcome to submit a composition to the Gardner Competition. You may submit more than one composition for review. The entry period consists of two phases. Entries submitted from October 1 to October 31 (by 11:59 PM ET) are free of charge. For entries submitted November 1 through December 1, a \$25 entry fee will be required, payable via credit card or PayPal.

Submission Deadline: December 1, 2025

The American Viola Society seeks to address the systemic and structural inequities that are part of the classical music world. We especially want to hear from composers who identify as BIPOC/ALAANA/LGBTQ. During the submission process we have made it possible to self-identify as a member of an underrepresented community. (This information is not used internally and does not factor into adjudication.)

All compositions will be anonymized and reviewed by a panel of judges which will be announced in October and will include internationally known violists and composers.

Prizes to be awarded:

First Prize – \$1000, plus:

A performance at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, VA, USA on June 3-6, 2026
Reimbursement of travel expenses to the festival (up to \$500)

Second Prize – \$500

Submission portal will be open October 1 – December 1, 2025.

[Please click here to submit your composition to the 2026 Gardner Competition for Composers.](#)

Composers of winning compositions will be notified via email or phone call by February 15, 2026.

Competition Rules

- Entries must not have been commercially recorded or previously received an *official* world premiere (although prior workshop performances, internal college performances, and other small-scale performances are permitted).
- Entries may not exceed 15 minutes in length.
- Entries may be for solo viola, viola and one other instrument, or viola and interactive media. Compositional elements beyond the classical music canon are encouraged, including jazz idioms and other improvisatory elements, electronic media and non-orchestral instruments.
- Previous winners are ineligible to apply for 6 years following their most recent win.

- The same composition cannot be entered more than twice.
- The competition is open to composers of all ages, racial and ethnic backgrounds, gender expressions and identities, sexual orientations, nationalities, or religious beliefs.

Application Guidelines

- The application period is October 1 – December 1, 2025.
- The following application materials will be collected electronically via online entry form (accessible via the AVS website beginning on October 1):
 - A legible score in PDF format of the work submitted
 - A live or MIDI recording of the complete work submitted
 - Entries submitted from October 1 to October 31 (by 11:59 PM ET) are free of charge. For entries submitted November 1 through December 1, a \$25 entry fee will be required, payable via credit card or PayPal.
- **All submissions must be anonymous.** The composer's name and any other identifiable features must be removed from scores and recordings and from file names submitted. Pseudonyms are permitted.

Direct questions and inquiries to: [Marcus R. Pyle, Competition Chair](#)